



Module 2

MAYA'S LABYRINTH

The Unconscious Voice



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THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED JUNGIAN STUDIES

MAYA'S LABYRINTH

MODULE 2: THE UNCONSCIOUS VOICE

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THE THEATRE OF THE MIND

Like Freud (and Erikson) Jung regarded the psyche as made up of a number of separate but interacting systems. From a Jungian framework, the three interacting systems are the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious.

Jung saw the ego as the center of the field of consciousness, containing our awareness that we exist and being the bearer of our personality, standing at the junctions between the inner and outer worlds. It is the organizer of our thoughts and intuitions, feelings and sensations, holding the executive function within the psyche, perceiving meaning and assessing value.

Jung compared the nature of consciousness to the eye: only a limited number of things can be held in its vision at any one time. In the same way the activity of consciousness is selective. Consciousness demands direction and in this pursuit some things deemed irrelevant or unwanted are excluded or rejected from the conscious point of view.

The ego as the gatekeeper of consciousness, influences which contents and experiences will be selected to be available in the conscious mind and which information will be eliminated or ignored. Herein lies the danger, as during this exclusion there is a risk of becoming one-sided in our nature. The contents which are excluded sink into the unconscious where they form a counterweight to the

conscious orientation. By contrast, Jung describes the unconscious as being the holder of:

“Everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things which are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness; all this is the content of the unconscious.... Besides these we must include all more or less intentional repressions of painful thoughts and feelings. I call the sum of these contents the ‘personal unconscious’.” [CW8, par 270]

Unlike Freud, Jung saw repressed memories, temporary forgotten information, as just one element of the unconscious, rather than all of it. Jung, in addition, saw the personal unconscious as the seat of potential future development, the place where undeveloped elements are striving to reach consciousness. The unconscious then can be seen as balancing, compensating, and supplementing the conscious position.

Jung called the personal unconscious the first layer of the unconscious psyche, attributing to this part of the psyche a creative function in that it presents to consciousness contents necessary for psychological health. The more one becomes aware of the contents of the personal unconscious, the more is revealed

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of the rich layer of images and motifs that comprise the second layer of the unconscious, the collective unconscious. This has the effect of enlarging the personality. Jung describes the process by saying:

“In this way there arises a consciousness which is no longer imprisoned in the petty, oversensitive, personal world of the ego, but participates freely in the wider world of objective interests. This widened consciousness is no longer that touchy, egotistical bundle of personal wishes, fears, hopes and ambitions which always has to be compensated or corrected by unconscious counter-tendencies; instead, it is a function of relationship to the world of objects, bringing the individual into absolute, binding and indissoluble communion with the world at large.” [CW7, par 275]

Listening to the unconscious through the frame of projection, seeing the multitude and expansion of who we are, strengthens the ego, enlarges consciousness and moves us forwards on our journey to true self knowledge and living an authentic life. In his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams Reflections*, Jung writes:

"My life is the story of the self-realization of the unconscious. Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole."

How then can we learn to listen to the voice of the unconscious through the framework of projection? And indeed, what is the unconscious trying to communicate by throwing up these mirrors of projection?

COMMUNICATION FROM UNCONSCIOUS PROJECTIONS

Life naturally involves the collision between conflicting obligations and incompatible desires. On the one hand, we are community-seeking individuals desiring close relationships with others and this by its very nature demands compromise and sacrifice as we all learn to live in harmony and how to give and take. On the other hand, we yearn for the freedom to follow our true nature, to be who we are unapologetically.

This conflict constellates the problem of opposites as we are faced with choices between security and freedom, duty and pleasure, who we wish to be and who society expects us to be, between our adult self and our inner child, between our needs and the needs of others. Such conflicts generate a great deal of inner tension and often arise because of a one-sided rational attitude. It is these often-painful conflicts that we unconsciously cast out and project onto others and the world, acting them out on others through projection. It is these inner conflicts that the unconscious seeks to bring to consciousness, thus enlarging our capacity to choose creatively between both internal and external necessities without denying either.

In addition, the process of growing to adulthood necessitated an adaptation to the

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cultural norms of society and the expectations of our parents, teachers and other authority figures. Along the way much of who we are and how we behave required a suppression of some aspects of ourselves. These neglected, suppressed or

never recognised aspects of ourselves then withdrew from consciousness and fell into what Jung termed the shadow.

The shadow is composed for the most part of repressed desires and uncivilised impulses, morally inferior motives, childish fantasies and resentments—all of those things about oneself that one is not proud of. To the degree that we identify with a bright persona, the shadow is correspondingly dark. Thus, shadow and persona stand in compensatory relationship to each other. These unacknowledged personal characteristics are then cast out onto others through the mechanism of projection. Projection here seeks to bring to consciousness these rejected parts of ourselves. Jung describes it in this way:

“This process of coming to terms with the Other in us is well worth while, because in this way we get to know aspects of our nature which we would not allow anybody else to show us and which we ourselves would never have admitted.” [The Conjunction, par 706]

But if we cast these aspects out of ourselves, why then would the unconscious wish to bring them back into consciousness?

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In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung addresses this paradox, saying:

“... the psychoanalytic aim is to observe the shadowy presentation — whether in the form of images or of feelings — that are spontaneously evolved in the unconscious psyche and appear without his bidding to the man who looks within. In this way we find once more things what we have repressed or forgotten. Painful though it may be, this is in itself a gain — for what is inferior or even worthless belongs to me as my Shadow and gives me substance and mass. How can I be substantial if I fail to cast a Shadow? I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole; and in as much as I become conscious of my Shadow I also remember that I am a human being like any other. [ibid. pg. 35]

By taking back what belongs to us, we withdraw our projections from the Other and relieve them of the burden of carrying our dark side. Through this process we often discover that there is indeed light in the shadow, that the shadowy sides of ourselves are necessary for us to live well. For example, we discover that our anger tells us that someone or something is a threat to ourselves—someone or something we love or value—and anger is seeking to help keep us safe or to help us set better boundaries. Fear tells us what we do not want to lose and that within the fear, we discover our values and attachments; jealousy and envy tell us what we are seeking for ourselves, what we desire and long for, and so on.

It is through projection that the unconscious shows consciousness the pitfalls, the areas which need work in the psyche, highlighting and communicating our blind spots

or where one-sidedness has developed in the personality. The function of projection is to balance our conscious one-sidedness, moving us towards growth and our full potential.

IDENTIFYING YOUR PROJECTIONS

The first step on the road to withdrawing our projections is bringing the projection to consciousness, becoming aware that we are in fact projecting something which we have cast out into the world. So how do we spot that we are projecting?

Strong emotional reactions:

Our projections are always accompanied by a strongly accentuated emotion. It is important to note that we project in the moment. Sometimes you can feel it immediately, but other times you leave an event or meeting and feel “off” but unsure of what disturbed you.

Projection is an unconscious process and so we aren't conscious that we are projecting or what we are projecting, but we will be aware of the heightened emotions or feeling state that accompanies projection. Here Jung advises us that:

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

Becoming aware of when and how Others irritate us, listening to our criticisms of the other, to the comparisons we make, our daily complaints, these are all potential

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gateways into becoming conscious of what we are projecting. Equally, all that we love, all that inspires us, the people and organizations we admire, the books we love to read, the shows we love to watch, the countries we long to visit.

These too are potential gateways into becoming conscious of what we are projecting.

Referring to Existential Analysis, emotions are the detectors of values. And this is exactly what projection helps us uncover. Our own values are paramount to expressing ourselves fully and with meaning in this world. It is only once we know what the meaning and value is of our emotions that we can make proactive decisions with regards who we are and what is important to us. In Existential Analysis this is called being in alignment with oneself. We often behave and act out of alignment with ourselves because we are unaware of our authentic nature. The rules and belief systems that we were taught are given more importance than how we are feeling and as such we become alienated from ourselves and subsequently confused by our own emotions.

Take note of your body:

Projection is always experienced through the body. The body is our true compass to authenticity, meaning that the emotions and feelings and affects—like psychosomatic reactions it experiences—are directly related to our true nature. Just as we can't fake being attracted to someone, our body is a guide to what is really going on within our

psyche. We are constantly reacting to our environment through our feelings and emotions. Sometimes we see something so beautiful, it takes our breath away. Other times we are so mad that we can't breathe. It is important to become aware of the experiences in your body and emotional state in any given situation. This self-awareness is part of becoming conscious from a depth psychological perspective.

Become aware of the inner critical voice:

The roots of the Inner Critic lie in introjections; instead of projecting the critical voice out into the world, we swallow the projection and internalize it.

The critical inner voice is an internal enemy that can affect every aspect of our lives, including our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships, and our performance and accomplishments. These negative thoughts affect us by undermining our positive feelings about ourselves and others and fostering self-criticism, inwardness, distrust, self-denial and addictions. The critical voice fills our head with thoughts like "You're stupid," "You're not attractive," or "You're not like other people." "You'll never be successful," "No one appreciates how hard you work," or "You are under too much pressure, you can't handle this stress."

In the same way that we bring to consciousness our projections, we need to become aware of our introjections, questioning what their validity and their purpose is within our psyche.

APPLICATIONS

Week 1:

Reflect and capture in your journal the things you love, that inspires you, the people, and organizations you admire, the books you love to read and the shows you love to watch. Write detailed descriptions. Once done read over what you have written and identify three words that stand out for you or are repeated in your descriptions.

With regards the three words, reflect on the following questions:

- Choose one word for each one that is opposite, e.g. if your word is courageous, the opposite could be scared/timid/shy etc.
- How does this opposite quality live within you? How/where does it express itself?
- How does the positive quality live within you? How/where does it express itself?
- How can you develop this positive quality to live more authentically and consciously in your life?

Week 2:

Take note and identify three judgments the inner critic loves to mention. “You are so ...”; “You will never...”; “You can’t ...”

Reflect and journal the following:

- Is this always true?
- Who said this is true?
- In what situations or circumstances is this true and when is it not?
- Who would you be without this thought?

CONCLUSION

Congratulations, you have completed the second week of the projection course. The next module will focus on bringing projections to consciousness as we look to meet the Heroes and Villains within.