Women, Violence, and Jung's Archetypes

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Abstract

Jung's concept of the shadow will be applied to cases of violence against women in the regional context of the Middle East. This paper will present an explanation of the reasons why Middle Eastern women are often subject to gender inequality and violence against women. In order to do so, Jung's conception of archetypes will be applied to the specific cultural context of the Middle East.

Objective: To further understanding of gender inequality in the Middle East.

Methods: Phenomenology/Analytic Psychology

Results: Liberation from violence from men is the women's shadow since this is a desire which they deny or consciously ignore primarily because it is in contrast with societal and cultural norms that teach them to be submissive and inferior to males.

Conclusions: Women should identify, understand, and reveal this shadow. Once revealed, women will realize their rights, particularly to be free from acts of discrimination and violence, and can begin to fight for these rights and for empowerment.

Keywords: gender inequality, Middle East, Carl Jung, archetypes

1. Introduction

Jung's ideas, such as the three components of the human psyche, the complexes and mechanisms which make up the unconscious, and the catalogue of archetypes in the collective unconscious, are not only widely accepted in professional, clinical and analytical psychology, but they have become part of the cultural landscape of popular culture, literature and media entertainment. This widespread acceptance is symptomatic is indicative of how Jung's work has created the conditions in which we understand the human psyche, whether or not we are part of the field of psychology.

In the following paper, I will take Jung's concept of the shadow and apply it to a specific topic of personal interest and advocacy, namely women and violence. The shadow, as well as Jung's description and explanation of the psyche and its archetypes, will be discussed in order to provide the foundation for the present work. This will be followed by a narrative on women, violence, and gender equality in my specific regional context, the Middle East. Subsequently, a comparative analysis of these two will be presented in order to partially explain and understand their relationship. In sum, this paper will attempt to present an explanation of the reasons why Middle Eastern women allow themselves to be subject to gender inequality and violence through an understanding of the shadow as defined by Jung. Specifically, it is believed that despite the fact that women may have feelings that they should have the same rights as men, they interpret these feelings as negative, since they are opposed to social norms. According to Jung, these feelings are their shadows since they are the opposite of the traits they were raised to embody. However, in this sense, the shadow is in fact desirable and should be discovered and expressed in order to further women's rights and empowerment.

2. The 'Psyche' According to Carl Jung

The human psyche is the totality of all psychic processes, both conscious and unconscious, which play a role in an individual's thoughts, behavior and personality (Storr, 1999). This is why it is the focus of all psychological studies. According to Carl Jung, founder of analytical psychology, the human psyche is composed of three components: the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious (Stein, 1998). The ego is the conscious mind – the focal point of the field of consciousness (Edinger, 1973), while the personal unconscious contains one's memories, including those that are inaccessible or repressed (Stein, 1998).

The personal unconscious encompasses the personal experiences accumulated by a person in his lifetime. These repressed memories, emotions, and perceptions that are associated to specific experiences are referred to by Jung as complexes (Jung, 1968). A great deal of Jung's work addresses the existence of these memories and their associated emotions, which he proved could readily be recalled provided the correct or appropriate external stimulus; hence the creation of the word association test and other measures (Jung, 1968). Through tests with patients, Jung learned that certain external stimuli can reveal repressed memories; however, subjects or persons with strong wills are also able to resist the effect of stimuli, therein preventing personal secrets or memories from being revealed to other people (Stein, 1998). Therefore, Jung (1968) notes that while the unconscious may house repressed memories, some subjects are able to retain the ability repress such memories to the level of the ego and not let anyone else know about these memories. Through further studies into these complexes, Jung devised the notion that while some subjects may be able to restrict verbalization of memories in the unconscious, other physiological effects reveal themselves when such memories surface, such as an increased heart rate and sweating of the palms (Stein, 1998). Most people's egos are often able to neutralize these physiological effects to a degree, while those with stronger egos will be able to override the effects completely. This is the process when subjects keep up an attitude of professionalism and objectivity when tending to professional tasks even when plagued by personal issues (Stein, 1998).

The third component of Jung's notion of the human psyche is the collective unconscious, which is made of various archetypes and centered on the Self (Stein, 1998). According to Jung, the collective unconscious forms our psychological inheritance; in other words, individuals transfer certain knowledge from one generation to another simply by being part of one speciies. To differentiate the components of the personal unconscious to those of the collective unconscious, he used the term archetypes to refer to the latter. As archetypes are believed to form our psychological inheritance (i.e. they are hereditary, inborn, and universal), they are also regarded as the foundation on which the most powerful ideas in history are based, especially religious ideas (Storr, 1999). Though many archetypes exist among individuals, Jung identified five that are common among the general population.

For instance, the notion of the 'Self' is the archetype of wholeness; it regulates the center of the psyche and helps to bring about the process of individuation (Stein, 1999). The overarching objective of analytical psychology is indeed the attainment of self through individuation – this is the mechanism of bringing unconscious contents into conscious form through imaging, thereby integrating the various aspects of personality (Jung, 1989). The second major archetype is the shadow, or the repressed part of the ego, which indicates or represents a person's preferences that he is unable to understand or acknowledge (Jung, 1968). In other words, the shadow represents traits that lie within a person, hidden and obscured in everyday life, and often referred to as the opposite of the Self (Stein, 1999). Jung indicated that knowing one's self can only be complete if one is aware of and knows all his traits, including those that are hidden, i.e. the shadow (Stein, 1999). The anima and the animus are the third and fourth archetypes. These are, respectively, the feminine imagine in the male psyche and the masculine image in the female psyche (Jung, 1968). These archetypes transcend beyond societal stereotypes, thereby allowing the masculine subject to be in touch with the feminine subject, and vice versa (stein, 1999). The purpose of such encounters is to improve male and female relationships though communication and understanding (Stein, 1999)

The fifth major archetype is the persona or the mask, which alters how we present or project ourselves to the exterior world (Jung, 1968). The persona is seen as the dynamic or structural component of the psyche since one person may have multiple personas or masks that he wears in various situations and with different groups of people (Stein, 1999). Jung studied and wrote extensively on this construct because he was particularly interested with how people become part of a society by playing specific roles, adopting conventions, and embodying cultural tropes and stereotypes instead of letting their uniqueness shine through (Stein, 1999). Jung revealed through studies of patients that the creation and use of multiple personas are usually caused by people's sensitivity to others' opinions and expectations (Stein, 1998). Put simply, social subjects assume certain attitudes or personas because it is deemed necessary for functioning within certain institutions, such as the office, school or home (Storr, 1999) Stein (1998) notes that those

living in rural or natural areas tend to have a more unified environment as a result of the fact that they live where they work; hence there is no need to present different personas since they generally encounter the same people all day. Urban dwellers, on the other hand, are subjected to at least two different milieus – the domestic circle and the public word – which create at least two different personas (Stein, 1998). Jung also noted that his own personas in his autobiography (Jung, 1989). According to Jung, the creation of multiple personas is often beyond one's control since a persona is usually a response to specific situational and social expectations (Jung, 1989).

Since archetypes form the collective unconscious, and since that unconscious is passed through generations, new archetypes which emerge are deemed as discoveries as opposed to creations (Jung, 1968). Jung's work is centered on the discovery of such archetypes, which help people relate to their own archetypes.

3. Women and Gender Equality

Gender equality has been a topic of great interest for many individuals and groups, with organizations and social groups going to great lengths to further this interest. While this topic has had much attention since the late 19th century, there is yet to be a generally agreed-upon definition of the term (Kardam, 2002; Sörlin, Öhman, Ng, & Lindholm, 2012). Variations and difficulty in defining the term is probably caused by differences in what people perceive as equal, i.e. some might only want equal work opportunities, others may mean equality in domestic responsibilities, while other persons consider gender equality to encompass all aspects of life such as home, work, health, and legal rights (Sörlin et al., 2012). The absence of a working definition and standard metric for gender equality causes difficulty in research into this topic. Despite this, however, many researchers have studied the existence of gender equality in specific societies, and the effects of inequality in women's health, corporate success, and education (Moletsane, 2005; Sörlin et al., 2012).

In addition to research on the topic, many organizations – both local and international – have devoted time and resources to further women's rights and gender equality to government leaders. Kardam (2002) indicated that states that have greater linkages with international organizations that are sensitive to gender issues tend to create more progressive policies on women. The most significant international organization that stands for gender equality and women's rights is the United Nations, which collaborates with other organizations, foundations, and governments in creating and implementing policies that address women's rights and promote gender equality (Kardam, 2002).

Effects of gender inequality. Research and statistics show that gender inequality have adverse effects on the lives, well-being, and success of women (Moletsane, 2005). Conferences on women issues held by the United Nations revealed that women lag behind men in virtually all life aspects such literacy and education, as well as the ability to access capital and income, which in turn prevents career opportunities (Kardam, 2002). One of the most well-known and routinely studied effects of gender inequality is women's health (Buvinic, Morrison, Ofosu-Amaah, & Sjöblom, 2008; Moletsane, 2005). Statistics show that in societies wherein gender inequality persists, women are more prone to having HIV/AIDS and other health problems (Moletsane, 2005). While women have a longer recorded life span than men, they also have more recorded health issues such as bone diseases and serious illnesses such as breast and ovarian cancer (Buvinic et al., 2008).

Women's literacy and education is also greatly affected by gender inequality, most notably in countries where resources are limited and men are prioritized (Moletsane, 2005). In addition, gender inequality affects women's opportunities in earning income and participating in politics (Blumberg, 2010).

Discrimination and violence against women. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) is the internationally definitive legal instrument on gender equality, and has been ratified by 169 member countries of the United Nations (Kardam, 2002). It defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (UN General Assembly, 1979). States that ratified the CEDAW must create and implement policies and mechanisms that ensure that instances of discrimination against women are addressed adequately. The CEDAW has been effective in eliminating discrimination against women in such states; however, many countries wherein the CEDAW has not been ratified continue to report cases of gender discrimination, particularly in poor and patriarchal countries.

Violence against women is also dominant and of great concern in patriarchal societies. While both men and women may commit acts of violence against the opposite sex, acts of violence against women is significantly higher, i.e.

95% against 5% (Abeya, Afework, & Yalew, 2011). Violence against women is defined as "any act or conduct based on gender which causes death or physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or private sphere" (Organization of American States, 1994). Governments in western and European countries have created policies and laws that address violence against women, and international organizations such as the United Nations have also advocated people, time, and resources in aiding developing countries create and implement rules against violence towards women and girls (Sörlin et al., 2012). The Inter-American convention on the prevention, punishment, and eradication of violence against women, which was adopted in the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (1994), is the first treaty that specifically addresses the issue of violence against women. The adoption and ratification of this treaty made member states pioneers in the development of national and international laws that protect women from physical, psychological, and sexual harm or suffering (Center for Justice and International Law [CEJIL], 2006). Despite the widespread ratification of the treaty, violence against women continues to be a problem in the region and even more so in countries that do not have laws or policies that protect women from violence.

Middle East countries are predominant in world studies of violence against women (Ghanim, 2009). Different modalities of gender violence exist and vary among countries and across regions within countries. One of the most commonly reported modality is domestic violence, which includes physical aggression and abuse such as hitting, physical violence, throwing objects, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and economic deprivation (Ghanim, 2009). Domestic violence against women accounts for 85% or reported cases of violence against women worldwide (Abeya et al., 2011). While there are multiple complex social and cultural factors that affect the occurrence of domestic violence, these are manifestations of unequal rights and power relations between men and women in relationships (Abeya et al., 2011).

Many liberal parties and organizations consider the mutilation of female genitals, a cultural and religious tradition in some Middle Eastern countries, to be as a form of culturally-sanctioned violence against women (Lehman & Nath, 2009). Indeed, the World Health Organization has shown how such procedures could be dangerous for the health and well-being of women in order to convince governments to create laws that prohibit such acts Monjok, Essien, & Holmes, 2007). Yet, by the year 2012 some studies measured that at least 120million girls and women had experience genital mutilation or cutting, and approximately 30 million below the age of 15 who are still subject to such mutilation (UNICEF, 2013). This indicates that efforts by both local and transnational organization to end the practice of female genital mutilation have not had much effect on the governments and citizens who engage in such practices due to sociocultural norms and religious beliefs (Monjok et al., 2007).

Gender alienation and punishment for rape and adultery are also forms of violence against women, which are currently accepted and legal in many African and Middle Eastern countries (Ghanim, 2009). While multiple transnational organizations have condemned and argues against such acts of violence against women, such acts continue to be legally performed in many Middle Eastern countries.

4. Jung's Archetypes, Women and Violence

In the following section, I will relate the psychological concepts discussed by Carl Jung to the phenomena of discrimination, violence against women and gender inequality in the Middle East. By using studies, exposition to western cultures and laws, and personal experiences with abused women, I've come to condemn passed on perceptions of females as lesser persons with fewer rights and lesser dignity, and traditions that permit discrimination and violence against women. Having experience in working in organizations that care for and protect women and for greater equality between the genders, I have made female empowerment and gender equality my priority. Because of this, I've decided to relate this issue to the concepts of Jungian psychology discuse in class. For the purposes of this paper, I've chosen the archetype of the shadow as directly related to my interest in and experience with protecting women, abolishing discrimination and violence against women, and advocating equal rights and women empowerment.

The shadow functions to represent a person's preferences which he or she hides, either actively of unconsciously Compared to other archetypes and the other aspects of the human psyche, Jung discussed the shadow least in his formal writings. This lack of information quite naturally creates difficulty in completely understanding this particular archetype; yet its definition is still useful for reflection and discussion about the existence and discovery of the shadow.

In his lectures at the Tavistock Clinic, Jung (1968) mentioned how the body might stand or be perceived as the

shadow; specifically, he referred to the body as the embodiment or "personification of this shadow of the ego" (p. 23). The analogy at first appeared to break down, because humans can see our bodies, which we know is the precise opposite of the shadw, which according to its definition, is obscured and hidden. However, being able to visualize one's body does not imply that such a body is known. Additionally, the assumption is often made about our bodies wishes and desires, what the body stands for, what it means and what it appears to be, without considering if we could be incorrect about these assumptions. This is particularly true for women in cultures and societies that regard men to be higher beings than women – the woman is the property of the man, hence her body is his possession and he can do whatever he wants with it. While the cultural norm in such societies is for the woman to submit herself to her husband, whether to sexual or physical abuse, the body embodies hidden desires to be liberated from such harm. Therefore the shadow, which is to say the body, stands in for preferences which could be perceived as negative in the local culture, but believed to be positive in western societies where a modicum of gender equality exits. Put simply, hidden desire sentrapped in the shadow as defined by Jung may be the opposite of the self, but are not always negative. Such negativity is often a subjective emotion and is dependent upon social conditions. For those who aim for gender equality, such as myself, oppressed women must recogize this shadow in order to advocate for better treatment and equal rights. Such a realization is necessary in order to further motions for gender equality, and for governments to create and pass laws that protect and empower women. For as long as women in the Middle East and Africa perceive that they and their bodies are the properties of their husbands, pushing for gender equality and abolishing discrimination and violence against women will be futile and ineffective.

5. Jung's Relevance in Contemporary Culture

While Sigmund Freud is the most well-known psychologist in popular culture, Carl Jung's theories are just as recognizable, though his name is more obscure. In fact, many of the concepts identified and defined by Jung have become part of the vocabulary of common people, often without their knowledge that they are using psychological terms. The most popular concepts used by the public are persona, introvert, extrovert, ego, transference, and anima/animus. As Stein (1998) points out, such terms are often used in popular culture, as well as in fields like literature and cultural studies, even though those who use them are unaware that these terms were coined by a psychologist named Carl Jung. In other words, the works of Jung have become so influential that they are considered to be part of ordinary vocabulary, and not only in psychological analysis and discourse.

The notion of the persona also plays a part in literary studies, as mentioned above. For instance, many short stories, novels and films describe their characters as performing one personality at work, and another at home exemplify people's use of several different masks or personas depending on the social situation they are in and the people whom they are with. One popular example is Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, which shows one person can be good, refined and well-respected yet at the same time dangerous and immoral (Stein, 1998). The term introvert has also become part of the common vocabulary to describe persons who are often quiet and keep to themselves. The prevalence of Jungian constructs in everyday usage attests to its broad cultural influence.

Jungian psychology is also used by analysts and psycholgists in understanding other aspects of life, situations and cultures. Among these people is Bruze M. Metzger who utilized Jungian and Freudian concepts and theories in understanding and explaining the Bible, particularly the New Testament. Metzger used psychological cnostructs such as introvert, extrovert, self, and shadow to describe players in the bible and to understand the decisions they made and the actions they took specifically during the time of Christ and the spread of Christianity in subsequent years (Ellens, 2007).

Beatrice M. Hinkle, an important figure in early feminist movements, used Jungian psychology to understand the rise of feminism (Kate, 1998). By using psychoanalytic theories, Hunkle realized the need for female empowerment, especially since the world wars created problems in all aspects of life, and women would need to work harder and exert more effort if they are to survive these effects. Through her work, women in her time did not only survive the physiological problems caused by the war, but also helped to ameliorate their quality of life and improve their social standing by promoting political aims and debating the necessity for equal work opportunities for women, as well as advocating against discrimination and violence against women.

Similar to the use of psychoanalytic concepts, theories, and discourse by Hinkle in her feminist advocacies, I and other liberal thinkers in the Middle East can attempt to engage and inspire common women in advocating for equal gender rights and abolishing discrimination and violence against women. Convincing ordinary women of their rights to health, education, work, and politics is just the beginning of the movement towards the passing of new laws that address, punish, and eradicate any form of discrimination and violence against women.

6. Conclusion

Gender equality has been a great and popular issue since the late 19th century. Many local, national, and international organizations advocate equal rights between men and women, and fight for the abolishment of discrimination and violence against women. Through the efforts of these organizations and national governments, women in many western and European countries have received equal rights with men, and are protected by law against discrimination and violence. The situation of women in Middle Eastern countries, however, have not changed much – women still have fewer rights and are legally subject to discrimination and violence.

In this paper I related one of Jung's archetypes, the shadow, to violence against women. Specifically, I highlighted the notion that Middle Eastern women who have experienced violence and subjected themselves to violence from men secretly aspire to be liberated from such acts of violence. This liberation from violence from men is the women's shadow since this is a desire which they deny or consciously ignore primarily because it is in contrast with societal and cultural norms that teach them to be submissive and inferior to males. Seen in this perspective, it is desired by gender equality advocates such as myself and other organizations that women identify, understand, and reveal this shadow. Once revealed, women will realize their rights, particularly to be free from acts of discrimination and violence, and can begin to fight for these rights and for empowerment.

This application of the archetype of the shadow in the issue of gender equality and violence against women is one example of the usefulness and relevance of Jung's concepts and theories in contemporary lives and issues. Viewing issues in the perspective of Jungian psychology often aids doctors, analysts, and researchers in explaining such issues and in identifying possible solutions. While decades have passed since Jung studied, proposed, and wrote about such concepts in analytical psychology, the constructs discussed here are still applicable today, in both everyday discourse and in clinical analyses.

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