

**C. G. Jung's Collective Unconscious:  
An Evaluation of an Historically Contingent Scientific Theory**

A thesis presented

by

Colin Garcia-Mata DeYoung

to

The Department of the History of Science  
in partial fulfillment  
of an honors degree in History and Science

Harvard University  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
March 1998

## **Abstract**

Jung's theory of the collective unconscious has never been studied extensively within the context of the history of science. Scholarship on the theory has generally come from two opposing viewpoints, the Jungian and the Freudian. The former has generally treated the theory ahistorically, attempting to demonstrate its current scientific validity, while the latter has written it off as unscientific mysticism. When examined, however, through an historically-minded close reading of Jung's writings and viewed in the larger context of science—especially evolutionary biology and heredity—from 1890-1930, the theory emerges as consistent with the science of its day. Following this investigation, my final chapter addresses the question of why the theory was marginalized in psychiatry and psychology.

### **Keywords:**

Jung, collective unconscious, psychoanalysis,  
Lamarckism, vitalism, organic memory

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank Richard Noll for being my advisor on this project. Not only was he an invaluable source of information, being a virtual walking encyclopedia of nineteenth-century history of science and, more particularly, an expert Jung scholar, he was also truly inspiring. From his class on Jung last Spring to my meetings with him throughout this year, I have experienced a dawning realization of what it really means to study and understand history—not as a set of disconnected and disembodied texts, but as an organic whole. As I explored the life and thought of Carl Jung, he trusted me to figure out what I was doing even when it meant wandering down a dead end or two, waded through several drafts in a hurry as my deadline loomed ominously near, and calmed me quickly in the rare moment of panic. On top of all that, he even fed me well, now and then. A million thanks for all your help, Richard.

I would also like to thank everyone who has cultivated my interest in Jung: My father, who introduced me to Jung some years ago; Jordan Peterson, who through his remarkable teaching inspired my historical interest in Jung as the source for many of his ideas, and who was always willing to discuss Jung over lunch; and Suzi Naiburg, who guided me in my first expedition into Jung scholarship.

Though in general they tried not to pester me, my parents and sisters provided me with occasional moral support, which was greatly appreciated.

And last, but far from least, I would like to thank Valentine Cadieux—for putting up with me during several arduous weeks of writing when I wasn't good for much else, for giving me support and encouragement, for helping out, and . . . well, for everything. Trying to list all the things for which I'd like to thank you would be moot . . .

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction: Evaluating an Historically Contingent Theory</b>	1
<b>Chapter 1. Historiographic Review</b>	12
1.1 The Nature of Jung Scholarship	14
1.2 Scholarship on the Theory of the Collective Unconscious	15
<b>Chapter 2. The Collective Unconscious in Jung's Writings</b>	26
2.1 The Importance of the Years 1916-1919	27
2.2 The Development of Jung's Terminology	28
2.3 Making Sense of Jung's Initial Presentation	30
2.4 The Development of the Theory of the Collective Unconscious	39
<b>Chapter 3. The Collective Unconscious in Its Historical Context</b>	49
3.1 Problems in Jung's Methodology	50
3.1.1 The Question of Alternative Hypotheses	54
3.1.2 Jung in the Context of Nineteenth-Century <i>Wissenschaften</i>	60
3.2 Evolution and Heredity 1890-1930	63
3.2.1 Lamarckism in the Theory of the Collective Unconscious	65
3.2.2 Racialism	70
3.2.3 Degeneration, the Primitive Mind, and the Biogenetic Law	76
3.3 Organic Memory and Vitalism	80
3.4 The Plausibility of Jung's Theory	87
<b>Chapter 4. The Reception of the Collective Unconscious</b>	88
4.1 Jungian and Freudian Responses	89
4.2 Other Responses	93
4.3 A Puzzling Silence: Why was Jung Marginalized?	100
<b>Bibliography</b>	103

## **Introduction: Evaluating an Historically Contingent Theory**

All scientific theories are historically contingent. They depend on the culture in which they are embedded for their particular meaning. That meaning is determined by the scientific practice, knowledge, and belief, both explicit and implicit, of the surrounding culture in that time and place. Non-scientific practices, knowledge, and beliefs also go into the construction of a theory's meaning. If one moves a theory to a new time or place, to another culture, one necessarily changes its meaning.

All theories are contingent in this way, but the historically contingent nature of a scientific theory only becomes problematic when it is not recognized, especially if the theory has been moved from one culture to another—and especially if the practices, knowledge, and beliefs of the original culture are incommensurable with those of the new, that is, if the presuppositions on which those practices, knowledge, and beliefs are based are not the same. If a theory's presuppositions are made explicit, they can readily be compared across cultures and hopefully understood along with the theories that rest on them. Unfortunately, because of the very nature of Western scientific culture, many of the most important presuppositions of any scientific theory usually remain implicit. Once an earlier theory has been accepted, it is often used without acknowledgment to support a current theory; in physics, to use a gross example, one does not need to cite Einstein when referring to a unified space-time continuum. In one sense, this is the great advantage of science—one is not always forced to begin at the beginning but may rely on accepted theory to formulate new theory. At the same time it can make understanding the rationale behind a particular theory, especially one that is historically distant, quite difficult because science is not infallible. Our knowledge does not accumulate in a purely linear manner. Theories change, their underlying presuppositions change, and the past often becomes incommensurable with the present.

Such is the problem underlying current treatment of C. G. Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, a theory developed in the early decades of this century but

accepted today by some and criticized by others as if Jung had presented his argument just yesterday. Thoroughly contradictory evaluations of the theory are given by his supporters and his critics, yet both groups seem able to support their arguments with passages from his writings. What is going on here? Are Jung's writings really that inconsistent (as some critics have claimed)? I will argue that they are not; rather the fault lies in the ahistorical approach used to understand them. Jung's theory has been displaced from its historical context and suffered significant loss of its original meaning, largely because of our failure to recognize Jung's scientific presuppositions. In order to evaluate the theory of the collective unconscious fairly, we desperately need to replace it in its historical context.

\* \* \* \* \*

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) stands as a significant, though often neglected, figure in the history of psychology and psychiatry, especially notable for his role in the rise of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century. Psychoanalysis may be summarily described as a school of psychology dependent on the concept of a dynamic unconscious; born around the turn of the century, Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) psychoanalysis is widely known as the prime example. Jung's name, along with Alfred Adler's (1870-1937), usually follows "Freud" in a triumvirate of the leaders of the main schools of psychoanalysis. Jung is often represented as a disciple of Freud who later broke with the master to found his own school. He is in fact even more important to the rise of psychoanalysis than this would indicate, his support having largely made Freud's psychoanalytic career at the outset.

After studying science and medicine at Basel University in his native Switzerland, Jung surprised his peers and professors by choosing to go into psychiatry. In 1900, at the age of 25, he obtained a post at the well known Burghölzli mental institution, where he

worked until 1909. The Burghölzli was headed by Eugen Bleuler (1857-1939), best known for coining the term “schizophrenia” in 1908. While many accounts date Jung’s international fame to his association with Freud, which began in 1905, he had by that time already achieved some measure of international renown under Bleuler for his pioneering work with the word association test, which, though he did not invent, he refined and utilized extensively.<sup>1</sup> In the word association test the subject is asked to respond to a word spoken by the experimenter with the first word that comes to his or her mind. These responses are noted and usually timed. A second step is often the repetition of the task with the subject asked to recall his or her original responses. These tests were quite successful and led to Jung’s development of his “complex theory,” which constitutes his first original theoretical innovation.

The theory of “feeling-toned complexes” was Jung’s first systematization of the contents of the unconscious. Jung posited that similarly emotionally charged mental contents tended to form aggregates (become “constellated”) unbeknownst to the conscious mind. If strongly enough charged, these complexes could become “autonomous,” taking over control of a person’s behavior from his or her conscious mind, or “ego.” These unconscious patterns in the psyche,<sup>2</sup> Jung found, could be uncovered through the word association test by analyzing the subjects’ responses. Complexes might be identified in a thematic bias in the pattern of responses, or words relating to highly emotionally-charged complexes might lead to longer than normal reaction times in the production of responses.<sup>3</sup> Jung was internationally recognized for these discoveries.

---

<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), the so-called father of experimental psychology had employed the test previously.

<sup>2</sup>The “psyche” being the entirety of the mind or soul.

<sup>3</sup>For Jung’s original formulation of the complex theory see volumes 2 and 3 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, especially “The Psychology of Dementia Praecox,” in volume 3, and “On the Doctrine of the Complexes,” in volume 2, Appendix. (Henceforth *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957-1979), in their English translation, will be referred to in text as *Collected Works* and in citation as CW followed by volume and paragraph number. Where there is no paragraph number, page number will be indicated by “p.”.)

It was Jung's respected position in the wake of these accomplishments that allowed him successfully to champion Freud, a relative outsider to the world of academic psychology, whose radical views in *The Interpretation of Dreams* were not being well received. The relationship (and its eventual break) that ensued between the two men has been by far the most studied portion of Jung's life, a state of affairs that has led many to overestimate Freud's influence on Jung's ideas. Jung's devotion to Freud was due less to the supposedly revelatory effect of Freud's ideas than to the charisma of their personal relationship and Jung's idealized evaluation of Freud as a speaker of previously hidden truths, some of which Jung had been arriving at himself, influenced by many sources, and therefore welcomed enthusiastically. Despite his enthusiasm, however, Jung differed on key postulates of Freud's theory even during his most intensely "Freudian" period. The point to be made here is not that Freud's influence on Jung's life wasn't enormous—it most certainly was. What must be realized is that Freud's influence on Jung's *ideas* is not so great as is usually portrayed. True, Freud greatly influenced Jung's presentation of those ideas even after the latter's break from the psychoanalytic movement inasmuch as Jung continually took pains to distinguish himself from Freud in his writings. But Jung had many more, and more important, scientific sources for his ideas than Freud, and his continuing attention to his former mentor was due largely to the dynamics of their respective positions in the academic, and even the cultural, world. It is those other sources, some of which have never been studied closely, in which I am particularly interested.

The historical details that concern the present work begin shortly after Jung's relationship with Freud had broken up rather inimically. Their prelude is a book of Jung's, *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*,<sup>4</sup> published in 1912, near the end of the friendship of the two men. Though Jung and others have tended to identify this book as

---

<sup>4</sup>Henceforth cited and referred to as *Wandlungen*. The English translation of this work to which I will refer is not the significantly revised version found in CW 5, as *Symbols of Transformation*, but rather the translation of the original made in 1916, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

the major cause of the break because in it Jung proposed an alternative to Freud's cherished sexual libido theory, it would be more accurate to say that Jung's voicing of theoretical differences in this book was merely one indication of the difficulties between the two men, rather than their cause. As John Kerr has elaborated upon with particular insight and detail, the problems between Jung and Freud were complex, and developed over the seven-year course of their relationship.<sup>5</sup> What is most of interest for my purposes, regarding *Wandlungen*, is that it contains the first published references to the themes of Jung's thought, particularly his belief in a "racial" or "phylogenetic" unconscious, that would transform his complex theory of the psyche into his theory of the collective unconscious, the theory that would become the hallmark of his unique school of psychoanalysis, analytical psychology.

After his break with Freud, Jung withdrew from the academic world, resigning in April of 1914 from his posts both as the President of the International Psychoanalytic Association and as *privatdocent* (lecturer) in the medical faculty at Zurich University.<sup>6</sup> By his own account,<sup>7</sup> he went through a time of personal turmoil, lasting approximately from December of 1912 to 1918 and entailing mostly inner disturbances, though there is evidence that his relationship with his wife, Emma Jung, was troubled during this time (not surprisingly, given that it was then that Jung took his former patient, now assistant, Toni Wolff, as his mistress, a role she would occupy in his life for nearly forty years<sup>8</sup>). Jung was inundated by dreams and fantasies, and he emerged from this turbulent period having had a number of visionary experiences that would dramatically affect his thinking for the rest of his life and with the beginnings of a systematic foundation for what would

---

<sup>5</sup>John Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993).

<sup>6</sup>William McGuire (Ed.), *The Freud/Jung Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) 551.

<sup>7</sup>C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), henceforth cited as MDR.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Noll, *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung* (New York: Random House, 1997) 94.

become his vast theoretical edifice.<sup>9</sup> That foundation, the core concept of Jung's psychology, was the theory of the collective unconscious.

The definition of the collective unconscious that follows is a provisional one, unavoidably somewhat simplified; a more comprehensive understanding of the theory will emerge as my argument progresses:

Jung posited the collective unconscious as a level of the psyche that was the same across all human beings. As such, it was not the product of an individual's experiences but was inborn. He tended, when defining it, to contrast it with Freud's theory of the unconscious, which, according to Jung, consisted solely of a "personal unconscious." As Jung told it, Freud believed everything that lay in the unconscious psyche to be the result of the individual's life experience.<sup>10</sup> Jung believed this level of the unconscious to be a part, but not the whole, of the unconscious psyche. His collective unconscious allowed for certain contents to enter consciousness from within, without the individual's having previously been introduced to them in his external environment. Thus, his was a theory of the psyche composed of three levels, conscious, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious, as opposed to Freud's two.<sup>11</sup> It will also be important to keep in mind from the outset that Jung's theory was evolutionary and phylogenetic, in that he claimed the collective unconscious to be inherited biologically and its contents to have been acquired by the species over the course of its evolution. The collective unconscious can be defined as an innate level of the psyche embedded in the shared biology of humankind.

Jung first explicitly introduced this theory in 1916, in an essay titled "The Structure of the Unconscious," widely recognized as his seminal work on the subject. It is here that I begin my focused analysis. Between 1916 and 1919 the theory of the

---

<sup>9</sup>For an account of some of these visionary experiences see my discussion of the autobiographical significance of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious in Chapter 2.

<sup>10</sup>Freud's views on this subject are in actuality somewhat more complex. While Freud did indeed emphasize the nature of unconscious contents as repressed memories, he was also interested in inherited aspects of the psyche, especially during and after his relationship with Jung. Jung emphasizes their differences, for the obvious reason of his personal and theoretical antagonism with Freud at this point.

<sup>11</sup>Freud had not yet developed his "id, ego, superego" model of the psyche.

collective unconscious took on the form it would largely retain for the rest of Jung's life. Hence, this is the most crucial historical period in which to pin down the meaning of the theory. In these years, Jung published four essays on the topic, which I will examine closely along with another manuscript, written in 1916 but only published more than 60 years later in the *Collected Works*. These five pieces of writing contain the genesis and development of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious.

I focus more heavily on these few years and these few articles than on Jung's later work because in order to approach the historical reality of Jung's theory there is a real need to go in depth into the texts themselves. Jung's canon of writing is so large and so diverse that it has been too easy for broad arguments to be made about his theories and supported by quotes taken out of context from writings covering a span of fifty years and twenty volumes. It is not that this method has led always to completely inaccurate analyses of Jung's theories, but it has obscured their development over the course of Jung's life. (While the basic framework of the theory of the collective unconscious did solidify in 1919, Jung's views on certain secondary aspects of his theory did change over time.) To juxtapose a quotation from Jung's work in 1916 with another from twenty or thirty years later without noting the history in between leads to an inaccurate depiction of Jung as an intellectual figure outside the influence of time.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, this ahistorical approach has allowed for the easy introduction of bias into interpretation, as evidenced by the fact that downright contradictory conclusions about Jung and his theories have been drawn and supported by seemingly ample evidence. This interpretive dichotomy may be highlighted by noting that some have claimed Jung's theory of the collective unconscious to be a perfectly viable scientific hypothesis (even today) while others have denounced (or occasionally supported) it as a thoroughly unscientific, mystical or quasi-religious notion. I am convinced that the truth lies somewhere in between. A less biased picture of Jung's theory would ideally take all of the subtleties of Jung's Protean writings into account;

while I can not attempt the completion of such a Herculean labor, I can shed light on a largely ignored aspect of Jung's historical context that will help to make sense of the theory of the collective unconscious.

In order to understand Jung's theory of the collective unconscious as he developed it in his published writings three questions must be addressed:

1. What are the idiosyncrasies of his writing?
2. What is his methodology?
3. What are his sources?

By answering these questions one will gain a clearer understanding of what Jung's theory meant to him and begin to get an idea of what it meant in the culture of his day.

Anyone attempting to read Jung will immediately be forced to deal with the first of these questions. Jung's writing is frequently rather difficult, his style dense and, in his own phrase, "circumambulating." A further difficulty arises in that his language is sometimes unfortunately imprecise. Furthermore, many of Jung's theoretical writings often contain strong but unacknowledged autobiographical references, recognizable only to those intimately familiar with the details of his life, which can render the rationale behind his approach puzzling at times. The theory of the collective unconscious, especially as Jung first presented it, is autobiographical enough in places that, in order to do it justice, one must elaborate somewhat on its place in Jung's personal history. These concerns have been addressed with some thoroughness by other scholars, but will need to be reviewed briefly in relation to the specific texts and theoretical issues in question here.

The question of Jung's methodology has also been discussed at some length elsewhere, but it will be necessary to assess its relation to my topic specifically. The largest source of controversy has been Jung's claim of empirical validity for his theory of the collective unconscious. Broadly speaking, it is undeniable that some of his work was

empirical in the sense that a discipline like history is empirical, drawing conclusions from large surveys of collected observations both current and historical. Jung also claimed objectivity, however, for certain introspective observations and argued for the existence of the collective unconscious as a biologically inherited entity, which would seem to place it in the realm of biology, where one tends to expect a particularly rigorous sort of empiricism. He frequently declared his methods to be scientific, yet often they do not seem to jibe with our understanding of scientific method. I will argue that these discrepancies stem from a combination of personal and cultural factors, and are not merely indicative of a lack of rigor or of inflated claims on Jung's part (which is not to say that Jung's methodology is entirely unproblematic, merely that there is more to the story than has traditionally been recognized).

The question of Jung's sources is the one in which I am most interested, and also the one covering the most hitherto neglected territory. The existing scholarship in this area has been blind to certain key influences on Jung's thought, largely, I surmise, because of the complexity introduced by the distinction between his explicit and his implicit sources. Jung's explicit sources, those historical figures and contemporaries whom he cites extensively or often, have naturally been recognized, and his connections to them have been studied. They will occasionally be worthy of note in my discussion, but they have already been explored fairly thoroughly. What has rarely been investigated are Jung's implicit sources, the ideas embedded in the culture of his time that were so firmly ensconced and/or widely utilized that their origins were rarely noted. With Jung these presuppositions become even more difficult for the modern reader to trace because he was on the cusp of a great shift in scientific approach.

Jung grew up in the late nineteenth century, and, though all of his mature work was done in the twentieth century, he remained strongly tied to the intellectual traditions of the era of his birth. Many of these traditions were dying out in the first decades of the twentieth century, others remained popular throughout these decades, though they are

strangers to us now. Understanding the culture, and particularly the scientific culture, that raised and educated C. G. Jung is the only way one will be able to understand the historically contingent meaning of his theory of the collective unconscious.

Theories of Lamarckian evolution and heredity, racialism, organic memory, and vitalism combine to form the scientific axioms behind Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. Of these, the Lamarckian mode of evolution—i.e. the inheritance of acquired traits—is most important to Jung's theory. Together with racialism, it also remained the most widely accepted of these theories during the first three decades of this century. Vitalism was no longer widely influential in science but retained a few strong adherents to whom Jung sometimes referred. Theories of organic memory were on the wane in their more radical forms, but their influence remained important. Each of these traditions contributed key components of Jung's thought and must be considered one of his sources, even when he does not discuss it explicitly. Interestingly, even where Jung occasionally did refer to these issues explicitly, they have tended to remain unnoticed. The neglect of certain key influences by Jung scholars may, in some cases, be attributable to ignorance of their historical significance, and in others (i.e., Jungians), to the fact that people often fail to see what they do not want to see. It is time that these important currents of Jung's thought were explored, so that both he and his theories may be better understood as existing in a particular historical context.

In some ways, I see this work as complementary to Richard Noll's recent scholarship on Jung<sup>12</sup>; where he focused most heavily on Jung's non-scientific cultural sources, both implicit and explicit, I am focusing on Jung's scientific framework. In this way I hope to offer an alternative perspective to Noll's interpretation of Jung as being more interested in mysticism than science after 1913, and producing, in the collective unconscious, a theory that was a mystical metaphysics merely masquerading as a

---

<sup>12</sup>Richard Noll, *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and Noll, *The Aryan Christ* (New York: Random House, 1997).

scientific hypothesis. Noll argues that Jung's identity as a "psychologist" was no more than a mask and that "this twentieth-century mask was constructed deliberately, and somewhat deceptively, by Jung to make his own magical, polytheist, pagan worldview more palatable to a secularized world conditioned to respect only those ideas that seem to have a scientific air to them."<sup>13</sup> Though Noll does provide support for this interpretation, the story needs to be told from another angle as well. Through an investigation of Jung's often implicit scientific sources, I hope to demonstrate that Jung's theory of the collective unconscious was, if not entirely free from difficulty, still scientifically plausible in its day and that Jung, therefore, may fruitfully be considered part of the scientific milieu. It should also become apparent, however, that Jung's theory is *no longer* scientifically plausible, at least as he framed it, contrary to the assertions of many of his current supporters. The fact that science has changed much since the 1920s has caused many to misinterpret Jung's theories either as scientifically plausible today or as wholly unscientific in Jung's day.

This argument will be better made after a review of the existing historical scholarship on Jung, with particular regard for its treatment of the collective unconscious. This historiographic review comprises the chapter that follows. Having located the present study within a historiographic framework and having argued that it can usefully fill a gap in the existing scholarship on Jung, I will proceed, in Chapter 2, to an exposition of the development of the theory of the collective unconscious in Jung's writings. Chapter 3 will then focus on the significance of the theory in the larger historical context of the scientific culture of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Following my argument that Jung's theory was not scientifically implausible by the standards of its day, the final chapter will examine its reception by the academic community in the 1920s and 30s, which, if my hypothesis is correct, should prove not to be entirely hostile.

---

<sup>13</sup>Noll, *The Aryan Christ* xv.

## Chapter 1. Historiographic Review

Jung remains a somewhat difficult subject for historical study for several reasons. Much of the difficulty in Jung scholarship is due simply to the inaccessibility of many primary documents. A large number of these remain in the custody of Jung's family, which, largely it would seem out of a desire to protect Jung's image, and perhaps even more strongly his wife's, has refused to make them accessible. Nonetheless, important material may be found in several historical archives, one of the most extensive of which is the *C. G. Jung Biographical Archive* kept at the Countway Library of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School. This archive contains nearly two hundred in-depth interviews made in the 1970s with individuals who knew Jung personally and constitutes an excellent source of primary material. Also useful are many of Jung's selected letters, published in two volumes,<sup>1</sup> and his complete correspondence with Freud has also been published.<sup>2</sup>

The *Biographical Archive* and the letters notwithstanding, one must contend with gaps in the primary biographical sources on Jung. The book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ostensibly Jung's autobiography, is one of the least historical autobiographies imaginable; it focuses almost exclusively on Jung's mental life, giving little outward detail, proclaims itself as Jung's "personal myth," and notes, "Whether or not the stories are 'true' is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is *my* fable, *my* truth."<sup>3</sup> Jung's life is viewed, from the vantage point of his very old age, through the lens of analytical psychology. Historical accuracy is often distorted in favor of personal meaning. In fact, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* can not even be called an autobiography without a caveat, for only the first three chapters (on Jung's childhood and student years) and a concluding rumination, "Late Thoughts," were written by Jung

---

<sup>1</sup>Adler, Gerhard (Ed.), *C. G. Jung: Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

<sup>2</sup>McGuire, William (Ed.), *The Freud/Jung Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988)—henceforth cited as F/J.

<sup>3</sup>MDR 3.

himself. The rest were penned by Jung's secretary, Aniela Jaffé, based on her interviews with him. Though Jung reviewed the manuscript, it was later edited and censored, in part by Jaffé herself, but most extensively by several of Jung's children, with the result that Jung's language was "cleaned up" and "toned down" and content was edited with an eye for the preservation of Jung's public respectability. All references to Jung's mistress, Toni Wolff, and even most to his wife, were omitted. Also, Freud's role in Jung's life was overemphasized (as usual) when a number of character sketches of influential contemporaries were edited out, leaving a chapter simply titled, "Sigmund Freud."<sup>4</sup> In short, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* provides but a shaky foundation for biography.

In this work I am focusing less on biography than on intellectual history; though, of course, an understanding of theory must to some extent be predicated on an understanding of the personality of its creator. The main primary source for any investigation of Jung's theory is *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. Research in these twenty volumes—plus several supplementary volumes of seminar transcriptions, lecture notes, and pre-revision versions of older works—presents its own difficulties. The *Collected Works* are not organized chronologically but by subject, and the classification system is inevitably somewhat subjective. The rationale behind an article's inclusion in a given volume is sometimes difficult to discern. The resulting difficulty in establishing chronology in the *Collected Works* is further complicated by Jung's penchant for revision. Jung often revised articles, books, or papers several times, sometimes over the course of as many as forty years. The editors of the *Collected Works* in some instances even saw fit to interpolate edited material in an earlier or later version of the work in question, generally noting their actions, but occasionally leaving the dating rather obscure. In short, historical analysis of the *Collected Works* requires a fair amount of reconstruction.

---

<sup>4</sup>Allan Elms, "The Auntification of C. G. Jung," in Alan Elms, *Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

## 1.1 Historical Scholarship on Jung

Historical scholarship on Jung has not traditionally been neutral. The majority has been written by Jungians and is, to say the least, uncritical. Other work on Jung has been done largely by Freudians and is usually very negative. Most examinations of Jung's character and theory have come from these two opposing camps, and notably few people who have written on Jung extensively have been neither Freudian nor Jungian.

Jungian biographies have tended toward hagiography, sticking closely to the mythologized account of Jung's life presented in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Many of these were written by Jung's friends and disciples, including Barbara Hannah, Marie-Louise von Franz, and Laurens van der Post. Van der Post's *Jung and the Story of Our Time* (1975) is the most blatantly saint-making, with Jung as the intellectual hero fighting a lonely battle to bring truth to the world. Hannah's book, *Jung: His Life and Work* (1976), is the most historically rigorous of the Jungian biographies, von Franz's *C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time* the closest in its mythological character to *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.<sup>5</sup> A more recent example of biography written by a Jungian is Gerhard Wehr's *Jung, a Biography* (1985); it too quotes often from *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* to establish the basic framework of Jung's life. Books that only briefly summarize Jung's biography in the context of theoretical exposition (e.g. Anthony Stevens' *Jung* (1994)) rely even more heavily on *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, to the point where they simply present its material in condensed form.

Freudians (or at least those scholars who prefer Freud to Jung) have traditionally dismissed Jung as a renegade disciple and, beginning with Freud, diagnosed him with various pathologies—usually narcissism but ranging to the extreme of schizophrenia. A particularly biased caricature is Paul Stern's, *Jung: The Haunted Prophet* (1975). Stern ensconced the tradition of pathologizing Jung, begun by Freud and his companions, in

---

<sup>5</sup>This opinion is also held by Richard Noll; see *The Jung Cult* 301.

book form with a derisive and almost entirely undocumented account of Jung's life as one of profound mental disturbance of a dissociative, nearly schizophrenic, nature. Recently, F. J. McLynn has taken a similar stance in *Carl Gustav Jung: A Biography* (1997), referring to Jung's period of inner turmoil from 1913-1918 as a "psychotic interlude"<sup>6</sup> or a disappearance into "the mists of schizophrenia."<sup>7</sup> Peter Homans followed the tradition of pathologizing Jung's character, though in a much more sophisticated manner, with his 1979 book, *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology*, arguing that the idiosyncrasies of Jung's personality and work were due to excessive narcissism.

Accounts by scholars who fall in neither category include Henri Ellenberger's chapter on Jung in *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (1970), Richard Noll's *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* (1994) and *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung* (1997), and John Kerr's *A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein* (1993). Outside the Jungian and Freudian traditions, Ellenberger's has for many years been the classic historical examination of Jung. Its presentation is fairly neutral. By contrast, the extraordinarily hostile response to Noll's work by the Jungian community would lead one to believe that it was not neutral in the slightest. Yet while he does not subscribe to the standard pretty picture painted by Jungians, he does not pathologize Jung either, portraying him instead as quite deliberately hiding a religion-building agenda behind a facade of science. Jung was not crazy but cunning, in Noll's view. Kerr's book offers the most detailed historical account of the relationship between Freud and Jung to date but is limited in that its coverage does not extend far beyond the decade from 1904-1914.

## 1.2 Scholarship on the Theory of the Collective Unconscious

---

<sup>6</sup>F. J. McLynn, *Carl Gustav Jung: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 253.

<sup>7</sup>McLynn 246.

Evaluations of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious have tended to suffer from the same one-sidedness as the biographies. Jungians have almost invariably treated all of Jung's theories ahistorically, ignoring or explaining away difficulties that result from Jung's historical context or the vagaries of his personal beliefs and methodology. Those who are anti-Jung, on the other hand, have often neglected to investigate his theories in any depth at all, while those who have paid attention to them have usually explained them as either a defense against, or a product of, his mental instability.

Nevertheless, three different approaches to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious may be described schematically.<sup>8</sup> The least sophisticated is that of many Jungians—especially those who wish to present Jung's theory as currently scientifically respectable—who describe Jung's generation of the theory as a linear progression to a rational conclusion, a positivistic depiction that makes the theory of the collective unconscious seem almost a logical necessity. Accounts following this scheme explain Jung's invention simply as the best explanation that could be devised for the correspondences he saw between themes and images from mythology and religion on the one hand and the dreams and fantasies of his patients and himself on the other. Jung himself tended to give this sort of account in his more scholarly expositions, though in his more personalized accounts (e.g., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, or his seminars) he seemed happy to discuss subjective influences. A similar dichotomy appears in Jungians; those less interested in scientific respectability are more willing to delve into personal context. At any rate, Jung's occasional endorsement of the positivist account does not mitigate the fact that such a naive approach totally ignores the contingent nature of all theories and the question of historical context, both personal and cultural.

The second approach is to look to Jung's personal context for the roots of his theory. Accounts in this vein tend to regard the theory as the result of Jung's years of

---

<sup>8</sup>My schema here is related to (but distinct from) Peter Homans' schema of approaches to the history of psychological ideas in general. See Peter Homans, *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 5-10.

psychological upheaval, the theory appearing either as inspired and brilliant creativity, if one favors the Jungian account, or as an attempt to heal a splintered psyche or justify narcissistic and mystical concerns, if one favors the Freudian. This psychological approach creates a more nuanced picture but still neglects the whole panoply of socio-cultural influences that went into the making of the theory. Arguing that Jung's theory was a response to his personal experiences is useful and perfectly valid, but without examining his larger historical context it ignores the fact that for any set of data there are bound to be multiple and distinct theories that provide adequate explanation. In a different historical context, in other words, a very similar man might have produced a very different response to such experiences.

Thus, the third line of approach necessary to complete the picture is to ask why Jung formulated the theory of the collective unconscious in precisely the particular way that he did. Why did he claim phylogenetic status for it? Why did he reject the mechanistic determinism that dominated the science of his day? These questions and others like them are the ones I will be investigating in the following chapters, for they have had too little attention paid to them thus far.

Scholarship on the collective unconscious can usefully be classified according to the three approaches just outlined. As mentioned above, Jungians have relied heavily on the first and second approaches only, and when doing psycho-history they have almost invariably used Jung's analytical psychology as their method of analysis—seemingly a solipsistic endeavor. Most non-Jungian biographical accounts adopt the second strategy unless, like some (e.g., McLynn), they fail to discuss the theory in detail at all.

Surprisingly, Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, rich as it is in historical detail on most topics, has very little to say about the genesis of the theory of the collective unconscious, adopting for the most part the simplistic positivist approach. Jung's justification for the theory is covered in a single paragraph, and a later summary describes the collective unconscious only as "known to him from his work with patients

and from literature.”<sup>9</sup> That Ellenberger, a Swiss, adheres to the most orthodox Jungian account of the discovery of the collective unconscious may be due in part to the fact that he actually submitted a “draft of an account of Jung’s theories” to Jung himself for his annotation and approval.<sup>10</sup>

Generally speaking, Ellenberger’s analysis of the creation of the psychological systems of Freud, Adler, and Jung hinges on his notion of the “creative illness,” a period of withdrawal and psychological turmoil from which each of these figures emerged with his new systematic understanding of psychology. In Jung’s case, however, Ellenberger assumes Jung’s idea of the collective unconscious already to have been in place and his “creative illness” to have furnished merely certain theoretical substructures (e.g. the “persona,” the “self,” and the “anima”—constructs that Jung posited as regular components of the collective unconscious or the psyche as a whole).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Ellenberger’s account is least original with regard to Jung, who stressed his period of inner turmoil both in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* and in many of his writings throughout his life. In fact, the period was so important to Jung and Jungians that it became canonized in the myth of Jung as his “Confrontation with the Unconscious.”<sup>12</sup> It is perhaps because Jung focused on these inner events in his own life story that many have been inclined to diagnose him as struggling with psychosis, but anxiously caught up in his mental life though he was, he remained outwardly functional and actively engaged in social life during this time. His withdrawal was from academia and the Freudian circle specifically, not from the outer world as a whole.

While the specific form of Jung’s psychology may have emerged from this “creative illness,” the underlying framework, at least for the collective unconscious, existed before this time; Ellenberger is right in that much, although his account is

---

<sup>9</sup>Ellenberger 728

<sup>10</sup>Ellenberger xiv.

<sup>11</sup>Ellenberger 728.

<sup>12</sup>The title of Chapter 6 in MDR.

somewhat misleading inasmuch as Jung had not previously been thinking in terms of a “collective unconscious” as such. Rather, in 1909 Jung began to take an interest in “phylogenetic” psychological history, and elaborated upon this theme in *Wandlungen* in 1911 and 1912. Other key components of Jung’s thought (such as vitalism) had appeared as early as Jung’s medical school days.<sup>13</sup> Though Jung’s experiences in the years 1913-1918 did indeed affect his unique packaging of phylogenetic, vitalist, and other types of scientific thinking into the theory of the collective unconscious, the theory’s presuppositional framework was already in place and was not Jung’s unique creation. His scientific presuppositions correspond to many of those in the culture at the time, a fact that has rarely been recognized.

Thus, one is again led to the necessity of the third approach, the analysis of Jung’s cultural context and his sources. Here I refer to two groups of influences, humanistic and scientific, but it should be noted that the distinction is a crude one and necessarily obscures the interplay between two domains that were more intimately intertwined then than now. By “humanistic influences” I refer mostly to philosophers and philologists (scholars of languages and cultures, comparative mythology and religion), despite the fact that the German model of science, or *Wissenschaft*, in the nineteenth century included these disciplines. By “scientific influences” I refer to psychiatry and psychology, evolutionary and other biological sciences. This is a modern distinction applied ahistorically for the sake of clear exposition, and it must not be thought that I am claiming the presence of these categories in the past.

That said, I begin by noting that Jung’s humanistic influences have been covered frequently, though with varying depth, by other scholars. His scientific influences have been covered to a certain extent inasmuch as they come from psychiatry and psychology, though even there certain topics (e.g. Germans other than Freud) have largely failed to materialize in the literature. When it comes to the influence of biological science,

---

<sup>13</sup>See Chapter 3 below.

historians have been virtually silent. Only Noll has begun such an analysis with any thoroughness, by discussing Jung's relationship to the biology of Ernst Haeckel.<sup>14</sup> A brief review of the scholarship on both categories of influences follows.

Jung's debt to the German Romantic philosophers and philologists, including Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), F. W. von Schelling (1775-1854), J. J. Bachofen (1815-1887), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), C. G. Carus (1789-1869), and Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906), has received widespread—if superficial—attention. Ellenberger's chapter contains the first, and still one of the best, surveys of these influences.<sup>15</sup> Another fairly comprehensive survey has appeared recently in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*.<sup>16</sup> Noll has discussed many of these influences in depth in his two books. They have been noted so often undoubtedly in part because Ellenberger remains such a heavily relied-upon source, but also because Jung quotes or refers to them often and traces the lineage of his understanding of the unconscious back to them (especially Carus and von Hartmann<sup>17</sup>). It must be noted, however, that he explicitly states that where these philosophers employed concepts of the unconscious metaphysically, he is using them empirically and scientifically.

The question then remains, on what influences did Jung draw in attempting to remake philosophical ideas into scientific theory? These influences are much less superficially visible because most were embodied in ideas deeply embedded in the scientific culture at that time, meaning that there was not necessarily any need to cite sources when espousing them, but they are equally if not more important, in that they

---

<sup>14</sup>See Noll, *The Jung Cult*, Chapter Three, "Freud, Haeckel, and Jung."

<sup>15</sup>That Ellenberger goes into some of Jung's sources so extensively makes it even more strange that he represents Jung's development of the collective unconscious so simplistically. This inconsistency may be due in part to the fact that his section on "Carl Gustav Jung's Sources" (Ellenberger 727) is separate from the exposition of Jung's theory, for which Jung gave his approval.

<sup>16</sup>Claire Douglas, "The Historical Context of Analytical Psychology," in Polly Young-Eisendrath and Terence Dawson (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 17-34.

<sup>17</sup>MDR 169, Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," CW 9i, 1.

provide the specifics of Jung's scientific argument for the collective unconscious. The Romantics may have supplied the terminology and the basic ideational structures, but Jung appropriated and fleshed them out in his own way.

The one set of scientific influences that are not in the least hidden in Jung are the psychiatrists and psychologists of his day. Freud, Adler, Pierre Janet (1859-1947), Theodore Flournoy (1854-1920), William James (1842-1910), and others all get their due from Jung on many occasions. And in response it has occurred to historians to investigate and elaborate upon these influences. Ellenberger even discusses the less well known German ethnologist, Adolf Bastian (1826-1905), who contended, just as Jung did, "that the theory of diffusion did not suffice to explain the occurrence of the same rites, myths, and thoughts all over the world, and that this could be explained only by a theory of the universal structure of the human mind."<sup>18</sup> That such an argument is an integral part of Jung's justification for the collective unconscious leads Ellenberger to conclude that "Jung seems to have been influenced" by the man,<sup>19</sup> although he fails to mention that Jung does not begin to cite Bastian until the mid-1930s.

The hidden scientific influences on Jung's theory are mostly biological and/or evolutionary. Lamarckism, organic memory, vitalism—these highly influential theories have gone largely unrecognized in Jung scholarship. Despite the fact that Jung's Lamarckian understanding of evolution and heredity is perhaps more crucial to his argument for the collective unconscious than any other influence, it has rarely been recognized by historians writing on Jung, with the exception of Noll, who, though he does not refer to Jung's ideas as Lamarckian in *The Jung Cult*, does do so several times in passing in *The Aryan Christ*.<sup>20</sup> As for organic memory and vitalism, Noll seems to be one

---

<sup>18</sup>Ellenberger 730.

<sup>19</sup>Ellenberger 730.

<sup>20</sup>In a recent article posted on the web, Noll goes into more detail on Jung's Lamarckism as well as some of Jung's other scientific influences, though in less depth than I do here (Richard Noll, "The Jung Cult and The Aryan Christ: A Response to Past and Future Critics," [online: web] Cited 11 March 1998, URL: [http://www.jungindex.net/jungmagazine/noll/noll\\_response\\_page1.html](http://www.jungindex.net/jungmagazine/noll/noll_response_page1.html) (posted February 1998)).

of the only scholars who has recognized them even as *possible* influences. In his books, he covers them briefly in a more biographical context, however, without looking extensively at their ramifications in the actual expression of Jung's theory as I do here.<sup>21</sup>

Laura Otis has also connected Jung with the organic memory tradition, in her book *Organic Memory: History and Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (1994).

Perhaps it would be more straightforward to say that scholars have not *acknowledged* Jung's Lamarckism, rather than that they have not recognized it. Some of the Jungians have clearly been aware that Jung's theories are open to criticism from the point of view of modern evolutionary theory because of their Lamarckian nature, but their response has been to deny the importance—usually even the existence—of Lamarckism in Jung's thought.

Jungians who have discussed Jung's connection to Lamarckian thought may be well represented by Andrew Samuels, Anthony Stevens, and J. J. Clarke. Of the three, Andrew Samuels has the least to say on the subject. In a review of the development of the concept of archetype in Jung's thought (the archetypes being the specific forms within the collective unconscious), he writes, "Any consideration of the ways in which primordial imagery is transmitted over time runs foul of the Lamarckian fallacy,"<sup>22</sup> but he goes on to dismiss this problem in a single paragraph. He argues that, because Jung postulates that only the tendency to produce specific types of imagery is inherited, rather than the individual memories or images themselves, the theory is not Lamarckian. Such an argument ignores the vital question of how those tendencies came to be part of the biological inheritance of the organism in the first place. Jung certainly did not ignore this question, and his answer to it was, as we shall see, distinctly Lamarckian.

---

<sup>21</sup>"Organic memory" is covered in a single paragraph in *The Aryan Christ* (p. 46) and "vitalism" is discussed in *The Jung Cult* (pp. 142-3).

<sup>22</sup>Andrew Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) 25.

Anthony Stevens, like Samuels and so many other contemporary Jungians, attempts to sell his reader on the current scientific validity of Jung's theory: "In fact the collective unconscious is a respectable scientific hypothesis and one does not have to adopt a Lamarckian view of biology to entertain it."<sup>23</sup> This statement is somewhat question-begging from an historical point of view; one is not interested so much in whether the collective unconscious can somehow be framed as "respectable scientific hypothesis" *today* without Lamarckian biology as in whether Jung himself framed it without Lamarckian biology. Later Stevens makes it clear that he believes Jung did just that:

Jung conceived the programme for human life to be encoded in the collective unconscious as a series of archetypal determinants which are actualized in response to inner and outer events in the course of the life cycle. There is nothing Lamarckian or unbiological in this conception.<sup>24</sup>

In attempting to demonstrate that Jung's thinking was not Lamarckian, however, Stevens makes the same mistake that Samuels does of assuming that as long as Jung is only talking about inherited tendencies and not ideas, there can be no question of Lamarckian inheritance. "Precisely in order to acquit himself of the charge of Lamarckism Jung eventually made a clear distinction between what he termed the *archetype-as-such* and the archetypal images, ideas, and behaviours that the archetype-as-such gives rise to." 39 Unfortunately for Stevens, Jung never claimed the desire to "acquit himself of the charge of Lamarckism" as his motive in making this distinction; that is pure assumption on Stevens' part. While this particular distinction of Jung's is worth noting, it does not address the real issue of how the "archetype-as-such" is formed and inherited.

J. J. Clarke is the only Jungian I have read who recognizes that the fact that Jung was talking about inherited forms rather than specific contents doesn't really solve the

---

<sup>23</sup>Anthony Stevens, *Jung* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 39.

<sup>24</sup>Stevens, *Jung* 39.

problem.<sup>25</sup> Of the three Jungians here discussed, his is the most sophisticated examination of Jung's views on evolution, but nevertheless he hedges on offering any real conclusion. He begins by noting that Jung claimed the archetypes to be inherited, and then introduces the issue of Lamarckism by writing, "The question of evolution, though, raises a thorny problem, namely: by what mechanism are the archetypes inherited. The issue here is the old one of Lamarckism versus Darwinism."<sup>26</sup>

The strange thing about the discussion that follows is that, while Clarke's goal seems to be to question the necessity of viewing Jung as a Lamarckian ("Must Jung adopt a form of supposedly long-discredited Lamarckism to make sense of his theory of inherited archetypes?"<sup>27</sup>), he goes on to give what seems to be convincing evidence that Jung did indeed hold Lamarckian views. He notes, for example, the "distinctly Lamarckian flavor"<sup>28</sup> of Jung's arguments that archetypes "can only be explained by assuming them to be deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity" and that they are "recurrent impressions made by subjective reactions."<sup>29</sup>

Despite his recognition of Jung's "distinctly Lamarckian flavour," Clarke concludes that "[i]n the absence of any clear statement from Jung on this matter it is not possible to come to any definitive conclusion."<sup>30</sup> He makes this argument more elaborately as well, writing, "While it is true that Jung was never well disposed toward Darwinism, and that both at Basel and at the Burghölzli he worked in a prevalingly Lamarckian culture, he never explicitly aligned himself with this theory."<sup>31</sup>

Clarke is not the first person to argue against acknowledging Jung's reliance on Lamarckism on the grounds that he never cited Lamarck. The flaw in this line of

---

<sup>25</sup>J. J. Clarke, *In Search of Jung* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 124.

<sup>26</sup>Clarke 122. Lamarckism versus "neo-Darwinism" would be more appropriate phrasing because Darwin himself adopted some of Lamarck's now-discredited theories of evolution (Clarke 122). The theory usually meant today by "Darwinism" is specifically natural selection operating on random variation.

<sup>27</sup>Clarke 122.

<sup>28</sup>Clarke 125.

<sup>29</sup>Jung, "On the Psychology of the Unconscious," CW 7, 109, quoted in Clarke 124.

<sup>30</sup>Clarke 124.

<sup>31</sup>Clarke 122.

reasoning, however, lies in precisely the ubiquity of Lamarckian thinking in the decades around the turn of the century that Clarke himself acknowledges.<sup>32</sup> Lamarckism was so ingrained in the thinking of Jung's surrounding culture that he would have had good reason to take it for granted. It is typical of the ahistorical and acontextual approach of Jung scholars, especially Jungians, that they only admit of influences that Jung cites in his published writings, as if the culture around him did not exist except inasmuch as he chose to take note of it. Furthermore, in the Lamarckian-Darwinian debate, it makes little sense to attempt a demonstration of the congruence of Jung's theory with Darwinian natural selection because the only time he ever mentioned it was to voice his opposition to the idea in 1897.<sup>33</sup> Beyond that he says as little about Darwin as he does about Lamarck; the Jungians' own argument, therefore, works against them. Though Jung does not specifically trace his viewpoint to Lamarck, by no means does he trace it to Darwin either.

Thus, the question remains: How is one to come to any conclusion about Jung's more implicit influences? What must be done, and what has not been done before, is to combine a study of the scientific culture surrounding Jung with a careful close reading of Jung's theoretical writings. The following chapter of this work begins this close reading, tracking the development of the theory of the collective unconscious, and the third chapter attempts to tie Jung's theory in to the relevant science of the day.

What is most important for scholars interested in evaluating Jung's theory, and what has long been ignored in favor either of debunking (or simply insulting) Jung or of vindicating him to a modern audience, is the question of whether Jung's theory of the collective unconscious was plausible in the context of the scientific climate of the first three decades of this century. Granted there came a time when adherence to ideas like Lamarckism and vitalism became undeniably anachronistic, but this did not become

---

<sup>32</sup>For further discussion of Lamarckism see Chapter 3 below.

<sup>33</sup>Jung, "Some Thoughts on Psychology" 31, cited in Noll, *The Jung Cult* 347.

particularly definitive until, perhaps, the mid-1930s, by which time Jung was already in his late fifties. The theory of the collective unconscious needs to be understood within the context of the history of science, and this can only be accomplished by the revelation of its historically contingent underpinnings.

## Chapter 2. The Collective Unconscious in Jung's Writings

In this chapter and the next, I will utilize the three pronged attack outlined in my introduction to analyze the genesis and development of the theory of the collective unconscious in Jung's writings. By answering the three questions—What are the idiosyncrasies of Jung's writing?; What is his methodology?; and What are his sources, especially for his scientific presuppositions?—we will gain a clearer understanding of what Jung's theory meant to him and what it meant in the context of the scientific culture of his day.

Some overlap exists between these three questions. Because I am particularly interested in Jung's *implicit* sources, the topic raised by the third question shades somewhat into the question of methodology; one's presuppositions, after all, help to create one's methodology. These last two questions will be treated together in the Chapter 3. For now, it will be useful to focus mainly on the first question while tracing the development of Jung's theory, so that we may stand on relatively clear ground while examining Jung's scientific context. Some overlap is inevitable, however, between the question of Jung's presentation and that of his methodology, so this chapter also covers the second question somewhat. While it is true that general issues regarding the nature of Jung's idiosyncratic presentation, especially the influence of personal events on the development of his theory, have been covered before, specific texts have seldom been subjected to close reading.<sup>1</sup> I will carefully examine the papers from 1916-1919 in which Jung developed the theory of the collective unconscious.

---

<sup>1</sup>Noll, who did some close reading of the 1916 essays in *The Jung Cult* (Chapter 11), was more interested in content that he felt revealed Jung's religion-building agenda than in the scientific qualities of the arguments being made.

## 2.1 The Importance of the Years 1916-1919

Jung first began to refer to an inherited component of the unconscious in 1909 when he was still leading Freud's psychoanalytic movement.<sup>2</sup> At this time and until 1916, he referred to this inheritance as the "phylogenetic" aspect of the unconscious. This concept of a phylogenetic unconscious was the precursor to what would become the "collective unconscious" when Jung developed his own school of psychology after his break with Freud. Before 1916, however, Jung had made no attempt to systematize this concept and create a unified theory. In 1916 Jung published an article titled "The Structure of the Unconscious,"<sup>3</sup> the goal of which seems to have been the systematic presentation of his own unique model of the psyche composed of both individual, or personal, and collective, or impersonal, components.<sup>4</sup> As a result both of the idiosyncrasies of Jung's presentation and of the fact that his thought was still in development, the article does not, in fact, come across as particularly systematic (he later referred to it as an "interim report" . . . "of whose inadequacy I was painfully aware"<sup>5</sup>), and a paper of the following year presents the theory in a manner more congruent with Jung's standard format. In the two years following this second publication, Jung published two more articles that developed this model. The last of these, titled, "Instinct and the Unconscious," introduces the term "archetype" to designate certain distinct contents of the collective unconscious. Archetypes are "inborn forms . . . of perception

---

<sup>2</sup>He writes to Freud of a "phylogenetic basis of the theory of neurosis" in a letter of November 8, 1909 (F/J 256). And also: "What we now find in the individual psyche—in compressed, stunted, or one-sidedly differentiated form—may be seen spread out in all its fullness in times past" (letter of November 30, 1909, F/J 268.)

<sup>3</sup>Originally published as a French translation of a German lecture (given in the same year) in Flournoy's journal *Archives de Psychologie* (CW 7, p. 269).

<sup>4</sup>In Jung's preface to the second edition (1935) of his major (book-length) 1928 revision of "The Structure of the Unconscious," *The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious*, Jung makes this development clear:

In 1912 [in *Wandlungen*], I illustrated some of the main points of the process in an individual case and at the same time I indicated the historical and ethnological parallels to these seemingly universal psychic events. In the above-mentioned essay, ["The Structure of the Unconscious"], I attempted for the first time to give a comprehensive account of the whole process. (CW 7, p. 123.)

<sup>5</sup>CW 7, p. 123.

and apprehension” that guide “all psychic processes.”<sup>6</sup> The concept of the archetype appears to have served as a final piece of the conceptual puzzle Jung was assembling, for after 1919 his explications of his theory of the collective unconscious maintain the essential features evident at that time.

The development of the theory of the collective unconscious from 1916-1919 can be traced through five papers written by Jung in those years specifically addressing the topic. These are “The Structure of the Unconscious” (1916), “Adaptation, Individuation, Collectivity” (1916),<sup>7</sup> “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” (1917), “The Role of the Unconscious” (1918), and “Instinct and the Unconscious” (1919).<sup>8</sup> It is typical of the difficulty inherent in studying Jung through his *Collected Works*, supposedly organized by subject matter, that four of these five appear in four separate volumes of the *Collected Works*—none of which, ironically, is the volume titled *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*—and the fifth, “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes,” does not appear at all in its original form, having been revised significantly by Jung on two separate occasions over the course of thirty years, with only the most recent version included. Fortunately, an English translation of the original version is available, published in a collection of Jung’s papers in 1917.

## 2.2 The Development of Jung’s Terminology

The language Jung used in the explication of his theory of the collective unconscious changed over time, and in order to follow Jung’s theoretical development it will be useful to review the course of this transformation. As noted above, Jung began to refer to a “phylogenetic” unconscious in 1909. This was the language he maintained in *Wandlungen* (1912), his first major work. Also in 1912, in an article titled “New Paths in

---

<sup>6</sup>CW 8, 270.

<sup>7</sup>This paper is a shorter manuscript related to “The Structure of the Unconscious” that will not become relevant until Chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup>These papers are published in CW 7, CW 18, *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology*, ed. Constance Long (New York: Moffat Yard and Co., 1917, 2nd edition), CW 10, and CW 8, respectively.

Psychology,” he refers to “‘race memories,’ extending far beyond the limits of the individual.”<sup>9</sup> Evidently, when Jung set out to elaborate the principles of his own psychology in 1916, he had been thinking about the underlying ideas for years.

Now was the time, however, having broken from the psychoanalytic school, for him to present them systematically as his own. The desire to stake out his own territory, combined with the personal upheaval he had undergone during the past several years, seems the probable cause for the shift in terminology. In the paper that ensued, “The Structure of the Unconscious,” Jung did not actually employ the specific term “collective unconscious,” though in his concluding summary he did refer to a subdivision of the unconscious that is “collective.”<sup>10</sup> Instead he used two related terms, “impersonal unconscious” and “collective psyche.” The former means precisely what the “collective unconscious” does beginning the following year. The latter, however, has a meaning which is interestingly distinct from that of “collective unconscious” in that it contains both a conscious and an unconscious component. The fact that Jung’s theory entailed a collective conscious as well as a collective unconscious is seldom noted, but it has important ramifications in terms of what it reveals about Jung’s scientific presuppositions.

In “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” (1917), one finds the first appearance of the phrase “collective unconscious” (though the heading for the section in which this occurs, “The Personal and the Impersonal Unconscious,” maintains the older terminology). In this essay Jung refers with nearly equal frequency to the “collective unconscious” and the “absolute unconscious,” also occasionally to the “super-personal unconscious”—all synonymous. By the following year the terminology has settled

---

<sup>9</sup>CW 7, 434.

<sup>10</sup>Confusingly, in the version of this paper appearing in the *Collected Works*, the phrase “collective unconscious” appears in an addendum that Jung only added years later in preparation for the major revision published in 1928 as “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious.” (CW 7).

somewhat, and in “The Role of the Unconscious” (1918) and “Instinct and the Unconscious” (1919), Jung refers almost exclusively to the “collective unconscious.”

A similar progression takes place in Jung’s terminology for the concept that became the “archetypes.” From 1909 Jung refers to them as “primordial images.” In “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” (1917) he renames them “dominants of the collective unconscious” but does not settle on this term; his article “The Role of the Unconscious” from the following year, still uses exclusively the term “primordial images.” Then in 1919 they are reborn as the “archetypes.” It will be helpful to keep in mind these various terms related to the collective unconscious and the archetypes, as most of them will appear at one time or another in the following discussion.

### **2.3 Making Sense of Jung’s Initial Presentation**

The major stylistic difficulties one will encounter reading Jung, as mentioned in my introduction, may be summarized as follows: His exposition has a tendency to be meandering or oblique, and his language, even around key terms, is sometimes imprecise. On the subject of the collective unconscious the most notable ambiguity in Jung’s language results from his often referring to the archetypes (or to the concept that will ultimately become the “archetypes”) as “primordial images,” or even just “images,” despite his adamance that specific “images” or “ideas” can not be inherited. (Only the tendency or urge to form certain types of images and ideas can be inherited.) Conversely, in somewhat later writings Jung frequently uses the term “archetype” even when he is not referring to what he would technically designate an archetype but rather to the specific manifestation of an archetype, the “archetypal image.” These vagaries have frequently led critics to assume that Jung was positing the inheritance of specific mental contents. That this interpretation is a misunderstanding resulting from loose language and that Jung

explicitly and repeatedly, from the very introduction of the theory, denied that this was his claim, has been pointed out with almost equal frequency.<sup>11</sup>

The second main concern is that many of Jung's theoretical writings are often significantly autobiographical, even when their personal relevance is not explicitly noted. This was true throughout his life, but is especially relevant to some of the texts in question here, which often seem to be an attempt as much to make sense of personal experience as to elucidate a theory. Keeping these idiosyncrasies in mind, it should be possible to follow the thread of Jung's theoretical development from 1916 to 1919 without getting lost.

Making sense of Jung's presentation is most difficult with regard to the 1916 article, "The Structure of the Unconscious," which is somewhat muddled and really quite difficult. It is also arguably the most intensely autobiographical of any of Jung's theoretical papers. While Jung clearly began the systematization of his unique theory of the psyche here, it is equally clear that the system was not yet worked out in its entirety. However, "The Structure of the Unconscious" is usually designated in the literature as Jung's seminal work on the collective unconscious, and furthermore it contains important clues to the presuppositions involved in Jung's thought. Because this article marks such a crucial point in Jung's thought I will review it in some detail.

As the article originally appeared, it is divided into five sections, plus a summary in outline form at the end. Because it was presented first as a lecture, it is plausible that Jung only added the summary when he came to publish it, perhaps deeming it necessary to give some clarification to what was, in a sense, a work in progress. This summary contains Jung's only explicit mention in the article of the distinction between the conscious and unconscious components of the collective psyche. Because, in the body of the article, Jung shifts back and forth in his reference to these two components without

---

<sup>11</sup>e.g. Steven F. Walker, *Jung and the Jungians on Myth: An Introduction* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995) 12 and Ellenberger 706.

any clear demarcation (perhaps indicating that he had not yet made the distinction sharply in his own mind) the argument occasionally becomes difficult to follow. We may summarize the argument broadly as follows. This is my interpretation (following Jung's sections), but the language sometimes paraphrases Jung's:

**1. "The Distinction between the Personal and the Impersonal Unconscious."**

A new model of the psyche must be posited to account for unconscious material that cannot be contained in the Freudian model. The material in question is impersonal, in that it is not derived from the life of the individual.

**2. "Phenomena Resulting from the Assimilation of the Unconscious"**

This impersonal material becomes apparent during the course of analysis if one continues to explore the unconscious after all personal contents (i.e. repressed memories and feelings) have been assimilated. It can be recognized when its attempted assimilation leads the patient to develop a greatly inflated sense of self, either positively or negatively. The impersonal level of the psyche is created by the similarities of mental functioning endowed in all people by the brain's universally inherited capacities (although this "universality" is subject to racial variation). Because the capacities in question are universal they can not rightly be said to belong to the ego of a single individual, and thus lead to damage of the individual personality if their assimilation is attempted. "Hence it is imperative to make a clear distinction between the personal unconscious and the contents of the collective psyche."<sup>12</sup> The latter include such examples as "archaic symbolisms" and "basic instincts and basic forms of thinking and feeling."<sup>13</sup> Also, the human capacity for imitation is responsible for much that is collective in the psyche.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>CW 7, 462.

<sup>13</sup>CW 7, 462.

<sup>14</sup>Here one sees one of Jung's unacknowledged shifts between what is "unconscious" and collective (inheritance) and what is "conscious" and collective (imitation).

### 3. “The Persona as a Segment of the Collective Psyche”

What appears personal to the individual often contains much that is in truth impersonal. Those contents of the collective psyche that the individual (wrongly) thinks of as “belonging” to himself can be called the “persona” (which means “mask”).<sup>15</sup> The persona is composed of both social roles and values and certain universal mental functions with which the individual identifies.<sup>16</sup> Dissolving the persona through analysis, which is accomplished by making the patient aware of its collective nature—i.e. removing the illusion that it is his or her unique possession—leads to feelings of being lost, not knowing who one is, and also to the production of fantasy, which is “the specific activity of the collective psyche.”<sup>17</sup>

### 4. “Attempts to Free the Individuality from the Collective Psyche”

There are two inappropriate methods for dealing with the state of immersion in the collective psyche resulting from the dissolution of the persona. One is the attempt to deny the impersonal, collective nature of the original persona and retain it as an individual possession. The other is to remain within the collective psyche, claiming *it* as an individual possession. The former leads to a cessation of personal development, the latter to a mild megalomania, in which one believes that one has found the ultimate truth and may try to set oneself up as a prophet.

### 5. “Fundamental Principles in the Treatment of Collective Identity”

The appropriate method is the recognition of the products of the collective psyche as impersonal—universal factors in the human psyche. Once this distance has been achieved, the material appearing in dreams, fantasies, visions, and imaginings may be treated

---

<sup>15</sup>This is Jung’s first published mention of the “persona.”

<sup>16</sup>Again, Jung does not separate the social and the internal explicitly.

<sup>17</sup>CW 7, 468.

as symbolism and interpreted to gain an understanding of the “natural urge of life.”<sup>18</sup> This interpretation should be made hermeneutically, i.e. by “amplifying,” or enlarging, the meaning of the symbol, rather than reductively, after Freud. The information thus gained about the natural tendencies welling up from within one’s psyche can then be used to construct a provisional “life line” that can direct individual development and action.

The biological argument for the existence of the impersonal unconscious and the collective psyche that appears in section two marks this as a theory that must be considered in a scientific context. (For clarity’s sake, I will continue to refer to this argument as the “biological argument.”) Furthermore, Jung continued to use this argument to justify the theory of the collective unconscious throughout his life. It will therefore be useful to review the argument that Jung presents leading up to that point.

In section one, Jung introduces the term “impersonal” for the first time through an example. (Using an example as an integral part of an argument is a common strategy for Jung, which we will see more than once.) He describes an unintelligent and uneducated schizophrenic patient (not his own), who claimed “that the world was his picture-book, the leaves of which he was turning over as he looked around him.”<sup>19</sup> Jung claims that conceptually this idea is “exactly the same as Schopenhauer’s ‘world as will and idea,’ but expressed in primitive picture language.” Whether or not one finds this analogy compelling (“The Book of Nature” is a common metaphor with a long history that was a favorite of the German Romantics), what is important is that Jung considers the philosopher’s idea and the mental patient’s to be equivalent in meaning. Having thus set the stage, Jung proclaims the key distinction between Schopenhauer and the schizophrenic: the former formulated his expression deliberately, while the latter stumbled upon it accidentally. Neither, however, can be said to be uniquely responsible

---

<sup>18</sup>CW 7, 488.

<sup>19</sup>CW 7, 447.

for the creation of the underlying idea. The passage contains enough that is essential to understanding Jung's thought that it is worth presenting:

It would be quite wrong to suppose that the patient's vision had a personal character and value, for that would be to endow the patient with the dignity of a philosopher. But, as I have indicated, he alone is a philosopher who can transmute a vision born of nature into an abstract idea, thereby translating it into a universally valid language. Schopenhauer's philosophical conception represents a personal value, but the vision of the patient is an impersonal value, a merely natural growth, the proprietary right to which can be acquired only by him who abstracts it into an idea and expresses it in universal terms.<sup>20</sup>

In Jung's methodology a "vision," whether the hallucination of a madman or the fantasy of someone relatively sane, is seen as an objective phenomenon rather than a subjective one. The schizophrenic's imagining of a supposedly symbolic image, like the picture-book of the world, remains in the domain of "nature," the domain of objective phenomena. The subjective, personal component only arises when the symbol is interpreted through language that can be understood abstractly. The distinction between language as conscious and images and emotions as unconscious was crucial for Jung throughout his life. He expresses it explicitly in this passage from a 1910 letter to Freud about a lecture he had given on "Symbolism":

I explained there that "logical" thinking is thinking *in words*, which like discourse is directed outwards. "Analogical" or fantasy thinking is emotionally toned, pictorial and wordless, not discourse but an inner-directed rumination on materials belonging to the past. Logical thinking is "verbal thinking." Analogical thinking is archaic, unconscious, not put into words and hardly formulable in words.<sup>21</sup>

That Jung chooses to think of the unconscious material that emerges in images and emotions as objective is an important peculiarity of his methodology, which will be

---

<sup>20</sup>CW 7, 448.

<sup>21</sup>F/J 298, quoted in Kerr 272.

discussed below in relation both to biographical events and, in Chapter 3, to Jung's place in the history of psychology.

For now, what should be noted in the passage on Schopenhauer is that Jung has introduced the idea of "impersonal" psychic content. He goes on in the paragraph to argue, "It is a primordial idea that grows up quite as naturally in the philosopher [as in the schizophrenic] and is simply a part of the common property of mankind, in which, in principle, everyone has a share."<sup>22</sup> The original English translation (1917) uses Jung's more traditional expression "primordial image."<sup>23</sup> Thus, Jung's new argument for the impersonal unconscious is linked to his older formulation of the phylogenetic unconscious containing primordial images. In fact, Jung continued to use the concept of the "primordial idea" occasionally even after he had coined the term "archetype" in 1919.

Having argued for the need to distinguish between a personal and impersonal unconscious, in section two Jung proceeds to his first argument for the biological basis of the collective psyche. The route he traverses to get there, however, proves puzzling without the light of biographical insight. Ostensibly, Jung is continuing his strategy of approaching the impersonal unconscious through a narrative description of analysis. He claims that, if analysis is continued after the assimilation of the personal unconscious, material from the impersonal unconscious begins to appear, the effect of which on the patient is usually the development of a feeling of "godlikeness."

Unless one is aware of the events taking place in Jung's private life in the years around this time, the term "godlikeness," is likely to seem a rather peculiar choice. When one learns, however, that three years earlier, at the time when he was involved in the most intense phase of his "confrontation with the unconscious," Jung had undergone a visionary experience in which he became the ancient Mithraic, lion-headed god, Aion, took on the pose of the crucifixion, and was told by the figure of Salomé that he was

---

<sup>22</sup>CW 7, 4488

<sup>23</sup>"The Conception of the Unconscious," in Jung, *Collected Papers* 448. This version proved most helpful in determining what Jung had altered in his later revisions.

Christ, his vocabulary begins to make more sense.<sup>24</sup> Certainly Jung's experience of godlikeness was far less figurative in nature than that of the patients he describes, who suffered either from an inflated sense of self-importance, or conversely from a feeling of total insignificance.<sup>25</sup> Jung believed these feelings to result from contact with a psychic realm far greater than the individual, like the realm of gods and spirits he had experienced. The experience of this realm was a defining one for Jung. Out of his immersion in his own fantastical imagination he formulated many of the ideas that are expressed in "The Structure of the Unconscious." Jung identifies the images that he encountered in his visions as stemming from an impersonal source because he did not willfully direct his visions and because he claims he could not identify the content of these visions as stemming from any actual events in his personal history. The historian must note, however, that he had been studying mythology and religion for years at that point; the latter claim, therefore, becomes somewhat problematic.

A further factor in Jung's decision to take the view that these visions did not truly belong to him personally was anxiety over his own sanity. Jung himself claimed that he sometimes feared for his sanity during the period of his inner turmoil. He had lost his outer support systems professionally, his relationship with his wife was strained at best, and he was inundated with visions and fantasies, the like of which were all too familiar to him from his schizophrenic patients at the Burghölzli. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he writes, "I was afraid of losing command of myself and becoming a prey to the fantasies—and as a psychiatrist I knew what that meant."<sup>26</sup> At one point he even felt that if he did could not understand a certain dream that he had just experienced, he would have to kill himself with the revolver in his night table.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>Jung, *Analytical Psychology*, p. 96.

<sup>25</sup>CW 7, 451.

<sup>26</sup>MDR 178.

<sup>27</sup>MDR 180.

In this fairly traumatic context it is easy to read in Jung's methodological approach to the collective unconscious a defense against insanity. What saved him from going crazy, according to him, was his ability to view these experiences objectively as if they were appearing in one of his patients. Faced with an objective phenomena emerging from a level of the psyche that was common to all, he did not have to worry that they signaled madness in him individually. He could consider himself to have opened a door into hitherto unexplored territory, without having to take personal responsibility for his visions.

In "The Structure of the Unconscious" one can find implicitly a description and an exoneration of Jung's personal condition. In his discussion of "godlikeness," Jung writes, "As the term indicates, the abnormality of the patient's condition consists in his attributing to himself qualities or values which obviously do not belong to him, for to be "godlike" is to be like a spirit superior to the spirit of man."<sup>28</sup> Note that the abnormality does not lie in the experience of these "qualities or values" per se. Thus, Jung immediately begins to exonerate himself from mental illness; by reasoning that the "impersonal" fantasy of becoming a god does not mean that he is necessarily godlike, he saves himself from abnormality.

Interestingly, the other concept appearing for the first time in this essay, "persona" also seems to be related to Jung's attempt to understand his own psychological situation rationally. In the third section, "The Persona as a Segment of the Collective Psyche," Jung writes, "One result of the dissolution of the persona is the release of fantasy, which is apparently nothing less than the specific activity of the collective psyche."<sup>29</sup> Jung's persona, the mask he wore for his society, had incorporated his role as an academic psychologist and a member (and president) of the psychoanalytic movement. By breaking from Freud and resigning from his academic position, Jung suddenly lost his role in

---

<sup>28</sup>CW 7, 454.

<sup>29</sup>CW 7, 468.

society at large. His persona dissolved, and the result, as we have seen, was the release of his fantasies. Again, it appears that Jung's theory is colored by autobiography.

Jung claims, of course, that his patients have experienced similar phenomena, but one can not ignore how strongly his conception of the persona and the encounter with the collective unconscious are tied to the events of his own life. Nor, however, should one ignore the fact that the new aspects of his theory are consistent with his earlier thinking. His conclusion that fantasy is "the specific activity of the collective psyche," for example, is consistent with his understanding, from as early as 1910, that fantasy, wordless imagining, is archaic and unconscious.

Because Jung was obsessed with his visionary experiences of the unconscious, and because this obsession strongly influenced his writing, it has been argued that he was inventing new terminology and new concepts just for the sake of making sense of his experience. I would add to this plausible argument that he also seems to have been trying to generalize from his own experience, in combination with his clinical experience, to create a systematic theory that would explain both. Yet because the theory he created for this purpose was argued on the basis of heredity and evolutionary biology, if one wishes to understand it historically, one can not remain satisfied with this explanation.

## **2.4 The Development of the Theory of the Collective Unconscious**

With an understanding of the manner in which Jung arrives at the theory of the collective unconscious in "The Structure of the Unconscious" and of the personal events that played such an imposing role in Jung's theoretical development, we may now proceed to the initial presentation of the biological argument. Having introduced the topic by way of its appearance in himself (implicitly) and his practice (explicitly), and having argued for the need to posit an impersonal unconscious, Jung set down his first argument for the biological nature of the collective unconscious (in this case the "impersonal unconscious" and the "collective psyche"):

[E]very man is born with a brain that is highly differentiated. This makes him capable of a wide range of mental functioning which is neither developed ontogenetically nor acquired. But, inasmuch as human brains are uniformly differentiated, the mental functioning thereby made possible is collective and universal. This explains, for example, the interesting fact that the unconscious processes of the most widely separated peoples and races show a quite remarkable correspondence, which displays itself, among other things, in the extraordinary but well authenticated analogies between the forms and motifs of autochthonous myths.<sup>30</sup>

What is at stake here? An examination of the first three sentences will reveal little that is particularly controversial, either in Jung's time or our own. (The distinction between ontogenesis and acquisition is not entirely clear; I take both to refer to mental functioning that is learned or developed over the course of the individual life.) That the brain inherits certain inherent capacities, such as those for emotion or vision, has long been virtually unarguable (except, perhaps, by the most extreme behaviorists). The real question is *what* those capacities may be. It is here where Jung stakes his particular claim.

Jung's theory of the collective unconscious states that the spontaneous appearance of similar patterns in mythology throughout the world is a result of the brain's universally inherent capacities, specifically as they emerge in unconscious processes. Later in section two, the full import of Jung's argument emerges in his claim that the collective psyche is responsible not only for similarities in comparative mythology, but also for the reappearance and the symbolic power of mythological imagery in contemporary individuals, in dreams and fantasies. These two postulates, that biologically based heredity is responsible for the universality of certain themes in mythology, and that the same inheritance is responsible for the spontaneous reappearance of these themes in individual psyches up through the present day, are the real heart of Jung's biological argument for the collective unconscious.

---

<sup>30</sup>CW 7, 455.

One thing that Jung does not make clear in this first essay on the subject is how these mythological tendencies fit into the course of evolution. How were they incorporated into the brain structure? In “The Structure of the Unconscious,” one is forced to take Jung on faith that the impersonal unconscious is phylogenetically ancient because he makes no argument to explain why or how it would be. Instead he uses this postulate as the starting point to describe the collective nature of the psyche. An evolutionary justification for the theory would have to wait for the following year.

Though “The Structure of the Unconscious” is recognized as Jung’s seminal work on the collective unconscious, it is in “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes,” published in 1917, that Jung makes his biological argument in a reasonably clear context for the first time and begins to discuss its evolutionary context. The structure of his argument is very similar to that of the 1916 essay, but he has toned down the veiled autobiographical allusions and, perhaps more importantly, dropped his discussion of the “persona” and all but a couple mentions of the “collective psyche.” The “collective unconscious” has center stage in the section devoted to it, though this section is only one of many, as “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” is a longer work. Subtitled “Being a Survey of the Modern Theory and Method of Analytical Psychology” it represents Jung’s first attempt to synthesize and present systematically his whole system of psychology.<sup>31</sup> Along with an exposition of the system’s newer components, the collective unconscious and its “dominants,” the paper includes an early review of his theory of typology (revised and expanded upon four years later in what is perhaps Jung’s most famous book, *Psychological Types* (1921)) and also a review and critique of the schools of his rivals, Freud and Adler. Anyone looking for an “orthodox” early version of the theories of analytical psychology, including the collective unconscious, would be much better off looking to “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes,” with its

---

<sup>31</sup>It is interesting to note that again he presents his system within a narrative account of an analysis. Here this technique seems more grounded, however, as he is recounting details of an actual case rather than a hypothetical one based on his own experiences.

orderly exposition, than to the half-formed and awkwardly presented ideas in “The Structure of the Unconscious.”

The biological argument is more clearly presented in this paper, but its form remains virtually unchanged:

In every individual, in addition to the personal memories, there are also . . . the great “primordial images,” the inherited potentialities of human imagination. They have always been potentially latent in the structure of the brain. The fact of this inheritance also explains the otherwise incredible phenomenon, that the matter and themes of certain legends are met with all over the world in identical forms. Further, it explains how it is that persons who are mentally deranged are able to produce precisely the same images and associations that are known to us from the study of old manuscripts.<sup>32</sup>

He goes on to introduce the term “collective unconscious” for the first time:

We are now obliged to differentiate a personal unconscious and an impersonal or superpersonal unconscious. We also term the latter the *absolute or collective* unconscious, and because it is absolutely universal, wherefore its contents may be found in every head, which of course is not the case with the personal contents.<sup>33</sup>

Jung even makes his argument for this claim largely through an example very much like the Schopenhauer example in “The Structure of the Unconscious,” in which a man of intellect comes up with an idea that is shown to be inherent in symbolic form in other, more “unconscious,” human creations. The example here concerns the discovery of the principle of the conservation of energy by Robert Mayer, a man who was not a physicist but a physician and worked with feverish inspiration on this physical question during the course of his first journey through the South Seas.<sup>34</sup> Jung took great stock in the fact that the idea seemed to come to Mayer unbidden, saying “It is of great importance

---

<sup>32</sup>Jung, “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” 410.

<sup>33</sup>Jung, “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” 410. Italics are Jung’s unless otherwise noted.

<sup>34</sup>Jung, “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” 411-12.

to realize that in the real sense of the word, Robert Mayer's idea was not *created*." To support this interpretation of the affair, Jung quotes "Heim, in his book on Energetics"<sup>35</sup>:

"Robert Mayer's new thought did not gradually detach itself by dint of revolving in his mind, from the conceptions of power transmitted from the past, *but belongs to those ideas that are intuitively conceived, which, originating in other spheres of a mental kind, surprise thought, as it were, compelling it to transform its inherited notions conformably with those ideas.*"<sup>36</sup>

Where did this idea come from? Jung asks rhetorically. And his answer:

*The idea of energy and of its conservation must be a primordial image that lay dormant in the absolute unconscious.* This conclusion obviously compels us to prove that a similar primordial image did really exist in the history of the human mind, and continued to be effective through thousands of years. As a matter of fact, evidence of this can be produced without difficulty.<sup>37</sup>

The evidence that Jung produces, however, is likely to be without much power to convince a late twentieth-century audience (or an early twentieth-century audience, for that matter)—it consists of an elaborate analogy of the physical sciences' concept of the conservation of energy with concepts of the soul in myth and religion that comes to this conclusion:

The Buddhistic and primitive conception of the metempsychosis (transmigration of souls) contains the idea of its *unlimited capacity for transformation under constant conservation.*

This thought has obviously therefore been imprinted on the human brain for untold ages. That is why it lies ready in the unconscious of every one.<sup>38</sup>

With the claim that the collective unconscious has been "imprinted on the brain" and again in the following passage from the later section on "The Dominants of the Super-personal Unconscious" Jung begins to reveal his explanation for how the inherited

---

<sup>35</sup>Jung, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes" 412.

<sup>36</sup>Jung, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes" 412.

<sup>37</sup>Jung, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes" 412

<sup>38</sup>Jung, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes" 413.

collective unconscious got into the brain in the first place. In the essay of the previous year he had simply claimed it as part of the brains inherited structure but had not ventured an argument as to why these mythological tendencies were inherited. Here he writes:

“The collective unconscious is the sediment of all the experience of the universe of all time, and is also an image of the universe that has been in process of formation for untold ages. In the course of time certain features have become prominent in this image, the so-called *dominants*. These dominants are the ruling powers, the gods; that is, the representations resulting from dominating laws and principles, from average regularities in the issue of the images that the brain has received as a consequence of secular processes.<sup>39</sup>

There is something decidedly curious about the way in which Jung depicts the origins of the collective unconscious. For “experience” to be “imprinted” on the brain through the “regularities,” i.e. the frequent occurrences, of life (“secular processes”) and then for these to be passed down for “untold ages” obviously requires the assumption that the life-experiences of the individual can modify his or her biology in such a way that these changes can be inherited by future generations. A Lamarckian understanding of evolution, in which acquired traits may be inherited, is thus clearly implicit in the sense of Jung’s argument.

The 1918 article, “The Role of the Unconscious,” contains a restatement of the biological argument as presented in 1916 and 1917, which need not be again reiterated. The main distinction of this article is its focus not on individual psychology and psychiatry but on the role of the collective unconscious in the species as a whole, Jung having “omitted to speak here of the medical aspect of the unconscious.”<sup>40</sup> That Jung may be interpreted here as playing the role of the social critic is presumably responsible for this article’s inclusion in the volume of the *Collected Works* titled *Civilization in Transition*.<sup>41</sup> In this essay, the collective unconscious emerges strongly for the first time

---

<sup>39</sup>Jung, “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” 432.

<sup>40</sup>CW 10, 23.

<sup>41</sup>CW 10.

as a racial theory. Jung had, however, already introduced this racial component in “The Structure of the Unconscious” (1916). There, following the biological argument, he writes, “Inasmuch as there are differentiations corresponding to race, tribe, and even family, there is also a collective psyche limited to race tribe, and family, over and above the ‘universal’ collective psyche.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1918 he came back to this idea and elaborated on the difference between the Germanic psyche and the Jewish psyche. Again Jung seems to have been largely motivated by the need to justify his theory as appropriate for Germanic patients over and above Freud and Adler’s (who were both Jews). Such a racist outlook was by no means extraordinary in the Western scientific culture of Jung’s day. It should also be noted that racialism is distinct from racism, though today racialist views have been largely discredited by science and are almost invariably considered racist. Racialism posits hereditary biological differences, physical and/or psychological, between races. Racism posits the superiority of certain races over others. Though evidence does exist to suggest that Jung was privately somewhat anti-Semitic, at least toward practicing Jews,<sup>43</sup> what he was arguing publicly was not that the Jewish mind or soul was inferior to the Germanic, but rather that it was different enough that the two races required different psychological understanding and treatment. Freud or Adler’s system might be well and good for the long-civilized Jew, but the German, having been much more recently civilized by the unnatural grafting of Christianity onto the pagan roots of a “barbarian,”<sup>44</sup> needs to pay special heed to “the dark springs of instinct and intuition” found in the collective unconscious.<sup>45</sup>

Along with the emphasis on race, this article also contains one of Jung’s clearest statements to the effect that he is not talking about specific inherited mental contents:

---

<sup>42</sup>CW 7, 456

<sup>43</sup>See Noll, *The Aryan Christ*.

<sup>44</sup>CW 10, 17. See also Jung’s letter of 26 May 1923 to Oskar A. H. Schmitz, in Gerhard Adler, ed., *C. G. Jung: Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) 39.

<sup>45</sup>CW 10, 25.

It should on no account be imagined that there are such things as *inherited ideas*. Of that there can be no question. There are, however, innate possibilities of ideas, *a priori* conditions for fantasy production, which are somewhat similar to the Kantian categories. Though these innate conditions do not produce any contents of themselves, they give definite form to contents that have already been acquired. Being a part of the inherited structure of the brain, they are the reason for the identity of symbols and myth-motifs in all parts of the earth.<sup>46</sup>

In 1919, Jung's article "Instinct and the Unconscious" really solidifies the theory of the collective unconscious by making an explicit distinction between two constituents of the collective unconscious, the instincts and the "archetypes." Prior to this time Jung refers to the instincts and the primordial images or dominants as equivalent. Here, however, he separates them, marking off the archetypes as his own special domain of inquiry. (After all, many people, Freud included, accepted the universality of the instincts.) In an interesting tactical maneuver, Jung uses an analogy with the more widely accepted concept of instinct to argue for the necessity of his concept of the archetype. Here the analogy emerges that defined the essence of the collective unconscious for the rest of Jung's life: As the instincts are to behavior, the archetypes are to perception, thinking, and feeling.

Just as his instincts compel man to a specifically human mode of existence, so the archetypes force his ways of perception and apprehension into specifically human patterns. The instincts and the archetypes together form the "collective unconscious." I call it "collective" because unlike the personal unconscious, it is not made up of individual and more or less unique contents but of those which are universal and of regular occurrence. Instinct is an essentially collective, i.e., universal and regularly occurring phenomenon which has nothing to do with individuality. Archetypes have this quality in common with the instincts and are likewise collective phenomena.<sup>47</sup>

Jung's argument in this article rests largely on an example, thus following the now familiar pattern. Drawing from zoology, he relates the reproductive habits of the yucca

---

<sup>46</sup>CW 10, 14.

<sup>47</sup>CW 8, 269.

moth, which, on the single day of the year that the yucca plant blossoms, gathers a ball of pollen from one plant, transports it to another, cuts open the female reproductive organ of a flower, and deposits its eggs and the ball of pollen inside. The yucca moth's complex behavior, Jung argues, requires not simply a preprogrammed sequence of behavior (instinct), but also a preprogrammed ability to recognize the very specific environmental situation in which to engage in that behavior. This preformed, therefore inherited, mode of perception, Jung identifies as an archetype. In human beings, with their capacity for mental representation, these inherited modes of perception emerge from the unconscious symbolically; thus, one tends to respond to particular situations with certain imaginary forms, such as those found in myth.

That Jung as early as 1919 specifically distinguished instinct from archetype is especially significant in light of the fact that modern Jungians frequently attempt to “prove” the existence of archetypes by holding up examples of scientific theories that involve an instinct-related construct. A particular favorite in this regard is the concept of “innate releasing mechanisms” from behavioral biology.<sup>48</sup> The unique aspect of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, however, was not the instincts that shape behavior but the archetypes that shape thought and imagination. The fact that established scientific disciplines employ concepts that are strongly tied to the idea of instinct does not “prove” the theory of the collective unconscious even by Jung's standards.

Jung held to the formulation of the collective unconscious developed in “Instinct and the Unconscious,” with its instincts and archetypes, for the rest of his life, as may easily be demonstrated by a comparison with his later papers. One of these in which this pattern is particularly clear is a 1936 article entitled “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious,” which, as a rare article addressed solely to the topic at hand, seems

---

<sup>48</sup>Clarke 123, and Anthony Stevens “Critical Notice,” *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 42 (1997) 675.

particularly apropos. Here Jung states that the instincts “form very close analogies to the archetypes,”<sup>49</sup> and he argues:

One admits readily that human activity is influenced to a high degree by instincts, quite apart from the rational motivations of the conscious mind. So if the assertion is made that our imagination, perception and thinking are likewise influenced by inborn and universally present formal elements [i.e. the archetypes], it seems to me that a normally functioning intelligence can discover in this idea just as much or just as little mysticism as in the theory of instincts.<sup>50</sup>

There one has the formal structure of Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious—archetypes are to mental processes as the instincts are to behavior. All that is missing from the above passage for a complete synopsis of the basic theory is the fact that Jung was claiming that the archetypes were responsible for world-wide similarities in mythology and personal fantasy.

In this examination of the development of the theory of the collective unconscious some key features have appeared that do not seem to be entirely explicable by reference to Jung’s personal situation. These are 1) the disappearance of the “persona” and the “collective psyche” from the theory, 2) the Lamarckian and racialist overtones, and 3) a seeming disregard for rigorous scientific evidence in favor of a number of arguments made by analogy. To understand the historical significance of these factors and their full significance in the theory of the collective unconscious, we must now turn to Jung’s larger historical context.

---

<sup>49</sup>CW 9i, 91.

<sup>50</sup>CW 9i, 92.

### Chapter 3. The Collective Unconscious in Its Historical Context

We must now address the issue of Jung's sources, particularly those that shaped the collective unconscious as a scientific theory, in the context of the science of his day. In ways that are frequently hidden from us today, Jung's theoretical sources and his methodology create the distinctive nature of the theory of the collective unconscious. Some of his presuppositions, methodological and otherwise, were generated from the scientific movements of the early twentieth century, but others were remnants of the science of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In this regard, Jung was something of a reactionary, distancing himself in particular from the strong materialism and positivism of the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup> Jung's presuppositions can not adequately be viewed as non-scientific, however, even if occasionally they were held only by a small minority of contemporary scientists between 1890 and 1930.

In the previous chapter, I raised the argument that Jung's theory of the collective unconscious was directly influenced by Jung's personal experiences. This strong biographical influence has led many interpreters to explain Jung's theory almost exclusively in terms of those personal experiences. This approach is not sufficient. Perhaps Jung did create the theory of the collective unconscious out of a need to understand his own experiences. That is understandable. *What is more difficult to understand is why he settled on just the particular explanation that he did.* Many different interpretations are possible, after all, for any given set of phenomena. An answer to the question of why Jung framed the theory of the collective unconscious precisely the way he did can only be found in an examination of his sources in the surrounding scientific culture.

I am examining the collective unconscious as a scientific theory, but there are also tensions and difficulties that appear in regard to Jung's identity as a scientist and the

---

<sup>1</sup>As such he was part of a German movement toward holism in science, which Anne Harrington explores in her book *Reenchanted Science* (Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

scientific status he claimed for the theory. Some of these perceived difficulties are due to modern ignorance of the history of science. Those that represent real problems tend to stem from aspects of Jung's methodology.

Jung's theory that an inherited collective unconscious was responsible for the appearance of specific types of images and patterns in the psyche proved a difficult one to test. Jung, furthermore, never seemed particularly interested in testing it, though he was always quick to assure his readers of the objective and empirically verified status of the theory. To the modern reader the theory likely seems to be in need of stricter testing to prove its validity.

What could explain Jung's seeming lack of concern in this regard? Two large factors contribute to a plausible explanation—1) that he was, methodologically, a direct descendent of a nineteenth century scientific tradition, the German *Wissenschaften*, that possessed a different set of criteria for scientific theory and proof, and 2) that his scientific presuppositions regarding evolution and heredity prevented alternative explanations from being as problematic as they seem to us.

### **3.1 Problems in Jung's Methodology**

The issue of Jung's status as an empiricist and a scientist is a vital one, and one that has been widely examined and debated but will need to be reexamined here, in part because ignorance of certain important aspects of Jung's historical context has obscured the issue. What may look glaringly unempirical to us may have looked quite different to Jung and other of his contemporaries. One of the fundamental tenets of Jung's methodology that has been seen as problematic is his claim that the images and emotions that appear from the unconscious must be treated as objective phenomena rather than subjective ones. He frequently stated his conviction that human subjectivity was rightly considered as falling between two objective worlds, the outer physical world and the inner world of the collective unconscious:

In 1918 he writes, “At all events we stand between two worlds, or between two totally different psychological systems of perceptions; between perception of external sensory stimuli and perception of the unconscious.”<sup>2</sup> Here the objectivity of unconscious world is implied in the claim that one perceives it as one does the external world; in 1934, Jung expresses it more explicitly:

Because the unconscious is not just a reactive mirror-reflection, but an independent, productive activity, its realm of experience is a self-contained world. And just as material objects are the constituent elements of this world, so psychic factors constitute the objects of that other world.<sup>3</sup>

Jung believed that in order to cultivate healthy psychological development one had to recognize the objectivity of the inner world. One must know “how to separate himself from the unconscious—not by repressing it, for then it seizes him from behind—but *but by presenting it visibly to himself as something that is totally different from him.*”<sup>4</sup> As noted in the last chapter, this methodological decision on Jung’s part can usefully be seen as a defensive maneuver against fears of insanity, but this interpretation can be extended farther by taking Jung’s social world into account. That the unconscious mind represents an alien, objective world rather than a subjective one capable of belonging to the individual makes Jung’s methodology remarkable to us today, when a psychiatrist would, I think, tend to assume that any production of an individual mind belonged to that individual, even if it were not assimilated into the identity, but it would not have been remarkable in his day. One might distinguish these two different outlooks by saying that today’s concept of the individual is more organismically based, whereas the turn of the century’s was more personality or “ego” based. Furthermore, the current concept of identity is considerably more malleable than was the concept of “ego” in Freud and Jung’s day, at least in part because, while both concepts are socially constrained, what

---

<sup>2</sup>Jung, “The Role of the Unconscious,” CW 10, 23.

<sup>3</sup>Jung, “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious,” CW 7, 292.

<sup>4</sup>Jung, “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” 416. Italics are Jung’s unless otherwise noted.

society then would consider normal in the ego was much more narrowly defined than what could be considered normal in the identity today.

A powerful imagination, such as Jung obviously possessed, would not have been particularly acceptable for a male academic and a man of science at that time. It could be read as a sign of femininity, even degeneration to a less than human (at least less than *civilized* human) condition. Jung admits as much in his 1925 seminar on *Analytical Psychology* when discussing the origins of the mythological thinking that he presented for the first time in *Wandlungen*, which was structured around an example of fantasy written by a female patient of Flournoy:

[F]antasizing was a mental process that was directly repellent to me. As a form of thinking I held it to be altogether impure, a sort of incestuous intercourse, thoroughly immoral from an intellectual point of view. . . . Or, to put it even more strongly, passive thinking seemed to me such a weak and perverted thing that I could only handle it through a diseased woman.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, it should be no surprise that Jung would have had a difficult time seeing this aspect of his psyche as belonging to his ego, nor that he might create a defensive separation of this material from that which made up his socially conditioned identity as a highly rational academic. As there were many others who shared this identity, the idea that the images and emotions of the imagination were alien to personal identity would not have been particularly odd to Jung's contemporaries.

Nor was the power to observe the workings of one's own mind "scientifically" and objectively an unusual claim. In espousing such a position Jung might be considered somewhat reactionary in a time where a mechanistic psychology, in which the scientist observed others rather than himself, had the upper hand, but by his claim of validity for self-observation he was placing himself within a solid tradition of introspection in nineteenth-century psychology, especially German psychology, that included the

---

<sup>5</sup>Jung, *Analytical Psychology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) 27.

American, William James, and the German, Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), who “aimed to make introspection rigorous and repeatable, by training observers in tightly regulated physical contexts.”<sup>6</sup> Jung may not have been as rigorous as Wundt, but he did develop a specific method for introspection, which he called active imagination.

Where Jung was on shakier methodological ground was in his generalization from what he observed within his own psyche to claims about the psyche of all people. Jung may not unreasonably be criticized as having succumbed to the risk of universalizing his own experience. Peter Homans suggests that Jung suffered from “confusion between what is subjective and what is objective in mental life.”<sup>7</sup> One might also say that he was confused between what might be objectively true in the context of his own personality and what could be assumed about the personality of others. The decision to treat the imagistic and emotional productions of his psyche as empirical data was a methodological one supported by the introspectionist tradition, but the assumption that what he found “objectively” in himself would appear in all people seems obviously open to criticism.

In defense of such criticism, Jung claimed, in virtually every article he wrote on the collective unconscious, that he was not making a leap of assumption because he had indeed found proof of the action of the collective unconscious in other people—most notably his patients, whether schizophrenics at the Burghölzli or troubled souls in analysis. As indicated in the previous chapter, however, it is not obvious that Jung was ever able to present thoroughly convincing evidence for this in his writings. In all of those early papers (and certainly in most of his later work), Jung relied on the biological argument to establish the working theory of the collective unconscious and then proceeded to interpret the world of psychology in light of that theory. To the modern

---

<sup>6</sup>W. F. Bynum, E. J. Brown, and Roy Porter, eds., *Dictionary of the History of Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) 212.

<sup>7</sup>Homans 110.

reader Jung seems to have taken what should have been the hypothesis he was trying to prove and used it as if it were already a well established theory.

The question of Jung's scientific rigor forms a useful bridge to an understanding of the methodological approach that would allow Jung to treat a seeming hypothesis as an established theory. Interestingly, though Jung himself usually referred to the collective unconscious as a "theory," occasionally he chose, seemingly quite deliberately, to call it a "hypothesis," as in a 1932 lecture titled, "The Hypothesis of the Collective Unconscious."<sup>8</sup> The very concept of hypothesis, however, suggests a proposition that can and will be tested in some way. One generally assumes the mark of an adequate hypothesis to be that its validity will be subject to verification, that it will prove either true or false and consequently be either accepted or rejected. Yet Jung never seemed interested in testing his theory of the biological transmission of the contents of the collective unconscious against what seem to be highly plausible alternative explanations. This lack of concern constitutes one of the greatest difficulties in Jung's methodology.

### **3.1.1 The Question of Alternative Hypotheses**

One of the most pressing questions regarding Jung's methodology is that of the manner in which he dealt with possible alternative hypotheses to account for the phenomena that he explained by his theory of the collective unconscious. The most obvious candidates, neither of which were unfamiliar to Jung, were cultural transmission and cryptomnesia. Cryptomnesia refers to the reappearance of mental contents that were once experienced, but without the memory of the original experience. Thus, one might read about some idea and forget all about it for years, then suddenly find oneself thinking of it one day, without remembering that one had ever read of it in the first place. Under these circumstances, it would not be surprising if one believed the idea to be an original one. Thus mythology read or heard as a child could reappear as "archetypal" images in

---

<sup>8</sup>CW 18, 1223.

the dreams of an adult, though the adult might have no memory of having been exposed to those images previously. This process could occur with other modalities of experience than reading, of course. Combined with the cultural transmission of mythological themes from generation to generation through speech, the written word, and pictures cryptomnesia would seem to offer a likely explanation for the seemingly spontaneous appearance of mythological symbolism in adults.

What makes Jung's lack of regard for the possibility of cryptomnesia particularly odd is that he pioneered the concept during his days at the Burghölzli. Jung's 1905 essay, "Cryptomnesia," may be summarized in a sentence: There exists a psychological process, cryptomnesia, whereby previously experienced material not held in consciousness may nevertheless be faithfully reproduced in accurate detail in the context of an abnormal mental state. In this essay Jung was specifically referring to such abnormal states as the visions of an hysteric or the genius of a thinker. (As an example, he cites a passage from *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, in which Nietzsche had replicated with remarkable fidelity a passage from a book that Jung was able to confirm he had read in his youth.<sup>9</sup>) Both of these states were surely applicable to the visionary experiences Jung underwent some years later and his subsequent formulation of the theory of the collective unconscious.

Nonetheless, for years after Jung introduced the collective unconscious he seemed totally unconcerned with such alternate hypotheses. Only around 1930 does he begin to express concern that cryptomnesia and cultural transmission should be ruled out if the existence of the collective unconscious is to be proved beyond a doubt. In 1917 in "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes," for example, Jung seems perfectly willing to admit that the mythological symbolism supposedly produced by the influence of the collective unconscious may well be common knowledge:

*Such attributes ["unknown," "non-human," "not applicable to a human personality"] always indicate that contents of the super-personal or absolute unconscious are being projected. Neither*

---

<sup>9</sup>Jung, "Cryptomnesia," CW 1, 180.

demons nor wicked magicians are reminiscences of personal experiences, although every one has, of course, at some time or other heard or read of them.<sup>10</sup>

This passage is indicative of the lack of concern for the possibility of cultural transmission of the collective unconscious Jung was to display for nearly fifteen years. Other hypotheses simply were not on Jung's mind; in most of his writing that is related to the collective unconscious its existence is simply assumed as the starting point for argument, "validated" by the biological argument.

Strangely, after expressing no particular concern for alternative hypotheses for almost twenty years, Jung, in several papers in the late twenties and thirties, stressed the criteria for proof of the collective unconscious quite strongly. In his 1936 essay, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" he writes:

It is true that the diagnosis of the collective unconscious is not always an easy task. It is not sufficient to point out the often obviously archetypal nature of unconscious products, for these can just as well be derived from acquisitions through language and education. Cryptomnesia should also be ruled out, which it is almost impossible to do in certain cases. In spite of all these difficulties, there remain enough individual instances showing the autochthonous revival of mythological motifs to put the matter beyond any reasonable doubt.<sup>11</sup>

In virtually every instance where Jung claimed the need to produce absolute proof for the collective unconscious's *a priori* existence—i.e. wherein cultural transmission and cryptomnesia needed to be definitively ruled out—he relied on a case that has been dubbed "the solar phallus man." As for the other "individual instances," these were left to be taken on faith.

The solar phallus man was a patient at the Burghölzli during Jung's tenure there, who one day, while standing looking out the window, related that the sun had a penis-like appendage that would sway back and forth in response to his own swaying of his

---

<sup>10</sup>Jung, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes" 430.

<sup>11</sup>CW 9i, 92.

head and from which emanated the wind. In the 1930s, Jung claimed that he did not know what to make of this vision until several years later when he came across a book about an ancient Mithraic mystical liturgy in which the sun was described as having a hanging tube that was the origin of the wind. Jung argued that, because his uneducated schizophrenic patient could not have been privy to this rare information, the case was necessarily one in which archetypal imagery was appearing spontaneously from the collective unconscious.<sup>12</sup>

Jungians have claimed in Jung's defense that he could have used any number of examples as proof<sup>13</sup>; whether or not this is so, the fact remains that Jung consistently chose to use this one. Furthermore, most of the examples of archetypes in action that he did use, in other contexts, obviously fail to meet the necessary criterion of being definitively autochthonous. As but one instance of this failure, consider Jung's example, cited in the previous chapter, of Mayer's development of the principle of the conservation of energy. Jung argued that this idea had to be formed under the influence of the collective unconscious by comparing it to various religious traditions that believe in the transmigration of souls.<sup>14</sup> Even if one buys the analogy between the conservation of the soul and the conservation of energy, one is left with the problem that Jung was citing religious traditions, like Buddhism, of which an educated man, at a time when Europeans were obsessed with the oddities of Eastern culture and religion, would in all probability have been aware. Unfortunately the central role in Jung's argumentation played by the solar phallus man can not be ignored.

I write "unfortunately" because, as Richard Noll has demonstrated, beginning around 1930 Jung seems clearly to have falsified information about this case. First of all, he writes of having had the interactions with the patient in question himself, whereas we know that in fact his assistant, J. J. Honegger, who soon after committed suicide, was the

---

<sup>12</sup>Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," CW 9i, 109.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Stevens, *Jung* 40.

<sup>14</sup>Jung, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes," 413.

one to whom the patient related the vision (as Jung himself notes in *Wandlungen*—before the theory of the collective unconscious was at stake). Honegger merely reported the experience to Jung. Furthermore, Jung’s claim that his patient could have had no exposure to the book by Albrecht Dieterech in which he later discovered an almost identical image, depended on his ignoring the first edition of the book (1903) in favor of the second (1910). Nor was this first edition the only earlier source for this liturgy, as Jung well knew, for in *Wandlungen* Jung actually cited a *different book* than the one he later claimed to have been his source, Mead’s *A Mithraic Ritual*, published in 1907.<sup>15</sup> Because Honegger could not have worked with the patient until he was employed at the Burghölzli in 1909, we also know that Jung gave incorrect information as to the year in which the solar phallus vision occurred, which he claimed to be 1906. When one realizes that this alteration conveniently locates the incident before the 1907 citation in the original version of *Wandlungen*, the case against Jung begins to look fairly dire.<sup>16</sup>

Why should Jung have lied about something for which, at most points in his life, he did not seem concerned for proof? One possibility is that Jung’s desire to be recognized by a scientific community that largely ignored him was so compelling as to allow him to falsify information that would provide the kind of evidence he knew to be necessary for definitive proof in their eyes. While the need for credibility may well have been partly responsible, *such an explanation fails to explain Jung’s personal lack of concern for this sort of proof*. Why should Jung maintain a theory that he couldn’t prove without distorting the evidence? Could it be, as Noll claims, because his supposedly scientific theory was in fact a metaphysical one based on his own visionary experiences, and that his desire for academic recognition stemmed purely from vanity? Certainly Jung’s highly charged experiences are likely to have contributed to the strength of his

---

<sup>15</sup>*Wandlungen* 96.

<sup>16</sup>For more detail on this topic, see Noll, *The Jung Cult* 181-184 and *The Aryan Christ* 268-272.

convictions, and his concern for recognition and respectability is also well documented, but as I see it two other explanations must also be considered.

The first is a logical component of Jung's argument that he only stressed occasionally but which is nonetheless compelling enough to deserve review. Consider this passage in which he is discussing a supposedly archetypal image produced by one of his patients:

If we must take it as a wholly personal acquisition, it might be a case of so-called cryptomnesia, the unconscious recollection of a thought which the dreamer had once read somewhere. I have nothing against such a possibility in this particular case; but I have seen a sufficient number of other cases—many of them are to be found in the book mentioned above—where cryptomnesia can be excluded with certainty. Even if it were a case of cryptomnesia, which seems to me very improbable, we should still have to explain what the predisposition was that caused just this image to be retained and later, as Semon puts it, “ecphorated” [i.e., re-emitted].<sup>17</sup>

Here one sees Jung's standard argument, that one must take it on faith that Jung has seen “other cases” in which cryptomnesia can be ruled out. (One is even referred to another of Jung's books—*Wandlungen*—but without any mention of where, in a book written before Jung had even developed the theory of the collective unconscious, one might find these examples.) Following this familiar refrain, however, a new argument comes into play. In the last sentence of the above passage, Jung argues that more important than whether the image has previously been seen is the question of why the individual should utilize just this particular image in a dream or fantasy.

This formulation of the problem of the significance of archetypal images, focusing more on the reason for their widespread appeal than on their source, seems to be more in keeping with Jung's earliest discussion of the role of past experience, as cited above, in which Jung voiced no concern about cryptomnesia but freely admitted that such mythological images might have been previously experienced. The question that Jung

---

<sup>17</sup>Jung, “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious,” CW 7, 219. Jung's connection to Semon will be discussed below.

identified in 1917 was why anyone would choose (unconsciously, of course) a particular symbol, like a demon or a magician, from the infinite number of images available, to represent a particular situation. It was in that choice that Jung saw the action of a collective disposition—the archetype.

That Jung was as much interested in why people latched on to the symbols that they did as in where they got them in the first place should be evident from his own experience. After all, when he had his own period of intense visionary and imaginative experiences, he had for years been reading every scrap of mythological scholarship available. Certainly, he recognized the figures in his visions (the lion-headed god, Aion, e.g.) from his own studies, and was not shy about admitting it. The theory of the collective unconscious originally helped to explain why those figures *reappeared* from his unconscious loaded with symbolic meaning. The real question thus lies in why Jung failed to stress this angle of the question of archetypes more often.

In the sections that follow, I will elaborate a two-part solution to that question, a solution that relies on Jung's roots in 1) the methodological tradition of nineteenth-century German science and 2) a scientific tradition that did not distinguish culture from biology in the same way that we do today, thus making the distinction between culturally transmitted and spontaneously produced images less important.

### **3.1.2 Jung in the Context of Nineteenth-Century *Wissenschaften***

Though Jung made an effort to present himself as a modern scientist, his science had much more in common with the German *Wissenschaften* of the nineteenth century than the experimentally driven science that developed in the twentieth. The best translation for the German word *Wissenschaften* is “sciences,” but this category subsumed many historically oriented disciplines that would have no place in the modern category of science—philology, for example, the study of languages and cultures, especially ancient languages by which to understand ancient cultures. The *Wissenschaften* were invested in

a scientific ideal of what might be called system-building. Their scientific method was quite different from the “scientific method,” in which experimentation plays such an important role. They subsisted on the (Platonic) assumption of the thinker, the “genius,” as capable of discerning the true nature of the world through the analytic and synthetic powers of the mind alone.

Like the philologists and the German Romantic practitioners of *Naturphilosophie*, Jung attempted to organize the world of his experience historically and holistically into an all encompassing world-system.<sup>18</sup> As J. J. Clarke points out, Jung often claimed that his method was not “systematic,”<sup>19</sup> but he used the term to refer to the sort of causal mechanistic system that Freud employed; in other words, he meant that his psychology was not a reductive system. Rather it was a “hermeneutic” system<sup>20</sup> for understanding the world holistically, and as such it was infinitely expansive. The collective unconscious was not the hypothesis Jung sometimes claimed it as, but rather a lens by which to interpret virtually any phenomenon. It was his fundamental position, central to his world-system—the bedrock of theory upon which his explanation of the psychological world was raised. Even if the biological argument for the collective unconscious may be considered a plausible hypothesis in the scientific context of its day (as I will argue), he can not truly be said to have treated it as a hypothesis, despite his occasional claims to that effect.

Jung treated the collective unconscious as an established theory in the context of which he examined all “empirical” data for the rest of his life. While such a biased approach would be unacceptable to the modern scientist steeped in the experimental method, it would have looked quite different to the fin-de-siècle world. The sort of theory that science was required to formulate changed gradually during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Rather than a set of testable hypotheses, the model of the

---

<sup>18</sup>For more detailed discussion of Jung’s relationship to these *Wissenschaften* see Noll, *The Jung Cult*.

<sup>19</sup>Clarke xiii.

<sup>20</sup>Jung, “The Structure of the Unconscious,” CW 7, 491.

*Wissenschaften* with which Jung was familiar would have required a coherent explanatory system by which phenomena could be explained or in which they could be located. The nineteenth century was the era of the great cataloguers and systematizers. Taxonomy might be considered the dominant model, especially in Germany where the taxonomic method was enthusiastically applied to biology, philology, and other *Wissenschaften*. With the collective unconscious and its archetypes, Jung had created a taxonomy of human symbolism, the authority of which rested on his claim that this taxonomy was universally applicable.

This older way of scientific thinking did not die out overnight, especially in psychology and psychiatry. Why was Freudian psychoanalysis the dominant paradigm in American psychiatry until the 1970s? Certainly not because Freud's assertions about the sexual desires of infants and children could be proved, but rather because it provided a highly systematized explanatory framework for mental illness. While it is true that fin-de-siècle science ran more in the direction of mechanistic positivism than had German Romanticism, the ideals of the *Wissenschaften* had not died out but simply gone underground.

In short, Jung was caught between the old methodology of science and the new. The old standards were those he had been taught in medical school, those with which he was familiar and of which he approved. They allowed him to follow "scientifically" his interests in religion, mythology, and history. Problematically, however, the new standards of experimental science were increasingly those he was judged by; they were fast becoming the standards of the majority of his audience. That Jung eventually became acutely aware of this is indicated by his occasional insistence that his theory was an hypothesis and even more so by his attempts in the 1930s to provide conclusive verification for the collective unconscious and rule out alternative hypotheses (even if that meant falsifying evidence). In reality the theory was never a hypothesis but, almost from the outset, a fully realized theory or world-system in the mode of the

*Wissenschaften*. As such, however, it can be analyzed, like any scientific theory regardless of methodology, according to the scientific sources on which it drew.

### **3.2 Evolution and Heredity 1890-1930**

This section explores the backdrop of evolutionary and hereditary theory from which Jung drew his understanding of these matters. It focuses on two dominant, interrelated ideologies, Lamarckism and racialism, both of which have been discredited by modern science, but which were still viable at the time.

The so-called Darwinian revolution has traditionally been falsely regarded as overwhelming all other forms of evolutionary theory in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As Peter Bowler, in *The Non-Darwinian Revolution* (1988), and Ernst Mayr, in *One Long Argument* (1991), make clear, however, Darwinism in its modern form did not completely dominate the field until the genetic theory of heredity had been developed and assimilated into neo-Darwinism in the “evolutionary synthesis” that took place in the 1930s.<sup>21</sup> (In its most modern form evolutionary theory did not solidify until the discovery of DNA in the 1950s.) Nor can Darwin’s ideas adequately be considered a single unified theory; rather they consisted of several theoretical components that were accepted or rejected separately by the academic world<sup>22</sup> Relatively widely accepted, for example, was his concept of common descent—that man and other organisms were descended from common ancestors. The doctrine of natural selection, however, which is today considered to be the hallmark of Darwinism, did not find overwhelming acceptance in the nineteenth century. Many people, Jung included, denied its adequacy to explain the process of evolution, even when they admitted that it might play some role.<sup>23</sup> The idea that evolution was a non-purposive mechanism was distasteful to most people. Instead

---

<sup>21</sup>Ernst Mayr, *One Long Argument* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) 134.

<sup>22</sup>Mayr 37.

<sup>23</sup>In a lecture of 1897 Jung said that natural selection “cannot adequately explain evolution.” Noll, *The Jung Cult* 142.

evolution was generally considered to be a progressive upward affair with man at the top of that progression—the high point of the Great Chain of Being.

The picture of evolutionary theory that emerges with scrutiny of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century is one in which different and conflicting lines of theory coexisted. Even when Mendelian genetics appeared (or rather, one should say, reappeared, for Mendel had proposed his theories to an indifferent world in the mid-nineteenth century and was sixteen years dead when they were rediscovered in 1900<sup>24</sup>) they by no means immediately eliminated alternative understandings of heredity and evolution. As historian Ernst Mayr puts it, “One would have thought that the rediscovery of Mendel’s laws in 1900 would have brought about an immediate change in the attitude toward natural selection, but this was not the case.”<sup>25</sup> The most popular evolutionary theory in the fin de siècle, and the strongest competitor to neo-Darwinian theory in the early twentieth century, was Lamarckism.

The central tenets of Lamarckism were the purposiveness of evolution and the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Lamarckians believed that changes in the physical (or psychological) state of one organism could be passed on to subsequent generations. Until the genetic theory began to solidify the notion of “hard” heredity, in which the hereditary material could not be changed with the rest of the organism during life, a “soft” notion of unfixated and malleable heredity dominated. This was perhaps most evident in the fin-de-siècle obsession with “degeneration,” the idea that one’s surroundings or behavior (if they were squalid and immoral) could have a negative effect on one’s health and character that could be passed on to one’s children. As the genetic theory that would eventually to render these more traditional understandings of evolution untenable began to develop, the assumptions underlying half a century of evolutionary theory did not simply disappear. Lamarckism remained present in the intellectual world even in the

---

<sup>24</sup>Bynum 259.

<sup>25</sup>Mayr 132.

1920s. In *The Eclipse of Darwinism* (1983), Bowler writes of the “continued popularity of such views in the 1920s,” and claims, “There was no lack of Lamarckian experiments in the 1920s”<sup>26</sup> Jung may actually have been justified, therefore, writing in 1919 that “[t]he view is widely held that instincts originated in individual, and then general, acts of will that were frequently repeated.”<sup>27</sup> Under these circumstances, it was neither surprising nor unwarranted that Jung claimed acquired psychic qualities to have been passed on phylogenetically.

### 3.2.1 Lamarckism in the Theory of the Collective Unconscious

That Jung’s understanding of evolution was Lamarckian throughout his life can be demonstrated readily despite the fact that he never cites Lamarck. Throughout the *Collected Works*, Jung’s arguments for the existence of the collective unconscious state that the archetypes were developed as the repeated experiences of our evolutionary ancestors were imprinted on the structure of the brain or the psyche. In 1936, for example, he writes, “There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution . . .”<sup>28</sup> Though Jung occasionally mentions concepts related to the developing genetic theory (“Since the human body is built up by heredity out of a multitude of Mendelian units, it does not seem altogether out of the question that the human psyche is similarly put together.”<sup>29</sup>), he never seems to have assimilated these to any non-Lamarckian understanding of evolution. As Mayr points out, such an attitude was not unprecedented; even many of the “leading Mendelians . . . did not adopt natural selection.”<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>Peter Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti -Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades around 1900* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983) 103.

<sup>27</sup>Jung, “Instinct and the Unconscious,” CW 8, 268.

<sup>28</sup>Jung, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious,” CW 9i, 99.

<sup>29</sup>Jung, “Archaic Man,” CW 10, 141 (1931).

<sup>30</sup>Mayer 132.

Nowhere are Jung's Lamarckian preconceptions more important than in his seminal essay "The Structure of the Unconscious." Only with these in mind can we make sense of Jung's introduction, and subsequent removal in later articles, of the ideas of "collective psyche" and "persona." Confusion arises in "The Structure of the Unconscious" because he does not make a clear delineation between his discussions of the conscious and the unconscious components of the collective psyche, except *a posteriori* in his summary outline. This confusing lack of demarcation, however, can serve as a clue to the way in which Jung's thinking was biased by his evolutionary presuppositions even after he had more systematically separated these two aspects of his theory later on.

The only way to understand the essay is to realize that the conscious and unconscious components of the collective psyche correspond roughly to what one would today think of as heredity and culture, or the two sides of the nature vs. nurture debate. No debate between the two was yet necessary in the scientific world in which Jung was educated because nature and nurture did not have to be seen as distinct categories. Because in the Lamarckian world that he inhabited there was no fixed dividing line between biology and culture, our categories and Jung's are incommensurable. He had reason to believe that environmental factors could directly alter the body's hereditary information. In this context, it is understandable that Jung might subsume these two influences on the individual under the heading of a single collective psyche.

The necessity of recognizing this dual nature of the collective psyche in "The Structure of the Unconscious" may be proved by an attempt to understand a statement like, "[A collective attitude] derives this characteristic from the collective psyche, which is itself a product of the psychological differentiation of the powerful gregarious instinct in man."<sup>31</sup> Slightly farther along in the article one begins to see what Jung might mean by this rather cryptic statement:

---

<sup>31</sup>CW 7, 459.

Humans have one faculty which, though it is of the greatest utility for collective purposes, is most pernicious for individuation, and that is the faculty of imitation. Collective psychology cannot dispense with imitation, for without it all mass organizations, the State and the social order, are simply impossible. Society is organized, indeed, less by law than by the propensity to imitation . . .<sup>32</sup>

In these passages Jung is describing the strong influence of group dynamics and social identity on the individual psyche. The collective psyche can thus be described as the panoply of social roles and values offered or enforced by society or culture. But this explanation follows the biological argument in which the collective psyche was explained as a derivation of inherited brain structure. To resolve this paradox one must realize that the former explanation pertains to the collective psyche in its conscious manifestation, and the latter to its unconscious manifestation.

This interpretation is supported by a manuscript, “Adaptation, Individuation, Collectivity,” which Jung wrote at approximately the same time as “The Structure of the Unconscious” and seems to be a further elaboration on some of the topics therein, but was only published posthumously in the *Collected Works*. In this manuscript Jung writes:

The collective function may be divided into two functions, which from the “mystical” or metapsychological point of view are identical:

1. The collective function in relation to society.
2. The collective function in relation to the unconscious.<sup>33</sup>

(Jung is not calling his own approach “mystical” but referring to his understanding that mythology, mysticism, and religion depict the psychological world metaphorically in narratives about the external world.) This schema of Jung’s further justifies the interpretation of his collective psyche in “The Structure of the Unconscious” as a

---

<sup>32</sup>CW 7, 463.

<sup>33</sup>CW 18, 1101.

combination of societal or cultural forces and internal or hereditary forces. That Jung only discriminated these two sides explicitly in his summary and in his further ruminations is very telling, inasmuch as it indicates a willingness to consider two categories, which modern science would separate, as a single entity.

While this lack of division was consistent with Lamarckism, it caused a logical inconsistency in Jung's writing that seems a likely candidate for the motivating force in his elimination of the concept of the collective psyche from subsequent writings. The conscious, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious provided a three level schematization of the individual psyche. If, however, the collective unconscious was seen to be part of a single entity (the collective psyche) that contained a conscious aspect located externally in society, an inconsistency arose. The schema for the individual psyche would then, with the addition of the collective conscious, consist of four discernible parts, one of which could not properly be said to reside in the individual. Jung could perhaps have circumvented this difficulty by claiming the collective conscious as the *internalization* of societal roles and values, but the persona already served this role. The collective conscious needed to consist of the whole pool of roles and values from which the individual could draw if it were to be parallel to the collective unconscious, which represented all the universally inherited mental functions from which the individual could draw. To retain consistency with his conception of the individual subject as sandwiched between parallel inner and outer objective worlds, Jung had to consider the conscious portion of the collective psyche an external phenomenon.

In this logically untenable situation, something had to give, and that something proved to be the collective psyche. In order to avoid the inconsistency of implying that culture at large is part of an individual organism, Jung stopped talking about biological inheritance and society as two aspects of a single collective psyche. Their capacity for interaction, however, remained central for his explanation of the manner in which the collective unconscious had arisen evolutionarily. By the following year, Jung had moved

the “collective psyche” with its social, conscious component out of center stage in favor of the collective unconscious. He even occasionally identified the collective psyche with the collective unconscious, despite the fact that originally they were explicitly distinct concepts. In 1917, he writes, “The [non-ego] is the collective psyche or absolute unconscious.”<sup>34</sup> Rather than passing this off as an oversight or as careless language, one might see this change as a sign of Jung’s decision to eliminate the concept of the collective psyche.

This developmental path in Jung’s thought illustrates remarkably well the fact that, for him, the separation between hereditary and cultural influences on the collective unconscious was not a necessary one. In “The Structure of the Unconscious,” where Jung’s developing system is still rather confused, one realizes (or is thrown into confusion by) the fact that biological heredity and culture mix indiscriminately. Though Jung tightened up his explanations later on, it is important to understand that this Lamarckian permissiveness is implicit in his thought even when it does not show up so obviously. Precisely because his first essay on the subject is muddled, we can see more clearly the presuppositions that guided Jung’s thought. Jung’s melding of biology and sociology makes the collective unconscious confusing to the modern reader, but that melding is made possible by Lamarckism.

I include here a brief digression that will be useful for those especially interested in the development of Jung’s theories: Another cause of confusion in “The Structure of the Unconscious” is that Jung was just beginning to make explicit ideas that he would differentiate and systematize to a greater extent in later years; thus, he had not yet sorted out the notion of “persona” very well. Later, the persona becomes more precisely defined as the personality construct that mediates between the subject and the external world. The addition of the complementary concept of the “anima/animus” as the factor that mediates between the subject and the internal world of the collective unconscious creates

---

<sup>34</sup>Jung, “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” 416.

an easily schematized relationship: the persona is to the collective conscious as the anima is to collective unconscious. In “The Structure of the Unconscious,” however, the anima had not yet appeared and the persona seems to have played both roles, somewhat imperfectly; hence the difficulty of making out the relationship between the persona and the two sides of the collective psyche.

### 3.2.2 Racialism

In the previous chapter we saw that Jung incorporated racialism—i.e. the theory that races exist as biological entities and vary physically and/or psychologically, usually according to differences in their evolutionary background—into the theory of the collective unconscious. As Graham Richards notes in his excellent book, *“Race,” Racism, and Psychology*, racialist, and frequently racist, thinking was well ensconced in science in general and in psychology in particular by the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Richards also discusses Jung’s theory specifically, noting that “At its deepest the collective unconscious unites all humanity, but subsidiary collectivities of an ethnic and national character exist at intermediate levels between this and the personal unconscious.”<sup>36</sup> He goes on to analyze Jung’s racialism more in terms of Jung’s personal psychology than in terms of his assumptions about evolution and heredity, claiming that Jung made the mistake of projecting his own preconceptions of different racial characters into his experiences of other races, which then led him to perceive them as archetypically different.<sup>37</sup> It is important to realize, however, that Jung’s racialist thinking was closely related to Lamarckism because Jung assumes that response to environmental factors creates racial variation. The theory of the collective unconscious contains this racialist aspect until at least 1936.

---

<sup>35</sup>See especially Chapter 2, “Psychology and ‘Scientific Racism’ 1860-1910,” in Graham Richards, *“Race”, Racism and Psychology: Towards a Reflexive History* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>36</sup>Richards 167.

<sup>37</sup>Richards 168.

In light of its hereditary nature, one can scarcely be surprised that Jung originally claimed the collective unconscious to be subject to racial variation. Certain essential archetypes Jung believed to be universal, while others varied in their distribution according to their evolutionary age. Mother and Father archetypes, for example, would be universal because the experience of having parents is universal across races and cultures. Other universal archetypes would include the opposite sex (Jung's "anima/animus"), the sun, and the wise old man. In *Psychological Types* (1921), Jung writes:

The primordial image, elsewhere also termed *archetype*, is always collective, i.e., it is at least common to entire peoples or epochs. In all probability the most important mythological motifs are common to all times and races; I have, in fact, been able to demonstrate a whole series of motifs from Greek mythology in the dreams and fantasies of pure-bred Negroes suffering from mental disorders.<sup>38</sup>

Certain gods or psychic functions, however, might be local to certain races due to the formative environment and experiences of their evolution, a phenomenon on which Jung occasionally elaborated. In 1936, for instance, with the rise of National Socialism, Jung wrote an article in which he claimed that the German people were being influenced by a specific archetype—the ancient Germanic tribal god Wotan. Here was an archetype limited to a single race: "Because the behavior of a race takes on its specific character from its underlying images we can speak of an archetype 'Wotan.'"<sup>39</sup> And, "He is a fundamental attribute of the German psyche . . ."<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the collective unconscious is stratified, some layers being more universal than others. In his 1925 seminar on *Analytical Psychology*, Jung presents a diagram that represents the psyche as a geological cross section in which geological strata represent the

---

<sup>38</sup>CW 6, 747. This was St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington D.C., "through the cooperation of its director, Dr. William Alanson White" (CW 6, 747n). For more on Jung's relationship with White see Chapter 4.

<sup>39</sup>Jung, "Wotan," CW 10, 391.

<sup>40</sup>CW 10 389.

layers of the collective unconscious. At the deeper levels all people are the same, but higher up, at the level of nations, clans, and families, valleys divide the collective unconscious into discrete segments.<sup>41</sup>

The racialism of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious has made many of his proponents in the latter half of this century rather nervous, especially because of the ongoing debate on the question of whether Jung was an anti-Semite. Concerns of this kind have led at least one Jungian interpreter to deny the extent to which Jung's theory was racist. Steven Walker writes, "Fortunately, except for a few brief lapses in the 1930's, Jung was consistent in his references to the archetypes of the collective unconscious as the common psychic inheritance of all humanity."<sup>42</sup> This is a gross misrepresentation because the collective unconscious was racially divided from the start. As noted above, in the paragraph immediately following the first presentation of his biological argument, Jung writes, "Inasmuch as there are differentiations corresponding to race, tribe, and even family, there is also a collective psyche limited to race, tribe, and family, over and above the 'universal' collective psyche."<sup>43</sup>

Walker's flawed analysis does not come entirely out of left field, however. While he may not have taken the trouble to research Jung's work before the thirties, from which he could have ascertained that Jung's racialism was well established, he is correct inasmuch as the racist component of Jung's theory disappeared in the mid-thirties never to return. This is the one important scientific element of the theory of the collective unconscious that changed significantly between 1919 and Jung's death in 1961. The most likely explanation for this modification would certainly seem to be the scandal surrounding Jung's alleged anti-Semitism and the accusations of his collaboration with the Nazis.

---

<sup>41</sup>Jung, *Analytical Psychology* 133.

<sup>42</sup>Walker 11.

<sup>43</sup>CW 7, 456.

In fact one can date the turning point to 1936—the same year that “Wotan,” with its decidedly racist tone, was published. Not long after, during that year, Jung published his definitive essay, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious.” Here the archetypes are described as “definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere,”<sup>44</sup> and no mention of a varying racial distribution of archetypes is mentioned, despite the fact that in earlier work Jung’s description of the archetypes as universal did not prevent him from assuming that some were subject to racial variation. By 1938 Jung had specifically begun to deny any racial variation in the collective unconscious:

[I]t must be pointed out that just as the human body shows a common anatomy over and above all racial differences, so, too, the human psyche possesses a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness. I have called this substratum the collective unconscious. This unconscious psyche, common to all mankind, does not consist merely of contents capable of becoming conscious, but of latent predispositions towards identical reactions. The collective unconscious is simply the psychic expression of the identity of brain structure *irrespective of all racial differences*.<sup>45</sup>

In examining the scientific presuppositions that shaped the theory of the collective unconscious, we can not ignore racialism simply because Jung divorced it from his theory after twenty years, for what were most likely political reasons. Jung’s racialism was deeply tied into his Lamarckian understanding of evolution, and the two frameworks combined in one of Jung’s more remarkable arguments. In his 1918 article, “The Role of the Unconscious,” in which he wrote extensively on the differences between the “Aryan European” and the Jew,<sup>46</sup> Jung developed the idea that the “soil” of different lands radically effects the evolution of the races who dwell in them, leading to “a quality in

---

<sup>44</sup>CW 9j, 89.

<sup>45</sup>Jung, “Commentary on ‘The Secret of the Golden Flower,’” CW 13, 11. Emphasis mine. (This is a revision of an earlier version published in 1929.)

<sup>46</sup>CW 10, 18.

man which roots him to the earth and draws new strength from below.”<sup>47</sup> Jung diagnosed the Jew as having “too little of this quality” because he has no homeland (“where has he his own earth underfoot?”), but of the German he claimed, “This chthonic quality is found in dangerous concentration in the Germanic peoples.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, neither race got off scot-free in this mass psychoanalysis.

While it probably strikes the modern reader as odd that Jung would write, “The soil of every country holds some such mystery,” and that “just as there is a relationship of mind to body, so there is a relationship of body to earth,”<sup>49</sup> these sentiments of rootedness in a mystical landscape were in fact quite common to the major Volkish trend in German culture at that time, as Noll documents extensively in *The Jung Cult* and *The Aryan Christ*. What is most interesting about Jung’s use of these ideas, however, is that, as with the Romantic philosophers’ unconscious, he remakes them into scientific theory. Jung is clearly not entirely comfortable speaking in the language of Volkish mysticism to his intended audience here; after the remark about the relationship of the mind to the earth he writes, “I hope the reader will pardon my figurative way of speaking, and will try to grasp what I mean.”<sup>50</sup> Clearly Jung would like his argument to sound more scientific.

His attempt to rectify this problem consists in adding anatomical evidence from America to the equation. Following his “soil” diagnoses of Germans and Jews, he writes, “The mystery of the earth is no joke and no paradox. One only needs to see how, in America, the skull and pelvis measurements of all the European races begin to indianize themselves in the second generation of immigrants.”<sup>51</sup> This represents Jung’s attempt to include scientific evidence for his claim. The source of this data is unclear, however, unless one happens to read another of Jung’s articles on a similar topic, published in 1931 and titled “Mind and Earth.” There he writes, “Boas has shown that anatomical changes

---

<sup>47</sup>CW 10, 18.

<sup>48</sup>CW 10, 18.

<sup>49</sup>CW 10, 19.

<sup>50</sup>CW 10, 19.

<sup>51</sup>CW 10, 18.

begin already in the second generation of immigrants, chiefly in the measurements of the skull. At all events the ‘Yankee’ type is formed, and this is . . . similar to the Indian type,” despite the fact that “admixture of Indian blood is increasingly small, so it plays no role.”<sup>52</sup> Jung’s source may thus be identified as the influential American anthropologist, Franz Boas.

Boas (1858-1942), often called the father of American anthropology, did indeed publish, in his 1911 book *The Mind of Primitive Man*, the findings to which Jung refers. Jung, however, modifies Boas’ conclusions somewhat to suit his purposes. While Boas does claim that either “the influence of natural selection” or “the direct influence of the environment” may be responsible for the varying human types, a statement that might be interpreted as an acceptance of a Lamarckian as well as a Darwinian mode of evolution, he does not seem to assume that the influence of the environment has an effect on heredity, but rather on each generation individually.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, he discusses the influence of the environment and heredity in separate chapters. Nor does he state explicitly that Americans become “indianized”; his only reference to Indians in the discussion in question is a brief comparison between the way Americans and “many Indian tribes” swaddle their babies.<sup>54</sup>

What must have particularly drawn Jung’s attention was Boas’ claim that he could only find evidence for the environmental factor:

I cannot give any example in which the influence of selection has been proved beyond cavil. . . . On the other hand, it has been my good fortune to be able to demonstrate the existence of a direct influence of environment upon the bodily form of man by a comparison of immigrants born in Europe and their descendants born in New York City.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup>CW 10, 94. For further discussion of this article see Noll, *The Jung Cult* 96.

<sup>53</sup>Franz Boas, *The Mind Primitive Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1911) 52.

<sup>54</sup>Boas (1911) 59.

<sup>55</sup>Boas (1911) 53.

What he found was that “head-measurements” of various European types change from the generation of immigrants to the generation of their American-born descendants. To be fair to Jung, Boas does claim that head-measurement is a trait “primarily dependent on heredity.”<sup>56</sup> His exploration of possible explanations for change in this trait, however, focuses on phenomena, such as the handling of infants, that might cause the change not because of heredity but because of environmental factors in individual development. Unlike Jung, Boas does not come to the conclusion that the American soil is responsible. He does not, in fact, come to any definitive conclusion, rejecting most of the hypotheses he considers, and thereby leaves his readers, Jung included, to speculate on the true cause of this phenomena. What Jung concludes shows the intermingling of racialist and Lamarckian presuppositions with his German cultural background.

### **3.2.3 Degeneration, the Biogenetic Law, and the Primitive Mind**

Three common ideas from the *fin de siècle* that were largely predicated on racialist and Lamarckian ideas are worth examining briefly in light of their importance to Jung. These are degeneration, the Biogenetic Law, and the primitive mind. Degeneration theory became the obsession of a time when urbanization, industrialization, and over-population seemed to be leading to an increasing corruption of the moral and physical health of civilization and its component parts—nations, societies, individuals. It was predicated on the assumption that evolution was a two-way street; what could be done could be undone. In a squalid or otherwise unfortunate environment an organism might begin to degenerate, falling back into more primitive evolutionary states. Thus the expanding cities, with their dirt, their crime and their vice, were seen as driving the degeneration of modern man. Not only could an individual be driven down the evolutionary ladder, by indulgence in alcohol or prostitution for example, but that taint of degeneracy could then be passed on to his or her offspring in the Lamarckian mode. In

---

<sup>56</sup>Boas (1911) 54

subsequent generations, in fact, degeneration was often thought to grow progressively worse; thus a father might be an alcoholic, his children thieves or hysterics, and their children outright madmen and imbeciles. In his years at the Burghölzli clinic, Jung frequently discussed degeneration and hereditary taint in his diagnoses.<sup>57</sup> Though he stopped referring to the concept explicitly after that time, his general concern with the negative effects of modernity can certainly be related to the cultural obsession with degeneration.<sup>58</sup> It was, perhaps, his focus on the possibility of upward psychological progress—“individuation”—which he believed to come from contact with the collective unconscious, that led him away from the idea of degeneration in the context of individual psychology. In Jung’s analytical psychology, individuals can be redeemed, no matter how unfortunate their family inheritance, as long as they can tap into the more universal inheritance of the collective unconscious.

Degeneration theory relied on the progressive, Lamarckian view of evolution, in which man, and specifically civilized European man, was at the top of the Great Chain of Being, the proud outcome of a long, upward evolutionary journey. If civilized man was at the top, slightly beneath him must have been the primitive roots from which he sprang, roots toward which he would descend if subjected to forces of degeneration. Because evolution was a process effective at the time scale of a mere generation or two in a family or even the course of an individual lifetime, it seemed reasonable to posit that the process of man’s development was not distinct from his evolution in the larger time scale of history. This sort of thinking led to the famous Biogenetic Law of Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), the great popularizer of biology and evolution in the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

The Biogenetic Law states that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, in other words that an individual organism, in its own development, goes through all of the stages that its species went through in its evolutionary development. Though the formulation of this

---

<sup>57</sup>See for example, Jung “On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena,” CW 1, 113.

<sup>58</sup>Homans, in *Jung in Context*, identifies modernity as one of the major themes of Jung’s thought.

<sup>59</sup>Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution* 13.

“law” was based largely on what have long since been shown to be merely superficial similarities between embryonic development and phylogenetic development, around the turn of the century the Biogenetic Law was indeed treated as absolute law by many scientists, Jung included. Early in his career, Jung’s most explicit invocation of the biogenetic law appears in *Wandlungen*, where he argued that its validity might be extended from biology to psychology:

All this experience suggests to us that we draw a parallel between the phantastical, mythological thinking of antiquity and the similar thinking of children, between the lower human races and dreams. This train of thought is not a strange one for us, but quite familiar through our knowledge of comparative anatomy and the history of development, which show us how the structure and function of the human body are the results of a series of embryonic changes which correspond to similar changes in the history of the race. Therefore, the supposition is justified that ontogenesis corresponds in psychology to phylogenesis. Consequently, it would be true, as well, that the state of infantile thinking in the child’s psychic life, as well as in dreams, is nothing but a re-echo of the prehistoric and the ancient.<sup>60</sup>

That Jung still employed the concept of the Biogenetic Law well into his later life may be demonstrated by quoting from an article published in 1928, in which he writes, “This possibility of regression to the primitive stage is explained by the fundamental Biogenetic Law which holds good not only for the development of the body, but also in all probability for that of the psyche.”<sup>61</sup> While the biogenetic law may still have possessed a limited measure of credibility when Jung first developed the theory of the collective unconscious, one can scarcely question that it was wholly discredited by 1950, when Jung performed a major rewriting of *Wandlungen*, referring to it as one of the “sins of my youth”<sup>62</sup> and citing the need to bring it up to date with the knowledge he had gained in the intervening forty years. Nonetheless, he saw fit to leave the passage cited above virtually

---

<sup>60</sup>*Wandlungen* 36.

<sup>61</sup>Jung, “Child Development and Education,” CW 17, 104.

<sup>62</sup>CW 5, p. xxiii.

unchanged, writing that we know “from comparative anatomy and from evolution” of the “correspondence between ontogenesis and phylogenesis”<sup>63</sup>

The Biogenetic Law held sway over Jung’s thought throughout his life, and it largely dictated what he saw as acceptable evidence for the collective unconscious. In “The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes” (1917) he writes:

In order to understand the language of dreams, we need plenty of parallels from the psychology of primitive peoples, as well as from historical symbolism. This is so because dreams originate in the unconscious, which contains the residual potentialities of function of all preceding epochs of the history of the evolution of man.<sup>64</sup>

Apparent in this passage, and in the others quoted above relating to the Biogenetic Law, is the idea of the primitive mind. Not only children but whole races, if they were primitive or “uncivilized” (for which may usually be read “non-White”), constituted examples of earlier evolutionary stages. Psychologically, this meant that their minds were primitive, less conscious—exactly as civilized man’s had been in the earlier stages of his evolution, in other words. The culture of primitive races was, thus, the perfect laboratory in which for Jung to study the nature of the collective unconscious because Jung believed the collective unconscious to be precisely the presence of this evolutionary past in modern man, underlying the thin veneer of his civilized conscious mind.

This idea of the primitive mind of primitive races was very popular around the turn of the century and is represented in some of Jung’s sources that are rarely acknowledged. One of its more outspoken proponents was the French sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), whom Jung cites heavily. One of his books is titled “Primitive Mentality,” and he employed two concepts that resonated strongly with Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious, *participation mystique* (mystical participation) and *représentations collective* (collective representations). Though neither of these concepts

---

<sup>63</sup>CW 5, 26.

<sup>64</sup>Jung, *Collected Papers* 422.

incorporated biology and heredity the way Jung's theory did, Lévy-Bruhl's assumption that the primitive was a largely unconscious participant in a group culture (*participation mystique*), in which the individual was not differentiated and group thoughts (*représentations collective*) were shared in the form of mythology and religion, bore an obvious similarity to Jung's concept of the collective unconscious. Such was the affinity of Lévy-Bruhl's concepts to Jung's ideas that in *Psychological Types* he gives *participation mystique* its own entry in his chapter of "Definitions" and begins his definition of "collective" with these sentences: "I term *collective* all psychic contents that belong not to one individual but to many, i.e., to a society, a people, or to mankind in general. Such contents are what Lévy-Bruhl calls the *représentations collective* of primitives . . ."65

Boas was another of Jung's sources interested in the primitive mind. His book with which we know Jung to have been familiar was "The Mind of Primitive Man" (1911). Though Boas specifically disavowed the more negative aspects of racialism in his extensive 1938 revision of this work, arguing that it was not the primitiveness of a race that made its culture less like Western culture,<sup>66</sup> in 1911, like Jung and others, he was still deeply embedded in this sort of nineteenth-century thinking.

### 3.3 Organic Memory and Vitalism

The final components of Jung's scientific framework here discussed are derived from theories less widely accepted in the early twentieth century than Lamarckism and racialism, theories of organic memory and vitalism. Both of these scientific movements were based on the idea that there was something different about life, something special. Organic matter, they argued, didn't seem to be subject to the same laws as non-living,

---

<sup>65</sup>CW 6, 692.

<sup>66</sup>Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1938) 3.

inorganic matter. Both movements occupied a similar time-frame around the turn of the century.

Theories of organic memory tried to synthesize the phenomena of memory and heredity by positing a single biological substrate for both, in which organic matter stored information, usually at the cellular level, in such a way that it could be accessed later by the same organism or passed on to another organism in reproduction. One would, thereby, in essence embody the memories of one's ancestors. Organic memory was, among other things, an attempt to create a mechanism for heredity at a time when no such mechanism had yet been discovered. Organic memory was Lamarckian in that individual memories were not categorically distinguished from the racial "memories" that constituted inheritance.

Richard Semon (1859-1918) was the originator of one of the most articulated theories of organic memory. We saw Jung make reference to Semon's concept of "ecphoration" in the discussion of cryptomnesia above, and, in fact, the two men knew each other in Zurich before the first world war.<sup>67</sup> Semon was a German and came to Switzerland having been Haeckel's protégé.<sup>68</sup> His 1904 book, *Die Mneme als erhaltendes Prinzip im Wechsel des organischen Geschehens*, translated into English as *The Mneme*, was a late entry in the organic memory tradition.<sup>69</sup> Because Semon did not believe memory and heredity to be distinct phenomena, he invented a new term for their unity which was "mneme." Semon also invented several other terms in the creation of his theory. "Mneme" referred to "the capacity of organic material to maintain an aftereffect of stimulation."<sup>70</sup> This specific lasting aftereffect he called an "engram," and the

---

<sup>67</sup>Harrington 243.

<sup>68</sup>Daniel Schacter, *Stranger Behind the Engram* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982) 14.

<sup>69</sup>Laura Otis *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 27. Strangely, though Otis discusses both Semon and Jung in this book, she fails to discuss Semon's influence on Jung or otherwise connect the two men.

<sup>70</sup>Otis 28

reappearance or “remembering” of the engram—“its awakening from a latent to a manifest state”—he called “ecphory.”<sup>71</sup>

The term “vitalism” appeared in the late-eighteenth century to denote theoretical systems that claimed the need to posit a principle or power unique to living matter, a vital force, often nonmaterial, that could account for the self-organizing, generative, and teleological qualities of life.<sup>72</sup> The popularity, if not general acceptance, of these ideas in science continued throughout the nineteenth century and even into the first half of the twentieth. Vitalism experienced a resurgence in the fin de siècle, especially in Germany, where it represented an opposition to the dominant mechanistic materialism, an opposition that Jung shared. At the turn of the century, one of the most influential proponents of vitalism was the biologist Hans Driesch (1876-1941), whose embryological experiments convinced him that ontogenesis could not be explained mechanistically. Borrowing a term from Aristotle, Driesch named his vital force “entelechy.” Driesch’s entelechy was the “autonomous, nonmaterial, teleological principle,” that directed embryological development and other phenomena unique to living things.<sup>73</sup>

William McDougall (1871-1938), a Harvard psychologist, was an important late proponent of vitalism, or “animism” as he called it in his book, *Body and Mind: A History and a Defense of Animism*, which was first published in 1911. Not only was McDougall in favor of a vitalist theory of life, he was also a prominent Lamarckian, publishing experimental results in 1927 “that seemed to show that rats inherited from their parents the knowledge of how to run mazes.”<sup>74</sup> Jung was undoubtedly familiar with McDougall’s work, despite the fact that he rarely cited it. He knew McDougall, gave him several sessions of analysis in 1920-21, reviewed an article of his in 1921, and even

---

<sup>71</sup>Otis 28.

<sup>72</sup>Thomas Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969) 105.

<sup>73</sup>Harrington 51.

<sup>74</sup>Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism* 102.

referred to him in a lecture in 1935 as “my friend McDougall.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, he owned a copy of *Body and Mind* as well as several other of McDougall’s books.<sup>76</sup>

Although Jung does not cite the organic memory theorists or the vitalists frequently, their ideas were nonetheless fundamental to his understanding of life and psychological phenomena.<sup>77</sup> Amusingly, Jung’s only citation of Driesch before the 1950s deems his theory too philosophical.<sup>78</sup> This criticism notwithstanding, Jung occasionally employed the term “entelechy,” though without citing Driesch. In 1944, he writes of “the entelechy of the self” as equivalent to the “evolving self.”<sup>79</sup> More important than his use of the term itself, however, is his extensive reliance on a nearly indistinguishable concept—that of psychological development or evolution guided by the promptings of the “self.” The self, in Jung’s usage, may be regarded as the vital force of the psyche; it is at the same time the whole of the psyche, the goal toward which psychological development progresses, and the psyche’s guiding principle. The Jungian self is, in short, a holistic concept of potentiality that is analogous to the concept of entelechy—in light of Jung’s usage, one can only wonder what he found too philosophical in Driesch.

Jung first began to elaborate such a concept well before he had added “self” to his terminology. In 1916, the foundation of Jung’s vitalist conception for the collective unconscious may be found in section five of “The Structure of the Unconscious,” where he refers to the “natural urge of life.”<sup>80</sup> There he argues that information revealed through contact with the impersonal unconscious constitutes information about the natural path of the unfolding development of the organism. Jung may not use the term “entelechy” here,

---

<sup>75</sup>Jung, “The Tavistock Lectures,” CW 18, 142.

<sup>76</sup>C. G. Jung *Bibliotek Katalog* (Küsnacht-Zurich: 1967) 48.

<sup>77</sup>This may be qualified by saying that while Jung rarely cited vitalists in science, he did cite frequently the vitalist philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), whom Horst Freyhofer describes as Driesch’s counterpart in philosophy (Horst Freyhofer, *The Vitalism of Hans Driesch* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982) 13). Bergson called his vital force *élan vital*, a term which Jung occasionally employed (e.g. Jung, “A Contribution to the Study of Psychological Types,” CW 6, 871).

<sup>78</sup>Jung, “The Structure of the Psyche,” CW 8, 368 (1927).

<sup>79</sup>Jung, “The Holy Men of India,” CW 11, 960.

<sup>80</sup>CW 7, 488.

but the vitalist nature of the concept is clear, nonetheless. Jung's conception of the function of the collective unconscious continues always to be framed in such a way that it seems clearly related to vitalism. After a discussion of the influence of theories of organic memory on Jung's thought, we will return to evidence that links Jung even more strongly to the vitalist concept that life operates under different laws than the rest of the physical universe.

In his 1921 book, *Psychological Types*, Jung cites Semon on two occasions, the first being a passing reference to *The Meme* to identify Semon's concept of mneme with the collective unconscious.<sup>81</sup> Semon's removal of the boundary between individual memory and heredity was a perfect match for Jung's Lamarckian understanding of the origins of the collective unconscious. The second and perhaps the more important reference is found in the back of the book in the chapter "Definitions," which represents the only time Jung attempted systematically to list and codify his terminology. There Semon's engram is identified with the primordial image or archetype. Jung also mentions this connection to Semon's engrams in "On the Psychology of the Unconscious."<sup>82</sup> Of these references, it is in *Psychological Types* that one finds the most extensive discussion of this connection and in which Jung makes a crucial modification of Semon's theory. Jung writes:

From the scientific, causal standpoint the primordial image can be conceived as a mnemonic deposit, an imprint or *engram* (Semon), which has arisen through the condensation of countless processes of a similar kind. . . . From this standpoint it is a psychic expression of the physiological and anatomical disposition. If one holds the view that a particular anatomical structure is a product of environmental conditions working on living matter, then the primordial image, in its constant and universal distribution, would be the product of equally constant and universal influences from

---

<sup>81</sup>CW 6, 376&n. "The psychic structure is the same as what Semon calls 'mneme' and what I call the 'collective unconscious.'"

<sup>82</sup>CW 7, 159. It is difficult for the material in this paper, originally published in English in 1917 as "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes," to be located definitively in time because of two major revisions, in 1926 and 1943, but, as the reference to Semon does not appear in the original and Jung's only other mentions of Semon and engrams come from the 1920's, 1926 seems likelier than 1943.

without, which must, therefore, act like a natural law. One could in this way relate myths to nature, as for instance solar myths to the daily rising and setting of the sun . . .<sup>83</sup>

However, Jung claims, this can not account for the symbolic or allegorical use of these images of natural phenomena by the psyche—if this sort of “imprinting” was the only factor in producing the archetypes, such phenomena as the passage of the sun should appear in undisguised, literal representations in the psyche. “The fact that the sun or the moon or the meteorological processes appear, at the very least, in allegorized form points to an independent collaboration of the psyche, which in that case cannot be merely a product or stereotype of environmental conditions.”<sup>84</sup> What Jung goes on to say constitutes an embellishment of organic memory theory with the principles of vitalism:

In view of such questions Semon’s naturalistic and causalistic engram theory no longer suffices. We are forced to assume that the given structure of the brain does not owe its peculiar nature merely to the influence of surrounding conditions, but also and just as much to the peculiar and autonomous quality of living matter, i.e. to a law inherent in life itself. The given constitution of the organism, therefore, is on the one hand a product of external conditions, while on the other it is determined by the intrinsic nature of living matter.<sup>85</sup>

The notion that “living matter” is fundamentally different from non-living matter marks this irrevocably as a vitalistic argument. In *The Jung Cult*, Noll notes Jung’s explicit endorsement of vitalism in the Zofingia lectures from his days as a medical student (Jung says, “. . . it is necessary to postulate the existence of a vital principle”<sup>86</sup>). Furthermore, he has very recently uncovered the fact that the medical faculty at Basel University, where Jung studied, was one of the only ones in Europe to embrace the new vitalism of the fin

---

<sup>83</sup>CW 6, 748.

<sup>84</sup>CW 6, 748.

<sup>85</sup>CW 6, 748.

<sup>86</sup>Noll, *The Jung Cult* 142.

de siècle.<sup>87</sup> While Noll, in *The Jung Cult*, claims that Jung kept these views throughout his life, he does not offer evidence from Jung's later years to support this claim.<sup>88</sup> The above passage from *Psychological Types* is exactly the evidence needed to prove that Jung was still a vitalist when he developed and codified his analytical psychology.

Furthermore, evidence may also be found that Jung still embraced vitalism toward the end of his life. Consider the following passage from Jung's paper, "Synchronicity, An Acausal Connecting Principle," written in the early 1950s:

Agrippa is thus suggesting that there is an inborn "knowledge" or "perception" in living organisms, an idea which recurs in our own day in Hans Driesch. Whether we like it or not, we find ourselves in this embarrassing position as soon as we begin seriously to reflect on the teleological processes in biology or to investigate the compensatory function of the unconscious, not to speak of trying to explain the phenomenon of synchronicity. Final causes, twist them how we will, postulate a *foreknowledge of some kind*.<sup>89</sup>

Here Jung cites Driesch, the paragon of vitalism, and goes on to claim that his idea must be accepted to explain biological, psychological and "synchronistic" (meaningfully coincidental) phenomena. That he now acknowledges such a theory as "embarrassing" indicates an awareness that such a theory is no longer acceptable in the scientific community even to a minority, as it had been in the 1910s and 20s. Jung holds fast to his anachronistic axiom nonetheless.

Jung's vitalism contributed more to rendering him out of touch with mainstream science than any of his other scientific presuppositions. Jung's reasons for holding fast to such an idea all the way through the 1950s are difficult to fathom. Perhaps he simply never got his mind around the fact that a plausible mechanistic explanation for the teleological nature of life could be devised—i.e. that life maintains itself in a goal-

---

<sup>87</sup>Richard Noll, "Jung's Concept of 'Die Dominanten' ('The Dominants'): The Neovitalism of the Basle Medical Faculty and Its Influence on Jung's Later Theories," [online: web] Cited 11 March 1998, URL: <http://www.jungindex.net/noll/dominants.html> (posted March 98).

<sup>88</sup>Noll, *The Jung Cult* 143.

<sup>89</sup>CW 8, 931.

directed manner because only those processes, arising by chance through mutation, that cause organisms to strive toward survival and reproduction endure. More likely, however, he simply could never accept such an explanation because of the anti-Darwinian preconceptions (not to mention anti-mechanistic sentiments) that he had always held.

His interest in the parapsychology of J. B. Rhine (1895-1980),<sup>90</sup> and indeed in all supernatural phenomena, undoubtedly colored his view as well; in terms of embarrassment, Jung's theory of synchronicity must have been even greater than vitalism, inasmuch as it demands an interaction between the individual psyche and what should be (by the standards of science) chance events in its environment. Rhine's claim to have successfully proved the existence of ESP through experimentation fueled Jung's belief in such a possibility. That Jung apparently revised his opinion of Driesch at this point (or at least became willing to acknowledge the importance of his theories openly) might have something to do with his familiarity with Driesch's interest in parapsychology.<sup>91</sup>

### **3.5 The Plausibility of Jung's Theory**

Having reviewed the scientific context in which Jung introduced his theory of the collective unconscious in late teens and early twenties, we are in a position to say that Jung's theory would not have been scientifically implausible. While Jung's vitalistic conception of the *function* of the collective unconscious might have seemed rather doubtful to all but the minority like Driesch and McDougall who endorsed vitalism, the more basic conjecture simply of the *existence* of a phylogenetic and racial collective unconscious, created by evolutionary adaptation through repeated life experiences and capable of being investigated in children, primitives, and even civilized people through application of the Biogenetic Law, should not have required much of a stretch for a fair

---

<sup>90</sup>Jung cites Rhine extensively in "Synchronicity: An A Causal Connecting Principle" CW 8.

<sup>91</sup>Jung owned Driesch's 1932 book *Parapsychologie* (*C.G. Jung Bibliothek Katalog* 20). For more on Driesch's parapsychoylogy see "Vitalism and Parapsychology," in Freyhofer 151.

number of scientists before 1930. The following chapter examines the reception of the collective unconscious in the 1910s and 1920s by the academic community.

## **Chapter 4. The Reception of the Collective Unconscious**

In order to shed further light on the historical context of the collective unconscious, we must examine its reception. Given that Jung's theory of the collective unconscious can not be considered beyond scientific plausibility in the 1910s and 20s, what were the critical responses to it from the scientific community during that time and why? If it could not have been rejected as wholly unscientific, one would expect to find at least some positive response, or at least some that was not wholly negative.

What one finds generally, however, is a puzzling silence. Very little response to Jung's theory ever took place outside of the Freudian and Jungian circles. Within those circles the predictable dichotomy is evident. The former derided it as spurious, mystical, and unnecessary, the latter accepted it unquestioningly. This overall picture is supported by the literature on the topic that will be reviewed here, published mainly in the twenties. Criticism, positive or negative, is difficult to find outside those two groups. What little there is to be found, however, supports my conclusion, as some of it is quite positive.

My survey of the critical response to Jung's theory is limited to materials that were written or translated in English. The response of continental Europe, with the exception of the Freudians, is uncertain. Jung's theory found favor in Germany with the rise of National Socialism because, though Jung may not have meant it to be explicitly racist, it was nonetheless a racialist theory that made a distinction between the Germanic psyche and the Jewish psyche and was easily assimilable to National Socialist ideals. Jung's status in Germany prior to the Nazi period is not documented, however. It would also be useful to pin down any French response that may have existed.

An important resource for research on Jung's reception is Joseph Vincie and Margreta Rathbauer-Vincie's *C. G. Jung and Analytical Psychology: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (1977), which attempts to list all publications concerning themselves with Jung's psychology since as early as 1910. All of the works cited in the following discussion (other than Jung's), with the exception of the article by William Alanson

White and the book by M. K. Bradby, may be found in the Vincies' book. Though helpful, the book confirms the remarkable lack of response to Jung in the 1910s and 20s, especially in the non-German-speaking world. Whereas by the 1950s from five to ten pages are required to list all the sources from a single year, the fourteen years from 1916-1930 require only four pages. After reviewing what little response existed, I will speculate on this puzzling silence.

#### 4.1 Jungian and Freudian Responses

In the 1920s, three of Jung's female followers, Joan Corrie, Constance Long, and Beatrice Hinkle (the first two British and the last American), published their own books on psychoanalysis. Though none of these women deviate far from Jung's theory, some interesting variation from Jung's biological argument may be found in their presentations of the theory of the collective unconscious.

In *A B C of Jung's Psychology* (1927), Corrie gives a straightforward exposition of the basics of Jung's psychology, accomplishing her stated goal "to place before the educated layman the principal psychological views and theories of Dr. Jung of Zurich, in simple and untechnical language"<sup>1</sup>; one can only wish that Jung had ever been so concise. In introducing the topic of the collective unconscious, she writes, "Man is the 'heir of all the ages' by virtue of the collective unconscious. It is the soil formed by age-long deposits of mental processes in which the roots of the psyche are deeply imbedded."<sup>2</sup> Her scientific explanation for this is similar to Jung's with one important exception—she blends contradictory theories of soft and hard heredity:

Every experience passed through by man in his long ascent from the lower forms of life has left its mark in the psyche; for even as physically the germ-cells pass unchanged from one generation to another, so traces of experiences lived through ancestrally, and repeated millions of times, are

---

<sup>1</sup>Joan Corrie, *A B C of Jung's Psychology* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1927) ix.

<sup>2</sup>Corrie 16.

imprinted in the structure of the brain, and, handed down through the centuries, reappear in dreams and in otherwise unaccountable reactions.<sup>3</sup>

This passage is consistent with Jung's Lamarckian understanding of the "imprinting" of repeated experiences on brain structure, but it also makes refers to the "hard" theory that "germ-cells pass unchanged from one generation to another." Corrie's usage may indicate simply a lack of understanding as to the function of "germ-cells" (an older term for the units of hard heredity that were unchanged by the life of the organism, which began to be replaced by "gene" around 1910) it may also indicate that, because theories of heredity had not yet solidified, melding two of them would have not have been entirely unacceptable for someone with Lamarckian sympathies. At any rate, the Lamarckian acquisition of traits is the only one she seems to find relevant to Jung's theories, going on to describe the archetypes as "forms into which repeated ancestral experiences have moulded the typically human mode of apprehension" and as "images imprinted in the brain substance."<sup>4</sup>

Constance Long's writings in *Collected Papers on the Psychology of Phantasy* (1921) display more autonomy from Jung's thought than either Corrie's or Hinkle's. Long does not hesitate to elaborate Jung's theories with original thought of her own. The papers in this volume rarely mention the collective unconscious, focusing on other topics; Long seems to have been particularly interested in the theory of psychological types. Also, several of the papers are on the psychology of children, a topic of only marginal interest to Jung. Her most extensive discussion of the collective unconscious runs as follows:

The unconscious mind is pre-existent to the conscious mind. It is a racial possession, common to all, and is not acquired during the lifetime. To distinguish this primordial portion of the mind Jung calls it the *collective or impersonal unconscious*. Its organ, the brain, is an ancestral inheritance,

---

<sup>3</sup>Corrie 16.

<sup>4</sup>Corrie 17.

and possesses the pre-formed instincts and archetypes of apprehension, which are present as potentialities of future thought and feeling. As consciousness emerges out of unconsciousness, the mind climbs up its genealogical tree as the body has done; that is, its function becomes more and more differentiated.<sup>5</sup>

The last sentence of this passage should be read to refer not only to phylogeny but also to ontogeny, as evidenced by her subsequent description of the child's developing consciousness.<sup>6</sup> In light of Long's fascination with child psychology and development, it comes as no surprise that she focuses on the recapitulation of phylogenetic development in the growth of the individual, the climb up the "genealogical tree." Jung's assimilation of the Biogenetic Law is of more interest to her than his argument for the biological acquisition of the archetypes in the first place. When she occasionally mentions the collective unconscious throughout the rest of the book, she refers to it as an "inheritance" without going into detail on the justification for Jung's position.

Beatrice Hinkle's book, *The Re-Creating of the Individual: A Study of Psychological Types and Their Relation to Psychoanalysis* (1923), focuses on Jung's psychological types, but, being enthusiastically Jungian, emphasizes the collective unconscious as a necessary theory for understanding psychological phenomena in general:

Jung has offered a practical method avoiding confusion by differentiating the unconscious into the *collective unconscious* when the contents and activity belong to racial inheritance, and the *personal unconscious* when they belong to individual experience.<sup>7</sup>

In her argumentation, the blurring between cultural and biological inheritance that is so crucial to Jung's way of thinking is not particularly explicit. Though she speaks of

---

<sup>5</sup>Constance Long, *Collected Papers on the Psychology of Phantasy* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1921) 16.

<sup>6</sup>Long 17.

<sup>7</sup>Beatrice Hinkle, *The Re-Creating of the Individual: A Study of Psychological Types and Their Relation to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923) 109.

“racial inheritance” she does not make it clear that this inheritance is biological, embedded in “brain structure.” Instead the cultural aspect is emphasized:

[The] succession of generations has gradually produced through eons of time a great cultural past; the activity and effort involved in the production of these achievements has influenced the general human psyche during the slow evolution of the race out of its complete *participation mystique*. . .

In this way the great modification of impulse and psychic development shown in the complexity of culture has been produced, and these effects of racial activity are gradually added to the original impulse activity to form the content of the unconscious. This aspect of the unconscious belongs to the racial inheritance in general. . .<sup>8</sup>

It is characteristic of Hinkle’s language in general that one could infer a biological basis for racial inheritance from this passage, as undoubtedly Jung would have, but does not absolutely need to in order to understand the sense of her argument. This ambiguity suggests the possibility that not all disciples of Jung felt the need to adhere rigidly to his more biologically oriented assumptions.

Freudians, on the other hand, were not interested in Jungian theory in any form. When they deigned to mention Jung’s theories at all, they did so only to dismiss them as mystical nonsense. In a 1928 article in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, titled “On some of the Standpoints of Freud and Jung,” John Rickman offers a fairly concise sample of the Freudians’ general opinion of Jung and the collective unconscious. “Jung,” he writes mockingly, “offers [the patient] the unlimited possibility of attuning himself to the Collective Unconscious, the medium through which the Divine is made manifest.”<sup>9</sup> After holding up Freud’s conception of analysis for admiration, he concludes his attack on Jung’s collective unconscious by writing that “these views about God and the Collective Unconscious are a myth, themselves a sign of infantile thinking and emotional fixation.” Such derision characterizes the Freudian reception of Jung’s modifications of psychoanalysis.

---

<sup>8</sup>Hinkle 108.

<sup>9</sup>John Rickman, “On Some of the Standpoints of Freud and Jung,” *British Journal of Medical Psychology*

## 4.2 Other Responses

More interesting perhaps than the predictably stereotyped responses of Jungians and Freudians is the rare response from someone outside these insular circles. I discuss three such responses below. Both favorable and unfavorable responses to the theory of the collective unconscious are represented, and what is most interesting is that all tend to give at least some credence to Jung's scientific presuppositions. The favorable responses in particular give credence to the kind of evolutionary and biological reasoning that Jung employed.

In 1919, a woman named M. K. Bradby, who was the friend and possible lover of Constance Long but not herself a Jungian,<sup>10</sup> published an introductory level exposition of psychoanalysis titled, *Psycho-Analysis and Its Place in Life*. Her approach is more eclectic than strictly Freudian, drawing when necessary on Jung, James, or others, but when it comes to the collective unconscious she is quite skeptical. When giving an example of a situation in which she claims conscious motives are in conflict with unconscious motives (notably a religious ritual), she writes:

With Samuel Butler or Professor Jung, some people may be inclined to see in the above example an instance of "inherited racial memory." . . . It is an attractive and romantic theory, but we see no good evidence so far adduced in its support, and it certainly is superfluous. All that we can be shown to have inherited is the capacity for instinctive action.<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted that she does not disagree with Jung's idea that there are "archaic mental traits,"<sup>12</sup> but she limits these to the instincts. Yet even while she denies the necessity of looking to heredity to explain certain types of thought, she endorses the

---

<sup>10</sup>She appears as MKB in Long's diary. See Noll, *The Aryan Christ*, Chapter 11: "The Passion of Constance Long."

<sup>11</sup>Bradby, *Psychoanalysis and Its Place in Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1919) 21.

<sup>12</sup>Bradby 21.

concept of the primitive mind, writing, “The desires and instincts of the civilized man of today are those of the primitive, . . .”<sup>13</sup> Even from a dissenting voice, one sees that certain of Jung’s presuppositions are not necessarily unusual enough to be questioned in the scientific context of 1919.

In 1923, a British psychoanalyst named J. H. van der Hoop, published a rare non-partisan examination of both Freud and Jung’s theories, titled *Character and the Unconscious: A Critical Exposition of the Psychology of Freud and Jung*. Hoop does not take sides against Freud or Jung, but rather portrays their theories in general as complementary, each making up for something left out of the other. This model is upheld in his discussion of the collective unconscious:

Freud’s theory, which emphasizes repression, seems unsatisfactory, because he does not sufficiently take into account the development of new possibilities out of unconscious impulses. Jung, on the other hand, regards the unconscious more as the inherited disposition, . . . He gives the name of “the collective unconscious” to that part of the mind which in the course of ages has been determined by the inherited form of brain-structure, . . .<sup>14</sup>

Neither Freud nor Jung is presented as wrong, however, Freud simply emphasizes “the influence of the environment, while Jung tries to discover . . . a tentative and groping process of evolution.”<sup>15</sup>

What is most interesting about Hoop’s book is the following explanation for why Jung’s school finds it necessary to take the non-mechanistic, teleological approach rather than Freud’s causal one:

Darwin held that the complicated development of the various forms of life was due to environment, and to the struggle for life; he tried to show the relation between every detail of the circumstances and of the corresponding development, and he rejected the idea that the development might be due

---

<sup>13</sup>Bradby 21.

<sup>14</sup>J. H. van der Hoop, *Character and the Unconscious: A Critical Exposition of the Psychology of Freud and Jung* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, inc., 1923) 202.

<sup>15</sup>Hoop 202.

to an inherent life-force which is always pushing on towards further expansion and evolution. Later scientists have proved the incompleteness of some of Darwin's theories, and further research has gradually convinced most men of science that, although the influence of environment must still be regarded as an important factor, it can no longer be considered as the only cause of evolution. Thus we are led to believe that life possesses some inherent force, which notwithstanding all the varying influences of surrounding circumstances, follows its own principle of development, and makes use of circumstances only in so far as they can be made to agree with this principle.<sup>16</sup>

This passage is especially notable for its conviction that Darwin's theories are inadequate. While in 1923 it may have been hyperbole to imply that "most men of science" were convinced that life possesses a progressive and vitalistic "inherent force," at least some men of science were still willing to entertain the idea.

The most complete and significant concurrence with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious comes from William Alanson White (1870-1937), who in 1924 gave a talk for the eighteenth annual meeting of The American Psychiatric Association that was subsequently published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*; the talk was titled, "Primitive Mentality and the Racial Unconscious."<sup>17</sup> The figure of William Alanson White looms very large in the history of American psychiatry, but it would appear that no Jung scholar has previously noticed this most important paper in which he specifically endorses Jung's theory of the collective unconscious.

White was the founder of the American Psychiatric Association and by establishing the first training institutes for psychiatry had tremendous influence in shaping twentieth-century American Psychiatry. With this influence, furthermore, he contributed much to the establishment of the dominance of psychoanalysis in American psychiatry, especially Freudian psychoanalysis. It is therefore doubly remarkable not only that he endorsed this aspect of Jungian psychology, but that no one remembers that he did so.

---

<sup>16</sup>Hoop 102.

<sup>17</sup>William A. White, "Primitive Mentality and the Racial Unconscious," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 4 (1925) 663-671.

Jung knew White personally, having met him in 1907, and having visited St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington D. C., where White was the superintendent, in 1912. He visited again, after White had given the talk in question, during his trip to America in 1925.<sup>18</sup> In 1913, Jung sent a letter to the *Psychoanalytical Review*, which had just been established by White and the American psychoanalyst Smith Elly Jeliffe, in which he presaged some of the topics addressed by White eleven years later.<sup>19</sup> Though the term "collective unconscious" was not yet in existence, Jung stressed the importance of the "phylogenetic evolution" of the psyche.<sup>20</sup> The letter was published in the inaugural issue of the *Psychoanalytical Review* (Fall 1913) and appears to be Jung's only surviving correspondence with White.

White begins "Primitive Mentality and the Racial Unconscious" with the words, "The subject I want to discuss today is the constitution of consciousness from some points of view that are somewhat more recent than those that have been definitely formulated in former Literature."<sup>21</sup> Then he proceeds to present a model of the psyche diagrammed by a triangle, with consciousness at its apex and increasingly unconscious material as it widens below. From the description of the upper levels, with which he begins, it seems highly probable that he had been reading the 1917 English translation of Jung's "The Structure of the Unconscious" (1916), which appeared, as "The Conception of the Unconscious," along with "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes" in *Collected Papers in Analytical Psychology*. White claims that the uppermost level of the unconscious contains material that "to use Jung's language might as well be conscious."<sup>22</sup> This phrasing is indeed nearly identical to Jung's language in "The Conception of the Unconscious" in which one finds the phrase, "According to [Freud's] theory, the unconscious contains only those parts of the personality which might just as well be

---

<sup>18</sup>McLynn 199.

<sup>19</sup>Gerhard Adler, ed., *C. G. Jung: Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) 28.

<sup>20</sup>Adler 29.

<sup>21</sup>White 663.

<sup>22</sup>White 663.

conscious.”<sup>23</sup> Like Jung, White goes on to posit levels of the psyche beneath Freud’s personal unconscious:

Then there is the region here, which is also unconscious, lying beneath the region of the personal unconscious which Jung calls the collective unconscious, but which is better designated as the racial unconscious and constitutes the philogenetic background upon which the rest of the psychic material is erected, so to speak, as a superstructure.<sup>24</sup>

With the invocation of “phylogenesis” White firmly allies himself to Jung’s biological argument for the collective unconscious. In fact his only quibble with Jung seems to be the preference for term “racial” rather than “collective,” which if anything only strengthens the tie to biological inheritance. White describes material in the racial unconscious as material that has not been accessible to consciousness “within the life-time of the individual, but has only occupied such a position within the life-time of the race.”<sup>25</sup>

In true Jungian style he then continues his argument through an example from “the language of savages,” who “do not count by units, but they count in collective fashion using as the measure of number an expression which means the hand and which if we translate it would be the number five.”<sup>26</sup> After elaborating on the history of such counting methods, pointing out that “the interesting thing is that we have projected into our present civilization precisely such methods of counting,”<sup>27</sup> he raises (and answers) the key question of whether such a correspondence could be the result of cultural transmission:

Now, or course, it might seem that this is personal material that was transmitted from parent to child, but it seems quite obvious to me that that is an incomplete explanation. We can only reach a

---

<sup>23</sup>Jung, *Collected Papers* 445.

<sup>24</sup>White 663.

<sup>25</sup>White 664.

<sup>26</sup>White 664.

<sup>27</sup>White 664.

complete explanation of this conscious phenomenon by interpreting it in the history of the development of counting through the race and the translation of the words which the savages used.<sup>28</sup>

As with Jung, no proof is offered for the inadequacy of cultural transmission as an alternative hypothesis; one must take the assertion on faith. This might seem hopelessly problematic to a modern audience, but in its historical context, it supports my argument that such an assumption would not necessarily have struck his listeners as unusual, even if some might disagree. Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949, American psychiatrist known for his “interpersonal” theory of personality<sup>29</sup>), for example, raises a disagreement in the brief discussion that follows the talk, declaring his “resistance to such an hypothesis as that of the racial unconscious” and offering the possibility that some seemingly “archaic” phenomena may be explained by childhood or intrauterine development—but he nonetheless politely declares that he “accept[s] the racial unconscious when endorsed by Dr. White.”<sup>30</sup> As we saw in the preceding chapter, theories of evolution and heredity that might definitively have repudiated such a theory were not yet overwhelming in their dominance.

After positing the existence of the racial unconscious, White goes on to discuss the relevance of this Jungian theory to the practice of psychiatry. The racial material “can only be interpreted by methods of comparison,” he says. “That is one of the aspects of what I believe is the new method that needs to come into psychiatry . . .”<sup>31</sup> In aid of the comparative method he then recommends the methods and findings of a discipline “which is not recognized by psychiatrists; that is the discipline of comparative philology.”<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>White 664.

<sup>29</sup>Joseph F. Rychlak, *Introduction to Personality and Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981) 323.

<sup>30</sup>White 671.

<sup>31</sup>White 665.

<sup>32</sup>White 665.

Compare this recommendation with Jung's from his 1913 letter to the *Psychoanalytical Review*: "We need not only the work of medical psychologists, but also that of philologists, historians, archaeologists, mythologists, folklore students, ethnologists, philosophers, theologians, pedagogues and biologists."<sup>33</sup> Jung may be more comprehensive in his list, but the spirit of White's recommendation of philology is obviously similar. Both are looking to the German *Wissenschaften* for assistance.

In the 1913 letter, Jung goes on from his list of disciplines to invoke his usual analogy with evolutionary biology and the Biogenetic Law, proposing that the "comparative material" to be gained from these other disciplines can prepare for "the distant goal of a genetic psychology, which will clear our eyes for medical psychology, just as comparative anatomy has already done in regard to the structure and function of the human body."<sup>34</sup> Eleven years later, White employs the same analogy to justify the necessity of the comparative historical approach in psychology, first implicitly when he equates the thinking of "savages" with that of children,<sup>35</sup> and then more explicitly in his closing argument:

[T]he psyche is necessarily as old as the body; it has therefore its comparative anatomy just like the body and it is a no more difficult matter to think in terms of its history through its different levels than it is to trace anatomical formations back through various types of related species to their origins.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the talk, the congruence between White's style of argumentation and Jung's (not only in the eleven year old letter, but in his articles of 1916 and 1917) is remarkable. One even finds him drawing material from schizophrenic patients exactly as Jung did:

---

<sup>33</sup>Adler 30.

<sup>34</sup>Adler 30.

<sup>35</sup>White 666.

<sup>36</sup>White 670.

I cannot be unmindful or cannot consider as unimportant, the fact that some of our praecox [i.e. schizophrenic] patients occupy motor attitudes that have given rise to the term, Egyptian attitude, because we see this same attitude in the figures of Egyptian sculpture, and I believe that such a motor attitude must be deeper seated than the personal experiences of the individual, that have taken place since birth.<sup>37</sup>

After reading White's talk, one can only wonder why, with the support of such a powerful figure on its side, Jung's theory of the collective unconscious did not find more favor in the worlds of psychiatry and psychology. Why was Jung's theory, in fact, not only unfavored but almost entirely ignored?

#### **4.3 A Puzzling Silence: Why was Jung Marginalized?**

The fact that Jung's theory can not be considered to have been unacceptable on purely scientific grounds makes the fact that Jung was marginalized harder to understand. I offer several possible hypotheses for the question of why Jung and his theory of the collective unconscious were for the most part ignored by the psychiatric and psychological communities. The first of these is that while the Lamarckism on which Jung's biological argument for the collective unconscious was so dependent held out through the 1920s it was on the defensive throughout the decade. Thus while Jung's theory was not unscientific, neither was it in line with major developing trends. And the modern evolutionary synthesis of the 1930s made the biological argument thereafter unacceptable.

The second reason I propose for Jung's marginalization is his self-imposed alienation from academia. After 1909, he never held an official academic position, though he had honorary degrees from several universities, a fact of which he liked to remind skeptics in his later years. Unlike Freudian work, Jung's was very rarely published in academic journals, much of it appearing in popular Swiss journals. For ideas

---

<sup>37</sup>White 669.

to become popular they must be seen. The channels into which Jung directed his work virtually guaranteed that much of it would go unnoticed by the academic and scientific communities.

Though Jung's name would have been familiar to most people with an interest in psychoanalysis, the details of his theories and especially the theory of the collective unconscious remained far less familiar than Freud's, whose concepts quickly became household terms. Jung's theory of psychological types, from which come the familiar terms "extraversion" and "introversion," was far better known and received than the theory of the collective unconscious. This was due largely to the fact that *Psychological Types* (1921) met with resounding success and was far and away his best known work, but it scarcely covered the collective unconscious, with the exception of an entry in the chapter of "Definitions" that brought up its rear.

As another factor, Jung's conflict with Freud cannot be overlooked. This was a conflict based largely on personal politics, and it seems fair to say that Freud won the war, largely because of Jung's withdrawal from academic circles. It was Freudian psychoanalysis that came to dominate psychiatry in America especially, and with the Freudians crusading so vehemently against the traitor Jung, it is no wonder that he found it very difficult to gain even a small foothold in official psychiatry.

The last and perhaps the most important reason that I will suggest for Jung's marginalization is his overwhelming interest in mythology and religion, which prompted him to relate all of his psychological theorizing to those topics. Undeniably, Jung tailored his theories specially to take into account various occult phenomena such as astrology, ESP, the *I Ching*, and visionary experiences like his own, phenomena that have always been relegated to the very fringes of science when they have been allowed in at all. He also expended some effort, however, even after 1916, thinking and writing about the problems of more everyday life, such as sex, social interaction, and simply figuring out what to do with oneself. That even these more down-to-earth topics of Jung's thought

were ignored might be ascribed, as well as to the other factors discussed above, to what I will call Jung's fantastical approach to the mundane.

Freud has been criticized for ignoring or dismissing all spiritual concerns as displaced sexuality. Jung, on the other hand, might be criticized for his tendency to construe sexual (and other everyday) matters in spiritual and mythological terms. If, as Freud once said, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, surely it would not have hurt Jung to acknowledge that sometimes a phallus is just a phallus. From biographical information it is clear that Jung recognized that not all of life was fantastical, that sometimes the phallus was related more to basic sexual urges than to the creative strivings of the spirit. He was often described by those who knew him as "earthy" and in touch with the less lofty side of human existence, and Ellenberger notes that "Jung conveyed the impression of being a practical man firmly anchored in reality . . ." <sup>38</sup> Part of what he ascribed to the collective unconscious, after all, was simply the instincts. Yet obviously it was only the more intangible, the spiritual, side, consisting of the archetypes, that really sparked his intellect. In his writings Jung consistently took a fantastical approach to the psyche, even to the more mundane aspects of the psyche, and this approach is in part responsible for his marginalization.

In the 1917 essay, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes," that introduced the term "collective unconscious," Jung writes:

Inasmuch as through our unconscious we have a share in the historical collective psyche, we naturally dwell unconsciously in a world of werewolves, demons, magicians, etc, these being things which have always affected man most profoundly. We have just as much a part in gods and devils, saviours and criminals.<sup>39</sup>

A man who would write about the profound effect on man of gods, demons, spirits, and magicians was unlikely to be taken particularly seriously by the largely materialistic

---

<sup>38</sup>Ellenberger 680.

<sup>39</sup>Jung, "The Psychology of the Unconscious Processes" 430.

world of science in the twentieth century, no matter how well-grounded his theories were in the scientific milieu of his time.

## Bibliography

Following the sections of “Archival Materials” and “Jung’s writings,” this bibliography is organized into sections that correspond roughly to my chapters. Naturally, this categorization is imperfect, as some sources are relevant to multiple chapters, but in general sources listed under “Historical Scholarship on Jung” and “Works by Modern Jungians” are used in the “Historiographic Review” that comprises Chapter 1; Chapter 2 “The Collective Unconscious in Jung’s Writings” draws mainly from the section “Jung’s Writings”; the section titled “Historical Context” corresponds to Chapter 3, “The Historical Context of the Theory of the Collective Unconscious,”; and the sources under “Critical Literature from the 1910s and 20s” are used in Chapter 4, “The Reception of the Collective Unconscious.

### Archival Materials

*C. G. Jung Bibliothek Katalog*. Küssnacht-Zurich: 1967.

From the Kristine Mann Library, Analytical Psychology Club of New York, Inc.

- The catalog of Jung’s personal library.

*The C. G. Jung Biographical Archive*. Countway Library of Medicine, Rare Books Dept.

Me-H MS c29

- Nearly two hundred extensive interviews with people who knew Jung. Though I do not cite these in this work of intellectual history, they were invaluable in getting to know Jung, revealing much about his character and his thought.

### Jung’s Writings

Adler, Gerhard, ed. *C. G. Jung: Letters* vol. 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.

W-BF 173 .J73313

- Jung’s collected letters from 1906-1950.

Jung, C. G. *Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1925*. Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1989.

W-BF 173 .J666

\_\_\_\_\_. *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology*. Ed. Constance Long. New York: Moffat Yard and Co., 1917, 2nd edition.

L-BF 173 .J7

- Contains an early version of the paper in which Jung introduced the term “collective unconscious” not contained in the *Collected Works*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 1-20. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957-1979

W-BF 23 .J763

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.  
L-BF 109 .J8 A33  
•Jung's pseudo-autobiography ("pseudo" because his secretary wrote most of it).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.  
W-BF 23 .J763 vol. 23  
•The English translation of the 1912 original version of *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, Jung's first book to employ the concept of a phylogenetic unconscious.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Man and His Symbols*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1964.  
W-Phil 6319.1.71
- McGuire, William, ed. *The Freud/Jung Letters*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.  
W-BF 109 .F4 A4  
•The complete surviving correspondence between Freud and Jung.
- McGuire, William and R. F. C. Hull, eds. *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.  
BF-173 .J85 C23
- Historical Scholarship on Jung
- Ellenberger, Henri F. *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*. Basic Books, 1970.  
W-Phil 6906.10  
•Contains a chapter on Jung that remains one of the best studies to date.
- Elms, Alan. "The Aunтификаtion of C. G. Jung," in Alan Elms. *Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.  
W-BF 39.4 .E46  
•Reveals the editing and censorship of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.
- Kerr, John. *A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993.  
W-BF 173 .K42  
•The most complete and nuanced history of the Freud/Jung relationship to date.
- Hannah, Barbara. *Jung: His Life and Work, A Biographical Memoir*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976.  
W-BF 173 .J85  
•The best biography by one of Jung's disciples in terms of historical detail.
- Homans, Peter. *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.  
L-BF 173 .J85 H63  
•One of the best historical considerations of Jung's work.
- McLynn, F. J. *Carl Gustav Jung: A Biography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.  
W-BF 109 .J8 M355  
•A recent biography of Jung that portrays him as more or less schizophrenic.

- Noll, Richard. *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung*. New York: Random House, 1997.  
W-BF 109 .J8 N24
- Examines Jung's role as the founder of a quasi-religious movement in more depth than his other book, *The Jung Cult*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Jung's Concept of 'Die Dominanten' ('The Dominants'): The Neovitalism of the Basle Medical Faculty and Its Influence on Jung's Later Theories." [online: web] Cited 11 March 1998. (posted March 98).  
URL: <http://www.jungindex.net/noll/dominants.html>
- Information on Jung's vitalistic educational background.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Jung Cult and The Aryan Christ: A Response to Past and Future Critics." [online: web] Cited 11 March 1998. (posted February 1998).  
URL: [http://www.jungindex.net/jungmagazine/noll/noll\\_response\\_page1.html](http://www.jungindex.net/jungmagazine/noll/noll_response_page1.html)
- Noll includes in this article a discussion of most of the scientific sources that I cover.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.  
W-BF 109 .J8 N65
- Examines Jung and his theory in the context of nineteenth century German culture, focusing especially on the Volkish and neo-pagan movements.
- Stern, Paul. *C. G. Jung: The Haunted Prophet*. New York: George Braziller, 1976.  
W-Phil 6319.1.305
- A particularly negative and poorly documented biography of Jung.
- van der Post, Laurens. *Jung and the Story of Our Time*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975.  
W-BF 173 .V247
- An extremely flattering biography by a friend of Jung.
- von Franz, Marie-Louise. *C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time*. Boston: Little Brown, 1975.  
W-Phil 6319.1.100
- Of the Jungian biographies this is most like *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* in its mythologized portrayal of Jung.
- Wehr, Gerhard. *Jung, a Biography*. New York: Random House, 1987.  
W-BF 173 .J85 W44213
- A recent biography of Jung, tending somewhat toward hagiography.

#### Works by Modern Jungians

- Clarke, J.J. *In Search of Jung*. New York: Routledge, 1992.  
W-BF 109 .J8 C53
- Contains one of the most sophisticated discussions by a Jungian of Jung's understanding of evolution and heredity.
- Samuels, Andrew. *Jung and the Post-Jungians*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.  
W-BF 173 .J85 S28

- Contains a defense of the theory of the unconscious from charges of Lamarckism.

Singer, June. *Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jung's Psychology*. Garden City: Anchor Press, 1972.

W-Phil 6319.1.267

- A general overview of Jung's theories.

Stevens, Anthony. "Critical Notice." *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 42 (1997): 671- 689.

W-Phil 19.35—Unbound issues in the Periodical Room, Case 40

- A review of Richard Noll's books, *The Jung Cult* and *The Aryan Christ*, that defends the current scientific validity of the theory of the collective unconscious.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Jung*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

W-Harvard Depository, BF 109 .J8 S74

- An introduction to Jung's life and work that defends Jung from charges of Lamarckism.

Walker, Steven F. *Jung and the Jungians on Myth: An Introduction*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995.

W-BF 175.5 .M95 W35

- Reviews the theory of the collective unconscious and discusses Jung's racialism.

Young-Eisendrath, Polly and Terence Dawson, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

W-BF 109 .J8 C36

- Contains a survey of some of Jung's sources.

### Jung's Historical Context

This section is comprised of materials that were Jung's sources, historical examinations of Jung's sources (though not always as such), and more general information about the history of the science that made up Jung's scientific context.

Boas, Franz. *The Mind Primitive Man*. New York: Macmillan, 1911.

W-An 2109.11.3A

- Jung used Boas as a source of evidence for the influence of the environment on heredity and the collective unconscious.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Mind of Primitive Man*. New York: Macmillan, 1938 (Revised edition).

W-An 2109.38.5

Bowler, Peter J. *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades around 1900*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

W -QH 361 .B68

- Bowler's books reveal the competing strains of evolutionary theory that existed around the turn of the century and formed Jung's background.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Non-Darwinian Revolution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

W-QH 361 .B693

- Freyhofer, Horst H. *The Vitalism of Hans Driesch*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. 1982.  
W-QH 341 .F74  
•An examination of the life and work of one of Jung's important sources.
- Hall, Thomas S. *Ideas of Life and Matter*, vol. 2. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969.  
W-S 8443.36 C  
•Contains a history of vitalism.
- Harrington, Anne. *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.  
W-QH 341 .F74  
•Information about the scientific culture in which Jung lived.
- Mayr, Ernst. *One Long Argument: Charles Darwin and the Genesis of Modern Evolutionary Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.  
W-QH 371 .M336  
•One of the best histories of the development of evolutionary theory.
- McDougall, William. *Body and Mind, A History and a Defense of Animism*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1923.  
W-Phil 6122.13.13  
•A book by one of Jung's vitalist and Lamarckian friends and contemporaries.
- Otis, Laura. *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.  
W-PN 50 .O75  
•Background on an important source of Jung's thought.
- Richards, Graham. "Race," *Racism and Psychology: Towards a Reflexive History*. New York: Routledge, 1997.  
W-Ordered-Recieved  
•Covers Jung in the context of a larger discussion of racialist and racist psychology.
- Sander, Klaus. "Hans Driesch's 'philosophy really ab ovo,' or Why to Be a Vitalist," *Roux's Archives of Developmental Biology* 202, 1-3.  
B-SERIAL
- Schacter, Daniel L. *Stranger Behind the Engram: Theories of Memory and the Psychology of Science*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982.  
W-BF 371 .S47 S3  
•A biography of one of Jung's sources, Richard Semon.
- Stocking, George. *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.  
W-GN 17 .S77  
•Contains an essay on Lamarckism in the social sciences in the early-twentieth century and information on Franz Boas.

### Critical Literature from the 1910s and 20s

- Bradby, M. K. *Psychoanalysis and Its Place in Life*. London: Oxford University Press, 1919.  
W -Harvard Depository KE 10817  
•Contains an early non-Freudian criticism of the collective unconscious.
- Corrie, Joan. *A B C of Jung's Psychology*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1927.  
(Not at Harvard)  
•An exposition of Jung's theories by one of his British followers.
- Hinkle, Beatrice. *The Re-Creating of the Individual: A Study of Psychological Types and Their Relation to Psychoanalysis*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923.  
W-Phil 6317.10  
•A work of Jungian psychology by an American disciple.
- Long, Constance. *Collected Papers on the Psychology of Phantasy*. New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1921.  
W-Phil 6321.6  
•A work Jungian psychology by a British disciple.
- Rickman, John. "On Some of the Standpoints of Freud and Jung." *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 8 (1928) 44-48.  
W-Phil 11.2.8  
•A Freudian article by a British psychoanalyst that attacks the theory of the collective unconscious.
- van der Hoop, J. H. *Character and the Unconscious: A Critical Exposition of the Psychology of Freud and Jung*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc., 1923.  
W-Phil 6317.9 B  
•A rare non-partisan book on psychoanalysis from the early days.
- Vincie, Joseph F. and Margreta Rathbauer-Vincie. *C. G. Jung and Analytical Psychology: A Comprehensive Bibliography*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977.  
W-BF 173 .J85 Z998  
•Lists publications about Jung and analytical psychology from 1910-1977.
- White, William Alanson. "Primitive Mentality and the Racial Unconscious," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 4 (1925): 663-671.  
Ps-SERIAL  
•A hitherto unknown article supporting Jung's theory of the collective unconscious.

### General

- Bynum, W. F., E. J. Brown, and Roy Porter, eds. *Dictionary of the History of Science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.  
Wo-Q 125 .D45X
- Rychlak, Joseph F. *Introduction to Personality and Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

L-BF 698 .R945

•An excellent reference on twentieth-century personality psychology. Contains brief biographical sketches and expositions of the theories of Jung, Freud, Adler, Sullivan and others.