

COMPLEXES

ORIGINS

When Jung was working at Burghölzli, Eugen Bleuler gave him a test called the Word Association Test that was developed by Francis Galton. He asked Jung to do some research on this process. The Word Association Test consisted of over 100 words that he asked the patient, and the patient had to respond as soon as possible with another word, e.g. he would ask the word “bird” and then the patient may respond “nest”. This test soon identified that some words caused the patient to falter or have some physical response. The research identified for Jung that there were certain ideas, cluster of feelings and emotions around some words. This formed the basis of the Complex Theory. Jung felt that Complexes were key to identifying parts of ourselves that were stuck and neurotic. In fact, he felt so strongly about it, that initially he wanted to call his system of analysis, Complex Theory.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND EMOTION

Jung linked the recall of memories to emotion. Only when the emotion is strong enough, does the memory surface in consciousness. We also have memories that are not emotionally significant which can be recalled through hypnosis. But when memories have too much emotional significance, they become painful to accept and we hide them behind emotional barriers. These are what Freud called repressed memories. These repressed memories can take many forms, e.g. physical or emotional pain or if there is something that clashes with our world view, we may repress it in order to carry on believing our own version of reality.

THE ROLE OF ARCHETYPES IN COMPLEXES

Complexes are created when certain events trigger archetypal patterns. Usually a complex is informed by a number of archetypes. For example, a child wants to draw and be creative, but she is told that it is wasting her study time or that she is no good at it. This suppressed desire constellates a number of archetypes, e.g. the artist, the wounded child, the victim. As she grows up, this complex will grow in complexity with experiences, feelings and thoughts adding to it. As an adult she may project this complex outward onto artists and view them as lazy or the opposite, free. Experiences and our inherited potential archetypes are triggered by events in the world and forms very specific complexes unique to us.

KEY POINTS

Complexes are identified through projection. When there is an emotional charge in engaging an experience or individual, there is always a complex behind it.

- Complexes can be healthy (i.e. a talent), neurotic or psychotic.
- The complex has its own thoughts, ideas, feelings, desires, aversions, etc.

- The complex has an aim, something it is moving towards which is always (if unconscious) in opposition to the ego's perspective.
- Complexes will express themselves when we least expect it, e.g. Freudian slips or we find ourselves behaving out of character.
- We experience complexes as irrational drives or behavior patterns.
- Complexes are compulsive and one-sided.

WORKING WITH COMPLEXES

Working with complexes are central to Jungian psychology. Complexes that lie within the unconscious are called Shadow complexes and they can wreak havoc in the psyche. As they have their own agenda, ideas and aims which contradicts the conscious ego personality, they cause conflict within the psyche that leads to neurosis and psychosis. Complexes can be identified through projection and dream work. Complexes appear in dreams as symbols in the shape of aliens, animals and other people. Through identifying the complex and working to uncover its thoughts, feelings, aims and desires, it can be integrated into consciousness. This has two benefits, the ego personality expands and becomes stronger, whilst the unconscious compulsion and neurosis abates.

Video for week 18:

https://player.vimeo.com/external/332946066.hd.mp4?s=fd5dc31e92338ab404789a1417c956a371dcb855&profile_id=175

Books:

[C.G. Jung Complex Dynamic and the Clinical Relationship by Brenda A. Donahue](#)

[Fear of Jung: The Complex Doctrine and Emotional Science by Theo A. Cope](#)

[The Complex: Path of Transformation from Archetype to Ego by Erel Shalit](#)

Articles:

<https://frithluton.com/articles/complex/>

<https://www.learning-mind.com/psychological-complexes/>

<https://naap.nl/en/complexes-2/>

YouTube videos:

<https://youtu.be/SNAjHThYziw>

<https://youtu.be/TyAPBd93IDo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSSoVZQMEIU>

Topic for next week: The Development of Complexes