Editorial

Jung

The pages of *Encounter* reveal a new interest in the psychoanalytic theory of Carl Jung. Recent articles by Cliff Mayes (Spring 2002) and Ron Miller (Spring 2003) draw heavily on Jungian concepts. In the present issue, Andrew Johnson's article and Robert Mitchell's letter focus on Jung, and the majority of the authors in the issue refer to him at some point. Why this interest among holistic educators?

Jung Thought Deeply about Spiritual Matters

Whereas Freud viewed the unconscious in terms of sexual and aggressive drives, Jung believed it also includes spiritual strivings. It includes the search for God, wholeness, and meaning. Many, though not all, holistic educators want education to nurture the spiritual dimensions of the personality.

Jung Considered the Full Personality

His personality theory includes not only the ego, consciousness, and the persona (the image we present to the social world), but deeper, unconscious process. At the deepest level, we find the archetypal yearnings and tensions shared among all people. Archetypes cannot be known directly, but have emerged in the art, myths, dreams, and fantasies of people throughout the world. They include images of an Earth Mother, rebirth, a holy child, the trickster, the snake, God, a centered Self, and many others. While holistic educators may not all agree on the existence of universal archetypes, they want a personality theory that includes the whole person and connects us to people everywhere, speaking to universal human experiences.

Jung Provided a Coherent Model of Mental Health: Psychic Balance

For example, Jung said that the persona, or public image, is important for achieving one's goals in society, but the persona shouldn't be developed in a one-sided way. When this happens, the individual becomes an empty shell. The individual needs to develop a balance between the persona and the deeper aspects of his/her personality. Similarly, we need to achieve balance between the feminine and masculine dimensions of our personalities and between our rational and imaginative capacities. Jungian theory is valuable to holistic theorists because it provides a sense of how mental health depends on the balanced functioning of the whole.

Jung Considered Ways in which Full Development Can be Cramped by Social Adjustment

In his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961), Jung described how one of his early treatment cases contributed to his understanding of this point. His client was a pretty, chic, and highly intelligent young woman. Although she suffered from anxiety spells, Jung initially couldn't see what her problem was. She seemed to be very well adjusted.

The woman's first sign of deep emotion came when she spoke of her late grandfather, who had been a mystical rabbi. Her father renounced religion, and she had little use for mystical ideas. The next night, Jung dreamt that he was handing his client an umbrella and then suddenly fell to his knees before her, as if she were a goddess. He told her his dream, which she took as a signal to begin thinking about spiritual matters. Her life took on meaning, and her neurosis left.

Commenting on this case, Jung (1961, 140) said that people too often

> content themselves with inadequate or wrong answers to the questions of life. They seek position, marriage, reputation, outward success or money, and they remain unhappy and neurotic even when they have attained what they were seeking.

This young woman's life had been focused on clothes, flirtation, and sex; she had ignored the spiritual aspects of her personality. Jung found that many people, like her, lose their neuroses when they find

deeper meaning in their lives, when they develop "more spacious personalities." Thus Jung considered personal development more important than social adjustment.

Jung found that it is typically in middle age that inner, unconscious forces press people toward more complete lives. During the earlier years, people naturally develop in somewhat one-sided ways. Young people develop their ego strengths, personas, and cope with the external social reality. They want to be successful. But social success is won at the expense of full personal development. In mid-life the organism cries out for wholeness and balance. The individual feels depressed, stagnant, and empty. The person's temptation is to look for ways of ridding herself of these painful feelings, but Jung felt that they should be attended to. Like a pain in the tooth, the psychic pain shouldn't be masked, for it tells one that something is wrong. And dreams and fantasies suggest solutions. For example, a highly successful but depressed middle-aged man dreamt that he was lost in a strange city, when a woman pointed the way out. The dream, in Jungian theory, suggests that he will overcome his imbalance by attending to the female side of his personality.

Like Jung, holistic educators want us to recognize that adjustment to society, even success, is not the same as personal growth, which is guided by inner forces.

Jung's Concept of the Shadow Has Considerable Relevance to the World Situation Today

The shadow consists of those traits or impulses that we cannot admit to ourselves. It is the opposite of our ego or self-image. It is Dr. Jekyll's Mr. Hyde. Until we gain awareness of our shadow, we simply project it outward; we perceive negative characteristics in others that we repress in ourselves. Projections of the shadow are seen in dreams about bad behavior in a person of the same gender. In waking life, projections are often indicated by overly emotional reactions to others and by complaints about "the one thing I can't stand in others." The Jungian analyst will wonder if the individual is repressing this "one thing" in his or her self.

Jung described how projections of the shadow occur not only on an individual level, but on an international level as well. This is a major problem today. As Ron Miller observed in his article, "Education for a Culture of Peace" (*Encounter*, Spring 2003), the Bush administration's foreign policy assumes that the U.S. is entirely devoted to what is good and others are evil. Although there is no denying that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are vicious men, the Bush administration pours all negative qualities onto them and refuses to see our nation's own destructive behavior.

Children don't respond to the parents' conflict itself as much as the parents' attitude toward it. In particular, children react to how honestly their parents address their own problems.

In his book, *9-11* (2001), Noam Chomsky comes close to a Jungian analysis. Immediately after the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Americans began asking, "Why do they hate us?"—an important question. But the answers by President Bush, as well as by the mainstream media, were superficial and self-laudatory. Others hate us, they said, because they are jealous of our freedoms.

Chomsky points out that this comforting self-image denies U.S.- instigated or U.S.-supported aggression in the 1980s and 1990s in Nicaragua, Turkey, East Timor, South Africa, the Sudan, and other countries. In several instances, the U.S. was responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people. In East Timor, one-third of the population was wiped out. The World Court condemned us for international terrorism in Nicaragua, a judgment our government cavalierly dismissed. Prior to our war against Iraq, our trade sanctions against medical supplies and infrastructure materials contributed to the death of a half million Iraqi children. If we want to know why we are hated, Chomsky says, we should look at our behavior. Subsequently, we dropped huge bombs on Iraq's cities. But our government is unwilling to see

anything but good in our acts. It projects (to use Jung's term) all aggression onto foreign "evildoers."

Following our recent military attacks on Iraq, the U.S. government focused primarily on Hussein's brutally repressive government. Our avowed goal, apart from eliminating the elusive weapons of mass destruction, was to bring freedom to this country. But here again, we fail to look at ourselves. The United States leads the world in the percentage of its population in prison, disproportionately incarcerating African-Americans and Latinos for many years for nonviolent offenses.

Adults should initially just listen and hear what the children bring up, for children's perceptions and concerns can be very different from our own.

Critics of U.S. foreign policy have found it nearly impossible to get an audience. Chomsky has not appeared on any major U.S. editorial page. The *New York Times*, to be sure, has reported U.S. abuses of foreign prisoners and possible White House deceptions. But these reports came *after* the major assaults on Afghanistan and Iraq. During the time the United States contemplated and conducted its attacks, the mainstream media had little critical to say. It neither predicted or described the pain and death the U.S. caused.

Some of my colleagues tell me that the mainstream media serves powerful military and corporate interests abroad. This may be part of the picture. But we also need to consider the kinds of psychological and group dynamics that Jung wrote about. None of us likes to think about our country in negative ways, as causing death and destruction. We want to be proud Americans. So when our leaders, contemplating war, talk about our nation's goodness and outside "evildoers," they arouse strong patriotic emotions. We join our leaders in denying our own country's aggression, and we collectively project all bad actions—our shadow—onto external enemies.

Time and again, Jung asked us to look into our shadow and consciously examine it. If we instead project it onto enemies, seeing others as completely evil, our foreign policy will be militaristic. Consider President Bush's labeling of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the "axis of evil." This kind of emotional statement, which presumes alliances that exist only in our leaders' minds, precludes the rational analysis on which diplomacy depends. We need to look impartially at what our military power is capable of doing and understand the fear that North Korea, for instance, has of it. Then we will be capable of realistic negotiation, perhaps exchanging North Korea's elimination of nuclear weapons for our guarantees of its security.

With respect to Iran, labeling the entire nation as evil ignores the various forces within the country, including a majority in Iran's Parliament, that seek greater democracy. So long as we view others solely in terms of evil images, we will be prone to war. Only a rational, impartial examination of the complexities of international life will permit diplomatic and peaceful solutions.

Jung on Childhood

Jung had important things to say about children. In particular, he observed how young children, before developing the ego and rational skills, are closer than adults to the universal unconscious. The dreams and fantasies of three- and four-year-olds evoke mythical and poetic themes that would startle classics scholars.

For the most part, however, Jung's writing focused on the second half of life, from mid-life on. This is when the unconscious seeks balance and calls on the individual to pay attention to the neglected parts of the personality.

In his psychiatric practice, too, Jung primarily treated adults—even when adults presented the child as the family member with the symptoms. Jung said that parents must recognize that they themselves are likely to be the principle cause of neurosis in children. As he once told the author Laurens van der Post (1977, 72), "Bring me the parents and I will deal with the problems of the child through them."

Adults' oppressive influence on children is quite evident today. For example, many parents try to live through their children's athletic and academic achievements. The parents often try to accomplish through their children what they never attempted

themselves. In other instances, parents' marital problems affect the child, as when a parent unconsciously uses the child as a love-substitute for the spouse.

In her book, *The Inner World of Childhood* (1968), the Jungian child psychologist Frances Wickes said that children don't respond to the parents' conflict itself as much as the parents' attitude toward it. In particular, children react to how honestly their parents address their own problems. When grownups attempt to brush their problems under the rug, they create a very negative environment for the child. "Have you ever entered a room," Wilkes asks (1968, 40), "where the atmosphere is surcharged with hostility and suspicion though outwardly it is filled with courteous, friendly people?" This is the kind of atmosphere the child intuits. Wickes and Jung didn't believe parents are to be blamed for having problems, which can have deep roots in their own family histories, but they are responsible for the openness and effort with which they work on their own difficulties.

Children's emotional health is also affected by the educational system. Today, the standards and testing movement produces chronic fear and humiliation in many children. And teachers can help children overcome some of their fears and pain, often by talking things over with the children.

But Jung's message is that what's most important is how teachers approach *their own* lives. Teachers need to aware of their emotions and address their problems. Moreover, teachers need to confront the wrongs they see in the educational system. If teachers believe excessive testing harms children, they need to speak out. When teachers take social actions they believe are right, children somehow feel more secure, even when it doesn't seem that the children even know about the teacher's actions. Children somehow sense that the adult acts bravely on their behalf.

I became aware of the importance of grownups' own actions in 1990, when a white police officer in my hometown of Teaneck, NJ, killed an African-American teenager. The teenager had a gun in his pocket when the policeman shot him in the back. The parents in this politically liberal community repeatedly asked, "What should we tell the students?" and "What counseling can we provide?" I was asked to attend a gathering of teenagers, mostly African-Americans, who were particularly distraught. Some spoke of taking guns to the streets. As I listened, I increasingly felt that counseling and advice would do little good. But I felt that the young people might be all right if adults would act in line with their own convictions. Some of us therefore held marches to protest the shooting, even though the community at large opposed the marches because of the negative publicity they brought on the town. Once the adults took action, the young people became much calmer.

I felt it important to make a similar point this year. As our government prepared to attack Iraq, a progressive New York City radio station, WBAI, asked me how teachers and parents should talk to children, especially in light of the fear of terrorist counterattacks in the city. I first noted that adults shouldn't just begin talking to children. We should initially just listen and hear what the children bring up, for children's perceptions and concerns can be very different from our own. I also said we should make sure we are in close contact with children, for a child's greatest fear is often that of being left alone. But in this situation, too, I emphasized the importance of adults taking action. If those of us who oppose the invasion vigorously protest it, the children will gain a basic reassurance that comes from seeing that the adults who care for them are doing what they can to stop violence.

Jung's major message to adults, then, is to pay attention to our own problems and responsibilities. Still, teachers must focus on young people, so we need to consider what Jung can offer us when it comes to teaching them. This is largely an open question, to be filled in by us. Educators who value children's inner growth, artistic activities, and the mythical imagination are particularly interested in Jungian ideas, and I look forward to their accounts of Jung's relevance in this journal.

—William Crain

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