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**ДУАЛЬНАЯ ПРИРОДА ВСТРЕЧИ:
ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ Я ЧЕРЕЗ ВНУТРИЛИЧНОСТНЫЙ И
МЕЖЛИЧНОСТНЫЙ ОПЫТ[©]**

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Аннотация. В эпоху технологического ускорения и растущего чувства отчужденности концепция Встречи предлагает глубокую основу для понимания человеческого контакта и формирования самости. Основанная на теориях Карла Роджерса, Мартина Бубера и Карла Юнга, данная статья исследует, как Встреча выступает одновременно как реляционный и внутриличностный процесс, запускающий развитие многогранного Я. Опираясь на экспериментальные исследования и философские идеи, мы рассматриваем преобразующий потенциал Встречи, подчеркивая ее способность выявлять скрытые аспекты Я и интегрировать их в целостное единство. В статье обсуждаются этапы развития самости, роль внутреннего диалога и интеграции теневых сторон как базовые механизмы данного процесса. Также подчеркивается, что Встреча не является изначально ни позитивной, ни негативной – ее качество определяется выбором и готовностью человека вступать в нее аутентично и ответственно. Современные вызовы, такие как социальное ускорение и цифровое отчуждение, подчеркивают актуальность и необходимость подлинных Встреч, способных развивать эмпатию, эмоциональную устойчивость и гармоничные отношения. Через синтез теоретических и философских подходов статья представляет Встречу как динамическую и непрерывную практику, имеющую глубокие последствия для личностного роста и коллективного благополучия. Это исследование бросает вызов привычным представлениям об аутентичности и предлагает Встречу как путь к более глубокому самопознанию и осмыслилному существованию.

Ключевые слова: Встреча; я; аутентичная связь; тень; внутренний диалог.

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The dual work of Encounter: Shaping the Self through Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Experience[©]

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Abstract. In an era of technological acceleration and an increasing sense of disconnection, the concept of *Encounter* offers a profound framework for understanding human connection and self-formation. Rooted in the theories of Carl Rogers, Martin Buber, and Carl Jung, this article explores how *Encounter* serves as both a relational and intrapersonal process, catalyzing the evolution of the multifaceted Self. Drawing on experimental work and philosophical insights, we examine the transformative potential of *Encounter*, emphasizing its capacity to surface hidden aspects of the Self and integrate them into a cohesive whole. The article discusses the stages of self-development, the role of inner dialogue, and the integration of shadow aspects as foundational mechanisms in this process. It further highlights how *Encounter* is not inherently positive or negative but depends on individual choice and responsibility to engage authentically. Contemporary challenges, such as social acceleration and digital disconnection, underscore the urgency of fostering meaningful *Encounters*, which have the potential to cultivate empathy, resilience, and relational harmony. Through synthesizing theoretical and philosophical perspectives, the article positions *Encounter* as a dynamic and ongoing practice with profound implications for personal growth and collective well-being. This exploration challenges conventional notions of authenticity and presents *Encounter* as a pathway to deeper self-awareness and a more connected existence.

Keywords: Encounter; Self; Authentic; connection; Shadow; Inner dialogue.

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If the acceleration of life is the problem,
then the solution to it lies in 'resonance

H. Rosa

Introduction

In an age marked by rapid technological advancement, societal upheavals, and shifting interpersonal dynamics, authentic human connection has become increasingly rare and yet profoundly vital [Rosa, 2013]. Amidst these challenges, the psychological concept of *Encounter* offers a framework for understanding how deep interpersonal

experiences shape our sense of Self and foster personal growth. Rooted in the theories of Rogers [Rogers, 1961], *Encounter* transcends mere interaction, inviting a genuine meeting of individuals. Rogers reframed the therapeutic relationship as a co-created, transformative space where both therapist and client contribute to each other's growth.

Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharhurin [Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharhurin, 2024] examined the structure of the *Encounter* process, detailing each step and variation of this phenomenon. Their findings led to a construct highlighting the core element evolving during these encounters, which drives inner motivation toward engaging in them: the Self. The Self is defined as a comprehensive, unifying principle of the psyche that integrates both conscious and unconscious elements [Jung, 1959]. Jung [Jung, 1950] noted that the development of the Self and its pursuit of a harmonious state is the ultimate existential goal that provides meaning.

This article explores the transformative power of *Encounter* and its role in facilitating the formation of the Self. Drawing on foundational principles from Rogers [Rogers, 1961], Martin Buber's [Buber, 1937] dialogical philosophy, Jungian's theory of "shadow" parts of personality, and the results of the experimental data on the architecture of *Encounter* in everyday life [Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharkhurin, 2024], it examines how *Encounters* foster self-awareness, emotional resilience, and relational harmony. The article illustrates how Encounters catalyze meaningful transformation by analyzing stages of self-development and the inner dialogues accompanying these processes.

The discussion also considers how *Encounters* addresses contemporary challenges like loneliness and digital disconnection. It emphasizes their potential as a life practice for cultivating deeper connections, both with others and with oneself.

Encounter as Connection

The concept of *Encounter* [Rogers, 1970] revolutionized therapeutic practice by emphasizing the importance of authentic connection. Rather than positioning the therapist as an authoritative figure, Rogers envisioned the therapeutic relationship as a mutual exchange where both client and therapist contribute to healing. In this dynamic process, the therapist acts as a participant, creating a space of safety and understanding: "I find that when I am willing to let myself be fully aware of what I am experiencing inside and am willing to take the risk of expressing it, I discover that others tend to experience the same kind of

freedom. And the result is a deeply human meeting—a moment of realness between individuals.” [Rogers, p. 28]. Rogers also described how these experiences foster profound personal growth and transformation by enabling individuals to encounter themselves more authentically and deeply. He observed that profound psychological shifts and reorganization of the self-concept occurred during these moments of connection, not through isolated interventions. Also, noting that despite it being often unsettling, “it ultimately leads to a more congruent and realistic sense of self” [Rogers, 1961, p. 119]. To come to that “realistic” state, the Self has to accept itself, which “creates the freedom to grow and become more connected to reality” [Rogers, 1961, p. 120].

Rogers identified three core conditions for facilitating *Encounters*: unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence. Initially developed for therapy, these principles have broader implications for fostering resilience, self-awareness, and relational harmony in everyday life. Yet, in a world increasingly characterized by emotional disconnection and burnout, such *Encounters* are becoming more elusive. Modern life’s accelerated pace, compounded by digital communication, often inhibits the trust and empathy required for genuine connection. This raises critical questions: Why is it so challenging to connect meaningfully? What barriers prevent individuals from fostering the trust and empathy essential for *Encounters*?

Rogers’ ideas laid the foundation for understanding connection, but they are part of a broader dialogue on the transformative nature of interpersonal relationships. Martin Buber’s [Buber, 1937] philosophy of dialogue offers a complementary perspective, emphasizing the relational depth required for authentic *Encounters*.

Encounter as Inner and Outer Dialogue

Buber’s [Buber, 1937] *I-Thou* philosophy provides a profound lens through which to understand *Encounter*. For Buber, authentic dialogue requires openness to the other as a whole, a unique being, free from judgment or control. This “I-Thou” relationship contrasts with the “I-It” mode, where individuals treat others as objects rather than equal dialogue participants. Relatedness creates readiness – “a category or being, a form that reaches out to be filled” [Buber, p. 60]. This, in turn, has to be mutual, as only then the “sphere of the between” [Buber, 1947, p. 202] is created, the relational space that allows the Selves to meet and transcend. Genuine dialogue, as Buber argued, fosters mutual

existential recognition and open pathways to transformation, which is achieved through a deep sense of connection with both your Self and the broader world. [Buber, 1970]. Buber describes relational space as something sacred, where one can feel the divine and glimpse the authentic relationality. This raises the question of where the initial relatedness originates, preparing a person for the Encounter with others.

In 1957, Carl Rogers and Martin Buber met for a public discussion on *Encounter*, observed by colleagues in the field of psychology. Despite high expectations, many attendees concluded that a true *Encounter* had not occurred [Vasilyuk, 1991]. This perception underscores the complexity of authentic dialogue. While observers judged the exchange based on external cues, Rogers and Buber later reflected on the depth of their connection. This divergence highlights an essential insight: *Encounter* is often an internal process, not immediately apparent from the outside. It may unfold over time, revealing its transformative qualities long after the initial interaction.

The tension noted during their dialogue illustrates a key aspect of *Encounter*: its ability to surface hidden, often challenging aspects of the Self. This aligns with Jung's [Jung, 1959] concept of shadow integration, where growth arises from engaging with parts of oneself that are difficult to acknowledge. Similarly, Buber's emphasis on relational authenticity echoes Rogers' belief in the transformative power of mutual recognition. Bakhtin's [Bakhtin, 1981] concept of dialogical time further suggests that the value of an *Encounter* can only be fully appreciated when contextualized within past experiences and future possibilities, emphasizing its unfolding and dynamic nature.

Encounter and the Shadow Self

Encounters are not inherently comfortable experiences; in fact, their transformative potential often emerges precisely through the tensions and challenges they evoke [Jung, 1959]. An *Encounter* can reveal hidden or "shadow" aspects of the Self, which Jung [Jung, 1959] describes as qualities individuals tend to repress. The shadow is an essential component of the Self—the central archetype in the Jungian personality structure, which embodies unity, wholeness, and the process of individuation. The ultimate goal of personal development is to achieve or move towards a balanced psyche centered around the Self.

The Self encompasses both the conscious and subconscious mind. Within the subconscious lies the shadow archetype, which plays a crucial role in the formation of the Self. Jung [Jung, 1958] stated, “The less the shadow is embodied in the individual’s consciousness, the blacker and denser it is. At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions” [Jung, p. 131]. This highlights the importance of acknowledging and integrating the shadow to prevent its destructive influence on our thoughts and actions. The shadow holds repressed impulses, desires, and qualities that an individual perceives as unacceptable or undesirable. It represents both a challenge and an opportunity for personal growth. By confronting and integrating the shadow, individuals embark on a transformative journey toward individuation and self-actualization. Jung [Jung, 1958] noted that this process is primal and often uncomfortable.

The Encounters we have with others often mirror the inner tensions we carry, especially those stemming from the unconscious mind. As Jung [Jung, 1959] observed, “Through the meeting with others, we meet ourselves in a thousand different forms. Each encounter is a chance to see within ourselves what has been hidden or repressed” [Jung, p. 236]. In this light, the 1957 dialogue between Rogers and Buber, initially perceived by many as a failed Encounter [Vasilyuk, 1991], can be reconsidered not as a lack of connection but as a moment in which deeper psychological dynamics were at play. The visible discomfort and misattunement may, in fact, reflect the surfacing of the “shadow” – the unacknowledged parts of self that are often activated in true relational contact. While their verbal exchange revealed tension, this very tension becomes meaningful when understood as part of Encounter’s transformative potential: the capacity to expose and integrate what is hidden. Thus, what seemed on the surface to be a missed connection may instead exemplify the depth of Encounter as a process that challenges, unsettles, and ultimately deepens self-understanding – not always in the moment, but across the unfolding of dialogical time. Therefore, every Encounter presents an opportunity to face not only our authentic “bright side” but also our “shadow.”

The main challenge in this context is accepting the shadow Self as authentic. Many people resist the experience of openness because it requires confronting parts of themselves they would rather deny. Three reasons hinder individuals from experiencing an encounter or recognizing it as such: false beliefs, lack of trust, and fear of rejection [Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharhurin, 2024]. The concept of the shadow explains these

three barriers. If a person believes that “I have no shadow,” he or she will be confronted with that shadow, leading to a lack of trust in future interactions. Conversely, if a person acknowledges their shadow but has not accepted it, he or she will likely fear rejection from others, mirroring their self-rejection. Avoiding the shadow can result in psychological imbalance and projecting these denied qualities onto others. However, when the shadow is integrated, it can become a source of creativity, strength, and vitality [Jung, 1959].

Relatedness is essential for engaging in dialogue [Buber, 1970], and, in Rosa’s [Rosa, 2013] terms, resonating with others is a universal aspect of being. Then, one is related to all around – subjects, objects, beliefs, and ideas. Thus, the negative relationships an individual forms, or those they choose not to acknowledge, become personal relational shadows. One fundamental characteristic of the shadow is that it always follows the object that causes it. Therefore, one cannot escape one’s shadow, even when alone. This represents the cycle of encountering the Self, eventually leading to encountering Others [Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharhurin, 2024].

The first step in this process is accepting that one has shadows, perfection is unattainable, and everyone has flaws. This acceptance forms the essential Encounter when the Ego – a filter determining what unconscious content can enter conscious awareness [Jung, 1959] – confronts the Self. Initial act of ego dissolution opens the space for discovering the Self and fosters a readiness to explore its multiple facets.

These cycles facilitate transformation, but the Self must first become aware and emerge from the “latent Self” stage [Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharkhurin, 2024, p. 8] to fully engage with Others. Rogers [Rogers, 1961] referred to this process as the organic valuing system, where the locus of valuing becomes internalized as individuals move toward self-actualization. This reflective process initiates an inner transformation that unfolds in several stages. First, a reaction to the Other (such as irritation, idealization, or withdrawal) signals a projection — a part of the Self that is not yet fully accepted or integrated. Second, through self-reflection or symbolic mediation, the individual begins to recognize that the emotional intensity is not solely about the Other, but reveals an inner wound, fear, or unmet need. Third, by staying with this awareness, rather than acting on the initial impulse, the individual creates a space for emotional regulation and insight. This allows the projected material to be “owned,” reintegrated into the psyche as part of a broader, more compassionate sense of self. Only then does the Other cease to be

a distorted figure and emerge as a separate, complex being. In this way, the integration of the Shadow shifts the Encounter from a reactive dynamic to a co-present one, characterized by empathy, clear boundaries, and authentic mutual recognition. Without such self-awareness, individuals remain in a latent development stage, externally driven and unable to recognize the importance of encounters in shaping their lives.

Encounter as a Symbol

The Self is a multifaceted entity, encompassing both light and shadow aspects. While shadow traits often remain invisible to the individual, they are frequently apparent to others. Encounters with others serve as mirrors, reflecting these hidden facets to the Self. This exposes the conflicting nature of the duality of relationships, which stimulates a dialogue between the Imaginary and the Real [Lacan, 1975]. By mentioning this, Lacan [Lacan, 1975] underscores that the Self is a product of misunderstanding and misrecognition. The central theme of Encounter focuses on an internal dialogue that may not always be outwardly expressed but is felt deeply within. This process aligns with Gendlin's [Gendlin, 1981] concept of a "felt sense," a bodily awareness preceding verbal expression that conveys a pre-verbal understanding of experiences. Thus, an Encounter is more than interaction; it is a profound opportunity for self-recognition and integration.

Individuals often struggle to interpret these reflections, lacking the tools to understand the deeper messages conveyed by others. To address this, symbolic frameworks offer a way to distill complex information into accessible forms. As Jung [Jung, 1959] emphasized, symbols are the psyche's natural language, connecting deeply felt experiences to conscious awareness. This tradition is rooted in the symbolic foundations of many ancient cultures, as the psyche tends to relate most vividly to visual symbols [Eliade, 1957]. Symbols are structures that set a method to perceive reality [Lacan, 1973]. Therefore, symbols are essential for personal growth as their meaning unfolds progressively, guiding the individual toward greater understanding.

One of the richest symbolic systems is the Tarot's Major Arcana, a collection of 21 archetypes representing the journey of self-discovery [Nichols, 1980]. Some researchers believe that tarot can be considered as a symbolic language, designed to map the human experience [Waite, 1910]. Each card reflects a unique archetype, embodying aspects of human consciousness that are vital yet often challenging to acknowledge.

Jung compared the Major Arcana to his system of archetypes, both of which emerge from the collective unconscious - the deeper levels of the personal unconscious. The Arcana encapsulates the journey from latent potential (The Fool) to wholeness and integration (The World). This progression reflects a psychological individuation process, moving from foundational to relational and transformational dimensions of the psyche, reflecting on the progression of the states of the Self from the latent to emerging, then manifested, and finally transpersonal [Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharkhurin, 2024].

We can assume that, the choice of 21 as the number of sides to the psyche is not arbitrary. Symbolically, 21 has long been associated with completion and integration. 21 can be reduced to 3 ($2 + 1$), where 2 is duality, and 1 is a singularity. The resulting 3 is a synthesis of opposites into a cohesive whole, mirroring the integration process. Geometrically, 21 is a triangular number, meaning it is the sum of the first six integers, so it is a perfect triangle. The triad often symbolizes body, mind, and spirit harmony. Based on the above, if we present the Self as a figure, we will get a 21-sided polygon, as shown in Figure 1. Each side showcases qualities that can be applied to an individual or situation.

Correct Triangle Inscribed in a Completed 21-Sided Polygon

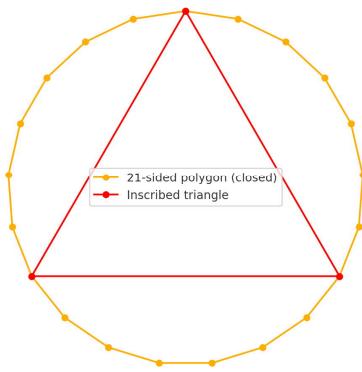


Fig. 1 The 21-sided Polygon of the Self

The collection of symbols is organized as a 21-step scale with “The Fool” traditionally placed outside the numbered sequence as card 0, symbolizing pure potential and the latent state of the Self. However, this potential for development is essential to the journey’s continuity.

For example, “The Fool” represents the initial excitement and boundless possibilities of beginning a new project. In contrast, “The Magician,” symbolizing manifestation and willpower, provides the necessary focus and determination to overcome obstacles and achieve goals.

It can be assumed that 0 is a reserved space adaptable to any Encounter, regardless of the aspect of the Self being confronted. This framework establishes a cycle of continuous growth, emphasizing that wholeness is not only a destination but also an ongoing and dynamic process of self-discovery. 0 is a reserved space adaptable to any Encounter, regardless of the aspect of the Self being confronted. This framework establishes a cycle of continuous growth, emphasizing that wholeness is not only a destination but also an ongoing and dynamic process of self-discovery.

If we observe the progression of the Major Arcana in Table 1, we see a journey from pure to realized potential. This represents a sense of completeness that encounters obstacles in the material world, along with cognitive and emotional transformations.

Table 1
Representation of Symbols in Arcana

N	Arcana	Symbol	Description
0	The Magician	Manifestation and willpower	Embodies the power to influence one's own experience and the experience of others
1	The Fool	Innocence and pure potential	Embodies innocence and unshaped consciousness
2	The High Priestess	The intuitive and subconscious dimension	Hidden, subconscious knowledge must be accessed to balance the seen and unseen aspects of existence

N	Arcana	Symbol	Description
3	The Empress	Nurturance and creativity	Embodies nature's fertile, generative forces and connection to abundance, signaling the development of relational and sensory consciousness
4	The Emperor	Authority and structure	Reflects on establishing order and discipline and recognizing personal power within societal constructs
5	The Hierophant	Tradition and spiritual wisdom	Internalization of cultural, spiritual, and moral frameworks fosters a sense of belonging and ethical guidance. This is when the first conscious thoughts of the existence of something bigger than oneself start to visit
6	The Lovers	Relationships and value alignment	The awareness of choice, the interplay of relationships, and the integration of opposites to shape identity and values
7	The Chariot	Drive and determination	The ability to harness conflicting forces with determination and focus, moving forward with confidence and purpose if the rules are acknowledged and accepted
8	Strength	Inner courage and emotional mastery	Integration of instinct and compassion symbolizes the ability to harness inner power with grace and maintain equilibrium in the face of challenges

N	Arcana	Symbol	Description
9	The Hermit	Introspection and solitude	The search for deeper truths, guiding consciousness toward self-discovery and illumination through solitude and introspection
10	The Wheel of Fortune	Cycles and change	An awareness of fate, change, and the ability to adapt to the ebbs and flows of life with equanimity
11	Justice	Fairness and accountability	The application of discernment and accountability emphasizes the importance of fairness, truth, and moral responsibility in shaping reality
12	The Hanged Man	Surrender and new perspectives	Reflects the necessity of letting go, embracing stillness, adopting a transformative outlook, and transcending personal limitations
13	Death	Transformation and endings	The shedding of the old fosters the acceptance of impermanence and the potential for profound rebirth and growth
14	Temperance	Balance and moderation	Integration of opposites fosters moderation, adaptability, and the ability to create unity within complexity
15	The Devil	Shadow aspects and attachments	Reveals the chains of materialism, fear, and attachment, urging the individual to confront and transcend self-imposed limitations

N	Arcana	Symbol	Description
16	The Tower	Upheaval and revelation	Breaking down false constructs, awakening the individual to new truths, and liberating them from rigid thought structures
17	The Star	Hope and inspiration	Renewal, faith, and the guidance of higher ideals offer a vision of possibilities beyond current limitations
18	The Moon	Illusions and subconscious fears	Murky realms of dreams, fears, and mysteries urge individuals to navigate uncertainty with trust and intuition
19	The Sun	Clarity and joy	Illumination, vitality, and aligning inner and outer worlds foster confidence and a sense of purpose
20	Judgment	Self-reflection and renewal	Call to rise above past limitations, integrate lessons, and align with a higher purpose and truth
21	The World	Integration and completion	The harmonious integration of all aspects of life signifies fulfillment, wholeness, and the realization of the interconnectedness of existence

The deck of Archana's could also be viewed through the principle of a sacred triad, representing the gradual transition from the body level, which starts with "The Fool," to the soul, which begins with "Strength," and finally to the spirit, which escalation goes from "The Devil" gradually to "The God/World". The first seven cards illustrate an individual's interaction with the material world, focusing on physical existence, foundational experiences, and external influences. These cards emphasize agency development, understanding relationships, and

mastery over external circumstances. The journey begins in a state of zero awareness, where the individual senses an undefined potential for growth (The Fool). Then consciousness awakens (The High Priestess). Awareness expands into nurturing and creation, but is still only at the superficial material level (The Empress). Gradually, consciousness consolidates into structure and authority (The Emperor). Awareness turns to tradition and the collective (The Hierophant). Consciousness evolves through duality and connection (The Lovers). Awareness matures into self-discipline and mastery (The Chariot).

This first “flight to steps” is centered on grounding the individual in the material world and mastering the dynamics of physical existence. It involves cultivating a sense of Self and agency within external circumstances. This phase signifies the transition of the Self from its latent stage to its appearing stage.

The next seven cards shift the focus inward, exploring the psychological dimensions of the Self. This part of the scale involves navigating emotional landscapes, balancing inner conflicts, and cultivating self-awareness. This middle stage delves into the complexities of the mind and emotions, focusing on self-awareness, adaptability, and the inner work necessary for personal growth. There, we see the transformation from the appearing to the manifested states of the Self. Consciousness embraces inner mastery and resilience (Strength). Awareness turns inward for self-reflection and wisdom (The Hermit). Consciousness expands to recognize cycles and the interconnected nature of existence (The Wheel of Fortune). Awareness matures into understanding cause and effect (Justice). Consciousness learns to surrender and perspective (The Hanged Man). Awareness confronts transformation and renewal (Death). Consciousness attains balance and harmony (Temperance). The final seven cards elevate the journey to the spiritual plane, addressing the transcendence of the ego, connection with universal forces, and integration of the higher Self. This final part of the scale emphasizes the transcendence of material and psychological limitations, culminating in spiritual unity and fulfillment. At this stage, the manifested Self transits into its ultimate transpersonal state. Awareness encounters the shadow and its illusions (The Devil). Consciousness faces disruption and revelation (The Tower). Awareness finds hope and inspiration (The Star). Consciousness explores intuition and the unconscious (The Moon). Awareness blossoms into clarity and joy (The Sun). Consciousness transcends individual experience toward collective and spiritual

awakening (The Judgment). Awareness culminates in completion and unity (The World).

Table 2 illustrates the progression of the symbolic meaning of the discovery journey of the Self.

Table 2
Self-Development Progression - Body-Mind-Spirit

Body	Mind / Emotions	Spirit
The Chariot	Temperance	The World
The Lovers	Death	Judgment
The Hierophant	The Hanged Man	The Sun
The Emperor	Justice	The Moon
The Empress	The Wheel of Fortune	The Star
The High Priestess	The Hermit	The Tower
The Fool	Strength	The Devil

Viewing the symbols of Major Arcana through this lens allows us to see every encounter with others as a moment rich with potential for personal growth and self-reflection. It provides a structured symbolic framework that helps individuals evaluate their consciousness and responses to these interactions. We can assess what the other person reflects about ourselves and the underlying message within the interaction.

Often, Encounters bring forth archetypes that challenge our self-concept. While these discomforting moments may be unsettling, they reveal deeper dimensions of our psyche and facilitate personal growth [Nichols, 1980]. For instance, meeting someone who exudes nurturing and supportive energy may activate the Empress archetype within us, encouraging a reconnection with empathy, creativity, or the capacity to care for oneself, or revealing resistance to those qualities. A confrontation with someone who disrupts our worldview or triggers a defensive reaction might evoke the Tower archetype, signaling an invitation to dismantle rigid assumptions and welcome personal growth through discomfort. Similarly,

when we face a situation where intentions must be clarified and emotional balance restored, the archetype of Temperance can guide us toward measured, harmonious dialogue. In moments of joyful resonance, the Sun becomes present, highlighting authenticity and shared vitality. When we encounter ambiguity or unspoken emotions in a relationship, the Moon reminds us to tune into intuition and hidden layers of meaning. And the Lovers archetype may surface when we are faced with choices in how to engage, commit, or set boundaries in a relationship. These examples demonstrate how the symbolic structure of the Major Arcana can map onto relational dynamics, transforming abstract archetypes into tangible, lived psychological experiences.

By aligning our actions with the lessons of a specific archetype, we can navigate interactions more consciously. If mutual goals are unclear, Temperance can inspire a balanced and harmonious approach. In moments of shared joy, the Sun reminds us to celebrate connection and authenticity.

The Arcana offers a symbolic language that reflects the complex interplay of emotions, intuition, and intellect in human interactions. For instance, The High Priestess highlights the importance of listening beyond words, promoting a deeper understanding of unspoken feelings, while The Lovers emphasizes the role of choice in relationships, encouraging individuals to make conscious decisions about how to connect with others or set boundaries. This framework fosters emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and intentionality in human encounters.

By viewing each encounter as an opportunity to engage with these psychological symbols, individuals can approach interactions as exercises in embracing the diverse aspects of the Self [Rosengarten, 2000]. As Hermans [Hermans, 2003] stated, “self-knowledge is seeded with affect-laden self-acceptance” [Hermans, p. 122]. This system illustrates that principle.

Applying the grounded knowledge of Arcana through the lens of psychology to human encounters bridges the symbolic and the practical, providing a nuanced method for navigating relationships and contributing to overall psychological and emotional development.

Ultimately, Encounters are not isolated events but rather part of a continuous process of self-reflection and growth. Each meaningful connection contributes to the broader journey of self-formation, integrating new insights and refining personal values. Rather than arriving at a fixed state, the Self remains dynamic, evolving through repeated experiences of empathy, recognition, and inner dialogue. In this way,

encounters act as ongoing catalysts for transformation, offering opportunities to align with one's inner values and deepen understanding of both the Self and others.

Discussion

Our research findings suggest that there is no singular, “true” Self. Rather, the Self is best understood as a voluminous, multifaceted entity, continually revealed and refined through Encounters. Each meaningful interaction unveils a new facet or depth of the Self, enriching self-awareness and fostering a greater understanding of its complexity. This growing awareness inevitably cultivates tolerance and acceptance. As individuals recognize their own diverse sides—those deemed “positive” and “negative”—they become more attuned to the multifaceted nature of others. This shift lays the groundwork for empathy and authentic connection.

Importantly, Encounter is not defined by its positivity or negativity but by the depth of engagement it enables. As Jaeggi [Jaeggi, 2014] notes, “negative resonance” is less about adverse experiences and more about a lack of resonance—a failure to connect meaningfully. Similarly, a lack of Encounter often reflects an absence of capacity or willingness to engage authentically. This insight underscores the importance of fostering conditions that facilitate Encounter, such as locus of valuing, concentration, and perseverance [Pasechnik-Lyle & Kharkhurin, 2024].

Once the willingness for an *Encounter* is present, the next essential requirement is openness – an ability to engage fully without pre-conceived judgments or expectations. This openness, however, is rooted in an understanding that no *Encounter* is inherently positive or negative. Rather, each interaction reflects archetypal patterns that serve as **Mirrors of the Self**, revealing both the light and shadow aspects of the psyche. These archetypes, whether nurturing (*The Empress*), challenging (*The Tower*), or transformative (*Death*), guide us toward deeper self-awareness and growth. As Massumi (2002) argues, openness is a dynamic process shaped by affective exchanges, where relational encounters act as catalysts for movement and transformation. By recognizing the archetypal dimensions of *Encounter* as **Mirrors of the Self**, we move beyond binary evaluations of "good" or "bad" and instead view these moments as opportunities to explore and integrate the multifaceted aspects of our psyche. This perspective not only fosters emotional resilience

but also enriches our capacity to find meaning and balance in the relational dynamics of everyday life.

The concept of the authentic Self further deepens our understanding of Encounter. Rather than a purified or stripped-down version of the Self, authenticity arises from embracing the Self's contradictions. The authentic Self emerges through the reconciliation of these opposites, achieved through the reflective dialogue that Encounter facilitates.

The sense of wholeness in human interactions emerges within what Pasechnik-Lyle and Kharkhurin [Pasechnik-Lyle and Kharkhurin, 2024] describe as the *Encounter Field*, a dynamic space shared between individuals. This concept resonates with Buber's [Buber, 1970] "sphere in between," where genuine relationality unfolds, and Rogers' [Rogers, 1961] assertion that such a space becomes accessible through radical openness. When one individual fully embraces this openness, it invites the other to do the same, creating a profound connection. In these moments, the boundaries between the individual Self and the collective Self, rooted in the collective unconscious [Jung, 1959], blur. The *Encounter Field* acts as a bridge, allowing individuals to access not only their personal unconscious but also shared archetypal dimensions within the collective unconscious. This dynamic process suggests a potential universality of human experiences, fostering a shared reality where deeper layers of meaning, connection, and wholeness emerge. However, while the underlying structure of Encounter may be archetypal in nature, the initiation, expression, and interpretation of such moments are inevitably shaped by cultural norms, values, and relational expectations. Therefore, further cross-cultural research is necessary to explore how archetypal patterns are manifested and experienced across different sociocultural contexts – whether they reveal universal tendencies, culturally embedded variations, or a complex interplay of both.

In a world increasingly shaped by social acceleration and technological mediation, the necessity of resonance in relationships becomes undeniable. Rosa [Rosa, 2019] argues that transactional, emotionally detached relationships—characteristic of a fast-paced, efficiency-driven society—exacerbate loneliness, burnout, and alienation. As digital interactions replace face-to-face connections, the depth and reciprocity that define human relationships are increasingly at risk. The phenomenon of digital disconnection – both voluntary and involuntary – further illustrates the paradox of our time: while digital technologies offer constant connectivity, they often fail to support genuine connection. On one hand, individuals consciously withdraw from digital spaces to escape cognitive

overload, surveillance, or the commodification of their attention. On the other hand, structural inequalities continue to exclude large populations from meaningful digital participation, reinforcing social and emotional isolation. In both cases, the erosion of relational depth signals a critical need for new modes of human engagement. Resonant relationships, by contrast, are marked by mutual affect, emotional attunement, and the capacity to truly *meet* one another. Uhtomsky [Uhtomsky, 1907] emphasized this resonance as vital for preserving human connection, cautioning that “The kingdom will be dumb and deaf, for no one will understand anyone, with the confidence that everyone understands everything for themselves” [Uhtomsky, p. 1]. Our findings underscore the transformative power of *Encounter* in addressing these challenges. By creating a shared space of mutual openness and engagement, *Encounter* offers a pathway to overcome the alienation of modern life, fostering deep, meaningful relationships that bridge the emotional and existential gaps widened by technological progress.

In this way, *Encounter* becomes more than a relational event—it is a state of being, a concept that allows individuals to access deeper truths about themselves and others. The transformative potential of *Encounter* lies not in its external circumstances but in participants’ willingness to engage with the unknown, embracing the complexity of their own and others’ Selves.

Conclusion

This exploration of *Encounter* highlights its transformative potential as a framework for self-formation and authentic connection. Rooted in relational depth and inner dialogue, *Encounter* challenges individuals to embrace their multifaceted Selves and engage meaningfully with others. Yet, the ultimate power of *Encounter* lies not in the external conditions of a meeting but in the freedom of choice and personal responsibility that each individual brings to the interaction.

Every meeting carries within it the potential for *Encounter*, but it is up to the individual to decide whether to approach it as such. This decision reflects an inner willingness to engage authentically, to confront the discomfort of the unknown, and to embrace the contradictions within oneself and others. As Sartre [Sartre, 1956] emphasized, freedom lies in the choices we make, and with it comes responsibility for the quality of our interactions. Similarly, Buber [Buber, 1937] argued that

authentic dialogue requires active openness to the other, transforming a superficial interaction into a moment of profound relational resonance.

This responsibility extends inward as well. As Gendlin [Gendlin, 1981] described, the *felt sense* of experience requires attention and care, inviting individuals to reflect on their inner processes and integrate their shadow aspects. The potential for transformation resides in this deliberate engagement, reinforcing that *Encounter* is not a passive event but an active process of meaning-making and growth.

Ultimately, the concept of *Encounter* underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of the Self. By exercising the freedom to approach each meeting as an opportunity for *Encounter*, individuals not only deepen their own self-awareness but also contribute to the creation of more empathetic and connected relationships. This insight affirms that the transformative power of *Encounter* lies within each person's capacity to choose how they engage with themselves, with others, and with the world.

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