## The Post-Jungians

# Chapter 28: The Post-Jungians

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**Abstract**

This chapter contemplates how the publication in 2009 of Jung's *Red Book,* which contains his active imagination process over many years, has affected the post-Jungian community. Exposure to his self-experimentation clearly demonstrates for the first time both his conceptual shift from a scientific to a hermeneutic approach and his own personal experience of the symbolic process that is individuation. Such publication has revolutionised the way that the post-Jungians envisage Jung, emphasising the process-oriented nature of his model of the psyche and the ways in which the analytic process addresses the dialectic tension arising between conscious and unconscious. Important advances by post-Jungians, such as Atmanspacher, Aziz, Cambray, Fordham, Hogenson, Jacoby, Kirsch, Main, Neumann, Samuels, Singer and Stein, are also mentioned to supplement the discussion.

## Introduction

Since the publication of Jung's Red Book in 2009, analytical psychology has entered a new phase in the appreciation of Jung's work, and contemporary post-Jungians have gained a greater understanding of his conceptual shift from a scientific to a hermeneutic approach and a deeper engagement with the meaning of some of his original concepts. The present chapter is written primarily from this vertex, in view of the wealth of recent scholarship and in the face of the difficulty in so confined a space of satisfactorily tracing a complete timeline from Jung's previous work.

## Underlying Assumptions in Analytical Psychology

When talking about basic underlying assumptions in analytical psychology, it is common to lift out certain key concepts in Jung's thinking, such as complexes, archetypes, and the collective unconscious, and then to be left with an impression of a model of the psyche that is somewhat static. So, before focussing on these central assumptions, I want to highlight that

Jung's theory is essentially process-oriented and concerns the ebb and flow of energy in the tension that arises between conscious and unconscious. Jung sought to harness that energy symbolically in the service of the patient's healing and in the life-long work of individuation.

Jung's model of the psyche was developed through years of scientific work (his Word Association Tests—WATs—conducted at the Burghölzli Clinic), self-reflection and hermeneutic study (his Red Book work, and his subsequent theoretical conceptualisations), comparative study in other disciplines, and empirical observation of his clinic patients' hallucinations and his analytic patients' dreams and imaginal material. This model embraces all the elements that feed into the analytic process. For the early post-Jungians, not all of his work was available but contemporary post-Jungians have access to his personal self-experimentation, with the publication of his Red Book in 2009 and the publication of his Black Books in 2019, and considerable research (e.g. Kirsch & Hogenson, 2014; Stein, 2011; Stein & Arzt, 2017, 2018, 2019) has gone into this new material. Thus, we now have far greater insight into Jung's hermeneutic approach and its implications for analytical psychology, clinically, theoretically, and culturally. We also have Jung's own example of his individuation process through his repeated working and re-working of the material from his unconscious as displayed in the Red Book.

Certain of Jung's ideas that are not prominent in his previously published work have come to the fore, most notably his psychoid concept and his notion of synchronicity. There is not space here to address all the developments, and so I propose simply to draw out certain main strands of post-Jungian thought from their historical base in Jung's work while weaving in contemporary changes in emphasis and picking up on just some of the aspects of post-Jungian thinking that have an important place in clinical practice.

## Main, General Underlying Assumptions

*Structure of the Psyche (Personal and Collective Unconscious); Complexes; Archetypes; Individuation*

From his early WATs, Jung conceived the idea of a *personal unconscious* including accumulations of ideas clustered around emotionally charged events in our lived experience. He termed these clusters *complexes*. Jung described a complex as "the *image* of a certain psychic situation which is strongly accentuated emotionally and is, moreover, incompatible with the habitual attitude of consciousness. This image has a . . . high degree of autonomy, so that it is subject to the control of the conscious mind to only a limited extent . . . ." (Jung, 1934/1969, para. 201). His experiments demonstrated scientifically that complexes exert a strong energic influence in which emotion and physical reaction are seen to be intimately combined. This was the beginning of his understanding of a monistic relation between mind and body.

From his subsequent hermeneutic study in the multi-layer work of imagination that gave rise to his Red Book, and from his empirical observation of his patients, he discovered the existence of universal ideas and patterns of behaviour common to all mankind, and he conceived the notion of *a collective unconscious* that is inhabited by primordial images.

The flood of unconscious fantasy, unleashed in the autumn of 1913 following two dreams of a terrible sea of blood, prompted him to begin his "most difficult experiment" of actively engaging with the unconscious, by plunging himself into his fantasies, and entering into dialogue with them. Such dialogue involved encouraging his visions, reflecting on the primordial images that arose, and engaging in a multi-layer process of imaginal elaboration, which he continued over many years. He termed this process *active imagination*, seeing it as

a means for fostering the symbolic expression of an unconscious determinant and harnessing the associated energy in the service of transformation and individuation.

His self-experimentation showed that primordial images have a numinous quality, echoing mythological motifs, and possess a vitality and fascination that activates the psyche:

> [I]n dreams, fantasies, and other exceptional states of mind the most far-fetched mythological motifs and symbols can appear autochthonously at any time . . . . These "primordial images" . . . make up that psychic stratum which I have called the collective unconscious. (Jung, 1929/1969, para. 229).

After developing a view of the collective unconscious as a locus of deeply unconscious sources of potential, the *archetypes*, serving as generators of psychic form, he gave these images the name *archetypal images*. "[T]he archetype is . . . a dynamism which makes itself felt in the . . . fascinating power of the archetypal image." (Jung, 1947/1954/1969, para. 414). He saw this dynamism as potentially transformative.

## Specific Theoretical Assumptions

### *Psychoid Unconscious; Archetype as Such; Unus Mundus; Body and Mind; Transcendent Function*

At the deepest level of the psyche, Jung conceived a *psychoid unconscious* that was so deep as to be unknowable:

> The archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are very varied structures which all point back to one essentially "irrepresentable" form. The latter is characterised by certain formal elements . . . although these can be grasped only approximately. The archetype as such is a *psychoid* factor. . . . It does not appear to be capable of reaching consciousness. (Jung, 1936/1969, para. 417)

His psychoid concept has some very far-reaching implications, since he saw this aspect of the unconscious as possessing particular qualities of organization taking effect through the archetypes, and as being associated with an *unus mundus* or unitary world in which *body and mind*, later even mind and matter (cf. his synchronicity concept), and self and other are undifferentiated.

Describing the archetype as having a "gripping" quality, Jung writes:

> This remarkable effect points to the "psychoid" and essentially transcendental nature of the archetype as an "arranger" of psychic forms inside and outside the psyche. (Adler, 1976, p. 22)

He thought of this as a vital force or life-energy. Addison (2019) argues that the *archetype as such* can be seen as a potential in the psychoid unconscious for organizing and shaping elements of an instinctual or imaginal character to engender new and more complex emergent positions depicted as the instinctual image or the archetypal image, respectively. As a result of the psychoid nature of the archetype, these images may emerge in embodied form anywhere along the psyche-soma continuum between instinct and spirit, and thence become conscious. This is important in the analytic process.

Jung himself saw the archetypes as "formal factors responsible for the organization of unconscious psychic processes" and "at the same time they have a "specific charge" and develop numinous effects which express themselves as *affects*." (Jung, 1952/1969, para. 841). Such affects withdraw energy from the contents of consciousness and allow unconscious contents, generally of an archetypal nature, to break through, or emerge, and find expression as images. These instinctual and archetypal images enrich and clarify the affect and are symbolic in that they portray the meaning of the affect in terms of the best possible

expression for a complex fact not yet clearly consciously apprehended. Such transformation of energy is an emergent process having a vitalizing effect on the personality for enabling the conscious ego to come to terms with the unconscious in a symbolic way to achieve a resolution of internal conflict through a new position. Jung described this effect as the *transcendent function*, a mediator and transformer of psychic energy.

## Assumptions Concerning Etiology

### *Reductive Method; Synthetic Method; Emergence*

As can be seen from the above, Jung's model is dynamic and emergent. Although he does write about the psychology of childhood development, his work is directed more toward the nature of the unconscious and the dynamics of the psyche in the adult. Furthermore, he eschews causal interpretations of psychic material, which look to childhood for explanation, in favor of understandings based on prospective meaning, which contemplate potential future unfolding.

> No psychological fact can ever be explained in terms of causality alone; as a living phenomenon, it is always indissolubly bound up with the continuity of the vital process, so that it is not only something evolved but also continually evolving and creative. (Jung, 1921/1971, para. 717)

In this, Jung makes plain that he is distinguishing himself from Freud, describing Freud's method as *reductive* in its attempts to depict unconscious material in terms of infantile, instinctual motivations and past deficits, and as limiting to the ongoing development of the personality. He describes his own method as constructive or *synthetic* because it attends to the full meaning and potential for growth represented by unconscious contents, thereby seeking to integrate these unconscious contents into the personality as a whole. More especially, he acknowledges that, whilst it may be necessary at the outset of analysis to employ Freud's method to uncover and deal with childhood issues, thereafter the reductive

viewpoint tends to lead to a limited, mechanistic effect whereas the synthetic viewpoint leads to an *emergent* life-enhancing result.

In Jung's view, it is important to reach the vital meaning of unconscious symbolism. Such unconscious material, he believed, has a prospective function compensating for the conscious attitude and anticipating lines of future development. A symbol is the best current formulation of an unknown fact, a numinous structural element in the collective unconscious attracting conscious content to itself to generate an archetypal image representing the unknown fact, an intimation of a meaning beyond our present comprehension. Thus, the synthetic approach, based on the question, what is the purpose of this material, offers a more complete understanding better suited to future adaptation of the personality.

Amongst the post-Jungians, Colman (2007) describes the symbol as representing living, emergent meaning. He refers to the idea of the third to describe the emergence of a new level of mental functioning, linking this with Jung's concept of the transcendent function. The transcendent function arises through an active confrontation between conscious and unconscious leading to the emergence of new symbolic forms. The new symbolic forms transcend internal conflicts and lead to a greater psychic wholeness. Such third (area or position) may thus be described as a representational space for the occurrence of emergent meaning (p. 566).

Urban (2008) contemplates a symbol as a vital process. She takes issue with the use of the terms "image" and "representation" for symbolic expression, on the grounds that they imply something static. She suggests instead that consciousness and unconsciousness are in ceaseless movement, constantly blending into and clashing against one another to create

"symbolic expressions [that] are ephemeral and elusive, rising up, emerging into consciousness seemingly from nowhere and disappearing again" (p. 346).

## Implications for Technique

*Transference; Countertransference; Active Imagination; Relationship*

The synthetic approach has considerable implications for technique. The analyst, seeking to mediate the relations of unconscious and conscious, and hence the transcendent function, with and for the patient in order to help the patient arrive at a new position, is all the time monitoring and evaluating the purpose of the *transference*. Unconscious manifestations, slips, spontaneous fantasies and dreams, are noted for emotional intensity and energic value and the analyst engages with the patient in what Jung described as a form of *active imagination* to assist the patient in giving symbolic shape to this charged material. In view of Jung's psychoid concept, the shape may emerge anywhere along the psyche-soma continuum and anywhere along the relational continuum between patient and analyst, depending upon numerous factors including the ego strength of the patient, the stage of the analysis, and the current transference-countertransference *relationship*.

A description of this emergent process in the transference, from confidential interview material, is given below:

> For me, the important [thing] is not the phenomena itself, it is how the phenomena is going to shape our thoughts. And to allow us to think what we would be unable to think without that. It is an emergent process. [. . . T]hese phenomena are linked to the complex system, which is the encounter. [F]rom this system emerges something which would not have emerged in another system. I would say that, in this moment, the important thing for the analysis is that you have been able to accept to lose your boundaries, so that's this complex system, which is the transference, will then take the

> place of your ego, inside your psyche, inside your body first, and then your psyche. And will create inside you some shape or representation, using your consciousness for that. And then you recovered your boundaries, and you have been able to think something, to be conscious of a thinking, which has emerged from this experience inside you. [. . . There is also] the necessity of time for the analyst to lose his boundaries and the necessity of time for the patient to be able to hear something about an important insight. And what is very mysterious for me is that this necessity of time is coming from the encounter, and no one decides, it emerges. And usually, when it emerges like this, if the analyst is able to say something, usually the analysand is able to hear. (Addison, 2019, pp. 138–9)

In post-Jungian thinking, there is a significant body of work (e.g. Cambray, 2002; Hogenson, 2004) attending to questions of emergence relating to this synthetic understanding.

## Subsequent Developments

In the above, I have woven contemporary post-Jungian thinking into observations on certain of Jung's key concepts. I have embraced some of the current ideas concerning his model of the psyche, and its deeply unknowable strata designated the psychoid unconscious and the emergent dynamic associated with that. I have not covered his views on synchronicity, seen as a locus of meaningful coincidence or an acausal connecting principle, nor have I highlighted the considerable amount of research addressing this concept (see, by way of example only, Atmanspacher, 2014; Aziz, 2007; Cambray, 2009; Hogenson, 2009; Main, 2004).

Many other aspects of Jung's thinking have also been critiqued and expanded by the post-Jungians, and space permits me to select a few key areas only. There exist important critiques on the validity of his central notion of the archetype, its nature, its function and its basis in the

psyche. Significant amongst these discussions are Pietikainen, 1998; Knox, 2003; Stevens, 2015; and Hogenson, 2019. There is, in addition, an evolving area of post-Jungian study devoted to gender and queer theory (e.g. McKenzie, 2006; Samuels, 1984), critiquing Jung's ideas concerning the two specific contra-sexual archetypes, anima and animus.

Specific applications of Jung's theory have also received attention, including studies of development (e.g. Fordham, 1957, 1986; Jacoby, 1999; Neumann, 1973), studies of trauma (e.g. Kalsched, 1996), studies on therapeutic care for refugees (e.g. Papadopoulos, 2002) and studies of politics and diversity (e.g. Samuels, 1993).

Finally, recent work by various post-Jungians has identified and elaborated an additional important aspect of Jung's model of the psyche, designated the cultural complex (Singer, 2000, 2018; Singer & Kimbles, 2004), which relates to the influences of cultural background on individuals and on the unconscious behaviours of social groups.

| Post-Jungians | |
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| **Main, general underlying assumptions** | A dynamic model of the psyche having a personal and a collective unconscious, in which individuation is a key function. |
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| **Specific Theoretical Assumptions** | |
| **Psychic structure** | A personal unconscious characterised by complexes, a collective unconscious characterised by archetypes and archetypal images, and a deeply unknowable stratum, the psychoid unconscious. |
| **Energy** | A purposive vital principle or life-force governs an emergent dynamism in the psyche. |
| **Relationship** | Relationship is seen in terms of the transference, wherein analyst and patient together strive to give symbolic form to emerging material. |
| **Developmental stages** | N/A |
| **Body** | A body-mind monism applies so that unconscious material may manifest anywhere along a continuum from physiologic to psychic. |
| **Anxieties/instinct and defences** | N/A |
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| **Assumptions concerning etiology** | Jung's synthetic method focuses on the purpose of the transference, in contrast to Freud's reductive method which focuses on the cause. |

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| **Implications for technique** | The analyst mediates the relation of conscious and unconscious, hence the transcendent function, through a form of active imagination by monitoring the purpose of the transference. |
| **Subsequent developments of the core concept** | Critiques of Jung's depiction of the archetype, elaborations of his psychoid concept and his notion of synchronicity, the conceptualisation of cultural complexes.<br>Applications of Jung's ideas address areas of development, gender, trauma, refugee care, politics, and diversity. |

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