Brief Introduction

Carl G. Jung’s Analytical Psychology

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Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung (1875-1961) are the twin pillars of the modern depth psychology. These two greats crossed path for a few years and then parted way to establish their own schools of psychoanalysis. Freud established psychoanalysis and Jung founded analytical psychology. One postulate that was the common denominator in both men’s approach was that what was repressed into the unconscious returns to consciousness as some manifestation of the psyche. Freud postulated that the unconscious is the repository of repressed sexual wishes and these return to consciousness in disguised form as neurotic and other symptoms filtered through by the ego’s defenses to make them acceptable to consciousness and thus survive the censorship of the superego which is the guardian of our moral code. Jung agreed with this basic premise but expanded Freud’s hypothesis significantly when he proposed that the unconscious is not just the depository of repressed sexual desire but the source of our ancestral archetypal wisdom and a treasure cove of profound unlived creative and spiritual potentials which continues to unfold and manifest as symbols of our psyche. He proposed that our conscious is not just the cause of our problems and symptoms but the source of our yet to be realized promise. This process of becoming who we are meant to be is called the individuation process which is the guiding principle of our psyche. Just as a seed is destined to become a tree, individuation process defines the optimal milieu for our ego to achieve wholeness and selfhood. The goal of Jung’s analytical psychology is not just symptom resolution but achievement of health, vigor and wholeness by living out our deeper program. The following introductory article will present an introduction to Jung’s life and work and outline the basic tenets of his analytical psychology.

Jung’s life story

Einstein postulated that the perceived reality is a function of the observer. We cannot understand any theory without the context of its founder. Carl Jung’s life story will help us understand the backdrop of his theories. He was born in 1875, a 2nd child of a pastor (1st son died 2 days after birth in 1873). In 1878 his mother had psychiatric hospitalization ostensibly for depression. Later as a medical student from 1895-1899, he got interested in the unconscious and as a part of his researches he had spiritualistic sessions with his cousin Helene Preiswerk and published his findings in one of his earlier volumes. His father died in 1896, the same year as Freud started using psychoanalysis and publishing about his method. In 1900, Jung chose psychiatry and began work at Burgholzi clinic in Zurich, a large public
mental institution. In 1902, he published “On the Psychology & Pathology of the So Called Occult Phenomenon”. While at the Burgholzi clinic, in 1904 he conducted word association tests in collaboration with Wundt and published his book, Experimental Researches outlining his results of the Word Association Tests and the theory of Complexes. This became a foundation of his collaboration with Freud, since both men came to the same conclusion independently about the presence of the feeling toned complexes as a source of mental disturbances. Freud’s conclusions were based on his theories of the interpretation of dreams while Jung came to the same conclusion via his word association experiments. From 1905-1909, Jung was the chief resident at Burgholzi clinic from where in 1906, he began correspondence with Freud. In 1907 he met with Freud in Vienna: the same year that he published his “The Psychology of Dementia Praecox”. In 1909, he began private practice in psychiatry at Kusnacht and traveled with Freud to Clarke University, USA, where both men were invited independently. On the ship they undertook mutual dream analysis. One of Jung’s dreams was that he descends down through 16th century from Roman to prehistoric time bones and skulls: the impersonal underlying the psyche. This dream laid the framework for their differing theories: Freud considered this as Jung’s oedipal wish to murder his father (Freud), while Jung saw this as a symbolic manifestation of the ancestral wisdom underlying the outer layers of our consciousness.

In 1910, Jung published his book, “Symbols of Transformation of the Libido”, in which he postulated that at the root of mental illness is not just repressed sexuality but unlived spiritual and creative potentials. Eventually this led to breakup with Freud in 1913. This break with his mentor had a profound impact on Jung coupled with the professional isolation he felt in the neutral Switzerland during World War 1. In his autobiography he calls this phase of his life from 1914-1919 as “Confrontation with the Unconscious”. During this time, Jung was working through his grief of lost connection with Freud, professional isolation from his peers from the rest of the world. This was not only a very depressive but also an extremely creative phase. It crystallized his personal encounter with the Self Archetype and became the basis of all his subsequent theories. This encounter with his unconscious is well documented in his recently published diary the Red Book. In this book, he outlines his encounters with his deeper self, which he calls the archetype of the Self (Soul). In this diary, he drew his encounters with his psyche and these took the form of Mandala or the circle representing the Self. Different aspects of the Self were represented in this mandala which depicted a sort of an X-Ray of the psyche at any given point in time.

During this encounter with the unconscious, Jung discovered the archetypes as the guiding templates of human psyche and at the root of our complexes. He evolved the concept of archetypes in many of his subsequent publications. Archetypes are defined in Jungian literature as the cumulative wisdom of the human psyche activated in each person to help us navigate our spiritual development, achieve our individual destiny and optimally adapt to our time and environment. Transmitted genetically, archetypes are mediated by the nervous system and by our formative development.
When Jung recovered from this depression during his encounters with the unconscious, he reclaimed his personal and professional stride and now became reflective about his break up with Freud. Instead of being depressed about it, he became curious about why they may have broken up. His working hypothesis was that it was based on differing personality profiles or types. In 1921 he published his book, “Psychological Types”, which postulates there each one of us has a unique psychological type. We are either Thinking or Feeling type or Intuitive or Sensate types. These are archetypal sets of opposites and create a unique lens with which we look at ourselves, others, world and our future. The most prominent of our type of these two pairs of opposites is our superior function; its opposite is our least comfortable and minimally evolved inferior function. The second in ranking of our functions is called our auxiliary function and its opposite is our tertiary function. The quaternity of our superior, auxiliary, tertiary and inferior functions rank orders our lens of judging and perceiving ourselves, others, the world and our future. This then constitutes our Type. Furthermore, each one of us is either an introvert or an extrovert in our attitude. This adds another layer of complexity to our typological orientation. Thus typology became an important variable in Jung’s analytical psychology to unpack the mystery of our personality structure, our relationship problems and our symptoms. For example, a thinking type of personal would have difficulty in experiencing and expressing their emotions, feelings and using these to establish a sense of value order to their decisions. An intuitive type of person would have difficulty with sensate function, i.e. attention to details. Our four functions may be presented as follows for a thinking/intuitive type.

Our two attitudes may be represented as follows:

Researchers Myers and Briggs came up with a very similar formulation of personality type and is the basis of the famous Myers Briggs test. Typology added a significant foundation to understanding the human psyche and its problems, especially relationship issues, our cognitive processing styles and our symptoms. Our less evolved functions and attitudes become the backdrop of our medical and psychiatric symptoms.

After Personality types and Typology, Jung got interested in Alchemy. Alchemy is both a philosophy and an ancient practice focused on the attempt to change base metals into gold, investigating the preparation of the "elixir of longevity", and achieving ultimate wisdom. Of course, the Alchemists never succeeded in making gold out of lead, but what fascinated Jung was the mind of the Alchemists. His postulation was that the process of gold making was a projection of the unconscious process of the alchemist onto the gold making process. What was gold making was a symbolic manifestation of Soul Making. The Alchemist was working through the unconscious process of moving from their lower lead nature to their higher gold nature. Thus Alchemy became a sort of an X-ray of the unconscious processes of the Alchemist. By study of the medieval alchemical texts, Jung was able to get an overview of the workings of the unconscious its quest for reaching its higher potential. Suddenly, we now have a system to decode the workings of the unconscious, especially in a relational vessel. The two or more substances combined in this chemical process became the symbols of the
two individuals in a relationship, e.g. the doctor and the patient, the therapist and the patient, two lovers, or friends or any dyad which is involved in a relationship.

Jung studies the alchemical images of an ancient text called Rosarium Philosohorum, in which he analyzes ten images of a relationship between the analyst and the patient and the images graphically and symbolically outline the process of mutual transformation and eventual wholeness and health. This is invaluable resource for therapists to decode the mystery of the therapeutic relationship. This is outlined in the Collected Works of C.G. Jung Volume 16 – the Psychology of Transference. It outlines the early stages of therapy and establishment of the therapy situation, the middle stages of analysis and the final stages of transformation and individuation of the patient (and the analyst). Alchemy has its own language and symbolism which is fascinating and would be the subject of another article. In 1926 Jung published the Alchemical Studies- Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious, in 1944 he published “Psychology and Alchemy,” and in 1946; Psychology of Transference.

Jung had a serious medical problem and a near death experience in 1944, when he had a pulmonary embolism following a deep vein thrombosis in his calf, perhaps a complication of his visit to India in 1937-38. He miraculously survived and he had an intuition that he was sent back to complete his next piece of work on which he worked up to his death for about twenty years. This was Mysterium Coniunctionis, published in 1955, which outlines the process of the union of the opposites in the psyche at a gradually higher threshold of sophistication. This process of aligning the opposing the competing aspects of our nature into a gradual and higher state of union and wholeness he termed the “Individuation Process”, becoming the unique individual we are meant to become in this lifetime.

In his masterwork Mysterium Coniunctionis, Jung summarizes his wisdom on the individuation process and the union of opposites in the psyche. To Jung, our psyche exists on a continuum of Unio Naturalis (in continuum with nature, both our own and the nature around us), Unio Mentalis (the cognitive phenomenon or psychological lens with which we look at ourselves and others, the world and the future), Unio Spiritualis (a manifestation of our spiritual purpose), Unio Corporalis (the soul manifesting in the body) and Unus Mundus (our individual soul connected with the world soul and the primal Spirit; a union of Atman with Brahman). Jung was trying to establish the interconnection between these different manifestations of the soul in nature, mentation, cognition, spirituality, the body and the world.

Jung proposed that in the service of adaptation to life, we form a persona, the mask we present to the world. This persona is a press secretary to our Ego consciousness. The Ego is the center of our consciousness, while the Self is the center of our total personality. The shadow is aspect of our personality that we repress and are generally projected onto our adversaries, or people we do not like. The anima is the unconscious feminine aspects of a man and the animus is the unconscious masculine aspects of a woman. Gradually via complexes, relationships, projections, transference, dreams, active imagination and other products of the unconscious, they become manifest and accessible to consciousness for integration into the personality.
Jungian dream interpretation differs from Freud in significant ways. According to Freud, the function of dream is to preserve sleep; dream has manifest and more significant latent content and dream leads to the gratification of an unfulfilled, infantile wish and dream work disguises the latent content in the manifest content with some secondary elaboration by the day residue. Freudian dream theory postulates the processes of dramatization, condensation, displacement and secondary elaboration to disguise the latent content. Jung defined dreams as spontaneous Self or Soul Portrayal in symbolic form of the actual situation in the unconscious. A dream compensates for the attitude of the Ego consciousness and the dreams have a causal and purposeful/teleological perspective guiding us onto our future potential and Self’s program. In Jungian dream interpretation technique, he proposed four stages: Exposition – setting, place, protagonists, the initial situation; Development – Action – complication of plot, tension development; Climax – Culmination – change in situation, something quite different happens; Lysis – Solution – outcome – the prescription of the Self.

Active imagination is another major contribution of the Jungian approach. Active Imagination is a conscious voluntary dialogue between the ego and the unconscious. Active imagination consciously activates a complex, its related instincts and eventually its archetypal nucleus. Jung used active imagination to meet his sub personalities. He encountered the wise old man and the anima. Philemon, the wise old man figure was the deep archetypal core of his father complex initially projected onto Freud. Active imagination is a method of personifying the unconscious (complex). Its the bridge between the conscious and a selected aspect of the unconscious and in this context it can be seen as an activation of the transcendent function. Since active imagination is performed alone, it bypasses the transference phenomenon which may be prominent complication in the hypnotic method.

In summary, the Jungian theory evolved in the following approximate stages, each of which adds much richness to our therapeutic paradigm and the individuation process.

Jung was very respectful of the Eastern wisdom. During his visit to India in 1937-38, he visited several places in India and Sri Lanka to honor the rich traditions of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. The Jungian approach is like gold mining method; it helps individual from each culture and tradition mine the gold in their tradition. Both sides are enriched. Each culture adds to the completion and understanding of the jigsaw puzzle of the human psyche and its vicissitudes. This helps us in our mission of healing and cross cultural collaboration. Understanding and respecting other cultures is the path to world peace. We as Indians have much to offer to the world in understanding the ancient men that lives in each citizen of the world. Jung has much to offer us in India to harvest the gold of our timeless and ancient culture by understanding our wisdom with contemporary lens.

Appendix

The Collected Works of C. G. Jung is a multi-volume work containing the writings of psychiatrist Carl Jung. Routledge published the first English-language edition of this set
in the United Kingdom, while Princeton University Press published it in the United States as part of its Bollingen Series of books.

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