



# The Social Character of the Unconscious. A Cross Reading between G. H. Mead and C. G. Jung

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## Abstract

The aim of this essay is to develop an original interpretative hypothesis concerning problematic aspects of George Herbert Mead's social theory of the Self in the light of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology. First of all, we will try to unveil a link between the Meadian component of the Self defined I and the dimension of the unconscious. Discussion of this connection will open to the hypothesis that the Meadian *I* can be understood as both an instinctive, unconscious and *non-pre-social* component of the Self. We will support this interpretative hypothesis by establishing a dialogue with two of the central concepts of Jung's analytical psychology, namely, the collective unconscious and the archetype. As we shall see, the main point of contact between the two theories lies in the identification of a common *non-pre-social* declination of the instinctive and unconscious assumptions of the conscious Self. More narrowly, we will try to explore this hypothesis by arguing for an interpretative affinity between the Jungian archetype and the Meadian social nature of instincts. Along these lines, we will propose a functionalist approach to the interpretation of the instinctive dimension of archetypes, according to which

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archetypes function instinctively. Our hypothesis of convergence between Mead and Jung with regard to the social nature of instincts and the archetype will lead us to sketch a peculiar and innovative social conception of the unconscious.

#### KEYWORDS

archetype, C. G. Jung, G. H. Mead, instinct, self

## 1 | THE PROBLEMATIC CONCEPT OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN MEAD'S THEORY OF THE SELF

George Herbert Mead is widely acknowledged as the pivotal author in the development of a social theory of the Self (Joas, 2001 (1997)).<sup>1</sup> Mead's social theory establishes that the genesis and development of the Self occurs within a social process. Mead is extremely clear in outlining his thesis: "it is impossible to conceive a self that arises outside of social experience" (Mead, 2015 (1934): 198). The consciousness of Self would not be such "unless the individual brought himself into the same experiential field as that of other individual selves in relation to whom he acts in any given social situation" (Mead, 2015 (1934), p. 195). The individual experiences himself and the world as a Self "only in so far as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behavior in which both he and they are involved" (Mead, 2015 (1934), p. 196). I can look at myself as an object, only if I look at myself as others do. The intersubjective conception of self-consciousness is centered on the concrete social interaction of Selves, which co-determine each other and which, in co-determining themselves, contribute at the same time to the creation of a social fabric of shared meanings.

The key mechanism in the genesis of the Self is the capacity to assume the attitude of the other (Mead, 1964d (1925), 2015 (1934); Cook, 1993). Starting from the assumption of the attitude of particular others, the Self constitutes itself as such— through the well known socialisation processes of *play* and *games*— and comes to assume the attitude of a *generalised other* (Mead, 1964c (1922), 1964d (1925); 2015 (1934)). The Self is thus the product of a more elaborate identification with a set of attitudes that structures a social group. As is well known, in order to account for the differentiation of the two components of the Self, Mead refers to concepts of the *Me* and the *I*. The socialised component of the Self is defined through recourse to the concept of the *Me*. The Self is also constituted by the component of the *I*. The *Me* can be defined as the objectification of the Self, deriving from the assumption of others' attitudes towards us, while the *I* is definable as the always open possibility of response to the objectification of the Self. The *I* can be understood in terms of the individual's response to the attitude that the others assume towards him (Cook, 2013; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Joas, 1985; Kato, 1970; Lewis, 1979).

In this article, we discuss the role that the dimension of the unconscious assumes within Mead's conception of the Self. In general terms, the pragmatist position toward the concept of the unconscious and its relation to psychoanalysis are subjects of extensive discussion

(Colapietro, 1995, 2021; Dadaian, 2023; Henning, 2022; Santarelli, 2020). Mead's case is part of this discussion exception. Although Mead acknowledges certain proximities between his theory and Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly with regard to the role of social control and self-criticism (Mead, 2015 (1934); Côté, 2015, p. 47; Côté, 2023), it is quite evident that Mead's reference to the concept of the unconscious is different from that proposed by Freud. Mead's reflections seem to neglect, or at any rate not to treat adequately, the dimension of the "Soul", proper to the unconscious. This has led some interpreters to argue that "the way Mead uses the term 'unconscious' here obviously has very little to do with its Freudian definition and indicates a sociopsychological orientation entirely different from the one being developed by the then equally nascent discipline of psychoanalysis" (Côté, 2015, p. 49). Mead, in fact, does not refer to any permanent structure of the unconscious, such as, for instance, the Freudian account of the Oedipus complex.

The assessment proposed by Côté's critical analysis appears rather stark. In his view, Mead's reflection on the unconscious neglects "the sensitive part of the psychic experience where emotions are formed, as well as the pathic dimension rooted in the experience of pleasure and pain and further developed into multiple categories of expressions of subjective sensibility. This is not, of course, a small dimension of psychic life, though it is one that will remain remarkably absent from Mead's social psychology" (ivi, p. 49). As a corollary to this general assessment, Côté further argues that Mead identifies the dimension of the unconscious primarily with the component of the *Me*, that is, with the routinization of unproblematized action: "thus defined, it would seem to relegate the unconscious to the general course of action, which is unproblematic and which represents a huge domain in itself" (ivi, p. 51). In this sense, the domain of the unconscious would basically coincide with that of the habitual and not fully reflective *Me*. This means that, thus conceived, the unconscious would constitute, on the one hand, a magmatic, disorganized and unsocialized dimension of personality, whereby the individual subject takes the form of self-consciousness only to the extent that he or she internalizes a set of social relations in which he or she is situated as an object with respect to other selves. Otherwise, this individual remains unconscious of himself or herself, that is, deprived of self-consciousness. On the other hand, the unconscious would be defined in terms of the habitual and unreflective dimension of the *Me*, that is, the already socialized component of the Self. In essence, the possibility of devising a domain of the unconscious that does not coincide with the dimension of the already socialized *Me* and that at the same time does not refer to a merely biological and pre-social sphere seems to remain excluded.

While broadly agreeing with Côté's interpretation, we will try to highlight the presence of an unconscious dimension within Mead's conception of the Self. This unconscious dimension— not adequately theorized by Mead— is neither entirely pre-social nor exclusively ascribable to the unreflective routinization of the habitual *Me*. This broader understanding of the unconscious dimension can be developed from an analysis of some problematic aspects of the *I*, understood as an instinctive— or more precisely: impulsive— ineffable and *non-pre-social* component of the Self.<sup>2</sup> In particular, we want to show how, alongside an unconscious Self understood as habitual and routinized, and connected to the stabilization of unproblematized social meanings (in short, to the *Me*), there may arise a dimension more closely related to the impulsive dimension of the Self and its unconscious preconditions, which is instead connected to the *I*<sup>3</sup>.

Moving from the problematic framework outlined above, the structure of the article will be developed as follows. The Second section will focus on passages in Mead's work that help to unveil a link between the component of the *I* and the dimension of the unconscious. Discussion of this connection will open to the hypothesis that the Meadian *I* can be understood as both an

instinctive, unconscious and *non-pre-social* component of the Self. The Third section will support this interpretative hypothesis by establishing a dialogue with two of the central concepts of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology, namely, the collective unconscious and the archetype. As we shall see, the main point of contact between the two theories lies in the identification of a common *non-pre-social* declination of the instinctive and unconscious assumptions of the conscious Self. We will try to explore this hypothesis by arguing for an interpretative affinity between the Jungian archetype and the Meadian social nature of instincts. Along these lines, the Fourth section will host an extensive critical analysis of the concept of instincts in Jung's theory of the archetype, concluding that, within the theory of the archetype, instincts lose their character of inflexibility and rigidity and become flexible and plastic, ultimately making the Jungian conception of instincts akin to Mead's. The Fifth section, will propose a functionalist approach to the interpretation of the instinctive dimension of archetypes, according to which archetypes function instinctively. Our hypothesis of convergence between Mead and Jung with regard to the social nature of instincts and the archetype will lead us to sketch, in the sixth and final section, a peculiar and innovative conception of the unconscious.

## 2 | THE MEADIAN I AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Mead's conceptualization of the *I* is ambiguous and problematic (Cook, 2013; Lewis, 1979; Santarelli, 2013). For the purposes of this article, we will focus on those passages of Mead's work that suggest a potential connection between the *I* and the unconscious. We start with the essays which, according to a well-established interpretive tradition (inaugurated by Joas, 1985) introduce Mead's conception of the mature Self. In "The Mechanism of Social Consciousness" (1964a [1912]), Mead writes that the *I* "lies beyond the range of immediate experience" (ivi, p. 140). The *I* is a sort of actual response and "we cannot present the response while we are responding" (ibid.). Furthermore, "The *I* therefore never can exist as an object in consciousness (...) the very process of replying to one's own talk, implies an *I* behind the scenes who answers to the gestures, the symbols that arise in consciousness" (ivi, p. 141). The *I* is a non-conscious precondition of the *Me* and it is "always out of sight of himself" (ibid.).

In "The Social Self" (1964b [1913]), an essay that returns to and develops the contents examined in "The Mechanism of Social Consciousness", Mead reiterates some characteristics of the *I* that contribute to its definition as an unconscious precondition of the Self. At the outset, the essay restates that the Self "cannot appear in consciousness as an *I*" (ivi, p. 142). Mead writes: "such an *I* is a presupposition, but never a presentation of conscious experience, for the moment it is presented it has passed into the objective case" (ibid.). The *I*, immediate and unconscious, induces the *Me* and can be understood only as a memory image deposited in the objectified *Me*. While it is true that in *Mind, Self, and Society* (2015 [1934]) the discussion of the *I* effectively shifts back and forth between reference to an unpredictable behavioral response to what has already been objectified and reference to a sort of subject of the responsive action rather than the action itself, even in this case there are some passages that permit a reading of the *I* as an unconscious precondition of the Self. In Part Three of the volume, we find the following: "The "*I*" does not get into the limelight; we talk to ourselves, but do not see ourselves. The "*I*" reacts to the self which arises through the taking of the attitudes of others" (ivi, p. 174). The *I* is referred to explicitly as the unconscious component of the action: "It is because of the "*I*" that we say that we are never fully aware of what we are, that we surprise ourselves by our

own action” (ibid.). In so far as it is an ineffable and unconscious dimension, the *I* cannot be understood except as objectification, and therefore as inserting itself only as a historical figure: “You cannot get the immediate response of the “*I*” in the process” (ibid.).

One might think that, as an unconscious precondition of socially organized action, the *I* could be identified with the merely biological and pre-social dimension of the Self.<sup>4</sup> Discussion of this point necessarily calls for a brief analysis of one of the supplementary essays of *Mind, Self, and Society*.

In this essay Mead distinguishes the biological individual from the “socially self-conscious individual. Mead describes the differences between these two kinds of individual in terms of differences in conduct. The conduct of the biologic individual “does not involve conscious reasoning”, and it is shared by “the more intelligent of the lower animals and [that of] man” (Mead, 2015 (1934), p. 347). The pre-reflective character of such conduct stems from the immediate and “unfractured relation” between the impulses and objects which characterize it (ivi, p. 352). As long as impulses and objects are connected through an immediate relation, there is no room for a conscious distinction between stimulation and response. The biological individual lives and acts in this kind of “living reality” (ivi, p. 353), in which she has no need and no ability to draw upon reflexive conduct.

The “socially self-conscious individual” (ivi, p. 347) distinguishes herself from the biological individual in terms of both conduct and experience. She is able to engage in symbolically shaped and socially complex kinds of behavior. Because she has the neurological capacity to postpone her responses to outward stimulation, when she participates in highly organized social interactions – such as games – the socially self-conscious individual displays the capacity to adopt the attitude of the other, and to reflexively control her own behavior and the behavior of the others in a reciprocal way. In this way, reflection is a potential part of her experience. She is not limited to living in the continuous present. She is able to ponder her reactions, and to reflect upon her past behavior. While the conduct and the experience of the biological individual is shared by other intelligent forms of lower animal life – it is a “biological inheritance from lower life” – the level of the socially self-conscious individual, “the peculiar control which the human social animal exercises over his environment and himself” (ivi, p. 347), represents a specific and peculiar feature of human action.

At this point, two clarifications are necessary. First, according to Mead the distinction between the biological individual and socially self-conscious individual does not simply refer to two different stages of the socialization process. On the contrary, this distinction also describes two dimensions of conduct and experience in the mature self. The biological individual is “a biological heritage”, which also acts once the individual has become “socially self-aware”. This heritage, alive and active, is opposed to the socialized and reflexive dimension of the Self, to the field organized by the internalization of social objects – that is, of the attitudes of others. Second, this distinction is functional, not substantive. Mead is not suggesting that our mature personality is split into two completely different and separate parts that can be easily differentiated and isolated from each other. On the contrary, the terms “biological individual” and “socially self-conscious individual” refer to different modes of experience and conduct. These modes are often intermingled, but in specific contexts they may become more or less prominent or relevant.<sup>5</sup>

But what is the relation between the biological and reflexive or socially conscious dimensions and the conceptual couple “*I-Me*”? Is it possible to identify the biological individual with the *I*, and the socially conscious individual with the *Me*? The thesis of identification between the biological individual and the *I* was introduced by Charles Morris, the American

philosopher and editor of *Mind, Self, and Society*. In his introduction to Mead's volume, Morris sometimes refers to the biological source of the spontaneity and the unpredictability of the *I*. The *I* appears as innovative and unpredictable from the standpoint of the *Me*, because it conveys a biological spontaneity which can never be fully taken into account in the existing social organization, and whose representative in the field of the self is the *Me*.<sup>6</sup> This strong analogy between the biological individual and the *I* was also recently emphasized by Gary Cook. In a 2013 article, Cook maintains that there are two different definitions of the *I* and the *Me*, which coexist in Mead's articles and lectures. The first definition is a functional one. The *Me*, as the result of a process of internalization, represents the objective side of the Self. This objective side of the Self requires a complementary subjective instance. This subjective instance must have the functional capacity to respond in an unpredictable and innovative way to the internalized responses of the other, so as to constitute an inner dialogue. This subjective function is performed by the *I*.

But in addition to this functional James-inspired distinction, there is a second distinction at work. The second distinction is structured in terms of an opposition between the biological and the social. On the one hand, there is the socialized part of the Self, organized around the internalized social responses of others – this is the dimension of the *Me*. On the other hand, there is the unpredictable, innovative, immediate dimension of the Self, organized around the body's impulsive responses. This is the dimension of the *I*. In this way, the characterization of the *I* as a source of innovation is based on the biological dimension of the organism. There is an impulsive bedrock – i.e., the biologic individual – which remains present and active even in the experience of the Self. Sometimes this impulsiveness reacts unpredictably to social norms and rules, and to their internalized version – the *Me*. These impulsive and organic responses of the *I* thus represent the source of innovations in the relationship between the individual and society, and in the relationship between the individual and herself.

Were this reconstruction valid, Mead's theory of socialization would appear occasionally inconsistent with the rest of his work.<sup>7</sup> The opposition between the biological pole – represented by the al individual and the *I* – and the social pole – represented by the socially self-conscious individual and the *Me* – depicts a dichotomic representation of the human being, fundamentally at odds with the social naturalism endorsed by Mead and the other pragmatists. Apart from the fact that Mead never clearly defines the *I* in biological terms,<sup>8</sup> and even though the language he uses in the aforementioned supplementary essay is a definite source of ambiguity, we must acknowledge that Mead never opposes the biological and the social – neither in this text, nor in his other articles and writings. Impulses, Mead maintains, are always social. An impulse might be directed against a specific social setting, but that does not mean that this impulse is asocial in general terms. There are no pre-social instincts or impulses. Non-human animals, Mead writes in *Mind, Self, and Society* (p. 235), are as social as human animals, even if their behavior is more impulsive, it is devoid of reflexivity – i.e., the kind of behavior inherited by the biological individual. Instincts shape interaction with other organisms and the environment. Instincts have a dialogical nature, they are present within practical interactions with others and with the environment, and they are plastic, or shaped and reshaped within those same interactions. The essay entitled *The Social Character of Instinct* (2017 (1908)) proposes that human instincts are all to be considered as social in nature. Human instincts are elicited by the behavior of those individuals with whom we share a social conduct. The *I*, in this sense, can be interpreted as an instinctive disposition toward an open-ended resynchronization with others' reactions to ourselves by, for example, a bodily or expressive readjustment.<sup>9</sup> And this assumption, independently of Mead's shift from the vocabulary of instincts to the language of impulses (Joas, 1985),

is a very stable point in the development of Mead's theory. This brief account of Mead's general theory of human action as biosocial action (Baggio, 2015) suggests how the biological character of the individual is not at odds with the social; it does not constitute a dimension that resists socialization.

Therefore, the *I* can be understood as the dimension of instinctive/impulsive response and unconsciousness of acting, as long as this impulsivity is not confused with asociality. Let's take a brief look at still another passage from *Mind, Self, and Society* which allows us to clarify in an exemplary way the nature of this unconscious and instinctive – and at the same time social – response proper to the *I*. Mead refers to the *I* of the instinctive laughter that might take us by surprise on seeing someone fall. This response is instinctive and unconscious since “it is situated outside of what we define as self-consciousness” (Mead, 2015 (1934), p. 273), and it is also social at the same time. The laugh is the instinctive way in which the *I* reacts to the liberation from the effort not to fall, from which we are exempted. It is an immediate, unconscious response. At the same time, it is an instinctive manifestation tied to a situation in which we identify with the other, we adopt his attitude as our own. Although the consequent reflectiveness that characterizes the repression of the laugh and the readiness to help the victim of the fall to get back up are the expression of the *Me* (ivi, p. 274), or of the assumption of a more elaborated attitude of the other, the *I* is by no means to be understood only as a biological and pre-social dimension, despite it's not being social in the same way as the *Me* of the internalization of generalized expectations. When laughing at a certain action we may be influenced by patterns, past experiences, defensive re-elaborations of past traumas. But apart from the origin and history of such an impulsive reaction, what matters is that in the present moment laughter occurs in the manner of the *I*. On the contrary, the *Me*, in this case, would act Freudianly as a censor who intervenes to control the instinctive behaviour and remodel it on the basis of generalized expectations. The *I*, in its immediacy and unpredictability, does not, however, necessarily constitute a pre-social dimension. This conotation is further reiterated by Mead in the distinction between the impulsive person and the egotistical person. The former, unlike the latter, is a social individual since – while egotism implies a limited *Self*, that does not posit itself in relation to the collectivity and merely turns a given situation to its own advantage – impulsivity does not define a limited and egotistical *Self*, but a *Self* that posits itself in relation to the collectivity (Mead, 2015 (1934)).

### 3 | THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THE UNCONSCIOUS: COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS, ARCHETYPES AND THE SOCIAL NATURE OF INSTINCTS

What we saw in the previous paragraph opens the way to the hypothesis that the *I* can be understood at the same time as an unconscious and *non-pre-social* component of the *Self*. However, this thesis remains problematic because, as already shown, Mead does not clarify in an analytically univocal way the nature of the *I*, nor does he explicitly address the theme of the unconscious. Moreover, even in the contributions in which we have explicitly tried to evaluate the role that the unconscious can play in the theory of the *Self*, the unconscious has been traced exclusively to its Freudian version.

Within this framework, we want to relaunch our hypothesis: to address the problematic aspects of Mead's theory related to the definition of the *I* as an unconscious and *non-pre-social* assumption of the *Self*, it could be fruitful to look not so much at Freudian psychoanalysis, with

which there are the already-mentioned evident affinities and differences, but rather at some characteristic aspects of the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung<sup>10</sup>. In fact, we believe that a dialogue between the two theories can help to advance an innovative interpretation of the problematic aspects both of the Meadian theory that is the object of this article as well as Jung's perspective.

In our opinion, the fundamental point of contact lies in the possible identification of a common *non-pre-social* declination of the unconscious assumptions of the conscious Self. With reference to both theories, we can hypothesize the non-necessity of supporting the existence of a pre-social phase of psychic (and social) development. We will try to follow this path by arguing for an unprecedented hypothesis of interpretative affinity between the Jungian archetype and the Meadian social nature of instincts, with particular attention to the component of the *I*.<sup>11</sup> We will recall Jung's concept of collective unconscious and archetype, thus reading the unconscious, ineffable and creative component of the *I* through the Jungian lens.

One of the main discontinuities between Freudian psychoanalysis and Jung's analytical psychology lies in the definition of the unconscious. Jung believes that Freud narrows the unconscious to the personal unconscious, that is, to the outcome of the individual's history. In this case, the unconscious becomes a kind of warehouse in which removed contents are deposited. Jung's clinical experience, however, confronts him with contents of a different kind. These contents seem to recur in similar form in distant and different cultures, and thus seem to belong to a shared dimension, which cannot be acquired in individual histories. Next to the personal unconscious, Jung holds that there is a collective unconscious, shared by the whole of humanity:

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from a personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is unborn. This deeper layer I call *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term 'collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal (...) It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a superpersonal nature which is present in every one of us

(Jung, 1969 (1954), pp. 3-4).

In one of the few critical works in the literature on the reconstruction of the social implications of Jungian theory, Progoff (1953) gives a detailed account of the social epistemology that characterizes Jung's conception of the collective unconscious: the social nature of man is an original fact (Progoff, 1953, p. 162). The unconscious has a social nature; the social is an original fact constitutive of individual consciousness. The conception of the social that is associated with the definition of the collective unconscious refers to an objective dimension.

But would Jung agree with identifying the collective with the social? When dealing with this issue, there are at least three aspects to consider.

First, when Jung introduces the term "collective unconscious," his main references are Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl. Jung adopts Durkheim's concept of collective representations, from which consciousness differentiates by individuating itself. Moreover, he recalls Lévy-Bruhl's concept of the "law of participation", on the basis of which the fundamental characteristic of the unconscious is its fusal participation with the reality (biological, natural and social) of which it is a part. These two references are so central to the definition of Jungian epistemology that Jung himself goes so far as to define the collective as "mystical collective representations"



(Jung, 1971 [1921]), thus combining Durkheim's conceptualization with Lévy-Bruhl's. The collective dimension is therefore original for Jung both in logical and phylogenetic terms and substantially coincides with the collective unconscious.

Second, there are at least two ways to understand the collective nature of these representations. According to the first hypothesis, the collective is defined as the set of psychic contents peculiar to humanity, as a result of a philogenetic inheritance shared by human beings. According to the second hypothesis, collective representations characterize specific cultures and specific societies. While the condition of *homo duplex* is characteristic of the general human condition, there are no collective representations shared by all humans. Collective representations are always culturally and socially specific. Jung and Durkheim seem to diverge here. Jung's references to the collective dimension lean more toward the first hypothesis, while Durkheim would support the second. While Jung's collective representations are trans-cultural and trans-social, Durkheim's collective is social to the core. In addition—and this is the third point—uses the term *Persona* when discussing the role that internalized norms and roles play in the psychic life of human beings. We act as a *Persona* when we act according to the implicit and explicit norms required by our job and social status.

The articulation of these three points would seem to suggest the need to distinguish between a collective unconscious—phylogenetically inherited and shared by all human beings—and a social unconscious—shared by members of a particular culture or society and consisting of socially and culturally acquired social and cultural rules and norms. However, an alternative and more productive interpretation is possible. According to this “functional” interpretation, the collective is a general term that includes both representations shared by all of humanity and representations specific to a society/culture, as long as they are opposed to individual representations. Consequently, what we have argued about the attractive power of the collective unconscious refers to both senses of the term collective—i.e., the Durkheimian one, which refers to specific societies and cultures; the more strictly Jungian one, which refers to trans-cultural and transocial phylogenetic inheritance.<sup>12</sup>

From this perspective, consciousness is the result of a process of individuation mediated by the collective, that is, by the unconscious totality that transcends the individual and precedes the differentiation that leads to the formation of consciousness. The individual is derived from the social in that consciousness derives from the unconscious. This sheds light on the twofold notion of the social that can be reconstructed from Jung's work. Ultimately, the social is, on the one hand, declined by Jung as collective, that is, an unconscious, objective and universal presupposition of consciousness; on the other hand, it is defined as an external dimension of the personality coinciding with the concept of person, i.e. an extract of the collective psyche that outlines the conventional and conformist component of the personality itself.<sup>13</sup>

Hence it is absolutely imperative to make a clear distinction between personal content and content belonging to the collective psyche. But this distinction is not easy to make, since the personal grows out of the collective psyche, and is intimately linked with it. It is difficult to say, therefore, which contents are to be allotted to the collective psyche, and which to the personal. There is no doubt at all, for instance, that the archaic symbolism found so frequently in fantasies and dreams is a collective element. All the fundamental instincts and basic forms of thought and feeling are collective

(Jung, 1928, pp. 160–161).

This last clause deserves special attention. All instincts, starting with the fundamental ones, are collective. The collective unconscious is in fact made up of what Jung calls archetypes. Archetypes are defined as *a priori* forms, both unconscious and collective, of the instinctive foundation of consciousness. The archetypes do not constitute the content of the collective dimension of the unconscious, but induce it. They are its instinctive, collective assumptions.

My thesis, then, is as follows: In addition to our immediate consciousness (...) there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals (...) It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents

(Jung, 1969 (1954), p. 43).

Archetypes are pre-existent with respect to consciousness and they influence it. Archetypes “are pre-existent to consciousness and condition it, appear in the part they actually play in reality: as structural forms of the instinctive stuff of consciousness” (Jung, 1977 (1961), p. 416). Due to their structural and structuring character, archetypes are not to be confused with archetypal representations. While the latter vary in the different social and cultural contexts in which they occur, archetypes represent the universal and transcultural—“collective”, to use Jung’s jargon—structure of these representations.

#### 4 | JUNG ON INSTINCTS

But how exactly does Jung conceive the relationship between instincts and archetypes? It is difficult to arrive at a straightforward answer to this question. To this end, it is useful to start with Jung’s conception of instincts. This topic is treated in a series of public species and articles, which, though they do not offer a systematic definition, highlight some key features of instincts.

The topic of instinct is addressed in the 1919 essay *Instinct and the unconscious*. In this essay, Jung builds on a commonsensical definition of the instinctual as “characterized by a certain unconsciousness of the psychological motive behind it, in opposition to the strictly conscious processes which are distinguished by the conscious continuity of their motives. Instinctive activity appears to be a more or less abrupt psychic experience, a sort of intrusion into the continuity of conscious events”, “the intrusion of an unconsciously motivated impulse into conscious action” (Jung, 1919, p. 15).

Ordinary language tends to conflate the semantic domain of the instinctive with the unconscious. “Only those processes can be called instinctive which are inherited and unconscious, uniformly and regularly occurring everywhere”, “despite the fact that their psychological mechanism is almost identical with that of instinct” (ivi, p. 17). This identification is, in the first place, erroneous, because not everything that is unconscious is instinctive, and because what is instinctive cannot be characterized solely by non-consciousness, but must also possess the characteristics of uniformity and regularity (ivi, p. 16). At the same time, it is true that some psychological phenomena occur as instinctive behaviors. But such cases – including phobias, obsessions, musical obsessions, sudden moods and fantasies, compulsive emotions and tendencies, depression and feelings of anxiety – operate as though they were instinctual, but they are not, as they are individually acquired. In contrast, instincts are inherited, collective rather than individually acquired. In any event, since unconscious processes occur in an

instinctive-like manner, the conception of the unconscious becomes an integral part of the instinct problem” (ivi, pp. 18-19).

Two aspects of the instinctual dimension seem to play an important role in Jung's argument. First, precisely by virtue of their hereditary and non-individual character, instincts belong, along with archetypes, to the nonpersonal collective unconscious. They are “qualities of uniform and general occurrence” (ivi, p. 19). In addition to this “topical” proximity, Jung points out an analogy in the coercive functioning of instincts and archetypes: “Just as instincts compel man to a conduct of life which is specifically human, so the archetypes or categories a priori coerce intuition and apprehension to specifically human forms” (ibid.). Second, Jung believes that civilization modifies instincts only superficially: “There is no doubt that the instincts of civilized man have become considerably modified; but underneath, instinct remains as the motive nucleus” (ivi, p. 20). The instinctive dimension is thus composed of two layers: one, a more superficial, malleable, plastic layer, capable of assuming the forms that result from interaction with society and cultural context; and the other, a deeper, stiff layer, impervious to the shaping action of society and culture.

These two aspects—the collective nature and partial plasticity of instincts—return almost 20 years later in the 1936 essay *Psychological factors determining human behavior*. Unlike the earlier essay, this one places these aspects within the framework of an explicitly non-psychic conception of instincts. Specifically, Jung believes that instincts are psychological factors, that is, factors capable of influencing and determining the psychic dimension, though they are not themselves psychic. Through evolutionary arguments, Jung states that it is unlikely that instinct and psyche coincide—consciousness being a more recent phenomenon than instinct. Therefore, it is reasonable to think of the compulsive character of instinct as an “ectopsychic” phenomenon which is psychically important in that it determines structures and patterns at the level of behavior.

At the same time, as we move from abstract theoretical reflection to the analysis of concrete phenomena of human action, the determining factor turns out to be something resulting from the interaction of instinct with the psychic situation of the moment. This interaction produces a “modified instinct” which has undergone a process of “psychicization,” and which represents the result of the assimilation of the instinctive stimulus within a pre-existing psychic pattern (Jung, 1969 (1936), p. 115). Although such instincts “are not creative in themselves; they have become stably organized and are therefore largely automatic” (ivi, p. 118). These psychicized instincts lose their rigidity and assume the “extraordinary capacity for variation and transformation” that Jung finds characteristic of psychic phenomena.

Two examples of modified instincts are hunger and sexuality. On the one hand, sexuality is related to the biological instinct of reproduction. On the other hand, in concrete human life, it appears in a psychicized form:

*Sexuality*, like hunger, undergoes a radical psychicization which makes it possible for the originally purely instinctive energy to be diverted from its biological application and turned into other channels. The fact that the energy can be deployed in various fields indicates the existence of still other drives strong enough to change the direction of the sexual instinct and to deflect it, at least in part, from its immediate goal (Jung, 1969 (1936), p. 116).

The difficulties of such a layered conception of instinct and the corresponding division between instinctual and psychic emerge when Jung discusses the issue of creativity (decisive in

Mead, cf. Joas, 1969). On the one hand, the creative act seems to exceed the instinctive domain: “Although, in general, instinct is a system of stably organized tracts and consequently tends toward unlimited repetition, man nevertheless has the distinctive power of creating something new in the real sense of the word, just as nature, in the course of long periods of time, succeeds in creating new forms” (Jung, 1969 (1936), p. 118). On the other hand, there seems to be a kind of creative instinct. Jung is aware that the label “creative” is not “accurate” here, as it seems to configure a kind of contradiction in terms—instinct is by its definition mechanical, repetitive, and therefore not creative. Nonetheless, this creative instinct behaves at least at the “dynamic” level as an instinct: “Like instinct it is compulsive, but it is not common, and it is not a fixed and invariably inherited organization” (ibid.).

Jung’s solution to this conceptual impasse is quite intricate: “Therefore I prefer to designate the creative impulse as a psychic factor similar in nature to instinct, having indeed a very close connection with the instincts, but without being identical with any one of them” (Jung, 1969 (1936), p. 118).

Jung uses the term “impulse” to define the creative realm as instinctual but not in the full sense of the term. Coincidentally, Mead also uses the same word in his attempt to overcome a conception of instincts as rigid, refractory to the influence of cooperative and conflictual interactions, and ultimately pre-social, if not a-social. Jung seems to glimpse this possible resolution to the problems posed by the “ectopsychic instinct-psychic instinct” dichotomy, but he does not go down this road as resolutely as Mead. Mead’s use of the term impulse would have helped Jung clarify in what sense human creativity can be understood only as a vaguely defined instinct because creativity is an impulse, rather than an instinct in the rigid sense adopted by Jung.

These tensions persist in a later contribution, in which Jung restates and rearticulates the basic tenets of the 1936 essay, by way of some minor terminological variations. Here, Jung defines instincts as a “psychoïd”, “parapsychic” phenomenon (Jung, 1969b (1954))—in short: a non-psychic phenomenon. Through an optic-visual metaphor, Jung argues that instincts are a kind of infrared sphere of the psychic: we have no direct psychic experience of the instinctual dimension, but we perceive its consequences at the psychic level. Moreover, Jung again maintains that instincts can be subjected to a process of “psychization”. Through this process, instincts lose their character of inflexibility and rigidity, and become flexible and plastic, that is, malleable with respect to the contents offered by different cultural contexts.

## 5 | INSTINCTS AND ARCHETYPES. TOWARDS A FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

It is evident that there is a point of discontinuity in this respect between Jung and Mead. Jung distinguishes between an instinctual dimension in itself, and a “psychized’ instinctual dimension”. Only after instincts have taken on a psychic character can they assume the features of plasticity and flexibility which, according to Mead, are part of the instinctive-impulsive dimension as such. In essence, while on the one hand, Jung seems to assume exactly the conception of instinct rejected by Mead<sup>14</sup>; on the other hand, when referring to the “psychicized” instinctive dimension, Jung seems to adopt a conception close to what Mead calls impulse.<sup>15</sup>

Things become more complex, and at the same time more promising for our comparison, as Jung deals in detail with the relationship between instinct and archetype. In outlining the

collective dimension of the unconscious, Jung combines two characteristic features: the evolutionary inheritance of archaic modes, and the instinctual dimension. More specifically, instinct and the archaic mode coincide in the biological concept of pattern of behavior (1969b (1954), p. 201). Instinct, Jung states, is never amorphous, as every instinct “bears in itself the pattern of a situation” (ibid.). It can, however, exert itself only within an environmental framework that provides what some time later will be called affordances. And such a framework is equally aprioristic and valid for all instincts, which do not trivially represent the relics of past times, but instead consist of regulatory functions that extend to the whole of psychic life, and whose influence fades only when consciousness comes into play.

But how is it possible to grasp the presence of the instinctual form in human biology? The indirect way to such a presence is the fantasy-material provided by Jung's patients, a dimension that, at least at first glance, we would not connect to the instinctual dimension. What is crucial here is not so much or only the material that emerges in the lives of patients—for example, in their dreams—but rather the ways in which patients develop such content in different forms, such as drawing, dance, music (in short: a gestural articulation). Over time, through such activities, the initially chaotic material becomes “thickened into themes and formal elements “which repeated themselves in identical or analogous form with the most varied individuals” (Jung, 1969b (1954), p. 203)—the best-known example of this being mandalas. The culmination of such formal organizations is convergence in a center. Thus, it is not a matter of specific content, but rather of formative principles in action. A “dark impulse is the ultimate arbiter of the pattern, an unconscious a priori precipitates itself into a plastic form” (ibid., p. 204). This process of articulation affects not only structure but also sense. Image and sense are identical, and as the former is formed so the latter is clarified. Therefore, such articulation results in the therapist's interpretation becoming superfluous, since in such activities the sense unfolds autonomously in the patients' gestures and practices.

The “impersonal, collective” unconscious, therefore, contains “collectively present unconscious conditions”, which operate by regulating and stimulating the creative activity of the imagination, producing configurations from the material made available by consciousness. In light of this, Jung maintains that: archetypes, insofar as they intervene to regulate, modify and motivate in configuration the contents of consciousness, “act like instincts” (ibid.). However, stating that something behaves like instincts, appears to imply a functionalist understanding of instincts, i.e., that there are no actual instincts, there are only instinctive ways of behaving. If we replace the word “instinctive” with impulsive, we have exactly Mead's idea. And—Jung adds—nothing precludes that this analogy should be understood in a strong sense. One could legitimately inquire whether “the typical situational patterns which these form principles apparently represent are not in the end identical with the instinctual patterns, namely, with the patterns of behavior” (Jung, 1969b (1954), p. 205).

Is it possible to give order to such a rich—and at times seemingly confusing—array of insights into the relationship between instinct and archetype? Our interpretive proposal is as follows. Jung argues that instinct and archetype are opposites united by a deep affinity. On the one hand, the instinctual dimension is sometimes accessible only through archetypal representations. Think of the idea of the center. The archetype of the center is not a specific image, but, on the contrary, a structure around which certain archetypal representations are organized. At the same time, in the sense introduced by Plessner, the center can be understood in a deeply animal instinctive sense, that is, as the need to organize one's actions and experiences around a central point of view, whereas excentricity, for Plessner, is the exclusive prerogative of the human dimension (Plessner, 2019 (1928)). Drawing on Jung's complex optical metaphor, one

could say that the infrared of the instinctual need for the center can appear in human experience only in an indirect form, and by way of passage into the ultraviolet of the archetype— or more correctly: in the way the instinctual ultraviolet is reflected in archetypal representations organized around a center.

On the other hand, archetypes functionally act instinctively: they attract, they are compulsive, they are the origin of impulses in a way that we would intuitively attribute only to the so-called biological dimension. Therefore, the complex Jungian dialectic of opposites allows us to mitigate his biologicistic conception of impulses—and the consequent rigid distinction between instinct in itself and “psychic” instincts—thus shedding light on the interactions between the biological collective and the “spiritual” collective.

## 6 | THE SOCIAL NATURE OF INSTINCTS AND ARCHETYPES. A PROPOSAL OF CONVERGENCE OF MEAD AND JUNG

We now have the theoretical instruments to propose a reinterpretation of the Meadian *I* in light of the concept of the archetype. If we look at the archetype as a characteristic trait of an alternative formulation to the Freudian conception of the unconscious, we find support for the hypothesis that Mead's theory contains a reference to the unconscious, which invests an interpretation of the *I* understood as an instinctive and *non-pre-social* dimension. It is evident that a comparison with the Freudian conception of the unconscious alone does not permit such a reading of the unexpressed potential of Mead's reflection on the unconscious. The archetype belongs to the collective sphere of the unconscious and functions instinctively and impulsively. In Jung's view, the reflective consciousness of humans – similarly to what we have seen in reference to the declination of the *I* understood in terms of an unconscious, instinctive and *non-pre-social* dimension – is rooted in the collective nature of instincts. In this regard, Jung reports the case of a bushman who, prey to the instincts of anger for not having caught any fish, strangles his adored son who has accompanied him and, in a moment immediately following the strangulation, is assailed in consciousness by an immense and anguished regret (Jung, 1964). Instinct, then, is the pre-condition for the emergence of consciousness.

These traits of the archetype are evidently extendable to an interpretation of the Meadian *I* similar to the one we are proposing here. Mead, as already discussed, supports the social nature of instincts:

The primitive instincts of the human animal are practically all social. It is at best a difficult task to isolate and define human instincts, but whatever group one gathers together is bound to refer to conduct that is determined by the movements of other individuals whose conduct is like our own

(Mead, 2017 (1908), p. 3).

While such a response mechanism of the *I* does not amount to a cognitive and reflective dimension – proper instead to the *Me* component – it presents a social connotation not reducible to a merely organic or biological component. That by way of which we come to think, and not just the content, in the strict sense, of thought – social objects for Mead and the dimension of consciousness for Jung – has a social nature. For Jung, as seen in the previous paragraphs, the archetype does not represent a specific image, but rather a universal form of representation, which can then assume archetypal ideas or images. We do not know this form

directly at the psychic level, but we can only reconstruct it at the hypothetical level. All essential ideas or beliefs are based on archetypal, primitive forms, whose expressiveness dates back to a phase in which consciousness did not yet think but perceived (Jung, 1969a (1954)). The concept of archetype is limited to designating the psychic contents not yet subjected to conscious processing and which consequently represent an immediate psychic datum. This immediate psychic datum – that is, the unconscious and collective pre-conditions of thinking – precedes the consciousness of the Ego, which is its object rather than its subject (Jung, 1969a (1954)).

As we have seen, the same applies to the Meadian *I*. The *I* can never be conscious, because if it were, it would become an object and not a subject. It would be a *Me*, not an *I*. For this reason, the *I* is to be understood as a pre-condition of consciousness and never as the content of consciousness itself. For Mead, “recognizing the Self cannot appear in consciousness as an *I*, that it is always an object, i.e. a *Me*” (Mead, 1964b (1913): 142) is decisive. Consciousness as an object is inconceivable without a subject, in the same way as, for Jung, the archetype is the impersonal and collective subject of consciousness. Jung defines the archetype as a *pre-existent thinking*, while Mead defines the *I* as a presupposition but never a presentation of a conscious experience (Mead, 1964b (1913)). The archetype can only be grasped as an archetypal image, as a formula that has become historical or elaborated (Jung, 1969a (1954)). So Mead argues that “the self appearing as ‘I’ is the memory image of the self who acted toward himself” (Mead, 1964b (1913), p. 143). The *I* can appear as an object only in the form of mnemonic images integrated into the *Me*. The *Me* becomes the object induced by the collective and instinctive nature of the *I*: “On the other hand, the stuff that goes to make up the ‘Me’ whom the ‘I’ addresses and whom he observes, is the experience which is induced by this action of the ‘I’” (ibid.).

In short, in Jung’s analysis, archetypes seem to exert their attractive force toward the subject in the manner of Mead’s *I*. In this case, we are dealing with an unconscious collective dimension that functions impulsively. Although Jung had intuitively grasped the link between archetype and instinct, Mead’s proposed shift from a rigid and biologicistic conception of instincts to a social and dynamic conception enables the articulation of this link in a clearer and more coherent form. From this perspective, another decisive point of convergence between Jung and Mead clearly surfaces. The impulsive and attractive force of archetypal images is not necessarily progressive, but can also involve regressive dynamics. The subject can sink into the archetype, Jung asserts several times, and be overwhelmed by it. This idea is perfectly compatible with the numerous passages in which Mead—contrary to a certain conventional view that tends to read pragmatism as a naively progressive and optimistic theory—accentuates the possible regressive risks associated with the irruption of the *I* into conscious experience.

## 7 | CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the hypothesis of convergence that we have developed in this essay leads us to envisage a peculiar conception of the unconscious. This conception cannot be exhausted in reference to the Meadian concept of the *Me*, which instead, from the point of view of Jungian theory, seems to apply to the concept of *Persona*, that is, to our public identity, our social role. Rather, it is an open, creative conception and not merely reactive or pathological. The definition of the *non-pre-social* character of the unconscious shared by Jung and Mead recalls a common idea of the unconscious, understood as a moment of transformative spontaneity. For Mead, the *I* is in fact what can determine social reconstruction through the irruption of an unpredictable creativity; for Jung, on the other hand, “the unconscious to be merely reactive in all cases is by

no means the impression I intend". On the contrary, Jung continues, "there are very many experiences which seem to prove that not only can the unconscious act spontaneously, but it can even take over the leadership" (Jung, 1928, p. 97). This possible common declination of the unconscious sphere is based, as argued, on the centrality of the social dimension. The reference to the social dimension constitutes the common ground of a possible convergence between the two theories in the direction of a peculiar definition of the unconscious contribution. As we have tried to show in this essay, the hypothesis of convergence between Mead and Jung- limited to the possible cross-reading of the social nature of instincts and archetypes- leads us to outline a non-pre-social dimension of the preconditions of consciousness and subjectivity. Despite the convergence we have discussed between archetype and the social nature of instincts, Jung, in discontinuity with a certain type of Freudianism, suggests the social nature of the unconscious and consciousness, without, however, developing the idea to its fullest potential. This limitation is probably due to a less than fully articulated conception of society. Jung's analytical psychology does not incorporate a peculiar theory of society, although it is based on epistemological assumptions for which the social dimension is of fundamental importance. This limitation may account for the absence in Jungian theory of any reference to intersubjectivity, so central instead in Meadian theory, understood as an intermediate dimension between the individual and the social. This idea of intersubjectivity allows Mead, unlike Jung, to avoid the dichotomization between individual and social and to envisage the coextensiveness of social and individual transformation. While individuation and social transformation are two coextensive components for Mead, Jung conceives the Persona in static, conformist terms, and not without conservative tones (Jung, 1928). The possibility of a creative reconstruction of the *Persona*, which would follow the scheme of interaction between the *I* and the *Me* as designed by Mead, is not taken into account by Jung. The creative dimension of the psyche transcends the strict boundaries drawn by internalized social norms and rules, but does not lead to a creative reconstruction of these norms and rules. On the contrary, in the perspective we have outlined in this work, the transformation of social self-consciousness and the transformation of individual self-consciousness represent phases of the same and unitary social process. We have, therefore, proposed here a hypothesis of reading "Mead through Jung", but it is also possible to indicate a perspective of reading "Jung through Mead". These are research perspectives that the questions articulated in this paper allow us to glimpse, but which clearly go beyond its limited objectives and require further development of the hypotheses announced and discussed here.

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by all authors. The first draft of the manuscript was written by all authors and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. The article was written by both authors of common intent and with a contribution from both to the whole development. In detail, Lorenzo Bruni contributed most to the writing of paragraphs 1-2-6-7. Matteo Santarelli contributed most to the writing of paragraphs 3-4-5.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Not applicable.

Open access publishing facilitated by Università degli Studi di Perugia, as part of the Wiley - CRUI-CARE agreement.



## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the publication of this manuscript.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> All authors contributed to the study conception and design of the essay. The article was written by both authors of common intent and with a contribution from both to the whole development. In detail, Lorenzo Bruni contributed most to the writing of paragraphs 1-2-6-7. Matteo Santarelli contributed most to the writing of paragraphs 3-4-5.
- <sup>2</sup> For additional clarification with respect to the fundamental interpretation of the unconscious in Mead's theory of the Self proposed by Côté, the thesis of the present essay develops from the idea that Côté's analysis is totally convincing in reference to Freud's reading of the unconscious, while if we consider a declination alternative to that of Freud—as developed in the argument proposed here – it becomes more profitable to focus on the *I* component.
- <sup>3</sup> In support of this hypothesis, we can briefly recall what Hans Joas said in response to the recurring criticism according to which the social theory of Mead's Self would expire in an understanding of the autonomy of the pre-Freudian person, that is, unable to recognize that the ego is not *master* in its own house, and therefore ultimately extraneous to the thematization of the contributions of the unconscious. Joas rejects this criticism precisely by focusing on the reference to the component of the *I*. The person, in the course of his action, can be surprised at any time by his own impulses (Joas, 2001, p. 248). These impulses are never fully understood within the conscious coherence of the person and their sudden, unconscious expression we could say, plays a decisive role in reading the emergence of human creativity (Joas, 1996).
- <sup>4</sup> Some of Mead's interpreters have read the tension between *Me* and *I* as a relationship between the biological sphere of the Self and its social component. Yet the biological dimension of instincts is not pre-social, nor entirely chaotic and disorganized. The internalization of the attitudes of others is not integrated into a completely amorphous dimension, but into the more determined reconfiguration at the social level of interactive behaviors that are already socio-biological (Baggio, 2015; Santarelli, 2021). This interpretation has also been proposed, for example, in Axel Honneth's recovery of Mead's thought for the formulation of his theory of recognition (1996 (1992)). At first, Honneth sees in the *I* the dimension of transcending existing social relations of recognition. It is ultimately a biological *I*, coinciding substantially with the biological individual rather than with the current action in progress (Honneth, 2002). Honneth makes the potential coincide with the individual, with the biological subject, losing sight of the social character of the biological. Even when Honneth abandons the reference to Mead to develop the possibility of overcoming existing recognition relations in an alternative way to his original proposal, he confirms this reading. In fact, he argues that we should no longer look to the Mead – which in his opinion constitutes an irreducibly individual and non-socialized instinct against internalized norms – but rather to Winnicott's theory, which allows us to identify the motive of recognition in rebellion against the fact that others are not available to us, that they are independent. Ultimately, Honneth's proposal embraces the Freudian idea that through the recognition of others we seek uninterruptedly throughout our lives to bridge the vulnerability that results from the rupture of the original symbiosis (Honneth, 2002).
- <sup>5</sup> We are grateful to one of the two anonymous reviewers for his request for clarification on this point.
- <sup>6</sup> In a footnote on page 175 of *Mind, Self, and Society*, Morris writes: "For the "I" viewed as the biologic individual, see Supplementary essays II, III".

- <sup>7</sup> We thus agree with Cook that the first functionalist version of the *I-Me* distinction is more consistent with Mead's general framework than this second version. Yet, more radically than Cook we believe that this second version cannot be found in Mead's works.
- <sup>8</sup> There is really no textual evidence for this identification – neither in *Mind, Self, and Society*, nor in the other articles dealing with the issue of the *I* and the *Me* – e.g. *The Genesis of the Self and Social Control*. Retrieving resources from Habermas (1987), Manning seems to go in a quite different direction than ours.
- <sup>9</sup> It is worth expanding on the reference to *The Social Character of Instinct*, since in this essay—together with his thesis on the social nature of instincts—Mead makes explicit the notion of unconscious that he uses to indicate a social perspective of the evolution of communication and human mind. More specifically, the main implications for a characterization of the dimension of the unconscious can be summarized by the following passage: “Before conscious communication by symbols arises in gestures, signs, and articulate sounds, there exists in these earliest stages of acts and their physiological fringes the means of co-ordinating social conduct, the means of unconscious communication. And conscious communication has made use of these very expressions of the emotion to build up its signs. They were already signs. They had already been naturally selected and pre served as signs in unreflective social conduct before they were specialized as symbols” (Mead, 2017 (1908), p. 5). There exists, that is, a communicative and therefore interactive dimension which has an unconscious character and which precedes the conscious communication expressed by gestures. It is a pre-reflective social behavior, which Mead associates with the process of formation of emotional consciousness understood as pre-cognitive consciousness: “in the first place, the emotional consciousness belongs at the beginning of the reflective process. It comes before the possibility of thought or of reflective action” (ivi, p. 6). Emotions thus become “the earliest stuff out of which objects can be built in the history of presentative consciousness” (ibid.). Finally, Mead adds, reiterating the social character of instincts: “this earliest instinctive consciousness is primarily social” (ibid.). On the relationship between unconscious communication, gesture and meaning, see the recent work of Guido Baggio (2023).
- <sup>10</sup> This comparison appears legitimate not only on the theoretical level, but also on the level of the history of ideas. Although there were no direct contacts and references between the two authors, it is evident that there is theoretical and terminological common ground between the two authors. The connecting element in this sense is obviously William James, an author who was decisive for Mead's intellectual path (Baggio, 2015; Joas, 1985), and who also played a major role in the development of Jung's thought (Melo & Resende, 2020; Shamdasani, 2003; Taylor, 1980).
- <sup>11</sup> The relationship between Jung's analytical psychology and social theory in the broad sense—despite some sporadic and appreciable attempts (Greenwood, 1990; Newcomb, 2011; Walker, 2012, 2017)—has not been fully developed to its potential. It is clear that Jung's depth psychology is not a social psychology, nor a social theory, but an analytical theory of the individual that starts from assumptions and social assumptions. However, it seems surprising that there is no tradition of studies aimed at investigating the possible links between social theory and Jungian theory. Cultivating a critical knowledge of Jungian theory could therefore contribute to developing a more fruitful relationship with social theory, especially with regard to reflection on fundamental epistemological questions, such as—on all— the nature of the social and the status of the relationship between social and individual. At the same time, social theory could stimulate the discussion of some nodes of Jung's thought insufficiently articulated from the sociological point of view. Jung's analytical psychology, although evidently does not present a systematic theory of society, is based on assumptions and assumptions in which the social dimension seems to be of obvious importance. We could ultimately say that in Jung's thought it is possible to discern a peculiar thematization of the relationship between social and individual (Proffoff, 1953).
- <sup>12</sup> On the relationship between the collective consciousness and the collective unconscious is crucial to refer to Greenwood (1990). In particular, by exploring the concepts of collective representations and archetypes, the author points out that the unconscious plays a key role in bridging Jung's and Durkheim's theory.
- <sup>13</sup> We will return to the question of the definition of the Persona and Jung's conception of the social—emphasizing in particular the aspects that differentiate it from Mead's theory—in the concluding part of the essay.

- <sup>14</sup> It is significant to mention that in presenting the issue of instincts Jung explicitly refers to Morgan, an author whom Mead has been criticizing since the early stages of his intellectual development (Baggio, 2015).
- <sup>15</sup> Mead's terminology of impulse would have helped Jung clarify in what sense human creativity can be understood as an instinct only in an imprecise sense—precisely, because creativity is perhaps an impulse, rather than an instinct in the strict meaning adopted by Jung.

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**How to cite this article:** Bruni, L., & Santarelli, M. (2024). The Social Character of the Unconscious. A Cross Reading between G. H. Mead and C. G. Jung. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12432>