

JUNG AND THE PATH OF INDIVIDUATION

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STEIN, Murray. **Jung e o Caminho da Individuação: Uma introdução concisa**, tradução: Euclides Luiz Calloni. São Paulo: Cultrix, 2020.

In eight chapters, Murray Stein makes one of the best and most concise introductions to the key concept of the Jungian work: the process of individuation. Finally, the Portuguese-speaking reader will have access to this capital work, launched in 2020 by Cultrix. Stein teaches us the fundamental role of the *Principium individuationis* as the goal of deep psychology. We can go further and think that the former president of the International School of Analytical Psychology, in full consonance with the thought of the great Carl Gustav Jung, makes the best presentation of the maxim "know yourself", in contemporary language, of recent decades.

Already at the beginning the author presents to us that our *Self* is not something given forever and that our identity is an interwoven of unconscious contents added to a series of factors determined by historical contexts, genetic inheritance and cultural factors that are not chosen rationally, but after giving this "yes to life", accepting all the problematic - not optional - that formed us, is that we can develop our potentialities, making aware of what until then was hidden from us. As in the beautiful phrase of the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega Y Gasset: "I am I and my circumstance and if I do not save it, I do not save myself" (GASSET, 1967, p. 52).

We must stress that the process of individuation has nothing to do with modern individualism. It only remains clear that we cannot go beyond the real possibilities that

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Fortune has bequeathed us. The process of individuation is directly linked to the understanding of the context of each one, requiring "the integral participation of the conscious person to make it progress" (STEIN, 2020, p. 13). Thus, the process of individuation is a dive into the personal reality of each individual, which only by consciously placing itself within the social, psychological, cultural and even political context that surrounds it, can make emerge from the network of automatisms, cultural vices and all baggage not chosen; his true self.

Personal fulfilment is directly linked to the understanding and even acceptance of the reality in which we are inserted, and individuation is a dynamic and perennial process. The awakening of consciousness. Speaking in alchemical language, it is through *separatio* that the individual first identifies what is "cultural", common to the people of his family, city, country, which will then be able to return to himself and realize that of it all is part of his true self and what he merely repeats in a mechanical way, and often suffered, even if he is not aware of it; by habit. The self is something much greater than the little ego molded from outside, most of the time, having little relation to what we actually are. *Solve et Coagula*.

In short, the principle defines something essential about the human being. It is an absolutely fundamental impulse in the human subject to differentiate itself from that which is around. This is individuation, at least in part, and the energy for its creation is a postulate of human consciousness. In becoming a person, the individual must necessarily create distinctions and separations. [...] The search for individuation, therefore, is congruent with human nature. (STEIN, 2020, p. 22)

We can say - making a brief relationship between psychology and sociology - that the process of individuation is one of the main antidotes against the mass society that we are inserted into. Stein himself clearly shows us that the movement towards individuation is something natural to every human being and that however much the entity ignores this impulse, it will not be able to do it completely. In a mass society - where everything is leveled: habits, mannerisms, behaviors, tastes, etc - the subject often restrains himself from being what he is (or at least seek to be) for fear of not being understood and displaced from the community.

Within a context of social massification, Jung's expensive idea of persona is brought into the discussion. As you know, *persona* is nothing more than a mask. An identification of the ego with some of the thousands of archetypes that are part of the collective unconscious, used by the subject in order to adapt in the social environment. The *persona* is only one of the "socially accepted" roles, which most often the ego uses as an imitation of the true self in order to insert itself into society. The great problem of *persona* is when the subject forgets

that It's a mask and begins to believe that it is his "true self", being something not uncommon to be perceived among people who are successful in their works, making the subject occupy the accepted "social role", every day at all times. In this sense, the persona can become a great enemy of the process of individuation.

Still on the *persona*, Stein presents us that it is by assuming this "social mask" conspicuously that many mothers put their children to lose, not being very difficult to find in our clinics, friendships and throughout society such examples as this:

Similarly, women who cannot get rid of identification with the powerful mother archetype continue to feed compulsively throughout their lives, being unable to separate from children and grandchildren and to let them have their own lives and identity (STEIN, 2020, p. 29)

Stein asserts that in the scope of deep psychology, the process of individuation takes place from what Jung will call "The Transcendent Function", as this synthesis or union of conscious and unconscious contents (coniunction), and one of the methods presented by the father of deep psychology for the activation of transcendent function is the active imagination that has the function of "raising to the level of consciousness unconscious images and fantasies that are at work behind the scenes of the ego complex" (STEIN, 2020, p. 36).

Animus, Anima and the Numinosa Experience

In the scope of this journey in search of the true self, Stein presents us with the fundamental and absolutely innovative role of deep psychology: The *Animus*, the *Anima* and the Numinous Function. In Jungian psychotherapy, as we have seen, there is a central need to bring to the conscious various still dormant elements of our unconscious, such as the *Animus* and *Anima* influences that each of us possesses.

But what is the *Animus*? This would be the unconscious male side of every woman, as well as *Anima*, the unconscious female side of every man. So, they both influence our personal *psyche*. It is through active imagination that gradually the subject will bring consciousness and, *a posteriori*, loosen the *bonds of* unconscious influence of these two archetypes. Only by understanding and "reconciling" oneself with one's anima can man continue and perfect himself on the journey towards individuation, just as it happens with women, regarding their animus. This is accomplished through the numinous experience.

It is through numinous experience, as this experience with the sacred, as something that contemplates and transcends us, that we are able to divest ourselves of unconscious and even external influences and penetrate as far as possible into the *Mysterium* that we are. Stein

makes a point of presenting that this numinous experience should not be considered as the dogmatic religious experience, of which we are accustomed, nor with the famous criticism made to Jung in "psychologizing religion". In fact, "the spiritual is confirmed and expanded through the psychological" (STEIN, 2020, p. 51) and "To say that the object symbolized by religious experience is a content of the unconscious does not exclude its possible metaphysical condition. It only states a limit to human knowledge." (*ibid*).

The numinous experience resembles the mystical experiences carried out by the contemplatives of the various Eastern and Western religious traditions, but is not confused with them because the purpose of mystical experiences is an act of total adoration, while the numinous experience, for the hero/heroine of individuation, it is a *prima matéria* for the infinite work of individuation. In a very didactic and entertaining way, Stein presents us with symbolic examples of this hero/heroine journey and the role of animus and anima, in two short stories by the Brothers Grimm, entitled "The White Serpent" and "The Old Woman of the Forest". Two brilliant tales, simple and of unmistakable symbolic richness.

In the Greek myth of the god Hephaestus, the great struggle waged by men and women, with their individuality largely undermined, by a world torn by ideologies, wars and social mass "from the baggage of personal and collective history and become the individual personalities that constitute its innate potential" (STEIN, 2020, p. 116)

As we continue reading, we begin to realize how many forces act on us at all times and that "knowing oneself" is above all a heroic task, unfortunately abdicated by the great and overwhelming majority. Accepting oneself and the other is one of the greatest social and political challenges that modern man faces, and while there is humanity, we must take this existential, social and political problem seriously. When we come across the wisdom of the ancients, of the most varied cultures, often re-signified in contemporary language, we realize that the problem of man remains open.

The process of individuation requires that each one questions his own cultural certainties that he values and convictions sustained with devotion. It means abandoning previous identifications and being open to the exploitation of what is unknown and often unpleasant (separating on an inner level). There must also be a receptive attitude to the "other stranger" and willingness to engage in dialogue with this strange element (*coniunctio*). This requires the integration of the strange element in itself - the repressed, the gloomy, the frightening and the forgotten. (STEIN, 2020, p. 176)

Our "civilization in transition" presents us with several theses and antitheses. We need to create a new synthesis. This one starts within each of us.

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