

Jungian Psychology and Contemporary Politics

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I once heard a lecture by a financial expert in which he recounted a conversation with his father. They talked of world politics and at the end of a long exposition his father concluded, “it’s really all economics.” In a second conversation a couple years later the father summed up, “it’s really all psychology.” We are here tonight to consider some ways in which politics is really all about psychology. And more specifically how might a depth psychology that takes account of Jung’s idea of the collective unconscious be relevant to our contemporary sociopolitical problems?

There are generally two subjects you don’t talk about in polite conversation – politics and religion. We will discuss both tonight. But what I am NOT here to do is give you my own political viewpoint, which in any event would not be terribly interesting. We will not have a “political discussion” tonight in the traditional sense. Instead, basing our evening on Einstein’s idea that the significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created them, our intention is to open up a perspective on world political events that you will not find on either Fox News or CNN.

Some questions that are in the background of our exploration include: In what way does contemporary politics go on at a mythical or archetypal level? What is stirring in the collective unconscious today in response to our political, cultural, and ecological crises? And most importantly, “What can I do to help the world’s problems?”

Jung was interested in the intersection between the inner-psyche world and the outer social reality. In fact Jungian psychology as we know it today was born out of the visions and dreams Jung experienced in relationship to the outbreak of WWI. Jung’s intensive encounter with his unconscious, now published in the *Red Book*, was motivated

by an inner imperative to engage the psychological or spiritual issues that gave rise to the war.

In Oct 1913 Jung experienced a vision of a flood covering all of Europe from England to Russia. This vision lasted two hours. In another vision following this Jung saw a sea of blood over these same lands. In June and July 1914 Jung then experienced the same dream three times of being in a foreign land and suddenly a terrible cold descended from space. Everything was frozen. In the third dream he was in a remote English land and had to come back by the fastest ship possible. The ice had turned the leaves of a tree into sweet grapes full of healing juice through the working of the frost. Jung, in this third dream, picked some grapes and gave them to a great waiting throng. Then, just a couple weeks later, in Aug 1, 1914 WWI broke out. Jung was in Scotland, a foreign land for him as he was Swiss, and, as in his dream, he had to come back home by the fastest ship possible.

Up until the war broke out Jung believed, because of the horrific nature of his dreams and visions, that he was in danger of a psychotic break. In an interview with Mircea Eliade in 1952 Jung said that he worried at this time that he was “doing a schizophrenia.” Jung was already by this point a psychiatrist who built a world-wide reputation on his work with schizophrenics so he understood very well what that meant. In fact, right before the outbreak of WWI, Jung was in Aberdeen, Scotland because he was delivering a paper on schizophrenia to a psychiatric congress; he later admitted that as he delivered this paper he thought he would be speaking about himself and probably go mad right after the lecture. Then, “on July 31st,” he stated in the 1952 interview with Eliade, “immediately after my lecture, I learned from the newspapers that war had broken

out. Finally I understood. And when I disembarked in Holland on the next day, nobody was happier than I. Now I was sure that no schizophrenia was threatening me. I understood that my dreams and visions came to me from the subsoil of the collective unconscious. What remained for me to do now was to deepen and validate this discovery. And this is what I have been trying to do for forty years.” (Jung, C. G. (2009) *The Red Book: Liber Novus*. Sonu Shamdasani’s Introduction pp. 193-221). Jung came to the conclusion that his apocalyptic dreams and visions were not caused by personal problems but came from the tensions and chaos present in the collective unconscious. Jung also discovered that there was a relationship between his dreams and visions and social reality. This gave Jung the courage to confront his unconscious. If the dreams and visions that Jung experienced prior to the start of WWI were not personal delusions, but part of a collective experience, then it was not just individualistic, self-absorbed navel gazing to spend time working with them. Jung’s discovery of a collective as distinct from personal unconscious, and the importance of differentiating between personal and collective, became the center of his work from this point forward.

There are three themes I would like to present to you tonight. These include the concept of shadow projection, the idea of thinking symbolically or metaphorically about politics, and the way in which dreams respond to social and political events. At the end of this presentation I will tell you a dream I had after 9/11, and I will be interested in hearing about your dreams as well. Perhaps some of you have had a dream or dreams that you believe relate to the contemporary world, not just your own personal situation alone. As the evening goes on, if you remember one of these dreams, and it seems appropriate to share it tonight, hold onto it. I will leave some time at the end.

Shadow Projection

Aspects of ourselves that are incompatible with our conscious values tend to get repressed. When this happens, these contents do not disappear, but rather they are inevitably projected outside and seen in other people. Jung called this phenomenon shadow projection. When shadow projections happen on the collective scale they act like gasoline on a fire; they release huge reservoirs of split off emotional energy in large numbers of people. Jung saw war and political tension as stemming from collective projections of split off inner conflicts,

Once the symptoms are really outside in some form of sociopolitical insanity, it is impossible to convince anybody that the conflict is in the psyche of every individual since he is now quite sure where his enemy is. Then, the conflict which remains an intrapsychic phenomenon in the mind of the discerning person, takes place on the plane of projection in the form of political tension and murderous violence. (CW 14, par. 510)

Where do we see shadow projections occurring today in our political theater? Reagan's March 8, 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida is his first recorded use of the phrase "evil empire." Reagan said:

So, in your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride, the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil. ... They preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth. They are the focus of evil in the modern world.

During his September 2005 speech to the United Nations, newly elected President Ahmadinejad of Iran stated that the President of the United States sought to promote,

“state terrorism” based upon the “logic of the dark ages” and divide the world into “light and dark countries.” President Bush, in his 2002 State of the Union Address had already labeled the nations of North Korea, Iraq and Iran “regimes” that formed an “axis of evil”,

Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people’s hope for freedom. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade . . . This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger.

Bush also said before the invasion of Iraq, “Saddam Hussein is a homicidal dictator who is addicted to weapons of mass destruction.” Rhetoric and posturing aside, it is chilling to hear these statements with an ear for shadow projection. Which country is it that actually has nuclear bombs? The Middle East tends to imagine the President of the United States as the great threat to world peace, the one who, carrying at all times a briefcase with the nuclear codes, could at any moment destroy the world in fire.

Following Bush’s speech about the axis of evil in 2002, Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, the chief commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of Iran spoke of a true axis of evil consisting of the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel. Also Russia is mentioned as a “lesser Satan.” While Bush uses the term “evildoers”, Khomeini is quoted as saying on November 5, 1979, “America is the great Satan, the wounded snake.” Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, in a recent speech at

the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that Bush “is putting at risk the survival of the human species” and then called Bush, “the devil” repeatedly. “The devil came here yesterday”, Chavez said to the world, referring to Bush’s appearance at the same podium the day before, “and it smells of Sulphur still today.”

On a smaller scale, politicians know that if they can constellate their rivals as embodiments of the cultural shadow of their group this can emotionally solidify their base. In a 1996 Memo to GOPAC Newt Gingrich wrote that negative words should be used to describe Democrats, words such as: “Anti – flag, family, child, job ...” “bizarre”, “betray”, “decay”, “destroy”, “destructive”, “devour”, “failure”, “insecure”, “pathetic”, “selfish”, “shallow”, “sick”, “stagnation”, “*they/them*”, “traitors.” Here we see a projected symbolic self-portrait of the Republican shadow. These are demonizations that are intended to generate emotional reactions against a group of people. If we are really convinced that another person or group of persons is the embodiment of the shadow, all reason and objectivity, all capacity to see their human reality, goes out the window.

On the Democrat side listen to the negative characterizations of Mitt Romney: “lack of empathy” “inhumane” “insensitive to animals” “bad for women” “rich and indifferent” “just what you would expect from a guy who had a Swiss bank account” “extreme on issues”, “plastic”, “fake”, “insincere.” Here is the projected symbolic self-portrait of the liberal shadow, characteristics that are incompatible with the conscious values of liberals, exteriorized in a clichéd way as if power and greed and lack of empathy were not a general human problem but only a problem that Republicans have. Many democrats were disappointed when, after the first debate this year, Mitt Romney appeared not as an incarnation of the devil, but as an actual human being.

We live in a social world today that is filled with so much insanity. There is the threat of another World War, overpopulation, out of control greed, the environmental crisis. What can we do? Vaclav Havel suggested that there is a link between social and personal development. Havel was a leader of the Czech revolution, imprisoned multiple times for political dissidence, who later became the first president of the Czech Republic. He died last December at the age of 75. At the time of his death he was Chairman of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation. Havel received many recognitions, including the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Gandhi Peace Prize, the Philadelphia Liberty Medal, the Order of Canada, the freedom medal of the Four Freedoms Award, and the Ambassador of Conscience Award. In a letter to his wife written during a four-year prison sentence for political dissidence, Havel acknowledges that the naïve wish to change the world is a childish illusion, but instead of despairing about this, he focuses on what he can accomplish, the task of becoming himself,

If I consider the problem as that which the world is turning me into -- that is, as a tiny screw in a giant machine, deprived of human identity -- then there is really nothing I can do. Obviously I cannot put a stop to the destruction of the globe, the growing stupidity of nations and the production of thousands of new thermonuclear bombs. If, however, I consider it as that which each of us originally is, or rather what each of us -- irrespective of the state of the world -- has the basic potential to become, which is to say an autonomous human being, capable of acting responsibly to and for the world, then of course there is a great deal I can do." (Vaclav Havel, *Letters to Olga: June 1979-September 1982*, p. 295)

Havel states in effect that to make a contribution to the world problem one must first be one's own task. This is Mandela's fundamental conviction, "As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself... Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but

humility." For Jung, WWI and WWII were graphic illustrations of what happens when people are not honest with themselves, as Mandela puts it. In her book on active imagination, *Encounters with the Soul*, Jungian analyst Barbara Hannah recounted a discussion with Jung about whether or not there will be a third World War,

I remember vividly that when Jung was asked in a discussion if he thought there would be atomic war, he answered: "I think it depends on how many people can stand the tension of opposites in themselves. If enough can, I think we shall just escape the worst. But if not, and there is atomic war, or civilization will perish, as so many civilizations have perished before, but on a much larger scale." (p. 8)

Hannah continued, "This shows the tremendous value which Jung set on standing the tension between the opposites, and, if possible, uniting them in ourselves. For if we project the dark opposite beyond the Iron Curtain or onto the terrorists, for example, we are failing to contribute the grain that we might place on the positive side of the world scale of peace or war" (p. 8-9). When we work on taking back our shadow projections we are working not only for our own transformation, but for the transformation of society as well.

It is one thing to intellectually acknowledge that the qualities one rails against in others belong also to oneself, it is quite another to actually live through this realization. What does it feel like to be the thing that you've fought against your whole life? To really let that sink in? A man who was a liberal political activist once dreamt that he was fishing in a boat with Dick Cheney, the man who, more than any other, was for him the embodiment of the devil. A man who was a sniper in the Gulf War dreamt after returning home that the war was still going on and that he was in a battle. As he peered through the scope of his rifle and looked through the cross hairs to shoot his enemy he realized that he was taking aim against his brother. "A politics of individuation" writes Jungian analyst

Murray Stein, “requires questioning one’s own most cherished cultural certainties and dearly held convictions. It means letting go of earlier identifications and being open to exploring what is unknown and uncertain. There must be an open attitude toward the ‘alien other’ and a willingness to engage in dialogue with that foreign element. This draws out also the foreign element in ourselves, the unexpressed, the shadowy, the frightening and forgotten.” (Stein, *Politics of Individuation in the Americas in The Cultural Complex*, p. 273) Questioning our most deeply cherished certainties and values, being open to the dangerous and frightening darkness within and outside of us, is difficult. The depth psychological prescription to eat one’s own shadow reminds me of G.K. Chesterton’s observation about Christianity, “the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.”

Why can’t we all just get along? Rodney King famously asked this question during the 1992 L.A riots. There is a wild chaos in the human psyche, even an urge to destruction (Freud called it Thanatos or the death instinct) which is exacerbated through a naïve, one-sided belief in rational enlightenment, benevolent preaching, and good will. A dream of John Adams, the second U.S. President in the years 1797-1801 gives a vivid and sobering portrayal of this psychological reality. Adams had the following dream in 1790 and reported it 22 years later to his friend Benjamin Rush,

I dreamed that I was mounted on a lofty scaffold in the center of a great plain in Versailles, surrounded by an innumerable congregation of five and twenty million, at least, of the inhabitants of the royal menagerie. Such a multitude is not to be described or enumerated in detail. There were among them the elephant, (the) rhinoceros, the lion, the hyena, the wolf, the bear, the fox, and the wildcat, the rat, the squirrel, as well as the calf, the lamb, and the hare. There were eagles, hawks and owls of all sorts, and storks and cormorants and crows, and ducks, geese, turkeys, partridges, quails, robins, doves, and sparrows. There were whales, sharks, dolphins as well as cod, mackerel, herrings, and even minims and shiners.

My design was to persuade them to associate under a free, sovereign, ‘animatical’ (‘self-acting’ or ‘self-animated’) government, upon the unadulterated principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity among all living creatures. I had studied a long speech, arranged it in exact method, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, with an exordium and a very pathetic peroration, according to the most orthodox rules of the most approved rhetoricians. Throwing my eyes round and gracefully bowing to my respectable audience, I began:

‘My beloved brothers! We are all children of the same Father who feeds and clothes us all. Why should we not respect each other’s rights and live in peace and mutual love!’

I had not pronounced all these words before the elephant pouted his proboscis at me in contempt, the lion roared, the wolf howled, the cats and dogs were by the ears, the eagles flew upon the turkeys, the hawks and owls upon the chickens and pigeons. The whale rolled to swallow twenty at a mouthful, and the shark turned on his side to snap the first he could reach with his adamant teeth. In a word, such a scene of carnage ensued as no eye had ever seen and no pen or pencil ever described.

Frightened out of my wits, I leaped from the stage and made my escape – not, however, without having all my cloths torn from my back and my skin lacerated from head to foot. The terror and the scratches awakened me and convinced me forever what a fool I had been.” (as recounted in Zarrow, S. (2010). *Friendship and Healing – The Dreams of John Adams and Benjamin Rush*, p. 47)

It is as if, through this amazing archetypal dream, John Adams wakes up to the fact that peace cannot be attained by benevolently preaching enlightened philosophical ideals. If this were the case we would have done away with war long ago. For two thousand years the Christian ideal told Western culture to repress evil and strive for the spiritual good, but what is the result? The split off wild animals in all of us continue to roam around autonomously within ourselves and, through repression and projection, in the guise of enemies outside of us. We are confronted today with the problem of honestly confronting ourselves.

Symbolic Thinking

Keeping Einstein's observation in mind that problems cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness that created them, we can consider the social dimensions of developing the capacity to think symbolically. How is that relevant to what we have been discussing so far?

In a letter to David Cox in 1957, Jung said, "we are threatened with universal genocide if we cannot work out the way of salvation by a symbolic death." (Jung, *Letters Vol. II*, p. 586) Destruction and transformation is in the cards these days; will it take place concretely in the outer world or symbolically within the self?

Consider the contemporary phenomenon of what, from the perspective of the United States, is labeled Islamic terrorism. From the perspective of the Muslims who support them these men are not terrorists but martyrs. "Is there an art that is more beautiful, more divine, more eternal than the art of the martyr's death?" asked the President of Iran Muhammad Ahmadinejad. The martyr is not acting out of personal motives but imagines that he is sacrificing himself for a higher sacred purpose. From the depth psychological perspective such a person is unconsciously literalizing and enacting an archetypal image: death and rebirth. "I praise what longs to be burned to death" wrote Goethe in his poem "The Holy Longing." He sounds a lot like Ahmadinejad. But, unlike Ahmadinejad, Goethe is speaking not of a literal death, but of the symbolic death that Jung alluded to,

The Holy Longing

Tell a wise person or else keep silent
For the massman will mock it right away.

I praise what is truly alive
And what longs to be burned to death
...
And so long as you have not experienced this,
To die and so to grow,
You are only a troubled guest on a dark earth.

The poet, like the martyr, is caught up in a desire to be burned to death. But unlike the martyr he is not homicidal or suicidal. That is because the poet has worked this desire towards a mythopoetic realization of it that, unworked, remains in the fundamentalist raw psychosis. The English poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1817 in the *Biographia Literaria*, wrote of a “willing suspension of disbelief” that constituted “poetic faith” allowing one to see “the dramatic truth of delusion.” For the English 19th century artist and poet William Blake, the archetypal image of the destruction of the world by fire is absolutely true, not as historical fact but as metaphor,

The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard in Hell.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite and holy whereas it now appears finite and corrupt.

This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid. (Blake, 2000, p. 107; *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 14, “An allegory addressed to the Intellectual Powers”)

“Melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid” refers to Blake’s method of printing his books as well as to the unveiling of the archetypal

imagination hidden within literal facts, that same 'Eternity' which Blake describes as 'in love with the productions of time.'

The cure for the madness of fundamentalism, which is such a dire problem in our world today, is not the denigration of religious archetypal imagery as delusion, but the development of a symbolic or metaphoric understanding of religious imagery that allows us to take it seriously but not literally. Religious madness transforms the outer world into a symbolic world without knowing what it is doing, without conscious attention or awareness. If we can bring symbolic awareness to it we can discover the psychological truth of religious delusion. This is what Coleridge called poetic, as distinct from religious, faith.

In South Africa eating one's enemies is sometimes concretely enacted. Many soldiers are known to cut out the hearts of their enemies and eat them to gain power. Instead of engaging in literal cannibalism on the one hand, or rejecting this act as psychotic on the other, we can wonder about the symbol hidden within it. What does it mean psychologically to eat one's enemies, all the people one has killed? Perhaps one can become more whole, stronger, by eating one's own shadow, by integrating the enemy within oneself.

The capacity to think symbolically is something that most of us have to develop. It is a development of consciousness that can take a long time. The following painting was made, not by a great poet, but by an ordinary person like you or I, a woman in her mid-twenties.



This painting is based on a dream in which a huge serpent in the backyard of her house bit her young daughter. The bite was poisonous, the daughter was dying and the woman, in the dream, rushed her daughter to the hospital. The nurses at the hospital gave the child an injection on her forehead between her eyes. The hellish yet divine fire represented in the painting manifested in reality as a dangerous explosion of affect and fiery desire.

Why the shot to the forehead, to that space between the eyes? This is a symbol, not a literal fact, the best possible representation of something unknown that takes an archetypal form. Jung wrote about the symbolism of this part of the body as having to do with visionary consciousness, as in the Eastern idea of the third eye, the anja chakra,

Tantric yoga gives the classic localizations of thought: anahata, thinking (or localization of consciousness in the chest region (phrenes); visuddha (localized in the larynx), verbal thinking; and anja, vision, symbolized by the eye in the forehead, which is attained only when verbal image and object are no longer identical, i.e. when their participation mystique is abolished. I have this advance of human consciousness particularly at heart. It is a difficult task to which I have devoted all my life's work." (Jung, 1975, p. 264; *Letter to Pastor Walter Bernet*, 13 June 1955)

All of Jung's life's work was devoted to the advancement of consciousness depicted spontaneously in this woman's dream and painting.

Why? How is that relevant to our real life problems? In what way is the attainment of the symbolic point of view a social boon? In his *Red Book*, which, as we have seen, Jung wrote and painted in the years during and following WWI, Jung gives the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand as an example. Sonu Shamdasani in his commentary to the *Red Book* points out that this assassination was a “turning point in the history of the twentieth century” according to historian Martin Gilbert that played a critical role in the outbreak of WWI. For Jung the murder of the royal figure is an example of a literalized enactment of the need for a symbolic death and rebirth that was constellated at that time in the collective unconscious,

I would like you to see what the murdered hero means. Those nameless men who in our day have murdered a prince are blind prophets who demonstrate in events what then is valid only for the soul. Through the murder of princes we will learn that the prince in us, the hero, is threatened. Whether this should be seen as a good or a bad sign need not concern us. What is awful today is good in a hundred years, and in two hundred years is bad again. But we must recognize what is happening: there are nameless ones in you who threaten your prince, the hereditary ruler.

But our ruler is the spirit of this time, which rules and leads in us all. It is the general spirit in which we think and act today ... (Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 240)

Jung is saying that if Europe cannot consciously undergo an internal transformation of its cultural values and ideals, of the ruling spirit of the times, then it will unconsciously enact that inner urge for destruction as literal murder, war, and suicide,

But I ask you, when do men fall on their brothers with mighty weapons and bloody acts? They do such if they do not know that their brother is themselves. They themselves are sacrificers, but they mutually do the service of sacrifice. They must all sacrifice each other since the time has not yet come when man puts the bloody knife into himself in order to sacrifice the one he kills in his brother. But whom do people kill? They kill the noble, the brave, the heroes. They take aim at these and do not know that with these they mean themselves. They should sacrifice the hero in themselves, and because they do not know this, they kill their courageous brother.

The time is still not ripe. But through this blood sacrifice it should ripen. So long as it is possible to murder the brother instead of oneself, the time is not ripe. Frightful things must happen until men grow ripe. But anything else will not ripen humanity. Hence all this that takes place in these days must also be, so that the renewal can come. ... (Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 239)

In the final part of the talk we will look at a dream of an American man in which the motifs that Jung writes about here in the *Red Book*, putting the knife into oneself, the blood sacrifice of oneself, appear within the context of the days following 9/11 and the war between the United States and the Middle East.

Collective Dreams

We have explored the ideas of shadow projection and of thinking symbolically; now we turn our attention to collective dreams. Where can we look for hints, for possible directions to take with regard to dealing with our seemingly impossible world problems?

Jung wrote the following in a letter in 1960,

“We have simply got to listen to what the psyche spontaneously says to us. What the dream, which is not manufactured by us, says is just so. Say it again as well as you can ... it is the great dream which has always spoken through the artist as a mouthpiece. All his love and passion (his "values") flow towards the coming guest to proclaim his arrival.

What is the great Dream? It consists of the many small dreams and the many acts of humility and submission to their hints. It is the future and picture of the new world, which we do not understand yet. We cannot know better than the unconscious and its intimations. There is a fair chance of finding what we seek in vain in our conscious world. Where else could it be?" -- Jung, C. G. (1975). *C. G. Jung letters: Vol. II: 1951-1961* (G. Adler & A. Jaffe, Eds.) (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Letter to Sir Herbert Read, 2 September, 1960, pgs. 591-592.

Jung points us in the direction of looking within, to the unconscious, for solutions when our conscious understanding and rational willpower have hit their limits. Thomas Berry spoke in similar terms,

When the myths of our culture are not adequate to lead us into a new way of being, and new myths are not yet here, we have to return to what might be called 'genetic guidance', the spontaneously creative and mysterious impulses of the world unconscious that originate in the same instincts through which the earth came into being. In short, we have to return to nature.

The impulse to look to the dreams that arise in response to collective problems is an introverted compensation to our cultural extraversion and also a consequence of having nowhere else to turn, of hitting the limits of rational understanding, conscious willpower, and the mythical stories available in the culture. Put simply, we look to our dreams when we do not know what else to do.

In 1959 the Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz shared a big dream from a Swiss man in response to the Chinese invasion of Tibet,

"The other day a man, in revulsion over the slaughter now taking place in Tibet [1959], wrote a fiery article to the effect that we Swiss, who are also a mountain people threatened by surrounding big Powers, should show more sympathy and feeling for that other little mountain people who are fighting for their freedom, and that it is not enough just to read the papers and express sympathy, for tomorrow the same thing could happen to us with a Russian invasion. We should do something about it and stop trading with China. But then he dreamt that the world was coming to an end, and that a few people dug up a glacier in the mountains an old ship in which sat a beautiful woman. The ship was like Noah's ark which was moving towards the sea and only those who went in the old ship with the woman would be saved!

So you see, the unconscious says that what you in your masculine, political, thinking mind see is only a small aspect of what is really happening. We are now confronted with the deluge. Our real problem at the present time is that of overpopulation and not tension with the Arabs or the Russians. We are confronted with a hopeless situation. The saving principle is the feminine principle and this time it will not be Noah in the ark, but a woman, that is, a

goddess. What does that mean? You see the dreams with which one is sometimes confronted! You cannot evaluate this woman as a woman. The dreamer is all right in his relationship with women, there is nothing wrong on that level. What does the woman in the ark represent, and those few people that go with her?

That is not easy to interpret, but at the end of the Egyptian civilization there was a similar enantiodromia. Suddenly Isis got everything into her hands and the male gods faded -- and it is interesting that that was at the end of the Aries age and that now we are at the end of the Pisces, the astrological fish age, and again a woman is gathering the harvest and the men are a bit tired.” (Von Franz, *Alchemy*, p. 62-3)

Forty years after recounting this dream in which the saving image is the feminine principle Von Franz wrote again of this same theme, “our culture has been ruled by the masculine dynamism of the spirit. Now we will have to obey and submit ourselves to Mother Nature if we want to escape an imminent global catastrophe. Alchemy has been preparing this kind of feminine attitude in the underground for a long time” (*Book of the Explanation of the Symbols, CALA IA*, (Abt T., Ed.) 2006, p. 133). Following Mother Nature means following what for eons men in the West have projected into women – eros as opposed to power, the irrational, the feeling function, intuition, lunacy.



The alchemist in the image above who follows the footsteps of Mother Nature in the darkness of the night can be imagined to be following the guidance of his dreams.

I would like to share with you a dream I had 10 days after 9/11. I was extremely shaken by this event. In this context, I had a long dream of which I will tell you only part,

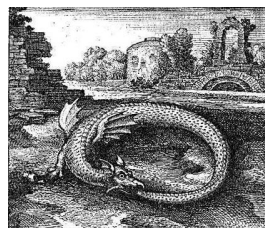
It is night and I am at a gathering of men, lie some kind of secret society, outdoors in a parking lot. We have all driven there. I am going to give a lecture to this group. At one point two men are talking about the situation in the middle-east, with Afghanistan. They are having an argument about it. One is my friend. I realize that my friend knows half the story from the United States side, and the other man knows the other half of the story from the Afghan side, they each have half the truth. As I realize that, I consider that it is my job to somehow unite them. They need to come together. I am told what must happen for this reconciliation of the United States man and the Afghan man to occur. A ritual must take place. What I must do is, first, cut my right hand with a dark iron blade and drain the blood into a chalice and then, second, drink my own blood. I can bear to go through with the first step of this dark ritual and cut my right palm and put the blood into the chalice. But I cannot go through with the second step of drinking my own blood. I can't bear it, it's too much and the whole thing is too overwhelming.

A parallel to the strange imagery in this dream is found in Jung's *Mysterium*

Coniunctionis. In a section entitled "Regeneration of the King" Jung is discussing symbols that relate to the problem of war,

If the projected [sociopolitical] conflict is to be healed, it must return into the psyche of the individual, where it had its unconscious beginnings. He must celebrate a Last Supper with himself, and eat his own flesh and drink his own blood, which means that he must recognize and accept the other in himself. But if he persists in his one-sidedness, the two lions will tear each other to pieces. Is this perhaps the meaning of Christ's teaching, that each must bear his own cross? For if you have to endure yourself, how will you be able to rend others also? (Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14 par. 512).

The image of turning oneself into a circulatory process is found in alchemical symbolism as the uroboros, the snake with the tail in its mouth. The *uroboros* is a dramatic symbol for the integration and assimilation of the opposite, i.e. of the shadow. (CW 14, 510-513)



The dream suggests that, put in the most basic terms, conscious acceptance of the shadow will make a contribution to problem of war. If I want to help the world problem I can start by becoming extracting, containing, and integrating – not my ego consciousness – but the psycho-physical life of my body.

Synchronistic events can also be part of what Jung called the great Dream, compensating for our off base conscious attitudes, adding what is missing from our understanding, illuminating what we do not know. When I had the 9/11 dream I was in Switzerland where I was training as a Jungian analyst. Some days following 9/11 I was playing ping-pong with one of my teachers. As we were playing I began to joke around, probably to relieve the tension we were all feeling. The ping-pong table was located downstairs in the building in what used to be a bomb shelter during WWII. As we played I joked that I felt pretty safe at the moment because I was in Switzerland, the most neutral country in the world, in the most holy part of Switzerland, near the hermitage of the only Swiss saint, Niklaus von Flue, in a retreat center that is also a convent, and in the *bomb shelter* of the retreat center. At just that moment I heard an explosion. It sounded just as if a bomb had gone off in the room. I could not see it, but what had actually happened was that the large fluorescent light about my head exploded in just that moment. Glass flew everywhere and for a couple seconds I was totally knocked on my heels. I tend to think I can hide out from world problems and avoid them, but the synchronicity corrects that delusion.

Is it dangerous to encounter the archetypal depths of the collective unconscious? Might it not disrupt our collective adaptation? Might it not overwhelm us? Yes, yes, and yes. Another common objection to engaging this type of psychological work is that it is

impractical. But what if enough people do not do it? The result is a state of perpetual war. If enough individuals in the United States and the Middle East, for example, do not live through the symbolic death of their current entrenched assumptions and values, if they do not turn around and face the collective shadow that they see only in the other, if they do not drink their own blood, as opposed to the blood of other nations, then the United States will always be the great Satan; Iraq, Iran and North Korea will always be the axis of evil.

Martin Luther King wrote in his last book, “For its very survival’s sake, America must re-examine old presuppositions and release itself from many things that for centuries have been held sacred. For the evils of racism, poverty and militarism to die, a new set of values must be born” (Martin Luther King, (1967). *Where do we go from here: Chaos or community?* p. 157). But *how*? How can we go from chaos today to a new sense of global community? Can we consider the possibility that individuation has something to do with it? Individuation as Jung understood it, namely the “blossoming and unfolding of the individual as the experimental, doubtful and bewildering work of the living God, to whom we have to lend our eyes and ears and discriminating mind” (Jung, 1975, p. 592; Letter 14 September to M. Serrano, 1960). Jung’s main answer to the question “what can I do?” about the world problem begins by not taking the easy and ordinary path of blaming others and locating evil outside of ourselves, but confronting it within ourselves, and doing what we can to bear the ensuing emotional tension.

When I first had the 9/11 dream, seven and a half years ago, it seemed to represent something dark and bizarre. As this dream has been more and more contained in the great alchemical Dream, I now can start to see that I need not shrink from the torture of its “bitter drink”; it is not a punishment or a pathology, something crazy or something that

should not be, but rather a way in which I might go forward towards the future. What now strikes me most vividly about this dream is that it is profoundly ethical. “If we are to develop further we have to draw to us and drink down to the very dregs what, because of our complexes, we have held at a distance.” (Jung, quoted in p. 31 *The Cultural Complex*) As we do this, as we face our own shadow, learn to think symbolically, and listen to our dreams, we begin to engage our collective problems from a different level of awareness that that which created them.