

Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961): Analytical Psychology

As a matter of full disclosure, I should mention that when I was in my late teens I was struggling with trying to make sense of life and my place in the world, as many do. A friend recommended to me Jung's (1957) *The Undiscovered Self* as something I needed to read. I did. That began my career in psychology. I was 29 when I entered university and I had read nearly the complete collected works of Jung by that time and was very much under his influence. I have since, as a result of further learning, developed a more critical perspective on Jung. I think there are problems but I do not wholeheartedly reject him or his message. In fairness, a lot of what he proposed would be better considered mysticism instead of psychology but that does not mean he should be dismissed on that account. The realm of the mystical is a part of human experience, at least for some people, and should be acknowledged. It is not possible to do full justice to Jung's work and I will not try. I will just mention some key components of what he proposed. If you are at all interested I recommend Jung's (1961) autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, as the best place to encounter him.

Jung began correspondence with Freud during 1906 and a close friendship developed; they gave each other mutual support for their psychological pursuits (Jung, 1961). On a trip to America in 1909 Freud suggested they analyze each other's dreams. According to Jung, he began to be bothered by Freud in this since "Freud was placing authority above truth" (p. 158). Jung was internally driven to find answers to forces welling up from within and, in 1909, Jung and a friend expressed an interest to Freud in precognition and parapsychology. To Jung's dismay, Freud denounced the practice as nonsense. At that point a strange loud noise issued from the bookcase nearby. "There," Jung argued, "that is an example of a so-called catalytic exteriorization phenomenon" (p. 155). Freud retorted that it was bosh. "It is not," Jung replied, "And to prove my point I now predict that in a moment there will be another such loud report!" Just then a second detonation went off. Freud stared aghast at Jung. Jung could not explain his certainty it was just a feeling.

Around that time Jung developed a mild psychosis and found himself lost in the unconscious realm. He was having visions and lost in drawing mandalas. When he emerged he wrote *Symbols of Transformation* (1912/1976), which led to a complete cessation of relations with Freud by 1913, since he was going well beyond the realm of comfort of Freud and was not so caught up in the sexuality hypothesis. Jung ended up establishing his own approach to depth psychology called *analytical psychology*. Jung sought to tap the depths of the unconscious in order to deal with present experience and unravel the mysteries of life. As he wrote, "My life has been permeated and held together by one idea and one goal: namely, to penetrate into the secret of personality" (1961, p. 206). Unlike Freud, Jung believed that there was more to the unconscious than sex and aggression. Freud pessimistically regarded life as the coping with anxiety due to conflict with intrapsychic and extrapsychic forces, Jung regarded life as a journey toward psychic completion and wholeness (conditions permitting).

To Jung, personality as a whole is called *psyche*. It embraces conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, and behavior and functions as a guide to the social and physical

environment. Like Freud, Jung's theory is based on the assumption that mind has a conscious and an unconscious realm. The conscious realm is the only part of the mind that is known directly and it is an aspect of mind that affected by experience. The conscious mind is like a small island in the vast sea of the unconscious. Conscious awareness grows daily through the application of innate mental functions: thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuition. The child does not use each function equally—one tends to be dominant. The *orientation* of the conscious mind is determined by two attitudes: *extraversion* and *introversion*.

The conscious mind contains the ego, a complex of conscious ideas that constitute the center of one's awareness, possessing a high degree of continuity and identity. Due to the ego, we feel ourselves to be the same from day to day. It is the organization of the conscious mind and is composed of conscious perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories. The ego is a small portion of the total psyche that functions as a gatekeeper to consciousness; it is highly selective. Unless it acknowledges the presence of an idea, feeling, memory, or perception, it cannot be brought to awareness.

The unconscious includes previously conscious contents that have been repressed or have fallen below the threshold of consciousness, or elements that never reach consciousness. It has two levels: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The *personal unconscious* is that aspect of the unconscious which develops due to individual experience. Its contents may be recalled easily, some with difficulty, and some beyond the reach of consciousness. It is termed personal because it pertains exclusively to the individual.

The personal unconscious and ego originate after birth but Jung believed that the psyche at birth contains a storehouse of archaic remnants (primordial images or archetypes) that are inherited from ancestral forbearers that he called the collective unconscious. It was the result of the history of the human race as a species and was an inborn, species-specific memories and ideas. The collective unconscious, is responsible for human myths, legends, and religious beliefs. I won't go into detail because that would take too much but I should explain how Jung reached such ideas.

I forget where, but Jung once wrote of a patient he had who was staring out the window at the sun. He informed Jung that the sun had a penis which wagged back and forth and created the wind. Many years later he read, in an ancient alchemical treatise, of the same imagery. His patient could not have had access to this obscure document yet the parallel was undeniable. In his further examination of myths and religions, artwork, and customs, he kept finding recurring themes across unrelated cultures and historical epochs. Since these cultures could not have had any association he reasoned that their productions must be due to some common humanity which led to the idea of the collective unconscious.

The collective unconscious contains archetypes which are the fundamental images of people. An archetype a representation in the unconscious of an experience of the human race; an inherited and unconscious idea or idea-feeling (English and English, 1958). Archetypes are universal patterns or predispositions that influence how all humans consciously and unconsciously adapt to their world and result from the deposits of the often repeated

experiences of humanity (Jung, 1961). They are potentialities *not* specific memories or facts and they remain dormant unless strengthened by appropriate experience.

Archetypes are not instincts to Jung but are their psychic counterpart. To Jung an instinct was an inborn physiological urge that produces uniform and regularly recurring modes of action and reaction. They are unconsciously determined psychological drives. Both archetype and instinct impel a person to action and in both cases the person remains unconscious of the true motives behind the actions. An archetype cannot be directly represented but, when activated, they express themselves through several modes, e.g., dreams, fantasies, delusions, art, myth, religion, behavior.

Jung presented a developmental stage theory of psychic life. The first stage was childhood (birth to around puberty). Initially there were virtually no problems since that requires an ego. There is no continuity or consciousness, no sense of personal identity. The child is conscious but memory is underdeveloped and perceptions poorly organized. The child is dependent upon parents, the child lives in an enclosed psychic atmosphere and a world-order provided by the parents. Once ego has formed the child speaks of self in first person. Upon entering school, the child emerges from parental psychic enclosure. In the stage of youth and young adulthood, around puberty, the psyche begins to take its own shape. This is demonstrated by the adolescent asserting his/her self. The psyche is burdened with problems, decisions, and making necessary adaptations to social life—job, marriage, insecurity, lack of self-worth. During middle age (35–40 onset) there is usually successful adaptation to external world (Jung's clients were successful). A new set of adaptation problems arise that re-center life around a new set of problems—spiritual (self). The person may be subjected to a process of individuation. During childhood, ego, personal unconscious, and other personality components gradually develop into separate entities. Middle age (35–40) is highlighted by a shift from materialism, sexuality, and propagation to more spiritual and cultural values. Radical reversals can occur in one's strongest convictions and emotions. This may cause changes in profession, divorces, religious upheaval. There is a reconciliation of the opposing forces of personality or individuation, the full development of the self. It is a dynamic, complex, life-long process whereby the person seeks to synthesize the various opposites in personality in order to become whole.

Jung has been criticized for a lack of scientific rigor. Such a critique ignores his word association work (see Jung, 1981). Furthermore, it begs the question what is science? Webster's defines science as systematized knowledge derived from observation, study, etc. Jung was a scholar whose investigations into cultures and ancient treatises, religions, philosophies, and the like, was the basis of his theorizing. One may dislike the subject matter but one cannot fault the depth of his investigations. Consider Aristotle who gathered, organized, and categorized plants and animals, and is considered the first biologist. Darwin too would not measure up by the standards of experimentation but he *was* a scientist.

A further critique has been that of conceptual confusion. Jung's writing is often confusing and terms are poorly or inconsistently defined. This misses the fact that much of what Jung was writing of may have been beyond conceptual delineation and may involve outright

contradiction. I suggest that there is something of Zen Buddhism in Jung. Zen koans are intended to break rational thought and to reach a stage of thinking without content and I suggest that is what Jung may have been trying to achieve, and may not be a reflection of inconsistency. I will leave it to you to investigate further if so inclined.

References

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