

Stages of The Inner Journey

The inner journey is a voyage of self-discovery and self-transformation. We journey into our unconscious psyche discovering unknown parts of ourselves. Our unconscious is revealed and integrated (brought into consciousness) through dream interpretation or forms of active imagination, writing poetry or producing artwork etc. This is a process of self-realisation and personality development with the goal of becoming a whole person. This is known as individuation. Individuation is the process of becoming a whole, unique and authentic individual. This causes a shift in our identity from our old socially conditioned self to realising our true self.

Dissolution of the Persona

The dissolution of the persona is often initiated by a life crisis. While painful, the collapse of the persona is essential for personal growth and the emergence of our true and authentic self. When the persona disintegrates the individual may feel disoriented or like they have reached a dead end. They may feel lost or experience a void as their old adapted self, social identity and mindset are no longer serving them. They may feel like their world is coming to an end and may be experiencing apathy, despair, hopelessness or anxiety. How dark before the dawn. A breakdown can be an initiation that leads to a breakthrough and a rebirth of the personality.

The Shadow

Shadow integration is the psychological process of bringing repressed, disowned or unconscious parts of ourself (our shadow) into conscious awareness to achieve personal wholeness. This work involves accepting rather than suppressing undesirable traits like anger, fear, jealousy or insecurity which diminishes projection of these traits onto others and reduces reactivity. Integrating the shadow leads to psychological wholeness, emotional maturity and authenticity. The shadow is commonly personified in dreams by persons of the same sex as the dreamer.

Anima and Animus

When the shadow has been sufficiently integrated the anima or animus will appear. The anima is the feminine side of a person and tends to be dominant in women and unconscious in men. The animus is the masculine side of a person and tends to be dominant in men and unconscious in women. Anima and animus integration is a crucial stage in the process of individuation, where a person incorporates their unconscious contrasexual inner self—the female anima in men or male animus in women—into consciousness. However, this is a generalisation and doesn't take into account diversity. The personality type of a person, their sexuality and social conditioning will also determine the dominance of the anima or animus in their personality. Anima integration enhances relatedness, connection, emotional depth, sensitivity and intuition (Eros). Animus Integration fosters independence, assertiveness, intellectual clarity and logical reasoning (Logos). Individuation requires uniting these opposing inner forces to achieve a balanced and mature personality. Anima and animus integration withdraws projections from others, fosters psychological wholeness, emotional richness and balances masculine and feminine energies (logos/eros) in the psyche. Their integration moves the individual past societal gender stereotypes toward their whole, unique and authentic self. The anima and animus are also messengers who convey communications and wisdom from our unconscious mind which is our intuition, inner wisdom, inner guru or Higher Power and appears in dreams as a Great Man or Great Woman we hold in high esteem.

Union with the Unconscious

When the anima and animus have been sufficiently integrated this will lead to a union with our unconscious mind. Our unconscious mind is our intuition and inner wisdom. The anima and animus act as messengers between our autonomous unconscious mind and conscious ego conveying intuitive thoughts, feelings and images. The unconscious mind is represented by parental images in dreams as the unconscious is superordinate to the ego.

Emergence of the Self

The progressive integration of our unconscious will take us to the deep inner core of our psych. The Self is the inner core and true centre of the psyche and is our essence. The Self can appear as a circle, sphere, the sun, energy, fire, light, the sky, water, a sacred object, a holy figure or something with a numinous quality.

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