

Complexes and Projection

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The psychological model

The subject of complexes is, if you will excuse the expression, highly complex. But it is immensely valuable as a psychological model, because it can give us remarkable insight into the dynamics of a horoscope. Of all the many available psychological perspectives, that of complexes is one of the most useful to the astrologer, and one of the most profound. We can view complexes reductively to understand personal conflicts and family dynamics more clearly. Or we can view complexes from an archetypal or mythic perspective, and get a glimpse of the deeper meaning behind a person's experiences and development pattern. Both views are valid. What we are really looking at is a psychological model of fate.

Complexes and Greek myth

Although the term “complex” is relatively modern, awareness of its dynamics is very ancient. Greek myth, with its vivid portrayals of the “family curse” and the compulsions visited upon humans by gods, gives us our earliest models of how a complex operates. The Greeks understood that “something” – some compulsive inner pattern which created dramatic repercussions in outer life – had an irrevocable way of passing from father to son, from mother to daughter, and this “something” was usually linked with one or another of the gods. Not only family curses, but also family gifts could be inherited in this way. What is most psychologically relevant about these mythic portrayals is the compulsive nature of this “something” which drives human beings into beliefs, actions and feelings over which they have no conscious control and which are often in violent opposition to their ethics and values. By presenting these compulsive patterns as the signature of a dynamic relationship between human and god, myth highlights the numinous nature of complexes. To the Greeks, the enactment of an inherited pattern was fate in the most profound sense. When Orestes killed his mother to avenge his father's death, he was compulsively acting out yet another of a long line of offences against deity which began with his ancestor Tantalus and ended only when his efforts to find an alternative solution created a new relationship between the gods themselves. The Greeks also seem to have understood that, although complexes are fate, human intervention can alter their expression, if not their essential “divine” core. In modern dynamic psychiatry, complexes were initially explored almost solely in terms of pathology. But the mythic portrayal of their workings gives us an entirely different perspective. Complexes are not only fate – they are the primary factor in both human and divine evolution.

Early research: Charcot, Janet and Freud

We can trace the history of the complex in modern psychology back to Charcot at the end of the 19th century. In his work with hysterical patients at the Salpêtrière in Paris, he came to the conclusion that behind particular kinds of mental disease lay pockets of associated ideas at work in the unconscious. These were in some way disconnected from consciousness and had a life of their own. Rather than trying to paraphrase him, I will read you a quote from Charcot, given in a lecture on hysterical paralysis in May 1885, which puts this first formulation of the complex quite clearly:

...an idea, a coherent group of associated ideas settle themselves in the mind in the fashion of parasites, remaining isolated from the rest of the mind and expressing themselves outwardly through corresponding motor phenomena...The group of suggested ideas finds itself isolated and cut off from the control of that large collection of personal ideas accumulated and organised from a long time, which constitutes consciousness proper, that is the Ego.¹

Charcot believed that split-off fragments of the personality can follow an invisible development of their own, accrue enormous power, and eventually express themselves through clinical disturbances which thwart the ego's wishes and goals. Although it may seem a long way away from the Greek gods, "possession" by a deity and the repercussions of the "family curse" are different ways of describing the same phenomenon. Something other than conscious volition is master in the psyche's house.

Pierre Janet took Charcot's idea and developed it further. He coined the term *idée fixe subconsciente* to describe these split-off personality fragments which seemed to wield such power. A quote from Janet is also in order here, to give you a flavour of how these early psychological pioneers perceived the workings of the psyche.

...The idea, like a virus, develops in a corner of the personality inaccessible to the subject, works subconsciously, and brings about all disorders of hysteria and of mental disease.²

Janet had enormous influence on modern psychology and psychiatry, and as we shall see in a moment, what Jung called the complex was originally simply the equivalent of Janet's "subconscious fixed idea". In these early days, the complex was viewed solely as a facet of pathology, and the split-off fragments were understood to be repressed conflicts – primarily sexual – which the ego could not face or deal with. During the course of the day we will see that this view of the complex is still relevant in specific individual situations, since personal conflicts flesh out the bones of the complex and may need to be dealt with as a source of pathology. But the core of the complex is not pathological.

The next important researcher into complexes was Freud. Although he rarely named the sources for his ideas, he did acknowledge Janet's priority, both in the discovery of "subconscious fixed ideas" and in the cure of the patient through catharsis and conscious awareness of the troublesome *idée fixe*. The essential techniques of psychoanalysis – dream interpretation and free association – are ultimately geared toward raising the complex into consciousness. Freud, like Charcot and Janet, initially viewed the complex as essentially comprised of repressed personal memories and conflicts. Only later did he begin to acknowledge complexes as universal factors which provided the motivating force in every individual's development.

Jung, while still Freud's disciple, introduced the term "complex" into psychoanalytic thought. The Oedipus complex might otherwise have been called the Oedipal fixed idea – the inevitable and universal incestuous triangle of childhood, with all its attendant desire, fear, guilt, aggression and shame. Likewise, Alfred Adler took up Jung's term and utilised it in his concept of the inferiority complex – the fixed idea of inferiority at work beneath the threshold of awareness, which leads to a compulsive power-drive that can both achieve greatness and destroy the individual.

The complex in Jung's analytical psychology

At the turn of the century, while working at the Burghölzli Clinic, Jung developed the famous "word association test" to demonstrate the existence and nature of unconscious

¹J. M. Charcot, *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, III, 335-337, quoted in Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1970, p. 146.

²Pierre Janet, *L'Automatisme psychologique*, Alcan, Paris, 1889, p. 436, quoted in Ellenberger, *ibid.*

complexes. The test had been around for a while in crude form, but Jung restructured and refined it. At this time Jung was still a Freudian, if that is the right way of putting it. For any of you who might be unfamiliar with this test, it consists of reading a succession of carefully chosen words to the subject, who has to respond with the first word that occurs to him or her. The reaction time is measured precisely, and anomalies, such as a delayed response, no response, a stutter or mispronunciation, or the repetition of one word over and over again, are carefully noted. Then the connections between the responses are examined. I have taken this test as well as giving it to others during my clinical training, and although you may all think it very amusing and a bit of a waste of time, it is in fact a very strange and powerful experience. We believe we are in control of what we think and how we respond verbally, but if one takes this test in an open and spontaneous fashion, it is extraordinary how much is revealed by it. The subject is almost invariably unaware of the connection between his or her answers and the complex underlying the responses, even though it may be screamingly obvious to the person administering the test.

Jung's main objective in developing this test was the detection of complexes. Initially he distinguished between normal, accidental, and permanent complexes. The existence of a "normal" complex had not really been considered prior to this, since most of the early research was done with severely disturbed patients in psychiatric clinics. To Charcot and Janet, and also to Freud, complexes were invariably linked to pathology. What Jung initially meant by "normal" complexes involved fundamental areas of human experience, such as sexual feelings, family relationships, and money. For example, a powerful drive toward success might be viewed as a "normal" complex – it is compulsive and consuming, but it may lead to great productivity and creative fulfillment, and does not necessarily distort the individual's relationship to reality. In other words, a complex, although unconscious, may not be pathological. It may be an unconscious web of feelings and associations, "normal" in itself, which exerts a compulsive but positive influence over conscious life. "Accidental" complexes, in contrast, relate to specific events which have happened in a person's life, often traumatic in nature, which have left powerful unconscious emotions and associations in their wake. These are not universal, as are the "normal" complexes, because they are related to particular experiences. For example, a childhood rape may form the nucleus for an "accidental" complex which has powerful destructive effects on the individual's ability to relate to others. "Permanent" complexes are, in the main, pathological and inclined to overwhelm the ego. They are resistant to integration, and are particularly relevant to progressive conditions such as schizophrenia. Although Jung did not use the term, I would be inclined to call these "hereditary" complexes, reflecting unresolved conflicts which extend back into the fabric of the family psyche.

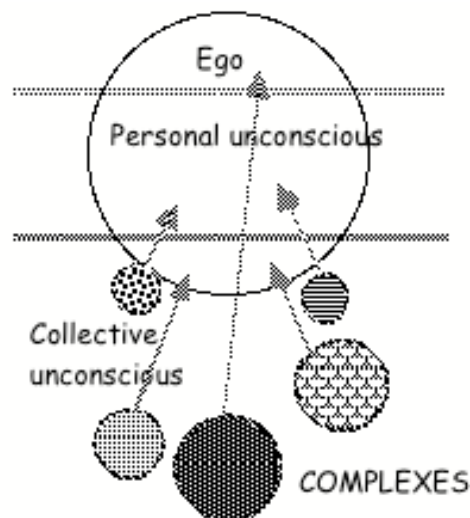
Gradually Jung extended the narrow early concept of the complex, and postulated many different stages – conscious, partly conscious, fully unconscious, and strongly or less strongly emotionally charged. This latter issue preoccupied him, because it was directly linked with the compulsiveness of the complex. He began to think in terms of psychic energy, and evaluated the complex as strong or weak according to the amount of psychic energy charging it. Ultimately he extended his scope beyond the personal unconscious and formulated his theory of the archetypes. In doing this he brought the idea of the complex full circle, and returned to the Greek myths as representations of the archetypal core of the complex. It is at this juncture that we, as astrologers, can come in and view the whole spectrum, from the mythic to the personal, and recognise in planetary configurations a precise picture of this archetypal core.

The application of the model

The psychological model of the complex is quite sophisticated on its own, but it is utterly transformed when viewed through an astrological lens. It is a great pity that

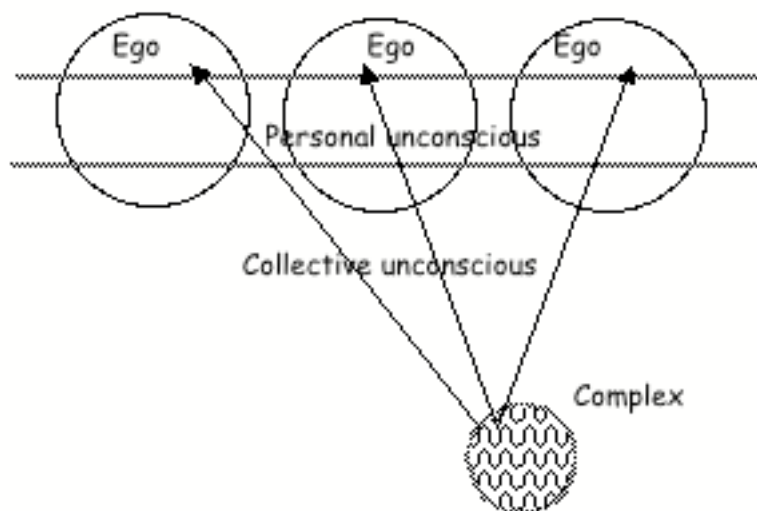
psychology has not, in the main, availed itself of astrological imagery, because, as I said earlier, complexes are really what we mean by fate. I also find it very interesting to play about with the model of the complex in the context of esoteric thought. For example, if one is sympathetic to the idea of reincarnation, one will probably view the various issues that one grapples with in one's present life as the continuing unfoldment of the efforts, failures, successes, and conflicts carried over from other lifetimes. Complexes are not mutually exclusive with the idea of "karma" as substance accrued from past lives. Thus the complex may be seen as an encoded energetic container of past life patterns, in the same way that DNA is an encoded container of heredity. We can also see complexes as part of our genetic inheritance, and it may be that our complexes as well as our physical traits are, in part, a product of the line from which we come. Complexes are a quintessential model of how the psyche works. This model not only gives the whole theory of conscious-unconscious dichotomy a demonstrable basis, but also gives the astrological chart a firm basis in psychological dynamics. When we look at aspect configurations, singletons, angular planets – anything in the chart we deem to be energetic – we are looking at complexes. When we look at transits and progressions, we are looking at the timing of the emergence of a complex, or part of a complex, from the unconscious into conscious life.

I shall now put a sequence of very crude maps on the overhead projector, just to orientate those of you who may be unfamiliar with the material I have been outlining. Please bear in mind that all maps are very limited. They are meant to sketch in the territory, not to provide a vicarious experience of it. The map, as Ian Gordon-Brown always used to say about Assagioli's "egg diagram", is not the country. This diagram is one of many valid albeit simplistic maps to help us navigate a deeply mysterious realm. It is not meant to state categorically, "That's how it is." Please take it in the Mercurial spirit in which it is offered. This diagram is, of course, a lie; there is constant movement in the psyche. Life is not static like a two-dimensional black-and-white drawing, and neither are we. We don't go around with a conscious ego like a perspex bubble containing fixed perceptions and ideas, and a personal unconscious full of seething unmentionables, and a bottomless collective unconscious with little globules that have lines ending in arrows. There is constant interchange between the different dimensions of the human psyche, and the boundaries are fluid and always shifting. Things that one is aware of at any given time may slide back into the unconscious, which, although I have drawn it as "below" in the diagram, may actually be above, or within, or all around. Unconscious qualities that are not yet developed, or have been suppressed for various reasons, may enter conscious awareness at different times in life. They may be triggered by events or the natural process of ageing. Or they may simply be ripe.



As the American poet Walt Whitman once wrote, we contain multitudes. The psyche has many facets, and some of them are in the dark – not necessarily negative, but beyond the threshold of consciousness. Our awareness of ourselves and of the world is necessarily limited, not only by our limited personal experience, but also by our limited psychological “spectacles”. We see only what we are best suited to see, which tends to leave out a lot. That is why the word association test fascinated Jung – it provides a vivid demonstration of what we have left out. We are also usually unconscious of the larger psyche to which we all belong, and therefore don’t really register what human beings as a collective are going through at any given time, although we may act it out blindly. This unconsciousness about the complexes which drive us as a mass makes us very vulnerable to collective movements of a compulsive kind. That is one of the reasons why the outer planets, which are symbols of collective drives, can wreak such havoc if there is an insufficiently solid individual ego to mediate them. We tend to think that what we see is all there is to see of reality, both inner and outer, and if we encounter people who see things differently, they are at best misguided or mistaken, and at worst mad. We may also believe that our experiences are unique, unlike anyone else’s, and that no one has ever experienced, or ever will experience, love, hate, pain or longing as we do. On one level, that is true – we process our experiences through a unique personality which isn’t quite like anyone else’s, even if we find a perfect “astrological twin”. The mysterious chemical combination of individual experience and the inherent temperament reflected by the individual horoscope creates a particular perception of life which is uniquely our own. But complexes, at their core, are not unique. They are archetypal patterns, neither pathological nor individual, and they motivate all human beings – perhaps even all life, according to the level of awareness.

Here is the same diagram, altered slightly, to give you an idea of what I mean. Once again I will remind you that the map is not the country. Each of these three individuals will experience the impact of the same complex in highly individual ways, according to their early environment, subsequent experiences, and inherent temperaments. And they will react accordingly. But the core of the complex is the same, because it is a pattern within the collective psyche, forming part of and motivating each individual psyche. Because the same complex is at work, the issues which emerge at the personal level will draw these three people into certain kinds of relationship patterns based on the complex. We will look at this more carefully later, in an astrological context.



The archetypal level of complexes

Now we need to go back to the Greeks, who invariably thought of everything first. In assigning compulsive behaviour to a deity, they recognised that, beyond the personal level of experience, there are areas of life in which we all share the same unconscious needs, drives and patterns. The same deity can interfere with the lives of a multitude. The Trojan War, for example, does not begin with one individual leader deciding to invade another leader's territory. We think mainly in political and sociological terms these days. The Trojan War begins with a beauty contest between the gods. Human beings are the helpless counters in a divine game in which enmities between the Olympians are unavoidably visited on hapless mortals. Have any of you ever seen a wonderful early animatronics film called *Clash of the Titans*? There is a superb scene on Olympus, where the gods are sorting out their conflicts on a chessboard. Zeus, played with great style by Laurence Olivier, makes a particularly clever move, and down below, poor Perseus is unknowingly saddled with his fate. Anything the gods can't work out between themselves winds up getting tossed into the court of the innocent humans who happen to be favoured by them and are both their pawns and their vessels of embodiment. Although we tend now to see this "pawns on the chessboard of the gods" view of life as cynical and depressing, it may be truer than we think. We are certainly pawns on the chessboard of our complexes, and the more we believe we are always in conscious control of ourselves and life, the more compulsively we seem to behave.

For "gods", read "planets". That is, after all, what we are dealing with in astrological symbolism. Because we all share the same planets, we are not isolated individuals. We are like every other human being who ever has lived and who ever will live, because the same archetypal patterns, symbolised by the planets, are alive within us. In this sense all the planets are collective, because they reflect universal human qualities. The basic drives which we share with every human being may make an individual pattern in the birth horoscope, but the planets themselves are universal, like the core of a complex. For example, we have all had parents. They may be good, bad or indifferent. One or both may be absent. And it is even possible, through *in vitro* fertilisation, for a child to have a father who died ten years earlier and had his sperm frozen, or a mother whose fertilised egg has been implanted into someone else. But however bizarre the nature of the parental experience, we have not yet found the secret of immaculate conception, and still depend on a sperm and an egg to keep things going. The experience of parenting is not just my personal experience. Everyone has been parented – badly, lovingly, violently, absently, smotheringly, or whatever. In our very different ways we all experience the process of coming from two parents, male and female, whether they are present or absent, and however they treated us. The experience of mother and father is part of the collective level of experience, which is why in myth we have a king and queen of the gods or, even in the oldest and most primal of myths, a maternal deity who has a male self-fertilising capacity. Mythic images are images of basic psychological drives, fundamental and irrevocable patternings in life and in the psyche. They don't have to be mystified. One doesn't have to believe in gods in the supernatural sense. One can be a supremely rational scientist who has observed that crystal formation always follows certain fixed patterns, and snowflakes always have six sides, and frogs always start off with gills and end up with lungs.

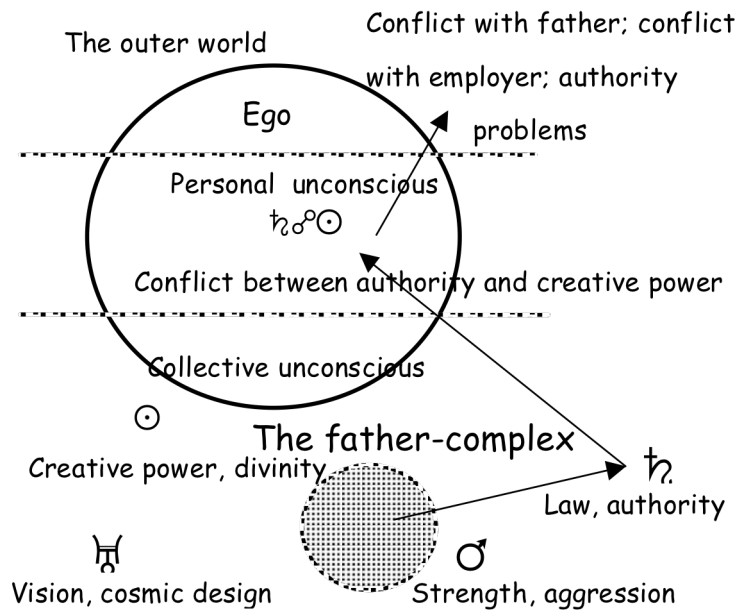
To understand these archetypal patterns, astrologers use the shorthand of planets, or a combination of planets and mythic images. But the arrangement of the patterns is different in each person. We get different emphases and different challenges. Out of the huge range of archetypal images of father, for example, a particular individual may live out a very specific facet, depending on what the signifiers of the father-principle look like in the individual chart, and what kind of experiences shape the way the complex develops. Sun-Saturn, for example, is very special kind of father-image. It is reflected in a compulsion to express the father-complex – the energetic web of feelings, ideas and associations pertaining to father – in a certain way. Sun-Neptune will describe another, entirely different experience and expression of the father-complex. Sun-Mars will describe yet another. The Sun-Neptune

person may experience the archetypal father as an invisible spiritual source, or a poet, or a wounded victim, and the energy of this special kind of father-complex will generate certain kinds of perceptions, feelings, and actions. The Sun-Saturn person may experience father as a law-giver, or a tyrant, or a strong and stable protector. The Sun-Mars person may experience him as a fighter, a bully, a leader, or a violent aggressor. All these aspects are concerned with the father-principle and colour the father-complex, but they are different. We all have a father-complex, but we don't all have the same way of enacting and experiencing it.

A hypothetical example: Sun-Saturn as a father complex

When we try to understand what a complex looks like in astrological terms, we need to look at individual planets as well as aspects between planets. Saturn, as we know, symbolises the archetypal principles of law, authority, structure and limitation. This is its nature as portrayed in myth, and this is what it represents as an archetypal pattern within human beings. It is one dimension of the father-principle, or, in human terms, the father-complex – a web of associated ideas, feelings and experiences which reflects all we humans know of father, both personal and transpersonal. Saturn is, of course, not the only planet connected with the father-principle. The Sun symbolises a different facet – the radiant creator-god who makes the universe and then sustains it with love and light. In Greek art, Saturn is always an old man, but Apollo the Sun-god is always young, beautiful, and perfectly proportioned. When we meet a person in whose chart there is a Sun-Saturn contact, the father-complex in that individual will be coloured by this combination of planets, so that the creator and source of life is also the stern and implacable enforcer of law and limitation. However joyful and inspired the creative urge, it will always run up against irrevocable laws which define its limits. This combination may be manageable with a trine or sextile – a complex with a fairly low energy charge. Or it may be disturbingly compulsive with a conjunction, square or opposition – a complex with a high energy charge, because two facets of the father-archetype are in conflict. When this conflict comes through into the personal unconscious, it forms a kind of energy field, gathering personal feelings and associations around it like a big magnet. It is both a pattern of development and a specific mode of perception. From infancy onward, all experiences pertaining to father will be perceived through its lens. When it begins to influence consciousness, the individual with the Sun in hard aspect to Saturn will experience his or her father as either Saturnian or solar, and feel compelled to do battle on the side of one against the other.

Let's create a hypothetical example – a man called George. We meet George at a friend's house, and in the course of a personal conversation the subject of parents comes up. He mentions that he will be spending the weekend with his father. Something in his tone rings oddly. Being psychologically inclined, we become curious, and ask him, "How did you get on with your father when you were young?" He replies politely, "Well, he was a very responsible person. He worked terribly hard. I didn't see much of him because he was away at work all the time. But I have a lot of respect for him. He always insisted that we play by the rules." Because we are astrologers, we ask him for his birth data – although ethically we have no business doing so, because George has not asked for advice. But being ignorant of what a chart can reveal, he complies. We go home and calculate his chart, and are not surprised to find that the Sun is opposition Saturn. We then know what he edited out, but might have said if he had had the courage and the consciousness: "The bastard ignored me. I felt rejected all the time. Nothing I did was ever good enough. He made me feel stifled, because he was so authoritarian. And the last thing in the world I want to do is spend the weekend with him. I always leave feeling upset, undermined, and resentful."



The archetypal father-complex is universal, and it is neither positive nor negative. It simply *is*, and contains all human experience of the life-principle which we call father. We associate law, order, authority and discipline with Father Saturn, and the creative power in the cosmos with Father Sun. We associate the cosmic or heavenly design with Father Uranus, as in “Our Father Who art in Heaven”. We associate strength, aggression and leadership with Father Mars. We all have these planets in the birth chart, and all of them tell us something about the qualities and patterns connected with the father archetype and the father-complex. I have neglected to include Jupiter in the diagram, although he may also be a father-image. He is the Giver of Gifts, the father who bestows good fortune and turns our eyes to the future. I also haven’t included Mercury, god of the roads, who is father as teacher and educator. And the planets we consider “feminine” in astrology may also be associated with father, especially if we find them in the 4th house. Father Moon is the nurturing or unreliable father, Father Venus is the beautiful beloved, Father Neptune is the divine source with which we seek to merge, and Father Pluto visits divine retribution on those who transgress natural law. We all have a father-complex of some kind. Unless one of you has been immaculately conceived, you will have a father, present or absent, alive or dead. If you *were* immaculately conceived you will still have one, albeit divine. And it seems that we all have a solar component to our father-complex, because we are created, not self-engendered.

George, our hypothetical example, has the Sun opposition Saturn in his birth chart, so he will experience a particular dimension of the father-archetype in a particular way. This is how we each partake of specific facets of a universal human pattern. We don’t get to work on the whole picture in one incarnation – and maybe not even in several. We each have a highly individual destiny, or fate, or any other word we might care to use to describe our necessity. Because these two planets were in conflict at the moment of George’s birth, the archetypal father-principle was in conflict with itself. There was a special kind of disharmony within the cosmos when George was born. The father-complex on the collective level had a bug in it, and such bugs are cyclical, because all planets form cyclical aspects to each other. The gods were fighting one of their recurrent fights (because the Sun opposes Saturn once every year). Kronos-Saturn the Titan was battling it out with Apollo the Lord of Light. As the alchemists used to say, creation itself is still imperfect, and so too is God; and God depends upon human consciousness to achieve that perfection which is potential but not yet manifest. So George’s particular father-complex, symbolised by his Sun-Saturn opposition, has coloured his

perception of his actual father right from the beginning of life. Whatever his father says or does, George experiences him through the lens of his Sun-Saturn opposition. In the early years of life, this perception will be unconscious, which is why I have put the Sun-Saturn opposition in the area of the diagram labeled “personal unconscious”.

As George grows up and his personal ego begins to form, he will unconsciously make a choice as to which end of this opposition he experiences as his, and which end he will project on his father. This isn’t pathological. It tends to happen with any difficult aspect in a birth chart, because the human ego doesn’t seem to handle inherent conflict very well and will usually try to suppress one end in favour of the other. Also, our family background can virtually coerce us into taking sides between quarrelling gods. Successive hard aspects from transiting Saturn to this natal opposition, as well as other important transits and progressions, may reflect experiences which make George feel cornered and impelled to “split” the opposition in order to avoid anxiety and stress. And the actual behaviour of George’s father may tip the scales strongly one way or the other. If his father really is a tyrannical bastard, then George won’t be especially enthusiastic about owning Saturnian qualities in himself. We can never be certain, from looking at a hard aspect, which end the ego will “claim” and which end will remain unconscious. But we can get some clues. If George is a Capricorn with Taurus rising and the Moon in Virgo trine the Sun and sextile Saturn, and nothing except Pluto in fire, then we can make an educated guess that he will favour Saturn over the Sun, and project the solar side of the opposition onto his father. The father might then appear artistic or charismatic, but possibly also weak or childish, or inaccessible like the Sun in the heavens. If George is a Leo with Sagittarius rising, the Sun conjunct Jupiter, and Venus and Mercury in Leo trine Mars in Aries, we can make an educated guess that he will favour the Sun, and project Saturn. This latter possibility is the line I will take as I develop our story about the Madness of George.

As fiery George begins to interact with the outer world and encounters any thing or person that is connected with the archetype of father – school authorities, police, his weekly allowance, even his own body – his complex will push against his conscious perceptions and subtly colour them, distorting his relationship with reality. Saturnian people and institutions will invariably seem authoritarian and restrictive, the outer world will seem to be blocking him at every turn, and George will go about thinking to himself, “It’s tough out there. The world is a rotten place. Everybody heaps shit on me.” This is how he perceives his father. At this point he is unlikely to recognise that the hard, tough, authoritarian figure who keeps him down isn’t really his father, or, for that matter, the world. His father is a hook upon which he is projecting some of the energy of his father-complex – the half he cannot yet digest and make his own.

In infancy George is already predisposed through his innate psychic structure – which is what complexes are – to perceive his father and all father-surrogates in this way. But it is direct experience that will flesh out the bare archetypal bones of the complex. For the moment, let’s leave George’s mother out of the picture, although we all know she will play a very important part in influencing how this Sun-Saturn opposition is experienced. Let’s say, then, that his father really isn’t too bad a chap. He too has a Sun-Saturn aspect, a square. But unlike George, the father’s Sun is in an earth sign, and there isn’t any fire in his chart except for the Moon in Leo, so he identifies with Saturn’s earthbound voice, and rejects the individualistic solar principle. He is secretly a dreamer, a frustrated artist. He adores his son – his Moon is, after all, conjunct George’s Sun-Venus-Jupiter – and wishes the boy could have all the creative opportunities he himself never got. But he feels he must support his family, so he puts on a Saturnian face and tries terribly hard to be responsible. But George is predisposed to seeing him as nothing but negative Saturn. So his father is going to start feeling rejected. George gets sullen around him, and resents any attempts at discipline, and doesn’t like the wooden horse his father has spent hours carving for him for his birthday. After a while, the father says to himself, “This boy is impossible. I just can’t talk to him.

Whatever I try to do, I can't get it right. I'm not going to bother with him any more. His mother can deal with him."

The father withdraws and becomes distant, and increasingly feels a failure as a father. After all, he has a Sun-Saturn square, and his experience of his own father, George's grandfather, wasn't exactly a piece of cake. He doesn't really know much about fathering. George meanwhile secretly feels a failure as a son, because he thinks his father doesn't love him – even though, on the conscious level, he blames his father for their mutual alienation. This very personal experience of father-and-son conflict starts fleshing out the bones of George's complex. Our childhood experiences, which we remember and interpret selectively, contribute personal associations, personal memories, and personal feelings to something that is essentially impersonal or transpersonal. And thus the complex grows, with an archetypal pattern at its core and a highly personal layering of experiential flesh around that core. On first viewing, a pathological expression of George's complex has begun to form. It is accumulating a high energy charge of a negative kind. But its ultimate meaning and purpose have not yet revealed themselves.

As he reaches adulthood and moves toward his Saturn return, George's disappointment, hurt and resentment toward his father will generate feelings of anger and failure in all relationships and situations which involve the father-archetype. He may not be conscious of some of this, or even any of it. But at the same time that he is carrying around a negative perception of father, the secret respect and admiration he feels for his father's self-control and self-discipline is not negative. Although he is unlikely to admit it, he may envy his father, because this man had the toughness and commitment to sacrifice his own aspirations for the family, and George knows this, deep down. He may also know, since he is fiery, that he is rather narcissistic and childish in assuming that the world "ought" to recognise his specialness and grant him exemptions. By the time he reaches his Saturn return, the complex contains a complicated mass of highly ambivalent personal associations and feelings. At twenty-nine, George is doing very well working for British Telecom. He is aiming for a good managerial position, perhaps as a regional manager. He wants to move up in the company, and he believes, on the conscious level, that he deserves to reach the top. But fate plays a very nasty trick on him – or so it would appear. George doesn't know he has a father-complex which predisposes him to problems with authority, because he hasn't yet encountered the full impact of the complex. He has had glimpses – at around fifteen, when Saturn opposed Saturn and conjuncted the Sun and he had his first really big fight with his father about his punk friends and his poor performance at school, and at twenty-two, when Saturn squared the Sun-Saturn and he got thrown out of his job at Sainsbury's because he wore jeans and an earring to work. But now he is having his Saturn return. He is a grownup, and he thinks he has left his adolescent rebellion behind. Yet the very nature of the work he has chosen will inevitably constellate the complex. The moment one goes to work as an employee of a company, one will encounter an authority to whom one must answer. One goes along and applies for the job. Somebody is already there who says, "I will look at your application, and I will decide whether you are good enough." From the outset the father-complex is constellated, because there is an authority to whom one must go in order to get the job in the first place. Before George even gets through the door at BT, his father-complex is already starting to pulsate, because he might get rejected. Somebody there might say, "We don't want you." He is already primed, even though he doesn't realise it.

For a time, all seems to go well. But then his boss moves up, just in time for George's Saturn return, and he acquires a new boss who has the Sun opposition Saturn. Wherever in the world he goes, George will always meet this Saturnian figure when the moment is ripe. This is what I mean by fate. There is no rational explanation of how this happens. On one level, we can see the cause-and-effect principle in operation. George is a company man because his Sun-Saturn compels him to seek security and structure. Within companies it is likely that those at the top will also have Sun-Saturn natures, and the odds are he will wind up working for one of them. But such causal reasoning cannot explain the mysterious ways in which we

encounter our complexes in the outer world. Sometimes the chain of causes and consequences is so obscure that we cannot find the beginning of it, because it may lie in the family background before our birth. Sometimes our choices are made when we are so young that we cannot in any sense be deemed responsible. Sometimes we are forced to make certain choices because the world is what it is. Sometimes the collective has set things in motion which lead to consequences which affect us personally. In this area personal “blame” may be irrelevant and inappropriate. All we know is that, if we look at enough life histories, including our own, we can see this strange synchronicity occurring constantly. We always meet our secret selves in the outer world, even if we have to go around the world to do it. We always find those people whose birth charts fit our birth charts and whose complexes match our own, so that we can act out our drama with those individuals and thereby, hopefully, discover ourselves. It is generally through the dynamic of relationship that we start becoming aware of our complexes. That is how they usually manifest in life – not just in romantic relationships, but in all relationships in which we are deeply involved.

So George will unerringly be assigned to the particular executive at BT who also has a father-complex of the Saturnian kind. Initially there is likely to be antipathy between them, based on mutual projections. Our problems with other people usually begin with small, unnoticed gestures, words, and actions generated by our complexes, before they flower as full-blown power-battles. Something difficult starts going on between George and his employer, and at first it is quite unconscious. The employer may be a bit tight-lipped and officious, but he is basically a nice chap. But his Sun-Saturn makes it hard for him to delegate authority or show warmth to his employees, and George feels unappreciated and put down all the time. His boss doesn’t know what the problem is. All he knows is that there is friction between them. The relationship is not working. George’s unconscious complex is making him cast his boss in the same role in which he cast his father. He feels criticised. He is not being acknowledged as special. He gives off a sullen atmosphere. His boss, in turn, feels that whatever he does, George is going to sabotage it. He senses George’s tacit insubordination, and worries that he might turn out irresponsible, or even dishonest.

George’s employer may have a tendency to feel threatened by the talents or strengths of any employee, so he may tend to put George down a lot. It is not just George whose father-complex is on the rampage, but also his employer. We don’t know the exact nature of George’s employer’s father-complex. But he may feel envy of George because George seems so fiery and outgoing, and this man, like George’s father, may have stifled all his playful *puer* instincts to achieve success. George’s boss may also be frightened of him. Saturn in myth was frightened of his children, because he was certain one of them would overthrow him. Or the man may feel in some way inferior to George, or he may feel that he is trying to be a good father and here is a son who is rejecting him. All of these feelings may be involved. You are quite right – the situation may constellate envy in the employer. It may also constellate envy in George. All we know initially is that these two are going to find each other, and once they start getting into their psychic punch-up – once that joint father-complex takes over without any conscious awareness – a concrete punch-up is inevitable. George gets fired, and then turns up on an astrologer’s doorstep wanting a chart consultation. To help *him* understand the real nature of this tangle, *we* must understand it. At core, it has nothing to do with employers or jobs. That is only one possible concrete manifestation of the complex. Even if George goes into psychoanalysis for ten years, no amount of conscious effort will make the complex go away. After ten years of analysis George might discover that his father is not really Saturn-Kronos, but he will still be left with his complex, peeled of its purely personal associations. The complex is a living, dynamic centre of energy, and it contains the pattern of George’s development as a man. Ultimately he has to find a way to be this combination of Sun and Saturn himself, and express it in as creative and constructive way as he can.

He can only get to that level of consciousness by going through many different experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant, gradually gaining insight into his father-complex through the Saturnian people and situations he encounters. He may accumulate such

experiences for many years, each time his natal Sun-Saturn is triggered by a transit or progressed aspect, until the time arrives when the complex has gathered sufficient energy to emerge into consciousness and be at least partly integrated. Complexes may sleep for a long time, and only make themselves known when the time is right. That is what predictive astrology is all about, although the more concrete-minded astrologer may miss the meaning and slow emergence of the complex, and focus only on the material event which is its by-product – George losing his job. On the inner level, transits and progressions tell us when complexes are ripe. We can work on an intellectual level to understand what our complexes are all about. We can use our charts to “spot the complex”. This is great fun, and also very useful because it can prepare us and help us to deal more sensibly with what is coming up. But it will not alter the timing of the development and emergence of the complex. When complexes begin to intrude on life, the actual experience is rather different from an intellectual recognition. Then it is wise to turn inward to meet them, in order to understand what they are and where they are leading us.

The possibility of change

When we try to understand complexes, we need to think in paradoxes. Complexes change constantly according to our experiences and the consciousness we bring to them, and the way we handle them at any given time may alter the way they are expressed in the future. If George had understood even a little of the ambivalent feelings he held toward his father, the outcome of his confrontation with his employer might have been different. But we cannot stand in front of the mirror and shout, “Come out, you bastard!” if the complex is not yet ripe for integration. And the archetypal core will remain the same, no matter how successful we are in integrating the personal material attached to the complex. The core of a complex is reflected astrologically by the configurations in the birth chart. We cannot send in and order a new birth chart because we feel something should be changed. I don’t think working constructively with our complexes is a question of transforming something into something else. It is a question of consciousness, which can help us to stop projecting our complexes and engaging in compulsive relationship patterns with other people. It can also help us to be freer of the inner compulsions which drive us against our values and ethics, and it can help us to find new creative avenues for expressing the energy of the complex. Whether such consciousness can help us to alter the future is a question to which I have no answer. It is possible. It is also possible that certain experiences are necessary and unavoidable. Complexes are very mysterious, and take us into very deep philosophical and spiritual waters. If we do not limit ourselves to the psychoanalytic framework, and come at the subject from a more esoteric perspective, we are facing the dilemma the medieval alchemists struggled so hard to resolve – the cosmos isn’t finished yet. God has not yet finished the work of creation, or, to put it even more heretically, God himself, herself or itself is not yet finished. It isn’t fully cooked yet. In this world-view, complexes are bits of God, if you want to be very mystical about it. What we call the collective unconscious is the *unus mundus*, the living cosmic whole of which human beings are a part.

When a person works to integrate a complex by making a relationship with the unconscious, the complex is given new avenues of expression which, on a purely instinctual level, it would never have. Complexes without any consciousness to mediate them have limited levels of expression, as they do in the animal kingdom. Most life forms are bound by the archetypal patterns which dictate their evolution in accordance with survival needs, and this was understood by the Greeks as the “Law of Nature” – the most rudimentary form of fate or *moira*. There are not many things your cat can do with its complexes, except enact them within the limits of its species. If it is feeling aggressive, it can bite its owner or another cat, or it can tear apart the furniture, or run madly around the house. But it does not, as far as

we know, possess the capability of reflecting on the source of the aggressive feelings, which might shift them onto another level.

Deservedly or not, a human has a conscious ego which can make considered choices. This does not imply inherent superiority over other life-forms, nor do we always use our capacity for choice wisely. And many people prefer to lie back and let the complex take over, because it is so much easier. It could even be argued that, because we have so many choices, we have found far more destructive outlets for our complexes than other living things would ever pursue. But for whatever reason, if there is indeed a reason and it isn't just a cosmic accident, we have been given the gift of reflection, and can look forward and back, inward and outward. Therefore we can establish a different relationship with these energy centres within us, and encourage a dialogue between the complex with its compulsions and the ego with its capacity for choice. By making the complex conscious, and taking responsibility for containing its inherent conflicts, the individual gives something back to the collective psyche. Like the alchemists, we have worked on nature, and transformed its expression, if not its essential archetypal core. It may be that, if enough individuals work in this way, the compulsive and destructive manner in which some collective complexes habitually enact themselves – the aggressive compulsions which leads to war, for example – would be transformed. I have no answer to the question of whether this is possible. I personally believe it is, but I doubt that it will happen by next week. Some complexes seem not to have changed their expression at all in several thousand years. Others clearly have. But even with the latter, the archetypal core of the complex doesn't seem to change.

In Jung's *Answer to Job*,³ he suggests that, after many millennia of human life, the tyrannical Old Testament Yahveh is transformed by Job's dignified acceptance of suffering, and learns compassion. This is a hopeful perspective on the potential for change in complexes, but it certainly took a bloody long time. And even with such a vast collective shift, the archetypal core of our complexes remains the same, because complexes are the structure of our psychic reality. So there is a possibility of change – but also, there isn't. The way in which consciousness contains the complex and works with it can radically change its "seating", although not its essential nature and meaning.

³C. G. Jung, "Answer to Job", in *Psychology and Religion, Collected Works, Vol. 11*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973, pp. 355-474.