
An Introduction to Jung's Psychology: Education

Contributed by Frieda Fordham

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Chapter 7: Psychology and Education

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JUNG has made an interesting contribution to the understanding of child development in demonstrating, through the medium of the association tests, how closely the psychology of a child is linked with that of its parents. Even a whole family can show strikingly similar reactions. Children, as we have already seen, can have dreams which reflect the parents' problems and nervous disturbances or bad behaviour can often be traced to parental difficulties which have been carefully concealed from the child. If the parents solve their own problems, or sometimes if they merely bring their difficulties into the light of day and share them frankly with the child (naturally on a level that he or she can understand), the child's nervousness or refractoriness will often disappear as if by magic.(1)

Jung describes the case of a girl of nine who ran a low temperature for months and was unable to attend school, though no cause could be found for the condition. The parents were unhappy together and wished for a divorce, but could not come to a decision to take the actual step. They were sure the child knew nothing of this, and that she was not worried in any way. The child's dreams, however, showed that she was aware of the situation, and she confessed that whenever her father went away (as he sometimes did on business trips) she was afraid that he would never come back. She also noticed that her mother was happier then. The parents came to see at last that they were making the child ill by leaving their problem unsolved. They had either to work out an adjustment between themselves or to separate.

1. 'The Familial Constellations' ' Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology, pp. 119-32 (Cf. C.W., 2, in preparation). They chose the latter, and explained to the child that she would not be entirely parted from either of them, but would have two homes in future, and though this seems a far from ideal arrangement, the child's relief at being freed from her vague fears and intuitions was so great that she was soon well again and able to return to school.(1)

) The close identity of thought in families is sometimes strikingly clear, when each member echoes the opinion of the other and shares the general likes and dislikes, but the unconscious identity of children and parents is less obvious, and usually only shown in dreams and through the medium of tests like the association tests. The unconscious influence of parents can burden a child and hinder its development; for instance, a wife dissatisfied with her husband may unknowingly heap on her son the emotion that would normally flow towards the father, and a father may be really in love with his little daughter, and jealously prevent any other influence entering her life. The story of the early life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning is a good, if extreme, example of the development of such a situation. Mr Barrett used every means open to a Victorian father to prevent his daughter from marrying, but a modern parent can also produce the same effect, though in a far less obvious way, and be quite unaware he is doing it. Analytic practice is full of young men and women who have not been weaned from their parents' psyche, and so cannot live like adults. Jung has gone so far as to say that it is little use treating a problem child unless the parents will attempt to clear up their own difficulties at the same time, but followers of his have somewhat modified this point of view, finding that it is possible to develop and strengthen the consciousness of a child so that he can become to some extent an individual able to resist harmful influences.(2)

1. 'Analytical Psychology and Education' (C.W., 17), pars. 216-19.

2. Cf. Michael Fordham, *The Life of Childhood* (London 1944) pp. 131, 132. One practical consequence for parents of this unconscious influence on children is that the personality of the former will have far more effect in shaping the child's character than any precepts; what they say is less important than what they are. This is not a new idea, but rather an example of ancient wisdom strikingly confirmed by modern knowledge. It follows that parents, and especially parents of 'maladjusted children', even if the maladjustment is only slight, can learn more about themselves and their inner life with great advantage, since the influence of the unknown is so much more harmful than that of the known.

Children often live out some aspect of their parents' personality which has been repressed, or which circumstance has prevented them developing. In the latter case the parents' influence is often conscious or half-conscious, and mistakes it leads to can be seen, at least by other people, if not by themselves; when for example parents say 'We want him to have the education we missed', regardless of whether the kind of education of which they are thinking is suitable for their particular child, and as a result he fails at school or university, When, however, a parent has repressed the sexual instinct it is less apparent why their daughter should be 'man mad', or their son develop into a rake. Somehow (and only the careful and detailed following of a life history will show how this happens) the energy of the repressed unconscious tendency has worked in a thousand ways to push the children into the path of what the parent most fears, and at the same time most desires.

That this unconscious influence can work in a bizarre and terrifying way is shown by T. S. Eliot in *The Family Reunion*. Here the influence is collective rather than personal, and is expressed as a family curse - a fate. Lord Monchensy wanted to kill his wife ' but was prevented by his own weakness and the decision of the woman he loved. His son Harry becomes convinced he has acted on the unconscious desire to kill his wife by pushing her overboard from the liner on which they are travelling. Harry is pursued by tormenting questions, fears, and fantasies which go far beyond the guilt he might have been expected to feel, and it is only when he returns to his old home that he learns the secret of the past, and is made free by this knowledge to live his own life.

Perhaps my life has only been a dream

Dreamt through me by the minds of others says Harry, while he is trying to understand what has happened to him. In the play T. S. Eliot shows something of the hidden yet powerful influences that had worked in him as the result of his parents' failure to face their own passion and violence:

Seven years I kept him,

For the sake of the future, a discontented ghost,

In his own house ...

Forcing sorts upon an unwilling father says Harry's mother of her husband:

I would have sons, if I could not have a husband

Then I let him go. and Harry says:

I think the things that are taken for granted at home, make a deeper impression upon children than what they are told. What is important, if children are to develop satisfactorily, is that their parents should accept life and live it as fully(1) possible, and when there is frustration, as there often must be, they should be honest with themselves and acknowledge it. It is the secret, hidden things, the skeletons in the cupboard, that harm.

Just as it is vital for parents to live their own lives as fully as possible and to deepen their understanding of themselves to the utmost, so is it important for teachers and educators to (to the same. When children go to school their teachers become, during school hours, substitutes for the parents, the children transfer to the teacher some of the feelings they I have for their parents and are influenced in their turn by the personalities of the teachers. This mutual relationship is of more importance than any teaching method, and a child's ability to learn is continually hampered if the relationship is unsatisfactory.

1. What is meant here by 'living fully' is the acceptance, rather than the avoidance of experience. For example, there are people who postpone marriage on the grounds that they 'can't afford it', long after this has (eased to be reasonable caution, or others whose lives are paralysed because of the fear of what people will think. Again, if teachers really want to be educators, to help children to develop into satisfactory men and women, and not simply to 'stuff them with knowledge', they will only be really successful if they themselves have sound personalities. No amount of preaching, however well done, no principles, however sound, no clever technique or mechanical aids can replace the influence of a well-developed personality. Teachers cannot expect to be 'whole individuals', in the sense of being individuated, at least, not until they reach middle life or later, but they should live as normally and fully as possible, and extend their knowledge of themselves as far as they can, in order to avoid projecting their complexes on to the children in their care; otherwise they waste their energy and distort the alms of their more impressionable pupils.

The harmful effect of an over-anxious or warped personality is usually clearly seen, and a child can (and usually does) react against such influences, but the projection of a complex is more subtle. For instance, an unmarried woman teacher who has not come to terms with her animus may so overstress the value of intellectual achievement as to leave her girl pupils with a sense of the inferiority of specifically feminine aims which will be a constant difficulty in later life. This will not happen, of course, with those girls who are assured of the value of their femininity, but only when the ground is already prepared by the child's early relationship with her mother having failed to develop satisfactorily.

The complexes of teachers are also much in evidence in the perennial arguments for and against discipline. The infantile teacher who is really incapable of exerting consistent discipline often exalts freedom into a principle, whilst others, urged on by a will to power, or because they have identified themselves with an authoritarian figure, insist on the necessity of the strictest rules and punishments. Such people argue, and even put their ideas into practice without any real consideration of their merits, sometimes with most unfortunate consequences. It is only fair to add that there are of course many teachers who can and do consider these things in an open-minded fashion.

Parents and teachers, because of their influence on future generations, have the greatest need of a healthy attitude to life and to themselves. One might add that politicians and all who are concerned with people, with making laws or framing policies, would be less likely to make dangerous mistakes if they understood better both their own motives and the dynamics of human nature. At present such knowledge is usually employed negatively - that is, to exploit situations, rather than in positive ways.

Such considerations as these lead Jung to the suggestion that adults are as much in need of education as children,

though it is a different kind of education from which the schools give that he has in mind.

At present [Jung says] we educate people only up to the point where they can earn a living and marry; then education ceases altogether, as though a complete mental outfit had been acquired. The solution of all the remaining complicated problems of life is left to the discretion - and ignorance - of the individual. Innumerable ill-advised and unhappy marriages, innumerable professional disappointments, are due solely to this lack of adult education. Vast numbers of men and women thus spend their entire lives in complete ignorance of the most important things.(1)

1. 'Child Development and Education' (C.W., 17), par. 109. We have already seen, for instance, how the extravert and the introvert misunderstand each other, and how their personal relationships are complicated by their different attitudes to life. It is clear that some understanding of this basic difference would be helpful, especially to the introvert, who, because of the general popularity of the extraverted attitude is in danger of feeling inferior, or of being accused of unsociability, egocentricity, and even morbidity, if he or she wants to be alone. Introverts should choose professions which do not force them out of their natural reticence, and work where reflection is more important than quick decisions. Extraverts, on the other hand, should not choose solitary positions, or work where they must be often alone. In spite of the obviousness of this and the fact that most people possess some such knowledge of themselves, it is surprising how often they allow themselves to be forced by circumstance or tradition into an unsuitable position. Husbands and wives might also be more tolerant if they realized they were dealing with something inherent, when their partner's attitude differed from their own.

Some understanding of the effect of the anima and animus is particularly helpful in personal relationships. When, for example, a man makes a startling assumption about a woman, or vice versa, it is because the anima or animus is being projected on to the other person. If the assumption is flattering, no one is likely to object (except the friends and relations who exclaim, 'I can't think what he sees in her'), but when it is critical or derogatory the misunderstood person is usually up in arms. Innumerable quarrels between husband and wife have their basis in this kind of misunderstanding. The moods and emotional outbursts produced in a man by the anima are irrational, and very troublesome to a woman who does not understand them. Some have an instinctive gift for knowing that the mood is best ignored and that it does not relate to anything they have said or done, others are seized by their own animus and wish to prove that the man is wrong, or that he is behaving unreasonably. Soon an argument develops, they are both plunged into the unconscious, and anything may happen.

If a man does not realize that he possesses the anima image within himself, he will tend to project it on to women he meets, and, especially if his feeling side is undeveloped, he is easily fascinated. Sometimes circumstances combine to push him literally into the arms of the fascinator, and if he is really possessed, he will throw over everything, even ruin his career, for her sake. This is the theme of so many films and novels as to show what an ever-present factor it is in life. Perhaps the anima projection cannot for the time being be withdrawn, perhaps there is something valuable to the man that he can only realize in this way, but he should understand what it is that possesses him, so that the experience can serve to develop him, and not simply wreck everything that he has hitherto established. Men tend to depreciate feminine qualities, so that it is particularly difficult for them to accept these as also being elements in their own personality. It is only, however, by developing this side of themselves that they can become relatively immune to the more destructive aspects of anima influence. Women, on the other hand, tend to exaggerate the value and importance of male attributes, so that it is flattering to them to develop these in themselves, and they sometimes overdo it, becoming masculine women that is, women ruled by the animus rather than women who can make use of his qualities to enrich their femininity.

If the animus overrules her a woman will always be making trouble with ill-considered remarks, aggressive behaviour, and obstinate opinions. Women's movements, which always have the driving force of the animus behind them, express the unconscious aspect of women's nature, and often depreciate or forget those feminine qualities which are equally valuable and absolutely necessary to a balanced and healthy life.

The integration of the anima and animus into conscious life - i.e. those aspects of the two archetypes which it is possible to integrate - leads to the possibility of a new kind of relationship between men and women. Instead of each playing complementary roles, they become equal partners. This in some ways demands more of them, for as long as each was content to stick to his part, life might go smoothly, though it was always in danger of disruptive influences from the unconscious. Now they must perhaps concede more to the other, yield up some of their special territory; but they are freer from the disturbingly irrational unconscious, or at least they recognize it for what it is. This development of personality leads to the possibility of a new relationship between man and woman, and in marriage to a partnership that has moved beyond the merely biological, and other aims besides the satisfaction of the sexual instinct and the raising of children can be shared. There are signs that a development of this kind is already fairly widespread; men share feminine tasks in a way that was almost unheard of twenty years ago, and it is not uncommon for women to have interests outside their family, and work outside the home.(1) Such developments, however, have mainly come about through necessity, rather than a conscious wish to extend the personality. It is true that the feminists chose to develop their masculine side, but in doing so they relegated their femininity to the unconscious, so that they simply reversed things instead of widening their consciousness. And because men and women are not fully aware of what they are doing there is always a certain uneasiness about their progress, and a failure of society to keep step.

Unfortunately there is no easy solution of this dilemma, the gap in adult knowledge and awareness cannot be made good by attending a few lectures or reading some books on psychology. Knowledge can even be a hindrance, used as a defence against experience, an excuse for avoiding difficulties which might if accepted lead to a development of personality, or for the justification of a pessimistic attitude to life. How often one has heard people who know a little psychology put all their failures down to the way they were mishandled as children! If they were less blind they would see that this very mishandling could often be the starting point for their own development as individuals, simply because it made dependence on the parents disagreeable - even a smothering affection can produce this reaction against its inhibiting effects. One could cite hosts of famous men and women who triumphed over unhappy childhoods, working their difficulties into the pattern of their lives in such a way that they often became the driving force and material of their success. The history of the great educator Froebel is a striking example of this.

1. There have, of course, always been sections of the community where women's work outside the home has been the rule rather than the exception, but these were special cases, not the general pattern of society. Jung illustrates the limitations of a mere knowledge of psychology with the story of a neurotic young man who came to him with a complete dossier of his case. 'Here', said the young man in effect, 'is the genesis and meaning of my neurosis; why, can you tell me, if I understand myself so completely, do my symptoms persist? Why am I not cured?'

In discussion with the young man, it was revealed that though he had very little money, he often spent the winters at St Moritz or in the South. 'How', asked Jung, 'was this possible?' It seemed that a woman friend of his, a not-very-well-off school-teacher, paid for these holidays, and when Jung suggested that this was scarcely a fair arrangement, the young man indignantly countered that they had talked all that over and she was entirely in agreement that he should have these holidays at her expense. He was quite unable to see that he was exploiting the woman's affection for him, and that this egotistical and infantile attitude had something to do with the persistence of his neurosis.(1) People will often accept those weaknesses to which they can attach psychological labels, and thinking they have done all that is necessary, blind themselves to the real nature of their shadow. In fact the most comprehensive knowledge of psychology can leave the personality untouched, and the relationship with an analyst, as well as the will to develop, is often necessary to engender a real change.

Analysis, as a method of education applied to normal people, can only hope to show its effects slowly and in a relatively limited number of cases. Jung as a physician, accustomed to dealing with individuals (using the word here in its ordinary and not in his own specialized sense), is undismayed by this.

All beginnings [he says] are small. Therefore we must not mind doing tedious but conscientious work on obscure individuals, even though the goal towards which we strive seems unattainably far off. But one goal we can attain, and that is to develop and bring to maturity individual personalities.(2)

1. The case is in 'Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology' (C.W., 8), par. 685, and 'Analytical Psychology and Education' (C.W., 17), par. 182.

2. 'Psychotherapy Today' (C.W., 16), par. 229. Intellectual knowledge need not be dismissed, however, as useless, especially if it stimulates people, as it often does, to look farther and deeper into themselves; it can also show where difficulties are most likely to arise and where development needs to take place. Knowledge can also make people look again at the things they have taken for granted, and question them; and it can rouse their sense of values, and show them that the creative power of the imagination is not limited to artists and writers. The particular value of analysis is that it demonstrates the unconscious as a force to be reckoned with, allows its expression in controlled circumstances, and helps to find a channel for the libido if the ordinary ones are closed; it also touches the deep springs of the religious spirit.

Some knowledge and experience of the collect unconscious is also absolutely necessary, if we are to understand those forces which have in our time moved vast numbers of men and women to throw over their civilized standards and act in a brutal and terrifying way. Nations are made up of separate men and women and the study of the individual shows, 'as in a test tube', the forces which move them; 'psychopathology of the masses is rooted in the psychology of the individual'.(1) But in any large gathering of people it is not the unique qualities of individuals that count - these only serve to differentiate, not to unite them - it is rather what is common to all - namely, the archetypes. When the same archetype is active in a number of people it draws them together, as if by magnetic force, and drives them to act in an irrational way. In addition, a group to preserve its life must stress the adaptation of each of its members, so that differences become a disadvantage and average qualities are cultivated. Hence the larger the group the more stupid it is likely to become; even a collection of highly intelligent people will act at a much lower level of intelligence than its individual members, and Jung once said bitingly that a hundred intelligent heads added up to one hydrocephalus.

1. 'The Fight with the Shadow' (C.W., 10), par. 445. In 1928 he wrote:

Our admiration for great organizations dwindles when once we become aware of the other side of the wonder: the tremendous piling up and accentuation of all that is primitive in man, and the unavoidable destruction of his individuality in the interests of the monstrosity that every great organization in fact is. The man of today, who resembles more or less the collective ideal, has made his heart into a den of murderers, as can easily be proved by the analysis of his unconscious, even though he himself is not in the least disturbed by it. And in so far as he is normally 'adapted' to his

environment, it is true that the greatest infamy on the part of his group will not disturb him, so long as the majority of his fellows steadfastly believe in the exalted morality of their social organization.(1) These are strong words, but the events that followed showed how sadly right Jung was.

Since the development of applied science in the last hundred years, man's material progress has been rapid, but he has moved dangerously far from his roots in the soil. The taller the tree the deeper its roots should go, but modern man has little relationship with nature, and so has become dangerously unstable and a victim of any storms that blow. In addition, our social organization with its laws - written and unwritten - and its system of education, represses his V unconscious instinctive nature and civilizes him outwardly, while leaving what is primitive in him untamed and chafing under the restraint. And as he does not realize how primitive he really is, he becomes like someone who unaware carries dynamite in his pockets disguised as harmless cigarettes. Anything that -weakens his repression may loose an outburst of violence, or result in chaotic and disorderly behaviour, in an attempt of the unconscious to compensate for the over civilized and one-sided conscious attitude.

1. Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, par. 240. When life is orderly and disciplined the compensatory unconscious will manifest itself in a chaotic manner, but when disorder rules, as it does to some extent after war, and to a much greater extent during revolutionary periods, the un conscious attempts to compensate by producing symbols of order, and man begins to long for a settled and orderly state of affairs. Instead, however, of realizing that his unconscious wish should first be made manifest in his own life, he projects it on to governments and leaders that promise a new order, regardless of how that order is to be obtained, and so he swings from one extreme to the other, motivated and possessed by the archetypes of the unconscious.

If ... a compensatory move of the unconscious is not integrated into consciousness in an individual, it leads to a neurosis or even to a psychosis, and the same would apply to a collectivity. Clearly there must be something wrong with the conscious attitude for a compensatory move of this kind to be possible; something must be amiss or exaggerated, because only a faulty consciousness can call forth a counter-move on the part of the unconscious. Well, innumerable things were wrong, as you know, and opinions are thoroughly divided about them. Which is the correct opinion will only be learnt ex effectu; that is, we can only discover what the defects in the consciousness of our epoch are by observing the kind of reaction they call forth from the unconscious.(1) It is this longing for order, and difficulty in tolerating states of tension, that lead men to support totalitarian forms of government which end by enslaving them and reducing . On the other the individual to a mere cog in the machine' hand:

True democracy [as Jung says] is a highly psychological institution which takes account of human nature as it is and makes allowances for the necessity of conflict within its national boundaries.(2) In other words, neither complete anarchy nor complete order are possible while human nature remains much as it is, and the only healthy state of affairs is one which allows for some conflict and disorder, as well as for some order and discipline.

1. 'The Fight with the Shadow', par. 448.

2. Ibid., par. 456. The development of individual consciousness and the integration by the individual of unconscious contents are the only real safeguards against possession by the archetypes, and therefore against dangerous mass movements. An archetype, like everything unconscious, is two-faced: it can produce completely opposite effects, be either evil or good, destructive or constructive. The aspect it presents depends largely on the conscious attitude, and its effects on the individual's capacity for understanding and moral evaluation.

The integration of unconscious contents is an individual act of realization, of understanding, and moral evaluation. It is a most difficult task, demanding a high degree of ethical responsibility. Only relatively few individuals can be expected to be capable of such an achievement, and they are not the political but the moral leaders of mankind. The maintenance and further development of civilization depend on such individuals.(1) But even if there are only a few individuals capable of such development, the rest are not excused from making the attempt. It is, in fact, clear that everyone, even if only for his own safety, should make some effort to realize and understand the unconscious.

1. Ibid., par. 451.

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