

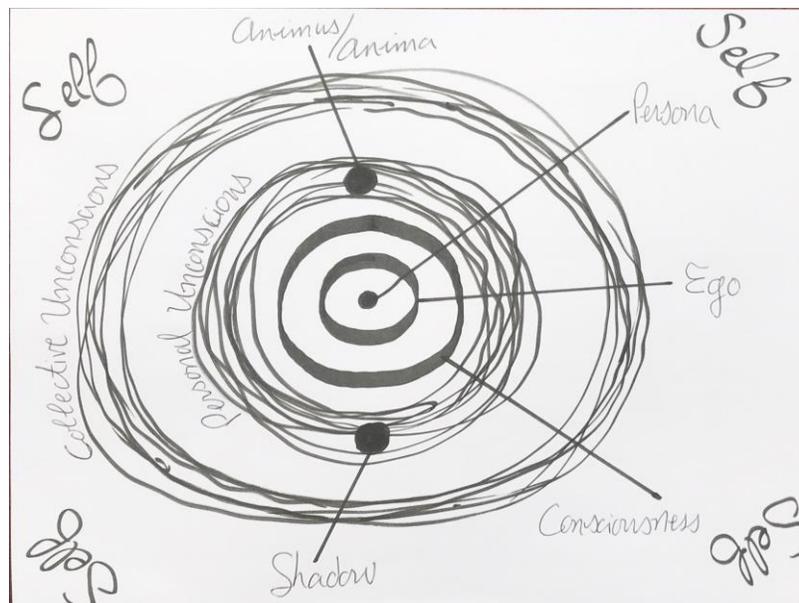
Notes on Analytic Psychology

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss psychologist and former student of Sigmund Freud. After breaking from Freud, he founded his own approach to psychology, which he called “analytic psychology” to distinguish it from Freud’s “psychoanalytic” approach.

Though it adopts many of the basic tenets of psychoanalysis (see Summary of First Session), analytic psychology differs in several key ways. First among them is that it deemphasizes sexuality as the primary motivation (*libidinal* drive) for all human activity. As a consequence of this, Jung’s theory is also less “phallogentric,” meaning that it does not perceive of the penis as the central symbolic concern of human life. Jung’s philosophy toward the discipline is also less “patriarchal” insofar as it explores maternal archetypes and female development in much greater depth. Finally, (and most important) analytic psychology theorizes the existence of archetypes and a collective unconscious, two concepts that have come to define Jung’s work as extending far beyond the boundaries of traditional psychoanalytic approaches.

Like psychoanalysis, analytical psychology doesn’t find very much application in modern psychotherapy or psychological research. However, like the numerous re-interpretations of traditional psychoanalysis, it finds contemporary application in the analysis, interpretation, and critique of culture. Perhaps it’s more suited to this task than other schools of thought because Jung did not make a clear distinction between collective and individual psychology. The very term “collective unconscious” suggests a crossing of boundaries between the personal and collective psychology. Additionally, Jung’s emphasis on mythological “archetypes” (symbolic representations of inborn perceptions) and use of “amplification” as a method of dream analysis (wherein dream content is explored through reference to mythology) emphasize the central role of cultural products in offering insight to individual psychology.

The diagram below offers a visual representation of the Jungian “Self,” a central archetype in analytic psychology. This “self” may refer to the consumer of the media text or it may refer to a character being represented through the media text.



Imagine this diagram as having three dimensions, like a perfectly conical mountain surrounded by mist. The “mist” of the collective and individual unconscious mind are represented by the messy ellipses labeled “collective unconscious” and “personal unconscious.” The mountain starts peeking through the top of the unconscious mist at the first solid circle (labeled “consciousness”).

The point in the center of the diagram, the *persona* is meant to symbolize social performance. It is the mask we wear when we play our approved social role as a professional or member of a community or partner in a personal relationship. The persona, in short, refers to our social reputation which we attempt to carefully manage by controlling other people’s impressions of us.

The *ego* lies one level beyond the persona. As in psychoanalysis, ego refers to the “I” or “me.” The ego is the center of our own consciousness and is responsible for the generally consistent impression that we have of ourselves. Without an ego it’s possible to be conscious, but any sense of the self as a cohesive, consistent whole would be lacking.

Consciousness is what we call our awareness. Everything from physical sense impressions (i.e. the five empirical senses) to memories or fantasies that can be called to mind. As long as thoughts are directed through the ego’s control, we are dealing with conscious phenomena. Dreams, however, are governed by unconscious processes.

Outside of consciousness lies the first layer of the unconscious, the *personal unconscious* which is composed of sense impressions that fail to meet the threshold of our awareness, either because they didn’t leave a strong enough initial impression or because, due to their troubling nature, they’ve been repressed from consciousness to maintain consistency within the ego.

The *shadow* and the *anima/animus* are housed in the personal unconscious. The shadow is an archetypal presence within us that gives form to our dark and antisocial impulses. In the “light of consciousness,” the “shadow” cast by the “ego” houses the qualities which we disavow but are nevertheless present within us. The *anima* is the female presence within men, just as the *animus* is the male presence within women. Both of these archetypes presuppose an interior life that’s guided by forces quite different from our external orientation to the world. These inborn gendered opposites, according to Jung, are adaptive in the sense that relations between sexes and our reproductive capacities are to some extent contingent upon them. The twin concepts of anima/animus also guard analytic psychology against charges of one-sidedness and phallocentrism which plague traditional Freudian psychoanalysis.

Ultimately, the last layer and foundation of the model is the *collective unconscious*, one of Jung’s most radical and important claims. The collective unconscious is often misunderstood as a mystical or religious concept and, though it’s useful for understanding religious mysticism, it does not rely on it for support. Instead, Jung adopts an evolutionary stance toward the collective unconscious and argues that our collective evolutionary histories are stored as much in our minds as they are in the evidence offered by our bodies and, to the extent that our material brains share a common form that is the product of evolution, that form also carries with it predispositions (or presets) toward responding to particular stimuli. The psychological apprehension or experience of this stimuli form the archetypes of the collective unconscious. Jung refers to a number of general archetypes, but stipulates that it is not a finite list and can be expanded upon indefinitely. General archetypes include: Mother, Father, Divine Child, Maiden, Hero, Wise Old Man, and Earth Mother.