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Chapter 1

Jung and history

Adumbrations of a post-Jungian approach to psychoanalytic history

Kevin Lu

Introduction

The problems plaguing psychohistory have been well documented (Barzun 1974; Stannard 1980), so any attempt to view history from a depth psychological perspective requires an awareness of the pitfalls and critiques, as well as how the theory would approach telling, interpreting and imaging the past. This accordingly entails a critical analysis of the primary sources, which has not been extensively pursued by Jung scholars. To date, no one has systematically distilled what Jung actually said and thought about history. This chapter aims to remedy this gap in Jungian studies. It is only with this crucial work in place that a critical assessment of post-Jungian approaches to history can be pursued.


It is beyond the scope of this chapter to cover all of Jung’s statements on history. However, three major themes frequently arise: Jung’s consistently
inconsistent evaluation of history’s place in both individual and collective development; his distinction between ‘objective’ and ‘natural’ history which, I suggest, can be better understood as a tension between conscious history and archetypal history; and the significant role exceptional individuals play in history. Although these initial thoughts do not exhaust the complexity of Jung’s approach to history, they do provide a taste of what his philosophy of history might be.

Contradictory statements on the value of history

The tension between Jung’s romantic view of history and the overall empirical ethos governing his psychological method crystallises in his contradictory statements on history’s value. An examination of these discrepancies further shows the uniqueness of a Jungian psychohistorical approach, and the lengths to which historians would need to stretch if Jungian tools are to be utilised. Stated succinctly, what Jung means by ‘history’ and being ‘historical’ is opposed to more conventional conceptions held by western historians (Carr, 1961/90; Elton, 1969/87; Evans, 1997; Marwick, 2001; Tosh, 1984/2010).

The negative aspects of history and tradition

In his paper Woman in Europe, Jung depicts history and tradition as forces hindering individual progress. He asserts that feminine love defies all masculine constructs of traditional marriage, which brings into question the vow of fidelity. ‘Tradition’ incapacitates the potential for true feeling. Yielding to collective expectations only perpetuates the donning of a fraudulent persona (CW10: 265). Modern women realise that only in the state of love can they achieve everything of which they are capable. Yet this acknowledgement brings about psychological conflict, for as soon as they apprehend the redemptive and liberating functions of love, ‘a sort of conscience’ or, as I understand it, a misogynistic and patriarchal voice, holds them in check (CW10: 266). Coming face to face with public opinion, a woman’s initial intuition and willingness to be guided by feeling are crushed. Jung interprets this as being in ‘conflict with history’ (ibid.). As long as women ‘[live] the life of the past [they] can never come into conflict with history’ (CW10: 267). As soon as they deviate from this well-worn path, they encounter ‘the full weight of historical inertia’, which could have fatal psychic effects (ibid.). Jung thus implies that history and tradition are outdated relics stifling progress, mitigating an individual’s urge to follow her inner voice.

The problem of ‘historical inertia’, Jung continues, becomes a question of personal fulfillment, of whether an individual desires to make history, thus realising a sense of vocation so pivotal to Jung’s theory of individuation. ‘In
the end,’ he comments, ‘it boils down to this: is one prepared to break with tradition, to be “unhistorical” in order to make history, or not?’ (CW10: 268) In other words, history cannot be made without first breaking away from tradition. He continues: ‘No one can make history who is not willing to risk everything for it, to carry the experiment with his own life through to the bitter end, and to declare that his life is not a continuation of the past, but a new beginning’ (ibid.). Jung reiterates the importance of being ‘unhistorical’ in The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man.

Jung comments that a truly modern man must break free from the shackles of the past. ‘Every step forward,’ he writes, ‘means tearing oneself loose from the maternal womb of unconsciousness in which the mass of men dwells’ (CW10: 150). If aspects of the collective psyche remain unexamined, a collective malaise or herd mentality will result. The individual who sheds the shackles of the past, thereby breaking free from the herd, will transcend that which prevents every other ordinary person from realising true fulfillment. This gifted individual is described as becoming ‘“unhistorical” in the deepest sense’ and ‘estrang[ing] himself from the mass of men who live entirely within the bounds of tradition’ (ibid.). The truly modern individual ‘must [leave] behind him all that has been discarded and outgrown, and acknowledging that he stands before the Nothing out of which All may grow’ (ibid.). Though in the eyes of the collective, the one who strays too far from the accepted viewpoint should be ostracised, the sin of being unhistorical is a promethean transgression required for the attainment of higher consciousness (CW10: 152). Only by outgrowing ‘the stages of consciousness belonging to the past [. . .] can [one] achieve full consciousness of the present’ (ibid.).

The positive aspects of history

History as the ideal container

Jung’s antagonistic assessment of history and tradition contradict his other statements on the subject. In his Commentary on The Secret of the Golden Flower, he contends that the West’s knowledge of history and science prevents a childish engagement with the psyche, which is characteristic of eastern approaches. These disciplines serve as necessary containers effectively mediating the West’s interaction with the unconscious. Subsequently, the combination of history and science finds its teleological climax in psychology. In Jung’s opinion, this is the only subject that equally values both introspection and scientific rigour (CW13: 63). Psychology can extract the same knowledge the East has attained while simultaneously protecting the western ego from exposure to abnormal psychic states (ibid.). Jung’s recognition of history, however, is tempered with a criticism of its overt rationality. ‘[K]nowledge of the external world,’ he reflects, ‘is the greatest
obstacle to introspection’ (ibid.). If I am reading Jung correctly, history, in an unmediated form, is a hindrance. But when combined with science to spawn psychology, it serves a useful purpose. Ultimately, Jung is not commend- ing history per se, but recognising its role in the then burgeoning study of psychology. This ambivalence, however, is a doorway to exploring his more positive evaluations of history.

Jung’s thoughts on psychology and history outlined above – placed in the context of discussing the East – raise a number of issues. To reiterate Jung’s position, the West can extract more from the unconscious and do so more effectively than the East because it is equipped with disciplines serving as sufficient containers, mediating an encounter with the unconscious. The respective downfalls of history and science – being overtly rational approaches – are adequately addressed with the perfection of psychology as a branch of knowledge. Jung applauds the East for engaging the unconscious on the one hand, but criticises it for how it gets there on the other. Jung ultimately insists that a western perspective (steeped in rationality) is better than an eastern one (which is essentially backward) when engaging the unconscious. He thus expresses a Eurocentric model based on binary thinking – the West is best and progressive, the East is backward and regressive. Even in its positive form – where Jung praises eastern philosophies, or when he calls the ‘mystical’, introverted East the unconscious complement of the rational, extraverted West – he is employing simplistic divisions that fail to appreciate the East for its difference from and independence of the West. If Jung is endorsing certain eastern tenets because they prove his own psychological insights, the East then becomes ‘acceptable’ only because it resembles the West in some way. Rather than promoting the unity of the human race – a ramification implicit in his theory of the collective unconscious – Jung may be perpetuating division. Though Clarke makes a strong case that Jung’s dialogue with the East aims to build bridges of understanding (1994: 189), his Eurocentric mindset (ibid.: 160–61) and, by extension, the Eurocentrism woven into the fabric of analytical psychology, still needs to be acknowledged when applying analytical psychology to history.

A ‘living sense of history’

In Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology, Jung advocates fostering a ‘living sense of history’ by recognising the reality of historical continuity (CW8: 655). By only prizing conscious knowledge, the West has grown in many respects, but not in others. Mainly, its knowledge of the unconscious remains limited. If individuals were aware of its presence and its influence, they would comprehend that change in the present only mimics transformations that have occurred in the past. The ‘continuity of history’ forwarded by Jung here is different from what he perceives to be an outmoded traditional history. The importance of realising the ‘continuity of
history’ is intrinsically bound to recognising the unconscious operating in history. An awareness of one’s personal and impersonal link to the past serves as a grounding mechanism and reference point – a firm foundation fostering the development of a healthy personality. At the collective level, society is inherently linked to an ancient past, and knowledge of this connection is integral to deciphering the psychological effects the unconscious has had on cultural and intellectual progress.

Jung explicitly supports the study of history in his essay The Gifted Child. Knowledge of the past plays an integral part in the cultivation of the gifted. Jung writes: ‘And it seems to me especially important for any broad-based culture to have a regard for history in the widest sense of the word. Important as it is to pay attention to what is practical and useful, and to consider the future, that backward glance at the past is just as important’ (CW17: 250, emphasis added). Jung, however, is not referring to the discipline of history, but a form of metahistory. This perspective stresses continuity with, and being entrenched in, the roots of humanity’s history, i.e. the unconscious. As children are by nature closer to the unconscious, an early understanding of it, and the history of which it is comprised, could prevent a deleterious separation from the unconscious in adult life. This specific explanation – emphasising a form of history wedded to the unconscious – suggests a particular perception of history moving beyond its more familiar definitions (Carr, 1961/90; Elton, 1969/87; Evans, 1997; Marwick, 2001; Tosh, 1984/2010). Jung’s contradictory thoughts on history outlined in this section, moreover, ultimately attest to the fact that for him, history operates at two distinct levels.

A philosophy of history: Conscious history vs archetypal history

‘Objective history’ and ‘natural history’

Jung’s central distinction is established in his essay The Role of the Unconscious. He begins by noting the drawbacks of only understanding the unconscious in light of one’s personal experiences. Admittedly, a large portion of the analysand’s material can be traced back to his individual case history, but certain fantasies have roots in mythology. ‘They are,’ Jung writes, ‘elements which do not correspond to any events or experiences of personal life, but only to myths’ (CW10: 11). He continues:

We receive along with our body a highly differentiated brain which brings with it its entire history, and when it becomes creative it creates out of this history – out of the history of mankind. By ‘history’ we usually mean the history which we ‘make’, and we call this ‘objective history.’ The truly creative fantasy activity of the brain has nothing to
do with this kind of history, but solely with that age-old natural history which has been transmitted in living form since the remotest times, namely, the history of the brain-structure. And this structure tells its own story, which is the story of mankind: the unending myth of death and rebirth, and of the multitudinous figures who weave in and out of this mystery.

(CW10: 12)

Jung thus distinguishes between ‘objective history’ and ‘natural history’, a form of the past transmitted along with the brain-structure. Humanity inherits ‘natural history’ and from it creatively reproduces new forms of universal, mythic motifs, such as death and rebirth. ‘Natural history’ resides in, and emanates from, the collective unconscious and only discloses its living presence ‘through the medium of creative fantasy’ (CW10: 13). ‘Natural history’ transcends ‘objective history’, which is bound by space and time. Underlying recorded history is a greater historical process imbedded in the collective unconscious.

What Jung calls ‘objective history’, I suggest, could be more usefully referred to as conscious history. The term denotes that form of history which is, for him, a product of the conscious mind, further expressing the rationality with which historians usually engage the past. What Jung terms ‘natural history’ could be designated archetypal history. Not only would this prevent confusing Jung’s employment of ‘natural history’ with the way it was used – denoting psychology as a discipline – in the nineteenth century (Dallas 1860), but it captures what Jung actually meant by it. This form of history dwells in the unconscious, and only becomes partially distinguishable through its manifestations as conscious history. 10

The value of archetypal history and the denigration of conscious history

In The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man, Jung provides a description of the relationship between conscious and archetypal history. He undeniably attributes, moreover, greater value to the latter:

When we look at human history, we see only what happens on the surface, and even this is distorted in the faded mirror of tradition. But what has really been happening eludes the inquiring eye of the historian, for the true historical event lies deeply buried, experienced by all and observed by none. It is the most private and most subjective of psychic experiences. Wars, dynasties, social upheavals, conquests, and religions are but the superficial symptoms of a secret psychic attitude unknown even to the individual himself, and transmitted by no historian; perhaps the founders of religions give us the most information
in this regard. The great events of world history are, at bottom, profoundly unimportant.

(CW10: 315)

According to Jung, ‘history’ occurring on ‘the surface’ is not the real form of history. True history exists \textit{a priori} in the unconscious, in seed form. It merely awaits the right opportunity or psychic situation allowing for the content’s movement into consciousness. Historical events are subsequently trivialised and deemed inconsequential. This controversial perspective is further asserted in Jung’s statements on historical change.

\textbf{Jung on historical change}

In The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits, Jung proposes that the blueprint for historical change exists \textit{a priori} in the unconscious: ‘Incisive changes in history are generally attributed exclusively to external causes. It seems to me, however, that external circumstances often serve merely as occasions for a new attitude to life and the world, long prepared in the unconscious, to become manifest’ (CW8: 594). Not only does this confirm his view that another form of history operates at an unconscious level, but further reveals an additional quality of archetypal history, which may in turn be considered a crucial pitfall. The archetype underpinning events predetermines the outcome of its conscious materialization. A pattern ‘long prepared in the unconscious’ merely awaits the appropriate situation that will express the compensatory messages complementing a myopic, conscious viewpoint. The event becomes a container or shell which is, in and of itself, meaningless. An occurrence is meaningful only when the psychological process – i.e. the constellation of an archetypal pattern in history – underlying it is discerned.

External change in historical time, according to Jung, is ultimately an erroneous conception. Authentic historical change occurs in ‘unconscious time’, for the unconscious \textit{is} the true reality. (Jung 1963/1989: 323–25; 341; 348–49) Conscious experiences and historical events are, by extension, merely images of the true reality (ibid.: 324). Contrary to popular belief, historians are not dealing with ‘actual facts’ – the data produced by the unconscious parts of our psyches – but meandering in abstraction.

\textbf{Critical assessment}

Upon reading the above quotations, many historians would be justifiably cautious of a Jungian approach to telling psychoanalytic history. To assume that events are immaterial, and placing emphasis instead on the ‘objective truth’ emanating from the depths of the unconscious, contravenes most forms of historical investigation.\textsuperscript{11} What is important for Jung is
grasping the underlying blueprint, as its conscious manifestations are but mere repetitions of a pivotal pattern. The denigration of the conscious occurrence and the staunch advocacy of archetypes leave little room for appreciating the event for what it truly is – an integral instance never to be repeated in human history. Further, suggesting the immateriality of external events implies that they should be studied less, with concentration instead being focused on the greater patterns governing their outcome. This consequently sidesteps the moral responsibility and obligation we should have to the outside world, nullifying the compassion felt for all those affected by the all too real events of the past. To say that external happenings are ultimately unimportant and to myopically concentrate on internal images means that Jungian history is not really history at all.

A Jungian narrative of history – if it uncompromisingly adheres to archetypal theory – is one of repetition, rejecting the possibility that new things can occur. Stagnation – not development – is the result. That is not to say the alternative – a myth of historical progress – is any less problematic. However, if Jung’s brand of history is one of repetition – thus rendering historical events predictable – we still need to study this. This exploration would be valuable for the history of ideas, but it would contribute little to the viability of applying analytical psychology to elucidate any aspect of the historical enterprise.

From the historian’s vantage point, two interrelated issues remain, which I will touch on briefly here. First is the extermination of human agency implicit in postulating the reality of archetypal history. Second, is the question of change, and whether or not Jung provides space for its existence in his approach.

Saying that a greater pattern governs and thus predetermines historical outcomes inevitably takes human agency out of the historical equation. This is something most historians – and most people – would be unwilling to relinquish. Jung’s interpretation of the meaning of history – assuming there is one – could thus provide a way of avoiding both collective and individual responsibility. For instance, archetypal history could narrate contemporary rivalries between two groups – such as the Chinese and Japanese – as a lineage of historical clashes that are ultimately insurmountable due to how deeply they have been entrenched in the group psyche. Stated another way, if we argue that China’s animosity towards Japan is intrinsic, unchanging, inherited, patterned and archetypal, then hatred will continually be the result. The argument for archetypicality potentially stifles the possibility for change, denying the fact that communities can repair antagonisms of the past simply because their origins are identifiable, not hard-wired or imbedded into our very beings. We are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past, however hard it may be to escape from it. Consequently, Jung’s preference for archetypal history fails to see events and disputes contextually, historically and politically. If we assume the archetypal nature of
Chinese hatred towards different groups, we unavoidably give licence to perpetual retaliation, accepting it as an automatic and expected response being governed by some psychological meta-pattern. Stated simply, archetypal history could inflict a repetition of potentially harmful discourses, unwillingly justifying the recourse to violence and legitimising destruction and intellectual passivity. Hatred thus becomes a cycle that cannot be broken; vengeance becomes the norm, not the anomaly.

The problematic nature of Jung’s philosophy of history which would surely be classified as speculative\textsuperscript{12} needs to be dealt with proactively, and can neither be sidestepped nor brushed under a rug of psychological determinism, failing to attach itself to some real-world context. The downfall of an archetypal reading of history is that it assigns simple causes to complex historical events. In light of its defects, any reading of history needs to be contextual in the first instance, and not archetypal. History needs to be seen for its complexity, and not forced to fit theoretical structures that deny it a multiplicity of potential meanings. Further issues arise in the third major attribute of Jung’s approach to history – the prominence placed on exceptional individuals.

**The role of the individual in history**

Jung places individuals (in the Jungian sense) at the centre of history though ultimately, they are merely the vehicles for historical change. In The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man, Jung comments:

> In the last analysis, the essential thing is the life of the individual. This alone makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately springs as a gigantic summation from these hidden sources in individuals. In our most private and most subjective lives we are not only the passive witness of our age, and its sufferers, but also its makers. We make our own epoch.

\[(CW10: 315)\]

Jung’s emphasis on individuals can be framed not only within the ‘great man’ narrative of history which was still prominent when Jung was writing, but in view of his theory of indviduation, a teleological process of personality development (\textit{CW7}: 266). The duty of the exceptional individual in history is not simply to foster his own individuation, but to mobilise that process for the entire culture. By consciously following his own path of psychological development, he also changes society. Effecting larger alterations at the collective level is a mere consequence of the more important task of realising the Self (Jung 1963/1989: 3–5). This consequently leads to a methodological concern beyond the scope of this chapter: how can we
comprehend the past events of our external world through a psychological lens which affirms the veracity of the inner life over and above an engagement with concrete reality?

Jung’s paper The Gifted Child outlines the ideal education exceptional children should receive. Because their temperament should never be stifled, lessons must not deviate ‘from the humanities into over-specialised fields’ (CW17: 250). To cultivate an open mind, it is ‘especially important for any broad-based culture to have a regard for history in the widest sense of the word’ (ibid.). Based on my examination of Jung’s other statements on history—especially those concerning ‘objective’ and ‘natural’ history—the type of history to which he refers here is archetypal history. Respecting history and learning from the past—what Jung calls fostering a sense of continuity (ibid.)—balances the psyches of gifted children. As they are typically one-sided, another aspect is inescapably vulnerable and under-developed. By directing them to history ‘in the widest sense of the word’, Jung aims to reconnect them to their psychic heritage, which in turn is built upon the historical experiences of humanity. As children are by nature closer to the unconscious, making them aware of this realm of psychic activity reinforces a connection to it, before maturity and bitterness lead them astray. Jung writes:

Childhood [. . .] is a state of the past. Just as the developing embryo recapitulates, in a sense, our phylogenetic history, so the child-psyche relives ‘the lesson of earlier humanity’ [. . .] The child lives in a pre-rational and above all in a pre-scientific world, the world of the men who existed before us. Our roots lie in that world and every child grows from those roots. Maturity bears him away from his roots and immaturity binds him to them. Knowledge of the universal origins builds the bridge between the lost and abandoned world of the past and the still largely inconceivable world of the future.

(CW17: 250)

Fostering a connection with the unconscious entrenches children in the experiences and wisdom gained from those coming before them. Any novelty can prove to be a potential danger, which is why the gifted need to be capable of ‘well-balanced judgment’ (CW17: 251). History facilitates this, providing a ‘firm standpoint’ stemming from ‘sound knowledge of what has been’ (ibid.). ‘The man who is unconscious of the historical context,’ Jung argues, ‘and lets slip his link with the past is in constant danger of succumbing to the crazes and delusions engendered by all novelties’ (ibid.). True individuality is only achieved by anchoring oneself in the ‘wider’ history of the collective, thereby distancing oneself from mass movements and trends. A purely technical and practical education, Jung continues, ‘[lacks] the culture whose innermost law is the continuity of history, the long
procession of man’s *more than individual* consciousness’ (ibid., emphasis added). It is this continuity which ‘reconciles all opposites’ and ‘heals the conflicts that threaten the gifted child’ (ibid.). For Jung, history needs to serve a psychological function. A purely conscious approach to history, therefore, is not enough. A more comprehensive history needs to factor in the unconscious.

**Individuals and historical change**

Gifted children or exceptional individuals, capable of acknowledging the unconscious and its compensatory messages whilst withstanding its overwhelming power, are chosen to change the course of history as they are able to perceive this ‘abandoned world of the past’ (CW17: 251). They help ensure a collective future by combating widespread mass-mindedness (ibid.). Jung argues this on two other occasions (CW10: 315; CW8: 314) and although these statements do, in some ways, conflict with his other remarks on historical change (CW8: 594; CW10: 315), I argue that for him, historical change fundamentally springs from the unconscious, and not from individual agents. After arguing that historical change is the expression of unconscious processes in *The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits*, Jung writes: ‘Certain individuals gifted with particularly strong intuition then become aware of the changes going on in it [the unconscious] and translate these changes into communicable ideas’ (CW8: 594). These sentiments are repeated in *The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man.* As the great events of world history are ‘profoundly unimportant’, the ‘essential thing is the life of the individual’ (CW10: 315). ‘This alone,’ Jung remarks, ‘makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately spring as a gigantic summation from these hidden sources in individuals’ (ibid.). At the outset of this quotation, individuals are described not as passive bystanders, but the key to historical change. Upon closer examination, however, and in light of his other statements (CW8: 594), exceptional individuals are simply the ‘lucky’ and appointed hosts with the ability to intuit the process of historical change occurring in the unconscious. The whole history of the world emanates from the hidden sources found *within* individuals. Accordingly, they are the translators of change, but not its agents. In summary, the elite do possess a degree of autonomy – to decipher and interpret historical change – but they too must bow before the power of the unconscious.

Jung’s view of the individual in history raises some issues. It buttresses the ‘great man’ narrative, where historical change (or, in Jung’s case, knowledge of its source) is attributed to the choices and actions of one individual. Although there is no doubt that individuals do contribute to historical change, their intervention in world affairs is never isolated. There
is a context to every historical outcome, as well as other individuals and groups who shape the unfolding of events. Any historian interested in telling history from the ‘bottom up’ rather than the ‘top down’ would find Jung’s emphasis on the individual problematic, providing as it does only one perspective that inevitably stifles the voices of other historical agents.

**Conclusion**

Jung possesses contrasting opinions of history, and a tension subsequently arises in his writings. Ultimately, he distinguishes between two types of history, which I have termed conscious and archetypal history. Jung was vague about the value of conscious history, sometimes seeing it as a vessel serving a containing function, and at others conflating it with his negative evaluation of tradition. It is clear, however, that he bestowed greater value upon archetypal history. All history and the seeds of historical change are to be found, preformed, in the unconscious. Telling the history stemming from the unconscious is the true task of historians, not the recounting of minute facts that are ultimately meaningless.

In attempting to extract Jung’s philosophy of history, my interest has not been in his telling of history per se, but how we can use Jungian psychology to tell history. In other words, based on his psychological model specifically and his understanding of history more generally, can we illuminate the nature of historical events or an historical period? Can we mobilise analytical psychology to intelligently and responsibly comment on different times and places neither contingent to, nor directly considered by, Jung? Or is the real contribution limited to historiography? Teasing out Jung’s thoughts on history is the crucial, preliminary step that needs to precede any forays into telling Jungian psychoanalytic history. Post-Jungians interested in this area of study need to be aware of the pitfalls and arguments against Jung’s reading of history so that his mistakes may be avoided and, if possible, corrected.

Future studies need to apply analytical psychology to various spectrums – not just biography – within the historical enterprise, seeing if the theoretical tension evident in Jung’s thinking on history can be resolved. Moreover, the question needs to be asked: ‘Do the Jungian and Post-Jungian lenses yield fruitful results that cannot be achieved via other viewpoints, and do they add value to historical analysis?’ Jung certainly saw history through the lens of his psychology, which led to an underestimation of the principles of historical investigation. Yet can we uncover more open Jungian and Post-Jungian approaches to history, rendering the endeavour a more viable form of psychohistorical – and indeed, historical – research? It is clear, however, from the history of psychohistory that depth psychological perspectives – evidenced by the strong work of Lyndal Roper (1994) and Daniel Pick (2005) – are to be used as supplements to, and not
replacements for, good historical research. Historical facts should not be trumped by psychological ones. Concrete connections – and not psychological coincidences – are the building blocks of history, and any decent research refusing to denigrate the historical record must be founded upon the former.

Bibliography


Notes

1 In this chapter, I distinguish between psychohistory, which refers to reductive studies championing the psychoanalytic lens with little regard for historical method, and psychoanalytic history, which utilizes depth psychology only when appropriate, as one perspective out of many upon which the historian can draw. The latter emphasizes responsible history, rather than advancing one particular approach to it.
2 Toynbee was one of the first to utilise Jungian psychology (typology) to explicate some aspect of history (his concept of higher religions). This study can be found as an Appendix to Vol 7 of A Study of History (Toynbee 1954).
3 For a critique of Meyer’s text, see my review (Lu 2008).
4 Regarding the relationship between biography and history, see: Barbara Caine (2010); Ludmilla Jordanova (2000/2006); David Nasaw (2009); Lois Banner (2009) and Alice Kessler-Harris (2009).
5 The chart in the Appendix outlines some of Jung’s statements on history as found in his Collected Works.
6 For its simplicity, I follow J. J. Clarke’s format for citing the Collected Works. CW10 points to Collected Works Volume 10, and 265 refers to the paragraph.
7 In this instance, Jung wrongly assumes that all women are governed by feeling and emotion, an erroneous presumption highlighting his tendency to essentialise.
Jung takes a similar stance in Psychotherapists or the Clergy, arguing that modern man – insisting on living ‘with every side of himself’ – must cast history aside (CW11: 528).

In the nineteenth century, the phrase ‘natural history of the human mind’ referred to psychology (Dallas 1860). Accordingly, it is possible that Jung is not introducing a distinctive form of history, but referring to psychology as a discipline. Thus, a comparison with the original German and R. F. C. Hull’s translation was required. I am indebted to Rev. Dr. Ann Jeffers for aiding me in the translation, and confirming that Jung’s use of ‘natürlichen Geschichte’ – in light of an analysis of the paragraph specifically and the chapter more generally – is indeed referring to a separate form of history opposed to ‘objektive Geschichte’ (CW12: 10; Jung 1974: 22). Arguably, Jung’s way of combating Rankean-style history – in the same vein as Jacob Burckhardt’s response – was to aim to tell a more subjective history by utilising what he knew best: the notion of a dynamic unconscious (Jeffers, personal communication, 15 June 2009).

I avoid the term unconscious history, for it implies a general unawareness of the past which, I believe, is neither advocated by historians, nor would it have been by Jung himself.


Regarding the distinction between critical and speculative philosophy of history, see William Dray’s Philosophy of History (1949).
### Appendix

Jung’s statements on history as found in his *Collected Works*[^1]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of reference in <em>Collected Works</em></th>
<th>Title of work</th>
<th>Year of publication</th>
<th>Year of lecture</th>
<th>Topic of reference to history</th>
<th>Critical point made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) (CW5: 1; p. 3)</td>
<td>Introduction to Symbols of Transformation (First published in 1912)</td>
<td>German publication: 1952 – Translation of the Fourth Swiss Edition</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Continuity of history</td>
<td>History working at a deeper, unconscious level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) (CW5: 3; p. 5)</td>
<td>Introduction to Symbols of Transformation (First published in 1912)</td>
<td>German publication: 1952 – Translation of the Fourth Swiss Edition</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Historical material; Comparative study of history</td>
<td>Jung encourages the application of analytical psychology to history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) (CW6: 8–100; pp. 8–66)</td>
<td>The Problem of Types in the History of Classical Medieval Thought in <em>Psychological Types</em></td>
<td>German publication: 1921; English publication: 1923</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>History (in title)</td>
<td>Jung embarks upon a typological analysis of the Gnostics and a psychobiographical commentary of Tertullian and Origen. In Part II, he argues that religious schisms and heresies can be understood in terms of typological differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) (CW6: 231–32; pp. 141–42)</td>
<td>The Apollonian and the Dionysian in <em>Psychological Types</em></td>
<td>German publication: 1921; English publication: 1923</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Historical approach</td>
<td>Jung uses the term ‘history’ as exemplifying an overtly rational, conscious, and thus one-sided approach to knowledge.</td>
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[^1]: Jung’s *Collected Works* is a comprehensive collection of his works, originally published in German, with translations into English and other languages.
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<td>6) (CW8: 594; p. 314)</td>
<td>The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits</td>
<td>German publication: 1928; English publication: 1928; Revised and Expanded Edition: 1948</td>
<td>4 July 1919. Read at a General meeting of the Society for Psychical Research</td>
<td>Changes in history</td>
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<tr>
<td>7) (CW8: 655; p. 341)</td>
<td>Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology</td>
<td>German publication: 1931; English publication: 1933 in Modern Man in Search of a Soul (on which the present translation is based); Revision of original: 1934</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Jung advocates the cultivation of a ‘living sense of history’. Acknowledging the unconscious and realising the continuity of history – that society is still linked to its ancient past – is crucial to deciphering the psychological effects the unconscious has had on cultural development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) (CW9ii: 162–180; pp. 103–117)</td>
<td>The Historical Significance of the Fish in Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self</td>
<td>First five chapters, translated into English, were published in 1958; Jung dates the Foreword to the entire text as being written in 1950</td>
<td>History (in title)</td>
<td>Jung explores the historical manifestations of the archetypal image of wholeness. More specifically, he examines the dual nature of the fish symbol, which is representative of both Attis and Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location of reference in <em>Collected Works</em></td>
<td>Title of work</td>
<td>Year of publication</td>
<td>Year of lecture</td>
<td>Topic of reference to history</td>
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<tr>
<td>9) (CW9ii: pp. ix–xi) Foreword to <em>Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self</em></td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Jung's inadequacy as a historian</td>
<td>In his Foreword to <em>Aion</em>, written in 1950, Jung outlines the historical nature of the work as well as noting his own inadequacies as a historian. He sees his individual work as 'contributing to the historical process of assimilation'. He is aware of the dangers of using historical examples to buttress his psychological contentions. Jung further states, however, his unwillingness to be constrained within safe and rigid academic boundaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10) (CW10: 617; pp. 324–25) <em>Civilization in Transition</em></td>
<td><em>Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies</em></td>
<td>German publication: 1958; English publication: 1959</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Historians; psychological factors and history</td>
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<tr>
<td>11) (CW10: 265–68; pp. 129–30) <em>Civilization in Transition</em></td>
<td><em>Woman in Europe</em></td>
<td>German publication: Oct. 1927, republished in 1929, 1932, 1948 and 1959; English publication: 1928</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Conflict with history/historical inertia/unhistorical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>German Publication</td>
<td>English Publication</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>12) (CW10; pp. 177–78)</td>
<td>Preface to Essays on Contemporary Events</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1946; English publication: 1947</td>
<td>Psychologists must be in tune with contemporary history in order to best serve their analysands. What happens in the outer world has a huge impact on the inner life of the individual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13) (CW10: 985–86; pp. 517–180)</td>
<td>The Dreamlike World of India</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Indian attitude to history</td>
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becoming ‘unhistorical’. ‘Making history’ is not about continuity with the past, but a separation from it.

India, because it is closer to the unconscious, has no need of history, which is a western invention. History gives shape and form to the chaotic experiences of Europe.

The ‘history’ that occurs on the surface is not the real history. True history occurs in the unconscious, or is pre-formed in the unconscious, ‘experienced by all and observed by none’. Jung notes the connection between the individual and collective levels, for what occurs at the individual level is a microcosmic reflection of what is occurring at the macrocosmic level (ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny – recapitulation theory). Historical events are merely the vehicle for the expression of the unconscious. Historical events are ultimately unimportant. The individual is the harbinger for historical change.
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<th>Topic of reference to history</th>
<th>Critical point made</th>
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<tr>
<td>Civilization in Transition</td>
<td>The Role of the Unconscious</td>
<td>German publication: 1918; English publication: 1964</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>‘Objective history’ v. ‘natural history’</td>
<td>para. 12: Humanity inherits, along with a highly differentiated brain, its entire history. The brain creates out of, or draws from, the foundation provided by the history of mankind. The history which is of humanity’s making, and to which one usually refers, Jung terms objective history. Jung does not favour this form of history. The creative fantasy activity of the brain is connected to another form of history — ‘an age-old natural history which has been transmitted in living form since the remotest times [. . .]’. This inherent brain structure tells the stories of mankind, expressing themselves as myths.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civilization in Transition</td>
<td>The Role of the Unconscious</td>
<td>German publication: 1918; English publication: 1964</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Analytical psychology in its historical setting</td>
<td>Jung displays an understanding of history that is characteristically teleological. He contextualises and charts the role of significant events, as well as the contribution</td>
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</table>
of historical figures, to the rising, general interest in the unconscious. In his immediate context, Jung notes that humanity is in danger of suffering a bursting forth of the unconscious.

17) (CW10: 47; pp. 27–8) Civilization in Transition The Role of the Unconscious German publication: 1918; English publication: 1964 History The question of the relation between consciousness and the unconscious is inextricably intertwined with the history of humanity. Knowledge of the unconscious cannot be gained by exploring contemporary problems alone, but must be done in tandem with an inquiry into the history of humanity.

18) (CW10: 150–52; p. 75) Civilization in Transition The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man German publication: 1928; Revised and Expanded Edition: 1931; English publication in Modern Man in Search of a Soul (which was consulted in this translation): 1933 Unhistorical For Jung, a truly modern man must break free of the past – thus becoming ‘unhistorical’ – in order to attain higher levels of consciousness.

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<tr>
<td>20) (CW11: 528; p. 342)</td>
<td>Psychotherapists or the Clergy</td>
<td>German publication: 1932; English publication: 1933 in Modern Man in Search of a Soul</td>
<td>May 1932. Given as a lecture before the Alsatian Pastoral Conference at Strasbourg</td>
<td>Modern man and history</td>
<td>Modern man casts history aside, wanting to break with tradition in order to find meaning and value for himself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21) (CW13: 63; p. 43)</td>
<td>Commentary on The Secret of the Golden Flower</td>
<td>German publication: 1929; English publication: 1931; Revised German Edition: 1938; Fifth Edition (from which this translation is derived): 1957</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>History is a necessary, intellectual container which will mediate humanity's engagement with the unconscious – an approach to the unconscious contrasting the entirely intuitive nature of the East's engagement. At the same time, Jung seems to be criticising overtly rational attempts to gain knowledge of the external world. By extension, the type of history of which Jung speaks integrates introspection and, more specifically, a psychology of the unconscious.</td>
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<td>22) (CW13: 252; pp. 204–05)</td>
<td>The Spirit Mercurius</td>
<td>German publication: 1943; Revised and Expanded German Edition: 1948; English publication (from which this translation is derived): 1953</td>
<td>1942: Given as two lectures at the Eranos Conference, Ascona, Switzerland</td>
<td>History of religion</td>
<td>Jung promotes a symbolic, psychological interpretation of the history of alchemy. Studying the history of alchemy from this perspective inevitably leads to a consideration of the history of religion, hence the inadequacy of a purely scientific approach which is unwilling to cross the disciplinary boundary into more symbolic considerations.</td>
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<td>23)</td>
<td><em>The Philosophical Tree</em></td>
<td>German publication: 1945</td>
<td>Revised and Expanded Edition</td>
<td>1954</td>
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<td>24)</td>
<td><em>The Philosophical Tree</em></td>
<td>German publication: 1945</td>
<td>Revised and Expanded Edition</td>
<td>1954</td>
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<td>25)</td>
<td><em>Sigmund Freud in his Historical Setting</em></td>
<td>Published in both German and English simultaneously: 1932; Essay reprinted in 1934</td>
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<td>26)</td>
<td><em>The Gifted Child</em></td>
<td>German publication: 1943 and 1946; (English translation based on the 1946 edition)</td>
<td>December 1942. Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Basel School Council</td>
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<td>27) (CW17: 250; pp. 144–45)</td>
<td>The Gifted Child</td>
<td>German publication:</td>
<td>December 1942.</td>
<td>Continuity of history</td>
<td>Jung argues for the continuity of history, which points to a potential, teleological element in his thinking. The unconscious simultaneously directs and reconciles the experiences of humanity. The continuity that regulates opposites in history at the macro level also moderates the personal fluctuations and conflicts of the gifted child at the micro level (<em>archetypal history</em>). The unconscious operates at both the individual and collective levels and thus its effects should be studied at both strataums.</td>
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<td>The Development of the Personality</td>
<td></td>
<td>1943 and 1946; (English translation based on the 1946 edition)</td>
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<td>para 251: History provides a ‘firm standpoint’ or strong-enough container to withstand the danger of succumbing to mass trends and thus is essential to true individuality. To resist the dangers of collectivity one must be entrenched in the lessons stemming from the history of the collective. para 252: The individual can potentially influence and change the path of history.</td>
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</table>

Note

1 These do not include references to history made in the context of discussing the figure of Christ.