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The Inner World of the First Half of Life: Analytical Psychology's Forgotten Developmental Stage

Satya Doyle Byock

The field of analytical psychology has largely ignored the developmental stage that Jung termed the “first half of life.” As a result, a great many individuals coming of age today, starving for guidance on how to live in relationship to their inner lives, find little that reflects them within the Jungian literature or community. This article addresses that issue, identifying some of the challenges that individuals in the first half of life face today, including the lack of traditional supports to guide their transition from childhood into adulthood, and the popularly termed “quarter-life crisis” that often marks this stage. This article also questions the assumptions within the field that tie individuation to the second half of life, and it explores the relationship with the inner world that is possible earlier in life.

In his essay “Stages of Life,” C. G. Jung separated human psychological development into three stages: childhood, the first half of life, and the second half of life. Jung’s clinical interest lay primarily in the final stage, beginning at the midlife transition, which he believed began around age 35 or 40 (1933, p. 100). The field of analytical psychology has maintained this focus on the second half of life since Jung’s time, with an expanded focus on the stage of childhood. Left conspicuously unexamined, however, are the twenty-some years of adulthood in between. Indeed, the scant commentary on the first half of life is generally found embedded within discussions of other topics. Like the forgotten middle child, the first half of life is mentioned in passing for the sake of comparison to the other stages, rarely identified with its own characteristics or praised for its unique value.



Pamela Freundl Kirst, *Blossom Fallen from the Branch*,
digital photograph, 2014.

The traditional emphasis on ego development in the first half of life may inherently relegate it to a place of diminished interest within the Jungian world. In the developmental literature of the Jungian canon, the ego complex in the first half of life is defined not by its profound immersion in the archetypal unconscious (childhood), nor by its pursuit of reconnection to that unconscious (second half of life), but by its increasing distance and growing independence. As I note throughout this article, that traditional emphasis and bias beg renewed consideration.

The significant demographic shifts in the last fifty-plus years may have transformed the stages of life as Jung defined them, altering as well the traditional path of individuation. These shifts have yet to be fully appreciated by the culture of Jungian practitioners, however, a culture that continues to emphasize the correlation between individuation and the second half of life without full recognition of how the world has changed—this despite the fact that many of the leaders in the field began analytic training in their 20s and 30s.

As I have heard repeatedly in my practice with clients in their 20s, they have read Jungian literature and found that their own struggles and experiences are either not reflected or are best understood within the context of the midlife crisis, anticipated a decade or two later. In both cases, they become disheartened and confused. Just as the midlife transition once received a tremendous boost of exploration for older adults seeking reconnection to their inner lives, greater focus on the first half of life is needed now to support individuals coming of age in a culture increasingly distant from the inner life and increasingly overwhelmed by the external. Individuals moving through the first half of life today are in desperate need of guidance to fill in the gaps left by social and cultural education. It behooves the field of analytical psychology to appreciate this stage of life anew so as not to alienate those individuals who are seeking orientation towards their inner lives.

THE INNER WORLD OF THE FIRST HALF OF LIFE, THEN AND NOW

In his essay on the life stages, Jung postulated the necessary goals of the first half of life. Individuals in this stage, he emphasized, strive to establish themselves in the external world, pursue secure employment, gain skills and education, find a mate, and start a family. In order to engage life and develop a strong ego and sense of self, Jung wrote, the purpose of the first half of life “undoubtedly lies in the development of the individual, our entrenchment in the outer world, [and] the propagation of our kind and the care of

our children” (trans. 1933, p. 109). In reference to the second half of life in his commentary on “The Secret of the Golden Flower,” Jung reiterated this point: The goal of the first half of life is “procreation and reproduction—the means of perpetuating one’s physical existence” (1931/1967, par. 69). Despite his own emphasis on the unconscious, Jung stressed the importance of outward, worldly development for individuals in the first half of life. He considered this stage as a necessary preparation for the stage of introspection that comes later. Indeed, rather than encourage inner exploration in the first half of life, he warned against it. “Achievement, usefulness and so forth” is the normal work for individuals in the first half of life, Jung declared, “and in all circumstances preferable to merely tossing about in a welter of problems” (trans. 1933, p. 103). He continued with a graver tone: “For a young person it is almost a sin—and certainly a danger—to be too much occupied with himself” (p. 109).

Following childhood, there is a necessity that young adults kill the dragon, go into the mouth of the cave and destroy the connection to the mother, both personally and archetypally, so they can move into secure psychological independence. When Jung warns against too much self-preoccupation, he is warning against an abdication of this battle. He fears that young adults will fly away to Never Never Land, trapping themselves in the borderline state between immersion in the unconscious and full ego development and stay forever, psychologically, young. Despite these warnings of a failure to move into adulthood within Jung’s writings and that of other scholars, however, there is scant exploration of how the ego is to differentiate from identification with the unconscious safely and effectively. Within the literature, the psychological work required for entrance into the first half of life is taken for granted. The transition is viewed as an inevitability that simply requires hard work and focus.

As evidenced by Jung’s (1948/1960) discussion here, he trusted the inherent biological system to move individuals forward into the first half of life: “Proper recognition and appreciation of normal instincts leads the young person into life and entangles him with fate, thus involving him in life’s necessities and the consequent sacrifices and efforts through which his character is developed and his experience matured” (par. 113). In “Stages of Life,” Jung suggested a similar notion that the transition from childhood into an independent adulthood would take place organically, via the challenges of survival that adulthood brings. “For most people, it is the demands of life which harshly put an end to the dream of childhood. If the individual is sufficiently well prepared, the transition to a professional career may take place smoothly” (trans. 1933, p. 100). He did not address, however, what happens if a person is not sufficiently prepared, nor how an individual might go about consciously selecting a good career or spouse if he or she is prepared. These

things do not happen without significant toil and consternation—certainly not anymore, if they ever did.

Perhaps the once strong chance that instinct alone would move individuals forward into life has diminished since Jung's day, due to a variety of factors. An awareness of one's innate instinctual knowledge, particularly healthy sexuality (the libidinal energy of life, which Jung addresses below), is so ubiquitously bungled for my patients in their 20s and 30s that I don't hesitate to call it epidemic. From Jung in 1948:

Today, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of individuals coming of age in the Western world are . . . either being forced to withdraw from life or into that very "wretched and unsuitable" way of life against which Jung cautions.

Obviously, it is in the youthful period of life that we have most to gain from a thorough recognition of the instinctual side. A timely recognition of sexuality, for instance, can prevent that neurotic suppression of it which keeps a man unduly withdrawn from life, or else forces him into a wretched and unsuitable way of living with which he is bound to come into conflict. (1948/1960, par. 113)

Today, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of individuals coming of age in the Western world are, in fact, either being forced to withdraw from life or into that very "wretched and unsuitable" way of life against which Jung cautions. Today, the neurotic path is a far more likely one than the instinctive.

Jung understood well that the transition from the first half of life to the second was unsupported by culture. It was this absence upon which much of his psychology was based, providing a structure by which to understand the inner turmoil and confusion so many individuals in midlife were feeling. His comments then regarding midlife could well be applied verbatim to the transition from childhood to the first half of life today:

Our collective education makes practically no provision for this transitional period. Concerned solely with the education of the

young, we disregard the education of the adult, of whom it is always assumed—on what grounds who can say?—that he needs no more education. There is an almost total lack of guidance for this extraordinarily important transition from the biological to the cultural attitude, for the transformation of energy from the biological form into the cultural form. (1948/1960, par. 113)

Although the first half of life has been viewed traditionally as the sphere of the biological, there is plenty of evidence to support the notion that that stark delineation is being broken down today, and may be a false dichotomy. Modern individuals in the first half of life are increasingly living the once rare artist's or entrepreneur's life, creating unique cultural contributions in their 20s and 30s, often delaying the biological work of starting families for many years or intertwining the two. Further, just as Jung argued that certain education was absent for individuals on the brink of the second half of life, I would argue that exactly the same is true for younger adults today. College and all its preceding education instruct in knowledge and thinking and an obsession with success, but not in life, with its failures and joys, and certainly not—absolutely not—in the acceptance and cultivation of instinct.

Instead of learning trades and experiencing organic life in one's body, the first nearly quarter-century for Western individuals is focused on intellectual learning. One can imagine a 25-year-old body-builder who has spent every hour in the gym working exclusively on his neck and shoulders. Individuals in the first half of life today are toppling over from an imposed obsession with their heads and a resulting dissociation from knowledge of how to work with their hands, experience of sexuality without performance or neurotic thinking, healthy engagement with food and eating, or instinctive movement. Embodied life has been almost entirely abandoned. Even for the young modern athlete or dancer, the goals encouraged are primarily those of numeric achievements and the perfection of skills; seeking bigger and better scores, there is no qualitative appreciation of any single experience. There is no organic play. The same, of course, takes place within the classroom. The result is not only a loss of meaning in these activities, but also a psychological dependency on others. Within this paradigm of perfection, one must always look to the coach, parent, professor, or institution that grades, scores, or bestows diplomas, to ascertain success or failure. The experience of life for its own sake, the once embodied wandering and exploration, and learning to fall down and get back up, are lost to the hopeful or desperate search for approval. For my clients straight out of college, doubled over by an obsession with working hard, the only conceivable goal is perfection, an ethereal,

unattainable demon that continues to weigh down their already burdened shoulders. The suffering is tremendous.

Literary critic and former Yale professor William Deresiewicz (2014) aptly characterized psychological life for young adults in his essay on the pitfalls of Ivy League education, published in *New Republic*: “Look beneath the façade of seamless well-adjustment, and what you often find are toxic levels of fear, anxiety, and depression, of emptiness and aimlessness and isolation. A large-scale survey of college

freshmen recently found that self-reports of emotional well-being have fallen to their lowest level in the study’s 25-year history.” Further, in exploring the admissions requirements of Ivy League education (which sets the standards for all other colleges and universities), Deresiewicz accurately sketches the expectations that begin to rule the inner lives of young adults:

So extreme are the admission standards now that kids who manage to get into elite colleges have, by definition, never experienced anything but success. The prospect of not being successful terrifies them, disorients them. The cost of falling short, even temporarily, becomes not merely practical, but existential. The result is a violent aversion to risk. You have no margin for error, so you avoid the possibility that you will ever make an error.

The fear of failure has become so extreme for people coming of age today that its very possibility is inconceivable; the felt notion of failing in even the most minor way can set off an extreme crisis, a hysterical sense of dissolution manifest from a tiny scratch.

From preschool to college graduation (or grad school or medical school) individuals are raised with a notion that there is always a next stage to achieve: first grade to second grade, junior year to senior year. This is what I refer to as the *myth of vertical growth*. It is the underlying myth within which children and young adults are being raised today. Once the final graduation arrives, these individuals stand as if on the brink of a massive

The *myth of vertical growth* . . . is the underlying myth with which children and young adults are being raised today. Once the final graduation arrives, these individuals stand as if on the brink of a massive cliff.

cliff. Where once there was a steady path upwards, clearly defined, there is now only empty space, a black void that one must enter, without the emotional and psychological training to take it on. It can feel to many like the most terrifying, most disorienting moment of their lives—and they are expected, meanwhile, to publicly pronounce pride, gratitude, and hope for the future.

Nearly a century ago, analyst Frances G. Wickes (1927/1966) wrote presciently about this danger of modern young adulthood in her book *The Inner World of Childhood*—one of the very few Jungian explorations of the first half of life I've encountered (despite the overall focus on childhood), and a marked parallel to Deresiewicz's views. Regarding the path of a young man coming of age at the beginning of the 20th century, Wickes wrote:

Consciously he is grateful for the opportunities which may include college, a professional training, long apprenticeship; unconsciously he feels the urge to prove himself, to know that he is a man. Scholastic things, in which he may take a genuine interest, fail to satisfy. . . . Now we have the added problem of choice and of long preparation. . . . College entrance examinations, intellectual training, social conventions have crowded out the other issues which are, after all, the essential ones. . . . Growth comes through individual experience and the understanding of experience. This must be gained by each one for himself. (pp. 97–99)

A vertical progression of success is an unnatural and untransformative course for an individual life, yet most individuals in the first half of life in Western culture do not know any other way. They do not know that it is natural to also experience descents. Instead, they are taught, implicitly or explicitly, to lie their way through failures and sadness, to cover them up or to hide themselves in order not to lose face or potential career opportunities. When downswings or depressions or a lack of direction enter the lives of young adults today, the experiences are so utterly outside of the standard frame of reference that amidst the profound internal struggle to avoid the descent, mute it with addiction, or bottle it up, the individuals are privately asking themselves, “What’s wrong with me?” and “What do I need to do to get back on top?” The result, of course, is that the descents into darkness are only made more profound. This is a cultural issue, I tell my patients. You have been sold a lie about the natural course of life. There is nothing wrong with you. As anthropologist Mircea Eliade wrote, “Every human life is made up of a series of ordeals, of ‘deaths,’ and of ‘resurrections’” (as cited in Meade, 1996, p. 30). This very idea can be healing for people raised within the myth of vertical growth.

Formal education does not bestow the necessary skills to make the transition from childhood to adulthood effectively—that is not what higher education was created to do. That college is now one of few experiences (often the primary one) marking the transition from childhood to independent adulthood is a grave problem for the psychological life of individuals. As it functions today, higher education can be more harmful than helpful, exacerbating an already difficult and unsupported journey into adulthood.

INITIATION RITES AND THE TRANSITION FROM CHILDHOOD TO THE FIRST HALF OF LIFE

Traditional rites of passage were once present in cultures worldwide, initiation rituals that were born of an archetypal necessity to radically transform the ego of the young person and prepare him or her for adulthood. As Jung explained it in 1935:

When the fascinating and unique influence of the parental images has to be loosened, so that the child is liberated from his original biological participation with the parents, then Nature, that is the unconscious nature in man, in her infinite wisdom produces a certain kind of initiation. You find it in very primitive tribes—it is the initiation into manhood. (1968, p. 175)

Of course, today, we do not see these initiation rituals taking place. Where once there were initiatory rites, there are now classes and homework and soccer practice. There are exams to pass and games to win. In the modern era, the psychological and instinctual necessity for entrance into the first half of life is socially unsupported. As culture no longer contains these rites, the initiation necessary for psychological growth must happen through individual crisis instead. Joseph Campbell (1973) put it simply: “There is something in these initiatory images so necessary to the psyche that if they are not supplied from without, through myth and ritual, they will have to be announced again . . . from within” (p. 12). Indeed, if the community does not provide the necessary death–rebirth process that once prepared individuals for success in the first half of life, it will manifest itself independently, and painfully.

Anthropologist Mircea Eliade (1957/1987) explained the traditional tribal rites this way: “The tormented and mutilated novice [was] believed to be tortured, cut to pieces, boiled or roasted by the demons who are masters of initiation” (p. 190). The psychological crises of countless young adults today may be viewed as unguided initiations occurring instinctively through

psyche, an experience that is not unlike a long, unassisted labor for a woman who has never been told what it is to be pregnant, nor what to expect following the harrowing and bloody event. What is often a long and humiliating ordeal, confusing personal changes observed by a whole community, may result in a great gift of new life and new direction. But first, one has to find a way through to the other side.

Today, the lack of roadmaps or soulful awareness for what young adults require to thrive has left too many in a state of terror and confusion. This was never a painless, comfortable process, but it once had structure and guidance and a clear conclusion. For the young man or woman trying to figure out how to move into adulthood all on his or her own—now without even the once strong guide of instinct—life is a panic-riddled, obsessively intellectualized affair. Well-meaning parents, friends, and coworkers may also wonder in dismay what the heck is wrong with the 20-something who cannot seem to get it together and “grow-up, already.” It may be helpful for these individuals and their support systems to appreciate that society has failed to support them at a critical point of transition.

THE “QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS” AND INDIVIDUATION IN THE FIRST HALF OF LIFE

In addition to the crisis of initiation into adulthood, there is a concurrent crisis that may be taking place in epidemic numbers in the first half of life today. The two cannot be easily separated.

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Individuals who grew up under the midlife transitions of their parents, many of which included divorce and other traumas, became determined to never replicate such chaos. Indeed the awareness of the midlife crisis as a looming moment of radical adult disruption has motivated young adults to live adulthood meaningfully and consciously from the outset, or die trying. Within the generation itself, the result is often popularly referred to as the “quarter-life crisis,” the

now well-known years of wandering, confusion, and search for self-knowledge following the successful (or unsuccessful) completion of college (or high school, law school, or medical school).

It is not just a chaotic household, however, but also a chaotic society that is prompting this crisis. For a generation raised on a heavy diet of apocalyptic news worldwide, punitive policing versus wise mentorship, and endless sensory activity, the call to return to the unconscious beckons earlier than in the past. That is, the very loss of faith in social prescriptions, the inability to see the value in cultural expectations, may prematurely prompt the goal of individuation: to create a life that adheres to inner direction and inner laws, versus those imposed by the social collective. Just as a child raised in a turbulent household will learn clearly that the adults do not know how to live a safe and meaningful life, children of modern society are learning the same. If everyone is spinning in circles, the despondent and disoriented child, with tremendous courage, may discover the strength and orientation internally to captain the ship and reset the course. No matter the age, the trust of an inner source, with the ego strength to parse and manifest its guidance, is the path of individuation.

All told, this trend challenges the traditional and supposed correlation of the path of individuation with the second half of life. More individuals today may have what Jung (1976) termed “benevolent fate” in regard to his 30-year-old patient discussed in *The Visions Seminars* (p. 1). The crisis of soul within culture has demanded a widespread search for “the other side of the world” earlier in life (p. 1).

Certain transitions in development occur in relationship with the body and physical development. Learning to crawl and speak, for instance; puberty and sexuality, brain development and decision-making. These events all have a general period of expected appearance related to age (though still variable by months and years). There is a difference between inherent physiological events that mark the path of life transitions, however, and those purely psychical changes born of social expectations and compacts. Nonetheless, throughout the literature of analytical psychology, discussions of individuation rely on an assumption of its inherent emergence at midlife, with insufficient explanation as to why the launch of this psychic process might be so rigidly tied to biological age.

Some associations between the second half of life and individuation suggest a correlation to ego development, a natural and relevant expectation. Michael Fordham (1957) stated that individuation “occurs in the second half of life, and for it to take place a strongly established ego is a necessary prerequisite” (p. 116). Echoing this view, Edward Edinger (1973) asserted in his opus *Ego and Archetype* that individuation is correlated with midlife when the ego–Self axis begins “to emerge into consciousness” (p. 7), although he

fails to elaborate on why the third stage of his ego–Self diagram “demonstrate[s] the general validity of assigning awareness of the relativity of the ego to the second half of life” (p. 7). Like his predecessors, Edinger neglects to articulate why psychic life prior to the second half is inherently unequipped for the path of individuation. None of the research I have encountered has provided further elucidation. To further obfuscate the theory, Jung (1928/1954) wrote that ego development is typically complete in early adulthood: “The greatest and most extensive development [of ego] takes place during the period between birth and the end of psychic puberty, a period that may normally extend, for a man of our climate and race, to the twenty-fifth year. In the case of a woman it usually ends when she is about nineteen or twenty” (par. 103). Such an assertion, one that is supported by modern neuroscience, renders the question of why, if the necessary ego structure and brain development are achieved in the early part of the first half of life, the pursuit of a renewed, conscious relationship with the archetypal realm is unattainable for a decade or two following.

There are other cogent arguments that challenge the correlation between individuation and the second half of life. Adolf Guggenbühl-Craig (1971) raised doubts about the association of age to individuation given that such a characterization is overwhelmingly ethnocentric, based on a life span in Western civilization contemporaneous with Jung and his colleagues: “Throughout most of human history, people have died relatively young. Even

today in underdeveloped countries, most people do not live beyond the age of forty. How could it be that only those who, by good fortune, have been permitted to live more than thirty or forty years can have a chance of fulfilling their human destiny?” (p. 115). Furthermore, Guggenbühl-Craig asserted that although Jung wrote about individuation taking

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place in the second half of life, he “did not maintain this point dogmatically, [though] some of his followers have elevated it to a dogma” (p. 115).

David L. Hart (1997) reiterated Guggenbühl-Craig’s sentiments that despite Jung’s postulations about the stages of life, the work of individuation is available to be undertaken in the first half of life. “Individuation is a spiritual undertaking” (p. 99), Hart wrote: “It is the conscious response to an instinct not recognized in biological thought, an innate and powerful drive

toward spiritual realization and ultimate meaning. . . . Whoever, in any age or condition, is prepared to heed and respond to this spiritual and fundamentally human drive, is prepared for the process of individuation” (pp. 99–100). Again, Jung’s (1976) comments regarding his 30-year-old subject in *The Visions Seminars* suggest that he felt similarly.

There is no biologically rooted reason why midlife invites individuation; it is instead a response to the question of a loss of soul in one’s life and a pressing inner demand that it be recovered. In a society with an increasing lack of ritual, tradition, and spiritual containment, it is exclusively up to the individual to find soul within him- or herself, or not. As Jung wrote in 1948, “There are large numbers of people for whom the development of individuality is the prime necessity, especially in a cultural epoch like ours, which is literally flattened out by collective norms, and where the newspaper is the real monarch of the earth” (par. 112). Of course, this trend toward collective thinking has only increased since Jung’s time. The monarchy of the newspaper has been well replaced by the empire of the Internet and social media and the 24-hour news cycle.

Further, the social demographics of European and American societies have altered dramatically in the years since Jung wrote “The Stages of Life.” By the 1950s, the shifting landscape of modern adulthood was in full swing. The normal course for leaving childhood and entering adulthood was assaulted by cultural shifts brought on by World War II, economic and technological advancements, civil rights, and feminism. By the 1970s, social structure and cultural traditions in the Western world had been thrown by the wayside. No longer was adulthood attained via the creation of one’s own family or by securing a long-term career. Everything about how to become an adult and what an ideal adulthood looked like was questioned, and the options for defining one’s own path expanded dramatically. No longer was the time and space for self-investigation that once defined “empty nesters” unavailable until midlife.

June Singer (1970) explored this shifting path of individuation in *Boundaries of the Soul*. She postulated that a man who married and settled down shortly after World War II might have paid for his livelihood with “the loss of his individuality” (p. 157), whereas his children, “unhampered by fear of hunger or the unavailability of education, have looked about them and have become disenchanted with the stereotypes of the affluent society. Many have withdrawn from an overorganized and overstandardized system, and are searching for alternatives that seem to offer a better opportunity to express their individual needs and talents” (p. 158). Singer suggested that perhaps an earlier path of individuation was possible and that the trend of people in society “coming to selfhood through a distinctly individual and personal effort offered a way which is increasingly attracting the attention

and then the commitment of those who feel the necessity of breaking out of the bonds imposed by the collectivity” (p. 158). Without constructs of biological age, Singer stated definitively, “that effort, as Jung conceived it, is the way of *individuation*” (original emphasis, p. 158). Today, eighty years after Jung wrote his seminal essay on life’s stages, the path out of one’s family of origin and into adulthood is defined by even more self-definition and self-exploration than in Singer’s time.

Psychologist Jeffrey Jenson Arnett (2000) sees a wholly new stage of adulthood today as the result of the widespread social changes of the last fifty years. Termed “emerging adulthood,” this modern stage of life, Arnett asserts, is characterized by a broad-scale delay in marriage and childbearing and a resulting period of self-exploration. Citing statistics contrasting the average age of marriage in 1950 and in 2000, Arnett identified a standard delay in marriage of 5 years, with the average woman waiting to marry until the age of 25 and the average man waiting until age 27 (p. 5), a trend that has certainly continued to expand in the nearly 15 years since. The result, Arnett wrote, is that “For today’s young people, the road to adulthood is a long one. . . . From their late teens to their late twenties they explore the possibilities available to them in love and work, and move gradually toward making enduring choices” (p. 4). In the period between leaving one’s family of origin and starting one’s own family, individuals today pursue education, work various jobs, date various people, and change homes with some regularity. The years are not extended adolescence, however, as Arnett is clear to point out. Individuals are not trying to stay young but testing various possible futures in search of the one most fitting. For many there is a pressing, undeniable demand that the trappings of their external life align with the life that calls from within. Not just any job will do. Not just any partner, or city, or lifestyle. Increasingly, the necessity of self-knowledge makes itself known, and the search for the life one wants to live—with meaning and fulfillment—beckons.

CONCLUSION

The field of analytical psychology needs to attend to the implicit and oft-defended age bias within the field through expanded research and awareness regarding the ways in which the stages of life present today. Young adults who could benefit from Jung’s insights, sometimes to a life-saving degree, regularly feel unwelcomed or unacknowledged by the field founded in his name.

In order to counteract the finger-pointing of individual diagnoses and hair-trigger prescriptions so common within the mental health world, a psychology oriented towards the soul can to help young adults learn that

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their symptoms are natural responses to an imbalanced education and a world in chaos. The initiatory journey that may arise at this time can introduce the individual ego to the vastness of psyche and the richness available in daily life. The successful completion of this journey is a release from the vertical climb through life, a lonely life bound for some imaginary success above oneself, a life

unaware of the guidance available within one's own being. As a result of this now self-guided journey, the two thresholds that were once seen as bracketing the first half of life—initiation and midlife—may come into an intertwined, inseparable relationship.

The developmental work of early adulthood today can be supported by conscious engagement with the personal and archetypal unconscious. Just as an individual in the second half of life would not be expected to neglect his or her conscious life and responsibilities in favor of a full immersion in explorations of the unconscious, an individual in the first half of life should not be expected to maintain psychic health through a total immersion in the conscious world and a neglect of the unconscious. One cannot simply be expected to get a job and choose a spouse. The world today is too rapidly changing, and the options are too many in number. Individuals in the first half of life can be introduced to a relationship with their deepest self by clinicians, professors, parents, or mentors who themselves understand this connection and know it can significantly calm anxiety around making life decisions. The introduction to the mysteries and miracles of the inner life can offer hope and vitality. The earlier this inner relationship is experienced, the earlier its transforming influence can be felt and its beneficial effects realized for the individual, his or her family, and culture at large. There is no need to wait for the un-lived life to come calling.

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a book for people in the first half of life. Contact sites: QuarterLifeCounselor.com or satya@quarterlifecounselor.com

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