Evolving attitudes
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The significance of Jung’s notion of synchronicity and its place in the wider scheme of his psychology is readily underestimated. In this paper, the author suggests that the shift heralded by the emergence of the synchronistic paradigm can be understood as a response to theoretical tensions that can be traced throughout Jung’s career. These tensions are reflective of the Cartesian assumptions upon which Jung grounded his ideas about typology. By examining the theoretical development of the attitudes of consciousness, the author argues for the necessity of the synchronistic paradigm in establishing coherence in Jung’s psychology.

Keywords: attitudes of consciousness; Cartesian dualism; reception of Jung’s work; synchronicity; typology

During his time as a medical student at the University of Basel, Jung manifested a distinct change in his public persona. Sonu Shamdasani has drawn attention to this period by contrasting the philosophical sensibility of Jung’s student days with the subsequent emergence of Jung’s identity as a scientist:

Between Jung’s Zofingia lectures and his first publications, there are considerable discontinuities in language, conceptions, and epistemology, as the far-reaching speculations on metaphysical issues characteristic of the Zofingia lectures largely disappeared. Following his discovery of his vocation as a psychiatrist, he appears to have undergone something like a conversion to a natural scientific perspective. (Shamdasani, 2004, p. 201)

The move from metaphysical preoccupations to the approach of a hard-line empiricist, concerned only with the observable facts, suggests a clear change in Jung’s public face from one in keeping with his introverted nature to a more extraverted outlook. This extraverted position served him in his early development as a psychiatrist, and also enabled the development of his professional relationship with Freud. However, while Jung would attempt to sustain the professional identity of ‘scientist’ throughout his life, the underlying relationship he maintained with the extraverted attitude of consciousness is a great deal more uncertain. In the early phases of his career, Jung may well have aligned himself quite firmly with the extraverted frame of reference suggested by his professional position. Erich Neumann supports this view when he refers to the period of Jung’s alliance with Freud: ‘But, before it was recognized that introversion and extraversion were equally legitimate attitude types, Jung himself interpreted introversion reductively and misunderstood it as an

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archaic and regressive phenomenon, i.e., as a relapse into a primitive mode of functioning’ (Neumann, 1954, p. 207).

The break with Freud was precipitated on a theoretical level in part by Jung’s increasing unwillingness to accept the exclusively extraverted model of the psyche implied by Freud’s system. In Memories, Dreams, Reflections, Jung states that it was in concluding the final chapter of Psychology of the Unconscious that he recognized the inevitability of a break with Freud (Jung, 1961, p. 162). The chapter in question, entitled ‘The Sacrifice’, includes the following ‘heretical’ claim as to the nature of the libido: ‘In the first half of life its will is for growth, in the second half of life it hints, softly at first, and then audibly, at its will for death’ (1916, para. 696). The cementing of Jung’s position on this matter, coupled with the subsequent period of public withdrawal, thus clearly suggests the forceful re-emergence of Jung’s introversion. It was in the wake of this period that Jung set to work on Psychological Types, a hugely influential publication that offered his most extensive formulation of the attitudes of consciousness.

It is apparent from the whole ethos of Psychological Types that Jung had already formulated a strong sense of the importance that polarity, tension and balance would play in his psychology. The Transcendent Function, though not published until the 1950s, was written in 1916 – contemporaneous with his early work on Psychological Types. As such, he was aware at this time of the need to draw an unbiased account of the opposing attitudes of consciousness. However, several factors appear to have been working against this: Jung’s bias as a natural introvert was perhaps aggravated not only in light of the recent self-denigration of his own introversion, but also as a consequence of the widespread denigration of the introvert attitude evidenced by Western society. Resultantly, a careful reading of Jung’s early comments on extraversion betrays his prejudice, even while the will is seemingly evident that it be otherwise. Jung (1921, para. 622) writes:

It is characteristic of our present extraverted sense of values that the word ‘subjective’ usually sounds like a reproof; at all events the epithet ‘merely subjective’ is brandished like a weapon over the head of anyone who is not boundlessly convinced of the absolute superiority of the object.

Systemic resistance of this kind may have met with particular frustration from Jung, who was writing from within the extraverted scientific community trying to make a case against the extraverted Freudian orthodoxy. With this in mind, it may not be entirely surprising if in Jung’s work at this time the extravert is given short shrift. In fact, should some of Jung’s remarks be taken to heart, the extravert is at times liable to seem by nature somewhat foolhardy. Often, such a person is portrayed as being on the verge of forgetting themselves altogether: ‘This is the extravert’s danger: he gets sucked into objects and completely loses himself in them’ (Jung, 1921, para. 565). The introvert, by comparison, gets off rather lightly. In stark contrast to the foregoing, Jung writes: ‘Although the introverted consciousness is naturally aware of external conditions, it selects subjective determinants as the decisive ones’ (Jung, 1921, para. 621). The language adopted in both instances is revealing: while the bumbling extravert entirely loses sight of the introvert’s domain, the introvert is apparently not subject to the same degree of obliviousness. The introvert ‘selects’; the extravert ‘loses’. The fundamentally demoralizing position of the extravert is made quite clear where Jung revealingly states:
But what is the subject? The subject is man himself – we are the subject. Only a sick mind could forget that cognition must have a subject, and that there is no knowledge whatever and therefore no world at all unless ‘I know’ has been said, though with this statement one has already expressed the subjective nature of all knowledge. (Jung, 1921, para. 621)

If this statement is taken at face value and all knowledge is indeed subjective, then where does this leave the extravert, whose knowledge is assumedly concerned only with ‘objective’ facts? In reading comments such as these, we can only conclude that the introvert’s gaze is naturally trained toward the ‘true’ subjective nature of reality, while the extravert is fundamentally misguided. The most that can apparently be said for extraversion at this point is that it serves a necessary purpose in establishing the individual in the world, but only with a view to establishing a firm base from which to make the journey inward. However, even this adaptive quality of extraversion has distinct drawbacks:

But from a higher point of view it by no means follows that the objective situation is in all circumstances a normal one. It can quite well be temporarily or locally abnormal. An individual who adjusts himself to it is admittedly conforming to the style of his environment, but together with his whole surroundings he is in an abnormal situation with respect to the universally valid laws of life. (Jung, 1921, para. 564)

Writing in the context of World War I, a criticism of this kind seems heavily weighted. Somewhat ironically, however, the extravert’s adaptedness is classically portrayed as their greatest asset. Following the conventional approach, Jolande Jacobi, one of only a few confessed extraverts to have made an impact on the early field, seems to portray the extravert attitude as little more than the method of adaptation most appropriate to the first half of life. Jacobi (1967, pp. 41–42) gives the impression that extraversion serves only as a kind of worldly bullishness, useful insofar as it assists the individual to establish his or her place in the environment. Jacobi writes:

Usually it is easier for an extravert to adapt to the demands of outer reality – the specific task of the first half of life – than it is for an introvert, whose nature is moulded rather by his inner experiences. This frequently leads to difficulties with adaptation and even to neurotic disturbances […] it is chiefly introverts who resort to psychotherapeutic help in the first half of life.

That the attitudes of consciousness are distinctly associated with the two halves of life may suggest that a value judgment is being made regarding the relative developmental sophistication of the two attitudes. The hierarchical relationship potentially implied by the first half of life being designated for extraversion and the second half for introversion is reflected elsewhere:

There are in nature two fundamentally different modes of adaptation which ensure the continued existence of the living organism. The one consists of a high rate of fertility, with low powers of defense and short duration of life for the single individual; the other consists in equipping the individual with numerous means of self-preservation plus a low fertility rate. (Jung, 1921, para. 559)

This is a reference to the theory of $r$ versus $K$ selection. Extraversion is here being correlated with $r$ selection, which in the scientific literature is described as the means of adaptation most appropriate to unstable environments. As such, it is commonly associated
with those forms of life usually considered less conscious: bacteria, insects, and plants. In Jung’s thinking, extraversion is closely associated with action and hence with instinct, so that the introverted capacity to reflect is in a fundamental sense what separates mankind and the higher forms of life from the rest of the living world.

**Influence of the East**

Jung’s early adoption of a scientific persona was presumably a genuine expression of his outlook at that time. As his work continues, however, there is the clear sense of a shift and the professional mask is now being managed with a more measured and conscious intent. Increasingly, the scientific method appears to be adopted as a rhetorical means of undertaking a critique of Western materialism. Jung pushes scientific epistemology to its logical conclusion and thereby enacts an enantiodromia wherein extraversion is turned over into its opposite. Something of this sort seems to be implied where Jung states: ‘Psychology is doomed to cancel itself out as a science and therein precisely it reaches its scientific goal’ (1947, para. 429). What Jung does not address so directly, though, is that exactly the same sleight of hand can naturally be worked the other way. While the introvert stands by Jung when he states that there is no world without an ‘I’ to know it, the extravert might well rejoin that there is no ‘I’ without a world by means of which it might be known. These paradoxical nuances are to be drawn out of Jung’s work through extrapolation, however, since the surface level of the text (whether for reasons consciously calculated or otherwise) as we have seen places greater emphasis on critiquing extraversion with its claims to objectivity, while allowing introversion to escape more lightly.

The initial emphasis placed on the adaptive quality of extraversion is misleading. In considering this question, it seems important that we recognize a distinction that Jung himself does not make perfectly explicit: that the description of introvert and extravert attitudes is further complicated by the society into which any given individual is acculturated. In Jung’s work, the typology of the individual’s milieu can seem almost as foundational as his or her own personal temperament. Anyone in doubt of this need only refer to Jung’s numerous remarks denigrating the viability of Easterners and Westerners directly adopting each other’s ways (1939a, para. 802; 1939b, pp. 875–876; 1943, para. 933). It may transpire that the emphasis on the culturally adaptive benefit of extraversion is only applicable in an extraverted society and is not necessarily a quality of extraversion per se. This assumption of Jung might have more to do with the extraverted professional persona adopted in forging his own career, than with a necessary state of affairs that holds true for all individuals.

Given Jung’s contrary nature, it is not surprising that his more positive assessment of the introvert attitude only came to be tested with the onset of his serious engagement with ‘the East’ (a generalized designation that is, of course, subject to criticism). Jung’s confrontation with what he perceives to be Eastern values causes a reconsideration of the implicit superiority previously attributed to introversion. The East constitutes an introverted norm which, in Jung’s view, has not led to an increase in mass consciousness. According to Jung, this introverted norm has in fact produced a general tendency of identifying with the unconscious. The initial misplaced emphasis on introversion as the necessary conduit to the expansion of consciousness may have been brought about by Jung’s bias as a Westerner. In a culture of extraversion, while the extravert has the advantage in terms of adaptation since his or her attitude is in keeping with the norm, the introvert enjoys the advantage of a nature that pulls against this norm, thus increasing...
the tension of opposites and promoting consciousness. In a culture of introversion by contrast, it may in fact be the natural extravert who will feel this kind of tension most keenly.

Over the course of his engagement with the attitudes of consciousness, Jung’s work with the transcendent function always lies in the background, inducing him to search for a more balanced model. This searching quality is evident in much of Jung’s writing on the East and manifests itself in an epistemological analysis of Eastern metaphysics that is as stringent as his sustained critique of Western materialism. In both instances, Jung insists on the fallacy of attempting to hypostasize the content of consciousness. Writing in 1939, he states:

Any honest thinker has to admit the insecurity of all metaphysical positions, and in particular of all creeds. He has also to admit the unwarrantable nature of all metaphysical assertions and face the fact that there is no evidence whatever for the ability of the human mind to pull itself up by its own boot strings, that is, to establish anything transcendental. (1939a, para. 764)

Throughout much of his career, Jung seems to assume a peculiar middle ground in his epistemology wherein the objective ground of both psyche and matter are neither wholly accepted nor rejected. This is reflected on the one hand where he speaks cautiously of ‘positing’ the reality of the archetypes (1917, para 158) while refusing to enter into questions of their ultimate metaphysical basis (1952, para 15–16), and on the other, where he claims materialism as a doctrine of faith founded on the hypostasizing of ‘matter’ (1939a, para. 762, 765). A certain amount of philosophical dishonesty is perhaps implied, since Jung is ready to work with the hypotheticals as he sees fit, but will rail against them if their claims are made in a manner deemed (by him) too forceful. This apparent lack of philosophical rigor might be forgiven, however, since Jung may well be adopting philosophical discourse as a means, and not as an end in itself: ‘The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites’ (1958b, para. 189). Rather than fold under the weight of potentially nihilistic epistemic concerns, Jung plays with these claims by at times upholding them while at other times partially dismissing them under the rubric of ‘commonsense’. This approach, which comes to the fore with his writings on the East, allows Jung to intensify the clash between introversion and extraversion, while at the same time potentially inflaming much of his audience by offending the sensibilities of Easterner and Westerner, theologian and scientist, introvert and extravert alike: ‘The purpose of the initial procedure is to discover the feeling-toned contents, for in these cases we are always dealing with situations where the one-sidedness of consciousness meets with the resistance of the instinctual sphere’ (1958b, para. 178). An example of this tendency in action can be witnessed in his introduction to the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation, wherein Jung appears to be staging the conflict of the opposites and developing the creative tension out of which his work on synchronicity was developing.

Late life and a new approach

The result of Jung’s epistemic playfulness is ultimately a transcendence of the subject/object split that had previously been taken as a given. The difficulty with Jung’s early formulations lies with a faulty emphasis arising out of his overzealous efforts to redeem introversion. Jung tries to argue for introversion by asserting the primacy of the subjective factor. As his work matures, however, he increasingly recognizes the shortcomings of this
position. At the root of the problem lies Jung’s initial placement of the ‘I’. In *Psychological Types*, Jung locates the ‘I’ or ‘man himself’ with the subjective – that is to say, inner – world (the preserve of the introvert). By mid-career, though, there are signs of Jung’s position having changed: ‘But since one cannot detach oneself from something of which one is unconscious, the European must first learn to know his subject. This, in the West, is what one calls the unconscious’ (1939b, para. 871). While in 1921 Jung defines the subject as ‘man himself’, by 1939 he speaks of ‘the unconscious’. In this way, a more distinct separation has been made between the center of consciousness and what Jung terms the ‘subject’. This shift is of considerable significance, since it reflects a movement towards balancing the divergent claims of introversion and extraversion. Consciousness is now understood to arise out of the tension between subject and object. This change in emphasis establishes the basis for an understanding of psyche and matter not as two distinct and separate ways of conceiving reality, but rather as two theoretical extremes on a continuum. By initially identifying the ‘I’ only with subjective conditions, Jung falls into the trap that *Psychological Types* was in a sense dedicated to explicating: he lapses into revealing his own bias by assuming that the introvert’s sense of the ‘I’ is valid, while the extravert’s is deluded.

From the perspective of the unus mundus, psyche and matter are in a sense both subjective and objective, ‘for we now know that a factor exists which mediates between the apparent incommensurability of body and psyche, giving matter a kind of “psychic” faculty and the psyche a kind of “materiality”, by means of which one can work on the other’ (1959, para. 780). For psyche, the relationship between subjective and objective is illustrated by the interdependence of the personal and collective dimensions of the unconscious; while in the realm of matter, Jung was keenly aware of the paradigm-breaking significance of quantum physics (1947, para. 442; 1958a, para. 852). His early move to restore value to the subjective realm at the cost of the objective had clearly been inadequate. The solution he eventually reached was to bring partially objective status to the psyche while at the same time emphasizing the partially subjective quality of matter.

Jung’s efforts to protect himself from accusations of psychologism by asserting that such claims were the product of an undervaluation of the subjective psyche were always a poor substitute for the affirmation of an objective and transcendent psychic reality. With the work of his late career, this affirmation is finally made. At the same time, extraversion is at last understood to serve a purpose more meaningful than mere adaptation to environmental circumstances. As the individual moves forward in their individuation, it seems possible that extraversion no longer serves only the needs of a person’s adaptation to society, but rather society’s adaptation by means of the individual to the needs of the collective unconscious. In fact, extraversion must in some measure always be serving this purpose. Additionally, since with this new model the unconscious can express itself through matter, attending to outer events can directly serve the individuation process: ‘That nature, through the psychoid archetype, compensates consciousness both inwardly and outwardly is certainly one of the central points of the synchronicity theory’ (Aziz, 1990, p. 59).

In his early career, Jung first conceptualizes the introvert and extravert positions, suggesting that the two attitudes constitute the opposites out of which the state of *participation mystique* is made partially conscious. In mid-career, he pits these opposites against each other and brings creative heat to the question. This eventually takes him to the position of his late career, wherein the conflict is transcended through recognition of the psychoid nature of the archetype. When Jung committed himself publicly to all that he saw implied by the phenomenon of synchronicity, it constituted a laying down of arms.
in the epistemological battle he had been waging on two fronts against the two attitudes of consciousness. The significance of this development cannot be overstated. Envisioned as a whole, it is apparent that Jung’s work necessarily culminates in the idea of the unus mundus, since prior to this move his psychology is out of balance (being biased toward introversion) and hence is inconsistent with one of its most fundamental principles.

Reception and consequences

The stirring up of conflict is a Luciferian virtue in the true sense of the word. Conflict engenders fire, the fire of affects and emotions, and like every other fire it has two aspects, that of combustion and that of creating light. (Jung, 1954, para. 179)

If Jung’s psychology is to transcend its own origins and reflect more than a simple reaction to the extravert biases of Western society, then there is still much work to be done in fully integrating the findings of his late career. Unfortunately, Jung’s introvert bias is naturally reinforced by Jungians, the vast majority of whom share this typological description and, like Jung, find themselves living in an extraverted society. Thus there is perhaps a general tendency within the field to first receive Jung as a validator of introversion and of the frustrations felt by the introvert, and to sometimes lose sight of the more challenging dimensions of his psychology.

As always, the question of a ‘correct’ interpretation is further complicated by the fact that Jung himself was clearly in some degree averse to such a notion. This antipathy toward a fixed meaning is in keeping with the dissolution of the subject/object split that his thought ultimately leads to. It may also be reflective of an intent to shape intellectual content in an aesthetically playful manner so as to effectively render his own work a vehicle for the transcendent function:

The danger of wanting to understand the meaning is overvaluation of the content, which is subjected to intellectual analysis and interpretation, so that the essentially symbolic character of the product is lost. […] So far as it is possible at this stage to draw more general conclusions, we could say that aesthetic formulation needs understanding of the meaning, and understanding needs aesthetic formulation. (Jung, 1958b, para. 176–177)

In an effort to pass on what amounts to a living wisdom tradition, Jung’s work is rife with unexplained contradictions and unfinished thoughts (or ‘hints’, as the English translation often has him putting it). This quality of the writing allows the reader to effectively engage with Jung’s work in their own way and at their own level of consciousness. Unfortunately, the subjective malleability of this approach also lends itself to misinterpretation. That Jung did not make categorical just how momentous his late career findings are for a reading of all that went before has enabled much confusion. Past efforts to redeem Jung’s psychology from an introvert bias have commonly focused on the lack of emphasis placed on persona development:

Jung’s material on the persona seems to carry a double message; he contends that the persona and anima/animus have essentially equivalent functions relative to the ego, that they are both functional complexes of adaptation whose directions are different but whose value is similar – at least one would expect they might have equivalent value. But Jung sometimes writes of the persona in deprecatory, reductionist terms. (Greene, 1975, p. 25)

The extent to which Jungian psychology has moved to compensate for this particular neglect is open to question. It seems reasonable to suggest that the persona has come to
be taken more seriously as a tool for individuation. What is more uncertain, however, is whether the underlying rationale for this validation is grounded in a deep theoretical engagement with Jung’s work on synchronicity, or is simply a product of the same old notions concerning adaptedness to the world (now more properly termed ‘relatedness’) and an adherence to the ideal of psychic balance.

Erich Neumann’s approach to extraversion illustrates how we can appear to be responding to the problem of an introvert bias while the theoretical grounding of the underlying position continues to be inherently unbalanced. In The Origins and History of Consciousness, Neumann’s coining of the term ‘centroversion’ appears to constitute a distinct gesture towards addressing the prejudice in Jung’s earlier work. However, Neumann’s apparent unwillingness to recognize the unconscious both in psyche and matter leads to a confusing vacillation. At one moment, he seemingly accepts the authenticity of extraverted transpersonal experiences on their own terms; yet elsewhere, he locates the archetypes of the unconscious specifically with psyche: ‘For the extravert, the accent lies on the objects outside, people, things, and circumstances; for the introvert, it lies on the objects inside, the complexes and archetypes’ (Neumann, 1954, p. 35; emphasis added). This statement seems to be contradicted later in the same work:

Both types can have archetypal experiences, just as both can be limited to the purely personalistic plane. For instance, the introvert can stick to the personal contents of his consciousness, or of his personal unconscious, which are full of significance for him, while the extravert can experience the transpersonal nature of the world through the object. (Neumann, 1954, pp. 196–197)

The language here is confusing. Reading between the lines, Neumann’s position appears to be that encountering a particular configuration in the outside world can trigger an archetypal experience coming from within. For this reason, the experience is encountered through the object and not in the object. This position is not equivalent to Jung’s vis-à-vis the psychoid nature of the archetype, since Neumann continues to assume that psyche and matter are completely distinct, and that the archetypal reality does not exist ‘objectively’. Neumann’s notion of centroversion is ultimately a semantic evasion in support of what remains a biased psychology.

Readings in a similar vein to Neumann’s often seem to be the foundation upon which artificial boundaries have been construed separating self-identified Jungians from their colleagues. The misunderstanding is perpetuated both inside and outside of the Jungian community. Writing in 1985, Stanislav Grof encapsulates many of the criticisms that are often leveled against Jung on this basis:

There seems to be no genuine recognition of transpersonal experiences that mediate connection with various aspects of the material world. Here belong, for example, authentic identification with other people, animals, plants, or inorganic processes, and experiences of historical, phylogenetic, geophysical, or astronomical events that can mediate access to new information about various aspects of ‘objective reality’. (Grof, 1985, p. 192)

The alienating and unrelated atmosphere suggested here is surely a product of Grof’s ensnarement in the epistemological wordplay of Jung’s mid-career. Stevens (1982a) is sympathetic to the sense that can arise from this: ‘the powerful influence of Germanic idealism is seldom far from Jung’s thought and at times his statements bring him dangerously close to solipsism, arguing that the only thing of which we have a certain knowledge is the psychic image reflected in consciousness’ (p. 58). Along similar lines,
Goldenberg (1993) goes so far as to suggest that Jung’s approach culminates in: ‘a psychology which downplays the significance of human relationships’ (p. 98). However, this whole line of criticism does not stand up, if the meaning of extraversion is comprehended in light of Jung’s late work. As Aziz (1990) states: ‘Here, then, with this very significant theoretical step [recognition of the unus mundus], we are indeed carried beyond the projectionism of Jung’s strictly intrapsychic model and find ourselves face to face with that transcendent “Thou”, the transcendent “Reality” to which Buber referred’ (p. 180).

In a manner similar to Grof, the archetypal cosmologist Richard Tarnas has also perceived a boundary in Jungian thought which does a disservice to Jung’s late work:

Mediating [...] between modern psychology and classical philosophy, astrology suggests that archetypes possess a reality that is both subjective and objective, informing both inner human psyche and outer cosmos. In effect, planetary archetypes are here recognized as being both Jungian and Platonic in nature – universal essences or forms at once intrinsic to and independent of the human mind – and are regarded as functioning in a Pythagorean-Platonic cosmic setting, i.e., in a cosmos that is pervasively integrated by virtue of some form of universal intelligence. (Tarnas, 1995, p. 7)

Like Grof, Tarnas perpetuates a reductive reading of the archetypes based on a formulation that fails to account for Jung’s conclusions regarding synchronicity. In Tarnas’ more recent work, though, a more complete understanding of Jung’s final vision is evident. Tarnas (2006) contrasts Jung’s earlier notion of the archetypes, which he compares to Kant’s a priori forms, with the work of his late career where ‘Jung moved towards a conception of archetypes as autonomous patterns of meaning that inform both psyche and matter, providing a bridge between inner and outer’ (p. 57). Interestingly, a similar softening towards Jung is also apparent in Grof, whose comments in recent years suggest that his previous grievances may have been resolved. The following passage, in stark contrast to his earlier position, demonstrates this reversal and supports the argument being made as to the centrality of the late work in resolving the prior confusion:

In his original formulation, Jung also described the archetypes as operating within the psyche but not possessing consciousness independent of us. Later, Jung revised his position. He came to believe that archetypes had consciousness quite separate from our own, and were able to think and act on their own. […] He revised his earlier view of archetypes because it did not explain some of the important characteristics of archetypes, particularly as they related to the phenomenon Jung called synchronicity. (Grof, 1992, pp. 173–174)

Both Grof and Tarnas have made significant contributions to Jungian interests, but the manner in which Jung originally presented extraversion has at times enabled a theoretical distancing between Jungian psychology and the milieu from which these figures hail. While transpersonalists seem to be developing a more nuanced relationship to Jung’s ideas, within the Jungian community there continues to be a relative ignorance of transpersonal psychology. Clearly this tendency is to the detriment of both fields. Eugene Taylor (2009) observes that Jungians have tended to distance themselves from the psychotherapeutic counterculture in an effort to retain professional status (p. 148).

Recent attempts to ground Jung’s thinking in mainstream biology further underscore the desire for mainstream credibility, and also serve to demonstrate how this desire tends not to account for the fundamental problems with which the present paper has been concerned. The work of Anthony Stevens, in his long-standing effort to provide an
evolutionary account of the archetypes, is perhaps the best known of these endeavors. Concerning synchronicity, Stevens has not rejected the phenomenon outright (1982b, pp. 259–260), but nor has he addressed or even directly acknowledged the extent to which an evolutionary account clashes with the synchronistic paradigm. Jean Knox (2003), an admirer of Stevens who attempts to locate Jung’s ideas within the field of contemporary neurobiology, is more frank: ‘It may have appealed to him [Jung] to bring together the latest scientific research in mathematics with the ancient concept of Platonic Forms – but attempting to bring these together in one framework with biology creates impossible theoretical conflicts’ (p. 37). Rather than be dissuaded from pursuing a biological reading of Jung, however, Knox elects to throw the synchronistic paradigm out entirely by claiming that Jung’s ideas on the matter were merely a consequence of probabilistic naivety. Knox does not seem to recognize how fundamental Jung’s ideas on synchronicity are to the internal logic of his psychology. Her work is largely concerned with drawing connections between Jungian thought and attachment theory; another interest that she shares with Stevens, who in a recent publication posits ‘social affiliation’ as the basis for mental welfare (2013, p. 80). This position suggests a fundamental refutation of Jung who, as we know, throughout much of his work sees social integration as the extraverted task proper to the first half of life, but not by any means as the final determinant of psychological health. Stevens is of course at liberty to make this move, but it seems an obfuscation not to be more explicit as to the extent to which a position of this kind differs with fundamental aspects of Jung’s thought. Instead, the biological reductionism (not intended pejoratively, and simply true by definition) of this approach and others like it, tends to be supported with unusual frequency by claiming to reflect what Jung would have wanted. Whether or not such a claim is accurate seems fundamentally undecidable, and almost certainly beside the point.

What’s clear, however, is that efforts to align with mainstream biology inevitably require that the synchronistic paradigm be rejected: in this way, the earlier Cartesian position can be reinstated with a newly acquired and appropriately scientific bias towards extraversion. The revolutionary nature of Jung’s work is thereby largely negated, and what remains of his system is in danger of sliding back into precisely those assumptions that triggered the original break from Freud.

I hope to have demonstrated that Jung’s ideas on synchronicity play an integral role in supporting the unfolding logic of his psychology. In addressing the importance of the synchronicity principle, Cambray (2009) identifies a number of purposes that the theory seemingly serves; these include putting psychology on a level footing with physics, extending the boundaries of physics, and reflecting a movement in Jung’s thinking that would do credit to the dual transformation taking place in the therapeutic relationship (pp. 29–31). It might now be added that the paradigm shift heralded by Jung’s late work serves a fundamental role in resolving certain theoretical contradictions in his psychology. Until this move was made, Jung’s emphasis on harmony in persons had yet to meet with a correspondingly harmonious theory of the personality.

References


