

## Ego and the Self Notes

### CJS Fall 2018

### EGO

#### Definition of Ego

The ego is the centre of consciousness. It is the organ through which we become aware of things, of others and of ourselves. It is what we refer to as “I” or “me.” It is responsible for our continuing sense of identity so that we feel ourselves at the age of 80 to be the same person we were at the age of 8.

By ego I understand a complex of ideas which constitutes the centre of my field of consciousness and appears to possess a high degree of continuity and identity. Hence, I also speak of an *ego-complex*. The ego-complex is as much a content as a condition of *consciousness*, for a psychic element is conscious to me only insofar as it is related to my ego-complex. (CW6:706)

...ego is a content of consciousness  
 ...ego is a condition of consciousness

The ego is made up “...partly by the inherited disposition or character constituents and partly by consciously acquired impressions and their attendant phenomena.  
 (CW17:169)

...part inborn  
 ...part environment and our personal experience of it

The ego is the centre of consciousness but not the centre of the entire psyche or the entire personality. It is not the same as self-knowledge.

Anyone who has any ego-consciousness takes it for granted that he knows himself. But the ego knows only its own contents, not the unconscious and its contents. People measure their self-knowledge by what the average person in their social environment knows of himself, but not by the real psychic facts which are for the most part hidden from them. (CW10:491)

#### Visual

Johari Window:

Johari Window of Self-knowledge

<b>OPEN SELF</b> Information about yourself that you and others know.	<b>BLIND SELF</b> Information you don't know but others know about you.
<b>HIDDEN SELF</b> Information you know about yourself but others don't.	<b>UNKNOWN SELF</b> Information about yourself that neither you nor others know.

In other words, our self-knowledge isn't what we think it is! It takes a strong ego to be able to look at what is unconscious about ourselves. We have to be able to relate to these unconscious factors without the ego collapsing in self-judgment or running in self-defense. The ego has to be strong enough to maintain an objective stance toward the unconscious parts of ourselves when they are revealed to us – and not identify with them. (I'm worthless, what's the use? Or you need to do things this way for your own good.)

### How Ego Develops

The ego begins developing early in childhood, and it begins with the process of coming to consciousness, or coming to awareness.

The unconscious is the matrix out of which consciousness grows, for consciousness does not enter the world as a finished product, but is the end result of small beginnings. (CW17:102)

This development takes place in the child. During the first years of life there is hardly any consciousness, though the existence of psychic processes manifests itself at a very early stage. These processes, however, are not grouped round an organized ego; they have no centre and therefore no continuity, lacking which a conscious personality is impossible. (CW17:103)

Hence the need for an ego. And hence, the ego being the centre of consciousness. It is the cohesive, organizing factor or organ in our conscious psyche.

Because the unconscious is infinite, it can be compared to the sea, while consciousness is like an island rising out of its midst. (CW17:102)

Child coming to consciousness:

hunger instinct >> hunger eased by feeding >>> infant goes unconscious  
over time, hunger >> breast feeds >>>> infant goes unconscious  
over many repetitions >> hunger >> mother's face gets connected to the two  
a mother-island forms in child's awareness

distress >> eased by a voice singing a lullaby or stroking hands  
through repetition >> father's face comes into awareness  
a father-island forms in child's consciousness

infant looks around >> something moves, disappears  
over and over >> hand seems to belong to infant  
over time, island of own body rises into consciousness

given more time and repetitions, these three islands – mother island, father  
island, me island – create a continent called family

Thus, a mass of consciousness begins to have the substance and stability of an ego structure.

Throughout life, islands of awareness keep popping up and disappearing, popping up again, and sometimes remaining stable, sometimes even joining with other islands to create a mainland of awareness.

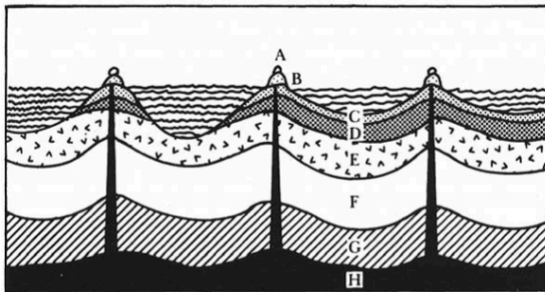
Jung warns that we must not take this too literally.

The comparison of the unconscious to the sea and consciousness as islands in that sea must not be pushed too far, for the relation of conscious to unconscious is essentially different from that of an island to the sea because it is not in any sense a stable relationship but a ceaseless welling-up, a constant shifting of content; for, like the conscious, the unconscious is never at rest, never stagnant. It lives and works in a state of perpetual interaction with the conscious. (CW17:102)

### Visual

To show you what is underneath the sea out of which the islands of consciousness form to make the ego

Jung's Diagram  
"Geology of the Personality"



This diagram shows the base upon which our egos rest. Each ego emerges out of these depths. First, we are physically born (**H**) carrying the fire of the life force. As babies, we are instinctual creatures (**G**), like animals whose lives are governed by the instincts of survival. Gradually, we walk and become teachable, like our primates ancestors (**F**). We are influenced by race (**E**), by our culture (**D**), by the religion and formalized education around us [**C**], by our nuclear and extended families (**B**) and emerge with our unique ego and personality (**A**).

Water layer = the unconscious

First tower depicts humankind before people were aware of humans outside their own clan. (See how the water is deeper between that tower and the next one...)

As consciousness increased over millennia, individuals and families became aware of other clans, then nations, there was a thinner layer of unconsciousness.....

## THE SELF

### Definition

The Self is an archetype. It is the reference point for the whole psyche. It is the thermostat, the regulating centre for everything – the ego, the shadow, the persona, the complexes. The Self transcends the ego. The ego is meant to be in service to it. It's like the Self is the compass and the ego steers the wheel, finds the route forward.

The Self is the archetype of wholeness. Jung describes it this way:

The Self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious. The Self is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness. (CW12:44)

### The Role of the Self

Jung said:

Ultimately, every individual life is at the same time the eternal life of the species. (CW11:146)

**The role of the Self is to move an individual toward the complete realization of the blueprint for human existence within the context of his/her life.**

Unpack it:

What are some of the skills that every human who ever lived has had to learn

what are some of the events that every human who has lived has undergone?

What life stages are apparent in every human community that anthropology knows about?

**HANDOUT** with above quote and the programme for human development

The psychic nucleus responsible for coordinating this lifelong sequence Jung called the Self. Each of us fulfills, at least to some degree, this programme for human development. We do it in our unique way, under the oversight and nudging of the Self.

### Ego-Self Relationships

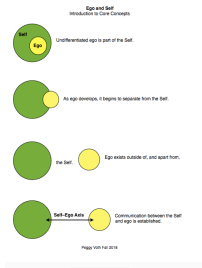
Obviously, to achieve all this, the Self needs the help of the ego. And the ego does not exist without the Self.

Jung points out that:

Our consciousness does not create itself – it wells up from unknown depths. In childhood it awakes gradually, and all through life it wakes each morning out of the depths of sleep from an unconscious condition. It is like a child that is born daily out of the primordial womb of the unconscious. (CW11:935)

The condition of our ego-consciousness depends on the continuing vitality of the Self "...because the determining factors which radiate out from the Self surround the ego on all sides and are therefore supra-ordinate to it. The Self, like the unconscious, is an *a priori* existent out of which the ego evolves. (CW11:391)

## Visual Ego-Self axis

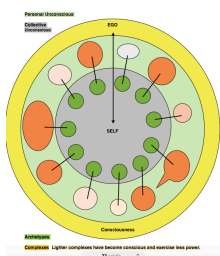


~ in the first half of life, it is essential to develop a strong and effective ego if we are to navigate the outer world, and deal competently with the tasks of the first half of life

~ in the second half of life, it is our task to recognize our ego's subordinate position in relation to the Self. The two begin to confront each other. It is critical that a line of communication be established so that dialogue can happen. The ego needs to bow to the Self and yet stand its ground. (Moses?)

One way in which we clear the way for actively connecting with the Self is to do our inner work. Complexes get in the way of communication between ego and Self. Our complexes don't go away, but being conscious of them does seem to have an effect on them. They lose some of their power when they are recognized, accepted, named.

## Visual Depotentiated Complexes



The goal of the Self is to bring harmony within the psyche. To bring balance between the life of the unconscious and the attitudes and activities of our conscious life. When we are at one with ourselves – with our entire being – life does not get easier, but we live it with more ease.

That's the payoff for ego-cooperating with the Self, and the Self tending to the overall equilibrium of the psyche, which, really encompasses our entire being: body, mind, soul and personality.

\*\*\*\*\*A greatly simplified statement but a positive one on which to end.\*\*\*\*\*