



Jungian Analytical Psychology & Gestalt Psychotherapy

Drawing The Parallels -
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Canberra Jung Society



Founders - Origin

Carl Jung (1875–1961)

- Born in rural Switzerland to a line of Protestant clergy and scholars
- Grew up introspective, solitary, fascinated by dreams, symbols, and the unseen world
- Studied medicine and psychiatry at the University of Basel and Zurich

Fritz Perls (1893–1970)

- Born in a working-class Jewish family in Berlin
- Childhood was turbulent: oppressive schooling, strained family relationships, rebellion
- Fought in WWI; later studied medicine and psychoanalysis in Berlin

Founders-Childhood wounds

- ❖ A fragile, withdrawn mother with mood swings
 - ❖ A father who was emotionally distant and intellectually rigid
 - ❖ A sense of being left alone with strange, overwhelming internal experiences
 - ❖ A deep fear of collapse — both psychological and familial
 - ❖ A split between the “No. 1 Personality” (outer, rational boy) and “No. 2 Personality” (inner, ancient, mystical self)
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- ❖ An authoritarian, harsh mother who belittled him
 - ❖ A father who was absent and unprotective
 - ❖ Severe academic struggles; he was often shamed by teachers
 - ❖ Feelings of being stupid, worthless, humiliated
 - ❖ Rejection from institutions, ridicule, and anti-Semitic hostility
 - ❖ A chaotic family environment with constant tension

The role of women - Jung

- ❖ **Emma Jung** — stabilizing, patient, intellectually engaged
- ❖ **Toni Wolff** — brilliant, intuitive, spiritually attuned
- ❖ **“Tension of opposites,” “Coniunctio,” “Psychic Union”**

The role of women - Perls

- ❖ A marriage strained by betrayal (**Laura Perls** was both his partner and frequent emotional opponent)
- ❖ Serial affairs, especially in the US
- ❖ Chronic infidelity - Sexuality used as:
Rebellion, self-assertion, validation,
dominance, escape, freedom

Catalytic role of Laura Perls

- Founder of contemporary Gestalt Therapy (more relational, less confrontational)
- Integrated rigorous German Gestalt psychology into the therapy
- Ensured the theory reflected phenomenology, not just personality
- Brought the body back into therapy
- Redefined Self as Process that happens in relationship
- Many concepts now seen as “core” to Gestalt—awareness, organismic self-regulation, contact, presence, co-creation—were sharpened, expanded, or even originated by Laura

Defence mechanisms - Jung

- **Compensatory mechanisms**
- **Persona as a defense**
- **Shadow repression**
- **Projection**
- **Inflation & deflation**
- **Neurotic complexes as defensive structures**

Defence Mechanisms - Perls

- **Introjection**
- **Projection**
- **Retroflection**
- **Confluence**
- **Deflection**
- **Desensitisation**
- **Egotism**

Differences

- Jung defences protect the Ego from the Unconscious
- Perl's defences protect the person from real contact with the world
- Jung = inner defenses
- Perls = boundary defences

Dreams

Jung: Dreams as Messages from the Deep

- For Jung, dreams were:
- Symbolic communications from the **unconscious**
- Attempts at **compensation** for imbalances in the conscious mind
- Expressions of **archetypes**, mythic patterns shared across humanity
- Dreams were a **bridge** to individuation

Perls: Dreams as Disowned Parts of the Self

- For Perls, dreams were not messages to be interpreted — they were **live expressions of the fragmented self**
- Every element of the dream *is you* — even objects
- The dream is the “royal road to **integration**,” not interpretation
- Dreams are **unfinished business** seeking closure

Approach to the unconscious

Jung

- The unconscious is **structured**, symbolic, and purposeful. It contains:
 - The personal unconscious (repressed/personal material)
 - The **collective unconscious** (archetypal patterns)
- The unconscious is a source of guidance and wisdom
- It wants to communicate and to heal
- The unconscious is not dangerous — it's the neglected half of the psyche that completes the individual

Perls

- The unconscious is not mystical or symbolic. It's simply:
 - What we push away
 - What we're not currently aware of
 - Emotions and impulses we suppress
- Integration happens by **bringing awareness into the present moment**, not by decoding mythic structures
- The unconscious is mostly **blocked energy**, interrupted processes, unfinished business

How modern Gestalt reabsorbed Jungian ideas through the back door (quietly smuggled Jung back in...)

- The return of the shadow
- Empty chair
- Field theory quietly replaces archetypes
- Jung mapped the psyche in symbols.
Gestalt invites you to step inside the map and feel it happening.
- Dreams to explore and re-enact
- A non-ego organising intelligence

Paradoxical theory of change

- Change occurs when a person becomes what they are, not when they try to become what they are not (Beisser, 1970).

- A JUNGIAN PARALLEL: Individuation Happens by *Becoming Who You Are*.

Change occurs when the ego relinquishes its inflated project of self-improvement and allows the psyche's compensatory forces to enter consciousness.

Paradoxical Theory of Change - Continued:

- Enantiodromia (from Heraclitus) - *the running toward the opposite*. The unconscious side of the paradoxical theory of change - the conscious, phenomenological version of enantiodromia
- Jung emphasizes *symbolic eruption* from the unconscious
- Gestalt emphasizes *here-and-now awareness* of the emerging experience
- Both describe a **reversal produced by honesty**, not excessive effort

Gestalt:

- **Stop trying to be different** → True difference becomes possible

Jung:

- **Stop identifying with Ego ideals** → The Self emerges

Relational Gestalt & Post-Jungians

- ❖ Michael Fordham (1905-1995):
Development is relational from the start. The self is not just a distant centre. It de-integrates and reintegrates in early relationships.
- ❖ James Hillman (1926-2011): Archetypes without transcendence. Draw the soul into the world. Psyche is imaginal, not hierarchical. Gods are perspectives, not truths. Symptoms are poetic, not problems to fix.

Fictional Dialogue between Jung and Perls

Jung:

Dreams speak a symbolic language older than the ego. To understand a dream is to converse with the unconscious.

Perls:

Conversation is just more talking. If the dream matters, *do it*. Don't interpret it — experience it.

Jung:

But symbols reveal the archetypal patterns that shape us. They point to the Self.

Perls:

People hide behind symbols. They talk about archetypes because they're scared to feel what's happening *right now*. That's avoidance dressed as philosophy.

Dialogue-Continued

Jung:

Dreams rise from the depths of the collective unconscious. They are not random; they use symbols that connect us to the mythic structure of the psyche.

Perls:

Symbols are excuses to avoid feeling. People hide behind myths the way they hide behind their parents. I want the person in front of me — not their mythology.

Jung:

But myths are not merely defenses. They are the language of the soul. Without myth, the psyche starves.

Interpretation brings insight - you sacrifice depth for immediacy.

Perls:

And you sacrifice immediacy for abstraction.

People need to breathe. They need to stand on the ground and own their wants. Myth is dessert, not the main dish.

Dialogue-Continued

Jung:

You reduce the psyche to physiology and behaviour. What about meaning? What of the archetypal dimension?

Perls:

Meaning is fine — but most people use it to escape the present. “What does it mean?” is a clever way to avoid “What do I feel right now?”

Jung:

Yet without symbolism, one cannot understand the inner child, the shadow, the anima, the Self.

Perls:

The inner child is right there crying. No need to name him. Let the client *be* the child — don't write a myth about him.

Jung:

You treat the psyche like a fire to be touched. I treat it like a mystery to be approached with reverence.

Perls:

I treat it like a life to be lived, not decoded.

Dialogue - End

Jung:

Perhaps the psyche requires both — symbols and sensations, meaning and experience.

Perls:

...Well, at least we agree on something: people split themselves in half.

Jung:

And spend their lives stitching the halves back together.

Perls:

Fine. You use mythic thread. I use bare hands.

Jung:

Perhaps the psyche needs both reverence and immediacy.

Perls:

Yes. But in your world, the client studies their pain. In mine, they feel it.

Jung:

And feeling without reflection becomes chaos.

Perls:

And reflection without feeling becomes a prison.

Summary

- Wholeness and integration (JUNG: individuation, GESTALT: awareness)
- Unconscious is not the enemy (JUNG: creative, compensatory, expressing through dreams, symbols, archetypes, GESTALT: Unfinished business, emergence of figure from ground)
- Complexes (JUNG: emotionally charged clusters that constellate attention and behaviour, GESTALT: Figure that “grabs” the psyche until it is recognised and integrated)
- Dialogue with parts of the psyche (JUNG: active imagination, GESTALT: empty chair). In both cases healing comes from encounter and relationship with inner figures.
- Mapping the same terrain from different angles (JUNG: Depth, archetypal layers, amplification, transpersonal meaning, GESTALT: Horizontalization, immediate experience)
- Self as organiser (JUNG: central, larger than the Ego. GESTALT: the organism naturally moves toward balance where awareness is not blocked)
- Map of the psyche (JUNG: mythopoetic but structural, GESTALT: phenomenological)

Thank you!
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