

**Shrink Rap Radio #244, August 19, 2010, Stories of the Middle Passage  
David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews James Hollis,  
Jungian Analyst**

(Transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Billy Braddock)

**Excerpt:** *The second half of life is not so much the chronological moment of say becoming over 35 or over 40, it's when a person begins to say in a very radical and very um, sort of sober considered way. So, what's going on here? What is my life about? What are the agencies within me that are making choices for me? What is it that I need to do that, you know needs to make changes in my life and so forth. And it's at that point that a person may begin to sort of walk out from underneath the umbrella that has hovered one's head, metaphorically speaking, that defines ones self and defines the roles and the decisions that one has made.*

**INTRODUCTION:** That was the voice of my guest noted Jungian analyst, Dr. James Hollis, discussing the psychology of the second half of life. And in particular the stories to which we are in service, whether we know it or not. James Hollis, PhD, is a Zurich trained Jungian analyst in private practice in Houston, Texas where he is also the director of the Jungian Studies Doctoral Program of Saybrook University of San Francisco. He's the author of thirteen books, including Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life and What Matters Most, Living a more considered life. Dr. Hollis is also Executive Director of the Jung Educational Center of Houston. He is also Senior Training Analyst for the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts, was the first Director of training of the Philadelphia Jungian Institute and is vice-president of the Philemon Foundation, which is dedicated to the publication of the complete works of Jung, including Jung's Red Book. Now here's the interview.

Dr. Dave: Dr. James Hollis, welcome to ShrinkRap Radio.

Dr. Hollis: Thank you very much.

Dr. Dave: I am so happy to have you on the show. I've been interviewing a number of Jungians of late, including Jerry Ruhl and Monica Wickman. So you can hear...

Dr. Hollis: Thank you for being persistent.

Dr. Dave: Yes, well thanks for being patient and uh, you know I screwed up the dates a couple of times, misunderstood. But I'm glad that we were, humanities for twenty-six years, having been a professor myself and you did that before going to Zurich to get trained as an analyst.

Dr. Hollis: Yes, well I found that the study of the humanities, literature, religion, philosophy of the arts, history, was as good a preparation for psychology as anything else and they are after all explorations of the human condition and uh, reflected a great deal of insight in to them. And so there is hardly a case that I've seen or an issue, a complex or whatever that one couldn't find a manifestation in literature, demonstrating it and dramatizing it and often in a very profound way. But I did find in my life in academia, as much as I valued it, always the remaining question, so where did that come from in us and what's that about really, and the essence of depth psychology is becoming aware that it's not about what's it's about, it's often about uh, you know, what's really stirred beneath, or what are the hidden agendas that are in service here, so that many of our behaviors that we've grown accustomed to or rationalized or whatever, are really coming from quite a different place in our psychological history. So, I felt the study of the humanities was not complete without also taking on the idea of Depth Psychology to work with the unconscious. And uh, as you know the problem with the unconscious is it's unconscious. So we literally do not know what it is until somehow we find a way to track it back from the visible, the tangible, observable world into the invisible places from which it comes in our behaviors and so forth.

Dr. Dave: Well that background in the Humanities certainly is valuable not only for psychology generally, but I think for becoming a Jungian Analyst in particular. It's clear that that was not a wasted effort given the wonderful literary references in your writing. I've been reading your book 'The Middle Passage from Misery to Meaning in Midlife' and you pose an excellent set of questions in the preface, which I think will provide an excellent set of bones for this interview.

Dr. Hollis: Okay.

Dr. Dave: And also I'd like to invite you to illustrate along the way with any stories or myths that help to illustrate or deepen our understanding of the journey.

Dr. Hollis: Certainly.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, so first let me ask you, why midlife seems such a popular topic among Jungian authors? I'm thinking not only of you, but also Murray Stein and Jerry Ruhl and probably others.

Dr. Hollis: Well, I think first of all, uh, so much of our early life is devoted to ego development and that's necessary. And by ego development I mean having a sense of who we are and what our capacities are and the necessity of developing enough strength to be able to meet people half way in relationships. To say, hire me, I can do that job, and uh trust me I can meet you half way in this relationship and so forth. And if, if we are run over by a truck on our thirty-fifth birthday or our fortieth we might say well the person lived a productive life according to the standards of his or her time and place. Fulfilled certain roles that we consider appropriate to adults and so forth. But so much of our life is really governed by the nature of the messages that we acquired in the family of origin. Some of them are conscious messages, some of them are not conscious. And we are much more in service to them than we think we are. Every young person leaving home thinks, well I'm going to avoid the mistakes of my parents and I'm going to choose the right partner and the right careers and that sort of thing. And sometimes we do, and sometimes we don't. And the issue of personal authority, namely, what is my truth and how do I stay in touch with it and how do I make decisions that are going to, in the long run, be consistent with my own nature, in the context in which I have to make those choices you know we're influenced by social, economic, um, political factors around us. But, I think what Jung suggested in an essay he wrote a long time ago, 'The Two Stages of Life', he said you know after you've served the biological and social functions of life, why are we still here? In 1900, the average mortality rate in North America was 47, so it didn't mean everybody died at 47, it just meant that beyond 47 you were out-living statistical possibilities. Today it's in the eighties and we'd have to say so what is that second half of life about, in service to what? Jung's answer to that was, well the first one, first half of life, again not speaking so much chronologically as psychologically is, is a social agenda. You know, again developing ego strength and creating a life of some kind and then the second half he said opens the possibility of, you know, spiritual questions. You know, what are my values, really? I mean what are the ones that I choose from all of those that are presented to me? Why do I choose them, and what are the kinds of qualitative decisions I need to make about relationship, career, and so forth. And these sorts of questions really require a person recovering a sense of personal authority. And by that I mean you know from the many voices coming at me, and the many different ways in which one can be influenced, which threads there are mine? And do I have the courage to risk them and to deliver them into the world? Could I mobilize the resources necessary to carry them through? These are different kinds of agendas.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, you know generally when I hear mid-life, at least in the past, before reading your book. I think thirty five, forty, maybe somewhere in that range. But one of the things that struck me in your book that you point out is that the middle passage can happen at almost any age. And that as you've suggested is driven not

by, by chronos, or objective time, but by chiros, which has more to do with a ripening. Do I have that right?

Dr. Hollis: Certainly, and the presenting venue is sometimes a marital conflict, sometimes it's a depression, sometimes it's a problem with substances, sometimes one wakes up at three in the morning and says, who am I really and what's my life about? Sometimes it's in the face of an illness, or a child departing or a change in one's work life. The precipitant can be highly varied and the situation can be different. But, the thing that's in common is that everybody has at some point to say, you know, is the map that I've been living with matching the terrain in which I'm living? And if it isn't, how do I evolve or move to a different map? And again, the second half of life isn't so much the chronological moment of say becoming over thirty-five or over forty. It's when a person begins to say in a very radical and very sort of sober, considered way. So, what's going on here? What is my life about? What are the agencies within me that are making choices for me? What is it that I need to do that, you know, that needs to make changes in my life and so forth? And it's at that point a person may begin to sort of walk out from underneath the umbrella that has hovered over one's head, metaphorically speaking, that defines oneself and defines the roles and the decisions that one has made. To say a question that I would always ask people, to what degree is the un-lived life of your mother playing out in your life? Are you stuck at the same place, are you trying to compensate for that? Don't think it's not playing a role. And how is the un-lived life of your father playing out in your life? It's going to be there and that has to do with someone else's life, but you've also internalized that as primal message about who you are and what your life's about. And to what degree is this playing a role in your life? And if we don't ask a question like that, and normally we wouldn't just sort of wake up and ask it, something has to trigger that.

Dr. Dave: You suggest that generally there is some kind of anxiety or depression or discomfort that's pressing up and driving a person to begin to ask these kinds of questions. And they maybe twenty-five or you even gave the example of somebody at sixty-five.

Dr. Hollis: Absolutely. Yes, and just take depression for example, I mean there are biological sources of depression, there are depressions that are reactive to outer loss and so forth, which are triggered in a different way. But then when we recognize most of us carry pockets of depression for good parts of our life, we have to say, all right, literally depression is something pushed down; it's pressed down. You know what areas of my life have not been lived or perhaps blocked by certain complexes, some fears, that sort of thing. A question I've asked in workshops, literally on four continents in the past is 'where do you feel stuck in your life?' And interestingly enough, when I've asked questions in workshops

before, people almost always ask ‘what does that question mean?’ and ‘can you give me examples?’ And no one has ever, ever, in four continents, asked me, ‘what does that question mean?’ Everybody, intuitively, has been able to quickly go to the place that says: ‘well, I’m stuck here.’ ‘This is a stuck place for me.’ And you know it stands to reason if I know I’m stuck at some place, I can certainly get unstuck. But it doesn’t work that way. Typically those are the kinds of places where one is really selling to a different kind of accountability for one’s journey and a questioning of what’s really going on here.

Dr. Dave: Do we all have stuck places?

Dr. Hollis: I think we do. Certainly we do. Places where we’re lacking example or permission. In other words, I work primarily with people in the second half of life and I would say every one of them has an accomplished life by our standards. And yet most lack elemental permission to be who they are. Feel what I feel, desire what I want, to really feel that I can risk being who I am and part of that is the legacy of learning early in life: ‘Well, if I am who I am and if I pursue the values that are really important to me, it gets costly in the world.’ You know I risk the disapproval of others, the loss of potential support, even risk exile or misunderstanding or whatever. And so we hedge our bets and we become our own oppressors, at times, and you can be sure in those places in our life where that’s the case, we will a) be stuck, and b) we will often have pockets of depression.

Dr. Dave: Well I can certainly cop to both of those on my journey. And what you’re saying really speaks to one of the questions in your preface, which was, how do we acquire our original sense of self? Is there more that you can say about that?

Dr. Hollis: Well, you know we acquire our original sense of self, now the key word there is sense of self, how we think or feel or believe about ourselves, both consciously and sort of unconsciously. It’s an assemblage of behaviors, of attitudes towards ourselves and others, and reflexive responses that have two basic motives; anxiety management and getting our needs met as best we can. And we set these in motion as children when we’re dis-empowered and dependent and vulnerable. And many times the behaviors there that get some modest success or adaptation is locked in. So we will have for example, areas where we are conflict avoidant, which is perfectly understandable for a child. Or areas where we run and hide, or areas where we are aggressive and domineering trying to get our needs met, or places where we wind up trading away our integrity in service to getting along and the combination of that.

Dr. Dave: So how do we redefine that sense of self, you know, it gets established early on, but then it gets revised?

Dr. Hollis: Well I think what happens is that our psyche, which is really a word for the totality of our being, has its own opinion and the paradox is, as therapists, as you, people don't drop in to talk to us because they were in the neighborhood and they would like to have a chat. It's because something's hurting. And part of the task of looking at things psychologically, is to say 'why has this symptom come?' And rather than simply say how quickly do I get rid of it? We could ask, why has it come? What does it want from me? What is this suggesting? Why this depression? Why this anxiety disorder? Why this addiction? Why has this come? Now it sounds simple minded as I describe it in the abstract, but usually that's sort of the last place we would look. Usually what happens is, we try to kick in our older behaviors and management systems, and things get worse. It's like being in a hole and the only tool we have is a shovel in our hands and we say 'I'd better work harder' and the hole gets deeper. And it's at that point that people say, you know I really need to go talk to this stranger about that. I mean that's kind of an abnormal conversation when you think about it. You go to a stranger, you pay them money, and you talk about your personal life. And people get to that point because their other systems are not working. And so that's always with a sense of humiliation, or failure, or confusion, or anxiety. And you know, frankly, it's the beginning of wisdom, because it's an invitation to say, what changes need to be made in my life, what new attitudes or behaviors or risks am I being called to make?

Dr. Dave: You know you point out that one of the things that we're struggling with in terms of the identity that we've taken on, that there are these cultural, not only familial determinants, or influences, but also cultural ones and there was a line – I was reading my wife's book, so she said I couldn't underline it, so, I may not get it quite right – but I think you said that our culture suffers from materialism, consumerism, and narcissism with a few computer skills thrown in. I love that. Did I get the right three things there?

Dr. Hollis: Well, I think so. That's a pretty good list. In other words, you know, what we have to offer people on a collective basis is the fantasy that the material life will make you happy, or will provide satisfaction. And it only does to a very limited extent. I mean if materialism really worked for us as individuals and as a culture, we would know by now. Because we've certainly had the greatest abundance in human history. And we have a culture of distraction, that helps us sort of distract from the conversation with ourselves. This in itself is not new. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the mathematician, Blaise Pascal, said you know culture has invented the jester because even the king, if he thinks of self, may grow miserable. So, we invent the jester to distract the king from reflecting upon himself. And he said so our whole culture has become a diversion from self-awareness. Now this is someone writing, you know, centuries ago. And how much have we further escalated the notion of a culture that's wired in with so-called reality shows and distractions of spectacles of all kinds. And what's the point? It

somehow distracts one from an encounter with one's self. And then you see that can veer off into narcissism. And, you know, self-investigation is not narcissism, it's actually, you know, can call one to some painful places. And ultimately says, all right what really do my behaviors need to be in service to? I think, ultimately, the notion of psychological health is to find that which is worthy of serving. Because we're spending our life simply acquiring more of something, we're certainly sacrificing our vital energies and our soul on behalf of something that is not going to pay off very much.

Dr. Dave: I was very interested in your discussion of narcissism in the book. You raised the question, because many people would look at a Buddhist meditation, or Jungian analysis as 'belly-button watching', 'belly-button gazing' I guess is the phrase. And you pose a question, well what's the relationship between Jung's concept of individuation and our commitment to others?

Dr. Hollis: Yeah. Well, you see, ultimately individuation is not individualism. It's about, as I was just suggesting, service. You know, what are you going to really serve? What are the values that in the long run prove most rewarding? And for you as a therapist, I'm sure that part of that has to do with you know times when you feel tired or sad or depressed or whatever and yet the work that you do is meaningful. And it's a work that you feel at the same time energized by and you feel most of all the payoff is its meaning. It's not easy work, but it is a meaningful work. And the day it ceases to be meaningful is the time that one should be looking in another direction. And so I don't use the word happiness very often. I think happiness is a transient state and very ephemeral. And pursuing happiness on a constant basis I think is going to trivialize one's life and distract it. I think it's a matter of question, am I experiencing you know, my relationships, my work, etc. in meaningful ways? And if we *are* experiencing it meaningfully then from time to time we'll be flooded with that emotion we call happiness. And it will come from a sense that the investment of our energies is coming back to us in a way that provides satisfaction. It's not necessarily an easy path, but it is a path that is anything but narcissism. Because narcissism is simply trying, you know narcissism arises out of our core insecurity. You know, the narcissist, the story about the narcissist says, you know, well enough about me, tell me now, what do *you* think about me? I mean, what that really reveals is a profound personal insecurity. And narcissists try to persuade us that they really feel good about themselves when in fact they don't. Which is why they wind up trying to solicit approval, affection, and honor from others. And, in some way we're on to the secret of the narcissist. And, so, individuation is anything but narcissism, it's saying, really I'm here with my life energies; how am I going to spend them in a way that, in the long run, feels most rewarding? And which provides, again, a sense of satisfaction. And that will lead one often into places other than the comfortable zone. In fact, I think one of the measures of our life is, if comfort is

the priority, it will wind up being a trivialized life. We have to move to places that are uncomfortable because those are the places that are challenging, that will bring about growth and development in us. We grow from challenge, we grow from taking something on. There's a wonderful line in the Prague poet Rilke that said once, our task is to be continuously defeated by ever larger things. But my youthful ego says 'what's this defeat business?' I plan to be in charge in my life, I plan to win. But you see his whole point is, if we are taking on ever larger things, it's life of growth and development. And that's the reward in itself.

Dr. Dave: Now you talked about our commitment to others, but I also seem to recall that you even said that can be called into question at times. That maybe a person has made some kind of an early, somewhat compulsive decision, to be of service and that may not be where their authenticity lies.

Dr. Hollis: No. I mean there has to be some balance between service to self as well because in the end, again this is not selfish, this is what I bring to the table. This is what I bring to my partner, this is what I bring to my children, this is what I bring to committees I serve on, this is what I bring to my society. In other words it's not selfish to bring a more evolved, more conscious, more accountable person to relationship and I can't do that by living mindlessly or simply on automatic pilot. It requires a measure of reflectivity and a willingness to change and to critique ourselves. And again the paradox is from the standpoint of best psychology, the human psyche is continuously making it's commentary. And being psychological doesn't mean being in control and manipulating our life as, as our psychologies often fantasize. It's actually saying, what do I have to learn from the psyche, which is one of the reasons why, for example, we would pay attention to dreams, because the ego does not create dreams. But sleep research tells us that we tend to dream as much as six times per night, times seven nights that's forty-two a week and nobody remembers that many. But we, there's a lot of activity there. And nature doesn't seem to waste energy, there are purposes in those dreams and so if one is able and willing to track the motifs that emerge in those dreams, then one will see over time that there is a connection with a deeper source of wisdom. Something, you know I have to say, you know, it is my dream so it's come from someplace in me but I didn't make it up consciously so it's not coming from the conscious part of me and to have the thought that there might be some other part of me that is wise, knowing, and invested in my well-being and seeking to solicit my attention, I think begins to lead one in a different direction and is the source of developing a personal authority after all.

Dr. Dave: I'm really glad that you brought up the topic of dreams because I'm in a dream group, I've been keeping a dream journal off and on for about thirty-years or more and taught classes on dreams. So lets talk a bit about dreams both in and out of therapy.

Dr. Hollis: Well as I said they go on every night even though we don't remember them. And I found that when people are in therapy and they've been specifically asked to pay attention they begin remembering many more and again there is no guarantee, we can go a week or two with no recollection and suddenly there they are, they are flooding one. And again it's, it's about tracking over time what the motifs mean. It's not so much, for example, if I dreamt tonight that I'm moving to Toledo I wouldn't advise anybody to sell their house and move to Toledo. You could get there and that shows you, you know moving to Detroit. It's more important to say what does it mean that something in me wants to move, what does that metaphor mean? Uh, we have an ego tendency to tend to literalize these things. That's one reason why most of the dream books out there are not very useful. So much depends on the life context of the individual dreamer and more particularly his or her associations with specific images. So if you dreamt of your grandmother this evening and I dreamt of my grandmother, it's not the same grandmother. You know you can say there may be certain universal or archetypal dimensions to the grandmother experience, but on the other hand we've had a different qualitative experience with different kinds of associations. And so it's important to realize the individuality, the uniqueness of the dream to each dreamer and to respect that difference, to say the real interpretation rises out of the dreamer and out of the dreamer's associations. Now, it's something we can do on our own, but it's also good to have an objective other there to ask certain leading questions and to raise some issues because we can be so swimming in our own psychology of the moment or our own complexes that we will view something through a particular lens. I remember many years ago when I returned from training in Zurich, I was doing a dream group in another part of the country and we met every two weeks and there were eight in the group so people took turns and we would meet for two hours, so we would agree in general to spend about an hour on each person's dream and try to rotate and so forth. And one of our members spent an enormous amount of time interpreting her dreams and would write an essay that was very thoughtful, with a lot of research on the various images and would come in and read her essay. The first couple of times that happened we thought well that sort of takes care of that doesn't it? Because she was so conscientious and dedicated in her research and sort of providing the final word. Then the third time someone said, but you know I didn't see that particular dream about this. I saw it from a completely way. She suddenly expressed an enormous amount of anxiety on the spot and it was like suddenly the jig was up. One realized, ok. What she was doing was on the one hand entering a dream group, which was an effort to *listen* and on the other hand saying 'but I want to stay in control of the material'. And so the essays were really unwitting or unconscious efforts not to listen, but to stay in control, and say this is what it's about, I understand this, I'm in charge here. And when someone offered a quite a contradictory point of view and began to explore some of the shadow issues in

that person's life, it was very troubling and very disconcerting. And I think that that indicated that we can, we need sometimes the other to provide that degree of distancing and objectivity that allows us to approach the dream from another stand point. Because ultimately this work is humbling, it's not meant to make us feel great about ourselves, it's rather to introduce a more authentic dialogue. And out of the that we can come to a more realistic and authentic relation to ourselves and our journey. And often that's humbling.

Dr. Dave: I know that you've written another book, I have a copy of it and didn't, wasn't able to spend as much time with it as I would like. Mythologems is the title, which kind of suggests to me, myth and mythology and so myth in a sense is a bigger dream, right? A cultural dream or something that we can look at similarly?

Dr. Hollis: Yes, as Joseph Campbell put it, he said that a myth is really the collective dream of the tribe.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Dr. Hollis: In other words, it's a dramatization of what are their values and in traditional cultures throughout the western world and the eastern world, it was clear that the tribal council understood a difference between what they called big dreams and little dreams. Little dreams were personal, but big dreams were those that had a larger energy to them and it was the moral duty of the dreamer to come and tell the story or tell the dream to village elders or the shaman or whomever, because it was understood as a message to the tribe. Now you can also say that the dream of the individual is his or her personal myth. And I'm using myth in a very neutral to positive sense of the word. Myth is really a dramatization of values and, in myths, both conscious and unconscious, you really are seeing what moves people and what really directs their lives. And so, you know the book Mythologems was really based on, mythologem really means a mythic motif or archetypal pattern and among other things I was talking about the psychological role that the idea of mother plays in both a personal level and a cultural level. The idea of the father and what do we mean by the archetype of a child? When we talk about the child we need to recognize that within each of us there's a whole kindergarten there. There's the needy child, the greedy child, the acting out child, the sullen child, the terrified child, and so forth. In any given moment that needy infantile part of us may show up in our behaviors, or the child is also the possibility of maturity? of spontaneity, of creativity. And the question is, what aspect of the child archetype is showing up in a person's life at any given moment?

Dr. Dave: Now we don't sit around the campfire and tell stories in the way that we used to anymore. To what extent do you think creations, somewhat conscious creations like films, let's say, play that role? Do you think they do, or have...

Dr. Hollis: To a degree, yes. Yes. No. It's clear that in ancient cultures story was the primary vehicle of cultural transmission of... because you see the purpose of myth is to link us to four orders of mystery. The first is the mystery of the cosmos. Why are we here? Who are the gods? What is this journey about? Where do we go when we die? Those are universal and timeless questions. And a person or a culture is well served when he or she has stories or images which help link him or her in a felt or moved way. And is in trouble or bereft when that's missing. The second order of mystery is the mystery of nature. We are natural creatures but we live in an environment in which living harmoniously is critical. Our ecological crisis that is growing to be larger and larger for our western world is a symbol of something that is really out of joint and dislocated with regard to living with nature. Thirdly is the mystery of society and of relationship. Who is my tribe? Who are my people? What are the rights, duties, privileges that come with being a member of this group and what are the responsibilities and accountabilities for that? The mystery of interpersonal and intimate relationship, too, and what are the images that we have available to us. And then fourthly is the mystery of the individual. Who am I? What is my journey? What is the nature of my soul's journey about? And if you remove the stories that once spoke to individual tribes or cultures then an individual is thrown back upon himself or herself and/or the resources of the culture. And then we're in trouble because you realize so much of our culture, as I said, is driven by the fuelant of materialism and distraction and so forth. But that is not to say that there aren't living images that speak to us. There are pieces of music that speak to us, there are movies that speak to us, there are novels that speak to us, etc. And why? Because there are ways in which one can be in with a creative imagination does embody these mysteries in modern form. And we would have to say that at some level, what we call psycho-therapy was a late nineteenth century, early twentieth century invention which hadn't existed before because it didn't need to be. That by and large one went to the village shaman, the village priest, the local tribe, for the answers to those orders of mystery. And as those sources became less and less satisfying to larger numbers of people one had to invent another way in which one could bring one's individual questions and individual journey to the fore. There was a short story written by Franz Kafka in the second decade of the last century called A Country Doctor in which a village doctor around the turn of the century is summoned to a patient in a small village and he gets to the village and the patient is there in a bed, it's a young man and he's surrounded by the whole village. And the patient says to the doctor, save me, save me. And the doctor gives him an exam and he says I can find nothing wrong with you, you're you seem fine. And the young man says again with a growing sense of desperation 'save me, save me' and the doctor

examines him again and this time Kafka describes it like a huge rose rising out of the chest of this patient, realizing it's a symbolic wound, it's like a soul wound and the doctor says 'I can't help you, I don't know anything about this' and at this point the villagers get very angry at the doctor and they strip his clothing off as a symbol of divesting him of his powers and sort of fling him out into the darkness. At the end of the story he's trying to make his way through the darkness and the gathering snow storm to get back to his own home, and saying 'that's the way these villagers are today. They used to call the priest in his black gown and when he couldn't save them he said they call me, the doctor, in my white gown and when I can't save them this is what happens'. Think, why would Kafka have written that story somewhere around maybe 1915-1920 in that area, except the recognition of many individuals that they could not particularly turn to the village shaman or the local tribal authority for the answers to questions that had maybe satisfied their ancestors, but they had to look elsewhere. And the invention of popular culture with its distractions, its addictions and its seductions are offered up as an alternative. And the question is, if they work, fine, but for most people they don't. That's how they wind up suffering some psychopathology: depression, addiction, or wind up in our office to look it over more consciously.

Dr. Dave: I love that Kafka story that you shared. I was not aware of that story. And, I know there are many in the field of psychology that really try to anchor its history and its meaning in terms of science, but I've long felt, kind of as you've articulated that our roots really lie more in the shamanic.

Dr. Hollis: Well, I think what we all need is a good story, and by story I mean images that come to us that are consistent with our inner reality and when we have that, when we feel that, we will feel connected, linked, we will feel a confirmation of identity and when we don't, we suffer that. And so, Jung put it once in a letter, he said "many moderns fell off the roof of the medieval cathedral into the abyss of the self." And it's a very dramatic metaphor talking about the tremendous isolation that people feel.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Dr. Hollis: I remember in, I believe it was Esquire magazine about twenty-five or thirty years ago, there was a story that I thought was brilliantly done, and it was just a fellow sitting in an apartment, presumably in Manhattan, and he had on three of the late-night television shows. At the time, it was Jack Parr or Johnny Carson, and Merv Griffin was one, and I forget the other one. And so, when these television hosts would introduce another celebrity, the fellow there would talk with them like they were all sitting in the same Living Room together. You realize this was his community. These were his friends. And they'd pause for a commercial and he would switch to the other channel and he would jump in with

that conversation. And then at the end of the story, it was one o'clock in New York and it was time for these programs to go off, and he was saying 'Good night Johnny, good night Jack, good night Merv' and then the curtain comes down and what it was was a transcript in a sense of a person trying to make connections with people through the television set, through a virtual society and the fastest growing addiction, as you probably know, in our time, is internet addiction and it says something about the spiritual and psychological isolation so many people feel and they're finding, sometimes in positive ways, sometimes not in positive ways, connection with people on the internet, distractions on the internet, a fueling of fantasy on the internet. There are people who have fallen in love with total strangers on the internet, and it's a place where all the projections and human pathology can follow. No matter what the invention, you can expect the human psyche to show up and manifest in its familiar ways sooner or later.

Dr. Dave: Yes, well that's certainly true. And then, on the positive side, in the book you talk about attitudes and behavior changes which support individuation and move us via the middle passage from misery to meaning. What would some of those kinds of new behaviors...

Dr. Hollis: Well, I'm not going to say that everybody needs to be in therapy, but what I would say is that everybody needs to have a thoughtful, informed conversation around the meaning of their own journey. It sounds simple, but it's not. And it's almost like saying 'we all have an appointment to show up and be accountable for our lives' and not everybody shows up for the appointment. And the question is 'how does one go about having a very meaningful discussion, an informed discussion, about what's going on here. Why do I do this or that? For example, we all would have places in our life where we see there are some patterns. You don't wake in the morning and say, 'well, while I'm brushing my teeth I'm going to stare in the mirror and swear today I'm going to do the same stupid things that I've done for a long time and expect it will all work out well.' Quite the contrary, but by day's end, we will have repeated some of our patterns. And the reason for that is that all of us carry these powerful internalized messages. Some conscious, some unconscious. That's what Jung meant by 'complex'. A 'complex' is there because we have a history. And sometimes those messages are supportive and protective and other times they are simply reductive and repetitive, and the question is, then, when I look at the patterns, I get some sense then of what is going on in the unconscious. What is it that makes me choose the same patterns? Why do I have my relationships turning out in the 'same old, same old' way? Where is it that I'm shooting myself in the foot? Where am I blocked by fear? As Jung said once, we all walk in shoes too small for us. And so, what he meant by that metaphor, we all live in adaptive, protective psychologies, that's understandable but it keeps us locked in. It keeps us blocked. It keeps us stuck. And whatever life is is a mystery. The question is, how is it that I am embracing

that mystery? And how is it that I am serving it? And how is it that I am growing up to be accountable to it? The question is, how does a person have a conversation around the meaning of their own journey? And sometimes it is through reading books where people can offer us ideas that are constructive and helpful.

Sometimes it's through friendship where we have people, hopefully, who are really friends and are willing to critique us and risk our displeasure. Sometimes we need to have a discussion with a third party who has certain training in some field, and that's where therapy can be very helpful. I think, interestingly enough, one of the changes that has happened in our culture is, less and less is there a kind of condemnation with therapy or assumption that there is something radically wrong with people. The people I see are actually the people who are being responsible, are being most accountable, who are most thoughtful people, driven less by overt symptoms rather than really wanting to address where their relationships are going or what their career's about or what their dreams might be and that kind of thoughtfulness, you see, is bound to lead one in a different direction over time.

There are three parts to this. First is the psychological part, and that is, can I get some insight into what's working within me, what are the search engines, what are the admonitions, the complexes within, and I sort through them and bring some of them into consciousness and then, really, come the moral qualities of the individual. The second is courage to face whatever the implications may be. And thirdly is persistence, sticking something out over time until we actually come to a different place in our psyche. And that's how people change and grow.

Dr. Dave: Well, that's a great place for us to wrap up this part of our conversation but before I let you go, I heard from Nancy Furlotti that you're heading up a program through Saybrook University. A two year Jungian studies program. Saybrook was actually, the original institution was founded by a couple of my colleagues, so tell us a little about that program and what kind of qualifications a person might need to be involved in it and just a little about the structure of it.

Dr. Hollis: I'm happy to do so. Saybrook University approached the Jung Center here in Houston about four years ago and they said, you know, for a long time we've had programs here in Humanistic and Transpersonal psychology and one of the pieces that has been missing here is really one of the fathers of that movement, Carl Jung, and would you be able and willing to create a program for us in which we can engage in a partnership. And that's what we've done. And what I did was develop a philosophy, a structure, and recruit a faculty, and we're now in our third year of operation and if anyone is interested you can simply go to [www.saybrook.edu](http://www.saybrook.edu) and look under Jungian Studies. And what we have is really three programmes in Jungian Studies. First of all is a wholly credentialed, accredited masters degree in Jungian psychology. Secondly, a doctoral program in Jungian psychology. And thirdly a certificate for people who are interested simply

for personal growth and development, and the certificate is a two year study program. For example, we have a Houston-based physician, age 65, who has been in the certificate program and he is doing it simply as he looks to retirement and moving away from medicine, looking at ‘what are the things that I find interesting and stimulating that maybe I didn’t have time and opportunity to look at in my life before and this is an opportunity to do that.’ And so we’re about to begin our third class. We have people moving through. We have people who are doing their Masters thesis now, and we have people heading towards their doctoral dissertations and so forth. It’s the only program in the world that is focused exclusively on the psychology of Jung and is an effort to provide an in depth immersion in the primary works of Jung. And we meet in monthly seminars here in Houston and students also take courses online for other requirements, such as Ethics courses and History of Psychology and that sort of thing. But the primary educational encounter are the monthly seminars that we have throughout the winter months.

Dr. Dave: Well, I just know that some of my listeners’ ears have really perked up and I think there are going to be some inquiries coming forth as a result of this interview. So, Dr. James Hollis, I want to thank you so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Dr. Hollis: It’s my pleasure and I appreciate the invitation to be with you.