Ubuntu and the Individuation Process: Toward a Multicultural Analytical Psychology

Roger Brooke

Taking a position informed by postcolonial thought, it is argued that Jung's concept of individuation, with its emphasis on separateness and the withdrawal of projections, is essentially modern and Western. Any group of people is regarded by Jung only as a regressive threat to the individuation process. Jung's European colonialism is evident in his trips to Africa and his response to the dreams that he had there. It is argued that traces of this colonialism remain evident as a colonialism of the psyche to the extent that opposites such as light/dark, white/black, civilized/primitive, conscious/unconscious remain as the organizing principles in our theory of psyche. The author's experience of growing up in apartheid South Africa is discussed, together with an account of a dream of a traditional Xhosa woman and another Xhosa woman's life. Thereafter, Senghor's concept of nègritude is used to describe an individuating consciousness that might be closer to our shared human experience than is found in Jung's writings. Individuation is then discussed in terms of the Zulu concept of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is based on the recognition that we become persons through other persons who treat us as persons, and that the community can be imagined as facilitating our individuation. It is suggested that Ubuntu might describe our experience of growth within the Jungian community.

Jung did not have much time for groups. His life's myth was the affirmation of the individual's capacity for consciousness, from which position he tended to regard gatherings of people with a jaundiced eye. Jacobi's (1971) delightful collection of Jung's writings about the individual and community reveals a consistent suspicion that any group of people could only exert a regressive pull toward individual unconsciousness. With Nietzsche-like disdain for the masses, Jung remarked, "A million zeroes joined together do..."
not, unfortunately, add up to one" (Jacobi, p. 166); and for groups of people who think they are smart: "A hundred Great Brains make one big fathead" (p. 166). It is true that Jung also said, "If a man is capable of leading a responsible life himself, then he is also conscious of his duties to the community” (p. 163). However, this theme is not developed. Nor does Jung see any possible role for a community of people in facilitating the individuation process.

Jung's model of individuation reflects the imperatives of 20th-century existentialist ethics: autonomy, integrity, authenticity in relation to the self. What I think is only recently coming into critical focus is the extent to which Jung's model of psyche and individuation also reflects his European existentialist assumptions. I mean this not only with regard to its relevance for people of so-called “other cultures,” but also in terms of its inner logic. His model reflects the (late) colonialist cultural politics in which his thought was historically situated. In other words, there is a colonialism of the psyche that can be detected in Jung's thinking regarding individuation. In this context, I am going to argue that the Zulu term Ubuntu has much to offer our notion of individuation and that it captures something important in our own experience of training and participation within the Jungian community.

First I address the question of individuation as a cultural phenomenon, then Jung's travels to Africa, in which, I argue, Jung did not escape the European's dream of Africa, as we can see in his own dreams. Within this context, I discuss what is meant by consciousness in individuation and make a brief excursion through Senghor's notion of negritude. Thus suitably prepared, we shall return to the notion of individuation through the term Ubuntu.¹

INDIVIDUATION AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Jung understood better than his psychoanalytic contemporaries that our models of mind and human development are infused with cultural assumptions of which we might be only dimly aware. Culture is the eye that sees before we know what we see. As we know, Jung wanted to find a position outside himself from which to see his own cultural assumptions (Jung, 1961, p. 266). This is why he traveled to India, the American Southwest, and Africa.

It was unfortunate that Jung did not question his assumptions regarding the African cultures that he visited and thought about. He opens his 1931 essay, "Archaic Man," saying that he cannot speak of civilized man without prejudices, but that he can talk about “archaic man” due to his own “superior vantage point”: “Our mental equipment,” Jung says, “being more differentiated, is superior to his” (Jung, 1931, p. 50).

It is surprising that Jung did not seem to appreciate clearly enough that what we see as another's culture is organized by the assumptions and values of our own. The African culture that Jung saw was a cultural transference fantasy, a reflection of the organizing images within the collective consciousness of the early 20th-century educated European. With regard to individuation, for instance, Jung's concept is so thoroughly cultural that it all but forecloses the possibility of individuation for people of color, especially in Africa.

Individuation is the guiding term in analytical psychology; Jung's Collected Works can be read as elaborations of that central theme. The development of consciousness, the complexities of conscience and moral conduct, finding one's way between the opposites, archetypal images of struggle and transformation, and the differentiation and integration of Western spirituality are all dimensions of individuation. Although Jung does recognize individuation as a universal, or archetypal, process, it seems safe to say that he generally regards it as a particularly Western and "modern" calling (see Jacobi, 1965). It is infused with the values and assumptions of the modern man, according to Jung. If black Africans are perceived to lack an autonomous ego and self-reflection, to be “unconscious,” “primitive,” “childlike,” “whole” in their "natural state," and not yet capable of personal responsibility, “will and directed intention,” then clearly individuation, for them, has not even begun (e.g., Jung 1931, 1946, 1961, p. 270).

I am ahead of myself. There are two overlapping meanings of individuation in Jung's work. First, individuation is a process in which one becomes increasingly undivided against oneself, complete rather than perfect (Jung 1953, p. 159), and a "separate, indivisible unity or whole" (Jung, 1939, p.275). Second, individuation is a process in which one becomes separate from identification with the collective—both the collective unconscious of childhood and the collective consciousness of one's culture, to the extent that this is merely the collective unconscious made visible.

What links these processes that comprise individuation is an emphasis on the withdrawal of projections—which means, taking personal responsibility for one's psychic life and recognizing that the greatest moral and spiritual conflicts are within one's own soul. Separateness is the key to the process, both with regard to others, from whom we have withdrawn projections, and from the archetypal images within, from which we have wrestled a degree of

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energy and consciousness. To be sure, separateness is intended to enhance one’s relationships with others, and within oneself. Separateness is not meant to be schizoid, but to enable more complete and satisfying relating. Nevertheless, separateness remains key, and the ongoing significance of others in this process is not discussed, except negatively as a regressive pull.

Individualization is difficult to talk about; here is one account from Jung’s writings. Individualization is imagined as a process in which the development of consciousness involves the withdrawal of projections—a process that is consistent with a rational view of a material, scientific world. Instead of participation mystique, in which psychic life is submerged in an animated world of projections, one lives rationally in a “despiritualized” scientific world and rediscovers meaning within the self. One’s superior conscious separates one from the herd. We might envy those who live “close to nature,” the unconscious, feeling, and the body, but loneliness and loss of vitality are understood to be the price to pay for individuation (Jung, 1938). Although we, as egos, might feel intimately connected to the unconscious and the self, separateness and conscious relationship rather than unconscious identification are the organizing themes. (I remember at 21 feeling reassured that I was on a noble quest. I had seen the Freeman [1959/1977] BBC interview with Jung and was convinced that the future of the world hung “by a thin thread,” and all depended on my heroic efforts. When I began to feel especially fond of a young girl, I promptly ditched her so that I could withdraw my “anima projection,” and I even felt a warm moral glow about it—and inexplicably depressed, of course.)

I expect all of us can recognize these threads in Jung’s writings, but I imagine we also feel that this presentation is overintellectualized and misses the depth of our own experience, especially with regard to the facilitative significance of others to whom we are indebted.

I shall come back to this point, but first we should do what Jung tried to do: to see our own assumptions from another cultural point of view.

Jung’s Unconscious Colonialist Bias

We can start with Jung’s own account of his trip to East Africa in 1925-26 (see Burleson, 2005), and his dream of having his hair curled by his African-American Chattanooga barber. In this dream, Jung could feel the heat of the curling iron as his “Negro” barber was making his hair “kinky,” and he awoke in “terror.” Jung recounted how he took the dream as “a warning from the unconscious” that “the primitive was a danger to [him]” and that his “European personality must under all circumstances be preserved intact” (Jung, 1961, p. 302).

In my reading, Jung made the common mistake of interpreting his dream while still in its grip. After he awoke, his frightened dream ego was still dreaming the nightmare when trying to understand the dream. Jung could feel that the unconscious was a danger to him as ego, but his response was simply to flee back to Europe for fear of “going black.” His perception of black Africa remained a concrete transference. No projection was withdrawn, either from Africa or from the darkness of his own unconscious. Jung’s response to his own dream was concrete and literal, prompting a literal retreat to Europe. Jung reacted to his dream rather than analyzing it. Ironically, in this regard Jung was behaving just as “primitively” as any of those he imagined he saw around him. As Michael VanNoy Adams (1996) has discussed in careful detail, Jung failed to use his own theory of dreams to investigate the compensation and telos that this nightmare contained. If he had done so, Jung might have recognized that his “head” needed to be transformed by heat, that his black barber, like an analyst, was working on his head to effect a necessary change, and that what would grow out of his head—ideas—would be less “straight,” more “kinky”—more intimately rooted in the unconscious that Jung was projecting onto black people and Africa.

What was the “European personality” that Jung desperately needed to preserve? I think it has to do with the European constitution of identity: rational, interiorized, Cartesian, set over and against a world from which all projections have supposedly been withdrawn (Brooke, 1991). Jung’s experience of beautiful black women, confident and self-contained, and of a world that had come alive as his “liberated psychic forces poured blissfully back to the primeval expanses” (Jung, 1961, p. 293), was an experience of being seduced, as he explicitly indicates. But his response was to affirm his anxieties.

Unfortunately, I think traces of Jung’s African nightmare remain at the center of Jungian theory. The nightmare remains to the extent that the images of blackness and light, unconsciousness and consciousness, remain as binary opposites, mutually constituting each other. (It should be mentioned, however, that Stanton Marlan has used Jung’s alchemical imagery and sensibility to demolish these oppositions; see Marlan, 1999, 2005.) If this nightmare of co-constituting binary oppositions has theoretical and psychological
consequences, the political consequences are such that we—or, at least, I as a white South African—should weep.

What I want to do now is to lead us in an imaginative seduction, so that our own thinking might become a little "kinky"—hopefully without our feeling too bent out of shape.

As Adams and others have argued, Jung's view of individuation, consciousness, the unconscious, and of Africa and black people was seen through the lenses of rationalism and evolutionism. Despite himself, Jung was a rationalist in his repeated linking of consciousness to thinking and objectivity, and in his assumption that it is the scientific method that peers through our psychic projections onto the "real" world (Jung, 1926, p. 327). Like all his modern contemporaries, Jung was an evolutionist in his assumption that nature, morphology, human culture, and consciousness are all evolving, with some cultures and people ahead of others. No matter how much we acknowledge Jung's attempts to write of the paradoxes of consciousness and European modernity, and no matter how much we bob and weave as apologists in our interpretations of Jung, it has to be said that there runs throughout his work a consistent set of equations and oppositions. They look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White European</th>
<th>Black African</th>
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<tr>
<td>light</td>
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<tr>
<td>civilized</td>
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<td>conscious</td>
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<td>disembodied</td>
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<td>scientific</td>
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<td>repressed neurotic</td>
<td>paranoid psychotic</td>
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<td>adultlike</td>
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<td>personal</td>
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<td>individual</td>
<td>collective</td>
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<tr>
<td>separation</td>
<td>participation mystique</td>
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<td>moral</td>
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This set of oppositions significantly informs Jung's understanding of individuation and suggests that individuation is the prerogative and burden of "modern man." It also reveals a colonialist and patronizing attitude toward those of other cultures, particularly black Africans. It can hardly be defensible or offer much comfort to black Africans (or people of color anywhere) to learn that Jung envies their "meaningful" lives, their "wholeness," and their "vitality," when such attributes are equated with unconsciousness, childhood, animal nature, psychosis, and an absence of personal responsibility (e.g., Jung, 1946, p. 116).

Can we be surprised at the absence of people of color in the Jungian world? We Jungians need to address these issues with the moral tough mindedness with which we have addressed the question of Jung's anti-Semitism.

It is not necessary to argue that Jung's view of black African people has no empirical support whatever. Perhaps I can take just one example of how far from any empirical reality this type of thinking is. In The Origins and History of Consciousness, Neumann says, "Primitive experience is total, but is not associated with an ego complex and consequently does not become personal experience which can be remembered" (Neumann, 1954, p. 330). My housekeeper in South Africa was a traditional Xhosa woman, who had been born in a mud hut on the Hogsback Mountain in the area known as the Ciskei. She had never been to a Western school and remained illiterate, but she followed her traditional customs with devotion. She also had a memory that most of us might envy; indeed, I found it astonishing. She knew the details of her extended family history going back generations. She could remember a shopping list of dozens of items, or complex recipes that she had been shown once over a year previously. She also had a capacity to endure and raise a family in the face of apartheid's oppression, and to differentiate between apartheid as a system and white people who also found themselves within it. She had her own perspectives on the world, and on the political leaders to whom she listened on the radio. Her ethical thinking was finely differentiated. In the apartheid era, she was far less split in her political thinking than most white South Africans. So much for no ego or memory!

Jung's colonialism is revealed in a dream he had in north Africa in 1920. He dreamed of an Arab prince who tried to drown him. After they wrestled and Jung won, he forced the young prince to read an ancient text that Jung knew was somehow his own book—although Jung could not read the strange and ancient script himself. "I explained to him that now that I had overcome him he must read the book. I knew that this was absolutely essential, and at last he yielded" (Jung, 1961, p. 271).
Once again, Jung as ego dominates the Arab, despite interpreting him as a symbol of the self. Jung is still in the grip of the dream when he is discussing it some 40 years later. No compensatory function has ever been allowed. Jung has no interest in learning from the Other, even though he recognizes that the Other is an image of his own self. For us to listen to Jung's dream with a political ear, however, is to become aware of images of power, conquest, self-certainty, and an awful absence of self-knowledge. As the dream reveals, Jung was not aware of what was in his own "book." He was unconscious of the narratives that make up his own history and psychic life, while forcing the Other to submit to them. It is the Other, the African Arab, who is burdened with the task of making Jung's unconscious conscious.

I am embarrassed to admit that these difficulties in Jung's thinking have remained to an extent as enduring shadows in my own. I grew up in South Africa and had relatively liberal and enlightened parents. My expensive private school education was both wonderful and thoroughly colonial. I knew more Latin than Xhosa, and am appalled to admit that I was a teenager before I learned that black people had surnames. When, as a late adolescent, I first read Jung's writings and found that they spoke to my developing view of the world, I experienced little cognitive dissonance in the cultural organization of its guiding images. I, too, read about "archaic man," "primitives," the "development of consciousness," and "Africa" with no more cultural insight than Jung. On the contrary, I would have to admit that Jung's psychology deepened my splitting and my sentimentality. I thought I was becoming less prejudiced when I might have been getting worse.

Reflecting on Jung now with a critical cultural and moral eye, we are called to take responsibility for the political consequences of our psychological assumptions. Unconsciousness, here, is not repressed or somewhere else. As Michael Adams has shown us, unconsciousness might be the blind spot in the center of our cultural imagination.

OUR ARCHETYPAL GROUND AS BASIS FOR MULTICULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Despite these critiques, Jung offers us a way of thinking about individuation and the development of consciousness that has been missed so far. More than any other style of psychoanalysis, Jung's has the potential to be a truly multicultural psychology, rooted in our shared archetypal ground yet open to endless cultural variation. Let's start with a dream. Even if you know nothing about Xhosa culture, or the chains of associations accessible only in the Xhosa language, Jungian sensibilities nevertheless help us listen to this person and her dream with understanding and respect.

A 35-year-old Xhosa woman had come to Grahamstown to look for work. She enjoyed her new job, the extra money she was able to earn, and she enjoyed the modern utilities—electricity, sanitation, and tap water—that living in town provided. She maintained her communal ties and was careful to remember her ancestors on significant occasions or when important decisions had to be made. Nevertheless, she began to feel depressed and "worried." She knew of the work I did. One day she said that she had had a dream that she wanted to tell me. She then told me her dream, in English, which was her third language:

I am on the farm where I was raised. The land has been in my family since before my great-grandfather. Someone is driving a tractor pulling a plough over the land where we had farmed cattle and buried our ancestors. I am worried and upset. Then I go down a pathway to a small pond. I walk into the water up to my chest. It is very peaceful. Then I see lots of little golden fishes in the water around me, and I am so happy to see them. Some of them come to the surface, and they speak to me. They say that I must not worry or be sad, that they are happy, and that they will look after me. Then I get out of the water.

Without another word, we are already moved by her dream. It is a privilege to be in its presence. I told the dreamer that her dream was a gift, given to her because she is a good woman. I said that I thought the fish were the way in which her ancestors had come to her, and that they were reassuring her that everything was all right, even though she was enjoying a modern life in the city. At this point the dreamer was shedding tears of relief. She admitted that she had privately thought the fish might be her ancestors, but she had been too "shy" to say so herself. I added that, although the dream had been given to her, I did not think it was only for her, and I suggested that she might want to share it with others. It was a "big" dream.

The point I am making here is that Jungian psychology makes it possible for us to share in the integration and transformation taking place in the psychic life of this fairly traditional Xhosa woman. Despite our cultural differences, we share a common humanity. None of the oppositions mentioned earlier—black/white, conscious/unconscious, civilized/primitive—applies here along racial or geographic lines.

We can surely see ourselves there, with her, as we too endeavor to make peace with our own ancestors, even if we have colonized them by calling them "internal object representations." In our European tradition, this Xhosa dream was also Goethe's, when he wrote of Faust ploughing the land, forcing the gods to flee homeless. Our Xhosa dreamer is a little like Baucis, offering hospitality to the homeless gods (Giegerich, 1984), although our dreamer is
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There is no fully satisfying phenomenological description of what Jung means by an individuating consciousness. Most discussions seem too laden with theory, with references to the integration of opposites, an optimal relationship between ego and self, and so on. Nevertheless, there are some evocative pointers. Jung writes that “individuation does not shut one out from the world but gathers the world to oneself” (Jung, 1954, p. 226). He also says that a “widered consciousness... is a function of relationship to the world of objects, bringing the individual into absolute, binding, and indissoluble communion with the world at large” (Jung, 1935, p. 178). (Does it seem that Jung may be trying rather too hard?)

What, then, of boundaries and the withdrawal of projections? If the psyche surrounds us, and there is no way out of the psyche, then it is contradictory to say that boundaries separate the psyche from the surrounding world. We need to remember that, for Jung, we cannot lift ourselves outside of the psyche to grasp the world any more than we can reach into the Kantian noumenon. We therefore need to think of boundaries as structured within psychic reality itself.

Boundaries allow us to participate in the reality of the Other, within psychic life, as intimately as a mother with her baby, or as a lover. At the same time, boundaries mark a difference between us that can never be dissolved without violence to the Other and a magical, defensive dissolution of the ego. Boundaries mean that the Other’s presence can never be possessed; they preserve the presence of the Other’s own interiority and infinite mystery. Whether the Other is a person, an ancestor, an animal, a place, or God, we know that that presence also marks an ineffable and sacred absence, and that our knowing is always self-reflective and humble in its limitation.

The withdrawal of projections, if we want to use the expression, is not so much a process of bringing back pieces of myself from “out there” to “in here,” withdrawing psyche from the world. The withdrawal of projections is, suggests David Holt, a process in which one stops speaking and starts listening instead.

It is, says Holt, “the activity which lets the world be, which allows Presence to sound” (Holt, 1975, p. 143). It deepens our communion with the world. When our simplifying fantasies are suspended and we learn to hear, then the Other becomes more present in meaning, value, complexity, and mystery. This process is very different from Jung’s (Jung, 1940, p. 85) argument that the withdrawal of projections despiritualizes the world by stripping it of meaning. The withdrawal of projections facilitates the emergent *presensing* of the Other, an interpersonal and ethical awakening that is absent, or at best only implicit, in Jung’s writings.

It should already be apparent that the Jungian meaning of the term *consciousness* is intended to be something very different from its rationalist interpretations, even though these are often implied by Jung himself in his “scientific” writings. In the closing lines of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung writes:

> The more uncertain I have felt about myself, the more there has grown up in me a feeling of kinship with all things. In fact it seems to me as if that alienation which so long separated me from the world has become transferred to my own inner world and has revealed to me an unexpected unfamiliarity with myself. (Jung, 1961, p. 392)

In these lines Jung’s consciousness is no longer Cartesian, interiorized, disembodied, rational, and separate from the world. Nor is the self any longer the object of inquiry, the long sought-after Other within that would provide Jung with a steadying ground beneath his vulnerable and sometimes anxious ego (Papadopoulos, 1984). Here, as in his earlier accounts of his trip to Africa and the primordial presensing of the world, Jung reveals the self to be a capacity that allows the world to come into presence, each thing in its own way, according to itself. In these “Late Thoughts” at the end of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung is thoughtful, insightful, differentiated, ethical, and deeply engaged with the world and history, as he bequeaths the gift of these lines to us. If we like, we can also note that there is no confusion of boundaries, or loss of identity, and Jung’s 80-year-old ego functions are working perfectly well. Consciousness, for Jung, is not a kind of “reason which only sees,” but is embodied and participant; reason is one which “comes to grips.” In
Jung's discovery—or perhaps rediscovery—of himself in the world, there is no regression into what he had once imagined as primitive identification with the collective.

Two expressions have now found their way into these reflections: I contrasted a "reason which only sees" and a "reason which comes to grips." The author of these lines is Leopold Senghor, the former President of Senegal. Senghor was a statesman, philosopher, poet, and writer. He wrote about the contribution that African thinking and philosophy could make to an emerging global civilization. In a 1961 lecture at Oxford University, Senghor described the mature and differentiated consciousness of the black African, a consciousness Senghor called *negritude*. It is a consciousness that is not unaware of scientific reality—in fact, Senghor, like Jung, was inspired by the systemic and dynamic models of contemporary physics, and by thinkers such as Heidegger, Bachelard, and Teilhard de Chardin.

Negritude is a consciousness that understands reality as ultimately a spiritual mystery; its knowledge is engaged and intimate rather than detached, disinterested, or what Romanyshyn once called "despotic" (1984). It is a consciousness for the whole person: sensual, affective, and thoughtful, integrating what we Jungians would call *functions*.

What Senghor is describing as negritude is a quality of consciousness to which many Jungians might feel drawn, even if it may sound, for some, rather idealized. A description by Senghor is grammatically awkward and difficult to follow, so I have given myself permission to quote loosely. You will notice, too, Senghor's oblique reference to Jung:

[Negritude consciousness] is the whole network of civilized values... which characterize the Black peoples, or, more precisely, the Black African world. All these values are informed by an intuitive reason—a consciousness—that involves the whole person. This reason is sentient; it is a reason which comes to grips, which expresses itself emotionally; it involves surrender of the ego, and a communion of subject and object; it is a reason which includes an awareness of myths, by which I mean the archetypal images of the Collective Soul; above all, the values of Negritude are informed through the primordial rhythms of our beings synchronized with those of the cosmos. In other words, the sense of communion, the gift of myth-making, the gift of rhythm, such are the essential elements of Negritude. (Senghor, 1963/1998, p. 440).

**UBUNTU: INDIVIDUATION AND THE SOCIAL WORLD**

The concept of *Ubuntu* offers an important counterpoint to Jung's view of the social world, which is only ever imagined as suffocating the urge for individuation. The term *Ubuntu* can help us imagine our social world as facilitating individuation rather than as constituting a regressive drag toward unconsciousness. It also opens an ethical dimension to individuation and consciousness that always seems problematic, or at least awkward, for Jung, but is nevertheless intrinsic to human fulfillment.

*Ubuntu* is a Zulu term for a sensibility common to sub-Saharan Africa. It is difficult to translate into English. It is a person's sense of community, of responsibility toward others, both living and dead, and toward the wider world at large. It is not an attribute that some people have, or something that can be put aside. *Ubuntu* is a term that defines what it is to be a person, where being a person is both a given and a task of self-realization.

*Ubuntu* is given to us because we are human, but its realization is a spiritual task that requires personal resoluteness, moral courage, and the support of others who treat us as persons. *Ubuntu* is the quality we see and admire in those who seem to have become fully human: people such as Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu immediately come to mind. *Ubuntu* is the mark of African humanism (see Senghor, 1977/2001).

We recall how Descartes set out his defining ground of human existence. He said "I think, therefore I am." For the African, our defining ground has been restated by the African theologian John Mbiti as "We are, therefore I am" (quoted in Burleson, 2005, p. 120). This statement should not be interpreted as a description of undifferentiated identification with the collective. It is, rather, a recognition that, as the Zulu saying goes, "a person is a person through persons" (Shuttle, 1993, p. vi). For the black African, community is not collectivity (Senghor, 1977/2001; Shuttle, 1993); instead, *Ubuntu* is that sense of community that preserves the person and in which the personal can thrive.

African humanism, evoked by the term *Ubuntu*, would imagine individuation as a process of personal growth and transformation within that network of relationships that make such transformation possible and to which the person remains, therefore, ethically indebted. Augustine Shuttle describes *Ubuntu* as the animating spirit behind African virtues such as patience, hospitality, loyalty, respect, conviviality, endurance, and sympathy. It is also the spirit of self-knowledge, which means owning what we call the shadow by recognizing that the failures and sins of others are also our responsibility. Healing...
and reconciliation are guiding values. Moral and ethical development are not rooted in prohibitions and injunctions, such as the Ten Commandments. Psychological development is rooted in the self-realization of the person in relation to ever-widening circles of self-identity, from family to local school and community to the larger human world of people, both living and dead, to our nonhuman animal cousins, and even the stuff of the earth and sky.

The spirit of *Ubuntu* was dramatically realized in the years following the end of apartheid, when Bishop Desmond Tutu and Alex Boraine headed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. Victims of violence could approach the commission with their stories. Perpetrators of violence—including former security policemen involved in state-sanctioned murder, and others, such as the Pan Africanist Congress youths who murdered the American aide worker Amy Biehl—went to the commission. The principle was that anyone who confessed a crime and spoke the truth would be free from prosecution. *Ubuntu* is the spirit that led Amy Biehl’s parents to start an education and training facility in Cape Town, and to train and employ her daughter’s murderers. It is true that many people, on both sides of the political conflict, were disappointed in the Commission. Many victims of state violence and murder felt that justice had not been adequately served. Nevertheless, the TRC was an extraordinary achievement, borne from the idea that we are called to own our own shadows and to do what we can to heal the wounded society. Within the spirit of *Ubuntu*, healing the community—and finding our own healing in that process—is, in the long run, a higher calling than seeking revenge in the name of justice.

If we imagine individuation through the notion of *Ubuntu*, then there is no heroic loneliness, no growing separation from others regarded as a “herd.” Individuated consciousness is certainly not the dispassionate rationality of science. In *Ubuntu* consciousness, all the virtues we admire are present: personal responsibility, ethical self-knowledge, strength and courage, humility, forgiveness, human understanding, a knowledge of history, and a sense of the sacred.  

Individuation involves a series of transformations within that network of relationships with which we are already engaged. We remain embedded from beginning to end. From infantile dependency to mature spirituality, our expanding community is the psychological home in which we become fully persons.  

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**Notes**

1. This paper was presented at the International Association for Analytical Psychology Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, August 14, 2007. A slightly different version of this paper was read to the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts, Santa Fe, October 19, 2005.
2. Jung’s use of Levi-Bruhl’s term, as well as the general question of the influence of Levi-Bruhl on Jung, has recently been the topic of considerable interest in the International Association for Jungian Studies (e.g., see Case- ment, 2006; Flower, 2006; Segal, 2006).
3. It occurs to me that object relations theory is thoroughly colonialist; it is one of the ways in which we, like Jung, force the ancestors to “read our book.” Object relations theory might be about our ancestral relations, but in psychoanalysis we relate to the ancestors only after colonizing them with our depotentiating model of mind.
4. The original quotation is: “[Negritude consciousness] is the whole complex of civilized values … which characterize the Black peoples, or, more precisely, the Negro-African world. All these values are informed by intuitive reason. Because this sentient reason, the reason which comes to grips, expresses itself emotionally, through that self-surrender, that coalescence of subject and object, through myths, by which I mean the archetypal images of the Collective Soul; above all through primordial rhythms, synchronized with those of the cosmos. In other words, the sense of communion, the gift of myth-making, the gift of rhythm, such are the essential elements of Negritude” (Senghor, 1961, p. 440).
5. In the United States, one might think of Martin Luther King Jr., Jimmy Carter, and Bill Moyers. I might include Bill Clinton. In the West we tend to think of humanism as having post-Enlightenment French roots, but humanism is also deeply African.
6. What is *Ubuntu*'s shadow? I can think of two: (1) what we would call nepotism, and (2) the regressive dangers of group-think and anonymity, which do not disappear. They remain as shadow, just as they do for all of us.

7. There have been some wonderfully readable books, which, rooted in phenomenology, recover the sense of consciousness as vital and engaged with a world that is sacred. Heidegger's (1978) late writings were historically pivotal; see also Vincent Vercinas's (1972) *Search for Gods;* more recently: David Abram's (1996) *The Spell of the Sensuous.* The ontological and epistemological links between African philosophy and phenomenology have been noted by Senghor and Shutte.

**FURTHER READING**


