Thinking blondes and heroes: interpreting Jungian theory and hero stories for women’s psychology

Beth M. Marlow
University of Wollongong
NOTE

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CHAPTER SIX

The Self: The Grail
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The Self: The Grail

... I am the knowledge of my inquiry,
   and the finding of those who seek after me,
   and the command of those who ask after me,
   and the power of the powers in my knowledge
   of the angels, who have been sent at my word,
   and of gods in their seasons by my counsel,
   and of spirits of every man who exists with me,
   and of women who dwell within me. ...

(from The Thunder: Perfect Mind, Unknown, c. 150 A.D. or earlier).

Nearly there ... the journey's end ... at last the goal in sight ... I hope. Yet
that the exploration of the "self" should be the aim of the psychological quest,
is so obvious as to seem clichéd. So have I travelled all this way, only to
discover the Grail is still the same old tin cup? Will its value be obvious?
How will I know if the one I have found is genuine or fake?

Identifying the Goal:

Theories of self go to the heart of psychology as explanation of human
nature, so are especially vulnerable to intellectual and social expectations. If a
theory of self is to be useful to a psychology of women, it must be expansive
enough to avoid restrictive cultural requirements, particularly those of the ideal
of individualism. In this chapter, I explore different approaches to self-theory,
with an accent on Jungian theory, and a view to identifying how a theory of self
can be helpful in defining human psychology without prescribing human
behaviours. Hence, my proposal is that, with careful application, Jung's theory of self has much to recommend it. Nonetheless, of all Jungian concepts which have been overlaid and confused with a masculine bias, this, being so central, is also the most complicated to reclaim and reinterpret. The challenge would seem to lie in finding ways to explore the archetypal Self without objectifying it. If the archetypal Self can be experienced as continuous with the experiencing self, the "I", it becomes a treasure trove of possibilities, some problematical, some fascinating.

Jung (CW 9ii) proposed a unique and intriguing theory of self, fraught with the predictable difficulties of developing a non-prescriptive theory, but ultimately revealing considerable value as a means of explaining this tricky topic. Building on the psychodynamic view of mind, Jung's (CW 9ii) theory proposed (atypically of such theories) a concept of self located with the unconscious, hence an archetype. Jung claimed it as the most important of the archetypes and the goal of psychological development, the goal of the process of individuation, hence the psychological equivalent of the goal of the quest, the Fleece, the Grail. "I have suggested calling the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known, the self. The ego is, by definition, subordinate to the self and is related to it like a part to the whole." (CW 9ii, § 9). A convention has developed among Jungian writers to refer to the "Self", capitalised, to distinguish it from other uses of "self", as in self-awareness or self-concept. I will follow that convention for ease of explanation, but I do not intend to infer a reified or hierarchical arrangement of personality.

The Self, for Jung, represents a potential for psychological development, a range of possibilities, which, being mostly unconscious, can only be speculated upon. By distinguishing Self from aspects of self-awareness Jung was able to avoid many of the limitations of less inclusive self-concepts, while still
maintaining a subscription to a purposive or intentional perspective. He proposed a teleological concept of Self, encapsulating not only how we perceive ourselves at the present moment, but also how we believe we want to be.

Such a theory of self, Self as unconscious and goal directed, has led, probably inevitably, to textbook categorisations of Jung's theory as deterministic (Monte, 1991). Such an assessment, if correct, would not auger well for a non-prescriptive psychology. In Aion, Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self (CW 9ii) Jung presented an imaginative discussion of the likely nature of the Self, using as an example, as a personification of the archetype, the character of Christ. If ever there was an immediately recognisable hero, an Ideal Man in Western culture, this is he. What chance has a liberated woman's psychology in the face of such a masculine ideal? At this point in my quest I suspected I had reached a dead end. Jung certainly did not intend his theory to be so limiting. He took a moderate stance on the dimension of free-will and determinism. Certainly people could be influenced by archetypal forms. However the aim of the individuation process (the recognition of Self) is to become more self-aware, to make conscious, as far as possible, the unconscious aspects of psyche. Meaning, understanding and choice are central to Jung's theory of human development. Yet the limitations in his description of the ideal Self sound depressingly restrictive.

Faced with the dilemma of seemingly not being able to apply the core of Jung's theory to my review of a Jungian psychology of women, I decided to investigate ways some other theorists had attempted to resolve the problem. I discovered they were every bit as prescriptive as Jung and again often unintentionally so. My conclusion is that almost all theories of self, certainly all developmental theories of self, must by definition be goal directed; they
must provide a proposal for possible normative development. In their attempts to describe the goal, the theorists tend to describe socially sanctioned ideals, giving the proposed outcome a narrow prescriptive focus. Moreover almost always the type described bears an uncanny resemblance to the very masculine ideal of individualism. This is an easy trap into which to fall, but not an inevitable one.

Although such theories may be goal directed, or teleological, they do not necessarily have to be deterministic. At least part of the confusion comes from the strongly negative, deterministic connotations attributed to the term “teleology”. Unfortunately, positivist, materialist definitions have gained precedence, and unquestionably, in that sense teleology is a deterministic (and very silly) concept. From one such mechanistic, causal perspective, teleology refers to some future event which is (miraculously) the cause, or stimulus, of something happening in the present. A less bizarre, but still untestable, so unacceptable, definition identifies “purpose” as an internal, intervening variable. Charles Taylor (1980) rejected both definitions, claiming that such atomistic approaches simply miss the point of explaining human actions. Purpose is not a separate link in the causal chain, but an intrinsic aspect of the animate organism’s system.

To speak of ‘action’ [purposive behaviour] is to say not only that the laws governing the behaviour so described are teleological, but also that this behaviour can only be accounted for as action, i.e., in terms of intentionality.


Intentionality and teleology are intrinsic to Jung’s metatheoretical assumptions (Rychlak, 1991). I too am presupposing not mechanism, but rather intentionality to explain human behaviours, so here as well teleology
assumes a significant function. Humans continually make plans, set goals, pursue ideals; in short they imagine their futures and tailor their present accordingly. The imaginative projections, the dreams of the future, influence demonstrably - the choices people make, and the ways they see and understand themselves. That goal directed, purposive action is influenced by the present images of the future, does not make the influences any less real or less powerful. The goals are substantial as are the effects. Successful action is measured in terms of the goals attained, just as responsibility is apportioned in relation to the perceived intentions underlying observed behaviours.

It is worth reviewing a few theories of self to better illustrate the point. A very brief historical perspective shows how theories of human development converge with the ideals of individualism. That provides a background from which I am better able to determine what it is I require from a theory of self. Many theories, of course, fulfil at least some of the requirements, but I have drawn most heavily from William James’s (1890) and Jung’s (CW 9i) theories of self.

**Historical Overview; Tracking the Grail:**

Probably the nearest one can get to a concept of self in the Greek Classical tradition is the notion of “soul” or “psyche”. This points to the centrality of these related concepts in psychology, a reminder that psychology derives from psyche (soul) and logos (word or knowledge). Certainly the dictum “know thyself!” is usually attributed to the Classical period, sometimes ascribed to the Delphic Oracle, sometimes to Socrates.

Soul was the essence of the human being in the Greek tradition. From the Socratic/Platonic perspective, satisfaction for the soul and hence complete development for the person was the attainment of the Truth. This meant the attainment, through the practice of reason, of the perfect, universal truth - the
pursuit of Truth, Beauty and Goodness (Plato, trans. 1928). For Aristotle the purpose remained the same as it did with Plato, but the nature of both soul and knowledge are much changed (Edwards, 1967). In contrast to Plato's two-world view (separate realms of Form and Matter), Aristotle proposed the notion of form inhering in matter (form, categories, generalisations require the physical object in order to be defined, to be said to exist). This important and much disputed shift in meaning has had profound and lasting influence on Western thinking, religious, philosophical and scientific. Ultimately it still impacts on what or who we say we are. The Aristotelian orientation is the precursor to scientific materialism. More broadly, the Classical orientations towards self-development and self-knowledge definitely point to modern versions. But it is important to remember that even in their most introspective moments, the Greeks were not so much focusing on an autonomous, individual self, as on a proper understanding of oneself in the context of one's place in a society and a universe which could and should be understood.

Although the nature of soul came to be defined differently in the Middle Ages, especially within the requirements of Christianity, it remained the essential quality of being human. However there was a shift in focus, especially in the Augustinian tradition, to an internalised, an introspective, knowledge of soul and God (Leahey, 1992). Yet this is still not a description of soul which maps easily across modern concepts of self. The quest for knowledge at this time was still not simply to know oneself in an individual sense, but specifically to know oneself in relation to God (that is, once again to know the Truth).

Thomas Aquinas countered Augustine's Platonic introspectionism with an adaptation of Aristotelian ideas (Leahey, 1992). He used the empiricism of Aristotle's method to support a rational, scientific understanding of the world,
something of which, he said, the rational human soul was capable. Then it was
via this knowledge of the material world that people were able to know God
(but only indirectly). There was of course a pragmatic political requirement to
be answered here as well. The path of introspection diverges too far from the
ability of the church, as institution, to control the religious thinking of its
members. Aquinas created an acceptable public doctrine which the church
fathers were then able to enforce; they could become the experts, interpreting
God to the laity. Luther, in turn, strongly objected to such doctrinal control and
made a return to an Augustinian introspectionism (Leahey, 1992).

Developments in Renaissance thinking come closer to modern notions of
self. Self is implied in the Cartesian “Cogito ergo sum”, though only partially
explored. After all Descartes was primarily interested in what we can know;
what it is to be a knowing being. Other methods, empiricism for instance, of
that and later times, have a similar orientation to knowledge. However, it took
the Utilitarian and materialist perspectives of Hobbes and Locke (Leahey,
1992) and similar developments in Enlightenment thinking to really provoke
interest in the self as focus in its own right. With a truly scientific approach, it
was now claimed, the mechanical laws governing the universe could not only
be understood, but could also be controlled and manipulated. Frances Bacon
epitomises this world view (Leahey, 1992; Lloyd, 1984). People (men) become
potential controllers of the universe, hence more interesting as a source of study
- here too humanity replaces God. There are a number of possible ways the
human individual can be studied though, from independent and powerful
manipulator to the object to be manipulated (Machiavelli, trans. 1961).

Consequently the burgeoning Enlightenment philosophies simultaneously
reified Man, as ideal, and objectified the human individual into an interesting
specimen for scientific scrutiny. The above summary is not meant to imply
there was a single trend which unfolded to finally arrive at the modern theories of self. Religious, mystical and other non-materialist perspectives continued as well. In more recent times, nineteenth century Romanticism, particularly in Germany, was just such an attempt to reduce the dominance of the logical, rational, materialist scientific world view. As discussed in chapter two, Jung and Freud were particularly influenced by German Romanticism (Ellenberger, 1970).

**The Ideal of Individualism; The Other Grail:**

There is a single theme however, which I wish to draw from the philosophical tradition summarised above, namely the notion of a valued social ideal, the ideal of individualism discussed in earlier chapters, which forms the basis of concepts of self in modern psychologies. To elaborate a little; this person, more correctly this man, would be independent, responsible, capable intellectually and physically, especially rational and dependable. He would not be given over to moods, outbursts of feeling, irrational emotional entanglements. He would be someone you could rely on, as both thinker and doer, making significant contributions to the society of which he is an important member.

This is an appropriate point for me to expand on why I object to individualism. Psychologically speaking, there is a considerable irony in the ideal, in fact something akin to Bateson’s “double-bind”. If someone succeeds in realising the ideal - becomes a highly rational, autonomous, capable, and self-possessed person - is she or he really an individual, or a fine product of society? Each one an individual, just like all the rest.

But it is even more insidious still. Human beings don’t live entirely autonomous lives, they live inter-dependently in communities. The successful public individual (the business tycoon, or the political leader, for instance) has
the time and energy to indulge in individual planning, to take individual
decisions, because there is a solid infrastructure of subordinates who take care
of the practicalities. In addition, he (traditionally it has been a man) and all the
other workers have private lives, not just for rest and recreation, but places and
relationships which take care of a whole range of needs. The great man, and
his increasingly common counterpart the great woman, cannot be great in
isolation, they are absolutely dependent on fellow workers, housekeepers,
friends and lovers. One doesn't get to the top of Maslow's hierarchy and sigh
with relief, knowing one is safely there and there to stay.

Finally, brief reference is needed to a very real double-bind in which
women can find themselves in this scenario. Traditionally, and this is a
tradition which still has currency, women do not fit the individualist mould
easily. Stereotypical definitions assert that women are less rational, more
emotional, less self-centred, more relationship oriented. This is not to be
understood in only negative terms, part of the difficulty arises from the positive
aspects of this view. It is claimed that the "feminine" qualities equip women to
be good mothers, home makers and companions; they are said to be much
better at maintaining relationships and hence communities. These are valuable
contributions, and if women fail to make them, things can end up in an awful
mess.

So what about the ideal, the fully developed autonomous human being; the
person who has successfully resolved the Oedipus complex (only a man can,
said Freud, 1990d); the person Erikson said has resolved the identity crisis (I
must acknowledge here Erikson's, 1985, own appreciation of these issues); the
person Kohlberg (1969) said has developed an internalised, personal moral
code? What if she aspires to the same goals? Either she can go against her true
nature, as defined in this traditional view, and risk social censure, or she can
remain truly womanly, and by implication accept her inferior status. There is another modern alternative, also costly. She can try to attain both sets of goals, psychologically and practically; this is the superwoman phenomenon. The above inevitably involves some questionable generalisations, there are no doubt other options, yet these social pressures and requirements are very real.

Surely there must be some psychologically acceptable alternatives to such a restrictive ideal. Not too many radical alternatives I think; these habits of thought and understanding (archetypal forms, Jung would say) are too thoroughly entrenched to be easily displaced. Otto Rank (1958) recognised the propensity of psychologists to unwittingly incorporate ideologics into their theories. He believed his depth psychology had circumvented the problem, but I am less sure theory can transcend ideology. Yet I am less pessimistic than Freud was. One way of conceptualising and theorising about different perspectives is done by looking at the limits of the dichotomous thinking processes we normally employ. If we understand terms such as individual and social, male and female, psychic and material, to be mutually exclusive opposites we remain locked into either/or alternatives. I am not proposing a postmodern jettisoning of all dichotomous thinking - that would seem counterproductive, and I suspect, linguistically impossible. What I am attempting here is a typically Jungian acceptance of the necessary complementarity of the polar opposites in order to develop more comprehensive overviews.

**Psychological Theories of Self; Choosing the Grail:**

The connections between a masculine ideal and psychological theory and practice are particularly strong. Early twentieth century psychology forged ahead with few qualms about the exclusive use of male experimental subjects and extrapolation from the results to include psychologies of women. Thus
men's psychology became "normal" psychology by default, and any deviations, especially by women, were pathologised. (It remains to be seen how the changed pattern will be managed, now that the standard subject pool for psychological experimentation, psychology undergraduates, is made up of a majority of women.)

James Hillman (1980a) described the conflation of the statistical (average, most frequent, middle point) meaning of "normal" with value laden ideals (distinctions between "normal" and "abnormal"). "Abnormal' is both a statistical definition and a moral condemnation. What is odd becomes wrong; what is unusual and irregular becomes reprehensible." (Hillman, 1980a, p. 24). So whether an ideal is made synonymous with quantity - with the statistically most frequent - or whether it is proposed as a superior exemplar, it typically circumscribes narrow parameters of psychological development and behaviour.

I contend that it is the conflation of average and ideal which leads to the limiting of possibilities for acceptable psychological development, in theories of self. Hillman (1977) argued that psychopathology is the "normal" human state. Intellectually his claim has great merit; it avoids judging and reifying psychological types and it promotes difference. In practical terms however, I am less enthusiastic. There is nothing celebratory about being in psychological distress. So, I am left with necessary distinctions between the ideal, the normal and the abnormal, but I take seriously Hillman’s warning that they are easily confused.

The cost, to women and women’s psychologies, of the bias toward masculine ideals in psychology has been thoroughly researched in more recent times. Jill Morawski (1988, p. 85) documented the power imbalances and gender bias of laboratory experimentation, not only exclusively male, but with a hierarchy in which the “rights” (to opinions, decisions, agency) of the
experimental subject were replaced by the experimenter's assessment of the subject's "abilities". Rachel Hare-Mustin and Jeanne Marecek (1988), in their review of gender theory, warned against the extremes of either asserting no psychological differences, or alternatively, no similarities, between the sexes. Mary Crawford and Jeanne Marecek (1989), in reviewing the ways feminist psychologists have attempted to redress the balance, advocated a transformation of methodology towards more relativist, subjectivist and contextualist approaches, an orientation shared by Wendy Holloway (1989) and Nicola Gavey (1989). Similarly, with implications for broader theorising in psychology, the costs of pathologising women's experiences were powerfully recorded in Phyllis Chesler's (1983) harrowing accounts of case studies. Nancy Chodorow (1978), with object relations, Carol Gilligan (1982), with moral development, and Polly Young-Eisendrath and Florence Wiedemann (1987), with feminist archetypal theory have attempted to redeem developmental theories from their masculine bias.

Now that the groundwork has been done in alerting researchers to the habitual white, middle class, androcentric bias of twentieth century Western psychology, it has been possible for subsequent theorising and researching to move beyond the strictures of the fantasy of a totally objective research methodology, reported in a disembodied, privileged, authoritative voice (John, 1990). The resultant research has the chance to be more diverse, more adventurous, if less unassailable, and so, paradoxically, potentially more relevant. Yet the traditional theoretical orientations are still taught to psychology undergraduates, so continue to provide the theoretical foundations for much experimentation. The same is true of theoretical research, especially in the area of self theory.
**Behaviourist Theories:**

I will review a few salient aspects of self theory in the major branches of modern psychological theories beginning with Behaviourism, then move on through Psychodynamic and Existentialist approaches to touch on more recent developments in Social Constructionism. Of necessity any discussion of Behaviourist approaches to self must be brief; the concept of self is yet another internal state which is anathema to Behaviourists. However, referring back to my description of the individualist, I don’t think a Social Learning theorist, or even B. F. Skinner, would have total objections to most of that description. Skinner’s (1953) description of what it is to be a good scientist, namely to be rational, clear thinking, responsible and the like, bears a marked similarity to the individualist ideal. The main difficulty, of course, arises from the individualist’s subscription to autonomy and personal agency - the perennial issue of free will - discounted by the Behaviourists. Terms like “self”, internal referents, Skinner (1976) wrote, are simply a habit or convention of language. Yet he still found it necessary to continue the convention himself, even to the extent of resorting to levels of self, to explain self-control (Skinner 1976).

Albert Bandura (1986) talked about aspects of self-concept or self-system; self-observation, self-efficacy, self-controls, are a series of internal processes which interact with the environment. These are personal, internalised, aspects of socially acceptable qualities, implying a tendency towards the statistical average, as discussed above. An overarching, abstract notion of self is unnecessary to Bandura’s explanation. I’m not quite sure how Bandura, or other Behaviourists, accommodate the different or exceptional individual, the person who feels genuinely and justifiably unique and at odds with society.
Psychodynamic Theories:

The Psychodynamic perspective includes internal states and adds an extra factor, the dynamic of conscious and unconscious processes affecting the human psyche. Freud did not talk about a sense of self as such, there is no separate “self” described in his theory. He concentrated on what he referred to as ego development (Freud, 1988). But once again a well developed ego is one which closely approximates the individualist ideal. For Freud though, given the tremendous countervailing libidinal forces of the unconscious, achieving such an ideal takes on heroic proportions.

Yet a further difficulty, according to Freud (1985), is the pressure exerted by the ego ideal. This is an unrealistic goal of self-development, fuelled by the excessive demands of the superego, which leaves the individual torn between a perception of what one ought to be and the miserable failure one perceives oneself to be. Consequently, the psychoanalytic perspective actually offers an explanation of the way in which an ideal, drawn, I suggest, from a socially sanctioned ideal based in individualism, can become a tyrannous internalised demand rather than a program for truly individual development. Interestingly, Freud related the conflict to the hero myth, “... the first myth ...” (Freud, 1985, p. 170), which he proposed as the earliest record of the individual’s differentiation from the group.

Jung (CW 8) shared Freud’s subscription to the conscious/unconscious dynamic. However Jung’s version of the contents or processes of each are rather different. For Freud, bringing to consciousness the contents of the unconscious was a way of alerting oneself to dangers lurking beneath the surface. For Jung, the process was one of uncovering images, symbols, ways of knowing, which could be beneficial, or dangerous, or both. He considered the unconscious as a valuable resource, containing both repressed personal
experiences and collective experiences and knowledge. Such a perspective has enabled Jung (CW 9ii) to propose Self as a fundamental, that is, an archetypal idea. Jung claimed it is natural, an inbuilt need, for people to strive towards an expanded sense of self, of psychological wholeness, and this sense of self is to be discovered by exploring the unconscious.

In pragmatic terms, in the ways in which it is described (CW 9i, § 489ff), such a sense of self, once again, reflects many individualist values. The process of individuation requires autonomy, dedication, determination (the self-possessed, autonomous individual again) and a certain mental and physical maturity - Jung said it was a process usually attempted in the second half of one’s life. Through the process of individuation one turns inward, introspects, and discovers that there is much more to oneself than ego consciousness, or the roles one plays in one’s society, or the extroverted, worldly ideals one has entertained to that point. What one discovers is the archetypal Self (discussed further below).

A review of other major psychodynamic theorists, including ego psychologies, object relations theories and even Lacanian linguistic psychoanalysis reveals notable tendencies to a teleological perspective on self and tendencies to subscribe to the ideals of individualism. Alfred Adler’s (1958) personality theory is explicitly individualistic and teleological. Consequently, although the proposed goal of superiority is universalist and relies on many traditional masculine values, the theory tends to explore rather than presume, so is paradoxically less prescriptive than many others. Similarly Gordon Allport (1955), developing theory from the psychoanalytic tradition, concentrated on the unique individual, with an appreciation of the unified personality and the need to recognise continual change. Yet in describing the “propriate striving” for “self-perfection” Allport (1955, p. 48) asserted that the
individual has inherent tendencies to transcend group mores and to aspire to abstract ideals, in this case a substitution of the ideal as statistical average with the ideal as perfected example.

Karen Horney (1967) in explaining neuroticism, gave central importance to the alienation from the real self. The real self, the core self, or one's potential for self-actualisation, comes to be devalued through the criticisms and expectations of parents in early childhood. The real self is displaced by an unrealistically idealised self-image, which in turn becomes a further hindrance to self-development. Horney's account of self makes clear the distinction between the experienced and the ideal selves. However Horney's theory leaves real and ideal selves as oppositional, providing no accommodation for a human preoccupation with the creation and pursuit of ideals.

By contrast, in his explicitly political, Marxist account of psychoanalysis, Erich Fromm (1962) criticised the ideals of individualism which, in promoting personal autonomy, competitiveness and independence, also promoted the development of selfishness, loneliness and alienation. This does not detach Fromm's theory entirely from the Enlightenment ideal of humanity, however. Many of his recommendations, written in the 1940's, 50's and '60's now read as an anachronistic mixture of humanistic optimism and good Judeo-Christian moralising. Once again, I am not attempting to detract from Fromm’s contributions. Rather, I want to point out that theory and social values are intertwined.

Object relations theorists describe self-development in terms of a gradual process, in very early childhood, of learning to distinguish between oneself and the object of one's desire (mother's breast, then mother herself, then other people and so on) (Redfearn, 1987). This process necessarily involves a sense of separateness from the other (the object) but importantly also an ability to
successfully relate to the object as well. This ability to relate is even more central to the theory Hans Kohut has termed “Self theory” (Redfearn, 1987). He is a much more optimistic psychoanalyst than was Freud. He proposed that libidinous instincts and social requirements are able to be adapted and hence it is possible to have a well developed sense of self, a sense of well-being and wholeness.

For Jacques Lacan and his French psychoanalytic school, Freudian theory is combined with linguistics to produce a theory of development every bit as grim as Freud’s. To the psychodynamic principle of conscious/unconscious processes Lacan added the linguistic categories of the Real (the material world) the Imaginary (the image of the world - as in a mirror image) and the Symbolic (the word, language) (Kugler, 1987). Development of the subject, the self, is contingent on the mastery of language. Initial self-consciousness is in the Imaginary realm (the child recognises him/herself as an object, in a mirror) then comes the Symbolic, the representation of “I” and “me” as created in language. But with language one learns to define oneself as others see one, as object. Hence to have a well constituted ego - to be a successful person in the world - requires a relinquishment of unmediated, pre-verbal experiences. The “I” is split from the “me”. The choice here seems to be either to remain autistically true to oneself, or to remould oneself into a socially acceptable being. It seems to me however, that in alerting us to the shaping power of language, Lacanian psychoanalysis has given all power to the word and leaves none to our capacities to distinguish between language and what it signifies. This Lacanian perspective has some common themes with Social Constructionism, still to be discussed.
**Humanistic and Existentialist Theories:**

Self is absolutely crucial to the so called third force, or Humanistic theories; to have a well developed sense of self and to be fully human are synonymous (Maslow, 1976). For the humanistic psychologists, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow in particular, striving towards an ideal self is an explicit requirement, it is a goal of personal development. Although Rogers and Maslow do not seem to have foreseen the implication, their notion of the ideal self also shares many of the values of the individualist ideal.

It is easiest to trace the developmental process, and its individualist subscriptions, in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The self-actualised person holds a set of B-Values (ennobling Being Values) which include “Truth ... Goodness ... Beauty ... Unity ... Uniqueness ... Perfection ... Justice ... Order ... Self-sufficiency ... Meaningfulness” (Maslow, 1976, pp. 308-9). The requirement of single-minded dedication to these transcendent values and an accompanying sense of vocation, a public vocation, led Maslow to admit that he had difficulty describing the process as it might occur for a woman.

Carl Rogers (1961) too referred to self-actualisation, to becoming the person one really is, to fully developing one’s potential. Although his appeals to the ideals of individualism are not quite so explicit as Maslow’s, the tendency is not difficult to trace. Given congruence between experience and self-concept, and unconditional positive regard, one can develop one’s potential, a creative, as well as a simple, growth process. The problem emerges as to what the *real* self might be. Is it something fully formed, waiting to be uncovered, hidden under layers of false self, or is it simply a predisposition, a potential, to be a certain way? I suspect that Rogers means potential. This still, however, begs the question of how Rogers *knows* that potential will inevitably be good or great. Humanistic optimism is a metatheoretical given in his theory.
If provided with the fundamental physical and psychological requirements of life, people will strive to reach a potential satisfying to themselves and to society, no clash here as there is in the psychoanalytic view. This is where theory and ideology meet. For an optimist, human beings, by definition, are worthwhile and positive; others simply don’t share that faith.

R. D. Laing (1971a) and Rollo May (1993) presented holistic theories, and succeeded in proposing less prescriptive theories of self. Talking about self for them is synonymous with existence, with Being. They develop existentialist variations on the orientations of psychodynamic theories discussed above. For existentialists, there is not a progression from stage to stage towards some distant goal; rather, living successfully is living fully and passionately in the moment. So it is not quite so easy to predict linear, goal directed development here. It can be done though, since finding purpose and meaning can be read as a goal too. There is not a distant future towards which the individual is meant to make a steady linear progress, instead the development and the satisfaction are focused on the present. But there is a continuing interplay between Being and Becoming. In their criticisms of society, Laing (1971b) and May (1969) were also criticising the individualist ideals valued by that society. They took great pains to demonstrate the cost of alienation in a schizoid world. Laing’s expectations were pessimistic, but May was more hopeful. Again however in the context of my discussion, the theories provide less explanatory scope than archetypal theory, when it comes to exploring the complex relationships between experienced self and ideal self.

**Social Constructionist Theories:**

Social Constructionism is a very broad term, covering a range of theories which give precedence to the social over the individual, as a source of development and knowledge. This poses quite a challenge to psychology,
which has traditionally concerned itself with the individual, leaving the social
to the sociologists. References to George Kelly, Kenneth Gergen and Rom
Harré illustrate just how diverse constructionist theories can be. Kelly’s (1963)
Personal Construct Psychology uses a constructionist framework; he bases
knowing in construing, but this is personal, not social construing.
Understanding is gained through individual conceptualisations, that is, through
personal hypothesis testing, continuously negotiated in interactions with others
and the world. An integrated sense of self develops out of progressively more
successful construing and prediction.

In contrast to Kelly’s (1963) Personal Construct Psychology, more recent
developments in Social Constructionism, drawing from G. H. Mead’s social
behaviourism, and related to postmodernism and its feminist variations, have
questioned the degree to which social constructions, in the form of
conversational acts (our continuing and inevitable interactions with each other),
can be said to involve enduring generalisations. Their meanings, it is argued,
can only properly be treated as specific to the time and place they occur. This
leads to a strongly relativist stance as evidenced in Gergen’s (1993) more
recent work, with implications of course not only for conversational acts, but
for selves as well. According to constructionists, a sense of self develops
directly out of interactions with others - individuals define themselves through
the reactions of other people. If selves are created in social interactions, and
the meanings of interactions are entirely relative, so must selves be. This
introduces the psychologically radical notion of a multiplicity of selves. It is no
longer necessary to talk about some constant unchanging core self - individuals
are whoever they are defined to be at any given moment. Rom Harré (1992),
however, disputed the many selves thesis, and claimed further that the
singularity and continuity of personhood are sufficiently accounted for in
linguistic rules - as in the pronoun "I". So, there is no need to posit additionally, "... such entities as selves ..." (Harré, 1992, p. 520). "Self" becomes redundant.

The value placed on linguistics in the Social Constructionist perspective is obvious and it is reminiscent of the Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective I mentioned earlier. The post-modernist multiplicity of selves however is different to the Lacanian view, the inevitable and painful split between ego and core self. The multiplicity of selves offers a pragmatic and political appeal for advocates of difference (individual differences in psychological terms), including many feminists and some Jungians (Lauter & Rupprecht, 1985; Samuels, 1985). If there is no authoritative social injunction dictating a core self which one ought to be, or ought to become, there are fewer restrictions on development and behaviour - one way out of the tyranny of individualism. The philosopher, James Ogilvy (1977) addressed this same possibility from a different point of view, proposing that we need to hold on to the unitary concept of self for the same reasons that we cling to other clear-cut but often shaky beliefs - we find it all but impossible to live without the security of feeling in control (even though the belief may well be an illusion).

Identifying meaning and purpose in the Social Constructionism requires a more tentative approach. Early Gergen (1971), Kelly (1963) and Harré (1992) all refer to creating a sense of self through the constructions of meaning. The nature of this self is more social in both development and identity. This relieves some of the oppositional tension between concepts of self and others, and of self and society, implicit in theories discussed earlier. Individuality, individual differences, can still be accommodated by the extraordinary variety of possible social interactions. This suggests the possibility of a singular, individual identity or selfhood, within a diverse but structured social context.
In the process of formulating guidelines for theorising on self, the Jungian writers Polly Young-Eisendrath and James Hall (1987) implied that an acceptable theory of self lies somewhere between a unity and a multiplicity.

The more extreme relativism of some post-modernist perspectives promise limitless possibility and variety, but like any freedom without boundaries, such a promise can be confusing and enervating. There is some purpose, even some fun in debunking a few of the self-satisfied intellectual habits acquired over generations of academic life. I for one am also happy to see attempts to deconstruct the ideal of individualism. But the post-modernist game, the play of textual and contextual meanings, the deconstructing and reconstructing, the degendering and regendering of shifting discourses, becomes clever rather than illuminating. It is a game ostensibly breaking all the rules, but still itself bound by esoteric linguistic rules which require knowledge and understanding of the very intellectual conceits the postmodernists claim to be deconstructing.

*James's Theory of Self:*

Having traced the use of self theory in a number of psychological orientations it is appropriate to expand some more on what it is I consider necessary to a successful theory of self. William James’s (1890) theory offers an excellent basis from which to define self, even in the Jungian context I use here, disparate as the two perspectives are. James proposed a concept of self defined in two parts roughly equivalent to the pronouns “I” and “me”. The “me” is the phenomenal or perceived self and is further subdivided into three parts arranged hierarchically. The highest or most intimate is the “spiritual self”, encapsulating the perceptions, sensations, values and will; it is closest to one’s experience of oneself (as distinct from what is not self). Less immediate is the “social self”, or selves, typified in the various roles one plays. Then there is the wonderfully inclusive “material self”, not only the bodily self but also
family, clothes, possessions and accoutrements, all intrinsic to a sense of self. The notion of immediate family as part of self is especially evocative. James inferred family were neither possessions nor simply interpersonal relationships, but were something far more proximate. They "... are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone." (James, 1890, p. 292).

However there has to be an "I", the "pure Ego", an active consciousness to register awareness of all these aspects of the phenomenal self as constituting "me" or "mine". As a functionalist aiming at a parsimonious theory, James refused to interpose yet another entity as the knower or "thinker" of the thoughts which can distinguish between "me" and "not me". He attempted to resolve this age old dilemma by saying the thinker is the "Thought", or more accurately the stream of thoughts, each of which appropriates its predecessor in the continuity of personal consciousness (James, 1890).

James's (1890) conceptualisations of the phenomenal self are particularly satisfying, however the conflation of process and content in the combination of thinker with thought is seriously limiting to further explanations. James, like Horney (1967), provided a successful distinction between the ideals and the actual self; for James this is done by associating ideals with each of the aspects of the phenomenal self, not with the pure Ego. Yet the actual or essential self remains as elusive as ever. So, in defining what I would require from a theory of self, the phenomenal self in James's theory has provided an excellent point of orientation. Nonetheless I have found myself drawn back to Jung to find an explanation of the "I", of the ways values and judgements are acted upon and directed into goals and choices.
Requirements of a Self Theory; Is This the One?

To summarise briefly my requirements for a theory of self: the "self", the "I" and "me" which distinguishes me from others as separate selves, will necessarily be a self preoccupied with meanings, purpose and goals. As soon as one begins to consider judgements, values, plans, expectations as important aspects of self concept, intention and goals are implied. A serious difficulty in Western society is the continuing subscription to individualism. This ideal offers the possibility of the development of a rational, capable, independent individual, but in practice, it easily sets the individual against society, the masses, all those other individuals out there, so can result in alienation and a serious diminishment of personal being.

The ways in which self has been defined in particular psychological theories vary considerably, and to add to the confusion "self" is often not really defined at all; it is simply a given. So to clarify, when I talk about myself I immediately think of the pronoun "I", very close to Descartes' "cogito". Then there is also the "me" about whom I can think, feel, speak; this is the all important self-reflexive quality of consciousness, the ability to be aware of oneself, considered to be a quintessentially human characteristic (May, 1993). As William James (1890) pointed out, the distinction between "I" and "me" is only a linguistic one - when I talk this way I know I am referring to only one person. Then there is "person", or "personhood", the issue of identity, another important aspect of self. People generally accept the idea of a person being unique, an individual, an embodied human with a distinct psychological makeup. Implied in this notion of personhood is the capacity to act, with some degree of autonomy (and usually responsibility). People, as individual selves, have their own pasts (with memories), futures (with goals and concerns) and presents (complete with the various parts or roles they play). This last, though,
the “roles”, is a complex issue - I am making the assumption that it is the essential self which takes the executive part (stage directs) the playing of the various roles.

Importantly, the self, or person, is one among many, something brought back to the attention of self theorists by Social Constructionists. Not only do I live in a society made up of human beings, but I also define myself within and against the context of those other humans both as individuals and as a collective. With his concept of “dialogical acts”, Charles Taylor (1991, p. 310) successfully draws together several themes central to my requirements of a self theory. Dialogical acts (acts originating from clearly defined selves, but involving more than one agent) bring together a reflexive, intentional sense of self, an appreciation of self as embodied and a member of a community, and importantly self recognition through social interaction. People’s interactions, and especially their shared narratives, serve to define selves, and to examine and make judgements about selves and others.

Essentially, I am suggesting a sense of self which is unitary, which develops towards an increasing sense of self-reflexivity, and which is occupied with the future, as well as present and past. People can, and do, set their own goals of personal development. The more narrow one’s experience the more restrictive the choice of goals is likely to be. Unlike the Behaviourists, I don’t believe experience is restricted to the external world. Human beings have extraordinary imaginations, and the more people observe, read, discuss, dream or reflect, the richer those imaginations become.

People are influenced by one another and by their cultural and material surroundings - this can be both constraining and liberating. It is in the external, real world context that people learn what they really ought not to do, as well as what they can do. If personal freedom is defined exclusively in terms of
independence or autonomy, there must be a clash between individual and community. Of necessity when defined in such a way, freedom for one will mean loss of freedom for the other (Bergmann, 1987). However, as Don Mixon (1997) explains, when human communities are imagined, not as directing or curtailing, but rather as allowing human experience, community and individual are no longer oppositional. In fact most human wishes and desires can be realised only within the context of communities. Escape from constraints must then come, not by escaping society, but by avoiding unacceptably restrictive communal demands.

Out of this complicated array come choices, directions, goals. I am not advocating some single-minded, unbending dedication towards the singular, lofty ideal, the unwavering dedication to finding the Grail or the Fleece. The journey is rather more scenic than that, lots of byways, pauses, changes of direction, even wrong turns. There may in fact be several journeys and several Grails. Yet there is a sense of going somewhere, of there being a purpose. By contrast, people with no sense of purpose complain of feeling lost, confused; this is “anomic”, the living death. If humans are purposive beings, however, how do they ever know which are the right and which the wrong ways to develop? Must individual ideals necessarily be determined by the ideals of the society or culture? It is certainly difficult to distinguish between the personal and collective goals. This is the focus of the other part of my discussion; it is in fact so difficult that there are serious problems in formulating a theory of self which is not overly influenced by qualities deemed acceptable by society’s prevailing values. Existing theories, particularly developmental theories, demonstrate this by their adherence to the ideal of individualism; the autonomous, capable, rational man, inherited from the Western Renaissance and Enlightenment traditions. While I consider the ideal of individualism a
very limited one, especially for women, I do not want as a consequence to have to abandon the whole notion of self as ideal. Rather I want to advocate a more careful appraisal of implications of the ideal.

In other words, a theory of self, especially if that theory has a developmental component (Freud's theory of psychosexual development for example), will inevitably imply certain goals, certain ends towards which the individual will gravitate. To have a strong sense of self is to have a strong sense of who I want, or ought, to be and to become. Put concisely, there is purpose inherent in a sense of self.

**Working the Jungian Self:**

There are particular aspects of the Jungian view which are especially useful in developing the notion of self further. A major extension to my working description is offered by the psychodynamic conscious/unconscious dimension. This is an account which offers a broader concept of mind and psyche. If the unconscious can be made conscious, however, it can provide a different source of experiences and knowledge. Given the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious, the unconscious does not consist of simply a haphazard collection of forgotten and repressed memories. There are images, symbols, archetypal ideas, which Jung (CW 9i, § 91) said are the psychological equivalent of the physiological instincts. Here also is a possible way out of the restrictive boundaries of the ideal of individualism.

Most importantly though, with the unconscious aspect of the psyche, is the fact that Jung has situated the Self with the unconscious. This is a teleological perspective on the self, a self which is to be discovered by introspection, explored and carefully considered as a lifelong undertaking. There are many places where Jung falls into the unfortunate but easy trap of confounding the ideal self with the social ideal of individualism, right to the gendered
preferences for the autonomous, self-possessed male psyche, supported by the warm, intuitive female psyche. However, Jung’s personal prejudices are not a necessary part of his theory.

It is easy to forget, because the Self, in Jungian terms, is to be experienced through introspection, that there is a social aspect here too. The collective unconscious is not personal, it is a communal - Jung would say a universal - human capacity. A major difference between Jung’s and the Social Constructionists’ viewpoints is that for Jung the child is not born a blank slate, without a self. There are certainly endless social influences on the development of the self, but some of those social influences are accessible, paradoxically, through personal introspection, which can enable access to collective unconscious imagery. This has further implications for the importance of language. Language and meaning play a central role in the Jungian view as well. Conscious understandings are mediated through language, in the usual understanding of the term language as verbal explanation. Images, symbols, dreams, however, are the language of the unconscious. They provide alternative possibilities to the conscious, rational mode of understanding, and can be accessed through the mediums of myths, stories, art, poetry, dance, I dare say through sport or lovemaking too.

In _Aion_ (CW 9ii), Jung described many symbols of the unconscious, from other cultural traditions as well as from his own. He generalised these symbols into abstract, geometrical forms, those of the circle and square (CW 9ii, § 351). The circle and the square, or quaternity, are forms representing completion, balance, and especially in the case of the circle, perfection. The use of the circle as a symbol of the self is quite common; it is a diagrammatic representation presented not only in academic psychology courses, but also in self-development, counselling, even management courses. Mandalas, much
favoured in Jungian analysis for example, are often presented as typical explanatory diagrams of Self and of wholeness in Jungian literature (CW 9i), and hence in introductory texts (Monte, 1991; Weiten, 1992). A Judy Chicago dinner plate design, as an alternative and very female mandala, was an irresistible choice as illustration for this chapter.

Of the many paradoxes in Jungian theory however, Self is the most enigmatic. Although the tendency is to seek the perfect ideal, Jung (CW 9ii, § 123) pointed out that the Self, as an ideal, must be complete. The implication is that the archetype represents the full potentiality, hence opposites and contradictions as well (CW 12, § 22). At its best, the tension of opposites can be held together in a delicate union, a full appreciation of paradox. But the process of individuation and the resulting awarenesses do not represent a smooth progression towards a state of contentment and bliss, but rather towards a more comprehensive and precise appreciation of the human predicament, in its glory and its horror, its ordinariness and extraordinariness.

The union of opposites, with the attendant paradoxes, Jung often represented as a “syzygy”, a conjunction or union, (CW 9ii, § 20ff) and a sacred marriage, a “mysterium coniunctionis” (CW 14). The examples Jung favoured were drawn from alchemy (CW 12, CW 13, CW 14). It is significant that Jung was attracted to the imagery of an arcane medieval discipline which had been progressively discredited, as Enlightenment ideals crystallised into ever more analytical and materialist values. From a gender perspective, the alchemical tradition too is androcentric, but the feminine aspect as anima - queen, “soror” (sister) - is a reassuringly strong presence. The syzygy is reintroduced later in the anima reflection, Answer to Sophia.

A personification of Self much favoured by Jung (CW 9ii, § 68ff; CW 11, § 553ff) is that of Christ. Jung used the image of Christ as a representation of the
ideal, and an example which he said would have particular meaning to people from a Western cultural tradition. Depending on one’s point of view, such a controversial choice of image could be inspirational, blasphemous or irrelevant, but Jung was nothing if not provocative. Again there are some important shifts in focus, however. Jung psychologised the image of Christ; he was using it as a personified example of the archetype, and was not, he claimed, making statements about theology.

My initial response (as a woman) to Jung’s (CW 9ii) introduction of the Christ image as a personification of the Self, appropriate to the Western tradition, was to feel cheated and alienated. Jung had ascribed a masculine ideal form to the Self, the archetype he claimed is both the essence and goal of human existence. Admittedly, Jung detailed Gnostic traditions in which both Christ and the Anthropos (ideal man) are presented as androgynous, but the problem remains - they are androgynous men (CW 12, § 209; CW 14, § 526ff). Jung (CW 9ii) clearly saw the difficulties of proposing Christ as ideal man - all good, all perfection - but Jung still apparently failed to appreciate the gender implications. Once again the feminine is excluded, relegated to the other. However, on further reflection, in much the same way as psychoanalytic feminists found great explanatory value in much of Freud’s misogynist writings, Jung’s choice of the Christ image proved illuminating. Jung (CW 8, § 417) used the image as a representation, a possible indication, of what the Self, an unknowable, abstract form, might be like, but inevitably also described many socially sanctioned patriarchal preferences of his time. Thus Jung’s example becomes especially revealing of his own and his society’s ideals.

Referring back to the earlier explorations of the masculine as hero and animus and to my brief historical summary, if I begin with the Christ as hero there are immediate associations with individualism. The medieval enterprise
had been to know God (or at the very least, God's will) and to learn to live a
godly life. The mystics took the knowledge a step further by developing
Augustinian introspection, with the aim of coming to know God directly and
personally, rather than mediated only through the church fathers. However in
either case - orthodox or mystical - the religious aim was to know God as the
ultimate satisfaction for the soul. For the Enlightenment thinkers the focus
moved to worldly concerns. The aim was not simply to understand the world
(as the Greeks proposed), but to understand it in order to be able to manipulate
and control it (Lloyd, 1984). This involved a shift in the power hierarchy.
Many people maintained their beliefs in the omnipotence of God, but for others
this became increasingly irrelevant, as humans (men) learned to control the
world about them.

During medieval times Christ was consciously invoked as the justification
for most undertakings. His virtue served the aspirations of temporal rulers who
expanded their domains in the name of Christianity. The Crusades extended
these bizarre claims to include even ordinary citizens who joined the nobles
and their armies to perpetrate horrendous atrocities in the name of the wronged
and suffering Christ. Here is the evidence of the positive aspects of the
archetype so wholeheartedly embraced in a collective sense that the negative,
destructive aspects are not perceived. The suffering and cruelty could be
justified as punishment inflicted on sinners by sinners, all of whom would thus
be cleansed in the eyes of God. As in any age, there would have been cynics
who used propaganda to deftly exploit the situation. However, in terms of
archetypal possession, Christ as ideal Self provides an account of why certain
groups of people were so susceptible to persuasion. People were already drawn
to, possessed by, the positive aspects of the archetype, so were especially
susceptible to propaganda which resonated with prejudice evoked by the
archetypal image. In the medieval examples (with the exception of mystical experiences) the Christ image is still separate, more the hero ideal than the internalised Self.

If Christ was a good representation of the archetypal Hero/Self during the middle ages, he was an equally interesting one post-Enlightenment. The image of Christ as hero-ideal later becomes personalised, introjected, through the revolution of scientific knowledge following the Renaissance. The struggle between ecclesiastical and scientific thought, a very concrete power struggle for temporal as well as spiritual control, led to a shift in belief concerning the centre of knowledge and the purpose of knowledge. In their clashes with the powerful, conservative church authorities, the Enlightenment philosophers came to locate knowledge and power in the human individual. The philosopher himself became hero, as he struggled to declare truth as he found it, against the connivances of the clergy. Again, this was genuine heroism; many philosophers were ridiculed, restricted and deprived of privileges and some even lost their lives, just as the Crusaders had done before them.

Jung after all, I have to conclude, has provided a very profitable technique for understanding individuals and groups. That I do not like the individualistic androcentrism highlighted by the archetypal explanation is a separate issue from my conclusion that it is still an accurate explanation. It is under extreme pressures that the hero archetype will flourish, if taken to heart. Completely secure in his beliefs, the hero-philosopher is prepared to make sacrifices for his noble goal, so, after Christ has become Man, Enlightenment Man now becomes god. Any archetypal possession such as this is typically polarised. Heroes who believe they have access to the truth are convinced evil and ignorance are exclusively situated with the enemy. Such was the psychological climate at the birth of the religion of science, still the dominant religion in the West in the
late twentieth century. The philosopher-scientists became the new Olympians in a proliferation of scientific disciplines, as they extracted favours from the natural world, from *Mother* Nature, in the name of the Ideal Man, a vague and shadowy Anthropos.

The Ideal seems to exist in both the abstract form as perfect knowledge (as the laws of the Universe, or as Logos) and also as a human Ideal (a capable, benevolent controller of nature, dispensing security, comfort and opportunities to an appreciative humanity). There is a complete shift from a theocentric to an anthropocentric world view, but the confidence in the beneficence and omnipotence of the Ideal form remains unchanged. Any problems, any evil, reside squarely with unruly nature and those recalcitrant humans who either will not, or cannot, grasp the reality of the situation.

This is a very critical picture of human development, suggesting profound cynicism. But I mean to imply it must be so only while we cling steadfastly to narrowly polarised world views. An inability to appreciate the totality, including the negative shadow, provokes heroic deeds which in retrospect not only look foolish, but can result in serious harm to the hero and to those around him. My subscription to psychodynamic theorising arises out of the belief that the more people are entranced by any single possibility, the more they narrow their capacities to see the attendant difficulties. The implication is not that people should cease to strive or be inspired, but rather, if the inspiration is accompanied by a more thorough understanding, less harm and probably more success will ensue.

**A Self Inquisition:**

Self as archetype, as core of human development, as totality of psyche, is abstract, difficult to imagine, much less to successfully personify. My Logos dominated discussion of self needs some further illustration and some return to
myth and narrative. Both Jung and Dostoyevsky tell fascinating stories in which Christ appears as hero-ideal, stories which are well worth exploring in context with Christ as ideal Self.

In his *Answer to Job*, Jung (*CW* 11, § 553ff), with characteristic temerity, discussed the psychological relevance of Christianity by presenting a psychological assessment of God. What constitutes the true or absolute essence of a god, Jung said, is unknowable to humans. What is experienced is the form as it manifests in a mythological context which has genuine meaning and relevance for time and place. The Judeo-Christian form of the deity is just such a mythical form (which is quite different to saying “it is only a myth”) which will retain its power and meaning only in as much as it remains relevant to the experience of people in any given age and social setting. The Yahweh Jung analysed is presumably a manifestation of the archetypal deity, but is at the same time, in its specific character, a Western cultural creation (*CW* 11, § 555). Consequently a psychological analysis of Yahweh becomes an analysis of the Judeo-Christian tradition as well. Jung was not arguing to reduce the powerful influence of a god in human affairs, but rather to make that influence more relevant and ultimately more positive.

According to Jung, the contest which pitted the omnipotence of both Yahweh and his dark son, Satan, against a defenceless Job was ill-conceived and ill-matched. Some form of reparation became imperative. That reparation came in the form of the sacrifice of Christ’s life. So in this novel interpretation Jung suggested that the crucifixion was a sacrifice of reparation from God to humanity rather than an act of human redemption. Such an interpretation suggests a very different kind of heroism. In psychological terms the crisis which this provoked led to self-examination and a vast extension of conscious awareness, for both Yahweh and his chosen people. Inadvertently Job,
representative of humanity, had shown himself to be more steadfast, more moral and more self-aware than his God. Yahweh thus needed to become more like his human creations and they deserved to be recognised as more godlike.

The incarnation and death of Christ, along with the new doctrines he introduced, accomplished both the reparation and the introduction of a new covenant.

Christ is also an enigmatic character in Dostoyevsky’s (1966/1880) story of the Grand Inquisitor, in The Brothers Karamazov. Christ has appeared in Seville at the height of the Inquisition, the Grand Inquisitor has recognised him and the danger he represents, and has ordered that he be arrested.

Dostoyevsky’s protagonist, Ivan, tells the story to his brother, Alyosha, as an illustration of human virtues and failings and especially of the problems of freedom. For Ivan, Christ represents the radical freedom and responsibility of the individual, while the Grand Inquisitor represents institutionalised charity, hence patronage. Neither is presented as an easy option. The Grand Inquisitor though, claims for himself the greater compassion in saving a weak humanity from the perils of freedom and says to Christ:

But we shall tell them that we do your bidding and rule in your name. We shall deceive them again, for we shall not let you come near us again. That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to lie.


Dostoyevsky’s masterstroke, in the dramatisation of the meeting between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor, is to have Christ remain silent throughout. All the reader learns about Christ is from his perceived challenge to what the Grand Inquisitor represents. The Grand Inquisitor is immediately alert to the threat Christ poses to a carefully engineered and unrelentingly rigid social order. The Grand Inquisitor, with some heartfelt conviction, claims to have traded his own
integrity for the greater happiness of humanity. Humanity, in turn, has traded freedom for security. Like any dedicated hero, the Grand Inquisitor has set out to save his flock, in this case from themselves.

Both the stories described present a Christ who advocates freedom. In Jung's (CW 11) case it is freedom from an oppressive, omnipotent Yahweh, in Dostoyevsky's (1966/1880) case, freedom from stifling institutionalised religion. Freedom from the control of powerful others means freedom to be (D. Mixon, 1997). Any qualities and personifications attributed to the ideal, specifically here the ideal Self, must be tentative; they must be treated as exploratory imaginings or they assume the deadening weight of requirements made by a demanding master.

Employing the story of the Grand Inquisitor to expand on the archetype of Self as personified by Christ, is to change the focus. Yet this should do no violence to Dostoyevsky's original intent, as my definition of Self necessarily implies freedom. In fact Frithjof Bergmann (1987) defined freedom simply and explicitly as freedom to be oneself, that is, freedom to identify with one's actions. My requirements for self are more complex than Bergmann's, but not oppositional. The story of the Grand Inquisitor is a convincing dramatisation of the dialectic, the struggle for identification and understanding, between the self as an experiencing being and the Self as an ideal. I am focusing on the Grand Inquisitor as personifying an experiencing self, comparing himself to Christ as ideal. Interestingly the essential qualities of Christ remain the same as those of the noble Christ Jung suggested had sacrificed himself to repay Yahweh's debt to humanity. But the implications the Grand Inquisitor takes from the ideal Christ have shifted. Dostoyevsky's dramatisation moves the meaning. The Grand Inquisitor levels a direct accusation at the person of Christ: Christ, he says, asks too much of humanity. The Inquisitor proffers his
own pragmatic compassion as a greater good. In Jung’s story, Christ redeems
the gross injustice of Yahweh’s exploitation of Job, he saves humanity from an
unjust god. Yet the Grand Inquisitor insists it is he, not Christ, who is the true
saviour. In each case it is the same Christ who features in a provocative
allegory told to illustrate philosophical positions. The same ideal is used to
evoke different meanings.

The ideal itself is abstract. It will have its basis in an archetype (also
abstract), but will also acquire socially desirable qualities. Being abstract
(defined in terms of a collection of qualities) the ideal can shift; it can
progressively drop one, gain another characteristic until transformed. This is
where personifications are so valuable, especially when given a specific
context. When the good Christian, the Grand Inquisitor, is confronted with his
Christ, their contrariety is startling. His only recourse is to imprison Christ in
order to have him burned with other heretics on the following day (although he
relents and orders Christ to leave). The description of the personal
confrontation carries far more impact than a careful exposition of the opposing
philosophies.

As already stated, that Christ remains silent is a literary triumph, but
Christ’s silence also signals, for me, something of the complexities of ideal
forms and traditional heroes. They have their source - they must originate
somewhere - in this case in the historical person of Christ, and in the
philosophies propounded in the Gospels. But that is only the beginning. The
hero accrues all kinds of other qualities as his reputation develops. The silent
Christ of the Grand Inquisitor is like a reversing mirror onto which the Grand
Inquisitor projects all the dangerous qualities which threaten his world view. It
is not that the qualities are unreservedly negative, ignoble, undesirable; their
real danger lies in their appeal. Taking the Grand Inquisitor at face value (the
level of cynicism in his attitudes and his elitism are separate issues), he has pragmatically traded human freedom for safety, and claims this makes him the more compassionate one. Yet this has radically restricted the options of his congregation, and even more gravely compromised his own morals. Christ, as his mirror in every sense of the word, discloses for the reader a reflection of the processes of explanation and justification, as the Grand Inquisitor articulates his position and is confronted by the implications.

To assume that the ideal Self is a fully and clearly defined reality is to opt for prescription. If I accept only the orthodox view of a perfect Christ, or alternatively, the Jungian view of Christ as complex combination of perfection and completeness, or perhaps Dostoyevsky’s demanding but inspirational ideal, I would have some of the essence, but would also miss many other possibilities. Struggling to find the appropriate ideal seems to be all but inevitable. But to then adopt uncritically the version which presents, is to truncate the process. Just as real encounters with actual people continue to develop, so encounters with the ideal need to be tentative and open to change. If Christ is the chosen personification (I might also not choose him), someone else’s version of Christ can only serve as a starting point.

So, what exactly is the shift, the adaptation to Self, I am suggesting here? At this stage I can only articulate it in general terms - I have a feeling (not unpleasant) that there is a lot more yet to be discovered. I want to retain the psychodynamic perspective and a Self centred outside ego consciousness. If it is an ideal however, it is to be discovered and explored, rather than imposed. The major difficulty, of course, is finding access to this strange and mysterious world of the collective unconscious. How will I know when I have found what I am looking for? I do know that it will not be the same sort of ideal (closely akin to individualism) from which Jung drew his extensive social
commentaries. His racist and chauvinistic attitudes are enough to make a modern reader cringe. Jung was, predictably, a man of his times. It does not follow, however, that his theory must be equally dated.

Post-Jungian theorising has highlighted the limitations of singular, unitary and especially perfect symbols of self (Hillman, 1990; Rychlak, 1991; Samuels, 1985). Violence is done to the unique reports of selfhood if they are reduced to symbolism such as the circle, square or mandala. However when used carefully and tentatively, the same symbolism can have notable explanatory and therapeutic value as a point of focus. Problems arise, as with any symbols or metaphors, when self symbols are literalised and codified.

Talking about self (self as concept) and living as oneself (self as experience) are two very different versions of selfhood seemingly presenting inevitable definitional problems (Samuels, 1985). Yet the two must not be left as separate entities. Psychological theories of self intend to, and do, have an influence on lived experience of selfhood. To personalise it, my interest in self theory is not only theoretical, I am very aware that it is myself wondering, self-reflexively, about myself, as well as about the theory. Imagining self is something selves seem to relish. This could easily degenerate into word games, so I will summarise: although "self" as a concept and the "self" doing the conceptualising are obviously distinct in definitional terms, they are closely related in intentional and experiential terms.

By way of illustration, the orientation I favour seemed to be elegantly summarised in a quotation attributed to Christ in the gnostic Gospel of Thomas:

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you. (Pagels, 1985, p. 135).
This seemed a satisfying closure. It took me some time to appreciate the irony when I read the revised translation, quite different in focus:

That which you have will save you if you bring it forth from yourselves.

That which you do not have within you [will] kill you if you do not have it within you. (Lambdin, Trans., p. 134).

The power of attributions and interpretations: I had thought to call on impressive support, but I find myself inevitably, maddeningly thrown back onto reliance on my own understandings.

Given the human capacity for intentional imagination, it is inevitable that ideals of self will be explored as prospective goals. For this reason it becomes imperative that the intellectual and social ideals implicit in theories of self also be explored and acknowledged for what they are. It is not likely, nor even desirable, that goal directed imaginings should cease. It takes considerably longer to extend self-reflexivity to unconscious processes, it is harder to do and much more elusive, especially when only the logical, rational language of Western consciousness is valued and the symbolic imagery of the unconscious is ignored. Depending on how far people allow their personal capacities, conscious and unconscious, to develop, they can turn the exploration process to their own advantage. They can think, and especially they can imagine, their way out of overly limiting, controlling and prescriptive traditional and social ideals - in Jungian terms, control by archetypal forms. Knowing what is and isn’t possible is obviously the key. It seems the Greeks were on the right track; "Know thyself" is a worthwhile undertaking.

In Summary; "Many a Slip ...":

For all my frustrations with theories of self, I seem to have ended not far from where I began. My response to Jung’s theory is a shift in focus rather than a reformulation. Despite the hazards, the positing of an ideal Self fits with
a human tendency to dream, imagine and identify with goals of self-realisation. The particular difficulties in theorising about an ideal Self come from the almost irresistible tendency to reify Self, then to circumscribe its potential by attempting to describe it in detail. Yet something needs to be said. The Self demands attention.

Jung’s proposal of an archetypal Self - as potential, and as ideal - is a useful notion. However I want to include rather more of the embodied and interpersonal aspects of individual experience. These are the aspects which contribute the unique, personal qualities. They also enable the combining of intellectual understanding of generalisations and abstractions with the personalised gestalts of lived experience. Understanding self requires both “reality” (experience) and “truth” (meaning), to return to Lewis’s (1988) assessment of making sense of experience. The difficulty I am left with, when Self is theorised as inclusive of, but more extensive and less knowable than ego consciousness, is that there is so little I can say without violating my own requirements of a non-prescriptive theory. I can easily find myself proposing ideals as requirements. If Self is primarily an unconscious potential, then discussion is thrown back on metaphor, back to a reliance on stories as probable examples. They are not examples to be embraced and lived out, but to be imagined, explored and tested against the very real responses to the story tellings, tested for their value as true stories.

It is easier to personify, play with and explore, the less immediate aspects of psyche - anima, animus, shadow or persona - they are familiar but not central, not so essentially self. Yet Jung would suggest that all of these and more are what constitute Self. The habitual, the easiest, way to conceptualise self as ideal, as goal, as other possibilities, is to objectify it, in the same way that other aspects of psyche can be distanced and scrutinised. This is an
obvious risk with any archetypes, but certainly was not Jung's intention in formulating his theories. The greater challenge is to explore the archetype of Self, dare to confront it, in an intensely direct and personal fashion. For me, the fundamental challenge is to accept the "me" - fantasy or actual - as fully continuous with the "I", the self doing the experiencing, and that both "me" and "I" are in part indefinable potentialities, such that the archetypal Self is my archetypal Self.

In keeping with my determination not to prescribe, I am prepared to make only vague allusions to what my adapted self theory might mean for a psychology of women. I am certain it would not be personified by a single, exclusive image. If it is female, it will also be pluralistic - polytheistic, in archetypal terms. Exploring familiar images of the archetypal Feminine is entirely worthwhile, as is the attempt to uncover lost female characters and qualities. Yet insisting on gender appropriate imagery is in itself restrictive. One aim of the thesis has been to demonstrate ways in which masculine imagery informs and often inspires women. The syzygy is one image of the Self favoured by Jung (CW 14) which can partially extend personifications beyond an androcentric ideal. One such sacred union, banished to the gnostic fringes of the Western Christian tradition, is that between Yahweh and Sophia (Wisdom). My response to Sophia, a shadowy presence somewhere to the left and back of Yahweh, is presented below.
Answer to Sophia:

For I am the first and the last.
I am the honored one and the scorned one.
I am the whore and the holy one.
I am the wife and the virgin. ...

I am the silence that is incomprehensible
   and the idea whose remembrance is frequent.
I am the voice whose sound is manifold
   and the word whose appearance is multiple.
I am the utterance of my name. ...

For I am knowledge and ignorance.
I am shame and boldness.
I am shameless; I am ashamed.
I am strength and I am fear.
I am war and peace.
Give heed to me.
I am the one who is disgraced and the great one.
(from The Thunder: Perfect Mind, Unknown, c. 150 A.D. or earlier).

No matter how good or perfect Christ is seen to be, the Christ story
makes no sense without a belief in the existence of evil. Whether Christ saved
humanity from Yahweh, or atoned for the original sin, his sacrifice points to
some terrible wrong done. In the more conventional version, Christ redeemed
humanity after his dark counterpart, Satan, seduced Eve with, of all things,
fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This act of disobedience was a
coming of age for the first humans, a realisation of the frustrating paradox of
an awareness of being alive. Awareness of being alive implies an appreciation
of mortality; good implies evil, pleasure implies pain and so on. Christ’s
redemptive act did not produce a return to the original state of innocence, of
unknowing, even though it was said to atone for the original sin. The resultant
human is capable of both redemption and damnation and most importantly, is
fully aware of both possibilities.

Perhaps the temptation for more knowledge and power was too great, or
perhaps juggling the extreme possibilities in such an awareness became too
painful. Whatever the reason, the Enlightenment saw a tidying up, a tightening
and narrowing of beliefs and aims until change and progress became the
single-minded focus of the knowledge priests. Thus began almost a millennium
of breathtakingly heroic assaults on the natural world with outcomes ranging
from the spectacular to the catastrophic. But before the preoccupation with
controlling disintegrates into both psychological and material chaos, where
nothing at all can be controlled, it may be necessary to apply the bitter-sweet
human capacity for self-reflection.

If I mused only on Christ or Yahweh, though, I know I'd leave myself
trapped in my usual resentments, simply restating yet again what has been said
a thousand times about gender inequalities. I want to push beyond that point.
Maybe god and the feminine ... substituting a female godhead provides the
mirror image, but I don't think that will move me very far along either -
anyway, others have done it already. Perhaps the syzygy and the feminine
aspects of the very masculine Yahweh? What could I say of Sophia?

Jung (CW 11, § 553ff) pointed out in Answer to Job that it was largely due
to the loss of the feminine aspect of Yahweh, in the form of his consort, Sophia
(Wisdom), that he failed to appreciate the mischief initiated by Satan in the Job
story. An essential aspect of the new God/human relationship, after Christ's
life and death, was a reawakened awareness of the feminine, which Jung
termed "... the anamnesis of Sophia ..., he continued,"... Self-reflection
becomes an imperative necessity [for Yahweh], and for this Wisdom is
needed." (CW 11, § 617). Sophia had been the companion of Yahweh before
the creation of the world, but seemed to be subsequently lost to his awareness. She reappears in the sacred books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, both near contemporaries of the book of Job. For Jung this is no mere coincidence, but the demonstration of a strong need or requirement - the work of an archetype. Mary, mother of Jesus, later becomes the human embodiment of Sophia, the intercessor and mediator on behalf of humanity to a God who could now appreciate true justice, wisdom and moral behaviour. The sense of compassion and justice in the human woman can strike a resonating chord with the (feminine) wisdom which Sophia imparts to Yahweh. Mary was also, said Jung, the way in which the feminine aspect, Sophia as Logos, could unite herself with God the father in their son, Christ. Yet another aspect of the feminine, Ruach, the spirit or breath of God, becomes manifest in the permanently available intermediary between God and humanity, the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Jung (CW 11, § 65ff.) claimed that the scenario of God becoming man is by no means fully played out, there may be many more developments yet. As a woman, I certainly find the story, as far as Jung goes, very frustrating. There is satisfaction, hope even, when I encounter the idea that Yahweh does have a feminine aspect. At last, at the time of Job, and increasingly thereafter he becomes once again aware of this aspect of himself, especially as it constellates into the three forms of Sophia, Ruach and Mary. Sophia, Wisdom or Logos, suggests useful, meaningful knowledge, and implies especially self-knowledge. Then there is Ruach, breath or spirit of God, representing a connecting life-force, with close connections to "psyche" (breath) and "soul" (anima or life-force). Finally there is the creative, physical, maternal aspect, at the time of Christ embodied, literally, in the human body of Mary. So far so good. Yet, despite these recognitions and manifestations of the feminine, God
seems to remain absolutely himself in all aspects of the Trinity. The Logos and the spirit of God are masculinised and Mary remains quite separate.

An acknowledgment of the feminine in the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary, in which it is declared that Mary was taken bodily into heaven, held considerable significance for Jung (CW 11, § 744). Mary's physical, human form (the imperfect materiality, traditionally associated with the feminine) is accorded immense value by being perfected and immortalised. Additionally, Jung (CW 11, § 612) pointed to the significance of the recurring archetypal theme of the mother of the son/lover who is a god (Aphrodite and Eros, Ishtar and Tammuz, Isis and Osiris are related myths dealing with the mystery of the creative principle - the paradox of the continuance of life through the cycle of individual lives and deaths). There are several reasons why the story, as Jung presented it, remains unsatisfactory for me. Mary, exempt from the truly human condition of original sin, was never fully human anyway. In addition she has been "assumed" into heaven, the masculine place of formal perfection where all the limitations of her materiality can be removed. There her own and her son's perfect human bodies are sustained in splendid isolation, until the day of judgement when the elect will be reunited with their similarly perfected bodies.

Worse still, Man has become god. Nietzsche's own tragic fate may have been personal insanity and the misappropriation of his concept of the Superman by a Nazi regime, yet he seemed to understand a strange reality about the death of God and his re-incarnation in Man. Man, the Man of Reason, the ideal (male) human, is an ideal which has so captivated men (and many women), as to lead them to pursue it with the fierce devotion of religious fervour. I don't mean either to blame or absolve individual men or women for
their involvement in a collective subscription to this bizarre goal, I'm just staggered by its continuing appeal.

The connection between Sophia (Wisdom) and Logos has once again been severed. The principle of Logos has been pared down, sharpened and honed into the precision of a weapon as the concept of Reason (a cool passionless logic which presumes a capacity for omniscience). Once Reason becomes incarnate in Man, Man can truly become god. This new deity can be simultaneously worshipped and empowered in the practice of the cult of science. This inflation, ego-centrism, is astonishing in its scope, but the current danger is not so much from what the Man has failed to see of his limitations as from the extraordinary power he has already harnessed and wields both clumsily and unethically. The amorality of this single-minded pursuit of power and domination makes Yahweh's treatment of Job pale into insignificance. In a physicalist and bellicose culture, an atom bomb test site called "Trinity" and a nuclear powered submarine named "Corpus Christi" are deliberate and measured choices, apparently made without any hint of irony, which evoke eerie, archetypal resonances. The current scenario indicates a final catastrophe in keeping with the apocalyptic visions of John in Revelations. Sophia's wisdom, seems to have been replaced with an uncritical acceptance of knowledge as power. What a supreme act of faith Man seems to have made in dedicating and devoting himself to Reason.

I am brought back to Sophia, to the idea of exploring a wise knowledge of the self and others in the guise of a feminine aspect of the deity. Earlier, Jung's (CW 9ii, § 29) masculine Logos and feminine Eros principles were challenged, with my assertion that Eros, as a male god, better represented lost aspects of the masculine. Here I arrive at the obvious complementarity of Logos as a feminine principle. Moreover, aspects of the feminine represented
by Sophia run counter to the usual stereotypes. Not only is she intimately associated with God himself, the highest authority and top of the hierarchy, but she is abstract (masculine) and intellect (Logos). In Jung's exposition Sophia is not presented as having somehow acquired these special, male characteristics under the aegis of Yahweh's omnipotence; they are qualities intrinsic to her which Yahweh has lost to his own consciousness. In some gnostic accounts, Sophia even preceded, and gave birth to "... the demiurge, the creator-God of Israel ..." (Pagels, 1985, p. 76).

Once again the inevitable question arises - what purpose is served by applying gender status to such abstract qualities? To personalise the qualities, to suggest that Yahweh forgot, or lost sight of, aspects of himself, is more evocative than to simply say a particular moral stance did not seem wise or just. But then, in our gender preoccupied tradition, to suggest, in addition, that the wise and just aspects are feminine, delivers the message with force. Of course the claim cannot be arbitrary, it must have its origins within the tradition. As well as the occasional reference to Sophia in the Old Testament, there is considerable evidence in early gnostic writings of an appreciation of the feminine aspects of the deity, both as Sophia or "hokhmah" (the Hebrew equivalent) and as the Spirit, Ruach or "ruah" (also a Hebraic feminine term) (Pagels, 1985, pp. 74-5). With Ruach and Mary, Sophia makes an interesting counter trinity. I can only marvel at the thorough suppression of gender inclusive understandings and egalitarian sexual practices which had been espoused by some of the early Christian sects, and the continued exclusion throughout the Enlightenment transformation of the ideal into the Man of Reason.

The voice, perhaps Sophia's, of Thunder, Perfect Mind creates an impression, brings to life, the feminine as deity. If I read the text as reflection
or meditation, it is possible to reach past the endless contradictions (from a logical, rational perspective) to an appreciation of the connections and paradoxes (the poetic voice). The cumulative effect is a fascinating integration of the individual ("one-in-herself"), with the person in context (sometimes sure, sometimes unsure), and especially with the person in relationship with others.