

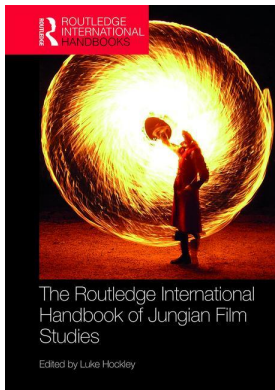
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Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



## The Routledge International Handbook of Jungian Film Studies

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### Stick to the image?

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315619163-4>

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**Published online on: 09 Apr 2018**

**How to cite :-** Eric Greene. 09 Apr 2018, *Stick to the image? from: The Routledge International Handbook of Jungian Film Studies* Routledge

Accessed on: 22 Oct 2021

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315619163-4>

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# 3

## STICK TO THE IMAGE?

No thanks!

*Eric Greene*

### Introduction

This chapter is informed by two systems of thought that define antithetical ontologies of subjectivity: the critical theory of Karl Marx and the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung. Critical theory claims that the ‘ensemble of social relations’ structures everything, including the psyche, and that ‘human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual’ (Marx and Engels, 1978, p. 145). Running contrary to this position is Jung’s analytical psychology that claims that the psyche is essential to each individual, and is itself a source of knowledge. Despite the apparent incompatibility, this chapter deploys both systems of thought towards a single goal which is inherent in each: namely, to resist mass psychological thinking. Put another way, both systems of thought are demystifying critical theories of consciousness.

One location where such a critique can occur is in the cinema where one confronts ideological images on the screen. (Homologous to this are the images which emerge in our minds.) However, a problem of interpreting these images can be the affectivity, which emerges in the viewer while watching a film, which itself might be a kind of false consciousness. From this perspective it is the dimensions of the commodity form (e.g. the film) that are ‘mystical’ or ‘transcendent’ (Marx, 1978, p. 320) and which might be generating the numinous experience. The same argument can be made for the images that emerge in one’s mind.

In order to resist this particular configuration of subjectivity, that is, to gain mental clarity so to better evaluate the verity of the images and the affective response to them, the singular form or archetype of capitalism which defines them needs to be subject to a critique – one very Jungian way to do that is to critique its numinosity.

Today, as the features of neoliberalism dominate political and economic systems globally, so too they colonize and define consciousness and psyche. Now so more than ever everything, including the images in the mind and in the cinema, perverts or violently shapes persons into the mass psychology of the capitalist way of life. In other words, the numinosity of the capitalist image is everywhere. This is why we need Jung’s work more than ever, so that humans once having found their souls do not moan in torture and sell them because their worth is no different from that of a mass manufactured automaton.

To begin, this chapter draws a brief connection between mind and cinema in order to present the homology of their functioning. Then it will proceed by comparing and deploying

critical theory and analytical psychology in the task of critiquing the image. The chapter will proceed with a discussion of Jung's interpretation of images. Then it will use *The Fast and The Furious: Furious 7* (dir. Wan, 2015) as an example of one of Jung's warnings regarding narcissistic interpretations of images. Then it will proceed with a final warning by James Hillman, and critique of that warning. Finally it will illustrate the ways in which the film *Titanic* (dir. Cameron, 1997) is an example of ideology, and then the chapter will end with concluding remarks.

## Jung and Marx

Since the time of the Ancient Greeks, comparisons have been at least prefigured and drawn between the mind and phantasmic moving images. Famously, Plato in book seven of the Republic (514a–520a), prefigured the idea of the cinema in his well known allegory of the cave in which the mind is likened to moving images which are projected from behind viewers onto a front facing wall; the viewers, who are chained to the floor, confuse these moving images with the true nature of things (Bloom, 1968). The movement of these images on the wall, is homologous to the mythopoetical function of the psyche in the ways it produces and animates images in the mind (Ellenberger, 1981, p. 314). That is, images are a necessary feature of our consciousness (c.f. Jonas, 1966, pp. 157ff.; Hillman, 1970; Bachelard, 1971). The complexity of the relationship between cinema and mind is made in Pat Berry's observation that, 'Film began at the same time as depth psychology, at the end of the 19th century' (2001, p. 70). Additional comparisons to cinema have been made. For example, McGinn (2007) compares the activity in church to the activity in the cinema – a comparison of religion. Hockley (2013) draws comparisons between therapy and cinema – a comparison of psychotherapy.

All of this suggests the basic homology of envisioning mental images and watching images move across a cinema screen should include a discussion of Jung's practice of active imagination – 'a sequence of fantasies produced by deliberate concentration' (1936: §101). In both activities, one is attempting to bear witness to the movement of images, which have the potential to be extremely psycho-activating, and, additionally, both provide primary material for mental or ethical acquisition. Put succinctly:

Cinema has the possibility of becoming an imaginal space – a *temenos* – and by engaging with films a version of active imagination is stimulated which can then engage the unconscious – potentially in as successful a fashion as our conscious attention to dream imagery and other fantasies.

*(Hauke and Alister, 2001 p. 2)*

But, these very images that are stimulated via active imagination or by watching a film, and how one interprets them, can also be ideologically configured, that is to say, they offer a source of false knowledge, as opposed to a source of true knowledge of oneself or the world. The psyche as a dimension of experience that one assumes to be the groundwork of one's life, can be the manufactured experience which comes from being a part of the material conditions of the mass psychological or social world. This is to argue that the configuration of subjectivity within 'the ensemble of social relations' (i.e. capitalism) prescribes or determines specific intrapsychic as well as extrapsychic experiences. As Marx writes:

Hitherto men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be. They have arranged their

relationships according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands.

(Marx and Engels, 1978, p. 146)

One possible critique of Jungian interpretative procedures of images is that the belief that all intrapsychic experience including the affect or somatization generated from contact with the numinous is necessarily true, is quite possibly false. That is, the sum total of one's experience could be nothing more than a phantom that has gotten out of one's hands.

What structures these phantoms? According to critical theory, it is ideology. As Marx puts it:

If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

(*ibid.*, p. 154)

(That he compares ideology to a camera is a noteworthy synchronicity.) Ideology emerges from one's historical life-process, that is, from the material conditions which define life today. He continues: 'The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process ... [Ideology has] no history, no development.... Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life' (*ibid.*, pp. 154–155).

What forms the consciousness of the mass-psychology human is the global domination of neoliberalism, and, one could add, its corresponding image. The simplification of Marx's work to the abovementioned phrase that 'consciousness [is determined] by life' aligns well with Jung's notion of the collective unconscious and his oft repeated quip that we are in psyche, and not the other way around. That is to say, Marx and Jung share a concern about the forces of collective and social life which shape and influence the nature of subjectivity and psychology.

Jung's comments on the problems of mass psychology align well with Marx's critique of ideology. But while Marx focuses his attention on labor and alienation, Jung focuses his on the mass psychological human, or the problems of the mass psyche. For example, Jung writes:

Thanks to industrialization, large portions of the population were up-rooted and were herded together in large centres. This new form of existence – with its mass psychology and social dependence on the fluctuation of the markets and wages – produced an individual who was unstable, insecure, and suggestible.

(1946: §453)

Jung characterizes the modern mass psychological human as unstable, insecure, and suggestible, and in doing so what he offers is akin to Marx's description of the worker or subject under capitalism as 'alienated' and characterized by a 'loss of self' and 'animal' (Marx and Engels, 1978, p. 74). This is noteworthy because it means that mass culture fractures a person's psychological strength, creates misery, soullessness and dependence on the system. The importance of this characterization for this chapter will come further down, but it is sufficient for now to suggest the dynamic of a miserable person desiring ideological life, is reproduced in the cinema.

Jung continues:

The dangerous slope leading down to mass psychology begins with this plausible thinking in large numbers, in terms of powerful organizations where the individual

dwindles to a mere cipher. Everything that exceeds a certain human size evokes equally inhuman powers in man's unconscious.

(*ibid.*: §457)

These words apply to the world now more than ever. As a singular, dominant ideology colonizes our globe and our psyches, the threat of being reduced to a mere cypher applies to everyone. This definition of subjectivity as an empty or zero-person, has the potential to be reproduced within the dynamic of the cinema. Even further, film images hold the potential to shape or pervert us by telling and teaching us how to behave and what to believe, as Slavoj Žižek points out in *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (dir. Fiennes, 2012).

This theme of the image of mass psychological human within analytical psychology, combined with the ways in which false consciousness today shapes us to think we have self-knowledge when really that knowledge is false (as shown by critical theory) will be the focus of investigation for the next portion of the chapter. The chapter will proceed with a discussion of Jung's interpretation of images.

### **Jung's interpretations and warnings of images**

Jung was largely concerned with the phenomenological investigation of the instinct of images. Also, he claimed that the main interest of his life's work was 'with the approach to the numinous' (Jaffe, 1989, p. 16). One might add, 'by means of the image'. He offers a method by which one could interpret an object of art or an intrapsychic image.

Jung identified two categories of creative processes that were effective in analyzing and or interpreting images, as one would interpret the images of art. He terms one the 'Psychological' and the other the 'Visionary' (1930/50: §139). This fork in the interpretive road between these two different perspectives takes us down diverging hermeneutical paths into somewhat distinct universes of discourse. The first path leads us into a reductionist medical universe of discourse and a psychologizing of the subject in which creative work is thought to be a symptom of psychopathology or a disease of the artist (*ibid.*: §107). It is not unlike the scene in the film *Gremlins* (dir. Dante, 1984) where when water is poured on the adorable Mogwai a nasty little gremlin emerges out of his back. According to this procedure, interpreting the images of art beyond the manifest content reveals the so-called truth, naturally, hidden in the artist. Along these lines, we would interpret the figure of Superman as Jerry Siegel's attempt to resolve his Oedipal complex through the fantasy of asserting dominance in the world, to impress his mother and destroy his father, with leaps and bounds, movement faster than a speeding bullet, and all the rest.

Among other things, this reductionism excludes the dimensions of the collective unconscious. In addition, of this deconstructive, restrictive, psychologizing interpretative procedure, Jung comments:

The reduction of the vision to a personal experience makes it something unreal and unauthentic – mere substitute, as we have said. The vision thus loses its primordial quality and becomes nothing but a symptom; the teeming chaos shrinks to the proportions of a psychic disturbance.... We should do well, I think, to bear clearly in mind the full consequences of this reduction of art to personal factors, and see where it leads. The truth is that it deflects our attention from the psychology of the work of art and focuses it on the psychology of the artist.

(*ibid.*: §146–147)

In short, reducing a work of art, such as a film, to be a product of the artist's pathology or psychonarrative, misses the value and meaning of the object of art itself and fails to provide value for the collective world.

The second path of artistic interpretation identified by Jung leads into a visionary and compelling universe of discourse. Jung explains:

In dealing with the psychological mode of creation we need never ask ourselves what the material consists of or what it means. But this question forces itself upon us when we turn to the visionary mode. We are astonished, confused, bewildered, put on our guard, even repelled; we demand commentaries and explanations. We are reminded of nothing in everyday life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears, and the dark, uncanny recesses of the human mind.

(*ibid.*: §143)

The states of experience from the visionary are astonishing and are at times confusing, bewildering and terrifying. All of this can be reduced to a single criterion for the definition of the visionary category, which is also one of Jung's most oft-used words: numinous. With its root 'numen' and its variation 'numinosity', the word occurs on average of about once every 13–14 pages from the beginning to the end of the 4963 pages of his *Collected Works*. Specifically, the *Collected Works* contains the word 'numinous' about 190 times, while its root 'numen' occurs roughly 67 times and its variation 'numinosity' around 89 times. The feeling of astonishment, confusion, etc., is the magical feeling of numinosity, as the archetypes are the numinous and structural elements of the psyche. According to Jung's argument the visionary contains the 'imagery of the collective unconscious' (*ibid.*: §152).

However, modern scholars and analytic therapists have struggled to define exactly what Jung meant by 'numinous'. According to Huskinson (2006, p. 201), the numinous is difficult to define because it is non-rational. Thus, one dimension of the word is that it is a mystery, i.e. beyond ego comprehension. Further, Huskinson shows that Jung borrowed the term from Rudolf Otto who used it in the context of its etymology 'spirit', that is, within the discourse of religion, specifically Christianity. Thus, another dimension of the word is a Christian one. However, according to Huskinson, Jung 'facilitates its mistranslation into his psychological theory' (*ibid.*, p. 202). That is, most of Jung's allusions to the numinous are 'concerned with the emotional affective experience of the unconscious' (*ibid.*). In short, Jung, for better or worse, took the word from a religious discourse, and within the discourse of his psychology refocused its meaning on the affectivity of confronting the mysterious. What one struggles with today is upon what criteria is it possible to agree that a given moment, in the cinema or elsewhere, is truly numinous and not something else, such as traumatizing, or amazing. In other words, if one accepts critical theory's argument that 'life determines consciousness' how would one evaluate if a numinous moment is or is not ideological?

The failure to answer this question adequately has been problematic to the Jungian community generally, and a source of naive wholesale introjection by mainstream culture. That is, the redefinition of the word, i.e. sanitizing its religious dimension and focusing on the affective experience of the confrontation with the mysterious, became easy fodder specifically for the feel-good nature of the New Age Movement, and its tendency to incorporate so-called mystery moments into one's psycho-narrative, or, one's so-called 'journey'. A good report of this can be found in the article in the *New York Times* that came out during the publication of the *Red Book*, entitled, 'The Holy Grail of the Unconscious', by Sara Corbett (2009):

Whether or not he would have wanted it this way, Jung – who regarded himself as a scientist – is today remembered more as a countercultural icon, a proponent of spirituality outside religion and the ultimate champion of dreamers and seekers everywhere, which has earned him both posthumous respect and posthumous ridicule.... His central tenets – the existence of a collective unconscious and the power of archetypes – have seeped into the larger domain of New Age thinking while remaining more at the fringes of mainstream psychology.

The subject in these instances of New Ageism and of Jungianism is very susceptible to ideology. (The coupling of religion with business would need to be the subject of another paper, but sufficient for now is to suggest that the marketing of numinous experiences tends to be an incredibly attractive sales pitch and highly lucrative (cf. Weber, 1920/2011)). All affective moments from the numinous, all moments in which something has appeared to have emerged from someplace mysterious or secret, all moments in which one exchanges and cheapens a critical consciousness for a feel-good experience, have the potential to send one to some destructive psychological place where one is completely lost and furthest from one's self, all the while thinking that one is closest to one's self. As Tacey (2001) reminds us, Jung's writing in *Symbols and Transformation* was largely concerned with this problem. He approaches the same issue from a different angle when he writes:

In archetypal terms, we have to do with a fatal erotic attraction, where the ego longs to 'marry' the archetypal mother in death. To educate us beyond this fatal attraction, the ego has to be shown how to serve the sacred reality in this life, and not to hanker after another life to consummate the erotic union. This opaque, dull, or inert world has to be made translucent, has to become the legitimate home of the sacred reality, so that in our longing for the sacred we do not always betray this world and flee to another world in ecstatic death or egoic dissolution. Jung ... was hugely concerned with this problem, and with the way in which an otherworldly divine image can 'poison humanity' and bring about psychic destruction in individuals. In *Symbols [and Transformation]*, Jung described a case study in which an incestuous longing for fusion with the matrix subverts a human life, brings on fragmentation of the mind, and engenders the illusion of creativity and power in the face of evident self-destruction. (p. 52)

Today, perhaps these images are necessarily 'incestuous' because images of mind and of world are configured by the same ideology, which reinforces one's gaze to be constructed narcissistically. This makes the intrapsychic experience prescribed within a determined dynamic. Specific to this chapter, it is possible that the interpretation of the affectivity elicited in the viewer in the cinema runs the risk of being confused with a so-called authentic experience of self.

The complexity of the issue of the numinous is caught up too in the desire for the experience, such as when Holowitz writes in Hauke and Alister (2001): '[c]ertainly Iago can be seen as shadow, or Circe as an anima figure ... [b]ut our *experience* of Othello or Homer is not much enriched as a result' (p. 84, italics added). This desire to feel something so that one could become more authentic by integrating the god-like (i.e. the Self) material on one's path toward individuation, that is to be transformed, obscures the fact that these experiences may not be transformative at all (cf. Cushman, 1990). And, one runs the risk of commoditizing, stockpiling and fetishizing the moment into only that – an experience. This very reduction of the work of art to its experience might be the precise interpretive procedure or desire that needs to be resisted in order to understand more accurately the purpose of the film. The trap set by the

jargon of authenticity is that the experience, which one tends to elevate to a superior moral status, could be nothing more than a cheapened manufacturing or reproduction of affectivity.

Jung was aware of further complications inherent in encountering numinous images, and he warns the reader of the traps along the way. Curiously, one will not find the warnings in relation to literature, but one will find them in his method of active imagination that is a sequence of fantasies produced by deliberate concentration on an image. Even so these warnings are pertinent to the creative arts. Jung provides three warnings to the person who undergoes active imagination. The first warning is similar to the first mode of interpretation with one major exception: the so-called artist, in this sense, is the subject. That is, one may get stuck in a cycle of Freudian free interpretation such that one becomes 'caught in the sterile circle of his own complexes, from which he is in any case unable to escape' (1916/57: Prefatory note before §131). In short: resist the urge to psychologize one's self.

This warning deserves further elaboration and cannot be overstated enough because of its central importance today to the destructiveness of consciousness and imagination (Bloom, 1987), contributing to the 'culture of incapacity' (Zaslavsky, 2015, personal correspondence) and to the implicit acceptance and reinforcement of domination. In other words, the dominant hermeneutic of works of art today including literature, paintings and film, is to make the work personalized within the viewer. While all works of art, in fact any object, may stir some personal meaning or reflect our invisible worlds, the central focus of the viewer on personal meaning is as a socially constructed interpretive or ideologically constructed procedure (Foucault, 1995). Jung's injunction here is that such a personal psychologization leads to an inescapable and sterile circle of one's own complexes. In short, one loses the object of art altogether while retreating into a world of interiority. This precise warning aligns with social theory's notion of the commoditization of the self, which necessarily forces subjects to focus their attention inwardly thus foreclosing knowledge of the effects of the social world (Fisher, 2009; Parker, 2007). That the viewer accepts the ontological experience of their subjectivity as absolute truth potentially could not be more dangerous, more perverted, more ideological, that is, it could not be further from the truth. In short, we run the risk of becoming anesthetized by the ideology of subjectivism, when we interpret our external experiences within the discourse of psychogenic narratives.

The second warning states that one might get 'stuck in an all-enveloping phantasmagoria' (1916/57: Prefatory note before §131). This too needs further elaboration. Some images fail to be integrated into the personality because their meaning and moral demands are missed. The images become too personalized. This fetishization of the image turns one's viewing into a narcissistic gaze that collapses the depth and value of the image into the cheap two-dimensionality of its façade. One gets the spirit of the times without the depths. Being stuck in this kind of what could be called an aesthetic trance is not unlike the far out encounter with the phantasmagoria produced by a mescaline trip. In his letter to Betty Grover Eisener, Jung (1957/84) writes unhappily:

Experiments along the line of mescaline and related drugs are certainly most interesting, since such drugs lay bare a level of the unconscious that is otherwise accessible only under peculiar psychic conditions [perhaps, during active imagination?]. It is a fact that you get certain perceptions and experiences of things appearing either in mystical states or in the analysis of unconscious phenomena, just like the primitives in their orgiastic or intoxicated conditions. I don't feel happy about these things, since you merely fall into such experience without being able to integrate them. The result is not a moral and mental acquisition. It is the eternally primitive man having experience of his ghost-hand, but it is not an achievement of your cultural development.

(p. 159)



In Jung's critique, the encounter with drug induced psychic visions does not become integrated. In the parlance of those times, one cannot handle it. One experiences the images without any 'moral or mental acquisition'.

This failure to integrate aligns with the popular critique today of blockbuster films: all show, no substance; all visual, no content. One leaves the theater as if one gained absolutely nothing, except for diminished hearing and a wowing from the aesthetics of cinematic transmogrification. This experience is codified in social dynamics so that one may forget about the pain of everyday life.

Consider the seventh iteration of *The Fast and The Furious: Furious 7* (dir. Wan, 2015) (the eighth came out in 2017, and there is talk of making up to ten), a completely vacuous movie with symbols that should be as dead as dust. Why, then, should this film reach such heights of success? The series was Universal's biggest franchise of all time, perhaps because it races into the American psyche and injects a tank full of nitrous into the collective symbolism of driving on the open road of freedom. Today in mundane life, that archetypal content has been psychically congested, like being caught in 50 lanes of traffic (literally) on the G4 Beijing–Hong Kong–Macau Expressway, or in Heathrow airport Christmas eve, or in any Walmart on Black Friday, or Times Square on New Year's Eve, or at the checkout line at the supermarket pretty much any day, any time. One's 'day in day out' life is completely miserable and frustrating, and a cinematic experience makes one forget that. In addition, the steroidal images of driving absurdly fast, over, past, through, around, or under any traffic jam, or any jam, with fire-breathing engines and roaringly loud music, is a fantasy, evidently, everyone can identify with. The film in this sense is totally meaningless except after the mystification of its visual trip dissipates, one is left with the sober, painful reality of one's daily commute, that it dramatizes our collective impotence of our 'day-to-day' lives. The inverse is supported and can be read meaningfully, too: one's daily, mundane life is socially constructed, and the film allows one to release imaginably one's so-called authentic self from within with a blast of raw psychic energy through which to complete a 'whole' vision of the current times. In short, this boring film is configured to either supplement or complement our lives. The warning then is clear: analyze the mind-numbing effects of the narcissistic aesthetics to create analytic space, because most likely, what one will be left with, otherwise, is nothing in mind or pocket.

Jung puts his last warning as follows:

Finally, a third danger – and this may in certain circumstances be a very serious matter – is that the subliminal contents already possess such a high energy charge that, when afforded an outlet by active imagination, they may overpower the conscious mind and take possession of the personality. This gives rise to a condition which – temporarily, at least – cannot easily be distinguished from schizophrenia, and may even lead to a genuine 'psychotic interval.' The method of active imagination, therefore, is not a plaything for children.

(1916/57: Prefatory note before §131)

Jung attributed to schizophrenia the quality of the numinous and, therefore, this psychotic interval is not easily distinguished from symptoms of schizophrenia. He opines:

[W]e might conclude that the schizophrenic state of mind, so far as it yields archaic material, has all the characteristics of a 'big dream' – in other words, that it is an important event, exhibiting the same 'numinous' quality which in primitive cultures is attributed to a magic ritual.

(1939: §528)

This third and final warning from Jung is serious and the most complicated of all the concerns that he enumerates as the unconscious content emerging from active imagination can possess an energy charge that is intense enough to cause a psychotic interval albeit a numinous one. The danger is that the ego becomes consumed by the contents of the unconscious. By extension it follows that it might well be possible for a film image to have a similar effect. If that were to happen then the ego would be subsumed and temporarily lost. In other words, the sensuous dimensions of the cinematic experience, to use the language of one of Jung's oft-cited fore-thinkers, Pierre Janet, causes an *abaissement du niveau mental*. This lowering or weakening of mental functioning dissipates the *fonction du reel* like a mist into the background while unconscious image and film image merge. The result is that '[w]e are astonished, confused, bewildered, put on our guard, even repelled' (1930/50: §143).

The visionary mode of interpretation in film, when we are caught by archetypal content, functions much like a temporary 'psychotic interval' and should not be explored from the automatic assumption or belief that the experience is purely 'magical', 'religious', 'mystical' or 'spiritual'. Jung writes:

It is abundantly clear that such an *abaissement du niveau mental*, i.e., the overpowering of the ego by unconscious contents and the consequent identification with preconscious wholes, possesses a prodigious psychic virulence, or power of contagion, and is capable of the most disastrous results.

(1947/54: §430)

Put another way, during the psychotic break, the tension of the ego becomes slackened, like a limp rope, and then drops into the dark abyss of interiority while the collision or union of over-image and under-image, or inner-image and outer-image, generates a 'feeling-toned' charge. The danger is that this precise category of experience becomes fetishized as some mystical, magical or spiritual experience, when it could be nothing at all except a socially constructed affect or the desire to forget the boring events of day-to-day life, or the felt experience of the loss of ego akin to intoxication or psychosis, or even nothing at all. An empathic interpretation would suggest that the desire for this so-called numinous experience is the way for the ego to take a trip away from our painfully boring reality which we encounter daily, a kind of reverse order of, or inverting values of the transcendent function. Additionally, perhaps at this very moment when inner and outer merge, the ego jumps ship into the abyss because it cannot bear the pain of the experience. In this reading, that so-called numinous moment is traumatizing. In short, feeling-toned, so-called numinous experiences are not always what they seem to be, and should be approached with rigorous analytical distance.

In summation: the first warning is to resist making the images something personal about you-the-viewer; the second is to resist only enjoying the pure aesthetics of the film; the third is to re-evaluate the criteria upon which the category of the numinous experience is defined and to resist the urge to misinterpret non-numinous experiences as numinous, and to have, stockpile, fetishize or eroticize, experiences.

If a characterization of individuation, a goal of analytic psychology, is to be able to face reality, and to be individuated is to be one's own authority, to face the world and to use one's abilities to do so, then the perpetual deflection or displacement of one's faculties for the enjoyment of a potentially so-called numinous experience soothes or numbs someone away from reality and, therefore, runs counter to the entire process of individuation.

### **An additional warning: stick to the image? No thanks!**

James Hillman (1970) was aware of the problem of subjectively interpreting images, and this led to his well known dictum ‘Stick to the image’. The upside of this means that sticking to the image stops the amplification of the image straying too far away from the original image. For example if one dreams about snakes, and then amplifies that image to find a meaning in it of divine wisdom, or the uroboros, or the penis, one fails to stick to the image. If one continues by discussing the images of divine wisdom etc., then one has effectively depotentiated the numinous quality of the dream image. For Hillman, the power of the image is in sticking to the description of its quality and movement and in doing so it becomes possible to know and experience its numinous qualities.

The second reading of ‘Stick to the Image’ exposes the dictum to a critique which has not yet been discussed in Jungian or Post-Jungian literature: Stick to the image, can be read as ‘stick the image to yourself’, or ‘stick yourself to the image’, such that there is no differentiation. Here the double reading reveals the mantra’s hidden narcissistic and psychotic meaning. If we are too close to the image, it subsumes us, and we lose all reflective or descriptive capacity. If there is no space between ego and image, if one sticks to it, without the further step to critique through it, or distance oneself from it, then one is no different from it, one is but a slave that is chained down in a dark cave, who has confused one’s own mind for the images of the world.

An additional step is needed which would result in the dictum’s re-formulation: Stay Close to the Image, then Critique It. That is, it is only by staying close to the image and then critiquing it can one retroactively know its numinosity by means of the critical distance attained, by the language applied afterwards. This is an important step to facing and then displacing the dominant image of capitalism that has defined our ontology and colonized the consciousness of our collective psyche. The central image of our times is one of capitalism, and sticking to it without a critique would inevitably lead to the subsuming of and identification with one’s manufactured and tortured psyche, including affect, somatization and thoughts. By sticking to the numinous content and critiquing it one is able to put language to the very things collectively that turns one into a zombie, that is, that which puts one under a spell, charms or poisons one. Furthermore, one is better able to know the films one watches on the film’s own terms.

### ***Titanic*: an example**

The following example will demonstrate two responses to the film *Titanic* (dir. Cameron, 1997), one positive and one negative. The purpose will be to show the predetermination of mass-psychology human’s response to the film. Thus, the affectivity which viewers may claim is their own, i.e. personalized or capitalized, is nothing more than manufactured ideology. Further, the chapter will position Hockley’s (2014) critique with critical theory’s to demystify this manufactured affect. This strips the film bare of its so-called numinosity revealing its concealed characteristic, that is, the film is flat and empty. Furthermore, this chapter will offer two readings of *Titanic*, one Jungian and one Marxist.

*Titanic* is the second highest grossing film of all time at \$2.1 billion, just behind *Avatar* (dir. Cameron, 2009) at \$2.7 billion. The film captured the attention and imagination of so many, perhaps, at least for the Americans, because of its historical significance (the ship was on its way to New York), its expression as a stereotypically American desire (i.e. *Titanic* was the biggest of its day), its enormous budget totaled about \$200 million which included a re-creation of a near perfect and only slightly smaller model of the original ship, and its location in the American collective psyche as a story about the American Dream and the fetishization of love.

The vast amount of money spent, its cutting edge cinematography techniques, the amount of labor needed to produce the film, combined with a methodized storyline, all contribute to the ‘mystical character of [this particular] commodity’ (Marx and Engels, 1978, p. 320). In short, before the film was shown, the mass psychological human was primed to enjoy its presentation as if it were ‘something transcendent’ (ibid., p. 320). This purely capitalistic logic generates numinosity.

The pure image of capitalism and its ineffable relationality has become so effective and pervasive that viewers, and even the most esteemed critics, become unconscious of it perverting them to desire ideology. Roger Ebert (2017) writes of the *Titanic*: ‘James Cameron’s 194-minute, \$200 million film of the tragic voyage is in the tradition of the great Hollywood epics. It is flawlessly crafted, intelligently constructed, strongly acted and spellbinding.’

It is clear that Ebert’s response reflects an affective experience from a numinous encounter. That he felt the film was ‘spellbinding’ demonstrates the depth of capitalistic logic that defines psychological life today. The response from the general public was fairly similar. Rotten Tomatoes gave it a tomatometer of 88 percent and the audience gave it a rating of 69 percent. IMDB gave it 7.7/10 and Google users gave it a 93 percent. In general, the film was hailed as a great blockbuster success.

However, some scholars and viewers have critiqued the film on the grounds that it was psychologically or affectively flat, that is to say, boring, despite Cameron’s intention to deal with ‘archetypes’ in the film (Hockley, 2014, p. 22). That the film elicited such extreme and contrary reactions is not unusual, however, perhaps trying to understand the responses proves more complicated. This chapter suggests that the film is pure ideology and therefore had the potential to generate two different registers of experience: one ideological and one critical.

Hockley’s (2014) lamentations about *Titanic* suggest that the film is psychologically flat because the process of working with unconscious material in a conscious manner robs it of its affect. Hockley (2014) writes, ‘When unconscious material is used in a calculating and conscious manner it is unable to speak with the voice of the unconscious’ (p. 24). This is a characteristically Jungian critique.

Jung resisted creating a method for his psychology because he was concerned that people would mindlessly apply it to unconscious content, therein destroying potential meaning or affect. The method, in short, would ruin any meaningful relationship to the psychic content. Jung provided an answer to this problem with his practice of active imagination, enabling one to encounter unconscious material in a way which respects the material on its own terms, allowing the image to play out, so to speak, on its own without conscious interference. However, as shown by Hockley (2014), for *Titanic*, director James Cameron used Christopher Vogler’s work with the intention to create a modern myth which spans all cultures (p. 22). Vogler’s work methodizes Campbell’s hero’s journey. This very methodizing (i.e. formalizing) runs the risk of denying access to affectivity. *Titanic* is psychologically flat, Hockley (2014) argues, because the conscious application of this methodized storyline robs the material of its natural affectivity. That is, by applying a frame to organic content, much of the content is cut-off and lost. But how was it such a success?

Hockley recognizes the apparent contradiction but does not further develop the point. He suggests that despite the fact that the film left him (and many others) feeling ‘cold’, that perhaps the film’s success could be the result of its marketing (2014, p. 25). This apparent contradiction is recognizable. On the one hand, the film is boring and cold; on the other, the film is a cultural myth that is lauded as a spellbinding success. The spellbinding-ness is generated from the cultural myth of capitalism and its ideology. The ideology says that one’s desire is for a fantastical notion of love, for the catastrophe of a great, capitalist ship, for an easily digestible (i.e. methodized)

storyline which does nothing to generate friction in the viewer (i.e. the meeting of two images, here, are identical, that is, narcissistic, leaving the viewer not changed, but rather reinforced), and, as mentioned, for the amount of money spent to make the film.

Two readings of the film serve to critique its capitalistic functioning and reveal its rather trite and perhaps even offensive storyline. On the one hand, it is Rose's boredom with the austerity of bourgeois life which propels her to descend down into the belly of the ship to rejuvenate her spirit with a poor proletariat boy, Jack, where bodily movement, sensual pleasures and sex are permitted. Once she has her fill, much like a 'vampire' (Marx, 1867 [2008], p. 149) that feeds off of labor, she ascends the ship and continues to live out her normal life. Meaning, the bourgeois sap the life energy of the proletariat for their own vitality.

The second reading is a Jungian one: the ship, which represents the self, is under intense pressure from a tension of the opposites. The tension is horizontal and mythic. Above is the Apollonian discipline that characterizes bourgeois culture and below is Dionysian chaos that characterizes proletarian culture. God, as so often is done when one does not pay attention to one's self, throws a stumbling block in the ship's way because the opposing forces have not been integrated. Then the ship collides with the iceberg, tearing it apart. What emerges, albeit for a brief moment, is the heart of the story, the great symbol of affect, and of the ocean: the blue diamond in the shape of a heart, which of course symbolizes eternal strength and love. Blue of course, containing so many meanings, represents the sea, depth, sadness, power, strength and much more (cf. Hillman, 2015). And the diamond signifies indestructible love or a union. Shortly thereafter, the ultimate symbol of love descends back into the dark icy waters of the unconscious ocean. Jack freezes to death and dies, while Rose floats to safety on her wooden raft. Perhaps Rose has integrated some of her opposite and has transformed on account of it. This cheapened and immature version of an alchemical or psychological union of opposites fails to account for so much of the harrowing and mundane difficulties that characterizes both realistic life and true growth. That is, the film romanticizes and perverts the image for a quick buck.

These critiques of the film are reductive readings, but where they succeed is in revealing the film's paltry narrative, basic motifs and immoral messages. What the marketing and ideology of the film did was commoditize and romanticize class-conflict stories and mythic dimensions of social life, cheapen them, and sell them to the public who gobbled them up like children eating drug-inducing candy. The two registers, one of the numinosity of capitalism, and the other, of the critiques, perhaps helps to explain the film's polarized reception.

### **Rolling credits**

Nowhere else can one find the research supporting the collective unconscious and the function of man as an image making mortal, than in the work of Jung. This is why one needs Jung's work more than ever. Jung writes, '[p]sychological treatment, taken in its widest sense, seeks the values that satisfy the psychic needs of contemporary man [*sic*], so that he [*sic*] shall not fall victim to the destructive influence of mass psychology' (1946: §903). The problems we face are not the same as the *fin de siècle* hysterics, whose symptoms could be located in their personal history of some traumatic mommy-daddy-me dynamic, which was the basis to Freud's work. Nor are they filled with the psychotic rants or visions of the lunatic asylum at the Burgholzi, as is the basis of Jung's work.

Today the unconscious is not a personal one, not at all. It is both totally collective, and totally objective, that is, it is everyone's and it is not-ours. Today the last psychology has colonized our imaginations, and it is incredibly torturous. Erich Fromm (1994) claimed that today we suffer

from symptoms of the schizoid personality and that we are too isolated and self-involved. Noam Chomsky (1998) characterizes us as ‘atoms of consumption’. Zizek (1989) explains that we are cynical subjects. Sloterdijk (1988) argues that we are melancholics who can bear the tension of reality just enough to get through our day. Marcuse (1964) claimed that we are constructed to be one-dimensional functionaries. Marx and Engels (1978) claimed that we are alienated from ourselves, and Durkheim (1893/1984) that we have become anomies. According to Wolfe (1976) today is defined as the ‘Me’ period, where alchemy is used to transform the self. In short, man searched for his soul, found it and sold it for a cheap penny. And this idea of our humanness is torturing everyone collectively, yet one still interprets and treats pain as if it were experienced only personally. This notion is constructed by completely capitalistic logic – so anyone can possess the pain and make it personally theirs. The deflection or obscuring of the truth – that everyone is becoming more un-free and cynical – is due to the effects of the fragmentation and isolation of persons in modern times. Our psyches have been constructed to be completely isolated, mass manufactured and tortured. Interpretations which reinforce that isolation necessarily convert outer experiences into inner journeys. The image of capitalism defines humans to behave in this way by means of its numinosity. And, the images in the movie theater have the potential to reinforce this ideology.

The movie theater is a precise location of the battleground to work through new interpretive procedures, or to take up old ones in new ways, so that one can come to know and explain the images before one’s eyes and to resist their numinous affect to pervert one. Sticking to the image runs the risk of subsuming one; critiquing it may help to expand one’s psychological horizons. This critique hopefully offers to people a chance against the monolithic presence that dominates the globe, oppresses one and colonizes one’s imagination turning one into miserable and tortured persons.

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