Re-Constructing Jung

> [E]xpanatory principles are only points of view, that is, manifestations of the psychological attitude and of the *a priori* conditions under which all thinking takes place.
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> Jung, *CW* 8:5

Recent efforts to deconstruct Jung's *text* have done so by locating his ideas in the historical context of the discredited theories of his day upon which he drew.[1] By pulling on these worn and broken threads, contemporary criticism unravels the woven garment of Jung's work--or at least so it would appear.

The notion of the archetype is a case in point. Deconstructive readings of Jung's *discourse* related to this concept stress his usage of notions such as Darwin's natural selection, Lamarck's inheritance of acquired characteristics and Haeckel's ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny on the assumption that the disrepute of these ideas in the fields in which they were first tendered--biology, ethnology, anthropology--casts the psychological implications Jung gleaned from them equally into disrepute.

Leaving to one side the fallacious assumption that the reality to which concepts such as the collective unconscious and the archetype refer can be confirmed or disconfirmed on the basis of textual criticism (as if it were only a matter of discourse, only a matter of words),[2] let me take issue

with the assumption that the conceptions which Jung has borrowed from other fields must be false for psychology on the grounds that they have proven to be so for the fields of endeavour in which they originated.

Jung's psychology, as he himself so often emphasized (*CW* 18:1740, *CW* 11:751), is premised on the *reality of the psyche* even as other disciplines such as physics and chemistry are premised on the reality of matter and energy. This premise, so difficult to grasp, is crucial to an understanding of Jung's psychology, for without an appreciation of the autonomy which Jung saw as characterizing the psyche, studies of his psychology will have at best a denuding effect upon it. (In light of Jung's characterization of academic psychology as a "psychology without the psyche" [*CW* 8:660], we should not be surprised that Jung's thought now suffers as much from its current interest in academic circles as it formerly suffered from lack of such interest.)

Although Jung drew widely on the sciences of his day, sciences which did not take the psyche as constituting so much as a variable, let alone a reality in its own right, the psyche which he sought to study by means of their findings, and which analytical psychologists continue to study in a similar vein, is not an epiphenomenon which disappears in thin air when the adjacent disciplines reject for themselves the particular notions psychology has borrowed from them. On the contrary, inasmuch as psychic reality is the first, in the sense of being the most immediate reality that we experience, the mediator of all other reality, it may be regarded to be always already the source of what psychology would appear to have borrowed from other disciplines. For what science discards as error, psychology (re)collects as so many projections and assimilates to itself.

"I failed to consider," wrote Jung during those fateful years of breakdown in which he came to understand more deeply the psyche's reality, "that the soul cannot be the object of my judgement

and knowledge; rather, my judgement and knowledge are the objects of my soul."[3] With this recognition, a recognition which he repeatedly reiterates in those discussions in which he reminds his readers of psychology's lack of an archimedean perspective (*CW* 11: 87), Jung revolutionized his approach to science in general and to psychology in particular. All scientific endeavour, he came to realize, had a special relationship to psychology insofar as that what we have subsequently come to call the "theory-ladenness of scientific observation" (T. Kuhn) is recognized as the stuff of psychic fantasy. As Jung succinctly states it in his paper, "On the Nature of the Psyche," "Every other science has so to speak an outside; not so psychology, whose object is the inside subject of all sciences" (*CW* 8:429).

Jung's recognition of the reality of the psyche, as his autobiography bears witness, began with a dialogue he conducted with an inner feminine figure, later identified as his anima or feminine soul, in which he found himself in a debate about the status of what he was doing. Repelled by his anima's insinuation that he was making art, but unable to claim to be doing science, Jung replied that his experiments in active imagination were "nature."

The nature of the psyche, as Jung came to understand it, is nowhere more revealed than in the theories and ideas through which science fails in its attempt to define nature. For in precisely these failures of fit between mind and nature we catch a glimpse of that autonomous spirit of the psyche that the alchemists knew as Mercurius in the very moment of his vanishing. It is in such glimpses that psyche, in Jung's sense, insights itself and psychology begins. As Heraclitus, author of the adage, "nature loves to hide," and the most ancient forebear, according to Jung, of modern depth psychology put it, "You could not discover the limits of the soul (*psyche*), even if you travelled every road to do so, such is the depth (*bathun*) of its meaning (*logos*)."

Jungian psychology, though clearly not a part of the contemporary scientific project, constitutes, for all its apparent modernism, a post-modern deconstruction of science inasmuch as it reads and utilizes the findings of science in the same manner that Jung read and utilized the fantasies of the alchemists.

As an object of the psyche, all science is alchemical, not just the contributions of the literal alchemists. And just as alchemy anticipated modern chemistry on the one hand, and the psychology of the unconscious on the other, so the stones which each successive shift in scientific paradigm reject, become the cornerstones upon which the psychology of the future is founded. Whether or not notions such as "ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny" and the "inheritence of acquired characteristics" are good biology, taken as alchemy and read psychologically they are notions of tremendous heuristic value, crucial psychic myths.[4] The same goes for the other ideas that Jung associated with psychic reality. Read descriptively, as attributes of the unknowable essence of psychic reality, "the inside subject of all sciences," these ideas are like the synonyms of the philosopher's stone. For, just as the stone that is not a stone self-amplifies its mercurial nature in an endless series of images, eg., as orphan, widow, water, fire, tears, etc., so the archetypal psyche, far from being nothing but "a conspiratorial reification of psychological language,"[5] is a Lamarckian, Darwinian, Haeckelian mystery whose nature must be engaged as a living, experiential, personified reality if it is in any measure to be fathomed at all.

Jungian studies, if they are not to become so "subject to foreign motions [that they] lose their own,"[6] must wrestle with Jung's concept of psychic reality even as Jung wrestled in his active imaginations with the inner figures who were the daimonic instruments which conveyed this concept to him. While it is an interesting and worthwhile pursuit to relate the inner figures which

were the mediators of the ideas which inspired Jung to the outer persons of his social and historical milieu who were at some time or other cathected with the energies he later withdrew from them (eg. Salome to Sabina Spielrein and Siegfried-Elijah-Philemon to Freud, Plato, Haeckel, Darwin, Lamarck, Nietzsche etc.), it is not enough to leave matters there, as if these inner and outer persons could be divided into each other without remainder. For just as Jung recognized that psychology lacks the "outside" of the other sciences, but takes as its object and theatre of it own objectification, the inside of all sciences, so Jung differentiated the inner source of psychological authority from the scientific authorities that had carried its mana for him in projected form, through imaginal dialogues with the wisdom figure Philemon. It was this inner figure, as Jung told the audience of his 1925 seminar in analytical psychology and later confided to a wider public in his autobiography, that "brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life."[7] Though Jung drew on the thought of Freud and other influential contributors of his period, it was Philemon who taught him "psychic objectivity, the reality of the psyche."[8]

> [Philemon] said I treated thoughts as if I generated them myself [and here, we might add, as if the sciences with an "outside" had generated their own theories--GM], but, according to his views, thoughts were like animals in a forest, or people in a room, or birds in the air. He said, "If you should see people in a room, you would not say that you made those people, or that you were responsible for them." Only then I learned psychological objectivity. Only then could I say to a patient, "Be quiet, something is happening." There *are* such things as mice in a house. You cannot say

> you are wrong when you have a thought. For the understanding of the unconscious we must see our thoughts [and the thoughts and theories of science in general--GM] as events, as phenomena. We must have perfect objectivity."[9]

For Jung, the touchstone of perfect objectivity is the psyche itself related to as other. Though we usually project the otherness of the psyche's interior figures onto those external others who are our selfobjects (Kohut), psychic self-agency can also be recognized apart the people who mediate it for us. This, for Jung, was an important part of what he meant by becoming conscious and by individuation.[10]

Long before deconstruction established a name for itself by pointing out the notorious gap or fissure between signifiers and their signified correlatives, Jung had created a self-psychology based upon his appreciation of the gap between self and other in the social world. As Jung scholarship contextualizes Jung's work by supplementing our readings of it with researches into the actual identity of such figures as Frank Miller[11] and Sabina Spielrein,[12] we do well to remember that the individuating feature of Jung's opus is the emphasis it places on the value of shifting the centre of psychic gravity away from outer persons such as these.[13] The fact that Jung had a counter-transference to Spielrein and a "religious crush"[14] on Freud is of less importance in an of itself than the fact that by personifying these transference reactions he discovered a more conscious form of intercourse with his own unconscious than the outer relationships afforded.[15] Though the fantasy figures, Salome and Siegfried-Elijah-Philemon, were personifications of the affects which Spielrein and Freud stirred in Jung, it must also be recognized--and this was Jung's great discovery--that in a deeper sense these figures were discontinuous from the outer persons through whom they had once

projectively arrayed themselves, not signs of human relationship, but autonomous symbols of an unknowable, unconscious power. As Jung put it in a lecture series in which he specifically discussed the figures of Salome and Elijah,

> ... it would be somewhat of a depreciation to make the dignity of the collective unconscious one of secondhand origin only. There is another kind of consideration that allows us to envisage the collective unconscious as a firsthand phenomenon, something *sui generis*, in the following way. As we assume that behind our image of the external world there is an absolute entity, so necessarily we must assume that behind the perceiving subject there is an entity; and when we start our consideration from that end, we must say the collective unconscious is reaction *a*, or the first reaction, or first image of the world, while the conscious would be second-hand only."[16]

Notes

1. Cf., Jeremy R. Carrette, "The Language of Archetypes: A Conspiracy in Psychological Theory," *Harvest: Journal for Jungian Studies*, Vol. 40, London: C.G. Jung Analytical Psychology Club London, pp. 168-192; James G. Donat, "Is Depth Psychology Really Deep? Reflections on the history of Jungian Psychology," *Ibid*., pp. 193-208; Richard Noll, *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* (Princeton, Princeton, University Press, 1994).

2. Deconstruction, with its solipsistic declaration that there exists no "transcendental signified" outside the text, rules out to begin with the actuality of whatever purports to have an existence beyond the words which posit it. Whatever the value of this deconstructionist move of "ontologizing" the text may be for reading other thinkers, it obscures Jung's own similar move with respect to the psyche. Jung's "esse in anima" is a being-in-soul, not a being-in-text, and his deconstructive practice is to locate, not the fissure in the text, but the imaginal figures of the psyche which are to psyche as tropes are to literature.

3. From Jung's "Red Book." Quoted in P.J. Stern, *C.G. Jung: The Haunted Prophet* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1976), p. 121.

4. Here I am thinking, not only of religious ideas relating to ancestor worship and the Communion of Saints, but of Jung's idea, partly derived from the study of these sorts of religious notions, that what the individual makes conscious during his or her lifetime is not lost, but, rather, is added to the archetypal psyche where it acts as a creative, constellating factor in the further evolution of consciousness in subsequent generations. Although this idea has a definite Lamarckian ring to it, it cannot be disposed of with the same arguments that critics of Lamarckianism have levelled against the crudely Larmarckian account of how the giraffe got its long neck. Nor can it be thrown out with the same arguments that are leveled against the Lamarckian aspect of Freud's notion of the primal crime. The psyche, after all, is not corporeal in the way that a giraffe's neck is, and Jung's archetypes, in contrast to Freud's "archaic vestiges," are formal structures of indefinite content. This has implications for Jungian studies. I believe that it may be necessary, and perhaps even salutary, for analytical psychology to actually brave the scandal and entertain, from its own perspective and within the limits of its definition of reality, a revised version of Lamarckian theory if it is to once again grapple with that question of questions--at what point and by what means do the complexes, acquired through individual experience and heritable through the culture of a family and the social influence of a given society, become fully effective features of the emerging Anthropos in the autochthonic sense which interested Jung and for which he coined the term "archetype"? Reviewing the research and debate in the field of evolutionary theory, Arthur Koestler, in the chapter "Lamarck Revisited" of his book *Janus: A Summing Up* [Hutchinson of London, 1978. p. 273], argues for "the existence of a Lamarckian micro-hierarchy of selective filters [working in concert with natural selection--GM], which prevents acquired characteristics from interfering with the hereditary endowment--except for those select few which respond to some vital need of the species, resulting from persistent pressures of the environment over many generations, until they seep through the filter and become part of the hereditary endowment of the human embryo, like the thick skin on its soles. This is undeniably an acquired characteristic which has become hereditary--yet in conformity with the prevailing dogma we are asked to believe that it happened by pure chance." While this is not the place to further elaborate these ideas, an intuitive connection is perhaps worth noting. In his 1925 Seminar [*Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar given in 1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 135-136], Jung characterizes archetypes as "records of reactions to subjective sense-images" and as an example of this speaks of how the hero-myth has arisen as the "expression of the way in which our unconscious has reacted to the conscious image of sunrise and sunset." (Joseph Campbell says much the same thing when he characterizes myth as a register of the energies informing the life of the body.) If we substitute Jung's term "reactions to subjective sense-images" for the term "acquired characteristics" in the quotation from Koestler, the theoretical implication arises that only those subjective reactions or complexes acquired through experience will be become structural features of the archetypal psyche "which respond to some vital need of the species, resulting from persistent pressures of the environment over many generations." Koestler, in a passage that sounds much like Jung, writes that these acquired characteristics may, through the means described, become genetically efficient: "Molecular genetics...does not exclude *a priori* the possibility of a phylogenetic memory for vital and recurrent experiences encoded in the chromosomes. How else but through some process of phylogenetic learning and memory-formation could the complex inherited skills of building a bird's nest or weaving a spider's web have arisen? The official theory, as we have seen, has no

explanation for the genetics of such inherited virtuosity (p. 203)."

5. Jeremy R. Carrette, *Ibid*., p. 168.

6. The phrase is from John Donne's poem, "Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward," line 4.

7. C. G. Jung *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Aniela Jaffe, ed., (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 183.

8. *Ibid*.

9. C.G. Jung, *Analytical Psychology: Notes of the seminar given in 1925*, William McGuire, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 95.

10. In his Tavistock Lectures Jung, describing the therapy of the transference, speaks of the "*objectification of impersonal images*": "Its goal is to detach consciousness from the object so that the individual no longer places the guarantee of his happiness, or of his life even, in factors outside himself, whether they be persons, ideas, or circumstances, but comes to realize that everything depends on whether he holds the treasure or not. If the possession of that gold is realized, then the centre of gravity is *in* the individual and no longer in an object on which he depends." *CW* 18: 377.

11. Sonu Shamdasani, "A Woman Called Frank," *Spring* 50 (1990), pp. 25-56.

12. Aldo Carotenuto, *A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein between Jung and Freud* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

13. Some time after writing his analysis of the Miller fantasies in what is now *Symbols of Transformation*, Jung recognized that this actual person, as a carrier of his own anima projection, was also an inner figure: "I took Miss Miller's fantasies as ... an autonomous form of thinking, but I did not realize [at that time] that she stood for that form of thinking in myself. She took over my fantasy and became the stage director of it, if one interprets the book subjectively. ...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." *Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar given in 1925*, pp. 27-28.

14. Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, William McGuire, ed., Ralph Manheim and R.F.C. Hull, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 95.

15. For a contemporary discussion of the clinical value of personifying the counter-transference even as Jung personified his counter-transference reactions as a pioneer on the frontiers of this clinical conundrum see Nathan Schwartz-Salant, *The Borderline Personality: Vision and Healing* (Wilmette, Ill: Chiron Publications, 1989).

16. C.G. Jung, *Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar given in 1925*, p. 136.