

# Jung, vitalism and ‘the psychoid’: an historical reconstruction

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*Abstract:* This paper traces the history of Jung’s ideas concerning the psychoid unconscious, from their origins in the work of the vitalist, Hans Driesch, and his concept of *Das Psychoid*, through the subsequent work of Eugen Bleuler, Director of the Burghölzli Asylum, and his concept of *Die Psychoide*, to the publication of Jung’s paper *On the Nature of the Psyche* in 1947. This involves a review of Jung’s early work and of his meeting with Freud, when apparently the two men discussed calling the unconscious ‘psychoid’, as well as a review of Jung’s more mature ideas concerning a psychoid unconscious. I propose to argue that even at the time of their meeting, Jung had already formulated an epistemological approach that was significantly different from that of Freud and that clearly foreshadowed his later ideas as set out in *On the Nature of the Psyche*.

*Key words:* archetypes, body-mind, emergence, instincts, psychoid, psychoid processes, psychoid unconscious, vitalism

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## Introduction

In this paper, I want to look at the conceptual history of the psychoid unconscious, in an attempt to discover how the seeds of this concept arose and germinated in the mind of Jung, thereby to gain a better understanding as to what Jung means when he refers to psychoid to designate a deeply unconscious set of processes that are neither physiological nor psychological but that somehow partake of both. Although my primary aim in developing such a conceptual framework has been to formulate a theoretical underpinning in relation to clinical work, nonetheless the history of this idea also sheds an interesting light on the relationship between Freud and Jung and on differences in their early epistemologies, and this is what I wish to focus on in the present paper.

The paper will therefore begin here, with a reference in a letter of Freud to Jung dated 7 April 1907, very shortly after their first meeting in the spring of that year, in which Freud is responding to a suggestion, presumably made by Jung in their meeting, to give the unconscious the name ‘psychoid’. At first sight, this exchange may seem to be no more than a casual interchange between the two men, but I am proposing to demonstrate below that in fact it contains

far more significance than initially appears, and points towards a divergence of approach right from the start of their collaboration.

This conversation is of interest, additionally, because it shows that even in 1907 Jung was already contemplating an idea of a psychoid unconscious; and yet, apparently, he did not adopt the expression 'psychoid' into his own theory until forty years later, when he published *On the Nature of the Psyche* in 1947.

The reference in question is somewhat mysterious, since what Freud says is:

I appreciate your motives in trying to sweeten the sour apple, but I do not think you will be successful. Even if we call the unconscious 'psychoid' it will still be the unconscious, and even if we do not call the driving force in the broadened conception of sexuality 'libido', it will still be libido, and in every inference we draw from it we shall come back to the very thing from which we are trying to divert attention with our nomenclature.

(McGuire 1991, p. 58)

Rather tantalisingly, the currently published records do not show in detail what passed between them in this first meeting, and so we cannot fully unravel the strands of their dialogue to get at their underlying intentions. However, we can readily surmise that it was Jung who raised the idea of calling the unconscious the 'psychoid'. We can also surmise that they were discussing Freud's theory of the unconscious, including his concept of 'libido' with its sexual connotations, and that Jung was questioning his ideas. On the face of it, Freud is trying to neutralize a view alternative to his own, by claiming that the terms 'unconscious' and 'libido' carry within them the essence of *his* concepts, which already incorporate or supersede the ideas offered by Jung.

It is to be borne in mind that, in the beginning, psychoanalysis was founded upon an interest in the links between psyche and soma. The pioneering work of Freud and Breuer, beginning with their *Studies on Hysteria* (Freud & Breuer 1892–5), traced a link between a precipitating psychic trauma on the one hand and sensory memory and experience on the other (later described by Freud as sensory hallucinations), that could be abreacted by bringing the memory of the original trauma to consciousness through analysis. The mechanism attributed to hysteria by Freud and Breuer involved the repression into the unconscious of unwanted ideas of a sexual nature, and thus their dissociation from consciousness, coupled with a conversion of the accompanying affect into somatic symptoms.

At the same time, Freud was writing his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* concerning the environment's impact on the human organism and the organism's reaction to it, in which Freud attempted to represent mental phenomena, including dreaming and hysterical compulsion, in terms of physiological processes (Freud 1895[1950]). Not much later, Jung in his word association tests demonstrated through the use of a galvanometer, whose electrodes were placed in skin contact with the hands and feet of his subjects, that a physical reaction accompanies the manifestation of an affect-laden association of ideas or complex (Jung 1907/8).

At this very early stage in the field of psychoanalysis, the ideas of Freud and his followers were founded primarily on empiricism and a search for causal mechanisms linking body and mind, following the prevailing influences including natural causality, Darwin's biology and the physiology of the Helmholtz school<sup>1</sup>, whose principles were physico-chemical. In *Freud's Models of the Mind*, Sandler et al emphasize Freud's causal approach stemming from his efforts to avoid metaphysical ideas, including teleology, in favour of an empirical orientation:

In line with the dominant scientific ideas of the time, Freud systematically attempted to eliminate teleological explanations from his theories; that is, he saw mental functioning as being a form of adaptation to natural causes rather than having an ultimate and final 'purpose'.

(Sandler et al 1997, p. 17)

By the time Freud and Jung met in 1907, Freud had moved to a more topographical theory of mind, in which Conscious, Preconscious and Unconscious define different depth levels. The Unconscious was characterized by a very primitive mode of functioning according to which instinctual drives and wishes seek discharge, gratification and relief but are in conflict with the moral values of the Conscious and therefore subject to censorship. Freud linked these instinctual drives with the psychosexual development of the child, and conceptualized them as fluctuating quantities of energy seeking discharge. Such energy he termed libido.

Although, in the early years of their collaboration, Jung's attitude to Freud is popularly believed to have been based on an adherence to Freud's ideas, I would like to argue that in fact Jung was from the very beginning in this first meeting proposing a completely different view of the unconscious: one that was embedded in the history of vitalism; and one that foreshadowed and laid the foundation for many of his later theories. I believe that already Jung had begun to formulate his own theory of the unconscious as it would ultimately be summarized forty years later in 1947 in *On the Nature of the Psyche*, and that the implications in this first meeting were borne out by the subsequent unfolding of events.

I am proposing therefore to begin by tracing Jung's interests at the start of his career, to look at his first case history and early clinical work in the light of these interests, and then to set these against Freud's early views on hysteria. This will involve locating the psychoid concept within the history of vitalism, since the notion of 'a psychoid' had already been conceived by the vitalist Hans Driesch prior to the meeting of Freud and Jung. I shall then follow through the subsequent development of the psychoid concept and offer a review of the

<sup>1</sup> In connection with the association between Freud and the School of Helmholtz, Cranefield (1966) reacts against the position that Freud was a mechanist/materialist, a view which was attributed to Bernfield (1944)

extent to which Jung's more mature ideas departed from those of the vitalist tradition.

### Etymology

A consideration of the etymology of the word 'psychoid' locates its roots in the Greek word *psyche*, meaning spirit or soul, after the goddess Psyche, and breath or breath of life; and the Greek suffix *-oeide*, which is related to *eidōs*, meaning shape or form or what is seen. Interestingly, the Greek word *psycho*, meaning I breathe, is onomatopoeic, representing out-, followed by in-, breathing. The Greek *psyche* can be traced through the Latin *psyche* to later derivations in numerous languages. The Greek *psyche* also carries the meaning 'mind', and *psyche* in the sense of mind may be opposed to the Late Latin (i.e., AD 180–600) *psychicus* having the meaning materialistic or carnal. Hence, the expression 'psychoid' may express an attempt to convey something about the manifest shape or form of the spirit, soul or mind, animated by the breath of life. And yet, at the same time, we also find from the same root a derivation which is material and bodily.

Here, already, we have an association pointing in both directions towards mind and body and betraying some uncertainty concerning their relation, and in adopting the expression 'psychoid', the vitalists and Jung picked up on this association. As I shall show, they tried to encapsulate the body-mind relation in a single unified idea that was based not on psycho-physical parallelism but on a conceptual unity.

### Driesch's concept of *Das Psychoid*

The term 'psychoid' was first employed in the field of vitalism to describe a particular teleological function of the human organism, having been coined by the vitalist, Hans Driesch (1867–1941), biologist and philosopher. Driesch was interested in the relationship between body and mind and was opposed to the notion of any deterministic connection between mind and body, and to the mechanistic view that resulted from psycho-physical parallelism.

According to Driesch, all living bodies have three primary characteristics, namely form, metabolism and the capacity for action. In experiments conducted in 1892, he found that when an embryo of a sea urchin was at a very early stage, including only two or four cells (blastomeres), and all but one of those blastomeres were mutilated or destroyed, the single surviving blastomere still developed into a complete, though smaller than normal, whole. He concluded that the living organism aims at some sort of wholeness in terms of its form, and thus that the development of organisms is directed by a life force or unifying self-determining ordering principle.

Following a long line of philosophical thinkers from Aristotle onwards, he called this biological teleology 'vitalism', and he used the term 'entelechy' for the

life force or ordering principle governing the process (as described in *Die 'Seele' als Elementarer Naturfaktor* published in Germany in 1903 and *Der Vitalismus als Geschichte und als Lehre* published in Germany in 1905). He went on to show that entelechy might also be found to account for the inheritance of characteristics from one generation to another.

He then turned to the third characteristic of the living body, namely action in the sense of movement in response to a stimulus. Movement, he said, involves a functional adaptation through experience, when a stimulus is repeated over time. A mechanical cause and effect cannot be deduced, since the correspondence between an individualized stimulus and an individualized effect occurs on the basis of reaction that has been created historically. An individual stimulus has a 'prospective potency' of possible fates, only a single one of which actually results; some innate faculty responds to the stimulus by acting to produce a specific combination of muscular movements based on history. This innate faculty he called *Das Psychoid* (i.e., a 'psychoid') in *Die 'Seele' als Elementarer Naturfaktor*:

This seems to be just the right place in our discussion to give a *name* to the 'acting something' which we have discovered not to be a machine. We might speak of 'entelechy' . . . but it appears better to distinguish also in terminology the natural agent which forms the body from the elemental agent which directs it. . . . I therefore propose the very neutral name of 'Psychoid' for the elemental agent discovered in action.

(Driesch 1929, p. 221)

Accordingly, Driesch considered that the psychoid served to regulate action, and it did so by employing the faculties of the brain as a piano player uses a piano.

He went on to postulate that, on the basis of future research into the nature of instinct, the psychoid might also be found to underlie instinctual behaviour:

If the analysis of instincts should help us some day to a true proof of vitalism, instead of offering only some indications towards it, it might also be said that a 'psychoid' is the basis of instinctive phenomena.

(Driesch 1929, p. 221)

Driesch came to associate this innate faculty with unconscious 'intra-psychical' (as opposed to physical) states involving memory and association. Investigating the 'relations between *my* conscious phenomena and *my* material body' (Driesch 1929, p. 304), he concluded:

Seen from a *purely psychological side*<sup>2</sup>, entelechy, or at least that part of it which regulates action, i.e., our psychoid, is the same entity which is usually called *soul* or *mind*, being the ultimate foundation of the Ego, with all his experiences.

(Driesch 1929, p. 306)

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<sup>2</sup> My emphasis

Therefore, he defined his psychoid as an intra-psychic factor providing the unconscious ultimate foundation of the conscious ego and linking the conscious ego and the body-in-action. It is important to understand that overall Driesch saw his psychoid as neither body nor mind but as something occupying a third position in between and relating to both. This psychoid directs the brain in response to acts of volition from the ego to achieve individualized behaviour based on history, a process which he described as 'I live my life' (Driesch 1929, p. 306). Further, this psychoid is teleological and purposive in the sense that it constitutes an ordering principle urging behaviour along paths of adaptation to the environment based on intentionality of the ego and on historical experience.

### Jung and vitalism

Returning to Jung, we know from his very early work that he had a significant interest in vitalism. In *The Zofingia Lectures*, delivered as a student in the years 1896–1899, Jung rejected both 'contemporary sceptical materialist opinion' (Jung 1896, para. 63) and metaphysics. He sought a third position lying between them, which he found in vitalism, asserting that 'a pre-existent vital principle is necessary to explain the world of organic phenomena' (Jung 1896, para. 63). He described the vital principle as a life force, which

governs all bodily functions, including those of the brain, and hence also governs consciousness. . . . The vital principle extends far beyond consciousness in that it also maintains the vegetative functions of the body which, as we know, are not under our conscious control. Our consciousness is dependent on the functions of the brain, but these are in turn dependent on the vital principle, and accordingly the vital principle represents a substance, whereas consciousness represents a contingent phenomenon.

(Jung 1897, para. 96)

He linked the vital principle with the purposeful and organizational activity of the soul in what he described as the new empirical psychology:

The new empirical psychology furnishes us with data ideally designed to expand our knowledge of organic life and to deepen our views of the world. . . . Our body formed from matter, our soul gazing towards the heights, are joined in a single living organism.

(ibid., para. 142)

Accordingly, right from the outset and even as a student, Jung espoused in his psychology a purposeful, i.e., a teleological, approach directed towards goals of wholeness in the future, and in this he displayed the foundations of some of his much later ideas with their vitalistic basis. This bias is also taken through into his early clinical work, as his first case study demonstrates.

### Jung's dissertation

Jung's initial publication of clinical work was his dissertation on a case of somnambulism (1902). The subject, designated as Miss S. W., was in fact his

cousin Hélène Preiswerk although this was not at the time disclosed. She was a young girl who experienced states of 'double consciousness' in which she held séances attended by the young Jung. Jung describes at some length so-called occult phenomena occurring in these states, without at any stage offering a view as to the reality of such phenomena. Rather, he adopts a position of enquiry into their psychological meaning for Hélène.

In her somnambulistic 'attacks', Hélène would display an unnatural pallor and enact the behaviour and dialogue of other personalities foreign to that of her normal waking state. Jung quotes Krafft-Ebing (1879, p. 498) that hallucinations of all the senses are not uncommon in somnambulism (Jung 1902, para. 11), and Hélène would display various kinds of automatic behaviour, including unconscious motor phenomena and automatic writing, prior to returning gradually to her waking state by way of a cataleptic stage.

Some of these other personalities were frivolous and childish but one, named Ivenes and identified by Jung as the somnambulistic ego of Hélène, was a more mature woman, assured and influential. Jung considered that Hélène:

anticipates her own future and embodies in Ivenes what she wishes to be in twenty years' time – the assured, influential, wise, gracious, pious lady.

(Jung 1902, para. 116)

The mechanism of this double consciousness, as described by Jung, bears comment. Although he refers to the secondary personalities as dissociations from the already existing personality, mentioning Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, nevertheless he explicitly avoids adopting Freud's theories on the ground that he has no means of judging how far the emotion in question was 'repressed' (ibid., para. 97). He also refers to the dream-states producing Hélène's automatisms as hysterical, and links her periodic personality changes and splits in consciousness with hysteria, although again he avoids any idea of repression:

Our patient differs essentially from pathological dreamers in that it could never be proved that her reveries had previously been the object of her daily interests; her dreams come up explosively, suddenly bursting forth with amazing completeness from the darkness of the unconscious. . . . it seems probable that the roots of those dreams were originally feeling-toned ideas which only occupied her waking consciousness for a short time. We must suppose that hysterical forgetfulness plays a not inconsiderable role in the origin of such dreams: many ideas which, in themselves, would be worth preserving in consciousness, sink below the threshold, associated trains of thought get lost and, thanks to psychic dissociation, go on working in the unconscious. We meet the same process again in the genesis of our own dreams.

(ibid., para. 119)

For Jung, then, repression is not a factor, but rather a 'forgetfulness' in which *worthwhile*<sup>3</sup> content sinks below the threshold of consciousness. This paves the

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<sup>3</sup> My emphasis

way for a view contrary to the theory of hysteria based on repression favoured by Freud, a view according to which H el ene's somnambulism has a teleological function:

It is, therefore, conceivable that the phenomena of double consciousness are simply new character formations, or attempts of the future personality to break through. . . . In view of the difficulties that oppose the future character, the somnambulisms sometimes have an eminently teleological significance, in that they give the individual, who would otherwise succumb, the means of victory.

(ibid., para. 136)

Thus, in this very early piece of work, Jung achieves a remarkable synthesis, which is more in line with his earlier expressed interest in vitalism than with his acknowledgement of Freud. Firstly, he offers a mechanism for explaining dissociation, in which body and mind co-operate to produce split off somnambulisms that are activated by unconscious motor phenomena and hallucinations, and that incorporate forgotten worthwhile content; and secondly he emphasizes clearly both the psychological meaning of H el ene's experiences and their teleological function in giving intimations of future possibilities and their form, as in the case of the personality of Ivenes.

### A case of hysteria

During the next few years, Jung began to adopt some of Freud's ideas more overtly, most notably in his treatment of Sabina Spielrein, in which he employed Freud's method of working over childhood memories and associative material.

Sabina was admitted to the Burgh olzli Clinic in 1904, when Eugen Bleuler was Director and Jung had sole medical responsibility for patients. Although, in 1896, Bleuler had described Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* as 'one of the most important publications of the last few years in the field of normal and pathological psychology', the hospital records give no indication of any clinical application yet of Freud's ideas (Minder 1994, p. 111). Sabina was diagnosed with hysteria, and she was effectively the Burgh olzli's first case to be treated using Freud's analytic method.

She suffered from compulsions, tics, and other somatic symptoms, and according to notes taken by Jung, she reported feeling as if someone were pressing upon her, and as if something were crawling around in her bed. In her treatment with Jung, she confessed to a father complex, in which her father had beaten and humiliated her as a child. Jung wrote that he applied Freud's method with considerable success and her symptoms cleared up (Minder 1994, p. 121).

However, while Jung acknowledged the efficacy of Freud's method, it is not so evident that he agreed with Freud's theory. Minder (1994, p. 129) thinks that Jung was referring to Sabina in his paper *Cryptomnesia* (Jung 1905), in which Jung describes hysteria in terms of his own theories, according to which

hysterical dissociation is brought about by a feeling-toned memory complex. The following year, in their early correspondence during October to December of 1906, Jung expressed directly to Freud doubts concerning various aspects of Freud's theory of hysteria and its genesis, writing that his scientific premises were utterly different from those of Freud (McGuire 1991, p. 51). Papadopoulos (2006) sees in this statement a reference to significant epistemological differences from the outset.

In a lecture in Amsterdam in 1907 shortly after his meeting with Freud, Jung again referred to his work with Sabina, presented as a case of psychotic hysteria, describing her symptoms very much in the Freudian terms of infantile sexuality, repression, and the consequent appearance of physical symptoms (Jung 1908, paras. 51–2). Nevertheless, in the same lecture Jung also criticizes Freud's views, based on his own theory of complexes derived from his word association experiments (*ibid.*, para. 42), and he gives a very wide interpretation to Freud's understandings of 'sexuality' and 'libido', describing them respectively as 'the instinct for the preservation of the species' and 'any inordinate passion or desire' (Jung 1908, para. 49). I think therefore that it is quite possible that Jung tended to see the aetiology of hysteria more in terms of his own ideas concerning complexes and their links with dissociation and physical symptoms, rather than in terms of the mechanism described by Freud. All of this seems to suggest that Jung had clear reservations about Freud's ideas even at the stage of their first meeting.

### **Freud and Jung and their meeting**

In the light of this background, Jung's suggestion to Freud to call the unconscious 'psychoid' would seem to be no mere chance remark but one to carry within it a whole raft of already formulated ideas concerning the unconscious, in spite of the fact that the remark was tossed lightly aside by Freud with the comment that Jung was simply 'trying to sweeten the apple'. Given his already demonstrated interest in vitalism and his approach in his dissertation to the psychological experiences of his cousin Hélène, Jung might well have contemplated an idea of the unconscious more in line with the vitalism of Hans Driesch than with the views of Freud, i.e., one that was teleological and aligned towards potential future forms, one having an organizing function, and one whose drives were not solely sexual in origin. The contents of such an unconscious could then be seen as worthwhile and forgotten, as opposed to unwanted and repressed, and the dissociation and somatic symptoms of hysteria could be explained in terms of Jung's theory of complexes and the somatic thinking of Driesch.

Even at this early stage, therefore, it appears that Jung may well have been contemplating a view of the unconscious that embraced something like the psychoid of Driesch to account both for the body-mind connection and for the teleological function that he attributed to Hélène and her somnambulisms.

That this view is in fact quite probable may be demonstrated also by Jung's references to vitalistic ideas and works on vitalism in his later writings on his theory of libido, including *Symbols of Transformation* (1912), which proposed an idea of libido in non-sexual energetic terms, and his essay *On Psychic Energy* (partly written in 1912 although only published in 1928), which sets out to explain the rationale for his ideas on libido.

Marilyn Nagy (1991) draws attention to references to vitalistic ideas in *Symbols of Transformation*, commenting:

I am certain that what was really at stake between the two men in their struggle over the nature of psychic libido was the ancient mind-body problem as it surfaces in the biological sphere.

(Nagy 1991, p.128)

In my opinion, the differences ran even deeper than this and were of an epistemological nature, since Freud, as stated above, espoused a biological-mechanical model in his initial work on hysteria and in the *Project* and located the origins of pathology in childhood sexuality, whereas Jung from the outset held to a vitalistic teleological approach, which continued to influence his thinking in one form or another throughout his life.

It is then no surprise that subsequent events led to a parting of the ways, as both Freud and Jung continued to develop their ideas along the lines already foreshadowed in their divergent initial epistemological approaches. In Jung's case, this meant that the influence of vitalism continued in the future evolution of his views concerning a psychoid unconscious.

### Bleuler's concept of *Die Psychoide*

The next step in the background to Jung's mature ideas on a psychoid unconscious, derived from the field of vitalism, is provided by Eugen Bleuler (1857–1939), professor of psychiatry at the University of Zurich, and director of the Burghölzli Asylum in the period 1898–1927. Jung was Bleuler's assistant from 1900–1909, and we know, from Ernst Falzeder (2007) for example, that the Burghölzli community was close knit and that ideas were freely discussed and exchanged. It is likely, therefore, that Bleuler was well acquainted with Jung's interest in vitalism, and he was certainly aware of Driesch as his writings attest, although he dismissed Driesch's view of the psychoid on the ground that the underlying theory could be attributed to philosophy rather than science.

It was only considerably after Jung had left the Burghölzli that Bleuler published a concept of the psychoid in *Die Psychoide als Prinzip Der Organischen Entwicklung* (1925). In distinction from Driesch's concept 'Das Psychoid', having the neuter gender, Bleuler called his the feminine 'Die Psychoide'. In a review in the *IJPA* (1927), Reich suggests that Bleuler does not satisfactorily distinguish his psychoid from that of Driesch but I think that this shows an insufficient understanding of the two views.

By contrast with Driesch, Bleuler described his psychoid in terms of a psycho-physical parallelism, in that he argued that 'both physiology and the psyche act on similar principles' for motives that seek to achieve some final future orientation (Bleuler 1930, p. 35). In the case of the organism, the *instincts* are so ordered that life is maintained; and in the case of the psyche, *intelligence* acts as a guide to the same end. In both, adaptation occurs in response to experience and introduces new orientations accordingly. This approach suggests the idea of a psyche-soma split, whereas Driesch disputes such parallelism by proposing a third position for his psychoid between the two.

For example, in the case of the body, according to Bleuler:

the organism adapts itself a thousandfold to unusual needs, heat, cold, increased or diminished use of certain bodily organs, change of food etc. . . . It is as if the organism were 'learning' to select the conditions most favourable to it. In any case, we are in the presence here of a function similar to human memory, which creates new connections . . .

(Bleuler 1930, p. 36)

In another example, a newborn baby cries by reflex and finds that mother comes, which gradually leads first to an idea that mother comes in response to crying, which the baby likes, and then to the building of memory and psyche. The newborn has no ability to reflect, but his cry causes a reaction in that mother comes. This produces a change in his psyche so that an association is formed, and thereafter crying occurs on the mere inclination to have mother near.

In both cases, an influence causes a reaction and a permanent structural change, which shapes future reactions in a favourable direction. Since these are not conscious, Bleuler eschewed the expression 'memory' in favour of 'mneme' for the link between influence and reaction, and he allocated the expression 'engramme' for the permanent change, borrowing his terminology from the psychologist Richard Semon (Bleuler 1930, p. 38). Thus, the mneme yields an adaptation, a 'learning' of a purposeful action as if it already had a potential outcome in view, and the experiences are preserved in the form of engrammes that are later revived in the shape of actions, and in associations that determine the paths of our thought processes. In the body, this yields physical actions in response to nervous stimuli, and regeneration occurs following injury. In the brain, for example in the process of writing, it produces a perception of pen and paper, as well as engrammes of the writing movement and a conception of the ideas to be written that direct the writing action.

Thus, exactly the same elementary processes occur in the bodily functions as in the memory of the psyche. Both learn by experience and both comprise an integration of functions:

The psyche – apart from its experience content – consists of a number of instincts . . . bound up as a unit . . . Bodily functions, too, are integrated to a high degree, not only the nervous ones but all the others; all vegetative functions, digestion,

circulation etc, are dependent on one another . . . Hence, we have good grounds for bringing the bodily functions under one conception. This summary, the body soul, I have called the psychoid.

As we ascertain in the psychoid, with the exception of consciousness, all the elementary functions that we find in the psyche, and in the latter all that are in the former, we cannot do otherwise than regard the psyche as a specialization of the psychoid . . .

(Bleuler 1930, p. 43)

Accordingly, the stage moves from the psychoid to the psyche at the point that consciousness sets in. Bleuler defines the psychoid as the capacity to respond and adapt in the face of stimuli thereby creating permanent changes in the brain that shape future reactions. Out of this, he goes on to elaborate the functions of the psychoid in the development or evolution of the species.

For Bleuler, therefore, the psychoid is initially a bodily function that extends into the area of psychological growth, arising out of behaviour based on 'what is favourable' and generating permanent changes in the body and in the brain through the experience. This leads Bleuler ultimately to see the psychoid as a causal agent of psychic development, as in the case of the infant who develops a pattern of behaviour as it learns that mother responds to its crying, and in this sense Bleuler's psychoid also has a teleological character.

Bleuler, by opposing psyche and soma, is forced to locate his psychoid in one or the other, and does so by placing it in the body rather than in the psyche, in distinction from Driesch's unifying psychoid having a third position. Nevertheless, Bleuler offers an elaboration not provided by Driesch, according to which his bodily psychoid is oriented towards psychic development based on a selection of that which has a favourable outcome. Thus, he supplies a mechanism of a causal nature by which psyche develops out of soma, which may be contrasted with the very deeply unconscious and life enhancing process envisaged by Driesch. We may therefore see the psychoid of Bleuler particularly as a developmental agent, which fosters the development of mind out of the matrix of the body.

### Jung's concept of the psychoid unconscious

This then is the background to Jung's adoption of the same expression 'psychoid' to describe a particular aspect of the unconscious in his paper *On the Nature of the Psyche* (1947).

In the period between offering the name to Freud in 1907 and this time, Jung had been developing his own ideas concerning the structure and development of the psyche, in which he regarded instincts as a key factor. In his paper *Instincts and the Unconscious* (first published in 1919), he described instincts and archetypes as correlates of one another in the spheres of action and perception, the one regulating our conscious actions and the other determining our mode of apprehension:

Just as instincts compel a man to a specifically human mode of existence, so the archetypes force his ways of perception into specifically human patterns.

(Jung 1919/1928/1948, para. 270)

A few years later, he arrived at a different view, according to which the archetypes are the forms which the instincts assume (Jung 1927/1931, para. 339). By 1936, he was writing that the instincts are the chief motivating forces of psychic events:

I regard the *compulsiveness* of instinct as an ectopsychic factor. None the less, it is psychologically important because it leads to the formation of structures or patterns which may be regarded as determinants of human behaviour. Under these circumstances the immediate determining factor is . . . the structure resulting from the interaction of instinct and the psychic situation of the moment.

(Jung 1936, para. 234)

He called this process 'psychization'.

This development in Jung's thinking is relevant to his views on the nature of psychoid processes, because of the way in which Jung links such processes with instincts and the archetypes. Acknowledging both Driesch and Bleuler, Jung dismisses Driesch's view of the psychoid as a 'directing principle' on the ground that this approach is essentially philosophical, and observes that his own use of the term serves to delineate roughly the same group of phenomena that Bleuler had in mind, namely those subcortical processes concerned with biological adaptive functions.

Jung defined his own use of the term 'psychoid' thus:

(F)irstly, I use it as an adjective, not as a noun; secondly, no psychic quality in the proper sense of the word is implied, but only a 'quasi-psychic' one such as reflex-processes possess; and . . . it is meant to distinguish a category of events from merely vitalistic phenomena on the one hand and from specifically psychic processes on the other.

(Jung 1947, para. 368)

Based on the enquiry, '(H)ow do we define the psychic as distinct from the physiological?' (Jung 1947, para. 376), he came up with precisely the view that the contents of the unconscious psyche contain undoubted links with the instinctual sphere, which may be thought of as physiological, the lower reaches of the psyche beginning where the psyche emancipates itself from the compulsive force of the instinct. The psyche then extends along a continuum from instinct in its lower reaches in the organic-material substrate to spirit in its upper reaches, and:

Where instinct predominates psychoid processes set in which pertain to the unconscious as elements incapable of consciousness. The psychoid process is not the unconscious as such, for this has far greater extension. Apart from psychoid processes, there are in the unconscious ideas, volitional acts, hence something akin to conscious processes; but in the instinctual sphere these phenomena retire so far into the background that the term 'psychoid' is probably justified.

(Jung 1947, para. 380)

Having thus linked instinct with psychoid processes, he goes on to link instinct with his theory of archetypes, as follows:

Instinct and the archaic [primitive] mode [of functioning] meet in the biological conception of the 'pattern of behaviour' . . . [E]very instinct bears in itself the pattern of its situation. Always, it fulfils an image, and the image has fixed qualities. The instinct of the leaf-cutting ant fulfils the image of ant, tree, leaf, cutting, transport, and the little ant-garden of fungi. If any one of these conditions is lacking, the instinct does not function, because it cannot exist without its total pattern, without its image. Such an image is an *a priori* type. It is inborn in the ant prior to any activity, for there can be no activity at all unless an instinct of corresponding pattern initiates and makes it possible. This schema holds true also of man . . .

(Jung 1947, para. 398)

He considered that this instinctual (i.e., primordial) image<sup>4</sup> represented the meaning of the instinct, and concluded that such patterns of behaviour constitute unconscious conditions acting as regulators and stimulators of the instinctual sphere. The resulting unconscious processes give rise to spontaneous manifestations in the form of dreams and other fantasy-material of a consciously perceptible nature, in which can be seen certain well-defined themes and formal elements. The unconscious conditions thus act also as regulators and stimulators of creative fantasy-activity, which avails itself of the existing conscious material, so that the instinctual image stimulates mental activity generally. Consciousness, he wrote, is not only a transformation of the original instinctual image but also its transformer (Jung 1947, para. 399). In this respect, I think Jung is describing and elaborating an emergent factor that arises whenever the instinctual image is fulfilled and that yields a new and synergistic result.

He goes on to say:

The archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are very varied structures which all point back to one essentially 'irrepresentable' form. The latter is characterized by certain formal elements and by certain fundamental meanings, although these can be grasped only approximately. The archetype as such is a psychoid factor . . . It does not appear to be capable of reaching consciousness.

(Jung 1947, para. 417)

By designating the archetype as a psychoid factor, Jung is suggesting that all archetypes possess this psychoid aspect, i.e., they are all underpinned by psychoid processes immanent in the structure of the organism, that may be conceived as emergent properties. This is the first time that he has specifically related archetypes to psychoid processes, and it results in an extension of his previous definition of the archetypes to embrace an idea where their effect may be to generate phenomena *other than* visual images and ideas, which phenomena

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<sup>4</sup> His use of the word 'image' is confusing in this paper since he uses it on the one hand to refer to a complete set of criteria composing the primordial or instinctual image, and on the other to refer to the more usual context of a visual representation.

manifest psychically although being nearer in character to the physiology of the organism:

In my previous writings, I have always treated the archetypal phenomena as psychic, because the material to be expounded or investigated was solely concerned with images or ideas. The psychoid nature of the archetype as put forward here does not contradict these earlier formulations; it only means a further degree of conceptual differentiation... Just as the 'psychic infra-red', the biological instinctual psyche, gradually passes over into the physiology of the organism and thus merges with its chemical and physical conditions, so the 'psychic ultra-violet', the archetype, describes a field which exhibits none of the peculiarities of the physiological and yet, in the last analysis, can no longer be regarded as psychic, although it manifests itself psychically.

(Jung 1947, paras. 419-420)

Consequently, for Jung, the psychoid nature of the archetype is a way of linking psyche and soma through a continuum extending from an instinctual or 'psychic infra-red' pole to a spiritual or 'psychic ultra-violet' pole. We can see that, for him, body and mind do not stand in a parallel relation but are two different aspects of one and the same thing, represented in his notion of the psychoid unconscious.

In Jung's model, psychoid processes underlying the archetypes are immanent at an instinctual level in the matrix of the organism and are so deeply lodged that they are incapable of being made conscious. Such processes through their links with the instincts give rise to activity within the psyche that produces emergent forms of an archetypal nature, which contribute to the development of consciousness and of structure within the psyche, both transforming the existing structure and then being transformed by the new structure.

## Discussion

Interestingly, both Bleuler and Jung dismissed Driesch on the grounds that he was a philosopher and that his ideas were based merely on philosophy, in spite of the fact that, of the three of them, Driesch was the one with the strongest record of scientific experimentation, publication and scientific claim.

In viewing the evolution of the psychoid concept through its various incarnations in the hands of the three men, I think that they adopted different positions in regard to the nature of the linking mechanism between body and mind, with Driesch and Jung both arguing that body and mind are different aspects of the same thing, while Bleuler took a view based more on psycho-physical parallelism. A common theme in each case, however, was a notion of the psychoid concept as a teleological factor, and here each of them developed the ideas of their predecessor further towards a hypothesis of a specific methodology by which such teleology might be expressed.

Driesch postulated a unifying psychoid situated between psyche and soma, such psychoid directing and organizing behaviour, in the sense of the body-in-action, towards goals of wholeness lying in the future. Bleuler's advance

over Driesch was to elucidate a view of the psychoid as an unconscious bodily process by which psychic learning takes place in response to physical stimuli, as in the case of the infant who develops a pattern of behaviour as it learns that mother responds to its crying.

Jung, I think, developed his description of psychoid processes a long way beyond the ideas of both Driesch and Bleuler. However, the fact that he chose to adopt the same terminology suggests that he still wished to retain a vitalistic basis for his ideas, in spite of the fact that he eschewed the entirely vitalistic notion of Driesch, saying that his definition of psychoid processes is not intended to embrace merely vitalistic phenomena within its scope.

The key aspect of Jung's advance, I think, lies with his linking of psychoid processes with his theory of archetypes. This enables him to draw connections with the function of instincts, and with his notion of the instinctual image with its many components combining together into one single outcome. This connection is a very interesting one, whose full implications may be far reaching. As Jung observes, *all* of the elements must be present before *any* outcome arises, but at the moment when they all come together something entirely new emerges. In his example, the instinctual image of the leaf-cutting ant, all of the ant, tree etc., must coincide to produce the leaf-cutting behaviour natural to the ant. No previous experience of leaf-cutting behaviour is required for the ant to know what to do, and no learning takes place; rather the instinct is complete in its specificity from the very first occurrence. The instinctual image is therefore complex and multi-valent. It is also purposeful, teleological, and directed towards the survival of the organism in bringing about the next developmental stage. In this manner, we can see that each succeeding stage supervenes on the previous one, neither being caused by, nor reducible to, the factors in the previous stage.

A pattern of elements, in their multiplicity, coincide and an entirely new and more complex form emerges, in which all the elements are combined not simply as an independent collection or collocation but as an interacting whole, in which the interaction is not predictable from the individual parts.

Furthermore, the instinctual image with its pattern of elements is immanent as a potential in the basic structure of the organism. It exists as potential internally within the organism, but it can only be brought to fruition when external circumstances arise to fulfil the instinctual image. The internal potential must be met by the external circumstances for the next stage to emerge.

As Jung says, what holds true for the instinctual image of the ant is a schema that also holds true for man. And indeed we can see it in the newborn infant who, when laid on her mother's breast, has been found to seek out the nipple and start to feed. Here, infant, mouth, tongue, mother, breast, nipple come together, and in this moment the infant instinctively suckles and milk starts to flow.

However, Jung does not stop at the behavioural level of instinct. He goes on to apply this schema to the development of consciousness, linking such

development with the dynamism of instinct at one end of the spectrum and with the instinctual image at the other. To me, this suggests that he is giving us a mechanism by which consciousness not only emerges from the matrix of the body under the pressure of the dynamism of instinct in co-operation with the elements of the instinctual image, but also how consciousness may become increasingly sophisticated by developing to ever further levels by the same process. It also suggests that this process requires a duality, in which the instinctual image as potential meets the elements of the instinctual image as objects, for new forms to arise. This points to the significance of relationship in the development of the psyche, the 'other' being required to fulfil aspects of the instinctual image in the early stages of physiological development and of consciousness.

The process of emergence of new forms of instinctual image will gradually give rise to consciousness, internal representations of the 'other', and fantasy-material concerning self and other perceptible to and interacting with consciousness. Thus, in later stages, I would suggest, such internal representations of the other, including fantasy material, can also provide elements of the instinctual image, and the process of emergence can be at least in part an intrapsychic one. This fits with Jung's comments that consciousness is not only a transformation of the original instinctual image but also its transformer.

### **Conclusion**

I would therefore like to propose that Jung is giving us a model of psychoid processes in terms of the primordial image that he describes as a pattern of behaviour in relation to the leaf-cutting ant. When a particular set of conditions is fulfilled, then these processes are initiated and the instinctual sphere is stimulated to activity. However, such set of conditions can only be fulfilled in the human sphere in relationship, at which point psychoid processes respond and lead first to connection, communication, and in time later to the development of psychic structure. Thus, I would suggest that Jung's psychoid processes link the physiological and instinctual spheres with the growth of the psyche, and lead to the emergence of ever new and more complex psychic and psychophysical structures.

To return now to the point where I started, with Freud's letter of 7 April 1907 to Jung, and the suggestion put forward by Jung in their meeting that the unconscious could be called 'psychoid', it seems to me that even at this early stage Jung had in mind some idea of an unconscious more aligned with the somatic thinking of Driesch than with the views of Freud. I believe that, even in their meeting, the groundwork had already been laid in the mind of Jung for an idea of the unconscious based on a teleological outlook directed towards the possibility and even character of future potential. Such a view implies that the two men had wholly different epistemological approaches from the outset. And, it seems to me that this was borne out in the unfolding of events, not only

between Freud and Jung, but also in the way in which Jung's more mature ideas asserted themselves.

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

L'article retrace l'histoire des idées de Jung concernant l'inconscient psychoïde depuis leur origine dans l'œuvre du vitaliste Hans Driesch et son concept *Das Psychoïd*, en passant par l'œuvre d'Eugen Bleuler, alors directeur du Burghölzli, et son concept *Die Psychoïde*, jusqu'à la publication de l'article de Jung sur *La Nature du Psychisme* en 1947. Les premiers travaux de Jung y sont passés en revue, de même qu'y est évoquée sa rencontre avec Freud, au cours de laquelle les deux hommes discutèrent de l'inconscient en le nommant « psychoïde », et enfin le résultat de la maturation de ses idées concernant un inconscient psychoïde. A l'époque de leur rencontre, l'approche de Jung était déjà épistémologiquement fort distincte de celle de Freud, annonçant clairement ses idées plus tardives, telles qu'elles seront formulées dans l'article de 1947.

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Dieser Aufsatz verfolgt die Geschichte von Jungs Ideen das psychoide Unbewußte betreffend von ihren Ursprüngen im Werk des Vitalisten Hans Driesch und dessen Konzeptes *Das Psychoïd* über das darauf aufbauende Werk Eugen Bleulers, Direktors des Burghölzli, und seines Entwurfs *Die Psychoïde* bis zu Jungs Aufsatz *On the Nature of the Psyche* von 1947. Hierin eingeschlossen sind sowohl eine Überprüfung von Jungs Frühwerk sowie seiner Begegnung mit Freud, bei der beide offensichtlich über das Unbewußte als 'psychoïd' sprachen, wie auch eine Betrachtung von Jungs reiferen Ideen bezüglich eines psychoiden Unbewußten. Ich stelle die These auf, daß Jung bereits zur Zeit ihres Zusammentreffens einen epistemologischen Zugang formuliert hatte, der sich bedeutend von jenem Freuds unterschied und der deutlich seine späteren Ideen ahnen läßt, die er in *On the Nature of the Psyche* darlegt.

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In questo lavoro viene tracciata la storia delle idee di Jung che riguardano l'inconscio psicoide a partire dalle loro origini nel lavoro del sostenitore del vitalismo Hans Driesch e del suo concetto de *Lo Psicoïde*, passando poi attraverso il lavoro successivo di Eugen Bleuler, direttore del Burghölzlii Asylum e del suo concetto de *Lo psicoïde*, alla pubblicazione nel 1947 del lavoro di Jung *Sulla natura della psiche*. Ciò implicherà una revisione sia del primo lavoro junghiano e del suo incontro con Freud, quando, apparentemente, i due uomini discussero sul chiamare l'inconscio 'psicoïde', sia su una revisione delle idee più mature riguardanti un inconscio psicoide. Sostengo che persino al tempo dei loro incontri, Jung aveva già approntato un approccio epistemologico significativamente diverso da quello di Freud e che chiaramente anticipava le sue idee più tarde come espote in *Sulla natura della psiche*.

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Este trabajo explora la historia de las ideas de Jung sobre el inconsciente psicoide, desde sus orígenes en los trabajos de Hans Driesch, y su concepto del *das psychoïd*, continuando con los trabajos de Eugen Bleuler, director del Hospital de Burghölzli, y

sus concepto del *Die Psychoide*, hasta la publicación de Jung *Sobre la Naturaleza de la Psique* en 1947. Ello connotará la revisión de las obras tempranas de Jung y su encuentro con Freud, en el cual aparentemente ambos hombres discutieron llamando al inconsciente 'psicoide', así mismo se hace una revisión de las ideas más maduras de Jung concernientes al psicoide inconsciente. Me propongo argumentar que aún al momento de su reunión, Jung ya tenía una aproximación epistemológica que era significativamente diferente a la de Freud y que esta enmarcara claramente sus ideas posteriores como se expresan en *Sobre la Naturaleza de la Psique*.

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