

FOREWORD BY GAIL GODWIN

Knowing the  
QUESTIONS  
Living the  
ANSWERS

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A JUNGIAN GUIDE THROUGH THE PARADOXES OF PEACE,  
CONFLICT AND LOVE THAT MARK A LIFETIME

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I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing, live your way into the answer.

– Rainer Maria Rilke

### *Author's Note*

All stories, dialogues, and dreams in this book, except those I specifically designate as being my own, reflect material people have shared with me. To protect the privacy of those people, I have carefully altered anything that might disclose the identity of particular individuals or permit the identification of actual relationships or circumstances. Any similarity between the people and situations I have used for illustration and actual people or situations is unintended and purely coincidental.

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## A LIFE OF OUR OWN

### THE SPIRIT OF INDIVIDUATION

The underlying principle of Jungian psychology is that our life story, if it is truly lived, brings about the realization of our inner and often unconscious potentials. From this perspective, we see that the goal of life is to achieve wholeness of the personality by bringing to light and integrating into our consciousness certain aspects of our nature that are presently unconscious. In more practical terms, it means we are called to discover and fulfill the inherent pattern for development that lies within us. This process results in the unfolding of the totality of our personality in both the inner and the outer worlds.

A fulfilling life is one that is continually bringing our inner patterns into conscious expression and completion. There are few traditional textbooks, scientific systems, or religious techniques that can do any more than give us a little help along our way as we seek the kind of self-knowledge that leads to individuation. The knowledge required for this task can only come through increased conscious awareness based on our experience in living and our relationship to our interior life.

Self-understanding and self-realization are key concepts in Jungian psychology, but they are not simply intellectual terms. They must be married to values of the heart. Originally, they emanated from the “heart of the physician” in Dr. Jung, who felt great compassion for people’s suffering and wanted to help them find healing. As Jung grew into his later years, it is clear that this heart expanded into a deep concern for the problems and the future of humanity and culture.

In Jung’s view, the unconscious itself wishes to be understood and wishes to help both individuals and culture heal and grow. In other words, it wishes to be manifested and lived. Of course, Dr. Jung was not naïve. He realized that dangerous things also lurk within us, and, as a result, he felt that the work of individuation must be done carefully and that it requires a strong, well-developed personality. Such a personality, with a sense of ethics and a secure rootedness in the outer world, is the foundation of the second half of an individual’s development.

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Jung often compared the development of our personality to the course of the sun during the day. With birth—dawn in his allegory—our consciousness begins to shine and marks the beginning of our personality development. Our early development is characterized by the push for identity, action, achievement, and external relationships. This push requires a large amount of emotional energy and the eventual sacrifice of our childhood dependency. Hopefully, this effort will culminate in a strong personality and a place in society as we fulfill the psychological tasks of late adolescence and early adulthood. By this time, we are generally approaching midlife. During midlife our “sun” is at its zenith, in its position of greatest strength. At this point the sun begins to set, losing its position of strength as it follows nature’s course. Similarly, at that midlife point, we must begin releasing our focus on our identity and achievement, redirecting our energy toward becoming *whole*.

The first step in this process is to start reclaiming parts of ourselves that were lost in our struggle to reach that zenith. Of course, we have a choice at this point. We can choose to resist nature, the greater pattern of life, and protect what we have achieved. But nature, in such a case, will generally escalate the unconscious assaults against our personality in the form of neurosis, addictions, and illnesses.

In a general sense, Jungian psychology considers the unconscious to be the psychic counterpart of the world of nature. The tap root of our inner “nature” is rooted in the collective unconscious, which contains the psychic energy centers and patterns that animate us. These natural forces are common to everyone. Often they are so powerful that they have a numinous quality. As a result, they have been projected outward in the images of gods, goddesses, and other spiritual symbols throughout history.

Another goal of our later life is to face the inevitability of death, as nature decrees that our allegorical sun must also set. The search for wholeness and the completion of our personal pattern is, in Jung’s mind, our preparation for death and eternity. As our energy shifts to this inner search, we still have to contend with our outer life and face its obligations. But we must change our focus from the bright daylight of external development to the softer, more diffused light of our inner world. This new focus can lead to an inner rootedness, a relationship with the transcendent, and a concern for culture. As this process proceeds, our personality will be broadened, our life will be deepened, and our experiences will approach an unexpected sense of unity within themselves.

In summary, we see that the Jungian perspective divides the development of the personality into two fundamental periods. The first is from birth to psychological midlife, commonly referred to as “the first half of life.” The second is from psychological midlife to death, and is commonly referred to as “the second half of life.”

During the first half of life, our basic developmental task is to differentiate a personality as we grow out of childhood. That personality should be strong enough to find a place and to form relationships in the external world of societal life. It should be able to function effectively there, according to the common standards, aims, and goals of that world. In symbolic terms, this achievement is referred to in Jungian psychology as finding the *common gold*.

Generally, once this task is completed, we begin feeling lost—as though somehow, in achieving our place in life, we have lost ourselves. That is, we do so if we are alert enough to let that much self-awareness through our defenses. If we don't or can't, we will develop some other attention-getting type of symptom, usually expressed in the form of an emotional or physical dis-ease. In either case, our primary task in the second half of life is to come into relationship with our unconscious and the center of our being—our *Self*—by finding our soul and the meaning of our life. In this way, we discover the *true gold*, the symbol of the illuminated soul.

The Jungian analyst must take nature as his or her guide. What we do in analytic sessions is not so much therapy as it is furthering the development of the creative seed inherent in the analysand and nurturing that development. This process often includes going backward in a person's life—especially family life—and helping the person create a friendly inner background in which his or her reconstruction can begin.

Once the corner is turned from the first half of life to the second, one discovers that a lifestyle that looks good and works (no matter how well) isn't sufficient to provide the true gold of fulfillment. This realization alone is enough to give us an idea of how difficult the work of individuation can be.

During this turning point in personal growth, suffering evolves to a higher level. In this context, suffering comes to mean expending “blood, sweat, and tears” with religious devotion in the effort to discover the true gold of our nature. It represents the courage to depart from conventional wisdom, ambition, pleasures, comforts, pride, and values in favor of following the creative voice within us. There are many possible wrong turns and no guarantees of success in this journey. But if we are successful, genuine self-realization rewards us by giving birth to a deeper experience of love, compassion, and joy in our lives.

Another of Jung's cardinal concepts is that of the *Self*. For Jung, the Self is the central archetype of order within the personality, and it also represents the totality of the personality as well as its center. The Self embraces both the conscious and unconscious elements in our psyche. However, as an archetype, it is nevertheless located in the unconscious. Dr. Jung noted that “the Self is our life's goal, for it is the completest

expression of the fateful combination we call individuality.”<sup>3</sup> In simple language, we can say, as Jung did, that the Self is the image of God within us. It is our center and it also represents the pattern of all we are meant to be. The energy of this central point issues a psychological imperative to us to “become what we are,” just as biology compels us to assume the form of a human being.

In Jungian psychology, our ego is regarded as the center of our conscious personality, while the Self is the center of our whole personality and the carrier of our potential. Often these two centers may be on contradictory paths, thereby causing us a lot of conflict. For example, our ego may be seeking material success, security, and conventional satisfaction, while our Self is more interested in the creative fulfillment of our life. The Self also requires us not simply to be, but also to *become*. As you may recognize, this requirement is the foundation of the spiritual principle that underlies Western religious thought and doesn’t allow us to retire from life.

Once we have begun our individuation process, we come into an increasingly conscious relationship with the Self. As this relationship deepens, we start to realize that a hidden hand seems to be—and to have been—holding onto, guiding, and supporting us throughout our life. In different parts of this book, I refer to this guiding aspect of the Self variously as the *hidden teacher*, the *inner teacher*, or the *hidden healer*. When we are truly in touch with this aspect of ourselves, no experience (regardless of how devastating) is meaningless or without value: each contributes to the true gold.