

Between Stereotypes and Hermeneutic Quest: C. G. Jung’s Approach to “Primitive Psychology”

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Moins le Blanc est intelligent, plus le Noir lui paraît bête
[The less intelligent the white man is, the more stupid he finds the black]

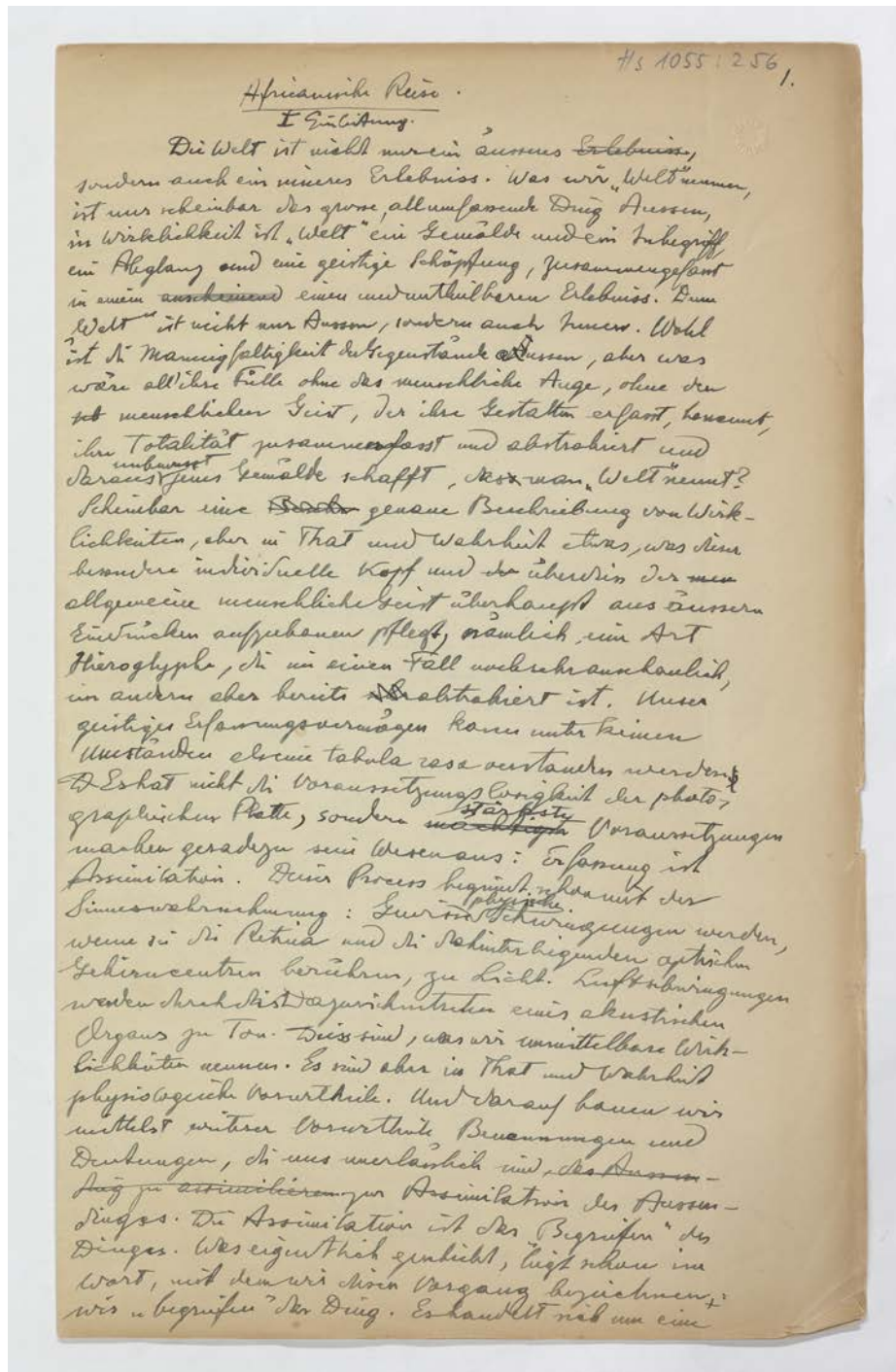
André Gide (1927)

We are always strangers to someone else.
Learning to live together is fighting against racism.

Tahar Ben Jelloun (2017)

Abstract: C. G. Jung’s alleged racism with regard to indigenous populations and, by extension, people of color and, specifically, Africans and native Americans, is much debated. The present contribution is based largely on Jung’s writings, some of which are unpublished. Jung’s considerations—often deriving from his travels in North Africa and New Mexico—seem sometimes to imply the psychic inferiority of certain populations in comparison with the alleged civilized “white man.” To establish context, the essay cites passages from Jung’s published works (including his fear of “going black”), the discussion of the “racial question” among his contemporaries, and secondary literature. It then turns to statements from Jung’s unpublished manuscript “African Journey” (ca. 1925–26) for fresh insights into his views on his “primitive psychology.” On the one hand, Jung’s psychological approach failed to fully account for the social, economic, and historical aspects inherent to cultural differences. Moreover, he followed the widespread notion equating the primitive, the child, and the mentally ill. On the other hand, Jung’s understanding of “primitiveness” appears to be intrinsically linked to a critical approach to the alleged superiority of the “civilized man.” I argue that some passages from his unpublished manuscript “African Journey” demonstrate Jung’s conviction that the Western white man must recover a sense of the sacred and the experience of the numinosum, which the so-called primitive still retains. I discuss this complex and somewhat paradoxical view alongside an epistemologically problematic connotation inherent both to Jung’s empirical approach and his conception of the collective unconscious.

Keywords: Race, primitive psychology, indigenous populations, Africans, Indian Americans, psychic inferiority and superiority, “going black”, white man.



First page of C. G. Jung's original manuscript *Afrikanische Reise*
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Introduction to race psychology at the dawn of the twentieth century

In the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, published between 1902 and 1905 and edited by James Baldwin, “Race Psychology” is designated “that branch of psychology which uses as data the manifestations of mind in the various species and races of animals and man” (vol. 2, p. 414). This definition echoes the tendency, inaugurated by Linnaeus, to establish classificatory chains among different species, animal *and* human species, in accordance with the assumption that *natura non facit saltum* (“nature does not make jumps”). This line is reflected, for instance, in Darwin’s influential last major work on evolutionary theory *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). In fact, the racialization of the “other,” along with the idealization, but also animalization, of the fabulous or savage “wild men” had shaped the whole self-understanding and representation of the West from its remote beginning to the advent of European scientific tradition, whose racist biology interpreted the “primitives” through the lens of an arrested or backward evolutionary state (Jahoda 1999). In the words of Mosse (1988), “racism” became in modern times “a secular religion based upon science and history: it laid claim to the best of two worlds, that of science, which provided new “truths” from the eighteenth century onward, and that of history, which forged a link to traditions which were fast dissolving in the modern world” (p. 85). Thus, the discourse about race, known as race (or racial) psychology, strongly permeated the whole of the nineteenth century. Subsequently, the first three to four decades of the twentieth century saw an intense exploration of this subject pursued by natural and social sciences, such as anthropology, ethnology, sociology and, of course, psychology and psychoanalysis. Racial views, in many aspects, were fashionable, and the scientific debate even permeated popular opinion. According to the Italian historian Gentile (1975/1996), “racism appropriated the morality of the middle classes ... in the same way as it took possession of nationalism and basically of all those ideas that seemed to have a future.” And, he observed, “this was its strength: neither Morel, nor Lombroso, nor Nordau were racists, but their ideas became the core of racist thinking” (pp. 85–86). The twentieth century took up the legacy of the previous century “in which two traditions had converged: the mystical idea of race ... and that tradition which sought to give an academic respectability to the racial classification as scientific” (pp. 85–86; my translation).

In Europe, the preponderant racial current was the one that mingled together anthropology, social thinking, and eugenics. Simultaneously, the influence of Darwinism and, specifically, social Darwinism, contributed to the racist concern for hereditary factors and eugenics. Nonetheless, race psychology cannot be viewed as a school; rather, it was a quite heterogeneous current of thought, dominated (between the 1910s and 1940s) by U.S. psychologists, who used currently available psychometric and psychological tests in order to empirically determine innate race differences in psychology as well as black-white differences in intelligence (Richards, 2012). Furthermore in the U.S., so-called Negro education became a much debated topic in social educational sciences and “constituted a major component in the so-called ‘Negro Question’” to which psychology “offered an ideologically ‘neutral,’ respectably scientific, route for readdressing the intractable difficulties from a new angle” (p. 77). This angle “located the source of the problem safely at the individual psychological level, in the ‘Negro’ psyche itself” (p. 77). Race differences were usually considered an aspect of *Völkerpsychologie* or “Folk Psychology,” a research orientation founded by physiologist and philosopher Wundt at the border of anthropology

and psychology, which aimed at defining the interactions between the individual and the community. To describe their reciprocal relationships, Wundt introduced the term *schöpferische Synthese* or “creative synthesis,” for analogous to the human organism and mind, this discipline represented more than the sum of its parts. Folk psychology also intended to explore the developments of different stages of mankind to higher forms of civilization. Alongside the entire racial discourse, folk psychology was largely substantiated by comparativism that, from linguistic to mythological studies, spread within and without academic research. Medical and psychological disciplines in a broad sense were profoundly involved in these anthropological purposes and increasingly established themselves as social-cultural and social-critical hermeneutic tools. From approximately the middle of the nineteenth century, medical (especially psychiatric and later also psychoanalytic) categories were applied to the understanding of society as a whole to a hitherto unmatched extent. Thus, the damage of the alienation of industrial civilization (the urbanization, the so-called electrification, etc.) was read through concepts such as *Nervosität*, *Hysteria*, and *Entartung* or “degeneration,” whose increasing popularity was reinforced by their social-Darwinistic scientific patina (see also Roelcke, 1999). “Pathologizing,” the reflexive discourse on civilization was accompanied by a longing to return to a sort of “Rousseian” original and pure stage attributed to the “primitive,” the “savages”: all that seemed to substantiate the distance between the so-called “Naturvölker” or “natural” i.e. “primitive” - or “indigenous” - “people” and “Kulturvölker” or “civilized people”. From this social-cultural congeries, eugenics theories progressively took hold as “collective hygiene,” “folk hygiene,” or “racial hygiene” (which, as well known, would have reached its peak with Nazism).

As early as 1899 (the same publication year as Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* – and, incidentally, of Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden”), Conrad’s successful *Heart of darkness* contested the distance between white and indigenous populations and raised questions about colonialism and imperialism, while scholarly research proceeded to scientifically prove the unsustainability of racial differences on the basis of a puzzling amount of physical, cranial, and other differences also among members of the same ethnic group. Nevertheless, the discourse about race was incessantly and successfully used for political purposes on the basis of alleged scientific proofs. For example, to justify the Italian campaign in Ethiopia, Cipriani (1935), director of the Anthropological Institute and Museum in Florence, affirmed:

Researches conducted on the brain of the African and on its physiological and psychological functions reveal the existence of a mental inferiority which is impossible to modify and which excludes the possibility of its development in our own manner. The Africans are particularly unfit to assimilate European civilization. Since this depends upon the characters of the race, which are transmissible, then, with crossing, it is necessary to develop certain eugenic norms, above all for Europeans living in contact with the Africans. In this connection the important observations which have been made on the Negroes into America since the seventeenth century have the greatest value. (p. 177; my translation)

According to Richards (2012), the argument that “‘race’ is an unscientific category, a myth for rationalization oppression and injustice ... only becomes prominent in the late 1930s,

bolstered both by the spectre of Nazism and by invocation of contemporary developments in genetics” (p. 125). On the one hand, “Anglophone social and cultural anthropology was, by the 1930s, theoretically at least, anti-racist, although when working in the field, British anthropologists were certainly inclined to compromise with the racist assumptions and agendas of colonial administrators” (p. 184). On the other, a genuine interest in customs and mentalities of indigenous colonized people grew. Anthropology and ethnology helped relativize the presumption of the superiority of European culture. The same happened with the French Sociological school and especially Durkheim, Mauss, and Lévy-Bruhl, who were influential to Jung.

Psychoanalysis between Folk-Psychology and Haeckelian recapitulation theory

Modern ethnology, one may say, was born when Bronislaw Malinowski arrived in 1915 on the island of Kiriwina in Papua New Guinea. Malinowski’s conception of “participant observation” implied the assumption of the viewpoint of the indigenous, and therefore recalls Freud’s (1910) notion of “empathy” (*Einfühlung*), which properly allows one to approach another’s “soul life” (*Seelenleben*). Psychoanalytic schools played a pivotal role in allowing, theorizing, and debating the so-called discovery of “primitive mentality” *also* within “civilized” European psychology. Freud’s and Jung’s studies on primitive mentality show the wish to (re)establish what was believed to represent the primitive as an original, primordial status with all its ambivalent fascinations and projections. The intention, done on the basis of contemporary anthropological sources, was equipped with the theoretical hermeneutics of that time. As Brickman (2003) points out in her seminal work, the Darwinist, Lamarckian and Haeckelian theories largely influenced the epistemology of psychoanalytic discourse about the primitives. Yet according to Richards (2012), “both Jungian and Freudian theories encouraged a too facile equation between the ‘unconscious’ and the ‘primitive,’” following the trend to “indiscriminately” muster appropriate examples from anthropological information previously labeled “primitive” (p. 194). Freud described *Totem and Taboo* (1913) as a “first attempt” to apply “notions and results of psychoanalysis” to unresolved problems of folk-psychology. Admittedly, Freud found major inspirations both from Wundt’s folk-psychology and the studies of C. G. Jung (*Totem and Taboo* may be considered as an answer to Jung’s [1916] *Psychology of the Unconscious*, originally published in 1911/1912 as *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*). According to Brickman (2003), “because the details of *Totem and Taboo* lean so heavily on the social evolutionary conceptions of the nineteenth-century anthropology that Freud adopted,” invoking the text recirculated throughout psychoanalysis the “colonialist tenets of social evolutionary thought” (p. 53). Sulloway (1979) even went so far as to consider Freud a “crypto-biologist” and, by extension, a “crypto-racist” (p. x). In the famous first lines from *Totem and Taboo*, Freud (1913) declares his “peculiar interest” in the mental life of those “we describe as savages or half-savages [*Wilden und halbwilden Völker*]” which would offer a “well preserved picture of an early stage of our own development” (p. 1), thus advocating the desire for dialogue between social anthropology and depth psychology (Brickman, 2003, p. 67). In his effort to open the way to a sort of universal anthropology, Freud not only borrowed many insights from the theories about “savages” by Tylor and Frazer but was also strongly indebted to the Lamarckian doctrine of the inheritance of acquired characteristics and to the “biogenetic law,” according to which ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny (Brickman, 2003, p. 51ff.

Jahoda, 1999, p. 164ff.). By means of these “socio-evolutionary axioms,” the life of “savages” could be used to interpret Western history and specifically “reconstruct the history of the present-day European tendencies” (Brickman, 2003, p. 67). Symmetrically, Freud’s famous definition of female sexuality as “dunkler Kontinent” or “dark continent” reflects the consistent relationship between psychoanalysis and colonialist theories (see also Khanna, 2003). As Hillman (1986) observed, “the topological language used by Freud for ‘the unconscious’ as a place below, different, timeless, primordial, libidinal and separated from consciousness recapitulates what white reporters centuries earlier said about West Africa” (p. 45). Brickman also recalled a number of articles concerning “The Negro” that appeared in 1914 in the early volumes of the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* in which the authors, moving from the assumption that individual development relives the history of race, “arranged their clinical material to demonstrate that black peoples regressed more quickly and easily to psychosis because of their lower position on the sociocultural evolutionary scale” (p. 87). The articles also celebrated “slavery as ‘the most wonderful thing’ because it had introduced the Negro to the ability to engage in sustained work and to the ideals of Christianity” (p. 87).

The popular recapitulation theory, originally formulated by von Baer and confined to embryology, was extensively developed and popularized by German zoologist and philosopher Haeckel. With Haeckel, who called it “the fundamental law of organic evolution,” the law “came to be extended to include post-natal human development in order to account for race differences” (Jahoda, 1999, p. 152–153). This contributed to the extensive tendency to equate childhood with primitiveness and also to equate individual development with the development of collectives (in term of nations, ethnicities, races). Moreover, the belief that the history of the fetus represents a recapitulation of the history of the race was consistent with the conviction—widespread also in religious studies—of a deep consubstantiality of the *sauvage* or primitive, the child, and the mentally ill with a primitive, original mental stage. In line with Nietzsche’s belief of a connection between ancient myths and oneiric life, psychoanalysis reformulated, in psychological terms, the idea that individual development relives the racial history of mankind. Freud’s assumption that regression to a state of infantile libido would hatch a sort of picture of the primitive past was subsequently reconsidered and developed by Jung in his notion of the collective unconscious as living depository of ancestral memories. However, as far as the collective unconscious and symbols are concerned, Jung provided a compensatory implication for both of these with respect to consciousness, as well as a prospective connotation that could provide a different value to the understanding of the primitive.

Vignettes from Jung’s published texts (1911/12–1931)

Like Freud and many other scholars, Jung shared the current ethnocentric conviction of the superiority of European civilization, which was considered—and in fact still was—at the center of the world. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the approach to the “*Naturvölker*” was influenced by the Enlightenment-era elevation of reason as the chief achievement of humanity. At the same time, an approach that one could define with a grain of salt as post-Romantic arose, sustained by the idea of the deep unity of mankind’s spirit and by the adoption of a comparativist paradigm in social sciences. This scholarly trend thoroughly explored the specificity of languages, customs, myths, and rites of “exotic” or “primitive peoples” that until then had been considered inferior *tout court*. At the same

time Jung shared the assumption that an examination of “primitive mentality” would supply evidence of the evolution of the human mind (and unconscious) somewhat analogous to the biological examination of the embryo with respect to the evolution of the human body.

In *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (1911/12), Jung discussed the “fantastic activity of the ancient spirit” [*phantastische Tätigkeit des antiken Geistes*] as capable of providing a “picture of the universe ... which corresponds to the subjective fantasies” (p. 22; here and in the following quotations: my translation; cf. *Symbols of Transformation* [1952/1956], par. 24ff.). He maintained, “Naive antiquity saw in the sun the great father of heaven and of the heavens, and in the moon the fertile good mother,” and in relation with this “childish condition” he said “low races [*niedrige Rassen*], like the Negroes, see the locomotive as an animal and call a drawer the child of the table” (p. 22).¹ Furthermore, he agreed with Freud’s distinction between the “Progression” of “watchful thinking” [*wachen Denkens*] and the “Regression” of unconscious and dreaming thinking. Also, quoting Abraham’s researches, he stated “a parallel ... between the fantastic-mythological thinking of antiquity and a similar way of thinking in children, lower races of humanity [*niedrig stehender Menschenrassen*] and dreams” (p. 24). He inferred the validity of the correspondence between ontogeny and phylogeny for psychology (pp. 24–25). Thus, in the footsteps of Nietzsche’s belief epitomized by the famous sentence “in sleep and in dream we make the pilgrimage of early mankind over again” (p. 25. qtd. from *Human, All-Too Human*, 1878), Jung not only shared Freud’s position, but credited Otto Rank’s research, which led him to regard the myth as “people’s mass dream” [*Massentraum des Volkes*] (p. 26), and joined Abraham’s (1909) conviction that “the myth is a piece of overcome infantile psychic life [*Seelenleben*] of people.”²

Following these premises, Jung deduced the relevance of mythological presuppositions and their function in the modern human psyche, which he considered characterized by logical thought. The postulation that “fantastic thought [is] a peculiarity of antiquity, of the child and of the lower human races” (p. 25) underneath his hermeneutic exploration of the fantasies of Miss Frank Miller—is a psychological-epistemological paradigm that ran throughout his entire work: hence the centrality of active imagination and amplification in Jung’s psychotherapy. While Freud believed that the primitive drives of the libido would be “tamed” by and in favor of the ego, Jung emphasized the relevance of integrating creative and healing values of unconscious forces, which would, he thought, lead to a higher, more encompassing psychic level, the *Self*. The enhancement (and re-animation) of the instinctive and cultural primordial dynamism of the collective psyche was aimed at counterbalancing the one-sidedness and the rationalistic narrow-mindedness he ascribed to western mentality. In the same vein, Jung pointed out the psycho-historical split within the German psyche in a 1923 letter, which he called a still painful “deformity” [*Verkrüppelung*] (*Letters*, 1973, p. 40). He said, “every step beyond the existing situation has to begin down among the truncated nature-demons. In other words, there is a whole lot of primitivity in us to be made good” (p. 40). He further argued that cultural development relied on receiving “a powerful impetus from our primitive roots” and on going “back

¹ He refers in this respect to “Dr. Oetker” (p. 22). Cfr. Oetker, 1907, p. 278.

² Abraham, 1909, p. 36, qtd. in Jung 1911/12, p. 26). He also quoted Freud (1908): “It is extremely probable that myths, for instance, are distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies of whole nations, the secular dreams of youthful humanity” (p. 152, qtd. in Jung 1911/12, p. 25). Cf. Jung 1952/1956, par. 27-29.

behind our cultural level, thus giving the suppressed primitive man in ourselves a chance to develop ... for only out of the conflict between civilized man and the Germanic barbarian will there come what we need: a new experience of God” (p. 40). Evidently, Jung considered primitiveness as an essential component of the psyche that had to be rediscovered and revived in order to compensate for the one-sided Germanic (and, we can say, European and even Western) psyche. How this endopsychic process operated both individually and collectively was not clearly specified. In any case, only then would a new religious experience be possible.

A few years later, in “Mind and Earth” (*Seele und Erde*, 1927/1931), Jung referred to the “greatest experiment in the transplantation of a race in modern times [which] was the colonization of the North American continent by a predominantly Germanic population” (par. 94). He quoted Boas’s controversial research that allegedly proved “that anatomical changes begin already in the second generation of immigrants, chiefly in the measurements of the skull.” When Jung visited America with Freud and Ferenczi in 1909, he was surprised to learn that some “workers coming out of a factory” who appeared to have “such a high percentage of Indian blood” did not have, in fact, any “drop of Indian blood.” This fact led him to reflect on the “mysterious Indianization of the American people” (par. 94).³ Then, commenting the intrapsychic dynamisms of the relation between whites and blacks for Americans, Jung (1927/1931) found it “natural” that “the Negro should play no small role as an expression of the inferior side of their personality” in the dreams of his American patients, since a European “might similarly dream of tramps or other representatives of the lower classes” (par. 96); such equation reveals a social evolutionary paradigm underlying Jung’s psychological understanding of “primitiveness”.⁴

Subsequently Jung (1927/1931) observed the risk—for the white man—to “lose” himself psychically within a majority of black population. One may recognize here a sort of extension (or projection) of the black qualities to the unconscious and of the white qualities to consciousness, with the direct epistemological consequence that the first one can, as analytical psychology assumes, overwhelm the second one. At the same time, the unconscious may and should help the “contracted” Western consciousness to develop. About “this infection of the primitive” in other countries, Jung continued:

In Africa, for example, the white man is a diminishing minority and therefore protect himself from the Negro by observing the most rigorous social forms, otherwise he risks “going black.” If he succumbs to the primitive influence he is lost. But in America the Negro, just because he is in a minority, is not a degenerative influence, but rather one which, peculiar though it is, cannot be termed unfavorable—unless one happens to have a jazz phobia” (1927/1931, par. 97)

³ In a previous essay, Jung (1918) had already reflected on the research of Boas. On this matter see also the insightful article of Tacey 2009.

⁴ In fact, the equation between the poorest Europeans classes and “primitive people” (just think of the comparisons of the Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone between Africans and underprivileged British classes) had a long tradition also outside of Anglo-Saxon literature as shown by Le Bon’ 1894 classical book on the psychology of crowds: “the lowest layers of European societies are homologous with primitive beings—one always discerns a more or less greater incapacity to reason” (pp. 28-29, qtd. in Jahoda, 1999, p. 238).

Thus, as long as the numeric majority of white people is maintained, black—in this perspective, “inferior”—people do not provoke dangerous, degenerative psychic effects. Again, a “jazz phobia” may be psychologically resolved, but to associate a majority of people of color within a country with an objective danger for the psychic health of the white people is to carry implications that go far beyond a psychological perspective—as well as beyond Jung’s affirmations themselves. It may be worthwhile to note here that Boas (1914) had already lamented how the modern eugenic movement was going to place, at the center of scientific discourse, the “mentally healthy and the eradication of the inferior” (“*geistig Gesunden und die Ausmerzungen der Minderwertigen*”) (p. 59). Hence Boas stressed that nationality is essentially made not by the “blood community” (“*Blutsgemeinschaft*”), but by the “community of feeling” (“*Gefühlsgemeinschaft*”) that creates an objective unity from the habits of everyday life, from the forms of thinking and feeling, in which the individual can informally act out” (p. 131).⁵ However, Jung did not adopt (as far as we know) a position on Boas’s contentions; rather, he was interested in and bewildered by the results of his researches and inferences about physical transformations by the mystery of the earth—and the collective psyche.

In a 1930 article entitled “Your Negroid and Indian Behavior,” Jung addressed the “Complications of American Psychology,” as it was later titled in volume 10 of the *Collected Works*. He describes the “childlikeness” of Americans, including the way they laugh, move, and chatter, expressing a sympathetic attitude towards their alleged youthfulness (and greatness). “The overwhelming influence of collective emotions spreads into everything” (p. 195). When he ventured beyond describing the “American temperament” to considering “the most striking and suggestive figure—the Negro,” Jung asked,

What is more contagious than to live side by side with a rather primitive people? Go to Africa and see what happens. When the effect is so very obvious that you stumble over it, you can call it “going black.” (p. 196)

Again, in presenting this (or his) concern of being “infected” by the primitiveness of a supposed inferior population, Jung ascribed to the Negro’s psychology the traits of an early stage of the human evolution while legitimizing his personal observations with allegedly empirical data.

The white man is a terrific problem to the Negro, and whenever you affect somebody profoundly, then in a mysterious way something comes back from him to yourself. The Negro, by his mere presence in America, is a source of temperamental and mimetic infection which the European can’t help noticing, for he sees the hopeless gap between the American and the African Negro. (p. 196)

Jung went further by affirming, “Just as every Jew has a Christ complex, so every Negro has a white complex, and every white American a Negro complex” (p. 196).

⁵ Moreover, Boas (1915/1982) had stressed the groundlessness of the “degeneration of our race” ascribed, for instance, to the “congestion in modern cities and other causes” by “advocates of eugenics” who would intend to “counteract by adequate legislative measures” (p. 26). Furthermore, in his presentation at Clark University conference of 1909, which Jung also attended, Boas condemned the belief in European civilization as the summit of culture (Shamdasani, 2003, pp. 277–278).

Moving from these premises, Jung warned against possible “contagions” in favor of the allegedly inferior influence: that of the “Negro”, in this case. Emblematically, in this rigid dichotomy between black and white, there is no place for mixed race categories. In the twentieth century, the dichotomy came to be associated with the term race even though “the finer gradations of the racial spectrum still made a powerful difference within colonial societies” (Schumaker, 2001, p. 137. Cf. Brown, 1933/1996). Moreover, Jung (1930) stated, “the Negro, generally speaking, would give anything to change his skin” (p. 196), in a way envisaging what Fanon, moving from quite another perspective, would call “lactification.” Conversely, Jung continued, “the white man hates to admit that he has been touched by the black” (p. 196). It should be noted that Jung’s observations on the influence of black people in the U.S. overlooked, or, at least, did not sufficiently consider, the main historical reasons—slavery in the first place—which explains the diffusion of the black population in the country. He then goes on to affirm that the “racial infection” caused by the “Negro” in American behavior (for instance with “his sense of music and rhythm, his funny and picturesque language”) “is a very serious mental and moral problem wherever a primitive race outnumbers the white man” (p. 196). (Interestingly enough, the contrary is not argued: namely, the case when the white man outnumbers the primitive man).

Jung evidently essentialized the construct of “primitive man” in terms of inferiority, whereby the latter attracts different levels of the psyche of civilized man, “which has lived through untold ages of similar conditions” (1930, p. 196). The “infection problem” is considered on both an individual and societal level. On the one side, in discussing this fascination, Jung advocated a re-vitalization of the “primitive in us.” On the other hand, his fear of “contagions” at a societal level was strongly tinged by his concern for the white man becoming “black under the skin.” Such a concern may be connected with what Adams calls, following psychiatrist John E. Lind, Jung’s “color complex,” which biased Jung against the mixture of races and, specifically, interracial sexual intercourse (1986, p. 120ff. and p. 130). Yet Jung’s ideas were also informed by the assumption that, as it had happened with the fall of the Roman Empire, the “conqueror overcomes the old inhabitant in the body, and succumbs to his spirit” (p. 199). However, “the conqueror,” he added with an explicit negative connotation, “gets the wrong ancestors’ spirits, the primitives would say” (p. 199). In the same vein, he compared the rites of secret societies like the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of Columbus with those of “all primitive, mystery religions” (p. 199). Jung’s conception of collective psychic balance is accompanied and somehow reinforced by an allegedly neutral detached observation of “facts,” which tend to be exempt from any judgment or assessment. “Facts are neither favorable nor unfavorable. They are merely interesting. And the most interesting fact about America is that this childlike, impetuous, ‘naïve’ people has probably the most complicated psychology of all nations” (p. 199).⁶

All in all, the picture of the psychology of Americans emerging from Jung’s assertions is quite complex and even contradictory. Alongside their naïve, childlike characters Americans are marked by one-sidedness and strive for greatness. Would such a mindset be equally considerate towards, for instance, the subsequent decolonization movements?

⁶ Cf. Jung’s letter to J. W. Hauer (in relation with Hauer’s German Faith Movement) of 14 February 1936: “I am deeply convinced that historical events cannot be evaluated but at best interpreted” (*C. G. Jung Letters* [1973/1992, Vol. I, p. 209).

Vignettes from Jung's unpublished manuscript "African Journey"

The manuscript "African Journey" provides further elements of Jung's understanding of indigenous people as well as the relevance he ascribed to "primitive psychology." The manuscript was presumably written ca. 1925/26, thus a few years earlier the "Mind and Earth," after Jung's Bugishu Psychological Expedition to Kenya and Uganda that brought him to study the Elgoni; an exact date has not been established so far.⁷

Among the different themes covered in the text, which certainly deserves future thorough analysis,⁸ I wish to pay particular attention to a few points. First, Jung insisted on the psychological and epistemological importance of respectfully approaching primitive cultures as illustrations of early stages of the human spirit:

To me, it seems highly unlikely for a white person to penetrate in a sensitive way in the secrets and strangeness of the primitive mind [literally "spirit"] without being personally deeply affected. Insofar as the European spirit yields in the twilight to its primeval spirit, it becomes also entangled in the dark fabric of its unconscious historical prerequisites. Our cultural spirit does not soar rootless in the space of an abstract world of ideas but remains—even at its brightest and loftiest heights—a building constructed on the vestige of all what our ancestors erected. (Jung, "African Journey," pp. 5–6)⁹

⁷ The title of the manuscript "Afrikanische Reise," which is deposited at the C. G. Jung Archive at the Swiss Federal Technical School in Zurich under the signature Hs 1055: 256, is somewhat misleading because it does not specifically deal with Jung's expedition to East Africa in 1925. Rather, it presents a much wider range of psychological and cultural observations on native and colonial populations from his trips to North and East Africa as well as in the U.S. which have been partly used in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (chapters "Travels": 1. North Africa, and 2. America: The Pueblo Indians. Instead, another document—in a double, handwritten and a typescript version—entitled "Afrika" with the signature Hs 1055:256a was written in 1958 specifically for the chapter "Kenya and Uganda" in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*). A thorough analysis of this manuscript may also provide insights into the understanding of the above mentioned "Mind and Earth" (1927/1931) and "The Complications of American Psychology" (1930). In regard to Jung's African expedition see the detailed, intriguing essay by Angela Graf-Nold, "'The cousins Sarasin described very nicely...': C. G. Jung's trip to Africa in context of his contemporaries. I thank Angela Graf-Nold for placing her manuscript at my disposal, which also offers elements for understanding Jung's approach to primitive mentality on the basis of Jung's ETH lectures (under publication for the Philemon Series). See Burleson's (2005), which among other things provides excerpts from the section about Africa within Jung's Protocols, the typed notes taken by Aniela Jaffé during her interviews with Jung that provided the basis for *Jung's Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961). *The original protocols for Memory, Dreams, Reflections*, edited by S. Shamdasani, with T. Fischer and R. Hinshaw as consulting editors, is forthcoming for Daimon. Burleson (2005) considered Jung's "psychological expedition" to East Africa, supported by the British Foreign Office, "more properly a 'safari' following a well-established circuitous route" and an "archetypal journey repeated by countless Europeans in the early decade of the twentieth century" (p. 15). "The book," he wrote, "could have been titled Africa in Jung" (p. 18). See also Burleson, 2008, Van der Post (1975), and McLynn (1992).

⁸ Translations of cited passages from "African Journey" are mine.

⁹ Orig.: "Es erscheint mir unmöglich, dass ein Weisser die Geheimnisse und Fremdarten des primitiven Geistes verständnisvoll eindringen kann, ohne selber im Tiefsten davon affiziert zu werden. Denn in dem Masse, als der europäische Geist sich dem Zwielficht des primitiven Geistes ergiebt, verfängt er sich auch im dunkeln Gewebe seiner [eigenen] unbewussten historischen Vorbedingungen. Unser culturlicher Geist

Moreover, Jung observed that whereas America represented “the spectacle of a mutual racial influence on a large scale,” in Africa “man and nature overwhelm the white [man] as superior power [*Übermacht*].” He stressed the importance of being respectful of tribal mysteries and refraining from selfish robberies of the “secrets” [*Geheimnisse*] of the primitives. The mysteries function to maintain the tribe, protecting it from the other, from the foreigner, for “of course, tribal cohesion is a vital necessity under primitive circumstances.” In this regard, Jung hoped that predatory colonizing by white men would not deprive the indigenous of their identity and history:

I hope these little tribes will preserve their religious secrets for as long as possible so as to allow our subsequent descendants to approach this piece of living antiquity. It is enormously impressive to listen to people whose mental disposition is nearly 2000 years old. As precious as their criticism of the white man was to me, the more I also felt necessary to get to know their central ideas, which enable becoming acquainted with an independent spiritual position beside our white culture. (“African Journey,” p. 27)¹⁰

Jung also reflected on the fact that the criticism of the American Indian was not to be understood as a “mere opposition to the white usurper,” for, according to him, they were facing the white man not only as “enemy and oppressor, but also as a problem”—a problem that, to a large extent, was to remain inexplicable for them (p. 27). Instead of investigating the socio-historical reasons (firstly, colonization) of the problem, Jung prioritized the psychological specificity of the oppressed while assuming a sympathetic attitude towards the primitive. In doing so, Jung attempted to displace himself from his own perspective as carrier of the predatory tendencies he himself denounced—which does not signify to me a surreptitious reification of a supremacist attitude. On the contrary, Jung gave quite a lot of thought to indigenous peoples’ puzzlement about the white man’s idea that thinking was a matter of the head since the white man, he said, usually conceives the head as the center of thought and the heart as the organ of feelings and emotions. Instead, Jung believed that a primitive mentality, thanks to its pre-intellectual, uncultivated approach, is better suited to grasp the “totality of the psyche” and to cope directly with the *numinosum*. Consequently, according to Jung, the alleged lack of consciousness of the primitive essentially fosters a more direct experience of a (truly) religious experience.

The religious idea dominates the consciousness and the psyche of the primitive, leading him to act out the corresponding actions. To a certain extent, this (religious) idea, by living a life of its own at the cost of him [the

schwebt ja nicht wurzellos im Raume der abstracten Ideenwelt, sondern ist, auch auf seiner hellsten und luftigsten Höhe, ein Gebäude, errichtet auf den Überbleibseln alles dessen, was unsere Ahnen gebaut haben.“

¹⁰ Orig.: “Ich hoffe, dass diese kleinen Stämme ihre religiösen Geheimnisse so lange wie möglich bewahren, sodass noch unsere späten Nachkommen sich an diesen Stück lebendigen Alterthums freuen können. Es ist ungemein eindrucksvoll, diese Menschen aus einer geistigen Disposition heraus, die beinahe 2000 Jahre hinter uns liegt, reden zu hören. So werthvoll mir ihre Kritik des weissen Mannes war, so unerlässlich schien es mir auch, ihre centralen Ideen, die ihnen eine unabhängige geistige Stellung ausserhalb unserer weissen Cultur ermöglichen, kennen zu lernen.”

primitive], takes his soul into its service and uses it to express itself. This leads to cultic acts or rituals. (Jung, “African Journey,” p. 35)¹¹

Later on, he would say with respect to this issue: “Unconscious as he [the primitive] is of himself (for he cannot consider himself as object), he also does not perceive his thoughts as his own creation, but rather as something superordinate: It is” (“African Journey,” p. 30).¹² This statement recalls Jung’s repeated exhortation for modern westerners to consider dreams and the dynamics of the objective psyche not as something made by the subject, but as a “mere, undiscovered portion of nature,” an attitude that fosters the primitive’s consciousness in front of the unknown.

In a passage in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961/1989, p. 247) Jung recounted his conversation with Ochwiay Bianco, Chief *Mountain Lake* of the Taos Pueblo peoples in New Mexico, who describes the “cultic action” of the Pueblo ritual at sunrise. At one point, Jung maintained that this “concretism” [*Concretismus*] involved in cultic actions (similarly to the *Buffalo-dances* of the Taos Pueblo Indians) fosters a pre-psychological openness, which provides the primitive with a capacity to better deal with the powerful forces of life, the cosmos, and the unconscious. Westerners, on the other hand, are accustomed to experience the cultic religious act as a “duty or a convention, an immediate emotional instigation or a kind of necessity.” Therefore:

Through the devaluation of this affirmative response, the focus is pushed towards the invisible, that is, the unconscious. This in turn reinforces the unconscious creating a characteristic perturbation or distress in consciousness, an angst of an unconscious and unknown present [or presence: *Gegenwart*]; of an unknown God, who has to be called with new and unheard-of names, and who must be reconciled with equally new, strange magical acts. It is therefore of tremendous psychological significance that St. Paul begins his preaching in the Areopagus in Athens, right in the heart of an ancient civilization, with an allusion to the *Agnostos Theos*, the unknown God. (Jung, “African Journey,” p. 45)¹³

Here echoes the whole discourse underpinning Jung’s (2009) *Liber Novus* about the rebirth of (a) God in the soul—as thoroughly explained by Shamdasani (“whereas Zarathustra proclaimed the death of **God**, *Liber Novus* depicts the **rebirth of God in the soul**” [p. 31])—

¹¹ Orig.: “Die religiöse Vorstellung beherrscht das Bewusstsein und die Psyche des Primitiven und veranlasst ihn unmittelbar zum entsprechenden Handeln. Sie lebt gewissermassen auf seine Kosten ein eigenes Leben, die Seele der Menschen in ihren Dienst nehmend und sich durch sie ausdrückend. Daran wird cultische Handlung.”

¹² Orig.: “Seiner selbst unbewusst (da er sich ja nicht selber zum Object nehmen kann) empfindet er seinen Gedanken auch nicht als sein Werk, sondern als ein Übergeordnetes: *Es ist.*”

¹³ Orig.: “Durch die Entwerthung dieser Bejahung wird der Schwerpunkt ins Unsichtbare d. h. ins Unbewusste verschoben. Dadurch wird das Unbewusst verstärkt, und es entsteht eine charakteristische Beunruhigung des Bewusstseins, eine Angst vor einer unbewussten und unbekanntem Gegenwart, vor einem unbekanntem Gotte, der mit neuen und unerhörten Namen angerufen und mit ebenso neuen, [...] seltsamen magischen Handlungen versöhnt werden muss. Es ist deshalb psychologisch ungemein bezeichnend, dass Paulus seine Predigt auf den Areopag, so reich im Herzen antiken Cultur mit einer Anspielung auf den ἄγνωστος θεός, dem unbekanntem Gott, beginnt.”

as well as, perhaps, a reminiscence from Nietzsche's 1864 poetry to the Unknown God (Grundlehner, 1986, p. 26).

Jung further pondered the identification of the current western mentality with the conscious side of the personality. Because of this identification, he continued, the Church "is forced to require that one must believe in God." In other words, "It has to artificially confer value to this idea or pump life [*Leben einpumpen müsse*] [into it]," which is indicative of the loss of "our pre-psychological notions or images [connected with religiosity]." Therefore, he added, we are no longer able to be "seized" or "captured" [*ergriffen*], alluding to the inability of "civilized people" to retain or re-establish direct contact with the *numinosum*.

Jung diagnosed the perturbation or distress of modern Western civilization as a consequence not only of a disproportionate development of intellectual rationality, but also of the devaluation of the spontaneous affirmative response to nature, which characterizes primitive cultures. Thus, the evolutionary path of civilized man is directly connected to increased anxiety about the unconscious and even about God: that same God, Jung seemed to hint, who, although still unnamed before the rise of Christianity, had been far more present in the daily life of pre-Christianized people. Moving from a (i.e., his) Christian perspective, Jung identified a sort of pre-Christian stance among the Pueblo Indians "in contrast ... to the clear, childlike gaze of Negroes." "It seems to me," Jung went on, "that by living with a primitive race [*primitive(n) Rasse*], the primitive in us is somehow brought to life. It would have to break into consciousness thereby bringing about a mixture along with a subsequent humiliation of the cultural level. To prevent such humiliation, "the North American protected himself ... by intensifying his Puritanism and with a matching legislation, [and]) with a withdrawal of consciousness before a roused unconscious. Apparently, he reacted ... with increasing security measures" (Jung, "African Journey," p. 13–14).¹⁴

Yet in relation to the American south, he noted: "The treatment of Negroes (especially in the Southern states) clearly shows how the white American projects many of his own mistakes on the Negroes, thereby acquiring a particularly clean conscience. Should he smell something evil, he can easily say, 'It is the other.'" Again, he wrote: "The American shares his good conscience [*gute(s) Gewissen*] with the Englishman, but it seems to me that the American conscience is even better. The Englishman is a European and thinks too much [*und denkt zuviel*]" (Jung, "African Journey," p. 17).¹⁵

Finally, it is worth recounting some impressions about the physical differences between the so-called primitive and the white man. Jung stressed "the dignity and the self-confidence of the individual" [*Würde und die Selbstsicherheit des Individuums*] among

¹⁴ Orig.: "Es scheint mir nämlich, dass durch das Zusammenleben mit einer primitiven Rasse das Primitive in uns irgendwie zum Leben gebracht wird. Es müsste ins Bewusstsein einbrechen und dadurch eine Vermischung herbeiführen mit nachfolgender Erniedrigung des Culturniveaus. ... Der Nordamerikaner schützte sich dagegen mit einem verschärften Puritanismus und entsprechender Gesetzgebung, mit einem Rückzug des Bewusstseins vor dem belebten Unbewussten. Er reagierte offenbar so ... mit Vermehrung der Sicherheitsmassnahmen."

¹⁵ Orig.: "Der Amerikaner hat das gute Gewissen gemein mit dem Engländer, jedoch scheint mir, als ob das amerikanische Gewissen noch besser sei. Der Engländer ist ein Europäer und denkt zuviel." Noticeably, the very last phrase literally recalls the title of the book by Parin, Morgenthaler, and Parin-Matthey (1963).

American indigenous and claimed, “it was not about a pose, but essentially about simple naturalness.” The white man, by contrast,

actually makes an unbalanced and unnatural impression: he either speaks too much, or too loudly, or too hastily or too unintelligibly or too presumptuously, or too politely. Likewise, his movements are somehow exaggerated, just like his (facial and bodily) expressions ... [which are] somewhat hysterical compared to the Indian composure. Hysteria should not be confused with vivacity. If the white man remains serious, then his facial expression is such that even at 20 steps everyone must be impressed by his seriousness. He laughs immoderately or doggedly, he is over-emotional or creepy, ridiculously friendly or abominably cold. (Jung, “African Journey,” pp. 48–49).¹⁶

Jung even said of the white man that “at heart he is at odds with everything he does” such that “his feeling always has a fatal, sentimental—and thus—unlikely connotation; and in turn all his actions are adamant.” Lacking naturalness, the white man “replaces this deficiency with hysteria!” (p. 49).¹⁷

“Primitive mentality” and race in other psychoanalytical approaches

In short, Jung’s understanding of primitive mentality and the racial question betrays a strong influence from contemporary anthropological literature and its shortcomings, noticed for instance by anthropologist Radin in 1927 in his *Primitive Man as a Philosopher* (see also Shamdasani, 2003, pp. 329–330) and an universalizing, ethnocentric, attitude combined with an essentialist approach, which was accompanied by Jung’s tendency to consider as empiric, factual evidence his personal experience with indigenous people. From his stance as a white man of his time, it is also easy to denounce Jung’s supremacist approach towards indigenous cultures, even though their backwardness carried essential elements for the psyche of civilized man through fostering a (more) direct experience of the *numinosum*. Yet his approach was substantiated by the epistemic premise of the dichotomy conscious/unconscious, which he applied to civilized/uncivilized as well as to white/black people, with consequences for a reductive and even racist understanding of indigenous populations and people of color. As noticed by Adams (1996), Jung also tended to equate “whiteness” with “consciousness and individual identity” and “blackness” with “unconsciousness and collective identity” (p. 150. See also chapter 9). This set of issues, alongside many other problematic questions including the current situation of analysts of

¹⁶ Orig.: “Im Vergleich damit schnitt der weisse Mann ungünstig ab. Er macht thatsächlich einen unbalancierten und unnatürlichen Eindruck: Er spricht entweder zu viel, oder zu laut, oder zu hastig oder zu unverständlich oder zu anmassend, oder zu höflich. Ebenso sind seine Bewegungen irgendwie einigermaßen übertrieben, genau wie seine Mimik. Seine Mimik ist entschieden etwas hysterisch im Vergleich mit der indianischen Gehaltenheit. Man darf Hysterie nicht mit Lebhaftigkeit verwechseln. Bleibt der weisse Mann ernst, so ist sein Gesichtsausdruck so beschaffen, dass schon auf 20 Schritte Jedermann von seinem Ernst beeindruckt werden muss. Er lacht unmässig oder verbissen, er ist effusiv oder bockig, lächerlich freundlich oder abscheulich kalt.”

¹⁷ Orig.: “Man merkt es seiner Mimik an, dass er im Grunde genommen mit nichts, was er auch immer thut, ganz einverstanden ist. Sein Gefühl hat daher immer einen fatalen, sentimental und daher ungläubwürdigen Beiklang, und alles, was er thut, lässt Nachdrücklichkeit durchblicken. ... Selbstverständlichkeit fehlt dem weissen Mann am meisten. Er ersetzt, wie gesagt, diesen Mangel mit Hysterie!”

color in the Jungian community, is being discussed and explored very actively (Baird, 2018; Samuels, 2018; Brewster, 2019; Carta & Kiel, 2020). Nonetheless, it is worth recalling what Lewin (2009) wrote in *Jung on War, Politics and Nazi Germany*:

We need to be clear that our task is not to criticize Jung's early attempts at cross-cultural studies and his ideas about race by the standards of modern anthropological scholarship; to do so would be anachronistic. Jung's thinking should be judged by the standards of his time, but as we also want to discuss how applicable his ideas may be for today, modern criticism needs to be given due recognition, but caution must be taken not to get caught in "politically correct" fixations. Vocabulary changes, and when Jung used the term "primitive cultures" he did not have available the phrase "primary cultures." Closely entangled with our modern sensitivities about the word "primitive" is the issue of race. There remains concern that when Jung was referring to the "primitive" he was implying some form of racial slur. (pp. 130–131)

Given the relevance of properly contextualizing Jung's writings during the 1920s and 1930s, their racial aspects imply, denote, and entail a complex set of issues.

According to Pietikainen (1998), Jung shared the stereotypes and convictions on race of his time. Moreover, the persuasion of the "mental superiority of the white European in respect to non-whites was a truism, an unmistakable scientific fact both in its philosophical and popular versions" (p. 367). While recalling that Freud too did not challenge the "prevailing evolutionary notion of superior and inferior races," Pietikeinen responded as follows to Dalal's (1988, pp. 263–279) assertion that Jung was a racist: "one can reply to the effect that 'surely Jung was a racist, but the point is: who was not racist at that time?'" (p. 368). Jung was among several intellectuals (Pietikeinen named Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley, and Franz Boas) who at one point "came to modify their racial views and assumed a more egalitarian and relative attitude towards non-Western culture" (p. 367). Specifically after World War II, and during the period of decolonization in the 1950s Jung, like other members of the educated classes, "more emphatically explicated egalitarian views" and began to critique "Western imperialistic and colonialist policy" (pp. 367–368).

Needless to say, there were different gradations in views regarding race. Some thinkers were more aware of this issue than others (among them Boas, whose position seems to me different from what Pietikainen's statement conveys). Ashley Montagu (1942), for instance, did not wait for the end of World War II to firmly request that the term "race" be replaced with "ethnic group" because "when we speak of the 'race problem' in America, what we really mean is the caste system and the problem which the caste system creates in America" (p. 82). For the British-American anthropologist, "a class differs from a caste in that a greater degree of social mobility is, in all respects, permitted between the members of the upper and the lower social classes than is permitted between castes. The caste is static, the class dynamic" (p. 82).¹⁸

Later, during the post-war period and with the decolonization processes, a new sensibility arose within and towards different native populations. Fanon, psychiatrist and

¹⁸ In 1950 Montagu was selected to draft, with few other academicians and scientists, the initial UNESCO *Statement on Race*.

activist, represented the radicalism of the upcoming change. He decisively linked the racial question with class domination and gave voice to the anger and powerlessness of people of color in a new and shattering way.¹⁹ The colonial system had deprived the black people of any possibility to develop their own identity—as individuals and as a group. “The black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white” (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 12). Fanon’s approach, while combining Marxism, phenomenology and existentialism, sought a radical subversion of the structural asymmetry of the relationship between black and white (and the dehumanization of the first engendered by the second). Yet only through a violent struggle can the Black free himself from a forcefully spurious identity for, to Fanon’s eyes, the black liberated without bloodshed resembles “those servants who are allowed once every year to dance in the drawing room” (p. 219). Fanon’s analysis deconstructs the psychoanalytic discourse and moves from completely different premises than Jung’s.²⁰

While decolonization was struggling against the patriarchal “white supremacy” as it still is (lamentably) today, social sciences progressively abandoned many of their pillar concepts. For instance, Haeckel’s law of biogenetic recapitulation became passé—but not for psychoanalysis and analytical psychology, whose epistemological premises remained largely and unreflexively entangled in it. As late as 1949, Lévi-Strauss poignantly indicated the ongoing “spurious temptation” of psychoanalytic, especially Freudian, authors to maintain the “archaic illusion” of an identity between “primitive” and “infantile” (see Brickman, 2003, p. 88).

Two years after Jung’s death, Parin, Morgenthaler, and Parin-Matthey published *Die Weissen denken zuviel* (1963/1980), a cult book for the rebellious student movement, which would inaugurate ethno-psychoanalysis, i.e., “the product of a confrontation between

¹⁹ Let me just quote a couple of passages from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/1986): “I am black; I am in the incarnation of a complete fusion with the world, an intuitive understanding of the earth, an abandonment of my ego in the heart of the cosmos, and no white man, no matter how intelligent he may be, can ever understand Louis Armstrong and the music of the Congo. If I am black, it is not the result of a curse, but it is because, having offered my skin, I have been able to absorb all the cosmic *effluvia*. I am truly a ray of sunlight under the earth.” (p. 45). Fanon maintained that “The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation. Therefore,” he continued “I have been led to consider their alienation in terms of psychoanalytical classifications” (p. 60).

²⁰ For this reason too, he looked at the collective unconscious in a rather reductive way (while defining it “purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group”) and thought that Jung “has confused instinct and habit. In his view ... the myths and archetypes are permanent engrams of the race”. Instead, Fanon’s key concern was to point out that “collective unconscious is cultural, which means acquired” (p. 188). Cf. chapter 10 (“Frantz Fanon and Alice Walker on Humanism and Universalism”) in Adams, 1996, pp. 159ff. However, it is worth adding that according to Fanon, “reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century, Freud ... substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man’s alienation is not an individual question. Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands *sociogeny*.” Contextually, as it has been noted, Fanon’s concept of “sociogeny” moves from the diagnosis of colonialism presented in *The Wretched of the Earth* (published in 1961, the year of his death – and Jung’s). Moreover, “If we read Fanon’s sociogeny alongside Jung’s collective unconscious, numerous interesting possibilities arise for thinking about the contexts of what we might call culture and thus healing within culture” (Walcott, 2006, p. 32). The volume also includes a contribution by Dalal (‘Culturalism in multicultural psychotherapy’, in Moodley & Palmer, 2006, pp. 36-45).

psychoanalysis and the social sciences.”²¹ The three Swiss psychoanalysts and ethnologists presented the results of a survey-expedition to the African tribe of the Dogon, to conduct a psychoanalytic experiment using free verbal associations and narration, while assuming that psychoanalysis is a Western theory “which is never true beyond postcolonial power relations” (Reychmyer, 2016, p. 339). They also maintained that language cannot be a neutral mechanism, but is a meeting place for complex intercultural communication processes in continuous transformation (p. 339). The psychoanalysts (differently than Jung with the African tribes) stated a fundamental incompatibility of the Dogon with the Christian worldview. They also repudiated the notion of “primitive” as an ahistorical category, as well as the presumption to understand collective psychology *en masse*. They concluded, “We do not believe that today there is a valid mass psychology or folk-psychology”—which, from their perspective, may be equally translated as “ethnopsychology”—that “allows us to directly examine a population (as a whole)” (1963/1985), p. 612). In a way, they rejected the old pretense to grasp (and understand) collective mentality, for instance of a nation or an ethnicity. Finally, they poignantly admitted

Psychology fails in its attempt to compare the personality of the Dogon as a whole with that of the Western or of the European ... The differences between the Dogon and us become more and more obscure the more generally and further one grasps the manifestations of cultural contact. (Parin, P., Morgenthaler, F., Parin-Matthèy, H., 1963/1985, p. 612; my translation)

“Primitive psychology” for and within Jung’s analytical psychology and the collective unconscious

Jung’s reflections on so-called primitive mentality was central to the development of his psychology. Analytical psychology represents a system of comparative psychology intrinsically based on a constant confrontation with different disciplines and thereby presents Jung’s acquisitions from the social and natural sciences of his day along with their unavoidable limits. For instance, he shared Durkheim’s and Mauss’s interest in archaic societies and the primitive mind, adopted Durkheim’s notion of collective representations and borrowed the conception of participation mystique from Lucien Lévy-Bruhl.²² Moreover, “like the evolutionists, Jung considered primitive society to be an undifferentiated whole, postulated a series of stages in the psychic development of mankind, and equated this with the psychic development of the individual” (Shamdasani 2003, p. 330).

According to Richards (2012), Jung’s description of primitive mentality was a mix of influences from “exotic images and traveler’s tales of strange and primitive peoples,” and a way to sympathetically understand the primitive mentality also through contemporary anthropological literature. However, it seems to him that Jung was “chronically unable to go beyond conventional Western ‘archetypal’ or ‘collective’ representations, and failed to

²¹ Parin, Morgenthaler, Parin-Matthèy, H. (1963/1980), p. 372. On the subject see also Reichmayr, 2016.

²² Cf. Shamdasani 2003, especially pp. 288–290, 311–317, and 328–342. See also Adams, 1996, pp. 54–59 and the essays in Bishop, 2011, Part II.

see the immediate down-to-earth details of the actual situation in a way that contrasts to that—for instance—of Margaret Mead in Polynesia or New Guinea.” Contextually, Richards observed that while Africans and Native Americans were part of “the domestic landscape” of the British and French who “had long been having direct dealings with non-European imperial subjects,” Jung was “an empireless Swiss” (pp. 192–193).

That Jung shared the Eurocentric (and colonialist) mentality of his time was inevitable, at least to some degree. Furthermore, as Roazen (1971/1985) noted, “just as Jung shared sexist prejudices toward women, it would not be surprising for him to have uncritically adopted many traditional stereotypes about Jews” (p. 292); and, we can add, about black people. However, how far the Eurocentric mentality along with coeval prejudices affected his entire psychology is both an historical and an epistemological question. If the first question is to be considered in a differentiated way, in terms of the specificity, extent, and severity of his racism, the second question obligates us to ask: Is it possible to separate Jung’s racist visions from his psychology and, if so, how? Or should one agree with Farhad Dalal’s conclusion that Jung’s theoretical (yet not personal) racism implies that contemporary Jungian analysis has a “racist core” (Dalal, 1988, p. 263)? Could Jung’s perceived risk of “going black” under the skin be considered primarily as his personal fear (and resistance) alongside his equally personal fascination for the primitive? Or is such fear instead an expression of a structural element inextricably embedded in Jung’s psychological system, which could be considered intrinsically racist? (In this direction goes, for instance, the thesis of the critical and insightful work of Dohe (2016).

It might be useful here to recall the broad definition of racism by Adams (1996), who defines it “any categorization of people on the basis of physical characteristics (such as skin color) that are indicative of putatively significant psychical differences, *whether these ostensible difference are positive or negative, honorific or defamatory*” (p. 10). In my view, the racial issue connected with Jung’s thought has to do with an epistemological aspect that is intrinsically related to the conception of the collective unconscious. The latter is, per definition, stratified and phylogenetically shaped, yet it belongs to whole humankind. It is, if we want, democratic and aristocratic (*quod licet Jovi non licet bovi*), universal and racial.

Two examples are worth recalling here. On the one hand, in 1912 Jung had analyzed fifteen “pure-blooded Negroes,” i.e. African-American hospitalized patients at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington, DC, and found oneiric images which seemed to refer to Greek mythology. The dream images could not, Jung (1935) clearly stated, be “explained by racial inheritance” as they “have nothing to do with so-called blood or racial inheritance, nor are they personally acquired by the individual. They belong to mankind in general, and therefore they are of a *collective* nature” (par. 79). On the other hand, in the same period Jung (1934) (in)famously called for recognition of the differences between Germanic and Jewish psychology because “the Jewish race as a whole ... possess an unconscious which can be compared with the ‘Aryan’ only with reserve” (par. 354). These two brief passages clearly depict a kind of epistemic tension which runs throughout Jung’s understanding of the collective unconscious. In this regard Adams (1996) was certainly correct in concluding that Jung found “evidence for a typically human, rather than a ‘racial’ collective unconscious” (p. 106). Nonetheless Adams also detected a double dimension of the collective unconscious, namely “an archetypal (a natural—that is, a transhistorical, transcultural, transethnic) dimension and a stereotypical (a historical, cultural, ethnic)

dimension” (p. 46). Adams’ point speaks to the suggestion that “there were ‘two’ Jungs: one who sometimes categorized people in terms of ‘biology’ and another who sometimes categorizes them in terms of ‘history’” (p. 131). Yet I cannot fail to highlight the persistence of an intrinsic epistemic criticality underpinning the notion of collective unconscious. In social-political interpretations, the collective unconscious can be considered emancipatory, but it can also be (mis)used for reactionary purposes. This issue lies, then, not only in the applications of the collective unconscious, especially to political and nationalistic agendas, but also affects the hermeneutic effort to recognize the coexistence of these two aspects, related to history and biology, underlying Jung’s conception.

In this regard Grossman (2003) maintained that Jung’s thought was strongly influenced by German Romantic philosophy, which highly valued the folk as depositories of an ancient wisdom. He defined Jung as a “partially racist thinker” in relation to his descriptions of “Negroes and Jews” (p. 116). At the same time, he saw in Jung’s theories

a more universal element ... and this element was in the last resort more important. If Jung was interested in racial archetypes, he was even more interested in exploring the archetypes which were common to all of humanity. As far as race is concerned it would be more accurate to say that there were some racist components in this thought rather than to characterize its orientation as racist. (p. 117)

This set of issues might be profitably connected to and analyzed with the help of the seminal work by Singer and Kimbles (2004) about cultural complexes and of the subsequent Henderson’s (2018) theory of cultural unconscious.

That said, a brief account of the views of two Swiss psychiatrists in the early 1930s might further frame Jung’s specific position on race. First I quote a passage in the memoir of philosopher and brain researcher Forel (1935). Forel is commonly considered the father of Swiss psychiatry; he was Bleuler’s predecessor at the direction of the Burghölzli, and was a promoter of the women’s vote in Switzerland. Forel argued that history teaches how great and noble cultures regularly fall under barbarism. And he raised the following question:

Is this always the case? No, because thanks to printing, steam and electricity, the speediness of exchanges is such that discoveries spread in a flash and are no longer lost. What is really new and effectively useful in our current scientific discoveries? To what extent is it based on primeval—hundreds of thousands or millions of years old—inheritance of our brain? And how much of it stems from the culture acquired by that very same brain and collected through the compendium of knowledge of our ancestors? (p. 158)

Then, in relation to the question of race he asked, “Which races are useful [*brauchbar*] for the further development of mankind, and which are not? And if the lowest races are useless [*unbrauchbar*], how can they gradually be eliminated?” (p. 158; my translation)

Secondly, let us consider what the author and psychiatrist Strasser wrote in 1932 in a book about superstition, quackery, and soul healing:

Whether one speaks for or against race, regardless of the fact that it is morally valued or depreciated, the uncertain findings as to heredity provide

each and every theory on race with an apparent certainty. Every gap is filled by means of the scientific superstition of inheritance. (p. 61; my translation)

Strasser compared “prejudice against race and gender, hypothesis on constitution and instinct constitution” to the inveterate “superstition of the born criminal (reminiscent of Lombroso’s theory) of innate dispositions or mental illnesses, of the inborn nature of temperaments and feelings.” He would further assert that such “superstitions about racial characteristics” are particularly fruitful when there is a need—as was happening with Jews—for “a beloved scapegoat from ancient times” (p. 61; my translation).

Noticeably, Jung did not share either of these attitudes. He never ventured, as did Forel, to pontificate on the relative “usefulness” of single races for the evolution of humanity, nor did he question the meaning that so-called inferior races might have in that global context. On the other hand, he never stated with the same clarity as Strasser (perhaps because he did not think so) the unsustainability and hazard of any discourse on race.

In analytical psychology, the historical assumptions about the allegedly evolutionary superiority of the white man goes hand in hand with a strong criticism of the very same subject. From a dynamic and comparative (but also compensatory) perspective, Jung considers on the one hand the so-called primitives to be morally less developed—as, etymologically speaking, they had less developed “mores”—with respect to the civilized populations. On the other hand, Jung relentlessly credits the so-called superior westerner with a whimsical assumed superiority, completely unaware of their historical and religious-spiritual roots, to which the primitives are still connected. With this kind of variant of the long-standing differentiation of nature from nurture, Jung ends up “pathologiz[ing] the civilized, not the primitive” (Adams, 1996, p. 150). Thus the primitive as a “category functions as a plea to recover the lost roots of human kind and for the possibility of a new religious experience.”²³

One can discern in Jung’s stance an interrelation between and consubstantiality of inferiority and superiority. Jung’s main concern was not to emphasize the inferiority of the primitive, even though he lamentably (and perhaps carelessly) applied the label “primitive” to blacks, American Indians, and others. Rather, he strived to reveal the shadow of so-called civilized (white) people and to undermine the comforting belief in their alleged superiority. Psychologically, the primitive ends up constituting the quintessence of what the so-called civilized individual has lost or forgotten and needs to rediscover.

At the same time, Jung’s empiricism and deductive argumentation needs to be critically evaluated, especially when considering Jung’s assertiveness about alleged “Tatsachen” or facts which, he once says, “are neither favorable or unfavorable. They are merely interesting” (1930, p. 199). For instance, while Jung (1927) mentioned the risk of going black for the European, he said: “It is no mere snobbery that the English should consider anyone born in the colonies, even though the best blood may run in his veins, ‘slightly inferior’. There are facts to support this view” (par. 249). Likewise, as mentioned

²³ Commenting the “minds of all unsophisticated people” with reference to Lévy-Bruhl’s theory on the “participation mystique,” Jung (1930/1931) said: “we still attribute to the other fellow all the evil and inferior qualities that we do not recognize in ourselves” (par. 130). Since “projection is one of the commonest psychic phenomena,” what we confront in our neighbors “is usually our own inferior side” (par. 131).

above, Jung (1927/1931) considered it natural that “the Negro should play no small role as an expression of the inferior side of [white Americans’] personality” (par. 96).

Here it is worth recalling what Samuels (1991) affirmed in the famous Congress on Jungian, Freudians, and Anti-Semitism held in New York in 1989.

The main difficulty with Jung’s work in the general area of national psychology is an unwarranted expansion of his psychology, and hence his authority as a leading psychologist, into complicated fields where psychology alone is an inadequate explanatory too. This problem is exemplified in his treatment of the question of national psychology. (pp. 182–83).

Consequently Jung’s “ideas on national psychology degenerate into nothing more than typology” (p. 190). Samuels, therefore, invited the audience not to consider “defined or predefined” psychological differences among national or cultural attributes, as well as among sexes, races, and classes. “The analyst is not an authority or teacher who has a priori knowledge of the psychological implications of the patient’s ethnic and cultural background,” Samuels asserted, but “rather he or she is a mediator who enables the patient to experience and express his or her *own* difference” (p. 200). On other occasions, Samuels warned against the risk of over-psychologizing in depth psychology.

Samuels’s position differed from that of Guggenbühl-Craig’s (1991), who, in the same congress, considered Jung a “man of his time” also because he shared all the stereotypes and clichés of the Swiss bourgeoisie (including anti-Semitism). Guggenbühl-Craig urged the audience to consider the greatness of Jung’s psychology instead of stressing the littleness of such historically-linked aspects.²⁴ I would venture to say that these different positions may represent two poles of the post-Jungian approach to his theory, which may be fruitfully connected and perhaps even integrated.

Conclusion

One of today’s challenges for analytical psychology may be to recognize and differentiate the historical-biographical aspects of Jung’s ideas from the methodological and hermeneutical aspects. This has been stated with particular clarity by the Italian Jungian analyst Trevi (1988; see also Trevi and Innamorati, 2000). He strongly insisted on differentiating between analytical psychology’s fruitful orientation as an open hermeneutic system and its tendency towards being a closed doctrinal system. Only an epistemological reflection about such a differentiation would enhance analytical psychology’s methodological stance as well as the notion of the “personal equation”—without forgetting Jung’s personal vision of the world. That view was influenced by differences that have been largely overcome today: between Europe and the rest of the world, between primitive and civilized people, between East and West, between colonialists and colonized. One cannot say the same for the engrained biases regarding whiteness/blackness as expressions of dichotomies such as conscious/unconscious, positive/negative, male/female, and even life/death. Such biases perpetuate the complex of white supremacy that, according to Hillman (1986), is deeply embedded in Western society in ethnographical, mythological,

²⁴ By the same token see also van der Post (1975/1977): “His psychological approach was on so profound and universal a level that its racial implications were the least of all to him” (p. 195).

historical and even linguistic terms. The imagination of white superiority over the black “is archetypically inherent in whiteness” (p. 29): whiteness “represents the divinity as essence and source, as well as sustentation” (p. 32) and this implies that “white sees its own shadow in black” (p. 41).

One may also recall the “tacit, colorist assumption” that potentially affects the interpretation of alchemy (Adams, 1996, p. 219) by means of connotations inherent in the alchemical transformation process from the ‘blackness’ of nigredo to the ‘whiteness’ of albedo, which many alchemists consider the ultimate goal. Adams contends that “if Jungian analysis were to theorize *nigredo* and *albedo* not as stages, however, but as states, it would relativize ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’” (p. 224)

Another challenge for analytical psychology would be to explore the extent to which such inadvertent (and insufficiently scrutinized) biases related to whiteness and blackness remain embedded in the Jungian system as it is understood and practiced today.

In addition, I see the need to discern a tendency in analytical psychology toward pan-psychologizing. Unless challenged, this tendency could become, emblematically, a sort of psychological annexation or colonization—a kind of psychological neo-colonialism—of allegedly self-evident events whose understanding requires other knowledge. Hence the need for the development of “the capacity for a differential, multicultural imagination” (Adams, 1996, p. 246) able to overcome that “archetypal predisposition in whiteness ... to imagine in oppositions” (Hillman 1986, p. 41); and the need for a humbleness for the discipline of psychology itself, based on a major collaboration with other disciplines and a mature receptivity for their researches. This was, after (or before!) all, Jung’s original understanding of a comparative, complex psychology (Shamdasani, 2003, p. 12ff., 347 *et passim*. Cf. also Sorge 2017).

Consequently, one should not indiscriminately assume that a psychological and hermeneutic system manifestly fruitful in the comprehension and resolution of individual psychic problems is equally fruitful in understanding collective problems. To me, a critical reassessment of the propensity of analytical psychology to read national, collective or socio-cultural dynamics in an essentialist, cyclical, or even mythologically-oriented way is needed. Consider, for instance, the enantiomorphic principle inherent in Hölderlin’s verses, “Where the *danger* is, *also grows* the *saving* power,” which underlay Jung’s interpretation of the Nazi phenomenon at least during its early years, and provided it with a quite confident, almost too confident perspective in a regenerative dynamic underpinning social-political events. A patient undergoing a mental health crisis may need to lie down and wait it out, as Jung suggested in the 1959 BBC interview “Face to Face”, but that does not justify, I think, the shift from the individual to the collective register by adopting the same attitude to the symptoms of the social and political crisis. One can face the crises also by rising and fighting instead of sublimating or trying to forcefully integrate the critical awareness (especially when the latter cannot be integrated) into a superior, encompassing *coincidentia oppositorum* especially when the latter runs the risk of concealing a psychological yet crypto-metaphysical comfort-zone.²⁵

²⁵ Cf. the insightful reflections by Lanfranchi (2017) who advocates for a critical reassessment of the premises of analytical psychology by deactivating the paradigms of sovereignty embedded in our language as well as in Jung’s psychology and by adopting a not defensive nor condescending attitude toward the

Recognizing constructive resources in individual as well as collective crises must not prevent us from acknowledging their sometimes irreversibly negative nature, such as the catastrophic ecologic crisis today. Recurrent phenomena such as the fact that the inferiority complex manifests itself as a superiority complex or that a formerly oppressed (or colonized) population can later become an oppressor, or that the conqueror succumbs in the spirits or demons of the conquered, have been thoroughly examined. However, one has to be very cautious in turning them into unquestioned *psychological* assumptions which would lead to too hasty psycho-historical conclusions about the dynamics of global history. Perhaps the rush toward assumptions and conclusion has to do with the old dream of psychology (and of psychoanalysis) to establish itself as a natural, exact, perhaps infallible science.

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shadow of the "hidden claim of universality of the psyche, which creates a covert racial subtext allowing for a continuous slippage between the (developmental) psychological and (evolutionist) anthropological registers" (p. 37).

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