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Individuation, the Goal of Life in Carl Gustav Jung. Between Auctorial Intentions, Eastern References, and Various Christian Receptions

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the concept of individuation as proposed by Carl Gustav Jung, with a specific focus on its relationship to Eastern religious systems and Christianity. Substantiated by reference to orientalistically mediated Eastern beliefs and practices, Jung’s view of perfection tackles significant shortcomings recognized by the founder of analytical psychology in reference to Western Christianity, while also seeking to transcend the limitations identified by him in both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. Throughout the years, numerous endeavors have been undertaken to assess Jung’s goals via the lens of Christianity. The following study situates Jung’s endeavor between East and West, examines various Judeo-Christian authors who have attempted to engage in dialogue with the Jungian system, identifies the benefits and limitations of its appropriation within a Christian worldview, and indicates how the grid of relationship to it changes when the Orthodox vision of human nature restoration in Christ is at its foundation.

Keywords

Carl Gustav Jung, individuation, self, ego, archetypal self, restoration in Christ, inner restoration, Christian reception

I. Introductory remarks

Undoubtedly, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) emerged as a prominent figure whose contributions significantly influenced the understanding of religion during the 20th century. The concepts put forth by him had a considerable impact not only on the field of psychotherapy, but also on the disciplines of psychology, religion studies, ethnology, literary studies, and art studies. His reflections on the structure of the human psyche and the dynamics within it, as well as on the way religious experience is felt, have also had a major impact on the collective mind and have become a common cultural asset.

The thematization of the relationship between the ego and the core of the human personality, the self, is at the center of his work, as is the concept of man's inner restoration, interpreted as a process of harmonization, of inner unification. This process, as envisioned by Jung, has specific and recognized similarities with Eastern religious conceptions, as well as some overlaps with the Christian model of restoration in Christ, i.e. it can also be read in a Christian key, with certain reinterpretations or revisions. In what follows, we shall attempt to position Jungian principles between East and West, as well as point to diverse forms of Christian reception that have emerged in various branches of Christianity. However, before delving into these matters, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive explanation of the fundamental principles that underlie this framework.

II. Basic concepts of Jungian thought

Carl Gustav Jung's construct is founded on his understanding of the structure of the human psyche. In summary, the structure of the psyche consists of three distinct sectors: the *conscious*, the *personal unconscious*, which contains remnants from individual experiences, and the *collective unconscious* housing the shared ancestral legacy of humanity. This shared legacy is primarily structured by employing *archetypes*, which are patterns of organization of human ideas and experiences, "inherited possibilities of

representation”¹, which are then manifested and brought to life through the use of archetypal imagery. It is important to acknowledge that archetypes are not mere images, but rather inherent capacities to generate them based on specific patterns. These patterns encompass aspects that pertain to a wide range of human events and experiences. Therefore, it can be argued that Jungian archetypes can be seen as communicative frameworks that offer many ways of engaging with individuals and entities, which may not always be explicitly recognized as such.

The collective unconscious, which constitutes the profoundest structure of the human psyche, is primarily characterized by archetypes. In contrast, the personal unconscious represents a domain of *complexes*, psychic structures that arise from the interplay between the archetypal realm and the ongoing experiences of individuals. Specifically, these experiences are mirrored within the human psyche. External stimuli have the capacity to leave a lasting impression on the unconscious mind, resulting in an accumulation of psychic energy (which Jung refers to as *libido*). This accumulation establishes an affective center capable of connecting with the archetypal level. Nevertheless, the first perception does not exist in isolation; it is interconnected with numerous other occurrences inside one’s conscious experience. The potency of a complex is thus ascertained by the magnitude of the affective symptoms it elicits, as well as the quantity and frequency of the constellations it generates².

Among the complexes, *the ego complex* stands out. This is the only conscious complex, although certainly not entirely conscious³, and it represents the center of individuality. The reason for its classification as a complex can be attributed to both its intense emotional impact and its connection to the more elevated aspects of the psyche. The development of the ego complex occurs progressively over the initial stages of an individual’s lifespan. During this process “the individual establishes himself as a reality in his own right, a reality that relates

¹ Carl Gustav JUNG, “Über die Energetik der Seele”, in: Carl Gustav JUNG, *Über die Energetik der Seele und andere psychologische Abhandlungen*, Rascher, Zürich, 1928, p. 89.

² Carl Gustav JUNG, “Über die Energetik der Seele”, pp. 21-22.

³ Mihaela MINULESCU, *Introducere în analiza jungiană*, Editura Trei, București, 2001, p. 47.

to other persons, to external reality and to the collective consciousness of the world”⁴. Simultaneously, the ego undergoes the process of developing its primary function, which involves the coordination of conscious contents⁵.

The ego complex is related to the *archetype of the self*. This is regarded as the archetype of psychic totality, with the ego complex serving as the major operational area. If “the ego is the center of consciousness that thinks, plans, directs and prides itself on these accomplishments”⁶, “the self designates the totality of the comprehensiveness of all psychic phenomena in man. It expresses the unity and wholeness of the personality taken as a whole”⁷. “The self as a creative principle guides the structuring of the ego complex and is considered the origin of the self-regulating process of the psyche”⁸. However, “in human nature... the relationship between ego and self is based on reciprocity: the self-motivates the development of the ego and extends far beyond the ego complex, but the self can only be realized through the ego”⁹.

The self, however, is not just “a kind of universal consciousness”, which would mean that it is just “another name for the unconscious”. The self

“consists rather in the awareness on the one hand of our unique natures, and on the other of our intimate relationship with all life, not only human, but animal and plant, and even that of inorganic matter and the cosmos itself. It brings a feeling of «oneness» and of reconciliation with life, which can now be accepted as it is, not as it ought to be”¹⁰.

⁴ Mihaela MINULESCU, *Introdúcere în analiza jungiană*, p. 48.

⁵ Mihaela MINULESCU, *Introdúcere în analiza jungiană*, p. 47.

⁶ Wayne G. ROLLINS, *Jung and the Bible*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1983, p. 84.

⁷ Gerhard WEHR, *C. G. Jung*, Teora, București, 1999, p. 41.

⁸ Mihaela MINULESCU, *Introdúcere în analiza jungiană*, p. 93.

⁹ Mihaela MINULESCU, *Introdúcere în analiza jungiană*, p. 96.

¹⁰ Frieda FORDHAM, *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*, Richard Clay & Company Ltd., Bungay, Suffolk 1964, p. 63.

Because of these facts, “the archetype of the self is the most important element composing the unconscious¹¹, and it is the goal of the psychotherapeutic process”¹².

The predominant symbol for the designation of the self in Jung is the mandala. The term comes from Sanskrit where it simply means ‘circle’¹³. By extension, the term was generally adopted for geometric figures pointing to perfection, to totality, hence to the self. “They have the advantage of being intuitive”¹⁴, remarks V. D. Zamfirescu. “The symbolic diagram is frequent in Hindu spirituality¹⁵, the plastic image that combines the balancing virtues of the square and the circle offering the possibility of new and new expressions of harmony. Alongside the mandala appear symbols of the self such as the child, an animal, an egg, a hermaphroditic figure or the treasure for which a thorny path must be followed¹⁶.

Each of the elements listed above illustrates some of the aspects that converge in the archetype of the self: unity of opposites, harmony, integrity, value. Jung himself observes that “psychologically... the symbol of the self cannot be distinguished from the God-image ... the God-image is the self, although this idea is shocking to the European mentality”¹⁷. In other words: “The concept of the self is very abstract; lived in personal experience it is practically indistinguishable from what is traditionally called God”¹⁸. Another symbol of the self is in Jung’s view Jesus Christ:

“Christ, as a hero and god-man, signifies psychologically the self; that is, he represents the projection of this most important and most central of archetypes. The archetype of the self has,

¹¹ As an archetype, it is nevertheless part of the archetypal sector attributed to the collective unconscious, although its designate is much broader than the psychic sphere that contains it.

¹² Antonio MORENO, *Jung, Gods and Modern Man*, Sheldon Press, London 1974, p. 60.

¹³ Vasile Dem. ZAMFIRESCU, *Filosofia inconștientului*, vol. II, Three, București, 2001, pp. 202-203.

¹⁴ Vasile Dem. ZAMFIRESCU, *Filosofia inconștientului*, p. 202.

¹⁵ Emilian VASILESCU, *Istoria Religiiilor*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică R. A., București, 1998, p. 242.

¹⁶ Frieda FORDHAM, *An Introduction to Jung’s Psychology*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁷ Antonio MORENO, *Jung, Gods and Modern Man*, p. 61.

¹⁸ Mihaela MINULESCU, *Introducere în analiza jungiană*, p. 94.

functionally, the significance of a ruler of the inner world, i.e., of the collective unconscious”¹⁹.

We will return to these identifications below.

“The process by which the individual integrates the conscious and unconscious parts of the personality”²⁰, *individuation* is a theoretical model closely related to the concept of *self*. The goal of human life is the achievement of individuation, i.e. the acquisition of inner unity through the assimilation and harmonization of all dimensions of the psyche. This goal can only be achieved in stages, and in this sense, Jung sees human life as divided into two main parts. The first half is focused on the development of the conscious dimension centered in the ego complex, thus on rationality, exteriority, and extension. The second part of life is characterized by placing emphasis on those dimensions of the personality which were neglected in the first stage of existence, and by finding ways of unifying disparate tendencies in order to constitute the whole harmoniously.

“The process of individuation includes an ongoing dialogue between the ego, as the center responsible for consciousness, and this numinous regulating center of the total psyche, a center Jung called the self, acting as the center of the ego, but also transcending it”²¹.

Bearing in mind that “at birth there is no ego, but a complete identification with the self, i.e. the state of totality and unconscious perfection”²², it can be stated that “the first part of man’s life records the gradual separation of the ego from the self, and the second part records their gradual reunion”²³.

¹⁹ Carl Gustav JUNG, *Symbols of transformation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1967, p. 216.

²⁰ Michael PALMER, *Freud și Jung despre religie*, Editura Iri, București, 1999, p. 208.

²¹ Mihaela MINULESCU, *Introducere în analiza jungiană*, p. 87.

²² Michael PALMER, *Freud și Jung despre religie*, p. 216.

²³ Michael PALMER, *Freud și Jung despre religie*, p. 216.

The process of individuation is “archetypally directed” by the same self that presents itself as the goal of individuation²⁴. We noted above the identity established by Jung between the experience of the self and the experience of God. Following the same idea, individuation acquires the characteristics of a religious process. While we can see the initial similarities between individuation and Christian salvation, we would like to point out that a full appreciation of all these assertions is reserved for the following sections.

III. The problem of the internal restoration

Both analytical depth psychology and religious systems share a same purpose, which is the attainment of salvation for the individual. The various ways in which they understand it, and the various ways in which they propose to achieve it, attest not only to the astonishing variety of religious understanding present on humanity’s meridians, but also to the constants of our existence, the most general of which is the constitutive communion between God and man.

This communion, and the desire to restore it, are central to both the Jungian concept of individuation and the Christian concept of redemption in Christ. Even if Jungian individuation does not explicitly refer to communion, it aims to restore the link between man and God, the first and most obvious difference between it and Christian salvation being the understanding of God - in the case of individuation, a psychologizing one - and the way God intervenes in the human psyche.

Individuation, on the other hand, appears more clearly as a process of establishing inner harmony, meant to secure the individual’s comfort and peace. Even in this regard, the Jungian perspective is a constructive one. Individuation is a psychological maturation process that involves self-organization around an inner center capable of providing order, meaning and purpose.

The process of inner harmonization constitutes a fundamental component of salvation; and many religious traditions, including several

²⁴ Michael PALMER, *Freud și Jung despre religie*, p. 210.

in the Christian realm, place emphasis on it²⁵. Nevertheless, Jung's concept of unifying opposites and integrating the autonomous aspects of the psyche ultimately aims to establish an identity between the self and the ego. This formulation draws parallels to Eastern religious systems, particularly Hinduism, which also espouses similar ideas²⁶.

What is the correlation between the philosophical ideas of Carl Jung and the principles of Eastern thought? The subsequent section will handle these factors sequentially in order to include them into the appropriate equation.

IV. Between the West and the East: Carl Gustav Jung and his relation to religion

Born into the family of a Swiss Reformed pastor and experiencing a formative upbringing marked by weekly church services, Carl Gustav Jung would spend his entire life dealing with the soteriological problem and the reality of God. During interviews conducted in his advanced years, he expressed a lack of belief in the existence of God while simultaneously acknowledging knowledge of God's existence. In doing so, he would consistently emphasize the distinction between the personal perception of God held by individual human beings and the enigmatic nature of God, which defies complete understanding and renders any depiction of God insufficient²⁷.

²⁵ Joachim WACH, *The Comparative Study of Religions*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1958, pp. 32-33. See also Peter FENWICK, "The neurophysiology of religious experience", in: Dinesh BHUGRA, *Psychiatry and Religion: Context, Consensus and Controversies*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 71. Here he takes over from Bucke the nine characteristics of mystical experience, and as the first defining elements he sets the feelings of oneness.

²⁶ Leon SCHLAMM, "Jung, Carl Gustav and Eastern Religious Traditions", in: D.A. LEEMING (eds), *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, Springer, Boston, MA, 2014, pp. 483u.

²⁷ See Steve MYERS, "Jung's regret over «I don't need to believe, I know»", in: Steve MYERS, *Practical Insights of analytical psychology*, <https://steve.myers.co/jungs-regret-over-i-dont-need-to-believe-i-know/>, accessed 28.10.2023.

His relation to Christianity is marked by what he considers to be “the impersonal approaches to organized religion” or “theological intellectualization”²⁸. In his adulthood, he becomes less interested in institutionalized religion and more drawn to more vivid and experiential views to religion, such as those of Protestant theologian Rudolph Otto²⁹.

Jung had a phase of infatuation with Eastern philosophy in the middle of his work, which he gained access to through Orientalism. This phase ended in 1938, following his three-month tour to India. Henceforth, Jung’s intellectual focus would encompass alternative forms of religious manifestation within the Western context, including those rooted in Christian traditions³⁰. By 1938, he had already incorporated and reinterpreted elements deemed valuable from Eastern religions, integrating them into his own philosophical framework. It is vital to emphasize that Jung’s interaction with Eastern religions was creative as well as critical. In this section, we shall attempt to synthesize Jung’s relationship to Eastern religions, considering the entirety of his work, particularly his final findings.

In short, the concept of the archetype of the self is based on the concept of the atman as presented in the Upanishads³¹. Simultaneously, Jung also employs the term “Imago Dei” to describe the self, signifying the image of God in the human psyche³², indicating that he also associates the idea with the Christian paradigm of expression. Jung is also “fascinated by Taoist and Hindu notions of the individual’s capacity for self-liberation - as opposed to the particularly Protestant Christian belief in personal salvation being wholly dependent upon divine grace”³³. In the concept of Brahman, he finds a resource for his conception of libido, psychic energy “in its

²⁸ Richard KRADIN, “Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology”, in: D.A. LEEMING (eds), *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, Springer, Boston, MA, 2014, p. 467.

²⁹ Richard KRADIN, “Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology”, 468.

³⁰ Murray STEIN, “Jung, Carl Gustav”, in: D.A. LEEMING (eds), *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, Springer, Boston, MA, 2014, p. 479.

³¹ Richard KRADIN, “Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology”, p. 467.

³² Pittman MCGEHEE, “Jungian Self” in: D.A. LEEMING (eds), *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, Springer, Boston, MA, 2014, p. 981.

³³ Miranda PUNITA, “Bridging East & West: Oriental Influences in the Psychology of Carl Jung”, in: *Jaarboek C.G. Jung Vereniging Nederland*, 2020, p. 112.

simplest form of manifestation”³⁴. Another of his interests is the creative tension between opposing realities, between the parts of life’s polarity, as seen in Eastern thought, which humans are tasked with reconciling³⁵. He means the relationship between atman and brahman, or the yin-yang pair of Taoism, reunited in the Tao: in Jung’s formulation, the self is “not only in the self, but in all beings, as atman, as Tao. It is the totality of the psyche”³⁶. He sees yoga as a spiritual practice that allows for the expansion of consciousness, which leads to the unification of opposites and hence the centering of the self³⁷. For Jung, yoga “is the basis of everything spiritual in Eastern thought and it designates traditions as diverse as Hinduism, Indian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism and Chinese Taoism”³⁸. It is important to note that Jung’s interpretation of yoga differs significantly from the traditional Hindu understanding.

However, Jung adopts a critical stance towards both Eastern and Western perspectives. The perspectives of both are one-sided, he says. The dichotomy between interiority and exteriority, as well as the contrast between passivism and activism, can be understood as manifestations of fragmented aspects of the entirety of reality, indicating a state of incompleteness. According to Jung, the integration of these elements is necessary, and the individuation process seeks to accomplish this objective. Furthermore, Jung does not adopt Eastern terms or conceptions, but rather claims that they validate his intuitions, helping him to better define his own, broader, conceptions. He even warns against Westerners practicing yoga and other Eastern techniques, highlighting the potential risks associated with their practice³⁹. These dangers arise from the fact that their practice will be taken out of context and will not benefit from the self-regulating mechanisms that the Eastern context has developed. Exposure to Eastern traditions, he believes, serves merely as a catalyst for Western spiritual

³⁴ Miranda PUNITA, “Bridging East & West...”, p. 115.

³⁵ Leon SCHLAMM, “Jung, Carl Gustav and Eastern Religious Traditions”, p. 483; Miranda PUNITA, “Bridging East & West...”, p. 112.

³⁶ Carl. Gustav JUNG, *Civilization in Transition*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1964, p. 463.

³⁷ Leon SCHLAMM, “Jung, Carl Gustav and Eastern Religious Traditions”, p. 484.

³⁸ Miranda PUNITA, “Bridging East & West...”, p. 115.

³⁹ Leon SCHLAMM, “Jung, Carl Gustav and Eastern Religious Traditions”, p. 485.

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transformation, and interaction with yoga serves as a reminder that we in the West have evolved similar kinds of introverted spirituality, one of which, as explicitly acknowledged by Jung, is Christian mysticism⁴⁰.

As a result, Jung develops his own paradigm, which he sees as combining the core truths of both the East and the West. Individuation results from a process of unification around the archetypal self, rather than complete absorption into a transcendental self. Furthermore, he maintains that absolute ego annihilation is unthinkable, “because there must always be something or someone left over - the infinitesimal ego, the knowing «I» - to experience the realization that there is no distinction between subject and object”⁴¹. For Europeans, he recommends instead of practicing yoga his own visionary techniques of active imagination, which facilitate the penetration of content from the unconscious to the conscious⁴².

Jung’s model has a notable level of complexity, since it strives for a goal comparable to religious aspirations, while also displaying some overlap with Eastern religions and Christianity, albeit with distinct aims and methodologies. Hence, it is unsurprising that theologians have engaged with this concept, resulting in both dismissive responses and suggestions for its integration, namely in alignment with the Judeo-Christian worldview and, more specifically, the Christian soteriological paradigm.

V. Individuation: Christian evaluation and reception

Jung’s friend, the Dominican Victor White, was one of his earliest Christian recipients. White’s scholarly works aim to engage in a scholarly discourse with the field of analytical psychology, as he assumes the role of a Roman Catholic theologian with a background in Thomistic philosophy. Regarding the matter of individuation, achieving consensus proves to be unattainable due to the significant disparities in the initial perspectives of the two parties involved, namely Protestantism and Kant’s metaphysical framework on one side, and Catholic Thomistic ideology on the other⁴³.

⁴⁰ Leon SCHLAMM, “Jung, Carl Gustav and Eastern Religious Traditions”, p. 484.

⁴¹ Leon SCHLAMM, “Jung, Carl Gustav and Eastern Religious Traditions”, p. 485.

⁴² Leon SCHLAMM, “Jung, Carl Gustav and Eastern Religious Traditions”, p. 485.

⁴³ Murray STEIN, “Jung, Carl Gustav”, p. 480.

David Cox is a scholarly writer who endeavors to establish a connection between the theories of Carl Jung and the principles of Christianity, drawing upon the fundamental tenets of Protestantism. Starting from this shared foundation, the author delves into a comprehensive analysis of the resemblances and distinctions between the concepts of individuation and justification by faith.⁴⁴ Cox elucidates certain parallels between the two procedures, while simultaneously delineating certain distinctions. Naturally, his observations will pertain solely to a limited sector of the Christian sphere, rather than encompassing its entirety, due to the specific focus of the second component of his comparative analysis.

As “clear parallels” between the two processes, Cox summarizes four important issues:

“(i) both are means by which man is brought from a state thought to be unsatisfactory to one thought to be desirable; (ii) both the stage from which man is taken and the goal to which man is led are similar in the two systems; (iii) the goal of both the Christian path and the psychotherapeutic path are realities which are meant to ‘happen’ to man and which man is said not to be able to attain by his conscious effort alone; (iv) in both systems there is a continuous emphasis on the oneness of human nature”⁴⁵.

The observations seem acceptable from a Christian-Orthodox perspective, even the third one whose intention is to emphasize the insufficiency of the effort of the conscious self.

In addition to the “clear parallels”, Cox also notes two “hidden parallels”⁴⁶, that may not be readily embraced. The first is based on man’s “wholly sinful” condition, as expressed in the “Christian (n.n. Protestant) diagnosis”⁴⁷, that allows us to infer the necessity for transformation. The second is based on the notion of external, declarative justification, which

⁴⁴ David Cox, *Jung and St Paul. A Study of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and Its Relation to the Concept of Individuation*, Longmans, Green and Co, London, 1959.

The work, considered a reference, has been republished several times.

⁴⁵ David Cox, *Jung and St Paul...*, pp. 337-338.

⁴⁶ David Cox, *Jung and St Paul...*, p. 339.

⁴⁷ David Cox, *Jung and St Paul...*, p. 340.

holds that “no development of character is necessary before God justifies a man”⁴⁸, development being present, but only as a process that follows justification⁴⁹.

Following the Orthodox view, we can easily identify more similarities between the two phenomena, this time “clear” similarities, such as the processual nature of both realities, the need for sustained effort, the feeling of inadequacy of conscious efforts, and the permanent sensation of help felt as acting from within but having a transcendent origin.

From the standpoint of a Christian fundamental theology, the Jungian theory of individuation provides a clear example of how the rational encounter between God and man can also take place within the framework of autonomous reflection, concerned with the understanding of the human being and his state of well-being, even if any revelational premises are eliminated from the start for good reason. Jungian philosophy, in certain aspects, surpasses certain Christian doctrinal bodies in its pursuit of truth. And since it can be regarded as an example of natural Revelation, the immense value of what since St. Paul has been called the knowledge of God “through the things he has made” (Romans 1, 20) becomes evident once again.

However, the individuation theory has its limits, many of which are easy to see. Of the differences pointed out by Cox between individuation and Christian salvation, we will note only those that are viable from an Orthodox perspective, since many of them insist precisely on the same automatic and definitive character of justification. A difference that could be accepted, with some nuances, would be that in the psychotherapeutic process, unlike the religious one, the goal is known neither to the analyst nor to the analysand, and it only becomes clear in the course of time⁵⁰. The nuance that we wish to introduce is related to the fact that even in the spiritual life the subsequent stages are not really known to those on the path, and especially the final stage is only described as being made up of “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived” (I

⁴⁸ David Cox, *Jung and St Paul...*, p. 341.

⁴⁹ David Cox, *Jung and St Paul...*, p. 341.

⁵⁰ David Cox, *Jung and St Paul...*, p. 342.

Corinthians 2, 9.). However, it may be asserted that for Christians the goal is well defined.

Another distinction highlighted by Cox is that the Christian path is universally presented and accessible to individuals, whereas individuation necessitates special intellectual skills and is thus not available to everybody⁵¹.

Christopher Bryant, a clergyman of the Anglican Church and a member of the monastic order known as The Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE), also provides insights into the distinctions between Christian salvation and psychological individuation. The author identifies several aspects, such as the absence of direct mention of sin, which is reframed as a reluctance to embrace change⁵², or the exclusive linkage of God's action to the inner world, with no possibility of divine intervention from without⁵³. Bryant notes that "Jung did not fully understand the place of dogma and creed in the Christian life. He seems to have understood the creed as a set of intellectual formulations unrelated to the inner life of the believer"⁵⁴. Thus, while Bryant differs from Cox in many ways, he appears to accept Cox's final idea:

"The salvation which the Christian seeks differs from the individuation which Jung sees as the goal of human life but there is an overlap of meaning. For salvation, which must be understood in terms of oneness with God and his will, includes the individual's personal fulfilment in the life to come and some real anticipation of it in this life. Further Jung acknowledges individuation to be a rare achievement and beyond the reach of most people"⁵⁵.

Additionally, Bryant's text reveals an interpretation of salvation that aligns more closely with the Eastern Church's perspective on the matter.

⁵¹ David COX, *Jung and St Paul...*, p. 346.

⁵² Christopher BRYANT, *Jung and the Christian Way*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1983, pp. 51f.

⁵³ Christopher BRYANT, *Jung and the Christian Way*, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Christopher BRYANT, *Jung and the Christian Way*, p. 123.

⁵⁵ Christopher BRYANT, *Jung and the Christian Way*, p. 52.

The key difference, according to Irene Bloomfield, a Jewish psychotherapist, is that a religious worldview is focused on every human life circumstance, in connection to which there are norms and standards drawn from the very relationship with the divine. Psychology, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with “realization of potential”, “better adjustment”, “individuation”, “self-actualization” and “wholeness”⁵⁶, and not with behavior in concrete situations.

Beyond these distinctions, we believe that the most important distinction should be emphasized once more: the harmonization of the ego with the self never leads to the wholeness of communion with God, as we define it when we integrate the Christian revelational framework. It is only accessible through communion in Christ. However, as will be demonstrated further down, Christianly received individuation can lead to an intensification of this communion.

However, the examination of the issue of individuation must extend beyond mere identification of resemblances and disparities among processes that strive towards an internal coherence associated with the divine. The Jungian theory presents a notable proposition regarding the identification of God and the self, aiming to encompass diverse religious frameworks within its explanatory framework while also acknowledging the intricate breadth of phenomena associated with the human psyche.

It is important to note that developing a comprehensive model that adequately encompasses both the pantheistic beliefs of the East and the Christian revelational framework is a challenging endeavor. Previous attempts have largely fallen short, as they frequently do not meet the criteria set forth by the Christian framework. Once again, the association between God and the self exhibits a prominent pantheistic characteristic, which is deemed incompatible with the Christian perspective. Jung’s thought has also been appropriated by New Age followers precisely because of this identification. The Christian framework of revelation prohibits the reduction of God to the limited dimensions of the contingent universe,

⁵⁶ Irene BLOOMFIELD, “Religion and Psychotherapy. Friends or Foes?”, in: David WILLOWS and John SWINTON, *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care. Practical Theology in a Multidisciplinary Context*, Athenaem Press Gateshead Tyne & Wear, London, 2000, pp. 117-118.

regardless of any potential absolutization through a particular method. One pertinent inquiry pertains to the feasibility of embracing the notion of the equivalence between the divine being and the self in a framework of thought that extends beyond the boundaries of pantheism.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that within the framework of Jungian ideology, there exists no contention regarding a total assimilation of God and the ego. In alternative terms, Jung does not engage in a discussion on the existence of God beyond the confines of the psyche, transcending the self, or whether God's existence is solely confined within it. Regarding the objective existence of God beyond the realm of the psyche, it is important to note that Jung does neither put forth any propositions nor has the necessary tools to unravel this enigma. He explores the phenomenon of encountering the divine within the realm of the human psyche. This viewpoint is acknowledged by Paul Evdokimov, an Orthodox theologian who held a prominent position within the Russian Orthodox diaspora during the 20th century, who states: "Everything Jung says does not relate at all to God in Himself, but to man's religious experience, to his reactions, to the projection of God in his heart."⁵⁷ Given this clarification, we will proceed to examine the potential compatibility of Jung's concepts within the framework of Christian ideology.

Christopher Bryant confesses that Jung's suggestion of identification between self and God helped him to understand much better the concept of providence governing and protecting human life unceasingly.

"Jung's idea of the self, the whole personality, acting as a constant influence on my conscious aims and intentions in a manner which I was powerless to prevent, that brought home to me the inescapable reality of God's rule over my life. So long as I thought of God's providence as an abstract truth, part of theistic belief, it made no powerful impact upon me. But it was quite another matter if God's guiding hand was within my being, within the fluctuations of mood and the ups and downs of my health"⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Paul EVDOKIMOV, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, Asociația medicală creștină Christiana, București, 1995, p. 206.

⁵⁸ Christopher BRYANT, *Jung and the Christian Way*, pp. 40-41.

Thus, the Jungian framework of comprehension offers a distinct advantage in this regard.

Second, it should be noted that even in religious experience, the Christians do not have a sense of identity between themselves and the experienced God. In Christian understanding, the concept of communion in otherness is central, which is not evident in Jung's writings. We detect a deficiency here that is probably caused by his Protestant background, which remains insufficiently reflected in this respect.

However, it is important to remember that in Jung's conception, the self is not synonymous with God, but God is experienced by man through the archetype of the self, which is that of totality, comprehended in a categorial manner. When individuals become aware of the shared experience of the divine, they tend to categorize God in ways that are comprehensible to them. When discussing categories, we are also alluding to categories and intuitions that extend outside the categorial realm, such as apophaticism or the suprapersonal. The Jungian framework demonstrates that God is encompassed within the domains of harmony, perfection, and unity, as shown by the archetype of the self. If we conceptualize archetypes as communication structures, representing inherent tendencies towards communion that are ingrained in humanity through the process of creation, it is plausible to view the archetype of the self as the inclination towards complete communion with God.

What about the overlap between self and Christ? Is there a form available in which this can also be accepted?

For Christians, says Jung, the symbol of the self par excellence is Jesus Christ. Numerous theologians have expressed problems with the reduction of the God-Man to a mere psychological symbol. According to Christopher Briant, it is possible to consider the notion without necessarily implying a reduction: "The Christians believes him to be much more than a symbol, to be an actual person who lived and died and is alive still. But it is because he is able to be for men and women a living symbol that he is able to change their lives"⁵⁹.

Paul Evdokimov offers a creative reading of Jungian texts. Thus, he proposes several assimilations based solely on the so-called "intentio

⁵⁹ Christopher BRYANT, *Jung and the Christian Way*, p. 84.

lectoris”⁶⁰, without verifying the existence of any authorial or textual intentionality in this respect. In terms of Christ as archetype, he attempts to identify a point of significant convergence between the psychological system and the Christian religion. “The fundamental affirmation of the affinity between the image of Christ and certain elements of content of the human unconscious places Jung’s thought very close to Christology”⁶¹, he states. “Indeed, the archetypal Man-God is eternally present: in Christ, he becomes a historical reality, Incarnation”⁶². Jung’s reading grid, shaped by his Christian beliefs, is a viable technique to selective reception within a certain ideational framework. Worthy of note is the interpretation of the image of God, into which man was created, as an archetype of the self⁶³, an idea sufficiently prominent in post-Jungian Christian theology, maybe equivalent to the far earlier ones of Christ as “archetype of man”⁶⁴, respectively “archetype of salvation”⁶⁵.

Wayne G. Rollins, a more recent Catholic theologian trained in the atmosphere of post-Vatican II Catholicism, advances a similar approach to Evdokimov’s, tying the archetype of psychic completeness to Christ’s presence and work. It wakes and illuminates the archetype of the self while simultaneously particularizing it⁶⁶. The Catholic ethos of acknowledging the natural, the innate potentiality to know God, reverberates in Rollins’ thought. Rollins easily identifies similarities between the Jungian theory and formulations of St. Paul (“Christ dwelling in me”, “Christ who is born in us”, us living “in Christ”), Origen or Karl Barth⁶⁷. Christ is the archetype of the self since He is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John, 14, 6). These phrases, which Rollins examines separately, also convey a sense of completeness⁶⁸. These realities are experienced and internalized in a manner that aligns with the teachings of Christ, with potential avenues including the use of scripture,

⁶⁰ Umberto ECO, *The Limits of Interpretation*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990, pp. 50-51.

⁶¹ Paul EVDOKIMOV, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, p. 203.

⁶² Paul EVDOKIMOV, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, p. 203.

⁶³ Paul EVDOKIMOV, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, p. 203.

⁶⁴ Panayotis NELLAS, *Omul, animal îndumnezeit*, Deisis, Sibiu 1999, pp. 65-84.

⁶⁵ Ilie MOLDOVAN, “Teologia Duhului Sfânt în Catehezele Sf. Simeon Noul Teolog”, in: *Studii Teologice*, XIX (1967) 7-8, p. 430.

⁶⁶ Wayne G. ROLLINS, *Jung and the Bible*, p. 86.

⁶⁷ Wayne G. ROLLINS, *Jung and the Bible*, p. 86.

⁶⁸ Wayne G. ROLLINS, *Jung and the Bible*, pp. 86-89.

the contemplation of divine mysteries, the expression of one's faith through confession, or the emulation of virtuous actions⁶⁹.

Morton T. Kelsey was an Episcopal clergyman and appreciated spiritual advisor in the United States. Kelsey asserts that he does not align with the Jungian perspective, but rather identifies as a Christian who has found value in utilizing Jungian concepts to effectively convey the teachings and principles of Jesus to contemporary individuals who are educated and inquisitive⁷⁰. He distinguishes between the goals of psychotherapy and spiritual counselling, noting that the goal of treatment is to alleviate suffering, whereas the goal of spiritual counselling is to open the entire mind to God's transformative power⁷¹. He also believes that "individuation is not the same as holiness, it is the name given by Jung to the process of spiritual growth which can lead to holiness"⁷². Kelsey further suggests that individuation unfolds in a series of stages. The initial stage involves abreaction or confession, which entails acknowledging one's own condition. This is followed by transference, defined as "the capacity to become so close to others that the divine can be manifested in and through the relationship"⁷³. The final stage is integration, which involves the growth of comprehension and the realization of one's potential⁷⁴. In this instance, we observe the manner in which Jungian ideology is embraced within the context of Christianity, with the intention of employing it as a means to advance the Christian ethos.

The potential applications of incorporating Jungian principles of individuation into Christian spirituality are considerably extensive. "Jung's teaching about the stages of life has direct relevance to Christian prayer"⁷⁵, Christopher Bryant argues. In their book on prayer and temperament, Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrisey dedicate a complete chapter to the process of integrating the lower function⁷⁶. As evidenced by the mentioned

⁶⁹ Wayne G. ROLLINS, *Jung and the Bible*, pp. 89-91.

⁷⁰ Morton T. KELSEY, *Christo-Psychology*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1983, p. 1.

⁷¹ Morton T. KELSEY, *Christo-Psychology*, p. 59.

⁷² Morton T. KELSEY, *Christo-Psychology*, p. 110.

⁷³ Morton T. KELSEY, *Christo-Psychology*, p. 111.

⁷⁴ Morton T. KELSEY, *Christo-Psychology*, p. 112.

⁷⁵ Christopher BRYANT, *Jung and the Christian Way*, p. 106.

⁷⁶ Chester P. MICHAEL and Marie C. NORRISEY, *Prayer and Temperament. Different Prayer Forms for Different Personality Types*, The Open Door Inc, Charlottesville, 1984, pp. 91-102.

instances, the concept of individuation, despite its contentious nature, may be approached from a Christian perspective and yield genuine spiritual advantages. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the process of individuation and the restoration of human nature in Christ cannot be seen as equivalent, as substantiated by the aforementioned arguments.

VI. Conclusions

The father of analytical psychology demonstrates a noteworthy endeavor in formulating a comprehensive and inclusive program of perfection, that is not only complete and accessible to people of different cultural backgrounds, but also tied to the concept of God. Jung also felt the need to expand his understanding of God beyond the confines of his Protestant framework, seeking for an inner transformation expressible in terms such as harmony, peace, and unification. The theories proposed by Jung demonstrate considerable similarities to Eastern religious philosophy, while also displaying a notable alignment with the values and ethos of Eastern Christianity. However, certain unresolved issues persist, either due to the inherent constraints of the field of psychology or the author's incapacity to completely transcend his own Protestant theological background.

In this study, we attempted to synthesize the intricate concept of individuation, considering the context in which it originates, the author's objectives, and its significance within the Christian framework of comprehension. From this vantage point, the topic of individuation, which falls under the umbrella of soteriology, would benefit from a far more in-depth exploration. Given the constrained focus of this investigation, we are able to merely reference it within this context. The present undertaking has been initiated with the purpose of highlighting the interrelation between many sectors of thought and life, while also opening up novel avenues for scholarly investigation.