READING JUNG'S STAGES OF LIFE FROM SUNRISE TO SUNSET: A GUIDE FOR TEACHING JUNG IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

Most theories on human development are based on age, biological constructs, crises, and abilities. Carl Gustave Jung can be considered a divergent psychologist since he did not confine himself with empirical data. Much of his works show his interest in the spiritual path. It does sound ironic when the topic is psychology, when *psyche* by definition, means *spirit* and yet little is discussed about the spirit in psychological theories. This article was embarked to help illustrate and digest the details of Jung's Stages of Life. It is also the aim of this paper to summarize and interpret pragmatically the mystic qualities of Jung's concepts by providing current relatable issues to encourage readers, teachers, and students to investigate further and experience the contributions of Jung to the study of the unconscious.

Introduction:

Carl Gustav Jung and Sigmund Freud were very close friends but they developed different views on the purpose of the unconscious mind. Unlike Freud, Jung wanted to study how the unconscious is linked to humankind's purpose and how everything eventually unfolds towards unification. Freud was into fixations and saw the unconscious as the receptacle of repressed thoughts and memories. Although both Freud and Jung were brave to put forward ideas that were viewed as taboo during their time, Jung leaned towards the esoteric because he saw the common denominators inherent in mankind's mythologies. He studied mysticism, astrology, and mythical symbols all over the world and he found out that there are underlying models similar to all cultures. For Jung, this signals that, although mankind is comprised of different races and physical attributes, there are essential beliefs that prove we are one. He called these models archetypes.

Jung's stages of life discussed the development of human consciousness, but the story really began in the garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden was a metaphor pertaining to the state of *unconsciousness*. Adam and Eve were enjoying this state of bliss devoid of problems because they do not possess knowledge. This was their natural state – no ambition, no aspirations, no competition, no work, just existing, just instinct. Instincts**,** like in animals, help the organism maintain their existence.

As everyone already knows, they ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge. This action was the dawn of consciousness, a.k.a the birth of problems. To view this positively, when Adam and Eve gained consciousness, they became aware of the things they should be doing in order to improve themselves. Problems demand that we leave our comfort zone and start changing. Problems also demand that we create something so that life will be better. Hence, the birth of consciousness gave rise to

problems, which also gave rise to human civilization and ultimately culture. Consciousness can also create problems for cultures and civilizations. For example, when a society is in a civil war phase, tensions are created for changes to happen. Indeed, Adam and Eve were really destined to eat that fruit anyway. The universe depended on it! If the fruit was not eaten, there will be no difference between humans and the amoeba.

According to Jung, Adam and Eve created the first human crisis. Before the problem with fruit of knowledge, the couple just depended on nature for survival. As the story of Genesis goes, the prize for knowing is having to burden oneself with decision making and finding solutions to problems. "Every problem, therefore, brings the possibility of a widening of consciousness, but also the necessity of saying goodbye to childlike unconsciousness and trust in nature" (Campbell, 1971, p.4). But the memory of paradise is inherent in man; it makes him want to avoid problems. Humans crave for certainties and patterns. They often fantasize not having to work but still have unlimited access to the good life. It is easy to find people rant about responsibilities and how burdensome they are. Jung would say that these would be the kind of people who want to stay unconscious and operate only based on instincts. The gift of certainty, achievement, and fulfillment are bestowed to those who take action to doubt and experiment, which means, opening oneself to failures and pain. The more problems are swept under the rug, the more uncertain the future becomes. From here, the answer to the question why problems exist becomes clear now.

The Model:
Jung's Stages of Life is comprised of five levels: childhood, puberty, young adulthood, middle age, and old age. He discussed these using the Sunrise-Sunset metaphor. The first half of life is from birth to middle age which is also labeled as 12 noon in the diagram and the second half of life begins around 40 years old until death. The bulk of work to be done in the first half of life entails the development of the persona, while in the second half of life, the person needs to focus inwardly to achieve individuation. These concepts will be discussed further in each stage.
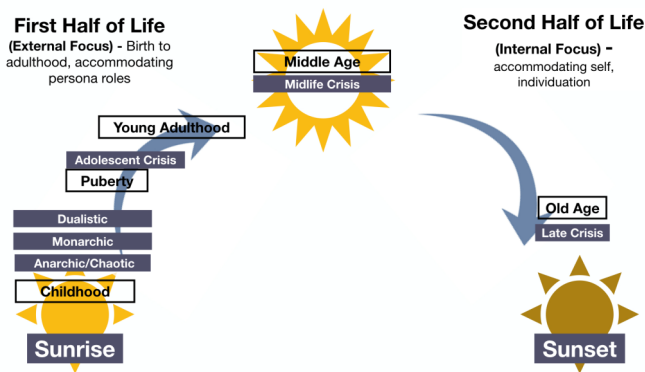

Figure 1:Jungs Stages of Life Model

I. Sunrise, First Half of Life – Birth to early adulthood

The task of the human being is *outer development* or the initiation into outward reality. This means that, for Jung, when a child is born, he has to undergo the process of detaching himself from the Garden of Eden or the unconscious, instinct, just existence, sloth state. The job here is to develop a *persona* that would allow humans to function productively in the society. Persona, according to Jung, means "mask" or the image we project based on the acquired personality. It is the face that we show the world. A healthy persona adapts, is balanced, unique, able to deal with tension, seeks out solutions, approaches problems instead of avoiding them, relates with others, performs duties, is interdependent with others, proactive. Thus to develop a persona would entail education and widening of horizons; basically finding your place under the sun! This takes effort, consumes resources, may require a person to practice healthy competition, to risk being in love, achieving real intimacy with another by surrendering. Indeed, the first half of life is a lot of work.

A. Childhood

Anarchic or Chaotic State. In this first stage, the child is still in the unconscious state.
The psychology of the baby and the psychology of the parents, particularly the mother's,
are undifferentiated. The parents act as the ego for the baby for the baby has yet to develop his own ego. Jung refers to the ego as the experience of *being me* which can be described as the awareness of one's talents, strengths, and weaknesses. Furthermore, this awareness is what the individual has to discover through his interactions with people. But in this case, the baby is naturally confined in the nursery, interacting only with the caregivers. Since the interaction of the baby is limited, their awareness can be described as sporadic. It is unable to form chronological memories. This explains why, in general, people find it difficult to remember the events that happened to them when they were infants. Jung referred to this as "islands of memory" (Jung & Jaffé, 1961, p. 6). The consciousness develops by knowing and recognizing the people and things around. In this stage, the baby has yet to learn how to differentiate himself with what is not himself, the I am and I am not.

Monarchic. The ego is starting to form; the child learns to speak but refers to himself in the third person due to the primitive ego. The islands of memories become larger but the child is not yet aware of himself as the perceiver. It is interesting to note that there are quite a number of conflicting literature on illeism or "speaking about yourself in the third person" (Robson, 2019). Some view it as a positive trait saying it facilitates emotion regulation (Moser, et al., 2017) and improves intellectual humility (Robson, 2019). On the other hand, the negative perceptions on illeism include its association with narcissism and dissociative disorder (Carrington, 2017). Albeit, these assumptions still need more research.

Dualistic State. As the child learns to separate himself from the rest of the world, his ego forms, there arises a sense of *I*. Consequently, this is the time when the child starts to speak of itself in the first person –I am hungry, and he is able to refer to himself as the object as well – Give me. During this time, memories start to

develop chronologically, in other words, the islands of consciousness or memories become continents!

According to Jung, very young children are still connected with the collective unconscious which comprises the archetypes, mythologies or big dreams of mankind. This dreamy, mystical realm is beyond empirical data which is why this is not a very popular research topic for academics. Nevertheless, Jung emphasized the importance of mythic metaphors for these allow mankind to connect with their inner consciousness and these give "us a language to name the ineffable" (Dune, 2000, p.240). It is not surprising, therefore, that fairy tales and magical worlds appeal greatly to children. For practicality's sake, children would need to outgrow these big dreams. As children become adults, their dream to become an astronaut is later transformed into a dream to become an insurance agent. The adult would need to adapt to his ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore, since the child is dependent on the caregiver/parents and the memory of the carefree life in the Garden of Eden is still very vivid, the child has no capacity to understand the pressures of common life problems.

> In the childish stage of consciousness there are as yet no problems; nothing depends on the subject, for the child itself is wholly dependent on its parents. It is as though it were not yet completely born, but were still enclosed in the psychic atmosphere of the parents (Campbell, 1971, p. 7).

B. Youth or Puberty

The psychic dependency on the parents is broken. The youth desires to establish his personal identity rather than piggy back on his parents' ego. Most children rebel at this age. The stricter the parents become, the more rebellious the child gets! This is the first time the individual has to deal with tensions arising from the environment and within himself as he attempts to leave the problem-free era of childhood.

Adolescent Crisis. The onset of physiological changes, raging hormones, and sexuality marks the beginning of problems. The individual may have a hard time adjusting to the demands of life if he "maintains exaggerated expectations, underestimation of difficulties, unjustified optimism, or a negative attitude" (Read, et al., 1972, p.392). If the adolescent crisis is unresolved, those who are not able to break free from the shadows of their parents rebel inwardly, "often nurturing a deep resentment that they are not allowed to grow up" (Halevi, 1991, p.222). Quite often, this is also manifested in midlife crisis which will be discussed later.

C. Young Adulthood

Jung explained that there is something in people that "wishes to remain a child, to be unconscious or at most, conscious only of the ego, to reject everything strange, to do nothing, or else indulge our own craving for pleasure or power" (Campbell, 1971, p.9-10). Childhood memories tempt people to prefer the easy-go-lucky, egotistic lifestyle, making them avoid responsibility, and abandon the quest for the development of consciousness because doing that is a lot of work. Indi-

viduals who feel entitled and those who expect help from others because they refuse to help themselves are examples of people who desire to remain unconscious.

The demands of life are coming from all directions now. The individual is forced to realize what it means to rise and shine! As problems start to bear weight, there are those who would refuse to adapt and embrace innovations. These types prefer to regress in the comfort of their childhood years. This is a sign that an individual is not comfortable with learning new things which can be quite problematic since learning is a constant whilst alive. On the other hand, there are those who quite ahead of the game and live in the future. If this is overrated, the individual might be running away from the past. Both of these strategies make people avoid confronting the problems when they should be dealing with them to help build their character.

Another strategy in dealing with problems that does not help build character is settling with the attainable or mediocre. The circumstances in which an individual is born into may add to the difficulty of the person to see options that is why it is easier not to take risks. In Jung's words:

> We limit ourselves the attainable, and this means renouncing all our other psychic potentialities. One man loses a valuable piece of his past, another a valuable piece of his future. Everyone can call to mind friends or schoolmates who were promising and idealistic youngsters, but who, when we meet them again years later, seem to have grown dry and cramped in a narrow mould. These are examples of the solution mentioned above. The serious problems in life, however, are ever fully solved (Campbell, 1971, p. 11).

However, Jung clarified that the attending to the problem is more important than the finding of solutions. This exercise is the only way to elevate one's consciousness. As one continues the work to elevate one's consciousness, the environment where he is in is positively affected.

II. The Second Half of Life

The midlife happens around 35 to 40 years. Metaphorically, as the clock strikes 12 noon, the decent begins. The morals, ideals, and convictions that people value would need to be evaluated but this can be difficult for stubborn folks. Jung said it is not a good idea to adhere to old convictions as one empties the cup – another metaphor he used. Using the sunrise/sunset model, there are ideals that are healthy to pursue in the morning but not all are worth pursing in the afternoon. The time is nigh to loosen the grip and open oneself to activities that involve more humanistic objectives like being the stewards of cultural heritage and caring for the future generations.

A. Middle Age

The process of *individuation* commences here. This is "the process by which a person becomes a psychological individual, a separate indivisible unity or whole, recognizing his innermost uniqueness, and he identified this process with becoming one's own self or self realization, which he distinguished from "ego-centeredness" and individualism" (Schlamm, 2014, n.p). In other words, the ego takes the back seat as the person embraces a holistic world view, integrates life's

lessons, appreciates the grand design of things through inclusive activities designed to form deeper connection with the *Self* and others. Jung also said that this is the time when the characteristics of men and women seem to exchange. "Women tend to develop more masculine features: deep, rough voices, incipient moustaches. Men develop feminine physical and psychological traits" (Campbell, 1971, p.15). The exchange of characteristics is due to the acknowledgment of the other roles done by the opposite sex. Thus, it becomes easier for a husband to partake of his wife's duties in the household thereby giving way to deeper empathy for both sexes.

Midlife Crisis. Adults start to question the relevance of their career and relationships. There are those who cling to their principles and convictions to the point that they totally close their minds to suggestions. These people are the intolerant adults we meet at work. As a result, their relationships suffer and their goals are always frustrated. Some adults remain in their youth state because they still live in the shadows of their parents. Individuals, with unresolved adolescent crises, may have been forced into professions they do not like. This can be the result of too much pressure from the family or just indecisiveness because they have not figured out what they want to do in the first place. These people feel that time is running out and they haven't even started pursing their dreams. Midlife crisis is also characterized as the paranoia one feels towards aging because the present circumstances point to a bleak future. Jung had suggested indirectly that schools should develop a curriculum for people 40 years old and above to help them age more gracefully.

B. Old Age

There are cultures that recognize the importance of old people in the society. Not so long ago in the Philippines, it is customary to kiss the hand of the elders as a sign of respect. For the native Americans, the elders are in charge of passing down the knowledge to young members of the tribe (Asif, 2018). Confucius' teaching on Filial Piety and the "honor thy father and thy mother" in the biblical 10 commandments of God reflect this respect for the elders. Jung described in his essay the potential contributions of the elderly. They are the guardians of the law, cultural heritage, and the source of wisdom.

Jung placed the *Internal Focus* in the second half of life to refer to the rediscovering one's spirituality through reflection and meditation in order to find value beyond material things. To achieve this, it is necessary to revisit the big dreams that inspired one during childhood and share this feeling with the younger generations. This is also the reason why religion and other spiritual practices appeal more to older people.

Due to the vast experiences of the elderly and given the time they had invested in reflective thought, they are more equipped to give sound advise to younger people for they have lived through the consequences of life's problems. This is the ideal Jung had proposed. It is expected that the elderly should have mastered the art of life by now. After all, wisdom is one the gifts of experience which they have in abundance.

Late Crisis. Jung was one of those psychologists who view old age positively. But most people today, generally succumb to the negative stereotypes of old age. Society values youthful qualities more and other related attributes (i.e., the instant, the quick, the techy, the hypermasculine and the hyperfeminine). Hence, most societies have negative attitudes towards aging. There is just no dignity in old age which is quite sad because everyone is bound to grow old eventually. Langer (2014) discussed in her book that the younger population have contributed to the negative stereotypes on old people. Thus, as one grows old, these stereotypes are internalized until it is too late to convince oneself otherwise. The younger self is creating the crisis that would plague the elderly self in the future! In effect, as a way to cope, there are old people who compete with the young, aspire to look like the sibling of their child, and invest in nip tuck jobs to achieve this (Campbell, 1971). The ambitious types who enter the twilight of life feel unsatisfied with their accomplishments, while those who were arrogant when they were younger feel despair that they do not have enough time to make amends.

It is actually hard on people to face the afternoon of life when they have been accustomed to the ways of the morning of life but Jung said, this is where religion comes in handy for most people. The promises of scripture give them something to look forward to. Interestingly, the life-after death idea helps people see that there is something else out there and death is not the end.

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