

In the Beginning Jung and Freud on Introversion

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[244] *By now it is well known that creativity requires incubation: a stage of turning inward that has been described as "introversion." That this was not always recognized, even by the founders of depth psychology, is documented here by Richard Capobianco, who holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy. His exploration of the evolution of Jung's earliest statements about the creative aspects of introversion provides us with a foundation for understanding the profound differences between Freud and Jung. Their approaches to depth psychology continue to fascinate.*

While much has been written about the theoretical issues which divided these two men, there has been very little comment on an issue of major importance: the nature and significance of the psychological phenomenon of "introversion." This essay documents the evolution of Jung's early effort to explore the creative aspects of introversion in contrast to Freud's view, which emphasized its pathological aspects.

[245] In the Zofingia lecture entitled, "Some Thoughts on Psychology" (1897/ 1983), which Jung delivered while a student at Basel University, he already maintained that the soul "extends far beyond our consciousness" and that this un-conscious dimension of the soul is an "intelligence" which is superior to conscious intelligence.

In his doctoral dissertation, *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena* (1902/1970), Jung stated this position more explicitly when he speculated that some cases of somnambulistic heightened unconscious performance "postulate a highly developed intellectual activity of the unconscious." Moreover, he added: "I am inclined to regard the mystical system devised by our patient as just such an example of heightened unconscious performance that transcends her normal intelligence" (par. 148).

It is the view of this essay that Jung's effort to remain true to this early suggestion that *the unconscious is an intelligent structure* is at the heart of his later struggle with Freud over the theoretical significance of "introversion."

In 1910 Jung published a paper entitled, "Psychic Conflicts in a Child," in which he introduced the term "introversion" for the first time (1910/1974):

The elegiac reveries [of the child] express the fact that part of the love which formally belonged, and should belong to a real object, is now *introverted*, that is, it is turned inward into the subject and there produces increased fantasy activity. Whence comes this introversion? Is it a psychological manifestation peculiar to this period, or does it come from a conflict? (par. 13)

The question that Jung raises at the end of this passage is intriguing, for it suggests, perhaps, something of the ambivalence he experienced from the outset regarding this psychological phenomenon. With this question he raises the possibility that the introversion of libido may not be a pathological phenomenon but instead a creative stage in the development of the human being. He does not, however, develop this suggestion any further in the early paper; he remains close to the Freudian line and proceeds to analyze the child's fantasies in pathological terms.

That Jung was not wholly satisfied with this orientation to introversion is revealed in a crucial exchange of letters with Freud. After the suicide of a close associate of Jung's, J.J. Honegger, who was considered to have fallen victim to dementia praecox (schizophrenia), Jung wrote to Freud on June 12, 1911 (Freud & Jung, 1974):

Everything I am doing now revolves round the contents and forms of unconscious fantasies. . . .It seems that introversion leads [246] not only, as in hysteria, to a recrudescence of infantile memories but also to *a loosening up of the historical layers of the unconscious*, thus giving rise to perilous formations which come to light only in exceptional cases. [Italics added] (pp. 426-427)

Freud replied to Jung in a letter dated June 15, 1911:

I am very much interested in what you tell me about the system of ucs. fantasies in a case of D. pr. *These constructions are known to me from hysteria and obsessional neurosis; they are nothing other than carefully cultivated daydreams.* . . .But I don't think you could have saved Honegger by revealing his system— if he had one. Where I have found one, its production was no more important than were the aetiology and motives and the rewards held out by real life. These in any case dominated the symptom-formation, so that until they were unmasked the symptoms could persist, even when there was general improvement.

On the role of fantasies— your introversion— I am mulling over a few fundamental ideas. [*Italics added*] (p.430)

Freud's response was, well, Freudian. He insisted that the unconscious fantasies of psychotics—no matter how rich or sublime—were best understood as "masks" of repressed childhood conflicts. To bring to light these repressed conflicts was to exhaust the significance of the fantasies.

Despite Freud's confidence in this interpretation, he was somewhat uneasy about Jung's preoccupation with unconscious fantasies. What ever else could Jung be thinking? Just in case, Freud promised to mull it all over.

Jung replied to Freud on June 23, 1911 and, no doubt to Freud's dismay, offered a very un-Freudian reflection on the significance of unconscious fantasies (Freud & Jung, 1974):

The unconscious fantasies contain a whole lot of relevant material, and bring the inside to the outside as nothing else can, so that I see a faint hope of getting at even the "inaccessible" cases by this means. These days my interest turns more and more to ucs. fantasy, and it is quite possible that I'm attaching too great hopes to these excavations. Ucs. fantasy is an amazing witches' cauldron:

"Formation, transformation,
Eternal Mind's eternal recreation.
[*Des ewigen Sinnes ewige Unterhaltung*]
Thronged round with images of things to be,
They see you not, shadows are all they see."
[*Faust II*, Act I, A Gloomy Gallery]

[247] This is the matrix of the mind, as the little great-grandfather [Goethe] correctly saw. I hope something good comes out of it. (pp. 430-431)

In his poetic way, Jung suggested to Freud that the rich fantasies accompanying the introversion of libido cannot simply be dismissed as pathological. Such unconscious fantasies also represent the "loosening up" of an unconscious structure of the human being, which perhaps had escaped the notice of Freud.

Jung suggested that while a patient's vital connection to external reality is lost in a psychosis, there was something of a corresponding gain of *inner* reality. In more general terms, introversion represents the necessary condition of breaking the domination of the ego and lighting up an unconscious, "historical," impersonal layer of the psyche. What is more, Jung indirectly related this historical layer to "the Eternal Mind" of Goethe's

poem. This leads us to the crucial consideration: Jung appeared to be suggesting the possibility that the unconscious is an *intelligent* structure, "a highly developed intellectual activity." This formulation clearly echoed the speculation he had voiced in the Zofingia lecture, and, more specifically, in his doctoral dissertation of 1902.

Although Freud ignored these suggestions in his subsequent correspondence with Jung, he did not break his promise to "mull over" the whole matter of introversion. Shortly thereafter, in his paper, "The Dynamics of the Transference" (1912), Freud set down his understanding of Jung's notion of introversion, implicitly rejecting everything but its pathological significance (Freud, 1912/1958):

An invariable and indispensable precondition of *every* onset of a psychoneurosis is the process to which Jung has given the appropriate name of "introversion." That is to say: the portion of libido which is capable of becoming conscious and is directed towards [250] reality is diminished, and the portion which is directed *away* from reality and is unconscious, and which, though it may still feed the subject's fantasies, nevertheless belongs to the unconscious, is proportionately increased. . . .The analytic treatment now proceeds to follow it; it seeks to track down the libido, to make it acceptable to consciousness and, in the end, serviceable for reality. (p. 102)

Here Freud closed the door on Jung's speculation regarding the significance of unconscious fantasies. For Freud, libido lost to the external world was simply "unserviceable"; the introversion of libido is exclusively a pathological phenomenon. He chose not to acknowledge the possibility raised by Jung that unconscious fantasy life may *also* illuminate an unconscious dimension of the psyche that is structured like a higher "mind."

The essay which Jung was writing during this exchange of letters with Freud, "*Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*" (published in two parts in the *Jahrbuch*, 1911-12), revealed his struggle to work out the significance of the [251] phenomenon of "introversion" in his own terms. In Part I, published in 1911 (published in English in 1916/1965), he spoke of introversion in a generally Freudian context:

The result. . . must be that an introversion occurring in later life, according to the Freudian teaching, seizes upon regressive infantile reminiscences taken from the individual past. That first points out the way; then with stronger introversion and regression (strong repressions, introversion psychoses), there come to light pronounced traits of an archaic mental kind which, under certain circumstances, might go as far as the re-echo of a once manifest, archaic mental product. (p. 37)

Not surprisingly, remarks such as these led Freud to believe that Jung remained well within the fold and that Jung was, in fact, now helping Abraham, Rank, and Freud himself conquer new ground (myths) for psychoanalysis (Freud & Jung, 1974).

Nevertheless, even in Part I Jung hinted that the introversion of libido may have more than a pathological significance. In section II, "Concerning Two Kinds of Thinking," he distinguished between "directed thinking" and "dream or fantasy thinking." Directed thinking (which he also refers to as *logos*) "works itself out in *word form*" and "is a phenomenon of consciousness throughout." Fantasy thinking, on the other hand, does not work itself out in word or speech but in *images*. "Here," Jung observed, "thinking in the form of speech ceases, image crowds upon image, feeling upon feeling. . . ." What is especially noteworthy, though, is that he states that fantasy thinking is primarily an *unconscious* phenomenon (p. 36); apparently, the unconscious structure "thinks" in *images*.

In an important footnote to this discussion, Jung maintained that such unconscious fantasy thinking comes to light especially in the phenomenon of the *introversion of libido*, and he referred the reader to his essay, "Psychic Conflicts in a Child," which we have examined. In a psychosis marked by the introversion of libido, he wrote, "we meet with this 'unutterable' purely fantastic thinking, which moves in 'inexpressible' images and feelings" (p. 487). Thus, Jung again stressed that the introversion of libido energizes the unconscious structure; in this section, he speaks of the unconscious as constituted by images. The key question becomes: What was the significance of these images for Jung?

For the most part, Jung spoke of unconscious fantasy thinking as being pathological. Such thinking "must necessarily produce an overwhelmingly [252] subjectively distorted idea of the world. We regard this state of mind as infantile." Yet, while he goes most of the way with Freud, he does not seem to have his heart in the task of reducing unconscious fantasies to the realm of pathology. In particular, Jung expressed admiration for the "richness and immense power of life of Grecian mythology," and he found delight in relating several mythical tales of the ancients. We are left with the impression that he was not convinced that unconscious fantasies are purely infantile and that unconscious processes are less intelligent, less complex, than conscious processes. What precisely do unconscious fantasies reveal about the nature of the unconscious structure? How are we to

understand this observation of Jung's? "By means of fantastic thinking, directed thinking is connected with the oldest foundations of the human mind, which have been for a long time beneath the threshold of the consciousness (p. 36)."

Jung's very un-Freudian interest in the phenomenon of introversion emerged more clearly in Part II of "*Wandlungen*," published in 1912. Here, as in his correspondence with Freud, Jung metaphorically suggested that the introversion of libido "loosens up" an irreducible unconscious structure which is in some way intelligent. In the following passage, Jung clearly gave a positive resonance to the function of introversion of the libido (Jung, 1916/1965):

Therefore, the sun is adapted as is nothing else to represent the visible God of this world. That is to say, that driving strength of our own soul, which we call libido, and whose nature it is to allow the useful and injurious, the good and the bad to proceed. That this comparison is no mere play of words is taught us by the mystics. When by looking inward (introversion) and going down into the depths of their own being they find "in their heart" the image of the Sun, they find their own love or libido. . . .(p.128)

Introversion, Jung observed, leads to the discovery, in "the depths" of one's own being, of the "image of the Sun." With this metaphor, he signaled his clear disagreement with Freud's position: the unconscious is not, as Freud would have it, the seat of infantile wishes but, rather, is the very source of "light." What *theoretical* position did Jung intend to suggest by the use of this metaphor? What is the constitution of this unconscious structure which is best symbolized by the "image of the Sun"? He was not explicit in this passage. Even so, I suggest that this metaphor of light recalls Jung's early theoretical speculation in his 1902 doctoral dissertation that the unconscious is the seat of "a highly developed intellectual activity." In another passage Jung remarked (1916/1965):

[253] Because we have discerned that the arrow is a libido symbol, the idea of "penetrating or piercing through" consequently becomes clear to us. It is a phallic act of union with one's self, a sort of self-fertilization (introversion); also a self-violation, a self-murder. . . .The wounding by one's own arrow means, first of all, *the state of introversion*. What this signifies we already know— the libido sinks into its "own depths" and finds there below, in the shadows of the unconscious, the substitute for the upper world, which it has abandoned: *the world of memories*. (p. 329)

This passage is particularly rich, for here Jung is suggesting the Janus-faced character of introversion: it is both a pathological *and* a creative phenomenon. He did not turn away from the darker aspect of introversion, for he noted [254] that the introversion of

libido is a kind of "self-murder" or "self-violation"; it is, after all, *loss*— loss of one's vital connection to the external world. Thus, to this extent at least, Jung sustained Freud's incisive insights into the pathological dimension of introversion.

Even so, Jung's real interest lay in the creative aspects of introversion. The introversion of libido illuminates an unconscious "world of memories," and it is in the uncovering of this unconscious structure of memories that we are healed, renewed, "fertilized." Yet what precisely is healing about such "memories"? At one point in this discussion, Jung related the tale of Vishnu who "sank into ecstasy (introversion) and during this state of sleep bore Brahma, who, enthroned upon the lotus flower, arose from the navel of Vishnu, bringing with him the Vedas, which he diligently read. (Birth of creative thought from introversion.)" Is not Jung's suggestion, at least in part, that such unconscious "memories" renew conscious life precisely because of the "deeper" wisdom they embody? If so, then we are led to consider that this passage, too, recalls Jung's earlier theoretical suggestion that the unconscious is structured by higher, more complex intellectual processes than is consciousness.

In yet another passage Jung wrote (1916/1965):

There is still to be considered one more source of the re-animation of the mother-*imago*. We have already met it in the discussion of the mother scene in "Faust," that is to say, *the willed introversion of a creative mind*, which, retreating before its own problem and inwardly collecting its forces, dips at least for a moment into the source of life, in order there to wrest a little more strength from the mother for the completion of its work. It is a mother-child play with one's self. The separation from the mother-*imago*, the birth out of one's self, reconciles all conflicts through the sufferings. . . .The symbolism of this speech is of the greatest richness. He is buried in the depths of *self*, as if in the earth. (p. 337)

Here Jung took a stronger stand against Freud's view of introversion by suggesting that, at some point, introversion may not be considered pathological at all: rather, it represents a periodic re-collection or re-cognition of the primordial unconscious structure upon which the conscious "I" rests. As this is a creative, renewing act according to Jung, we are again led to consider that this primordial unconscious structure is very different from Freud's pathological view. Indeed, there is a hint here of a later development in Jung's thinking [255] in which the "depths" of the unconscious structure is characterized in terms of the *Self*: one "is buried in the depths of *self*."

For both Freud and Jung, the question of the nature and significance of the psychological phenomenon of introversion crystallized the larger question of the nature and significance of the unconscious structure. Challenged by Jung's speculations, Freud persisted in maintaining that the unconscious is the seat of repressed infantile wishes. Through the use of powerful metaphors, Jung struggled to break the hold of Freud's ideas about the regressive nature of unconscious processes and to reassert his original speculation in the Zofingia lectures and in his doctoral dissertation that the unconscious is structured by intelligent processes which are higher or more complex than conscious processes. The story of the development of Jung's thinking does not end here, but in a fundamental way, it does begin here. We might all agree that re-reading the beginning of the story enriches our understanding and appreciation of Jung's later conclusions about the creative aspects of the process of introversion in art, healing, and daily life.

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