



# MAGNUM OPUS: NIGREDO

Module 3: Complex Theory Part 1

## QUOTE

*Everyone knows nowadays that people "have complexes." What is not so well known, though far more important theoretically, is that complexes can have us.*  
(Jung, CW, V. 8, par. 201)

Complex Theory Part 1

Compiled by The Centre for Applied Jungian Studies



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## **Transcript of Podcast**

Hello, and welcome to the third lecture of the Nigredo programme. This lecture explores the theme of complexes. This is the first lecture of two on The Complex Theory.

## **Complex Theory, Part 1: Identifying the Zombie**

### **Historical context**

The history of complex theory is quite interesting. Going back to ancient Greek philosophy, both Plato and Aristotle speak about something which is a precursor to complex theory - the concept that the soul has the paradoxical qualities of being a unity, while also having parts. This is explained by Socrates in "The Republic", where he says that the soul has three parts: the thinking soul, the feeling soul and the willing soul - or the spirited soul.

Socrates talks about different parts of Greece as representing a cultural norm - the different parts of the soul: the Athenians as the thinking soul; the spirited soul as the province of the Thracians; and the Phoenicians representing the appetitive soul. Aristotle, in "De Anima", talks about the different aspects of mind and of soul. So this idea of the psyche having - not only different characteristics, but - in a sense - different parts, was already being spoken about in ancient Greek philosophy.

In psychoanalysis, Freud and Breuer were the first to articulate a definition of complexes and to use the specific term, “complex” - or what we’ve now translated as “complex” - in 1893. They spoke about:

“A cluster – of interrelated and usually repressed ideas with a strong emotional content, that may compel an individual to adopt abnormal patterns of thought or behaviour.”

Freud was talking about complexes way before Jung, so it’s not as though Jung developed complex theory. He adopted complex theory from Freud and from Pierre Janet.

Freud, as a matter of interest, moved away from this idea of complexes; not that he specifically denied it, but Freudian theory developed later on more around drive theory than complex theory. There’s quite a nice distinction – I’ll try and illustrate it for you – between thinking about the psyche as being principally governed by drives or instincts which are autonomous, functional, animating impulses; and complexes which immediately invoke this idea of autonomous personality. Complexes have a more mythological or imaginative quality, because when you think about complexes you’re imagining a chorus of different beings that populate your psychology, as opposed to drives and instincts, which tend to be more functional in the way we imagine them. So it’s an interesting distinction.

Now, other than Freud, the person who influenced Jung in adoption of complex theory was Pierre Janet. Pierre Janet was a French psychologist, philosopher and psychotherapist, with whom Jung spent a fair amount of time

studying. Janet did some really interesting work on complexes, although he didn't refer to them as complexes; he referred to them as autonomous personalities which exist in the psyche. Janet's idea was that there is a competition that happens in our psychologies, between distinct personalities which exist in our psychologies. So, once again, there is this notion of unity and this idea of us – the way we typically like to think of ourselves, as unified beings. Now, without saying that is untrue, we must note that there is some tension around that idea, in the sense that there are competing personalities within our psychologies.

We can have this splitting, or fragmentation, of our psychologies, and we can have disassociation. Very significantly, I think that's the key idea, that we can have disassociation. This is something we can all relate to. We can behave in a particular way, with a particular emotional quality, with a particular mind-set, with a particular set of values if you will, and then, at other times behave wholly differently. And if we are on the right side of sanity then, of course, we're not totally disassociated in the sense that we know that we behaved differently, and we're aware of the behaviour and we're probably able to rationalise it somehow. We'll speak about it like, "You know that is how I am at work," or, "that is how I am at the office, but I'm different at home and I'm different with my friends," for example, or, "I'm different when I go hunting with the boys". So there's this way of explaining it, which is that this personality is appropriate to a specific context.

But you are aware of this ability within yourself to behave quite distinctly and almost, I think, with a different value system as well. It's as if the set of ethics

or normative values seems to subtly shift according to these different ways of behaving and being in the world. In any case, that was Janet's idea, and Janet coined a phrase that the Jungians have adopted, "*Abaissement du niveau mental*" which means in English, "lowering of the tensivity of consciousness". Janet's idea was that, the time that one of these personalities would emerge and usurp the ego identity, would be during a time of lowered consciousness as a consequence of stress, distress, disease, lowered inhibition (alcohol, narcotics - the classic things that lower inhibition). So this moment of *abaissement du niveau mental* is the opportune moment for one of these autonomous personalities to spring forward and take the reins of consciousness.

Jung did his PhD dissertation on his cousin, Helene Preiswerk, who was a medium. This was during the time of séances; when séances and spiritualism were in vogue. The medium, during the séance, would embody or channel a wholly different personality. This was quite mysterious when viewed from a secular, scientific consciousness because the presence of actual spirits seemed a bit far-fetched, although I think Jung personally always had his suspicions that they may exist, but he was trying to describe these things within scientific paradigms; within a scientific framework.

There was a very good book (I think the Gold Standard) written by another psychologist by the name of Théodore Flournoy, called, "From India to Mars and Back"<sup>1</sup> or something along those lines, and it was also an analysis of a

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<sup>1</sup> The actual title is "From India to planet Mars".

medium. Jung studied his cousin – or his second cousin –, Helene Preiswerk, who, by historical accounts, had a crush on Jung so, of course, she was really motivated to perform these séances when he was there. And what he inferred – the way he read it - was that what was going on wasn't a conscious act or a conscious contrivance; that she was just pretending to be someone else; putting on another voice. Rather that, there was really a shift; there was really a change.

And so instead of reading it in this sort of classical, spiritualist sense - that there's in fact some spirit that is 'occupying' - the idea was, that **this is unconscious content that is being allowed to come forward during the séance**; that in the state of the trance, consciousness is lowered and something that is typically unconscious can come forward and can temporarily take over the behaviour of the person - take over the consciousness - and can present itself. And so he did his dissertation on her, and that was really a study of medium-ship, if you will, through the lens of complex theory.

Then, finally, Jung really made a name for himself and got a tremendous amount of mileage out of a particular experiment that he developed whilst he was at the Burghölzli Psychiatric Clinic. And that was the Word Association Test or Experiment. It was actually developed originally by a man named Francis Galton, but Jung adopted it as a tool for depth psychology or psychoanalysis, and as a way of investigating the presence of complexes – unconscious complexes.

What he did was use one hundred words on the test, which he would read out one at a time to the test subject, and ask them to respond immediately and spontaneously with whatever word came to mind. Then he repeated the test. So he would read out all hundred words, capture all the responses, and then he would start again from the beginning. Then he looked at a number of variables. He looked at things like delays in response; he looked at unusual responses – so responses that didn't obviously seem to fit the trigger word or that seemed to be an unusual response in relation to the trigger word: words being repeated; people not hearing the trigger word, or having to say, "Sorry, but can you repeat that?" All these were indicators of the possible presence of complexes.

The modern lie detector test finds its origins in this word association test. And it was very interesting that prior to the lie detector test – during the development of the Word Association Test – Jung was invited to the States, to Clark University, to give a series of lectures on it. He received a lot of international acclaim as a consequence of the Word Association Test, and that's also how he came initially to Freud's attention.

It was a huge thing for psychoanalysis, because what you had was a psychiatrist - as Jung was first of all a psychiatrist, which immediately gave him an elevated status - and you had him working in what was the premier mental health clinic in Europe at the time. There he developed what seemed to be a really robust, scientific, empirical test that supported Freud's claims, which were resting on an uneasy scientific foundation at the time. Psychoanalysis was effectively a discursive method and very, very hard to take into the



laboratory and say, “You see there’s the oedipal complex. Can you see it?” It was quite a subtle thing. So here you had Jung independently developing this test, which seemed to provide very solid, empirical verification of the presence of unconscious content. And it was a huge breakthrough for depth psychology in toto, really.

So that’s a little bit of background on complexes; a very brief historical context.

## **Description**

Complexes are accompanied by affect or feeling tone, so a complex has a particular emotional quality. In that sense, it’s different from normal, rational lucidity. Even something seemingly positive - a talent or a skill - can still be a complex. As long as it’s a complex, the idea is that it has autonomy. And very significantly, it has a telos: it has a trajectory that is not necessarily my conscious choice, or my conscious trajectory, or my conscious telos. In other words, it constitutes an autonomous personality and it has its own aspirations, goals, value systems, etc. So, inasmuch as it’s separate from the ego identity - my personality - my psychology is not cohesive. There’s a degree of disassociation, even in the case of a healthy complex, because *it* drives me.

The head of the philosophy department at Columbia University, Carol Rovane, gave a series of lectures at Wits when I was there, about her theory of identity. Now, I won’t go into a whole philosophical context of identity; but I just want to, very briefly, tell you what her theory is. Her theory is that this

very notion of unity, the very idea that we believe that we are unified, is just a complete illusion. It's just something that we've adopted because, legally, it works, and you know, we consider you as a legal entity etc; but, in fact, psychologically, it's not the way we are.

Her idea is that in each of us - in society, and in each individual - there exists these autonomous personalities. So she would speak about herself, for example, as a lecturer. She happens to be a musician as well, and she is also an academic, a researcher and a writer. And she perceives her identity as being something of a carousel.

The idea is that two of the personalities move out of focus and one moves into focus - and then, boom! The musician is there and she plays the piano, and she studies her music, and she listens to music. And then the next day she's got to go to the university and give classes – boom! And the other two move out of the way and that one takes centre stage. And of course these three are aware of each other, and there's dialogue. There has to be dialogue, I mean she's sane. She's not suffering with Multiple Personality Disorder, in the sense that she needs to be institutionalized, so of course there's an awareness and there's dialogue. There's some sort of mental awareness, but she doesn't really perceive the presence of any over-arching "I", independent of these distinct personalities.

Now, whether you accept that or not, I think that from a psychoanalytic perspective, and certainly from a Jungian perspective, it's not really, ideally what we want. You see, the notion of a healthy psychology is the idea of unity.

The idea that, yes, there might be some sort of plurality and multiplicity in my psychology, but the greater the degree of cohesion, the greater the degree of integration. The greater the degree of “I” consciousness and awareness, the healthier my psychology becomes.

So Jungian psychology, and I think it would be true to say that about Freudian psychology as well, is about integrating these unconscious components of the personality into the ego identity. It’s not just about saying, “Oh well, these are just different aspects of myself”. It’s always that question of, *who* says this? Who says, “These are different aspects of myself”? There’s an aspiration towards the idea of a unity of consciousness. Individuation is not only about giving expression to these distinct aspects of myself, but it also is about bringing about integration and wholeness, and opposing disassociation.

In that sense then, one always views a complex with a degree of concern when looked at from a Jungian or psychoanalytic lens, because even though it’s healthy, the fact that we talk about a “complex” is a concern, because it means that we’re suggesting that there is a degree of disassociation from the ego identity. If it’s fully integrated into the ego identity we wouldn’t want to talk about a complex – we’d just simply say it’s a disposition, or a quality, or a characteristic, but the moment we invoke this notion of complex, we are bringing along with it the idea of a degree of disassociation and autonomy, allowing the complex to act independently, to a degree, of ego consciousness.

Integration of these complexes is about consciously choosing, as opposed to the complex choosing. So there’s a nice line from Jung where he says,

*“Everyone knows nowadays that people have complexes, but what is less well known, but more important theoretically, is that complexes have people.”* So there’s the suggestion of, who’s choosing? Are you choosing, or is the complex choosing? If you are choosing, then there’s a very high degree of integration, and awareness, and ego strength.

But the complexes that we’re concerned about here are more to do with where the complex is choosing; where the complex is making the calls; where the complex is stepping forward, rather than me choosing to actualize this particular aspect of myself at this time.

Going back to pre-complex theory, when we spoke about possession by a spirit, or by a daemon, I don’t think anything’s changed. It’s just that we’re not talking about spirits anymore, now we’re talking about complexes. But essentially, one way or another, it’s a possession.

Complexes are Machiavellian and they can be incredibly malevolent in that, if you are propitiating a complex; if you’ve got a complex and you are acting it out, the complex seems to be happy. Although I do think there’s a danger there, and I’ll talk about that now, as well. But in the case that I am in an internal conflict and I say, “Look, I actually have a problem with this way of behaving. It’s very hard for me to – in all consciousness and in all good conscience – fully embrace this way of behaving. Yes, I know I do it, but I’m not actually happy about it.” I end up in a wrestling match with the complex, and let’s assume that I am able to suppress it, the complex presents life situations which challenge that suppression.

It's like the moment you form a resolution – a real resolution. You really commit to doing something differently in your life. I think that's when, unconsciously, the complex says – or the trickster emerges, and says, "Really! Are you really committed? Let's see how committed you are. Let's see *just* how committed you are." That's when I think you're going to be tested and potentially tricked.

Complexes hide; they resist exposure. That's why I think something like the word association test, or dream interpretation, is very valuable.

The truth is that every complex that you integrate, you integrate at a cost to the ego. Yes, the ego gets stronger as a whole, but the old ego identity is no longer the same either, so the ego changes and the complex changes. The goal of analysis, and that is the goal of our work as well, is the goal of individuation. This goal of individuation is about a process of discovery -- of finding out what these complexes are; finding out what they want; and then figuring out what the hell we're going to do about it.

There was a wonderful theme from Breaking Bad. There's a wonderful scene – it's to do with these guys who cook crystal meth; these two guys that cook crystal meth – a young guy and an older guy, Mr. White and his assistant (who's the young guy). And at some point the young guy ends up in a rehabilitation centre. He's not only a drug dealer, but he's a serious addict of crystal meth himself, so he ends up in this rehabilitation centre - in one of the group therapy sessions in the rehab.

The psychologist who's leading the session says something to the effect of, "A huge part of rehabilitation is about giving up on this notion of being perfect; of getting everything right; of being right, and coming to terms with who you actually are," which, of course, from a Jungian perspective, fits in very much with our Jungian ethos. When he comes out of the rehabilitation centre, he's talking to Mr. White, and he says, "I really took that to heart, and I really thought about it, and you know what I realized? I'm the bad guy. Look, I've cleaned up; I've stopped using, but I realize that I am a dealer. That's what I do."

So there is a thing of saying, "Look, that's what I am, and I accept it, and that's what I'm going to be, independently of the normative value system out there in society." But, that's not always the case. So there might be this thing that repression comes from society, but there may be situations where you feel you recognize in yourself that you have some sort of compulsive behaviour; that it's not about the fact that it's immoral, or immodest, or inflated, or whatever it is, but it just detracts from the quality of your life, it detracts from the quality of your relationships, it erodes your humanity in one way or another. And you might say, "Look, it's not about moral or immoral - I don't want this; this is not something I want in my life. I choose - I'm making a conscious choice - that I do not want to live like this." So, there are going to be situations where the repressive impulse is, superego; societal; but there are other things, where it's really something that lives in you, that you don't want. It's not a way that you want to experience yourself.

Okay that noted, there are three points that I want to illustrate in terms of our journey into complex theory.

1. The merits of an obsession.<sup>2</sup>
2. The idea of a complex being analogous to a zombie.
3. What would the contrast be between complex-consciousness and ego-consciousness? So if one is not acting from the perspective of a complex, then what is the alternative? Is there consciousness that is not consciousness of the complex? What does that look like?

I'm going to try and unpack those three for you, but let's talk specifically about number 2, first, because it speaks quite nicely to our conversation so far. I want to suggest that a very useful way of visualizing complexes, and the way complexes behave in our lives and in our psychology, is provided in popular culture by the image of the zombie. The idea of **an undead creature that behaves unthinkingly, and unreflectively, and compulsively**. I'm sure you've all seen plenty of these zombie scenes. A good example for me was 'World War Z.' If you think of this image of the zombie, I think it really provides a useful image about the idea of a complex. A **complex is analogous to the zombie inside me, an inner zombie**.

These are some of the qualities that you find in zombies and in complexes.

- Zombies tend to be mass-minded. Have you noticed in the zombie movies how they're all moving in the same way? None of them is going, "Well, I

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<sup>2</sup> This is dealt with in part 2 of Complex Theory

don't know, you know? I'll go this (alternate) way." They're all going together, in the same direction.

- And they're pretty unreflective. You never see a zombie sitting down and wondering, "Mm I don't know, you know? Should we kill him? Don't you think there are enough zombies?" It's all like, "Aargh. Let's go and get some more zombies. Let's go and bite the humans and turn them all into zombies as well."
- They're instinct driven. They seem to be motivated and driven by the lowest common denominator, and I'll talk a bit about that now, but they seem to definitely be drive or instinct-driven. I don't know what zombies usually want – to create more zombies it seems, in the zombie movies. Anyway, to kill everyone who is not a zombie.
- Amoral; they tend to be pretty amoral. Why I say amoral as opposed to immoral is that – and I think this is an important point – I don't think one can really speak about morality or immorality, in relation to a zombie. It would seem to be an unfair charge to lay at a zombie's feet; to say the zombie is immoral, because surely only somebody with a capacity for moral behaviour can be immoral. So they're amoral, they're not immoral. And I think that it is the same thing with a complex. While something is a complex, we might accuse the person who has the complex of immoral behaviour,



but psychologically it would be very unfair to accuse the complex of being immoral. Morality is a property of consciousness; it is a property of someone who is able to reflect on their behaviour. As long as the complex acts out compulsively, it has not really reached the stage of development at which we can properly speak about morality. It exists in another domain, which is the domain of compulsive, instinctive behaviour, not the domain of morality or immorality.

- It is obviously compulsive. Well, a zombie is obviously compulsive. I'm not sure if every complex is compulsive, but I think it is an important defining characteristic when we consider our complexes. That frequently – not always, but frequently – they will have a compulsive character.

So those are some of the qualities that I think complexes share with zombies, and they're probably about as ugly as well, actually.

In terms of drives, I think let's just take these two basic drives: the sex drive and the will to power; the Freudian and the Adlerian keystones. I think that both of those are – they certainly are - complexes. In Jungian terms, they are archetypes, but let's just talk about them as complexes for the moment.

They are experienced as complexes inasmuch as an archetype lives in me, and I think they fit in with all of these qualities: mass-minded, unreflective, amoral and compulsive.

Thinking of the sexual act, it is hard for me to imagine anything more zombie-like than sex. I really think the sexual act – the act of copulation – is the perfect image for the behaviour of a complex, or compulsive behaviour.

The very act of animal-rutting is the most absurd thing. There's something so primitive and mindless about the sexual act. I'm not talking about love; I'm talking about sex.

But the truth is, we all have a sex complex. The 1999 movie, 'Romance,' is about a young woman (Marie) who was exploring the limits of her sexuality, and there was a great scene where she talks about the experience of her sexuality. She talks, and she shows this image – she's trying to describe it to someone, and she shows this image - in which her body is sticking through a wall. So the top part of her torso is on this side of the wall and then the other half, from her genitals down, is on the other side. And where her top side is, she's being wined and dined and it's romantic; and there are roses, and there is this stimulating conversation. And of course, the bottom side is in this dungeon and there's this guy wearing leather and chains and it's just pure carnality; pure animal sex; very primitive.

What she is illustrating with this image is that she finds these conflicting drives in herself. That at one level, her sexual drive is so primitive and basic; and then, at the other side of her, is this idea of romance, and love, and so on. As long as we're having sex, I really don't think we should take ourselves too seriously, because I can tell you now, no one else is. If there are any aliens watching us, trust me, they are laughing their asses off.

So that is the one. Then the other thing is the will to power. In a way, more – well I don't want to say more malevolent; that's the wrong description, but it's more – insidious, in a sense, because it's more hidden. Sex is kind of obvious, you experience the sex drive; you know about it; you know you're grappling with the sex drive.

But the will to power is quite nefarious because it manifests in subtle ways. You justify it as, "I have ambitions; I have aspirations; I want to do something in the world; I want to make a difference." Yes, maybe you do or maybe you're just trying to elevate your status, because what lives in you is the will to power. You want to move up in the ranks. Like every other imbecile on the planet, you are trying to get to the top of the pile, and you'll trample on other people's throats and heads, compromise morals and ethics, cheat, and steal and lie, and do whatever it takes, to get there. Not all the time, but my point is that, when this will to power is compulsive, and when it lives in us, we desire power at any price.

An analyst was telling me - and I think this illustrates it quite nicely - about how he works with some men who are really old, very late in their lives, and these are men who have done amazing things in business and they've traveled, and they've climbed mountains, and they've done all these things that men and women – but particularly men – are often obsessed with. They've got to do all these things, and he says a lot of them get to this stage of their lives and they say, "You know, to be honest with you now, I don't know why I did all that stuff. It just seemed like the right thing to do at the time." It's a really sad idea, but it's this idea that often we do things because we're driven to do

them. It's a compulsive urge to do, do, do – without ever really necessarily understanding or knowing why we are doing it, other than, “I need to get ahead. I need to stand out. I need to get noticed.”

So these two I think, are obviously what we talk about as basic drives, not just in the Freudian sense but in the sense of complex theory. There could be a multiplicity of drives, but I'm just choosing the two most archetypal human drives. Although, of course, Freud would probably say – well, Freud and Adler as a team – that of course, at the heart of every complex are these two drives, but we don't have to be so reductionist. My point is just that complexes have that quality; they have a telos; they're trying to go somewhere, and they're like zombies in that sense. They just keep going.

What we're looking at here is that, where the behaviour has a high degree of compulsiveness, it reflects some of these characteristics: **unreflective behaviour, drive-driven behaviour, amoral behaviour, compulsive behaviour.**

Now, the one distinction here is that, if you look at what you've consciously chosen, of course, it's also motivated by a drive. That's why you've chosen it - because it has a meaning. But our belief is that there's a distinction, where you've made a choice, where you've said, “Look, I'm going to act this out, but I'm acting it out within a particular personal paradigm, with a set of personal beliefs, within a global frame of who I want to be in the world, etc.” As opposed to behaviour that you are doing, and acting out, that may be diminishing your quality of life and diminishing the quality of life of other human beings around you. You're not even aware that you're doing it, or if you're aware that you're doing it, you've got no control over it. It drives you;

it is compulsive. So that's the sort of distinction that we're trying to map out here. We're looking at complexes as being predominantly unconscious, in that sense.

In terms of psychological health, we should distinguish between complexes that act *through* the ego – in other words, you become aware of a particular desire or prejudice, or some sort of an impulse, and you are able to reflect on it and make a choice whether to actualize it or not – and motivation, or desire, or behaviour, that acts through you, and somehow bypasses your consciousness in the process.

Let me give you an example. It's a personal example - and I don't mean to suggest that I am conscious, because I think I'm far from conscious - but it illustrates the point quite well. One of my complexes is around food. I've got a tendency to overeat, and it doesn't serve me very well. I mean, I get lots of pleasure from it, but it doesn't always serve me very well. So on the weekend, I was in Bloemfontein and I stayed at a Protea Hotel. I had a cold and I wasn't feeling very well, and I had a bad night on the Friday night, and a full day of lectures on the Saturday. In the morning, I didn't want to go driving around Bloemfontein, trying to find something to eat, so I just went into the breakfast buffet that they have at the hotel, and which I knew would be overpriced, but I thought, "It doesn't matter; it's convenient, I'll go there".

Now, I love breakfast. It's one of my favourite meals, so I went inside and you know what it's like with these things: it doesn't matter if you have one egg, or you have one glass of orange juice, or you clean them out, they still charge you

the same - R125, or whatever it is. So if you're anything like me, it is carte blanche; it's like, have a full go! Of course – you should see some of those guys; they have that plate loaded to the brim – some of those big farm boys; you know they've loaded that plate up!

Anyway, I come in and these are all the thoughts that are going through my mind, as I'm coming in to have breakfast. And somewhere, and somehow, it emerges for me to try to be conscious of what I'm doing. One of the ways that I try to become conscious is that I first walk around and I look very carefully at the food. I look and I look, and I walk around, and I look at the food, and I look at everything, and of course as I'm doing that I'm trying to formulate in my mind, "Now, what am I going to eat?"

So already as I'm doing this, this is, in itself, an act of consciousness. I didn't just pick up my plate, and walk up and just start unreflectively ordering food. I'm trying to be conscious of what I'm doing. Then I ended up having a small bowl of fruit salad, which I hate. I mean I hate fruit. I had this tiny little bowl of fruit salad, and a glass of orange juice – a big glass of orange juice. Now the complex said to me, "Eat", because I was feeling down. I had had a bad night. I was anxious – I had this class to teach. It was a big class - a big group. I had to perform, I wasn't feeling good, and my response to anxiety is to eat. A lot of people don't eat when they're anxious. If I'm anxious I do eat - so there's a drive; there's this compulsive drive to have a full go, because I know that lunch is going to be short, and I won't have time for lunch. I need to have a substantial breakfast, so that I've got energy when I lecture. You know, this is all the rationalization. But of course, on another level I know that I'm

going to feel bad if I have overeaten. I mean, my system's already flat, it doesn't need the additional stress of having to process twenty-six eggs and fifty slices of bacon.

The point is that, although I experienced this desire, I was able to reflectively make a choice that I believe was in line with what was best for me in the situation. Reflecting on the whole thing, I believe that it was the right choice to make. I think that's the distinction. That in a sense, all desire comes from complexes, but where consciousness is able to intervene and make choices, and reflectively process what is coming up, then you are not acting compulsively, or acting out the complex, so to speak.

What I'm saying is that there is a specific complex acting through me, and the complex that's acting through me is a tendency to eat inappropriately; to overeat when it's not going to serve me, and by being able to enter into a reflective state, I was able to oppose the complex.

The unconscious component – I wouldn't be able to tell you where it came from or what lies at the heart of it. Is it fear? Is it anxiety? Am I worried that if I don't eat, I'm going to somehow disintegrate? It is going to be unconscious, primal fears that are embedded in the complex, that are unknown to me; but symptomatically, I am aware of how it lives itself out in me. So there is an awareness of the complex, although there's a substantial portion of the complex that remains unconscious and hidden. But that awareness is sometimes sufficient, as it was that day, to allow me to step outside of its compulsive nature, outside of zombie consciousness.

Okay, that is it for this lecture. I'll leave you to get on with the application. This is part one of a two-part series on Complex Theory, the second lecture in this series ("*The Merits of an Obsession*") will follow next module. The application next module builds on the application from this one, so please take your time, and apply yourself to this unit's application. This is a central theme in Jung's work, and one that is foundational in terms of many of the applications to follow during the course of this programme.

Adieu,

Stephen.



## **Application:**

1. In the lecture, specific reference is made to the cinematic metaphor of the zombie, as an image or symbol of a complex. In this regard, these were the defining characteristics shared by zombies and complexes:

- Mass-minded;
- Unreflective;
- Compulsive
- Instinctive;
- Repetitive (pay particular attention to this idea of “*repetition compulsion*”); and
- Unconscious.

In addition to the above, classically identifying complexes would include reflecting on the following aspects:

- Primary patterns: events, thoughts, emotions, fantasies and behaviours that you typically encounter, and that follow typical, predictable paths;
- Personal talents and challenges;
- Fantasy and dream material;

- Strong emotional or “affective” reactions and responses in your behaviour; and
- Any characteristic that you define yourself by, that somehow sets you apart from others.

With the above guidelines in mind, identify *six* primary complexes in your own psychology. Avoid those that are shared by everyone, i.e., the instincts in their natural form. This does not mean your complexes are not instinctively driven; but that which is different about them, rather than what is generic, is of value in this application.

2. Once you have identified these six complexes:

- Name each one;
- Describe them in as much detail as possible; and
- Consider each one's trajectory and purpose (each one, individually).

3. Now consider where, and how, these individual complexes form alliances or oppositions in your psychology.