



# MAGNUM OPUS: NIGREDO

Module 5: Projection

## QUOTE

*If you imagine someone who is brave enough to withdraw all his projections, then you get an individual who is conscious of a pretty thick shadow. Such a man has saddled himself with new problems and conflicts. He has become a serious problem to himself, as he is now unable to say that they do this or that, they are wrong, and they must be fought against... Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world is in himself, and if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day.*

*“Psychology and Religion”  
(1938). In CW 11: Psychology  
and Religion: West and  
East. P.140*

## Projection

Compiled by The Centre for Applied Jungian Studies

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## **Transcript of Podcast**

Hello, and welcome to this module of the Nigredo stage of Magnum Opus.

In this module, we are going to be dealing with the topic of projection.

Projection is a key idea in psychoanalysis and plays a central role in understanding Jungian psychology.

It follows, organically, on the work we did during the last two modules, on complexes. When we look at our projections and consider their nature, this is another highly effective way to see, and to gain some insight into, our complexes. Projection is a useful tool in that sense, in that we project, and through understanding what we project by coming to terms with what we project, we gain insight into our unconscious content, that would otherwise not be available to us.

The concept of projection – the understanding and becoming aware of the idea of projection – is possibly one of the most liberating insights one can gain from depth psychology, and from applied Jungian psychology.

### **What is Projection?**

I'm going to start off by speaking a little bit about projection generally; giving it a sort of rough and ready definition, and say a little bit about it. From there, I'm going to go on to a more formal definition, which Jung provides. He splits his definition into four different points and I will go through those.

I am also going to talk a little about typical targets of projection. I am going to give you a list of the more common aspects of your life – both your inner and your outer life – which are targets of projection. Then I will go on to talk about projection in both its constructive and destructive dimensions.

I will conclude with the applications, the specific applications that we will be doing in this module. I am going to outline seven archetypal projections, with which I want you to consider the nature of your own projections, in terms of those seven archetypal categories. It is quite a big task and, obviously, you do with it as much as you can. This is something one can probably spend a decade working on, and we only have a fortnight. Nevertheless, these are rich targets for self-reflection. I trust that setting them up as categories for you to consider will be helpful. It will help you gain some greater insight into your psychology and into your inner life, as well as into what unconscious ideology you are bringing to bear, in terms of these aspects of your being in the world.

Very simply then, projection can be described in the following way:

Projection is assigning a value, quality, disposition or “way of being in the world,” to someone else, or something outside of you, that – properly speaking – belongs to you. Another way of putting it, maybe a much simpler way, although not quite as helpful, is to say that we view the world through the lens of our own subjectivity. I think that is an idea which is relatively well understood, and certainly it is an idea that is quite widely disseminated. It is the idea that the reality we perceive – the world that we perceive out there – is largely or significantly conditioned by our own subjectivity, and what we are



seeing is not neutral or uncoloured by our subjective lens. Projection builds on that notion. A little more specifically then, it is really this idea of assigning a value, virtue, vice, prejudice, disposition, etc., to someone else, which belongs to you.

### **Some philosophy**

Now, let me say something before we talk about the mechanism of projection, and then I will go through Jung's definition. Before I do, let me make the following point – I think it is important to understand this bit of philosophy which I'll keep brief – and I'll try and keep it as simple as I can.

When we think of the world, we can think of the world in two different and complementary fashions.

One is the material reality – the physical reality – that constitutes our world.

Then secondly, that we relate to that physical reality, as well as to other aspects of our world, through what, in dialectics, we call a symbolic field. So, when we relate to our world, we don't relate directly to the physical reality.

The physical reality has a particular significance or symbolic value to us; it means something. It is not just a neutral, meaningless thing – it is a thing that means something. This symbolic dimension is the dimension which we are dealing with, when we talk about perceiving the world through our subjective lens. When we are talking about projection, it is the symbolic value of the physical object, which I am relating to – that is colored by, or possibly distorted by, my subjectivity or my projection, in this case.

To try and explain that, and maybe give an example: we might say that I don't know much about plant life, and I don't know much about what they refer to as, "flora." I live in a home with quite a beautiful garden, but I don't know much about the plants in that garden. I don't know their names. I don't know anything about their life-cycles. I really know embarrassingly little, to be honest, about them. I cannot name them; I cannot tell you anything about them; and I do not know how to look after them. I know, really, pretty much nothing, I would say, except that they look pretty; and they make the garden look beautiful; and I love walking through the garden, and I enjoy being in the garden. But that's where my knowledge – if one can even call it that – stops.

Now compare that with someone who has a real understanding of plant life – maybe a horticulturist, or a landscaper, or someone who is a passionate gardener, and who has spent some time and attention understanding the different plants; understanding where they come from; understanding their habits; understanding the sorts of conditions in which they flourish, and how they need to be protected; someone who understands how they should be planted; what goes with what; and, from an aesthetic point of view, the right way to landscape a garden.

Now, just contrast me, a sort of ignoramus, with a horticulturist or a landscaper, and we're walking through this garden together. It is very easy to understand how what we see, has very different significance. In psychological

or philosophical terms, we would refer to this as a symbolic significance. So we are both seeing the same physical plants, trees, grass and landscape etc., but the experience of the horticulturist is very different from mine. He or she has an insight; has a relationship with them; has associations; has information that is not available to me, even though we are relating to the same physical entities.

Now that's a simple example, but I hope it gives some insight into what it is that we are talking about. When we relate to the world around us, and when we relate to the environment around us – and, as I will go on to explain, not only to the outer world, but to the inner world as well – we relate to ourselves and to our inner world through the lens of this subjectivity. We do not only project onto the world out there, but we project onto the inner world as well. The idea is that what we encounter, what it means to us, the value it has for us and how we understand it, is profoundly affected by the symbolic value of the object to which we are relating.

To give one more example – to illustrate the idea a bit more – think about your relationship with somebody that you either love or hate, quite passionately. Then think about how you see this person, how you relate to this person, what your thoughts are about this person etc., in contrast to somebody else who does not share that relationship with them. What you see, feel and think about, when you encounter this loved (or hated) one is very, very different from what I, or somebody else, who doesn't know them in the same way would.

So this is the idea, and I think it is an important point to make, because sometimes – when we talk about these things; when we talk about projection; we talk about subjectivity – people have the feeling that their feet sort of leave the firm ground of realism, and they kind of go into that twilight-zone space, where they are not quite sure what is real and what is not real anymore.

But this is not a notion that really challenges the idea of an objective, real world. It is the idea that the world in which we are embedded is not only made up of a physical, material environment, but it is also made up of a symbolic environment – and that symbolic environment is the environment in which our mental life, and our psychology, operate. The idea here is simply that the symbolic values of the things you relate to in the world can, and do, vary widely, between yourself and other people.

The understanding that what it is that you are relating to, or what it is that you are seeing, has this subjective value and is colored by your subjective lens and your unconscious content (in psychological terms), is what we are talking about, when we talk about projection. And really understanding this, and understanding how you can work with this knowledge, is an incredibly powerful and liberating tool.

### **How does projection work?**

Now let me say a little about the mechanism of projection. The idea is that you have some unconscious content that seeks expression – as unconscious

content does. Not being made conscious, it expresses itself through your projections. This happens in one of two typical fashions.

Firstly, consider this scenario – that you have a talent. Let's just say, for example, that you have an artistic talent and the circumstances of your life are such that this artistic talent is not able to find expression. You, for whatever reason, are unable to express yourself in this way, even though there is a desire, a capacity and a disposition to express yourself artistically.

Now, in this scenario, your relationships with people who are expressing themselves artistically, in whatever forms, is colored by the fact that there is this artistic capacity within you. So the way in which you relate to artistic people; the light in which you perceive them; the value that they take on; your regard for them; etc., is affected by the fact that you have this artistic talent in yourself, which is unexpressed. So people who do express themselves artistically, provide you with some access to that aspect of your own being, that you have been unable to express for yourself.

You may find that your relationship with the arts is one of deep appreciation, of very high regard, of love, or – not to paint too pretty a picture – there may even be a degree of envy or something of that nature mixed in as well. But the way, or the light, in which you view the artistic personality is not neutral. They carry in the world what you have been unable to express; and the way that you relate to them, and the way that you regard them, and the way that you regard their work, is going to be profoundly affected by the fact that this artistic complex resides within you.

That is the one idea in terms of projection: that the other can carry something, that you have been unable to express in your life.

The second idea is not entirely dissimilar, but it is slightly different.

The second causal mechanism is that there is an aspect of my personality, about which I am in a state of repression or suppression. I'm in denial about an aspect of myself. So let us just stay, for the purposes of metaphor, with the idea of the artistic personality. Now often, there seems to be something of an archetypal dimension to the artist. Maybe this is a cliché in some sense, but frequently we think of the artist as having a particular energy, a particular way of being in the world, maybe a particular relationship with the environment and very often (I don't mean to generalize like this, but just for the purposes of this example), we might think of the classical artistic personality as something of a free spirit, and as someone who's not bound by convention in the way that most of us are.

### **An example**

Now imagine a scenario where you also have this very strong inclination – this strong disposition – towards being a free spirit, with whatever that entails, but because of your upbringing, because of the circumstances of your life, because of what, in Freudian terms, we would call the superego, you are in a state of repression, with regard to that dimension of your being. So you don't flit from one thing to another; you don't change lovers as the wind blows; you don't sort of live some kind of Gypsy or Bohemian lifestyle (I don't mean to

caricature the artistic personalities, but I am just using some images that come to mind).

The idea is that you secretly long to connect with that less constrained, less restrained, less tightly-controlled personality, that you maybe experience in yourself; and you would love to encounter the world in a more Bohemian, free-spirited fashion but you cannot. You are in a state of repression about it.

Therefore, when you encounter the artistic personality, or someone who lives life with that artistic or Bohemian ethic, you are provoked by it. When you encounter this in a friend, or in someone with whom you are in contact, you are either:

In awe of them – there is a deep longing in you, to experience yourself in that way. They take on numinosity; they become something more than human; they become a magical creature.

Or, alternatively, if your relationship to this free-spirited aspect of yourself is very repressive, something that you do not want to own in yourself and something about which you are in denial, you may find that your relationship to this free-spirited human being is one of a negative, critical, judgmental or even vindictive nature. You feel the need to deny and judge who they are, and what they bring, just because it is something that, secretly, you long to be and do – but have not given yourself permission to do this in the world. Through this critical, judgmental approach, you ensure the internal repression remains in place – remains fixed – or so you hope.

A key point to understanding projection – and this comes from Jung – is that the unconscious seeks expression in your life, either in you, or through you, or in the world around you. This is an anthropomorphism, but the unconscious seems to aspire to expression. It seems to want to be expressed in the world. Or to put it in less anthropomorphic terms, it has a disposition towards expression. So projection is a way of encountering this unconscious content, that had previously not seen the light of day, in your world and in your life.

### **A formal definition**

I want to now give you a slightly more formal definition of projection. I'm going to read something that's fairly brief – two paragraphs – from Jung's Collected Works Volume Six, wherein Jung defines a number of his key concepts; a very useful guide to some of the Jungian concepts. Once I have read it to you, I will go through it point-by-point, and unpack it for you.

This is what Jung has to say:

"Projection means the expulsion of a subjective content into an object; it is the opposite of introjection. Accordingly, it is a process of dissimilation – versus assimilation – by which a subjective content becomes alienated from the subject and is, so to speak, embodied in the object. The subject gets rid of painful, incompatible contents by projecting them. As also of positive values which for one reason or another, self-depreciation, for instance, are inaccessible to him."



"Projection results from the archaic identity of subject and object, but is properly so called only when the need to dissolve the identity with the object has already arisen. This need arises when the identity becomes a disturbing factor, in other words, when the absence of the projected content is a hindrance to adaptation, and its withdrawal into the subject becomes desirable. From this moment the previous partial identity acquires the character of projection. The term projection therefore signifies a state of identity that has become noticeable. An object of criticism, whether it be the self-criticism of the subject or the objective criticism of another."

Okay, so I think there are four important points in this definition. I am going to go through them, one by one.

The first point, which I think that I've probably covered fairly extensively, already, is that projection is the locating of content that belongs to you, in the other, or in the world around you. Jung contrasts this with assimilation, which is the idea of drawing in content that was external to you, and making it part of your own psychology. The simplest example there, is to think of education. You enter an educational programme, and as you become familiar with new concepts and ideas, and if the educational process is successful, you make them part of your own cognitive inventory, your own psychology, your own sense of identity, etc. These ideas become part of you.

What was previously external to you becomes part of you, and that is the process of introjection, or assimilation. Projection is the exact opposite of that. Projection it is taking something that is part of you, and locating it in the

world that is outside of you; but, significantly, this is something that happens unconsciously, rather than consciously.

Jung goes on to make the point that, typically, the type of content with which this happens is one of two types. One is that it is, "...painful, unpleasant content." So here, the easiest thing to think of is how institutionalized morality – what society dictates, what your parents dictate, what your peers dictate, what culture dictates, etc. – has a very strong repressive element, and it dictates that certain ways of being in the world are acceptable, and others are not.

It is to the extent that we accept this – that we take this on – and, very importantly, please understand, it's not something that needs to be taken on consciously; it is something that we take on unconsciously. So you may have the naïve idea of being self-governed, and dictating your own moral code, but the idea is that, what we believe consciously is not at issue here; the question is, what have you taken on unconsciously?

The unconscious has taken on a certain ideology: a certain unconscious morality, set of ethics, etc. As my Jungian mentor used to say, "You know Catholicism is taken in with your mother's milk." It's not a question of whether one chooses to be a Catholic or a Protestant or a Jew or a Muslim. These are things that are assimilated at an age before you are in a position to make conscious, critical choices.

And when you have content that is in conflict with this morality, very often you have the need not to relate to it in yourself – not to see it as part of yourself –

but to locate it outside of yourself. You cannot come to terms with it being an aspect of yourself; that is not who you are. It is in conflict with your sense of personal identity – with your aspirational self, as we might call it. I’m not bad, you are bad. I’m not lazy, you are lazy. I’m not a layabout, or I’m not a polygamist, or I’m not dishonest (the list is, of course, infinite), you are!

Now the question of course is, are you really that? Or, is it that I see you in that light, as a result of those aspects of myself, with which I have been unable to come to terms? The idea of projection suggests that, in fact, what I’m seeing, and what I am accusing you of, are really aspects of me.

Jung then goes on to make an important point. As he puts it, “Projection results from the archaic identity of subject and object”. Now this is a very significant point. That is simply that, to one degree or another, all of us, I think, see the world as extensions of ourselves. It requires a tremendously high degree of psychological and spiritual maturity to truly understand the “otherness” of the other, and of the world, outside of ourselves. Our natural state is to see the world, and to see others, as extensions of ourselves.

Now, there’s an idea from the anthropologist, Lévy-Bruhl, which Jung borrows; it’s something that Lévy-Bruhl refers to as Participation Mystique. The idea is that in certain tribal cultures – in certain native cultures (and one sees this in African and Shamanistic practice) – the natural world (trees, rivers, plants, the sky, mountains and so on) is seen as being animated by certain spiritual entities. So the distinction between me and the environment is either very subtle, or it’s not there at all. In the environment around me, when there’s a

huge storm raging, for example, it is as though a storm were raging inside me, or the storm outside is an expression of the storm within me.

When the wind is sad, is it me who is sad, or is it the wind that is sad? I perceive sadness in the wind, which, in psychological terms, is a sadness that, properly speaking, belongs to me.

Now this idea of participation mystique – although Lévy-Bruhl’s anthropological work was focused on certain cultures – is fairly encompassing. I think we all experience something of that in our lives, and in our psychologies. You may be aware of some people – you know, it’s never us, it’s always someone else, but you may be aware of some people in your social circle – who are more victim to this than others. So, people who color everyone and everything they see, through the lens of their own subjectivity. They do not seem to appreciate the sovereignty, and the autonomy, of the other as independent of themselves. This is the idea of participation mystique.

So when Jung talks about this projection which results from the archaic identity of subject and object, this is a fairly ubiquitous feature of psychic life. It is not limited to certain, select people or certain, select cases. I think it is a feature of what it is to be alive in the world; that we do relate to the world, to a greater or lesser degree, through the lens of this subjectivity.

But then Jung goes on to make a very important point about the term “projection,” and as far as I know, this is true in Freudian psychoanalysis as well. (Just as a short sidebar: when we talk about projection, we are looking

at it through a Jungian lens; but projection has a long, rich history in psychoanalysis. Many pioneering psychoanalysts worked on it, including Freud, of course, and very significantly, Melanie Klein. Much of what we are talking about in this module is influenced by – not only Jung, but – the work of Freud and Klein as well.)

To come back to the point: when we talk about projection, we are talking about a state of identity, which has become the cause of anxiety. So this is the typical case of, “I’m madly in love with a woman who then abandons me, breaks it off with me, and disappears out of my life. And now I experience myself as fragmented – as broken. I experience an aspect of my soul life missing; specifically, of course, that aspect of my soul life that I deposited in my beloved.”

Now the projection has become problematic. The fact that I have given my beloved a numinous, divine quality – the fact that I see her as essential to my wellbeing and my continued happiness – this is when we can speak about projection proper.

### **Practical Examples**

Here is another example, by way of contrast. In my work environment, I have a particularly difficult relationship with a colleague – a co-worker – and this relationship becomes so challenging, that I am struggling to perform my duties, to behave rationally, and to function optimally at work. Because not

only is this person difficult, but I start to enter into a fantasy space, where I start to imbue them with a malevolence that goes beyond their objective malevolence – if they are objectively malevolent at all.

So the relationship with the other becomes problematic, and it starts to affect my ability to adapt and function in my environment. And that is when Jung uses the term “projection” in a technical sense.

Some of the typical things onto which people project may be useful to consider, in terms of trying to understand what we’re talking about here. This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives you some idea. They are:

- Relationships – fertile ground for projection;
- Other people;
- Jobs, careers, professions;
- Companies or workspaces – places in which you work;
- Homes;
- Possessions;
- Social status;
- Institutions – the government, church, various social institutions; and
- Public personalities – a very rich source for projections. Public personalities, celebrities, seem to occupy the same psychic space that the pantheon of Greek, Roman and Norse gods once did. They are a rich target of projections.

All of these, which I'm referring to here, are external objects, onto which one projects; but you project not only onto objects outside of yourself. You can project onto yourself, and onto certain aspects of your psychic life, as well. Typical targets of projections are: your goals and your ambitions; your fears; your future; and your past. Hopefully, as I go on, some of this will become a little clearer to you.

Just to briefly repeat what we mean by projection, and the mechanism of projection:

When we talk about projection, it is assigning a value – assigning some sort of way of being in the world – to another. It is something that properly belongs to you, but which you assign to another; and the reason for this, is that that I am unable to come to terms with the presence of this content in my own psychology. That could be as a result of either a repression or suppression – meaning, simply that it could be completely unconscious – or it could be something that I am resistant to. There could be some vague level of consciousness, but I am resistant to accepting it, and so I project it onto the other; or it could be something of which I am completely unconscious.

This content, nevertheless, seeks expression in my life and, interestingly, if I'm able to assign the value to another, then the other carries that content for me. Slavoj Žižek makes this point quite nicely, when he talks about belief, as he

says, “It is not necessary that I believe, but it’s necessary that someone believes”.

It’s the idea of Father Christmas. So I, as an adult, do not believe in Father Christmas but, nevertheless, I play the Father Christmas game with my kids up to a certain age, where I spin the yarn and the myth of Father Christmas, and the Christmas tree, and the presents under the tree, and the idea that Father Christmas brings the presents during Christmas night, etc.

But very often, ironically, as Žižek points out, at some point in this little play – this little Father Christmas play – the children themselves are acutely aware of the fact that there is no Father Christmas. And this is quite true based on my own experience – I have relatively young children - and we are still playing the Father Christmas game. The children themselves are aware of the fact that there is no Father Christmas, but they pretend to believe. They pretend to believe for your benefit – well in my case, my benefit, obviously, and I pretend to believe for their benefit.

So strangely, no one really seems to buy into it, and yet everyone imagines that the other believes. I think it is an interesting idea. It really goes to illustrate this point, that I may not need to believe in God, but it often gives me tremendous comfort that others do. It is a lot easier to be an atheist, for example, if there are believers in your community, because their belief, in a sense, is also your belief. And what goes on with projection is that, others can carry aspects of your soul life for you, that, for whatever reason, you cannot carry in your own internal psychological economy.



The question I want to address now is whether or not projection is a problem, and if it is a problem (if that's the right word), what kind of a problem it is. The first point that I want to make is that it is not always, in fact, a problem. I think Jung makes that point, as well, in his definition. He differentiates it by saying that, properly speaking, we only speak about projection when it has become a disturbing presence in the psychology of the subject in question. That is to say that projection has a fairly ubiquitous presence in our psychologies; and that he is trying to pick out the problematic cases, and assign the term "projection" to them. I think that is probably true of classical psychoanalysis as well.

The reason projection is not always a problem is that, projection is a very important aspect of the healthy functioning of our psychologies. This is apparent in many ways, so let me speak a bit about those. The most significant one, I think, is that if one looks at the development of a child, a child has an idealized idea, or relationship, to certain people in its life – obviously the parents (usually), older siblings, older children, teachers and other adults. And this notion – this idealized notion (so the child relates to the parent as an idealized figure, or an older sibling as an idealized figure) – as we know, has a degree of naiveté about it. That is to say, that usually the person who is being projected onto, has certain shortcomings and certain vulnerabilities of which, quite painfully, the child becomes aware at a later stage of development, when it is necessary for them to, in fact, withdraw from the parental bond.

But at a certain stage in the child's development, the parent becomes an idealized, almost divine, figure. Let's just take the idea of the idealized father,

so someone who is strong; someone who is intelligent; someone who is creative; someone who is a problem solver; someone who is a protector; who is a nurturer; who is a pillar of strength. (Okay, admittedly, I'm idealizing the masculine a little here; but for the purposes of the illustration, I hope you'll bear with me.) The theory of projection suggests that, in fact, it is through this idealization of the parent, that the child is relating to those qualities which exist in themselves, through the presence of the father. I cannot help thinking about that scene from "The Lion King" where Simba has this idealized relationship with his father, Mufasa. There's a very dramatic scene later in the show, after Mufasa has gone, where Simba is looking into the river and he sees Mufasa – or he believes he sees Mufasa – only to realize that he, in fact, is Mufasa now.

This idea, quite nicely, captures the notion of projection as an essential stage in psychological development. So we do need to have these characters in our lives, upon whom we can project; even if these projections are inherently one-sided, and they have a degree of naiveté about them, and they, later on usually, result in some sort of reality check, whereby we realize that there was a high degree of projection or idealization, let's say. But it allows us to relate to that aspect of ourselves, and to develop an image of what that aspect looks like in the world, that we would not be able to do without the mechanism of projection.

This idea is critical, in fact, to psychotherapy - and this is simply that the patient, necessarily, needs to project onto the therapist. The projection onto the therapist, typically referred to in psychoanalysis as transference, is an

essential part of the therapeutic process. The patient projects onto the therapist the role of healer, of someone who is able to help, of someone who cares, possibly of someone who takes on the role of a substitute parent. This transference or projection allows the patient to enter into the right kind of dynamic in terms of the relationship with the therapist – the dynamic that is necessary in order for the therapy to proceed.

But one can think of other transference relationships, which I think are similar. If one thinks about, say, if one takes it out of the realm of psychology for a moment, a relationship to a medical doctor. I think that also has a very strong element of projection, and of transference in it, as well, in that I perceive the doctor as somehow almost super-human. There is something divine in their characterization of the role (well, I'm not saying there is, of course, but I'm saying that one's projection brings about that type of relatedness). That is very, very important, because it is that which allows you to put your trust in this doctor.

If one is unable to trust the doctor, then the whole dynamic of patient-doctor just doesn't seem to work – or, at least, it doesn't work in the classical sense that it does. Maybe there's something between peers, where peers can heal and help each other as well – you know, sort of equals can help each other, as well. But typically, when we classically think about the relationship between doctor and patient, or between therapist and patient, it is one of the doctor or the therapist being cast in the role of healer, which, as psychoanalytical research would suggest, is really just another form of the parental relationship.

### **Positive or Negative?**

Projection then can play a very important, positive and constructive role in the development of the psychology of both children and, later on, our psychology as adults as well. So it's not to say that we only project, and we only need projection, as children. I think as adults we also need projection; we also need to be able to project, and projection can very often serve us but of course – and this is what we're going to talk a bit about now – it can be less than ideal.

Projections that, for example, are considered to be acceptable and healthy in the child – the sort of idealized relationship with adults – would not be similarly viewed in an adult psychology. If I went around idealizing everyone, and looking up to them, and turning to them for help, and seeing them in parental roles, etc., it is not ideal or healthy. If I relate to my wife as I did to my mother, for example, that is a problem.

Let's talk a little bit about the negative aspect of it – why it is a problem.

Maybe some of why it's a problem is already obvious, but let me try to unpack it a little more. Clearly, it distorts my view of the other.

So there are two major problems that I want to point out.

One is that it distorts my view of the other. If I relate to you through the lens of my projection, then what I see, when I relate to you is, in large part, my projection. There may be some aspect of you there; I think there usually is, possibly with the exception of psychoses. There is some relationship; there's some awareness of you as an independent, autonomous, objective human

being, but what I relate to, and what I see, is distorted. It's colored by my projection, so I'm not really relating to you: you are just a mirror of my own soul life. So it is suggestive of a high degree of what, in philosophy, we would refer to as a solipsistic type relationship, where I am ensconced in my own subjectivity, and I'm unable to build a bridge to you as other. I only see you as an extension of myself, although I may believe I see you as other. Inasmuch as I am in a state of projection, I'm seeing you as an extension of myself, and I'm not relating to you as you.

This does not seem to be ideal for two very important reasons. First of all, it distorts my view of who you are, and thus my ability to relate to you; to see you as other; to understand you; to truly empathize with you – although Jung has some interesting notions about the idea that the very act of empathizing is, in fact, an act of (it requires) projection. So one projects, and then one later introjects, and that is what the act of empathy is about, but leave that aside for the moment.

So insofar as I'm projecting, I simply do not see you for who you are, and it distorts my ability to relate to you; and, accordingly, to relate to the world around me. This is a dis-empowering faculty of my psychology.

That's one very important negative aspect of projection – maybe the most important, from our perspective. But there is another very important aspect that may occur as well, and that is simply that it is incredibly demeaning to you – to your humanity and to your uniqueness – that I seek to reduce you to my projection. It's an incredibly selfish act, in the sense that I do not recognize the

sovereignty of your being. Even though I'm doing this unconsciously, effectively, I am reducing you to an extension of myself.

So, in terms of the project of Eros, of relatedness, of forming meaningful connections with other human beings, and with the world around us – and doing that governed to some degree by what Freud would term the reality principle – projection is a limiting, restrictive, and often very negative aspect of the way our psychology operates. It certainly can work against you in that regard.

The other important aspect is that, when I project (one has to use a metaphor to understand this properly, so I don't mean this literally – I mean this metaphorically) it is as though I deposit an aspect of my soul life in that onto which I project. So if I fall in love with you (as a man, let's say I fall in love with you, a woman) I deposit an aspect of my anima – of the feminine archetype – in you. And then I relate to that aspect of myself through my relationship with you. When you are not present, or when you abandon me, or when there's some sort of an altercation between us, etc., I'm cut off from that aspect of my soul life.

To the degree that my projections reside in other human beings, and in other aspects of the world that are external to me, I find I experience myself as fragmented – as only being able to relate to those aspects of myself in the presence of those onto whom I've projected. This, of course, is the common source of the disturbance that occurs as a result of projection, in that our relationship that was once functional and that allowed (accommodated)

my projection, is no longer functional. Nevertheless, the projection remains in place, and now I am unable to function autonomously in the absence of that projected content, or in the absence of the relationship with the one who holds that projected content.

### **Four steps in working with projected content**

Jung described a four-step process for working with projected content, and working to reintegrate that content into one's psychology. I am going to go over that briefly. After that, I'm going to give you a couple of examples of archetypal projections which I think would be a good starting point for working on projection, and how it plays out in your life.

The initial situation is the point of unconscious projection. It is the idea that what I see is, in fact, objective and it's true, and this is an objective description of the world. I take no responsibility in that judgment, except that as a rational, critical being, I'm able to form this judgment; but I believe that the judgment of the other is, in fact, an accurate description of them.

Then the first step is the dawning of consciousness. The idea that I start to become aware, that there may be some gap between what it is that I have come to believe about the other, and who the other is independently of my projection onto them. I start to become aware of a difference between what I believe and what, in fact, obtains.

Then the second step is, to follow that thread and to start to make an informed evaluation; to understand what is objectively true – valid - as opposed to what

is really an aspect of my own subjective life, that I have projected onto this person. In making that evaluation, I'm able to get some sort of a handle on what it is that I have projected.

Then thirdly, through this process, there is the realization that one is in a state of projection. One is then ready to withdraw that projection, or one is ready to take responsibility – or ownership – of that projection.

Finally, the fourth step is to investigate the projection itself, independently of the person or the thing onto which you have projected it. One can look at it from different perspectives. One can look at its developmental history – where it has come from – and from a Jungian perspective, one looks at its telos: what is it doing in the psyche now, and where is it going? But in any case, the idea is to get a better handle on yourself, and your own psychology, and a better insight into who you are, and what you are about, by virtue of that projection.

### **Applications:**

I want to move on now to the area of applications – moving on from theory. I am going to outline seven archetypal phenomena that elicit projections, universal forms of projection, if you will. But before I do, I just want to make the point that this list I'm giving you is a list to guide you, and it's about particular projections that I would like you to consider within the context of the course we are doing. But beyond the list which I'm going to give you, consider that projection can happen in many different ways and you can



project onto many different people for many different reasons, as I hope has been clear in the lecture that I have just given. And, you know, any relationship – be it with a person or with any other aspect of your life – that is a source of distress, would be a very good starting point in terms of considering what it is that you are projecting onto this person or thing.

In terms of the point I made earlier, projection can be onto something outside of you, and that's usually what we think of when we think of projection, but, equally, you can and do project onto yourself, and onto your own hopes, dreams, fears, frustrations, etc.

There are seven archetypal projections that I would like you to consider. I'm going to list them for you, and thereafter talk a little bit about how you may work with them.

Let me start with a set of four, first of all, and that is: love, sex, money and success. Let's go through them one by one:

When we talk about love, what I'm interested in is what you project onto being loved. What does it mean to you? How important is it to you? What does it look like? How does it make you feel? What value do you assign to it? What are your beliefs around it? Etc. So, importantly there: I make the point, I'm not talking about your love for another, but what do you project onto being loved.

Sex: what do you project onto sex? What does sex mean to you? What are your beliefs and associations around it? What value do you give to it? What have you come to believe about it? How do you characterize the archetype of

sex, if you will, in your psychology?

Money is a nice one. I'd like you to do this in terms of an imaginative exercise, so I'd like you to describe a fantasy wherein you have access to an obscene amount of money. What would that look like in your life? How would your life be different, from the way it is now? Would it be different? Would you do things differently? Would you be a different person? Where would you live? What sort of car would you drive? What would you wear? What would you spend your days doing? Etc.

I really encourage you to take the exercises seriously, but particularly when it comes to sex and money it's very easy for the superego to immediately kick in and to repress what it is that you really feel, before it even gets a chance to get out there, so to speak. So try not to start off from the perspective of disallowing yourself; allow the fantasy to come to you. Try to enter fully into the fantasy, and then see what comes up for you in relation to it.

Now, if, let's say, in relation to either sex or money, the fantasy or the projection is one of a puritanical nature where you feel a sense of guilt or shame or lack of entitlement, then of course, those are important aspects of the projection, and they are important to identify, and to understand, because they naturally condition your relationship with those archetypal presences in your life and in the world. But at the same time, try not to allow the repressive superego to stop you from engaging honestly in the exercises.

Then the fourth one I mentioned was success. Once again, with success, the question is, what does success look like for you? What do you imagine success to be? How do you define success – for yourself, that is? Of course, in all of these cases, you're looking at it in relation to yourself, rather than as an abstraction. What would you need to achieve in your life, in order to consider yourself successful? Of course, if you could develop an image for that, that would be helpful, as well.

Then, going back to all of them – love, sex, money and success – in all of these cases, it is helpful if you can describe a fantasy, an image, of what it looks like when you are being loved; when your sexual fantasies are being realized; what you would look like with sufficient wealth; and who you'd be and what you'd be doing, if you were successful.

Now, in many of these cases, of course, I'm hoping that you already have love, sex, money and success, so, you know, you may wonder how to approach the exercise; but of course, the idea is to take these things to their logical conclusion. The idea is that, what would the pinnacle of love, sex, money and success be?

The other three areas, two of them are Lacanian ideas, and they're slightly subtler; I will try to unpack them – and the third one is fairly straightforward. This is the second triad. So first I described a foursome, and now I'm describing a triad. The first one now is what Žižek refers to as the 'Big Other', and he's drawing on Lacanian theory here. The Big Other is the concept of the symbolic order, if you will, outside of yourself. The simplest manifestation of

the Big Other is God. You might say, “How does the presence of God in your psychology condition the way you behave, and the way you think about yourself, and the way you think about the world?” But it’s not necessarily God, it can be other things as well. It can be, simply, the presence of society, the presence of anyone, essentially, whose opinion is significant to you. It is the idea that there is someone, or something, external to you, whose opinion you value. This could be your family; this could be God; this could be your peers; this could be society itself. In Africa there is a strong relationship to the ancestors. Any of these could constitute the Big Other. The Big Other is the idea of a presence in the world that sets up a kind of a ‘gold standard,’ if you will, or a means whereby things are measured. I want you to think about, onto what do you project the Big Other? Is it God? Is it a religious institution? Is it society? Is it the family? Whose opinion and presence in the world impacts on the way you live your life, and the way you conduct your life?

I’d like you to identify who or what the Big Other is for you, and then what the value of the Big Other is in your life – what they represent for you.

The next one, in Lacanian psychology, is called, ‘objet petit a,’ – but for the purposes of this exercise, I’m going to simplify it slightly. I want you to think simply about the object upon which your most profound desires are directed. What do you desire above all else in the world, in terms of an object that is external to you? So I’m not talking about success, or adulation, or love, but I’m talking about the projection of your desire onto an object.

And for the purpose of this exercise, you can include in the category of objects, other people. Although, of course, we don't consider other people to be objects, for the purposes of this exercise you can incorporate them into the field of objects. And I'm thinking here, for example, there's a lovely line from a TV series that aired a few years back, called *Fringe*, where Professor Walter Bishop has this very intense relationship with his son, Peter. Much of the series really centres on this relationship between Walter and his son, Peter. Many of the actions that he takes, that have fateful consequences, are to do with the incredible love that Walter has for his son, Peter. And there's a lovely scene in one of the episodes towards the end of the series, where Walter says to Peter, "You are my favourite thing in the whole world."

And so, I want you to think about what your favourite thing in the whole world is – be it an object or be it a person. Upon what is your desire directed? Now it could be something that is present in your life, as in the case of the 'Fringe' example, or equally, it could be something that exists only in your fantasy life, for example. So, a good example would be (working with a client, he gave the answer) a McLaren F1. And those who know a little about exotic sports cars will know what the McLaren F1 is, but in any case it's sort of the pinnacle of exotic sports cars and it is something that is obscenely expensive and, conveniently, will most probably remain out of reach for most of us. But this motor car constitutes the objet petit a – this object of desire – for the person in question.

For the purposes of this exercise then, I don't want you to differentiate between objects and people, and I want you to think about the object upon which your desire is directed, and then once you have done that I want you to try and understand the value which that object has for you, what it means to you and why your desire centres on it. Try to understand what it is about the object, that it is so incredibly attractive to you.

Then, the last one is relatively simple – certainly compared to the last two – and that is, simply, happiness. But it's a very important one, I think. It would be incomplete to do these exercises without considering what you project happiness onto. So, I want you to think, in what world are you happy? I want you to describe a world, wherein you are blissfully happy. I think that is a critical exercise to do, if consciousness is your goal.

I'm going to list the seven categories again, very briefly:

Love, sex, money, success, the Big Other, objet petit a (or simply the fantasy object), and happiness.

You would have received a transcript of this lecture, along with the podcast, as well as a document outlining the exercises, so everything should be there and available to you. If there is anything that you do not understand or anything you'd like to query, please raise it on the forum page and we will make every effort to assist you with the work. So, good luck with the work, and I look forward to interacting with you over the course of this module.

Adieu,

Stephen.