

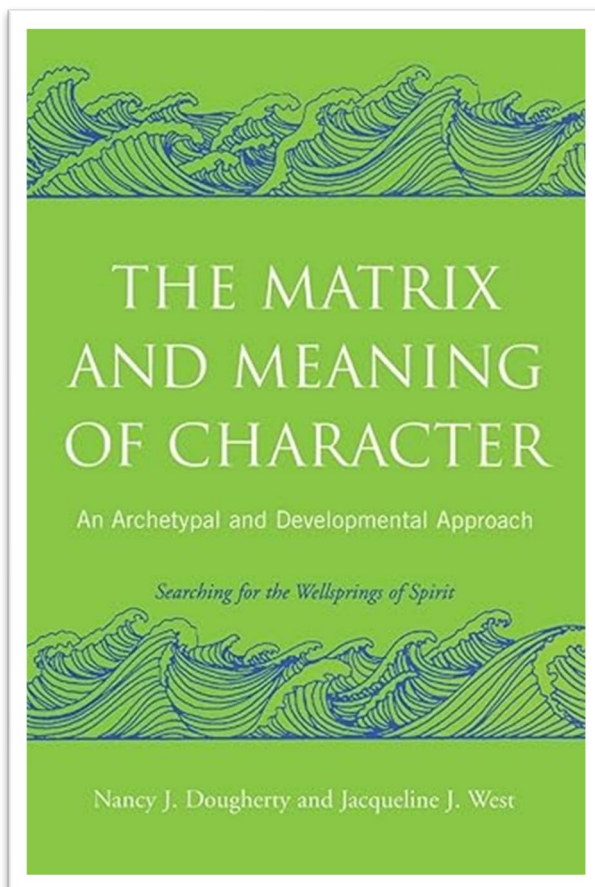
## BOOK REVIEW



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Nancy J. Dougherty, Jacqueline J. West

“THE MATRIX AND MEANING OF CHARACTER: AN ARCHETYPAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH”

**Publisher: Routledge; 1st edition (2007)**

**Language: English**

**Paperback: 312 pages**

**ISBN-10: 0415403006**

**ISBN-13: 978-0415403009**

ISSN 2710-1460

*"Where there's a wound, there's potential."*

*N. J. Dougherty, J. J. West*

As we begin our practice, each of us in the helping professions, psychologists and colleagues, is confronted with an inner need to understand how human beings work, what human character is, what the logic of intrapsychic affect is, and how all this manifests itself in behavior. We dream of a fulcrum that will help us to hold on among the manifestations of a wide variety of phenomena: properties, qualities and abilities, a large number of emotions and illogical human behaviors.

In the world of scientific psychology, medicine and psychotherapy, there are different classifications of characters and disorders. The book "The Matrix and Meaning of Character an Archetypal and Developmental Approach Searching for the Wellspring of Spirit" provides a very interesting way to look at people's character types using fairy tale and archetypal imagery. Like many Jungian books, "The Matrix..." fascinates us with its images and poeticizes the human character, but at the same time all this figurative and poetic language is based on a clear structure of the proposed typologization of individuals.

So, the authors offer an original perspective on character typology. They believe that the diagnoses of medical classifications can sound offensive to the patient and offer a lively diagnostic language that can make clinical work not only effective but also fun, allowing you to penetrate the psychic depths and find the right direction. The book describes nine-character structures tied to stages of early development and archetypal themes. As each person's psyche develops, it passes through three different stages, which have been given the

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following names: primitive, or early, narcissistic, and preneurotic. The individual also internalizes one of three specific relationship patterns: avoidant, seeking, or antagonistic. The pattern of attitudes that actually defines a person's life arises from a set of factors that includes archetypal forces, biological predisposition, developmental conditions, and the element of chance or what is called the mystery of life. The three structures of character that form around the pattern of relationships are described in thematically related yet quite different images, fairy tales, and life stories. Thus, three developmental stages overlap with three different relationship patterns, giving rise to the character structures described: schizoid, counterdependent narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, borderline, dependent narcissistic, hysterical, psychopathic, alpha-narcissistic, passive-aggressive.

The analysis of all these nine-character structures through fairy tales and myths is very impressive, in my opinion, and at the same time effective for clinical work with patients. Readers can try to recognize themselves in the images described and, by engaging in their emotional experience, reflect on what is closer to them, what abilities, resources and potential the fairy tale and the character of the hero carry. The Girl with Matches, Cassandra, Aphrodite, Brother Fox, Peter Pan, and other fairy tale and mythological characters infuse life, creativity, and energy into places in the patient's life that may seem unusually vulnerable. As the book poetically notes, "Demons that seem exceptionally pathological and haunting can

become powerful guides to help us connect to the spiritual world."

So, the authors conclude that at the core of character structure is a paradox: "The core of any character contains a paradox: on the one hand, it is a protective structure, on the other, it is adaptive and has the potential for development, filled with an inspiring archetypal presence. Thus, our traumas, our personality and our abilities are directly related to each other. Within the character structure itself lies the seed of transformation and individuation." The character structure is an individual portrait that represents archetypal themes and personal traumas, as well as what has been dealt with and what has had to be defended against at a particular stage of development.

The authors also argue that transformation does not happen in spite of, but because of character structures; it is through one's wounds that one is able to heal at the deepest level, awaken creative energies, and start the process of individuation. At the end of the book, Dougherty and West express the hope that by understanding the peculiarities of different character structures through this book, each of us will be able to understand ourselves better and more deeply.

The book is very close to the spirit of positive psychotherapy, as it is based on an exploration of the abilities, resources, and potentials that are present in every personality, every character, and every trauma, and is thus highly recommended by me for study and use.