

Libido and situational apperception

There are two dominant strands of thought regarding libido in humans. They both derive from the work of Sigmund Freud. The first strand was summarised by Freud as ‘the sex drive’ and this has been considerably elaborated by scientific experiment. In a 2006 study by Helen Fisher, Arthur Aron and Lucy Brown published the results of their consortium, ‘Romantic love: a mammalian brain system for mate choice’.¹ A differently extended strand and conception of the phenomena, derived from Freud, was proposed by C.G. Jung who identified libido in humans as psychic energy. In *Symbols of Transformation*, he writes that libido ‘denotes a desire or impulse which is unchecked by any kind of authority, moral or otherwise. Libido is appetite in its natural state. From the genetic point of view it is bodily needs like hunger, thirst, sleep, and sex, and emotional states or affects, which constitute the essence of libido.’²

Ideas regarding situational apperception can be followed through in Lacan’s work and his attention to the work of the Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler. For Lacan, the ah-ha experience (the *Aha-Erlebnis* in Köhler) is analogous to the mirror-stage, which also involves a moment of sudden insight that leads to a significant change in the subjects’ mental organisation and as such introspective self-consciousness. (vid. ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’ (1949)³

¹ Helen E. Fisher is at the Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Arthur Aron is at the Department of Psychology, State University of New York and Lucy L. Brown is at the Department of Neuroscience, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut. Their paper was published as part of *Philosophical Transactions B* by The Royal Society London.

² C.G. Jung. *Symbols of Transformation*, volume 5 of *Collected Works*, edited by Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953-83, paragraph 194.

³ Jacques Lacan. *Écrits*, translated by Bruce Fink, New York and London: Norton, 2006: para. 93-100, pp. 75-81.