

## **Psyche and environment**

*Anne Noonan*

### **Abstract**

The psyche, in the totality of conscious and unconscious processes, is revealed through the image, thought, and language, and within the group phenomena in relation with the environment.

Within this framework are the concepts of protomental and psychoid, respectively, in Bion and Jung, as well as the implications of transference and countertransference, but also in the group phenomena.

**Keywords :** group, individual, environment, psyche, archetypal

### **Psyche**

1-Psyche presents itself in, and is reflected upon by images, thoughts, feelings, lapsi, symptoms, dreams. These phenomena emerge after a cultural pruning of myriads of potentials. These potentials have many names, depending on which metaphor we choose. For some Jungians, but not all, the potential is called an archetype. There would be some Jungian analysts who hold to the classic idea of the 'archetype' as 'formed image'-for example, the "sage".

Our Judaic-Christian heritage has encouraged a particular world- or psychological view. Depth analysts, starting from Freud, have been responsible for a revisioning of this view as well as a movement towards a plurality of vision, with an acceptance of the fluidity of the psyche. Their understanding has now been added to those of people from traditional cultures, ecologists, feminists, contemporary theologians, and social theorists who are moving towards a culture of inter-dependence and diversity.

I shall look at how psyche presents itself through image, thought and language in the following three circumstances, using some of Jung's ideas as well as those of some of the so-called post-Jungians. First, within the therapeutic dyad; second, within group phenomena; and, third, in our understanding of interaction with environment beyond the human species.

For the sake of simplicity I have tried to organise this paper so that it will look a one circumstance, and then the other two, but this is very difficult given that the three areas are inter-related. I was initially somewhat frustrated with this but have subsequently found a possible reason (defence?) in this very nature of Jung's idea of unus mundus or the inter-relationship of the world of all things . I hope this view is acceptable; the shadow side of course could be a massa confusa !

In looking at psyche and psychological processes we enter a difficult domain in that, by attempting to discuss psyche, the lens we use is psyche itself. Reflection, or bending back on oneself, may lead to the contortions which occur in searching for descriptions of psychological states.

2- A conversation between Jung and Bion as they sought to discuss the relationship between psyche and soma will be described. In order to review these varied and yet inter-related areas the following are definitions of psyche, protomental, psychoid, and archetype, Psyche is the totality of all psychological processes, both conscious and unconscious. The Greek word psyche means butterfly, the emergence from the caterpillar state. There is a continuity between the caterpillar and the butterfly. They need each other for their different states. One often sees in psychoanalysis and analytical psychology an argument for primacy of psyche or body when clearly they are interdependent .

Psyche may be translated as either mind or soul. If one is using object relations theory the mind is conceived as having arisen through the internalisation of (actual outer others); archetypal psychology is also concerned with the imaginal inner others already present in potentia.

Another descriptions or metaphor for mind is the idea of inherited genetic information . James Hillman, an influential post-Jungian, has deftly coined the term interiorised community for the mind or self, rather than internal and internalised and so avoids the need to pronounce as to whether the objects/imaginal patterns are innate or introjected.

Archetypes are systems of readiness for action and also images and emotions - they are inherited with the brain structure - the chthonic portion of the psyche; that portion through which the psyche is attached to nature.

They manifest both on a personal level through complexes, and collectively as characteristics of whole cultures. <<... *the collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution born anew in the brain structure of every individual*>>-Jung CW 8 One can think of them as a fluid system of interaction at psychical and physical levels, represented as images and instinct. They are influenced by both internal and external reality, both physical and mental states.

Psychoid is a concept applicable to virtually any archetype, expressing the connection between psyche and matter.

3- Of the protomental system Bion writes: <<*I visualise as one in which physical and psychological or mental are undifferentiated. It is a matrix from which spring the phenomena ... since it is a level in which physical and mental are undifferentiated, it stands to reason what, when distress from this source manifests itself, it can manifest itself just as well in physical forms as in psychological.*>>- 'Experience in Groups', Wilfred Bion

### **Soma is the physical body**

Early understanding of the psyche-soma relationship Bion and Jung met in 1935 at a series of lectures now published as the Tavistock Lectures (London) given by Jung. There Bion asked Jung: 'You gave an analogy between archaic forms of the body and archaic forms of mind.

Is it purely an analogy or is there in fact a closer relationship?’ He then referred to a report in the British Medical Journal of a dream from which a diagnosis of a physical disorder was made by Jung.

Jung replied: <<*You touch again on the disputable problem of the psycho-physical parallelism for which I know of no answer because it is beyond the reach of man’s cognition. As I tried to explain yesterday, the two things - the psychical fact and the physiological fact - are peculiarly together ..... On account of that possible unity of the two things we must expect to find dreams which are more on the physiological side than on the psychological and ... These organic representations are well known in ancient literature .... According to my idea of the community of the psyche and the living body, it should be like that and it would be marvellous if it were not so*>>.

The discussion continued with Bion urging Jung to speak further, and Jung evidencing his fear of obscurantism and being thought ‘absolutely crazy’.

With the gift of hindsight we are able to see that Bion and Jung were referring to their idea of the protomental and the psychoid respectively.

In the case of Jung one can see this assumption extended into three areas: in the dyad of therapy, with discussions of transference and counter-transference, and contagion and possession within the analytical relationship; second. in his studies of the influence of an archetypal image as it grips a group, crowd or nation.

Jung believed that both individual and collective life are ruled by archetypes and, third, his later extension of interconnection, not only between people but also between psyche and matter usually regarded as dead or inert.

These ideas are illustrated in his work on synchronicity, his description of the I-Ching as animated, etc. These notions intersect with contemporary ideas in theology and ecology of a living and responsive world, the concept of anima mundi , the world as body of God.

What most interests me is the influence of the archetype in collective life behaviour, and the metaphors and myths which are used to describe, understand and learn from this behaviour and both reproduce and sometimes change the culture.

One sees these patterns of group behaviour in the Orphic cults and the stories of the Grail and Bion’s descriptions of the basic assumptions in groups with the powerful imagery of the church, the army, and the aristocracy.

Examples will be given of how some Jungian analysts have described archetypes’ functions in social contexts and an idea which gripped me a couple of years ago (in 1996) in response to the Pauline Hanson phenomenon.

Pauline Hanson was the leader of a new political party ‘One Nation ‘-the Australian version of the nationalism and xenophobia which has been a global feature of the late 20th century .

## **The Dyad**

In 1946 Jung wrote of the psychoid as that area where body and psyche meet, and this has important implications at the clinical level of transference and counter-transference for the images and bodily sensations, effects and contagions that pass

between the dyad. One is aware of this in particular physical and mental associations which are evoked with certain people.

An interesting study conducted by German analysts in the 80s attempted to give some objective proof of this - particular thoughts or sensations experienced by the therapists during sessions were recorded for colleagues and in some instances links were later discovered with undisclosed, often unconscious, material of the analysand. Information from Dr. Hans Dieckmann, Sydney lecture 1991

5 Jung speaks extensively of the transference in his Psychology of the Transference (CW16 Practice of Psychotherapy). 'The bond is often of such intensity that we could almost speak of a combination' and that for treatment to work both people would change. He believed that as well as personal material there are projections of impersonal and archetypal material.

Aldo Carotenuto states in his book The difficult art. A critical discourse on psychotherapy that this particular work of Jung's (Psychology of the Transference) is actually a re-elaboration of his involvement with his patient Sabina Spielrein - an erotic possession.

Carotenuto quotes from Jung's letters to her: <<return to me, in this moment of my need, some of the love and guilt and altruism which I was able to give you at the time of your illness. Now it is I who am ill>>. We are all aware of the contagion and shadow side of the therapeutic relationship, the hubris of acting out and the destruction which follows, often for both parties.

Perhaps these 'scandals' have helped bring a greater diffidence about our own work and the need for reflection and support. The older interpretation as objective knowledge held by the analyst, is giving way to an understanding of fallibility and a recognition that the work is to be done together, that transference may be initiated by the analyst, and that transference is talking of the actual situation and not just the original definition of reliving of past behaviour.

The very metaphor chosen for therapy - Oedipal, Eros/ Psyche, mother/child invoke specific interpretation, image, symbol and symptom for both parties.

## **The Environment**

Some of Jung's ideas of the anima mundi or ensouling and animating principles in the world and the resacrilisation of matter link with those of modern environmentalists, theologians and philosophers such as Umberto Maturana, Fritjof Capra and Thomas Berry who are attempting to image a turn-around from conceptualism matter and nature as dead and exploitable. (life-less and exploitable)

That aliveness of the world which has been always obvious to many cultures, including indigenous Australians (Aboriginal people in Australia) is now being painfully re-learned by many in Western culture.

The notion of polytheism, if not taken literally or fundamentally, complements an imaginal way of viewing a multi-cultural Australia not bound to assimilate to a monolithic or one true way conformism.

One of the objections to Jung's receptivity to concepts of anima mundi, paganism and polytheism, and his turning away from monotheism and traditional Christianity, is the belief that he was excessively influenced by the then contemporary pan-Germanism. This (pG) in its turn was influenced by over-idealised and romantic notions of Hellenism and the old German nature gods.

Richard Noll, in his book *The Jung Cult*, argues that the emphasis on a centralising sun motif (star as inner God) beloved of Jung and associated with old German culture, illustrates a kind of monotheistic neopaganism which itself allowed no tolerance of other cultures and beliefs. It (the sun symbol) and the swastika were certainly used by Nazis as a way of exclusion and genocide for other cultures whether they were religious, political or racial.

Much of Noll's work has been dismissed as insubstantial and sensationalist by Sonu Shamdasani in his scholarly and well-researched book *Cult Fictions - C G Jung and the Founding of Analytical Psychology*.

A great deal has been written on Jung in this regard, the most benevolent view being that he was influenced by the Zeitgeist but was also able to reflect and interpret it and saw it as a kind of demonic possession. In 1932 Jung certainly spoke about a new young Germany as vigorous and necessary. In an arresting description in 1938 spoke of Hitler as possessed:

*<<he, (Hitler) made upon the impression of a sort of scaffolding of wood covered with cloth, an automaton with a mask, like a robot, or a mask of a robot .... he showed no human sign, his expression was that of an inhumanly single-minded purposiveness with no sense of humour. He seemed as if he might be the double of a real person and that the man might perhaps be hiding inside like an appendix, and deliberately so hiding in order not to disturb the mechanism ...>>.*

Jung argued that Hitler believed himself to be and was identified by the German people and was in the grip of a powerful archetype of Wotan or the berserker God which he described as an irrational psychic factor inherent in the Germans, thereby showing his belief in a 'racial unconscious' a position unacceptable to many Jungians.

Freud's famous adage 'anatomy is destiny' is actually borrowed from that of Napoleon - 'geography is destiny' - and the extension of this original thought approaches the concepts of environmental therapy and eco-psychology - a direction in which many progressive therapists are proceeding.

In his book *The Political Psyche*, Andrew Samuels writes that nearly half the therapists interviewed about their approach to politics agreed with their patients' perception of the existence of an external political world which affected them.

One of the fundamental beliefs of psychotherapy has been the overriding importance of internal psychic events which are selectively named and organised according to prevailing views and beliefs. This is also associated with particular, selective myths or metaphors. Psychoanalysis, in common with other philosophical representations of western culture, has been dominated by a capitalist, patriarchal individualistic position - Freud's metaphor of the Oedipal drama, the killing of the father by the son, Jung's

metaphor of psychological development as the alchemical process with its emphasis on renewal and the hero's myth and the Eros and Psyche myth. Other models of imagining therapy and psychological development and cure are that of the parent/child, the basic assumptions within groups, etc.

Alternative and emerging psychoanalytic metaphors are, for example those of Luce Irigaray and James Hillman. Luce Irigaray revises the imagery of the primal hordes of totem and taboo and the story of Clytemnestra, Hillman's emphasis on the abandonment of Oedipus and grief of Jocasta rather than the killing of Laius, challenges the psychoanalytic story.

These studies explore the assumptions inherited from the myths and stories of our religions and written and oral histories which convey ideas of the innate inferiority of women.

This hierarchical vision of gender is also part of a more generalised hierarchical vision - with humans at the pinnacle and Nature and other species undervalued.

The environmental scientists Knudston and Suzuki stress the importance of the *unus mundus* for the environmental health of the world and believe as long as the Western language structure continues to describe matter as lifeless and inexhaustible, as opposed to traditional languages structures which recognise animation, fragility and the finite, progress in working against man-made environmental disasters will be limited.

Western structure has no finiteness to concepts of air, water or earth, There is no concept of limit and the hubris, with its consequent nemesis so feared by the Greeks, is gone. In Western society the concept of nature as alive usually appears as demonic - flood, earthquake, Cyclone Tracey etc.

The idea of animated nature appears to be returning in modern theology, with the idea of cosmic intelligence, the Gaia principle, and the world as God's body.

Geography is Destiny. Napoleon's phrase hits us with peculiar and new relevance now as we see our ecological problems worsening and the misery of millions as an effect of this. To capture the sense of the sacred in matter and the knowledge that it is fragile and limited is of paramount importance.

How can we shift from our vision of ourselves as the top of a monolithic world and explore our psyches? I believe depth psychology with its plurality of vision about ourselves and our visions of the world can contribute.

## **The Group**

Although Jung was traditionally seen to eschew groups, he certainly spoke about them, his idea of the German people infected by the archetype of Wotan, the berserker god and their fundamentalist fantasies of racial purity.

Post-Jungians who have written on group phenomena and archetypal influence include Refael Lopez Pedraza who in his book 'Cultural Anxiety' speaks variously on polytheism and monotheism and the conflict of these two cultural approaches within the individual psyche and the collective.

Louis Zinken ('The grail and the group' 1989 looked at the grail myth - one of the planks of classical Jungianism - in terms of collective rather than individual behaviour. This theme was also taken up by Arthur Colman, an American Jungian analyst and group therapist in his book *Beyond Scapegoating -Awakening Consciousness in Groups*.

Coming at it from a slightly different tack is an interesting paper by Eugene Monick called *Phallos and the Gulf War* where he looks at Operation Desert Storm as a reaction to impotence on the part of President George Bush (Bush senior).

One of the most influential thinkers in this area is Brazilian analyst Roberto Gambini who in his paper *The Soul of Underdevelopment*, delivered at the IAAP conference in Zurich, 1995, draws a persuasive connection between the colonial history, images, ideas, metaphors and archetypes which inform the culture of contemporary Brazil.

In Australia in this moment we are experiencing high levels of scapegoating of society's most vulnerable people, indigenous, youth, refugees, newcomers, particularly Asians.

This phenomenon is influenced by the kind of economic rationalism and hardship which was also present in Germany after the First World War.

Jung, in 1938, said of Hitler: <<*the law to remember about dictators is it is the persecuted one who persecutes*>>. - C.G. Jung Speaking' This does not imply that all persecuted become persecutors (cf the wounded healer concept). Jung also spoke of his (Hitler's) lack of self or core personality (what would now be described as a feature of the borderline personality) and his receptivity to and possession by the projections of the Germans on him as a saviour.

Pauline Hanson was the leader of a new Australian political party 'One Nation' which emerged as economic rationalism and hard times took a toll on Australia's underclass.

The party as the name suggests prided itself on its 'Australianess', although what this was never clearly articulated, and blamed the present woes of Australia on those who did not have these "Australian" characteristics, that is newcomers, Asians, Aborigines, youth and the unemployed.

Needless to say this approach was fostered and exploited by the conservative establishment

Hanson has a curious stereotyping and a lack of individuality of personal self and a perception of herself as representing (or being) Australia with which many are able to have an idealised projective identification.

She sees herself as a saviour, has described herself as crucified for the Australian people, and in her parliamentary office, had a painting done by an admirer, of herself as St Joan burning, martyred even as she unified the country. The Bishop wears a mitre with an ABC logo on it!!! Sydney Morning Herald, October, 1996

Hanson's dread of loss of identity and abandonment is shared by many Anglo-celts in their clinging to a past of excessive nationalism, Britain and the Queen

It is interesting that it is a woman who is taking on the saviour role in Australia - a shadow aspect of the little Aussie battler and the 'drover's wife'. In musing about this I think that there is a part of the Australian psyche which is borderline.

The fear of abandonment, the 'huddlers' Patrick White described, no sense of core self or its perception as terrifying, unknown and dreadful, that early fear of the interior as empty or persecutory with no intimate history of place as meaningful or sacred - a connection to neither indigenous sense of soul nor an openness to the new meanings which youth and new arrivals are trying to contribute.

I am aware of the objections to the imaginal approach of a diagnosis of part of a national psyche and also of therapising (excusing) a person who has as a parliamentarian the power to affect significantly others' lives. I am putting it forward as a way of playing with ideas, and an attempt to help depotentiate the fundamentalism and literalism prevalent in contemporary Australia.

In contrast to conservative, reactionary and reactive measures as a defence against rapid change and fear of the unknown, the need to understand and live in a changing community are bringing forth new ideas and interpretations of group behaviour.

I am thinking of the work of two Italian psychoanalysts: Riccardo Romano who, in 'L'Assunto di Base di Omerta' postulates a fourth basic assumption of omerta-a conspiracy of silence which underpins a group of destructive nature, with a repressive hierarchy and sacrifice of young blood and ideas.

Claudio Neri in his book 'Group' speaks of the 'genius loci' and says 'in the small analytic group the <<Genius Loci>> refers to the function of reanimating group identity and linking the change with the affective basis of the group>>.

In discussion with colleagues concerning an ongoing group for women with terminal illness we were struck by the liveliness which often accompanies the knowledge of one's impending death.

I remembered the description of a 'most alive man' of the Spanish poet Gabriel Garcia Lorca who wrote so much about and often play-acted death. Perhaps our contemporary Western malaise and depression is partly the result of this denial of death.

Rafael Lopez Pedraza in his 'Dionysus in Exile' discusses a group, the 'thiasos', which even in contemporary times is ritually dedicated to those traits which represent Dionysus - life, the body and death. He identifies such thiasos' in jazz, and in Spanish culture the flamenco and the bullfight, the enactment and the rituals of the aficionados of the protagonist musicians, dancers and fighters. Having observed the covert interest in death in Australian culture- detective stories, cinema and television thrillers, serial killers etc and the relief and change the therapist sees in patients who are able to talk about their impending death, one understands the importance and use of such thiasos in our secular times.

## **Bibliography**

Bion W.R. (1961). *Experiences in Groups and other papers*. London: Tavistock Publications Limited .

-----  
**Funzione Gamma**, scientific online magazine University "Sapienza" of Rome, registered with the Court Rome Civil (n. 426 of 28/10/2004)– [www.funzionegamma.it](http://www.funzionegamma.it)

Carotenuto, Aldo. (1992). *The Difficult Art. A Critical Discourse on Psychotherapy*. Wilmettete, Ill.: Chiron Publications.

Colman, Arthur D.(1995). *Up from Scapegoating-Awakening Consciousness in Groups*. Wilmette, Ill.: Chiron Publications.

Freud, S.(1933). *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. London: Hogarth Press.

Gambini, Roberto,(1997). the Soul of Underdevelopment; ‘The Case of Brazil’, in Mary Ann Mattoon(ed) Zurich 95, Einsiedeln, Daimon Verlag Hillman James ,(1972)*The Myth of Analysis: Three Essays in Archetypal Psychology*, Evanston: North Western University Press.

*I- Ching or Book of Changes* . (1950). Princeton: Princeton University Press,1950.

Irigaray Luce.(1977). *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Jung, C.J. (1964).*The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. CW 8, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Jung, C.J.(1964). *Civilisation in Transition*. CW 10 Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Jung, C.J. (1964). *The Practice of Psychotherapy*. CW16 Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Jung, C.G. (1935). *Fundamental Psychological Concepts .A Report of Five Lectures* to the Institute of Medical Psychology edited by Mary Barker and Margaret Game, London, private publication.

Kerenyi, Karl and Hillman James. (1991). *Oedipal Variations*. Dallas: Spring

Knudtson, Peter and Suzuki, David.(1992). *Wisdom of the Elders*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Lopez-Pedraza, Rafael.(1990). *Cultural Anxiety* .Einsiedeln: Daimon Verlag .

Lopez-Pedraza, Rafael.(2000). *Dionysus in Exile* . Willette, Ill.: Chiron Publications.

McGuire,William and Hull R,F.C. .(1977). *C.G.Jung Speaking , Interviews and Encounters* . Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Monick, Eugene.( 1992) . *Phallos and the Gulf War,Audiotape*. A Festival of Archetypal Psychology, Chicago: University of Notre Dame.

Neri, Claudio.(1998) .*Group, International Library of Group Analysis* 8. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Noll, Richard. (1994). *The Jung Cult*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Romano, Riccardo. (1997). *L’Assunto di Base di Omertà* .Catania: Italy.

Samuels, Andrew.(1993). *The Political Psyche*. London: Routledge.

Shamdasani ,Sonu. (1997). *Cult Fictions-C.G. Jung and the Founding of Analytical psychology*. Dallas: Spring.

**Anne Noonan** is President of the Institute of Australasian Psychiatrists. She is a Sidney medical graduate and trained in psychiatry in Sidney, London and Rome - the latter where she also trained as a psychoanalyst . Anne Noonan is interested in cross cultural psychiatry and presently works as an outreach medical specialist in remote communities of Central Australia and in private practice in Sidney. She is the present president of the Institute of Australasian Psychiatrists and on the executive council of

-----  
**Funzione Gamma**, scientific online magazine University "Sapienza" of Rome, registered with the Court Rome Civil (n. 426 of 28/10/2004)– [www.funzionegamma.it](http://www.funzionegamma.it)

the Australian Association of Group Psychotherapists and the Australian and New Zealand Society of Jungian Analysts.