Toward a Dialogic Interpretation of Psychological Belief in Spirits Among Gamei of Ghana

Ebenezer Narh Yebuah

University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Part of the Africana Studies Commons, Anthropology Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
Toward a Dialogic Interpretation of Psychological Belief in Spirits among Gamei of Ghana

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver and

the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Ebenezer Narh Yebuah

March 2009

Arthur C. Jones
Abstract

This study examines central aspects of the ancestral tradition of the Gamei of Ghana which have not previously been investigated systematically from a psychological perspective. It is argued that Carl Gustav Jung and his intellectual descendants are the only Western psychological thinkers who have come close to formulating a conceptual framework that is helpful in this context, because Africa featured prominently in Jung’s formulations of his influential psychological theories during his archetypal journey to Africa. Accordingly, core features of Jungian theory are examined in order to determine the extent to which a psychological investigation of Gamei cosmological perspectives, particularly perspectives on death and spirits, can enrich our understanding of traditional Ghanaian cultural practices. By the same token, the limits of Jungian theory are also explored, along with an identification of the ways in which Jungian theory can, conversely, be enriched by the application of traditional Ghanaian cosmological frameworks.

Gamei concepts of death and funeral rituals, widowhood rites and the ancestral world are examined in considerable depth, and it is argued that the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious is considerably similar, conceptually, to the ancestral world of the Gamei as experienced in traditional Ghanaian culture. However, it is also pointed out that in Jungian theory, individuation is the goal of life, while ancestorship is the ultimate goal of life for the Gamei and other African peoples. A formulation is offered that expands Jung’s theory to include a final developmental stage, the attainment of ancestorship. It is argued that including an elucidation of the widespread experiences of ancestorship and community among indigenous peoples has the potential to enrich the current scope of psychological theory. In this re-formulation, drawing from observations in Ghanaian and other indigenous African cultures, a meaningful psychology reflects universal spiritual
phenomena that encompass the individuation process, ancestorship and community as an integral whole.

In the final chapter, the core arguments of the various chapters are re-captured, concluding with a summary of the salient contributions of the dissertation.
Acknowledgements

Doctoral study and working two jobs are the most unbearable enterprise. The magnitude of this enterprise and its completion with joy includes the involvement of a community of scholars and friends that offer support and encouragements. Without these numerous persons, this dissertation could not have been an actuality. I am profoundly grateful to them all. Thanks to Robert H. Neuwoehwer, an adjunct professor who taught a course “Religion and Jungian Psychology,” that provided the enthusiasm and framework for this project. The members of the Peoples Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), in Denver, Colorado, where I serve as a Minister of Christian Education, have been a family for us in meaningful ways too numerous to mention. Special mention goes to Rev. Nathan Bryd, Rev. Cylde Miller, Alfred Onyeku, Walter and Dorothy Carroll, Wanda Beauman, Olivia Hudson Smith, and other faithful friends outside Peoples, including Sampson Kotey (Adeitse) Samuel Tagoe, Curtis Jones, Clarence Ammons, Bill Scheide, Jason and Lisa Hickman, Nan and Victor Dawson, Jennifer and Jeff Witten for their unfailing friendship over all these years. My dissertation committee members were exceptional instruments in finishing the project. Professor Arthur C. Jones (my beloved advisor and professor) provided significant crucial conceptual clarifications, timely comments and revisions, and asked pertinent personal questions in terms of the thesis of the dissertation. Norman F. Watt (my beloved friend), for editing the manuscripts in its final form and offering useful corrections and comments, while Edward P. Antonio explained African thoughts to strengthen my arguments. Any errors remaining are solely my own.

Thanks and gratitude go to my wife and dear friend, Rejoice, the strong tower of our family, for her unwavering relationship, tolerance, and understanding for bearing with the burden of parenting alone, and to my children, Nii Yebuah, Mawukle and Naa Dei-Neequaye for bearing with an exceedingly busy father. Further, thanks go to my brothers and sisters in Ghana for their support and encouragement. Finally, I give glory to God and thanks to my deceased parents—Abraham Yebuah Nortei and Nora Dei Neequaye and deceased father-in-law, Owula Martey Kodi for their invisible presence always with me.
# Table of Contents

Abstract...............................................................................................................................ii–iii

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................iv

## Chapter One

Introduction and Thesis..........................................................................................................1
The Impact of Negative Cultural Stereotypes about Africa and Africans.........................12
Jung’s Orientation to African Culture.................................................................................14
Implications for a Psychological Understanding of Gamei Tradition.........................21
Jung’s Concept of the Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious.................................21
Limitations of the Study.....................................................................................................26
Outline of the Study...........................................................................................................35

## Chapter Two

Origins of Carl Gustav Jung’s Theory for Belief in Spirits..............................................38
Jung’s Psychological Understanding of Spirits .............................................................38
Critique and Expansion of Jungian Conceptualizations and Conclusions.........................68

## Chapter Three

Concepts of Death: Gamei and Jung/Jungian.................................................................71
Jung/Jungians and Death..................................................................................................81
The Unconscious psyche’s transcendence of space and time...........................................82
Death as a Teleological Concept.....................................................................................91
Points of convergence and divergence in Jungian concepts of death and Gamei............101

## Chapter Four

Community and Funeral Rituals in Ga Society..............................................................110
The Ritual of Bathing the Dead: ‘Kotsagbamo Kusum ke gbonyo he juu’......................110
The Day of the Funeral....................................................................................................116
Ritual of breaking of kola-nut: Separation and Reconciliation.......................................117
Ritual of presentation of gifts.........................................................................................119
Closing of the Casket.....................................................................................................121
The Funeral Obsequies...................................................................................................124
Traditional Funeral Procession ‘Carrying of the Corpse’: Jennyo Gbonyo Nowomo Alo Shifoo.........................................................................................................................124
Cemetery..........................................................................................................................127
Final Funeral Obsequies ‘Faafoo’..................................................................................129
The Day of the Funeral ‘Yarafeemogbi’..........................................................................132
Ritual of Removing the Unfound Deceased Spirit ‘Otofojiemo kusum’.........................133
Jung and Gamei Psychology of Unconscious: the Archetype of Mother Earth..............136
Summary and Conclusion...............................................................................................141
Chapter 1: 
Introduction and Thesis

This chapter presents the introduction and the thesis of the dissertation. In addition, it examines the significance of Africa in the formulation of Carl Gustav Jung’s most influential psychological theories as they were crystallized during his archetypal journey to Africa. Finally, it presents the limitations of the present study as well as the outline of the chapters.

The subject of spiritual phenomena as considered by the medical professions, especially in neurology and psychiatry, as unconscious fantasies that reflect individual pathology challenges the tradition in the Gamei (Ga people), i.e., witnessing, experiencing and communicating with ancestors. From a traditional African perspective, the existence of ancestors transcends fantasy; although it cannot be understood in conventional Western medical thought, this phenomenon is considered a way of life that provides evidence of a spiritual world.

Ancestral existence and expressions are inherent and indelible aspects of tradition, for instance, in the Ga society it describes the way of life that is required in order to maintain core aspects of historical cultural traditions. Ancestors, the custodians of those cultural mores, require conformity with such beliefs, and faithful adherents comply. Acknowledgment of the reality of ancestral existence is what shapes morality, identity and meaning in the world. The existence of ancestors is closely interwoven into the fabric of their cultural life, as reflected in languages, traditional cultural institutions, and sociological, commercial, economic, and religious practices. Thus, ancestral principles provide community identity and historical continuity in their communal life. The inclusiveness of ancestors in the psychology of the Ga has enhanced cooperative interaction in the Ga community, virtually eliminating any ethnic conflict in their society. As F. X. Charet observed, “The medical view, as represented in neurology and
psychiatry, recognized the autonomy of these secondary personalities (abnormal states), but preferred to relate them to the personalities of the mediums and to interpret their existence as evidence of dissociation and psychopathology.”¹ For Jung, perhaps the pertinent question was: “Are such autonomous psychical processes as found in spiritualistic phenomena necessarily always pathological?² When Jung investigated this phenomenon (and perhaps came to a negative answer) he moved away from an exclusively psychiatric view of such phenomena; in effect, he created his school of thought in psychology. He reconciled both psychiatric and religious insights to provide a plausible psychological explanation for spiritual phenomena. One may ask, therefore, whether a psychological understanding of spiritual phenomena that concedes the existential reality of the Gamei can be justified in terms of their functional significance in the community. Jung provides us with a tentative endorsement, albeit at some cost to his reputation in the Western world. Gananath Obeyesekere suggests that modern psychology cannot displace the spiritual, which may serve to open up channels to a profound, even ecstatic, self-consciousness.³ In addition, Gamei offer the means for Jung and Jungians to explore the meaning, identity, and significance attached to ancestorhood within the African community. On another level, Jung attributes to the concept of ancestorhood a transcendent quality embedded within the human psyche. That is, ancestors transcend the cultural consciousness of the community and yet reside in the community, since everyday life and spiritual life interact continuously, in the Gamei tradition.

Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious and its constituent archetypes may blend together as ancestral patterns of psychic energies, which are present universally in each human being in every culture. In effect, by designating the collective unconscious as universal in humankind, Jung is saying, in psychological terminology; that the whole of

² Ibid.
the human race, in essence, possesses the religious unconscious psyche. Ultimately, the collective unconscious intrinsically links with the archetypes to serve as the source for religious phenomena and religious experience within human cultures; that is the thesis of this dissertation.

Although themes such as spiritualism, ancestors, spiritual world, and religious phenomena belong to the field of philosophy, theology, and religion, Jung would assert that it would be a grave mistake to suppose that psychology is concerned with the metaphysical nature of the problem of spiritual phenomena. According to Jung, “Psychology cannot establish any metaphysical ‘truths,’ nor does it try to.” Jung disclaimed any intention of establishing metaphysical truths, stipulating that he was solely concerned with the *phenomenology of the psyche*.

Psychologically, the *Gamei* understanding of the interactive life permeates Jung’s formulation of collective unconscious theory, in that ancestors are ever-present to the living, and they possess the authority to influence the living. Jung may assign a role to ancestors and other spiritual beings in his theory of archetypes and psychic “daimons.” While I accept Jung’s theory of archetypes of spirit as universal, I argue that his theory of archetypes of spirit reduces the *Gamei* tradition of ancestral existence to a psychological framework, and thereby loses some of its spiritual essence. Jung paid much attention to the spiritual phenomena, perhaps in large part because he was convinced of the religious nature of the human psyche. Psychologically, ancestors may be recognized as *psychic phenomena*, which lend to them a *psychological reality* that finds expression in cultural and traditional myths and symbols in the *Gamei* tradition. Therefore, conceptualizations of ancestors carry a transcendental reality to the *Ga* worldview, which psychology can at best attempt to offer provisional interpretation unless the focus is on the phenomenological reality. Psychologically speaking, “ancestor” is an archetype of the spirit and the full implications of the psychology of spirit theory have yet to be realized among the *Gamei*. Although there may be discrepancies in theory, I argue that the

---


5 Ibid.
insights would be relevant today and they can enhance significantly current discussions in the field of psychology and religion.

The thesis of this dissertation is that Jung’s theory of the archetypes of the collective unconscious can greatly illuminate Ga ancestral traditions, and conversely, that the examination of Ga traditions can provide the framework for a critique and expansion of traditional Jungian ideas.

The Ga ethnic linguistic group resides in the Accra plains of Southern Ghana. They are among the minority groups in Ghana, and their towns include Ga-Mashie, Osu, La, Teshie, Nungua, Tema and Kpone. The Gamei are the target population for this study. It will be argued that while Jung’s theory provides a remarkably strong foundation for the psychological understanding of spiritualism among the Gamei, there are also some significant limits to its application, particularly when it comes to the elucidation of the psychological power of kinship ties, relationships with ancestors, and the dynamics of communal identity. Some preliminary ideas will be offered about ways in which the theory might be revised and expanded to provide a more comprehensive psychological understanding of the belief and experience of spirits among the Gamei and, ultimately, other African peoples.

This dissertation therefore examines the place of ancestral spirits in the African way of life and explores the extent to which existing Jungian and other psychological ideas might help to explicate the psychological dimensions of the belief in spirit that Westerners have discounted as mere superstition. While the ultimate aim is to elucidate psychological aspects of belief in spirits among African cultures generally, the current study will utilize the specific culture of the Gamei as the basis for some preliminary exploration of these ideas. Among the Gamei, spirits are construed sympathetically and non-judgmentally, giving full weight to the great significance that indigenous people attribute to ancestral expressions with their traditional, social, and religious practices. In the Ga worldview or way of life,⁶ existence of spirit derives its source from the forces or images in specific Ga ancestral traditions.

⁶The common expression “way of life” can also represent lifeway. John Grim stipulated that “Lifeway is an interrogative concept that raises questions about the ways in which diverse indigenous communities celebrate, work towards, and reflect on their wholeness as a people.” Grim, “Indigenous lifeways and
Several scholars have explored various cultural aspects of the African traditional existence of spirits as sketched above. However, until now, there has been little attempt to understand these beliefs from a specifically psychological perspective. Jung was the only Western psychologist who studied the phenomenon of spirits in any depth. He offered a cogent explanation of spirit phenomena as manifestations of the collective unconscious. He lamented the history of Western rationalism in suppressing what he viewed as a universal human tendency to experience spiritual phenomena that cannot be readily validated through empirical observation. Perhaps, Jung’s religious background helped him to apply his psychological concepts to religious themes; the recognition of the religious component of the human psyche was the primary source for Jung’s explanation for all religious phenomena as psychic phenomena. He exclusively based his interpretation on his concept of the collective unconscious, and the archetypal images within the hidden depths of the human psyche. As Jung writes: "…Obviously it can only be undertaken by nature herself, or rather, we may suppose it to be happening continuously, all the time the psyche perceives the physical world.” These archetypes, according to Jung, are represented in shared cultural or traditional symbols, which

---


provide “patterns of behavior” for all human communities. Jung argued that this psychological truth about the archetypes can be observed and experienced in all human communities, transcending cultural ethos, institutions and thought patterns. As it is generally known, Sigmund Freud and Jung both insisted on the reality and psychological power of “the unconscious,” that is, psychological experience that is both outside the realm of consciousness or “ego” awareness and significant for the life development of the individual. Freud focused primarily on the unconscious as a property of thought and behavior.11 For Jung, however, “the unconscious is, in addition, a realm in which subliminal perceptions, incipient processes of psychic development—that is, anticipations of future conscious processes—and in general all creative contents are constellated.”12 Psychologically, I argue that the ancestral world as described and experienced among the Gamei may appropriate the collective unconscious that Jung described in his theory. Jung came close to acknowledging this in his writing concerning the psychological reality of ancestral existence.13

This study is grounded in a psychological examination of the Gamei ethnic group’s traditional truths about ancestral spirits, as observed and experienced in common life experiences in the community, and specifically in those experiences that are related to death and funeral rituals. The occurrences within the invisible world or the ancestral world would have to be regarded as psychological postulates about the conditions within the collective unconscious.

The dissertation’s emphasis on psychological examination or interpretation is one of its distinctive contributions to both African studies and Jungian psychology. Until very recently, the Gamei traditional belief in the existence of ancestral spirits has not been prominently featured in psychological investigations of that culture, although many Jungian concepts and theories—such as archetype, complex, collective unconscious, dreams, anima, animus, shadow, and individuation are not thematically alien to Africa,


12 Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, 1.

13 Ibid. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 191. In another chapter of his memoirs, he refers to ancestral spirit or spirit of the departed—see 306-307.
they are simply described in different terms. Most of the recent bibliographies published regarding the *Gamei* attest to this disposition.\(^{14}\)

This dissertation maintains that a fuller appreciation of traditional religious attitudes in Ghana may provide at least a preliminary preview of the potential for enriching psychological understanding as humanity evolves into an intercultural global world. In other words, the focus of the current study is a fresh psychological examination of ancestral practices and experiences among the *Gamei*, but it is hoped that this will also pave the way for future studies for a broader application of these conceptualizations outside of this circumscribed ethnic community, particularly in Africa, but also in other cultures. In fact, Jung’s analytical psychology has influenced cultural and religious interpretations, of Western Christianity and many Eastern cultures, but to date has had little influence on indigenous African religions, even though Jung encountered the religious tradition of the *Elgonyi* people on Mount Elgon in East Africa.\(^{15}\) Clearly in developing his archetypal psychology Jung intended his psychological investigations as explorations of universal human experiences, across cultures. However, Africa, for whatever reason, appears to have been left out of the picture, at least in any depth.

This dissertation approaches this problem by investigating the psychological, epistemological, ontological, cultural, and hermeneutic assumptions underlying Western and African traditional thought, respectively. I focus my attention particularly on the *Gamei* traditions with respect to ancestral spirits and explore the extent to which existing Jungian and other psychological conceptions might help to explicate the spiritual and

---


cultural practices in Ghana that Westerners have discounted as mere superstition. In the process, there also will be an exploration of some of the limitations of both Jungian conceptual frameworks and Gamei traditional thought. Employing a format of conversational inquiry, suggestions will be offered concerning ways to achieve some conceptual integration, on epistemological grounds, for revising and expanding formulations about the unconscious—the spiritual world, the land of dreams, the archetypes of the spirit/soul, the earth mother, the power of kinship ties, death -- not as physical annihilation but rather as spiritual and psychic growth -- ancestors as voices and worthy mediators, and the dynamics of communal identity, emphasizing their compatibility with the Gamei traditions and cultural practices. In so doing, I hope to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Ga and Jungian hermeneutical paradigms. In the end, the Africanization, so to speak, of Jungian thought might well provide a preliminary glimpse at the prospect of Westerners’ appreciation of their own ancestors as a source of inspiration and healing. And at the same time, the application of Jungian principles to an understanding of Gamei funerary practices can serve to introduce a hitherto neglected psychological dimension to an understanding of Gamei culture. In other words, the “two worlds” approach—a Western approach that is relatively more scientific, rational and ego-oriented, and the Gamei approach which is more intuitive, traditional and community centered may have the potential to influence and synthesize each other to the benefit of both. As the Jungian analyst M. Vera Bührmann observed concerning her work with the Xhosa people in the Southern region of the continent: “In Southern Africa we therefore have the unique opportunity to overcome and avoid a one-sided attitude to life, which imbalance existing at present in the Western world is an acknowledged cause of psychological problems and even serious mental illness. This imbalance also exists in the African society, resulting in maladjusted behavior and other problems of a socio-economic nature.”16

In Ga tradition, spirit is inherently associated with nature: “Spirit is not defined in contrast to matter or as the opposite of the body. The spirits are present in and with nature, they are manifest in the physical as symbolic interpreters of reality, and are

---

understood anthropomorphically. . . . Spirit is manifested in nature, in the animal world, in so-called inanimate objects; you encounter spirit through your own spirit.”17 In the current dissertation, I restrict the term to its narrowed definition as spirits of the dead, ancestors or the living dead. E. Bolaji Idowu described ancestors as “domesticated spirits” because they are departed members of the family and have always been part of the community”18 and continue to live in the land of the departed, which we can describe as a spirit world. Gamei ancestorship claims the preamble of our identity: we are born into it, live with it; experience it continuously, and die into it. Thus, E. Dolvo summarizes the goal of life for all Africans “To join the ancestors at death, especially to become one of them, is the goal of … African peoples.”19 We must understand that the ultimate goal in life is to become an ancestor.

Psychological conviction about ancestral spirits constitutes one of the cornerstones of traditional African worldviews.20 In Gamei culture, the existence of ancestral spirit is based on aspects of traditional heritage that interweave the ever-


presence of ancestral spirits with the fabric of everyday life. In Gamei psychology, ancestors represent the symbolic flow of life that sustains the existence of the Gamei community. Ancestors are experienced as the founders and the stewards of traditional customs, the custodians of the stool lands, the constant concern of prayers, and the official guardians of the social order, and they are actively involved in everyday life. Of this Alyward Shorter wrote:

Ancestors are thought to be mediators in one sense or another. They are perhaps seldom conceived of as intercessors, like the Christian saints. More often they are plenipotentiaries of the Supreme Being, mediating his providence and receiving worship in his name. Occasionally they are seen as mankind’s companions in the approach to the Supreme Being, guarantors of authentic worship. Much of traditional morality is concerned with pleasing the ancestors and living in harmony with them, since they are the most important members of the total community.

Ancestors also are experienced as the causes of natural disasters, epidemics, and barrenness. Honestly speaking, they are capricious and unpredictable. There are dualistic elements within the ancestors, that is, negative and positive dynamics. In reality, ancestors express negative sentiments only when the living violates their will and being resentful toward tradition. In addition, ancestral relations can be understood as incorporating a psychotherapeutic function for the community because ancestors may be

---


22 Kilson, Kpele Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbols, 98.


called upon to assist the community to avert illness, and provide sufficient harvest. These are remarkable functions. Patrick A. Kalilome asserts this forcefully: “That is why the living cannot afford to ignore them…”27 In this experiential framework, the modalities of traditional rituals are not questioned because “blema kpaa no atsa”, that is, “we continue with the ancestor’s order or tradition”. As the Ghanaian philosopher, Kwame Appiah notes, the ancestors are the sources of the tradition, but they are not around to question.28 The dead cannot be neglected because they live not only for themselves but also for God and the living community. Psychologically, I would argue that the land of the spirits of the dead, or ancestors approximates the unconscious realm in Jung’s psychology. While Jung did not investigate this idea thoroughly, it is clear that he believed in ancestral existence.

Although African spiritualism has been perpetuated in a distinctive oral tradition and observations including the practical experience of consciousness, it has been without extensive scholarly documentation. However, Jung’s encounter with African culture appears to have contributed significantly to his thinking, even if he did not acknowledge this in his primary substantive writings. One place where there is a strong suggestion of the influence of Africa is in Jung’s memoirs, where one gets the impression that the African journey was probably one of the most productive times in Jung’s life, particularly the stay on Mount Elgon: He acknowledges:

My companions and I had the good fortune to taste the world of Africa, with its incredible beauty and its equally incredible suffering, before the end came. Our camp life proved to be one of the loveliest interludes in my life. I enjoyed the “divine peace” of a still primeval country. Never had I seen so clearly “man and the other animals” (Herodotus). Thousands of miles lay between me and Europe, mother of all demons. The demons could not reach me here—there were no telegraphs, no telephone calls, no letters, [and] no visitors. My liberated psychic forces poured blissfully back to the primeval expanses.29


29 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 264.
The Impact of Negative Cultural Stereotypes about Africa and Africans

In Western thought, Africa epitomizes “primitiveness”, as characterized by political instability, war, genocide, poverty, corruption, underdeveloped brains; retrogression; irrationality. In this worldview, anything African is inferior and inherently primitive, in need of development, maturation and improvement. Marianna Torgovnick in *Primitive Passions* wrote: “When a man of means felt anxious about his manhood or health, or maladjustment to the modern world, one prescription dominated. Go to Africa…he was advised, or to some other exotic site identified with “the primitive”. “The primitive” was widely valued as a way station or spa for men suffering from cultural alienation and psychic distress.”

It is interesting to observe that while experience with Africans may have well been pivotal in the development of many of Jung’s theoretical ideas, he was not immune from the racial prejudice that was pervasive in the European cultural environment in which he lived. This was also true of Freud. The result was a curious kind of equation of Africa with ideas of inferiority. For example, both Freud and Jung contended that Africans and other “primitive” persons could provide substantial evidence to the human subconscious because Africans were considered to possess inferior mentality. Freud observed: “We can… judge the so called savage and semi-savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us….“ He argues: “A comparison of the psychology of the primitive races…with the psychology of the neurotic…will reveal numerous points of correspondence.”

Jung too appeared to be influenced by extant racial prejudice toward African worldviews. For example, he wrote, “…my whole journey through savage Africa…Primitive society is regulated by an unconscious egoism and altruism; both attitudes are wisely given their due. This unconscious order breaks up at once if any

---


32 Ibid.
disturbance ensues which has to be remedied by a conscious act” 33 Clearly, this kind of racial bias interfered with Jung’s ability to acknowledge the more positive ways in which his experience of “primitive” Africans actually contributed to important parts of his theory and not simply the idea that Africa represent the less developed part of human experience.

The world of so-called “primitives” informed Jung’s statements about the psychological residues of primitivity in modern persons. In their book, *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis*, Andrew Samuels and his colleagues presented four perspectives of the psychology of primitive world to Jung’s analytical psychology:

The first is from within the man himself. This was, and experiment compelled by Jung’s own psychic nature, a prompting from his own unconscious. It was not an intentional focus any more than were his paintings or sculptures, his active fantasy, sequences of dreams or dialogues between No. 1 and No. 2 personalities. He went to Africa not to meet native Africans or tribal [ethnic] people but, by way of observation, to meet counterpart of the native, unfettered, tribal, sometimes savage person within himself. The second vantage point is also a perspective arising from Jung’s subjective orientation. Although it was never openly stated, his interest in so-called primitives was his first attempt to find verification of his psychological observations in collective projection. The later, more scholarly and sophisticated attempt was alchemy. The third perspective is one which brought him into methodological conflict with scientists and doctors of his time. This was research which granted to subjectivity the same status as that granted to objectivity in modern science. The fourth is that this provided a meeting in the flesh of collective as opposed to individuated man. His hypothesis about the style of thinking of primitives was that they reasoned by way of projection because their minds were collectively oriented. 34

Through personal reading, travel, dialogue and the work of Lévy-Brühl, Jung’s definition of “the primitive”:

Became co-equal with an image of a liminal being and we have here one of the most complete portrayals of any of his own images. Therefore, a look at his study of so-called primitives is integral to any thoroughgoing acquaintance with or assessment of the primitive coincides with his conceptualization of emerging consciousness in an individual. 35


35 Ibid. 113.
In the psychology of Africa, Jung was able to verify collective projection, community and psyche reality. Jung literally considered Africa as the center of darkness, where civilization has not advanced its golden hand of enlightenment. Again, Africa was the primordial place of time, darkness without light, and unconsciousness before consciousness. Jung observes, “This was the stillness of the eternal beginning, the world as it had always been in the state on non-being; for until then no one had been present to know that it was this world.” 36 This assertion explains that the knowledge of Africa was unknown to outsiders and no one had been present to know the nature of the psychological culture of African people. Thus, while Eurocentrism and racism overwhelmed Jung’s attitude, the primitiveness of Africa also offered him perhaps unwittingly the psychological landscape for the articulation of a meaningful relationship between African culture as he experienced it, and Western concepts of psyche.

**Jung’s orientation to African culture**

In spite of the influence of Eurocentric prejudices as described above, Jung was in many respects one of the first psychological theorists to recognize a vital relationship between Africa and Western concepts of psyche. What drew him to Africa so profoundly that it struck him psychically like a flash of lighting? His ambition was essentially to explore his European personality outside a foreign culture. 37 He writes:

> In traveling to Africa to find a psychic observation post outside the sphere of the European, I unconsciously wanted to find that part of my personality which had become invisible under the influence and the pressure of being European. This part stands in unconscious opposition to myself, and indeed I attempt to suppress it. In keeping with its nature, it wishes to make me unconscious (force me under water) so as to kill me; but my aim is, through insight, to make it more conscious, so that we can find a common modus vivendi. 38

The ambivalence of Jung’s observation of the savage shadows of Africa was evident in his recognition of dream worlds, while also describing his dreams in Africa in

---


38 Ibid., 244
somewhat dismissive terms: “… thus seemed to say that they considered—if it is permissible to personify the unconscious processes to this extent—the Africa journey not as something real, but rather as a symptomatic or symbolic act.” Even if this journey should be regarded as “symbolic” one of the essential themes of Analytical psychology—individuation that is the realization of the Self as the goal of psychological development dominates the entire experience. Jung reflects that “…In reality a darkness altogether different from natural night broods over the land. It is the psychic primal night which is the same today as it has been for countless millions of years. The longing for light is the longing for consciousness.” In other words, Jung experienced Africa as a symbolic landscape of dreams and fantasy, “…I no longer knew whether I had been transported from reality into a dream, or from a dream to reality.” He almost became one of the so-called savages, “going black under the skin” which affected him. While from a Jungian perspective, with its emphasis on the value of exploring unconscious experience, this might be seen as quite positive, the negative impact of his own cultural prejudices led him to consider himself superior because of his Europeanism, motivating him to distance himself from the “savage.” At the same time, he wrestled with his own inner self and the conversion of his rebirth, a new enlightenment in Africa. He points out,

…Thus the journey from the heart of Africa to Egypt became, for me, a kind of drama of the birth of light. That drama was intimately connected with me, with my psychology. I realized this, but felt incapable of formulating it in words. I had not known in advance what Africa would give me; but here lay the satisfying answer, the fulfilling experience.

Thus, in spite of his unintended racial prejudices, I would argue that Africa became the landscape of Jung’s depth psychology and left an invaluable and incredible print that radically transformed his consciousness. He wrote to Emma Jung that “… I do

---

39 Ibid. 272.

40 Ibid. 269.

41 Ibid. 257.

42 Ibid. 245.

43 Ibid. 274.
not know what Africa is really saying to me, but it speaks.” 44 He also wrote that he “had often wished to be able for once to see the European from outside, his image reflected back at him an altogether foreign milieu.” 45 On that archetypal journey he “learned to see to some extent with different eyes and to know the white man outside his own environment.” 46

Michael Vannoy Adams explained that metaphorically Africa was a mirror, which reflected image of the white European, which presented an opportunity for Jung, another white European, to reflect psychologically on that image. 47 This is the reason he sought “a psychic observation post outside the sphere of the European.” 48 According to Adams, when Jung traveled to Africa he carried with him quite specific psycho-geographical baggage. 49 The baggage comprises his strong Europeanism and the diagnosis of the various places of Africa that he visited. Adams adds, “Jung suffered from geopathology, and his suffering profoundly influenced his experience of Africa. He felt that Europe was sick—or, more specifically, that the soul of Europeans was sick—and he himself felt sick in Europe.” 50 Africa was a place of displacement: “only when I see where I as a European do not fit into the world.” 51 Thus when Jung “contemplated for the first time the European spectacle from the Sahara,” he discovered just how much he continued to be “imprisoned in the cultural consciousness of the white man.” 52 Adams maintains that in Africa, Jung became aware of how much he was still subjectively confined in the

44 Ibid. 372.
45 Ibid. 238.
46 Ibid. 239.
48 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 244.
49 Ibid. 149.
50 Ibid. 149-150.
51 Ibid. 247.
52 Ibid.
cultural ego of Europe.\textsuperscript{53} Besides Africa being the place of displacement, Jung was unconsciously motivated toward the end of his trip. “To my astonishment,” he says, “the suspicion dawnced on me that I had undertaken my African adventure with the secret purpose of escaping from Europe and its complex of problems, even at the risk of remaining in Africa, as so many before me had done, and as so many were doing at this very time.”\textsuperscript{54} Jung underestimated the efficacy and potency of African psychology and he attempted to answer “the rather embarrassing question: What is going to happen to Jung in the wilds of Africa?”\textsuperscript{55} One would argue that research theories are discovered and explored in the most unexpected places!

This was a question I had constantly sought to evade, in spite of my intellectual intention to study the European’s reaction to primitive conditions. It became clear to me that this study had been not so much an objective scientific project as an intensely personal one, and that any attempt to go deeper into it touched every possible sore spot in my own psychology.\textsuperscript{56}

Psychologically, Jung escaped from Europe because “the atmosphere had become too highly charged for me in Europe and its complex of problems.”\textsuperscript{57} For Jung to confess that the question had “touched every possible sore spot in my own psychology” was for him to acknowledge that Africa “had activated a complex of geopathological issues that he had previously excluded from consideration and relegated to the unconscious because he had felt that they were just too painful to address consciously.”\textsuperscript{58} I suggest therefore that in Africa, Jung was a ‘white ghost’ without an identity: “It has always been so. I have not been led by any kind of wisdom; I have been led by dreams, like any primitive. I am ashamed to say so, but I am as primitive as any nigger, because I do not know.”\textsuperscript{59} In this incredible mix of negative and positive thoughts about Africa, Jung nevertheless


\textsuperscript{54} Jung, \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections}, 273.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{59} Jung, \textit{The Symbolic Life and other Miscellaneous Writings}, 286.
emerges as a person who, despite any willful intentions, was changed forever by his experiences on the African continent. In a footnote, this was what the editor of Jung’s *Collected Works* has to say about his use of the N-word: ‘This offensive term was not invariably derogatory in earlier British and Continental usage, and definitely not in this case.’  

Despite this disclaimer, it is impossible not to see the ways in which Jung struggled with his own prejudices. For example, in a commentary on the relation between “mind” and “earth” Jung says that demographically in Africa “the white man is a diminishing minority and must therefore protect himself from the Negro by observing the most rigorous social forms, otherwise he risks ‘going black.’” According to Jung, if the white European “succumbs to the primitive influence, he is lost.”

Jung traveled to Africa with a fear of his own unconscious, which he projected onto Africa, and it was an experience that he encountered his own shadow. In spite of his fear and ambivalence, however I would argue that Africa radically challenged his personality and contributed significantly to his psychological theories. Reflecting on the impact of Africa on Jung, Robert Romanyshyn notes “…we cannot help but wonder if the ‘African journey,’ this homecoming of the soul of Western humanity, is the only thing left which may save us from the destruction of the earth.” Undoubtedly, “we understand more deeply that the journey to the African landscape is a re-awakening of the feminine soul.” Theoretically, these aspects of African psychology offered Jung a new vantage point from which to re-examine and reassess his Western psyche, and crystallized most of his theories during his archetypal journey to Africa. In his book, *Jung in Africa*, Blake W. Burleson summarizes, first, he says:

   Africa confirmed many of Jung’s incipient ideas about dreaming. Of particular importance was his concept of the “mythological” dream or “big” dream. “A

---

60 Ibid. See footnote.

61 Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, 47.


63 Ibid. 74.

second contribution of Africa to Jung’s practice was his understanding of fate, thus Africa was “God’s Country” where humankind intention was dwarfed and thwarted by the ubiquitous Africa-scope. Third, the modern infatuation with the primitive is compensation for the spiritual poverty and alienating individuation of Western materialistic, capitalistic, technological culture.65

Burleson also quotes what Van der Post said Jung had told him; firstly that Africa had confirmed his recognition of the ‘collective unconscious in man’ and that ‘everyone’s first duty was to his own culture, place and moment in time’… Secondly, that the growing habits of European travel ‘contained a certain element of evasion’, and thirdly, that the Dark Continent attracted Europeans because it ‘provoked what was forgotten in their primitive selves.” Jung reflects, “In the collective unconscious, you are the same as man [person] of another race. You have the same archetypes, just as you have, like him [her], eyes, a heart, a liver, and so on. It does not matter that his [her] skin is black. It matters to a certain extent; sure enough he [she] probably has a whole layer that is less than you. The different strata of the mind correspond to the history of the races.”66 A fourth lesson from Africa was “human consciousness.” …Jung saw human consciousness as a part of a vast web of relationships which included rocks, trees, animals, ancestors and spirit, a realm ruled by the unconscious and not by human ego. In addition, Jung “heard” the voices of the ancestral spirits and knew of their psychosomatic power. He considered their ancestors to be an ontological reality which he called the ““ancestral facts””, facts which modern, “civilized” man seemed to ignore.”67 Fifth, Africa offers Jung the birth of egoist identity, not its dissolution. He observed:

Now I knew what it was, and knew even more; that man [woman] is indispensable for the completion of creation: that, in fact he [she] himself [herself] is the second creator of the world, who alone has given to the world its objective existence—without which, unheard, unseen, silently eating, giving birth, dying, heads nodding through hundreds of millions of years, it would have gone on in the profoundest night of non-being down to its unknown end. Human

65 Ibid. 225.

66 Jung, The Symbolic Life and other Miscellaneous Writings, 46.

67 Burleson, Jung in Africa, 226.
consciousness created objective existence and meaning, and man found his [her] indispensable place in the great process of being.⁶⁸

For Jung, African ontological reality manifested itself through cultural consciousness, stimulated the awareness of the connection between the spirit world and the physical world and remained with him as a reference of liberation. Jung seemed to enjoy the sense of community, “divine peace” and harmony with everything in Africa. In his earlier European experience, the concept of indigenous deities was meaningless.⁶⁹

Nevertheless this perspective was transformed and he clung to the African consciousness as an ontological reality. In this new view, the ontological beings were viewed as residing among the archetypal contents of the collective unconscious. Ultimately, after wrestling with his own culturally derived prejudices, Jung appeared to come away from Africa with both a personal transformation and a new level of insight about the cross-cultural reality of archetypal experience. As Van Der Post notes, Jung “loved Africa, among other things… because it had finally settled whatever doubts he might have had of the human spirit shared by all men, no matter how different their cultures, their creeds, and their races and colors, an area for which he had coined the term ‘collective unconscious.”⁷⁰

And Jung himself noted:

Here there are many points of connections. For instance, in dreams we think in very much the same way as the primitive thinks consciously. With primitives, waking life and dream life are less divided than with us—so little, in fact, that it is often difficult to find out whether what a primitive tells you was real or a dream. Everything that we reject as mere fantasy because it comes from the unconscious is of extraordinary importance for the primitive, perhaps more important than the evidence of his [her] sense. He values the products of the unconscious—dreams, visions, fantasies, and so on—quite differently from us. His [her] dreams are an extremely important source of information, and the fact that he [she] has dreamt something is just as significant for him [her] as what happens in reality, and sometimes very much more significant. For primitives, certain dreams are the

---

⁶⁸ Ibid. 256.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 256.

voices of God. They distinguish two types of dreams: ordinary dreams that mean nothing, and the dreams they call the great vision…

Implications for a Psychological Understanding of Gamei Tradition

In the context of this dissertation, Jung’s ideas about the psychic reality beyond the ego consciousness, clearly developed and expanded as a result of his African experiences may provide an important framework for gaining a deeper understanding of certain of the psychological experiences underlying Gamei tradition. Bührmann suggests interestingly that aside from Jung, most Westerners are divorced from this kind of thinking and therefore limited in their ability to explore and utilize important parts of their human potential. Bührmann, herself a Jungian who spent a great deal of time living and practicing in Southern Africa, seems to be suggesting indirectly that the manifestation of some of the most central parts of Jungian theory are better evidenced among Africans than among Westerners, who are hampered by their culturally conditioned penchant for “objective” thinking:

In addition, the traditional Black people are also still more closely related to nature and, for them, events in their natural surroundings are usually still pregnant with some esoteric meaning. Western man has with his objectivity divorced himself from the symbolic meaningfulness of these manifestations and has studied them scientifically; a tree or plant can have medicinal value but no mythical or symbolic influence. The philosophy of the Black man seems to be more holistic, and he even has a cosmic relatedness which makes it possible for him to share in the created world and the world, still in the process of being created, in a meaningful way.

Jung’s Concept of the Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious

Conclusively, Jung would argue that the archetypes, which constitute the primary contents of the collective unconscious are universal aspects of humankind experience that are found in all cultures and they are inherited. The Collective Unconscious is “the

---


deposit of mankind’s typical reactions since primordial times to universal situations such as fear, danger, and the struggle against superior power. . . love, birth and death . . .”

Jung notes that the contents of the collective unconscious are in fact psychic contents which come into awareness but which are not the direct consequences of the individual’s own personal experiences: “…in addition to memories from a long-distance conscious past, completely new thoughts and creative ideas can also present themselves from the unconscious—thoughts and ideas that have never been conscious before.”

One could discover additional features of Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious:

The integration of unconscious contents into consciousness, which is the main endeavor of analytical psychology, is just such an alteration of principle, in that it does away with the sovereignty of the subjective ego-consciousness and confronts it with unconscious collective contents. Accordingly ego-consciousness seems to be dependent on two factors: firstly, on the conditions of the collective, i.e., the social, consciousness; and secondly, on the archetypes, or dominants, of the collective unconscious. The latter fall phenomenologically into two categories: instinctual and archetypal...Between the contents of collective consciousness, which purport to be generally accepted truths, and those of the collective unconscious there is so pronounced a contrast that the latter are rejected as totally irrational, not to say meaningless, and are most unjustifiably excluded from the scientific purview as though they did not exist.

The collective unconscious is the part of the psyche that is not a personal acquisition and has not been acquired through personal experience. Its contents have never been in consciousness—they are not repressed or forgotten—and they are not acquired but owe their existence to a form of heredity. Jung concludes thus:

My thesis, then, is as follows: In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop

---


75 Jacobi, The Psychology of Jung, 10.

76 Jung, Man and His Symbols, 25.

77 Ibid. The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 217-218.
individually but is inherited. It consists of pew-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.78

The term “archetype” is perhaps an ancient African word meaning seed; thus the main doorway through which collective unconscious ideas pass as they become conscious.79 Writing on the “Archetypes of Humanity” Richard King notes that “Black Dot is an ancient symbol for blackness, it is the black seed of all humanity, archetype of humanity, the hidden doorway to the collective unconsciousness-darkness, the shadow, primeval ocean, chaos, the worm and doorway of life.”80 In ancient Africa, archetypes are the seeds or patterns that determine the foundation for major aspects of human personality. According to King, the concept of the collective unconscious has parallels in a concept that was developed in the African universities and the secret societies of ancient Egypt.81

Just as was true of this concept in Africa, Jung understood archetypes present everywhere at all times as they are both inside and outside of the individual person. In Jung’s perspective, there are dualistic components within the archetypes of the human psyche. They contain positive and negative energies within each of them; for instances, the mother archetype may be experienced as benevolent, loving and virtuous archetypal mother and the experience of wicked, malevolent, angry, and arrogant archetypal mother. These archetypal characteristics are equally true of all the other archetypes. The positive and negative components of every archetype complement and balance each other.82 The severity of the contradictory or double nature of a particular archetype turns to rebalance the weak element to in order to achieve a psychic wholeness. The archetypes express


80 Ibid. 9.

81 King, African Origins of Biological Psychiatry, 11.

themselves through symbols and psychologically, symbols are psychic realities of the autonomous complexes that manifest themselves in dreams.

It is noteworthy that Jung found confirmation for his ideas about the collective unconscious through his observation of the mythological character of the images in the dreams and psychoses of most of his Black patients at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Washington, DC in 1912. Thus, much of his theoretical framework appears to have been formulated through his experiences with people of African descent. Nevertheless, he insisted that these processes were human rather specifically cultural. Jung wrote:

When I first came across such contents I wondered very much whether they might not be dues to heredity, and I thought they might be explained by racial inheritance. In order to settle that question I went to the United States and studied the dreams of pure-blood Negroes, and was able to satisfy myself that these images have nothing to do with so-called blood or racial inheritance, nor are thy acquired by the individual. They belong to mankind in general, and therefore they are of a collective nature.

For Jung, the dreams of African-Americans confirmed the collective unconscious and psycho mythological imagery of Ixion in Greek mythology:

In the dream of the Negro, the man on the wheel is a repetition of the Greek mythological motif of Ixion, who, on account of his offence against men and gods, was fastened by Zeus upon an incessantly turning wheel. I give you this example of a mythological motif in a dream merely in order to convey to you an idea of the collective unconscious. One single example is of course no conclusive proof. But one cannot very well assume that this Negro had studied Greek mythological figures. Furthermore, figures of Ixion are pretty.

In spite of all the striking debate about the collective unconscious, what is crucial for the current study is Jung’s contention that the human psyche is the bedrock of spiritual-religious phenomena, and that the universal belief in spirits provided evidence in support of his theories about the nature of the psychic reality, and particularly his ideas of autonomous complexes and the personal and collective unconscious. Whether the origin of the collective unconscious is inherited biology or simply culturally conditioned


84 Jung, Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self (2nd ed.), 41.

85 Ibid. The Symbolic Life and other Miscellaneous Writings, 40.
experience is not as significant as the idea that it appears to be a prevalent part of human experience, across cultures. Moreover, the idea of belief in spirits as psychic phenomena as well as archetypal idea in Jungian thought provides a transformative and illuminating avenue into ancestral beliefs and practices as meaningful psychical realities.

Among the various characterizations of archetypes in Jung’s terminology is the “authentic element of spirit.” Although the archetype can be classified as instinct or as a pattern of behavior, Jung argues that its spiritual component is witnessed through the experience of its manifestations into consciousness. In other words, he defines it as outward manifestation of the numinous element of the collective unconscious. This numinous aspect, according to Jung “deserves the epithet “spiritual” above all else. In this framework, it not infrequently happens that the archetype appears in the form of a spirit in dreams or fantasy-products, or even comports itself like a ghost”. Experience is the key to the knowing of the presence and activity of the spiritual reality of archetypes in the life of an individual and a community.

Clearly, African conceptions of death may perhaps have shaped Jung’s understanding of the human psyche—the perpetual dynamics of the psyche. Jung contended that the human psyche continues after death—“admittedly in a psychic-spiritual world which is beyond our rational consciousness.” Marie-Louise von Franz argues that such traditional practices as traditional practices as priestesses or priests bringing back messages from the spirit world or unconscious realm into consciousness augments Jung’s conception that the contents of the collective unconscious are not dead, “outmoded forms, but belong to our living interest and conceptualization of the unconscious developed through his awareness of his own personality, his interest in

---


psychic phenomena and in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche [and other philosophers that I will discuss in chapter 2].”90

In summary, Jung’s archetypal journey to Africa validated his theory of the collective unconscious transcending specific cultural or ethnic boundaries. In addition, the collective unconscious is the bedrock of all religious phenomena and also ancestral spirits are manifestations of psychic imageries ascending to psychic reality. For us to understand Jung’s understanding of the collective unconscious, it is significant to remind ourselves always that we are focusing on the numinous content of the collective unconscious, which transcends consciousness and rationalism.

**Limitations of the study**

Investigating a traditional conception from a psychological perspective runs the risk of intimating that a concrete understanding of “spirits of the dead” or ancestors have been reached. To do so would certainly be an expression of academic pomposity and cultural arrogance. The limitations of the theoretical interpretations expressed here can be classified as provisional, not definitive truth about ancestors, therefore rest entirely on the realm of belief—thus lacking the credibility of empirical proof in a conventional sense. The problem with metaphysical statements is that they are essentially impossible to prove or disprove, because they require access to knowledge that transcends the limits of human cognition. That is why metaphysical assertions are fundamentally speculative and unscientific. It must therefore be acknowledged that the validity of a psychological understanding of the validity and power of relationships with ancestors is difficult to arrive at through commonly accepted methods of empirical validation.91 In fact, this can be said about much of Jung’s notions of the collective unconscious. Although Jung did view his own methods as thoroughly empirical, in the sense that they derived from

---

90 Ibid. 84-113.

91 In this dissertation, the term “validity” is used not in the traditional scientific sense that implies accuracy of measurement. However, it refers to the profound spiritual meaning and functioning of the ancestral tradition of Gamei. The reality of ancestors among Gamei is a way of life despite the absence of empirical evidence that such a meaningful way of existence is probable. Tradition of ancestors implies the existence that ancestors are real, even though science cannot demonstrate any plausible empirical grounds for believing it.
systematic observation in multiple cultural contexts, on numerous occasions he acknowledged that his methods of “observation” were unorthodox. Jung consistently emphasized that he theorized on the basis of the psychological as an independent inquiry, not as a derivation of metaphysical abstraction.

In the Zofingia Lectures (1896-1899) he alluded to the assertion below. He observed: “…The physical phenomena have been studied and threshed out down to the last detail. Metaphysical phenomena are virtually a closed book. Surely it would be valuable to inquire into properties other than those with which we have long been familiar.”92 Besides, Jung focused on the personal experience as opposed to “any speculative inquiry based on an inductive, scientific method.”

All philosophy must have an empirical foundation. The only true basis for philosophy is what we experience ourselves and through ourselves, of our world around us. Every a priori structure that converts our experience into an abstraction must inevitably lead us to erroneous conclusions. . . . Our philosophy should consist in drawing inferences about the unknown, in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason, on the basis of real experience, and not in drawing inferences about the inner world on the basis of the outer, or denying external reality by affirming only the inner world.93

These statements express Jung’s perspective on psychology and metaphysical inferences. This complete rejection of the empirical as well as psychological inquiry transformed him as an empiricist and phenomenologist. He insisted, nonetheless, that psychological theories must be based on empirical investigation and not simply on religious belief or sentiment, but also suggested that his approach to empirical investigation was not easy to understand using conventional ideas about what “observation” means. For example, in one of his Terry Lectures in 1937 he said:

I restrict myself to the observation of phenomena and I refrain from any application of metaphysical or philosophical considerations. I do not deny the validity of other considerations, but I cannot claim to be competent to apply them correctly. … While having little to do with philosophy, it has much to do with


93 Ibid. 68.
empirical facts, many of which are not easily accessible to the average experience.94

In another work, he writes:

Psychology as the science of the soul has to confine itself to its subject and guard against overstepping its proper boundaries by metaphysical assertions or other professions of faith. Should it set up a God, even as a hypothetical cause, it would have implicitly claimed the possibility of proving God, thus exceeding its competence in an absolutely illegitimate way. . . . The religious-minded man is free to accept whatever metaphysical explanations he pleases about the origin of these images; not so the intellect, which must keep strictly to the principles of scientific interpretations and avoid trespassing beyond the bounds of what can be known. . . . The scientist is a scrupulous worker; he cannot take heaven by storm. Should he allow himself to be seduced into such an extravagance he would be sawing off the branch on which he sits.95

Jung was, in effect, arguing for a phenomenological approach to empiricism. That is, he believed strongly that the world of inner experience, in the hands of a skilled investigator, was not only a valid realm of investigation, but necessary and fruitful for a true understanding of human experience. From this perspective, an event is not true or false in terms of externally observable realities, but rather valid from the perspective of consistently validated internal experience, in multiple individual and cultural contexts. He calls his perspective “exclusively phenomenological.” For example, regarding a religious idea such as the virgin birth, he argued that psychology should only be concerned with the fact that there is such an idea, not with the question whether such an idea is true or false in any other sense. From his perspective, it is psychologically true in as much as it exists. Extending this line of thinking, he argued that psychological existence is subjective in so far as an idea occurs in only one individual, but it is objective in so far as it is established by a society—by a consensus gentium.96


95 Ibid. Psychology and Alchemy, 14-15.

Jung’s approach has been challenged by any number of scholars and psychological practitioners, even those within the depth psychology camp. For example, Erich Fromm, analyzing the perspectives of religion in “Freud and Jung,” explicitly rejects Jung’s assumption about the standard by which to judge psychological truth. Fromm concludes that “the existence of an idea does not make it “true” in any sense. Even the practicing psychiatrist could not work were he not concerned with the truth of an idea, that is, with its relation to the phenomena it tends to portray. Otherwise he could not speak of a delusion or a paranoid system.”97 In his work “Jung and Religious Belief” which focused on “Questions to Jung and His Answers” Jung responded to Fromm’s criticism of psychological truth by commenting:

Nobody is more convinced of the importance of the search for truth than I am. But when I say: something transcendental is true, critique begins: These are the reasons why I insist upon criterion of existence, both in the realm of science and in the realm of religion, and upon immediate and primordial experience. Facts are facts and contain no falsity. It is our judgment that introduces the element of deception. To my mind it is more important that an idea exists than that it is true. This despite the fact that it makes a great deal of difference subjectively whether an idea seems to me to be true or not, though this is a secondary consideration since there is no way of establishing the truth or untruth of a transcendental statement other than by a subjective belief.98

Interestingly Paul Tillich criticized Jung’s skepticism about metaphysics. He speaks of “Jung’s anxiety about what he calls metaphysic,” and continues:

This, it seems to me, does not agree with his actual discoveries, which on many points reach deeply into the dimension of a doctrine of being, that is, an ontology. This fear of metaphysics, which he shares with Freud and other nineteenth-century conquerors of the spirit, is a heritage of this century. . . . In taking the biological and, by necessary implication, the physical realm into the genesis of archetypes, he has actually reached the ontological dimension “imprinted upon the biological continuum.” And this was unavoidable, given the revelatory power he attributes to the symbols in which the archetypes express themselves. For to be revelatory one must express what needs revelation, namely, the mystery of being.99

---


98 Jung, Psychology and Western Religion, 255-257.

In turn, Jung contradicts some of his own otherwise reluctant approach to metaphysic, when he writes in *Aion*, about the “mystery of being”:

I regard these parallels as important because it is possible through them, to relate so-called *metaphysical* concepts, which have lost their root connection with natural experience, to living, universal psychic processes, so that they can recover their true and original meaning. It this way the connection is re-established between the ego and projected contents now formulated as “metaphysical” ideas.\(^{100}\)

In a similar comment on Jung and metaphysic, Edward F. Edinger observes: “This is a carefully worded psychological statement. It might be added that a projected metaphysical content, when withdrawn from projection, may still retain its metaphysical quality.”\(^{101}\)

At this point, it is self evident that Jung would emphasize psychological theories as an independent realm, not as a product of abstract metaphysics. As discussed above, one may argue that Jung’s religious belief was based on his psychological understanding of the human psyche. In his approach to religious beliefs, he focused on the phenomenology of beliefs. He argues “Our psychology is, therefore, a science of mere phenomena without any metaphysical implications.”\(^{102}\) Jung deliberately brought metaphysical realities into the scope of psychological understanding. Commenting on Jung’s conception of spirits as an element of the reality of objective psychic phenomena, Von Franz states: “One may say that Jung’s understanding of the unconscious marks the end of nineteenth-century scientific rationalism. This, in my opinion, is the basic cause of all the disputes which have never ceased to flare up concerning his work.”\(^{103}\)

In summary, one limitation of this dissertation is that it rests on an “empirical” approach which, although defended by Jung as thoroughly scientific, might well be regarded by some as resting within the realm of metaphysics. I want to acknowledge this

\(^{100}\) Ibid. *Aion*, 34.


limitation, but also suggest that Jung’s approach to the investigation of internal experience, particularly experience replicated across a wide range of cultural experience, is not only fascinating, but a potentially fruitful way to construct a psychological understanding of a cultural phenomenon that might otherwise be dismissed as simply primitive, divorced from sophisticated, objective standards of “reality” as viewed from a Western cultural perspective. It must be acknowledged that this is tricky ground, but it also carries the potential for an “outside the box” framework for understanding not only central aspects of African cultural practice, but also a deeper understanding of psychological experience among Westerners, as illustrated in Jung’s own inner experience as he encountered Africa, as described earlier.

Psychological ideas about ancestral belief suggest a transcendent reality beyond the scope of conventional methods of empirical investigation. Jung acknowledged that religion and religious mythology cannot be fairly evaluated without taking fully into account how they are incorporated into the fabric of local societies. Jung designates religion as “the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been altered by the experience of the numinous”\(^\text{104}\) and that “on the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, which is always rather its victim than its creator.”\(^\text{105}\)

Jung’s ideas about psychological reality acknowledged that science can neither prove nor disprove the beliefs of traditional religion, “We know that God-images play a great role in psychology, but we cannot prove the physical existence of God…Speaking for myself, the question whether God exists or not is futile.”\(^\text{106}\) The farthest he would go in justifying religious belief was to say that it seemed to be a basic need of humankind to believe that something that transcends humans exists; the unconscious is a religious phenomenon and for Jung, from a psychological perspective, religious imagery was the best image for what he called the Self, which he viewed as the ubiquitous psyche of humankind. Psychologically speaking, Jung adds that God is an archetype in that there


\(^{105}\) Ibid.

\(^{106}\) Ibid. *Psychology and Western Religion*, 259.
has to be an “imprint” or “type” in the psyche that corresponds to the different images of God found throughout the world history.\textsuperscript{107}

The traditional belief in ancestral spirits has been with humanity since the death of the first man or woman on the face of the planet. With the advent of Christianity, modernization, and sophisticated technological advancement, ancestral presence has permeated the psyche and the consciousness of humans as an expression of the universal striving for survival. Quoting Emile Durkheim to support the argument for the validity of religious beliefs, Appiah observes “… (f) or Durkheim cannot allow that religious beliefs are false, because he thinks that false beliefs could not survive. Since if they are false they would not have survived, it follows that they must be true: and since they are not literally true, they must be symbolically [as well as psychologically or culturally] true.”\textsuperscript{108} Appiah argues that “the major difference in the contents of the theories is that traditional religious theory is couched in terms of personal forces, while natural scientific theory is couched in terms of impersonal forces. The basic claim strikes me as immensely plausible…”\textsuperscript{109}

As we have seen, Jung expressed both his psychological and religious concepts in an unorthodox way, focusing his attention on the phenomenology of belief. He writes,

I quite deliberately bring everything that purports to be metaphysical into the daylight of psychological understanding, and do my best to prevent people from believing in nebulous power-words…. One cannot grasp anything metaphysically; one only can do so psychologically. Therefore I strip things of their metaphysical wrappings in order to make them objects of psychology.\textsuperscript{110}

He argues that archetypes are the transcendental reality of the human psyche. Jung presents his concepts from an “empirical” scientific perspective to prove psychic reality and, ultimately, psychological facts. Edinger has observed that what Jung presents


\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. 237.

\textsuperscript{110} Jung, \textit{Alchemical Studies}, 49.
are “psychic facts rather than theoretical constructs or philosophical speculations,”
although many philosophers of science might dispute that claim.

In conclusion, Jung cited religious themes as well as traditional worldviews of
indigenous cultures as both psychological facts and psychic facts; hence “…psychology
accordingly treats all metaphysical claims and assertions as mental phenomena, and
regards them as statements about the mind and its structure that derive ultimately from
certain unconscious dispositions.”
In his attempt to establish the psychological
foundation for belief in spirits, one can describe his approach as psychological
phenomenology; obviously, the world of spirits is beyond reason and empirical evidence,
therefore it belongs to the realm of belief. Jung believed in personal experience, however
in later writings, he changed his perspective:

It is not worth the effort to try to describe the total character. Anyone who has
experienced anything of the sort will know what I mean, and anyone who has not
had the experience will not be satisfied by any amount of description. Moreover
there are countless descriptions of it in world literature. But I know of no case in
which the base description conveyed the experience.

Thus, the realization of the experiential and conceptual reality enhances the
phenomenon. Certainly, the Gamei belief in the existence of ancestors reinforces the
concept of community, and the perceived intervention of the ancestors in the everyday
life of the Gamei reinforces the belief that they are authentic and real; hence from the Ga
perspective it is therefore wrong to equate them with imaginary or delusional concepts.
Traditional practices (“Kusum” or ‘way of life’) are not just about abstract ideas; they are
essentially about life. The Gamei terminology of “Kusum” represents ‘culture,’
‘tradition,’ or ‘way of life.’ Kofi Asare Opoku explains that the Akan word, amammre is
similar to the Gamei, kusum,

---

Court). See also Stanton Marlan, “Alchemy” in *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology: Theory, Practice
2006), 289.


…an all-inclusive category that includes the ideas of tradition, way of life, beliefs, (religious) practices, etiquette, customs and usages, ways of organizing society, and the norms that govern the relationship among members of society, as well as those which guide the relationships between members of society and their environment, both spiritual and physical.114

This “way of life” is not limited to oral tradition but is also expressed through “symbols and art, rituals and festivals, names of people and places, songs and dances, proverbs and wise sayings, myths and legends.”115 In Gamei society, arguably no traditional ceremony is valid without the guidance and co-operation of the ancestors—the guardians of moral laws. Their invisible and pervasive influence is acknowledged through libation, conversations, and feasting. Tradition or “Kusum” is the principal web that connects the community of the living and the living-dead into a holistic structure. To explain this point, Dominique Zahan carefully defines the word “tradition” as the means of communication between the ancestors and the living.116 It may perhaps be inappropriate to classify psychology and traditional practices as primarily or exclusively concerned with cognitive assertions of certain concepts that contradict the Gamei “kusum.” One cannot violate a revered custom since the repercussions may include death. Margaret Field observes,

The living never forget that they are the trustees of the dead. The continuity of customs must be faithfully preserved. A custom, rite, or ceremony is a link with the dead who instituted it quite as much as it is the right of the god who receives it. The dead are always watching to see that the living preserve what their forefathers established. And since the dead have power to bestow either blessing or adversity—nay, even life or death—the welfare of the living is felt to be bound up with the faithful performance of ancient custom.117


115 Ibid. 538-539.


117 Field, Religion and Medicine of the Ga people, 196-197.
Let us now review the plan for the remaining chapters.

**Outline of the Study**

*Toward a Dialogic Interpretation of Belief in Spirits among the Gamei of Ghana* is a conservational inquiry about the role played by ancestral spirits as experienced in the cultural life of the community, which can be observed in cultural practices that deal with death, ancestorship and funeral rituals of the *Gamei* of the Greater Accra Region. It employs a theoretical approach that blends scholarly insights from analytical psychology, philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, African traditional religion, personal experience, and descriptive accounts that examine and interpret the spiritual life of the *Ga* ethnic group. This work is intended to contribute to psychological understanding of traditional beliefs in ancestral spirits in Ghana, intending thereby to enrich our understanding of the significance and functional role of ancestors in the communal life of Ghana. This traditional worldview regards ancestral spirits as an integral part of communal life in life in Ghana, with a central role in defining personal identity.

Following this introduction, chapter 2, “*Origins of Carl Gustav Jung’s Theory for Belief in Spirits*,” examines sources of Jung’s psychological conception of belief in spirits, as presented in his various investigations into dreams and phenomena of the occult in various Western and African contexts. I argue that Jung’s justification for belief in spirits has no correlation with Christian or Hegelian philosophy but rather is rooted in parapsychological phenomena. This chapter also explores parallels between Jung’s theory of spirit and the *Ga* conceptions of spirit, and considers the relevance of cultural and religious practices in Ghana for Jungian psychology and vice versa. Since death in Ghana is considered as a rite of passage into the spirit world; the next chapter examines the concept of death.

Chapter 3 “*Concept of Death: Gamei and Jung/Jungian perspectives.*” It examines the concepts of death and explores the two different perspectives encompassing *Gamei* and Jung and Jungian perspectives. Then, it explores the points of convergence and divergence between the Jungian and traditional *Ga* conceptualizations of death. What
is the psychological purpose of referring to death with euphemisms such as “the departed”? And how is such awkwardness reconciled in the Ga tradition?

Chapter 4 “Community and Funeral Rituals in Ga Society” explores the notion of death rituals and funeral in traditional Ga society. It examines the three significant funeral rituals including the bathing of the corpse, the day of the funeral, the breaking of kola, the burial ritual, the removing of the lost-soul, and funeral rituals (or final obsequies). This chapter argues from both Jungian and traditional perspectives that the primary purpose of funeral rituals is reconnecting the dead body with the archetypal mother, the origin of life, and the parallels to the collective unconscious. What are the psychological implications of these practices for an intercultural psychology in a global world?

Chapter 5, “Ga Ancestral Psychology and World of Spirit” explores the Ga understanding of spirit world (gbohiaje) and the attainment of ancestor status in the spirit world, emphasizing the significance of the mediational roles of ancestors in the Ga community. The dominant question of this chapter is “who qualifies as an ancestor in the traditional Ga culture? This chapter attempts to formulate the qualifications of ancestors among the Gamei. I will argue that in a period of intercultural community, the implications of ancestorship should not be limited to natural death, old age and procreation. Finally, this chapter juxtaposes Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious with traditional views of ancestorship and ancestral world among the Gamei.

Chapter 6, “Conclusion—Contributions: Toward a Dialogic Psychological Formulation” is the core of this study, summarizing the significance of what Ga culture offers for Jungian Psychology, and what contemporary Jungian theory has to contribute to African studies. Preliminary ideas are offered for a revision and expanded psychological framework to understand the existence of ancestral spirits among the Gamei as well as ways in which Jungian psychology more generally might be enriched by the incorporation of core African ideas concerning the relationship between community and individual identity and development. In addition, I will also offer a few contributions to the study of religion and psychology.
Given the influence of ancestral spirits in the community traditions of the Gamei, we cannot define ancestral spirits in terms of pathology, but as the understanding of a normalcy of life.

*Toward a Dialogic Interpretation of Belief in Spirits among the Gamei of Ghana,* that is psychological interpretation of spirits, seems to me, a specific psychological reflection of spirits from Jung and Jungian’s perspective, however, with an understanding from an African context. So, in the next chapter, we examine the origins of Carl Gustav Jung’s theory for belief in spirits.
Chapter 2

Origins of Carl Gustav Jung’s Theory for Belief in Spirits

The task of this chapter is threefold. First, I examine closely Jung’s psychological conceptualizations of spirit. Second, I focus on Jung’s doctoral dissertation and his classical work on “the psychological foundation of belief in spirits” among the Australian Aborigines. Third, I examine the collaborative work of Marie-Louise von Franz with Jung on the five levels of withdrawal in projection as connected with ideas concerning the reality of spirits. Finally, I discuss the utility of these various conceptual frameworks for understanding the psychological experience of spirits among the Gamei.

Jung’s ideas about the reality of spirits are central, in many respects, to his conception of psychic reality. As touched on previously, the belief in spirits has often been dismissed by Westerners as mere superstition. Jung views this to be the result of the prominence of rationalism and scientific enlightenment in Western cultures. However, Jung took seriously the belief in spirits as a psychologically significant reality, which is evidenced in practices of spiritualism. For example, he noted: “The spirit does not dwell in concepts, but in deeds and in facts.”118 Jung’s ideas about spirits are, I would argue, helpful to an understanding of some of the cultural practices of the Gamei that are the concern of the current study, and perhaps the best way to understand the experience of spirits within the framework of Jung’s theory is to regard them (the experience of spirits) as autonomous complexes of the collective unconscious, which suggests that they are psychic elements that are likely experienced by people in diverse cultures, carrying a great deal of collective psychological meaning and energy.

Jung’s psychological understanding of spirits

---

118 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 144.
Of course, the concept of “spirit” hardly begins with Jung; the concept dates back to ancient times. The Hebrews used the word *ruach* to refer to divine breath, and the word *nephesh* to a product of the spirit, translated as “person” or “soul.” The Greek term “*pneuma*,” meaning “breath of life,” is translated as “spirit” of life and breath and is distinguishable from the images and ideas of the *psyche*, translated as “soul” or “mind.” 119

In the German language, the word “spirit” is derived from *Geist*, which has different meanings and applications. “For one, it is used to indicate something which contrasts with matter, something immaterial, which philosophers identify with God or regard as the basic milieu in which psychic processes occur. 120 Von Franz describes William Wundt’s conception of spirit as: “…inner being, when taken as unconnected with outer being.” “The word *Geist* is applied by other philosophers to certain psychic capacities, like thinking or reason, the totality of intellect, will, memory, fantasy and ideal strivings, or to a certain attitude of consciousness. 121 Von Franz adds, “The idea of *Geist* displays a tendency toward personification. One speaks of the spirit of Pestalozzi, of Goethe, etc., almost in the sense of survival of the soul of someone who has died; this is a relic of the original use of the word.” 122 Finally, according to Jung,

The German word *Geist* probably has more to do with something frothing, effervescing, or fermenting; hence affinities with *Gischt* (foam), *Gischt* (yeast), *ghost*, and also with emotional ghastly and aghast, are not to be rejected. We are concerned with a functional complex which originally, on the primitive level, was felt as an invisible, breath-like “presence”….The primitive mentality finds it quite natural to personify the invisible presence as a ghost or demon. The souls or spirits of the dead are identical with the psychic activity of the living; they merely continue it. The view that the psyche is a spirit is implicit in this….The spirit in the first case corresponds to the subjective attitude, in the latter case to public


121 Ibid.

122 Ibid. 81-82.
opinion, to the time-spirit, or to the original, not yet human, anthropoid disposition which we also call the unconscious.123

The Latin words animus, “spirit”, and anima, “soul”, are the same as the Greek anemos, “wind”. The other Greek word for “wind”, pneuma, also means “spirit”. In Gothic, we find the same word in us-anan, “to breathe out”, and in Latin it is anhelare, “to plant”. In Old High German, spiritus sanctus was rendered by atum, “breath”. In Arabic, “wind” is rīḥ, and rūḥ is “soul, spirit”. The Greek word psyche has similar connections; it is related to psychein, “to breathe”, psychos, “cool”, psychros, “cold, chill”, and physa, “bellows”. These connections show clearly how in Latin, Greek, and Arabic the names given to the soul are related to the notion of moving air, the “cold breath of the spirits.” And this is probably the reason why the primitive view also endows the soul with an invisible breath-body.124

In addition to the above interpretation of spirits, Jung experienced the presence of spirit among the Elonyis ethnic group in Kenya during traditional ceremonies and maintained that the original meaning of spirit in Arabic, Hebrew and Greek settings also appeared applicable to an African context.125 The instinctual drive that produces inner symbolic patterns in the psyche and dominates traditional rituals and ceremonies, “is what Jung understands by the word ‘spirit’.”126 Based on Jung’s work on the nature of dreams, Von Franz argues that spirit may be described as an instinctive behavior pattern.127 From this point it is significant to examine the role of parapsychology in Jung’s understanding of spiritualistic phenomena.

Much of Jung’s unique understanding of spirits came from his personal experiences and investigation of parapsychological events related to occult phenomena—premonitions, ghosts, apparitions, uncanny visions, mediumistic, and deceased persons. Jung’s investigation of parapsychological events started during his second semester

125 Ibid. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 267.
126 Von Franz, C. G. Jung: His Myth in our Time, 83.
Spiritualistic phenomena were characteristic of his family. His mother, Emilie Jung (née Preiswerk, 1849-1923) was keen with occultism and spiritualism. Accordingly, “she left behind a diary in which she noted down all the premonitions, “spookish” phenomena, and strange occurrences she had experienced.” Jung’s maternal grandfather, Samuel Preiswerk possessed psychic powers of communicating with spirits, especially his deceased wife. Aniela Jaffé wrote that “Samuel’s second wife, Augusta (née Faber, 1805-1862), Jung’s maternal grandmother, “was gifted with “second sight” and could also see “spirits.” The Preiswerk families were noted for their parapsychological tradition. As Gerhard Wehr asserted “Phenomena of this sort show that Jung had a heritage from maternal ancestors that allowed the other side of reality to appear more consciously and concretely that is normally the case.” Jung’s background of spiritualistic phenomena and personal experiments of spiritualism may be recognized as the emergence of spiritualistic paradox, resulting into the reality and illusory of the nature of spiritualism. Jung draws on both scientific and supernatural inclinations to explain parapsychology. Henri F. Ellenberger remarked that “Among the means of obtaining cognizance of the soul were the study of somnambulism, hypnosis, and spiritistic manifestations. Thus to Jung spiritism was not a matter of occultism, but of unknown psychic phenomena that needed to be investigated with proper scientific methods.” Jung offers us the unique relationship between the psychic and spiritualistic phenomena. Vincent Brome acknowledged that Jung’s investigation of occult practices took into consideration the psychological roots of spiritualism.

128 Ibid. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 98.


131 Ibid. See also, Gerhard Wehr, Jung: A Biography; trans. David M. Weeks (Boston & Shambhala: 1987), 17.

132 Wehr, Jung: A Biography, 18.


134 Brome, Jung, 69.
Turning to Jung’s passion in spiritualistic phenomena, he read a book on the beginnings of spiritual phenomena authored by a theologian. He realized that the contents of the book described experiences he had encountered as a child. He shares this remark: “My initial doubts were quickly dissipated, for I could not help seeing that the phenomena described in the book were in principle much the same as the stories I had heard again and again in the county since my earliest childhood. The material, without a doubt, was authentic.” The discovery of the book on Spiritualism marks the beginning of Jung’s concern about the possibility of the existence of spirits. We can also assume that the death of his father, Paul Jung in 1896 had greatly influenced him. In spite of his skepticism, Jung’s aim was to understand these phenomena as a way to develop a cogent conceptualization of the objective dynamics of the human psyche. He writes, “The observations of the spiritualists, weird and questionable as they seemed to me, were the first accounts I had seen of objective psychic phenomena.” In his enthusiasm about spiritualism, Jung read virtually the whole of the literature of Spiritualism that was available to him at the time. He was apologetic about spiritualism and spoke about it. However, most of his friends reacted with derision and disbelief or with anxious defensiveness. He shares this remark about his friends:

I wondered at the sureness with which they could assert that things like ghosts and table-turning were impossible and therefore fraudulent, and on the other hand at the evidently anxious nature of their defensiveness. I, too, was certain of the absolute reliability of the reports, but why, after all, should there not be ghosts? How did we know that something was “impossible”? And, above all, what did the anxiety signify? For myself I found such possibilities extremely interesting and attractive. They added another dimension to my life; the world gained depth and background. Could, for example, dreams have anything to do with ghosts?

135 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 99.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
Spiritualism, for Jung was essentially a psychic phenomenon and most of his fellow students ostracized him but his mother supported him. He observed that:

My mother’s No. 2 sympathized wholeheartedly with my enthusiasm, but everyone else I knew was distinctly discouraging….I found this even with my closest friends. To them all this was far worse than my preoccupation with theology. I had the feeling that I had pushed to the brink of the world; what was of burning interest to me was null and void for others, and even a cause for dread.140

Jung’s psychological perspective on spiritual phenomena and multiple personality to a great extent were influenced by the philosophical ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer and Immanuel Kant.141 These philosophers provided him with the intellectual framework for interpreting spiritualism and developed a psychological understanding of spiritualism. In his research, Jung found Schopenhauer’s ideas interesting, and he described him as “the great find.”142 However, his somber characterizations of the world had Jung’s undivided approval.143 He also reacted to Schopenhauer’s Essay on Spirit Seeing in much the same way. However, it was through Schopenhauer that Jung started reading Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason.144 This dissertation will not focus on Schopenhauer and Kant’s work. Jung continued with his reading in spiritualism which, on Sundays, included Kant.145 In terms of spiritualism, Charet summarized the different assertions of both Kant and Schopenhauer:

For Schopenhauer, the human person is made of two substances, a material body and an immaterial soul. At death, Schopenhauer observed that the spiritualists claimed the soul, though immaterial, acted on other bodies and their senses from without, as though it itself was a body. Kant for his part, Schopenhauer went on to state, theorized that if there were spirits they were not subject to the a priori categories of cognition, namely time, space and causality. Therefore,

140 Ibid. 100.


142 Jung, Memories, Dreams and Reflections, 69.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid. 70.

145 Ibid.
Schopenhauer concluded, spirits could not be bodies and so could not manifest and act as bodies. They could manifest only through an embodied soul which would clothe them with all the characteristics of phenomenal reality.\(^{146}\)

At this point, Jung summarized what he considered as the principal contribution and significance of spiritualism. According to Jung, spiritualism offered empirical proof of the existence of the soul. This is evident in dual approaches. Here again Charet wrote that “(1) by demonstrating the organizational activity of the soul as evident in the phenomena of “materialization” (meaning the actual manifestation of objects, limbs, etc, which he claimed were witnessed and photographed by reputable persons. (2) by offering proof of the fact the soul is independent of space and time.”\(^{147}\)

In the Zofingia Lectures, Jung claimed that hypnotism and telepathic phenomena were also proof of the existence of the soul because while in these states the individuals displayed the ability to know things at a great distance or even in the future, which indicated a relativization of space and time.\(^{148}\) Charet concluded that “…therefore, both materialization and extrasensory demonstrations were taken by Jung as evidence that there was a soul which was intelligent and not conditioned by space and time.\(^{149}\) In conclusion, Jung’s concept of spiritual phenomena consolidated his idea of the reality of soul. Also, his idea of soul was derived from both Kant and Schopenhauer, as expressed in their works on spiritualism.\(^{150}\) In Jung, spiritualistic phenomena were to be explained through psychiatric methods and he refused to classify all the phenomena as psychopathology. His dissertation reinforces this claim. Moreover, a dramatic experience of spirits emerged in his analysis of his observations of his cousin, Helene (Helly) Preiswerk, a medium who held spiritual séances every Saturday evening.\(^{151}\) Jung focused

\(^{146}\) Charet, *Spiritualism and the Foundations of C. G. Jung’s Psychology*, 137.

\(^{147}\) Ibid. 136-137.

\(^{148}\) Ibid. 137. See also Jung, *The Zofingia Lectures*, 39-41.

\(^{149}\) Ibid.


on the content of the séances and psychological personality of the subject in constructing
some of the principle arguments of his doctoral dissertation. Jung’s postulation of
spiritual phenomena, I argue, is not necessarily based on fantasy or unusual personal
experiences but also on the existential reality of spirits.

In the context of psychiatry, Jung concentrated his focus on somnambulistic states
and multiple personality. Brome briefly described Jung’s dissertation as an attempt to
answer the following question: “Are psychic powers rationally explicable as special
psychological states or are they powers of a different order?” It seems impossible for
Jung to exclude paranormal from his psychological explanation of spiritualistic
phenomena. However, as we have discussed, Jung devoted his investigation to
somnambulism as he observed:

Just as the Breuer case…was decisive for Freud, so a decisive experience
underlies my own views. Towards the end of my medical training I observed for a
long period a case of somnambulism in a young girl. It became the theme of my
doctor’s dissertation. For one acquainted with my scientific writings it may not be
without interest to compare this forty-year-old study with my later thesis.

The contents of Jung dissertation attest to the parapsychological state of the
human psyche manifest through phenomenon of trance. As in his introduction to his
dissertation “On the Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena” Jung
made the following remarks:

In that wide domain of psychopathic inferiority from which science has marked
off the clinical pictures of epilepsy, hysteria, and neurasthenia, we find scattered
observations on certain rare states of consciousness as to whose meaning the
authors are not yet agreed. These observations crop up sporadically in the
literature on narcolepsy, lethargy….

It is, in fact, exceedingly difficult, and sometimes impossible, to distinguish these
states from the various types of neurosis, but on the other hand certain features
point beyond pathological inferiority to something more than a merely analogical

152 Ibid. 107.

153 Brome, Jung, 81.

relationship with the phenomena of normal psychology, and even with the psychology of the supranormal, that of genius.\textsuperscript{155}

Jung wrote about these persons with these common states of consciousness:

Persons with habitual hallucinations, and also those who are inspired, exhibit these states; they draw the attention of the crowd to themselves, now as poets or artists, now as saviors, prophets, or founders of new sects.

In view of the—sometimes—great historical significance of such persons, it were much to be wished that we had enough scientific material to give us closer insight into the psychological development of their peculiarities.\textsuperscript{156}

Finally, Jung maintains that “…these reflections have promoted me to publish some observations which will perhaps help to broaden our knowledge of the relations between hysterical twilight states and the problems of normal psychology.”\textsuperscript{157} In the light of his experience, Jung had this to say: “All in all, this was the one great which wiped out all my earlier philosophy and made it possible for me to achieve a psychological point of view. I had discovered some objective facts about the human psyche….Once more I had to lay aside an unfinished problem.”\textsuperscript{158} He distanced himself from personal involvement in spiritualism and subjected it to a psychological analysis. Commenting on his experience of the spiritual phenomena, I would argue that Jung ended up not questioning the reality of the existence of spirits or the validity of the phenomena.

Rather, this work led him to an interest in the psychological meaning of the experience. Moreover, this mediumistic presence in Jung’s family, as he described it in his doctoral dissertation appeared to confirm for Jung the objective nature of the human psyche, leading to a “discovery” of the reality of spirits as potential characteristic elements of the psyche. On the whole, Jung was concerned with psychological analysis of spiritual experiences, and he argued that these occurrences are the energies of the

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. \textit{Psychology and the Occult}, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid. 19.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid. 20.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections}, 107.
archetypes within the unconscious psyche. In essence, Jung reduced spiritualism to psychology.

Jung’s Zofingia Lectures and the analysis of the paranormal are events of his life which occurred simultaneously. The emergence of these events intensified his commitment to spiritualism and associated by his reading of all available literature on spiritualism and the studies of both Kant and Schopenhauer set the framework for developing psychiatric theory for understanding spiritualism. To summarize, Jung encountered psychological disorders that were similar to spiritual experiences as a psychiatrist. However, in his dissertation, he managed to separate the pathology of spiritualism from its other characteristics, and he maintained that these “characteristics are indicators of an organized, purposeful intentionality within the unconscious.” In spite of his openness to the perspectives of Kant and Schopenhauer and the reduction of spiritualism to psychology, according to Charet, Jung “distinguished between its pathological and therapeutic characteristics. That these therapeutic characteristics suggested a consciousness independent of an ego, Jung took for granted. Whether he believed such a consciousness could ultimately originate in a disembodied state, he was not prepared to say.”

All of these spiritual phenomena compelled Jung to caution us that “spirit” should not be confused with any pathological characteristics. Instead, Jung understood spirits, especially the spirit of the dead as the verification of the spirit world, the manifestations of archetypes of spirits in the collective unconscious. As Von Franz argues, “…this “spiritual” aspect of the unconscious possesses the power of spontaneous motion, and independently of outer sensory stimuli it produces images and sudden thoughts in the inner world of the imagination and even orders them in a meaningful way.” Further, the phenomenon of spirit can be explained in terms of the mechanisms of dream composition. This hypothesis is grounded in the intelligent and meaningful statement

159 Charet, Spiritualism and the Foundations of C. G. Jung’s psychology, 163.

160 Ibid.

161 Von Franz, C.G. Jung: His Myth in our Time, 82.
about inner psychic possesses, which turn out to be higher than those made by consciousness. 162 Von Franz cites Jung’s position on this concept: “Spirit, therefore, according to Jung, is in the first instance the composer of dreams: a principle of spontaneous psychic motion which produces and orders symbolic images freely and in accordance with its own laws.”163

Jung’s doctoral dissertation offered perhaps the first formulation of his hypothesis on spiritual phenomena, ultimately leading to the formation of his psychological theory. For him, the results of his investigation appeared to confirm his belief in the necessity for spirits in human’s existence as well as the transcendental reality or the religious side of the psyche.

Writing about Jung’s dissertation and the psychiatry of the time, Peter Homans observed that “…Jung took up the problem of somnambulistic states—dreamlike states, bizarre acts, visions, hallucinations, and lapses of memory.”164 And the writings of Pierre Janet and others enhanced his understanding of these phenomena and the formulation of his ideas of unconscious or subconscious personality, and how these ideas were embedded in the unconscious psyche.

In this chapter, we explore Jung’s essential works on spirits, most especially, ‘The Phenomenology of the Spirits in Fairytales’, “The Psychological Foundations for Belief in Spirit”, ‘Spirit and Life,” and “Review of the Complex Theory.” In turn we explore the ways in which his theoretical formulations can be applied to and enhanced understanding of Gamei psychology.

Jung frequently acknowledged the perplexing ambiguity of the concept of spirit. For example, in “Spirit and Life” he pointed out:

The same verbal sign, spirit, is used for an inexpressible, transcendental idea of all-embracing significance; in a more commonplace sense it is synonymous with “mind”; it may connote courage, liveliness, or wit, or it may mean a ghost; it can also represent an unconscious complex that causes spiritualistic phenomena like

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid.

table-turning, automatic writing, rapping’s, etc. In a metaphorical sense it may refer to the dominant attitude in a particular social group—the “spirit” that prevails there. Finally, it is used in a material sense, as spirits of wine, spirits of ammonia, and spirituous liquors in general.  

Although Jung approaches his studies of religious beliefs from an “exclusively phenomenological” perspective, an elucidation of the concept of “spirit” proved to be an extremely challenging task, even within a phenomenological approach. An alternative interpretation of “spirit” was provided in his work “The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales,” where Jung asserted that “…Spirit, we say, is the principle that stands in opposition to matter. By this one can understand an immaterial substance or form of existence which on the highest and most universal level is called “God.” 

Psychologically, according to Jung, one can describe the transcendental being of the unconscious psyche as the Self or, in religious tradition, “God” “…as the vehicle of psychic phenomena or even of life itself.” The limitations of this definition are the contrast of spirit with nature, matter and instinct. Accordingly, whenever the interpretation of the concept of spirit is restricted to the supernatural or anti-natural, then the concept has lost its substantial connection with the psyche and life. Jung perhaps believed in the dynamics of spirits as an inherent dimension of life. He observed that in primitive times spirit was experienced as external reality to man [person] but with increasing development the pattern has been situated “…in man’s consciousness and becomes a subordinate function…” Jung recognized the origin and independent power of the spirit, which approaches consciousness from a transcendent source.  

In Jung’s theory of archetypes, “spirit” or God” can be described as almost synonymous with the Unconscious. In his memoirs, for example, Jung had this to say:

---

167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid. 212.
170 Ibid.
Here I prefer the term “the unconscious,” knowing that I might equally well speak of “God” or “daimon” if I wished to express myself in mythic language. When I do use such mythic language, I am aware that “mana,” “daimon,” and “God” are synonyms for the unconscious—that is to say, we know just as much or just as little about them as about the latter. People only believe they know much more about them—and for certain purposes that belief is far more useful and effective than a scientific concept. The great advantage of the concepts “daimon” and “God” lies in making possible a much better objectification of the vis-à-vis, namely, a personification of it.171

Consistent with his overall approach to theory, Jung emphasized that this conceptualization had to do with phenomenological experience rather than any objective fact.172 Elaborating, he asserts:

This is certainly not to say that what we call the unconscious is identical with God or is set up in His place. It is simply the medium from which religious experience seems to flow. As to what the further cause of such experience may be, the answer to this lies beyond the range of human knowledge. Knowledge of God is a transcendental problem.173

Jung’s biographer Jaffé expands on this idea:

Although God and the unconscious cannot be distinguished in our subjective experience, as self-subsistent entities they cannot be assumed to be identical. What does emerge from the unfathomableness of both God and the unconscious is the synonymity of the two concepts….Hence the indistinguishability of God and the unconscious applies merely to the subjective experience and so has to be considered in interpreting the spontaneous religious assertions of individuals and in analyzing myths and dogmas.174

Jung advances his discussion to include the symbols of the Self, the archetype representing the “essence of psychic wholeness”, which is also viewed as indistinguishable from God-symbols.175 The numerous personifications of the wholeness of the archetype of the Self include Anthropos, creator, father, mother, child,

---

171 Ibid. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 336-337.
light, Word, trinity, quaternity, mandala, and ancestor, just to mention a few. I shall come back to the ancestor as God-symbol in greater detail later because it is particularly relevant to the experience of spirit and “God” among the Gamei.

Psychologically, the archetype of the Self is symbolized in the psyche as an *imago Dei*, a God-image, which no more than the unconscious should be identified with God. 176 Jung carefully writes: “Accordingly when I say as psychologist that God is an archetype, I mean by that the “type” in the psyche. The word “type” is, as we know, derived from “blow” or “imprint”; thus an archetype presupposes an imprinter…. We simply do not know the ultimate derivation of the archetype any more that we know the origin of the psyche” 177 Nevertheless Jung also insists that: “…Psychology, as I have said, is not in a position to make metaphysical statements. It can only establish that the symbolism of psychic wholeness coincides with the God-image, but it can never prove that the God-image is God Himself, or that the self takes the place of God.” 178 This quotation explains the identity between God-image and the symbol of the Self. Moreover, Jung also adds a conceptual distinction between the Self and God. Thus, “…the Self can be distinguished only conceptually from what has always been referred to as “God,” but not practically.” 179 Jung turns to emphasize religious experience of God as the significant factor. Michael Palmer shares a similar conviction:

> The fact of this experience is all that the psychologist is concerned with it: it is only this that can be empirically established. Strictly speaking, then, all that we can say is that religious experience establishes God as a psychic reality, and that there exists an archetypal image of God indelibly engraved upon our psyche. Psychology cannot demonstrate the existence of God; but in establishing the existence of this archetypal image it can confirm religion as a fundamental activity of the human psyche, as a necessary expression of the deepest level of our unconscious being, the collective unconscious. 180

---


178 Ibid. “Gnostic Symbols of the Self” in *Aion*, 199.


In his theoretical conclusion on the numinous character of God, thus the unconscious, Jung endeavors to express metaphysical and religious statements in psychological terms. Inasmuch as the self is a conceptual name for a psychological reality, so God is a conceptual name for a transcendental reality about which psychology continues to speculate. Jung’s theory of the Self as the structure of the psychic reality as well as a distinctive component of the human psyche seems to be confused. In this dissertation, I would argue that the archetype of spirit may represent the ancestral spirit and the Supreme Being as the Self. Again in psychological language, “spirit” may be approximated as “higher consciousness” manifested and experienced from the world of archetypal images. Jung’s assertion of spirit is similar to the experience of the archetypes, and ultimately the unconscious psyche.

Jung views spirit as an autonomous complex of higher consciousness. He articulates that “…the phenomenon of spirit, like every autonomous complex, appears as an intention of the unconscious superior to, or at least on a par, with the intentions of the ego.”\(^{181}\) For Jung, psychic reality is the reality we know, and the “…universal belief in spirits is a direct expression of the complex structure of the unconscious.”\(^{182}\) In this conceptual scheme, spirit is a manifestation of unconsciously anchored complexes with intense psychic energy attached,\(^{183}\) and hence more powerful than the ego or conscious self. The reality of spirits emphasized more on the psychological autonomy of the unconscious psyche contents. For example, the autonomous qualities of complexes and equally autonomous are the manifestations of archetypes in dreams, visions and other cultural patterns. In the postmodern era, when we deal only with the categories of “real” versus “imagery,” we tend to lose sight of the fundamental psychological (empirical) reality that Jung was devoted to making known: that the psyche is real, that is, psychic manifestations are aspects of the human experience just as much as outer-world events are. Because many psychic manifestations are autonomous, they are not simply

\(^{181}\) Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 335.


\(^{183}\) Ibid. “Psychology and the Occult,” 116.
imaginary—at least not in the ordinary sense of a deliberate creation/construction of the conscious mind. To the degree that psychic images are autonomous, they resemble our common understanding of spirits as independent, autonomous beings. Spirits, as a psychological fact, “is experienced as psychic reality [and] may be a form of self-expression and, ultimately, contribute in a cybernetic manner to accretion of further layers of psychic reality.”  

In Jungian terminology, the term “spirit” applies to the non-material aspect of a living person (thought, intention, ideal) as well as to an incorporeal being detached from a human body (ghost, shade, ancestral soul). Since the current study concerns spirits of the dead or ancestors both in the traditional Ga worldview and in Jungian studies, it is worth stating that Jung’s parapsychology was more than a theme for scientific research, experiment, and theory. Rather his use of personal experience as part of his phenomenological approach to his research helped him to affirm the validity of these spiritual phenomena. In a sense, he stood distinct among other psychologists of his time because he recognized the world of the psyche as pervasive in human experience and therefore ripe for legitimate scientific investigation.

Jung’s classic work on this subject was “The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits.” In this work he explained spirits and other occult phenomena as unconscious autonomous complexes which appear as projections or, in other words, as “…the exteriorized effects of unconscious complexes.” He argued:

These parapsychic phenomena seem to be connected as a rule with the presence of a medium. They are, so far as my experience goes, the exteriorized effects of unconscious complexes. I for one am certainly convinced that they are exteriorizations. I have repeatedly observed the telepathic effects of unconscious complexes, and also a number of parapsychic phenomena, but in all this I see no proof whatever of the existence of real spirits, and until such proof is forthcoming I must regard this whole territory as an appendix of psychology. I think science has to impose this restriction on itself. Yet one should never forget that science is


186Jung, Psychology and the Occult,” 116. See also “Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits” 301-318.
simply a matter of intellect, and the intellect is only one among several fundamental psychic functions and therefore does not suffice to give a complete picture of the world.\textsuperscript{187}

In the preceding statement, Jung’s ambivalence toward spirit phenomena was evident. Although his theory of archetypes may be equated to the universal belief in spirits, to a great extent, Jung reluctantly refused to acknowledge the identity of the collective unconscious and the archetypes of the spirits as any indication that spirits may exist in themselves. Von Franz wrote, “…Although in this early work Jung regarded ‘spirits’ as only ‘psychic complexes,’ he changed his position in his later work. It is difficult to see how a ‘place-bound’ spook, for example, could have been evoked through a person’s complexes.”\textsuperscript{188} After thirty years, Jung revised his position on parapsychic phenomena as a result of an encounter that he believed to be strong evidence of the existence of a collective unconscious, the archetypes and associated occult phenomena. He included a footnote to the above sentence:

After collecting psychological experiences from many people and many countries for fifty years, I no longer feel as certain as I did in 1919, when I wrote this sentence. To put it bluntly, I doubt whether an exclusively psychological approach can do justice to the phenomena in question. Not only the findings of parapsychology, but my own theoretical reflections, outlined in “On the Nature of the Psyche,” have led me to certain postulates which touch on the realm of nuclear physics and the conception of the space-time continuum. This opens up the whole question of the transpsychic reality immediately underlying the psyche.\textsuperscript{189}

Jung’s conceptualizations were strengthened by his observation of a strong experience of ancestral spirits among the Australian Aborigines, adding further evidence to his idea that such phenomena can be viewed in multiple cultural contexts, the hallmark of evidence for the existence of cross-cultural experiences of a collective unconscious, which included, for him, the active presence of spirit in psychic life.

\textsuperscript{187}Ibid. “Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits” 318, See also, Psychology and the Occult, 125.

\textsuperscript{188} Von Franz, Jung: His Myth in Our Time, 58.

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
Australian Aborigines are the original indigenous people of Australia with a strong cultural presence pre-dating their exploitation by Europeans. Even in the face of such exploitation they remained unified through their strong religious beliefs, storytelling, art, and colonial history. Their worldview was grounded on the existence of supernatural beings and powers of Dreaming beings. In aboriginal societies, Spirit beings acted as mediators of communication with the living, introducing new knowledge into human society. They maintained totemic systems, which include believing that there is a relationship between people and species of animals or plants.190

Based on his psychological investigations of indigenous Aboriginals, Jung argued that the phenomenon of spirits is a unique confirmation of the reality of a spirit world: “For the primitive, the phenomenon of spirits is direct evidence for the reality of a spirit world.”191 Furthermore, indigenous cosmology is an integration of both the physical and spiritual worlds: “Primitive man [person], therefore, really lives in two worlds. Physical reality is at the same time spiritual reality.”192

Jung elaborated that the reports of seeing ghosts or apparitions by “primitives” were direct evidence of the existence of a spiritual world.193 He suggested that Westerners see the same things, often in dreams and visions, but tend to explain them away as examples of fantasy, superstition or neurosis.194 He also believed that we can learn about the world of spiritualism through the experience of people suffering from

---


191 Jung, “Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits”, 110. See also “Psychology and the Occult.” In Jung's thought, the word “primitive” may mean original.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.
some forms of mental illness, during which psychological defenses are relaxed, particularly among Westerners.

Extending himself beyond his investigations of indigenous cultures, Jung identified three areas of support for the psychological foundations of the belief in spirits—dreams, psychogenic diseases, and mental illness. Let me quote Jung at length:

One of the most important sources of the primitive belief in spirits is dreams. People very often appear as the actors in dreams, and the primitive readily believes them to be spirits or ghosts. The dream has for the primitive an incomparably higher value than it has for civilized man [woman]. Not only does he talk a great deal about his dreams, he also attributes an extraordinary importance to them, so that it often seems as though he were unable to distinguish between them and reality.

_Accordingly, for Westerners dreams are irrelevant, although some of them attach great significance to certain dreams on account of their weird and impressive character. For the primitive dreams are sources of inspiration from the ancestral spirits. In contrast, it does not appeal to the modern person._195

A dream is a psychic product originating in the sleeping state without conscious motivation. …The psychic contents associated with it in a dream confront the ego in much the same way as do the outward circumstances in real life, so that in dreams we generally find ourselves in situations such as we could not conceive when awake, but which are very like the situations we are confronted with in reality. As in our waking state, real people and things enter our field of vision, so the dream-images enter like another kind of reality into the field of consciousness of the dream-ego. We do not feel as if we were producing the dreams, it is rather as if the dreams came to us. They are not subject to our control but obey their own laws.196

Another source of the belief in spirits is psychogenic diseases, nervous disorders, especially those of a hysterical character, which are not rare among primitives. Since these illnesses stem from psychic conflicts, mostly unconscious, it seems to the primitive that they are caused by certain persons, living or dead, who are in some way connected with his subjective conflict. Jung attributed pathogenic conflict to the attachment of primitives to their ancestor spirits as a phenomenon of ancestor-worship.

Finally, Jung’s ground for belief in spirits is the role of mental illness. Among primitive peoples these illnesses, so far as is known, are mostly of a delirious,
hallucinatory or catatonic nature, belonging apparently to the broad domain of schizophrenia, an illness which covers the great majority of chronically insane patients. In all ages and all over the world, insane people have been regarded as possessed by evil spirits, and this belief is supported by the patient’s own hallucinations…To the naive mind, the hallucinations naturally appear to be caused by spirits.197

Jung remarks that belief in spirits correlates with belief in souls, the former associated with the collective unconscious, the latter with the personal unconscious. In the primitive traditional worldview, a spirit is usually the ghost of deceased persons and automatically the soul of a living person. In contrast, the ghost is the wandering or homeless spirit of a dead person without a proper funeral ritual. I will discuss the differences between ‘ghost’ and ‘spirit’ of the dead in another chapter, particularly because this distinction is especially relevant for elucidating these phenomena in the culture of the Gamei.

In his conceptualization, Jung distinguishes the terms “spirit” and “soul” complexes.198 For Jung, soul complexes reside in the personal conscious and belong to “…the ego and the loss of them appears pathological”.199 In contrast, spirit complexes reside in the collective unconscious and “…their association with the ego causes illness, and their dissociation from it brings recovery”.200 In Jungian terminology, spirits are complexes they are estranged from the ego: “…Spirits, therefore, viewed from a psychological angle, are unconscious autonomous complexes which appear as projections because they have no direct association with the ego.”201 In a footnote, Jung clarified the meaning of this statement as psychological. That is “…it should not be misconstrued as a metaphysical statement.”202 He cautioned us that “…The question of whether spirits exist

197 Ibid.112.


199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid.

202 Ibid.
in themselves is far from having been settled. Psychology is not concerned with things as they are ‘in themselves,’ but only with what people think about them.”

Psychopathology among primitives is caused by two illnesses: loss of soul and spirit possession. Spirits are capricious and unpredictable. Jung notes that spirits make their appearance when a person has lost his or her adaptive powers or their appearance causes him or her to do so. It is because of their disturbing effect that spirits are most feared.

Psychologically, for Jung, the psychological foundation for belief in spirits explains humanity’s urgent quest for intimacy with the spirit world, because there are many connections between the world of spirits and the physical world. In contrast, modern persons are not convinced of the ultimate reality of anything transcendent, of the soul or God. In our time, according to Jung, science and rationality prevent the recognition of the important human facets of spiritual experiences.

Also, Jung believed in the phenomenon of spirit possession whereby the spirit controls and shapes the person’s outlook on life in terms of religious experiences, which is characterized by emotions. Thus, Jung writes, “…Spirit in this case is the reflection of an autonomous affect, which is why the ancients, very appropriately, called the spirits imagines, ‘images’. Besides the image concept, Jung recognized the ambivalent and dual function with the manifestations of spirits. Spirits can be good as well as evil. Jung explains this concept in terms of attitudes, not personifications of affects. He writes, “…A bad attitude expressed as an evil spirit has, if naively conceived, nearly the same psychological function as a personified affect.” Therefore, spirit can be described as the image of a personified affect. In the spiritual domain, one would argue that the nature of spirit finds expression through cultural or religious symbols shrouded in mysticism. Jung put forward the divine meaning of archetypal symbolism thus: “…it points beyond itself to a meaning that is darkly divined yet still beyond our grasp…But spirit that

203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
demands a symbol for its expression is a psychic complex that contains the seeds of incalculable possibilities.”

Elsewhere Jung explains the ambivalence of the spirit as being destructive to the psyche if it possesses the ego and restricts the freedom of the person without any participation of other aspects of the spirit life. He describes this experience in this way: “There are all too many cases of men so possessed by a spirit that the man does not live any more but only the spirit, and in a way that does not bring him a richer and fuller life but only cripples him.” Also, the spirit can act in a destructive manner in the collective consciousness stage, by creating different “isms.”

Spirits are complexes of the collective unconscious with transcendental dimension. This numinous fascination of the unconscious psyche in the primitive period has been ascribed in Jungian thinking to a divine fluid (mana) or to a god or demon or spirit. For Von Franz, for example, “Such names gave expression to the feeling of an objective, alien and autonomous presence, as well as to a sense of something overwhelming to which the conscious has to submit.”

The existence of spirits and the phenomenon of spiritualism have always been practiced by the Gamei and in most indigenous cultures of the world. For instance, individuals or families may visit shrines to consult either the supreme deity or the spirit of a dead relative to determine the cause of misfortune in life— barrenness, illness, the work of spirits of the dead or poverty. In this context it is notable that in an important essay on this subject, Jung included a footnote about his expedition to Mount Elgon (East Africa) in 1925-26, when one of the water-bearers (a young woman) fell ill with a septic abortion with high fever. Western medications proved ineffective. Accordingly, a nganga, a traditional healer, treated her for spirit intrusion by her dead parents through traditional rituals of snuffing the air, building a ghost trap and a totem of the ill girl. After
these rituals, she recovered in two days. For Jung, this was significant evidence of the experiential power of interventions rooted in the spirit world.

For the African people that Jung encountered in his experience at Mount Elgon, ancestors are the healers of all illnesses in the community. When they are consulted they prescribe herbs and other rituals to be performed for the troubled persons. Jung used this encounter as evidence for his assertion that the collective unconscious is manifested in the belief in spirits of the dead. In this instance, he believed there were complex and powerful psychological effects of the experience of spirits of the dead parents.

Another important issue for Jung in understanding the experience of spirits is the phenomenon of projection. The most profound statement of his view of projection in this regard is found in his essay *Archaic Man*, where he again focuses on conceptualizations derived from observations in indigenous or “primitive” contexts, uncontaminated by the later masking of the rationalism of modern culture. His observations radically shaped his view of projection. Let me quote Jung at length.

…According to this theory mana, beauty moves us, and it is not we who create beauty. A certain person is a devil, we have not projected our own evil on him and in his way made a devil out of him. There are people—mana personalities—who are impressive in their own right and in no way thanks to our imagination. The mana theory maintains that there is something like a widely distributed power in the external world that produces all those extraordinary effects. Everything that exist acts, otherwise it would not be. It can only be virtue of its inherent energy. Being is a field of force. The primitive idea of mana, as you can see, has in it the beginnings of a crude theory of energy.

…It is then not my imagination or my awe that makes the medicine-man a sorcerer; on the contrary, he is a sorcerer and projects his magical powers on me. Spirits are not hallucinations of my mind, but appear to me of their own volition. Although such statements are logical derivatives of the man idea, we hesitate to accept them and begin to look around for a comfortable theory or psychic projections. The question is nothing less that this: Does the psychic in general -- the soul or spirit or the unconscious -- originate in us, or is the psyche, in the early stages of conscious evolution, actually outside us in the form of arbitrary powers with intentions of their own, and does it gradually take its place within us in the course of psychic development? Were the split-off “souls” -- or dissociated psychic contents, as we would call them -- ever parts of the psyches of individuals, or were they from the beginning psychic entities existing in themselves according to the primitive view as ghosts, ancestral spirits, and the like? Were they only by degrees embodied in man in the course of development,
so that they gradually constituted in him that world which we now call the psyche?

…The idea of a complex building-up of the psyche is expressed on a primitive level in a variety of forms, for instance in the widespread belief in possession, the incarnation of ancestral spirits, the immigration of souls, and so forth. When someone sneezes, we still say “God bless you,” by which is meant “I hope your new soul will do you no harm.” When in the course of our own development we feel ourselves achieving a unified personality out of a multitude of contradictory tendencies, we experience something like a complex growing-together of the psyche.\[211\]

With this assertion Jung provides the other side of the collective unconscious—an external dimension—not originated in us. I will explain the idea of a transcendental reality of the psyche in another chapter. However, it is important to emphasize here Jung’s idea of unconscious projection as a significant mechanism of transformation and self-consciousness through the pathway of the unconscious.

Jung suggests that there are five stages in the withdrawal of projections that he associated with cultural and historical development.\[212\] Von Franz synthesized and expanded Jung’s hypothesis.\[213\] In the following explanation, therefore, I focus on both Jung and Von Franz.

Jung cites an example from Nigeria, where a native soldier heard the voice of an oji tree calling him. He “…tried desperately to break out of the barracks and hasten to the tree. Under cross-examination he alleged that all those who bore the name of the tree now and then heard its voice. Here the voice was experienced as identical with the tree.”\[214\] Jung developed his idea of the five levels of differentiation of consciousness from this example.

The first level, according to Jung, is the original unconscious identity prior to any consciousness. Here the soldier, tree and voice are undoubtedly regarded as an

\[211\] Jung, “Archaic Man” 69-70.


\[213\] Von Franz, Projection and Re-Collection in Jungian Psychology: Reflections of the Soul, 9-11.

\[214\] Jung, “The Connection between Spirit and Tree,” 199.
unconscious identity, and the experience is *psychological truth as well as a psychic statement from the unconscious psyche.*

The second level is the first separation or differentiation between nature and man. The experience reflects that the voice and tree are unique, and the voice is ascribed to a spirit or a tree-demon. At this stage of consciousness, Jung maintains that differentiation has occurred. He adds, “Since at the present level of consciousness we cannot suppose that tree daemons exist, we are forced to assert that the primitive suffers from hallucinations, that he hears his own unconscious which has projected itself into the tree.” Nevertheless, Jung testified to a higher level of spirit—thus God or evil spirit.

The third level is the “moral evaluation” of the voice as an authentic manifestation of an evil or of a good spirit in terms of psychic content. There is a level of differentiation from the object, for example the soldier and the tree. Traditionally, the voice represents the divine and the soldier is obligated to listen and be obedient to this voice.

The fourth level alludes to the denial of spirit and simply describes the entire spiritual experience as an illusion or merely an auditory hallucination. The “voice” is opened to three interpretations—whether spirits inhabit trees, and the character of the man as a soldier, and whether the experience can be described as a psychic phenomenon.

Finally, the fifth level confirms the reality of unconscious existence. At this level, Jung asserts that the reality of spirits cannot be denied as a psychic phenomenon. He writes:

> However odious it may be, this means that the “spirit” is also a reality, and the “evil” spirit at that. What is even worse, the distinction between “good” and “evil” is suddenly no longer obsolete, but highly topical and necessary. The crucial point is that so long as the evil spirit cannot be proved to be a subjective psychic experience, then even trees and other suitable objects would have, once again, to be seriously considered as its lodging places.

---

215 Italics added.


217 Ibid. 201.
In Jung’s memoirs, he described the dead as voice of the unknown. I will turn to this subject in another chapter. As noted earlier, Jung believed that the archetypes of the collective unconscious manifested in dreams and belief in spirits of the dead or ancestors, as expressed by indigenous persons, can be understood as psychic reality. In this context, belief in spirits does not correlate with theological or philosophical theoretical interpretations.”218 As previously highlighted, as an empirical psychologist, Jung would not allow himself “to make statements about the divine being since that would be a transgression of the limits of science.”219 Accordingly, Jung maintains that “ghosts” and “spirits” are psychic manifestations of the complexes arising from the collective unconscious. For him, again, it is inner experience that is important and not “objective” reality.

In the context of the above discussion we can apply Jung’s framework to the understanding of ancestral spirits as complexes or archetypes of the unconscious, for they are transpsychic realities as well as God-symbols, classified as psychoid archetypes. For example, Jaffé explains that the “psychoid archetype”, or “archetype per se,” is an unknowable factor in the collective unconscious, which underlies those motifs and arranges them into typical images and groupings.”220 Further she adds that “…Since the archetype per se is psychoid, Jung succeeded in showing that it also arranges acausal parapsychological events (prophetic dreams, precognitions, etc), thus opening the way to an understanding of these hitherto inexplicable phenomena.221 The nature of spiritual phenomena still remains a mystery and at a point Jung was no longer confident about his original thesis that spirits are exteriorizations or projections of autonomous psychic complexes.222 In addition, the authentic nature of the psychoid archetype, from this expanded theoretical idea is spiritual, thus a metaphysical entity. Jung writes:

---

218 Ibid.


220 Jaffé, *Jung’s Last Years and Other Essays*, 8.

221 Ibid.

222 Ibid.
All religions and all metaphysical concepts rest upon archetypal foundation and, to the extent that we are able to explore them, we succeed in gaining at least a superficial glance behind the scenes of world history, and can lift a little the veil of mystery which hides the meaning of metaphysical ideas. For metaphysics is, as it were, a physics or physiology of the archetype, and its dogma (or teaching) formulates the knowledge of the essence of the dominants, that is, of the unconscious “leitmotivs,” of the psychic happenings predominating in the epoch. The archetype is metaphysical because of it transcends consciousness.223

Moreover, one can argue that the existence of spirits or ancestors is in essence a psychic idea, which can neither be explained rationally nor contested in any physical way. Psychologically speaking, they are cultural conceptual names demonstrating phenomenological identity:

Beliefs of this kind are psychic facts which cannot be contested and need no proof. They would be mere miracles, which are sufficiently exposed to doubt as it is, and yet they could not demonstrate the reality of the spirit or meaning that underlies them. The fact that religious statements frequently conflict with the observed physical phenomena proves that in contrast to physical perception the spirit is autonomous, and the psychic experience is to a certain extent independent of physical data. The psyche is an autonomous fact, and religious statements are psychic confessions which in the last resort are based on unconscious, i.e., on transcendental processes.224

In the light of our discussion of the ambiguities surrounding the existence or reality of spiritual or occult phenomena, it should be noted that in Jung’s latter years he was no longer committed to the investigation of occult phenomena, but he nevertheless never abandoned the ideas that derived from his earlier observations. As Jaffé notes, “…he never evaluated his parapsychological experiments scientifically, yet he did not by any means dismiss them as worthless.”225 Jung substantiates his attitude on occult phenomena: “Although I have not distinguished myself by any original researches in this field, I do not hesitate to declare that I have observed a sufficient number of such phenomena to be completely convinced of their reality. To me they are inexplicable, and

223 Harding, Woman’s Mysteries, Ancient and Modern: A Psychological Interpretation of the Feminine Principle as Portrayed in Myth, Story, and Dreams, x.

224 Jung, Religion and Psychology,

225 Jaffé, Jung’s Last Years and Other Essays, 12.
I am therefore unable to decide in favor of any of the usual interpretations.”

Nevertheless, Jung’s interest in spiritual phenomena provided an enrichment of experience entirely in accord with what he understood to be a thoroughly scientific attitude as an empiricist: “In this vast and shadowy region where everything seems possible and nothing believable, one must oneself have observed many strange happenings and in addition heard, read, and if possible tested many stories by examining their witnesses in order to form an even moderately sure judgment.”

As Jung seemed to recognize, the indigenous person’s concept of the human psyche is quite different from that of the Westerner. Again, as Jung seemed to be aware, people in indigenous societies are very close to nature and mysterious realities. Jung explains the concept of the psyche in terms of subjectivity and objectivity. In his essay “Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology” he explains the psychological meaning of soul from the indigenous person’s perspective:

According to another primitive view the soul is a fire or a flame because warmth is likewise a sign of life. A very curious, but by no means rare, primitive conception identifies the soul with the name. The name of an individual is his [her] soul, and hence the custom of using the ancestor’s name to reincarnate the ancestral soul in the newborn child. This means nothing less than that ego-consciousness is recognized as being an expression of the soul. Very often the soul is also identified with the shadow, hence it is a deadly insult to tread one a person’s shadow.

These indications may serve to show how primitive man [person] experienced the psyche. To him [her] the psyche appears as the source of life, the prime mover, a ghostlike presence which has objective reality. Therefore the primitive knows how to converse with his [person] soul; it becomes vocal within him [her] because it is not simply he [her] himself [herself] and his [her] consciousness. To primitive man [person] the psyche is not as it is with us, the epitome of all that is subjective and subject to the will; on the contrary, it is something objective, self-subsistent, and living its own life.

In another context, Jung employs the words soul, psyche, and spirit somewhat interchangeably. “‘Psyche’ is a Greek word for soul life, and breath; so psyche is Nature

---

226 Ibid. 8-9. Jaffe quotes this statement from the Forward to Stewart Edward White.

227 Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche. 346. See also Sabini, ed. The Earth has a Soul: The Nature Writings of C.G. Jung. 92.
itself...“the earth has a spirit of her own, a beauty of her own.”228 The spirit is the quintessence of nature: “Spirit is the inside of things and matter is their visible outer aspect.”229 One of Jung’s contributions to indigenous psychology lies in his elucidation of the spiritual characteristics of nature by reminding us that “…nature is not matter only, she is also spirit.”230 He also identifies the collective unconscious with Nature, as he writes, “…identical with Nature to the extent that Nature herself, including matter, is unknown to us.”231 Continuing, he writes that “…The word ‘matter’ remains a dry, inhuman, and purely intellectual concept…How different was the former image of matter—the Great Mother—that could encompass and express the profound emotional meaning of the Great Mother.”232

Consistent with Jung’s ideas in this realm, the spiritual component of Nature is a core thought in traditional African cosmologies. For example, John Samuel Mbiti notes, For him [the African], therefore, and for the larger community of which he [she] is part, to live is to be caught up in a religious drama. This is fundamental, for it means that man lives in a religious universe. Both that world and practically all his [her] activities in it, are seen and experienced through a religious understanding and meaning…The point here is that for Africans, the whole of existence is a religious phenomenon; man [woman] is a deeply religious being living in a religious universe.233

Similarly, Opoku holds the same view:

The traditional African worldview is of created universe with visible and invisible aspects. This universe characterizes everything that exists. Nature, the community, and society all have aspects that are both visible and invisible. The universe is characterized by order, not chaos. There are forces -- religious, moral, mystical, and natural (in nature) -- that are observed to be at work. Between all


229 Ibid. 2.

230 Ibid.

231 Ibid. See also Carl Jung, *Letters II*, 540.

232 Ibid.

that exists, there is interconnectedness and a dynamic correspondence among these forces, whether visible or not.\textsuperscript{234}

Moreover, this interrelatedness of life is essential to understand the indigenous knowledge of Africans. P. P. Ntuli provides this insight:

We must now turn our attention to the examination of African value systems that we seek to see reborn. Contrary to Western thought, African thought sees life as a cycle; and the world as an interconnected reality: human beings, plants, animals, and the universe is one interconnected whole, and that our survival depends on how these forces interact with each other. In all societies, the beginning and meaning of life lie with the world of myth, and these myths give form through rituals…. Traditional Africans provided us with a world-view that recognized our sanctity as people and sought to secure our place in the wider spheres of life to help give meaning and form to our striving for oneness with the cosmic spirit that guides us.\textsuperscript{235}

Psychologically, Jung’s recognition of the reality of the world of spirits, as well as the belief in the “spirits of the dead” or “ancestors” is quite consistent with the way in which these phenomena are experienced and described in indigenous cultures. Again, this kind of thinking is revolutionary for Western thought, in which, apart from Jung there is a relatively undeveloped set of psychological conceptualizations for complex issues of religion, particularly when it comes to the kind of complex inner experiences which are recognized so pervasively among indigenous people such as the Gamei. Again, as Jung recognized, these phenomena transcend the scope of metaphysical assumptions and reason and therefore represent a challenge for psychology and religion. Nonetheless, for Jung, a deep understanding of these phenomena is essential for the development of any valid psychological understanding of human experience.

In his concluding remarks on “Spirit and Life” Jung primarily emphasized the sense in which spirit and life are intimately integral dimensions of life and that they are inseparable:


Life is a touchstone for the truth of the spirit. Spirit that drags a man [person] away from life, seeking fulfillment only in itself, is a false spirit—though the man [person] too is to blame, since he [she] can choose whether he [she] will give himself [herself] up to this spirit or not.

Life and spirit are two powers or necessities between which man [person] is placed. Spirit gives meaning to his [her] life, and the possibility of its greatest development. But life is essential to spirit since its truth is nothing if it cannot live.236

Critique and Expansion of Jungian Conceptualizations and Conclusions

In conclusion, Jung’s interpretation of the archetype of spirit appears helpful in illuminating a number of his core concepts: his idea of psychic reality, the reality of spirit, synchronicity, individuation, teleological function, and the religious nature of psychic life. In addition the philosophical ideas of both Kant and Schopenhauer played significant roles in shaping his psychiatric theory for explaining spiritualism in psychological terms.

Psychologically, Jung’s asserted that archetypes have trans-psychic reality and spirits are psychic symbols that are manifestations of autonomous complexes within the collective unconscious. The implications of this assertion for the Gamei include the understanding that there are many connections between the world of spirits and the physical world. Moreover, archetypal spirits are all psychological terms that have a great deal of potential for the development of a substantive psychological understanding of the way in which the world of spirits and ancestors operate among the Gamei. In addition to the basic theoretical concepts noted above, Jung’s experiences of parapsychological occurrences undergirded his eventual acknowledgment of the metaphysical reality of spiritual beings. Although he experienced and observed them, arguably in many instances, particularly in his early writings, he did not apply his observation to his own theory. However, this did change over time.237 One must acknowledge that Jung’s assertion of spiritual phenomena was primarily psychological as well as phenomenological, not metaphysical abstraction. As Jung acknowledged, spiritual

236 Jung, “Spirit and Life” 337.

phenomena belong to the appendix of psychology, which limits their relevance to purely psychological insights. Although Jung publicly discussed the psychological foundation of belief in spirits, privately he held such a view had certain limitations and remained reserved about the phenomenon of spirits. Paradoxically, Jung recognized the reality of the existence of spirits but he would not say anything about it. In his footnotes, Charet quotes Greda Walther’s remarks to substantiate this assertion:

Jung was much impressed by these (Schlag) sittings. He once embraced Schlag when suddenly Schlag’s jacket dematerialized…. Jung said he was quite convinced of the genuineness of the phenomena he witnessed. When I asked him, why he didn’t publish this verdict, he said that he had so many important things to say—which were only accepted very reluctantly. When they would be “swallowed”, the time for writing about these phenomena will be at hand.

In the field of contemporary psychology and religion, archetypes of spirits should not necessarily be limited to the transcendental reality of the human psyche, but should be expanded to include the reality of the invisible world. The invisible world, not well investigated in Jung’s work, serves as an important component in the experience of ancestral spirits among the Gamei.

In addition to the critique of metaphysical reality that Jung often failed to acknowledge, the concept of projection was another concept of belief in spirits which seems problematic in some respects. For example, the experience of ancestral spirits in the traditional life of the Gamei community negates the psychological concept of projection, which in the vocabulary of psychologists is often seen as a pathological defense against anxiety. It is more helpful, it seems to me, to understand the experience of ancestral spirits as a straightforward adaptive phenomenon that carries deep meaning for the culture at large.

In Gamei religious tradition, spirits transcend psychological speculations, creeds or dogmas as well as the theory of projection. The emphasis is on the ontological or cosmic reality of their tradition, which provides the distinctive relationship between

---

238 Charet, Spiritualism and the Foundation of C. G. Jung’s psychology, 269.

239 Ibid. 283.

traditional religion and psychological themes. In the context of ancestral existence, for the *Gamei*, there is the knowledge of ontological spiritual reality, which permeates the entire spectrum of personal life as well as cultural institutions.

Despite this important critique of Jung’s theory of projection and his neglect of metaphysical ideas, particularly in his early writing, his extensive work on the psychological foundation of belief in spirits provided a framework that is quite helpful for building a *psychological* understanding of the widespread and longstanding convictions among the *Gamei* about the reality of spirits of the dead and their critical role in the cultural and communal life of the people of Ghana.

Now that we have established the significance of spiritualism in Jung’s life, we turn our attention to both *Gamei* and Jung and Jungian perspectives on death.
Chapter 3: Concepts of Death—Gamei and Jung/Jungian

The focus of this chapter is on concepts of death, examining the different perspectives of the Gamei and of Jung. It examines closely the points of convergence and divergence between their theories. The object of this cross-cultural approach is to reconstruct and explore the psychological and traditional context for understanding the nature and meaning of death. Firstly, three significant Gamei concepts—the human personality, traditional understanding of physical death, and ambivalence toward death will be discussed in this section. Nevertheless I will make reference to psychological assertions on euphemism and the language about death. Finally, I discuss Jung and Jungian perspectives on death.

It can be argued that the phenomenon of death is the key to understanding the meaning of life in its totality. Broadly speaking, life and death are the two experiences that all human beings have in common. For Jung, the phenomenon of death would perhaps be described as an archetypal event culminating in a spiritual/psychic growth within the unconscious psyche. In Gamei tradition, death is the final rite of passage into the ancestral community. But what are the ways in which these two perspectives are related? First, let us examine closely the Gamei conception of death.

Let us examine first the Gamei perspectives on death, beginning with conceptualization of the human personality, including beliefs about the different components of the human person. There is unfortunately no Ga word that specifically refers to human personality in a single meaning. Two words are employed to describe humans: “gbo” and “mo”. The Ga word for human “gbomo” is derived from two Ga words—“gbo” (dying or perishable) and “mo” (thing or entity). Literally, the term “human” refers to an “image of dying or perishing”. Simply put, we are dying mortals or we were born in the process of dying. A striking view was captured by June Singer, a
Jungian analyst, when she wrote “...I know that all children are born dying, we are all born dying!” Singer couched her perspective in terms of Jung’s theory of individuation. Singer elucidates the journey motif of living mortals on this earth in terms of the collective unconscious, and the developmental stages of life—childhood, youth, adulthood, aging and final death. In the context of Singer and Gamei perspectives, it appears that human beings can be described as perishable or destructive beings. Ga traditional thought maintains that human beings are dying entities and death is like a sleep “keji ole wo sramo gblele.”

The similarity to sleep is complementary to the image of dying. Among the Gamei, references to death as sleep are entrenched in their oral tradition, promoting familiarity with the phenomenon of death. This cultural sentiment is profoundly similar to the Christian doctrine of death, particularly Jesus’ interpretation of the death of Lazarus. By contrast, the Gamei concept of “death as a sleep” was probably not influenced by any religious or philosophical ideologies.

Another interesting fact that we must not overlook is that the Gamei concept of death is introduced to infants during naming ceremonies: “He/she came with black, may he/she return with gray.” In other words, the newly born baby has entered life with black hair, and the community wish is expressed that he return to the ancestral world with gray hair, a wish for longevity of life on earth followed by death. To be human is to be wrapped in the reality of death. As an Akan funeral dirge captures it, “…Everyone is a debtor to Death. To be in the hands of Death is to be in the hands of someone indeed. Man will die and rot away.” Having examined terminology in references to, and significance of, the meaning and expression of death, let us turn the focus to the Gamei conception of human personality in terms of death.

---


242 Ibid.

243 John 11: 11.

244 This statement is an abstract of the libation prayer at naming ceremonies.

The *Gamei* would maintain that the human personality is composed of tripartite elements: *susuma* (spirit), *kra* (soul), and *mumo* (breath). These all reside in the human body. According to Ga theology, *AtaaNaa Nyonmo* or the Supreme Being created humanity. He formed it out of clay and breathed into it the breath of life, and it became a living being and a spiritual being. This assertion illustrates that all the tripartite elements of the human personality are spiritual entities. *Susuma* and *kra* are thus spiritual (*mumo*) entities. According to the *Gamei*, when an individual dies, his or her *susuma* goes to the ancestral world, and the *kra* goes to *AtaaNaaNyonmo* to join the company of the celestial families. The *Gamei* would argue that death is the inevitable separation of the web of interconnectedness between the spirit (*susuma*), soul (*kla*) and the body (*gbomotso*). The *susuma* leaves the body at death. As the Ga say “esusuma eshi le”—“this person is dead.”

In significant ways, the *Gamei* motif of separation as death seems applicable to other African cultures. A striking example of a cross-cultural perspective is found in Mbiti’s assertion about death. In African traditional perspective, the departure of both the spirit and the soul from the body concludes the process of dying. Mbiti summarizes the concept of death as the separation of the spirit from the body: “Death is recognized as the point when the spirit separates from the body. Because the spirit is closely associated with breathing, people know that the spirit has gone when a person stops breathing. Some think that it goes out through the mouth or nostrils or eyes.”

The *susuma* is a nocturnal wanderer in dreams and able to leave the body through the realm of dreams. If the *kla* also leaves the body, then life departs. When the *susuma* leaves the body in dreams, the *kla* has to stay to maintain breathing. The co-existence of the *susuma* and *kla* ensures the vitality of the individual’s body. If both *kla* and *susuma* leave together, even temporarily, the individual dies. In her analysis of the human personality of *Gamei* and the complexities of *susuma* and *kra*, Margaret Field writes that

---

246 There are different creation stories in African culture similar to Hebrew’s Bible creation story in Genesis 2: 7. Theologically, the “breath of life” is God himself residing in the human body. This is what crowns human beings as spiritual beings.


a person with a powerful personality has stronger *susuma* with a weak *kla*. Further, when an infant struggles during sleep its *kla* and its *susuma* are fighting together, and parents can observe scratches on his or her face and arms.249 Field’s conception of the *susuma* is judgmental, one part of the duality being good and the other bad.

Although the *susuma* and the *kla* of an individual engage in nocturnal combats, witches also prey on the *kla* to cause death. Let us examine briefly the connection between witchcraft and *kla* or soul. According to *Ga* beliefs about witchcraft, witch’s *susuma*—the personality—soul leaves the body in sleep and flies off to attend the fellowship of witches. The purposes of this meeting are to discuss the next human victim of their destructive vices and to share and feast on other people’s *kla*. They act as vampires and suck blood of victims because the *Gamei* believe that the *kla* resides in the blood of the human person. The Akan say that “…The life soul is blood”, a statement that is paralleled in the Christian Bible.250 Again, Field describes the *kla* as “an invisible body, the perfect double of the visible body.”251 The witches can eat the *kla* overnight or during a longer period. When it is completed then the victim dies.

Witches meet at night for the purpose of sharing and eating other people’s *kla*. The *kla*, though invisible, has arms and legs and bodily organs corresponding to the visible body, and the witches cut it up, share it round, and eat it. When it is completely eaten the victim dies. If the witches relent they can reassemble the parts and give them back, but any portion missing will cause weakness or paralysis of the corresponding part of the victim’s body.252

They travel on invisible cobwebs and if any one dares cut them, and cannot get back, that results in the death of a witch.253 Others walk on spider webs and there is a belief that if a spider web entangles you it is a witch.254


250 Leviticus 17::11.


252 Ibid.

253 Ibid. 93.

In addition to the human personality of the *susuma*, the *susuma* has a spiritual element which manifests itself in the figure of the shadow. Anthony Ephirim-Donkor’s interpretation of Akan’s concept of the *sunsum* (shadow) is applicable to the *Gamei* concept of *susuma* (shadow). The shadow is first experienced as children. Ephirim-Donkor defines the manifestation of the *susuma* as “…a shade in the form of the self, endowed with motion, mimicking our every act. The shadow might be described in its more mysterious aspect as something that is seen yet intangible.”

Its formulation transpires throughout the day, which reveals the *sunsum’s* extreme spiritual significance. Ephirim-Donkor writes: “For the *sunsum* [*susuma*] has an existence independent of the individual, free of the confines of light. That is, it takes darkness to illuminate the precise nature of the *sunsum.*”

We must understand that the shadow dominates the dream world of the individual during the dream state.

Another aspect of the human personality in *Gamei* thought is the day-name. In addition to the destructive activities of witches to cause death, the traditional healers or “*tsofatsemei*” can use the “*kla*-name” or birthday name (*gbi gbei*) (which is related to the day of the week on which an individual was born) to cause sickness, accidents and finally death. Field observes

The “day-name” which is given according to the day of the week on which a person is born, is often known as “*kla*-name”. It is said that “…all people born on the same day have the same *kla*”… The day-name may be used by medicine men in killing, and furthermore the killing may reach the wrong person as well as the right one through their common name. For instance, if you want to kill a man named Kwaku (the name means “born on Wednesday”) you call in a bad medicine man and he prepares a medicine using the name of Kwaku, lays it on the ground and arranges that when Kwaku walks over it he will become sick and die. However, another Kwaku may walk over it and die instead of the first.

Another view of the *Gamei* conception of human personality was captured by Joyce Engmann. Engmann describes the “*kla*” as a guardian spirit. She writes that “…The belief that each person has an individual guardian spirit, and the belief that the

---


256 Ibid.

character and destiny accruing to one from such a spirit are determined by the disposition of the planets at one’s birth have, however mysteriously, often been conjoined in popular thought over the centuries.” 258

According to Engmann,

The import of the belief can now be seen to be as follows: that upon a person’s death, the connection between him/her and his guardian spirit is dissolved; that the guardian spirit returns to God; and that the person, in the form of his susuma enters the World of the Dead. The unity of the kla with the susuma does not persist through death any more than does its unity with the body. The kla survives death, but the immortality of the person does not consist in its survival, but in the survival of the susuma, which is supposed to retain a considerable range of the characteristics of the living person. The separation of kla and susuma after death is one of the strongest indications that the susuma is not a part of the kla, as, according to Gyekye, the susuma is of the okra, but is ontologically as well as logically distinct from it. 259

A critical examination of Engmann’s statement about the destination of the susuma affirms the popular conception among Gamei: “Esusuma etee AtaaNaa Nyonmo noo,” meaning the spirit has gone to God. At death, the spirit returns intact to its owner, AtaaNaa Nyonmo. The spirit is “a small indestructible part of God” which he gives to the individual and with it his fate or destiny just before birth. 260 This shows the transcendental reality of the spirit and the soul. The spirit joins the company of God and the soul journeys to the ancestral land, because the personality/soul is from an ancestor. The survival of the susuma and the soul after death in the spirit world indicates that they transcend space and time. The Gamei perspective on the human personality, its components characterized by its relationship with the body, may be summarized as follows:

The beliefs in which that argument was based do not entail that death is a separation of three things previously combined, one of which, the body, undergoes change from the moment of death onwards, while the other two, the susuma and the kla remain unchanged. The beliefs in question are quite consistent

---


259 Ibid. 180.

with the possibility that the susuma is itself in nature, either (like the body) after death, perhaps in virtue of its entry into the World of the Dead, or at the time of death, or perhaps even before death. The last of these three possibilities might seem appropriately consistent with the supposed “traveling” of the susuma of a living person in a terminal illness. But however this may be, the occurrence of a change in the susuma may be reflected in the statement that we receive a new body after death; although, as we saw, this always refers to the susuma, the description of it as a “new body” perhaps indicates that it now takes on some physical characteristics not possessed by it before.261

Another critical element in references to death is traditionally euphemism. The announcement of the death is always captured specifically in traditional euphemistic expressions, depending on the type of death and the status of the deceased. For instance, “Eje mli”—he or she has fallen out, “eke yme shi”—he or she has surrendered or “etee batsamo ebba” — he went to the forest to pluck a leaf and could return, or “eya nyenn hele”—he or she cannot cope with the illness,262 ‘ebe bia—“he or she is no more here”, ‘etson wo hie”—he or she has preceded us, “ekte wo ten ejeke”—there is a distance between us, “eya wo or ewo”—falling asleep or being asleep, “enyo”—he or she has fallen,263 “Ewo ehe no”—he or she is absent elsewhere, “ebu enaa”—he or she has kept silence, “etso ese”—returning to the ancestor, “he or she has gone home—“etee shia”264 and “egbo”—he or she is dead.265 Finally for a prominent person or chief in the society, the expression is “A mighty tree has been uprooted,” “He has departed, or gone out.”

These euphemisms signify that among Gamei death is a departure or a rite of passage from this life to another life. The euphemisms portraying death as “sleep and journey” to the ancestral world also illustrate the anxiety and ambivalence among the Gamei in their attitude toward death. This notion is reflected in another traditional pattern, in which death is described metaphorically as a monster and a terror. This idea is


262 This is used when the person died as a result of illness.

263 This refers to untimely death for example in war or fatal accidents.

264 These refer to an elderly person’s death.

265 This is used when the person has children.
reflected in the La Kpa Song “Gbele yitso wa, okun nbele, ofan nduade ya ye,” literally “death is cruel, you plucked my corn and cassava, and feast on them.” Other examples are the phrases “gbele yiston wa” meaning death is a wicked destroyer and “gbele fieteo shia” death is the great disrupter of communal harmony.

In his analysis of death in West Africa, Opoku points out the ambivalence toward death in such terms as “wicked destroyer”, “killer” and “…a curse that frustrates human effort.” It brings about complete physical separation and constitutes a great loss not only to the immediate family in which it occurs, but also to the whole community. Death is the implacable enemy of man [woman], as described by the Akan in these words: “When death wants you and you call him father, it will take you, if you call him mother, it will take you.” Also death drives men and women to sorrow and despair and has no respect for beauty or intelligence. It appears like a monster taking young and old, and there is nobody who can intervene when it comes.

Euphemistic portrayals also characterize death as a mere physical separation from one stage of existence, life on Earth, to another, the realm of the ancestral world. This is consistent with traditional African attitudes toward the phenomenon of death.

Opoku comments that death remains a riddle and attitudes toward it are ambivalent, and the commonest expressions refer to death in euphemistic terms.

The commonest way is to say that the deceased “has gone home”, “joined the ancestors”, “did not wake up from his sleep” or that person’s bed does not suit him” or that the person “has decided to seek a new sleeping place.” The deceased may also be said to have become God’s property” or “to have kicked down salt,” meaning that the person has stopped eating salt. This explains the practice common in many African societies of presenting the dead with saltless food. Finally, the proper way to refer to the death of a king or chief is to say that he has “gone to his village.”

Some Western psychologists have questioned the usage of euphemisms and concluded that they represent merely denial of the reality of death. The implication of this

---


268 Opoku, “African Perspectives on Death and Dying,” 75.
interpretation is that the usage of euphemisms denies the reality and finality of death. Death is death, and using euphemisms will not help mourners to find solace and consolation in the grieving process. For example, Edgar Jackson maintains that “…Death is an amputation; concealment will not change the fact. It will only delay and therefore distort reality.”

Is it the fear of death that compels Africans to employ traditional euphemisms? It can be argued that rather than expressing a dread of death, there is among the Gamei and other indigenous peoples an existential anxiety associated with the profound process of transition of the deceased spirit into the company of ancestors, which is part of the cyclical notion of life, and as such constitutes an affirmation of death as an integral part of life. Obviously, from a Western cultural perspective, such affirmation will be less appreciated if belief in spirits is dismissed as superstition.

From an African perspective, the Gamei employ euphemisms, consciously or unconsciously, as a way of communicating about the shadow of the reality of death. Most individuals want a real language “as it was intended to be used—to communicate thought, meaning and feeling, rather than to use it to obscure, confuse and deny.”

Their language and their cultural practices regarding the dead reveal they are not distancing themselves from the dead, but rather death and funeral ceremonies are seen as occasions for experiencing the deceased personally. Furthermore, belief in immortality as well as reincarnation among the Gamei reconciles them to death without suppressing the reality of death. From a Ga perspective death is no longer a threat, but rather the last passage to the world of ancestors, a psychic/spiritual transition that is much to be desired. The traditional euphemisms express this worldview.

Language about death expresses the framework of feelings, attitude and the intention of a community toward the dead. For instance, Charles A. Corr, Clyde M. Nabe and Donna M. Corr remark that people in Western culture don’t die, they merely “pass


270 Ibid. 58.
away.”271 Corr and others explain the purpose of using euphemisms: “…While use of euphemism is not necessarily undesirable in itself, it can become excessive and reflect an unwillingness to confront realities of life and death directly.”272 Familiar expressions include “kicked the bucket,” “bought the farm,” “the dearly departed,” “have been called home,” “laid to rest,” or “gone to their reward.”273 Michael Simpson brilliantly summarizes the state of the bereaved thus:

Anyhow, people don’t really die—they “expire,” “pass away,” “depart,” “pass on,” “go to their rest,” or even just “go to sleep.” The dead body or corpse becomes “the deceased,” “the departed,” “the remains of the loved one,” or “a beautiful memory picture.” We don’t simply bury them, we arrange for “funeralization,” from “removal” to “committal.”274

Writing on the subject “The fear of Death” C.W. Wahl argues from a psychiatric perspective that human beings are powerless in the face of the phenomenon of death.

He [she] may assuage its physical pains; he [she] may rationalize it away or deny its very existence, but escape it he [she] cannot.”275 The spirit of invincible belief in Science and the scientific method have compelled us psychologically and unconsciously to deny the reality of death in our language of death by employing euphemisms.276 According to Wahl, “This has been true at all times and in all cultures. The word “perish” has its origin in the Latin “to pass through,” i.e., a denial even in those days of life as termination and finite….We flee from the reality of our eventual deaths with such purpose and persistence and we employ defenses so patently magical and regressive that these would be ludicrously obvious to us if we should employ them to this degree in any other area of human conflict.277


272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.


276 Ibid. 18.

277 Ibid.
In conclusion, an examination of *Gamei* ways of experiencing and talking about death reveals a number of Ghanaian traditional concepts. For the human personality in the *Gamei* worldview, death is not an ultimate physical annihilation, but rather a prolongation of life in the ancestral land, with the personification of death as a wicked destroyer that yet does not bring complete disruption between the living and the dead. On the contrary, death is the process of transformation of one’s status from a deceased spirit into an ancestral spirit, and the reality of life continues.

**Jung /Jungians and death**

As is true of the *Gamei*, Jung also argued that death and life are integral elements of one’s existence just as birth is so important to life. In Jung’s thought, discussions about death are derived from myth and have nothing to do with science. In his memoirs, the chapter “On Life After Death” is devoted to Jung’s fantasy thinking or “mythologizing”: Even now I can do no more that tell stories—“mythologize.” Nevertheless, in his essay “The Soul and Death” he situates the discussion within science. Here he emphasized that the psyche transcends time and space spheres, for which reason it is also capable of extrasensory perceptions. In 1960 he wrote a letter arguing that so far as the psyche is capable of telepathic and precognitive perceptions it exists, at least in part, in a “continuum outside time and space,” therefore giving way to the possibility of genuine infinite phenomena:

> The comparative rarity of such phenomena suggests at all events that the forms of existence inside and outside time are so sharply divided that crossing this boundary presents the greatest difficulties. But this does not exclude the possibility that there is an existence outside time which runs parallel with existence inside time. Yes, we ourselves may simultaneously exist in both worlds, and occasionally we do have intimations of a twofold existence. But what is outside time is, according to our understanding, outside change. It possesses relative eternity.

The central argument is the spiritualization of the unconscious psyche, that is, the unconscious psyche which is common to all human beings transcends the brutality of death and continues to live beyond space and time. In Jungian thought, the individuation...
process may continue after death. Further, Jung employs teleological principles to describe death as a goal but not as an ultimate final reality of life, rather as part of the psychological curve of life.

**The Unconscious psyche’s transcendence of space and time**

Jung’s central concept of the relativity of time and space in the unconscious is that “the relation of time and space are functions of consciousness. They lose their absolute validity in proportion to the weakening of consciousness and to the depths of the unconscious layers involved.”

In the field of science, particularly the atomic world, “the same loss takes place when infinitesimal areas of space and time are under investigation.” Jung would perhaps argue that the infinite extension of the unconscious in time and space enables us to understand that it covers “perceiving” which consists—or to be more cautious, seems to consist—of images or subjectless “somulacra.”

According to Jaffè, “…These postulated images, so Jung adds, are presumably the same as the archetypes, which can be shown to be formal factors in spontaneous fantasy products.”

From a Jungian psychoanalytic perspective, the unconscious psyche transcends space and time because of its essential transspatial and transtemporal nature. In this framework, it is inconceivable for the unconscious psyche to die since the psyche is conceived as spirit or soul with an eternal dimension.

This possible transcendence of space-time, for which it seems to me there is a good deal of evidence, is of such incalculable import that it should spur the spirit of research to greatest effort. Our present development of consciousness is, however, so backward that in general we still lack the scientific and intellectual equipment for adequately evaluating the facts of telepathy so far as they have bearing on the nature of the psyche. I have referred to this group of phenomena merely in order to point out that the psyche’s attachment to the brain, i.e., its

---


281 Ibid.

282 Ibid. 124.

283 Ibid.
space-time limitation, is no longer as self-evident and incontrovertible as we have hitherto been led to believe.\textsuperscript{284}

Further, Jung cautions the empirical world that the unobservable evidence of things outside of conventional notions of space and time are by no means proof that such an existence is in itself impossible.\textsuperscript{285} Jung writes:

The hypothetical possibility that the psyche touches on a form of existence outside space and time presents a scientific question mark that merits serious consideration for a long time to come….The nature of the psyche reaches into obscurities far beyond the scope of our understanding. It contains as many riddles as the universe with its galactic systems, before whose majestic configuration only a mind lacking in imagination fails to admit its own sufficiency.\textsuperscript{286}

And Jaffè elaborates:

The space-timeless realm of “transpsychic reality” naturally tempts one to any number of speculations and hypotheses not only about spirits but also about a Beyond and a life after death. Jung personally held the opinion that man would miss something essential if he did not reflect on these matters and even indulge in fantasies about them. His life would be poorer, his old age perhaps more anxiety-ridden, and furthermore he would break with a spiritual tradition that reaches back to the dawn of human culture. From earliest times death and the idea of a life after death have filled man’s thoughts, and in religion, philosophy, and art have prompted answers to what is rationally unanswerable. To throw all this to the winds, from the psychological standpoint, symptomatic of an atrophy of instinct and a willful disregard of one’s psychic roots, both of which must be paid for dearly. Death remains a terrifying darkness and becomes an enemy.\textsuperscript{287}

Jung’s time hypothesis maintains that the psyche is structured with an indestructible element and boundless with regard to the space-time dimensions. He was persistent in stressing this concept:

What is commonly understood by “psyche” is certainly an ephemeral phenomenon if it is taken to mean the ordinary facts of consciousness. But in the deeper layers of the psyche which we call the unconscious there are things that cast doubt on the indispensable categories of our conscious world, namely time.


\textsuperscript{285} Ibid. \textit{Apparitions: An Archetypal Approach to Death Dreams and Ghosts}, 124.

\textsuperscript{286} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{287} Jaffè, \textit{Jung’s Last Years and Other Essays}, 13.
The existence of telepathy in time and space is still denied only by positive ignoramuses. It is clear that timeless and spaceless perceptions are possible only because the perceiving psyche is similarly constituted. Timelessness and spacelessness must therefore be somehow inherent in its nature, and this in itself permits us to doubt the exclusive temporality of the soul, or if you prefer, makes time and space appear doubtful. It is sufficiently clear that timelessness and spacelessness can never be grasped through the medium of our intelligence, so we must rest content with the borderline concept. Nevertheless we know that a door exists to a quite different order of things from the one we encounter in our empirical world of consciousness.

And in another letter:

The point is that, like all our concepts, time and space are not axiomatic but are statistical truths. This is proved by the fact that the psyche does not fit entirely into these categories. It is capable of telepathic and precognitive perceptions. To that extent it exists in a continuum outside time and space. We may therefore expect postmortal phenomena to occur which must be regarded as authentic. Nothing can be ascertained about existence outside time. The comparative rarity of such phenomena suggests at all events that the forms of existence inside and outside time are so sharply divided that crossing this boundary presents the greatest difficulties. But this does not exclude the possibility that there is an existence outside time which runs parallel with existence inside time. Yes, we ourselves may simultaneously exist in both worlds, and occasionally we do have intimations of a twofold existence. But what is outside time is, according to our understanding, outside change. It possesses relative eternity.

In addition, Jung couched the human psyche in terms of “eternity” and advanced the following argument:

…its deepest reaches, participates in a form of existence beyond space and time, and thus partakes of what is inadequately and symbolically described as “eternity”—then critical reason could counter with no other arguments than the “non liquet” of science. Furthermore, he would have the inestimable advantage of conforming to a bias of the human psyche which has existed from time immemorial and is universal.

---

288 Von Franz, *On Dreams and Death*, 149.


Again, Jung refers to the work of J. B. Rhine to support his perspective of time and space. “However, there are indications that at least a part of the psyche is not subject to the laws of space and time. Scientific proof of that has been provided by the well known J.B. Rhine experiments.”292 In Jung’s thought, synchronistic phenomena are relatively common and this supports Rhine’s “probability-exceeding” hypothesis in physics as well as psychology. He maintains that neither space nor time influenced the result of his extrasensory perception experiments.293 Therefore, in the approach of consciousness to the archetypal world of the unconscious, time and space undergo an objective transformation294. In natural life, one can argue from the start that myths and dreams about life after death are fantasies, yet Jung stressed that what life desires is eternity.295

In his work “Synchronicity: A Acausal Connecting Principle,”296 Jung presents an eloquent scientific exploration of the psychological experience of death. In this work he reports of experiences of unconsciousness and persons returning to consciousness to report about these unimaginable events. For instance, he shares the experience of Sir Auckland Geddes to the British Society of Medicine in 1927 about the significance of ESP (i.e. extra-sensory perception).297 For Geddes, it is possible to explain synchronistic phenomena in the events of severe collapse of a patient. He reports that “…During a state of collapse the patient noted the splitting off of an integral consciousness from his bodily consciousness, the latter gradually resolving itself into its organ components. The other consciousness possessed verifiable ESP.”298 In the context of psychic processes, the experience of the unconscious reality is not limited by space, time and causality; a patient

292 Ibid. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 304.
293 Jaffé, Apparitions and Precognition, An Archetypal Approach to Death Dreams and Ghosts, 123.
294 Ibid.
295 Ibid.
297 Ibid. 506-509.
298 Ibid. 509.
“…could still observe actual events in concrete detail with closed eyes,” as Jung observed. Moreover, it is worth stating that Geddes’s observations support the existence of transcendental thought and perception.

Jaffé explains that Jung adopted the researches of Karl von Frisch into the life of bees, in particular the “bee language,” through which they communicate to their comrades, by means of a peculiar sort of dance, the direction and distance of feeding places they have found.299 Jaffé adds that “…The information so conveyed must be regarded as “intelligent” and is understood by the bees. Yet insects have no cerebrospinal system at all, but only a double chain of ganglia corresponding to the sympathetic system in man.”300 Jaffé described Jung’s conclusion that the ganglionic system can evidently produce thoughts and perceptions just as easily as the cerebrospinal system.301 She asks, 

What then are we to think of the sympathetic system in vertebrates? Von Frisch’s observations prove the existence of transcerebral thought and perception. One must bear this possibility in mind if we want to account for the existence of some form of consciousness during an unconscious coma. During a coma the sympathetic system is not paralyzed and could therefore be considered as a possible carrier of psychic functions. If that is so, then one must ask whether the normal state of unconsciousness in sleep, and the potentially conscious dreams it contains, can be regarded in the same light—whether, in other words, dreams are produced not so much by the activity of the sleeping cortex, as by the unsleeping sympathetic system, and are therefore of a transcerebral nature.302

Von Franz summarized Jung’s hypothesis of time and space as follows: ‘It is obviously not only our experience of space and time that ceases at the threshold of death but also the connection between the psyche and brain activity. As a result the psyche is no longer extensity, but only intensity.’303 Transpsychic reality eschews anything material, hence explaining the experience of psychic life in the unconscious realm.

__________________________
300 Ibid.
301 Ibid. See also Jung, “Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle” 510.
302 Ibid. 16; see also von Frisch, The Dancing Bees, 957, Jung, Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle.” 510-511.
303 Von Franz, On Dreams and Death, 150.
For Jung, the spiritualization of the unconscious psyche demonstrates the continuation of psychic life after death. Von Franz extends Jung’s ideas about unconscious life after death through the use of dreams, alchemy, and Egyptian mythology. According to von Franz “…The unconscious ‘believes’ quite obviously in a life after death.”

In his forward to “On Dreams and Death”, Kennedy-Xipolitas characterized the psychic life of the unconscious after death as the soul’s metapsychic transformation and also as symbolic of the individuation process:

It looks as if the process of psychic development and the acquisition of higher states of consciousness do not cease with the death of the body but continue after death—admittedly in a psychic/spiritual world which is beyond the unconscious psyche seems to be part of the process of individuation which occurs progressively in this life, consciously: the completion of the inner psychic totality, the Self. This may explain why normal individuation dreams are indistinguishable from metapsychic dreams, except that the latter have an “otherworldly” quality. Individuation—the process of psychic and spiritual growth—is actually a preparation for death, the most essential transformation of our whole being.

In psychological terms, I would argue that following these ideas, it is useful to think of death as the attainment of psychic and spiritual growth in the psychic/spiritual world or the unconscious psyche without time or space limitations. Such a framework would help bring a level of psychological understanding to the kinds of experiences of death that are common among the Gamei, as discussed earlier. “In the form of being our birth is a death and our death is a birth,” Jung observed. Again, this is remarkably similar to the idea, among the Gamei, that birth carries with it the inherent process of death, and vice versa. From this perspective, the self-realization of the dead person expresses itself in what Karl Rahner calls the “all cosmic.” Death person becomes “all cosmic” and passes into the concrete ontological material prima of the universe, where he or she encounters the collective ancestors in the world of the ancestors.

304 Ibid. xvii.
305 Ibid.
306 Ibid. xi.
307 Ibid. xix.
In this framework, it is consistent to argue also that ancestral self consciousness means at the same time a reunion of the soul/spirit with collective ancestors, and a reconnection with the celestial community. In Jungian language, “one is oneself transformed into the ‘great person’—into the Self. This is individuation or Self-knowledge,” according to Jung. In a letter to a woman mourning for a child who had died very young, Jung alludes to the Self as the embodiment of all the ancestors and the living.

What happens after death is so unspeakably glorious that our imagination and our feelings do not suffice to form even an appropriate conception of it. A few days before my sister died her face wore an expression of such inhuman sublimity that I was profoundly frightened. A child, too, enter into this sublimity, and there detaches himself [herself] from this world and his [her] manifold individuations more quickly than the aged. So easily does he [she] become what you also are that he apparently vanishes. Sooner or later all the dead become what we also are. But in this reality we know little or nothing about the mode of being, and what shall we still know of this earth after death? The dissolution of our timebound form in eternity brings no loss of meaning. Rather does the little know itself a member of the hand.

According to von Franz, in the sentence, “Sooner or later all the dead become what we also are,” Jung alludes to the mystery of the Self in which all souls, those of the dead and of the living, are merged into a multiple unity.” Thus, Jungian psychology provides a framework for understanding the spiritualization of the unconscious psyche. Kennedy-Xipolitas observed:

As alchemy rediscovered life (spirit and soul) in matter, so can analytical psychology help us re-experience the hidden spiritual aspect of the body-soul, the unconscious—a spiritual life which seems to exist beyond death. The way to accomplish this seems to be through the individuation process. In Jung’s view the act of reunion with the unconscious produces a certain state of mind, namely, an “unconscious thinking.” This natural thought process in the unconscious is an expression of an inner psychic/spiritual life which is not bound to the time-space continuum.
In Jungian thought, evidently the *spiritualization* or the *transcendental reality* of the unconscious psyche locates it within psycho-religious cultural context. Jung argues elsewhere that the human psyche is the cornerstone for all religious experiences. Again, Jung’s concept of the human psyche may present an archetypal idea—*human beings transcend space and time, and may transcend death as well*. He wrote, in this regard, “…The only thing we know within reasonable certainty is that the psyche is relatively independent of time and space or that time and space (including causality) are relatively dependent upon the psyche.”\(^{312}\) Moreover, following this line of thinking, the human psyche has been in existence since time immemorial with a universal outlook. Perhaps this is what led Jung to his hypothesis of death as a teleological concept.

It is a psychological idea that the unconscious psyche is the most mysterious realm or in the words of Jaffé the “unknowable” realm. Jung’s interpretation of immortality is in essence what Immanuel Kant had proposed. Jaffé quotes Kant to substantiate the closeness of the departed spirits in a “beyond” or in the words of Kant, the “other world.”\(^{313}\) For Kant, death is “…only the end of man [kind], not the end of the soul’s life.” The soul “…is not dissolved when the body dissolves, for the body is only the form containing the soul.” Thus birth is not the beginning of the soul but only the beginning of man himself.”\(^{314}\) Kant affirms the immortality of the soul, when he writes that:

> The consciousness of the ego proves that life is not located in the body, but in a special principle differing from the body; that as a consequence this principle can continue to exist without body, and that its life is not thereby diminished but augmented. *This is the sole proof that can be given a priori*, and one drawn from the knowledge and nature of the soul comprehended a priori by us.”\(^{315}\)

There is a similar view among the *Gamei*. The spirit returns to the Supreme Being and it is part of eternity. According to Jaffé the Chinese Taoists express similar views:

---


\(^{315}\) Ibid. 176-177.
“The old master Lie-tse called death “the return of our innermost being,” and Chuang-tse said: “Life is a loan. We borrow it and thus are born.” In the transformation brought about by death we return it.”316 The proximity of the ancestors or the departed souls is still a mystery. Nevertheless Kant’s conception of life after death provides an alternative interpretation. Again Jaffé quotes Kant:

Since the soul has through the body a sensuous view of the corporeal world, when freed from the sensuous view of the body it will have a spiritual view, and this is the other world. In going to the other world one does not enter a community of other things, as it were on another planet, one stays in this world but has a spiritual view of everything.317

Accordingly, the separation of soul from body consists in the transformation from a sensuous view into a spiritual view; and this is the other world. Thus the other world is not another place, but only another view. The other world remains the same as regards objects, it does not differ in substance; only it is viewed spiritually.318

Jaffé summarizes Kant’s perspective of the other world as follows: “…the other world is the same as this world of ours, though experienced in another light. This would imply a constant “nearness” not only of the “other world” but also of the departed spirits, independent of their visibility or invisibility.”319

In addition, Jaffé concludes that the unconscious psyche can be termed as “the beyond”, or “eternity,” or “the other world.” She adds this insightful psychological idea: “The concept of the “beyond” stresses independence of space; the conception of “eternity” emphasizes independence of time. The concept of the unconscious stresses the relativity or independence of both. In fact, the essence, origin, and extent of the unconscious is a secret by no means inferior to that of the “beyond” or of “eternity.”320

316 Ibid.
317 Ibid. 177.
318 Ibid.
319 Ibid. 177-178.
320 Ibid.
Death as a Teleological concept

Jung expanded the meaning of ‘teleology’ in the context of human life and death. Teleology refers to the system that considers events in terms of their teleos; telos, being the goal, end, purpose, and fulfillment. At the time of his Zofingia lectures, he understood teleology as a process “external to man”: “... That is, they do not acknowledge the existence of any teleology external to man [woman], and instead claim that we ourselves have projected onto the world, out of our own heads, the idea of the purposefulness of nature.” Thus, human life is moving toward ends or purposes rather than causes; it underlies the individuation process.

In psychological terminology, death is considered as a psychic fact; it is an integral aspect of the individuation process, which is the ultimate goal of life—the thought that is central to Jung. Life proceeds gradually towards its goal, which culminates in the individuation process. Jung’s psychological construction of death provides a framework for understanding death not as a necessary end but rather as a goal of life, which he couched in terms of teleology. In the context of our discussion, teleology explains the termination of human life or death of an organism and the final goal to which human life is directed and it definitely reaches its ultimate end or purpose. Simply put, death is the destiny of humankind. Psychologically, Jung explains death as the termination of an organic process teleologically connected with life—what medieval Aristotelian scholastic philosophy called a final cause. Therefore, he declares that:

Life is an energy-process. Like every energy-process, it is in principle irreversible and is therefore directed towards a goal. That goal is a state of rest. In the long run everything that happens is, as it were, no more than the initial disturbance of a perpetual state of rest which forever attempts to re-establish itself. Life is teleology par excellence, it is the intrinsic striving towards a goal, and the living organism is a system of directed aims which seek to fulfill themselves. The end of every process is its goal. All energy-flow is like a runner who strives with the greatest effort and the utmost expenditure of strength to reach his goal.322

From the above statements, it is clear that Jung’s understanding of teleology was that the ultimate goal driving human beings toward both psychic and psychological

321 Ibid. The Zofingia Lectures, 67.
322 Jung, Jung on Death and Immortality, 12.
development is death, as the paramount aspect of life experience; it characterizes the individuation process.

**Psychological curve of life**

The derivation “psychological curve of life” is Jung’s idea of psychological development, of *stages of life*, that is, the “unfolding a picture of psychic life in its entirety from the cradle to the grave.” Jung categorizes the stages into the first and second half of life as essential elements of the individuation process. He stressed especially the psychological transition he saw as occurring at midlife. Psychological achievements of the first half of life include separation from mother and achievement of a strong ego, and denouncing the status of infancy and childhood and the acquisition of an adult identity. Most of the achievements include social position, relationship or marriage, parenthood, and employment. The second half of life is characterized by conscious relationship with intrapsychic processes. Relationship is now focused on the Self, not on the ego, with a conscious commitment toward meaning and spiritual values. According to Jung, the focus for this stage of human life is the consciousness of a sense of purpose. In the second half of life, the approach of death becomes a reality. Thus, facing one’s mortality dominates the individuation process. Let us examine Jung’s theory of the stages of life, beginning at birth. Jung writes:

> In this childish stage of consciousness there are as yet no problems; nothing depends upon the subject, for the child itself is still wholly dependent on its parents. It is as though it were not yet completely born, but were still enclosed in the psychic atmosphere of its parents. Psychic birth, and with it the conscious differentiation from the parents, normally takes places only at puberty, with the eruption of sexuality. The physiological change is attended by a psychic revolution. For the various bodily manifestations give such an emphasis to the ego that it often asserts itself without stint or moderation. This is sometimes called “the unbearable age.” Until this period is reached the psychic life of the individual is governed largely by instinct, and few or no problems arise.324

---


324 Ibid. 391.
Jung argues that these states of consciousness are characterized by their unique problems and we must deal with them.325 In conclusion, he writes:

Childhood and extreme old age are, of course, utterly different, and yet they have one thing in common: submersion in unconscious psychic happenings. Since the mind of a child grows out of the unconscious psychic processes, though not easily accessible, are not as difficult to discern as those of a very old person who is sinking again into the unconscious, and who progressively vanishes within it. Childhood and old age are the stages of life without any conscious problems, for which reason I have not taken them into consideration here.326

In terms of humankind’s growth and development over a lifetime, Jung engages the psychological curve of life to emphasize the strength as well as the steady decline of movement in longevity and aging and finally of death. The psychological curve unfolds a biological and psychological progression over an individual lifetime. Biological (physical) growth commences in the unconscious world of the womb and a person’s attainment of maturity in life between ages 20 and 35. However, maturity varies from one individual to another. Different factors including cultural norms, economic status, religious beliefs, environmental changes and individual choices shape one’s physical worldview until death. Traditional rituals also mark a transition between physiological stages of life such puberty, graduation, or death, associated with changes in social status from childhood to adolescence and finally adulthood. Nevertheless, growth forms an integral part of this process, and those who are fortunate or unfortunate to live much longer undergo dramatic steady declines in mobility, health related functions and other vulnerabilities associated with aging. Youthful exuberance influences youthful goals and aspirations for future events.

Psychological growth is more unique to each individual. In this context, psychological maturity includes self-evaluation, sense of judgment, and critical self-examination. In terms of biological growth, Jung suggests it follows the trajectory of a parabola. In Jung’s analytical approach, the psychological rather than the biological curve of life is important. Jung employs the athletic imagery of a runner who strives conscientiously to win the prize as a metaphor for the parabola of life:

325 Ibid. 391-392.
326 Ibid. 403.
The end of every process is its goal. All energy-flow is like a runner who strives with the greatest effort and the utmost expenditure of strength to reach his [her] goal. Youthful longing for the world and for life, for the attainment of high hopes and distant goals, is life’s obvious teleological urge, which at once changes into fear of life, neurotic resistances, depressions, and phobias if at some point it remains caught in the past, or shrinks from risks without which the unseen goal cannot be attained. With the attainment of maturity and at the zenith of biological existence, life’s drive towards a goal in no wise halts. With the same intensity and irresistibility with which it strove upward before middle age, life now descends; for the goal no longer lies on the summit, but in the valley where the ascent began. The curve of life is like the parabola of a projectile which, disturbed from its initial state of rest, rises and then returns to a state of repose.327

Reflecting on Jung’s four theories of stages of life, Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby focus on individuation and integration as essentials for personality growth. The growth process proceeds either positively or negatively depending on a number of conditions, such as heredity, the child’s experiences with his or her parents, education, religion, society, media, and age.328 Hall and Nordby observe that “…There is a radical change in development during the middle years of life. This consists of a transition from adaptation to the external world to adaptations to one’s inner being.”329 In addition, Anthony Stevens, a Jungian analyst echoes the influence of the archetypes in their regulation of the human life cycle. Accordingly, the archetypes mediate every stage of life, and the Self plays a specific role in the psychic development and social adjustment of everyone.330 Moreover, the process of archetypal organization begins with exploration of the environment…assuming the responsibilities of advanced maturity, old age, and preparation for death.331 Essentially, this archetypal organization constitutes psychic nucleus that is responsible for collaborating with these patterns to complete the individuation process.

327 Ibid. See also Herman Feifel, ed., *The Meaning of Death*, 3-15.


329 Ibid.


331 Ibid.,
Again, Jung contends that death is an integral part of life and it is psychologically as important as birth:

Death is psychologically as important as birth and, like it, is an integral part of life. What happens to the detached consciousness in the end is a question the psychologist cannot be expected to answer. Whatever his theoretical position he would hopelessly overstep the bounds of his scientific competence. He can only point out that the views of our text in regard to the timelessness of the detached consciousness are in harmony with the religious thought of all ages and with that of the overwhelming majority of mankind...As a doctor, I make every effort to strengthen the belief in immortality, especially with older patients when such questions come threateningly close. For, seen in correct psychological perspective, death is not an end but a goal, and life’s inclination towards death begins as soon as the meridian is passed.332

The psychological curve of life is a complex phenomenon without strict conformity to laws of nature. As mentioned previously, biological growth starts at the moment of pregnancy, yet sometimes there is the lack of accord early in the ascent. For example, Jung maintains that “…The projectile ascends biologically, but psychologically it lags behind.”333 In simple words, there is not always a close correlation between physical and psychological growth processes. Psychologically, the past continues to linger on and human beings embrace and cherish the ‘good old days’ of their lives. Jung writes:

We struggle behind our years, hugging our childhood as if we could not tear ourselves away. We stop the hands of the clock and imagine that time will stand still. When after some delay we finally reach the summit, there again, psychologically, we settle down to rest, and although we can see ourselves sliding down the other side, we cling, if only with longing backward glances, to the peak once attained. Just as, earlier, fear was a deterrent to life, so now it stands in the way of death….Our psychology then loses its natural basis. Consciousness stays up in the air, while the curve of the parabola sinks downward with ever-increasing speed.334

And in another context, Jung highlights some of the difficult dilemmas of life, especially the challenges of breaking with the past:

332 Jung, Alchemical Studies, 46.

333 Ibid. Jung on Death and Immortality, 13.

334 Ibid. 13.
Natural life is the nourishing soil of the soul. Anyone who fails to go along with life remains suspended, stiff and rigid in midair. That is why so many people get wooden in old age; they look back and cling to the past with a secret fear of death in their hearts. They withdraw from the life-process, at least psychologically, and consequently remain fixed like nostalgic pillars of salt, with vivid recollections of youth but no living relation to the present. From the middle of life onward, only he remains vitally alive who is ready to die with life. For in the secret hour of life’s midday the parabola is reversed, death is born. The second half of life does not signify ascent, unfolding, increase, exuberance, but death, since the end is its goal. The negation of life’s fulfillment is synonymous with the refusal to accept its ending. Both mean not wanting to live, and not wanting to live is identical with not wanting to die. Waxing and waning make one curve.335

Jung summarizes the psychological curve of life thus: “Life is a projectile flying to its goal, life ends in death. Even its ascent and its zenith are only steps and means to this goal. This paradoxical formula is no more than a logical deduction from the fact that life strives towards a goal and is determined by an aim.”336 Psychologically, the goal of life, which culminates in the individuation process, transcends space and time, whereby in the psychological framework the deceased attains his or her authentic self—thus ancestral spirit.

Von Franz analyzes the stages of life in terms of Jung’s experience of the spirit-world, that is, the unconscious, when he was thirty-eight years old.

For in the secret hour of life’s midday…death is born…Waxing and waning make one curve. While in the first half of life consciousness grows out of the purely natural basic by the instincts and strives primarily for the goal of social adaptation and achievement, a fundamental change takes place in middle life—it is as if the sun, after crossing the meridian, drew in rays, in order to illumine itself, after having squandered its light on the world. “For a young person it is almost a sin…to be too preoccupied with himself; but for the aging person it is a duty and a necessity to devote serious attention to himself.”337

Jung encountered the unconscious realm through dreams with recurring motifs of dead figures from his historical past coming to life, “or a dove, transformed into a little

335 Jung, “The Soul and Dead” in Psychology and the Occult, 129. See also Jung on Death and Immortality, 13.

336 Ibid. 14.

337 Von Franz, C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time, 105-106.
girl, coming to him as a messenger from the realm of death.” 338 Jung’s inner fantasies of near-death dreams continued throughout his life. “One fantasy kept returning: there was something dead present, but it was still alive. For example, corpses were placed in crematory ovens, but were then discovered to be still living. These fantasies came to a head and were simultaneously resolved in a dream.” 339

Jung uses the metaphor of a punctuation mark, specifically a period at the end of a sentence, to describe the psychological experience of death. “Death is known to us simply as the end. It is the period, often placed before the close of the sentence and followed by only memories or after-effects in others.” 340 Death is an end event in the life of the bereaved and it offers the living the opportunity to confront the awful certainty of facing our own mortality. Jung proposes that one should not hold on to the past, instead one should confront death as an integral part of a natural teleological fact: “Death is the end of empirical man and the goal of spiritual man.” 341

As Tony Walter observes, “…If death is the end, we are forced to attend to putting all our energies into this life.” 342 Moreover, Jung defines life in terms of an energy process structured in the principle of irreversible movement directly towards a goal.

In addition, Jung himself thoughtfully perceived death as paradoxical, an event that was “a fearful piece of brutality”:

And so it is—death is indeed a fearful piece of brutality. There is no sense pretending otherwise. It is brutal not only as a physical event, but far more so psychically: a human being is torn away from us, and what remains is the icy stillness of death. There no longer exists any hope of a relationship, for all the bridges have been smashed at one blow. Those who deserve a long life are cut off

338 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 171-172. See also Von Franz, C.G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time, 106.

339 Ibid. 172.

340 Jung, “The Soul and Death,” 796-815. See also Jung on Death and Immortality, 11.

341 Jung, Civilization and Transition, 367.

in the prime of their years, and good-for-nothings live to a ripe old age. This is a cruel reality which we have no right to sidestep. \(343\)

At the same time, consistent with his belief in the pervasive operation of a tension of the opposite in all psychological experience, Jung also embraced the notion that death can and should be perceived as a joyful event, as evidenced in numerous cultural settings around the world:

From another point of view, however, death appears as a joyful event. In the light of eternity, it is a wedding, a *mysterium coniunctionis*. The soul attains, as it were, its missing half, it achieves wholeness. On Greek sarcophagi the joyous element was represented by dancing girls, on Etruscan tombs by banquets. When the pious Cabbalist Rabbi Simon ben Jochai came to die, his friends said that he was celebrating his wedding. To this day it is the custom in many regions to hold a picnic on the graves on All Souls’ Day. Such customs express the feeling that death is really a festive occasion. \(344\)

Kübler-Ross expands this idea in her notion of the infinite nature of the psyche. She writes“…I believe that the soul or the spirit continues to live and it is conceivable that this is the reason it is so difficult for us to conceive of our own death.”\(345\) In the same vein, Edgar Herzog points to death as the framework for understanding the spiritual dimension for human life:

Man [kind] first experiences death as that which is “wholly other” in that it is the antithesis and negation of life as he knows it: he [she] then gradually comes to see that this apparently “wholly other” actually belongs of necessity to life and that death impinges upon existence at the point where existence extends beyond life. Present existence is felt to take place within a “world” which is largely “hidden”, and this “other world” gives meaning and order to the present—a meaning and order which is somehow felt to emanate from the “wholly other.” Thus the hidden “other world” becomes something more than a mere negation of life, and neither Life nor Death is any longer felt to be an independent power: taken together they are seen as an activity of the “wholly other”, the Godhead.\(346\)

---


\(344\) Ibid.

\(345\) Kübler-Ross, *Questions and Answers on Death and Dying*. 155. Also see Ibid. *On Death and Dying*, 2.

In my own experience as a *Ga*, I have never attended séances but I have experienced what seemed to me to be clear messages from the dead that seemed as real as anything can possibly be. I have come to believe that our spiritual essence as human beings does survive death. At the same time, it is clear that mediumistic communications can be manipulated by traditional priests and priestesses. H. Richard Neff developed six theories that explain this phenomenon: conscious fraud-investigation, conscious fraud-guesswork, subconscious thought, extrasensory perception, cosmic consciousness, and genuine communication with discarnate spirits.\(^{347}\) In his closing remarks on this controversial subject, Neff writes:

> Mediumistic communications provide substantial evidence for personal survival after death. So far, however, nothing can be reported from this source that would constitute proof strong enough to convince a determined skeptic. But there is good evidence that makes the theory that in some form the personality of a man [woman] does survive death credible to those who are willing to consider the phenomenon with an open mind.\(^{348}\)

Coming back to Jung, it is notable that his concept of the human psyche as a transcendental reality leads directly into the idea of a teleological destiny of the soul after death. He argues:

> …we cannot conceive of any other form of existence except a psychic one; for the life of the psyche requires no space and no time. Psychic existence, and above all the inner images with which we are here concerned, supply the material for all mythic speculations about a life in the hereafter, and I imagine that life as a continuance in the world of images. Thus the psyche might be that existence in which the hereafter or the land of the dead is located…From the psychological point of view, life in the hereafter would seem to be a logical continuation of the psychic life of old age…I do, however think that some things that are said in sittings lend some support to the belief that man [woman] survives death, and it is this evidence which warrants the serious investigation of this phenomenon.\(^{349}\)

---


\(^{348}\) Ibid. 206-207.

Jung’s perception of the state of the immortal soul after death resonates with Plato’s philosophy. However Jung certainly admits that “…At most we can say that there is some probability that something of our psyche continues beyond physical death. Whether what continues to exist is conscious of itself, we do not know either.” 350 For Jung, the soul has an intelligence independent of space and time. 351 He was convinced that the soul was imperceptible to the senses because it exists outside space. However, human beings symbolize the materialization of soul with spiritus rector status. 352 Jung espoused the idea of the soul as transcendent reality, which means that the concept of space and time cannot limit the being of the soul. He declares boldly that “…Everything transcendental, that is, everything nonspatial and nontemporal, will always be incomprehensible to us and in this sense the claim ‘Ignorabimus’ is entirely justified.” 353 He further developed his understanding of the soul and refined it in his psychological theories of hypnotism and telepathic phenomena, which will not be discussed in this dissertation. Jung emphasized the metaphysical essence of the soul. He writes: “The soul, as the metaphysical presupposition of the phenomenon of organic life, likewise transcends space and time, and for this reason its emancipation from sensory manifestation must be expressed in the fact that the soul appears as the basic force of actiones in distans.” 354

Psychic life in the unconscious may even provide therapeutic comfort and serenity for the dying patient. For example, Jung writes: “…we must not forget that for most people it means a great deal to assume that their lives will have an indefinite continuity beyond their present existence. They live more sensibly, feel better, and are more at peace.” 355

---

350 Ibid. 322.
351 Ibid. The Zofingia Lectures, 38.
352 Ibid.
353 Ibid. 39.
354 Ibid. 40.
355 Ibid. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 301.
Another metaphor that has been employed to describe death is the image of motherhood. For example, in *Jung’s Contribution to Our Time*, Eleanor Bertine writes: “Death is then strangely enough equated with the mother. And it expresses a most important psychological relation. The mother is at once giver of life and of death.”\textsuperscript{356} Psychologically, the personification of mother as death reinforces Jung’s principle of opposites which he viewed as an integral element of psychic life: “…Again, the view that good and evil are spiritual forces outside us, and that man is caught in the conflict between them, is the more bearable by far than the insight that the opposites are the ineradicable and indispensable precondition of all psychic life, so much so that life itself is guilt.”\textsuperscript{357}

The above analysis of Jung and Jungian perspectives on death suggests ideas about human psyche and death that have some potential utility in constructing a psychological understanding of *Gamei* cultural practice. It will be helpful at this point to describe the points of convergence and divergence between Jungian psychological ideas and the cosmology of the *Gamei*.

**Points of convergence and divergence in Jungian concepts of death and *Gamei* cosmology**

Death as an archetypal event was emphasized in Jung’s reformulation of the psychology of the collective unconscious as an integral element of universal human experience. Perhaps Jung felt later in his writings that the “collective unconscious” was more applicable to the concept of a community in which resides the wholeness of life. Certain themes, including the metaphysical elements of the human psyche and of community, serve to underscore the convergence of Jung’s theory and the mystical beliefs of the *Gamei*. Jung postulated that the human psyche continues after death through a passage into a psychic/spiritual world that is beyond our rational consciousness or comprehension. This psychological reformulation approximates closely the folklore of the *Gamei* culture. The shared belief is that when someone dies, the soul leaves the deceased body. For Jung, the soul possesses an intelligence that is independent and


\textsuperscript{357} Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 170.
transcends space, time and causality; whereas the Gamei maintain that the soul leaves the body and embarks on a journey to the ancestral world to be reunited with the premier ancestor. From a Jungian perspective, the soul of the Gamei is elevated as a psychic being into a spiritual/psychic world in which all the ancestors (or archetypes of their souls) congregate around the Self, the ground of all life. This new state of wholeness in the Self is depicted in the world’s religions by a variety of symbols, such as Jesus Christ, mandala, cross, and fish.

Jung’s ideas about death focus on the mysterious nature of the Self as the symbolism of the community of the ancestors and the living. In the context of community, Jung highlights the significance of nature, although interestingly, his concept of the collective unconscious hints—at least at some level—of his understanding of community; interconnectedness is a living reality. “Since no man [person] lives within his [her] own psychic sphere like a snail in its shell, separated from everybody else, but is connected with his [her] fellow men[women] by his[her] unconscious humanity.”

Further Meredith Sabini quotes Jung: “This unconscious humanity, which Jung called the collective unconscious, was in no way an abstract concept, but a living reality. It is that “immense treasury, that great reservoir from which we draw.”

Although Jung writes about individuation, his significant contribution to interconnectedness of community, Sabini notes, “… in theory and practice is the concept of synchronicity, the means by which internal and external realities are meaningful, though not causally linked.” For Jung, religious rituals unite individuals into a community of believers and it is in this community that the individual finds a meaning in life, a meaning that is lacking psychological development, and an authentic self. This process of inward psychological development is what Jung calls “individuation”.

358 Jung, Civilization in Transition, 198. See also Sabini, The Earth has a Soul: The Nature Writings of C.G. Jung, 14.

359 Meredith Sabini, ed. The Earth has a Soul: The Nature Writings of C.G. Jung (Berkeley: California: North Atlantic Books, 2002), 14. See also Carl Jung, Speaking, 415.

360 Meredith Sabini, The Earth has a Soul: The Nature Writings of C.G. Jung, 14.

The emphasis on the dynamics of the community in the Ga society, contrasts sharply from the focus on Jung’s theory on individuation. Jung was critical of the fundamental separation in the Western culture of his times: “I remain I and you remain you”—the final expression of the alienation and incompatibility of individuals. Jung’s theory of collective unconscious perhaps approximates the Gamei concept of community, in which the very process of individual identity is inextricably tied to one’s group membership. As the Gamei say, “wo he ji wohe,” meaning “we belong to each other.” Mbiti expresses this with irony: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” He adds, “…to be human is to belong to the whole community and to do so involves (responsibility, obligation,) participation in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community.” That was the summation of the African concept of community as depicting the reality of the collective unconscious, whereby the archetypal patterns of interconnectedness, one’s relationship with others and Nature are expressed. Sabini recognizes the sense of community in Jung’s writings. She remarks, “…Although he did emphasize the individuation process, he explained that this was compensatory for the mass-mindedness of our era. Individuation does not remove the individual from the social sphere but enlarges one’s connection to it.” Jung notes: “No one can individuate on Everest.” Perhaps Jung’s later writing on the psychology of the collective unconscious reflected that he was on the verge of formulating ideas about community, but the individualistic Western culture blinded his vision. The challenge to Jungian psychology is to incorporate the concept of community, perhaps including the living, the dead and the yet unborn, as in Ghanaian mythology. In a world where each and every person also carries their own portion of the universal, collective unconscious psyche, each individuating person that fosters the integration of the unconscious and unconscious

362 Ibid. 212.
363 Ibid. See also Jung, Letters II, 586.
364 Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, 106.
365 Ibid. 2.
psyche contributes to the fundamental concept of collective psyche, which from Ga perspective, I call community. We must understand the psychology of the collective psyche before we can understand the concept of community and vice versa.

In traditional Ga society, the community, not individual, comprises the core of existence. According to Kobina Sekyi, a Ghanaian scholar, “…Society is not a fabric composed of resolvable parts, but an organism of which the parts are necessarily interrelated and indivisible.” This sociological structure of the community permeates the Ga worldview of the family. Opoku also supports this assertion, when he argues “…the most important characteristic of Community in Africa is wholeness, for the community is made up not only of the living. There is an extra-human dimension or religious foundation to the community, because it goes beyond the limits of its members to include the ancestors or living dead, who are forbearers and predecessors of the community…”

For the Ga and the rest of Africa, tradition is anthropocentric. The living and the dead are in holistic relationship. The Gamei live in communities where ethnic descent, clan, and family are of the utmost significance. The person is the core of existence, not in the Gestalt of an individual, but as a collective society with the ancestors, the yet unborn and the living.

Spiritual practices primarily focus on the ancestors and then on the rewards or retributions of evil, and that maintain the moral equilibrium of the community. Kwesi

---


Dickson, a Ghanaian Theologian remarks, “…The most one can say is the African sense of community requires the recognition of the presence of the ancestors as the rally point of the group’s solidarity and they bring the custodians of law and morality, may punish or reward in order to ensure the maintenance of the group’s equilibrium.” 371 The ancestors are the pillars of the community, and to abandon them is to cease to be a whole person. True humanness in Ghana is rooted in the relationship with the ancestors. There is a persistent belief that the community of ancestors exists alongside the community of the living for mutual benefits. African scholars have emphasized the concept of community, which includes the ancestors insofar as they are beings with destiny. Englebert Mveng writes, “…Human beings are beings with a destiny insofar as they are the battleground for the struggle between life and death, the combatants who take sides with or against life, and the initiates in whom the victory of life over death (or its defeat by death) is verified.” 372

Jung reinforces the Gamei concept of community as the Self, whereby both the living and the dead merge into a composite society. In reality, the Gamei perception of community is that the invisible world is a mirror of the human world. Jung’s perspective on the unconscious, as well as the Gamei attitude toward community, may be understood better by focusing on the psychology of the collective unconscious, which provides a lens for interpreting the complex nuances of the relations of individuals to collective society.

In psychological terms, death is not a terror to be afraid of, but instead it is the attainment of a spiritual and psychic growth, culminating in the individuation process as the goal of life. In anthropological terms, we live forever in the unconscious world as a manifestation of unconscious reality. Among the Gamei, death is a mere transition from the world of mortals to the spirit world. In this regard, indigenous psychology owes much to Jung for his illumination and interpretation of the unconscious psyche, transcending space and time. The Gamei would have us believe that the community of ancestors constitutes the foundation on which can be built a viable social and moral and spiritual

order. To emphasize this point, I would argue that the unconscious psyche is the personification of the community of ancestors among the Gamei. Idowu maintains that “…The proper meaning of the ancestral cults derives from the belief of Africans that death does not write ‘finish’ to life; that the family or community life of this earth has only become extended into the life beyond in consequence of the “death” of the ancestors.”

The ultimate point of divergence between Jung and Gamei tradition is the concept of individuation. The individuation process lies at the core of Jungian theory, and is interpreted as the ultimate goal of life. As a theory of psychological development, individuation dominates the stages of life, which perhaps should include the life beyond the grave, since among the Gamei human life is holistic and cyclical, that is, life has no ending and death is just a transitional phase in the cycle of life. The teleological aspects of human life in Jung’s thought, with a definite goal, purpose and end of life through death, is particularly alien to Gamei thinking. In their view, human life is not driven towards an end. On the contrary, human life is the embodiment of ancestors, the living and the yet unborn. Human life is composed of ontological rhythm, one closely related to time, which Mbiti focused on the stages of life: birth, puberty, initiation, marriage, procreation, old age, death, entry into the community of the departed, and finally entry into the company of the spirits. He goes on to stress that these are the significant moments in the life of the individual. In the community, Mbiti asserted the cycle of seasons with their different life activities; sowing, cultivating, harvesting, and hunting are the key moments, which are marked by religious rites and ceremonies. Further, he proposed five ontological realities in the religious life of Africans, which dominates African culture in terms of time. The first category is the belief in God as the “ultimate explanation” for all existence. The second is the reality of spirits, which consist of men

373 Idowu, African Traditional Religion, 186.
375 Ibid.
376 Ibid.
and women who died a long time ago, as well as those considered as “extra-human beings”. Third is personhood, consisting of all humans, including those yet to be born. The fourth includes plants and animals, while the final reality comprises all objects and phenomena that are without biological life. Mbiti reminded us that with these categories, there seems to be a force, a power or energy that permeates the entire universe. According to Mbiti, the two main dimensions of the present and the past dominate African understanding of the individual, the community and the universe, which constitutes the five ontological categories mentioned above. Hence, human life in relation to time has an infinite past, extending toward many generations prior to one’s existence. The African concept of human life, as explained by Mbiti, describes the ontological rhythm of the Gamei existence, which gives life its cyclical pattern.

In the following paragraphs, I attempt to expand the Jungian conceptualization on the core theme of individuation, focusing this particular discussion on the Gamei concept of life. As discussed previously, life is continuous, without any separation of the various stages of life. Neumann’s three stages of individuation will help us in this expansion. The three stages of individuation are: first, the containment/nurturance (i.e., the maternal or in Neumann’s terminology the matriarchal) stage; the second, the adapting/adjusting (i.e., the paternal, or, again in Neumann’s terminology, the patriarchal) stage; and third, the centring/integrating (in Neumann’s terminology, the individual) stage. However, I have also proposed to add a four cycle, the attainment of ancestorship (which is the final goal of life for the Gamei). Jungians may argue that these stages are transitional growth and development in one’s life, but another stage has been ignored: the period from old age to death, when the soul leaves the body and at the same time the soul is transformed or elevated to the status of an ancestor, according to Gamei tradition. The lifelong development of personality is ancestry. Concisely stated, ancestry refers to the process of becoming the personality for which one is destined from the beginning of life, and

377 Ibid. 16.

378 Ibid. 17.

attaining a revered status in the community. However, just as individuation has its crises, so also does ancestry, to wit, acquiring the qualifications for becoming an ancestor. Ancestry builds on the collective personality that includes the ancestors, the living and the yet unborn. All the members of the community past, present and future are believed to be present within the existent community. It does not ignore the significance of relations that are common to all humanity.

Among the *Gamei*, the psychological and spiritual development of a personality is the attainment of ancestorship, which constitutes the goal of life. In traditional thought, time is cyclical; thus life moves from birth to ancestry. Psychologically, the synthesis and coordination of individuation and ancestry start from birth. This is exemplified in *Gamei* naming ceremonies. As discussed earlier, *Ga* people believe that the soul lives forever, and only the body dies. After death, the soul reincarnates into the physical world. Every newborn is an ancestor returned. A child is named after an ancestor to symbolize the ancestor’s return to be born in their family in the community. Among the *Gamei*, once the name of a returned ancestor is pronounced, it becomes the permanent name. Ancestral titles include *Nii, Naa, Ataa* and *Awo*, normally prefaced by the person’s name. To have the name of an ancestor is to inherit the person’s nature, qualities and status. It is a reverent name and the bearer is obligated to behave decently so that nobody makes disparaging remarks about the name in an attempt to denigrate it. Ancestral names are borrowed names; therefore we cannot classify them as personal names. The significance of these names affirms Gamei belief in the cyclical character of life. Therefore there is “no vision of a culminating ‘end’ to individual lives or to human history in general.”

The *Gamei* argue for ancestorship and community orientation, while Jung and Jungians proposed individuation. However, the theory of individuation/ancestry is based on the notion of psychological/spiritual growth and development in a perpetual cycle of

---


life. This theory of individuation/ancestry offers a Jungian perspective on understanding the holistic nature of life stages.

It is important to conclude that Jung’s ideas of the collective unconscious and archetypes of soul/spirit share affinity with Gamei cosmology. By contrast, Jung’s teleological notions contradict Gamei principles of community and ancestry as the ultimate goal of life. I would argue that the final level of the individuation process in the psychic/spiritual world is the attainment of ancestorship, where all psychic beings merge into the Self and live in the eternal company of the ancestors. The complementary perspective may be stated briefly; the collective unconscious represents the Supreme Being and the spiritual archetypes represent the collective ancestors, whose primary goal is the preservation of the community of spirits and all of its traditions.

This chapter highlighted the attainment of ancestorship as the ultimate goal of Gamei, but without physical death and the performance of traditional funeral rituals, the deceased’s spirit would become a wandering spirit in the community. Funeral rituals and practices are statements about the ancestral tradition of the Gamei.
Chapter 4: Community and Funeral Rituals in Ga Society

This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first describes three significant Gamei funeral practices that specifically prepare the deceased spirit for the entrance into the ancestral world. These funeral rituals include the bathing of the corpse, the day of the funeral; the burial rituals, removing of the lost-soul and the crossing of the river to the ancestral world. The chapter concludes with an examination of how Jung and Jungian concepts of the Earth Mother archetype may be applicable to the Gamei concept of the Earth as the personification of womanhood and motherhood. From both Jungian and traditional perspectives the primary purpose of funeral ritual can be viewed as an effort to reconnect the dead body with the archetypal Mother Earth, the origin of life, and this also can be subsumed within Jung’s notion of a collective unconscious. Within this context we examine both the extent to which traditional Gamei conceptualizations and Jungian ideas might converge and enrich each other, and ways in which the two formulations might clash.

The Ritual of Bathing the dead—“Kotsagbamo Kusum” and ghonyo he juu

The Gamei traditional bathing of the corpse is described as Kotsagbamo Kusum and symbolically, the ritual of breaking of sponge. This ritual is the beginning of the funeral rituals and ceremonies. It occurs particularly on the morning of the wake-keeping, that is the night of viewing the body at the lineage house or weku shia. In the context of this ritual, the wife, husband, and maternal and paternal, relatives and in-laws have

---

382 Although, I limited the discussion to three Gamei funeral rituals, there are others—thus the notification of death, the role of the lineage head (weku nukpa), the gathering of lineage members and friends to plan the mortuary rituals, the bathing of the corpse, the visitation or wake keeping, the different traditional rituals performed on the day of the funeral such as presentation of casket, the ritual of reconciliation and the breaking of kola, burial rituals, post-funeral socialization, “adechii” or presentation of funeral account, substitution ritual of deceased spouse, widowhood rites, ritual of removing of “lost soul” and “faafoo” or ritual of crossing the river to the ancestral world. This outline highlights funeral rites for the dead—from the moment of passing away to the crossing over “the great river” into the ancestral world.
shared responsibilities. Additionally, elderly women have significant roles to play by ensuring the participation of exalted persons. There are two points to note about these women. First, they are normally widows from both the patrilineal and matrilineal families of the deceased. Second, they are always advanced in age. Adjei describes the significant contributions of women in the context of bathing the dead:

After libations have been duly administered, then the corpse is made ready to be bathed. The bathing of dead bodies before burial is a traditional practice among many of the tribes of West Africa. In every clanship group, the “bathing of the dead” is done by a group of old women who have been selected because of their age and their sound experience in the traditional and customary procedures of the national group. This selected group of old women are known as gbonyohejuloi, which, translated literally, means “people who bathe the dead.”

The bathing of the dead is usually done with tepid water and a soft sponge and towel. The sponge and the towel are afterwards put into the coffin and buried with the dead. In cases where death occurs so far away that the dead body cannot be brought home for burial, before the bathing takes place, the finger nails, the toe nails, the eye lashes, the hair under the arm pits, and the hair at the erogenous regions of the body are all taken off by means of a razor or a sharp knife. These things, together with the towel, the sponge and the remainder of the spices and balms used in bathing and dressing the dead body, are sent home for burial, not in the public cemetery but at a remote corner of the house. It is the belief of the Ga people that until these things have been brought home and buried in the family house the spirit of the departed member of the family will have no rest in [the ancestral world] Gbohiiajeng, but will go about wandering in the world forever suffering. But when these waster materials are brought home and buried in the family house, it is believed that “the spirit of the departed member of the family has been brought home,” and it is the same as if he did not die in a foreign place but died at home.383

Customarily, bathing of the dead is collectively the responsibility of both paternal and maternal families. The paternal family provides limes (Abonuai) and soft sponge (sawie). In addition the maternal family contributes four chewing sponges (taakotsai akwaabo ajwe loo no). The wife offers sponge (Kotsa), toiletries and perfumes, (Samlia), razors, Soft Sponge (Sawie), Lime (Abonua), Spices (Kroboo), White Clay (Ayiloo) or Powder (Agblama), two pieces of clothing (Mama shishi ke nwei enyo), Scarf (Duku),

towels, Momoto and Mlono. The husband provides seven pieces of clothes, (Helenii loo laayi, kuumo kpaa, Tekle and Momoto).

The deceased children are expected to contribute adeka (casket) and dressing attire (gbonyo atade). Although tradition has prescribed these items, modernization and monetary considerations have influenced this presentation. This is the moment for extravagancy on the part of in-laws, especially daughter-in-laws and wives, to display lavishly their items. Occasionally, when the corpse is a single parent, divorcee, or unmarried, the maternal and paternal families provide the traditional items for the bathing. Traditionally, it is the responsibility of the lineage to bury one of its members. The presentation is accompanied by this expression: “This is the sponge of all your relatives which they brought to wash you in order that when you have gone you will be able to tell their story.” When everything has been presented, the paternal head presents a traditional drink, for example, a bottle of schnapps, or akpeteshie to the elderly woman, the team leader of the ceremony for traditional prayers:

“Naa, Dmene, oyamina Niimei ke Naamei ye jei, noni ole le yaagba shi kaayagba noni olee; no ji kaayamale.” Literally, “Today, you have returned to the ancestors, speak the truth about what you know and don’t tell lies about what you don’t know.”

This precaution is crucial because the deceased spirit will appear before the council of ancestors to answer questions and clarify statements about his or her existence in life.

The type of life a person has led determines, to a large extent, the fate of the deceased spirit. For example, good life leads to good death, but the contrast brings untold hardship to the deceased spirit, even in the spirit world. For instance, if a bad death, the deceased spirit is not given a seat to sit on. At this moment, the deceased spirit becomes a wandering spirit, and sometimes, it will be deaf for a period before he or she will be allowed to speak. The authority of the ancestral spirits is exercised beyond the living

385 Field, Religion and Medicine of the Ga people, 198.
386 Abbey, Keji Afo Jordan, 13.
community. It is easy to state that the ritual of traditional bathing perhaps starts the judicial process among the Gamei.

The symbolic traditional bathing process enters the splitting of the sponge phase and bosao are added to it and presented to the ground. This marks the connection of the deceased spirit to the ground, where his or her back was touched during his or her naming ceremony. At this point, the members of both the maternal and paternal families place their hands on the cluster of sponges and press them down three times on the ground. Then the elderly woman in charge of the ritual concludes the ceremony by gathering the ones for the main bath and then the sliced bathing soaps are included. Traditional belief holds that without the right hands to touch the sponge the deceased spirit is contaminated and this creates insults, insinuations and conflicts among the ancestral spirits in the spirit world. The remaining bathing items are distributed among the members present at the ceremony.

The next phase of the ritual is the actual bathing of the dead at the local mortuary. Between twenty and thirty relatives will leave for the local mortuary for the ceremony. Arguably, seven women including the deceased’s wife are the most important participants in this ceremony. Their task is to make the corpse presentable to both the ancestors and the living by cleaning and bathing thoroughly. This demonstrates that the living have accorded an incredible respect for someone valued as a human being.

The adulation of the corpse reflects the community’s belief in a cyclical life. For most societies in Ghana, the belief is that the deceased must be assisted on the journey to the ancestral world. The Gamei hold that the sacrament of bathing for the dead is significantly the point of reconciliation. Without the touch of water, the deceased spirit has not entered the spirit world, it is powerless and the living can influence his or her intentions. In the process of forgiveness and reconciliation, the dead is always guilty. There are reasons for this judgment. According to the Gamei, the corpse cannot defend his or herself, and secondly if the corpse is not guilty, the ancestral spirits will deal ruthlessly with the perpetrator. Usually, the deceased spirit can arrange for a new settlement in the spirit world. This action implies that the perpetrator would be called to
the spirit world through death and because of this the Gamei say “gbonyo yee bem le” or “the deceased spirit is guilty.”

Libation is offered after the reconciliation. Then the bathing ceremony starts. Before the bathing ritual, the finger nails, the toe nails, the eye lashes, the hair under the arm pits, and the hair at the erogenous parts of the body are all shaved by means of razor. In the context of the bathing, the paternal members hold the sponge and the maternal, the bosao; those from the maternal lineage bathe the right side of the body, and the paternal lineage, the left.

Elderly women of the bereaved family are responsible for the bathing and retrieving the corpse from the mortuary. In order to identify the deceased, if the deceased happens to be a man, then tradition demands that the wife must accompany these women to identify the body of her husband. On the presupposition that she had known her husband very intimately and if illness had deformed her husband before the death, she is assumed to be in a better position to recognize him. If a woman dies, her husband has the same obligation to identify the corpse at the local mortuary.

Today this ritual of identification of the corpse is obsolete and it has created humiliating circumstances for lineage heads and deceased families, with wrongful identification of deceased bodies from the mortuary. I have witnessed a corpse dressed and ready to be put on the bed and another family identified it as their corpse and picked it. But the corpse dressings were removed. In such a shock, the family went to the mortuary to pick their right corpse.

In the context of bathing, when the corpse is a man, the wife has to hold the legs of her husband during the bathing, whereas at the bathing of a wife, the husband has no obligation to participate in this ritual. Nevertheless, during the process of bathing the deceased husband, the wife occupies a small seat on the ground and holds the toes or the legs of the deceased husband throughout the period. This ordeal is what most researchers mistakenly report as a form of violence and they associate it with the structure of widowhood rites. They misconstrue the entire healthy ritual of widowhood rites.
Psychologically, the traditional process of viewing of a deceased spouse for identification purposes and accompanying the elderly women to bathe the corpse is the beginning of the grieving process, and for this reason one can argue that it should be re-introduced. In addition this is the initial process of accepting and acknowledging the reality of death. Symbolically, this explains the power of touch and presence even in the face of grieving. It provides a therapeutic flame for the deceased. It points to a continuing bonding with the dead as a core dynamic in the mortuary ritual. Psychologically, it is a form of confronting the death of one’s beloved without living in a state of denial. In contemporary times, the surviving spouse does not hold the toes or the legs of the deceased spouse or even visit the mortuary to identify the deceased spouse. From a psychological perspective, this abandonment of a powerful aspect of the mortuary ritual is unfortunate.

In the midst of the shock and grief, Gamei tradition calls for the deceased wife to attend the ritual of bathing the corpse. The most fascinating aspect of this ritual is the absence of wailing, crying or weeping since these outward displays of emotion are believed to hasten the decay of the corpse. Nevertheless, the presence of a spouse at the mortuary ritual as well as viewing of the corpse points to the recognition of the loss by means of acknowledging the death and understanding of the death. This is a means of confronting the reality of death. These traditional rituals have significant value for both the living and the dead.

The next step in the process, after the ritual bathing of the deceased, is conveying the corpse from the local mortuary to the lineage house. At this point, the corpse is wrapped in a *kente* cloth. The returning from the mortuary to the lineage house symbolizes being initiated into the immortal company of ancestors, restoration of personality, relationship and experience with the living community. At the entrance of the lineage house, the head of the lineage family offers traditional prayers to propitiate the supreme deity and the ancestral spirits of the lineage, and also to placate the departed spirit for blessings, guidance and to help it to distance itself from the ceremonies until the entire funeral ceremony is completed. Traditionally, the returning of the deceased home symbolizes the “re-establishment, and ancestor’s re-instatement in this status establishes
his continued relevance for his society, not as a ghost, but as a regulative focus for the social relations and activities that persist as the deposit, so to speak, of his life and career.387 One would argue therefore that an ancestral spirit is not thought of as a kind of nebulous being or personified mystical presence but primarily as a name attached to a relic, the stool, standing for ritual validation of lineage ancestry and for mystical intervention in human affairs.388

The Day of the Funeral

One of the significant events of the funeral grounds is funeral donations (gbonyo fuu). Gbonyo fuu is the traditional financial obligation that in-laws and spouses owe their deceased persons to defray funeral expenses. For credibility and accountability purposes, the Ketre receive all the donations, make a record of them, and issue receipts to the donors. Friends and sympathizers also willingly contribute money to assist in defraying the funeral expenses. Occasionally, donors specify donations to the children, spouses and the lineage family. The donors receive drinks from the Ketre and the donations are presented both before and after the burial ceremony.

The bereavement family, spouse, elderly women who perform the bathing ritual, lineage members, intimate friends, and in-laws and casket bearers can be identified by strips of cloth around their left wrists. Traditionally, this cloth is known as Abayay. Customarily, the elderly women examine the closet of the deceased and pick a cloth and tear it into pieces and share it among the immediate family of the deceased. Abayay is not received by hands. Normally, it is put on the funeral ground and the person picks it up there. The traditional manifest meaning of Abayay primarily is that, the individuals are attached to the dead and directly or indirectly belong to the bereaved member.

With the funeral activities in progress, friends, in-laws and sympathizers pass by the corpse to bid him or her farewell and others send messages through the deceased spirit to their departed relatives for health, prosperity, children, and blessings. As the lyric


388 Ibid.
of one song says “Sisa hee le ni oyaa nee, yaakee sisa momo ake, hin kee ehin hamie eee kee kefee amaje mi” or “the new departing spirit should inform the old ancestors that I need help.” Apart from the abayaj, shaving of hair by blood relatives of the deceased serves as a symbol of identification and loss. Gamei have modernized this ritual and accept money instead.

As tradition demands, the deceased’s children have to provide the casket for burying a parent. The children present the casket to the Ketre first, and with acceptance greetings they then notify the gathering—“This is the house that the deceased children have presented for burying their parent.” In some funerals in Ghana the deceased are put in elaborate “fantasy caskets” that are colored and shaped by wood-carvers in response to the requests of the deceased family. Depending on the status and dignity of the deceased; various symbols may be carved. Possibilities include a bible, fish, hammers, bus, oil drum, eagle, cocoa pod, antelope, sport boot, dove, crab, elephant, cell-phones, lion, pepper, fishing net, house, pirogue, red fish, onion, traditional stool, airplane and other objects. Wood carvers and carpenters have a wide range of differently priced caskets, ranging from extremely low-priced to extremely high-priced.

The exorbitant costs involved with various aspects of the funeral rituals may be intimidating for less fortunate families. However, there is no traditional law dictating the quality or cost of the casket that must be used to bury one’s deceased. At one point, churches in Accra initiated a low priced casket program for bereaved families. However, financial support from congregants was less than desired, resulting in the cancellation of the program. Local carpenters are still around who can construct reasonably priced, basic caskets. After all, the ground does not reject low-priced coffins and the dead have no way of being conscious and sensitive to the types of caskets used for their burial.

**Ritual of breaking of kola-nut: Separation and Reconciliation**

The concept of death as physical annihilation dominates the Gamei ritual of breaking of kola-nut. When spouses or intimate friends are separated in life by the

---

inevitable hand of death, the traditional belief is that the deceased’s spirit will continue to hover around the living. Since the deceased’s spirit cannot incorporate and share company with the living, the ritual of breaking kola-nut must be administered.\footnote{Kola nut symbolizes life.} Psychologically, the living and the departed spirit are being separated forever. Death represents a separation rite. But among friends and spouse something has to bring about this separation—thus “to death we part.”

This ritual is done before the corpse is put into the casket. This is a description of the ritual: The living friend brings a kola-nut to the bedside of the deceased. A delegation from the *Ketre*, especially an elder man offers a prayer:

Today_____________ (Mention the deceased name), your departure signifies that you are leaving your friend_____________ (Mention the friend’s name), and you are no longer in his company. Therefore, he/she is separating from you (*Nohewo le eke bo miigba tsere nee*), and you must keep your distance from him or her.

After this prayer, the friend presents the kola-nut to one of the elderly woman in deceased’s room (*gbonyo tsu mli*). She tosses both nuts. If by providence both face upwards the interpretation is that the corpse has not accepted the separation. This elderly woman has to try again. If it persists, then he has to appeal to the corpse to accept their request. On the other hand, after the toss; if the faces land in different positions, that is one upwards and one downwards, then it implies that the deceased has consented to the separation.

This ceremony is accompanied by demonstrative speeches to the deceased: ‘I have come to say farewell to you. You were a dear friend, I loved you and I am sorry that our friendship has come to an end. Do not try to remain with me and trouble me, for we cannot be friends anymore.’ Ambivalent relationships and unresolved grief create difficult adjustments for the deceased’s survivors. Thus, this elaborate ritual is performed when there is unresolved conflict between any person and the deceased, in hopes of facilitating reconciliation before the burial.
In the case of a partner with broken relationships, the scope and content of this ritual is the same as described above. The person has to perform certain traditional rituals, such as the slaughtering of goats or a cow to pacify the deceased’s spirit. One could argue that underlying all these rituals are deep psychological implications. In Gamei funeral rituals, if any conflict is not resolved then the deceased who happens to be a spirit can automatically cause the death of the person. Therefore, no one wants to incur the displeasure of the deceased. Nonetheless, the Gamei seem to have an ambivalent attitude toward the dead. When forgiveness and reconciliation have been achieved, and the peace-pipe has been smoked; all the spiritual barriers have been broken; ultimately the deceased is ready to be put into the casket. Reconciliation on the death bed points to the latent Ghanaian fears of the dead, and it brings out the cause of ambivalence toward the ancestral spirits.

The psychology of the “ritual of breaking kola nut” is the dissolution of relationship with the deceased. Nevertheless, the ritual is a challenging aspect of attachment principles because there are many variables that complicate a significant loss, such as attachment to and relationship with the deceased.

To summarize the ritual of kola-nut hypothesis, there is the belief in the ancestral world that a deceased person continues to affect the society and this result in ambivalence among the living towards the deceased. From both sociological and psychological perspectives, basically there is a permanent separation, or even dissolution of relationship between the deceased and the bereaved in the ritual of kola-nut breaking. Immediately, as the ceremony is performed the survivor recognizes the degree of separation and its permanence without any feeling of attachment to the deceased.

**Ritual of presentation of gifts**

On the day of the funeral, there is the ritual of presentation of gifts to the dead to mark the occasion of the deceased’s preparation to join the other world of ancestral spirits. Particularly important are gifts presented directly to the corpse in the form of currencies, coins, bibles, church hymnals, gold rings, and handkerchiefs. It is a belief that death is a journey, and the corpse has to prepare financially for his or her stay in the other
world. Also the deceased must pay for the cure of his or her fatal sickness. According to tradition, the cure takes place three days from the time of crossing the river.

The spouse, relatives, in-laws friends and sympathizers all approach the corpse to present their parting gifts, which are laid on the body. An elderly woman of the deceased’s family receives the monies from these persons. The themes of all the presentation speeches are distinct, reflecting the relationship of each person to the deceased.

In *Gamei* thought, nothing happens without a cause. Death may have a physical cause. “Protect us against our enemies. If this is an untimely death, after a week cause the death of the perpetrator. Change our fortune from poverty to riches. Do not let any of us fall sick. Bless the infertile women with children.”

Fertility in both men and women was in the past something that was often prayed for when libation was poured to the Ancestor, for the Akan liked to have many issues. It was the prayer of all that a young woman newly married would be blessed with many children. Sterility was regarded as disgraceful and unfortunate for many reasons, and the theme of sterile women being helped to have children by various agencies is common in folk tales. A chief could be destooled if it was proved that he was impotent or sterile.391

Akan funeral dirges express the concept of mortality. As the saying goes, “To be in the hands of Death is to be in the hands of someone indeed.” “If the Departed could send gifts, they would surely send something to their children.” But this does not prevent mourners from saying to the dead: “Send us something when someone is coming this way.”392 The deceased’s power dominates the psyche of the deceased survivors: “there are beliefs in the visitations of the dead, in invisible participation of the dead in the life of this world and in the continuation of ties of kinship after dead.”393

Others send messages to their deceased relatives. Traditionally, it is believed that the spirit pays special attention to the content and intent of the messages. The most passionate and mournful aspect of this grieving is when the spouse presents his or her gift. For instance, if there is a conflict between the spouse of the deceased and the in-laws


392 Ibid. 6-7.

393 Ibid. 6.
it is very evident. Rhetorical and provocative statements are made: “You have abandoned me to fight this battle alone. You have abandoned me into the arms of my enemies. Who will replace you, for without you I am insecure?” These gestures demonstrate a vehement belief in ancestral spirits and their rewards as well as retribution for the living.

Psychologically, the content and spirit of the messages addressed to the deceased spirit reflect the intimate relationship and quality of affection between mourners and the deceased and the circumstances of the death. Anthony Ephirim-Donkor describes the transmission of the messages to the ancestors as follows, “Just as no human being can alter an individual’s purpose of being, so the deceased cannot alter the message being carried to the ancestors. Like God, the ancestors already know what is being brought.”

To summarize, the psychology of the Gamei funeral ritual of presentation of gifts to the dead is based on their attachment to the dead and the immortality of the soul through the reincarnation process. There is a shared belief in the African concept of life as cyclical which revolves around time and space eternally. Adjei argues:

…From the spiritual world, the individual is born again into this physical world of the living, and he starts to enjoy material life once more. ..the belief developed among the Ga people that man [departed spirit] needs practically the same materials of this world in order to live a comfortable life in the world of the dead but living. So the money and the pieces of cloth that are presented to the dead are thought to be of use upon his entry into the world of spirits. In connection with this belief, … it is not that the departed relative is really going to carry the material things into the world beyond; he takes merely the “spirit” from those gifts.

Closing of the Casket

Traditionally, a ritual of farewell is observed. The Ketre invites all mourners who have not viewed the corpse to do so before the body is put into the casket, which is then closed. The climax of the viewing of the corpse is the moment that a spouse is inconsolable, or children, say farewell to the deceased, or parents say farewell to a child. Traditionally, the whole world is silent, and listening to the magnitude of the loss to that experienced by the spouse. Again, this is the moment that the spouse and children are opened and vulnerable to the unbearable loss and the deceased is surrounded by the

394 Ephirim-Donkor, African Spirituality: On Becoming Ancestors, 133.
395 Adjei, Mortuary Usages of the Ga People of the Gold Coast, 91.
nucleus family alone. There is no suppression of feelings and this ritual offers the deceased’s survivors the opportunity to become emotionally free at this time of loss. Intense wailing, weeping, and lamentations characterize this sorrowful time, and the community recognizes that the family is bidding final farewell to their beloved deceased. This is the most painful aspect of the grieving process. Mourning never ends. It is a lifelong process; it is never finished. Psychologically, the grieving of a significant other—a spouse, dear friend, and a colleague is the most painful aspect of mourning and the severity of grief is determined by the a strong sense of identification and the importance which the griever assigns to the lost person. Funeral rituals serve as reminders of our personal limitations and mortality. Psychologically, we mourn our own death whenever we view a corpse. Others mourn for their own loved ones who have died previously. This is evident in their farewell messages to the decedent.

The elder women remove all the gold ornaments and any valuable items used for decorating purposes. Then the coffin is brought outside and lowered down twice to indicate the frailty of humanity. Traditionally, this custom also gives notification to the Earth Goddess and the ancestral spirits that one of his or her offspring is returning to the ancestral world. At this point the religious belief of the deceased has paramount importance. Traditional prayer is offered to the ancestral spirits to welcome the deceased and to separate the deceased’s soul from the family.

Before putting the corpse into the casket someone from the Ketre offers this prayer:

Behold, as part of your bury ritual, the lineage family is offering you this cloth and a bottle of schnapp, present them to the ancestors. If your death was the result of a man, or woman we have no knowledge of, accept this drink and taste it. If this is your destiny or natural death, safe journey and rest in perpetual peace; but by contrast, if this is not your natural death, as you drink and taste this drink, don’t consume all, leave some for the perpetrator, and within three weeks let us discover who killed you. Bring us children, health to all of us, here is drink. Behold, as you go alone, don’t behave as a worthless departed spirit. Amen.

After this prayer, burial items are offered including a pillow, a piece of cloth, monies for the journey fare and to buy water when thirsty on the journey, and donations for departed relatives. The deceased’s nails and hairs which were cut before the body was
bathed, are put in the coffin together with the towel and sponge and lime that were used in the bathing. *Gamei agbonyo woo masei* meaning the corpse of a *Ga* person is not buried in a foreign land. Whatever the circumstances, the deceased’s nails, hairs, toe nails, eyes lashes, and hair under the arm pit must be sent home as a symbol of the person’s physical structure:

In cases where death occurs so far away that the dead cannot be brought home for burial, before the bathing takes place,…These things, together with the towel, the sponge and the remainder of the spices and balms used in bathing and dressing the dead body are sent home for burial, not in the public cemetery but at a remote corner of the house. It is the belief of the *Ga* people that until these things have been brought home and buried in the family house the spirit of the departed member of the family will have no rest in *gbohiiajen*, but will go about wandering in the world forever suffering. But when these waste materials are brought home and buried in the family house, it is believed that “the spirit of the departed member of the family has been brought home, and it is the same as if he did not die in a foreign country but died at home.”

Then the *Ketre* presents an amount of money to the deceased on behalf of the whole lineage family. The *Ketre* comprises a group of four elderly men of the deceased’s family. All of the money is gathered and wrapped in a scarf for the deceased. If the money is in excess, the family members surrounding the corpse share it among themselves. Traditionally, the *Gamei* believe that the spirit has accepted the monies. The other Ketre members are informed by one of the elder women that the deceased is about to be coffined. The final prayer is offered “We are going to lift you to bury you; go and sleep in peace if you have died as destined, but if not, let us discover who killed you: bring us children; health to all of us; here is drink.”

Throughout the funeral rituals, traditional prayers or libations constitute a vehicle of communication with the departed spirit and the collective ancestors and it echoes the fundamental belief in the immediacy of the presence of the ancestors in the living

---

396 Ibid. “Mortuary Usage of the Ga people”, 87. Bruce Finley, a reporter of Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire—THE DENVER POST edition TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2006, presents a cover story “Going back, a final time” reports that “Funeral directors and transportation officials try to adapt as families of immigrants in Colorado increasingly seek to return bodies of loved ones to their homeland. On page 8A it continues that “West Africans share costs, contributing $50 to $100 each to send bodies back to Ghana for funeral with relatives, said Makola African Market owner Peter Dwommoh, who posts death notices on his door.”

397 See Abbey, *Keji Afo Jordan*, 16-18 for the history of Ketre.
community. Thus, the contents are not necessarily bidding farewell to the deceased, but also accompanied by messages for the deceased to deliver to those who have gone before the deceased.

The next funeral drama is putting the corpse in a casket. The deceased is put into the coffin, which is filled with the things that had been given for the burial. The casket is then closed. The closed casket is moved from the deceased’s room to the funeral parlor whereby a traditional prayer is offered. Psychologically, emotions are high with wailing and crying concluding the second of the funeral rituals.

In summary, the second phase of the funeral accounts for ordinary persons, excluding the funeral customs for traditional leaders including chiefs, queenmother’s, and mankralo, and wulomo. This second phase is very elaborate, and includes the displaying of preserved African traditional funeral colors and values.

The three phase of the funeral ritual and ceremonies— the funeral obsequies include the funeral procession from the lineage house through the principal streets; then to the cemetery for burial rituals.

**The Funeral Obsequies**

The third phase of the funeral ritual and ceremonies—the funeral obsequies include the funeral procession from the lineage house through the principal streets, then to the cemetery for burial rituals. Let us now turn to an examination of this portion of the ritual which reflects the culmination of all that has gone before.

**Traditional Funeral Procession “Carrying of the corpse”: “Jennyo gbonyo-nowomo alo shifoo”**

“Carrying the corpse” by four men on traditional pall is primarily for deceased people who have not had any contact with Christianity, Islam or foreign accretions. In the ancient period, Parrinder observes,

Death is rarely regarded as natural, and “carrying the corpse” may be practiced to find out who is responsible for the death. If the deceased’s wife is accused she will be allowed to undergo an ordeal by drinking the water in which the corpse has been washed; or a small kola nut is put in the dead man’s mouth and then
given to the woman with some of his saliva. If she is unharmed by these, she is accounted innocent. 398

Field’s succinct description of the traditional carrying of the corpse among the Gamei demonstrates the deceased spirit controlling the bearers:

When the time comes for burial the body is put into a coffin—it used to be a basket—and is carried round the town. If anyone is responsible of the death either by witchcraft, poison or bad medicine, the coffin will lurch and plunge towards the house of the offender and refuse to pass it. Even when it has no accusations of this kind to make a coffin is always an unruly burden. It is the last time the dead man will be able to make people run about for his pleasure, so he takes full advantage of it. The corpse rushes round to all the quarters of the town saying “good-bye” to its friends. 399

In the old days this moment was a still more anxious one, since (as in many parts of Ghana) the carrying of the corpse to the grave was sometimes used as a method of discovering who had killed the dead man. 400

The tradition of “Carrying of the corpse” is a common funeral procession in Ghanaian cultures, especially for traditional leaders including chiefs, mankralo, asafoitsemei, traditional priests and priestess and non-Christians. For instance, Rattray explains the ritual as imploring the deceased spirit to assist the deceased’s survivors and mourners in searching for the perpetrator who had caused the death. “This the dead person does by causing those who are “carrying the body” to push or knock against the guilty party.” 401 Parrinder, Rattray, Field and Goody have presented the purpose and meaning of the ritual of “carrying the corpse” as finding the person who perpetrated the death.

In the afternoon on the day after the wake, the casket is carried in a procession to the cemetery. The casket is put on the ahimayνa or stretcher/pall and carried by four men. A relative leads the procession with a bottle of alcoholic drink (whisker or akpeteshie) as the deceased bids farewell to relatives, friends and other acquaintances. The pallbearers

position the legs in the front and head at the back. When the bearers are exhausted, they are relieved by a new contingent of men, who continue with the procession. It should also be noted that the deceased’s spouse may prefer to attend the burial ceremony at the cemetery.

During this procession “kolomashie” or traditional drumming, singing, clapping of hands and carved woods is an integral part of the procession. Wailing is mixed with these songs. If a deceased was a traditional leader then the Asafo, companies of young warriors with heads beribboned in red and black, fire blank shots of their ancestors’ old rifles into the atmosphere. They are joined by the cries of the wailing women who exclaim “ei, ei, wo wumei oh, wo wumei oh, naa hii abii nijee hii abii,” meaning “these are our husbands”. This functions as a celebration of life and helps also draw the support of the community.

In Gamei thought, the departed spirit occupies the topmost part of the casket, and directs the pallbearers where exactly to go. On the way to the cemetery, it passes through the principal streets, stopping at all the places and lineage houses that had some connection with the deceased’s daily life. Periodically, the casket will float above the crowd, describing several circles, unsure which direction to take. Then it picks up speed, it changes direction towards a relative or a friend’s house. At this moment it comes to a halt, swaying backwards and forwards in front of the main entrance. At the entrance of a farewell house, a respective family member or lineage head addresses the deceased with raised arms and touches the casket three times with his or her left hand. This gesture is an expression of condolence to the deceased. He pours water or a bottle of gin on the ground and sprinkles some on the casket, then pours some into the mouth of each of the bearers in turn. This is the prayer that is offered:

“Ei (Osimashi)! Aa! Otee baatsemo le obâa. Keji oyaa ni oyaa nee bodientse ogbele ni le, ke otee le owo jogbany; shi keji moko nine no otso keyaa le no dáa ni miyoshwieo shi nee keji onu le shi eko oha mo.”

“Ei (the name of the deceased) Aa! You went to pluck a leaf and you could not return. If this is your destiny, then have a perpetual rest and safe journey, nevertheless, if this is the work of someone, then leave a fraction of this drink for the person.
The casket swings round three times and then the procession is charged with drumming, singing, dancing, clapping, jumping and shouting. Occasionally, the casket gyrates and then sets off again. There are times the casket is heavy and times when it is light “Esheo hei komei in adeka le tsio, ni esheo hei komei hu ni efeo huyee.”

Critics claim that a departed spirit cannot direct the bearers or cause the gyration; instead the bearers manipulate the casket to reach the premises of relatives and friends. In Ga thought, doubters can experience “tsere ṣwane le daaŋ ajeo ye hewo le mamu ṣwanejee nee naa ake moni hée yée le eyatere eko ekwe; keji enojetseremo le wkue wāŋ ehe fii,” literally meaning “experience is the best teacher.” Field asserted that “Any one who has seen the sweating, suffering faces of the bearers cannot doubt that they feel themselves driven. I have seen several coffins spin round, shy, and then seem to take the bit between their teeth and charge round the town.”

Personally, I have seen several caskets dancing the traditional dance obonu, and the gyration of the caskets. When the deceased concludes his or her farewell schedule and it is getting dark, the leader of the procession appeals to the departed spirit to take the route toward one of the cemeteries for interment.

**Cemetery**

The road to the cemetery is characterized by farewell wailing, weeping, lamenting and is accompanied by singing, dancing, jumping and gyration of the casket. Most burials are Earth burials and are usually required to be in a cemetery set aside for the purpose of incorporation of the deceased body into the realm of Mother Earth. This is the only form of final disposal of a dead body in most Ghanaian cultures. Nevertheless, there are mausoleums reserved for the burial of traditional and political leaders.

Corpses are disposed of for sanitary reasons, sociological, cultural and psychological considerations. As Vernon Reynolds and Ralph Tanner observed “dead bodies have to be disposed of and religions often provide the rules and personnel for this, even when the dead and their

---


403 In Ghana, there is a mausoleum named after the first president, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, where his mortal remains and that of his wife, Fathia are being preserved. Donations of corpse to medical science for medical research are also encouraged.
survivors are not specifically religious.” 404 The body is buried six feet below the ground. Kenneth Iserson urges “an unembalmed adult body buried six-feet deep in ordinary soil [ritual space] without a coffin normally takes ten to twelve years to decompose down to the bony skeleton; a child’s body takes about half that time.” 405 Further, environmental factors can delay or hasten decomposition, for instance bodies buried in caskets take longer than those buried without caskets, and bodies exposed to the environment are reduced to skeletons quickly. 406

Cemeteries in Ghana have traditionally been owned by the government through the city councils and churches. In some areas, there are military cemeteries for rulers and their associates (maŋtsemei afonhe). These cemeteries are called “Mamprobi.”

It should be noted that family members are not buried side by side or close together unless the deceased had purchased a cemetery plot for their family. The graves are so close that you have to stand on another gravesite to perform a burial ritual.

The burial rite is performed in silence without music. The company of mourners forms a crowd surrounding the grave with flowers, and leaves. At the gravesite, the casket bearers are assisted to put the casket on the surface of the grave while the leader of the procession offers traditional prayer to the ancestors and the departed spirit. Then, the casket is lowered into the grave. Again a new burst of wailing and lamentation concludes the burial ritual. The committal ritual culminates the finality of life. While the casket is being lowered deceased survivors will be saying “nke bo baya” meaning “I will accompany you or go with you.” A grave marker, headstone or epitaph is put in the grave bearing the name, date of birth, date of death, and age of the deceased for the purpose of identification. In addition to identification, the grave marker at the cemetery gravesite serves to memorialize the deceased and it provides the space for family members to return and mourn the deceased. Family members shovel the Earth on the casket to cover it completely as a ritual that marks symbolically the end of the life of the deceased.

The *kolomanshie* group continues their singing and dancing: “*Anyemimei ni yaa yano anyeko, sisa le abe nabu....* ‘Friends who attended the funeral, well done, the deceased had no mouth....’ This song expresses gratitude to the mourners and sympathizers for a work well done. After the interment, the bearers have to bathe in the ocean for purification purposes because persons who have touched the corpse are traditionally considered to be unclean. Then, mourners return to the ancestral home or the place of the funeral for post-funeral rituals.

Psychologically, the closure of the deceased’s life enables the deceased survivors to focus on their continuing lives, based on the slowly growing confidence, bolstered by the funeral rituals, that they can live life without the deceased. In this respect, the burial ritual serves an extremely important purpose in signifying the commemoration of a life that has now ended. It also reinforces a fundamental reality of life, that death is inevitable.

**Final Funeral Obsequies or *Faafoo***

The burial of the deceased culminates the deceased’s physical separation from the company of mourners, yet the funeral obsequies may be planned between five and ten years and the ceremonies cover three days. Traditional “*Faafoo*” or final funeral obsequies are another day dedicated to perpetual incorporation of the deceased spirit into the ancestral world. In another perspective, this ritual offers the deceased survivors an opportunity to “say final farewell” to the deceased spirit. In *Gamei* traditional thought, without this ritual the deceased spirit continues to hover around the house and can join the family at meals, and even perhaps cannot cross the boundary between the living and the dead. Metaphorically, the *Gamei* believe that the deceased has to cross the River Jordan, similar, to the experience of the people of ancient Israel. As a popular *Ga* funeral dirge states:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Beni maf} \text{o Yordan faa le,} \\
& \text{Mike je neen nii aágbla mli} \\
& \text{Je nee nii mashi;} \\
& \text{Beni maf} \text{o Yordan faa le,} \\
& \text{Nenefaa kometoo mikeago,} \\
& \text{Faa le dale keya mistsewe.} \\
& \text{Faa le dale nyeen mi asu kokooko,} \\
& \text{Mijielo baahere mi atuu.}
\end{align*}
\]
Tradition acknowledges that there is a river that a departed spirit has to cross, before entering the ancestral world. At the banks of this river their noses are broken and they speak through their nasal tones.\textsuperscript{407} The broken nose symbolizes the separation from the human society into the ancestral world.

Funeral rituals and ceremonies mark the distinctive element in Ghanaian cultures as observed in the funerals of traditional leaders and their associates including chief, mankralo, asafoiatsemei, wulomei (high priest), and wontsemei (traditional priest or priestess). In addition, there are variations of funeral ceremonies for common persons. One might argue that the funeral brings out the collective distinction of personality representations in the community. Nketia for example, maintains, “The funerals of kings and people of royal birth are not celebrated in exactly the same way as that of common people. Nor is accidental death or death by suicide or death through childbirth, or death suspected to be caused by witchcraft, sorcery or poison regarded and celebrated in the same way as death through “normal illness” or old age.”\textsuperscript{408}

Traditionally, the departed spirit of the personality is consulted through occultism and provides the traditional items needed for performing and celebrating this ritual. If a deceased’s survivor, for instance a child is indisposed, the traditional conviction is that the deceased spirit wants the child to join him or her in the ancestral world.

It should be noted that funeral expenses compel survivors to postpone this ritual for years. No one can fail to recognize that the traditional “\textit{Faafoo}” is adhered to by traditionalists. There are two significant funeral rituals for the traditionalists—\textit{Oshamada} and \textit{Agbamaa}.\textsuperscript{409} \textit{Oshamada} is the ritual for traditional rulers and \textit{Agbamaa} is the corresponding ritual for traditional high priests and priestesses (“wontsemei.”) The festival duration covers three days and in-laws who cannot contribute financially during the actual funeral are expected to settle their funeral debts.


\textsuperscript{408} Nketia, \textit{Funeral Dirges of the Akan people}, 5.

\textsuperscript{409} \textit{Oshamada} is performed by the coronation chief therefore it takes years before a funeral chief is performed.
Oshamada commences with the purchase of a cow—the ritual animal—and drinks, most essentially a box of gin. The cow is tied to a chariot and paraded through the principal street with music, singing and dancing. In this procession, a young boy with his hair shaved completely is carried on someone’s shoulders. The ritual symbol of the boy represents the authority of the deceased chief, as well as the dignity and integrity of the deceased chief. The climax of Oshamada is the slaughtering of the cow, after which, the meat is distributed among the traditional leaders. The slaughtering of the cow demonstrates that the deceased person’s life is very important to the community. The blood of the animal opens the gate for embarking on the journey to the ancestral world. Psychologically, the slaughtering of the funeral animal enhances the prestige of the deceased, the incorporation process of the deceased spirit into the company of ancestors. To the living community it is a symbol of loss as well as a symbol of the mystical transformation of the deceased into a new status and identity.

The ritual animal or the funeral animal is slaughtered in the name of the dead man. For clarification purposes the ritual animal is not similar to sacrificial animals. The funeral animals are not slaughtered at any altar or a particular shrine, but beside the entrance of the chief’s palace. Among the Gamei, the cow is considered to be a sacred animal representing the deceased chief while the parade through the community means ‘taking away the sins’ of the community onto itself before enduring the ritual of slaughtering.

Let us now examine the Agbamaa. Literally, Agbamaa means “erecting a shade.” The Wulomo and Agbáafoi, company of traditional priests, priestesses and drummers of the traditional area are consulted. Tradition holds that one cannot visit the elders without a drink, therefore a bottle of gin and local drink are presented to them. At the completion of the shade the entrance is closed with three maize plants placed on both sides. The third plant is hung from the roof; then a huge traditional cloth is used to wrap the entire building. The next phase is latemaa—erecting of three traditional fire benders on a high level land to prevent a rainfall from extinguishing the fire. Three huge fire logs are placed in the fire bender. Then a traditional prayer is offered as follows;
What is today? Today is Saturday (the day of the funeral ritual)
Grandfather’s and Grandmother’s Saturday
Whatever is practice in God’s Kingdom
It is the same practice been done in the Skies
Today, we are performing the ritual of crossing the river for the deceased.
Blessed our children and pregnant women
Blessed our labors and multiplied our resources
To defray the funeral expenses.

At the end of the libation, the fire is set. In the process of lighting the fire, gun powder and local drink—“akpeteshie” are poured on the fire logs. The ritual of fire continues throughout the funeral celebrations without any one attempting to extinguish it.

**The Day of the Funeral: Yarafeemogbi**

In the preceding discussion there is the recognition that *Oshamada* is performed for chiefs and the erection of shade for traditional high priests and associates. Drumming is the significant element of this ritual. When the drummers arrive at the funeral parlor, immediately they report to the *yaratse* (“funeral director”), who presents them and the priestesses with drinks. At this juncture, the various *Ketre* at the funeral parlor present drinks to one another. There are the traditional greetings with exchange of drinks. Moreover, the elderly women will be splitting sponges at the funeral home “*weku shia*” – with the acclamations: “These are the drinks from the deceased children”. The mourners also serve food at the funeral to defray the funeral expenditure. Drinks are presented to the drummers and the traditional priestesses and priests throughout the ceremony. Drumming and traditional dancing by priestesses and priests continue for a week. By the end of the week, there is the removal of the shade and it is disposed of in the ocean or rubbish damp. A vigil is kept at the site of the hut until the following morning, at which point the funeral is completed.
On the following day, the deceased’s family observes a traditional expression of gratitude to the attendees of the funeral. This ritual serves a significant purpose of acknowledging those who have assisted them by contributing towards the funeral expenses. Normally, men perform this ritual at dawn by knocking at the window of the person. Alternatively, in the morning women gather at the funeral home in a group. They carry with them cymbals. Since they cannot recall the names of all the attendees they walk through the streets and the quarters expressing their gratitude to everyone involved. Their statement of thanksgiving is as follows: “Good morning! The deceased has extended his or her gratitude to you.” When they have completed the traditional ritual of thanksgiving, they return to the funeral home for refreshment. This type of funeral is very elaborate. Therefore, the lineage head sets another day for the examination of the funeral expenditures, involving all lineage family members.

This section attempts an analysis of the funeral rituals ‘crossing of a river” in Ga terminology as a traditional ritual of incorporation of the deceased spirit into the ancestral world.

Ritual of removing the unfound deceased spirit/ ‘Otofo jiemo kusum’

Traditional rituals are performed to transit the deceased spirit from the wandering land to the community, typical for those who have suffered death by accidental means including, for example, a motor-accident, a fire or a drowning. Traditionally, there is the belief that the deceased spirit has become a discomforted wanderer; therefore it cannot associate with the rest of the ancestral spirits. Moreover, the spirit cannot visit the family house. The Ga conviction in the apparition of ghosts of the departed spirits, allows them to make a distinction between the term “ghost” and the spirit of the dead (sisa). A ghost is a wandering spirits of the deceased in the neighbor without any funeral rituals. The ghost may visit the home as a troubled spirit, swift off lights, playing with cooking utensils, crying, laughing, accompanying love ones and children to inform them about the purpose of his frequently visit.

Psychologically, the ancestors appeared in dreams, through mediums and physical appearance. This is difficult to understand but this is the Ga worldview. The Ga name for ghost is sisa. Another kind of ghost is “Otofo” or ‘one lost’ is the spirit of the dead who
were victims of premature and tragedy death to their respective homes. Parrinder observes:

The Ga thinks that when anyone dies violently or prematurely his spirit wanders about for forty days as a ghost (otofo). It is savage and angry at having been taken thus unwontedly, and is jealous of other people’s pleasures, dancing and feasting, and especially of sexual intercourse. If it meets anyone coming home late at night from such pleasure, the ghost will chase him or she till the persons dies of heart failure. Those who go about late on lawful and sober occupations are not harmed by ghosts, provided that they pretend not to see them…. The ghost weeps and groans, and whistles shrilly to other ghosts.\footnote{Parrinder, \textit{West African Psychology}, 88.}

In \textit{Gamei} terminology, this traditional ritual is called ‘Otofo jiemo’ meaning ‘one lost’ or what Pauline Boss has termed “ambiguous loss.”\footnote{Pauline Boss, \textit{Ambiguous loss: Learning to live with Unresolved Grief} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999)/} A miniature coffin is made, covered with white cloth and then carried to the location of the accident. Traditional prayers are offered while the name of the deceased is repeated three times; with outbursts of wailing and mourning simultaneously by the deceased family and mourners. The ritual specialist, an elderly woman exclaims, “We have looked for you, but cannot find you.” In the case of a drowning, some sand from the beach is collected and placed in the coffin. This is what A. B. Ellis observed among the Akans, a practice which also applies to the \textit{Gamei}:

Some sand from the beach is then placed in the coffin, some sea-water poured into it, and, with the usual lamentations, the coffin is buried, usually on the beach. In the case of a man [person] destroyed by fire, some of the ashes of the burned body, or of the house in which it was consumed, are placed in the coffin with similar ceremonies. In this ceremony a fragment of the corpse is always interred if possible; and if no portion of it can be found, some Earth, water, or other substance from the locality in which the death occurred. The custom appears to owe its origin to the belief that if respect be not shown to the deceased, by paying him [her] the usual funeral honors, the \textit{sisa} will come into the dwellings of the neglectful relatives, cause sickness, and disturb them by night. Consequently, no body being forthcoming, they perform the funeral rites over a substitute; taking care,
however, to announce to the srahman of the deceased, or the sisa that they have sought for the body in vain.412

Psychologically, the ritual of removing the deceased spirit serves as the therapeutic structure for healing the wounds of the deceased’s survivors, because they are left with a sense of loss, fear, and anger. This is true for the Gamei as well as for other cultures. For example, as Joan Beder has noted, “the reality of the loss of loved ones becomes complicated by the lack of physical confirmation of death [unreality about the loss]. These losses, in which there are no remains to bury and no definite confirmation of death, extend the grieving period and can produce complicated or pathological mourning.”413 Beder believes that without retrieving the body, the trajectory of the post-death experience is altered for the bereaved. She writes, “For the families and individuals, the loss has to be handled differently and the situation can prove to be highly stressful. For them, the loss is incomprehensible, as there are no remains to bury and to focus the grief on; many people need the concrete experience of seeing a body to make the death real.”414 In addition, an ambiguous loss situation is characterized by feelings of helplessness, depression, anxiety, and relationship strain. There are significant reasons manifesting person’s reactions to the ambiguous loss situations:

First, because the loss is confusing people tend to become immobilized and baffled as they strive to make sense of their situation...Second, the uncertainty prevents people from adjusting to new roles required of them in relation to their loss, the ambiguity of the situation makes it difficult to act...Third, the individual and family are deprived of the rituals that attend death in their culture and the needed closure is absent.

Additional reactions associated with the loss when nobody has been found include denial, confused boundaries, continuous information seeking, and emotional swings...Other possible reactions include a posttraumatic stress response, with the obsessive need to relive and replay parts of the disaster.415


414 Ibid.

415 Ibid.
In the light of discussion the “lost soul” it is instructive to hear of Jaffé’s conception of the redeemed ghost. She writes:

From the psychological point of view they may be considered as personified projections, or exteriorizations of psychic contents, the “projector” being the person who encounters the ghost. The parallelism between the behavior of the ghosts and that of unconscious contents...becomes evident: the “ghosts” require for their redemption a positive relationship with man [person] —a relationship which is expressed here in the act of forgiving. On the other hand, it is the unconscious complexes or contents of the psyche which force their way into consciousness, and only when they are accepted, when man has become conscious of them, is the “complex” dissolved and man [person] at peace with himself. In the particular case of dark and unredeemed ghosts the psychological analogy is a challenge to become conscious of one’s dark and undifferentiated sides or of one’s own “shadow” and to feel compassion for the guilty ones.416

In psychological terms, the “lost souls” that are not redeemed fall back into the darkness of the unconscious realm. Moreover, the “soul” may perhaps represent the emergence of one’s dark and undifferentiated sides in consciousness as well as one’s own shadow.

In conclusion, one can say that the elaborate Gamei funeral rituals and ceremonies represent traditional practices through which the deceased spirits are incorporated into the ancestral world.

**Jung and Gamei psychology of the unconscious—the archetype of Mother Earth**

From a Jungian perspective, the burial ritual might be understood as a process for incorporating the dead body into the realm of the archetype of Mother. Traditionally, this phase is incomplete until the final funeral rituals which prepare the deceased spirit for the journey to the ancestral world, ultimately incorporating the deceased spirit into the ancestral world while also returning the deceased’s survivors into the rhythms of their continuing lives. The concept of life connecting to Mother Earth illustrates the idea that life originates from Mother Earth, centered on her presence and culminates in her womb.

Psychologically, Jung contended that the Earth is the primordial womb, which represents the origin of life, and “from which everything begins and in which everything

---

The mythology which presents the Earth as Mother Earth or Great Mother, the Archetypal Feminine has been interpreted and expanded by Erich Neumann in his work on “The Creation Myth: Uronoros.” Neumann contends that the Uroboros is the “maternal womb” the round container in which all that is archetypal exists. The womb is a primordial personification of the place of origin:

…a world of cosmic region where many contents hide and have their essential abode. “The Mothers” are not a mother. Anything deep—abyss, valley, ground, also sea and the bottom of the sea, foundations—the underworld, the cave, the house, and the city—all are parts of this archetype. Anything big and embracing which contains, surrounds, enwraps, shelters, preserves, and nourishes anything small belongs to the primordial matriarchal realm… the archetype of the bestower Primordial Mother.

Neumann describes the elementary character of the Feminine Archetype with appellations similar to African thoughts: the Great Round, the Great Container that sustains everything originates from her bowels: “tends to hold fast to everything that springs from it and to surround it like an eternal substance. Everything born of it belongs to it and remains subject to it…” And this is what Neumann’s psychology designates as matriarchal. The fruitfulness of the maternal uronoros—the Great Earth Mother—is life affirmation and connectedness of the psyche. This suggests that she is the giver of nourishment, pleasure, protection, warmth, comfort and forgiveness. In addition, she is the refuge for humanity, the primary goal of all desire. “For always this mother is she who fulfills the bestower and helper.”

---

417 Jung, “Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype” 92.


419 Ibid. 13.

420 Ibid. 14.


422 Ibid. 28.

423 Ibid. The Origins and History of Consciousness, 15.
Neumann defines Feminine “greatness” in terms of these excellent virtues—the giving of life, nourishment, warmth, and protection. This helps to understand why feminine images dominate the human symbolism in many cultures. At the same time, in the neo-Jungian framework outlined by Neumann, the archetype of the Terrible Mother is one that represents energies that allow the child to starve and thirst when she withdraws from living things. There is therefore, in classic Jungian terms, a tension of the opposites—the Great Earth Mother and the Terrible Mother.

Neumann’s exegesis of the Maternal Uronoros as the womb of the primordial symbolizing the origins of life, and the virtues of the Great Earth Mother resonates in many ways with the Ga traditional concept of the Earth as the Great Mother, in whose womb the collective ancestors reside and the spiritual powers of the Earth persistently influence the life of the living. The Great Earth Mother imagery, as a spiritual entity is perhaps an indigenous traditional phenomenon. In the context of the imagery of the Earth Mother, one could argue that the Earth is the mother of all humanity and only traditional cultures, like the one developed among the Gamei are conscious of it.

For Karl Kerényi, the renowned mythologist, the concept of the “Great Mother” is the personification of the unconscious psyche, which incorporates, as for Neumann, two aspects, both embodied in the symbolic energy of the goddess Aphrodite (Venus), who is seen not only as the goddess of love, but also the queen of the underworld or of death. Similarly, Jaffé writes:

This goddess of Earth, or the archetypal figure of the “Great Mother,” has to be understood as a personification of the unconscious. The unconscious is the maternal, instinctive foundation of man as a living creature; it is the “mother” of his mind and of consciousness as well. The unconscious reigns at the beginning of his life and fate, when consciousness awakes, and again at the end, when life and consciousness sink back into the darkness of the maternal unconscious. Life, or love, and death are the mysterious boundaries of the female principle itself.

The unconscious is surely the Parnmeter, the Mother of All (i.e., of all psychical life), being the matrix, the background and foundation of all the differentiated

424 Ibid. 13.
426 Ibid. 91.
phenomena we call psychical: religion, science, philosophy and art. Its experience—in whatever form it may be—is an approach to wholeness, the one experience absent in our modern civilization. It is the avenue and via regia to the Unus Mundus.427

The most important aspects of the Great Mother archetype were summarized by Jung in the following typical images:

On the personal level, she is the mother, the grandmother, the stepmother, the nanny, the ancestress, the goddess, the Virgin Mary, Sophia. She is the goal of the longing for salvation, paradise, the kingdom of God, the church, a piece of land, heaven, Earth, the forest, the sea and nonflowing bodies of water, matter, the underworld, the moon, the tilled field, the garden, the boulder, the cave, the tree, the springhole, the baptismal font, the flower, the mandala, the oven, the stove, the hare, and, in all a quite general way, the helpful animal. Psychologically, it is whatever is kindly, sheltering, bearing, growth-fostering, fertility-bringing, nourishment-providing; places of transformation; rebirth; that which is secret, hidden, dark; the world of the dead; that which devours, seduces, poisons, arouses fear; that which is inescapable. All these images belong to the archetype of the Great Mother.428

By examining in detail these statements by Jung and Jungians on the archetype of Mother Earth, it is now possible to understand the ancestral world of the Gamei as the personification of the unconscious, which is a powerful psychological force that can be thought to be present in all human experience. From this perspective, the Gamei can be viewed as quite sophisticated in their recognition of the need to nurture and develop these important aspects of universal human experience. In this framework, the archetypes of ancestors exert a powerful influence on the conscious world of the living, transcending space and time. All of the rituals funeral rituals that have been described in this chapter can be understood as processes that strengthen this influence.

Jung, who is perhaps the only Western psychologist who made attempts to understand the psychology of the ancestral world, may have provided an important bridge for forging connections between Western industrialized cultures and the indigenous


culture of Africa. That is, in arguing for a psychology that illuminates the critical role of the unconscious psyche. Jung prepared the way for a deeper explanation for the salient role of the ancestors among indigenous cultures like the Gamei. Again, the ancestors, in this framework, are reflections of a complex psychical world which, ironically, has been devalued and de-emphasized in the industrial West.

In Ga thought, the inseparable connection between the unconscious (the land of the dead) and the conscious (the land of the living) reflects in a Jungian conceptual framework profound significance of a dimension of the human spirit in which “dreams [land], must be refer to a psychic or pneumatic world of ghosts, spirits, ancestors, souls and daimones.”429

Within this context, Jung’s interest in the spiritual world of indigenous cultures supports the importance of ritual funeral practices among the Gamei. It suggests “the primacy of the psyche, for that is the one thing which life does not make clear to us.”430 James Hillman, another neo-Jungian scholar quotes Robert Lowie, who maintains that “the ‘psyche’ (i.e., the entity which functions after death or in dreams or trances)—instead of actively functioning in living and conscious human beings—is quite dormant in the conception of most primitive peoples.”431 In some ways, however, we might argue simply that indigenous cultures like the Gamei operate on a highly evolved level psychologically, but simply don’t understand the depth of their sophistication. In the introduction, Jungian perspectives help to illuminate this paradox.

In one way to imagine a conversation between the Gamei and Western thinkers like Jung and Hillman we might envision these Western theorists suggesting to the Gamei that they can view the spiritual world from a psychological perspective. This is not to suggest that their traditional experiences are illusionary, or simply “in their head,” but rather that they are reflections of profound, deeply human experiences, part of the “mystery” that surrounds all of human life. Hillman comments on the mystery of the personality in the spiritual world—“Entering the underworld” refers to a transition from


431 Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 47.
the material to the psychical point of view. Three dimensions become two as the perspective of nature, flesh, and matter fall away, leaving an existence of immaterial, mirror-like images, *eidola*. We are in the land of soul. As Nilsson says, “*Eidolon…signifies simply “image” and always keeps this sense…for the Greeks the soul was an image.*”

**Summary and Conclusion**

From a *Gamei* perspective, funeral rituals and ceremonies are essential and integral community practices. They are viewed as necessary for preparing the deceased spirit for entrance into the ancestral world. The traditional preparation has spiritual dimensions. The ‘ancestral world’ and ‘ancestral spirit’ primarily refer to spiritual concepts. These are thus an assertion of the present effects of belief in immortality and cyclical life. However, traditional rituals are performed primarily for the deceased’s survivors.

Three traditional institutions that address issues confronting those who survive the death of a loved one are “*nidinjiemo*”, “*hebulemo*” and widowhood rite.

A remarkable rite of passage for the deceased’s spouse is the traditional ritual of ‘the removal of the mourning clothes,’ which in *Gamei* terminology is —‘*Nidinjiemo*” or “removing of the mourning cloth.” The period of mourning varies from a week to forty days after the burial ceremony. The *Gamei* describe the ceremony which begins the widowhood rite as ‘*tsu mli wo*’ or ‘room confinement’. In this ceremony, the deceased’s spouse immerses herself or himself in the ocean seven times ‘*amli kpawo,*’ symbolizing the completing of the burial ritual, and leaves the cloth for the bath at the ocean, without turning her back. Tradition holds that turning her back symbolizes extending an invitation to the deceased spouse. Further, she puts on black cloth symbolizing the beginning of the widowhood phase, the recognition that loss has occurred and the acceptance of being currently without a partner. These are inescapable realities of the widow’s and widower’s current identity leading to the completion of the mourning. During this period, the widow wears black ear rings and finally shaves her hair as a sign of grief. In a similar context, a

---

432 Ibid. 51.
widower observes the cultural shaving, wearing of black attire without the wearing of ear rings.

The widowhood rite is observed for a year and it marks a period of mourning, grieving and acceptance of the reality of loss; therefore there is no cultural violence being perpetrated against any woman. Bereavement, loss and mourning are the most traumatic experiences of a deceased survivor regardless of gender, or age. The loss of a beloved one or a significant other is psychologically traumatic to the magnitude of being severely wounded. The question is how can a culture that reveres her citizens consciously perpetuate inhumane ordeals? These inevitable reactions to loss amplify the necessity for relevant rituals in contemporary cultures to deal with the deceased spirits. Widowhood rituals among the Gamei are prescribed mourning ceremonies and practices for dealing with the termination of the grieving period and the ‘letting go’ of the attachment and the memories of the deceased. A significant aspect of the widowhood phase is working through these attachments and relinquishing them.

Let us consider the complete process of widowhood ritual among the Gamei, thus okulanfeemo.

Rite of Purification and Widowhood rite: Hebulemo

Funeral rituals and ceremonies create liminal personae (threshold people) with a new identity. Without the completion of the ritual, the widow is still her late husband’s wife and widower is still his late wife’s husband. In other words, the psychological ambivalence and the feeling of attachment to the deceased requires the performance of this ritual. Gamei traditional thought compels a deceased person’s spouse—widow or widower – during the year-long mourning period to perform the rite of purification to terminate the period of defilement, thereby completing the grieving process. This enables the mourner to re-enter triumphantly into the life of the community; refreshed with a new sense of personhood and hope. The traditional duration of the widowhood phase with a defined time period posits a challenge to the bereaved in terms of the circumstances surrounding a loss.

The widowhood rite provides the time for the bereaved to conquer pathological grief and to avoid complicated mourning. This ritual is psychologically significant
because during the mourning season, the deceased’s spouse wears a mourning cloth; he or she lives between two worlds—the world of the living and the departed -- and maintains an intimate relationship with both worlds. The thesis of this section is that the Gamei rite of purification and widowhood rite are rituals of perpetual separation that offer specific spiritual channels for survivors’ healing during the mourning period. The ritual allows the deceased spouse to welcome a new day without the wearing of the ‘black’ mourning cloth again. It is a form of grieving therapy that alleviates the period of sorrows, grief and guilt from the psyche of the deceased spouse. Traditional culture in terms of widowhood rituals have radically changed. Widows do not experience devastation of life or violence any longer.

In Gamei traditional culture, widows are treated with compassion and respect. Among the Gamei, the ceremony starts with the surviving spouse confined in a room, normally the deceased’s room at the ancestral house or the deceased’s residence (tsu mli wo). Psychologically, there is the movement of the spouse from his or her residence to the center of mourning, the acknowledgment of the memory of the deceased and the identification with loss of a significant person in life. The first part of the ceremony is designed for the spouse, typically a woman to prepare corn dough and sell it to the general public herself for three times, which prepares the ground for the separation ceremonies. Nevertheless, only widows and widowers in the community are traditionally eligible to patronize it.

The durations of the ceremonies have changed from three days to a week to two days. The second phase is the grieving of the deceased and communicating with the spirit of the deceased. She sleeps on one of the deceased’s blanket or cloth in order to identify with the owner’s personality. This ritual is a clear evidence of identification with the image of the deceased, while also preparing the way for acceptance of the fact that one who has been known to the bereaved in the most sentimental and romantic atmosphere is now known in death. Further, it is a psychological tool allowing the survivor to handle grieving and loss in a real context, while at the same time the deceased spouse and deceased image identified motif is observed, facilitating movement beyond loss and separation.
Psychologically, the deceased is believed to be present in the room and throughout the ceremony. At a point the elderly woman (the ritual specialist) invokes the deceased’s spirit, praying for peace and prosperity for the living. During this process, the woman or man is in intense wailing and grieving throughout the night. In the morning, after dawn, the deceased and the living are completely separated. The elderly woman asks the deceased spirit to return to the ancestral word and not disturb the living, as their road is now divided and distance now exists between them. At dawn the surviving spouse is taken to the ocean and is instructed not to look back because the deceased is following him or her. The surviving spouse dips his or her head seven times into the ocean. This ritual means that he or she has renounced his or her defilements into the ocean and has bathed in the ocean to complete the process of grieving. The elderly woman then shaves the widow or widower’s hair as a sign of completing the process of grieving. The bereaved then removes all the mourning clothes and bedding of the deceased; presents them to the elderly woman. If desired, the elderly woman washes them and gives them to the widow or widower. Another option is to leave all the clothing at the ocean for the deceased spirit to take with them to ancestral world. The tainted image of death, bereavement and mourning is closed or removed. This ritual about purification enables the surviving spouse and the deceased spirit to separate for good, psychologically and spiritually.

Again, at the core of the psychology of the widowhood rite is the movement toward recovery. Traditionally, the Gamei considered death as unclean. Being in the presence of the corpse was considered to be contagious to the living being. As a result, the rite of purification is seen as essential.

The concluding phase of the widowhood rite is the hospitality or party time, whereby relatives, friends and sympathizers gather to celebrate the termination of grieving and the entrance into the incorporative life were the vacuum created by the loss of the deceased will no longer hinder one’s life. Making a psychological movement from the phase of bereavement and mourning to a new start demands new courage and empowerment.
Another task of the new widower or widow is the reinvestment of time in supportive relationships and developing new skills because of inevitable feelings of insecurity and loneliness. The severity of the loss affects a widow or widower living a life without a loved one. In all the phases of widowhood, developing new relationships are effective tools to handle grief, especially when relationships are forged with other widows or widowers who empathize and understand that the fears, pains and struggles of widowhood are integral, normal parts of the grieving process. Funeral rituals help the bereaved gain a sense of closure and begin to integrate a loss into their lives.

Funeral rituals and ceremonies serve not primarily as rites of passage for the deceased spirit into the ancestral world, but rather promote solidarity, support and new identity for the surviving community. The widowhood phase serves both a social and a psychological need. The social aspect provides community support for the widow or widower and an opportunity to experience the relational changes brought about by the death. The psychological aspect of widowhood phase reinforces the reality of the death, and the movement toward recovery culminates in the development of a new identity.

Gamei traditions maintain that if the ceremony is not properly performed, the spirit will hover around in the night to trouble the spouse. In a state of despair, sorrow and anxieties, the living partner will fall sick and suffer a premature death. Furthermore, if the deceased’s spirit succeeds in having a sexual encounter with a spouse, death also occurs. Additionally, after the death of a spouse, the children of the deceased also start dying, unless a medium is consulted, to joining with the spirit of the deceased to perform a traditional ritual to end the untimely death of the living children. Clearly, in the traditional Gamei worldview, uncompleted or otherwise unsatisfactory traditional widowhood rites can cause the premature death of both the surviving spouse and her or his children.

Tradition maintains that when all the components of the separation ceremonies — the rite of purification, the widowhood rites and the rites of hospitality -- have been completed, the surviving spouse should observe six months of chastity. Hasty remarriage brings the resentment of the deceased’s spouse, consequent untold hardships, and untimely death. Although tradition requires the deceased’s paternal family to supervise
and perform the widowhood rite, a dysfunctional marital relationship involving conflicts
with in-laws can result in the surviving spouse requesting his or her family to perform the
rites without any disapproval from the departed spirit.

In addition to the surviving spouse going through the ceremony of separation,
there are ceremonies for parents losing a child and twins losing one another. When
couples lose their child, both parents are also confined in a room for seven days, where
they engage in fasting and mourning. This grieving moment convinces the deceased child
to be reincarnated and is called Fia ceremony. The period allows the parents to
consecrate their thoughts and wishes on the child by communicating with the deceased
spirit how they missed him or her and desire his or her returning to life. On the eighth day
they are taken to the ocean for the ritual of bathing and purification. Traditional belief is
that between one and five years the mourning mother will become pregnant and have
another child.

When a twin dies, a traditional ceremony of separation is performed to separate
the surviving twin from an intimate connection with deceased spirit. The traditional belief
is that the deceased twin feels isolated and lonely in the ancestral world and attempts to
get the other twin to join his or her company. Twins, whether identical or fraternal,
experience a strong, sentimental attachment with a unique, inseparable twinning bond.
Therefore, funeral rituals relating to separation may be painful and complicated for a
grieving twin. Psychologically, acceptance of the reality of the death means accepting the
loss of a part of the self. This can be extremely painful and it means that the funeral
rituals are absolutely necessary to make effective mourning and successful healing
possible.

Psychologically, the traditional rite of separation offers widows, widowers, a twin
and parents mourning their child the ritual space to recognize, accept and acknowledge
the permanent loss of a loved one, and live beyond any form of illusion of the deceased,
with the ultimate goal of recovery. The rite of incorporation marks the end of the
transition for the widow and widower who have completed their traditional tasks. The
integral element of a ritual of incorporation focuses on both the deceased spirit and the
living.
In Jung’s theoretically perspective, the soul does not require any physical treatment and preparation before individuating into the archetypal spiritual world. As a psychiatrist, Jung was also concerned with the deceased’s survivors more than the deceased’s spirit because he viewed the spirit as a transcendent and autonomous reality of the unconscious psyche. Nevertheless, Marie-Louise von Franz’ work “On Dreams and Death: A Jungian Interpretation,” which I have cited extensively in this study, perhaps provides us with a Jungian approach to an understanding of the phenomenon of ancestral spirits. This would suggest that the transformation of the deceased spirit into an ancestral spirit unfolds a psychological energy that can be classified as psychic energy. The archetypal transformation of the physical and psychic energies seems so significant to me that it would be worthwhile to examine the necessity of the traditional preparation of the deceased’s spirit. In the context of these differences, throughout this study, an exploration of traditional Gamei practices illuminates the necessity of preparing the deceased’s spirit to the ancestral world or, as Jungian psychologists might say, the unconscious realm.

Nevertheless, Jung and his scholarly descendants hypothesized the collective unconscious as the personification of the Great Mother and Queenmother of death, espoused the Gamei traditional idea of the Earth within a psychological context, and offered a fresh theoretical framework that has the potential to encourage a cross-cultural psychological conversation between Westerners and Gamei about the foundation of Africans’ existence. The Ga traditional concept of land/Earth accords profound reverence for the Earth because of its divine qualities, and the personification of motherhood as well as womanhood. Also, the Earth is conceived as the primordial archetype of the mother’s womb, in which all humans and other living creatures find solace. The Earth is referred to as Mother, the provider and the giver of life. Traditionally, this deity is a woman, grandmother and old lady—the Earth Goddess. Religiously, the Earth embodies spiritual qualities whereby libation prayers and sacrifices are offered to her during significant occasions or circumstances in the life of the community because humanity depends on her for sustenance, livelihood, and growth.

Additionally, when a burial ground is to be dug, libation is offered to ask permission from the Earth and also at the cutting sod ceremony of any governmental
project. Thus in all, Mother Earth’s presence is recognized, her spiritual power validated and her dependence is fully appreciated. Traditionally, the conception is that humanity emerged from the womb of Earth Mother and death is the returning process to the bosom of the Earth, ultimately, we are buried in the unconditional womb.

Although Jung did not make the connection about traditional “ritual of crossing river into the ancestral world”, the psychological theories and ramifications of Jung’s unconscious contents, might be a reasonable way to describe this ritual, as a representation of a psychic journey into the unconscious psyche without any limitations of time and space. In addition, from this perspective “otofo” or the lost soul might be viewed as a personified projection of the unconscious contents pointing to the archetype of the shadow, or undeveloped side of one’s personality.

In summary, from a Jungian psychological perspective, funeral rituals and rites can be understood as representations of a psychic situation and archetypal event. For example, Jung writes:

The symbolism of the rites of renewal, if taken seriously, points far beyond the merely archaic and infantile to man’s innate psychic disposition, which is the result and deposit of all ancestral life right down to the animal level—hence the ancestor and animal symbolism. The rites are attempts to abolish the separation between the conscious mind and the unconscious, the real source of life, and to bring about a reunion of the individual with the native soil of his inherited instinctive make-up.433

In terms of Ga tradition, a violation of a traditional tenet brings repercussions which may include death. Field observes,

The living never forget that they are the trustees of the dead. The continuity of customs must be faithfully preserved. A custom, rite, or ceremony is a link with the dead who instituted it quite as much as it is the right of the god who receives it. The dead are always watching to see that the living preserve what their forefathers established. And since the dead have power to bestow either blessing or adversity—nay, even life or death—the welfare of the living is felt to be bound up with the faithful performance of ancient custom.434

433 Jung, Psychology and Alchemical Studies, 136-137.

434 Field, Religion and Medicine of the Ga people, 196-197.
Again, however, for Jung the emphasis is on the meaning of the soul as a transcendent and autonomous reality of unconscious psyche and the experience of the survivors, while for the Gamei the experience of the deceased’s spirit and the living were of equal importance. In our discussion of the role of the ancestors, in the next chapter, we will consider the extent to which these divergent perspectives can be reconsidered.
Chapter 5: Ga Ancestral Psychology and Ancestral World

This chapter examines Ga ancestral psychology and ancestral world. I explain the Gamei understanding of ancestral world. I explore the significant mediational functioning of ancestors connecting both the spirit world and the physical world. Echoing Jung’s theory of archetypes of the animus and anima, I explain how ancestors act as archetypes of the collective unconscious. I formulate qualifications for ancestors among the Gamei and discuss the ancestral world. This is the first study that attempts to explicate the issue of ancestor qualifications for the Gamei. Then I discuss Jung and Jungian concepts of ancestorhood. I focus extensively on Jung’s personal experiences of his distant ancestors and how he concluded that the dead are spokespersons of the unconscious psyche and that the ancestral world is perhaps a place, referencing Pleroma in the “Seven Sermons to the Dead.” I will also highlight Jung’s periodic ambivalence about acknowledging the existence of ancestors, and the implications of that ambivalence for the current study.

Within the Gamei worldview, the ancestral world, called Gbohiiajeng, points to the location of the residence of the immortal community of ancestors. The name Gbohiiajeng itself is descriptive. It points to the locality of the ancestral world as the abode of the community of ancestors. The suffix ‘ajeng’ denotes a place. Perhaps, this place is a mysterious ethereal place which can be described as an archetypal nation, kingdom or a world, similar to this visible world, “except that it is the ideal world where the impermanence of the mundane is nonexistent.”435 The only way to possess it and become a citizen of this ethereal place is by becoming an immortal or spiritual being through death, thereby attaining the status of ancestorhood. This is the ultimate goal of life among the Gamei.

435 Ephirim-Donkor, African Spirituality: On Becoming an Ancestor, 139.
The ancestral world is an otherworld within the underground aspect of the Earth. In addition, it is a spiritual realm because it transcends the ground. Traditionally, it shares the characteristics of transcendence, ontology and immanence in its structure. In addition, the ancestral world can be described as a traditional concept that is within and without the surroundings of each individual who performs an ancestral ritual. For example, Ephirim-Donkor argues that: “Finally, the ancestral world is within and without, because the location of the ancestral world is an innate phenomenon prevalent wherever the individual is found. …. More than being an intrinsic quality, it is a shared phenomenon ritualized to convey clearly defined meanings for the individual in relation to the ancestors.”

Ritual space cannot limit the presence of the ancestors and the ancestral world of the Gamei. Ephirim-Donkor’s reasonable explanation of ancestral world as one spiritual world where every individual originates and where all return perhaps seems similar to Jungian ideas about the archetype of the Great Mother, which we discussed in Chapter 4. It is easy to say from a psychological perspective that there is a considerable compatibility between certain aspects of Jung’s notion of the collective unconscious and traditional ideas about the ancestral world among the Gamei.

From a Gamei ontological perspective, the world of the ancestors has direct influence on the world of the living. Essentially, the ancestral world dominates the mundane because it is the residence of the collective ancestors and arguably “….It is where the impermanence and the inequities of the mundane are made right.”

In Jungian terms, it can be argued that Ga ancestral psychology reflects the expression of the archetypal spirit world based on the unconscious psyche emerging into traditional consciousness because of the ever-presence of the immortal community of ancestors, who continue to influence the life of the living. In Gamei thought, AtaaNaaNyonmo or God controls and preserves the affairs of humanity on Earth. Nevertheless, it is the ancestors who act as the official superintendents or mediators of

---

436 Ibid.
437 Ibid. 140.
438 Ibid. 141.
the social and moral order. For the Gamei, ancestral psychology is central to life and everyday experience. It operates at the center of traditional philosophy, religion, attitudes, all of which describe ancestors as the keepers of morality based on a complex and powerful genealogical framework.

Psychologically, ancestral consciousness bears heavily on the fabric of all traditional gatherings, ceremonies and rituals. Everything must be approached through the ancestors because they “…have achieved something that no human being has—immortality. They have reached the highest state of existence comparable to God, though not God, because they cannot create or alter the created order.”439 Their spiritual personalities make them extremely important to the living community. In other words, there is always ancestral priority, presence and authority. Ontologically, ancestors are prominent in the spiritual world. They are the ontological beings closest to God, and they act on behalf of God and the living community. Mbiti argues that: “Because of this unique position, the living-dead constitute the largest group of intermediaries of African societies . . . . Potentially, and if need be, the living-dead and other departed convey human requests, needs, prayers, sacrifices and offerings to God, and sometimes relay His response back to human beings.”440 Summarizing the purpose of intermediaries in African religious thought, Mbiti continues:

Man’s contact with God through acts of worship may, therefore, be direct or via the intermediaries. It is not the means but the end that matters most. Sometimes that end is sought or attained, not by the individual alone, but corporately with or on behalf of his wider community of which he is a member or whose religious functions are entrusted to him. In reality, religion is not, and cannot be, a private affair, it must involve two or more parties.441

Another reason for the mediation of the ancestors is that they are representatives of the Supreme Being or AtaaNaaNyonmo. According to Molefi Kete Asante and Emerka Nwadiora: “It is the ancestors who must be feared, who must be appeased, to whom

---

439 Ibid. 140.

440 Mbiti, *African Religion & Philosophy*, 69. It should be noted that Mbiti’s concept of the “living dead” encompasses those ancestors who were known during their lifetime by at least one member of the current living community. Because of this close familiarity, they are viewed as particularly important and powerful.

441 Ibid. 71.
appeals must be directed; they are the ones who must be invoked and revered, because they are the agents of transformation. A person’s life can change drastically if he or she does not pay proper homage to the ancestor….but all are essentially representatives of the God of Gods. 442 Ancestors serve as God’s intermediaries as well as human representatives of God.

Because they are closer to God than we are, the ancestors are imbued with power and wisdom. And because they were once part of the human community, they can be used by God to project that power into daily life and circumstances. It is much easier for human beings to connect with the ancestors than it is to go directly to God. God made a place in the scheme of life for the ancestors so that human beings could maintain a connection and receive the blessings, wisdom, support, and correction emanating from God. The ancestors are God servants. 443

Furthermore, the significance of mediation in the religious consciousness is based on an almost universal African cosmological conception that is certainly embraced by the Gamei: the hierarchical ontological structure reflects the Supreme Being at the apex. God stands alone and the theological concepts of transcendence and immanence are alien in this traditional African framework. In the hierarchy there are divinities and ancestors; while on the terrestrial level is the world of humanity. 444 Although Shorter describes this ontological structure as strict deism where mediation does not appear to be a prominent feature, 445 in the religious community of the Gamei, the spiritual quest for the Supreme Being makes mediation essentially important. The Supreme Being, the ancestral world and spirits and the world of human beings are distinct. Mbiti argues that “The spiritual world of African peoples is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits and the living-dead.” 446 Their distinctiveness requires a spiritual mediation for communication between the mysterious celestial world and the terrestrial world.

445 Ibid. 13.
446 Mbiti, African Religion & Philosophy, 74.
Arguably, society depends as much on the ontological as the ontological beings depend on society. As Mbiti observes, the ancestors are nearer to God, not on ethical grounds, but in terms of communication with Him. They convey traditional prayers and sacrifices to God, and may relay His reply to men.\textsuperscript{447} Essentially, they share the attribute of omnipresence with God, as the ancestors are ambassadors of God and they carry out His mission and purpose in the universe: “Because God is far away, out of reach of man [kind], He is obviously a transcendent Being who has created the world and orders it.”\textsuperscript{448} In addition, Mbiti argues that “The ontological transcendence of God is bridged by the spirit mode of existence. Man [kind] is forever a creature, but he [she] does not remain forever man [kind], and these are his [her] two polarities of existence.”\textsuperscript{449} In simple terms, the invisible and visible worlds constitute a profound characteristic of community in the African worldview.

In the following paragraphs I discuss cultural practices that are included in a specific traditional festival, where veneration of ancestors dominates the religious and psychological consciousness of the Gamei. I am referring to the annual Ga Homowo Traditional festival. Ga Homowo Traditional Festival which is characterized by the presence, the power and the authority of the ancestor within the Ga spiritualism. The Ga Homowo (meaning, ‘hootong at hunger’) festival is held in commemoration of the great deliverance of the Gamei by their ancestors from severe famine of pre-colonial times. Significant features of the festival include the preparing of the land (Shibāa), sowing of maize (Dmaadumo), the harvesting (Dmaakpamo), a one-month ban on drumming and the imposition of silence for specified periods preceding the main celebrations,\textsuperscript{450} the cleansing of the traditional ceremonial brooms (Bloi ahejuu), the purification rites of the town (Manjuramo), lifting of the ban on fishing (Dshobulemo), the filling of the

\textsuperscript{447} Ibid. 79.

\textsuperscript{448} Harry Sawyerr, God: Ancestor or Creator? Aspects of Traditional belief in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, 9.

\textsuperscript{449}Mbiti, African Religion & Philosophy, 79.

\textsuperscript{450}Ga traditional belief is that loud noise during this sacred period detracts the sanctity of the purification ritual, and every person in the Ga traditional area regardless of ethnicity or religious faith, is to adhere strictly to this ban.

The *Gamei* psychology for both food and drink on the ground symbolizes the African sense of friendliness, warmth, connectedness and hospitality. Mbiti writes: “The food and libation given to the living-dead are paradoxically acts of hospitality and welcome, and yet of informing the living to move-away. The living-dead are wanted and yet not wanted.”\footnote{Mbiti, *African Religious and Philosophy*, 82-83.} Mbiti also views this ritual as an essential element in our understanding of African concepts of communion, fellowship and remembrance. The sacraments of food and drink are the mystical ties that bind the living-dead to the surviving relatives.\footnote{Ibid.} Additionally, the symbolic offering of food and drink to ancestors illustrates that the ancestral world is an underground place.
To attack the concept of ancestry within the *Ga* worldview is to attack the fundamental elements of ethnic and family structure, because for the *Gamei*, whatever is life comes from the ancestors:

Their constant presence and closeness is so unquestioned that life without them is unthinkable. For life to continue in a satisfactory way it is essential for the living to perform their duties towards the ancestors in a way acceptable to them, i.e. to the ancestors. This can briefly be stated as living the good life according to the dictates of their beliefs and customs.\(^{455}\)

Psychologically, these ritual actions of sprinkling can be viewed, through a Jungian lens, as representations of the archetypal phenomenon of reenactment of the living bond with the ancestors. Further, they symbolize the sense of communion between the living and the ancestors. Another important act is eating of the meal by the living (*Kogbamo*), which emphasizes that the family/community has been brought together with the ancestors.

*Homowo* greetings (*Doowala*) follow the *Homowo* celebration. Their individual selves dissolve into a psychological holistic selfhood. As Mbiti related: “Traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for the community of which he [she] is a part... To be human [kind] is to belong to the whole community and to do [that] involves participation in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, and festivals of that community.”\(^{456}\) In other words, the *Ga* *Homowo* Traditional festival emphasizes common affinity and a strong social solidarity, as well as the unqualified affirmation that all the living relatives of one clan (*Weku*) are descendents of the primordial Great-Grand Father and Great-Grand Mother. The togetherness of living relatives in the community, which includes the ancestors and the yet unborn, can be viewed as similar to Jung’s archetype of the Mandala. In religious traditions, in the Jungian framework, the Mandala archetype expresses cosmic wholeness, and ultimately, the fulfillment of the dynamics of the Self.

The *Gamei* experience the ancestors as ever-living and watchful. Psychologically, they represent the psychic powers behind all creations, as Parrinder

---

\(^{455}\) Bührmann, *Living in two Worlds: Communication between a white healer and her black counterparts*, 30-31.

\(^{456}\) Ibid. 2.
describes the hierarchical structure of the African spiritual universe.\textsuperscript{457} Parrinder underscores the importance of the presence of ancestors in the \textit{Gamei} worldview. He asserts, “In the Gold Coast [Ghana], in the everyday life of the \textit{Ga} the dead [ancestors] are very present…Most people, as a regular habit, never drink, and many never eat, without throwing a small portion on the ground for their forefathers [ancestors] \textit{and nobody sleeps with an empty water pot in the house.}”\textsuperscript{458} C. G. Baeta, a Ghanaian scholar stated categorically: “Our people live with the dead,”\textsuperscript{459} in order to highlight the psychological reality of the filial and affectionate relationship between the living and the ancestor beings. Thus, the \textit{Gamei} experience not only ancestral existence through a limited number of occasions where the community gathers together in the circle of ancestors, including puberty rites, marriage, planting, famine, war, sickness and epidemics, reconciliation and peace, but also through eating and drinking to affirm the unique communion between them and their ancestral spirits.

Ancestors are venerated for numerous reasons that strengthen the concepts of linkage, heritage and spiritual relevance. Ancestral relations are the fabric of life and constitute an important component of the \textit{Ga} social, cultural, traditional, and religious life. They transcend mental aberration because they provide moral guidance, succession of ethnic chiefs, and cohesiveness among ethnic members. They maintain social solidarity and political stability, define gender roles in the family and in the ethnic communities, sustain reverence for the elderly, undivided loyalty to traditional political authority, and offer solace in the face of material and economic deprivations.

In the context of \textit{Gamei} ontology, the ancestors figure prominently in the collective psyche of the religious community. They are close to God and they understand the existential realities of humanity in the living community. They know the living intimately and this reality contributes to their important role as intermediaries, representatives, and spiritual superintendents of the community.

\textsuperscript{457} Parrinder, \textit{African Traditional Religion} (New York: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1954), 24-25.
Having concluded that the intermediary role of ancestors in traditional religious consciousness is central to the Gamei understanding of religious rituals and ceremonies, it is helpful to summarize the salient meaning of this intermediary role: Ancestors are bridge-builders between God and humanity. In other words, they provide the necessary bridge between the Gamei and God. However, it is also important to stress that the intermediary role of ancestors in traditional religious rituals and ceremonies must not be understood as a form of worship. In Gamei thought, the ancestors are venerated; they are merely the conduit of prayers, not the object of worship. They are trusted servants of God with the right access into the presence of God. As Joseph Boakye Danquah has observed, “They act as friends at court to intervene between man and the Supreme Being and to get prayers and petitions answered more quickly and effectively.”

Opoku has elaborated on this point: “It is from this belief in the close relationship between God and ancestors that libation, the specialized method of communicating with ancestors, originated; through libation, prayers are directed to the ancestors and ultimately to God.” Furthermore, from a sociological perspective, prayers offered to ancestors serve as an extension of important hierarchical relationships.

Proceeding to a formulation of a framework for understanding how one qualifies to be an ancestor in the Gamei community, it is unfortunate that this issue has received very little attention in the literature. However, Zahan and other African scholars have discussed this issue in the context of African societies generally, and much of what they write does apply to the Gamei.

Zahan maintains that the notion of ancestor explains African’s conception of individual, society, time and divinity: “In each society the notion of ancestor is formulated in relation to certain key ideas and according to dialectic of thought which puts into play the law of oppositions and contrasts.” As Zahan continues, he elucidates some of the specific criteria for attaining ancestor status:

---


461 Ibid.


Firstly, the ancestor is, first of all a man who has reached a great age and who has acquired along with longevity a profound experience of people and things. He is thus distinguished from people less advanced in age and whose credulity and inexperience in life classify them with children or youths; the latter are usually not given elaborate funerals and are never the focus of a “cult.”

Secondly, an individual who dies from a “dishonorable” disease is definitively struck from the list of ancestors. Thus it is impossible for a man dying from, say, leprosy to become an ancestor. There exist in Africa several specific illnesses which are incompatible with the esteem, radiance, and glory of the dead. It seems that the dead can only be honored by the living if they have ended their lives in conformity with the rules of society. An accidental death also constitutes a humiliation and a stigma, and its consequences in the hereafter are inauspicious for gaining a “halo.” A mortal accident breaks in some way the natural and regular progression of things; it constitutes a distressing event which is striking because of the suddenness with which it shatters order by brutally destroying the continuum of time.

In addition, physical and psychic integrity represents a fundamental condition for aspiring to the rank of ancestor. All those who are abnormal, all those who deviate from the usual type of person in a society, are automatically excluded from the category of “illustrious” dead. Thus the deformed and mentally ill can never figure among the “chosen.” The same ostracism applies to perjurers and any individual who does not enjoy moral integrity. It should be said here that, for the African, moral integrity is of prime importance; he places it before all else in the mastery of the self and, in particular, in the mastery of one’s speech.

Finally, the ancestor in Africa is always and everywhere an “organic” member of the community of the living; he is one of the links in the chain. Thus the stranger, even if he is adopted and integrated into a given society, cannot pretend to the title of ancestor there, since he is forever a juxtaposed component. The stranger lacks participation and communion with the life of the group in its spatial and temporal continuity.464

Zahan’s list of qualifications for African ancestorship includes five essential elements: one must be a man, must have achieved longevity and experience in life, must have suffered a normal death and physical and psychic integrity, must have been married with children, and must have been, in life, an “organic” member of the community. Considered closely, ancestorship in African traditional thought excludes women. However, it is very important to note that women do play essential roles as ritual specialists. Without the presence and participation of these female specialists in funeral ceremonies, those ceremonies would not be considered authentic or legitimate. It is the

464 Ibid. 49-50.
hands of the elderly women that bathe the corpse and prepare it for the final entrance into the ancestral world.

Writing about the qualification criteria for ancestorship among the Akan and Yoruba societies, Opoku writes:

For example, the Akan of Ghana believe that to become an ancestor one must have lived a life worthy of emulation, an exemplary life; one must also have lived to a ripe old age and have had children. In Yoruba society too, a person who dies childless is not acknowledged as an ancestor. To become an ancestor one must have died a good death, that is, one’s death must not have been due to accident, suicide, or any form of violence, one’s death must also not be caused by such “unclean” diseases as lunacy, dropsy, leprosy and epilepsy.465

Ogbu U. Kalu provides another perspective on qualifications for ancestorship. Of particular note is the fact that Kalu’s perspective is more inclusive. Women, for example, are eligible on an equal status with men:

But who are ancestors? Some of the literature leaves the impression that only old men become ancestors. There are reasons for this deduction: an ancestor must have lived a morally worthy life and must have died a good death. This means that the person was not killed by lightning or a falling tree, did not drown (betraying the sanction of the gods) or commits suicide, and not killed by a strange disease such as smallpox or leprosy. There is no gender differentiation; both males and females could be ancestors. An ancestor must have received a second or third burial to smooth the sojourn through the spirit world to reincarnation. Obviously, those who died bad deaths or did not get fitting burials do not reincarnate and, indeed, turn into malevolent spirits which hound their progeny for failing to bury them properly.466

To provide an overarching perspective that incorporates the divergent qualification criteria highlighted by such writers as Opoku, Zahan and Kalu, Bockie offers an alternative interpretation grounded on the failure of humanity to maintain their Godlike status.

God created man [woman], one will recall, to be his surrogate, or alter sui. In this role, man [woman] failed. But what he or she failed originally to be as precisely what the ancestors are now. To become an ancestor means to regain the status that the first man] woman] lost. Before death, we are just ordinary beings with no

465 Opoku, West African Traditional Religion, 36.

godlike status. But after death we find ourselves in the process of becoming God’s surrogates, or little gods, namely complete human beings. Humanness begins with God and extends to the ancestors. It has to do with the liberation of ordinary men [women] from oppression, death, and bondage of the established human power.467

With these discussions on ancestorhood, one issue on which all observers agree is that ancestors serve as mediators between the Supreme Being by providing access to spiritual guidance and power. Furthermore, the mere fact of death is not a sufficient condition for becoming an ancestor. Only those who have lived a full measure of life, cultivated moral values, and achieved social distinction may attain this status. While Opoku and Zahan generally agree on thoughts and themes for the qualifications, it should be noted again that Kalu provides a more inclusive framework, gender differentiation. Bockie’s position, which might be considered an example of a traditional Christian doctrine of the fallen of humanity, might be considered to be alien to traditional African philosophy. However, it may be helpful to examine the range of ideas presented by Zahan, Opoku, Kalu and Bockie as a framework for formulating qualifications for Gamei ancestorhood. Nevertheless, childlessness and unnatural death constitute disqualification for ancestorship.

The focus of the next section is the formulation of ancestral qualifications for the Gamei. Kilson identifies puberty ritual and final funeral rites as the two principal conditions for attaining ancestorship among the Gamei: “In Ga thought, the ancestral shades are the moral guardians of the conduct of the living. The spirit (susuma) of a person who has not undergone puberty ritual and final funeral rites (faafo) cannot assume ancestral status.”468 From my perspective and understanding of the significance of ancestors, these qualifications are simply limited. In contemporary Ga societies, modernity and Christianity pose a threat to the traditional ritual of puberty since most persons have converted to Christianity and have been exposed through education to alternative cultural frameworks. There is also a relative absence of elderly women to enforce, among members of the younger generation, the traditional values of the

467 Bockie, Death and the Invisible Powers: The World of Kongo Belief. 132.
community. Another alternative is required. Ancestorhood among the Gamei may perhaps be based on the following criteria:

First: the person must be a human being without any gender differentiation and an “organic” member of the community.

Second: Death is not a sufficient condition for becoming an ancestor. Therefore, the type of death is irrelevant. Traditionally there are sufficient prayer rituals which are performed for the wandering spirits who have suffered tragic death. The purpose is to prepare and purify the soul for his or her journey into the ancestral world.

Third: Moral integrity is one of the cornerstones of African cultures generally, including the Gamei. Therefore, those who have cultivated moral values, achieved social distinction, and contributed to the well-being of the society may attain ancestor status.

Four: Old age or longevity is not necessarily significant. There is a Gamei adage that states, “both the green leaves and dry leaves are dying.” Death is inevitable in spite of one’s psychological curve of life.

Fifth: Mbiti’s personal immortality should be included among these criteria. Personal immortality requires the joint status, in life, of marriage and parenthood to enhance the symbol of remembrance by living survivors. Mbiti explains that “if a man has no children or only daughters, he finds another wife so that through her, children (or sons) may be born who would survive him and keep him (with the other living-dead of the family) in personal immortality.” Again, the Gamei maintain that an ancestor lives on as long as there are children who remember him or her. Thus, procreation is crucial for becoming an ancestor.

Although I have conceptualized conditions for ancestorhood among the Gamei, a word of caution is that we cannot make definite statements about the things beyond our existence that we do know. The journey to the Unknown is still a complex phenomenon. From a Gamei perspective, it is problematic to argue that the possible condition for attaining authentic Selfhood on Earth is through the process of individuation, which is biological. As Stephan Hoeller says “Life is never static and the inner life least of all, so

---

469 Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, 25.
it would be improper to refer to any definable Gnosis or individuation as a final achievement. We are ever becoming, but we never become.\textsuperscript{470}

The individuation process is the context whereby a person attains his or her authentic Self, indivisible and distinct from other people in terms of death. Attainment of ancestorhood is a psychic as well as spiritual growth in the world of spirits (the unconscious psyche, in Jungian terms), culminating in joining the company of ancestors.

In addition, \textit{Gamei} ancestral psychology, as an aspect of the psychology of the unconscious, highlights (as has been suggested above) the transmission and continuity of life and the affirmation of the existential reality of the ancestral world. In simple traditional terms, there is a persistent belief in the continuity of life transcending death and the invisible world where the ancestors act as intermediaries for God and oversee the welfare of their families in the visible world. Accordingly, the ancestors are interested in the affairs of the living community and the living have confidence that they live in a world within the reign of ancestors.

One can now turn to a study of Jung’s perception of ancestors. In one of his writings, Jung alludes to the quest of mediation between conscious and unconscious reality, which appears helpful as a psychological framework within which the cultural dynamic of ancestorhood can be understood:

…They are images sprung from the life, the joys and sorrows, of our ancestors; and to life they seek to return, not in experience only, but in deed. Because of their opposition to the conscious mind they cannot be translated straight into our world; hence a way must be found that can mediate between conscious and unconscious reality.\textsuperscript{471}

Jung’s statement clearly indicates the possibility for ancestors, as a psychological reality, to return to life and interact with the experiences of the living community. Moreover, this formulation is quite compatible with the reality of \textit{Gamei} ancestral veneration in which the ancestors are viewed as possessing the authority of cosmology to help the living as they interact with and influence the affairs of the living. In other words, Jung’s formulation helps to provide a bridge between the cross-cultural reality of

\textsuperscript{470} Stephan A Hoeller, \textit{The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead}. A Quest Original. 1\textsuperscript{st} ed. (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1982), 35.

\textsuperscript{471} Jung, \textit{Two Essays on Analytical Psychology}, 79.
psychological experience and traditional *Gamei* cultural experiences and beliefs surrounding ancestors.

To elucidate further how traditional African and *Gamei* beliefs about ancestors can be understood in the context of a Jungian psychological framework (and vice versa), I propose Jung’s theory of the archetypes of the anima and the animus as one way to conceptualize the lived experience among Africans in which ancestors act as mediators. It is notable, for example, that the Latin term *anima* is best translated as *soul*. Similarly, the best English translation for *animus* is *spirit*.472

In Jungian psychology, the anima and animus archetypes, for men and women respectively, contribute significantly to the attainment of distinct personhood and the enhancement of positive relationships with others. Jung defines the anima archetype as the feminine side of the male psyche and the animus archetype as the masculine side of the female psyche. The anima and the animus, in other words, are equivalents of the opposite consciousness in the two genders. For example, in his memoirs, Jung describes the animus and anima as gateways to the archetypes of the collective unconscious: “The animus and anima should function as a bridge, or a door, leading to the images of the collective unconscious, as the persona should be a sort of bridge to the world.”473 Thus, their functions explain psychic realities within consciousness. Moreover, Jung explains his theory of animus and animus as archetypes: “With the archetype of the anima we enter the realm of gods, the realm that metaphysics has reserved for itself. Everything that the anima touches becomes numinous….474 And, he describes the animus as the archetype of meaning, the anima as the archetype of life.”475 It is most important to understand anima and animus as projected images of the collective unconscious, and that many of them appear in dreams and activated into consciousness through the process of

---


475 Ibid. 32.
active imagination. 476 In Mysterium Coniunctionis, Jung presents his ideas about the compensatory elements of the archetypes of animus and anima. He suggests that the animus compensates female consciousness, which he associates with “eros”, while the anima compensates male consciousness, which he associates with “logos”.477

In Aion, Jung describes experiential aspects of the anima and animus in relational terms. In this framework, the anima corresponds to the “eros” of the mother, the animus to the “logos” of the father. For Jung, eros refers to the principle of psychic relatedness, while logos means judgment, discrimination, and insight.478

Jung conceptualized the anima and animus within the context of archetypal constellations, with compensation and the law of opposites or enantiodromia as key aspects of their dynamics. Just as ancestors are mediators between the archetypal world of spirits and the living community, so also the animus and anima are experienced as mediators between the conscious and collective unconscious psyche: “….Thus the animus is a psychopomp (like the anima is), a mediator between the conscious and the unconscious and a personification of the latter. Just as the anima gives relationship and relatedness to a man’s consciousness, so the animus gives to a woman’s consciousness a capacity for reflection, deliberation and self knowledge.”479 In dreams, one can encounter the representation of ancestors as anima and animus figures, reflecting ones parental or family complexes. In addition, to parental complexes, anima and animus images may reflect authority figures, siblings, and mystical beings.

Among the Gamei, a collective name for ancestors in their state of collective immortality is Niimei ke Naamei, literally Grand-Great Father and Great-Grand Mother. Further, ancestors can be constellated in men and women, as they often appear in dreams. They regulate relationships between the living and the spiritual world to create harmonious relationships. In many respects, the dream world provides an important cultural foundation for the belief in spirits. Dreams connect the living to the mystical


479 Jung, “The Syzygy: Anima and Animus” in Aion, 16.
world, the Self, and the realm of soul and spirits. In the Ga worldview, the dream is the source of the manifestation of ancestors to the living. In the dream, living people encounter ancestors, speak to them and receive important messages or instructions. They also make periodic requests of the ancestors. Through their appearance in dreams ancestors often pass on messages directly, and there is no need for interpretation. At other times, when a message is unclear, the dreamer may seek the help of a traditional healer (wontse or tsofatse) to interpret it. Kilson noted: “The ancestral shades may manifest themselves to the living either in human form or in dreams. Their spiritual presence may be involved on certain occasions to assist the living.”

From the perspective of the Ga, dreams occur when the personality-soul (shadow or susuma) leaves the body to wander about independently through nocturnal activities during the hours of sleep. Children who scratch their faces in sleep are said to have their souls and spirits fighting one another. A sleeper should not be wakened suddenly lest the soul be unable to return to the body in time. From a psychological standpoint, these dream phenomena can be viewed as the manifestation of the archetypes of the animus and anima, which seek to connect the world of the unconscious to the conscious life of each living individual.

**Gamei Ancestral World**

In Ga cosmology, the human person is composed of certain spiritual and material elements. At physiological death, the soul is thought to continue to inhabit the body for three days; after which it leaves the body to wander until the final funerary rites (faafo) are performed. At these rites, the soul “crosses the river” and achieves its ultimate social status as an ancestral shade (sisa). The ancestral world (Ghohiiajeng, meaning the world or the universe of the dead person) is sharply defined by the Gamei. They believe that a person has the same social status in death as in life. For example, a priest is a priest, and an ordinary person is an ordinary person. Ghohiiajeng, according to the Ga: “is a second world to which we transcend after departing this material world. Its proper location in

---

relation to our physical universe cannot be identified with certainty.”481 Although the belief in Gbohiajeng is a core of Ga tradition, Adjei argues definitively that “to raise a question as to the locality of the spiritual world would be regarded as an immoral or heretical conduct. But from the ceremonial rituals performed for the dead, we may reasonably infer that the world of the spirits, or the realms of the ghost, is located under our physical world.”482 He adds that ancestral world is situated under the ground.483 Thus, while it is impossible and unrealistic to speak about the world of the dead, nevertheless Adjei explains the Ga traditional philosophy for burying the dead in the ground. He explains that the practice of burying the dead under the ground was perhaps due to hygienic reasons but also reflective of the primitive belief that the world of the departed is below the ground. Moreover, he observes that this practice is further substantiated by the practice of presenting gifts to the dead before burial, which is prevalent among African peoples today.484

Anthropologists, notably Robert Hertz and Arnold van Gennep, have affirmed the significance of the indigenous concept of the spirit world as a carbon copy of the physical world. As Hertz claims, “Once the individual has surmounted death, he [she] will not simply return to the life he has left; the separation has been too serious to be abolished so soon. He [she] is reunited with those who like himself [herself] and those before him [her] have left this world and gone to the ancestors. He [she] enters this mythical society of souls which each society constructs in its own image.”485 Van Gennep explains further that: “The most widespread idea is that of a world analogous to ours, but more pleasant, and of a society organized in the same way as it is here.”486 Among the Kono of Sierra Leone the land of the dead is known as “Faa.” Robert T. Parsons validates the Gamei or

482 Ibid.
483 Ibid. 86.
484 Ibid. footnote 4.
indigenous culture’s concept of the invisible spirit world as a carbon copy of the physical world. Parsons writes:

People who are reported to have returned to this life tell of the beauty and wealth of the place. There the spirits continue to live much as men live in this world; and they have the same human characteristics but superior ability to help those who call upon them. It seems that there is a separate faa for each family or clan; and some people say the men and women live apart. The residents of Faa are spoken of as Fanu (plural of “father”) or as Mbimbanu, “the great ancestral forefathers”. …If, because of neglect or carelessness they become angry, the people feel certain that illness, and even death, will come to the family. Good fortune results from the pleasure of the spirits with the conduct of the living.\(^{487}\)

In the Ga worldview the spirit of the dead is concrete and practical. The dead are ubiquitous; in the family home. Ga families recognize the visible presence of the spirit through the throwing of small portions of food on the ground at meal times. Family members also never sleep without an empty water pot in the home. In addition, at night people turn their stools on the sides to prevent the dead from sitting on them. This ritual gesture demonstrates that respect of ancestors is part of the Ga consciousness. Further, it reminds us that the ancestors control the land and its produce; before anyone enjoys the fruit of the land, a piece must be offered to them. Ancestors continue to maintain social status, moral character and human consciousness. Margaret Cleed remarks:

Ancestors retained their normal human passions and appetites, which had to be gratified in death as in life. Ancestors felt hunger and thirst. They became angry or happy depending on the behavior of their children. The living dead were vindictive if neglected but propitious if shown respect. Just as filial loyalty prevents one from allowing a parent to go hungry, “so must food be offered to the ancestors.\(^{488}\)

In summary, traditional Ga cosmology provides a view of the ancestral world as practical, concrete, and reflective in many ways of the world of the living. The employment of a Jungian psychological framework helps to provide a deeper, psychological explanation for these experiential phenomena. In this more explicitly psychological framework, ancestral spirits can be understood as manifestations of the


archetypes of animus and anima, which function as mediators between the collective unconscious and conscious. This mediational role is quite consistent with the phenomenological experiences of the ancestors among the Gamei. As the Gamei maintain, without the spiritual world there would be no physical world. They believe that harmonious existence and thriving in this world absolutely depends on the spiritual beings and supernatural powers beyond, which influence the living community. For Jung too, life in the physical world is quite empty without active engagement with the unconscious world through the mediational power of the archetypes, and particularly the archetypes of the anima and animus.

From a Jungian perspective, the concept of the collective unconscious helps explain the powerful experiences of the ancestral world that are a common part of everyday experience for the Gamei. As we have seen, the ancestral world is an invisible world; nevertheless there is no dichotomy between the physical and the world of the spirits. For Jung too, the world of the collective unconscious, though invisible, is a powerful experiential dynamic for those who choose to access it.

Mbiti remarks: “the land of the departed, where it might be situated, is very much like the carbon copy of the countries where they lived in this life…The activities there are similar to those of human life here, so that the departed work in the fields, look after cattle, get married and bear children, dance, fight or quarrel.”489 The land of the departed is the continuation of this current life and the ancestors are not limited in any circumstances regarding pleasure, entertainment, and work.

There are different perspectives about judgment, reward and retribution in the spirit world. The Ga believe that when the spirit of the departed arrives in the land of the departed, the primeval ancestors (moni wo aze, ni aze wo aze) hold a retribution and punishment on the spirit, in accordance to the person’s earthly life. As previously mentioned, it is believed that a person has the same social status in death: a chief is a chief, a commoner is commoner. Nevertheless, the other group maintains that a person may be punished by the ancestors in this life, but there is no retribution in the ancestral world. Again, Mbiti argues “Concerning retribution and punishment, nearly all the

evidence points to the fact that African peoples consider punishment to come in this life and not in the next.”\textsuperscript{490} Ancestral retribution and punishment promote psychological integrity and loyalty to ancestral names given to their descendents, because names denote cultural responsibility and accountability for the rest of the lives of the bearers.

**Jung/Jungian and Ancestorhood**

In Jungian psychology, the unconscious psyche continues to release psychic facts about ancestral spirits, and other archetypal figures to consciousness. The unconscious confronted Jung personally through his dreams, fantasies, visions and imagination. Between 1913 and 1917 Jung devoted himself to listening to his inner voices and providing psychological meaning to them. In one of his fantasies/visions, he maintained that he was in the land of the dead and the atmosphere was that of the other world.\textsuperscript{491} Jung believed that self exploration was an important avenue for discovering psychological realities.

In his autobiography, Jung included a section that he described as “Confrontation with the Unconscious.” In a dream, Jung says, he encountered a dove which transformed itself into a little girl and told him, “Only in the first hours of the night can I transform myself into a human being, while the male dove is busy with the twelve dead.”\textsuperscript{492} This dream content was a moment of astonishment for Jung: “I was greatly stirred. What business would a male dove be having with twelve dead people?”\textsuperscript{493} He attempted to provide a plausible interpretation through the symbolism of twelve such as twelve apostles, twelve months of the year and the signs of the zodiac, etc.\textsuperscript{494} He concluded that the dream experience “was that the dream indicated an unusual activation of the

\textsuperscript{490} Ibid. 260.
\textsuperscript{491} Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 181.
\textsuperscript{492} Ibid. 172.
\textsuperscript{493} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{494} Ibid.
unconscious.” In the context of pondering over the dream, another fantasy confronted him in which “there was something dead present, but it was also still alive. For example, corpses were placed in crematory ovens, but were then discovered to be still living. These fantasies came to a head and were simultaneously resolved in a dream.” He dreamt of walking through a lane of long row of tombs. At the first grave, he saw a dead mummified man from the 1830s, and suddenly the man moved and came to life. Jung observed that this man belonged to the eighteenth century. He continued to walk down the row until he found himself in the twelfth century. Out of this experience of the dead, Jung maintained “But dreams like this, and my actual experiences of the unconscious, taught me that such contents are not dead, outmoded forms, but belong to our living being.” Psychologically, this experience illustrated, for Jung, the vibrancy of the contents of the unconscious, where images of the dead can occupy a prominent place. Though Jung experienced the dead in a dream, the dead images are not dead or stagnant at all, just as the archetypes of the unconscious are active and alive in the human psyche.

Before the outbreak of the First World War Jung was afflicted with dreams of bloodbaths and catastrophes in Europe—dreams which he was unable to understand until after August 1, 1914. In the Advent season 1913—December 12, he decided to venture directly into his fantasies by embarking on the journey to the beyond—the ancestral land. Jung describes the ancestral land as dark depths, complete darkness, as if the interior space was running water. Within this running water was a corpse, a youth with blond hair and a wound in his head. He was followed by a gigantic black scarab and then by a red, newborn son, rising up out of the depths of water….It seemed to me that the blood continued to spurt for an unendurably long time. At last it ceased, and the vision came to an end. Jung understood this vision as “a drama of death and renewal, the rebirth

---

495 Ibid.
496 Ibid.
497 Ibid. 172-173.
498 Von Franz, C.G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time, 106
499 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 179.
symbolized by the Egyptian scarab. At the end, the dawn of the new day should have followed, but instead came the intolerable outpouring of blood.”

On December 18, 1913, six days after the preceding dream, Jung had another dream alluding to the killing of the sun-god completely in the collective unconscious and within himself. He encountered Siegfried and latter he wiped out all traces of the dead. “I had escaped the danger of discovery; life could go on, but an unbearable feeling of guilt remained.” In reflecting on this dream, Jung noted that Siegfried represented both his own conscious effort as well as the attitude of the “Germans at that time, for both believed in the power of will and in the power of one’s ideals. The young, on the other hand, represents primitive man who follows his instincts. The rain announces the resolution of the tension between conscious and unconscious.” He recognized through the interpretation of this dream, that there were things in life higher than the will of the ego. Indeed, this dream alludes to his conflict with Freud. Siegfried, (Freud), the German, wanted to impose his own will, have his own way, just as Jung felt that Freud was imposing his own psychological theory on Jung’s innovative efforts. But Jung did not place all the blame upon Freud. According to Homans, the dream instructed Jung “to give up his own heroic idealism, through which he imposed his own will upon others, but particularly upon himself.” In addition, the contents of the dream enabled Jung to denounce elements of narcissistic grandiosity and associated rage toward Freud. He recognized the unconscious forces within his own personality and began to accept the fact that he could not control the contents of his own consciousness.

Immediately after the death of Siegfried, the access to the beyond or ancestral land was opened: “It was like a voyage to the moon, or a descent into the empty space. First came the image of a crater, and I had the feeling that I was in the land of the dead.

---

500 Ibid.
501 Ibid. 180.
504 Ibid.
The atmosphere was that of the other world.”505 As he observed the contents of the unconscious, he realized that most of the personalities were characters of history of ancient civilizations, mythology, and Biblical traditions and they were personifications of the unconscious. Each personality had its own symbolic significance. For example, Salome appeared as the anima figure who was “blind because she does not see the meaning of things,” and Elijah, “the figure of the wise old prophet represents the factor of intelligence and knowledge.” According to Jung the figures are the representations of events and experiences.506 These figures, along with subsequent images, were active images from the archetypes of the collective unconscious. From this dream, the principles of constellation and compensation were exhibited. For example, Salome was an anima figure, Elijah the wise old prophet. Interestingly, Jung felt strange toward Salome and Elijah as a couple in this particular dream. He was distinctly suspicious of Salome. However, he stuck close to Elijah because he seemed to be the most reasonable of the three, and to have a clear intelligence.507

Another unconscious confrontation occurred after this fantasy, with the appearance of Philemon in a dream.508 Psychologically, Philemon personified a superior insight and a mysterious figure to Jung. From an ancestral psychological perspective, Philemon was like an ancestral spirit, at times as real as a living personality in the form of an Indian guru. Jung regarded him as an inner figure of great significance for him for many years: He “…taught me psychic objectivity, the reality of the psyche. Through him the distinction was clarified between myself and the object of my thought. He confronted me in an objective manner, and I understood that there is something in me which can say things that I do not know and do not intend, things which may even be directed against me.”509

505 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 181.
506 Ibid. 181-182.
507 Ibid. 181.
508 Ibid. 182-183.
509 Ibid. 182.
The dream represents the anima figure and the wise old prophet; his fantasy can be observed as a representation of the couple, animus and anima, being constellated in his psyche. Moreover, this experience taught Jung the theory of psychic distance, which he felt differentiated the ego from the collective unconscious. The archetype of the guru, Philemon, revealed the principle of differentiation most vividly to Jung when he writes: “Through him the distinction was clarified between myself and the object of my thought.”510 He recognized the distinction between himself and other images and this clarification was a tremendous relief to him. The significance of the archetypal figure of Philemon as a reflection of Jung’s conflict with Freud cannot be overstated. In reality, Philemon represents Jung’s father, his mentor Bleuler, and Freud and Flournoy, all wrapped up in one, transcendental being—a spiritual being.

In the context of our discussion on ancestral spirits, perhaps Philemon serves as the reality of the archetype of ancestral spirits in Jung’s life. On the other hand, the blind Salome epitomized his cousin Helene Preiswerk and Sabina Spielrein, which found expressions in Antonia (Toni) Wolff, a lifelong companion of Jung. Jung’s descent to the “land of the dead” perhaps offered him an experience of his ontological ancestors as well as illuminating the reality of ancestors as psychic beings. In addition, these unconscious figures presented him with a plausible explanation of ancestorhood as he observed it among indigenous peoples around the world. In a very real way, it seemed that Jung was acknowledging the presence of ancestors as an integral part of the human psyche.

In commenting on Jung’s journey to the beyond, von Franz writes: “Jung’s journey to the beyond is an anticipation of a rebirth of our world, just as Dante’s journey anticipated the spirit of the Renaissance. Jung’s journey, however, led him deeper and farther than Dante’s, into a still more profound rebirth of our Zeitgeist.”511 For the Gamei, essentially, Jung’s knowledge of the ancestral land frames their traditional knowledge of ancestral world through the lens of the psychology of the unconscious. In addition, it endorses the ancestral land as the unconscious realm, from where the archetypes of the Self manifest into consciousness through various cultural and religious symbols. Of

510 Ibid. 183.

511 Von Franz, C.G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time, 110-111.
special significance of this encounter of the unknown to Jung, was the realization of similar hallucinations of his psychotic patients. In another fantasy, he found himself flying into the land of the dead, which, for him, correlated with the unconscious psyche. Exploring this dream, Jung explains a significant moment where the archetypes of the soul and the anima establish distinct relationships with the collective unconscious. He writes: “In a certain sense this is also a relationship to the collectivity of the dead; for the unconscious corresponds to the mythic land of the dead, the land of the ancestors. If, therefore, one has a fantasy of the soul vanishing, this means that it has withdrawn into the unconscious or into the land of the dead.”

Jung describes the dead as the content of the unconscious. Moreover, the “Dead,” as the spokespersons or interpreters for the unknown realm, which is beyond the comprehension of humanity. The classification of the departed spirits as the spokesmen of the unconscious realm resonates with traditional Ghanaian diplomatic and communicative position. Thus the “ókyeame” is the spokesmen of the traditional chief. Yankah describes the “ókyeame” as the “chief’s diplomat and orator.” This significant traditional institution the “ókyeame” is always closer to the chief at most traditional gatherings. It should be noted that nobody speaks directly to the chief. Yankah observed a jury gathering at a chief’s palace to illustrate the significant functions of the “ókyeame”:

The king’s “ókyeame” listens attentively to the message and relays it to his lord, who responds through the “ókyeame,” who then transmits the reply to the party. As the “ókyeame” relays the message, he embellishes it with proverbs, idioms, and witticisms, transforming the chief’s brief statement into a longer poetic discourse to the admiration of the audience.

Nevertheless, outside the traditional royal setting, “mediated oratory permeated all modes of formal talk in Ghana and in several other parts of Africa as well. In these cases, an ad hoc intermediary may be appointed on the spur of the moment to represent a party or dignitary, or these may be designated orators well known in the community to

---


514 Ibid. ix-x.
relay their speech in style.”\textsuperscript{515} In the traditional context, the \textit{ókyeame} is recognized with the holding of a royal staff as a symbol of his office and authority. This is an important socio-cultural institution.\textsuperscript{516}

Again, indigenous spirituality always acknowledges the significant role of the ancestors. Similarly, Jung also experienced and valued the presence of his ancestors. This experience occurred during a moment he was building a Tower at Bolligen and he was chiseling a stone tablet. He became aware of the fateful link between him and his ancestors. He observed: “I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents, grandparents and more distant ancestors. It often seems as if there were an impersonal karma within a family, which is passed on from parents to children.”\textsuperscript{517}

In subsequent writing on ancestorhood, Jung adds:

If our impressions are too distinct, we are held to the hour and minute of the present and have no way of knowing how our ancestral psyches listen to and understand the present—in other word, how our unconscious is responding to it. Thus we remain ignorant of whether our ancestral components find an elementary gratification in our lives, or whether they are repelled. Inner peace and contentment depend in large measure upon whether or not the historical family which is inherent in the individual can be harmonized with the ephemeral conditions of the present.\textsuperscript{518}

In the \textit{Septem Sermones} (Seven Sermons for the Dead) Jung recognized that the voices of the \textit{Dead} or ancestors were the voices of the Unanswered, Unresolved, and Unredeemed. He wrote that “From that time on, the dead have become ever more distinct for me as the voices of the Unanswered, Unresolved, and Unredeemed; for since the questions and demands which my destiny required me to answer did not come to from outside they must have come from inner the world.”\textsuperscript{519}

\textsuperscript{515} Ibid. 182.

\textsuperscript{516} Ibid. 17.

\textsuperscript{517} Jung, \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections}, 233.

\textsuperscript{518} Ibid. 237.

\textsuperscript{519} Ibid. 191.
Jung embraced the indispensability of a speech intermediary of the dead as a conduit for understanding the psychic truth of the unconscious psyche. Additionally, he maintained that the archetypes are also operative in the unconscious of contemporary persons. One could argue that these experiences prepared him to exclaim in the *Septem Sermons* that: “These conversations with the dead formed a kind of prelude to what I had to communicate to the world about the unconscious: a kind of pattern of order and interpretation of all its general contents.”520

Many Jungian thinkers hold that the “*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*” symbolizes a summary of Jung’s experiences with the images of the unconscious psyche.521 Charet identifies the *Septem Sermones ad Mortous* as Jung’s discovery of the objective truth of the human psyche, marking his own process of individuation and re-entry into the world as Jung the healer and teacher.522 And according to Charet, the sermon revealed a multitude of Christian spirits, the ground from which Jung built his own school of psychology.523

With Jung’s confrontation of the unconscious alluding to the land of the departed spirits, one can turn to a study of the “*The Seven Sermons to the Dead*” written by Basilides in Alexandria, the city where East and West meet.524 Jaffé maintains that the “*Septem Sermones ad Mortous*,” summarizes the most essential ideas in Jung’s fantasies and is therefore both a review of the phase of introversion now drawing to an end and a preview of work to come.525

From a Jungian perspective, the *pleroma* may be viewed as a symbol of the unconscious psyche, whose existence is not dependent on thinking or believing. It can be understood in this framework as the gateway to this spiritual realm, coming at the end of

520 Ibid. 192.
521 Hoeller, *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead*. A Quest Original, 8. See also, *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, 190 for the origin of the *Seven Sermons to the Dead* and Appendix V for the full text.
522 Charet, *Spiritualism and the Foundation of C.G. Jung’s psychology*, 266.
523 Ibid. 267.
525 Jaffé, *Jung’s Last Years and Other Essays*, 159.
the individuation process: “However, because thinking alienates us from our true nature therefore I must teach knowledge to you, with which you can keep your thinking under control.” The above statement is the last sentence of the first Sermon. “Pleroma” is a Gnostic term employed by Jung to designate the ancestral world as a place, transcending time-space boundaries and situated within his ideas of the archetypes and the collective unconscious. In the Septem Sermons, Jung writes that pleroma is

This nothingness or fullness we called the Pleroma. Therein both thinking and being cease, since the eternal and infinite possess no qualities. In it now being is, for he then would be distinct from the pleroma, and would possess qualities which would distinguish him as something distinct from the pleroma.

Jung was interested in understanding the dimensions of the nature of the human psyche that lie beyond the culture of consciousness, and which transcend time-space limitations. He underscored the idea that the human psyche is the personification of an archetype, situated beyond the physical world. Jung’s pleromatic archetypal idea would resonate with traditional Gamei conceptions of the ancestral world as a place, infinite and eternal in nature.

Furthermore, one could argue that the unconscious psyche is the mother of all existence, where there is a strong affirmation of inclusiveness, where all the opposites are said to be balanced: “Effective and ineffective. Fullness and Emptiness, Living and Dead, Good and Evil Beauty and Ugliness, The One and the Many…” A thoughtful consideration of the dynamic of the unconscious psyche offers the formidable psychological basis for solving the brokenness in human societies. For example, Singer writes:

Here lies the germ of the concept marking the necessity of ever looking to the unconscious for that compensating factor which can balance the one-sided attitude of consciousness. Always, in the analytic process, we have searched the dreams, the fantasies, and the products of active imagination, for the elements that will balance: the shadow for persona-masked ego, the anima for the aggressively competitive man, the animus for the self-effacing woman, the old wise man for the puer aeternis, the deeply founded earth—mother for the impulsive young woman.\[526\]

\[526\]Singer, Boundaries of the Soul, 331.
Unconscious wholeness therefore seems to me the true *spiritus rector* of all biological and psychic events. Here is a principle which strives for total realization—which in man’s case signifies the attainment of total consciousness.527

Moreover, Singer provides us with an alternative psychological interpretation of the Dead: Psychologically, Singer maintains, human beings are living in the state of “living-dead,” which is different from Mbiti’ living-dead concept. Traditionally, for Mbiti, when a dead person is remembered by name, he or she is not really dead; he is alive, and such a person he termed the living-dead. He or she is alive in the world of the spirits.528 According to Singer, psychological human beings are living in a state of unconscious death without any physical death in the world of consciousness. She writes:

Suddenly we know who the Dead are. We are the dead. We are psychologically dead if we live only in the world of consciousness, of science, of thought which “estraneth from being.” Being is being alive to the potency of the creative principle, translucent to the lightness and the darkness of the pleroma, porous to the flux of the collective unconscious.529

Thus, for Singer, the archetype of death dominates the human psyche in a sophisticated culture that promotes modernization and technological advancement, where people are shut off from their deeper selves. However, in traditional cultures, the awareness of the collective unconscious motivates spirituality and conscious awareness of the meaning and deeper realms of life.

There is a conflict between modernization and traditional consciousness. Homans explains that human beings today transfer the engineering ethos of modern technology and bureaucracy to their personal consciousness and emotional life.530 Human cognizance of modernization of consciousness is composed of two contradictory movements in thought and society. Homans argues that the first category has created an intense nostalgia for the integrative symbols of the past, resulting in a traditionalism that defensively reaffirms ancient symbols of community. Peter Berger calls this movement

“counter-modernization.” The second category, modernization of consciousness, has created new values and a new sense of community that cannot be derived from tradition. Again, Berger calls this trend “demodernization.” Homans goes on to relate that “the principal affirmation of demodernization is the conviction that modern people must rediscover a real, “naked” self that exists beyond institutions and roles—a metainstitutional self—and that the sources for this new self lie in the future creation of fresh and new values.” He concludes: “Thus the trend in the direction of demodernization is even more privatized than is the modernization process itself.” In this framework, traditional Ga Ancestral psychology offers something of value for the modern psychological person: An opportunity to return to one’s past, as represented in a Ghanaian symbol “sankofa,” meaning “returning to your past in order to move into the future.” This is an interesting benefit that comes from viewing Gamei cosmology not as “primitive,” as is the common way that Westerners frame indigenous cultures, but as a kind of advanced human experience that has flourished because of its isolation from the spiritual and psychological constrictions associated with technological “advancements” in the West.

It is important to note that the unseen ancestral world, both for the Gamei, and for Jung, is very real. It is a world in which ancestral figures live and move actively. In a near-death experience in 1944, Jung had a foretaste of the glorious state of the unconscious realm. He appeared to be floating over the earth from a height of “approximately a thousand miles! The sight of the earth from this height was the most glorious thing I had ever seen.” As he looked around him he saw “a tremendous dark block of stone, like a meteorite. It was about the size of my house, or even bigger. It was floating in space, and I myself was floating in space.” At the entrance of the door of the temple was a black Hindu gatekeeper, ready to welcome him. Innumerable tiny

532 Ibid.
533 Ibid.
534 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 290.
535 Ibid.
niches….surrounded the door with a wreath of bright flames. Jung felt certain that he “was about to enter an illuminated room and would meet there all those people to whom I [he] belong in reality.”536 This experience offered him the meaning of life—“what historical nexus I or my life fitted into. I would know what had been before me, why I had come into being, and where my life was flowing.”537 At this critical moment, he was called back to earth by the emerging image of his doctor. A Gamei interpretation of this unconsciousness experience, would frame it as an affirmation of the fact that it was not the right time for Jung to die. Therefore, he was deported from the ancestral world by his distant ancestors. This experience parallels the Gamei concept of the mortal world as a carbon copy of the invisible world.

Jung shared a dream of one his patients, which helped to shape, revise, and confirm his ideas on a life after death:

I attached particular importance to a dream which a pupil of mine, a woman of sixty, dreamed about two months before her death. She had entered the hereafter. There was a class going on, and various deceased women friends of hers sat on the front bench. An atmosphere of general expectation prevailed. She looked around for a teacher or lecturer, but could find none. Then it became plain that she herself was the lecturer, for immediately after death people had to give accounts of the total experience of their lives. The dead were extremely interested in the life experiences that the newly deceased brought with them, just as if the acts and experiences taking place in earthly life, in space and time, were the decisive ones.538

In another vision, Jung experienced another floating in space, “as though I were safe in the womb of the universe—in a tremendous void but filled with the highest possible feelings of happiness. “This is eternal bliss,” I thought. “This cannot be described; it is far too wonderful.”539 Through this experience, it was clear to him that the unconscious realm characterized by the psychic life and the endearing presence of the ancestors cannot be described in mortal vocabulary.

536 Ibid. 291.
537 Ibid.
538 Ibid. 305.
539 Ibid. 293.
In Egyptian mythology and alchemical studies, “the stone” in the vision symbolizes psychic totality and a complexio oppositorum. The same stone appeared to Jung a second time a few days before his actual death:

He saw a great round stone in a high place, a barren square, and on it were engraved the words: “And this shall be a sign unto you of Wholeness and Oneness.” Then he saw many vessels to the right in an open square and a quadrangle of trees whose roots reached around the earth and enveloped him and among the roots golden threads were glittering.

In addition, the stone perhaps represents a house or a grave-temple. Two months prior to his death, Jung had a dream and told his protégés Marie Louise von-Franz and Barbara Hannah, who interpreted it as a death dream: “He saw the ‘Other Bollingen‘ bathed in a glow of light, and a voice told him that it was now completed and ready for habitation. Then far below he saw a mother wolverine teaching her child to dive and swim in a stretch of water,” something which it could not yet do by itself. Barbara Hannah writes:

The end of the dream has the same meaning: the dreamer must soon pass into another element (usually called another world) and learn as different a way of adaptation, as the young wolverine, who was already at home on dry ground, had to learn in the water. Evidently Mother Nature was ready for the change and prepared to give her full support….In fact, it may have been this dream that loosened his strong tie to his earthly Bollingen. Once again, as had happened so often before, Jung’s complete acceptance of death gave him a new lease on life, to his own great surprise.

In Jung’s vocabulary, the Bolligen tower personifies the Beyond, thus the Self, which is the destiny of the individual. For Jung, the tower, in its earthly form, was already a vessel of the greater inner man or of the Self. He argues that:

From the beginning I felt the Tower as in some way a place of maturation—a maternal womb or a maternal figure in which I could become what I was, what I

\[540\] Von Franz, On Dreams and Death, 127.
\[541\] Ibid. C.G. Jung: His Myth on Our Time, 287.

\[542\] Barbara Hannah, Jung; His Life and Work: A Biographical Memoir (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1976), 344.

\[543\] Ibid.
am and will be. It gave me a feeling as if I were being reborn in stone. It is thus a concretization of the individuation process, a *memorial aere perennius*…

At Bollingen I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself. Here I am, as it were the “age-old son of the mother….

At times I feel as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the plashing of the waves, in the clouds and the animals that come and go in the procession of the seasons. 544

Moreover, the Tower at Bollingen represents the abode of the dead. Jung writes:

In the Tower at Bollingen it is as if one lived in many simultaneously. The place will outlive me and its location and style it points backward to things of long ago. There is very little about it to suggest the present. If a man of the sixteenth century were to move into the house, only the kerosene lamp and the matches would be new to him; otherwise, he would know his way about without difficulty. There is nothing to disturb the dead, neither electric light not telephone. Moreover, my ancestors’ souls are sustained by the atmosphere of the house, since I answer for them the questions that lives once left behind. 545

In the midst of Jung’s fantasies about death, and his thinking about the scientific and philosophical traditions of death, he maintained that his individual ego life emerged like a rhizome. He lived above the ground, but the eternal roots of life continued to live in the depths.

Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away—an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilizations, we cannot escape the impression of absolute nullity. Yet I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures underneath the eternal flux. 546

In a letter to Kristine Mann, facing her mortality, quoted by van der Post, Jung writes:

Death, is the hardest thing from the outside and as long as we are outside of it. But once inside you taste of such completeness and peace and fulfillment that you don’t want to return. As a matter of fact, during the first month after my vision I suffered from black depression because I felt that I was recovering. It was like dying. I did not want to live and to return into this fragmentary, restricted, narrow, almost

545 Ibid. 237.
546 Ibid. 4.
mechanical life. . . . Throughout my illness something has carried me. My feet were not standing on air and I had the proof that I have reached a safe ground. Whatever you do, if you do it sincerely, will eventually become the bridge to your wholeness, a good ship that carries you through the darkness of your second birth, which seems to be death to the outside. I will not last too long any more. I am marked. But life has fortunately become provisional. It has become a transitory prejudice, a working hypothesis for the time being, but not existence itself. Be patient and regard it as another difficult task, this time the last one.  

And Hannah writes, concerning her reaction to the death of Jung:

Now that the “blossom was passing away and proving itself, like all mortal life, to be “an ephemeral apparition,” the eternal roots, that were also a C. G. Jung, appeared above the surface and spread themselves protecting over him. This dream tells us with the greatest clearness that Jung was dying at the right time, and was about to be received by that rhizome which he had always known as his “true invisible life.” Or to use the language he used in Memories, his No. 1 personality was dying, but his No. 2 remained unchanged.  

Van der Post recalls Jung’s conception of death: “Psychologically, death was for him just as important as birth, and like birth an integral part of life, so the events of life could not be described until after death.” Further he adds:

There is clear implication in his writing and clearer affirmation in his conversation that the self achieved lived on at least as image and incorruptible core of new being. Death freed it only from what was false and provisional and sent it on indestructible in time to serve in another season of itself. The walls between birth and death, the known and the unknown, had always been no opaque barrier for his spirit but transparent as the windows of a house of many mansions amber with light as night. However solidly and empirically drawn his own frontiers were for us, one was always conscious of how for him they remained transparent with the light of new meanings pressing out of the dark against them.  

What then is the celestial likeness of the dead? Von Franz argues that since the psyche is intensity, “Perhaps this is what is suggested by all those experiences of light of

---

547 Van der Post, *Jung and the story of our time*, 255.
549 Van der Post, *Jung and the story of our time*, 270.
light, since light is still virtually the highest perceivable limit of extensity.” In the transcendental state, the dead appears as “transparent and bright as the sun,” “appearing in a religious light,” “unusual brightness,” and “dazzlingly bright like the sum.”

In the preceding section, I have examined Jungian archetypal ideas of the dead or ancestors and the concept of death. One of the theoretical conclusions is that ancestors, in the Jungian framework, can be understood as the voices of the unconscious psyche, serving as intermediaries between the conscious and unconscious worlds. They mediate the Supreme Being to the living and also mediate the living to the Supreme Being. This kind of psychological frame helps deepen our understanding of the central place of religion in the Gamei community. Ancestors are the ones who mediate prayers, sacrifices and expressions of thanksgiving to the Supreme Being. The mediation of ancestors, in the Gamei tradition, is both vertical and horizontal. It is ancestors who guarantee the efficacy of religious practices and without their presence at all times, life is meaningless and worthless. In their transcendental state, their appearances are crystal-glorious similar to the sun. In addition, the dead are personified as motherhood, enforcing the principle of opposites. Yet in the psychic realm there is a psychological wholeness emerging in the central archetype of the psyche—thus the Self as a God-symbol. Again, Jung and other Jungian scholars argue that the world of spirits is in many respects simply a synonym of the unconscious psyche.

Essentially, viewing Gamei ancestral ideas through this kind of psychological lens helps to deepen our understanding of the Gamei traditional concept of ancestral world as pleroma, as a place without any limitations whatsoever to time-space.

**Jung/Jungian interpretation of the Ancestral world of the Gamei**

To summarize, within Jung’s understanding of the psyche, the world of spirits is synonymous with the unconscious psyche, and this psychological interpretation validates the invisible, numinous or transcendental reality of the unconscious psyche. “In a certain sense this is also a relationship to the collectivity of the dead: for the unconscious corresponds to the mythic land of the dead; for the land of the ancestors. If therefore, one

---


551 Ibid. 150-151.
has a fantasy of the soul vanishing, this means that it has withdrawn into the unconscious or into the land of the dead.”\textsuperscript{552} It is significant to note that Jung’s knowledge of ancestral land, that is, a transcendental homeland where psychic beings exist, parallels the Gamei worldview. The psychological frame for the existence of an ancestral land, in other words, provides a meaningful way of understanding how the ancestral world, for the Gamei, is so central to everyday life.

Despite these very strong affirmations of ancestral life in Jung’s writings, it is important to remember again that, as noted earlier in Chapter 2, Jung at times refused to comment about the emergence of a spirit-world in physical reality, largely for fear of the pathological undertones of such a view. For example, in describing Jung’s ambivalence toward spiritualistic phenomena, G. H. Baynes writes:

What we cannot determine is whether the spirit-world, which appears to be inhabited by the spirits of those who have died, is an aspect of this vast hinterland of the psyche, or whether it can be regarded as existing independently. All we know is that the spirits of the dead can become part of our experience only by means of our conscious psychic envelope, and just because of this inevitable condition it is practically impossible to determine whether they exist independently of the psyche or whether they live because the living give them life.\textsuperscript{553}

In contrast to this ambivalence in Jung’s writing, it is absolutely clear that for the Gamei, the ancestral world has a transcendental reality and it is a place. And when one examines the thrust of Jung’s writing, as we did earlier in this chapter, it is also clear that despite his ambivalence, Jung also came close to this conceptualization. For Jung, the structures of the collective unconscious are the archetypes, which are very real: “The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a \textit{facultas praeformandi}, a possibility of representation which is given \textit{a priori}.”\textsuperscript{554} One could explain that the content of the archetypes, its concrete particular expression, is determined by culture, tradition and finally by individuals. The archetypes as instinct and behavior pattern can

\textsuperscript{552} Jung, \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections}, 191.

\textsuperscript{554} Ibid. “Psychological Aspects of the Mother” 77.
be reduced to a simple formula. For Jung, “… It has a potential existence only, and when it takes shape in matter it is no longer what it was. It persists throughout the ages and requires interpreting ever anew. The archetypes are the imperishable elements of the unconscious, but they change their shape continually.”

Our ability to identity archetypal theme in cultural traditions increases our consciousness about the underlying influences which inform our cultural heritage that are at first unconscious.

Within this framework, Bührmann associates the belief in ancestors among indigenous Africans to the Westerner’s concept of the unconscious:

To me as an analytical psychologist the belief in the ancestors, the way they are experienced and the obligation towards them have many similarities to the Westerner’s concept of the unconscious, his experience of the archetypes and his obligation to pay attention to these as they appear in his dreams, visions, fantasies and his spontaneous, creative activities. To remain relatively, mentally and physically, and to have some light on the path of life, the ego should have a respectful attitude towards the manifestation of the unconscious and not to brush these aside as nonsense or “just imagination.”

Psychologically, the archetypes are projections from the unconscious, and they are objectified and personified, for instance as ancestors. Again, in Ga indigenous spirituality, the manifestations of ancestors through dreams and other psychic phenomena can be seen as expressions of archetypal contents. Ancestors, in this framework, are therefore archetypal images that are similar in all cultures and common to all humanity.

To express it traditionally, there are the realities of life. The central argument in this dissertation should not be taken to imply that we imagine that thoughts and experience of ancestors are so persuasive that they become an archetype of the Self. Rather, this dissertation is simply attempting to use words to illuminate the psychological meaning, representations and thoughts of the fact that in the inner world of all indigenous cultures, in particular Gamei, there is a powerful psychic reality beyond ego consciousness. This has implications for the industrial world as well, where there is the challenge of rediscovery of the full spiritual and psychological range of human experience. The study of ancestral psychology can be of considerable assistance in this realm.

---

555 Ibid. 179.
556 Bührmann, Living in two Worlds: Communication between a white healer and her black counterparts, 31.
Summary and Conclusion

In this section, I have discussed ancestorhood among the Gamei and conceptualized conditions for attaining ancestorhood. I have also examined Jungian psychological concepts of ancestorhood and have attempted to demonstrate how the application of a psychological theoretical framework can deepen our understanding of how ancestral spirituality operates in Gamei and other indigenous cultures.

In conclusion a few remarks may be added concerning some challenges accompanying a cross-cultural application of ideas about ancestorhood. Jung’s experience of ancestors is instructive in this regard because he had an actual experience in which he was able to instruct the dead. He writes: “Quite early I had learned that it was necessary for me to instruct the figures of the unconscious, or that other group which is often indistinguishable from them, the “spirits of the departed.” In contrast, the Gamei understanding of ancestors suggests that the ancestors rather instruct the living. It is not a two-way street. The extent to which these opposing world views can be reconciled is perhaps an area of exploration in future studies.

For Jung, the “Dead” are the voices of the world of the unconscious psyche, and this function situates them in the state of intermediary between the Supreme Being and humanity as communication functionaries. As “messengers, ambassadors and servants” acting on behalf of the Self, the God-images—the ancestors are dear to the Self. The archetype of the spirit is perhaps similar to the ancestors among the Gamei, representing the spirits of all departed members of the lineage. They are thus the intermediary between the lineage, the physical and metaphysical worlds. To put it psychologically, they act as bridges between the conscious and unconscious psyche. In a sense, they are communication intermediaries, representing the lineage in its interaction with the wholeness of the community—the living, the unborn and the ancestral world. Another characteristic of the self-ancestor motif is its ordering, organizational and unification functions. The Ancestor is as central to the life of Gamei as the Self is central to Jung’s theory of the human psyche: “It is the archetype of order, organization, and unification of

all that goes into the human personality. It is at the heart of the collective unconscious and draws to itself the many unconscious archetypes and their manifestations into an ideal harmonious totality.\textsuperscript{558} In addition, the archetypes of anima and animus also personify ancestors in the role as significant mediators. Psychologically, contemporary human beings are dead without the recognition and knowledge of the unconscious.

Finally, in Jung’s psychology the psychic life is a glorious and blissful experience in the Self—which is an apt description the spiritual world of the Gamei. Jung’s hypothesis of an unconscious psyche, as it has been construed throughout this dissertation as the spirit world has an overtone of communal nature for all humanity. Although spiritualism featured prominently in the life and thought of Jung, terms such as ancestorhood and ancestors may also be described in primarily psychological language, although at times Jung implies a certain pathological meaning. Despite this, I argue that Jung’s theory of archetypes of spirit, shares striking resemblance to the Gamei concept of ancestors as actual beings. Jung came quite close to admitting their actual existence.

\textsuperscript{558} Kelly, \textit{The Psychology of the Unconscious}, 121-122.
Chapter 6-Conclusions and Contributions: Toward a Dialogic Psychological Formulation

In this concluding chapter, I recapture the preceding summaries of the psychological understanding of spirit of Carl Gustav Jung and the Gamei. In addition, I offer the conclusions and contributions of the dissertation.

Jung’s psychological theory of the collective unconscious, suggests, in effect, that the human psyche has a spiritual or transcendental reality, that there is a religious unconscious. In contrast to classic Freudian theory, Jung maintains that the archetypal contents of the collective unconscious are not the product of repressed emotionally laden memories, but rather the repository of universal psychological tendencies, propensities and primordial images whose expressions are found in diverse cultures around the world. As noted at the beginning of this dissertation, Jung was virtually the only psychological theorist who viewed the cultural practices of indigenous cultures in Africa and other parts of the world as a source of fruitful investigation. Moreover, his willingness, even if ambivalent at times, to view the experiential intersections between the world of the living and the world of the ancestors as important realms of human experience, was unprecedented. As such, Jung’s archetypal theory provides the opportunity to explore the potential for adding an important psychological dimension to the understanding of ancestral practices among the Gamei. In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to explore the utility this approach.

What has emerged from this investigation has been the discovery of some important points of convergence between Jungian archetypal theory and ancestral practices among the Gamei, as well as other points in which the traditional cosmology of the Gamei can be seen as a source for enrichment and expansion of Western notions of life, death, and spirit.
In Chapter 1, I briefly stated that until now, there had been little attempt to understand ancestral beliefs from a specific psychological perspective, with reference to the *Gamei*. I demonstrated how a Jungian perspective has the potential to contribute significantly to an understanding of *spirit* by describing what is known about the metaphysical phenomenon of the collective unconscious, which through various investigations has been found to have shared meaning across diverse cultures. I reviewed some of Jung’s research with Africans and African-Americans, in which some of his most important theoretical formulations about archetypes and the collective unconscious were validated. In addition, I suggested that Jung’s epistemology and methodology were primarily psychological, without substantial metaphysical derivations or philosophical speculations. Stated briefly, he adopted a phenomenological approach to the study of psychology. That is, he was most interested in observing and documenting recurrent patterns in human *experience*. He thought of himself as an empirical scientist whose approach to theory was inductive rather than deductive. That is, he attempted to observe what he termed objective psychic reality, and formulated his theories based on what he observed. As he performed his research, Jung began to recognize the importance of religion in the emergence of psychological concepts. In other words, he came to believe that religious ideas can be interpreted psychologically. However, I argued that psychology is greatly limited by treating traditional concepts such as ancestorhood simply as cognitive concepts. Ancestorhood is essential to understanding both ontological and cosmological concepts of the *Gamei*. The concept of ancestorhood is an integral aspect of *Gamei* tradition, and thus a way of life. Jung’s psychology, therefore, offers us the recognition that ancestorhood can be understood from a psychological perspective as an important dimension of human experience. At the same time, however, it does not go as far as *Gamei* cosmology, in which ancestorhood is absolutely central to everything that transpires in a society.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the psychological literature (primarily writings by Jung and his conceptual descendants) on the concept of spiritualism, including Jung’s doctoral dissertation and research among the Australian Aborigines. Jung explained the phenomenon of spirits as autonomous complexes within the unconscious psyche. I
suggested that Jung’s observations concerning the phenomenon of spirits provides important verification of the psychological reality of a spirit world. (It is also important to note that “psychological reality” in this sense is not synonymous with “psychopathology.” Rather, it is the recognition that realms of very real, legitimate experience exist outside the bounds of Western notions of “objective” reality). In terms of the psychological mechanisms underlying the experience of spirits, I referred to the work of Marie-Louise von Franz and others, who concluded that spirits represent a kind of psychological projection, because they have no association with the ego. In some respects, this was another area in which Jungian theorists flirted with the idea of validating spirits, unambivalently, as an essential part of phenomenological reality. However, to some extent, Jung and his protégés failed to acknowledge the physical reality of the existence of spirits.

In Chapter 3, I examined the concepts of death, both among the Gamei and for Jung and Jungian theorists. I summarized the fact that for the Gamei, death is not an ultimate disruption of human life nor does it imply a differentiation between the living and the dead. Rather, it is final rite of passage to the ancestral world. Summarizing Jung’s concept of death, I noted that for Jung, death is the attainment of a spiritual and psychic growth in a psychic world. I reviewed both Jung’s and Neumann’s three stages of individuation within four cycles of life, and suggested that within this formulation ancestry might be viewed as the ultimate goal of life, for the Gamei and perhaps for humanity. For example, I argued, if death is a process of psychic growth toward self-actualization, and the individuation process is a natural element, with a potential to transcend time and space, then among the archetypes that emerge from the collective unconscious are figures who are essentially ancestors, and the attainment of ancestorhood is the ultimate goal of life among the Gamei. Within this framework, the ancestor can be seen as entering the community of the unconscious archetypes of ancestors, reunited with the Self, which is the final state of the archetypal journey in the unconscious world.

Again, Jungian theory is not completely compatible with Gamei cosmology, since Jung focuses more on ego development. However, Jung’s formulations are especially bold when considered from a Western perspective, and one can imagine that with further
development we could have a plausible psychological complement to traditional Gamei cosmology. In other words, Jung’s conception of the collective unconscious as well as his principle of interconnectedness and practice in terms of synchronicity comes remarkably close to the rediscovery of the concept of community among Gamei, whereby wholeness or balance (the Self) of existence is defined in terms of the interconnectedness between the ancestors, the living, the yet unborn and Nature.

If archetypes can exercise a compensatory function, and archetypal figures can be constellated in the psyche, then the equivalent of the anima archetype for a man, and the animus archetype for a woman, are essential elements of the psyche. In practical terms, without the opposite archetype there is a distortion of one’s personality, and there would be no wholeness. Therefore, archetypes are relational images existing in the unconscious of the psyche. Jungian theorists agree that though we are individuals, we are all carriers of portions of the universal, collective unconscious psyche, emphasizing the communal aspect of human existence. Drawing on these ideas, I suggest that this is another area in which application of psychological conceptualizations can deepen our understand of the Gamei idea of community, particularly when the idea of community is expanded to included the vibrant relationships between living members of the community and departed spirits, or ancestors. I believe that further expansion of these ideas is a potentially fruitful area for future investigation.

In Chapter 4 I examined the significance of funeral rituals among the Gamei and the sequence of events that collectively comprise those rituals. I speculated that Jung’s theory of the archetype of Great Mother corresponds in some respects with the Gamei concept of the earth, as the source of human life, and ultimately, the place where all life returns. I argued from both Jungian and Gamei perspectives that the primary purpose of burial rites is to provide an important symbol for reconnecting the deceased’s body with the archetypal Great Mother Earth, which in Jungian terms is a personification of the collective unconscious.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I focused on Ga ancestral experiences of the ancestral world. I explored the idea of ancestors exercising mediational functions between the spirit world (archetypal world of the unconscious) and the physical world (conscious
psyche). I suggested that Jung’s discovery of the archetypes of the animus and anima as they appear in dreams provides some support for the notion that ancestors can be described as archetypes of the collective unconscious. Jung’s personal experiences of the ancestral world and his ability to extrapolate those experiences into the formulation of a cogent theory, appears to strengthen the Gamei conception of ancestors as spokespersons of the spirit world, which can be conceptualized as the unconscious psyche, providing a mediational link to the conscious world. I also suggested that from this perspective the ancestral world can indeed be viewed as a place.

Now the question remains: What will be the function of Jungian psychology and Gamei tradition be in providing a psychological framework for understanding the Gamei way of life?

I began this study by stating that until now, there has been little attempt to understand Gamei ancestral tradition from a specifically psychological perspective. Utilizing Jungian and African traditional thoughts as potentially complementary theoretical frameworks, I described traditional customs and institutions, including death, funeral rituals and practices, ancestral world and other rituals associated with the dead, and summarized the traditional Gamei cosmological perspectives associated with these customs and institutions. Noting the unique potential of Jungian theory for elucidating the (non-pathological) psychological dynamics of African indigenous cultures, I explored various ways in which Jungian ideas might help to expand our understanding of Gamei funerary practices and customs.

The concept of community among indigenous traditions and Africans in general and the Gamei in particular, revolves around the unborn, the living and the ancestors, or the “living-dead.” In these traditions, all life depends on the ancestors -- the lineage of ancestors as well as the communal ancestors. Ancestors mediate the relationship between the Supreme Being and the community. The experience of ancestors profoundly establishes the place of life in religious, psychological, and sociological humanity.

Ancestorhood is the core element of one’s life among the Gamei and this principle is how they experience their reality in the complex world around them.
Ancestors continue to influence and shape the personal, social, religious and historical lives of the *Gamei* through their manifestation in mediums, dreams, visions and trances.

The primary task for the dissertation is to bring together Jung/Jungian and *Gamei* thought to construct a meaningful ancestral psychological interpretation that seeks to synthesize conceptual ideas from both African and Western culture. Although Western cultures tend to consider the philosophy of ancestorhood as superstitious and illusory, in contemporary Western cultures, the ubiquitous “family tree” might be viewed as a kind of rudimentary acknowledgment of the importance of ancestorhood, finding expression in treasured family stories, pictures and documents, and the preservation of family heirlooms. For the Westerner, however, ancestorhood is simply family legacy. For the *Gamei*, ancestorhood is much more; it is not only veneration, but also central to the fabric of everyday life. Consequently, the exploration of the rich psychological dimensions of ancestral practice not only serves to elucidate the psychological aspects of *Gamei* culture, but also provides a glimpse of how we might begin to find ways to recover some of the rich potential for personal and collective spiritual development that has been sacrificed in the service of Western “progress.” This approach, in future research, has the potential to enrich our understanding of the transcendence of human life and the diverse traditional cultures of primal traditions worldwide, as the world seeks to shape itself into a “global village.”

**Contributions**

Jung’s parapsychological approach to the understanding of spiritual phenomena reconciles both unconscious fantasies and the existence of human spirits in a holistic psychic reality. Although Jung did not acknowledge explicitly the “objective,” or physical reality of spirit, he was way ahead of his time in demonstrating that psychic experience is as “real” as the world of tangible, physical reality. To state it briefly, Jung’s extensive exploration of unconscious fantasies provides at least the beginnings of a fruitful illumination of the world of spirits in *Gamei* indigenous cultures, offering an alternative perspective to understanding the meaning of spirits in the cultural life of the community.
Attributing a central role to ancestors in the contemporary way of life sustains an historical continuity between the past and the future that preserves cultural coherence in traditional practices. The emergence of unconscious fantasies and widespread belief in spirits can best be understood if we take into account the cultural mores, the myths, common knowledge, religious symbols, cultural practices, longstanding customs, colloquial language, and traditional social practices. Following Jung’s example, people of differing persuasions can agree to disagree about the existential reality of ancestral spirits, while nevertheless sharing an appreciation that whether real or imagined, they play an integral part in defining and maintaining the cultural life of the people. Within the culture, whatever has a name and a functional purpose constitutes a social reality to reckon with. These cultural structures define the content of much of indigenous knowledge. In this sense, Jung’s psychological theory of archetypes in spiritual life, which are structured in unconscious fantasies, corresponds closely with the Gamei vision of the role of ancestors in contemporary cultural life.

Unquestionably, the people of Ghana truly believe in the reality of the human spirits in their midst. From a sociocultural perspective I would argue against dismissing those beliefs as primitive superstitions or delusional perceptions, for that would devalue the functional significance of their role in the religious and cultural life of the community. Jung’s reasoning about unconscious fantasies lends some justification to the viewpoint espoused also by Sigmund Freud that psychic realities need to be taken into account in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of cultural consciousness.

This dissertation makes several contributions to the study of ancestors. Most significant is my argument that Jung understanding of the unconscious psyche has parallels to the Gamei world of spirit. It reinforces and shapes the traditional concept of the residence of the dead.

Second, I argue that a Jungian theoretical framework helps to explain why the Gamei place such importance on the journey of the soul (faafo) into the ancestral realm after death. Understood from a Jungian perspective, this is not primitive superstition, but rather a very real psychic journey into the unconscious psyche, where very real interactions with ancestors in the form of psychic beings confirms the existence of an
important psychic reality, every bit as real and legitimate as the reified idea of physical reality in the West.

Third, a Jungian framework helps us understand why death, among the Gamei, is the process of attaining spiritual growth in the ancestral world. This principle provides a therapeutic paradigm as well for persons with vivid experiences of the collective unconscious, independent of the person’s cultural homeland.

Fourth, the Gamei concept of ancestorhood, especially in the context of intermediaries, seems applicable to Jung’s approach to ancestorhood. The dissertation re-echoes the roles of the ancestors as communication intermediaries or linguistics in the traditional Ghanaian chieftaincy context. Psychologically, in this view, the ancestors are transpsychic realities of the structure of the archetypes of the unconscious psyche; therefore they are similar to the archetype of the Self. Jung describes them as the “voices” of the unconscious psyche. These are trusted servants, ambassadors and messengers of the Supreme Being not on ethical grounds, but as necessary members of the community.

Fifth, I suggest an important way in which Jungian theory might be expanded as a result of its encounter with Gamei cultural practices. Contrary to the Jungian concept of individuation as the goal of life, I suggest that among the Gamei, the concept of community as cyclical provides an alternative perspective. In this framework, the goal of life is the attainment of ancestorship. In other words, Gamei culture is at root a communal culture, vividly embodying Mbiti’s proverb, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.”559 It is important to note that this does not negate the importance of the individual. It simply means that individual development cannot exist in isolation from the community in which the individual is born and dies. Additionally, just as the individual cannot develop properly without her or his surrounding community’s support and engagement, the community cannot develop without the engagement of the individual. Although Jung was truly far ahead of his contemporaries in his understanding of the deeper parts of human functioning that have been lost in the midst of Western industrialization, this understanding of the essentially reciprocal relationship between the individual and community may have been a blindspot for Jung. The application of

Jungian principles in the *Gamei* cultural context serves to uncover this blindspot and provide the beginning building blocks for an expansion of Jungian ideas about “individuation.” Accordingly, in my conceptual formulations, I have argued that the concept of community should not be limited to individuals. Among the *Gamei*, community includes the unborn, the living-dead and the living. Through the structure of traditions of religious humanity, ancestors are bridges for communal life. Western cultures too may find that the uncovering of this ancient notion of community might prove quite fruitful as a means of recovering the deeper parts of their own humanity.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Aryeh, Josiah N. “To drum or not to drum: the controversy surrounding the ban on drumming in Accra” in *Ghanaian Times*, 12: 5, 1999.


Ashley, Benedict M. & Kevin D. O’ Rourke, *Ethics of Health Care: An Introductory...*


Barnor, M. A. A Brief Description of Ga Homowo, Accra, May, 1923.


Coolwell, W. “*My Kind of People: Achievement, Identity and Aboriginality*,” St. Lucia,


206


210


___________. & Albert K. Awedoba, eds. *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture*,


Parsons, Robert T. “The Idea of God among the Kono of Sierra Leone,” in African Ideas


Wiredu, Kwasi. “Death and the Afterlife in African Culture,” in *Perspectives on Death and Dying: Cross-Cultural and Multi-Disciplinary Views*, Arthur Berger and


Appendix 1: GLOSSARY

Indigenous terms

Abayaŋ: A piece of funeral cloth around the waist during funeral service

Adowa: Traditional Asante music and dance form
Agbamaa: The traditional funeral ritual for high priests, and priestess
Akpeteshie: Locally brewed gin with high alcoholic content
Amli kpawo: Representing seven oceans
Ataa: Grandfather
AtaaNaa Nyọŋmo: Father-Mother God
Aye: Witch

Blema hemokeyeli: Traditional belief
Bloi ahejuu: The cleansing of the ceremonial brooms

Dead: Gbohii
Dudoŋnuwoo: The filling of the ceremonial pots with water

Faafoo: Final Funeral Obsequies
Fia: Ceremony for the parents of a dead child

Gbatsu: Medium
Gbele: Death
Gbohinajeŋ: Ancestral world
Gbomotso: Body
Gbonyo adeka: Casket

Haji: Twins
Hebulemo Ritual of purification
Homo wo: Hunger-hooting
Homowo: The annual Ga festival to commemorate the dead

Ketre: Representatives from both the maternal and paternal side of the deceased families supervising the funeral ceremonies including the head of the paternal family

Kla: The spiritual part of humans, the spirit like entity of a human being
Kla-gbei: Birthday names
Kọtsagbamo: Ritual of Bathing the dead
Kpekepi: Steamed unleavened corn dough that is served with palm soup
Kpeteŋkle: Transcendent
Kusum: Tradition or way of life

Lamo: Dream
Lamoi: Dreams
Ma: Corn, Millet, Wheat

Manjuramo: The cleansing of the town

Manjtse: Ga traditional chief or ruler

Manjtsemei: Ga traditional chiefs

Manjkralo: A traditional leader or town guardian, second to the traditional Chief

Dmanye: Queen mother

Mumo: Breath of life

Naa: Grandmother; an accolade of respect for females

Nidinjiemo: Removal of the mourning cloth

Nii: Grandsire; an accolade of respect for males

Niimei ke Naamei: Collective name for ancestors

Nishwamo: Sprinkling of the festal food

Nyono: Ga supreme God

Dkpaiyeli: Libation

Dmaadumo: Ceremonies of corn-planting

Dmaakpamo: Harvesting of corn/wheat

Doo wala: Annual Ga Homowo exchange of greetings

Dshobulemo: Lifting of the ban on fishing

Dô Wala Hamo: A New Year’s ceremony and exchange of greetings on the day after Homowo

Okulanfo: (yoo alo nuu) Widow or Widower

Okulanfeemo: Widowhood rite

Okyeame: A spokesperson or orator in Ga and Akan society, also the name of a literary magazine.

Oshamada: Final funeral ritual for traditional rulers

Otofo: spirit of the dead

Otofojiemo: The ritual for recovering the ambiguous loss spirit

Sankofa: Popular adinkra symbol meaning “go back and fetch it”

Shibâa: The preparation of the land

Shifoo: Funeral procession

Sisa: Invisible ghosts

Sunsum: The Ga unconscious mind that maintains the physical and psychological continuity of an individual between life and death

In Ga vocabulary, the term “sunsum” also refers to “shadow” but not in the Jungian psychological context.

Tsotfatemei: Traditional healers

Tsalegbemo: Ritual of kola-nut

Wala: Life

Weku: Lineage
**Wekushia:** Ancestral home/linage house
**Woji:** Ga pantheon of lesser gods
**Wọ́bá:** Minor god, spiritual beings
**Wulomei:** Ga traditional high priest
**Wulome:** A priest to a deity

**Yarafeemo:** Funeral rituals and practices
**Yarafeemogbi:** The day of funeral rituals and practices

**Jungian terms***
**Anima:** The feminine aspect within a man representing the principle of Soul or Eros.
   A connecting or relating quality.

**Animus:** The masculine aspect within a woman representing the principle of Spirit or Logos, the discriminating or decisive quality.

**Archetype:** A psychological primordial instinct represented by a universal mythological image.

**Collective unconscious:** The universal unconscious layer of the psyche which is identical in all human beings and contains autonomous archetypal contents.

**Ego:** The center of consciousness and personal identity; the source of memory and will.

**Individuation:** The teleological process of becoming whole; the ultimate goal of human life.

**Psyche:** The whole of one’s personality including the various components of the conscious and unconscious realm.

**Self:** The center and the totality of the psyche, the Self has a directive function which shapes a person’s growth; this direction may run counter to that of the ego.

**Shadow:** Those aspects of the psyche which the ego has rejected. These contents remain active but unconscious within the psyche.

**Synchronicity:** A meaningful coincidence in which an outer event relates acausally to an inner subjective psychological state.

**Spirits:** Unconscious autonomous complexes which appear as projections because they have no direct associations with the ego.

**Transcendent function:** From a Jungian perspective, the function which mediates opposites.
* Note that there is considerable scholarly debate in the Western literature about the scope and definitions of these various terms. In future investigations, it will be fruitful to explore the nuances of the debate more fully.

Appendix 2: CHRONOLOGY

1875 Carl Gustav Jung is born in Kessavi, Canton Thurgau on 26 July, and the son of the Reformed Protestant parson John Paul Achilles Jung (1842-1896) and his wife, Emilie Preiswerk (1848-1923).

1876 The family moves to Laufen on the Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen.

1879 Move to Kleinhüningen near Basel.

1884 Birth of sister Gertrud (d. 1935).

1886 Jung enters the Gymnasium in Basel.

1895 Studies in science and medicine at Basel University; state examinations 1900.

1899 Spiritistic sessions with his cousin, the medium Helene Preiswerk.

1900 Decision to specialize in psychiatry; in December assistant at the Burghölzli psychiatric clinic in Zürich under Professor Eugen Bleuler. Certification to practice medicine in all Swiss cantons.

1902 Dissertation: On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena.


1903/05 Volunteer doctor at Burghölzli. Experimental works including Studies in Word Association; discovery of the feeling-toned complexes.

1905/09 Senior doctor at Burghölzli.

1905/13 Lecturer on the medical faculty of Zürich University.

1906 Public advocacy of Freud’s psychoanalysis. Beginning of correspondence with Freud.

Departure from the clinic as a result of personal differences with Bleuder and Overwork; beginning of private practice in his newly built home in Küsnacht near Zürich.


March: Nuremberg Congress founds the “International Psychoanalytic Association,” with Jung as president (to 1914).

*Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido.*

September: Lectures at Fordham University in New York: Jung accentuates his views diverging from Freud’s; honorary doctorate.

With the permission of William Alanson White, Jung analyzed 15 African-American patients at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Washington, DC. the largest psychiatric institution in America.

Jung break with Freud.

August: In lectures to the Psycho-Medical Society in London, Jung designates his style of research “analytical psychology.”

Jung’s ‘confrontation with the unconscious.

20 April: Resignation as president.

July: Secession, with the Zürich branch, from the International Psychoanalytic Association.

“Septem Sermones ad Mortuos,” text from his confrontation with the conscious.

“The Transcendent Function”, first mention of the method of active imagination.

“The Structure of the Unconscious.”

Founding of the Psychological Club in Zürich.

Medical Corps doctor and commandant of English internment camp at Châteaux-d’Oex.

Studies of Gnostic writings.

c. 1926

*Psychological Types.*

Jung purchases Bollingen property.
1923 Death of his mother. Beginning of construction of the tower on land acquired on upper Lake Zürich in 1922; last wing completed in 1955.


1925 August: Jung visits the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley and renews His commitment to go to Africa. George Beckwith and Peter Baynes agree to join the safari. October: Jung consults the I Ching which favors continuation of the plans for the trip to Africa. Jung departs on the Wangoni from Southampton for the voyage to Mombasa. November: Jung’s ‘Bugishu Psychological Expedition” to the Elgonyi of Mount Elgon, East Africa. The Wangoni reaches Port Said, Egypt. The Wangoni arrives at Kilindini harbor, Mombasa, Kenya. Jung and company depart on night train for Nairobi. On the following morning Jung has a déjà vu experience before arriving in Nairobi. Jung spends the week shopping with Ruth. He also visits the Arthi Plains where he finds his raison d’être. Jung and Baynes dine with Sir William Gowers, the Governor of Uganda. Jung and Baynes are interviewed by the East Africa Standard.

1926 January: the caravan walks to walks to Bubulo, the district headquarters of Bugisu District.


1930 Vice-president of the General Medical Society for Psychotherapy, with president Ernest Kretschmer.

1930/34 “Interpretation of Visions,” English seminar in the Zürich Psychological Club.

1931 Seelenprobleme der Gegenwart.

1932 Prize for Literature, City of Zürich.

1933 After Kretschmer’s resignation, provisional president of the General Medical Society for Psychotherapy until its reconstruction in 1934.
Beginning of lectures at Swiss Technological Institute in Zürich. August: Beginning of the Eranos conferences, with “A Study in the Process of Individuation.”


1934/39 “Psychological Aspects of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra.” English seminar at the Psychological Club in Zürich.


1937 Terry Lectures at Yale University on “Psychology and Religion.”

1937/38 Invited by the British Indian government in India; honorary doctorates at the Universities of Calcutta, Benares, and Allahabad.

1938 Medical Congress for Psychotherapy at Oxford; honorary doctorate at Oxford University.

1939 Honorary member of the Royal Society of Medicine in London.


1942 Paracelsica Zwei Vorlesungen.

1943 15 October: Named Professor in ordinary of psychology at Basel University.

1944 Abandonment of university teaching duties after heart attack.
Psychology and Alchemy.

1945  Honorary doctorate at Geneva University on his seventieth birthday. Festschrift in Eranos Jahrbuch, Zur Idee des Archetypischen.

1946  Psychologie und Erziehung. 
Aufsätze zu Zeitgeschichte. 
“The Psychology of the Transference.”

1948  Founding of the C.G. Jung Institute in Zürich. 
Symbolik des Geistes. 
Über psychische Energetik und das Wesen der Träume.

1950  Gestaltungen des Unbewussten. 
On his seventy-fifth birthday, Eranos Jahrbuch, Aus der Welt der Urbilder.

1951  Aion; researchs in historical symbolism. 

1952  Symbols of Transformation (revised and expanded version of Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido of 1912). 
Answer to Job. 
Renewed serious illness.


1955  Honorary doctorate at Swiss Technological Institute, on his eightieth birthday. 
Festschrift by students and friends, Studien zur Analytischen Psychologie C. G. Jungs. 
Mysterium Coniunctionis, Vol. 1. 
Psychological commentary on The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation. 
27 November: Death of Emma Jung.


1957  Beginning of work on Memories, Dreams, Reflections, with Aniela Jaffé. 
“The Undiscovered Self.”

“A Psychological View of Conscience.” 
First volume of The Collected Works in German, Vol. 16: Praxis der Psychotherapie.
1959 “Good and Evil in Analytical Psychology.”

1960 Named honorary citizen of Küsnacht on his eighty-fifth birthday.

6 June: After a short illness Jung dies in his home in Küsnacht.
9 June: Burial in the Küsnacht cemetery