Archetypes, Mythic Imagination, and Modern Society: The Re-Enchantment of the World

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Collective Unconscious, Archetypes, and the Nature of Myths.

Understanding of archetypes, governing principles of the collective unconscious, as described by C. G. Jung (Jung 1959), is extremely important for psychotherapy and self-exploration using holotropic states of consciousness. It also throws new light on a broad range of other areas – religion and mysticism, astrology, nature and origin of art, scientific insights and inspiration, sociopolitical phenomena such as wars and revolutions, and others. I will begin this paper on the importance of mythic imagination and archetypal psychology for modern society with a brief discussion of the nature and dynamics of the archetypes and how our understanding of them has changed over the centuries. Following this, I will address more specifically the implications of archetypal thinking for a variety of disciplines and its relevance for the global crisis we are currently facing.

According to the insights that have emerged from Jungian psychology, consciousness research, and scholarly mythological studies, archetypes are timeless primordial cosmic principles

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underlying, informing, and forming the fabric of the material world (Jung 1959). The tendency to interpret the world in terms of archetypal principles first appeared in ancient Greece and was one of the most striking characteristics of Greek philosophy and culture. As Richard Tarnas pointed out in his sequel to The Passion of the Western Mind entitled Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View (Tarnas 2006), archetypes can be seen from several different perspectives:

1. In Homeric epics they took the form of *personified mythological figures,* as deities, such as Zeus, Poseidon, Dionysus, Hera, Aphrodite, or Ares.

2. In the philosophy of Plato, they were described as *pure metaphysical principles*, transcendent Ideas or Forms. They possessed independent existence of their own in a realm not accessible to ordinary human senses. According to him, earthly things partake in the shape or character of these universal Forms or Ideas, but they fall far short of the perfect glory or perfect reality of these transcendent Forms/Ideas (Plato 1961).

3. In modern times, C. G. Jung brought the concept of archetypes into modern psychology, describing them primarily as *psychological principles.*

The existence of hidden invisible dimensions of reality is an idea that is alien to materialistic science, unless these can be made accessible

through the use of devices that extend the range of our senses, such as microscopes, telescopes, or sensors detecting various bands of electromagnetic radiation. In addition, academic and clinical psychiatrists use a very narrow conceptual framework that limits the human psyche to postnatal biography and the Freudian individual unconscious. According to them, the experiences of archetypal beings and realms are not ontologically real; they are figments of human imagination or pathological products of the brain that require treatment by tranquilizing medication.

Modern materialistic science thus joined the centuries old philosophical argument between the *nominalists* and *realists* concerning the ontological nature of archetypes (Plato's Ideas or Forms), a heated debate that had permeated in its many variations the entire history of Western thought. The nominalists saw the archetypes as mere "names," abstractions from human experience of concrete objects and situations and thus derivatives of the material world. The realists believed that the archetypal world is ontologically real, although not accessible to human senses. Western science dominated by monistic materialism emphatically decided in favor of the nominalists.

The clinical and philosophical work of C. G. Jung radically changed this situation. Jung's analysis of the dreams and symptoms of his clients, as well as his study of world mythology, art, comparative religion, and ritual life of native cultures brought convincing evidence for the existence of the collective unconscious and for ontological reality of the archetypes as its governing principles (Jung 1956, 1959). Jung's

understanding of the nature and function of archetypes changed dramatically in the course of his life. In his early work, he saw them as transindividual but essentially intrapsychic phenomena, hardwired into the brain in a way similar to animal instincts. However, after he discovered and studied synchronicity – an "acausal connecting principle" that links intrapsychic events with happenings in the material world - he realized that they have what he called "psychoid" quality Jung 1960). It means that they govern not only the individual psyche, but also occurrences in the world of consensus reality. I have explored this fascinating topic in my other writings (Grof 1985, 2000, and 2006).

Jung observed that everyday life often brings striking coincidences that by far transcend any reasonable probability; they should not happen if the universe were governed exclusively by chains of causes and effects. He cited as examples the events in the life of the Austrian biologist Kammerer and Flammarion's story of the rare plum pudding (Jung 1960). Moreover, he observed that in many of these coincidences intrapsychic experiencess, such as dreams or visions, form meaningful patterns with events in material reality (see Jung's example of the golden scarab or Campbell's story about the praying mantis and a few others mentioned in my book When the Impossible Happens – Grof 2006). This would be possible only if archetypes were cosmic organizing principles governing the human psyche, as well as material reality.

Joseph Campbell's comparative studies of mythology brought strong supportive evidence for Jung's later understanding of archetypes and represent an important complement to and support for Jung's clinical

explorations. Of particular interest in this regard is Campbell's crosscultural study of the archetypal motif of the Hero's Journey that he referred to as "monomyth" because of its universal and ubiquitous nature transcending historical and geographical boundaries. He first described this motif in his 1947 classic The Hero with A Thousand faces (Campbell 1968) and later demonstrated how it manifests in a variety of situations including the shamanic initiatory crisis, experiences in rites of passage, mysteries of death and rebirth, and in psychoses or spiritual emergencies. Additional validation of the ontological reality of archetypes came from psychedelic therapy and powerful non-drug experiential techniques (Grof 1985, 2000, 2006).

Implications of the New Understanding of Myths:

1. Archetypes in Psychiatry, Psychology, and Psychotherapy.

In the light of the observations from psychedelic therapy and the work with Holotropic Breathwork, the cartography of the psyche used by academic psychiatry and psychology, which is limited to postnatal biography and to the Freudian individual unconscious, has to be vastly expanded. It has to include the perinatal domain and the transpersonal domain – particularly the collective unconscious with its archetypal dynamics (Grof 1985, 2000). Modern consciousness research has shown that in holotropic states archetypes can be directly experienced and bring new information about mythologies of the world unknown to the subject (e.g. Jung's example of the chronic schizophrenic patient, who perceived

the sun as possessing a phallus and making wind with its movements, as it is described in Mithraic mythology – Jung 1956).

To illustrate this point of view, I would like to describe one of many situations in which the authenticity of such information could be verified. It involved Otto, one of my clients in Prague, whom I treated for depression and pathological fear of death (*thanatophobia*).

In one of his psychedelic sessions, Otto experienced a powerful sequence of psychospiritual death and rebirth. As the experience was culminating, he had a vision of an ominous entrance into the underworld guarded by a terrifying pig goddess. At this point, he suddenly felt an urgent need to draw a specific geometrical design and asked me to bring him some sheets of paper and drawing utensils. He drew an entire series of complex abstract patterns and he kept impulsively tearing and crumpling these intricate designs as soon as he finished them. He was very dissatisfied with his drawings and was getting increasingly frustrated, because he was not able to 'get it right'.

At that time, I was still under a strong influence of my Freudian training and I tried my best to identify the unconscious motives for this strange behavior by using the method of free associations. We spent much time on this task, but without much success. The entire sequence simply did not make any sense. Eventually, the process moved to other areas and I stopped thinking about this situation. The entire episode had remained for me completely mysterious until many years later, when I moved to the United States.

During our stay at Esalen, Joseph Campbell frequently conducted workshops there and participated as guest faculty in many of our monthlong seminars. In the middle of the week, he regularly came for dinner in our house, because he became tired of the Esalen menu, which he called "rabbit food." We had many fascinating discussions over the years, during which I shared with him various observations of obscure archetypal experiences from my work that I

was not able to understand. In most instances, Joseph had no difficulties identifying the cultural sources of the symbolism involved.

During one of these discussions, I remembered the above episode and shared it with him. “How fascinating," said Joseph without any hesitation, “it was clearly the Cosmic Mother Night of Death, the Devouring Mother Goddess of the Malekulans in New Guinea.” He then continued to tell me that the Malekulans believed they would encounter this deity during the Journey of the Dead. She had the form of a frightening female figure with distinct pig features. According to the Malekulan tradition, she sat at the entrance into the underworld and guarded an intricate sacred labyrinthine design.

The Malekulans had an elaborate system of rituals that involved breeding and sacrificing pigs. This complex ritual activity was aimed at overcoming the dependency on their human mothers and eventually on the Devouring Mother Goddess. The Malekulans spent an enormous amount of time practicing the art of the labyrinth drawing, since its mastery was considered essential for a successful journey to the Beyond. Joseph, with his lexical knowledge, was able to solve an important part of this puzzle that I had come across during my research. The remaining question, that even he was not able to answer, was why my client had to encounter specifically this Malekulan deity at that particular time of his therapy. However, the task of mastering the posthumous journey certainly made good sense for somebody whose main symptom was pathological fear of death.

I have myself had in my psychedelic sessions many experiences involving the archetypal world:, the most interesting of them happened in a session with LSDsgf

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> About fifty minutes into the session, I started experiencing strong activation in the lower part of my body. My pelvis was vibrating as enormous amounts of energy were being released in ecstatic jolts. At one point, this streaming energy swept me along in an intoxicating frenzy into a whirling cosmic vortex of creation and destruction.

In the center of this monstrous hurricane of primordial forces were four giant herculean figures performing what seemed to be the ultimate cosmic saber dance. They had strong Mongolian features with protruding cheekbones, oblique eyes, and clean-shaven heads decorated by large braided ponytails. Whirling around in a frantic dance craze, they were swinging large weapons that looked like scythes or L-shaped scimitars; all four of these combined formed a rapidly rotating swastika.

I intuitively understood that this monumental archetypal scene was related to the beginning of the process of creation and simultaneously to the final stage of the spiritual journey. In the cosmogenetic process (in the movement from the primordial unity to the worlds of plurality) the blades of the scimitars represented the force that is splitting and fragmenting the unified field of cosmic consciousness and creative energy into countless individual units. In relation to spiritual journey, they represented the stage when the seeker's consciousness transcends separation and polarity and reaches the state of original undifferentiated unity. The direction of this process seemed to be related to the clockwise and counterclockwise rotation of the blades. Projected into the material world, this archetypal motif seemed to be related to growth and development (the fertilized egg or seed becoming an organism) or destruction of forms (wars, natural catastrophes, decay).

Then the experience opened up into an unimaginable panorama of scenes of destruction. In these visions, natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, crashing meteors, forest fires, floods and tidal waves, were combined with images of burning cities, entire blocks of collapsing high-rise buildings, mass death, and horror of wars. Heading this wave of total annihilation were four archetypal images of macabre riders symbolizing the end of the world. I realized that these were the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. (pestilence, war, famine, and death). The continuing vibrations and jolts of my pelvis now became synchronized with the movements of this ominous horseback riding and I became I joined the dance, becoming one of them, or possibly all four of them at once, leaving my own identity behind.

Suddenly, there was a rapid change of scenery and I had a vision of the cave from Plato's Republic. In this work, Plato describes a

group of people who live chained all of their lives in a cave, facing a blank wall. They watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of the cave entrance. According to Plato, the shadows are as close as the prisoners get to seeing reality. The enlightened philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from this illusion and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall are illusory, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners. This was followed by profound and convincing realization that the material world of our everyday life is not made of «stuff» but created by cosmic consciousness by infinitely complex and sophisticated orchestration of experiences. It is a divine play that the Hindus call lila, created by cosmic illusion maya.

The final major scene of the session was a magnificent ornate theater stage featuring a parade of personified universal principles, archetypes - cosmic actors, who through a complex interplay create the illusion of the phenomenal world. They were protean personages with many facets, levels, and dimensions of meaning that kept changing their forms in extremely intricate holographic interpenetration as I was observing them. Each of them seemed to represent simultaneously the essence of his or her function and all the concrete manifestations of this element in the world of matter. There was Maya, the mysterious ethereal principle symbolizing the world illusion; Anima, embodying the eternal Female; a Mars-like personification of war and aggression; the Lovers, representing all the sexual dramas and romances throughout ages; the royal figure of the Ruler; the withdrawn Hermit; the elusive Trickster; and many others. As they were passing across the stage, they bowed in my direction, as if expecting appreciation for the stellar performance in the divine play of the universe.

The work with holotropic states of consciousness has shown beyond any reasonable doubt that archetypal experiences are not erratic products of brain pathology of unknown origin (symptoms of “endogenous psychoses”), but contents of the collective unconscious emerging into individual consciousness (Grof 2000, 2006). To distinguish transpersonal experiences from imaginary products of

individual fantasy, Jungian psychologists refer to the archetypal domain as *imaginal.* French scholar, philosopher, and mystic, Henri Corbin, who first used the term *mundus imaginalis*, was inspired in this regard by his study of Islamic mystical literature (Corbin 2000). Research of holotropic states has also revealed the existence of the perinatal domain in the unconscious, which contains a unique mixture of fetal and archetypal elements. This has profound theoretical and practical implications for psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy:

a. Archetypal and perinatal experiencs play an important role in the genesis of emotional and psychosomatic symptoms as part of multilevel dynamic systems that consist of biographical, perinatal, and transpersonal material (COEX systems) (Grof 1976, 1985, 2000). Conversely, archetypes can also play an important role in healing and transformation (the extreme example being emergence and integration of a demonic archetype)(the story of Flora - Grof 2006)

b. This is closely related to inner self-healing intelligence of the psyche (Jung's individuation process) and to the healing potential of archetypal figures and the healing energy that ancient and native cultures have seen as divine (*Apollo* in the Greek temple incubation, deities of the Caribbean and South American syncretistic religions – the *loa* in Voodoo or *orishas* in Umbanda and Santeria, *pneuma* of the Gnostics, *prana* of Kundalini Yoga, *ntum* of the Kalahari Bushmen, *mana* of the Polynesians, and others).

c. The discovery of the ontological reality of the archetypal realm and the inner healing intelligence supports the concept of "spiritual emergency" (emergence of perinatal and transpersonal material into consciousness) as an alternative to the medical understanding of "endogenous psychoses" as mental diseases, caused by a pathological process and requiring suppressive therapy by tranquilizers (Grof S. and Grof C. 1989, Grof C.and Grof S. 1991).

2. The Role of Archetypes in Science:

a. Archetypes play an important role in the *genesis of scientific theories and in scientific discoveries.* As Philipp Frank has shown in his book Philosophy of Science (1957), the source of a scientific discovery or of the basic axiom of a scientific theory or is often an archetypal motif. In the history of science revolutionary ideas frequently emerge long before there is sufficient evidence to justify them or support them.

Saliant examples are the Ionic philosopher Anaximandros with his protoevolutionary theory suggesting that all life originated in the ocean, Demokritos and Leukippos with their atomic theory of matter, Copernicus and Kepler who drew their inspiration from the solar archetype, and Friedrich Kekule inspired by the vision of Uroboros in his discovery of the benzene ring. The Nobel Prize-winning molecular biologist Francis Crick allegedly told at one point his friend Kemp that he had actually "perceived the double-helix shape while on LSD" (Crick 2012). Additional fascinating examples can be found in the book Higher

Creativity: Liberating the Unconscious for Breakthrough Insights by Willis Harman (Harman 1984).

b. There is also increasing awareness of the importance of archetypal patterns in various scientific disciplines. Here belongs Goethe's fascination by the building plan of plants, Gregory Bateson's preoccupation with the "pattern that connects" in nature and in evolutionary theory, Sheldrake's concept of morphogenetic fields, Ernst Haeckel's research of art forms in nature, Mandelbrot's study of fractals mimicking archetypal forms in nature, Ilya Prigogine's theory of dissipative structures and emergence of order from chaos, and others (Goethe 2009, Bateson 1979, Sheldrake 1981, Mandelbrot 1982, Prigogine and Stengers 1984).

3. Archetypes, Religion, and Spirituality:

The discovery that the archetypal world is ontologically real gives legitimacy to the spiritual worldview, religious and ritual activity, and to spiritual quest that involves direct experience. It makes it possible to distinguish organized religions based on belief, with their dogmas, ritualism, moralism, and secular ambitions, from authentic spirituality found in the monastic and mystical branches of religions, rituals of native cultures, and traditions emphasizing spiritual practice and direct experience.

Spirituality is based on personal experiences of non-ordinary aspects and dimensions of reality. It does not require a special place or an

officially appointed persons mediating contact with the divine. The mystics do not need churches or temples. The context in which they experience the sacred dimensions of reality, including their own divinity, are their bodies and nature. And instead of officiating priests, they need a supportive group of fellow seekers or the guidance of a teacher who is more advanced on the inner journey than they are themselves.

According to Joseph Campbell (echoing Karlfried Graf Durckheim), another important distinction to make is the difference between idolatry and mysticism: “A useful deity (archetypal figure) has to be transparent to the transcendent;” it has to point to the Absolute, but not be mistaken for it. Making the archetypal figure opaque and worshipping it as the ultimate is idolatry; it results in a religion that unites within its radius, but divides the world into rival groups - Christians/pagans, Moslems/infidels, Jews/goyim.

The realization of the ontological reality of the archetypal world validates the ritual and spiritual life of pre-industrial cultures – shamanism, rites of passage, mysteries of death and rebirth, and the great religions and spiritual philosophies of the East and West. Of these, rites of passage are of particular importance for modern society. According to scholars, such as Margaret Mead and Mircea Eliade the fact that the industrial civilization has lost meaningful rites of passage contributes significantly to the ills of modern society, particularly of the young generation – sexual acting out, drug abuse, and violence.

In 1973, I had the opportunity to participate in a small brain-storming conference of the Weenner-Gren Foundation entitled Ritual: Reconciliation in Change inspired and organized by Margaret Mead and Catherine Bateson that took place in Burg Wartenstein in Austria, (Mead and Bateson 1973). Eighteen invited presenters discussed the question whether it would be possible to create modern rites of passages or if they need to emerge spontaneously from the spiritual history of the cultures involved. Pre-prints of the participants used at this conference as a basis for round table discussions are in the New York archives of the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

Several years ago, my wife Christina's gave a paper at a conference, convened by a New York state legislator on the same subject – importance of rites of passage and the possibility of recreating and reinstituting them (Grof 1998). Participants discussed the possibility of combining such elements as ropes courses, outward bound, fire walking, sailing on open sea, and Holotropic Breathwork (since all native rites of passage involve holotropic states of consciousness and under current circumstances, the logical choice for this purpose – responsible ritual use of psychedelics - is unlikely).

4. Archetypes and Sociopolitical Movements in History:

Archetypal forces govern not only processes in the individual psyche, but also in the collective psyche; they are driving forces of human history. Medieval knights were asked to sacrifice their lives for Jesus and participate in the Crusades to recover the Holy Land from the

Mohammedans. The Bohemian Hussites called themselves "Warriors of God" and sung their powerful chorale "Ye Who Are the Warriors of God" with such compelling power that it allegedly wreaked havoc among much larger large armies of Crusaders they were about to engage and made them flee the battlefield. Hitler used archetypal symbols to influence his followers – the Vedic images of the swastika and the solar eagle, the Thousand Years' Reich, and the supremacy of the Nordic race.

C. G. Jung noticed that in the decade before WW II the archetypal motif of Wotan kept appearing in the dreams of his German patients and discussed the political importance of the Wotan archetype for Germany and its future. He concluded that Germany was facing a national catastrophe that would be destructive and self-destructive in nature (Jung 1964). He also analyzed the personalities of Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini and pointed out the mystical, "medicine-man" qualities in Hitler (Jung 1950). The idea that Hitler was a deranged mystic was explored also in Trevor Ravenscroft's book The Spear of Destiny, in which he discussed the role that fascination by the sword that the Roman centurion Cassius Longinus used to pierce the side of Jesus (the "Holy Lance") played in Hitler's life (Ravenscroft 1982).

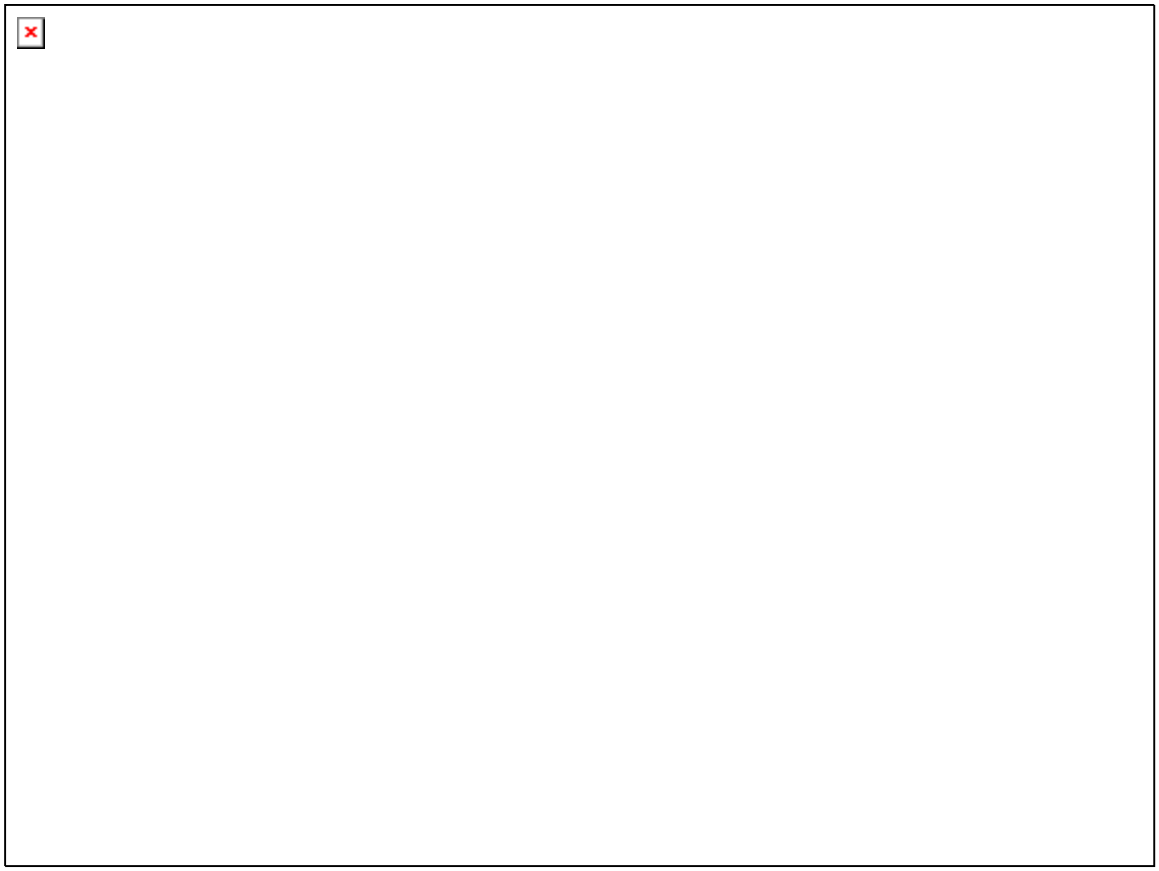
Marie-Louise von Franz discussed in her article The Transformed Berserk the importance that the vision of Wotanic Christ (Christ as Berserker), which the patron saint of Switzerland Nikolas von **Flü** experienced in his meditation, had for the future of her homeland. Following his vision, Nikolas negotiated peace for Switzerland in a conflict that threatened to develop into a bloody civil war. Von Franz

attributed the fact that Switzerland had not been since that time involved in any war to this experience of its patron saint, in which he had integrated the shadow side in Jesus' personality (von Franz 1988). James Hillman amassed in his brilliant book A Terrible Love of War convincing evidence that war is a formidable archetypal force that has irresistible power over individuals and nations (Hillman 2004).

Ronald Reagan made in his speeches references to the Apocalypse and called the Soviet Union the "Evil Empire." George Bush called his fight against Moslem terrorists a "crusade"; in turn, Moslem extremists use for political purposes the concept of *jihad,* the Holy War against the infidels. Moslem terrorists expect as reward for their suicidal attacks on infidels the delights of Paradise, including the virginal black-eyed *houris.* Similarly in the Second World War the Japanese kamikaze soldiers were referred to as "Divine Wind warriors"; they believed that they sacrificed their life for the living god – "Emperor of Heaven" Hirohito.

The authors of the strategic doctrine refer to members of their community as the "nuclear priesthood." The first atomic test was called Trinity -- the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The scientists who worked on the atomic bomb and witnessed the test described it in the following way: "It was as though we stood at the first day of creation." And Robert Oppenheimer thought of Krishna's words to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita: "I am become Death, the Shatterer of Worlds."

Work with holotropic states of consciousness, with and without psychedelics offers fascinating insights into the archetypal and perinatal roots of wars and bloody revolutions. On the perinatal level, reliving of various stages of biological birth is often associated with images of violent sociopolitical events and visions of archetypal figures and motifs. The connection between the archetypal elements and the stages of birth is very specific. I call these experiential clusters combining fetal elements with the corresponding archetypal imagery and scenes from the historical unconscious basic perinatal matrices (BPMs). (Grof 1985, 2000).



While we are reliving episodes of undisturbed intrauterine existence (BPM I), we typically experience images from human societies where

people live in harmony with each other and with nature. The archetypal domain contributes images of paradises and heavens of various cultures, images of beautiful unspoiled nature (Mother Nature), and Great Mother Goddess. Disturbing intrauterine memories, such as those of a toxic womb, imminent miscarriage, or attempted abortion, are accompanied by images of human groups living in industrial areas where nature is polluted and spoiled or in societies with insidious social order and all-pervading paranoia as described in Orwell's novel 1984 (Orwell 1949). Corresponding archetypal images feature insidious and creepy demons.

Typical archetypal images associated with the onset of delivery are ominous whirlpools, giant engulfing or constricting monsters (dragon, Leviathan, whale, tarantula, octopus), or visits into the underworld. Regressive experiences related to the fully developed first clinical stage of birth (BPM II), during which the uterus periodically contracts but the cervix is not open, present a very characteristic picture. They portray oppressive and abusive totalitarian societies with closed borders, victimizing their populations, and "choking" personal freedom, such as Czarist or Communist Russia, Hitler's Third Reich, South American dictatorships, and the African Apartheid), or bring images of prisoners in prisons and dungeons, psychiatric patients in locked wards, and inmates in Nazi concentration camps or Stalin's Gulag Archipelago.

While experiencing these scenes of living hell, we identify exclusively with the victims and feel deep sympathy for the down-trodden and the underdog. Underlying all the above experiences is the archetype of hell – extreme physical and emotional suffering that will never end,

complete with the images of devils and sinners. In Dante's Divine comedy, the inscription above the gate to hell reads: "Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate " ("Abandon all hope ye who enter")

The experiences accompanying reliving of the second clinical stage of delivery (BPM III), when the cervix is dilated and continued contractions propel the fetus through the narrow passage of the birth canal, feature a rich panoply of violent scenes -- bloody wars and revolutions, human or animal slaughter, mutilation, sexual abuse, and murder. These scenes often contain demonic elements and repulsive scatological motifs. Additional frequent concomitants of BPM III are visions of fire - burning cities, launching of rockets, and explosions of nuclear bombs. Here we are not limited to the role of victims, but can participate in three roles - that of the victim, of the aggressor, and of an emotionally involved observer.

The accompanying archetypal images portray battles of cosmic proportions – Ragnarok or Twilight of the Gods from Nordic mythology, battle between the forces of Light and Darkness, such as Ormuzd and Ahriman's armies from the Zoroastrian religion, Archangel Michael battling Satan's hords, Mara's army attacking the Buddha, or Armageddon. Additional archetypal motifs associated with BPM III are eerie scenes combining aggression, sex, and scatology, as exemplified by the Black mass rituals, satanic orgies, and Walpurgi's Night (Sabbath of the Witches). When the third matrix approaches resolution, the accompanying archetypal visions feature figures representing psychospiritual death and rebirth - Jesus, Osiris, Dionysus, Quetzalcoatl, Inanna, or Phoenix - and exploding volcano or deities associated with fire, such as Moloch or Pele).

The events characterizing the third clinical stage of delivery (BPM IV), the actual moment of birth and the separation from the mother, are typically associated with images of victory in wars and revolutions, liberation of prisoners, and success of collective efforts, such as patriotic or nationalistic movements. At this point, we can also experience visions of triumphant parades celebrating victory or of exciting postwar reconstruction. Archetypal motifs that belong here are scenes of rebirth of deities and demigods, rainbow spectra, peacock designs, Great Mother Goddesses, and images of deities appearing in light (angelic beings, gandharvas and apsaras, and others).

I described these observations, linking sociopolitical upheavals to stages of biological birth, in my first book, Realms of the Human Unconscious (Grof 1975). Shortly after its publication, I received a letter from Lloyd de Mause, a New York psychoanalyst and journalist. De Mause is one of the founders of psychohistory, a discipline that applies the findings of depth psychology to history and political science (Mause 1975, 1986). Psychohistorians study such issues as the relationship between the childhood history of political leaders and their system of values and process of decision-making or the influence of child-rearing practices on the nature of revolutions of that particular historical period. Lloyd de Mause was very interested in my findings concerning the trauma of birth and its possible sociopolitical implications, because they provided independent support for his own research.

For some time, de Mause had been studying the psychological aspects of the periods preceding wars and revolutions. It interested him how military leaders succeed in mobilizing masses of peaceful civilians and transforming them practically overnight into killing machines. His approach to this problem was very original and creative. In addition to analysis of traditional historical sources, he drew data of great psychological importance from caricatures, jokes, dreams, personal imagery, slips of the tongue, side comments of speakers, and even doodles and scribbles on the edge of the rough drafts of political documents. By the time he contacted me, he had analyzed in this way seventeen situations preceding the outbreak of wars and revolutionary upheavals, spanning many centuries since antiquity to most recent times (de Mause 1975).

De MMause was struck by the extraordinary abundance of figures of speech, metaphors, and images related to biological birth that he found in this material. Military leaders and politicians of all ages describing a critical situation or declaring war typically used terms that equally applied to perinatal distress. They accused the enemy of choking and strangling their people, squeezing the last breath out of their lungs, or constricting them and not giving them enough space to live (Hitler's “Lebensraum”). We could illustrate this by a recent example – Osama bin Laden threatening in his videotape that he would turn United States into a “choking hell.”

Equally frequent were allusions to dark caves, tunnels, and confusing labyrinths, dangerous abysses into which one might be pushed,

and the threat of engulfment by treacherous quicksand or a terrifying whirlpool. Similarly, the offer of the resolution of the crisis comes in the form of perinatal images. The leader promises to rescue his nation from an ominous labyrinth, to lead it to the light on the other side of the tunnel, and to create a situation where the dangerous aggressor and oppressor will be overcome and everybody will again “breathe freely.”

Lloyd de Mause's historical examples at the time included such famous personages as Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Samuel Adams, Kaiser Wilhelm II., Hitler, Khrushchev, and Kennedy. Samuel Adams talking about the American Revolution referred to "the child of Independence now struggling for birth." In 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm stated that "the Monarchy has been seized by the throat and forced to choose between letting itself be strangled and making a last ditch effort to defend itself against attack." During the Cuban missile crisis Krushchev wrote to Kennedy, pleading that the two nations not "come to a clash, like blind moles battling to death in a tunnel."

Even more explicit was the coded message used by Japanese ambassador Kurusu when he phoned Tokyo to signal that negotiations with Roosevelt had broken down and that it was all right to go ahead with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He announced that the "birth of the child was imminent" and asked how things were in Japan: "Does it seem as if the child might be born?" The reply was: "Yes, the birth of the child seems imminent." Interestingly, the American intelligence listening in recognized the meaning of the “war-as-birth” code.

Particularly chilling was the use of perinatal language in connection with the explosion of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. The airplane was given the name of the pilot's mother, Enola Gay, the atomic bomb itself carried a painted nickname “The Little Boy,” and the agreed-upon message sent to Washington as a signal of successful detonation was "The baby was born.” It would not be too far-fetched to see the image of a newborn also behind the nickname of the Nagasaki bomb, Fat Man. Since the time of our correspondence, Lloyd de Mause collected many additional historical examples and refined his thesis that the memory of the birth trauma plays an important role as a source of motivation for violent social activity.

The issues related to nuclear warfare are of such relevance that I would like to elaborate on them using the material from a fascinating paper by Carol Cohn entitled “Sex and Death in the Rational World of the Defense Intellectuals” (Cohn 1987). The defense intellectuals (DIs) are civilians who move in and out of government, working sometimes as administrative officials or consultants, sometimes at universities and think tanks. They create the theory that informs and legitimates U.S. nuclear strategic practice - how to manage the arms race, how to deter the use of nuclear weapons, how to fight a nuclear war if the deterrence fails, and how to explain why it is not safe to live without nuclear weapons.

Carol Cohn had attended a two-week summer seminar on nuclear weapons, nuclear strategic doctrine, and arms control. She was so fascinated by what had transpired there that she spent the following year immersed in the almost entirely male world of defense intellectuals

(except for secretaries). She collected some extremely interesting facts confirming the perinatal dimension in nuclear warfare. In her fascinating paper, she mentions eight historical examples, where coded messages and other communications about development and testing of atomic and hydrogen bombs involved references to birth and newborns.

Further support for the pivotal role of the perinatal and archetypal domains of the unconscious in war psychology can be found in Sam Keen's excellent book The Faces of the Enemy (Keen 1988) and a TV documentary of the same name. Keen brought together an outstanding collection of distorted and biased war posters, propaganda cartoons, and caricatures from many historical periods and countries. He demonstrated that the way the enemy is described and portrayed during a war or revolution is a stereotype that shows only minimal variations and has very little to do with the actual characteristics of the country and culture involved.

He was able to divide these images into several archetypal categories according to the prevailing characteristics (e.g., Stranger, Aggressor, Worthy Opponent, Faceless, Enemy of God, Barbarian, Greedy, Criminal, Torturer, Rapist, Death). According to Keen, the alleged images of the enemy are essentially projections of the repressed and unacknowledged shadow aspects of our own deep unconscious. Although we would certainly find in human history instances of just wars, those who initiate war activities are typically substituting external targets for elements in their own psyches that should be properly faced in personal self-exploration.

Sam Keen's theoretical framework does not specifically include the perinatal domain of the unconscious. However, the analysis of his picture material reveals preponderance of archetypal images that are characteristic of BPM II and BPM III. The enemy is typically depicted as a dangerous octopus, a vicious dragon, a multiheaded hydra, a giant venomous tarantula, or an engulfing Leviathan. Other frequently used symbols include vicious predatory felines or birds, monstrous sharks, and ominous snakes, particularly vipers and boa constrictors. Scenes depicting strangulation or crushing, ominous whirlpools, and treacherous quicksands also abound in pictures from the time of wars, revolutions, and political crises. Juxtaposition of pictures from holotropic states of consciousness that depict perinatal experiences with the historical pictorial documentation collected by Lloyd de Mause and Sam Keen represents strong evidence for the perinatal and archetypal roots of human violence.

According to the new insights, provided jointly by observations from consciousness research and the findings of psychohistory, we all carry in our deep unconscious powerful energies and emotions associated with the trauma of birth that we have not adequately mastered and assimilated. The symbolism associated with them is drawn from deep archetypal sources. For some of us, this aspect of our psyche can be completely unconscious, until and unless we embark on some in-depth self-exploration with the use of psychedelics or some powerful experiential techniques of psychotherapy, such as the holotropic breathwork or rebirthing. Others can have varying degrees of awareness

of the emotions and physical sensations from the perinatal and transpersonal level of the unconscious.

Activation of this material can lead to serious individual psychopathology, including unmotivated violence. It seems that, for unknown reasons, the awareness of the perinatal elements can increase simultaneously in a large number of people. This creates an atmosphere of general tension, anxiety, and anticipation. The leader is an individual who is under a stronger influence of the perinatal energies than the average person. He also has the ability to disown his unacceptable feelings (the Shadow in Jung's terminology) and to project them on the external situation. The collective discomfort is blamed on the enemy and a military intervention is offered as a solution.

Historical and astrological research of Richard Tarnas threw fascinating new light on de Mause's idea of the collective tension originating in the perinatal unconscious, which typically precedes onset of wars and revolutions. In his meticulous research, Tarnas recognized the deep correlations between the phenomenology of what I call Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPMs) and astrological archetypes (BPM I and Neptune, BPM II and Saturn, BPM III and Pluto and BPM IV and Uranus). He also was able to demonstrate throughout human history deep correlations between the periods of wars and revolutions and hard aspects of Pluto, Saturn, and Mars (Tarnas 2006). This demonstrates a close connection between sociopolitical events and dynamics of archetypes associated with various planets.

5. Consciousness research and archetypal astrology.

The new understanding of the nature of the archetypes, their symbolism, multivalent meaning, and their mutual interactions and interplay is essential for the disciplines known as archetypal psychology and cosmology. Research of holotropic states has brought strong supportive evidence for the worldview underlying astrology (Grof 2009), Because of the revolutionary nature of this understanding of reality, which represents a serious challenge to the materialistic scientific worldview and requires a radical change of our thinking about the nature of reality, it took me years to realize the extraordinary its value. Over thirty years of cooperation with Richard Tarnas have convinced me that archetypal astrology is an invaluable tool for psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy, and especially work with holotropic states of consciousness (I called is the Rosetta Stone of consciousness research). Rick has also demonstrated extraordinary value of this discipline for historical research; in a 30-year tour de force, he showed systematic correlations between world planetary transits and historical events (Tarnas 2006). This is a complicated subject and I can not give it justice in the limited framework of this paper. I have to direct interested leaders to literature focusing specifically on this area (Tarnas 2006, 2010, 2011, Grof 2009, 2012, Le Grise 2009).

5. Search for a New Planetary Myth.

Historian Arnold Toynbee and mythologist Joseph Campbell noticed that all cultures of the past had been governed by an underlying

myth or a combination of myths. Toynbee is often quoted for his prediction of the development of Western civilization: “The coming of Buddhism to the West may well prove to be the most important event of the twentieth century.” Joseph Campbell used to raise in his lectures the question: “What are the myths that are driving the Western civilization?” He himself emphasized the importance of the Search for the Holy Grail myth in its relation to individualism characterizing Western society: the knights of the Holy Grail decided to pursue the search for the holy chalice on their own. We can also think about the two major myths of the modern era: Paradise Lost vs. Ascent of Man (Tarnas 1993). Equally appropriate seem to be the motifs of the Abduction and Rape of the Feminine, psychospiritual death and rebirth, and a variety of others - Faust, Sorcerer’s Apprentice, Frankenstein, Prodigal Son, Tower of Babel, and others.

Joseph Campbell also often asked: what will be the myth of the future and he expressed his hope that it would involve overcoming fragmentation and creating a planetary civilization. It would be New Atlantis, where people would live in harmony with others and with nature, benefiting from the astonishing discoveries of science and technology, but using them with wisdom coming from a deep spiritual place. Achievement of this goal would also involve psychospiritual rebirth and liberation and return of the feminine.

Since we are talking about planetary civilization, I would like to mention a very interesting observation that seems very relevant in this regard. One of the most surprising discoveries in my work with

psychedelics and with the holotropic breathwork was the ease with which individuals in holotropic states of consciousness (including myself) transcended historical and geographical boundaries and experienced archetypal figures, motifs, and domains from just about any culture in human history. Over the years, I have myself have experienced in my own psychedelic sessions episodes from many different mythologies and religions of the world – Hindu, Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Moslem, Christian, Egyptian, Shinto, Australian Aboriginal, Native American, South American, and others.

This has to be a new phenomenon. Many pre-industrial cultures had and used powerful consciousness-expanding technologies, including psychedelic plants. Had the collective unconscious in its entirety been as easily accessible for them as it seems to be for modern subjects, we could not have distinct culture-specific mythologies. We have to assume that, for example, the Tibetans experienced primarily Tibetan deities and Huichol Indians in Mexico Huichol deities. There are no descriptions of the Dear Spirit Kayumare or Grandfather Fire Tatewari in the Bardo Thödol or those of the Dhyani Buddhas in the Huichol lore.

It seems that this increased accessibility of various domains in the collective unconscious parallels what is happening in the material world. Until the end of the fifteenth century, Europeans did not know anything about the New World and its inhabitants and vice versa. Many human groups in remote parts of the world remained unknown to the rest of the world until the modern era. Tibet was relatively isolated until the Chinese invasion in 1949. Today telephone, short-wave radio stations,

television, jet travel, and more recently the Internet have dissolved many of the old boundaries. Let us hope that what is happening in the inner and the outer world are indications that we are moving toward a truly global civilization.

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