

# The Big Five: The Psyche, According to Jung



The Big Five are essential features of the Jungian approach to mental health. Each has a specific quality which defines the activities associated with them. They are as follows; the **Persona**, the **Ego**, the **Shadow**, the **Anima/Animus**, and the **Self**.

**The Persona:** The Persona is what we want people to see and perceive about us. It is what Franz Fanon called the mask. As long as we know when to put it on and when to take it off, the Persona is not a bad thing to have. It can be highly functional for getting along with others at work, in the courtroom or other public arenas, where compliance is the only viable option. This is what we commonly refer to as “the ego”. It becomes troublesome when you “believe the hype” and trust that the image you project is actually your truth, your identity your destiny.

**The Ego:** Here, Jung is actually talking about the ego is the center of consciousness. It is true identity. It is 'I', the one who chooses to put the mask on and take it off. Still, the ego only holds sway over the conscious mind, which is just the tip of the iceberg. In Jungian theory the unconscious is far too vast to ever become completely merged with the conscious mind.

**The Shadow:** This is everything we know, deep down inside, but cannot readily accept about ourselves. Consequently, we have for one reason or another disowned this dimension of our consciousness. Perhaps in an effort to be psychologically inclusive, there is a growing movement towards “mainstreaming” the shadowy characters. The idea seems to be that, when they were banished to the shadows, they took some valuable attributes along with them. But truthfully, it’s a bit like Pandora’s box: There's a lot of very unsavory activity in the shadows. So any benefit gained from the residents will come at a very high price.

**The Anima/Animus:** The Anima is the female soul image of a man, the Animus the male soul image of a woman. They epitomize reciprocal energy; the concentrated gender opposite that helps the individual to synthesize his or her identity consciousness. This is what alchemists called the “mystical marriage” and what we call **ejiwapo** or twoness. Either way, it indicates that we have the power to synthesize these two powerful forces into an ever-emerging third. We are, therefore, "whole" people to the extent to which we allow our consciousness to be enlightened by our reciprocal energy. To Jung and Jungians, this is a vision of tremendous importance and of a high achievement.

**The Self:** The Self is simply the centre and the totality of the entire psyche. It is the archetype which contains all the other archetypes and around which they orbit. It's something of a paradox, and extremely difficult for the conscious ego to accept. But it is a very close psychological approximation of the Yoruba concept of Orí.

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