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Approximately 01:09:22 minutes Transcription

**TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST BY LISA, JOE AND DEB (THIS JUNGIAN LIFE PODCAST]**

**Introduction:** Welcome to This Jungian Life. Three good friends and Jungian analysts, Lisa Marchiano, Deborah Stewart and Joseph Lee invite you to join them for an intimate and honest conversation that brings a psychological perspective to important issues of the day.

**Lisa:** I'm Lisa Marchiano and I'm a Jungian analyst in Philadelphia.

**Joe:** I'm Joseph Lee and I'm a Jungian analyst in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

**Deb:** I'm Deborah Stewart, a Jungian analyst on Cape Cod. Today we are going to talk about Individuation, a concept and a process that Jung says it was the central concept of my psychology. So we are going to try to circumambulate a very, very big concept in Jung's psychology and at least perhaps give you some ideas and some pointers as to what this involves from a developmental point of view and ego development point of view and from the point of numinous experience or relationship to the sacred.

**Lisa:** Maybe it's just a good to start off by saying, for those of you who might be familiar with Margaret Mahler's work, Separation and Individuation, a lot of times people hear the term Individuation and they think more along the lines of Margaret Mahler's work where she was really looking at how infants relate to their caregivers. And this idea of sort of individuating in early childhood, which is I think, not unrelated to Jung's concept, but actually Jung's concept is quite different.

**Deb:** I agree. It's not unrelated. Because what we can see in infancy and early childhood is the process of a Self-appearing from, you know, a baby. Your brand new, beautiful, perfect infant.

**Joe:** But defining terms, because I think we're already kind of muddying the water is that people use the word Self to mean very different things in different schools of psychology. So, for instance, when you were talking about the Self-emerging of the child, you're really talking about the ego. So I think let's kind of tighten up our terms so we can kind of be congruent. So, there is a process where the ego is formed in childhood which allows the child to have an experience of itself as an individual in relationship to the parents. And that's part of a structuring or a platform. And then later in life, perhaps, this circumambulation of the Self and this other maturational process will happen almost as if it's a second adolescence or a second childhood happens when the Self begins to press.

**Deb:** And that's the key differentiation which is Self with the small "s" of the ability to say I or little kids say "me want water" versus the capital "S" Self which is the numinous, the center of the personality, something that is impossible really to define.

**Lisa:** Yeah. And I mean obviously I think you can already hear that there's some lack of specificity or range of opinion even among Jungians about exactly what these terms refer to. Some people really look at Individuation as a lifetime process and they see its roots in childhood. And there have been union theorists who have contributed to the idea of Individuation through looking at research and childhood development. And another more classical sense of it is that it's not something that really begins until midlife, in the second half of life. That is, Joseph, you said that the Self presses and then there's this sort of encounter with that aspect of the psyche and that that is more what is often thought of as Individuation in the kind of classical Jungian sense. But you know, without getting too bogged down in these particulars, I think we all three have a feeling sense of what this word means and how important it is in our own lives and the lives of our patients.

**Deb:** It is the Opus, you know, Jung's use of the alchemical term, the process. And what I'm thinking about is that there are stages of Individuation from that first ability of a toddler to say I or me to the integration of a consciousness and in the framework of ego development, of developing a strong, flexible sense of Self with a small "s" and that then in the second half of life, which I think you're pointing to here, of how do we develop and what is it like to develop a relationship with the Self as a capital "S", a deeper sacred numinous experience.

**Lisa:** I'm wondering if we should define the Self with a capital "S" because we keep on returning to that term.

**Deb:** Well, it's a hard thing to define because it's really beyond words and by its very nature, beyond ego. One analogy according to Jung is that the ego is to the Self as the earth is to the sun and that it's both lodged in the ego, the center that is everywhere, and it's a transpersonal process of the circumference that is nowhere. So it's both and it's in a realm that language can't capture because the part cannot comprehend the whole.

**Lisa:** And at one point Jung said that the Self is the God within.

**Joe:** Or the God image. I think Jung was shy about talking about God, but he was more of a phenomenologist. And so, in one of his volumes he did an elaborate study of the way that the Self or the God image is manifested from antiquity forward in all these different ways. And he was particularly inspired by our Judeo Christian tradition and the image of Christ as this amalgam of man and the divine image embodied in a lived life.

**Deb:** And in Jungian terms we might say, you know, both human and divine is analogous to ego and the Self. That there are these two centers; one is ego and my conscious sense of Self. And then there is another that is the true center of the personality, the Self with the capital "S"

**Lisa:** So, I'm just wanting to move into a sort of more feeling description of what the reality is of the Self or a process of tuning into the Self, which is how I think of Individuation. And it really can be that sense of, I don't know, when we know something's not quite right with our lives, we don't know how we know it. Maybe everything looks fine on the outside. We've got a good job, we have a family that we love, but it's just something feels off, something feels a mess. And it's like some part, something within us wants something of us. It's like something needs to come into the world through us and it can feel like a symptom at first, like depression or anxiety. But if we tune into it and we take it seriously, it might lead us to make some changes in our life. It might be simply a change of attitude. It might be that we're not in the correct career, that we need to make a change. It could be lots of things, but it's this sense that there's some part of us that's very deep and doesn't have full access to language that knows where we need to go. And so that brings up this other notion of telos, that our life is progressing along some arc and it's not necessarily known to the conscious part of the personality, but an inner kind of guiding Self does know where the arc should be.

**Joe:** And that certainly reminds me historically of Socrates' apparent experience having a daemon or an inner guiding spirit, which felt very different from his waking mind or the ego, which would chime in in ways that were very helpful and very directive and that he attributed to his great inspirations to this other center that would talk to him.

**Lisa:** I guess he was kind of lucky because it was pretty straightforward.

**Joe:** Much more straightforward than I experience myself.

**Deb:** There are authors that have referred to this as the guiding Self of something in us wants something of us or can direct us in some way, as you're saying, Lisa, that feeling sense of something's off. Something's not right here. Something's not working. And if we're lucky like Socrates, we'll have a daemon that tells us. I personally don't have one.

**Lisa:** And you know, I mean we should say that sometimes this experience of a guiding Self that kind of prompts you in these mysterious ways along life's journey and you wind up, you know, as an older person having achieved something and looking back over your life and saying, you know, it's sometimes in hindsight, you can look back and you can see where you were supposed to go. And these fateful encounters that seemed like they were engineered by the Self that led you in one particular direction. And it all seems to have this meaning and coherence. But you know, I think it's fair to say that sometimes what the Self wants from us can be horrifying and destructive. I mean, I don't think that's common, but I think it's easy to romanticize this idea.

**Joe:** And by destructive, it can also be that what rises up from this true center of the personality is so radically different to how the ego was living in the world before. And it requires abandoning or disassembling relationships or career choices or where one is living in order to reform a life that feels more congruent with what's rising up inside of us. And there's a lot of legitimate suffering that goes on in deciding to listen to that deeper part.

**Deb:** So there's something that happens that is really vitalizing and it may not be congruent with what the ego wants which is to stay in that nice job and a nice house somewhere in the suburbs, let's say. But to do something radically different, it's a vital happening that really transforms one's personality, one's relationship to life.

**Joe:** And it encounters the waking life through images, which at first can seem rather benign. So I just want to give an example of that to ground it in a graspable way. So somebody that I know really well was living a particular successful life as an aesthete in a kind of artistic career. And then sometime in the mid-thirties, he had a kind of vision and in the vision he was encountering this certain male figure at the banks of a river. And this fellow was, you know, very muscular and robust and very archetypally masculine in a lot of ways. And as my friend encountered this image, he noticed this tremendous shift of interests just by regarding the image or what we would call circumambulating the image. So, he went from being a rather refined artist to wanting a career as a fireman and went from seeing himself as this very trim waif-like fashionista to being kind of an earthy blue-collar fellow who wants to dress really casually. And those things may sound superficial as I'm talking about them, but that rising up inside of someone and feeling this radical shift of value, interest and what pleases them or doesn't. So I want to say that that image of this other kind of masculinity at the edge of the river is unlikely to be an image of the Self per se, but it is an image, a transitional image that seems to have risen up unbidden from the unconscious, which carries so much power that it is kind of melting down the old values and instilling a whole other set of values that could not have been predicted.

**Lisa:** Yeah, that's great. That's a great example and it brings a couple of things to mind for me. First of all, the idea that Jung says somewhere that Individuation involves developing our opposite. You know, what we've consciously identified with. Often it's the exact opposite that we need to lift up and develop. And he talks about this in terms of typology. So, if you are a feeling type, for example, part of your Individuation process might involve really developing your thinking function. So, you know, an important word when we talk about Individuation is wholeness. Jung says that wholeness is the goal, not perfection. So, if you're on a path of Individuation, you are interested in becoming as whole as you possibly can. You know, Joseph, your wording there about this new thing constellates that has so much energy that its kind of melts away old values, reminds me of another image that has come up for me regarding Individuation. I sometimes will raise Monarch butterfly caterpillars, you know, they lay their eggs on the milkweed and then I just usually kind of cover the milkweed plants with mesh so that they don't get predated and I can just kind of watch their life cycle. But one of the things that happens to the Caterpillar when it's done growing is it will, you know, it just has an instinct to do this right? It doesn't understand what's happening to it. It will just crawl around for a long time. Then finally it'll find someplace to attach itself and it will hang upside down. And once it starts hanging upside down, and of course this is true for all caterpillars, you know, it'll be like a couple of days later that it will pupate; that it will go from being an upside down Caterpillar to being one of those beautiful gold and green Chrysalis. It's a fascinating process to watch and I learned that when it pupates, you know, it wriggles out of its skin, you can see it do it, the skin drops and there's the pupa. And at that point, what's in that sack is just liquid. It's literally all of its internal structures have been broken down and it's just completely fascinating to me, but it's a real image, I think, of psychological development because it can be like we've just been totally disassembled in preparation for something larger. So, Individuation doesn't always feel good. One of the things I always think when I see the Caterpillar going through this process is, you know, it's literally digesting its body from the inside. And I wonder if that's painful or frightening to the extent that a Caterpillar could feel afraid, which I imagine it can.

**Deb:** I'm really resonating to what both of you have said and relating it to the concept of solutio, of that it feels like something in us has just melted down and there isn't anything solid. But who am I? What happened here? And it is that vitalizing event that the old structure has to go. If this Caterpillar and pupa has to become a butterfly, or if the example you use, Joseph, of become a fireman, that it is not an incremental stage of step by step by step in some kind of nice linear progression. It is a radical shift that can be disturbing and upsetting. And I'm also thinking about, you know, how does this come about and through a symbol, through dreams? We're talking about unconscious messages, events, symbols, happenings, and do we grab hold of that and say, Oh my gosh, I'm going to work with this.

**Joe:** Yes. And that's really the point where an analyst becomes perhaps a real ally in this process. Because one of the ubiquitous examples of this kind of dissolution of the old life is the midlife crisis that people have spent decades building and integrating an ego. They have a concrete set of skills and beliefs about who they are. You know, I'm a dad, I'm a banker, I have two kids, I have this many assets. And then sometimes there is this unprecedented discontent and deadness that can rise up, which is the beginning of the formation of the pupa and then this dissolution of the old life. Now that is also psycho spiritually a precarious moment. And it would be an incredible good fortune for a person in that stage to find an analyst or a therapist who really understands what's going on. Because in that fluid state, there is a receptivity to the influences and the images of the Self that there's a capability of being reformed. And coming back to the idea of the Caterpillar, that when the Caterpillar dissolves, becomes liquid inside of the Chrysalis, there are actually these very subtle discs inside of the fluid which have genetic material and actually are structures which float and migrate to very specific places in the fluid. And they land the structure for the butterfly, the beginning of the reconstellation.

**Lisa:** And you just can't make this up, I believe. Those are called imaginal discs.

**Joe:** Oh, that's great. In that moment where there's a fluidity and there's an imaginal disc emerging or unprecedented images that rise up from this deep place in the unconscious, because human beings have such a powerful ability for Self-determination, people can pull themselves out of the liquid state and restore their old and familiar life, which Jung called a regressive restoration of the persona. But unfortunately if that happens, there is often for decades afterwards a sense of a missed opportunity, a sense that something that should have happened, didn't happen. If we can stay in the liquid state long enough, something really new can happen. And sometimes that's radical and unprecedented, but sometimes it also feels like a homecoming. It feels like, well, of course I should be doing that. What was I thinking 20 years ago?

**Deb:** Absolutely. I'm thinking about the butterfly and the pupa. And you said, you know, does the Caterpillar feel afraid? You know, what's going on inside? And then, you know, one way to see it is, Oh, there's glorious transformation and now this says the Caterpillar to himself. Look! I turned into a butterfly. I'm beautiful. I'm migrating to Mexico. Or we could think about it as I'm a butterfly like millions of other butterflies. Yeah. I have become my true Self in an ordinary way. It's lovely and so on, but I'm not inflated about it. You know, we don't have to become some sort of glorious genius of the Western world, let's say.

**Joe:** We don't have to become the wizard of butterflies.

**Deb:** Exactly.

**Lisa:** That's that idea about wholeness rather than perfection. Yes. We're just becoming our holist Self.

**Deb:** Yes. The other great story about this just to amplify the butterfly theme is the Velveteen rabbit who's a nursery rabbit. And he's sort of a cheap, artificial little stuffed animal and eventually through his capacity to love and to feel, and particularly to be undefended and to feel grief, he is transformed magically by the nursery theory but into a garden rabbit. And so, yes, it's a miracle, but he doesn't become a unicorn or a flying horse. He becomes a regular little old Brown rabbit. And I like those images very much as images of wholeness.

**Joe:** Yes. That if Individuation is successful, we don't necessarily become glorious, but that our relationship to life changes and life becomes ever pregnant with meaning. And we often don't know that's missing until it finally arrives.

**Deb:** I liked your word a lot of homecoming that we are home to ourselves, in ourselves and in relationship to something greater.

**Lisa:** You know, I'm going to just pull in Ericsson's stages of development here because I think that there's some overlap with the idea of Individuation. You know, Erikson posited these stages of development. And right now, embarrassing, I cannot remember how many there are, but seven, yeah. But the idea is that there's a challenge at each stage of development and if you meet the challenge then you progress and finally the final stage of development is ego integrity versus despair. And so there's the sense that toward the end of life you sort of have that life well lived kind of feeling. Like maybe you have some regrets, maybe you screwed a whole bunch of things up, but basically you're like, yeah. That was well done. You know, I think Individuation is something like that, that as you stay open to yourself throughout your life and each time that you have an experience that's wounding or difficult that you turn toward it in a way and wonder what there is for you in it. And so, you know, consciousness expands. This is part of what happens with Individuation is more and more gets integrated and you know, I like to think that you, if you've sort of lived in that way, I think you tend to become an older person who is, you know, happy and wise rather than an older person who's bitter and small minded.

**Joe:** That can be a sign. I want to come back to the idea of stages because there is something so gratifying about staging and imagining a process in stages and a lot of theoreticians including the early Jungian analysts found it really gratifying too, compartmentalize a process and partially so they could talk about it, so they could differentiate what's happening. And earlier on in the development of Jungian work that they really did have concrete stages that they thought served Individuation. The first stage was often differentiating the persona and we'd had a previous episode on that. But to really understand that the social personality that we develop and present to the world is just a small derivative sliver of really what the inner ego wants and how it experiences itself. So we have this important differentiation. After that is clarified, they would be a lot of work on the shadow, which is the repressed and suppressed parts of the personality that we have a tendency to marginalize at best and denigrate at worst. And we often find the shadow by paying a lot of attention to the kinds of people and things that we hate in the outer world that really fire us up because there's a seed of something in that other person which we need to own inside of ourselves. And when that work is done, then the analysts would move on to the Contra sexual stage where often the dreams would signal this and where someone would be dreaming about their anima or animus, which goes to what Lisa was saying about opposite typology. The early analysts made a fascinating discovery that the ego would have a certain typology. Let's say you are an extroverted feeling type. And then as the anima, in a man's psyche, the female internal image, began to differentiate and evidence a kind of personality, it would almost always be in the opposite typology. So it might be an introverted thinking style or personality. And if the ego and the Contra sexual image can develop at the very least a deep union, then the contra sexual image, the anima/animus would begin to function differently and would become a linking function which would allow the ego to be introduced to very deep parts of the unconscious that it would not have been able to tolerate previously. And in that deep dive, it was possible to encounter these images of the Self and come under the influence of the Self. And so those stages were thought to be almost kind of an ideal setup to be able to have that kind of powerful energy enter into the life.

**Deb:** What I'm thinking about here is appreciating your reference, Lisa, to Erik Erickson and your description of stages really of analysis or psychological development so that these are all ways of trying to describe something that doesn't really happen very often, in my view, in a linear, incremental step by step way. But we have to be able to name what is this process so that we can demystify it and we can describe it. And that the bottom line for me is it is a process. It's not necessarily the magical mystery tour. It's getting the juice out of life wherever you are and whatever is going on and what you said, Lisa, turning toward whatever is coming to you as with your example of the artists that wants to become a fireman. Let's turn toward that.

**Joe:** Yeah, you could fight it or you could link arms and see where it leads.

**Deb:** And it doesn't necessarily mean by the way that a person has to literalize whatever may come in a dream or through a symbol or through some other call to a different life direction, but at least to address it and explore it and see what the meaning of it is.

**Joe:** And sometimes we recognize the influence of these emerging deep images by noticing how it changes our desire nature, how it changes what we are attracted to. Because what we like or don't like or what seems very attractive to us is rarely something that we can choose. It is something that we identify. So as those preferences and attractions shift, often that really is thrumming up from a level that is not at the ego that is much deeper.

**Lisa:** So looking for a story maybe that exemplifies this. And I mean, I think they're everywhere, you know, in some sense every fairy tale is about Individuation. So it's hard to pick just one.

**Joe:** Yes, because some psychological synthesis is generally being displayed.

**Lisa:** Yes. But there's a children's book that came to my mind. It's another rabbit story. It's the "Remarkable Journey of Edward Tulane" by Kate DE Camilo. And it's about a, I believe he's, he might be a porcelain rabbit, I don't really remember, but he's a beautiful foppish rabbit, very fancy, very expensive. And he thinks very highly of himself. And he belongs to a little girl. And then one day he gets lost and he's dropped over into the ocean while they're on a boat. And so he's in the depths of the ocean. And then he's in the net of a fisherman and then he's on top of a garbage heap. Then he gets adopted by a hobo and gets carried around. And then he comforts an ailing child, and by the end of it, he's been humanized. He's lost his kind of persona brittleness and he's deeply alive to himself and to those he loves. And it's a really beautiful kind of example of Individuation, I think, and shows that, you know, it's not some magical mystery tour. That it's hard. We suffer. Suffering is part of what kind of cures us. It makes us, it burns away that which is not important and reveals to us what really matters. I think that's an aspect of Individuation as well.

**Joe:** Another story that we all know, because Disney popularized it, was that wonderful animation "Frozen". And this theme shows up many stories that we find compelling. So there's this, you know, young girl who has this kind of magical power to command ice and snow and coldness and as this surfaces as a young girl, it's perceived as dangerous, and perhaps it even is. And it gets put into the unconscious. It's demonized. It's made very, very bad. And she's also kind of miserable as a result of that. She feels broken, alienated from herself, unable to have relationships because this truth about her has somehow become dangerous. And then it really is a crisis that causes her to have to stop pretending she is something other than herself. There's an enormous amount of tumult, she leaves the city, she makes her big ice castle, but there's that wonderful moment where she stamps on the ground that she owns the self that she's going to be. And at first this true Self that she is incredibly destructive. The town is cast in freezing blizzard. Life is a little bit blighted, which we might say is the inflation that sometimes happens when the true Self begins to manifest.

**Lisa:** When you get in touch with the Self.

**Joe:** Yeah. But if we can tolerate that and survive it just like the heroine in "Frozen", she comes down from the mountain, she's able to temper and mediate her power and then she becomes kind of a hero of the city and becomes this source of renewal and life for her community. So this theme is really everywhere if we're paying attention to it.

**Deb:** I'm thinking that the more we talk about stories, it's kind of like dandelions in the spring. It's everywhere. It's in our psyche. It's part of us. It's fairy tale after fairy tale. And I'd like to just introduce a symbol because it's there too. And Jung says no transformation is possible without a symbol. So something moves us. And we used to live in, we lived in Brooklyn for almost 20 years and every time I went across the Brooklyn Bridge, I would look for the statue of Liberty. And one day I noticed, I thought why am I always doing this? And I have to see the statue. And when coming from Manhattan back to Brooklyn, it means I really had to crane my neck and make a really intentional move to see the statue. And I thought, wow, here's the statue of Liberty also known as the lady or lady Liberty. And you know, your theme about turning toward and suffering. And of course there's Emma Lazarus' famous words of give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe, breathe free. The wretched refuse. Send these, the homeless Tempest tossed to me. I lift my lamp besides the golden door and the theme of liberation and Liberty. And people coming on ships used to rush to the side of the ship in order to see the statue of Liberty. Over a hundred thousand people contributed toward building the base that it rests on. So there, for me, is a powerful symbol of liberation in the inner world as well as liberation in the outer world. And I lift my lamp beside the golden door is a kind of wholeness with that kind of numinous sacred image of revelation.

**Joe:** And this promise of wholeness in as much as the immigrant has to go through the golden door and then enter into this new imagined life that is promised by this symbol.

**Deb:** And what people have to do to get there is the path is not, it's a journey and the path is not easy.

**Lisa:** So we're really talking about transformation.

**Joe:** Transformation that leads to a relationship with the Self because it could many different kinds of transformation.

**Lisa:** Yes. I am thinking, Joseph, about what you said about Frozen and how she had to sort of temper the power and kind of become part of a community. And you know, Jung says somewhere that you can't individuate on a mountain top. And I have this other quote here, I just love this quote. He says, only life integrates. Only life and what we do in life makes the individual appear. You cannot individuate, for instance, by locking yourself up in a cell. You can only individually in your concrete life. You appear in your deed. There you can individuate and nowhere else. So, he's really saying that Individuation happens through the choices that we make every day.

**Deb:** Through the doing of it. Yes. Which I liked very much because it makes it so possible.

**Joe:** And it's the doing of our everyday lives, but it's when the actions of the everyday life are incarnated by impulses that come from the Self. Because not everything we do in our life is in service to the Self. Clearly. Which brings up what I want to talk about is a failed Individuation, which I think is very painfully demonstrated in that old movie Citizen Kane. So this powerful magnate, Charles Foster Kane, it's played by Orson Welles. He utters these mysterious words on his deathbed, Rosebud. And then as this reporter unpacks his story and investigates it, you know, discovers that Kane had been in tremendous deprivation and through work and drive, he had become this incredible boron of the culture. And there at the end of the life as the ego is descending down into the depths, at the end of his life, the image that meets him is of his childhood sled, Rosebud which has poignancy that something that he abandoned early in life in order to become what the world would say is successful, still haunts him as an unrealized potential. And I think that's why at the end of the movie the audience is left with such a feeling of pathos despite the fact that on the outer scening he had everything that somebody would want.

**Lisa:** That's perfect. Yeah, that's really beautiful.

**Joe:** So, there is a decision process that goes into Individuation that, well, I say that back and forth because sometimes Individuation can be inflicted on a person and they're kind of dragged into a new way of being.

**Deb:** Yes. Like St Paul on the road to Damascus where he's just struck and has a conversion experience.

**Joe:** But if we're lucky enough to perhaps have some information about Individuation, we're reading about it, we're looking for these inner signs, we can cooperate with Individuation and find that it is much less painful and like the alchemists in their laboratory that we can conduct these experiments to create the Opus, to create this new life by decision and by hard work and by deep listening.

**Deb:** Yes, I like your idea about there is a conscious decision making process that we can employ really All day, every day of what am I in service to, what am I doing here? When I decide to do X instead of Y, am I indulging myself? Am I kind of being punitive and hard on myself? Am I really serving my own growth, my own best interest and considering the impact of my decisions on the people around me? All those things have integrity that is attainable in daily life. And integrity is a facet of real, part of wholeness of that we can start at least pointing our noses in the right direction, in daily actionable, doable ways. I find that very, very reassuring. And maybe, you know, if we're Paul on the road to Damascus, you know, some kind of lightning bolt will strike. But it's doable. I think really for all of us.

**Joe:** I'm holding this kind of tension as I'm listening to you, Deb, because there's something comforting about this homespun confidence in the Individuation process and that it could be an active kind of a simple surrender to what's good in one's life. And that's also very much a seduction of comfort. So Jung used this word, and we use this word constantly in the podcast called circumambulation, but that meant something very specific for Jung. And he took it from the ancient mystery traditions that often when an initiate was brought into a temple to be initiated, they would stand at the Western wall and in the center of the temple there would be a kind of mysterious symbolic object. It could be the sanctum sanctorum or the statue of the God or the crucifix for that matter. And that the initiate would actually stay close to the wall walking long each of the four walls of the temple, orienting towards the central mystery from different perspectives, often many, many times doing that in order to be exposed to the mystery and giving oneself time to be affected by it. And that is a specific and rarefied process. And if we bring that into the life of an individual and the process of Individuation, that there is this work of turning inward and attending to this deep listening process, listening into the darkness, paying attention to the images that are rising up out of the water, not taking them at face value, but putting these images that rise into the center of our attention and examining them from different angles over and over and again, not because we're going to reach the quintessential interpretation of the image, but by interacting with the image, certain psychological impulses begin to rise up in the individual which shifts and changes them. And that might happen in a very ordinary life and that might influence what seems to be rather ordinary decisions. But when the impulse to a behavior rises from the Self, there was a sense of absolute integrity between the individual and how they are acting, which goes to something of a metaphysical interpretation of sin. There's this again, a ubiquitous idea that we're all sinners and we're constantly sinning and we constantly need redemption. But in a kind of mystery tradition, the reason we're all sinning, so to speak, is that we are acting from the stance of the ego and its thought process. And even though the actions we might take would be considered beneficence by the community, but the fact that it is not rising from the Self means it is still not connected to something that is transpersonal. Because the transpersonal impulse can often be radical in the eyes of the community, can actually demand of the community which the community is not accustomed to. So what makes us not sinning is that something rises inside from the deepest point, we let it or align with it and its values and then we act from that. And the line is unbroken.

**Lisa:** Yeah, that's a really helpful and it makes me think of the importance of dreams in the Individuation process, that dreams can lead us or they can be part of what leads us. And I'm just thinking of a personal example that was really moving. I was contemplating a major decision and it was a choice between doing something that I felt deeply, I felt compelled to try something but it was sort of against, you know, the typical thing that one would do. And I was really hand-wringing over it and dreams I think don't usually tell us what to do, but this was a dream that did feel like it was guiding and the dream was simply that I was watching thousands and thousands of animals migrating. I was seeing whales swimming in hoards and I was seeing butterflies migrating back to our butterflies and lots of other animals. Just these images of animals migrating. It was very moving to me because, you know, what I think I understand about migration is it's still a little mysterious to us how animals know when and where to move. They just know and that felt like kind of prompting from the Self that it would be okay just to do something that felt deeply right to do even though it was a little bit maverick.

**Deb:** I'm back on your image of the circumambulation and what a wonderful image that is to move around the four walls of the temple or the Terminus and contemplate whatever is in the center as the sacred image and how in a way it ties in with my thought of it is doable of that we can do this if we take dream images or some kind of assemble, something that has deeply moved us and hold that in our awareness, hold it and contemplate it, let it live at least for a time in the center. And that then that is a way also to carry it out into the outer world and daily activities of your image of the unbroken line and that it's possible. I keep wanting to not have this be the magical mystery tour, but it is a call and a possibility that's out there and in there.

**Joe:** And leaning back into both what Deb and Lisa are saying is that we don't need to be wringing our hands for mystical images because every night you have a dream, which is a magical image in a certain way. And sometimes we work too quickly through our dreams. But if we were to take, let's say, a central image from a dream, really focus on it, even for several days. And looking at it from several angles could also mean in a very concrete way that maybe one day you think about that dream image and how it affects your feelings. And then maybe the next day you journal on it and you notice how the image affects your thinking, the thought stream. And then maybe the next day you journal on it and you pay attention to how it affects your body's sensations. And maybe on the fourth day little journey about just the wild intuitions that the image provokes. And that's another way of looking at the image from different lenses. And I bet at the end of those four days, something will have been imparted to you. So, I'm thinking about why Jungians talk about Individuation so much. And the reason is that young himself went through a powerful, at times overwhelming, transformational process which he came to call Individuation, which if any of you are interested, you might read "Memories, dreams, and reflections", which was his first kind of biography. And he tries to outline some of the pivotal dreams, experiences that changed him and Lisa is going to share a particular dream that he had that was pivotal.

**Lisa:** So, this is known as the Liverpool dream and it's in "Memories, Dreams, Reflections". I found myself in a dark city city. It was night and winter and dark and raining. I was in Liverpool with a number of Swiss say, half a dozen. I walked through the dark streets. I had the feeling that there we were coming from the Harbor and that the real city was actually up above on the cliffs. We climbed up there, it reminded me of Basel where the market is down below and then you go up through the Tote and Goshen or the alley of the dead, which leads to a plateau above and so to the Peter's Pots and the Peter's Kutcher. When we reached the plateau, we found a broad square dimly illuminated by streetlights into which many streets converged. The various quarters of the city were arranged radially around the square. In the center was around pool and in the middle of it, a small Island. While everything roundabout was obscured by rain, fog, smoke, and dimly lit darkness, the little Island blazed with sunlight. On it stood a single tree, a Magnolia in a shower of reddish blossoms. It was as though the trees stood in the sunlight and we're at the same time the source of light. My companions commented on the abominable weather and obviously did not see the tree. They spoke of another Swiss who was living in Liverpool and expressed surprise that he should have settled here. I was carried away by the beauty of the flowering tree in the sunlit Island and I thought, I know very well why he has settled here. Then I awoke. On one detail of the dream I must add a supplementary comment. The individual quarters of the city were themselves arranged radially around a central point. This point formed a small open square illuminated by a larger streetlamp and constituted a small replica of the Island. I knew that the other Swiss lived in the vicinity of one of these secondary centers. This dream represented my situation at the time. I can still see the grayish, yellow raincoat, glistening with the wetness of the rain. Everything was extremely unpleasant, black and opaque, just as I felt then. But I had had a vision of unearthly beauty and that was why I was able to live at all. Liverpool is the pool of life. The Liver, according to an old view, is the seed of life; that which makes to live. This dream brought with it a sense of finality. I saw that here the goal had been revealed. One could not go beyond the center. The center is the goal and everything is directed toward that center. Through this dream, I understood that the Self is the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning. Therein lies its healing function. For me, this insight signified an approach to the center and therefore to the goal. Out of it emerged first inkling of my personal myth.

**Joe:** Now to set a context. Before the dream was gifted to Jung, he was in a state of apparently almost unbearable agony. But he was, he had been absolutely turned into that solution inside of the pupa and he was very unsure that he could even continue to survive. And at times Jung even contemplated suicide because it was just so agonizing. And this dream, providing these symbols of the Self began to order or introduce a process of ordering into this big ocean that his life had become. And that gave him the sense of certainty and a feeling of certainty that he was going to return to life and he was going to be okay.

**Lisa:** And I'm wondering if this would be a good place for us to turn to a dream?

**Deb:** I think so.

**Joe:** Hi, this is Joseph from This Jungian Life podcast. Lisa, Deb and I have been deeply moved by your responses to our work. Producing, editing, and distributing it involves substantial expenses and now we need your help. Please stop by our website, thisjungianlife.com and click on the heading "be our patron". You'll be redirected to our Patron funding page. Patron helps creators connect with people who believe in projects like ours. There you can sign up with your credit card to support us with as little as a dollar a month. And at higher levels of support we'll provide special episodes, behind the scenes photos and stories, and a chance to join a select pool of listeners for dream interpretations. Thank you.

**Deb:** So here is the dream. Our dreamer is a man. He is 22. He has a first job while working at a store after having graduated from college. And here's the dream.

 *“In the beginning of the dream, it’s morning. I’m waiting for my father in the house where I grew up. We are about to drive halfway across the country to look at graduate schools. It is nearing afternoon and we still haven’t left the house. I know from previous experience that it takes more than a full day of driving to reach our destination, which leaves me feeling anxious. Now my parents and I are in the car heading down the highway. From the backseat, where I used to sit, I’m looking outside. We reach an empty stretch of road surrounded on either side by farmland. The sky is overcast- halfway between rain and sunset; I notice a few geese flying across the road from the left of my line of vision in a small V-shaped formation. Once they have reached the other side they circle back, flying in the opposite direction; they have doubled in numbers and form a more unified chevron. I am standing in a field with my girlfriend. We are watching the dark shapes of the geese bobbing in the dusk. Suddenly they start to glow, one by one as if each is carrying on their bodies a neon orb, similar to a brake light. I look down in the mud by my shoes and see a broken red light, one that could fit on a bike; I tell my girlfriend that the cracked object must have come from the geese. She agrees with me, which I find very reassuring.”*

**Deb:** And again, he just says he graduated from a liberal arts college last year and his girlfriend is about to graduate from the same college and that he had the feelings of anxiety, amazement, apprehension, and hope in relationship to this dream.

**Lisa:** Oh, I just find this dream so moving.

**Deb:** I do too.

**Lisa:** So here's a young man who's about to set out on a quest. He's about to set out on a journey and it's sort of an important journey that will have some impact on his future. You know, he's about to set out into his life's journey and he's waiting for his father.

**Joe:** So in that way, the father seems to represent a kind of agency, a power source, which I think in a young man's psyche is true; that the father principle or the masculine needs to accompany the young hero on the journey. And although he's anxious that it's going to take a full day of driving, it feels like the father's, the inner father is going to show him up.

**Lisa:** Well, but the inner father doesn't show up, you know, there's a sense. Yeah, but I think that's right. And he's in the house where I grew up and he's about to leave. He's about to leave the house where he grew up. So he's going to leave the childhood state.

**Joe:** Yeah. He's in a transition or approaching a transition. And that makes him a little anxious as it does for all of us.

**Lisa:** Yeah.

**Deb:** I'm thinking about how it's the father image that is in the driver's seat. They're going to go a long way and yet he's leaving home and is a little anxious in the dream about seeding this power to someone else, as he is about to go to graduate school and what an interesting symbol that could be of where is the inner graduate school and what is the inner topic that he's going to study. What does that mean to him from a psychic point of view? And then like Jung's Liverpool dream, it really reminds me of that this is such a great serendipitous thing that we have this dream after reading Jung's Liverpool dream, that the sky is overcast between rain and sunset of it's like the rain and fog and in Jung's dream. And he notices the geese flying first one way and then another and their numbers double.

**Lisa:** Yeah, I mean, so that kind of middle paragraph that starts now. My parents and I are in the car heading down the road. It's poignant. From the backseat where I used to sit, I'm looking outside. I mean, we can all remember being kids in the backseat, you know, with our parents driving. And there's this where he says, where I used to sit, I used to be just in the back seat and he's in that childhood position again. But then he sees the geese out of the car window and they reached the other side and then they circle back flying in the opposite direction. They have doubled in numbers and form a more unified Chevron. So the energy that's contained in the geese is building and then he's out of the car and he's standing in the field with a girlfriend. So there's a process of development being being shown here.

**Deb:** Yeah. Of the inner opposite, an Anima image from a deeper level of psyche. And together they're watching the geese bobbing in the dusk and they start to glow. It's a really magical, very, very magical image because birds are very often for obvious reasons symbolize a spiritual experience or a spiritual reality. They're up high. They're in the sky. There's the dove in Christianity and many an image of birds and flying is connected with spiritual experience.

**Joe:** And as well as being creatures, geese are also interesting because they're creatures of water and they dive down, they're creatures of land and they're creatures of air. So they have this mercurial ability to survive in numerous environments. And they are also incredibly robust. My house in North Carolina, you know, we're plagued by these geese that winter over in the area and they're like a gang, you know, like menacing our dogs. I mean, they're really stout creatures, really robust.

**Lisa:** If you keep backyard chickens, for example, one way to make sure that they don't become predated by a Hawk is to have a goose.

**Joe:** Absolutely. Those goose mean business.

**Lisa:** But, you know, it's also interesting because, I mean it's again a little bit of a synchronicity, but you know, geese migrate. They are famously migratory. They're a signal of the change of seasons. There are heralds that winter is coming or spring is coming. We see them fly over head North or South, just like in the dream of mine that I referenced earlier, that they know, they know when it's time to move. And so there's some, and I think that there is a kind of inherent wisdom there or something.

**Joe:** Well, there's a wisdom, there's something instinctive about his migration to graduate school that there is a kind of natural transitional arc to what is in the future for him. And Lisa, as you said, when all of a sudden the geese are in the sky or the geese land in your yard, you know, it's a harbinger of the change of season one way or the other. The thing that I am ambivalent about is the glowing lights on the geese. And the fact that I think that makes him anxious because when the girlfriend validates it, he's reassured. And I found myself thinking, well, what is he reassured of? And what I could imagine is if I'm sitting there looking at geese and all of a sudden something paranormal happens, like they're all wearing little lights. I might be thinking to myself like, am I seeing things, like what the heck is going on? You know, doubting one's senses or one sanity for a minute. And then finally there's a little bit of proof in the girl is reassuring, but there is a feeling, and I'm just using my intuition, but there's a feeling of the young men not quite trusting himself as to what he's really seeing. And that's also a transitional place of trusting whether you're seeing correctly, interpreting things correctly, whether or not he's on the right track. Is he going to the right graduate school? And there is a trust in oneself that I think is trying to sort itself out.

**Deb:** He does say something about having written a poem for a final project in his undergraduate education that involved feathers and brake lights. As I'm paying attention to the fact that these neon orbs are like brake lights, which means stop of course, and that he's looking up in the air at the geese and then he looks down in the mud by his shoes and sees a broken red light. So I'm thinking about looking up and then looking down and how ubiquitous we find it is to find the magical thing in the mud. The Lotus blooms in the mud, that there's something generative about mud on my shoes, a very earthy image.

**Lisa:** It is an ambivalent image because when he looks up and he sees these, I mean, these geese, which by the way have changed direction and flown back, which I think is interesting.

**Joe:** Which also happens a lot because once they've kind of landed in your area they might be there for a week or two and they still assemble in their formation as they're poking around finding food.

**Lisa:** But these start to glow, right? So there's something, like you're saying, kind of paranormal, there's something sort of numinous about that, but then it's just a broken brake light. So there's the possibility that something's been perhaps overvalued. You know, and now it's just a broken brake light, which I think, I think even the broken brake light in the mud is kind of bivalent because it is this thing that's kind of inherently not of much use, but it is Deb, as you were sort of alluding kind of proof, you know, that yes, he saw that. That there's something that, you know, it reminds me of in a lot of fairy stories, there's this sort of numinous encounter maybe with the fairies, let's say. And the fairies put gold in your pockets or when you're in the fairy world, you might stuff your pockets with gold and the next morning you wake up and you're not really sure it happened. You don't remember if it happened or not or did you just dream it? And then you put your hand in your pocket and what you find is dirt. So it's sort of this ambivalent thing. It's like, yes, it really happened. You spent the night with the fairies, but you can't bring the treasure across the threshold yet. Something like that.

**Joe:** Yes, in that story, I think the dirt in the pocket is helpful because it forces the individual to have to differentiate the world; that the fairy world is in the inner world and the real world is in the outer world, which in one sense might be disappointing for the person, but also it's comforting to have the separation of worlds. And here, this blending of the imaginal world and the natural world has happened which actually can cause a lot of anxiety.

**Lisa:** So my intuition is telling me, and I'm just making something up here, this is just my imagination, that as he weans his way toward graduate school, there is an intimation of something quite spectacular that may await him in the future. But right now he's dealing with the broken thing in the mind, which is very every day and ordinary. And it's this way that sometimes when we're dealing with Individuation, say in an analysis, it's not uncommon for someone to have an incredibly numinous dream early in the process that shows this wholeness. But the person is nowhere near that. But it's like the psyche is saying yes, but that's where you're going to get to eventually. But right now we're here in the mud.

**Deb:** I'm liking the reference to the realm of the fairies and that you've reach in the next day and you find dirt in your pocket. Yes, it's you know, a real sort of landing with a thud of here's the broken brake light or the dirt in your pocket and the validation that yes the geese did have me on exactly. You did spend a night in the realm of the fairies. Yes. Something transcendent is also real. And now we have to be ordinary and live it out in our daily lives, step-by-step and remember to brush your teeth too.

**Joe:** For me, I agree with both of you. But mostly just wanting to step now into the meaning of brake lights and flashing lights on flying things. So if we think about planes, they often have little lights on them. And of course bicycles or cars have brake lights on them and the lights are all meant to communicate information so that the flyer is kept safe. We have brake lights on to signal to the person behind us that we're slowing down or stopped. And so they don't hurt us and slam into us or planes have lights on them so that other planes in the vicinity can see them and not crash into them. So if we think about them as something to do with just an attitude that as the migration is happening, there is this extra element added to the dream to keep things safe and visible in flight, in the transition and to communicate to the forces around it so that they arrive safely. So the reassurance that he has at end, I think is linked up to the anxiety that he has in the beginning about the journey. And the brake lights are kind of safety features as they are on cars. So if we kind of make the dream even a little more ordinary that the unconscious is trying to give him what he needs to feel adequately safe in this migratory transition in his life and the anima figure of the girlfriend who is there, that he has companioned in some way is also just deeply reassuring.

**Lisa:** Yeah. In a way, there's this kind of opposition between feathers and brake lights, right? There's somehow kind of opposites that we can either take flight or we can slow down and there might be a sort of union of those images.

**Deb:** Yeah and a way too of holding the tension of opposites of something that means flight and something that means stop or slow down and it's quite a juxtaposition.

**Lisa:** Yes, it is.

**Joe:** That sounds like a good place to wrap it up.

**Conclusion:** You've been listening to This Jungian Life from our website, ThisJungianLife.com. You can follow us on Twitter, like us on Facebook, help us produce future episodes by funding us through Patron and submit your dreams for possible interpretation on another episode. We'd like to thank our listener who shared a dream for today's show and hope you'll let us know what topics you'd enjoy hearing more about. Until next time, keep living This Jungian Life.

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