

Carl Jung and The Achievement of Personality



All passage below are from the chapter “The Development of Personality”

The sons of earth find greatest joy
In personality alone.

No one can educate to personality who does not himself have it. And not the child, but only the adult can attain personality as the mature fruit of an accomplishment of life that is directed to this end. The achievement of personality means nothing less than the best possible development of all that lies in a particular, single being. It is impossible to foresee what an infinite number of conditions must be fulfilled to bring this about. A whole human lifespan in all its biological, social, and spiritual aspects is needed. Personality is the highest realization of the inborn distinctiveness of the particular living being. Personality is an act of the greatest courage in the face of life, and means unconditional affirmation of all that constitutes the individual, the most successful adaptation to the universal conditions of human existence, with the greatest possible freedom of personal decision.

Personality develops itself in the course of life from germs that are hard or impossible to discern, and it is only our actions that reveal who we are. We are like the sun that nourishes the life of the earth and brings forth every kind of lovely, strange, and evil thing; we are like the mothers who bear in their wombs unknown happiness and suffering. At first we do not know what deeds or misdeeds, what destiny, what good or evil we contain, and only the autumn can show what the spring has engendered; only in the evening will it be seen what the morning began.

Personality as a complete realization of the fullness of our being is an unattainable ideal. But unattainability is no counterargument against an ideal, for ideals are only signposts, never goals.

Yet the development of personality means more than the mere fear of bringing monsters into the world, or the fear of isolation. It also means fidelity to the law of one's being.

To undertake to develop personality is in fact an unpopular venture, an uncongenial deviation from the highway, and idiosyncrasy smacking of the recluse – or so it seems to those who stand outside. No wonder, then, that from the beginning only the few have hit upon this strange adventure. If they had all been fools, we could drop them from the field of vision of our interest, as persons who have retired from spiritual activity. But, unfortunately, personalities are as a rule the legendary heroes of mankind, those who are wondered at, loved, and worshipped, the true sons of God whose “names do not perish in aeons.” They are the true blossoms and fruits of the tree of humanity, the seeds that continue to engender.

The reference to historical personalities sufficiently explains why growth into personality is an ideal, and why the accusation of individualism is an insult. The greatness of historical personalities has never consisted in their unconditional subjection to convention, but, on the contrary, in their liberating freedom from convention. They thrust themselves up like mountain peaks out of the mass that clung to its collective fears, convictions, laws and methods, and chose their own way. And to the ordinary human being it always seemed wonderful that someone should prefer to the beaten track, with its known destination, a small and steep path that leads into the unknown. This is why it was always believed that such a man, if not out of his mind, was yet inhabited by a demon or god; the miracle of a man acting otherwise than in the way humanity had always acted could be explained as due to his being gifted with demonic power or divine spirit. For what, except a god, could counterbalance the dead weight of the whole of mankind and eternal habit?

What, in the last analysis, induces a man to choose his own way and so to climb out of unconscious identity with the mass as out of a fog bank? It cannot be necessity, for necessity comes to many and they all save themselves in

convention. It cannot be moral choice, for as a rule a man decides for convention. What is it, then, that inexorably tilts the beam in favour of the extraordinary?

It is what is called vocation: an irrational factor that fatefully forces a man to emancipate himself from the herd and its trodden paths. True personality always has vocation and believes in it, has fidelity to it as to God, in spite of the fact that, as the ordinary man would say, it is only a feeling of individual vocation. But this vocation acts like a law of God from which there is no escape. That many go to ruin upon their own ways means nothing to him who has vocation. He must obey his own law, as if it were a demon that whisperingly indicated to him new and strange ways. Who has vocation hears the voice of the inner man; he is called. And so it is the legendary belief that he possesses a private demon who counsels him and whose mandates he must execute.

Now, vocation, or the feeling of vocation, is not perchance the prerogative of great personalities, but also belongs to the small ones all the way down to the duodecimal format; only, with the decrease of proportions, it becomes more veiled and unconscious. It is as if the voice of the inner daemon moved further and further off and spoke more rarely and indistinctly. The smaller the personality is, so much the more unclear and unconscious it becomes, till it finally merges into one with society, surrendering its own wholeness and dissolving itself into the wholeness of the group. In the place of the inner voice appears the voice of the social group and its conventions, and in the place of vocation, the collective necessities.