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The Psychodynamics of Myth:

The Absence of God as Mental Illness According to Post-Jungian Analytical Psychology

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Abstract:

This dissertation introduces the subject of Analytical Psychology and identifies the importance of the divine in its practice, particularly in the post-Jungian scene. To achieve this, some vehicles through which religious manifestations occur are considered. Special attention is given to religious experiences, the psychodynamics of myth, and the role of suffering for the individual. The description of these manifestations as psychic fundamental dynamics is used to explore and synthesise the *religious function of the psyche* — first introduced by Jung as the ultimate therapy. Departing from works of reference in the field, the methodology used describes this particular analytical path regarding religious matters through their symbolism and accepted meaning. The religious concepts present in Jungian therapy are identified and explained through a conceptual and comparative analysis. The result of such effort includes the explanation of the relationship between religious/spiritual experiences, their mechanics and symbolical importance, and mental illness in the Jungian context. This thesis also connects the decrease of institutional religious affiliation with the intensification of spirituality, and how the latter is perceived by therapists. It is observed in the explored literature that such internal movement is considered an autonomous attempt to establish psychological balance. And that in order to respond to this, the therapeutic opinion is mostly concerned with the preparation of the professional in correctly understanding the religious experience and approaching it in a positive way, fostering more personal ways of exploring one's spirituality.

Keywords: Analytical Psychology — Jung — Numinous — Religious Experience — Spirituality — Mental Illness — Suffering.

Resumo:

A presente dissertação identifica a importância do divino na Psicologia Analítica, dando ênfase aos desenvolvimentos pós-Junguianos. Para alcançar tal objectivo, são considerados alguns veículos pelos quais as manifestações religiosas ocorrem. As experiências religiosas, as psicodinâmicas do mito, e o papel que o sofrimento pode adquirir para o indivíduo são tópicos observados. A exposição destes recursos como dinâmicas psíquicas fundamentais é utilizada para explorar a síntese da função transcendente da psique — introduzido pela primeira vez por Jung como a derradeira terapia. A partir de obras de referência para o enquadramento Junguiano, a metodologia utilizada descreve este distinto caminho analítico considerando as questões religiosas, a sua respectiva simbologia e significado vigente. Os conceitos religiosos presentes na terapia Junguiana são identificados e explicados através de uma análise comparativa e conceptual. O resultado deste estudo circunscreve a explicação da relação entre experiências religiosas/espirituais, o seu mecanismo e importância simbólica, e a doença mental no contexto Junguiano. Esta tese também estabelece uma conexão entre a diminuição da afiliação religiosa institucional com a intensificação da espiritualidade, e como este último factor é compreendido por terapeutas. É observado na literatura que serviu de base para esta dissertação que tal movimento interno é considerado uma tentativa autónoma de estabelecer equilíbrio. De maneira a responder esta expressão, a opinião terapêutica compromete-se sobretudo com a preparação do profissional na correcta compreensão da experiência religiosa, abordando-a de forma positiva, fomentando uma conduta mais pessoal na exploração da própria espiritualidade.

Palavras-chave: — Psicologia Analítica — Jung — Numinosidade — Experiência Religiosa — Espiritualidade — Doença Mental — Sofrimento.

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It is a rewarding experience to peek at how infinitely complicated we are, and how instantly we can become so clear.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

To better understand the psychodynamics of myth and religion, it is of great importance to define the grounds where these subjects possess fundamental significance, namely the field of Depth Psychology. The concept of 'Depth Psychology' was established by the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler to encircle every psychological and scientific approach based on the acceptance that the whole of the human mind was constituted by a conscious and unconscious side.

Considering accepted ideas in the field, the conscious is commonly composed of everything ever experienced and learned: it is the home of short- and long-term memories. In turn, the unconscious consists of an eternity of content, radiating its forces as far as the conscious side and hence influencing behavior. Emerging from that structure, ramified theories depict the psyche in many ways, considering differences in the content of the conscious and unconscious and how they work but without complete universal agreement about the formation of the unconscious part of the psyche.

Originating from Freud's work stands out one of the main prevailing views on the constitution of the psyche. This standard Freud-derived therapeutic practice sees most unconscious content as the result of repression: every unpleasant event that the individual goes through that he or she cannot instantly manage contributes to the creation of a burden. Placing a particular emphasis on childhood repressed trauma, this definition is generally referred to as 'Psychoanalysis'. Differing from the conventional Freudian perspective, Carl Jung introduced a theoretical point of view where the unconscious surpasses the individual and is compared to a natural law, as an ever-present force. A specificity of this conjecture is that the collective unconscious was formed by an eon of existence and sediments of thought, feelings, emotions, and memories; this Jungian variation is usually referred to as 'Analytical Psychology'.

Turning solely to the division made by Jung, some elements only belong to the conscious part of the psyche. Rationality, for instance, as the articulation of reason, is the product of the conscious mind with its everlasting exercise of thought. Opposing it (i.e., exterior to rationality) the unconscious stands for an unlimited source of something-to-discover; this Jungian axiom separates what is knowable from what can only be glimpsed at. Adding to that and bearing central importance

to the subject of this essay, in Analytical Psychology the unconscious communicates through symbols considered fundamentally religious and spiritual. Therefore, the relinquishment of the constrictive limits of rationality and the embracement of psychic religious processes have been recurrently held against those in this field of inquiry, often experiencing an unresolved prejudgment and carrying stigma.

Along this therapeutic line, religion and spirituality are discussed by focusing on the experience and the nature of the divine, where special attention is given to the understanding and construction of the sacred. Also, by focusing on the comprehension of God's image and its presence in life (in crisis and therapy), not in a theologically monotheistic sense, but as a symbolic figure of the divine or the numinous. Accordingly, Jung developed an abstract set of tools to conceptualize recurrent events, describing them as spiritual. This contributed to his conceptualization of the unconscious' influence on the conscious part of the psyche, and was later expanded by the post-Jungian advancements.

The grounds of all these assumptions about the psyche and religion/spirituality are analogously observed as the path towards mental stability and self-development. Here such developments are the same as spiritual development because they deal with the trouble of (modern) mental distress and encircle the search for existential security.

Recent generations, for numerous reasons, have been distancing themselves from organized religions. It is argued by some post-Jungian authors that this dissociation increases the distance between the unconscious and the conscious. As a reaction, the growing urge for spirituality is considered to be a natural response to this religious detachment — a necessity created by the lack of spiritual stimuli. It is as if the rise of intellect has been completely stripping mythological garments from the sacred, changing the way the sacred is seen and experienced: boosting the search for spirituality and leaving behind the institutional intermediate.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation defines the relation between suffering and the absence of God in Analytical Psychology, particularly in the post-Jungian scenery, and by doing so, distinguishes Analytical Psychology from other theories and provides an introduction of its religious features.

To achieve this, a very important component of Jung's theory which is constantly used in therapy is explained: the dynamics of myths, which are translated in the existence of a pattern that gives shape to the concept of a monomyth. Rituals, as actions that are deeply permeated by myth, are also considered. After this preliminary approach, myth is addressed inside a therapeutic frame, highlighting its healing and transcendent features. The mentioned structure of myth is equated to a symbolic language; such language is identified in other components of Analytical Psychology: mysticism and dreams. The "journey of the hero" in mythical narratives is examined as the path of a mystic, and dreams are approached as sharing similar properties. This consequently allows Religious Experiences to be presented as diverse phenomena encompassing many features (e.g. the insight born from a myth, the outcome of a ritual, the experiences of a mystic, dreams, and others). The inherent sacrality in all these features is evidenced when each is addressed, considering their historicity and the way it is carried out to a pragmatic line of thought.

When considered, all these religious features allow the religious importance in Analytical Psychology to be perceived; so to locate and comprehend the therapy properly it is also important to consider it in contrast to other theories. To do that, Freud is used as an object of comparison, enabling an understanding of how Analytical Psychology differentiates itself from other psychological approaches. The contrast is properly established and an image of how Jung's Analytical Psychology differs from Freudian Psychoanalysis is shown. Then, the similarities between these disagreeing theories and theorists are highlighted to deliver a synthesis of common concepts. An effort is made to identify similar concepts that are also represented in other psychological approaches; approaches that have no direct relation to Analytical Psychology itself. Once the important aspects of the therapy have been clarified, that is, its religious roots and

distinction and permeability in the field, then it becomes possible to define the current environment into which the practice is inserted.

The historical and theoretical backgrounds of these fundamental topics of Analytical Psychology are presented to sustain a clear approach to the subject. The aim is to describe different vehicles that carry similarities and observe their therapeutic value. The pattern identified reflects the psychic transformation desired in therapy; it is the representation of personal development, transcendent experiences, and healing.

Method and bibliography

The following conceptual analysis also assumes a religious and psychoanalytic comparative position, looking at first to religious features in their own space, to later identify them in the field of analysis. In order to reach this synthesis a set of abstract concepts is explained considering how they interact with each other. The therapeutic functions of these religious features are highlighted while their meaning and relation to one another is explained. The effort is towards the clarification of how these religious / spiritual concepts are inserted in Depth Psychology. This study also determines how Analytical Psychology is different from standard Freudian psychoanalysis and in which ways it can be seen as similar; considering also other opinions about the transcendent in the field of Depth Psychology.

After clarifying where Analytical Psychology stands and how it differs from other theories this study moves forward to a complete post-Jungian frame. It then defines specific concepts that (1) are still relevant to the subject of Analytical Psychology and (2) have the capacity to describe the main structure of the psyche from this perspective. Ultimately, the therapeutic process is depicted in a way that can expose the present religious features.

The bibliography considered for this research was chosen due to its relevant capacity of reviewing and summarizing Jung's concepts and approaches, showing its differences and acceptance in the field facing standard psychoanalysis — leaving behind concepts that are no longer relevant in the post-Jungian frame of thought. Special attention was given to works that approach Jung's theory in an integrative or comparative effort, mostly Neo-Jungian authors such as Andrews Samuels, David Tacey and Lionel Corbett. To contrast and show similarities, Freud and other unrelated authors were mentioned. Works that present a dialogue between myth/religion and the individual, as in the case of Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell on comparative mythology and William James on the study of religious experiences, are main objects for the bridge and analogy between topics.

Main objective

The aim of this work is to provide a suitable and clear description of the interaction between the many religious features composing Analytical Psychology and their roots, as well as their practical meaning and value in the post-Jungian age. The referenced therapy recognizes a pattern of orientation in a psychological crisis. This set of behaviors and decisions happens to also be present in the mythic and mystic journey. Another aim of this work is to clarify the structure of the manifestation of this pattern and contextualize it in both courses, psychological and mythical/ religious (and the resembling mystical path). To demonstrate its contemporary pertinence and practical value, the psychic function that articulates the pattern is repeatedly evidenced in different contexts and perspectives.

Relevance

The pertinence of this study is mostly based on its introductory nature and capacity to build a picture of the foundational traits of Analytical Psychology, clarifying the role of religion and spirituality to the therapy as a balancing factor for health maintenance. Furthermore, this dissertation pays a contribution to the religious field of studies, as a study capable of elucidating the role religion plays in Analytical Psychology and how religion is identified as therapeutically relevant. It is also of present concern to clarify and differentiate the leading role of the therapist, that, as a guiding figure, is of great importance to the articulation of and applicability of the therapy.

Overview

The following chapters were structured to outline the different features that are to this day relevant to analysis in the post-Jungian scenery.

I - Current spiritual landscape

This introductory chapter is set upon the different forms in which the movement towards a religious experience takes place, depicting religious experience as a source of existential security. The nurturing of spirituality is presented to meet the post-Jungian analytical vein, considering the religious features that remain therapeutically relevant. The idea of an individual spirituality is presented through insights of David Tacey, where suffering and mental unbalancing come as a consequence of distancing from traditional ways of experiencing the sacred. This section also introduces the notion of an autonomous and collective psychic movement towards a reunion with the sacredness of myth, setting the notion of the 'modern myth'.

II - Therapeutic views on religion

This chapter focus on the most prominent analytical views of these subjects. A contrast is set through Freud and Jung's evaluations of the phenomenological scope mentioned in the previous chapters, presenting some similarities and oppositions between them. Jung's singular posture towards mentorship is depicted alongside the guiding figures of mysticism, emphasizing the acceptance of guidance and rejection of authority. Additionally, other relevant positions about a transcendent psychic space are briefly presented in an attempt to provide compliant fragments present in divergent theories.

III - Religious Experiences: Interpretations and transformational value

This section resumes the presence of Religious Experiences (REs) in myth, popular tales, dreams and their representation as the main goal in mysticism. The suffering present in myth and ritual is also identified in REs, as is their healing effects. REs are analyzed as crucial to the foundation of mythical narratives and to the maintenance of the religious atmosphere. In this chapter Rudolf Otto's and William James' contributions are considered due to their clear and pioneering approach in the study of REs, both being of great importance to the developments of Analytical Psychology. The opposition between 'REs and mental illness (integration and disintegration)' are taken into account.

IV - Campbell and Eliade: Mythical features

Considering the works of Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade, this chapter provides an introduction to the main aspects of myth. Its symbolic value is explained and demonstrated as a communal effort towards social inclusion, personal progression and the way it changes the psychological reality for different individuals. Other transversal aspects that are also present in the frame of analytical concepts, such as the symbology of 'death' and 'rebirth' and the concept of 'sacred time' are explored. The profane is defined as a lack of the transcendent actions and narratives that in the past used to serve as a psychic health maintenance tool. Finally, Campbell's monomythic structure is presented in its three stages to embody and reiterate in practice the introduced features.

V - Religious features of Analytical Psychology: Myth, mysticism and dreams

Some of the structural similarities between the mythical and mystical journey are introduced. Campbell's and Eliade's insights are also considered as a bridge to provide the grounds to the

exploration of structural similarities between the mythical and mystical journey. These commonalities are placed in the therapeutic context, where myth and mysticism are considered meaningful resources to be used in analysis. The 'realm of fantasy' is placed alongside reality when there is a search for meaning and insight. Pain, as one of the main features present in both myth and mysticism, is identified as a necessity for personal development in the therapeutic path. Resuming the constituent patterns of both mysticism and myth, dreams are presented as an autonomous instrument of expression of these same patterns, and another tool used in analysis, representing the personification of feelings and the anxieties of life. Differences in dream interpretation in depth psychology are demonstrated with Jung and Freud, imparting this main duality in the field.

VI - Relevant aspects of the Psyche in Analytical Psychology

After establishing the relation between myth and mysticism and stating the broad spectrum of REs, this segment defines archetypes according to the similar structure present in myths, rituals, dreams, and REs in general. Other theories from different fields sharing archetypal precepts are also cited. Once the definition of archetype is clear, some of the main devices present in the structure of the psyche, according to Analytical Psychology, are explained. 'Ego' ,'Self" ,'Complex", and the formation of a 'God image' are elucidated, just as the mixture between the God image, Self, and its cultural anthropomorphized form. Religious divine figures are identified as cultural ways of representing the archetypes. The concept of numinosity is considered from a technical perspective and also localized in the psychic structure. It is depicted as an extremely relevant aspect in the post-Jungian age and the driving force of spirituality and transcendent experiences.

VII - The role of suffering

The last chapter summarizes suffering as an archetypal device possessing great significance to maturation and healing. The therapeutic attitude towards the inevitability of suffering is presented as a voluntary commitment to it, implying a kind of mythic-inspired preparation. This recurrently reiterated archetypal and paradigmatic behavior is summarized as a symbolic "path to God", bringing about numinous feelings and consequently impacting the individual. This whole psychic dynamic is finally identified as the "religious function of the psyche": a psychic event transversal to every mentioned religious / spiritual feature supporting the occurrence of a healing insight. Such function is usually triggered by the pressure of a limit experience, despair, or simply a numinous happening without further reason, leading to the possibility of encountering the sacred in mental illness.

Conclusion

As part of the concluding statement, religion in Analytical Psychology is finally observed as an adaptive function to be developed through the reassessing of religious values in therapy. And Myth, as a metaphor of this psychic adaptive potential, is a key element in understanding the transformational and integrative process of the therapeutic journey. Because of its basis and frame of meaning, the religiously aware analysis can then be seen as a religious pursuit, aiming at the God/numinous experience. To reach this desired outcome, one of the analytical requirements is the constant integrative posture with the unconscious Self. The final challenge in upbringing this relationship with the Self (or God figure) is the risk of over-identification with the numinous happening (if it ever takes place).

When framing the analytical value of myth, the learned lesson that remains relevant throughout the whole explored subject is to investigate the appearing challenges and not postpone any pounding inconveniente. This behavioral axiom is taken as a psychological metaphor, to observe neurotic behavior in order to overcome it. Such conflictual atmosphere is understood as the mythical caos that precedes order, and the purpose of facing these conflictual feelings is to acquire the aimed maturity and self-reliance when dealing with psychological complexities. In this way, Analytical Psychology addresses conflict analyzing the communication between the conscious and the unconscious, to comprehend and symbolically realize the (unconscious) desire for self-realization.

Mentoring figures, such as religious authorities, are finally assembled as a safeguard to the integrity of the psyche. When the individual, due to the various explored reasons, does not rely on his or her religious background, he or she may rely on the therapist, that as a 'religious carer' absorbs the role of the mentor, assisting through the accomplishment of a healthy spirituality and psychic balanced life. For that, it is expected from the therapist a particular sensitivity towards spiritual matters to eventually bring about change. It can be concluded that this change encircles the realization of an unconscious will, bringing forward the religiously sought numinous encounter.

I
CURRENT SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE

Being nurtured in a religion also means having learned to experience God in a particular way, since tradition does not empower the freedom of the *spiritual being* beyond its precepts. To belong to a canon is to have an already conveyed image of the divine, which when rejected may lead to the rise of a *self*-religion.

For the social body, the transcending movement towards the divine is rooted in history. The ways of exploring this capacity of transcendence are owed to the established forms of religion (which hold the key to anything beyond ordinary experience). These are the historical religions that were transmitted throughout life, leading the individual to be successfully inserted in a system of meaning, with a past (*the foundational hierophany*) and a future (*the promise of salvation*). Despite being institutionalized, this form of religion is technically seen as a tool that allows one to enter the sacred (taking Judaism, Christianity and Islamism as monotheistic examples). Nevertheless, this transcendent outcome is in reality the future promise of salvation – the redemptive event. In these three monotheist traditions, there is a separation between the individual and the divine being (the one that awaits and the one that will arrive). Consequently, this institutionalized shape ends up preventing spiritual progress, for the ultimate rescue and salvation is placed in the future; in a mystical way of seeing this, the future (just as the past), belongs to the realm of illusion.

However, the dogmatic religious precepts commonly give rise to existential security through the principle of hope as a fundamental part of the belief system: hope of redemption, transcendence and realization. This, undoubtedly institutes or increases life satisfaction. Similarly existential security can also be instantly attained through the rewarding feeling of spiritual development and consequent personal conquests.

Secularism

In his study about the many angles from which religion is perceived, Hans Kung identifies the rationalist refusal of religion as deeply connected to the rejection of religious institutions.[1]

[1] Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer to Today (*London: SCM Press, 1991), 324.

Nevertheless, this refusal is not applied to all aspects of faith: the renouncement of the religious narrative does not mean the renouncement of the common tendency to nurture a personal image of a divine figure. So the belief in God and the disbelief in dogmatic aspects is maintained; or the belief in an *energy* that substitutes the divine figure. This idea of a customized spirituality is familiar to the Western religious individual, who may present this selective faith. However, ultimately the difference between the West and the East becomes gradually null, due to secularism and globalization.[2] Adding to that, there are many other factors that characterize this secular state, contributing to the decrease of religious importance: the questioning of traditional education, the development of new concepts on gender,[3] individualism and modern science. Every one of these secular topics poses a challenge to traditional religions, gradually disavowing the anthropomorphic God.

To Analytic Psychology, the growing insensitivity towards traditional narratives becomes gradually harmful, resulting in a systematic rejection of religious symbols. For example, discarding a patient's dream under analysis, even the dreams which express through a symbolic language what needs to be shared and understood. Cognitive and behavioral learning theories, based on the grounds of the conscious psyche, are also to blame for this disregard. The differences in approach between Analytical Psychology and these conventional theories translates the incapacity of the latter to make the needed religious consideration, in other words, to 'consider the unconscious.' Lionel Corbett, a psychiatrist and Jungian analyst who contributed to the development of psychotherapy as a spiritual practice justifies this by stating that "an entire genre of the most important intrapsychic events — e.g., contact with the numinous — is not quantifiable, predictable, systematically repeatable or even measurable."[4] Hence, a strict psychology that does not allow further (unconscious) questioning remains unable to address the *spiritual deficiency* or *turmoil*, brought about or contributed to by the disenchantment with established religions. However, Depth Psychology, on the other hand, works by conducting this straining spiritual search, disguised within therapy. Endorsing this position and advocating an *independent tradition* to apply in treatment, Michael Parsons, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, states that: "psychoanalysis is a matter of unique

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[2] However, the Jungian approach underlines the lack of Eastern-style self-questioning, where one does not develop self-awareness due to his deep but unaware submission to dogma and institutional paternalistic images.

[3] See Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

[4] Lionel Corbett, *The Religious Function of the Psyche* (London: Routledge, 1996), 204.

subjective experience. In this case, what matters most cannot be empirically validated or quantified, or even, perhaps, precisely articulated in words."[5]

Young spirituality

David Tacey, a scholar in the field of spirituality, Psychoanalysis and Analytical Psychology, has developed an influential point of view in the reorientation of spiritual life. Sharing Eliade's views on myth and the transcendent, Tacey observed that this reorientation of the spiritual compass is a process that once belonged to a middle life event (as observed by Jung), that now has become part of the very early process of maturation. Such a conclusion came from his teaching experience with young students involving their personal thoughts on religion and spirituality, leading Tacey to believe in the idea of a spiritual resurgence in today's society. His observations emphasize overall the proclivity and misplacement of spirituality in young people (usually, seeing it as an unaccepted behavior, hence defining it as mental illness).

Andrew Samuels, a psychotherapist with a Jungian background and an influence on Corbett, focuses on the developmental characteristics of Analytic Psychology, its relationship with classical psychotherapy, and the current outcome of Jungian therapeutic practices. In *Jung and the Post-Jungians,* Samuels also mentions this transformation towards the enrichment of life experience that once took place in the second half of life, which includes a replacement of the interest in the ego-consciousness by the investment in the interpersonal self.[6] In Tacey's *Spiritual Revolution*, the description of this 'new paradigm' is the equivalent to the post-Jungian 'new myth' clarified by Edward Edinger[7], which takes shape through the social changes and outbursts of the sacred in modern society — where social stability and success turn into a search for deeper meaning and spiritual nourishment.

Tacey's academic relationship with the history of modern ideas led him to consider the lack of religion to be a secular transitional state — stating further that no political revolution could answer the most rooted and natural human longing, leaving this task to spirituality.[8] Nevertheless,

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[5] Michael Parsons, "Ways of transformation," in *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century: Competitors or Collaborators?* ed. David M. Black (London: Routledge, 2006), 117.

[6] Andrews Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians* (New York: Routledge, 1986), 136.

[7] Edward F. Edinger was a Jungian analyst and author of an extensive body of work regarding the psyche and the sacred.

[8] David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergency of Contemporary Spirituality (*New York: Routledge, 2004), 118.

he also defends that an inward spiritual change in behavior has an outward political impact. Spirituality, then, in this new paradigm that gains shape, comes to fulfill the secular crises of meaning and value. His criticism emphasizes the educational system and institutions that inadvertently desacralize the world by deconstructing religion without giving importance to spirituality, praising the cultural and overlooking the transcendent quality of myth. They thus preserve no tools for spiritual guidance, ending the strictly necessary spontaneity of rituals that once were used to evoke and contain the sacred. It all supports the idea of a culture where the inner life is gently suppressed along with one's social development, resulting in a collective resistance against the numinous.[9] For Tacey, institutional religions, in general, fail to incorporate with more fidelity the example set by the Christian God through the establishment of *free will*, which was given under the risk of losing His creation.[10] So as a compensation, the institution should free itself from its self-preserving will. It should risk its integrity and existence in order to provide a *better* path for its adherents. It must be considered that the rise of spirituality can lead to the deconstruction and abandonment of dogma, becoming a spiritual philosophy and leaving behind the institutional shape, in a way that the "spiritual gap" is solved in another way other than through conventional therapy or a forced religious affiliation.

Rejection of tradition

For Tacey, the decrease in religious socialization within families and the lost of faith in general religious ideas are conducts attributed to a desire to integrate into a society that has moved on. Contradictorily, following this mainstream movement is the beginning of individuation, which is the same as becoming spiritually aware. This process of *belonging* contradicts the whole mythological and ritualistic function: when myth and ritual are considered, social insertion happens through stepping out of the general course, and only after the individual becomes actually integrated. However, because 'separation' as a tool to bring about self-discovery is not as common as in tribal cultures (not even symbolically), stepping out in order to grow spiritually is not culturally reinforced. Considering all this, a valid withdrawal from any dogmatic system would

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[9] The term coined by Rudolf Otto (1869 — 1937) translates the nature of a religious feeling or moment that is incapable of expression and distinct from any rational form of experience. Otto deeply influenced William James, C. G. Jung, and Joseph Campbell; thereafter, the concept of numinosity has been widely present in post-Jungian literature.
Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry Into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 5-7.

[10] Tacey, The Spirituality Revolution, 165.

have to be made with clarity and not because of a social trend — without confusing rejection of religion with the rejection of the spirit. This is mostly because without the tools of religion, the psychological turmoil brought up by secularism strengthens the need for spiritual balance. And the absence of a transcendent figure brings 'insecurity, uncertainty and doubt because there is no spiritual guarantor.'[11] Dogma then, is no longer part of this spiritual container, for its incapacity to take spirituality to its core, keeping it from growing and causing conflict by putting the religious against the mainstream.

In their turn, religious institutions present a romanticization that makes it inaccessible to the secular individual:

> "Western understandings of the God realm are generally far too caught up in idealised and sentimental images of the deity to understand much about the disastrous human and social effects of the repression of sacramentality. Our religion seems too abstract and remote from human experience, and does not have enough psychological knowledge of the catastrophic effects of repressing the realm of sacred relations over large periods of time, and increasingly over larger tracts of land now that secularism is spreading its market economy and egomania into all parts of the world. The spirit is our vital and deepest human and social function, and when it is repressed the consequences are even more serious than the effects of sexual repression, which as Freud documented are serious enough."[12]

In Jungian terms, there will always be uncertainty if a strong bond with the spirit, in the most religious sense, is not built. The solution to this problem is to ensure that spirituality is not discarded and that the cultural background sustains it — if not through religion, then through therapy. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that "spirituality in the health context is fraught and controversial"[13] due to the lack of commitment within the field and the unpleasantness and pain that is associated with the discovery of one's own spirituality. There is some scientific acknowledgment of the mental benefits of spirituality, transforming "spiritual health" (and 'complementary medicine') into a strong field of interest. The confidence to speak openly in a social context about spirituality seems to be moving forward and being reinstated, though the question remains as to

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[11] Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, 150.

[12] Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution,* 212.

[13] David Tacey, *Gods and Diseases: Making Sense of our Physical and Mental Wellbeing* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 192.

how it should be explored, because the search for spiritual immediate benefits is mostly based in egocentric desire.

Healing was for a long time deeply associated with religion, and the institution used to take care not only of the spiritual nurturing but also of the physical health. Medicine has also been connected to spirituality: in tribal culture, for example, the shaman held proper tools for physical healing as much as for mental balance. There was no separation, and because of that, the treatment was holistic. But if there is no proper figure to mediate this transcendent connection, due to a decrease in the social importance of religion, the only path left to spiritual balance (as an autonomous and neglected psychic function) is through the *spiritual suffering* caused by its painful and self-regulatory expression. Tacey describes the rush from the spirit as emerging from the following basis:

> "Spiritual water becomes dangerous when we have no containers to hold it, and no symbols to transform it. 'Spirituality', that is the careful and reflective art of developing a relationship with the sacred, cannot find its mature expression unless the water of spirit can be contained and transformed."[14]

As religion becomes a less suitable container of the transcendent, due to its social incompatibilities, this necessity becomes naturally addressed in other ways, as in the rescue of holistic techniques from the ancient East and the therapeutic use of them.

Modern Myth

Küng describes the presence of religion in social and political endeavors, addressing the religious autonomous and permanent force in society:

> "there are a number of social scientists who are beginning to take a different view of the phenomenon of 'religiousness.' Today the tendency is increasingly to start out once more from the recognition of the permanence of man's religious needs, needs of course that might be satisfied in a 'secular' way. In this case it would be better, anyway, to speak of 'quasi-religiousness.'"[15]

The endurance of religion in one's life is considered, no matter what form it takes. Its pervasive potential is often demonstrated in the sacralization of social and political movements;

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[14] Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, 27.

[15] Küng, *Does God Exist?,* 555.

these later become dubious, and sometimes give rise to fanaticism. This is an example of this "quasi-religious" quality. However, the most important characteristic in the statement above is the prevalence of a religious essence and its inclination to permeate social movements.

Similarly, Mircea Eliade's final proposition is about the pertinence and permeability of the sacred through the identification of a pattern in many of his examples.[16] But he also presents a secular change: as God in a traditional manner becomes less reachable, the invariable sacredness makes itself present in alternative ways, configuring its realization. This force is represented through the mythical "spiritual waters", and when not addressed in the conventional religious frames, realizes itself in other available ways. Then, *the function of religion* once again changes itself to be present, to carry the dynamics of myth in a modern and socially approachable way — often referred to as a *new myth* by the post-Jungians.

This religious quality that persists is the religious aspects that reside in the individual. These religious aspects have an archetypal nature, and their shape is changed by the need for spiritual attainment: they adapt to converse in the secular paradigm, with a set of parameters distant from the traditional religious expressions that no longer can sustain religious importance. In this secular environment, the religiously permeated act does not coerce socially acceptable behaviors; instead, it takes on the task of guidance towards spiritual attainment. This is the same as the realization of the spirit, which in Jungian terms is just other words for the realization of archetypal forces (taking place within a self-transcendent experience). To put it briefly: Spiritual attainment, the realization of the spirit, or the realization of archetypal forces are all synonyms, brought about by the creation of consciousness.[17]

The creation of consciousness

Edinger, in *The Creation of Consciousness*, defends the presence of an imminent new myth, that can be described as a gentle and modern creation of consciousness (or *the process of*

[16] v. s. Chapter V.

[17] As will be further explored, archetypal forces are most present when there is a mitigation of the ego-consciousness. For example in Religious Experiences, where the ego-consciousness is recurrently *felt as to be ashes*, nothing or totally absent, giving space to the rise of a new understanding.

individuation[18]). This new myth is equivalent to a supra understanding about life, the mythical and religious roots, all under a transversal layer. Then, what is called the *new myth* is no more than an overview of all myths and their nuances as a whole — making clear its rooted structure and meaning.[19]

> "This myth is not a faith but an hypothesis, based on empirical data and consistent with the scientific conscience. The new myth tells us that each individual ego is a crucible for the creation of consciousness and a vessel to serve as a carrier of that consciousness."[20]

The definition of consciousness is intricate because there can be a very solid personal understanding of it but this can still be challenging to share. Acquiring consciousness is equated with becoming aware of something, noticing it, and give attention to it. In such a way, consciousness opposes fear and ignorance; it stands for getting in touch with any unpleasant or unexplored inner and outer reality or feelings (mythically, it stands for *accepting the adventure*).

Thereby, one's life goal is the everlasting creation of consciousness, because of the inexorable and natural force that is continuously establishing conflictual, or at least *new*, relations with the world around. Then, to become conscious is the 'meaning of life', because reality (as creational myth teaches) only exists when it is acknowledged (when meaning is attributed to it). The capacity to turn something conscious is the same as the recognition of conflict: the interaction between what is known and its opposite. As follows: "Consciousness is (…) defined as a psychic substance which is produced by experiencing the opposites suffered, not blindly, but in living

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[18] "Individuation is the term with which C. G. Jung describes the psychological process of inner growth and centralization by which the individual finds one's own Self. This does not mean to find one's own ego-identity, as is described by many modern psychological schools. By the term Self, Jung understands an ultimately unknowable inner center of the total personality and also the totality itself. This center can only be approached but never integrated. For Jung, psychological health depend on it. In the various religions and mythologies it is symbolized by the image of the 'treasure hard to attain' the mandala and all images of the inner psychic manifestation of the godhead." In this way, the whole individuation process is described through myth.
Marie-Louise von Franz, *Individuation in fairy tales* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1977), chap. 1, Kindle (2007).

[19] Edinger states that "Almost all the important episodes of Jung's life can be seen as paradigmatic of the new mode of being which is the consequence of living by a new myth."
Edward F. Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness: Jung's Myth for Modern Man* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1984), 13.

[20] Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness*, 32.

awareness."[21] In this entirety, the conflict ends up being perceived positively, extracting from it the raising of awareness towards it. Where "the original cosmogonic process of separating subject from object must be repeated with each new increment of consciousness."[22] This statement indicates the process of desacralization of the myth, stripping apart its conditioned cultural layers and adapting its essential dynamic.

Secular pleasure and selfless sorrow

Spirituality can be seen as unscientific because of its involvement with emotions, reliance on intuition, and other uncertain traits. The argument in its defense is that, as a numinous reality, it cannot be noticed "by the profane eye."[23] Advocating a new approach to the divine, Tacey states that "God is an idea that modernity had rendered obsolete, but which postmodernity is beginning to find attractive again."[24] However, because of the unpopularity of dogma, *religious experiences* became *spiritual experiences.* Still, some do not consider themselves spiritual nor have explored such limits, but believe that there can be specific fulfilling experiences that one may go through, capable of providing a selfless state and a particular contact with the surrounding world. This unique connection stands for the experience of the numinous that, to a lesser or greater degree, ends up causing an emotional prostration. Some examples of possible triggering events are things so common and natural as listening to music, dancing, or performing other similar activities,[25] — and becoming *utterly intoxicated by them*. These are all related to artistic amusement, that when practiced regularly and with extraordinary depth, almost like a meditative tool, can be equated to devotional actions, hence bringing a momentary displacement/transportation. There are also

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[21] Echoing with the problem of 'desire for suffering' — a desire for conflictual circumstances in order to extract consciousness from them. This in its turn is incompatible with the broadly advocated neutral posture towards suffering: a 'living awareness' encompassing a non-judgmental state of mind with the eradication of desire.
Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness*, 32.

[22] Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness*, 37.

[23] Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, 50.

[24] Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, 149.

[25] The same could be said about the symbolism and triggering role of nature: it represents an untouched space, creating a proper environment for something similar to rise, promoting self-inquiry in quietness.

elements capable of provoking this spiritual response, due to their sacramental and ritualistic function, such as "fire, water, music, incense, food and alcohol."[26]

The importance of a spiritual revolution is based on its healing effects, directly addressing the rise of psychological illness and bringing other communal benefits. There are many factors that reveal the growth of spirituality. Its rise, its phenomenon and developments within the individual, can be translated as a repressed yearning coming to light, which can be full of sudden and unpleasant occurrences. In the same way that the human calls for the sacred in need for restoration, the sacred also wants to be incarnated in order to be recognized and, according to cosmogony and myth in general, to exist.

The search for spiritual purpose can easily be mistaken with reward, enjoyment, or achievement. However, as seen before and contrary to the popular spiritual discourse, spiritual development is not benevolent with one's personality; instead, it is threatening. The flowering of the spirit seems to emerge from pain and self-sacrifice, making the idea of a spiritual revolution seem flawed in a *pleasure-seeking* context. Then, the development of a spiritual life with secular intentions would end up contributing to a fertile environment for repression (and consequently, conformism). This is because when it becomes mainstream, it loses part of its essence, namely the threatening aspect: self-sacrifice and discipline. For example, in the undergoing of a meditation session or practicing one of the many new age popular exercises, there is a common tendency to desire and expect a good experience, but never feel the necessary emotional unpleasantness of defying one's limits. The result of such activity assumes no sense of personal disposition or compromise, such that it can even be considered artificial. The cultural and therapeutic challenge then is to nurture a deconstructive impulse against new age spirituality and its prioritization of *ecstasy and bliss*. In addition, the literal interpretations that give no margin for further questioning are a reference to the identification of an empty spiritual path — thus new age spirituality is known and stigmatized due to its literalism.[27]

The aforementioned suffering is brought up to be not dismissed but faced, as often happens in therapy — during the emergence of unconscious content or repressed emotions. Accordingly, a more realistic spirituality would empower the individual's relation with the root of suffering: the concept of an *external will* responsible for the rise of conflict. Getting to know this unconscious will is seen as substantial progress towards the manifestation of the divine. To put it generically: The

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[26] John P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung and the Recovery of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2008), 179.

[27] Tacey, *Gods and Diseases*, 204-205.

ability to integrate one's pain and metabolize it into a learning experience carries the potential for a more selfless individuality. However, spiritual development is not the result of suffering; rather, suffering is but one of the consequences of the loosening attachment that leads to spiritual development.

The development of spiritual life brings about a religious relativism over all traditions, in a way that *truth* can be universally perceived. The challenge that emerges from this process is the difficulty of developing spiritual authenticity without holding on to a tradition, but rather distancing oneself from it, as a means to avoid fundamentalist ideas. But in general, the journey starts with a single path to a God and ends up with a God common to all, who can be reached by multiple paths. A spirituality as a reality raised from within brings with it its own understanding of religion.[28] This resumes the fundamental divergence between a truly personal spiritual life and a spiritual life subjugated by conventional religion. The latter constricts behavior while expecting spiritual growth, and when it fails to deliver, it may end up generating bitterness and repression. Thus, spiritual development has a paramount effect in society, concerning not only the way the individual behaves with his companions but also his posture towards the space around himself.[29]

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[28] Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, 143, 187.

[29] Such an assumption is based on the spiritual individual's identification with the outside world; he views it as part of himself. As a source of values, spiritual experiences seem to bring about a form of morality that is different from social or religious morality, mostly because one is experienced whilst the other is taught, imitated, or imposed. But through the experience of a unitary reality the burden on the individual is lessened and the sudden change, besides being deeply personal, ends up affecting the surrounding social atmosphere.

II
THERAPEUTIC VIEWS ON RELIGION

Freud defined religion as an illusion. Consequently, for him every Religious Experience (RE) was merely a neurotic symptom, and dogmatic religious practice was assimilated to the development of a neurosis or a collective obsession. Any other explanation of transcendent core would be diagnosed as a fantasy — though its importance was always thoroughly considered, because in the Freudian ethos even illusions carry important information.

As a founding figure of Depth Psychology, Freud holds significant intellectual influence whenever the unconscious is therapeutically considered. Jung, on the other hand, has not retained as important a value in mainstream analysis. His profound conceptualization of the psyche (which is to this day challenging to be understood) is varyingly described as sophisticatedly dense and broad, or too self-involved. Nevertheless, in the face of criticism, Jung always defended the empiricism of his work and his scientific commitment to analysis based on pure observation, taking into account the impact of spirituality in peoples' lives in the form of improvement in mental health and general well-being. Jung's work has a particular concern with the capacity of ego-consciousness to transcend itself and its conflicts: he rejected "psychoanalytic rationalism", looking for answers beyond the Freudian theory. Hans Küng in *Does God exist?* states that "For Freud, (…) religion produced neurosis and was itself a neurosis substitute, but for Jung, it produced a cure for neuroses and prevented the rise of neuroses."[30] According to Jung, the presence of neuroses indicates the craving for religion, a 'living religion' in the most experiential sense.

In the Jungian perception, religion presents the mythologized messages of the unconscious, which assume the shape of an interplay between different characters. Finding meaning in these symbols, as a way to address and understand them, is an essential tool for the maintenance of a healthy mental state. Jung's perception of religion contradicts Freud's, painting religion as *a means of adaptation*, a tool to be widely used — not neurotic, but instead constitutive of the psyche and

[30] Küng, *Does God Exist?,* 316-317.

necessary for its proper functioning.[31] Jung's valorization of religion places dogma as the carrier of psychological truths, considering it the means of symbolic and irrational expression of immeasurable importance. However, his approach also proposes that dogma must naturally become disposable and consequently be rejected — but only after the comprehension of the undeniable value it carries.

Theoretical convergences

In spite of his categorization of religion as an illusion, some Freudian statements can be found that indicate a level of correspondence with the Jungian perception. Corbett presents Freud's position regarding myth and the psyche: "This axiom of the primacy of the psyche is itself a metaphysical position, which I regard as analogous to the mythical underpinnings of all traditions"[32]. This reinforces the essentialism which constitutes the basis of Jungian thought. Corbett argues that it is possible to perceive harmony between Freud's final productions and Jung's work based on a few shared positions, such as Freud's endorsement of Jung's hermeneutics, emphasizing the role of suffering in human development:

> "as Freud noted, the work [of analysis] is also done for the purpose of discovering our essence. The difficulties with the psychological approach to suffering are that it requires a capacity to tolerate enormous uncertainty for prolonged periods of time, and that the outcome may be ambiguous. But the rewards which it brings are the authenticity of the result, a deeper connection to the Self and enhanced personality integration"[33]

In a similar vein, Küng explores some of Freud's ideas which can be seen as resembling the notion of archetype[34]:

> "[Freud] would ask about the sources of the inner strength of religious ideas. And his answer would be that they 'are not precipitates of experiences or end results of our thinking,' but 'illusions, fulfillment of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes'"[35]

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[31] Jordan Peterson, *Maps of meaning: The architecture of belief* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 411.

[32] Corbett, *The Religious Function,* 3.

[33] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 153.

[34] *Infra*: 76.

[35] Küng, *Does God Exist?*, 271.

In a Jungian frame, 'fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind' represent the prevalent force behind the thriving of religion. Despite religion being considered illusory by Freud, Analytical Psychology interprets its driving force as a reference to archetypes.

Substantial differences

Jung and Freud's substantial differences are situated in direct opposition to one another. Freud's approach is characterized by an aspiration to fully exercise control over instincts, such that the individual gains increased self-ownership. In contrast, from a Jungian perspective the individual should aim for the integration of the unconscious into conscious life (in which the exercise of control is not implicit); in doing so, he achieves not *self-ownership*, but *self-awareness*.[36] Some of the most pertinent divergences between Freudian and Jungian thought include:

- The source of libido. Freud's theory stresses the sexual drive, with 'aggression and sexuality'[37] presented as the two main drives of human behavior. This sensual monopoly was opposed by Jung, who saw sensuality as in fact contrary to spirituality: whilst the former deals with things of the senses, the latter deals with things of the spirit.[38]
- The formation of non-conscious content. For Freud, the subconscious or unconscious relies deeply on individual experience. From a Jungian perspective, this can be seen as somewhat reductive, and the unconscious is instead presented as exhibiting a spatial and temporal collective breadth.
- The interpretation of religion and the role of myth. The relevance of this disagreement stands on the completely antagonistic nature of the two theoretical perspectives. Jung's clinical practice showed him that throughout the recovery process a religious outlook was always (re)established in the individual's life. Contrarily, Freud saw the search for meaning in life and spiritual longings as signs of emotional disturbance, accordingly, categorizing the finding of shelter in religion as pathological.

Freud's interpretation of myths is viewed as flawed by Analytic Psychology because of his attachment to a *single* explanation (the settled sexual interpretation synthesized in the Oedipus

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[36] Küng, *Does God Exist?,* 311.

[37] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 145.

[38] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 47.

complex). For both Jung and Freud, personal assertions were deeply projected in the Oedipus complex, such that — with the respective protagonists of the *mother* and the *father* – their renditions reflected their own childhood.[39] The prominent variation between both theorists is that Jung, unlike Freud, appears willing to interpret a myth as a life lesson, illustrating the *many* perspectives and archetypes that are reflected in it.

One of the objections to Analytical Psychology is its supposed transformation of religion into psychology, or of psychology into religion. However, psychologists who are 'afraid' of this religious attitude can be characterized by its defenders as victims of the anxiety naturally provoked by confrontation with the unconscious – such anxiety, it is argued, leads them to ignore the whole *problem of the unconscious*. Consequently, the success of one theory and the rejection and exile of the other may also be perceived as a collective defense, as it is still challenging to this day the acceptance of an (unconscious) autonomous psyche. Thus, Jung's assertions were looked at with distrust because his work did not fulfill the rationalistic academic expectations left by Freud. To postulate the existence of an autonomous side of the psyche is to call into question the effectiveness of therapies that reject such belief, not only psychoanalysis but also therapies based on learning theories (cognitive / behavioral). The implication is that these therapies end up repressing or denying content on their own and therefore perpetuate this same movement in patients (due to the inability to face REs or any archetypal expression in a more meaningful way).

The individuation of the therapist

Unlike the Freudian vein, only much later did Jung's Analytical Psychology gain a formal place as a genuine variation of psychoanalysis. One reason for this delay was a widespread uneasiness related to the definition of the methods and results of Depth Psychology — a

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[39] Marie-Louise von Franz, in *His myth in our time*, makes various assertions on the feminine influence in Jung's life, his relation to his mother and the feminine nature of Eastern religious symbols: "The feminine factor had a determining influence on Jung's personality and thought. The intellect, the purely masculine spirit of the world of professional scholarship, was alien to him, because this world knows nothing of the process of fertilization through the unconscious."
Marie-Louise von Franz, *His Myth in our Time* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1998), 145.
The connection that Freud establishes with the male figure is underlined by Corbett: "Jung felt that the Oedipal story was so powerful for Freud in the particular way he used it because that was *his* personal myth. (…) The differences which lie between Freud and Jung in the interpretation of the Oedipal myth are understandable in view of the different childhood backgrounds of the two men.
Freud's father was most powerful to him, while for Jung, mother filled this role.
Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 88-89.

questioning of the kind of development that it achieves for the individual himself and for society. Another reason was Jung's rejection of any systematization since the very beginning: for him, Analytical Psychology was to be explored and looked into in a stimulating way that put into practice personal inquiry (since numinous insight comes from personal experience). Every attempt to turn Jung's ideas into ideals — equating his paradigmatic thought as perfect static concepts — may as well be acknowledged as a failure. Jung's constant effort to avoid imposing a method upon analysis is a noticeable endeavor, and this behavior reveals a characteristic that is continuously repeated in the mystic narrative.[40]

Andrew Samuels, a psychotherapist with a Jungian background and an influence on Corbett, focuses on the developmental characteristics of Analytic Psychology, its relationship with psychotherapy, and the current outcome of Jungian therapeutic practices. In *Jung and the Post-Jungians,* Samuels underlines the supposed incompatibility of Jung's accentuated efforts to share his knowledge with his stated desire not to be simply followed (despite his knowing that he could, as a precursor in the field, assume a fatherly position).[41]

Nevertheless, the fact that Jung did not want a systematization, and condemned the possibility of a '*Jungian* analysis' and the gathering of academic followers, does not contradict in any way his effort to share his conclusions and inferences on self-development. On the contrary, this was the exact form of inquiry that he could pass on: an invitation to self-questioning and paradigmatic action — without the implication of an absolute ruling figure and its concomitant limitations. As discussed above, he presented his ideas, not an ideal. This rejection of authority, if considered genuine, brings distinction. However, it also brings confusion whenever professionals and academics fail to understand that his behavior reflects the figure of the philosopher and spiritual seeker. That is, the very questioning of authority is part of their self-enquiry, mirroring the mystique narrative. To question the detachment of the theorist from the theory and the genuineness of his reluctance to have followers is to question the whole authenticity of his conclusions. The concern with the cause of Jung's rejection of followers is vital, because the e*go-less action* is supposedly the foundation and result of his work, as much a superior sense of morality as a diversion from social or

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[40] The rejection of a system is analogous to the dynamics present in mysticisms. *The pathless land* is very often mentioned as *ways to the sacred,* where the single contemplation of the psyche would be enough.
Cf. Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti's Notebook* (Brockwood Park: K's Foundation Trust, 1976).

[41] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 2.

dogmatic morality.[42] However, Samuels sees in Jung's position the avoidance of the emulation of Freud's figure.

Each therapeutic professional from a Jungian background has their own approach (i.e., theoretical interpretation and conclusions about how to achieve healing, guiding therapy in a specific course whilst maintaining the major concepts). Every therapist is expected to be able to develop in their interpersonal activity an idiosyncratic but coherent and effective posture. This *personalized* approach seems to be a central point in the formation of new therapists, where, to be an analyst, one must first become a therapist through one's own drive and experience.

> "Clarification of Jung's attitude to theory revolves around how far the practitioner can integrate the theory so that it ceases to be an artificial, imposed, technical, external matter and becomes more an expression of personality."[43]

In order to contribute to his own individuation process, the therapist should leave behind any paternalistic correspondence with Jung. The opinion that a 'Jungian' therapy does not exist is also an appeal to its natural characteristics: not relying on a methodology or a theorist, but instead recognizing innate mental structures that are capable of speaking for themselves when observed (through the constant amplification and interpretation of symbolic manifestations of the unconscious psyche). Very often this observation — and indeed the work of the therapist as a whole — is guided by *intuition*, which feeds scientific criticism.

Intermediary psychic space in other psychological theories

Freudian psychoanalysis at first dealt solely with neurosis in general; very little was known about other forms of mental illness. Pathologies that presented more dramatic symptoms were categorized as precocious dementia (*dementia praecox*). Before Freud and his psychoanalytic

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[42] In regard to the morality beyond cultural imposition in Analytical Psychology: the concepts of social morality and dogmatic religion are similar, as both can be seen as a set of behaviors defined and learned. Although imitation is said to be the root of this behavior, organized belief / social norms are only capable of projecting the influence they do because of their roots in the collective unconsciousness and its echoes in daily life. These rooted ideas are, to their detriment, posteriorly interpreted and embellished; this characterizes the imprisoning side of culture that, according to mysticism, must be rejected. The individual search for *truth* is upheld above the acquired knowledge of third parties, having a different and personal impact that is of much greater importance than the insight of others.

[43] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 5.

theory, any reflection about REs belonged mainly to the church and theological studies. The switch to Freud had an important impact on the modern approach to these subjects. Nevertheless, Susan DeHoff, in *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experiences,* attributes to Freud the reductive posture and psychological inattention to religion that was observable in many of his contemporaries — perhaps because of the continuing popularity of Freud's ideas in contrast to those of his peers.

As for Jung, the concepts of schizophrenia and REs in his work inevitably present some overlaps, but also stark contrasts. As DeHoff explains, "Jung associated schizophrenia with the disintegration of the personality; he associated spiritual experience with improved integration of the personality."[44] Both REs and schizophrenia assume a particular, differentiated, position: while the RE drives the individual towards psychic balance, schizophrenia is the exact opposite — in Jung's words, "it is as if the very foundations of the psyche were giving way, as if an explosion or an earthquake were tearing asunder the structure of a normally built house."[45] As such, schizophrenia is extremely important to the study of REs, because it is an RE's true *antithesis*. An RE has in its outcome a profound perception of a sacredness within the individual himself, establishing order through a "unifying effect as opposed to a disintegrating effect."[46]

The RE is capable of contributing to the integration of the personality, and consequently, to the individuation process, but as discussed above, such integration is accompanied by a few initial disturbing episodes. Although not every episode of schizophrenia can be interpreted as an initial stage of an RE, it can at least be interpreted as a confrontation with the unconscious.[47] Referring to Isabel Clarke's seminal work on psychosis and RE, DeHoff points out different views on the relationship between psychosis and REs, pondering the presence of an intermediate space between ego consciousness and the unconscious part of the psyche:

> "Isabel Clarke believed that both mystical and psychotic experiences occur in the transliminal state of consciousness that is not filtered through the lens of rational constructs (…) Most non-psychotic people find it hard to shift out of the rational, constructive state of consciousness. People suffering from psychosis have what Clarke called a "dangerously loose" barrier between the two ends of the

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[44] Susan L. DeHoff, *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience: A New Paradigm Grounded in Psychology and Reformed Theology* (Boston: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 82p.

[45] Carl G. Jung, *The Psychogenesis of Mental Diseases* (Princeton: University Press, 1982).

[46] DeHoff, *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience*, 81-82.

[47] DeHoff, *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience*, 14.

> continuum, and once they are in the transliminal state, have difficulty returning to the rational state."[48]

In the excerpt above, DeHoff uses Clarke's standpoint to explain an RE or a psychosis as the absence of ego-centered judgment — a conception which establishes a dialogue with the Buddhist tradition. It is acknowledged that both states of mind pour from the same psychic space ('*the transliminal state of consciousness')*, but the recognition of a *dangerously loose barrier* does not signify that, for example, individuals who *meditate* often and are capable of experiencing different states of mind have a predisposition towards psychopathologies. Moreover, the identification of this sensibility casts light on the inquiry about the driving factors behind REs and psychotic/ schizophrenic states. The following quote from DeHoff's work, sharing Thalbourne's insight, meets Jung's description of the same mechanics:

> "Michael Thalbourne suggested that mystical experience and psychotic experience 'are both manifestations — one largely positive, the other largely negative — of the same underlying dimension.'"[49]

DeHoff also underlines Corbett's position, which points to the transience of REs as a means to differentiate them from mental illness. REs, as events leading to the establishment of order, bring new ways of outer and inner perception, followed by the immediate return to an ego-centered state of attention.[50]

REs are discretely explored in many other psychological theories, sometimes not bearing the name and stigma, but being referred to as an "unconscious space of interaction" which carries similar transformative and creational dynamics. Winnicott's theory on the *transitional space* is a

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[48] DeHoff, *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience*, 17.

[49] Thalbourne introduced the concept of *transliminarity*, which embodies the idea of a psychological space that transcends ordinary experience. Such concept personifies mystical happenings and how these events, in general, have a negative and positive way of being lived. DeHoff, *Psychosis or mystical religious experience*, 17.
As manifestations that emerge from this *transitional space* and are perceived as opposites, the psychotic state and the religious experience allude to the dichotomy introduced by Otto. Both expressions carry numinous traits: the *dreadfulness and terror* that is the reflex of a psychosis, and the *sublime* of REs. So if the numinous is to be understood as the individual experiencing a less available part of his own psyche, the inherent *creature-feeling* is merely the acknowledgment of the breadth of the unconscious, inspiring apprehension.
Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 8-11.

[50] Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 82.

good example of this; it caused an impact in the theoretical field and exhibits sufficient parallel features to the depicted dynamic.[51] Michael Thalbourne defends his conception of transliminality, upholding the belief that in order to have an RE one must exhibit a congenital sensitivity towards it; that is, a tendency to cross "from ordinary conscious awareness to awareness of 'inwardly generated psychological phenomena of an ideational and affective kind' (Thalbourne and Delin)."[52] It is important to say that all these psychological positions / theories and theorists differ in many aspects from Jung's approach. In some cases, hardly relying in any of the known aspects at all, though here only similar and relevant concepts are underlined.

In addition to ideas about a transliminal state, Clarke also had a similar view of transpersonal perception and spirituality, differentiating ordinary awareness *from* transliminal awareness:

> Clarke (…) proposed thinking of consciousness as being on a continuum with ordinary awareness at one end of the continuum and transliminal consciousness at the other end. Clarke argued that the "transition from ordinary consciousness, through stages which may include euphoria followed by paranoia, represents a process common to both spirituality and psychosis". In practical terms, this continuum can be thought of as a movement from constructive thinking based on rational hypotheses and predictions, to an entrance into a meditative state based on suspension of rational thinking, and then to a reality not filtered through the lens of rational constructs at all. [53]

In Jung's work the *awareness* is displaced from the ordinary consciousness and repositioned at the edge of the conscious psyche. An ability to bring about such a displacement is attributed to a natural human aptitude, but also capable of being developed, as in meditative states:

> 'The meditative traditions have known for millennia that introspective study of the nature of mind reveals the mind's ways of constructing reality, and all meditation methods aim at deconstructing ordinary perception. With a few exceptions, Western psychologists have largely ignored this approach to the phenomenology of consciousness
> (…)

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[51] As Winnicott, Melanie Klein also associated schizophrenia with the splitting of the ego. DeHoff, *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience*, 16.

[52] DeHoff, *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience*, 102.

[53] Isabel Clarke, *Psychosis and Spirituality: Exploring the New Frontier* (London: Whurr Publishers, 2005) 129–142. as cited in DeHoff, *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience*, 102.

> On the surface therefore it seems that meditation tries to allow peace of mind regardless of the conditions one is in, while [Jungian] psychotherapy tries to alter the arrangement of one's internal conditions to allow peace of mind."[54]

This can also be interpreted as a critical comment on some varieties of Buddhism[55], where, in a meditative state, one consciously makes an effort to train one's attention and have an indifferent attitude in an attempt to transcend the contents of the psyche. In contrast, in therapy "one's internal conditions" are considered; the contents of the psyche are explored and amplified so the root of the problem can be addressed — leaving no place for avoidance. Nevertheless, this criticism is not to be broadly applied when it comes to contemplative traditions:

> "To me, Jung's theory is best understood as a psychological restatement of the ancient Vedantic notion of the Atman, an element of the divine within the individual which is identical with the universal, absolute consciousness of Brahman."[56]

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[54] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 226-225.

[55] e.g. Zen Buddhism, a branch of the Mahayana school, where one learns to act with equanimity in the face of adversity but does not inquire into the cause of the suffering. Therapy in this case would look directly at the source of pain, magnifying it in order to acquire insight.

[56] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 41.

III
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES: INTERPRETATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONAL VALUE

The distance drawn between the secular individual and myth is summed up by his lack of awareness of a transpersonal reality (i.e., Truth, the absolute, God, etc.). A Religious Experience (RE) is an unexplained break in this pattern. With all its *mystery*, it is the *numen* in practice. It is what myths, rituals and dreams translate, taking place through contact with something *completely exterior* and carrying a strong numinous charge. Rudolf Otto, whose work is a precursor to the study of REs, explores this religious phenomenon, defining it as the force behind the creation of narratives:

> "The feeling of the *numen* as (…) 'the mysterious' became an untiring impulse, prompting to inexhaustible invention in folk-tale and myth, saga and legend, permeating ritual and the forms of worship, and remaining till to-day to naive minds, whether in the form of narrative or sacrament, the most powerful factor that keeps the religious consciousness alive."[57]

The numen was, for Rudolf Otto, responsible for the maintenance of the *divine feeling* that dwells in REs; it kept 'consciousness alive'. This differentiated mental state, which is the main topic of his major work, assumes primal importance in the field of REs and the conceptualization of the religious *ineffable*. Succeeding Otto, William James (1842 — 1910) defined REs as the manifestation of an experiential and transversal numinous axis across many ways, agreeing with Otto in depicting this feeling as the source of creation: "Religious experience, in other words, spontaneously and inevitably engenders myths, superstitions, dogmas, creeds, and metaphysical theologies."[58]

Of organic spiritual significance — sometimes possessing a *natural laicity* that contributes to its essentialist interpretation — an RE can be any mystical and spiritual experience. In its

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[57] Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 66.

[58] William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human N*ature (London: Routledge, 1902), 335.

definition it is usually characterized by an encounter with a strong source of power that exceeds or expands the ego-consciousness causing an absolute communion, able to bring awe and contentment. It does not require any sort of explanation or motive due to its *self-explanatory* and *complete* nature. The event happens to a subject that is, in a greater or lesser degree, conscious of it.[59]

The adjective 'religious' in REs stands for *spiritual* as a natural human function; it does not have an intrinsic association with religious dogma since such doctrines carry an almost decorative function in relation to *self-transcendent insight*. Nonetheless, REs can be deeply permeated by religious dogma.[60] REs play an extremely important role in the establishment of religion (revealed or not): contributing to the foundation of many dogmas, or even, in contrast, acting as a tool to deconstruct a current religious system by the setting of a new law.[61] That is, as part of a cyclic process, an RE can resort to the symbology of a creed to generate another symbolism.[62]

William James' Religious Experiences

The first examination of REs in a pragmatic manner was made by William James at the very beginning of the 20th Century, when he addressed the controversial theme in his 1901 and 1902 lectures at the University of Edinburgh. These later gave rise to his seminal work *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. His work has had a profound influence, and its relevance reverberates in the contemporary conception of REs — in particular, his defense of the prominence of an RE as an agent of psychic balance in an individual's life. James brought forward Otto's concept of *numen*, though he left myth slightly aside (due to myth's secondary nature when compared to the numen, which was *the source*).[63]

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[59] Caroline Franks Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 20.

[60] In an analytic psychological approach, REs are usually accepted as constellated by religious images, e.g. deities, angels and other mythic/traditional figures.

[61] Davis, *The Evidential Force*, 13.

[62] This movement often takes place in the formation of mystical veins, where a spiritual knowledge beyond literal, orthodox, or already known interpretations is extracted from the traditional narrative.

[63] The following passage found in *The Varieties* reveals James' supportive position of the metaphorical value of myth: "A brilliant school of interpretation of Greek mythology would have it that in their origin the Greek gods were only half-metaphoric personifications of those great spheres of abstract law and order into which the natural world falls apart".
James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 49, 335.

James' main proposition focused on the erroneous placing of REs in the pathological field without further evidence. He criticized above all the lack of appreciation of the personal fruits of spiritual nurturing. His work explores transversal aspects of REs, bringing an awareness of the complexity of numinous interaction in life. There are many forms of such interaction, such as a numinous dream or a believer's awe derived from a religious ritual. Due to the plurality and scope of these forms, when collectively considered they serve as a kind of unattainable horizon which reinforces the essentialist nature of these matters.

REs are then turned into a philosophical quest and from James' elucidative efforts arises the need to observe the nature of religious connections. These encompass not the religious institutions and their branches, but the individual and his evolving relationship with his own spirituality. James proposes an unconventional hypothesis which locates the absence of a healthy mental state in the increasing space between men and this religious experiential quality *(numen)*. James's discussion also observes the experiential and social side of religion. Still relevant in the present, it raises questions that have not yet been answered, predicting criticism, posterior advancements, and their irrefutable limitations. *The Varieties of Religious Experiences* does more than simply present different instances of REs; it provides a philosophical analysis of them. The central theme of his lectures was natural theology within pragmatism: considering the practicality of *truth* and its role in life,[64] he questioned the real value of religion in helping the individual.

To James, theologies and everything within the various religious traditions are merely results from the interaction of the superficial consciousness with more profound layers of the psyche. All the religious-dogmatic paraphernalia is then no more than secondary material in front of the *truly religious quality* whose value was/is yet to be understood.[65] Through a slightly mystic frame, James shares for the first time what he calls the 'secret of religion,'[66] a paradox, as seen, extensively present in mythical narratives and reverberating in numerous religious traditions. James explored the possibility of religion being the most important and valuable function of humanity,

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[64] The primacy of *truth* and *freedom* in James' work echoes the *objectivity of truth* in Nietzsche's, and the mutually accepted possibility of having one's ego shattered. For example, when defining the capacity of *realization* and the strength of one's spirit: "It could even be part of the fundamental character of existence that people with complete knowledge get destroyed, — so that the strength of a spirit would be proportionate to how much of the 'truth' he could withstand".
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: University Press, 2002), paragraph 39.

[65] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, XXXV.

[66] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 51.

always stressing its therapeutic benefits and its importance. His criticism pointed specifically to the scientific prejudice, condemning "scientific dogma" and its self-limiting barriers. He also criticized the corruption of the real scientific posture when the healing profits of REs are denied due to lack of sensibility towards the subject (i.e., the prevalent typical reductionism and an immediate association with pathologies).

The common pain in REs

Amongst James' REs descriptions there are accounts of disturbed states of mind. For example, the 'religious melancholy'[67] which characterizes a transitory depressive state. The description of this particular connection between REs and suffering creates grounds for the binding of REs with the mystic and mythologic paradigm. The perception of the purposeful role of suffering in both situates sorrow as a key object and necessary stage in spiritual evolution. This reveals another aspect of James' approach: the originality of his countercurrent movement in altering the hierarchy settled between religion and psychology by his contemporaries.

The occurrence of an RE brings forward a new religious setting for the individual, suddenly causing critical changes in the perception of what is considered divine (or even establishing for the first time a concept of divinity). This change is usually triggered by a full surrender and/or a *renouncement of the world*, sometimes originating a conversion process. While a theological posture would pay special attention to the place of *God* in this conversion, a psychological or mystical analysis would prioritize the discussion about the reestablishment of balance/cure and the personal freedom attained by this state of mind.

James' subject of analysis, as far as it is approachable, is a religious *faculty* providing instant change and relief.[68] He underlines the importance of this faculty in a context where its weight is often devalued because of the difficulty of its conceptualization and systematization. Discouraging research, these characteristics put REs in an almost untouchable place. However, REs, being experiential, have the potential to bring forward relevant and deep questioning, underlining the need for recognition and reflection, but with a genuinely scientific attitude of pure observation and learning. The attribution of value to REs removes as much stigma as possible, preventing nescience and recognizing a psychic structure that provides relevant symbolic patterns. Resembling mythic dynamics, James thought REs were to be viewed as a guide providing tools which allowed the

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[67] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 24.

[68] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 139.

perception of the cohesion and commonalities within such *untouchable matters.* A long journey has been traced since James, but the practical application of REs (the main ambition of his quest) remains a controversial subject.

Effects and results

The main criterion in defining a genuine spiritual experience rests on its effects for the individual, which is crucial for spiritual development.[69] The strength and duration of the impact differentiates pathologic states from what are considered REs — although the dividing line is not always clear.[70] The existence of transpersonal activity and the resultant augmented capacity to recognize a common *sacrality* in all things are relevant characteristics for this differentiation.

James' main focus was on the transformative potential of REs. He saw self-abnegation and a increased sensibility towards the world as their results. The individuated characteristics of the subject begin to flourish self-reliantly but without an egocentric axis. Therefore, there is a strong respect for others' individuality as a consequence of the individual's own self-development, in which *the other is as holy as the individual himself*, and the only difference is the understanding that the other still has not experienced anything *outside his ego-self*.[71] The vitality of the being, the restoration of strength towards the challenges of life, and moral benefits not derived from social morality but from a personal insight can all be (and usually are) considered fruits of an RE. The desire for an RE can be both conscious and unconscious, driven by a craving for the restoration and balance it provides.

An RE can cause a sense of infinity, timelessness, greatness, and omnipotence. Divine figures culturally exhibit these characteristics and as such provide both a focal point for the individual's understanding of his God-like experience, and a vehicle for its explanation to others.

This *timeless space*, as reported by the many descriptions in *The Varieties*, stays hidden through a metaphoric *sacred veil*. According to Eliade's insight about *cosmic time*, what is beyond this veil can be perceived as an always-happening parallel reality, accessible only through a mysterious happening, as is the case of an RE.

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[69] Marianne Rankin, *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2008), 12-13.

[70] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, XXXVII.

[71] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, XXXVIII.

For the religious person, the many therapeutic values of an RE arise from the simple belief that it comes from a transcendent place.[72] Although this experience can be located within the individual, its beneficial effect is felt not only inwards but also outwards (i.e., an experience where the outcome is a change of consciousness, and consequently a change of behavior that directly affects the outer world). The spiritually aware individual can be the holy, praised citizen or the unrecognized, anonymous, and misunderstood one, depending on the nature of his past experiences and his desire whether or not to share them. When recognized in sacred terms, his words are forever relevant.

The modern man has a negative image of this individual because REs segregate those who experience them. He may become socially marginalized or be labelled as mentally abnormal (here, it is important to regard mental health as a malleable concept due to its culture-based nuances). It changes the individual's social frame of thought, affecting his interactions with the world around him. Such a differentiated vision of the world may cause difficulty when it comes to social integration. Additionally, because of the feeling of awe they create, REs' realness stands above everything and as such is difficult to deny. Then, attachment to the event itself is usually generated, preventing social progress and contributing to the individual's isolation. The fact that REs do not have a proper space in modern communal life is a decisive factor for their obstructive effect, where the "changed" consciousness has no support. The same could be said about mental illness in popular understanding. The counter-argument that stands against the authenticity of REs classify these psychological states as religious alienations; but such argument does not take into consideration the dogmatic freedom that may accompany the experience, and does not explain the resultant increased capacity of the individual to deal with adversity, or natural and ordinary *life trials*.

Manifestations and triggers

Besides dreams, REs can be sounds, voices, presences, visions, the perception of lights or darkness, angelic figures, religious journeys, unexplained events considered miracles, or synchronistic occurrences. But more frequently, REs provoke an intense and overwhelming feeling capable of piercing the individual's ego by invading it with feelings of happiness, peace, ecstasy, and at the same time the quietness of experiencing the *mystical oneness*. Other characteristics of REs are their instantaneity and their potential to completely change one's attitude and perception of

[72] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 210.

life by altering the psychic center of energy (i.e., the drives of behavior and ambitions where attention is mostly maintained).[73] It must be remembered that the full value of an RE lies in its pushing force towards spiritual growth, also perceived as the acquirement of *wisdom*. The RE widens the walls of the ego and forces it to interact, succumbing or surrendering. It is usual to experience one's *spiritual limitations* broadening after intense meditation and devotion. As noted, an RE represents a turning point in the individual's life, the irrevocable proof and validation of a transpersonal force. Those who experienced it were considered by James to be 'religious geniuses' as they possessed the ability to confront *religion* as a living truth, alive and fresh, rather than in a monotonous way or under social pressure and obligation.

The RE can be triggered by external objects and relations or happen naturally, but in both cases a small amount of spontaneity is present. It can happen simply in a moment of solitude through meditation and worship or can be provoked by a conversation, a discussion, or any other special episode able to arouse it. When meditating, the unprompted event seems to flow from an authentic desire of worship. This calls into question the role of religious authenticity in prayer. For example, under the Christian dichotomy of punishment (hell, suffering) and reward (heaven, liberation) apparent — inauthentic — worship may lead to the mere satisfaction of an egoistic desire, a "spiritual bargain" to sustain self-security and manage fear.

Prayer, ideally, is the main bond between the believer and his God, a primary means of communication. It can be silent or protocoled by dogma. With therapeutic effects, the appeal to God is also a way of sharing anguish, leading to an instant emotional discharge. The sharing of a problem can ease its pressure or even take the adversity to a place where it can no longer disturb the individual. Psychologically, prayer present an intriguing effect, and given the role of belief, still open for discussion.[74]

Though prayer can be equated to meditation, the latter stands for a far broader concept. The general idea of meditation is similar to the silent prayer, where to *silence the mind* different techniques are employed. The spiritual progress acquired through meditation is a form of consciousness creation where the journey to self-knowledge is based on the careful discovery of the

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[73] James' prioritization of consciousness change was above any visual manifestation: "These phenomena [hallucinations (…) levitation (…) the healing of diseases], which mystics have often presented (or are believed to have presented), have no essential mystical significance, for they occur with no consciousness of illumination whatever, when they occur, as they often do, in persons of non-mystical mind. Consciousness of illumination is for us the essential mark of 'mystical' states."
James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 316.

[74] Rankin, *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience*, 56-58.

unknown inner Self. However, the mind presents obstacles: memories and conditioned perception. Namely, the ego, which is constantly seeking to dominate, attempts to prevent the unfolding of this new way of seeing.[75] This can be equated with the mythical 'Refusal of the Call,' always pushing away the challenges so self-security may be maintained.

In addition to meditation and prayer, there are many other RE stimuli; for instance, evoking the symbology already established by existent religions through pilgrimage or sacred chants. Rituals of worship try to reproduce the *touch of the sacred*, underlining the magnitude of God and making the contrast between the divine and the ordinary visible. Practical examples are temples and liturgies. Nevertheless, even without the support of all these devices — which may indeed only have a superficial aesthetic function — an RE can voluntarily take place.

Near-death and out-of-body experiences have also been related to REs. *Limit-experiences* share the same attributes, always pointing to the pressing activity of something beyond the horizons of the ordinary experience of the world. The mere glimpse beyond the ordinary reality reinforces the spiritual search for resolutions, because of the remaining discontentment with the known universe. It is not unusual for an RE to occur during one of these episodes, when consciousness is felt as *separated* from the body, giving a sense of existential security based on the belief of the mind's prevalence over the body. The results vary widely, although a change in lifestyle is usually one of them.

Tremendum et fascinans

Taking place individually or in a group, these religious psychic happenings may show signigicant differences. In spite of the fact that REs are mainly positive, they may also may also leave the individual with the opposite of benediction, causing an equally strong impact, that is, a dread and the feeling of being invaded by an unfolding evil force. It can be terrifying — *tremendum et fascinans*[76] — which can also be understood as an involuntary fearful reverence reacting to the magnitude of what is observed, unsettling and piercing the very foundations of the individual.

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[75] Rankin, *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience*. 63.

[76] These attributes were first addressed by Otto, who in his conceptualization of the *numinous* also addressed the presence of dreadfulness.
Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 12, 31.

The end of dogma and experience

When it comes to great episodes of sincere religious/spiritual conversion, the event itself shows a subtle independence from tradition. In these occasions the individuals may lose their reliance on method and dogma and start questioning their institutional religious beliefs. The limits previously established by the institution fade as a more personal relationship with *the divine* becomes stronger.

The description of an ultimate reality is intricate and accounts of it are typically difficult, if not impossible, to verbalize. The supposition that these occurrences emanate from an unconscious part of the psyche suggests that its description is beyond common linguistic abilities. The unconscious psyche has its own image-based way of communication (symbolically based), thus placing all this "divine action" outside the learned linguistic system (which is a large constituent part of the conscious psyche and also a way of cataloging information). However, locating an RE out of the grasp of language does not mean that language is not *complex* enough to accurately capture this ultimate reality. Simply, language *cannot* describe it, because language exists in the realm of experience, and paradoxically, to have a religious experience would be the end of ego-conscious existence, and hence the end of the capacity to experience.[77] For the ego is seen as a mediator of experience and inevitably bound to it in a way that its absence would mean a completely different form of perception.

Miles' observation

A relevant opposing argument was raised by Thomas Richard Miles (1923 — 2008), an interdisciplinary British scholar. His analysis justifies the complexity of a linguistic description of the RE by reference to the extremely rare nature of the phenomenon: as an infrequently occurring experience, it does not belong to the behaviorist field only because it has not (*yet*) become mapped by *experience* and memory. Accordingly, the experience does not belong to a parallel universe of any kind, and the infrequency of the occurrence serves to justify the collective incapacity of describing it, dismissing all further (supernatural) inquiry.

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[77] A good example of this reality would be the Sufi mysticism, where a mystic must first develop all his capacities and orthodox cultural knowledge to truly understand how primary they are. Only afterwards may all orthodoxies be left behind, for they can no longer bear any spiritual ambition. Even the experienced mystic that has been on a spiritual journey for decades still feels the inefficacy of language in expressing the mysteries of REs.
See Farida Khanam, *Sufism: An Introduction* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2006), 38, 25, 46, et passim.

> "it is possible to take people's accounts of their religious experiences seriously without becoming involved in the controversial issues of 'materialism' versus 'anti-materialism', 'dualism' versus 'anti-dualism', or 'naturalism' versus 'supernaturalism'. If a person has a moving religious experience, it is unnecessary to re-describe the situation by saying that he has received a visitation from the supernatural world."[78]

For James, the fact of the experience for the individual is of crucial importance, and once this is observed, the irrelevance of the natural/supernatural debate can be recognized. For a sound, a voice, a vision, may not be accepted commonly as true, but it is an undeniable reality to the individual. Leaving this never-ending cycle behind means claiming objectivity over the effects of an RE for the individual who had the experience. Therefore, the analysis of its results is based on the observation of its personal impact and change in individual behavior. Accordingly, the focus is not on the material-rational/immaterial-irrational aspects, but on the only fact available: the RE itself for the subject himself. Miles standpoint then can be interpreted as supportive of James' position, that is, valuing the primacy and practicality of the experience.

Miles' main proposition is based on the rejection of the debate about the existence of a non-material universe. He explains that *experience*, as a consequence of *contact*, does not imply a *displacement* to another reality; instead, the sheer examination of what is called *ordinary reality* is enough to sustain these psychic experiences — in a way that nature's laws are preserved and never surpassed.

Psychoanalytic interpretations

The perception of sounds and images which are not physically present, i.e., the existence of a conflict with ordinary reality, is a shared characteristic between REs and psychopathologies. When these traits are identified as psychic disturbances, their source is the ill psyche. If they are considered genuinely spiritual for those who believe in them, the origin of the psychic events is located outside the being. In this occurrence, the psyche is more of a vehicle than a source, though in reality the extra-psychic or intra-psychic question cannot be answered. Another way of looking at it is to consider the fact that REs can also be genuine and neurotic at the same time (again, mental illness, in this case, is seen as a label derived from cultural conditioning). Considering that pathology is defined by what is uncommon from the cultural standpoint of the individual (with an

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[78] Thomas Richard Miles, *Religious Experiences* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 1972), 2.

emphasis on his religious background), what is socially acceptable and common is believed to be a healthy behavior. Although sharing common archetypal structures, every RE is as unique as every psyche, as it concerns an individual's traditions and personal experiences.

IV
CAMPBELL AND ELIADE: MYTHICAL FEATURES

A notable systematization of the mythological elucidations on the subject of comparative religion in the 20th century is owed to Joseph Campbell (1904 - 1987) and Mircea Eliade (1907 - 1986), with their two pioneering theoretical approaches and achievements — not only in the academic-religious field, but impacting other disciplines and even becoming popular out of the academic and scientific sphere. Their work obtained a distinct hermeneutical relevance, offering new perspectives and clarifying the understanding of mythology; though different in approach, the two reached similar conclusions. The present chapter provides an outline of the primary aspects of their work and other related developments.

In Campbell's and Eliade's observations of myth with its parallel reoccurring constructions, the main focus lies in the parity between the structure of the mythic narrative and innate psychic functions. The individual's comprehension of this correspondence supports his recognition and development of practical abilities, colliding with an understanding of religion and myth —what sense it is possible to make out of the relationship in a living and more approachable reality. Both authors aim to capture a general idea of myth through the examination and systematization of its different parts. A correlational core is located between ancient religious/mythic features and their timelessness, underlining the persistent gesture performed by these allegories even in the present day. In analyzing this subject, the authors' purpose was to obtain a clear understanding of the nature of the sacred and of myth itself; and, by contrast, to be able to recognize the profane, which one can only consider after having constructed a clear image of *the holy* and its echoes.

The authors explore instances of the sacred from many religious traditions, commonly presented as a transcendent essence.[79] An uncommon but more precise term to define the sacred at an experiential level would be *numinous*[80] — which can be translated as *the sacrality which*

[79] A relatively essentialist position must be considered in order to ground the following theoretical development.

[80] Eliade addresses in his work the concept of numinosity but does not restrict it to religious experiences.

permeates life. Such peculiar feeling appears to be crucial to religious development, and to the richness and penetrating power of mythic narratives and doctrine. Furthermore, the numinosity of religious texts contributes to their success in causing awe, triggering spiritual reactions.

The emergence of the divine is religiously defined through these characteristics in *Sacred and Profane: The nature of religion.* Here, Eliade observes different perspectives of the sacred, paying special attention to its constant presence. His work had a singular impact on identifying myth as a reliable vehicle of the sacred.[81] While Eliade endorsed the symbolic power and coherence of myth, interpreting the sacredness within, Campbell looked at it systematically, placing each mythical characteristic with its kind.

Myth

Different meanings and functions have been attributed to myth throughout time, varying across a wide range of explanations and practical usages. In Campbell's perception, myth primarily intends to give humankind the support enabling them to cope with the natural world and society. This cooperation does not mean a passive submission when confronted with adversity in everyday life, but the acquisition of empathy and the capacity to pedagogically recognize and manage life's arbitrary circumstances. Myths, as traditional stories, have always had an edifying function for the listener — for instance, maintaining storytelling, historical figures, and ancestry over time, or offering moral teachings of how to live an honorable life through the deeds of heroes. Briefly, myth "supplies models for human behavior and, by that very fact, gives meaning and value to life".[82] This is its religious and spiritual importance (for its teachings are not always clear). The structure derived from myth is often seen in tales and fables: sometimes clearly visible, other times remaining discretely inferred. This special structure is sacred by itself because it shares mysterious gestures, shown by holy or divine actors.

In a mythic reality, every human action can happen in a transhuman plane, where transfiguration occurs. The mythical realm is the original space of creation, where techniques are born to be later developed, following a similar course in the human plane (e.g., feeding, hunting,

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[81] Myth is interpreted by Eliade as a phenomenon without any commitment to *rationality*; the analysis of the role of myth in the individual's life makes room for the possibility of correlating mythic structures (such as those from cosmogonies and/or heroic narratives) and psychic archetypal dynamics.
Robert Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 55.

[82] Eliade, *Myth and Reality,* 2.

planting, etc.).[83] Myth, as a story, has the capacity to resonate its own "creative license" since its origins are still up for discussion and speculation. In the same way that everything was once created, everything can be a cosmic hierophany[84] for the *homoreligiosus*, thus also sacred for representing the emersion of God. In practical terms, this means the exemption from any questioning: under such conditions "just because it is" is an acceptable explanation.

There are many types of myths, and many rituals driven by them. An example of mythic knowledge which is culturally widespread and considered archetypal is the cosmogonic narratives and their creative potential and representation of power. Frequently in the narrative, after the cosmogonic event humankind is changed, cursed, or split by posterior developments of the story, meaning that man, *as he is known,* is caught in a conditioned state.[85] And because of this conditioning, cosmogonic myths do not simply explain the creation of the universe; they also justify what is considered the natural limits of human experience. Thus, myth defines an absolute past where men were complete, so the present can be understood as a defective result — making room for a mythical promise of restoration.[86]

Some mythic figures personify this idea by assuming different shapes. For example, a fusion between man and animal (or even simply the company of an animal), may reveal qualities which are lacking in the ordinary human form (which must be made complete by the presence of an outside being or beings). Alternatively, to underline this evolution through an allegory, visual features are incorporated into the hero's image. Through the interpretation of this kind of symbology, the individual is perceived as an unaccomplished being, still fighting for solutions which appear to be beyond himself.

Rites of passage

Nature often has its features reflected in myths or rituals, mirroring and embodying its cyclic changes (e.g., full moon, solstice, and equinoxes). Being periodic, these changes engender ceremonies of communal transitions, i.e. rites of passage.[87]

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[83] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 95, 171.

[84] A hierophany was defined by Eliade as "anything which manifests the sacred". These breakthroughs, in their various forms, are the main pieces of information that allow a slight conceptualization of the *sacred* in the study of comparative religion.

[85] Eliade, *Myth and Reality,* 11.

[86] Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 21.

[87] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 3-4.

> "We see that in the least advanced cultures the holy enters nearly every phase of a man's life. Being born, giving birth, and hunting, to cite but a few examples, are all acts whose major aspects fall within the sacred sphere. Social groups in such societies likewise have magico-religious foundations, and a passage from group to group takes on that special quality found in our rites of baptism and ordination. (…) Among semicivilized peoples such acts are enveloped in ceremonies, since to the semi-civilized mind no act is entirely free of the sacred. In such societies every change in a person's life involves actions and reactions between sacred and profane — actions and reactions to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury".[88]

The rites of passage celebrate heroic achievements and possess major relevance. Even though, in modern life, the meaning and importance of rituals has shapeshifted, losing some characteristics of the traditional ritualistic set, rituals still repeatedly reverberate cosmogonic *truths*. To the initiates, a rite of passage is a superior moment, for there is a strong cosmogonic symbology assuming the shape of a micro-cosmos but nevertheless always reflecting the corresponding cosmic dynamics of the primordial macro-cosmic event.

To acquire a certain status within a community — to be recognized and to grow as a capable individual — myth dictates that it is important to face trials. Usually, the novice undergoes a journey that gives him the desired social position and inclusion. In this typically heroic sacrament, natural life must end, and another life with divine qualities must take its place: a religious transformation happens, and existence becomes spiritual. Eliade underlines two critical features of the heroic journey:

> "(1) one does not become a complete man until one has passed beyond, and in some sense abolished, "natural" humanity, for initiation is reducible to a paradoxical, supernatural experience of death and resurrection or of second birth."
>
> "(2) initiation rites, entailing ordeals and symbolic death and resurrection, were instituted by gods, culture heroes, or mythical ancestors; hence these rites have a superhuman origin, and by performing them the novice imitates a superhuman, divine action."[89]

Symbolic death to ordinary existence, and symbolic rebirth from an unknown space, stand as essential aspects of these rites. The *second birth*, echoing across the most diverse religious

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[88] Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* 2-3.

[89] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 187.

traditions, garnishes many narratives, forever maintaining the transcendent force of its axis.[90] So, rites of passage can also be summarized as the path towards the defeat of man's inevitable outcome — death. This is because in myth, the hero can die, but death can also become a concern left behind, or can be experienced as part of the journey. Thus, the hero can acquire knowledge about this stage as well.

In a rite of passage, when the individual succeeds in his trial, the whole social body becomes aware of this change and extracts benefit from it: becoming a warrior, for example, is also becoming a member of the community and strengthening it.[91]

Each myth exhibits a structure shared at some level with all other myths. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* one of the most widespread forms of breaking the myth into pieces is demonstrated by employing the *monomythic* structure: a small act of courage sets the mythic path, showing availability to proceed; then a micro sacrifice is performed; and finally, a greater life-giving deed is consummated to immortalize the hero.

The whole framework can be demystified in accordance with these stages:

— "a separation from the world" (moving to a place of mystery and danger)

— "a penetration in some mysterious source of power" (finding shelter)

— "and a life-enhancing return" (where a symbolic death takes place)[92]

The mythic hero is the one who holds the potential of all bravery and good core values, the one who can awaken his inner identity — usually by his willingness to face evil or even to sacrifice himself. Thus, when the hero truly commits (i.e., relinquishes his egocentric will for others), his inner self finally gains freedom, for ego-conscious behavior has ceased and whatever stands beyond it can finally take place. In the end, the hero is reborn in order to erase ignorance and promote harmony in the lives of others. In brief, the initiate must grow old in spiritual matters, get to know life's mysteries, and interpret his role in the journey (which is to become the receptacle of beyond-

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[90] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 199-201.

[91] Campbell, *The Hero,* 9.

[92] Campbell, *The Hero*, 33, 189, 221.

ordinary forces).[93] By this reification of myth, the religious individual achieves *divine power*.[94] In distinct traditions, the ritualistic transformation is present as a universal image, which naturally entails a rite of passage that can be summed up as a form to gain the right experience. It also corrects the deficient state of being, or simply develops one's spirituality. Eliade states that "for all archaic societies, access to spirituality finds expression in a symbolism of death and a new birth."[95]

The cosmogonic cycle

Eliade describes the power of myth in the following statement: "To know the myths is to learn the secret of the origin of things. In other words, one learns not only how things came into existence but also where to find them and how to make them disappear".[96] Almost an alchemical treaty, a myth is depicted as a means of manifesting and recreating, and of delivering as objectively as possible an understandable meaning. Myth puts this dynamic of creation in a literal and relatable physical settlement, *the world.*

From this perspective, cosmogonic mythology does not support any partial or minor repair; it completely erases itself to recreate from the start. This cyclical quality is the main characteristic of cosmogony as an always-happening process — because from a human perspective the universe seems to last, but in myth change is always happening. Cyclical opposing forces are forever competing and creating; thus, the universe is made of victory (life) and defeat (death).

It is only possible to be born again through some degree of death. The spiritual Christian baptism in water is one example, where the convert dies in his previous sinful life and then rises,

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[93] Additionally, Campbell underlines similarities between the result of the initiation and the achievement of freedom (or enlightenment) in Buddhism and Hinduism. He sees them as analogous processes, crossing boundaries, carrying similar meaning and causing on a different scale the same core action (which is *a change* in one's life and the lives of others).

[94] Discussing the prevalence of ritual over myth, William Robertson Smith (1846 — 1894) theorized the pertinence of the ritual itself; this conception takes away a great part of myth's relevance. His conjecture is based on the fact that belief had no importance to ancient religion, and ritual carried out all the primary weight, so myth would be just a secondary explanation of it. The whole potential of myth would continue to rely on the re-creation of those moments — the ritual. Notwithstanding which came first, reenacting remains the main source of self-transcendence. Belief, as a sign of faith, is completely dismissed in the face of experience (provided by rituals with their power).
Segal, *Myth*, 61-63, 65.

[95] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 192.

[96] Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 13-15.

acquiring a new status. The following quotes exemplify this *purification process* using the element of water in a cosmogonic context:

> "The waters symbolize the universal sum of virtualities; they are *fons et origo*, 'spring and origin' the reservoir of all the possibilities of existence; they precede every form and support every creation. One of the paradigmatic images of creation is the island that suddenly manifests itself in the midst of the waves. On the other hand, immersion in water signifies regression to the preformal, reincorporation into the undifferentiated mode of pre-existence. Emersion repeats the cosmogonic act of formal manifestation; immersion is equivalent to a dissolution of forms. This is why the symbolism of the waters implies both death and rebirth. Contact with water always brings a regeneration — on the one hand because dissolution is followed by a new birth, on the other because immersion fertilizes and multiplies the potential of life."[97]

From this, an inference can be drawn about the importance of mythic death and rebirth as a means of restoring one's forces. This exact dynamic reflects the whole paradoxical nature of the mythical process of creation. In tribal practice, the effort was centered in being wholly immersed in chaos as a means to re-attain the perfect state which was once corrupted (conditioned) through another mythic event in an unfamiliar space.

> "Symbolic burial, partial or complete, has the same magic-religious value as immersion in water, baptism. The sick person is regenerated; he is born anew. The operation has the same efficacy in wiping out a sin or in curing a mental malady (the latter representing the same danger to the collectivity as does crime or somatic sickness)."[98]

Equating the social distress brought upon by a crime or physical illness to the lack of mental health underlines the equivalent danger of both to communal life. It also embodies a present-day way of looking at mental issues, and attributes awareness to them. Eliade underlines the therapeutic force of myth, depicting it as a resource capable of dealing with mental disorder. The above excerpt reveals something that is often expressed and deserves attentive consideration: the act of undergoing a symbolic burial and how it can be in some way helpful to the reestablishment of mental balance.

Dying is a *consequence* of a rite of initiation, while being reborn is the *purpose*. Mythically, death is a requirement for the expected outcome; it is the main feature of regeneration. As seen in

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[97] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 130.

[98] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 143.

rituals of passage, to symbolize death with its inherent suffering, pain is inflicted on the novice (as seen in rituals of passage) in order to trigger his progress. When the peak of this chaotic state is finally achieved, as if in a deathbed, attachment starts to fade, having no place in this following new existence to which one has been securely carried by myth. So, death and detachment turn into the source of creation.[99] All this process set by ritual has a healing function of an uncommon therapeutic value. Rebirth becomes mandatory to the success of the novice at every level: in other words, the immersion in chaos is the only way to reestablish order.[100]

Sacred time

In this creational space a new concept is introduced: the idea of sacred time. It provides the capacity of testifying, in chaotic immersion, the mythical moment of creation when order comes after chaos.[101] The breakthrough from one world into a *dream time*[102] or mythical world implies not only merging with this extraordinary space but letting the whole world as one knows it die.[103] This particular characteristic can be strongly related to a mystic's transcendent moment:[104] the letting go of the world as *previously experienced images*[105] formed by his past.[106]

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[99] Cosmogony contains an essential curative symbolic value: "(…) the ritual recitation of the cosmogonic myth plays an important role in healing, when what is sought is the regeneration of the human being". The whole point of it is to be transported to the moment of regeneration (to act upon what Jung called 'animistic pathologies' — i.e. diseases of the soul).
Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 81, 190, 195p.
See Segal, *Myth*, 55.

[100] 'Destruction', when evoked as part of a cycle, suffers a successful destigmatization in myth. Shiva is a pertinent example of this, with his holy flames of destruction. Or his *tandava*, Shiva's dance, setting the rhythm of creation and destruction.

[101] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 65.

[102] Using the example of the Australian aboriginal myths, sacred/mythic time is referred to as a parallel space from ordinary reality: the mythical *dream time.*
See also Doris Pilkington Garimara, *Follow the Rabbit-proof Fence* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1996).

[103] Here this transition from life to death is used within the assumption of a full displacement from ordinary perception to a more penetrating state of being, with a religious sensitivity — completely incarnating the mythic and ritual dynamic.

[104] Mystics belonging to different religions (among them Islamism, Buddhism, and other Indochinese traditions) believe in the possibility of experiencing an incoming major spiritual achievement, a kind of redemption where through contemplation one has a unitary divine experience — beyond the ordinary experience of time.

[105] Referring to Ppsychological images as a depth psychology concept.

[106] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 177-178.

On another scale, expressions of sacred time can be recognized in a hierophany: it causes a break, and space and time are settled from that moment on. One example is the moment of revelation in revealed traditions (it occurs in absolute reality and fixes the beginning of an ontological setting). When there is a revelation, the universe is born from the individual narrative. More specifically, creation happens from the truth of a man, moving from a microcosmic level to macrocosmic creation.[107] By the making of sense and the attribution of meaning, order is brought to disorder. The mythic narrative encompasses such a creational moment of phenomenal importance because traditionally, it is this paramount event that makes existence possible.[108]

Eliade states that "cosmogony equally implies the creation of time"[109] so when a story is set, time is initiated. He contrasts this idea of *sacred* time with the notion of *psychological* time. The latter is introduced as a "dead Time," (…)[a] Time that crushes and kills"[110] depicting an extremely tragic picture of modern man and presenting a social criticism of man's remaining stuck in his story (i.e., his thoughts and memories), which mythically commenced long ago.

Nonreligious man

Nonreligious individuals live in a desacralized world, in profanity.[111] To free themselves from superstitious attitudes and narratives impacting their life, men have generally buried their mythic resemblances.[112] Though they have deprived themselves of this enchanting protection and theosophical attainments, the modern man still has myths (even if he is not conscious of their function to his existential security and the maintenance of his health). Periodic festivities and other events have not been completely desacralized: they have simply changed their form and popular immediate meaning, whilst keeping some degree of sacred importance. This modern and maybe unnoticed way of living sacredness exists in many forms that one would hardly consider religious.

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[107] e.g. Prophet Mohammed's major revelation and the setting of the beginning of time (reverberating the notion of time as in a cosmogonic myth, where the past is often represented as inexistent, a void or as waters).

[108] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 21, 30, 44, 89.

[109] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 76.

[110] Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 193.

[111] If "Reality" or "extraordinary reality" is sacred, then the non-sacred — the ordinary state of being — is profane. The sacred Reality is mystical, i.e. beyond intellectualism and ordinary understanding; it corresponds to a much more objective and raw way of perceiving the world, as seen, with the aid of a transcendent happening.

[112] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 13, 211.

It would without deeper reflection be considered *spiritual,* but only because modern men have changed their way of defining *religion*.[113]

Religion, in the discussed terms, is not something apart, practicable, but something present and fundamental. Campbell presents in a very clear way the distance that man has drawn between himself and his spirituality. Modernity is depicted as a barrier to spiritual growth: it excludes what stands outside the verge of intellect, creating an unwillingness to question one's perception of the world in alternative terms. It seems that this conditioning is a consequence of the present and not a deliberate choice.

It is as if the modern man lives in a fading religious atmosphere, and because of that he does not take his struggle to an ontological field with complete commitment. If he were to do so, the argument is that he would have the capacity of transforming a complex and seemingly insolvable situation in a paradigmatic one, and through that path find already given answers (provided by myth and ritual). Another way of putting it would be to regard symbols with sensitivity to their meaning so that one can have a 'metaphysical comprehension of the world.'[114] The nonreligious men addressed here are mostly Western modern men: not those that still bear some mysticism around themselves or the stereotypical Western peasant from a provincial background. Though the latter group shows a massive decrease in participation in religious rituals, the predominant rule is that they keep a significant degree of 'cosmic liturgy'[115] among them.[116]

The concept of *religiousness* can be present and at the same time the individual can be unaware of its more profound significance. Because of that, he cannot benefit entirely from the mythical dynamics that tenaciously take place in everyday actions. This very lack of awareness can be symbolically placed in the mythical structure as a prime obstacle, indicating an ordinary state of being. Developing their roles, nonreligious men can have a place in myth if the narrative is interpreted to include modernity, where they can be seen as individuals looking to gain consciousness and having to undertake a set of actions in order to succeed. Mythically speaking, the current paradigm presents a sort of social confusion where the sacred is an *unlaunched* universe, waiting for the individual to (re)start its creation.

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[113] See also Bradley Onishi, *The Sacrality of the Secular: Postmodern Philosophy of Religion* (New York, Columbia University Press: 2018).

[114] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 211.

[115] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 178.

[116] Cf. Fernando Catroga, *Entre Deuses e Césares: Secularização, Laicidade e Religião Civil* (Lisboa: Almedina, 2006).

> "Properly speaking, there is no longer any world, there are only fragments of a shattered universe, an amorphous mass consisting of an infinite number of more or less neutral places in which man moves, governed and driven by the obligations of an existence incorporated into an industrial society."[117]

Ultimately there is not a complete desacralization of the world. Sacral force seems to have grown through a particular reflection of the sacred, that in the West is delivered as an aesthetic emotion, which is commonly accepted as *art*, publicly viewed with respect and as a metaphysical tool.[118]

Not having a myth, or losing one's myth, goes along with drifting endlessly. "Having to raise the sun everyday" is tribally an honor, and without this kind of major significant event, existential security drops. Myth takes away the heaviest of the burdens: the responsibility for one's own future. All things considered, such primordial stories no longer retain the capacity to seduce. Myth is subtly romanticized and seen as a product of naivety. As a consequence, it acquires an infantile stigma. At the same time, by being turned into pure fantasy, a more in-depth examination of it is prevented, obliterating the meaning of its elements and the fundamental narrative it carries.[119]

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[117] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 23-24.

[118] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 154.

[119] Edward Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness: Jung's Myth for Modern Man* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1984), 15.

Stages of the hero's journey

Campbell divided myth in three major parts: departure, initiation and return; each of which have their subdivisions as can be observed in the following tables (*tables 1, 2 and 3*).

Summary and brief analysis of the hero's journey stages according to Campbell

Table 1: Departure

Call to adventure The mythical adventure usually starts with something out of one's field of knowledge: a new entity comes and sets the start with its own rhythm. This new appearance assumes a religious character, possessing transcendent capacity and not related to any dogma or institutionalized entity — that is, entirely from the outside. The anxiety faced by the hero in this part of the narrative is usually the result of being exposed to and dealing with novelty.
Refusal of the call In a mythic frame, adversity and misfortune deserve attention. Every strange happening in the narrative has a source that must be carefully perceived and understood. The importance of these early events stands as a prelude and key for posterior developments. Ignoring the messenger's invitation to the adventure, or denying the calling, will generate persistence from the messenger's side (distress), driven by the hero's own resistance. The lesson to learn is that such invitation must not be dismissed.
Supernatural aid The aid comes through an external element (often from an unfamiliar place), providing advice about which specific tools are necessary for success. Such external elements could be wise spirits, enigmatic coordinates, charades, or holy objects. Also, the helper comes to make clear that fate has been decided, and the following actions may lead to self-destruction if not embraced.
The crossing of the first threshold A minor challenge will be carried out, something unpleasant must be fought: monsters and demons have lessons to teach. The acquisition of wisdom, experience, and guile are the main points, giving proof of possessing the courage to self-sacrifice.
The belly of the whale When the threshold is finally crossed and the combat initiated, the hero may eventually appear dead due to his ability to self-sacrifice, lying in the unknown to later prove his resilience by conquering this first trial. This contact with death has a valuable meaning, underlined by Campbell. Here, an analogy with the initial stages of a mystical journey can be set, due to the need of self-annihilation: in the end of the 'Departure' the hero needs to be annihilated, erased. In parallel, ego-detachment is the prerequisite of survival: ego-based existence ceases, and a more significant subject arises. In this set of stages, the whole trajectory is exposed, to be later repeated at a higher level of the same structural scheme.

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[120] Campbell, *The Hero*, 47, 54-64, 66, 79-82, 83-85.

Table 2 – Initiation

The road of trials Trials typically take place in unexplored grounds. The discovery and mapping of this new territory assumes great importance in the narrative. Every small trial is a way of learning skills necessary for the future. This stage is an echo of the 'threshold crossing' episode, always providing insight into the future greater challenge the hero will face. Realization and conquest come together. The balance between pride and humbleness is also to be conquered. In a limited way triumph comes about — the hero keeps improving his skillset (inwardly and outwardly).
The meeting with the goddess Meanwhile in the adventure, the individual has to settle all his efforts in a delicate communion. Such encounter requires all his good developed qualities to face the terrifying experience of a cosmic marriage (*hieros gamos*). This happening empowers the hero's future, and this fusion is an important element; the extent of this relation has a considerable impact on the hero's choices, as does every other stage, like a preparation for dealing with the unknown. The ability to go through this sacrament puts the hero in a singular position, becoming more complete.
Woman as temptress In addition to having established the previous relationship, the hero continues on his journey, and part of it has to do with knowing how to deal with his libidinous desires. Such desires are usually symbolized as a feminine force that, as a powerful drive, presents a strong challenge.
Atonement with the father "Atonement [...] consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster — the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id)". It stands for a healing moment. This quotation, providing a psychoanalytic interpretation, expresses the mentioned stages of self-surrender and the following ego-annihilation, and gives a glimpse of a mythical representation of the God-figure. In short, this stage depicts the hero's relinquishment of his own set of conceptions, his own world (paradoxically, the world that he aims to save). In this contradiction lies the paradox of myth (and also of religion). From these dynamics emerge profound insights and this is thus the most challenging stage of the mythic journey.
Apotheosis This synthesis has the purpose of endorsing the whole journey, making clear the hero's comprehension of the reason and value attached to the entire concatenated event. From this moment on, there is no room for minor challenges, simply because they no longer bring about any effort.
The ultimate boom The hitherto achievement is delineated by the giving up of the hero's universe. This is the peak of the crescendo represented until now. The hero breaks the link with his gods, his beliefs, and every source of attachment, from the most ordinary to the most sacred. The whole process underlines the paradoxical learned lessons.

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[121] Campbell, *The Hero*, 120, 159.

Table 3 – Initiation

The magic flight The hero can depart in good faith, having defeated every threat and achieved stability.
Rescue from without Sometimes the hero has to be rescued because the ordinary world needs his advice and knowledge. In this stage, the mentor or the helper plays a central role: he is responsible for watching over the hero, for helping him recover from the wounds (thus keeping alive the acquired knowledge). There is also the possibility that the hero has been watched over by the supernatural aid from the very beginning.
The crossing of the return threshold In the end, there is the realization that there exists only one world; it simply seems different because the hero has explored its unknown side. It is still a challenge to bring the acquired knowledge from the underworld into ordinary life. It is too much to ask from those who did not share the experience with the hero to believe and understand a universe they have never explored. The returned warrior understands reality in a way he cannot express. Others can only ponder or imagine what the hero has been through.
Master of the two worlds The hero sets the connection and assumes mastery of the outside knowledge and how to apply his new conceptions to the ordinary world. There are two realities: the one of the ordinary man, and the one of the underworld. The hero sees both. He lives by the mystery that now flows through him. He is the one that has conquered the underworld.
Freedom to live This freedom is the freedom to live and to die. One's destiny resides totally in one's capacity of evaluating and forgiving oneself for the transgressions of the trajectory, finally, without any illusion.

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[122] Campbell, *The Hero*, 179, 201-202, 218, 220.

V

RELIGIOUS FEATURES OF ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY: MYTH, MYSTICISM AND DREAMS

Analytical Psychology establishes a dialogue between psychology and theology, locating God in both fields and relying deeply on myths, alchemy, and related images. The interpretation of such imagery is not consistently based on the classic theories and schools of interpretation of myth. Even though many assertions of such theoretical positions suit the analytical psychological approach due to its conjectural interactions, ultimately none can be truly loyal to it. This is something that is commonly observed in Depth Psychology.[123]

Myth has been for a long time a singular truth present through many generations; as such, it carries a linking and guiding function. When people outwardly sought a sign that did not appear naturally, the sign had to be provoked in order for them to receive directions for their actions. The performance of a ritual — capable of reliving the myth — was one of the ways in which insight was sought. Rituals are techniques of orientation, where instructions are summoned through a type of meditation, looking not only outwardly but also inwardly, based on the belief that God exists in the world as within each individual.

> "The more religious man is, the more paradigmatic models does he possess to guide his attitudes and actions. In other words, the more religious he is, the more does he enter into the real and the

[123] Max Muller (1823 – 1900), with the "misinterpretation theory", accepted that, originally inspired by nature, myths were poetry that became misinterpreted and lost their early meaning. Moreover, myth was not accepted as a result or inspired by an extraordinary experience. Edward Tyler (1832 – 1917), in contradiction, argues about the philosophical function of myths as means to understand the world. Myth was considered by him primitive reasoning but having already a deeper psychological value of evolutionary character. William Robertson Smith (1846 – 1894) supported Tyler's evolutionary interpretation but defended the primacy of ritual for religion and society as a source of order and stability. He interpreted sacrificial rite as a sacralizing "communion" between humans and gods, where myth was created to justify the existence of ritual. Robertson Smith influenced Frazer's workings on myths and Durkheim's sociological views on religion.
Adapted from Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-7.

> less is he in danger of becoming lost in actions that, being nonparadigmatic, "subjective," are, finally, aberrant."[124]

The *aberrant* state referred to is a consequence of man's disagreement with and denial of myth: not the simple refusal of a literal interpretation, but of everything it stands for. *Paradigmatic models* present a form to be followed, reflecting a set of recommendations. Like the hero's refusal to join the adventure introduced in Campbell's model for the monomyth, this movement reverberates the idea of pushing away another reality and avoiding entering 'the real'. This leads to an endless imprisoning sorrow that the potential hero is liable to experience if he ignores the hopes and possibilities present in myth and the mythical adventure.

Myth as an analytical tool

As a science that is mainly concerned with individual suffering and growth, Depth Psychology establishes a strong involvement with myth. Analytical Psychology in particular rescues the traits of myth and pragmatically applies them. This therapy considers the explored stages of the mythical narrative, ritual and totem, the behavior of its characters, and most importantly the healing properties of the whole correlated movement present in myth. Campbell reached this conclusion by perceiving the interdependence of both myth and Depth Psychology, often underlying the work of Freud and Jung, as follows:

> "The bold and truly epoch-making writings of the psychoanalysts are indispensable to the student of mythology; (…) Freud, Jung, and their followers have demonstrated irrefutably that the logic, the heroes, and the deeds of myth survive into modern times."[125]

Eliade shared similar views:

> "Freud elaborated an analogous technique to enable a modern individual to recover the content of certain 'original' experiences. We have seen that there are several ways of 'going back,' but the most important are: (1) rapid and direct re-establishment of the first situation (whether Chaos or the pre-

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[124] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1957), 96.

[125] Here and in many other references there is no distinction between standard Psychoanalysis and Analytical Psychology.
Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 4.

> cosmogonic state or the moment of Creation) and (2) progressive return to the 'origin' by proceeding backward through Time from the present moment to the "absolute beginning."[126]

From the perspective of Analytical Psychology, despite being depicted in a fantastical realm, these narratives stand for psychological conquests: for myth itself, with its multiple characters, can represent various forces of a unique psyche — *an internal drama*.[127] It is necessary to remember that when the mythical hero tries to save the world, this mythical world is but an inflation of his individual psyche. The structure and relevance of myth are mirrored in the psychological therapeutic approach — ideally, the analysis will follow a relatively predictable course — although not in as literal or practical a manner as in the mythological narrative itself. Myth, regardless of its origins (being considered alternatively an anthropological, sociological, or psychological phenomenon), has an intrinsic relationship with behavior: it actively reinforces it, for example through rituals. It is rooted in an elementary psychic form, leading to the known cultural reverberation or slight resemblance:

> (…) it appears that through the wonder tales — which pretend to describe the lives of the legendary heroes, the powers of the divinities of nature, the spirits of the dead, and the totem ancestors of the group — symbolic expression is given to the unconscious desires, fears, and tensions that underlie the conscious patterns of human behavior. Mythology, in other words, is psychology misread as biography, history, and cosmology. The modern psychologist can translate it back to its proper denotations and thus rescue for the contemporary world a rich and eloquent document of the profoundest depths of human character.[128]

Mythical narratives ground themselves through the use of precise characters, allowing individuals to identify with them as a familiar reality. Besides its paradigmatic nature, the mythical

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[126] Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 88.

[127] See Lucy Huskinson, ed., *Dreaming the Myth Onwards: New Directions in Jungian Therapy and Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[128] Another expression of these unconscious desires are *dreams,* sharing the nature of myth and being similarly representative of the dynamics of the psyche: "Sigmund Freud, Carl G. Jung, Wilhelm Stekel, Otto Rank, Karl Abraham, Géza Róheim, and many others have within the past few decades developed a vastly documented modern lore of dream and myth interpretation; and though the doctors differ among themselves, they are united into one great modern movement by a considerable body of common principles. With their discovery that the patterns and logic of fairy tale and myth correspond to those of dream, the long discredited chimeras of archaic man have returned dramatically to the foreground of modern consciousness."
Campbell, *The Hero*, 237.

journey is extremely personal, so the impact of the hero on the mythical universe equates to the individual himself acting upon his own personal sphere. For example, the mythical *unbearable agony* can be a representational inflation of a deep longing or anxious suffering. These mythic figures, having their motivational weight, make possible the recognition of a pattern within the myth (made by gatherings of inflated symbols).

The common path in Myth and Mysticism

It seems that the *mythical* hero, for reasons beyond himself (i.e., destiny or ancestry) is pulled into action; while a *mystic's* achievements are mostly grounded in the previous existence of heroes as a follower that goes beyond ordinary worship and seeks a deeper understanding of the hero's path and teachings (considering here messianic/religious figures).

The limitations in myth are defined by the emergence of problems. As such, pain and suffering appear as key factors, not against but in favor of the hero's progress. Analytical Psychology presents this suffering experienced by the mythic hero as of the same nature as the mystical, shamanic, or spiritual seeker's pain. This is the pain of searching for an outer something and, consequently, of having one's world shattered in moments of profound transformation. Then, the trials of the monomyth equate themselves with this mystic suffering, often experienced as an initiatory sickness. While the monomyth depicts a cycle full of conflict but leading to freedom, the mystic narrative depicts a similar story that in the end also leads to a fusion between the ego/ individual and something greater. This outcome happens through the interaction between two different entities: the ordinary hero and this almost divine destination. Possessing different scales, both stand for the dilution of the limited ego in what is far beyond itself, leaving the individual with the feeling of belonging to something whole; something that genuinely *knows* and reflects his self, revealing to him his unconscious traits. It equals the realization of a holistic state. As mystics explore such ecstatic states more often, they are the ones to describe the event, and consequently indirectly take others closer to it: because the mere description of it carries *numinosity*.

For individuals belonging to a culture with a firm reliance on myth, pain is mitigated or not felt at all, because one of the most prominent lessons in myth is that (*psychological) pain only endures when attachments are present*. Thus, for a culture based in a strong mythological background, unbearable suffering would be completely prevented by means of a previously inserted tool, in this case a mythological lesson or action performed by the founding hero. For example, when a *pajé* from a tribe is introduced to the shamanic mores, a vital part of his formation is learning about the tribe's heroes and ancestry. To cultivate his spiritual skills, he learns the art of

humbly surrendering (whereby the individual loses himself). This *psychology of surrender* is widely present and necessary in mystical traditions of different religions (Sufism in Islam, Kabbalah in Judaism, Christian mysticism, etc.) which enable an individual to successfully enter a different state of consciousness without having his personality fragmented by the strain of holding on to any attachment.

After fusion and experience of the *numinosum*, mystics from diverse backgrounds recurrently return to their traditions with sweeping statements or even reformist ideas, exhibiting an evident discontentment with literalism and orthodoxy.[129] Reassessing dogma with a new spiritual deepness, mystics, often misunderstood, suffer due to the lack of comprehension. The emotional and spiritual depth of their speech is very often considered blasphemous since it puts an end to the distance between the (dogmatic) God and the praying follower, and thus opposes the posture settled by the great monotheistic traditions.

As previously discussed, in myth, the hero inevitably suffers. Initially, this suffering is fought and avoided at all costs; it is later accepted and embraced, allowing it to be dissolved. This dissolution, already seen in the hero's journey, is the action that brings forward healing, balance, and order in the mythic universe. The mystical journey follows a similar path (*table 4*), because both are based on the same dynamics.

Table 4 – Similarities between the mythical and mystical journey

Similarities between the mythical and mystical journey		
	Mythical	**Mystical**
The beginning of the journey	Attachment and Resistance	
	Renouncement of ordinary life	
Source of suffering and pain	The hero's trials throughout the mystical journey	Austere practices towards spiritual development
Relief	Selfless action	Self abandonment
Final expected outcome	Mastery and *freedom*	Enlightenment or freedom

[129] e.g. Almançor Alhalaje

However, for a mystic, the pain usually comes as a deliberated choice, as a method to burn *karma*, seek indulgence, or reduce attachment by the practicing of several austerities. This *mortification of the flesh* is accepted as a shortcut for redemption. Even though pain is a very present part of this growing process, it seems that it must not be purposefully sought or provoked but faced when present.

The aforementioned mystical branches are simply examples of the use of pain as a tool for spiritual development (as in ascetic practices, where undergoing pain is necessary on a path towards inner peace). Nevertheless, at the same time, the intentional choice contradicts the required spontaneity inherent in the hero's journey (underlined by his initial reluctance to depart). For example, in Buddhism, the fact of merely having a desire is an obstacle to the pursuit of freedom, even if the desire is for suffering. For this reason, when not provoked, suffering is considered a good sign of purgation which ought to be accepted as inevitable and met with inaction — neither fought nor encouraged.

Thereby, distress brings the believer near to his God[130] in a way such that the pain attached to spiritual growth becomes a door to perception.[131] As said by Evelyn Underhill (1875 — 1941), "the great mystics, creative geniuses in the realm of character, have known instinctively how to turn these psychic disturbances into spiritual profit."[132] This is most evident in Kabbalah culture, where the individual considers every adversity a valuable opportunity to acquire a new level of inner development. Mystical development lies in the ability to effortlessly meet obstacles rather than letting oneself be conditioned by them. Underhill defends that such behavior elucidates the ultimate insignificance of the obstacle. In Analytical Psychology, this outcome stands for the ability to consistently perceive one's world consciously, evolving towards *individuation*. It also relieves the burden of one's (troubled) life and allowing the unconscious (with its Self figure) to act.

Moreover, as a form of art and philosophy, mysticism is an instance of skepticism, because it presents itself as a way of questioning; this ultimately leads to the development of a transcendent faculty. Thus through *meditation* (in its broadest sense), one starts questioning subjective reality (i.e., ego reality: the reality shaped by personal experiences, memories, and projections) which then becomes untrustworthy and deceitful.[133] To put it briefly, the main objective of mysticism is to find

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[130] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 126-128.

[131] Cf. Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper Collins, 1954).

[132] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: E. P Dutton and Company, 1912), 461.

[133] See William Harmless, *Mystics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

God (alternatively labelled Truth, freedom, or *absolute reality),* in the form of experience. This final achievement is commonly depicted as pure ecstasy or another positive altered state of consciousness.[134] Accordingly, having the *God experience* (recognizing the divinity on the outside or the inside) depends solely on the seeker's determination in his quest to see through everyday reality or even become a sage.

Underhill, in her study on mysticism, states that "every failure to cope with a life situation must be laid, in the end, to a restriction of consciousness"[135]. Thus in a therapeutic context it is crucial to locate the place of every real-life trial in a mythical paradigm[136] because in myth it is known that a cure or resolution can only succeed when its origins are clear and explained. As previously demonstrated, this is part of the importance borne by creational myths. However, when addressing the need for balance, and considering myth as possessing hints about the path of *consciousness development*, it is important to note that the more fantastical and further from ordinary life a myth is, the harder it becomes to identify resemblances with everyday reality and problems and to extract knowledge from it. This reveals the importance of the mediator's role. This intermediary therapeutic figure (a priest, a sage, a shaman, a therapist, etc.) utilizes the similarity between the therapeutic course and the mythic trajectory. In therapy, the most important aim is to find the cause or origin of a mental complication, in order to be able to provide guidance. Hence this identification of a particular behavior with a corresponding mythical trajectory has the potential to contribute in a therapeutic way. The acquisition of such insight contributes to the particular treatment of the problem:

> 'in short was to "die" and be "resuscitated" in order to gain access to a fully responsible existence, open to spiritual values — so the patient undergoing analysis today must confront his own "unconscious" haunted by ghosts and monsters, in order to find psychic health and integrity and hence the world of cultural values.'[137]

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[134] Underhill, *Mysticism*, 451, 454.

[135] Campbell, *The Hero*, 111.

[136] The analytical psychologist must possess a vast mythologic knowledge, in parallel with the shamanic figure or the wise elder who hold all the stories. This represents their potential and effectiveness before a community.
Campbell, *The Hero*, 111p.

[137] In this excerpt note the placing of "the world of cultural values" as an inside reality, still to be discovered.
Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 208.

The implementation of *mystical* and *mythical dynamics* (investigation and confrontation) enables an understanding of 'ghosts and monsters' and hence an advantage over them.

Dreams and symbolic language

In Analytic Psychology, myth is the most genuine reflection of the psyche, reflecting not only its content but also its functioning. However, in the same way that myth embodies this structure, there are states of consciousness and psychic events which exhibit similar dynamics to, and equally reveal the structure of, myth in their forms. This correlation contributes to the revelation of myth's core concept and epiphanic conclusion (which is similar to the cathartic feeling in its nature).

The pattern that is present is myth can also be found in rituals, fairy tales, and dramas. Nevertheless, they all possess the quality of being consciously created and, for this reason, may be considered less genuine. However, opposing these examples of conscious expression, there is a *natural vehicle* where the same symbolic language is used, but in this case, unconsciously reproduced: dreams. Dreams sometimes even serve as an inspirational source for the formerly mentioned expressions. As Campbell explains, "dream is the personalized myth, myth [is] the depersonalized dream,"[138] both denoting the same archetypal material, the former addressing individual problems and the latter providing universal solutions.[139]

The symbolic language present in myths is the same as in dreams, sharing a corresponding creative identity. It is not a language to be automatically interpreted as a code but understood with complexity. According to Eric Fromm (1900 — 1980), who had a special relation with Jung's work and also contributed to the psychology of religion, "symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, exemplified as events in the outer world"[140] — though this world is free from any spatial and temporal restriction. The clearest bond between a myth and a dream is the language they use, the symbolism common to both. This language is no longer literally interpreted; nor does it depend strictly on

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[138] Campbell, *The Hero*, 17-18.

[139] Nise da Silveira, in her introduction to Jung, explained the main differences between the *great dream* and the *minor dream*. The great dream, more complex, would carry within itself pertinent symbology to the analysis, besides provoking particular feelings derived from the part of the psyche which is autonomous and collective, being deep in character and meaning.
See Nise da Silveira, *Jung: Vida e Obra* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1981).

[140] Eric Fromm, *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales, and Myths* (Kindle Edition), 18.

oracles. Since the rise of psychoanalysis, Freudian theories made the West start looking at dreams in another way; while Jung's contribution placed them in an analogous position to myth and inside a religious and philosophical frame. A deep understanding of a dream equates to the comprehension of a myth's message; this recognition maximizes the urge to understand dreams as clearly as possible. To Fromm, comprehension of the symbolic language present in a dream should not be restricted to the psychotherapist but should be available to everyone as a way to increase sensitivity towards this considered *source of wisdom*.[141]

> "Yet the fact remains that many of our dreams are, in both style and content, similar to myths, and we who find them strange and remote when we are awake have the ability to create these myth-like productions when we are asleep."[142]

This type of symbolism always stands for something beyond itself. It is an outer world language used to express happenings from the inner world (or the unconscious). Dreams communicate through universal symbols which do not belong to any specific culture or spoken language. The universality of these symbols is sustained by their appearance in different spaces and times: myths, rituals, and dreams forever reiterate themselves. An example expressing the motion of the inner world as an outside happening in myth would be the recurring hero's refusal to take his place in the adventure, and the following events of the story forcing him into it. Here there is a growing emotion; a negative, intense, and forceful feeling takes place. Fromm illustrates this dynamic as the development of a neurosis:

> "This is a mechanism which we find so characteristic of neurosis. An attitude is assumed as a defense against a danger, but then it grows far beyond its original defense function and becomes a neurotic symptom from which the person tries to be relieved".[143]

The Freudian psychoanalytic explanation also finds in dreams expressions of inner conflicts, assuming a movement from the outer world to the unconscious. Dreams then take place within the freedom provided by the end of conscious will.

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[141] Eric Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, 28, 207 et seq.

[142] Eric Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, 12-13.

[143] Eric Fromm, *The* Forgotten *Language*, 29.

> "Dreams are another part of behavior which Freud understands as an expression of unconscious strivings. He assumes that, as in the neurotic symptom or the error, the dream gives expression to unconscious strivings which we do not permit ourselves to be aware of and thus keep away from awareness when we are in full control of our thought. These repressed ideas and feelings become alive and find expression during sleep, and we call them dreams."[144]

Even though this definition partly reflects Jung's position towards the relation between dream and ego-consciousness, Freud, unlike Jung, does not embrace the idea of it holding a much deeper meaning. As Fromm explains: "Freud tended to see in the myth — as in the dream — only the expression of irrational antisocial impulses rather than the wisdom of past ages expressed in a specific language, that of symbols."[145] This last criticism instantly brings a contrast to the way Jung perceived both myth and dream. Jung's explanation does not entirely differ from Freud's, but it presents a deeper insight into the nature of dreams, pushing their definition to the religious realm, and assimilating the phenomenon of *religion* to the natural and universal phenomenon of dreaming:

> "(…) I am doubtful whether we can assume that a dream is something else than it appears to be. I am rather inclined to quote another Jewish authority, the Talmud, which says: *The dream is its own interpretation.* In other words, I take the dream for granted. The dream is such a difficult and intricate subject that I do not dare to make any assumptions about its possible cunning. The dream is a natural event (…) [it] occurs when consciousness and will are to a great extent extinguished. It seems (…) also to be found in people who are not neurotic. Moreover, we know so little about the psychology of the dream process that we must be more than careful when we introduce elements foreign to the dream itself into its explanation.
>
> For all these reasons I hold that our dream really speaks of religion and that it means to do so. Since the dream is elaborate and consistent it suggests a certain logic and a certain intention, that is, it is preceded by a motivation in the unconscious which finds direct expression in the dream content."[146]

The dream for Jung is not a direct expression of conflict, as it is for Freud, though there is an agreement that it emerges from the unconscious and it does carry meaning. When Jung states that a 'dream really speaks of religion' this religious aspect is defined by the numinous trait of its emotional weight and symbolic features. The referred 'consistency' and 'certain logic' points out the mythic logic (the paradigm), leaving the 'certain intention' to be postulated.

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[144] Eric Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, 61.

[145] Eric Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, 208.

[146] Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 31.

Dreams, in religious symbolic terms, are poorly explored psychic events; this reflects the human devaluation of transcendent matters. Despite being a representation of the unconscious, they no longer carry a social function of extraordinary significance, as they once did. Though placing great value on the interpretation of a dream may appear primitive, Analytical Psychology states that dreams bear within themselves unconscious insight to be explored and comprehended by the conscious psyche, serving above all for the maintenance of the psyche. As explored above, dreams and myths share a representational language; similarly, they share an *insight,* which "contains practical rules for the guidance of man."[147] Such rules express *psychic truths* that, when properly understood, provide meaning when such meaning is necessary. The Analytical claim is that they teach the individual how to face life's obstacles, with their elements, tricks, or clear advice about the comprehension of a challenge and its subsequent overcoming. Nevertheless, even from an Analytic Psychological perspective, dreams, myths, and fairy tales must not be confused with a strict guideline of behavior but seen as a paradigmatic path encompassing therapeutic attributes towards the creation of consciousness.

Alluding to the transcendent component in myth and to better synthesize Jung's view of the dream and the insight it brings, it could be said that the dream is a *religious happening* of variable intensity. Thus, regarding the numinosity of the happening and because of its experiential shape, the dream gives way to a highly relevant notion in the scope of Analytical Psychology: the idea of Religious Experiences, which encompasses not only dreams and the altered states of consciousness in ritual but also all kinds of *transcendent happenings*.

The *great dreams*[148] are those that incorporate mythical, symbolic language[149], so it can be "understood" by the conscious psyche (even though it may not be immediately noticed as imminent aid). The myth and the dream pour from the same source, and for this reason they show similar traits.

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[147] Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 20.

[148] The dream can be an attempt to bring to the conscious psyche the governing aspects of the Self, that although needed by the ego did not yet find their way into action.

[149] "Mandala imagery", "Transcendent figures", "United opposites" and expressions of nature are considered common symbols of the Self. Another relevant symbol present not just in Samuels' work but mentioned by Jung and receiving special attention in Perterson's studies is the *uroboros,* a symbol of death and resurrection. Personal and psychological death, "signifying spiritual regeneration, is in line with Jung's thesis that regression to the mother is horrifying and attractive at the same time."
Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 128.

> "Experiences of the psyche's symbolic function have an unmistakably numinous character; at the least they stir up profound feelings, indicating the presence of the archetype to which they allude. Because it allows the experience of the sacred to enter the personal sphere, the symbol is partly accessible to knowledge and partly ineffable; it is the only way to approach"[150]

Due to this 'ineffable' nature, one of the main proposals of Analytical Psychology is that what cannot in any circumstances be clearly understood by the intellect still deserves attention. The treatment can only analyze and profit from numinous effects — that is, it can only observe the direct impact of the experience (but never permeate it). Thus, theory and thought try to conceptualize it, even when its direct incorporation in psychotherapy appears inaccessible.

[150] Corbett, *The Religious Function*. 96-97.

VI
RELEVANT ASPECTS OF THE PSYCHE IN ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY

The rejection of a meaning and healing value of myth reveal a lack of interest in what lies beyond the firm grips of intellectualism when it comes to transcendent concerns. Despite representing the autonomous part of the psyche, and by that very fact carrying enormous therapeutic weight, myth is psychologically overlooked by conventional therapies.

For the post-Jungians, the human mythopoetic capacity as a creative process has unconscious roots that pave the way to mythologic development and cultural reaffirmation. As such, the very origin of a myth is not upheld in any particular way; no sudden 'revelation' or cultural theory is taken into account. Instead, the relevance of myth is upheld by people's own imitative behavior, where myth thrives just by being present and making its cultural statement due to its archetypal nature, no matter its origins. It slowly makes itself 'abstracted into play, formalized into drama and story, crystallized into myth and codified into religion — and only then criticized in philosophy.'[151] Lucy Huskinson shares a similar view, drawing attention to this unattainable nature:

> "The boundaries of myth can be extended even further, beyond the collective realm, to include that of the transcendent, thereby suggesting that myth is autonomous and seeks conscious expression in us, through our stories."[152]

The psyche has its working forces with its own dynamics, where specific parts take over in different moments. These different forces and tendencies of behavior are the archetypes, that as abstract entities are defined by their implications. The archetype is the *way* a particular experience is lived, not the object experienced but the shape of the relation; it is an emotional wave towards the object.

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[151] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning*, 78.

[152] Huskinson, "Introduction: Ordinarily Mythical," 3.

Samuels locates it within the individual: “the archetype may be said to be found in the eye of the beholder and not in that which he beholds.”[153]

All the recognized patterns present in myth, fairy tales, etc., are located by Jung in the unconscious level of the psyche. The psyche’s religious imagery led him to observe a commonality that was first most evident in psychotic individuals. These archetypal structures that reproduce themselves and carry numinosity were defined as *primordial images*. And from their apparent universal cultural presence, Jung defended that no theory of migration was able to explain the rootedness and coherence of this phenomenon: leading to another well known concept in Analytic Psychology, the *collective unconscious*[154] — the home of the archetypes.

The therapeutic appreciation of these patterns provides a different way of approaching illness. A disorder can be categorized as an alien will which has “nothing to do with one’s essence”. If therapy does not ensure analysis and confrontation (as metaphorically happens in myth), the unconscious factors sustaining the illness do not become clear. This happens because there is no cultural preparation for this personal enquiry, and also because of the frictions of such a task.[155] So the therapist undertakes steps to expose the pressing unconscious archetypal influence in action,[156] by giving attention to it and trying to integrate its effects and possibly its mesmerizing *numinous* virtues (that are not always positive, depending on the complex; because as seen, numinosity can effortlessly "flood" the individual, throwing the ego-consciousness into confusion).

Defining the archetype

The archetype, as an innate structure, is not considered a creation of Analytical Psychology. Its traits have been present in many fields and forms, for example in Chomsky’s universal grammar (already rejecting behaviorist systems); in Piaget’s theory of cognitive development (here, not only

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[153] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 43.

[154] Not relating to the Freudian psychoanalytic unconscious, which was essentially based on repressed content. Nevertheless, the possibility of its existence was not denied: "Freud also allowed for the possibility that some elements in the unconscious have never been conscious, a point which, if taken up, would tend towards a concept such as archetype”.
Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 20.

[155] Recognizing an unconscious base to the illness is not the same as attributing to it an esoteric or karmic function. It is a form to identify innate patterns that are also there to sustain recovery, but get misunderstood due to a lack of cultural cultivation. The attribution of meaning to illness works as a bridge that ensures a subtlety in the analytical process, because it makes possible the differentiation of the conscious and the unconscious through the identification of autonomous psychic developments (e.g., a neurotic alien will).

[156] And not just the God-archetype, although this would stand for the ultimate therapeutic act.

relying on environmental experience but also on biological maturation and an innate schemata); with Lévi-Strauss, who defended the universality of opposing systems in myth and ritual, and valued the synthesis arising from that interaction; and in Tibetan Buddhism, with the idea of a primordial mind emanating its forms.[157] All these views reinforce the idea of the archetype as an inborn feature — an underlying potential structure waiting to be fulfilled.

Jung did not invent the *archetypal medicine*[158]; he just drew attention to the paramount therapeutic benefits derived from observing the archetypes — identifying them as a spiritual force, in order to contextualize and address them in a spiritual context. Some authors may even associate Jung's archetypes with the Platonic Theory of Forms, because the essentialism reflected in them. Also, as influencing figures, Jung himself extensively quotes Nietzsche's and Goethe's works as possessing numerous archetypal characters. Even Freud came to consider the archetypes in 1918, already late in his career, in *From the History of an Infantile Neurosi*s. It goes as follows:

> "There remain two problems, of the many that it raises, which seem to me to deserve special emphasis. The first relates to the phylogenetically inherited schemata, which, like the categories of philosophy, are concerned with the business of 'placing' the impressions derived from actual experience. I am inclined to take the view that they are precipitates from the history of human civilization."[159]

Here, Freud reflects upon the organizational role of this 'phylogenetically inherited schemata' concerning experience; although he soon returned to the Oedipus complex, classifying it as the best-known scheme. He underlined the autonomy and superiority of these structures towards the conscious psyche, and recognized the plurality of archetypes.

> "The Oedipus complex, which comprises a child's relation to his parents, is one of them — is, in fact, the best known member of the class. Wherever experiences fail to fit in with the hereditary schema, they become remodeled in the imagination — a process which might very profitably be followed out in detail. It is precisely such cases that are calculated to convince us of the independent

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[157] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 16, 57.

[158] Archetypal medicine considers diseases as an archetypal / spiritual energy that seeks externalization. The known chemical imbalance responsible for disturbing affects is only seen as a consequence of this pressing need for spiritual support.
Tacey, *Gods and Diseases*, 27.

[159] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. XVII) (London: The Hogarth Press, 1918), 119.

existence of the schema. We are often able to see the schema triumphing over the experience of the individual."[160]

However, in contemporary psychoanalysis, such remarks about the prevalence of this 'hereditary schema' bear no substantial weight: the unconscious is formed by repression and externalized through pathologies.

The recognition of these unconscious/conscious dynamics is of primal importance for Jung, because the value of Analytical Psychology lies in the acknowledgment of *major psychic tendencies* — perceived through the observation of the mind and its vicissitudes (that is, the consequences of the archetype in life). To better understand this idea, Corbett establishes the following connection, criticizing it and making his post-Jungian proposal to settle the concept:

> "Just as the physicist is not concerned with the origin of the laws of thermodynamics, but is able to observe and understand matter because of them, so, too, the psychologist in our approach to the psyche can discern a set of laws whose origin is unknown."
> (…)
> Jung himself confuses this issue because of a circularity in his writing; he suggests that the archetypes are collective patterns that grow out of the deposit of innumerable human experiences, but also that they structure experience. Both these propositions could be true if the archetype is evolving, but not otherwise. By assuming the axiomatic primacy of the archetype as an a priori pattern maker, we avoid this chicken-egg problem. It is essential to argue in this way for the sake of consistency; it would make no sense to assume that the laws of thermodynamics arose because matter kept behaving in a certain way."[161]

Main structure: ego, Self, and archetypes

The opposites, conscious and unconscious, are represented by two leading systems, the 'ego' and the 'Self', respectively. The 'ego' is the personal variation of the individual, possessing common main traits and emotional idiosyncrasies that attribute particularities to the individual. Like the Self, the ego is visceral to one's experience of life. It is born out of contact with the external world and the inner world, prompting the creation of consciousness. The ego is deeply related to memory and as the center of consciousness it can only be conscious of what it can collect and catalog. A stable and well brought up ego provides the necessary foundation to cope with the

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[160] Freud, S. (1918). The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud (Vol. XVII). London, The Hogarth Press. 119p.

[161] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 57-59.

vicissitudes of life without experiencing excessive damage,[162] making the realization of whatever stands beyond ego-consciousness possible.

Against this background, the 'Self' is "the prime agent in the production of deep, awesome and numinous experience, having a self-regulatory and healing nature,"[163] representing potential complete integration of the individual and the personality. The Self is an agent of pattern maintenance, a "synthesizer and mediator of opposites within the psyche."[164] Devices of various forms are used to evoke the Self through an artificial simulation of conflict, bringing about novelty to be dealt with, engendering consciousness and shaping the ego — strengthening it, rescuing the conscious psyche from the bareness of instinct and attributing to it other features. The Self is related to the creation of meaning in an attempt to satisfy its primary function: the attribution of meaning to life.

In opposition to the conscious psyche (ruled by its ego figure), the unconscious psyche has its Self-figure, the root of the projected God-image, ultimately depicted as the *God archetype*. This is also the reason behind the difficulty of getting to know the Self, because the experience that one may get to testify is only an image of it; part of the complexity is due to this always-reflecting-quality, forever pointing to an unreachable otherness.

The Self, the transpersonal Self, the divine, the dominant archetype, and God are all the same when psychologically considered. There are other variations in the Jungian range of interpretation, sometimes possessing not only one, but multiple centers. This brings forward discussion over the singular or plural nature of the Self, resulting in a monotheistic or polytheistic conception of it.[165] Thus, in Hinduism and Greek mythology, Brahma is the first God, and Zeus is king of the Gods, so they both represent the Self as main archetypes. They share the space with minor archetypes that may eventually upstage all the others in order to make themselves heard when needed. Following this example, the unconscious can be viewed as a house to a pantheon.

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[162] For Jung, the strong, well nurtured ego is the one that develops a stable relation with the unconscious — the one that does not become fragmented before the strain of unconscious content, but knows how to manage that anxiety.

[163] Healing in this sense does not mean the physical curing of injuries, but being able to reach a peaceful state of mind. However, it does also have a physical effect when considering psychosomatic illness, because its psychological roots are then addressed.
Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 73.

[164] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 73.

[165] David Tacey, "Twisting and turning with James Hillman: From anima to world soul, from academia to pop," in *Post-Jungians Today: Key papers in contemporary analytical psychology*, ed. Ann Casement (London: Routledge, 1998), 232.

The other archetypes are seen as similar forces, standing in parallel with mythologies where different gods carry different names and personalities. These *unconscious deities* communicate with the conscious mind, as myth shares divine deeds and lessons. Therefore, the experienced image of the Self is equivalent to the spirit of God. In the Christian tradition, this contact is translated through the holy ghost that visits the worshipper; the same underlying dynamic is expressed in the so-called 'spiritual possessions.' The particularities of these *archetypal deities* represent not just different spirits, qualities, and feelings, but also a very defined set of skills or even a cause; and their protégées, in the Christian case, resemble the saints and their different domains. Furthermore, the archetypes go beyond the personification of the divine to reach philosophical principles, e.g., the concept of *reincarnation* and its broad presence when different traditions are compared; it is a sign of how an archetype conveys the same idea in different mythologies.

> "The Pharaohs of Egypt were thought to be incarnations of the sun god Ra, who took the form of the monarch in order to impregnate the queen (…) In the Greek pantheon, Zeus, Apollo and other gods commonly took human form for specific purposes. In Hindu mythology Vishnu incarnates when the world is in great need, to prevent the victory of evil and restore righteousness. In Buddhism, a Bodhisattva incarnates in order to help liberate mankind. Even in Judaism, the Cabbalistic notion of the emanation of a beam of divine will from the unknowable Godhead into the world of matter implies a 'downward' movement of spirit, as if the whole material universe is a kind of embodiment of God. For the Gnostics, the divine spark is unhappily trapped in matter and requires a process of awakening and reunion with the Source, while the alchemists struggled to purify matter so that the spirit could incarnate within it. Finally, of course, the idea of incarnation is central to Christianity, which expresses the unique idea of the death and resurrection of the incarnate God, as a once and for all historical event (…) "[166]

All these different traditions share common ideas, but the specificities of them vary widely. This type of variation precisely defines the role and nature of the archetype.

Psychological Complex in the creational dynamic

The encounter of practical experiences with the archetypes generates *complexes*. For example, the archetypal potential to experience *a brother* is fulfilled by the experience derived from a brotherly relation, forming a Brother Complex (*fig. 1*); then, something that was unconscious

[166] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 128.

finds its path to become conscious (the outside world contributes to the realization of this particular inside structure).

Figure 1 - Brother Complex

Complex formation process (particular: e.g. brother complex)
Brother Archetype ↓ **Formation process of the brother complex** ↑ Brotherly relation in everyday life interaction

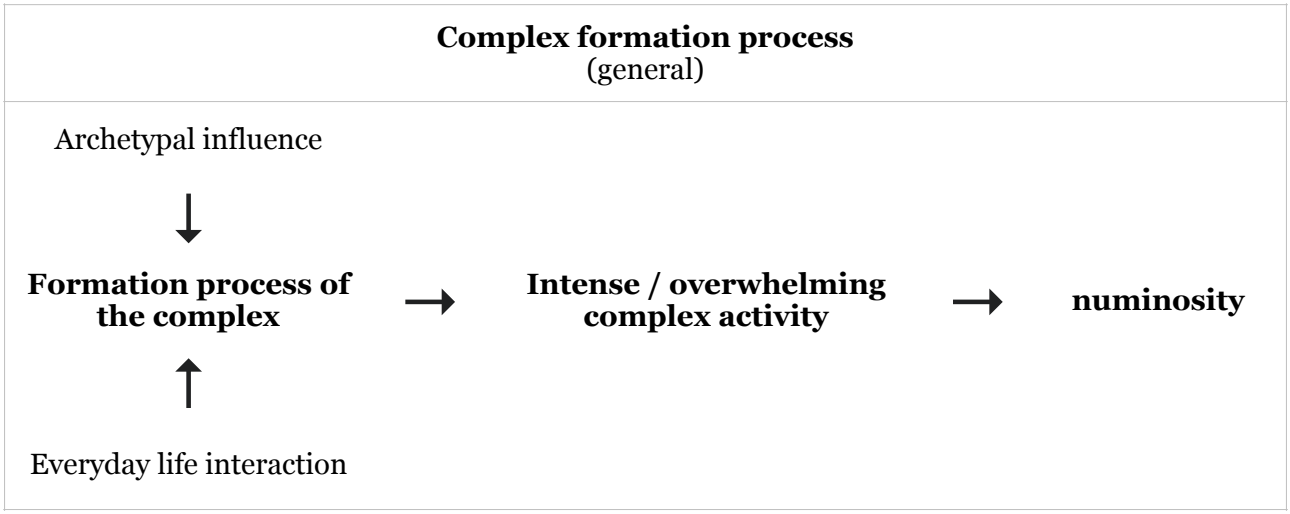
The archetypes tend to make themselves present in order to be *felt as particular*, to exist as relating to that individual's ego. For this reason and following this example, the lack of a brotherly figure may find its realization not in an actual brother, but in another subject capable of providing companionship, fraternalism, or sibling rivalry. Corbett explains in detail the religious relevance of such psychic movement:

> "this process involves the accretion of personal experience around an organizational core (…) when an archetype is felt relatively directly within the psyche, its effect is numinous and it is felt as Other. Phenomenologically there is no difference between these experiences and those described as the experience of spirit in the religious literature. This overlap means that archetypal processes are not only of developmental but also of religious significance. Therefore within the logic of the religious approach to the psyche, the personality is organized by means of spirit. Spirit as archetype forms the core of complexes which determine the structure of personality; these complexes are at the same time spirit in human dress. Because the terminologies of psychology and theology differ when they describe archetypal experiences, a pervasive but erroneous sense has arisen that religious and psychological approaches to the person are describing factors that are different in kind. This split has been fostered by the fact that our culture has partitioned off religious experience as if it had nothing to do with normal human development. We are not used to the idea that *elements of the divine are important informing the very structure of the mind*."[167]

[167] Corbett, *The Religious Function*, 60.

What makes an archetype to be felt directly can be the reenactment of myth through ritual, which contains archetypal resemblances; then eventually experiencing a genuine, spontaneous, and awe-inspiring episode that communicates with its archetypal reality and thus differs from ordinary everyday interaction. If in religious literature these experiences are defined as 'spiritual', suggesting that spirit and archetype share the exemplified relation, then it is important to notice that spiritual experiences are essential to human development (just as fundamental as the archetype is). According to this logic, they are the base of all personal development, the very structure that when ardently felt reveals its numinosity, its 'spirituality' — that is, through intense external stimuli a "spiritual charge" of a happening is felt (*fig. 2*).

Figure 2 - Complex formation and numinosity



As the possible 'sibling rivalry' mentioned above indicates, not every input made through the 'everyday life interaction' variable can set off the development of a healthy complex. For example, negatively experiencing parental archetypes may jeopardize one's ability to develop in a healthy course, increasing the need for therapy. Nevertheless, if the archetype develops appropriately, that is, in a way that is compatible with the other elements of the psyche, thereby allowing a harmonic existence with the social body around the individual (or at least with less potential for conflict), the need for therapy decreases.

The Self presented as God in REs

As seen, archetypal forms are identified in different traditions through the repetition of patterns; "(…) both forms of awareness — psychological experience of the (S)elf and religious experience — are based on the same thing, namely something experienced as a comprehensive,

integrated unity".[168] Pressuring the ego, the Self tries to be realized, and without spiritual guidance (which usually happens through a determined traditional course) to properly channel the experience, to set direction or somehow fulfill this need, the neglected inner force autonomously finds ways to "make statements". Put differently, if no vision outside the conscious is sought, the unconscious still tends to *present itself*. Most likely, the experience will not be recognized as such — because spiritual (or archetypal) reality is only perceived outside the comfort zone as much as preparation allows. To address that need, religions reflecting the Self through the preached image of God provide "guidelines" to the path towards the sacred. In the case of mysticism, when distinctive forms of mysticism are mentioned and their differences considered, the worship habits also reveal distinct ways of reaching God. In Analytical Psychology, this psychic dynamic stands for the involvement, or contact with the Self archetype that happens beyond conscious or logical categories (e.g., the language). Jung notices how the God-image is blended with the Self, to acquire cultural labels thereafter:

> "As one can never distinguish empirically between a symbol of the Self and a God-image, the two ideas, however much we try to differentiate them, always appear blended together, so that the (S)elf appears synonymous with the inner Christ of the Johannine and Pauline writings. Psychologically speaking, the domain of 'gods' begins where consciousness leaves off, for at that point man is already at the mercy of the natural order… To symbols of wholeness that come to him from there he attaches names which vary according to time and place."[169]

Corbett adds, relating directly to the mythologic religious core:

> "It is also no exaggeration to say that the Self is the real subject of all mythology — it merely changes its clothing according to local conditions. From a psychological point of view, different religious systems project the Self onto different personalities, and document different experiences of the Self. Their doctrines indicate the vicissitudes of the subsequent elaboration of these experiences. (…) the only criterion being its numinosity. Jung recognized that this approach allows true universality: 'I actually prefer the term "Self" because I am talking to Hindus as well as Christians, and I do not want to divide but to unite'"[170]

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[168] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 78.

[169] *Collected Works of C. G. Jung: XI,* para. 231 as cited in Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 78.

[170] Corbett, The Religious Function, 45-46.

Religion in this paradigm is the conscious articulation of the divine that resides in the *unconscious* — the God within the psyche — garnished with cultural fluctuations derived from experience. For instance, the Rig Veda depicts a matrix, prior to any image, that only becomes *something* by means of external experience (i.e., the conscious contribution). It becomes the worshipped shape (*fig. 3*),[171] which is generally similar inside the same credo. Being modified through this process, religions have been for a long time converting the whole into the partial, to be able to approach it from a limited point of view, addressing it socially. The very Rig Veda also, like most religions, creates an image that turns out anthropomorphized, because any attempt to define the Self would prove to be undoubtedly human and naturally limited.

Figure 3 - Psychic layers: image formation

The transformation of the ungraspable into narratives diminishes its numinous importance because of the conscious/profane contribution. Following this logic, this dynamic suggests that the questioning and abandonment of pre-formed divine figures would allow the numinous core of the experience to be felt more directly (without nurturing disbelief). For example, experiencing the God-image in a more advanced mystical state, that deeply deconstructs the image reinforced by tradition. Additionally, a parallel can be drawn between the rejection of religion and the rise of mental illness, where a lack of reliance on tradition contributes to the misunderstanding of the numinous. Bearing that in mind, religious traditions occupy a dubious nurturing position that can also lead to deceitfulness: a well-established religious system can find itself preventing one's genuine contact with the sacred whilst at the same time providing a mild but already well-established tool to achieve psychic balance. In Christianity, for example, some dogmas endorse repressive behavior, restricting carnal pleasure and avoiding ecstatic altered states of consciousness, profoundly contributing to a lack of freedom to experience God in one's own way.

[171] Taylor, E. (1996). William James on consciousness beyond the margin. New Jersey, Princeton University Press. 64p.

This particular form of viewing the Self was developed by Jung to address this exact imprisonment of the ego, as much as the growing lack of religious subjugation. Thus Jung reveals the psychic foundation of the messianic figure who upholds the human capacity to experience God; then, he ultimately contributes with an alternative tool for ego-deconstruction and Self-support. As Tacey explains:

> "The Self is a transcendental concept that cannot be known directly by the ego, but only indirectly through symbol, dream and myth. In imagining the Self, it is as if Jung is reinventing the concept of a redeemer for a psychological age. He sees our scientific era as having largely rejected religion, but he wants to reinvent religion in psychological terms, replacing the Christ figure with the archetype of the Self."[172]

And Jung reinforces:

> "The achievement of a synthesis of conscious and unconscious contents, and the conscious realization of the archetype's effects upon the conscious contents, represents the climax of a concentrated spiritual and psychic effort, in so far as this is undertaken consciously and of set purpose. (…) the synthesis can also be prepared in advance and brought to a certain point — James's 'bursting point' — unconsciously, whereupon it irrupts into consciousness of its own volition and confronts the latter with the formidable task of assimilating the contents that have burst in upon it, yet without damaging the viability of the two systems, i.e., of ego-consciousness on the one hand and the irrupted complex on the other. Classical examples of this process are Paul's conversion and the Trinity vision of Nicholas of Flüe.[173]

The except summarizes the exact representation of the psychic mechanics behind an RE, the mechanics that lead the individual to his main goal in Analytical Psychology.

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[172] Tacey, *Gods and Diseases*, 58.

[173] Carl G. Jung, *On the Nature and Functioning of the Psyche,* In V. de Laszlo ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969/1990), 83., as cited in Susan L. DeHoff, Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience: A New Paradigm Grounded in Psychology and Reformed Theology, (Boston: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). 81.

VII
THE ROLE OF SUFFERING

A chaotic outbreak can be driven by any event capable of underlining the incapacity of a fragile ego to manage a significant volume of distress, thus shattering the personality. This happening is equivalent to the novelty that starts the mythologic journey, causing an imbalance in the *known territory*; religiously speaking, that is the moment when the most genuine spiritual submission may take place.[174] This helpless state of mind leads to the discovery that one cannot deal with a crisis on his own, finally evoking a greater force.[175] In order to give direction to that dynamic, suffering is, according to Analytical Psychology, to be genuinely felt, in a way that the religious function of the psyche can bring about change, rather than interpreting suffering in a limited way and hence erroneously placing or distorting it.

Overcoming chaos

Order opposes the unpredictable and tempestuous wilderness. It is civilization and culture that keeps the individual *inside protective gates* against the terror of chaos, avoiding the encounter with what is beyond the familiar universe. Peterson, like Tacey and Corbett, explains the danger of being caught up by chaos, and its unavoidable nature:

> "involuntary exposure to chaos means an accidental encounter with the forces that undermine the known world. The affective consequences of such encounter can be overwhelming."[176]

He then goes on to argue that chaos, as it is cosmogonically depicted, is a necessary evil, something that one has to go through in order to avoid stagnation.

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[174] This can also be seen as the creation of an escape, resulting in the *spiritualization* of one's illness, attributing meaning to it through 'spiritualism' or trying to dogmatize it.
Cf. Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (Toronto: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978).

[175] David Tacey, *The Emergency of Contemporary Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2004). 209.

[176] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning,* 18.

Pathologically, the unknown is the motor of anxiety, which can be read as the 'unexpected' mythically emanating chaos. Then, every disruptive event is a passage between the known behaviorist world and the to-be-explored unknown. If all the mythical *trials* are well explored and all the lessons collected through a strong cultural upbringing, then this disruption is a hopeful promise for the well-settled personality that walks into it voluntarily; if not, it becomes a source of threat that may fragment the individual (exposure to novelty without preparation is then placed as the root cause of distress).[177] Such a conception does not endorse any form of self-provoked suffering or self-inflicted pain; instead, it is about the willingness to feel it if necessary, and as such avoiding being kept hostage by it. In this light, being vulnerable is the main condition for the *creation of consciousness* and the overcoming of the inherent fear of the unknown.[178] Then, fear and anxiety are closely related to the immeasurable *waters of chaos* that oppose order and rationality. Still following Peterson's logic:

> "Refusal of metanoia means inevitable intermixture of Earth and the underworld; conscientious acceptance, by contrast, produces a characteristic transformation of personality, of action, imagination and thought."[179]

The refusal of metanoia[180] means disaster, as a consequence of the pressure at the *threshold* of the conscious psyche. On the other hand, the conscious acceptance of it produces the needed transformation of personality, fostering the right action and posture. It stimulates intimacy with "unmanageable" emotions, contributing to the capacity to handle mental turmoil, spiritual experiences, and the distressing insight born from the psychotherapeutic work.

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[177] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning*, 459.

[178] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning,* 308, 335.

[179] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning,* 372.

[180] Metanoia in a Jungian context has a slight oscillation from its general meaning, referring to the complete transformation born from the process of individuation; the synthesis of this transformation can be observed in the *Secret of the Golden Flower*, based on a taoist treaty deeply related with inner alchemy / spiritual rebirth. It was also the text that had a very relevant impact on Jung's life, being the linking and enlightening element between his cultural Western life and the Eastern world — leading to a holistic understanding at a psychic level of interpretation.
Cf. Carl G. Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life* (London: Harvest Publishing, 1931).

Suffering

It was shown that the archetypal forces of the unconscious are represented in myth as characters — Gods or spirits — having their own cravings and desires. In Analytical Psychology, the illness is translated by the strength of the unconscious over the personality, affecting the individual but aiming at the establishment of a final balance. It happens by the breaking of the personality through the expression of the unconscious. This leads to suffering, which becomes a prerequisite for spiritual growth: it is how such forces make themselves present and therefore known. Tacey, embracing intuition, assumes a much more direct and essentialist posture towards these forces. Immediately placing them as psychological disturbances in the paradigm of spiritual development, he connects behavioral misconducts with the religious/mythologic significance of them and criticizes other non-religious therapeutic postures. The following quote resumes this relation:

> "Neurosis, sexual dysfunction, incest and child abuse, cancer phobia, alcoholism, depression, self-harm and suicidal impulses – are primarily diseases of the spirit and only secondarily diseases of the body. This is why the medical model as it stands can do little to heal these problems. It can reduce symptoms in some cases and alleviate suffering, but it cannot resolve or transform these pathologies unless it introduces the dimension of spirit or soul into the equation."[181]

In agreement with Peterson, Tacey also interprets the emergence of disorders as resulting from the lack of a voluntary approach to suffering, using religious and spiritual dynamics to justify the necessity of such an approach. The source of anxiety, depression, and ultimately despair originates from a self-preserving impulse, avoiding integration of the unconscious and leading to an over-identification with the ego. If this is true, then religious experiences (as a way to testify something outer, splendid and without any attachment with the social/material world) are an unconscious effort to relieve "excessive ego-centeredness."[182] Due to the lack of ritualistic / cultural preparation in modern times, there is no immediate surrender of the ego, and the unconscious pressure towards its own realization and healing can be erroneously perceived as illness. At the same time, the conscious psyche keeps pushing away unconscious elements (translated as a neurotic action) to maintain its

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[181] Tacey, *Gods and Diseases*, 27, 129.

[182] An unreasonable identification with one's personality, a pathologic egocentric behavior, leads to a more intense and harmful experience of ordinary emotions.

place as the psychic center of energy. This whole dynamic is an effort by the unconscious to establish a link between itself and the conscious, hence restoring self-balance.

> "Reconnection is healing, because through reconnection a link is established to something greater than ourselves, and the energy of life can move freely again. This is a powerful idea since it reminds us of the meaning of the word religion, based on the Latin religio, derived from ligare ('bind, connect'), and re ('again'). Religion means to 'reconnect' or 'bind again (…)."[183]

This reconciliation is, for the therapist, a *healing* benefit due to the new meaning that the mental symptoms may assume in such a numinous episode and the concern with the *cure* (as differing from healing) becomes totally "secondary".

Paradigmatic behavior

Myth has been the keeper of God: a drive to bring about numinous feelings, having a considerable impact on the unconscious; utterly *sui generis,* the subject of myth could as well be defined as *the emergence of God.*[184] Therapies sensible to these narratives and the inherent patterns that reflect the psyche and the spirit are important because of their attempt to bring about the mythical and mystical *splendor,* redemption, or atonement (which is analogous to psychic healing). Moreover, as previously observed, the reification of religious and ritualistic cultural traits is used in this process as a way that to understand patients better, creating parallels and comparisons to attribute context to particular cases, generating paradigmatic situations.

In Peterson's work an effort to elucidate major archetypes can be observed.[185] As a post-Jungian, Peterson encourages constant contact with possible sources of anxiety. Deeply influenced by the Jungian thought, he explains the psychological importance of myth and its symbolic value: from the known and conscious territory to the profound and unconscious.

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[183] Tacey, *Gods and Diseases*, 217.

[184] For Jung, some dogmatic Christian statements can reflect intra-psychic truths, just as many other assertions from a variety of religions.

[185] As the great mother, the father, the son, and the hero (the latter assuming the role of mediator between chaos and order, being the one in myth that takes on the adventure).

> "The known is explored territory, a place of stability and familiarity; it is the "city of God," as profanely realized. It finds metaphorical embodiment in myths and narratives describing the community, the kingdom or the state.
> (…)
> Myth portrays what is known, and performs a function that if limited to that, might be regarded as paramount in importance. But myth also presents information that is far more profound — almost unutterably so, once (I would argue) properly understood. We all produce models of what is and what should be, and how to transform one into the other. We change our behavior, when the consequences of that behavior are not what we would like. But sometimes mere alteration in behavior is insufficient. We must change not only what we do, but what we think is important. This means reconsideration of the nature of the motivational significance of the present, and reconsideration of the ideal nature of the future. This is a radical, even revolutionary transformation, and it is a very complex process in its realization — but mythic thinking has represented the nature of such change in great and remarkable detail."[186]

In its structure, myth presents this lifelike known world which later, in the threshold of the adventure, threatens all that has been built with the unknown — with novelty. The protagonist, the archetypal hero, is the one that at first changes his behavior in the learning process; and when such changes are not enough to succeed in his adventure, the whole reevaluation of his motives takes place. Sometimes the searched and needed *insight* is the recognition of egotistic behavior, self-centered drives, and self-preserving desires. The transformation that comes from this is revolutionary because sacrifice is present, what is seen as important changes and becomes no longer relevant, impacting directly how a person acts. For such a radical change to occur, the archetypal hero voluntarily gives up on his self-preserving desires, opening himself to the prominent novelty.

Peterson later continues, defining this threatening unknown (or in Jungian parlance: 'collective unconscious'):

> "The archetypal hero makes order out of chaos, brings peace to the world, and restructures society when it has become rigid and anachronistic. The "collective unconscious" that constitutes the basis for shared religious mythology is in fact the behavior, the procedures, that have been generated, transmitted, imitated, and modified by everyone who has ever lived, everywhere. Images of these behaviors and of the transcendent "place" where they occur (the universe of chaos and order) constitute metaphors, symbolic images. Metaphors mediate between our procedural wisdom and our explicit knowledge."[187]

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[186] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning*, 14.

[187] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning*, 94.

Order here is explained as the cyclic result of the encounter between the archetypal hero and the chaotic dimension. Myth's teachings that are reinforced and transmitted culturally are depicted as possessing a linking function between these two different sides, the 'procedural' that expresses archetypal established *ways,* and the 'explicit knowledge' which is related to the realm of ordinary things, and gathered through one's individual experience and memory. The influence of this archetypal behavior in the individual is also stressed:

> "We learn to imitate (and to remember) not individual heroes, the "objective" historical figures of the past, but what those heroes represented: the pattern of action that made them heroes. That pattern is the act of voluntary and successful encounter with the unknown, the generation of wisdom through exploration."[188]

This generation of wisdom stands for the previously seen *creation of consciousness* and the process of individuation, and both are born from the learned pattern of action present in myth — the pattern of action that provides the correct *tools* to survive during the "tempestuous adventures."

The Religious Function of the Psyche

Jung's theory of the *religious function of the psyche* or *the transcendent function* is about valuing this learning process taught by myth, and at the same time setting man free from this narrative. Myth has its intrinsic limitations (i.e., the rigidity of dogma and the literalism towards the folklore) and more importantly, the distance drawn between the modern individual and the almost stigmatized narratives. The aim, then, of Analytical Psychology is to explore the symbolic content of myth as much as its presence and unconscious influence (once the unconscious communicates through the same symbolic language). It aims to make the recently forgotten dynamics of the psyche, long taught by myth, available not only to those who have faith and belong to a credo or tribe but to everyone. This is done through the attention to the many ways that archetypes manifest and work in therapy — collecting experience and interpreting it.

The *transcendent function* is then a natural form of understanding and facing a connection with the unconscious. As Samuels summarizes:

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[188] Peterson, *Maps of Meaning*, 81.

> "Jung called this process the 'transcendent function' to emphasize how opposites that could dialogue with each other and engage in mutual influence might actually do so by transcending their old positions in consciousness and unconsciousness and finding a new position, attached to the ego. The ego is holding the tension of the opposites to let a mediatory symbol come through— a facilitation of the processes of the self which permit the unconscious-conscious transcendence. The symbol presents a way of moving from 'either-or' to 'and' by going beyond the limitations of logical discourse or commonsense; the symbol communicates its message in a way which can be seen as the only possible one. The experience of 'and-ness' is central to psychological change. What is involved is more than a crude combining of two possible solutions to a problem. Rather the transcendent function mediates between a person and the possibility of change by providing, not an answer, but a choice. Apart from the moral courage which is necessary to face change, making a choice involves discrimination by the ego of the possibilities and then some sort of balanced assessment of these."[189]

To define 'transcendent' properly and in order to better understand in a way that is relevant to the present intention, the following definition by Jeffrey Miller in *The Transcendent Function* should be taken in account:

> "the word transcendent was used by Jung to signify the transition from one attitude to another (…) Explaining how such unconscious contents could be elicited and brought into a dialogue with consciousness, Jung stated, "It is exactly as if a dialogue were taking place between two human beings with equal rights."[190]

There is an implicit obstacle within transcendence, and a movement towards this obstacle; ideally, there would be no avoidance. The ego-conscious attention, due to the fulfillment of hedonistic desires (in the so-called *culture of pleasure*), has its unconscious antithesis in unfulfilled spiritual cravings, which represent one of the obstacles. The lack of nourishment of the spiritual component increases the Self's need for making itself felt and present, forcing an encounter between what is 'conscious and satisfied' and what is 'unconscious and still craving for realization.' In this psychic conflict, the opposite sides try to overpower one another. There are two possible outcomes from this mediatory struggle: (1) an unhealed split forever seeking closure or (2) the ego may find the

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[189] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 47.

[190] Jeffrey C. Miller, *The Transcendent Function of the Psyche: Jung's Model of Psychological Growth Through Dialogue With the Unconscious* (New York: State University Press, 2004), 18.

strength to endure this encounter and benefit from the product born of this juncture, recognizing the equal rights and settling the dialogue.

The strength of the ego plays a relevant part in the success of this encounter, forming the first paradox of the transcendent function: the mediatory product of the encounter between the conscious and the unconscious (the known and the unknown) requires a healthy ego in order to avert fragmentation, and at the same time, "the very experience of the mediatory product strengthens the ego."[191]

Due to the growing lack of reliance on tradition and myth, there is some difficulty in psychologically reiterating it or extracting lessons from it. In a secular environment where religious roots are no longer at hand, the search for anything transcendent beyond the individual becomes a difficult challenge. Then, the remaining question is about the hypothesis of rescuing myth's numinosity and understanding how the *truth* in myth should resonate in a viable and useful way within the modern social frame. Furthermore, how can the mythic narrative when widespread (not preached, but demystified) influence life? It must be borne in mind that the world the mythical hero tries to save stands symbolically for his single life (once the many characters, as seen before, were considered different forces of the same psyche); thus the journey is extremely personal, as the impact the individual makes on the universe is an impact on the individual himself.

Myth and therapy: communicational tools

The mythical reiteration has the impact of conveying an archetypal action (e.g., a ritual of initiation, that unleashes and reiterates its inherent mythical narrative), therefore carrying with it numinous importance. The insight achieved in ritual, for the individual and consequently for his community, is owed to his ability to conduct the archetypal experience (probably the impersonation of a heroic figure), allowing himself to deal with novelty in the terms the mythical hero did before.

Additionally, the insight born from therapy stands equal to the realization of an archetypal force. As soon as an unconscious strain is recognized, it can no longer exert the same influence over the conscious psyche. This is because awareness of it, observation, and recognition also means creation and integration: it becomes part of the conscious psyche. In general, the observation and subsequent integration of content lessen the subservience of the ego and grant freedom from undesirable unconscious forces affecting or shaping cognition. These unconscious effects on the conscious mind become real for the individual, that is, easier to be managed instead of ignored. And

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[191] Samuels, *The Post-Jungians*, 47.

the final consequence of such attainment is the elevation of the individual's sense of existence through the numinosity residing in the archetype. Because after all, this encounter emphasizes the presence of the Self archetype, i.e. God-figure.

Negative expression and resistance against individuation

> "Individuation does imply an acceptance of what lies beyond the individual, of what is simply unknowable but not unfelt. In that sense, individuation is a spiritual calling but, as the realisation of the fullness of a personality, it is a psychological phenomenon"[192]

This ideal realization of the personality built throughout the creation of consciousness resumes the individuation process — symbolically equated to the great achievement of the mythical hero. Nevertheless, this process is surrounded by painful episodes: resistance against the frightening unknown, fear of losing the sense of reality (fragmentation), fear of losing one's attachments — fear of being overwhelmed by whatever stands "beyond the personal self."

Psychological suffering is generated by becoming aware of something that is perceived as harmful by the conscious psyche, something that challenges the established reality. The sufferer, when religious, may attribute the cause of his pain to his misconduct, and feel guilt for having provoked the abandonment of the divine. He lays a parallel with the religious horizon and its *antagonistic figures* possessing archetypal roots; once this is done, these figures become automatically liable of being integrated and deconstructed. In Hinduism, for instance, the wicked side of the gods and their capacity for destruction is regularly referenced and widely present, bearing equal importance as the loving sides (e.g., Shiva and Kali are both deeply related to the *ego death*, and showing a dreadful episodic nature). The mechanics of the *religious function* can be easily identified in Eastern religions that demonstrate it more clearly; Western traditions do also carry similar parallels; nevertheless, the former's mystical veins are much more direct and less metaphorical.

This can be observed in Christian mysticism, which portrays Christ's seclusion period in the desert as a purging period (a moment of ego-self abandonment that precedes his reappearance in the

[192] Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 88.

world).[193] Before the encounter with the unknown, the expression of self-preserving defenses[194] takes place; this is depicted as an effort to keep Christ away from his destiny.[195] The devil is then represented as an obstacle necessary for transcendence.[196] Then, the source of turmoil is attributed to the Devil — the wrongdoer — who carries this negative charge, despite initially belonging to the same divine realm.

This appreciation of *evil* is fundamentally present in the Kabbalah, where *Satan* is depicted as an allegory for the ego.[197] Although threatening with his temptations and agony, he is an essential device to grow (if such temptations are not avoided nor literally performed, but deeply understood for their illusory nature).

These reactions of the conscious part of the psyche exist in order to prevent integration and maintain the *psychic center of energy* in the *known territory*, inhibiting Self-*realization* or the mystical "enlightenment". This is the *problem of spiritual discovery* and exploration. As much as the unconscious psyche strives to make itself conscious, pressuring and affecting the ego in many acute forms, the ego-conscious still performs a precautionary movement of avoidance.

To address this situation, some mystical discourses send the seeker straight into the heart of the complex, to dive in the source of fear, shame, rage, and "stay with it"; because as far one goes into one's sorrow, the closer to the God-image one is. To become conscious of the archetypal Self (to experience God), a mystic's efforts are turned to the annihilation of the ego consciousness, even if this is seen as torture. This is because the absence of the ego is the main characteristic of a numinous happening. Nevertheless, a genuine ego-less state of mind seems to occur only with the complete absence of a will (translated here as the end of all desires), and not through an artificial attempt of the ego to manipulate itself. The conscious effort of ego-annihilation is thus misleading.

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[193] Cf. Stephen K. Hatch, *Wilderness Mysticism: A Contemplative Christian Tradition* (Morrisville: Lulu Publishing).
Cf. Hugh Farmer, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Design of Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness* (London: Taylor and Co, 2018).

[194] This episode resembles *The refusal of the call* to adventure: the avoidance of novelty present in monomyth.

[195] See also William Evans, *Epochs in the Life of Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company).
In this study Evans considers possible interpretations of the 'temptations of Christ' episode, such as vision, legend or parable, or, relevant to this subject: as a translation of an inner experience.

[196] Jung's theory's great disagreement with Christianity lies in the fact that the Christian God has no evil side, and his acts, as harmful as they can be, are only executed to deliver justice.

[197] See Joseph Dan, *Kabbalah: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

The attribution of a sacred meaning to suffering

> "Spiritual rebirth and suffering appear to go together, something that is found in all major religions and indigenous traditions. While some of us find the idea morbid and would like to think the sacred could be experienced in joyful not negative ways, the emergence of the sacred appears to demand a certain degree of suffering, for instance, in the initiation rites of passage of indigenous cultures."[198]

A pressing spiritual feeling related to negative effects is easily identified in Jungian and post-Jungian literature. The death and resurgence present in myth are deeply related to psychopathological pain and the healing process. Within this frame of interpretation, any self-destructive desire can be interpreted as a metaphor for spiritual renewal. The suicidal desire, for instance, stands symbolically for the unconscious desire for change, for the end of the known conscious psyche as it is: an unconscious craving for freedom, novelty and externality. According to Tacey, "the impulse to transform, which is often expressed initially as an impulse to destroy, can eat away at the individual's health and peace of mind until it is realized."[199] These disturbances are easily found in Jungian and post-Jungian literature,[200] as Tacey explains more clearly:

> "It is found in afflicted patients and suicidal youth often telling health authorities that 'spirituality' might have something to do with their malaise, their lack of orientation and their radically compromised sense of wellbeing"[201]

The disruptive event is immediately perceived as a threat due to its alien nature and because there is no preparation to face it — because the dynamics of myth and ritual are not learned, and all the chances to prepare for it are mostly overlooked by the individuals and their cultural surroundings. The event is met with hostility, resulting in repression. This problematic outcome seems to be the consequence of the difficulty that dogma has in keeping up with the changing world, where a

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[198] Tacey, *Gods and Diseases,* 50.

[199] Tacey, *Gods and Diseases,* 32.

[200] "As the old unbearable affect begins to re-emerge the defence is triggered, and with it self-destruction. This is a truly auto-immune disease of the psyche"
Donald E. Kalsched, "Archetypal affect, anxiety and defence in patients who have suffered early trauma," in *Post-Jungians Today: Key papers in contemporary analytical psychology*, ed. Ann Casement (London: Routledge, 1998), 93.

[201] Tacey, *The Emergency of Contemporary Spirituality*, 2.

stationary set of convictions do not support what is to be perceived as a spiritual collapse — perpetuating the problem.

Troubled manifestations diagnosed as mental illness appear to be preventable through the acceptance of the archetypal force within. For example the desire to be reborn would most certainly be addressed by rites of passage and initiation, which would express the equivalent pathological suicidal longing. The whole translational effort lies in symbolically learning how to die *in ceremony*. The acceptance of a repressed drive is not the exact fulfillment of it, but the capacity to see it as an archetypal force awaiting to be realized at a symbolic level, performing a therapeutic effect.

The following excerpt exemplifies the therapeutic equivalent of this dynamic:

> "The task of therapy is not to get rid of neurosis, which is what conventional medicine seeks to achieve. Rather, [religiously aware] psychotherapy asks the neurosis what it wants. It seeks to transform the neurosis by understanding why it arose in the first place and what it wants to accomplish. The unlived life must be given a chance to express itself and it can only do this if the ego is displaced, as Jung writes:
>
> 'A neurosis is truly removed only when it has removed the false attitude of the ego. We do not cure it – it cures us. A man is ill, but the illness is nature's attempt to heal him, and what the neurotic flings away as absolutely worthless contains the true gold we should never have found elsewhere.'"[202]

Undergoing this transformational process of giving up ego-conscious control in order to let the threatening spiritual forces within be manifested voluntarily *is* the performance of the religious function of the psyche. This is also the establishment of the contact with the unconscious, and consequently, with the Self or God-figure. The required acceptance of this implicit suffering has nothing to do with simple resignation, but is a conscious and almost mystical inquiry into it. Suffering, in these terms, does also take place because of the ego-conscious limitation on seeing only *consensual reality*, differing from *objective reality* (which is translated by the capacity *to see things for what they are*, i.e., without conditioning).[203] The consensual reality, when shattered, brings about the pain of having one's convictions deconstructed, leading to the perception of *a more*

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[202] Tacey, *Gods and Diseases*, 89.

[203] See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966).

objective reality. All these particularities point to the function of suffering in redemption and salvation, having the potential to be not only harmful but overall ultimately helpful.[204]

[204] Corbett resumes the benefits of suffering: "Increased empathy for the suffering of others; improved ability for relationships; the dissolution of narcissistic structures such as arrogance; new experiential knowledge of the Self; increased wisdom; increased capacity for humour and play; a restructuring of values, and deepened identity or self-knowledge."
Corbett, *The Religious Function* (London: Routledge), 177.

CONCLUSION

Religion in Analytical Psychology is taken as an adaptive function to be rightly and strongly fostered, without letting it become a tool of inner and outer coercion. Its *adaptive potential* can be motivated through the revaluation of religious values from the institution, the psychotherapist, and the believer. All these parties can make an effort to question their convictions and develop their pre-established conceptions. This latter endeavor is mostly aimed at the reiteration of the mythical creation: the necessary deconstruction of the mythical universe to avoid stagnation and bring about balance, by being created/born again.

Myth can be summarized as a systematic metaphor of this psychic adaptive potential, which is the same as the religious function of the psyche, revealing symbolic tracks that lead to psychic balance and healing. The mythical path is the source of many fantastic happenings and in Analytical Psychology it is a resource for deep psychic transformations. There are other forms of expression that operate through the same symbolic structure (such as dreams) and possess the same transcendent traits (as in particular religious experiences of various types). Both make clear the transversality of the inherent religious function. This mental ability does not depend on organized religion for its existence, although the insertion of the individual in a religious context seems to facilitate its understanding. Moreover, this symbolic interpretation of traditional narratives contributes to disenchantment with dogmatic beliefs because their representative intent becomes clear, and a spiritual sensibility seems to flower. Eliade and Campbell both looked at myths and recognized these traits as being meaningful and deeply reliant on the individual, reflecting psychic pathways. The effort was to see in it a universal language.

The religiously aware analysis can be summarized as a religious pursuit, a way to seek God, or more precisely a way to seek *the God experience* (possibly disguised and unnoticed as such), and finally, a way of equating itself with a religious practice not because of its configuration but because of the results and the elements explored. For that to happen, one of the requirements is the nurturing of a good relationship with the unconscious, making the unconscious Self as conscious as possible. The final challenge in upbringing this relationship with the Self (or God figure) is the risk of disintegration. Thus, the numinous encounter is considered non-psychotic when it is temporary and

causes no inflation.[205] However, the observation of each of these religious and psychological features that are depicted through the abstract mythical structures represent natural obstacles to the understanding and usage of these same dynamics. That is, in a healthy and numinous situation the individual is awed by the testified *otherness*, experiencing the creature-feeling.[206] Opposing this healthy way of dealing with an RE and constituting mental illness, lies an over-identification with the numinous happening due to incapacity to instantly objectify it. Because of that, the laicity and critical thought of the analyst towards religious symbolism is extremely important.

To avoid such a negative outcome, in common religious worship the mentor figure represented by religious authorities is emphasized as a guiding character in the field of spirituality. This mentorship safeguards the integrity of the psyche and supports a constant objectification of unconscious elements to achieve the desired relationship. The role of the mentor when not executed by the "religious carer" is absorbed by the therapist who incorporates a religious therapeutic attitude, even being able to use the patient's mental illness as an important tool in the accomplishment of the "personal myth", and work to assist the reestablishment of psychic balance.

Considering religion in the explored terms until this point, the task of Analytical Psychology is to nurture and encourage spiritual development. The therapist plays a major role in the achievement of this outcome, depending on his ability to resort to traditions, extract meaning from happenings, and interpret them in parallel with personal content. Thus, in a therapeutic context much of the success of one's healing journey is based in the therapist's ability to accept the divine as part of the psyche, removing all dogmas from it. In this ideal work frame, the therapist would present a sensibility towards the numinosity of a particular accessed situation. Automatically, it accentuates the process of individuation, respecting the individuality that tradition cannot always explain or bear.

Instead of antagonizing sorrow and working on its removal and repression, the therapeutic religious posture tries to find meaning in it, in order to place it in a mythical frame. This sensibility towards the subject of suffering considers that not every distressful situation is incapacitating and

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[205] Inflation, according to Jung's definition, is characterized by the loss of conscious capacity through the dissolution of the personality. It is about an over-identification with the extraordinary happening and its emergent contents, because the ego-conscious succumbs to the Self, losing the faculty of discrimination.
Cf. Carl G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1980).

[206] Configured by a sense of dependence. Seeing oneself as smaller than the whole and broad unconscious. As a creature in front of its creator.

permanently harmful, having also a nurturing quality. As shown, the learned lesson from myth is that it is important not to avoid neurotic challenges, but to understand their intention and feeling. In other words, the lesson is to look at the numinous features that are broadly present in psychological disturbances, and perceive their potential.

If psychological suffering as a natural drive of consciousness contributes to the development of spirituality and by doing so increases the frequency/intensity of spiritual experiences, then the pain derived from the "*mythless*" state of modern life also makes a controversial contribution to the maintenance of psychic balance. Conflict then can represent the mythical chaos that will ultimately reestablish order, under the essential condition of properly addressing the situation. Summarizing a deeply spiritual process: if initiation is indeed an archetypical recurrence implicating discomfort by being unfamiliar or painful, hence, as seen, pain and suffering have a great share in the creation of consciousness. Then, it is theoretically possible to set a correspondence between triggering and devastating psychic events and what is popularly called a "spiritual awakening". It is so because the individual is placed in the symbolic threshold of initiation, which will consequently broad his perception. Everything that has unfamiliar qualities to the individual possesses chaotic traits that forever break the pattern of *what is known*: giving space for collapse (death) and integration (birth). Considering all that, the whole intent of myth is to help one become acquainted with conflict, since it cannot be forever avoided.

The purpose of instantly addressing uncomfortable feelings and confronting unpleasant experiences is to acquire the aimed maturity and self-reliance when dealings with psychological complexities. In this way Analytical Psychology addresses conflict analyzing the communication between the conscious and the unconscious, to comprehend and symbolically fulfill the (unconscious) desire for self-realization. The work of the analyst who is sensitive to myth is to scrutinize any emergent psychic material in order to *read* mythological knowledge from it, usually trying to establish a connection with a known myth to turn the situation into a paradigmatic one. For that, the therapist must be able to develop a particular sensitivity to this matter to eventually bring about change. It can be concluded that this change encircles *the realization of an unconscious will*, bringing forward the sought numinous encounter.

A defining characteristic of a numinous experience is its total exteriority — its *otherness*. As an event, it possesses a natural unpredictability and contributes to the belief in an autonomous psyche. The *I*, i.e. the ego-consciousness, becomes less inflated and mitigated, more empathic instead of egotistically concerned. The aimed experience of wholeness brings about the discovery or the revival of a sense of purpose in life and by doing so, may reduce alienation, leading to a

larger and stronger sense of community and belonging. Experiences exhibiting numinosity were demonstrated as of great potential, fundamental to Analytical Psychology. And being exterior to the ego, they are also external to regular linguistic function. Therefore, as an experience lying on the outside of the conscious mind, no conceptualization is functionally viable, and no precise description is conceivable. However, the emotions attached to numinous happenings are distinct from ordinary feelings, where fear, love, and peace possess a completely different intensity. They are numinous expressions influenced by the mind's own contents, being revenant to one's life and personal history. The therapeutic purpose of these experiences is defined by the precision in addressing the individual's personal narrative.

Through a healing process, the numinous happening addresses the current reason for turmoil, leaving a deep sense of humility, releasing pressure from repressed content of the psyche, and encouraging a different way of exploring and seeing oneself. For this reason, religious experiences were accepted by Jung as the ultimate therapy. As Jung himself put it: "the main interest of my work is with the approach to the numinous (…) the fact is that the numinous is the real therapy."[207] The manifestation of the numinous is at the basis of the therapeutic track of Analytical Psychology, and also the reason why religion bears considerable relevance to the practice.

To address the Freudian conception of these unexplained psychic occurrences, therapeutically a vision, a voice or any other numinous event can be directly related with childhood issues and still carry numinous qualities. However, because of this "strategic impact", the experience is often quickly diagnosed as solely drawn from this unresolved situation, undermining its numinous impact, or dismissing it, without exploring fully the experience and allowing healing.

Numinosity is expected to be present in the course of therapy, and the therapist's refusal of a patient's inner experience, of his or her *madness* and hallucinations, ends up preventing the recognition of numinous traits in these experiences. The conventional therapeutic posture towards REs ends up not attributing value to them; and when not truthfully considered or therapeutically disavowed they will most probably lead to repression and medication. This gives space to a negative interpretation of the expression, causing anxiety and fear. Another contributive factor for such mismanaging comes from the instinctive reaction, in other words, due to the strain born from

[207] Carl G. Jung in private letter to P. W. Martin in 20/8/45 as in Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, 13.

avoidance of experiencing *novelty*. Within this resistance, there is also an increase in the chance of a neurotic behavior or psychosis.

For a patient it is only possible to establish balance when he comes to terms with his internal issues. In general, from the patient's perspective as well as from that of the the therapist, there is some difficulty in analyzing religious-related images, as some may not even be categorized as such due to a lack of intimacy with the sacred (or an absent religious upbringing). Or when a troubling psychic event is recognized as a religious happening, the therapist may be bound to a tradition of his own, and will interpret the manifestation in his personal context. This ignores the fact that the unconscious is not faithful to any tradition, but instead it is the element that enables numinosity to be present in all traditions. A more supporting posture would be a behavior that does not search for a major meaning in any specific religion, but rather assumes a sensibility towards the experience, and a laicity in observing the sacred. If the divine is not above dogma for the therapist (due to personal standpoints related to religions or psychoanalytic schools), the split between patient and therapist limits therapeutic results and the possibility of spiritual growth.

To the religiously sensitive analyst, every religious tradition is different in its way, expressing to a greater or a lesser degree archetypal realities. So only the therapist who is able to reassess his or her belief system, embodying a different approach, can meet these manifestations in a distinct new light. Instead of dismissing the inner credibility of the patient, the post-Jungians defend another attitude, one that increases the patient's discernment and trust in his own insights. So alternatively, a self-trusting environment is created, where experiences and the subsequent suffering are felt, looked into and explained. Thereupon, the post-Jungian therapist, who is sensitive to numinous experiences — i.e. religiously aware — builds a bridge between the sacred and secular lives and works to achieve a balanced analysis. The obstacle to this proper handling is the growing problem of spirituality, that is becoming mainstream and does not yet have the therapeutic background to assist it, and neither the religious or traditional. The greatest risk is of increasing the mishandling of the threatening mystery and repelling the promise of the numinous — repressing or outwardly projecting it — but never inquiring into the matter. It must not be forgot that at the end, all of these negative possible outcomes emanate from the lack of mythical/religious paradigmatic support mostly derived from Western modern life, which the individual has no place to acquire because he is less exposed to these traditional teachings.

To conclude, the need for religion is accepted as a primary concern in this particular analytical context. The religious / spiritual cravings of modernity have several interpretations in the psychological field, and it was shown that many different theories share similar insights with the

Jungian one. Until this point, these unfulfilled religious longings were explained as the cause of spiritual eruptions that is broadly seen as a sign of mental unbalance. These eruptions can acquire many shapes. The structure of these numinous happenings are transversal to many ways of expression, and they can be summarized through the concept of religious experiences. Myth, mysticism and dreams can epitomize religious experiences and because they represent the emergence of the unconscious, they can also be perceived as an analytical tool. Hence, carrying numinosity. The value of this kind of psychic event is defined by its efficacy in transforming one's perception towards a less egocentric way of seeing. Such transformation is well depicted in the monomythic structure, through the hero's journey: teaching lessons and nurturing self-development. This growing process of self-discovery and self-reliance is controversial for the individual because it requires a special attitude — a figurative self-sacrifice. The symbology present in myth, the movement of surrender or voluntary approach towards the obstacles of life is accepted as a process that provides advantages in facing adversities. And by this sacrifice or mitigation of the ego-self (representing the conscious side of the psyche), the unconscious gains expression. The unconscious psyche, as composed of archetypal material, which includes the Self-archetype or God-figure, pays the ultimate contribute to the reestablishment of harmony. The reconnection presumed to happen in this outbreak is numinous and accurate in compensating deprived aspects of the psyche. The most challenging prospect of this whole dynamic seems to be the exercise of an appropriate posture towards the suffering born from numinous interaction. That is, the intricate and mystical exercise and guidance in order to bring about the aimed realization and balance.

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