His father was a parish minister and his mother was a homemaker. Jung had one sibling, a sister, born when he was nine. According to Jung's autobiography (1963), he was a quiet child and spent much of his time alone. He was prone to deep thoughts and had a special attraction to, and relationship with, nature. Jung was curious about almost everything including how and why things existed. At the age of 11 Jung entered the Basel Gymnasium to start his preparation for university. In 1895, at the age of 20, he entered the University of Basel, where he studied the natural sciences and medicine. His father died suddenly in 1896; that tragic event seemed to have primed Jung for an eventual powerful father transference to Freud. Jung believed that medicine offered him a way to integrate his interest in science with his love of the humanities (primarily philosophy, particularly Kant, Schopenhauer, Swedenborg, and Goethe), and chose psychiatry as his specialty. As Jung pointed out in his autobiography (1963, pp. 108–109), "Here was the empirical field common to biological and spiritual facts, which I had everywhere sought and nowhere found. Here at last was the place where the collision of nature and spirit became a reality."

In 1900 Jung moved to Zürich to study and work at the Bürghölzli Mental Hospital with Eugen Bleuler. Also in 1900, Jung read Freud's magnum opus The Interpretation of Dreams (1900, Vienna). Jung found Freud's theory of unconscious repression extremely helpful in understanding complexes (neurotic conflicts) that resulted from abnormal responses to the Word Association Test. Freud likewise found support for his theories in Jung's research findings [see Experimental Researches, Collected Works (CW), Vol. 2]. Freud invited Jung to visit him in Vienna, where they met on 3 March 1907 and immediately became friends. Jung considered Freud to be the first person of real importance whom he had encountered; Freud was likewise impressed with Jung, whom he called his "Crown Prince." Three years later, in 1910, Jung was appointed permanent president of the International Congress of Psycho-Analysis. However, in 1909 when Freud and Jung were en route to give the Clark University Lectures in America, Jung had already started to question Freud's authority and his fixation on sexuality as the sole cause of mental problems. Jung viewed spirituality as the core of mental health, whereas Freud saw it as neurotic. Jung theorized that the center of the psyche was the divine Self (the central archetype of the collective unconscious) and not the ego as postulated by Freud. Herein was another basic difference between Jung and Freud: Jung's conception of a deeper collective unconscious in contrast to only a personal unconscious. Jung conceived of the collective unconscious as evolutionary and composed of archetypes (this term originated with Plato and means ancient imprints or types), which Jung theorized were inherited predispositions toward ideas.
and behavioral responses that were stimulated by actual psychological and sociocultural events. Jung viewed archetypes as being affectively charged and having positive and negative valences. For example, the innate mother archetype predisposed the individual to maternal behaviors such as feeding and nurturing in response to a baby’s cry, which would then lead to a positive mother complex in that individual’s child. However, trauma inflicted by one’s mother or by her loss could lead to a negative mother complex and depression, withdrawal, or failure to thrive.

Jung traveled extensively (throughout Europe, to America—including a visit to the Taos pueblo in New Mexico—to Africa, and to India) and found evidence of universal archetypal symbols and myths, which he thought validated his theory of a collective evolutionary unconscious (see Jung’s Man and His Symbols, 1964). Jung also found evidence of the collective unconscious in the common archetypal symbols of European dreams and alchemy, as well as in Chinese Taoist alchemy (see Psychology and Alchemy and Alchemical Studies, CW, Vols. 12 & 13).

Jung’s break from Freud was precipitated by Jung’s 1912 publication of The Psychology of the Unconscious (later retitled Symbols of Transformation, CW, Vol. 5). in which Jung outlined his own psychology emphasizing the evolutionary collective unconscious and featuring ancient human spiritual heritage. Concurrent with the official break from Freud in 1913, Jung resigned his academic position at the University of Zürich, which he had held for eight years, as well as the presidency of the International Congress of Psycho-analysis.

Jung’s break from Freud at the age of 38 heralded a major midlife crisis, which has become the hallmark of his psychology. As Jung stated (also in his autobiography, 1963, p. 199), “When I parted from Freud, I knew that I was plunging into the unknown. Beyond Freud, after all, I knew nothing; but I had taken the step into darkness.” Jung became suicidally depressed. Fortunately, he did not commit suicide, but rather a type of “egocide” in which the false self dies and the true self is born (see Rosen, 1997, pp. 65–66). The value of Jung’s “creative illness” approach is that it facilitates individuation (a process of becoming whole), which is Jung’s term for overcoming neurosis and fulfilling one’s own potential and finding meaning through self-realization (for clinical examples, see Rosen, 1996, which includes four actual cases).

Jung’s theory of neurosis has to do with a discrepancy or split between the true or authentic self and what he called the false or inauthentic self. The false self has a persona (mask), ego image, and identity that is related to a family script or role in society. Often the persona hides a repressed shadow personality that usually represents a negative ego identity. For example, this was apparent in Robert Louis Stevenson’s nightmare, which he transformed into a creative story, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, through the process of active imagination (transcending the opposites and healing the psyche through creativity). In sacrificing this inauthentic persona, ego image, and identity (as when Jung gave up his inauthentic Freudian false self), the person can actualize his or her own true self. In Jung’s model of the psyche, the contrasexual aspect of one’s personality, the anima (“soul,” or feminine aspect of a man’s psyche) or the animus (“spirit,” or masculine aspect of a woman’s psyche) guides one to the Self through dreams and active imagination. Jung’s theory of anima and animus is similar to the Taoist concept of yin and yang, which correspond to the feminine and masculine principles respectively. Jung was a forerunner of psychological androgyny and he postulated that an inner marriage was a prerequisite for a successful outer marriage or relationship with the opposite sex.

After the symbolic death of the false self, in Jung’s view, one heals by becoming one’s authentic true self with the reconstituted ego being secondary to the Self. Jung put the Self in the center of the psyche, displacing the ego that Freud had enshrined there, and consequently was viewed by Freudians as a heretic. It was Jung’s contention that the immense energy from the dying false self needed to be transformed into a creative product through active imagination. Initially this process involves meditation and removing the ego from the center of one’s psyche, then through creative pursuits such as painting and creating mandalas, one begins to integrate and feel balanced. Active imagination and the healing power of dreams enabled Jung to emerge in 1916 from a period of deep darkness and despair as a healthier and more genuine person.

In 1921, Jung published Psychological Types (CW, Vol. 6), his now well-known theory of personality. Jung’s theory of personality concerns uniting opposites so a person can eventually feel whole. Jung maintained that each of us is born with one predominant attitude or style: extraversion or introversion. Jung posited two perceiving functions: sensation and intuition and two other functions (thinking and feeling) that enable us to process perceived data. Jung postulated that we have a dominant function in each of these pairs. For example, a typical American would be an extraverted sensation thinking type. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (1975, Palo Alto, CA), which has become a very popular and useful measure of personality assessment, is based on Jung’s theory of types. Jung’s theory of psychological types is considered to be one of the main personality schemas in psychology.

Jung gave the Tavistock Lectures on analytical psychology in 1935, which remain a clear statement of his
whole psychology (see The Symbolic Life, CW, Vol. 18). Another important area of Jung’s scholarship involves “Psychology and Religion,” the title of his Terry Lectures given at Yale University in 1937. This scholarly work (Psychology and Religion: West and East, CW, Vol. 11) emphasizes how central religious experience is to mental health. Jung also shows how the Self is an innate spiritual force propelling one to find meaning and purpose. A further vital contribution of Jung’s involves the study of meaningful coincidences or synchronicity (see The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, CW, Vol. 8). Jung worked with Wolfgang Pauli (Nobel laureate in physics) on synchronicity and they came up with an explanation based on an acausal connecting principle that goes beyond usual cause and effect.

Jung’s contribution to the healing doctor-patient (therapist-client) relationship has been profound. In Jung’s The Practice of Psychotherapy (CW, Vol. 16), he explained dream analysis and the psychology of the transference in innovative and creative ways. The culmination of Jung’s life’s work is contained in his magnum opus, Mysterium Coniunctionis (CW, Vol. 14), which is a continuation of his interest in the symbolic significance of alchemy for modern depth psychology.

Jung has had a major impact on our culture. For instance, a few of the many influential books that feature Jung’s ideas are: The Road Less Travelled by M. Scott Peck (1978); Addiction to Perfection by Marion Woodman (1982); Goddesses in Everywoman and Gods in Everyman by Jean Bolen (1984 & 1989); Care of the Soul by Thomas Moore (1992); Possessing the Secret of Joy by Alice Walker (1992); Women Who Run with the Wolves by Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1995); and The Soul’s Code by James Hillman (1996).

Jung and his psychology are enduring. Jung’s main contributions lay in his focus on the uniqueness of each individual in the context of our evolutionary collective past, confronting our false selves and shadows, the value of psychological androgyny, the importance of integrating West and East, emphasizing the centrality of spirituality and soul in pursuing wholeness, and finding meaning through creativity and service, which evolves out of becoming our genuine true selves.

Bibliography

Works by Jung


Works about Jung


David H. Rosen