

## Conclusion

It is clear that Jung accepts and does not question stereotypes. What he does question is any deviation from the stereotypes. Blacks, for Jung, were inferior and not just different. The consequences of his theories, if true, are serious for any practising psychotherapist, and particularly, a Jungian psychotherapist, because the psychotherapist will have to deal very differently with black and white clients in order to remain within the Jungian framework and be consistent with it. But it would be a

mistake to assume that in the field of psychotherapy the charge of racism can only be levelled at Jung and his theories. I chose to focus on him because of his popularity, and because his racism is invisible to, and unacknowledged by, modern Jungians.

To conclude with some questions: Is it possible to rescue the concepts of individuation and the collective unconscious from their racist antecedents? When psychotherapists and analysts use these concepts, are they aware of their racist roots? If so, do they rationalise them away? Or do they accept them as facts?

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## Further Reading

Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, Norton, 1981

Carl Jung, *Collected Works*, especially volumes 6, 8, 9 and 10

Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, Pantheon, 1963

Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Zed, 1983

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# Jung and Racism

Michael Vannoy Adams

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Farhad Dalal's article 'The Racism of Jung' is a reprint, with a few minor alterations, of 'Jung: A Racist', which previously appeared in two journals, *Race & Class* and the *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, eight years ago. As the author of a recently-published book, *The Multicultural Imagination: 'Race', Color, and the Unconscious* (reviewed on page 52), I have been

asked by the editors of *Self & Society* for my views on this controversial and important subject.

Although my book is much wider in scope than Dalal's article (I advocate an authentically multicultural psychoanalysis and present a historical, theoretical, and clinical account of the importance of 'race' or colour in the unconscious), it does

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include an extensive discussion of Jung's attitudes toward and theories about so-called blacks, his interest in the 'psychology of primitives', his two trips to Africa (and his dreams on those two trips), his concept of the 'shadow', and his interest in the *nigredo* state in alchemy. The reason that I have included this discussion is that, even to this day, Jung remains one of the few analysts of any persuasion to attempt seriously to address the issue of 'race' in the white-black sense — however inadequate that effort may appear to us from a contemporary multicultural perspective.

I agree with Tzvetan Todorov that, although racism exists, 'races' do not exist (except in the opinion of some biologists, some anthropologists — and, of course, all racists). I define racism to be any categorisation of peoples on the basis of physical characteristics (such as skin colour) that are indicative of putatively significant psychological differences, *whether these ostensible differences are positive or negative, honorific or defamatory*.

By my definition, anyone who believes in the existence of 'races' and categorises people on that basis is a racist. This is, of course, a very broad definition that not everyone would accept. Some would argue that only negative categorisations are racist. Others would argue that, even if blacks categorise whites negatively on the basis of 'race', they are not *effectively* racists, because they are not in a position of power over whites.

Was Jung a racist by my definition? Sometimes he categorises people on the basis of 'race', but sometimes he repudiates, in no uncertain terms, any such notion. If Freud at his worst is capable of joking that he analyses patients as a lion voraciously devours 'negroes', and is

capable of predicting (according to Ernest Jones) 'the extinction of the white race in a few thousand years and its probable replacement by the black one' and stating that 'America is already threatened by the black race. And it serves her right', then Jung at his worst is capable of asserting that there is 'danger in the mixture of races', that 'a negro woman very rarely conceives from a white man', that if she does, 'a mulatto is the result and he is apt to be a bad character', that whites and blacks are like horses and donkeys that produce mules that 'have peculiar, vicious qualities and are not fertile', that whites and blacks are like European butterflies and African butterflies that 'don't really mix' any more than do 'oil and water', that miscegenation 'is the cause of many cases of insanity', and that any 'great difference in race nearly always causes a certain fragile, sensitive disposition because the units are not well glued together'.

At his best, Jung contends that we are all, white and black, archetypally the same, or typically human. For example, when Jung 'analysed' fifteen African-American patients at St Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington DC in 1912, he wondered whether the contents of the collective unconscious 'might not be due to heredity', but he ultimately concluded that archetypal images 'have nothing to do with so-called blood or racial inheritance'. Jung continues: 'In the collective unconscious you are the same as a man of another race, you have the same archetypes, just as you have, like him, eyes, a heart, a liver, and so on. It does not matter that his skin is black. It matters to a certain extent, sure enough — he has probably a whole historical layer less than you. The different strata of the mind

correspond to the history of the races'. In this instance, Jung argues that what really matters is history, not skin colour. Any correspondence between physical characteristics and psychical differences is nothing more than an accident of history. From the position of Jung as a white European, 'primitive' peoples (including black Africans) have experienced certain stages of history but not others, which 'civilised' peoples have experienced. This notion may be a Eurocentric, ethnocentric *historicist* prejudice, but it is not a racist bias. According to Jung, there is no natural or essential psychical difference between peoples, primitive or civilised. There are only cultural or accidental differences — historical differences — which are relative, not absolute.

### *'The Racist Core of Jungian Psychology'*

Does the fact that Jung sometimes categorises peoples on the basis of 'race' necessarily imply that, as Dalal insists, Jungian psychology has a 'racist core'? Is Jungian theory intrinsically and ineluctably racist? Are contemporary Jungians (or post-Jungians) racists? Some Jungians (as well as some Freudians) may, of course, be racists, but it seems to me that contemporary Jungians are under no duress to accept uncritically everything that Jung may have said on the topic of 'race'. They *are*, it seems to me, under a scientific and ethical obligation to scrutinise and revise Jungian theory when experience and evidence contradict it. To be a 'Jungian' does not mean to be 'Jung', any more than to be a 'Freudian' means to be 'Freud'. Analysts who idealise Jung and Freud, who idolise them as gods or worship them as heroes,

as if analysis were nothing more than a personality cult, perform a grave disservice.

### *The Shadow*

Jung defines the 'shadow' as the negative or inferior aspects of the psyche. He says that in dreams, for example, the unconscious often images these aspects as 'black' — sometimes as a black person. In this case, it is not Jung or the theory of the shadow that is racist. It is the *unconscious* that is racist. In addition, the shadow is always a relativistic function of the defensive attitudes of the ego. It comprises what the ego has repressed, ignored, neglected, or otherwise excluded from consideration for whatever reason. If the ego happens to be negative or inferior, then the shadow will be positive or superior. For example, a contemporary Jungian analyst, Robert Bosnak, interprets a dream in which the dreamer, a 'stiff' white man, encounters a 'limber' black man (a rigid ego encounters a flexible shadow). Through an exercise in active imagination, the black man exclaims to the white man, 'Don't be so uptight, man! Hang loose! . . . Relax, man, relax. Don't be so tense'. In this instance, the qualities of the 'black' shadow are positive and superior to the defensive attitudes of the 'white' ego.

### *Mimicry and Infection*

Dalal criticises Jung for saying that blacks are 'excellent judges of character' because they have a special 'talent for mimicry' and accurately imitate 'the manner of expression, the gestures, the gaits of people' because they somehow comprehend 'the emotional nature of others'. I would add that, for post-colonialist critics, the issue of mimicry is a significant topic in contemporary cultural studies. For example, Homi

Bhabha argues that mimicry was the result of a quite conscious imperialist strategy, or policy of domination, that, like other 'best laid plans', produced certain complex effects ironically different from the original intent (unlike Jung, Bhabha does not really address the unconscious dimension of mimicry). Dalal criticises Jung for saying that 'racial' infection is 'a serious mental and moral problem' especially when blacks are in the majority and whites in the minority. Jung says that contagion is 'a psychological influence' — that is, an unconscious influence. For whites, he says, the 'mere presence' of blacks 'is a source of temperamental and mimetic infection' — evidently not only blacks but also whites have an aptitude for mimicry. The self, whether black or white, unconsciously assumes certain attitudes and behaviours in contact with the other. Contagion (or, if one prefers a non-pathological term, 'suggestion'), I would emphasise, is a *real* phenomenon that post-colonialist critics like James Snead explicitly acknowledge. It is the phenomenon that the novelist Ishmael Reed images as 'Jes Grew', the contagion of black culture that, like Topsy, 'just grew' and continues to spread irresistibly, irrepressibly throughout white culture, which, like all other cultures, is not immune to unconscious influence.

### *'Race' and Ethnicity*

There is a certain irony to racism. As long as we categorise peoples by 'nature', as long as we simplistically regard psychical differences as a function of physical (or 'racial') differences, we avoid conflicts, controversies, and confrontations over 'culture' — that is, over the lifestyles of peoples. The differences in life-styles between peoples are much greater than any differences in 'races'

— and potentially much more contentious. An example would be the efforts of the novelist and feminist Alice Walker, a black woman and an admirer of Jung who protests the cultural practice of clitoridectomy and infibulation as an unnatural, inhumane, and immoral act. Walker courageously exposes the defects of a cultural relativism that would be utterly non-judgmental toward certain lifestyles. Once culture or ethnicity rather than nature or 'race' becomes the issue, however, we are suddenly in a difficult position: I mean that we are in a position that has to acknowledge that any truly significant differences in lifestyles between peoples are cultural *preferences*, not natural *orientations*. We may not like — in fact, we may even detest — certain lifestyles, and since lifestyles are by definition arbitrary and conventional, *any* such practices (not just such extreme examples as female genital mutilation) may suddenly become topics of radical contention. It is precisely this problem of *practices-as-preferences* that seems to me to pose not only an opportunity but also the most difficult challenge for contemporary cultural (or multicultural) studies.

### *Differential versus Oppositional Logic*

The post-Jungian analyst James Hillman cogently argues that 'white' and 'black' are not *opposites*, ontologically, but *oppositions* that whites have historically imposed on blacks. Not unlike Jacques Derrida, who would 'deconstruct' metaphysical oppositions, Hillman would 'revision' them. On the issue of 'race' Hillman is a post-structuralist Jungian who advocates a logic that would not grossly *oppose* white and black (and regard the one as superior

and the other inferior), but that would subtly *differentiate* whiteness and blackness in order to problematise 'white supremacy'.

### *Jung and Multiculturalism*

In spite of the ambiguities in what Jung says about collective psychological differences, I believe that the interest that he evinces in the issue provides us with an opportunity to develop an authentic multicultural psychoanalysis. Jung says some problematic things about collective psychological differences, but he also says some truly astute, even prescient things. A liberal construction of Jung would generously regard him as an analyst who — in emphasising difference — anticipates the keen contemporary concern

with multicultural issues. For example, Andrew Samuels portrays Jung as a precursor of those who currently profess an interest in the topic of cultural differences. Samuels says of Jung that 'we should recognise that, alongside the unfortunate excursions into racial typology, we can also discern the seeds of a surprisingly modern and constructive attitude to race and ethnicity'. He notes that, in contrast to various problematic or even reprehensible remarks about 'race', Jung also frequently repudiates 'a Eurocentric, judgmental approach to other cultures' and demonstrates 'respect for and interest in' cultural differences. This seems to me both an accurate description and an equitable evaluation of the paradoxes of Jung.

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### *Further Reading*

Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994

Robert Bosnak, *A Little Course in Dreams*, Shambhala, 1988

Carl Jung, *Collected Works*, vol. 18

James Hillman, 'Notes on White Supremacy: Esaying an Archetypal Account of Historical Events', *Spring* 46, 1986

Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*, Doubleday, 1972

Andrew Samuels, *The Political Psyche*, Routledge, 1993

James Snead, 'European Pedigrees, African Contagions: Nationality, Narrative, and Communality in Tutuola, Achebe, and Reed', in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, 1990

Tzvetan Todorov, "'Race", Writing, and Culture', in Henry Louis Gates, Jr (ed), *'Race,' Writing, and Difference*, University of Chicago Press, 1986

