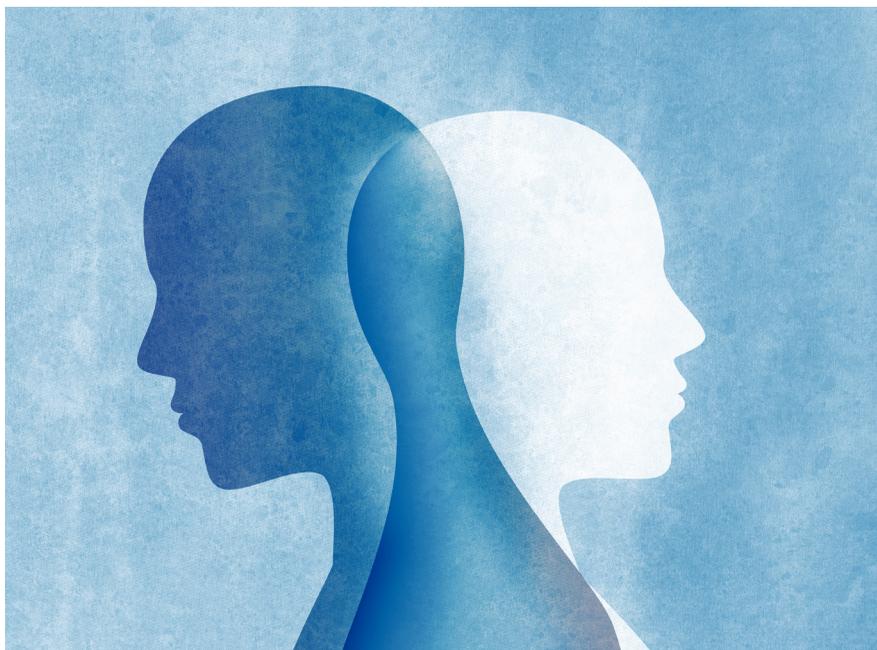


Academic Article

A Simulated Interview with Carl Jung: Part 1 – Respecting the Power of the Subconscious Mind

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and symbols. Jung proposed some interesting ideas about the dark side of human nature, encouraging clients to become more aware of their own natural inclinations. His work often focused on general aspects of the mind (psyche), mental energy (libido), and personality development.

Over the span of his lifetime, Jung explored some unconventional topics and controversial issues (e.g., religion, UFOs and the occult) that are not directly useful for the practising clinician. Several controversial aspects of Jung's personal life and professional career are not addressed. Instead, several important issues related to contemporary psychotherapy will be explored in a simulated interview with Carl Gustav Jung (CGJ) led by James C. Overholser (JCO). It should be noted that throughout his writings, Jung typically relied on masculine pronouns instead of gender-neutral terms. The quotations remain true to Jung's own words.

JCO: Thank you for meeting with me. Where should we begin?

CGJ: "I'm going to tell you something, and you will probably think it is all foolishness," (Jung, 1955, p. 279). "Our patients... are prisoners of the unconscious," (Jung, 1954, para 182). "The unconscious as the sum of all psychological processes below the threshold of consciousness," (Jung, 1914, p. 964). "Every neurotic fights for the maintenance and supremacy of his ego-consciousness and for the subjugation of the resistant unconscious forces," (Jung, 1939, p. 1003).

JCO: It sounds like a struggle, but most people appear 'normal'.

CGJ: "Through the persona, a man tries to appear this or that, or he hides behind a mask, or he may even build up a definite persona as a barricade," (Jung, 1953, p. 174).

Introduction

Carl Gustav Jung was born in Kesswil, Switzerland, in 1875 and died in Küsnacht, Switzerland, in 1961. He became a leading figure in the early years of psychoanalysis and worked closely with Sigmund Freud until their different views created a lasting split. Jung devoted his career to the refinement of psychotherapy – an approach that he called analytical psychology – to be identified as separate from Freudian psychoanalysis. Although analytical psychology, or Jungian analysis (Stein, 1982), is not widely practiced today, some of his ideas

remain valuable to the process of psychotherapy.

Throughout his career, Jung emphasized the power of the unconscious mind and its influence on behaviour. Jung wrote extensively about dreams and their use in therapy, as well as other strategies that could help to unlock the messages conveyed from the instinctive parts of the patient's psyche (Jacobi, 1973). Much of Jung's therapeutic work relied on dream interpretation to translate messages from the subconscious mind. In addition, Jung often used painting to express ideas in imagery

JCO: Are you referring to a person's public persona?

CGJ: "The persona... is nothing but a mask... which simulates individuality, pretending to others and to itself that it is individual," (Jung, 1953, para 468). "It is only a mask... that feigns individuality," (Jung, 1953, p. 155). "The persona is nothing real; it is a compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to be," (Jung, 1953, p. 156).

JCO: Isn't that a good thing – to fit into society?

CGJ: "These identifications with a social role are a very fruitful source of neurosis," (Jung, 1953, para 307). "Every calling or profession, for example, has its own characteristic persona... Only, the danger is that [people] become identical with their personas," (Jung, 1963, p. 398). "The persona is... designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual," (Jung in Storr, 1983, p. 94).

JCO: So, the average person hides a secret dark side of their personality?

CGJ: "That's right," (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 123). "At home you are quite different from what you appear to be in public... it is often a question of Jekyll and Hyde," (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 297). "We must begin to learn about man until every Jekyll can see his Hyde," (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 248). "I have called the inferior and less commendable part of a person the shadow," (Jung, 1940, p. 20).

JCO: I think of a shadow as a dark reflection that always follows a person?

CGJ: "By shadow I mean the 'negative' side of the personality; the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions

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(Jung, 1953, para 35)

and the contents of the personal unconscious," (Jung, 1953, footnote 5). "Man turns a blind eye to the shadow-side of human nature... We cannot be whole without this negative side," (Jung, 1953, para 35). "The shadow is so disagreeable to his ego-consciousness that it has to be repressed into the unconscious," (Jung, 1959a, para 474). "The so-called civilized man... never suspects that his own hidden and apparently harmless shadow has qualities whose dangerousness exceeds his wildest dreams," (Jung, 1959a, para 478). "We have succeeded... in subduing our own wildness – at least temporarily and up to a point," (Jung, 1969, para 87).

JCO: If we follow your theory, does it mean that even *you* have a dark side?

CGJ: "Yes you can put it like that," (Jung, 1955, p. 28). "How can I be substantial without casting a shadow? I must have a dark side too if I am to be whole; and by becoming conscious of my shadow I remember once more that I am a human being like any other," (Jung, 1933, p. 40). "We have a body which, like all bodies, casts a shadow, and that if we deny this body we cease to be three-dimensional and become flat and without substance," (Jung, 1953, para 35). "The essential thing is not the shadow but the body which casts it," (Jung, 1954, p. 64).

JCO: So, the problem is that the average person is not aware of their own shadow?

CGJ: "Yes, absolutely," (Jung, 1955,

p. 29). "Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is," (Jung, 1958a, p. 76 para 76). "Plato even used the parable of the white and black horses to illustrate the intractability and polarity of the human psyche," (Jung in Storr, 1983, p. 136).

JCO: How can a person confront the dark side in psychotherapy?

CGJ: "Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkness of other people," (Jung, in Adler & Jaffe, 1973, p. 237). "If people can be educated to see the shadow-side of their nature clearly, it may be hoped that they will also learn to understand and love their fellow men better," (Jung, 1953, para 28). "Recognition of the shadow... leads to the modesty we need in order to acknowledge imperfection," (Jung, 1958b, p. 73). "A little less hypocrisy and a little more tolerance toward oneself can only have good results," (Jung, 1955, para 439).

JCO: So, awareness of the shadow helps to reduce its strength?

CGJ: "I would not say that," (Jung, 1955, p. 31). "This shadow-side of the psyche, being withdrawn from conscious scrutiny, cannot be dealt with by the patient. He cannot correct it, cannot come to terms with it, nor yet disregard it," (Jung, 1953, para 27). "The shadow is underestimated by the conscious and overestimated by the unconscious," (Jung in Maier, 2001, p. 45). "With insight and good will, the shadow can to some extent be assimilated into the conscious personality," (Jung, 1959c, para 16).

JCO: Does the shadow pose a danger?

CGJ: "The only real danger that exists is man himself. He is the great danger, and we are pitifully unaware of it... We are the origin of all evil" (Jung in McGuire & Hull,

1977, p. 436). “It is the psyche of man that makes wars,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 74). “The future... needs only an almost imperceptible disturbance of equilibrium in a few of our rulers’ heads to plunge the world into blood, fire, and radioactivity,” (Jung in Storr, 1983, p. 390). “The world hangs on a thin thread, and that thread is the psyche of man,” (Jung, in Evans, 1964, p. 17).

JCO: In your view, is the shadow evil?

CGJ: “I don’t think so,” (Jung, in McGuire, 1974, p. 30). “The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself,” (Jung, 1959a, para 513).

JCO: Would it make sense for therapy to rid a person of their shadow?

CGJ: “Today it is no longer a question of ‘How can I get rid of my shadow?’... Rather we must ask ourselves: ‘How can man live with his shadow without its precipitating a succession of disasters?’ Recognition of the shadow is a reason for humility, for genuine fear of the abysmal depths in man... The man who recognizes his shadow knows very well that he is not harmless,” (Jung, 1954, para 452). “Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves,” (Jung, 1963, p. 247).

JCO: So, therapy helps clients become aware of their shadow in order to tame it?

CGJ: “Precisely,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 120). “If we are able to see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem has already been solved,” (Jung, 1959a, para 44). “He must make himself as conscious as possible of the mood he is in, sinking himself in it without reserve and noting down on paper all the fantasies and other associations that

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(Jung in Storr, 1983, p. 117)

come up. Fantasy must be allowed the freest possible play... there comes more or less a complete expression of mood... the affect and its contents are brought nearer to consciousness, becoming... more understandable,” (Jung, 1969, para 167).

JCO: How can we improve self-awareness?

CGJ: “The analytical technique activates the unconscious and brings it to the fore,” (Jung, 1953, p. 112). “It is much better for the conscious and unconscious to be connected and to move on parallel lines,” (Jung, 1955, para 475). “You try to integrate unconscious contents into consciousness,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 343). “Psychoanalysis makes the animal instincts conscious... to incorporate them in a purposeful whole,” (Jung, 1953, para 28). “Analysis liberates the animal instincts... to put them to higher uses,” (Jung, 1955, para 439). “To unite oneself with this shadow is to say yes to instinct,” (Jung, 1953, para 35).

JCO: Really, you believe that instincts are important in modern society?

CGJ: “Instincts suffice only for the individual embedded in nature,” (Jung, 1962, p. 87). “The more civilized, the more unconscious and complicated a man is, the less he is able to follow his instincts. His complicated living conditions and the influence of his environment are so strong that they drown the

quiet voice of nature,” (Jung in Storr, 1983, p. 117). “Rather than face one’s own darkness, one contents oneself with the illusion of one’s civic rectitude,” (Jung, 1970, para 741). “The individual who wishes to have an answer to the question of the problem of evil... must know relentlessly how much good he can do, and what crimes he is capable of,” (Jung in Zweig & Wolf, 1977, p. 8).

JCO: But most people today seem to function quite well.

CGJ: “Civilized man... is in danger of losing all contact with the world of instinct... This loss of instinct is largely responsible for the pathological condition of our contemporary culture,” (Jung, 1958a, 1493-1494). “The instincts have not disappeared; they have merely lost their contact with consciousness. They are thus forced to assert themselves in an indirect way,” (Jung, 1955, para 560). “Emotions are instinctive, involuntary reactions that upset the rational order of consciousness by their elementary outbursts... they appear suddenly, leaping up from an unconscious region,” (Jung, 1940, p. 10).

JCO: But today, people are guided by conscious reasoning.

CGJ: “I am convinced that human actions are influenced by instinct to a far higher degree than is usually admitted,” (Jung, 1919, p. 21). “The archetype is the form of the instinct, it is how the instinct appears to us,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 213). “As the archetypes are instinctive, inborn forms of behaviour, they exert a powerful influence on the psychic processes. Unless the conscious mind intervenes critically and with an effort of will, things go on happening as they have always happened,” (Jung, 1958a, para 1493).

JCO: How does psychotherapy help people get in touch with their animal instincts?

CGJ: “The unconscious... is revealed to us in dreams, where it appears not as a rational thought, but as a symbolic image,” (Jung, 1964, p. 23). “Dream symbols are the essential message carriers from the instinctive to the rational parts of the human mind, and their interpretation enriches the poverty of consciousness so that it learns to understand again the forgotten language of the instincts,” (Jung, 1964, p. 52). “You have only to observe carefully the message sent by the unconscious and then decode it. Analysis helps you to read these messages correctly,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 231). “The unconscious, in order to portray its contents, makes use of certain fantasy elements... and when subjected to careful scrutiny, yield a meaningful content,” (Jung, 1959b, pp. 15-16).

JCO: I’m sorry, but I do not focus on unconscious processes with my clients.

CGJ: “I don’t believe it,” (Jung, 1954, para 89). “Nobody doubts the importance of conscious experience; why then should we doubt the significance of unconscious happenings?” (Jung, 1954, p. 151).

JCO: Again, I apologize, but I find it more useful to help my clients strengthen their logical thinking and adaptive behaviours.

CGJ: “The conscious mind has been overvalued by the rationalists,” (Jung, 1954, para 51). “Reason has never ruled life, and presumably it never will. The questions of life and fate are too often... decided by the powers of the unconscious,” (Jung, 1940, p. 23). “Reason is often not sufficient to modify the instinct and make it conform to the rational order,” (Jung, 1954, para 178).

“Complicated, highly conscious persons – are so firmly anchored in consciousness that nothing can pry them loose... they want to talk with the doctor on the conscious plane and go into a rational explanation and discussion of their difficulties”

(Jung, 1954, p. 60, para 137)

“The further we go in the direction selected by reason, the surer we may be that we are excluding the irrational possibilities of life,” (Jung, 1953, p. 48). “Complicated, highly conscious persons – are so firmly anchored in consciousness that nothing can pry them loose... they want to talk with the doctor on the conscious plane and go into a rational explanation and discussion of their difficulties,” (Jung, 1954, p. 60, para 137). “My contribution to psychotherapy is confined to those cases in which rational treatment yields no satisfactory result,” (Jung, 1933, p. 70).

JCO: But a good logical discussion should be able to tame a person’s dark side.

CGJ: “You are mistaken,” (Jung, 1963, p. 193). “Mere talk has always been considered hollow,” (Jung, 1933, p. 59). “The shadow... cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness,” (Jung, 1959a, para 44). “Man is not and cannot be wholly rational” (Jung, 1961, p. 724). “Rational talk... is far too flat and colourless,” (Jung, 1955, para 474).

JCO: Okay, so if I am willing to try your approach, how do I help my clients to access this more ‘colourful’ side of their personality?

CGJ: “Try to awaken the hidden artist who slumbers in every man. Give him a chance to bring to light the pictures he carries unpainted within himself, to free the unwritten poems he has shut up inside him... Even though the work he produces will hardly ever amount to anything technically and artistically, it has helped to cleanse and release his psyche,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 45).

JCO: How do you use painting to advance your work in psychotherapy?

CGJ: “Often it is necessary to clarify a vague content by giving it visible form. This can be done by drawing, painting, or modelling. Often the hands know how to solve a riddle with which the intellect has wrestled in vain,” (Jung, 1969, para 180). “I have turned these hints to practical account, urging my patients at such times to paint in reality what they have seen in dream or fantasy... To paint what we see before us is a different art from painting what we see within,” (Jung, 1954, para 102).

JCO: Why?

CGJ: “Why do I encourage patients... to express themselves by means of brush, pencil, or pen at all? (Jung, 1954, para 105). “My aim is to bring about a psychic state in which my patient begins to experiment with his nature,” (Jung, 1982, p. 84). “He not only talks about it, he is actually doing something about it... by painting himself he gives shape to himself. For what he paints are active fantasies – that which is active within him,” (Jung, 1954, p. 49). “Such pictures spring from and satisfy a basic need. It is as if a part of the psyche that reaches far back into the primitive past were expressing itself in these pictures,” (Jung, 1954, para 111). “Drawing or painting is right only if one can do it from an inner motivation. The pictures ought to make themselves,” (Jung, 1940, p. 41).

JCO: And these artistic projects are helpful in therapy?

CGJ: “In our mechanized world this urge for artistic creation is repressed by the one-sided work of the day... The forgotten artist must be fetched up again from the darkness of the subconscious, and a path cleared for the urge for artistic expression – no matter how worthless the paintings and poems may be,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 42). “One should not be dogmatic and say to every patient, ‘Now you paint,’” (Jung, 1968, pp. 203-204). “Drawing and painting is right only if one can do it from an inner motivation. The pictures ought to make themselves,” (Jung, 1940, p. 41). “Do you understand that?” (Jung, 2001, p. 193).

JCO: I think so. They paint themselves by tapping into unconscious urges?

CGJ: “I try to funnel the fantasies of the unconscious into the conscious mind, not in order to destroy them, but to develop them,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 40). “Amplification... is simply that of seeking the parallels,” (Jung, 1955, para 173). “It consists in approaching the material as if it had

a coherent meaning... most of the data require a certain amplification, that is, they need to be clarified, generalized, and approximated to a more or less general concept,” (Jung, 1959a, p. 243 para 436).

JCO: How could painting help a depressed patient I am treating?

CGJ: “He can give form to his own inner experience by painting it,” (Jung, 1933, p. 80). “The emotional disturbance can also be dealt with... by giving it visible shape. Patients who express some talent for drawing or painting can give expression to their mood by means of a picture. It is not important for the picture to be technically or aesthetically satisfying, but merely for the fantasy to have free play,” (Jung, 1969, para 168).

JCO: I have enjoyed expressing myself through modern art style of painting. Would you like to see it someday?

CGJ: “I don’t think so,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 425). “I cannot occupy myself with modern art anymore. It is too awful,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 221). “Although my patients occasionally produce artistically beautiful things that might very

well be shown in modern ‘art’ exhibitions, I nevertheless treat them as completely worthless when judged by the canons of real art. As a matter of fact, it is essential that they should be considered worthless, otherwise my patients might imagine themselves to be artists, and the whole point of the exercise would be missed,” (Jung, 1954, para 104).

JCO: Maybe we should stop for today. Can we find another time to talk again?

CGJ: “Of course,” (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 117). “Please do come to see me next Friday at 5:30,” (Jung, 2001, p. 174). ☺

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