

**On January 14, 2017, the JungHaus Second Saturday Coffee and Conversation topic was on Jung and aging.** There is much interest in this subject and as moderator of that discussion, I (Linda Meadows) have made a few notes of it, in the hopes that a more in-depth program can be scheduled in the not too distant future.

#### **References:**

**Successful Aging: Jungian Contributions to Development in Later Life.** Lionel Corbett article - Published in Psychological Perspectives 2013

**Jungian analytical psychology and old age.** Journal of Applied Gerontology, 4 (2), 105-110. Barry, J. B., Bozarth, J., Myers, J. E., & Heyn, J. (1986).

#### **In Midlife** by Murray Stein

Midlife: crisis, anger, change... Drawing on analytic experience, dreams, and myths, Stein formulates the three main features of the middle passage. First an erosion of attachments. Then hints of a fresh spirit - renegade and mischievous - that scoffs at routines. This new spirit disrupts life and alarms family and friends. Finally, with luck, a transformation occurs; life begins anew.

**Jung and Aging - Possibilities and Potentials for the Second Half of Life.** Leslie Sawin, Lionel Corbett and Michael Carbine, Editors

In March 2012, the Library of Congress and the Jung Society of Washington convened the first Jung and Aging Symposium. Sponsored by the AARP Foundation, the symposium brought together depth psychologists and specialists in gerontology and spirituality to explore the second half of life in light of current best practices in the field of aging. This volume presents the results of the day's discussion, with supplementary perspectives from additional experts, and suggests some practical tools for optimizing the second half of life.

**Jungian Center for the Spiritual Sciences**      <http://jungiancenter.org/enjoying-the-afternoon-of-life-jung-on-aging/>

In this essay, we will examine the meaning of aging, and why Western society regards aging as a negative, something to be denied, ignored or fought off, rather than enjoyed. To be sure, the process of growing old has its challenges, but it also holds a wealth of opportunities. Of all the various schools of depth psychology Jung's school was the only one to recognize how the autumn of life could be regarded and handled, both by individuals and analysts, so as to bring out its meaning and purpose.<sup>[6]</sup> Jung and his followers suggested numerous ways we can age "consciously,"<sup>[7]</sup> and make the process of growing old a positive experience. *Footnotes 6 and 7 refer to Jane R. Pretat's 1994 book Coming to Age: The Crowning Years and Late-Life Transformation (Studies in Jungian Psychology by Jungian Analysts, 62)*

**Jungian Views on Aging- Podcast published September 18, 2014 by C.G. Jung Institute of Chicago**

This recording is the final segment of a series of lectures given by Lionel Corbett and includes a lengthy question and answer period. Themes include: The importance of the archetypes, primitive verses developed ego defenses, pre-egoic states, the storage of trauma in the body, and a discussion of the inner victim-perpetrator dyad which predates Kalsched's work on the Self-care system. Recorded at the C.G. Jung Institute of Chicago in 1991.

**Carl Jung And The Art Of Aging Well** By Kathy Gottberg Huffington Post THE BLOG 09/28/2015 06:41 am ET | Updated Sep 28, 2016

### Notes:

The process of individuation is the central tenet of Jung's philosophy. It involves an archetypal specific differentiation process in the dispute between Ego and Self as a conscious and unconscious search for spiritual wholeness and completeness. In an interview in which Jung was asked how he sees people after crossing the boundary to the second half of life, Jung replied: *"an ever-deepening self-awareness seems to me as probably essential for the continuation of a truly meaningful life in the aging, however uncomfortable this self-knowledge may be."* Individuation is essentially a process that takes place in the second half of life. (Corbett)

Fear and anxiety sometimes attend getting old. And what is old if people are living longer and in greater, more robust health. I think we have our own sense of it - when we feel it in our bones and joints or we experience physical ailments or limitations once considered the domain of the elderly; when we cannot retain or recall as acutely all that our minds before so facilely managed; when friends and loved ones are dying; when we begin to reflect on the past and pause to consider that the days ahead are more measured than we had ever before thought. There's perhaps an unfamiliar sense of vulnerability. A heightened concern about alzheimer's may follow memory lapses. We may find ourselves resolving to remain independent of institutional care. If our parents are still with us, their care and needs may overlap our own.

Joy and the sweetness of freedom also attend getting old. If we are able to retire, we are free from the daily pressures of the work world, though if our self-esteem is tied to work, we will be called to recognize our true identity (as would be the case also of self-esteem tied to looks when they become altered by aging). If we have the means and health, we can travel. We can enroll in workshops, seminars and classes. We can volunteer our services to organizations we value. If our bodies permit, we can exercise and hike and bike or bungee jump or whatever adventures may thrill us. If we have grandchildren we can delight in them and even experience childhood again through them.

However, perhaps the most profound gift of old age is its inward turn to the Self. In this process the grip of the ego is released and a spiritual pulse grows ever stronger. Jung said that as we grow older, God grows younger. He also noted that in the "morning" of life, it is incumbent to develop a healthy ego while in the "afternoon" of life, it is our calling to the Self that marks our transcendent pivot.

As ego recedes and we become more aligned with Self, we begin to make choices about how we spend our time and with whom we spend it. That which enthused us may no longer and new delights are discovered. Realizing that there are some things we may no longer be able to do for ourselves we give ourselves to a healthy dependence without sacrificing individual freedom. Realizing that some of the goals we had set for ourselves may not be achievable, we set new ones. Recognition of patterns, of complexes working in our lives, is a hallmark of aging, wherein we can observe, discern, and learn about the energies that have been present throughout our lives. We can reinterpret our life experiences and re-read the narrative of our lives. We can re-visit our stories with deeper insights that lead to epiphanal connections.

*As the ego becomes less insistent, the older person can become sensitive to new forms pushing up into consciousness from the deep layers of the collective unconscious. This fosters a metanoia, or change in attitude that creates releasing and healing in a cyclical process. What Jung called “the developmental imperative”—that innate force in each of us calling forth our growth—can rise up in later years to help the oldster move into the new phase. Another innate function, the transcendent function—that psychic phenomenon that reconciles the opposites—may emerge in the late liminal interval, unifying what previously had been polarized, and fostering integrity, authenticity and individuation. (Jung and Aging - Possibilities and Potentials for the Second Half of Life)*

Self-reflection and awareness partner in old age with the opportunity to round out the Self with pursuits that give a voice to unexpressed dimensions of our being. In terms of type, as an example, it might be allowing more space for extroversion if we are an introvert, or giving the wings (inferior functions) fuller flight. Perhaps it would be acts of artistic creation if we hadn't seen those as one of our gifts. *Creativity can be a form of spiritual practice; it opens us to whatever wants to emerge, trusting that there is something there that wants to be heard; it liberates meaning, renews life, and often allows us to uncover our un-lived aspects. Creativity helps to “relativize” the ego, so important in Jung’s writing; there is a growing sense that the ego participates in a larger reality, and creativity allows surrender to this expanded awareness. (Corbett)* Or it might be greater attention to the right hemisphere of the brain. Another dimension of rounding out self might be expression of contrasexual energies, allowing animus and anima less socially constructed restriction.

We can support the shift to reconciliation of opposites and tension, of awakening to Self and greater consciousness, of grokking archetypes and complexes, of illuminating the shadow, of longing for the spiritual – all these wisdoms we experience in old age – with a reframed attention to dreams, to active imagination, and to self-reflection.

*Not surprisingly, as long as the dreamer is developing and aging past midlife consciously, dreams heralding a change of physical state or view across the threshold of transformation are usually paired with others reminding the dreamer of tasks still to be accomplished. The work left undone may include disidentifying from defensive patterns and complexes established in childhood and again flourishing as the body-ego weakens and its stress revives early misaligned attachment bonds that need further work. (Corbett)*