

The Self in Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Island*: Quest and Aim in the Process of Individuation

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Abstract: According to C. G. Jung, individuation is a natural process that occurs throughout the life of an individual, and the final step of the process is associated with the self archetype. The comparison of the features of this archetype with certain elements in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Island* shows that there are some similarities as well as discrepancies between them. In the classical Jungian formulation, the self is the aim of a person's journey towards individuation, and both novels show that this aim is not easy to achieve. On the other hand, post-Jungians theorists have challenged the concept of self and of individuation, seeing it rather as a quest than an aim, which affects the reading of the two novels.

During our life, according to C. G. Jung, we are influenced by different archetypes, especially those that we encounter in what he calls process of individuation, "through which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual,' that is, a separate, indivisible unity" (*Archetypes* 275). Individuation is a natural process that occurs throughout the life of an individual, and in its final stage he comes into contact with the self archetype, the archetype of totality and meaning that embraces the different aspects of the personality. Jung says that the self "is not only the centre but also the whole circumference which embraces both consciousness and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality" (*Jung* 422). It encompasses good and evil, light and dark, male and female,

and aims at bringing these opposing elements into a meaningful whole, the final stage of individuation, when the person becomes truly an “in-dividual.”

The realization of the self is the goal of the process of individuation, and the individual is bound to bring to consciousness as much of the unconscious material as possible, acknowledge the influence of this material, and come to terms with it. A sense of wholeness is achieved at the end of this process when you come to understand that the opposing forces that operate inside your psyche are not at fight with each other any more, but are simply part of a totality. This capacity is probably connected with the old meaning of the word *religion*, that is, *religare*, when the person re-connects with his inner source of wisdom.

One representation of the self archetype is the mandala, a circular form that may include a variety of elements corresponding to and symbolizing the central point of the psyche, felt as a source of energy that shows how the self heals the split of the psyche brought about by the presence of apparently irreconcilable opposing forces, whose presence you sense in yourself, finally bringing them all into a harmonious whole. Mandalas frequently contain “a quaternity or a multiple of four, in the form of a cross, a star, a square” a motif that in alchemy is referred to as the “*quadratura circuli*” (Jung, *Archetypes* 387). Some of the formal elements that can be found in mandala symbolism usually appear in circular formations, including a circle presented as a flower or a wheel, a snake, a city or temple, a cross or a star, usually with four, eight or twelve rays. Certain animals as well as religious figures are also related to the self symbolism.

The process of facing the self is not an easy task, demanding all sorts of inner resources in order to be achieved, since it challenges the strength of the individual’s principles, standards, and values. It is not merely a question of disposing of one’s vices, but rather the process of discovering what lies at the core of one’s decisions, of facing

all the moral, immoral or amoral, natural, primitive or vile desires that rest in one's heart of hearts, and trying to find for them new forms of expression in a new pattern of wholeness so that "the unique, individual, spiritual essence, the inherent core of human existence is distilled" (221) and the individual finds the meaning of life.

In the analysis of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and of *Island*, it is possible to identify the some elements connected with mandalas and the symbolism of the self. In *Brave New World* the archetypal images connected with the self are less developed and some of these images are connected with Bernard Marx, others with John Savage, whereas in *Island* the images are related to Will Farnaby.

In *Brave New World* the mandala configuration associated with Bernard is danced rather than drawn. In the orgy-porgy session that he is advised to attend, there are twelve people, a multiple of four, six men and six women. The aim of the session is to make the group come to a feeling of oneness, of compensation for individual limitations, and in the end, the couples will have sexual intercourse in the couches placed around the circular centre where the ceremony takes place. During the dance, they go round, "a circular procession of dancers, each with hands on the hips of the dancer preceding, round and round, shouting in unison, stamping to the rhythm of the music [. . .] Twelve as one, twelve as one" (*Brave* 93). The aim of the orgy porgy is the attainment of the "atonement and final consummation of solidarity, the coming of the Twelve-as-One, the incarnation of the Greater Being" (93), a description that resembles all too well the religious experience associated with the integration of the self archetype. The association with religious images is accentuated by the presence of the "enormous negro dove [. . .] hovering benevolently over the now prone and supine dancers" (94), an inversion of the white dove that symbolizes the Holy Spirit of the Christian tradition. The dark Holy Spirit is there to bless the union of the couples united in the sexual act.

Jung says that one of the functions of the mandala is the healing of the individual's inner confusion, and this function is, up to a certain point, the aim of the orgy-porgy session. The "calm ecstasy of achieved consummation" (Huxley, *Brave* 94) that the participants are supposed to achieve is a state of being, where the union with the others in the orgy-porgy has the same effect as the union with the self. Although Bernard is looking for some kind of liberation from the narrow confines of his everyday consciousness, he does not reach this kind of atonement provided by the orgy-porgy. He is, however, also denied the experience of coming into contact with the self archetype, which could have helped him heal his inner feeling of inadequacy and deal with his crippling self-consciousness. The ceremony is simply too casual to have a lasting effect on him, and Bernard will have to deal with his idiosyncrasies in a different way.

John is the other character connected with several images associated with the self. The first situation in which one of these images appears is in a religious ceremony in Malpais, during which a young man nailed to a cross walks around a heap of writhing snakes in the centre of the square while several members of the tribe hit him with a whip. John tells Bernard and Lenina that he should have been chosen for the sacrifice, "for the sake of the pueblo – to make the rain come and the corn grow. And to please Pookong and Jesus" (123). The association of the circle with the cross, and the presence of the two god-images, Jesus and Pookong, bear a connection with the self. John, however, does not participate directly in the ceremony, remaining outside it.

John's attitude is again associated with the self when he decides to leave London, after his friends have been sent to the Falkland Islands. Even in the isolation of the lighthouse, he is unable to overcome his sinful physical attraction for Lenina, and out of sheer despair for not being able to stop thinking about her, he flings himself into a clump of hoary juniper bushes. The thorns that "stab and sting" (248) are evocative of

those that crowned Jesus, and the kind of identification that John seems to seek with Jesus is not the possibility of a life of awareness and fulfilment, usually suggested when Jesus is the archetypal image of the self, but rather one of suffering and dejection.

Ultimately, death is what John seeks, and the description of his suicide shows yet another mandala formation. When the visitors arrive, they discover that John has committed suicide, and his feet keep rotating slowly, moving towards the right in each direction of the compass, “north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-south-west,” and then, after a pause, they turn “unhurriedly back towards the left” (255). The compass, with its two four-pointed stars, can be seen as a mandala, an image of the self. The self archetype as shown here is definitely not a harbinger of life, but of death.

In *Island*, it is also possible to identify several archetypal formations connected with the self, and the first one is the island itself, which can be considered a symbol of the spiritual transformation that is the aim of the process of individuation. An island is reached after a sea voyage, in which the water can be understood as a symbol of the unconscious, or by air, and the flight indicates a situation in which you come into contact with the spiritual forces that exert an influence upon you in your quest for wholeness. Pala is a good example of this spiritual aspect. It cannot be reached at will or trodden lightly, since being there imposes the responsibility to strive for self-knowledge. Pala is a place of initiation, offering its inhabitants as well as visitors of good will the possibility to be exposed to the self and its life-transforming forces.

The temple in the mountains is another image connected with the self symbolism, and the ceremony conducted there for the benefit of a group of teenagers gives an indication of what the process of individuation aims at. Situated on the crest of the ridge, the temple is described as “a great red tower of the same substance as the mountains, massive, four-sided, vertically ribbed [. . .] its bounding contours against the

sky curved organically inwards, narrowing as they mounted towards a ring of marble, above which the red stone swelled out again, like the seed capsule of a flowering plant” (*Island* 185). The combination of the quaternity and the flower is typical of the mandala symbolism. The temple is an image of the self, showing its numinous power in the impression of life that emanates from it. In its altar there are two statues, one of Shiva Nataraja and the other of Shiva and Parvati together, also linked to the self symbolism.

The image of Shiva Nataraja represents Shiva, the Lord of life and death, of creation and destruction, as a dancer. Nataraja dances, and in his dance, he offers eternal bliss, the “fullness of life” and the “nothingness” perpetually alternating in the different “pleasures of our dying and our living” (197). The liberation promised by Nataraja is the same that is offered by the integration of the self archetype. The union of opposing forces, of light and darkness, of body and mind, is brought one step further by the other statue that is found in the temple, representing Shiva and Parvati, the cosmic love-making pair, showing the union of the male and female archetypes. It evokes the one indicated by Jung, when he says that “individuation is a ‘mysterium coniunctionis,’ the self being experienced as a nuptial union of opposite halves” (*Aion* 64).

Both the dancing Nataraja and the statue of Shiva and Parvati show some of the aspects of the transformation that are the aim of individuation. Will Farnaby’s first contact with the self archetype is connected with these images, when he witnesses a ceremony of initiation in the temple. His most powerful experience, however, is when he takes the moksha-medicine and contemplates Susila’s face revealing the dignity and the sorrow of being human, and sees “the paradox of opposites indissolubly wedded, of light shining out of darkness, of darkness at the very heart of light” (*Island* 328). In his moksha-trip, Will has a glimpse of the union of the human with the divine, the final aim of the individuation.

The concept of self has been put to the test and revised by post-Jungians. *Post-Jungian* is a term that was first used by Andrew Samuels “in preference to *Jungian* to indicate both connectedness and distance” from Jung (*Post-Jungians* 19), and self is a concept that post-Jungian writers have revised somewhat thoroughly. According to Samuels, one shift that seems to be favoured by several post-Jungians moves the self away from the notion of totality and towards a “situationist, relativised and pluralistic self in which clusters of experiences carry the feeling of ‘being myself’ rather than that of feeling ‘whole,’” since they believe that “[i]f the part-self or psychic fragment is lived fully, then wholeness will take care of itself” (*Post-Jungians* 110). Part-self is another post-Jungian concept and refers to each component of the self that leads to the experience of ‘feeling to be *myself*. Each part may be in conflict with other part-selves, but at the same time each one carries meaning and relevance.

Most post-Jungians, therefore, seem to view the self as having a double nature. On the one hand, when used “in a portrait of psychic structure, it does refer to the wholeness of the psyche, including conscious, unconscious, personal and archetypal experiences and capacities” (110). On the other hand, the self can be seen as “an experiential model,” having the function of helping the individual, not necessarily in “ordering, organising and even integrating,” but rather in the process of “making sense” of his experience (110). The implication here is that each part-self represents how you see yourself in a different context, allowing at the same time for the multiplicity of experiences and the lack of uniformity among the parts. The Jungian self is an archetype that carries the meaning of life and the totality of truth. In the post-Jungian concept, the meaning of each event is “bracketed by doubt and an attitude of not knowing” (Casey et al 333), in a refusal to give each one a definitive interpretation and a belief that the meaning is revealed when other connections can be perceived.

Samuels says that the self is “a barren and overvalued concept when used to deny the multiplicity and poliocentricity of the psyche” (*Post-Jungians* 106) and that the emphasis should be placed on the diversity of experiences. Although Jung does talk about “a multiplicity of partial consciousnesses like stars or divine sparks” (107), the self for him is the archetype that brings unity to all these manifestations. In contrast, some post-Jungian writers have tried to move away from the perception of self as the all-knowing locus of the psyche and towards the idea that integration of the different part-selves is not always possible and not necessarily desirable. According to Samuels, Hillman, for example, suggests that we should think about “wholeness, in a truly psychological sense,” seeing “a phenomenon *as a whole*, as it presents itself” (108). This kind of approach seems to deflate the self archetype, and instead of calling attention to its integrative role, we should accentuate the importance of accepting the plurality of the psyche.

The self has, therefore, lost some of its weight, and in the notion of a pluralistic self we can find “clusters of experience [that] carry the feeling of ‘being myself’ rather than that of being or feeling ‘whole’” (Samuels *Post-Jungians* 110). One of the consequences of this approach is that post-Jungians do not talk about a single process of individuation that culminates with the realisation of the self archetype, but of individuation *processes* or, as Hillman suggests, “a multiplicity of individuations deriving from our internal multiple persons” (112). Coming to terms with the self archetype means coming to terms with each part-self that arises in any situation and is connected with each of our personalities.

The development of the main male character in *Island*, rather than the one in *Brave New World*, illustrates the idea of a relativised self. *Brave New World*'s John Savage moves from one experience to another, from one environment to another,

striving for a kind of constancy that is more closely related to the traditional view of the self than to the concept proposed by the post-Jungians, although he moves from his Indian part-self to his philosophical part-self without showing any discomfort in relation to the rupture or the change. John's religious experience while still in the Reservation, his conflicting relationship with his mother and his love for Lenina pose questions about himself that he is unable to answer. John cannot bear the conflict of his opposing feelings, as if his part-selves were at war with one another. The world that he wishes for, a world that can be made beautiful and where people can be free, seems to be a symbol of the self archetype in its traditional form. This self is one that cannot handle what Samuels calls "a multiple field of shifting loci and complicated relations" (*Post-Jungians* 107). The way that his dangling feet move in different directions indicates the multiplicity of paths that he could have trodden and possibly the new horizons he could have discovered on his way towards individuation. His aim for atonement and wholeness cannot be achieved because he is not able to integrate his conflicting feelings. Individuation in the post-Jungian sense also eludes him, as he does not connect with the feeling of "being himself" within each irreconcilable cluster of experience.

In *Island*, it is possible to see Will Farnaby also striving for the same kind of wholeness, and yet settling for something more limited without so much conflict. Throughout the novel, Will presents a variety of part-selves, and his inner conflict at not being able to integrate them is quite clear. The hard-boiled reporter that arrives in Pala, the bitter traveller who refuses to take yes for an answer, decides to give up his dream for the ethical and spiritual values that he has recently re-discovered among the Palanese. In the post-Jungian sense, Will does not have to reconcile his old cynical self with his new ethical and more compassionate one. His past experience and contact with politicians, tycoons, and generals, "the cyanide of the earth" (*Island* 93), may actually

turn out to be positive when Pala is invaded. Although he and Susila are witnessing “[t]he work of a thousand years destroyed in a single night” (335), Will knows that two opposing facts, “the fact of the ending of sorrow as well as the fact of sorrow” (335) live side by side, irreconcilable, maybe, so that individuation in the traditional sense is not achievable, the process that leads to the experience of ‘being himself’ should nonetheless be pursued.

Considering the main changes in the concept of self proposed by the various post-Jungians, it seems that one of the main shifts has been from individuation as an aim to individuation as a quest. The process of individuation proposed by Jung should take place throughout life and culminate in the union with the self archetype. The post-Jungians tend to see the psyche as multi-faceted, with a variety of partial personalities. The self, in this view, remains as the centre of the whole psyche, but the process of individuation becomes multi-faceted too. “Individuation,” Samuels says, “is a spiritual calling but, as the realization of the fullness of a personality, it is a psychological phenomenon [although] *the process itself* [italics mine] is sometimes symbolized as the grail rather than the grail as its goal” (*Post-Jungians* 111). The quest involves coming to terms with the individual personalities as they are illuminated by the self and making this connection between ego and self increasingly conscious.

The classical view that sees individuation as a state, achieved at the end of a long and demanding process, leads us to a question. Although Jung talks repeatedly about how the person reaches the final state of becoming an ‘individual,’ he also points out that “nobody has ever been able to tell the story of the whole way, at least not to mortal ears, for it is not the story-teller but death who speaks the final ‘consummatum est’” (*Archetypes* 348). He seems to see individuation, on the one hand, as a state to be achieved at the end of a process, but, on the other, it is impossible to pinpoint what

exactly individuation entails or what this final state should be. This is a point that has been highlighted by post-Jungians. According to Samuels, it seems to be more realistic to consider that the grail is the process itself, a quest to be constantly pursued rather than an aim to be reached maybe in old age. We can say that individuation *is* the quest, something to be strived for but never to be completely achieved, and this impossibility is inherent to the process. "Individuation," Samuels says, "does imply the acceptance of what lies beyond the individual, of what is simply unknowable but not unfelt," and in this sense, "individuation is a spiritual calling" (*Post-Jungians* 111). The grail is not the prize at the end of the path, but the realization of who you are everyday and everywhere, provided that you develop your ability to be transformed. This transformation entails understanding that the pursuit of the self is the quest of a lifetime.

The post-Jungian view of individuation as a life-long quest rather than as an aim to be reached is more clearly delineated in *Island* than in *Brave New World*. The ego-hero in *Brave New World* seems to believe that the circumstances that he has to face are not acceptable if they do not bring him closer to his ideal of purity, of ethics, of integrity. John Savage is unable to perceive that each situation contains everything that he needs at that particular moment, offering him the best possibility of wholeness for that specific instant of his life, and that the wholeness to be achieved is always provisional and temporary, always leaving room for further personal growth. He does not understand that it is the sum of all his experiences that will eventually lead him to a deeper insight of who he really is. John is too much in a hurry to reach what Jung would consider to be the final aim of human life, the definitive union with the self. Since this union is impossible, the only viable alternative for him is death.

In *Island*, Will Farnaby's path towards wholeness and the union with the self does not blind him to the tentative stages of the process. Each new experience is like a

stepping stone, offering the opportunity of partial individuation, bringing him to an ever deeper understanding of who he is and where his potentialities lie. Furthermore, he does not reject his own limitations, but accepts his past errors as an indication of the lessons that he still has to learn. Farnaby is in no hurry to reach the last state of the process of individuation, but seems to understand that each step towards the final end is perhaps more relevant than the final end itself, since it is what is possible for him to do at the present moment of his life. The individuation shown here is open-ended, and it seems to be more in tune with the idea that the *process* is the grail to be strived for.

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