

Introduction to Literary Theory
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Lecture – 27
Literature and Psychoanalysis (IV): Carl Jung

Hello friends and welcome back to a new lecture on Literary Theory. In our past few meetings we have been discussing the topic of Freudian Psychoanalysis and we have been trying to find out how that can provide us with a theoretical framework for our understanding of literature. In this lecture as well as in the following one; we are going to move beyond Freud. And we are going to see how psychoanalysts working after Freud contributed to the field of Literary Theory. And our focus today will be on the work of the influential psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung and in the next lecture we are going to take up Jacques Lacan. So, today let us start with Jung.

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Carl Jung
(1875-1961)



Source: Crystalinks

Jung was born in 1875 in Switzerland to a family of German descent. And he was by training like Freud physician, but from very early in his career as a doctor he was interested in psychological diseases. And this interest primarily stemmed from the fact that it allowed him to access as a doctor from a scientific perspective the phenomenon of spiritual experiences. Being the son of a clergyman and a mother who frequently

complained about being possessed by spirits both the spiritual and the suprarational played a very formative role in Jung childhood.

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*On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called
Occult Phenomenon (1903)*

This in a way explains his doctoral thesis which was published under the title *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomenon* and this was published in 1903. Now, by 1906 Jung had already established himself in the world of psychology, and his work on human psychology had attracted the attention of Freud himself. And for more than 8 years after that; Jung was to be one of the closest associates of Freud. But Jung's approach to psychoanalysis ultimately proved to be crucially different from Freudian psychoanalysis.

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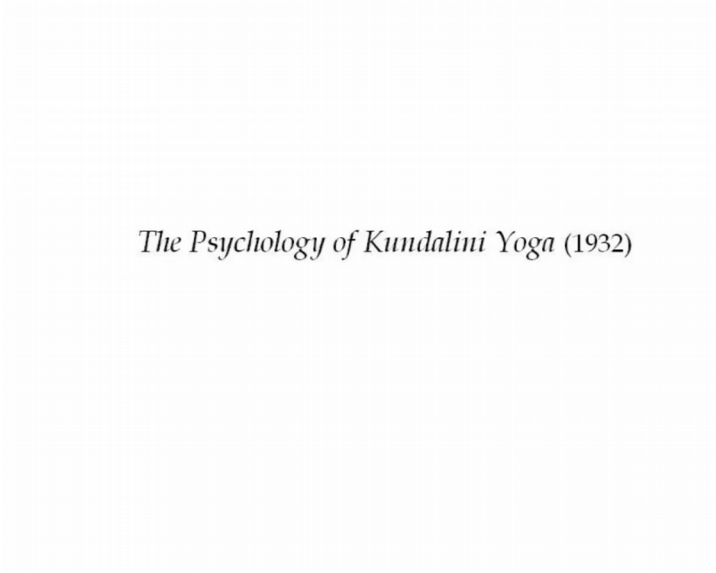
Psychology of the Unconscious (1912)

And this divergence became very prominently expressed in Jung 1912 publication; which was then initially published under the title “Psychology of the Unconscious”. The two most impressive figures of early 20th century psychoanalytic movements Freud and Jung thereafter parted ways. So, they stopped being collaborators from 1913 onwards. The dissociation with Freud was a major blow to Jung and he could recover from it only after the First World War. However, by a 1920’s early 1920’s Jung was again his prolific self as a researcher. And this period, this period starting from early 1920’s was also important for Jung’s career because this was a time when he started travelling extensively and he started going to distant places like; The United States, Africa as well as India. And the experiences that he gathered from these places enriched his own scholarly work.

Now, as I have already suggested in my introductory lecture in this series that one of the things that I would like to do throughout this lecture series; is to try and read India and Indian influences in the evolving story of literary theory. And I will try to do that so that literary theory does not appear to us Indian students as a completely alien field of inquiry as it often does. This discussion on Jung provides me with one such opportunity to fool around India in the story of literary theory. Thus, as early as 1912 we find evidences of Jung engaging with Indian most specifically; Hindu religious philosophy and folding in interpretations of passages from the Upanishads and the Rig-Veda into his psychoanalytic theories. This interest in Indian religion and philosophy only deepened

during the course of the next few decades and culminated in his visit to India in 1936 and 37. But even before he physically came to India Jung delivered a series of lectures on Indian yogic practices to the psychology club in Zurich which were published in 1932 under the title “The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga”.

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The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga (1932)

In the winter of 1936-37 Jung toured India and extensively discussed about Indian religion and spiritual practices with its various practitioners here. On his return Jung kept up his interest on India and we can see interesting glimpses of his sustained engagement with this country and its spiritual heritage.

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“What India Can Teach Us” (1939)

“The Psychology of Eastern Meditation”
(1943)

In thesis like the 1939 article “What India Can Teach Us” or in the 1943 essay “The Psychology of Eastern Meditation”. Jung died in 1961 in Zurich and he left behind not only a copious amount of published material, but also a very significant amount of unpublished texts; which are now gradually being made public. Out of these unpublished materials which are now seeing the light of the day the most enigmatic is perhaps a text which is usually referred to as Jung’s “Red Book”.

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Red Book or Liber Novus

Or sometimes it is referred to by its alternative title “Liber Novus” which literally translates into the new book. And this book is a record of Jung’s imaginative experiences between roughly in 1913 and 1917 and this book was published in 2009 so it is very recent actually. Now this particular book the “Red Book” is of interest for a number of reasons. One of them being that it helps Jung’s scholars to understand more clearly; what was going on in Jung’s mind during the period immediately after his breakup with Freud when Jung almost retreated within a cocoon.

But as far as I am concerned the most fascinating aspect of this book is the wonderfully brilliant paintings with which Jung decorated it and the beautiful calligraphic text that Jung used in this book. And some of these paintings are available online and I would wholeheartedly recommend you to look at them to experience for yourself some of the most brilliant and dazzling display of colors and forms. Now, let us come to Jung’s psychoanalytic theory; as I have mentioned before Jung was deeply influenced in his conceptualization of human psychology by Sigmund Freud.

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Memories, Dreams, Reflections

But there were also crucial differences and one of the best ways to understand both the linkages as well as the differences between Jungian and Freudian psychoanalysis is through one of his own dreams that Jung recounts in his autobiography titled “Memories, Dreams, Reflections”. In this particular dream, that Jung tells us; Jung finds himself in a two storied house which in his dream he immediately identifies as quote unquote “my

house” though the house is unknown to him. Looking around Jung could see that he was in an elegantly furnished salon or living room, which was situated on the second story.

And this living room was decorated in the luxuriant rococo style; which dominated European taste during the 18th century. And this particular room also had a number of precious old paintings hanging from the wall. Jung is then struck in his dream by a desire to explore the whole house and he starts climbing down to the ground floor. The ground floor is described by Jung as decorated in a style that is different and historically older to the style which had been predominant in the second story living room. Here in the ground floor the furnishing looks medieval and everything is rather dark. While exploring these rooms Jung encounters a door that leads him to a cellar or the basement and there he finds that the walls of the cellar dates back to ancient roman times.

But Jung soon discovers that even the cellar is not the lowest level of the dream house. Indeed he finds in this floor another narrow stairway that leads him to cave and this cave is scattered with bones and broken potteries that are reminiscent of some very primitive culture. It is while he is at this level that Jung wakes up and his dream breaks. Now, in his autobiography you explains this dream as a representative of a new model of human mind which was both derived from the Freudian model, but which was also importantly different from it. Let me quote from the text to clarify this point.

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Jung writes:

“It was plain to me that the house represented a kind of image of the psyche [...]. Consciousness was represented by the salon. It had an inhabited atmosphere, in spite of its antiquated style.

The ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious. The deeper I went, the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave, I discovered remains of a primitive culture, that is, the world of the primitive man within myself—a world which can scarcely be reached or illuminated by consciousness. The primitive psyche of man borders on the life of the animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animals before men laid claim to them.”

Jung says: “It was plain to me that the house represented a kind of image of the psyche [...]. Consciousness was represented by the salon. It had an inhabited atmosphere, in spite of its antiquated style. The ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious. The deeper I went the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave I discovered remains of a primitive culture, that is, the world of the primitive man within myself—a world which can scarcely be breached or illuminated by consciousness. The primitive psyche of man borders on the life of the animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animals before men laid claim to them”.

So, how is all of this similar or different from the Freudian map of the mind. Well as far as Freud was concerned the mind was divided into two sections the conscious and unconscious. And here please note that I am not talking about the Freudian dynamics of the human mind which has three sections the (Refer Time: 13:34) ego and the super ego. Because that is a different idea altogether so please do not get confused here.

Anyway coming back to the distinction between conscious mind and the unconscious mind Freud believed that the unconscious mind was purely personal. In other words the constitution of each individual's unconscious was determined by that individual's personal experiences and personal memories especially those that were developed during the childhood years. These are the experiences which for Freud determine the unique nature of an individual's repressed desires which constituted the unconscious.

So, for instance even though Freud talks about something like the Oedipal complex as a universal phenomenon he also asserts that the precise nature in which the Oedipal complex will form and operate in a person's psychological life will be largely determined by the specific relations that that person has had with his parents. Jung on the other hand asserts through this dream for instance or rather through his analysis of this dream that; the Freudian personal unconscious is only a part of the totality of the unconscious.

And it is one layer of unconscious that is present in the human mind one among many. He sees that there are deeper levels of unconscious than those elaborated by Freud and these other levels that Jung seems to be accessing in his dream as he went down the staircase first to the cellar and then to the cave beneath it. And what is important to note here is that one keeps descending into the deeper layers and as one does that one goes

beyond the personal memories, personal experiences, and their repressions and one reaches to what Jung called an “Animal soul”.

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“Animal soul” is not shaped by one’s individual experiences but seems to be the residue of the primitive mind of our ancestors from whom we evolved.

This soul according to Jung is not shaped by ones individual experiences, but rather this seems to be the residue of the primitive mind of our ancestors from whom we evolved. And thus this is an aspect of the unconscious that is shared by every one of us every one of us who constitute the human race.

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The deeper layer of the unconscious is what is referred to as the **“collective unconscious”**.

This deeper layer of the unconscious is what Jung refers to as the collective unconscious and this concept of the collective unconscious is very important as far as Jung psychoanalysis is concerned. Describing his use of the term collective unconscious Jung writes and I quote.

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Describing his use of the term “collective unconscious”, Jung writes:

I have chosen the term “collective” because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us.

I have chosen the term “collective” because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a super personal nature which is present in every one of us. What Jung is saying here is that; all of us collectively carry in our minds a psychic substratum that is formed not by our personal experiences by our personal development, but rather by the development of human being as a race. Take for instance the fear of darkness.

Now, all human beings share an innate fear of darkness some are more afraid of it some are less, but more or less there is this innate fear of darkness among all of us. And it can be argued that this collective fear of darkness is an imprint of the memories and experiences of the most primitive human being and of how they evolved. In a primitive world darkness would have been very fearful because it hid a number of threats, like for instance; the threat of being attacked by unseen animals, or the threat of losing one’s bearings and just getting lost.

From a Jungian perspective one may argue that; even in the modern world where these threats are much less or sometimes even nonexistent, darkness remains fearful because our mind is shaped by the fears and desires of our primitive ancestors. These fears these desires memories and experiences form the shared substratum that Jung identifies as collective unconscious. But how do we know that this thing called the collective unconscious actually exists. Well we know it by observing the influence of archetypes in our psychological life. And here again with the word archetype we come across a very crucial term in Jungian psychoanalysis. So, what are archetypes?

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Archetypes are the primordial images and patterns which create the basic grooves for human behavior, motivation for action and development of personalities.

Well Archetypes are the primordial images and patterns which create basic grooves for human behavior, for motivation for action for development of personalities and things like that. Now to give you an example of an archetype one of the archetypes that Jung talks about is the persona archetype. And one of the basic characteristic features of human personality respective of his or her individual upbringing is an attempt to portray his or her image as likable as socially acceptable. Now this is what Jung refers to as the persona and this is shaped and maintained meticulously by an individual to protect his or her ego from any negative criticism. And according to Jung it is a psychological imperative that is imprinted in our collective unconscious.

So, it does not have much to do with our personal memories and our personal experiences, but this imperative comes from deeper within comes from the layer of

collective unconscious. Another example of further Jungian archetype will be the father archetype. According to Jung we all carry the image of an authoritative stern and powerful figure in the deeper levels of our psyche which is identified as a father archetype. Now here please note that this father archetype exists in all of us irrespective of how our individual relationship is with our own fathers. Indeed this archetype would also influence the psychological dynamics of a person who has lost his father before his birth and therefore, has no personal memory of his own father.

So, this father archetype according to Jung has its origin in the primitive human experiences of social life and is therefore, again not part of our personal unconscious, but comes from a deeper level it is part of our collective unconscious it is imprinted there. Now, the reason why these archetypes are important from the perspective of literary theory is because according to Jung these archetypes form the basis of our literary narratives; especially of narratives like myths and fairy tales. Now this marks of profound shift from Freud's analysis of literature as modified daydreams; we have already discussed this in our previous lecture.

Now, daydreams as you will remember from our earlier discussion is connected to what we are now calling after Jung the personal unconscious right. This means that as far as Freud is concerned daydreams provide the specific individual who is engaged in the dreaming process with a high degree of pleasure by allowing him to imaginatively fulfill his personal desires his personal wishes. Now this however, creates a problem if we read literature as the daydream of the author which is a problem that we have already discussed in our previous lecture. What is the problem? Well if a novel for instance emerges out of the day dream of the novelist, then how does it manage to give pleasure to the reader because, novel should only give pleasure to its novelist right because, it is connected with the day dream of that novelist.

Now, we have also seen that Freud was aware of this problem and in order to bypass this problem he had to come up with concepts like incentive bonus and concepts like softening and disguising of the authors ego. The Jungian answer to why literature is enjoyed by people other than it is author is more straightforward. From the Jungian prospect literature is an expression of the authors unconscious yes, but not merely the personal unconscious. Literature is informed by the deep recesses of the collective

unconscious possessed by the author and this collective unconscious finds expression in literature through the underlying presence of the archetypes.

So, in other words if we were to study literature from the Freudian perspective we would try to look beneath the surface of the narrative and we would try to find the seething forces of the authors personal desires, personal wishes, and personal fears. But if we were to study literature from the Jungian perspective we would look beneath the surface of literary narrative and we will come across archetypal images and patterns. Now, since these archetypes are expressions of the collective unconscious they are much more relatable by the reader.

This is because the reader too shares the same collective unconscious with the author and is psychologically guided by the same set of archetypes as the author and his text. This approach towards literature via archetypes has in fact, come to form an independent strand of literary theory which is referred to as archetypal criticism. I will not be able to deal with this unique branch of literary theory any further in this course.

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M.H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

But if you are interested to know more about it the entry on archetypal criticism in M.H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms*; is perfect starting point. So, with this we end our discussion on Jung. In the next lecture we will wrap up this particular section on Literature and Psychoanalysis with a discussion of the work of Jacques Lacan.

Thank you.