

SELF-ORGANIZING NATURE

First Principle of the Jungian Paradigm

The psyche, through the process of psychic compensation, is self-regulating.

In contrast to the conflict model of the Freudian Paradigm in which the struggle between the conscious and unconscious is ongoing and as such experiences no respite but that which comes through the intervention of the ego, within the Jungian Paradigm, the psyche as a total system is regarded as being self-regulating. The psyche, according to the assumptions of the Jungian Paradigm, is held to be, in this manner, not only capable of maintaining its own equilibrium, but also of bringing about its own self-realization. Such self-regulation is more typically referred to by Jungians as *psychic compensation*.

The paradigmatic progression from the Freudian notion of *a psyche in conflict with itself* to the Jungian understanding of a *self-regulating psyche* constitutes, as already noted, a noncumulative break. Jung, we should, therefore, not be surprised to know, even prior to his association with Freud, was already in possession of what would prove to be some of the key pieces of the answer to his yet unformulated question—the question of the self-regulatory psyche. “As far back as 1907,” Jung writes in “General Aspects of Dream Psychology” in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, “I pointed out the compensatory relation between consciousness and the split-off complexes and also emphasized their purposive character.”¹ Going back further still, we see that Jung’s 1902 dissertation delivered before the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Zurich touches no less on this question. Jung’s medical dissertation, which in its English translation is titled “On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena,” asserts that certain psychological phenomena associated with what at that time was termed *somnambulism*—trance states—far from being random manifestations, constitute actual “attempts of the future personality

to break through."² The self-regulatory psyche, Jung is saying in other words, utilizes trance states as a means of bringing to consciousness those hidden, still unconscious aspects of personality of the greatest developmental importance.

Now of course a more common, yet no less intricate manifestation of the psyche's self-regulatory activity is the dream symbol. Within the Jungian Paradigm, the dream symbol, as has already been noted, is understood to consist of, among other things, both personal and transpersonal elements. The former being derived from what Jung terms the *personal unconscious*; the latter being derived from what Jung terms the *collective unconscious*.

The personal unconscious is understood to have arisen out of those experiences which were once conscious and then either forgotten or repressed, or which, on the other hand, were never conscious but rather entered through subliminal channels.³ Concerning the latter, as hard as it may be at a glance to understand what is meant by such influences, we should understand that subliminal influences are everyday occurrences. Such phenomena will often present, for example, in the behavior of children where an unacknowledged tension is present in a child's environment. Because children are generally more susceptible to the presence of such tensions than adults, as that tension passes into a child as it will invariably do with all present by way of a type of psychic osmosis, the direct and overt consequence to the child of the subliminal transmission will typically be problematic behavioral manifestations, such as out-of-control behavior. Problematic behavior thus erupts; disciplinary responses on the part of the adults thus follow, while the real significance of what is truly unfolding is lost on all present, children and adults alike. Now if, in continuing with this example, we were to think about such influences as being ongoing, everyday experiences for children, especially in their family environments, and if we were then to envision the cumulative effects, both positive and negative, of these types of psychic, environmental influences over the course of many years, we would approach what Jung has in mind in speaking of the presence of subliminal influences in the personal unconscious.

To summarize, we should emphasize that the personal unconscious is, as its name suggests, unique to each individual and consists of all that has been acquired, consciously and/or unconsciously, in the course of a particular individual's lifetime. This, as we will see in our examination of the second principle of the Jungian Paradigm, is very much in contrast to what Jung described as the collective unconscious which, most significantly, is the location of those innate, transpersonal factors he termed *archetypes*.

Beyond its personal and transpersonal dimensions, then, the symbol is also understood by Jungians to manifest in its compensatory role the three dimensions of time, that is to say, past, present, and future. We can perhaps at least begin to understand the compensatory role of these time dimensions by considering the following.

Beginning with the work of Freud and carried forward by Jung, an established observation in depth psychology is that highly emotionally charged unconscious themes become triggered in relationship to everyday experiences. Equally well established in depth psychology is the understanding that the more unaware one is of the activation of these unconscious themes the more problematic they tend to be. The technical term introduced by Jung to describe these highly autonomous psychic contents is the *complex*. Jung likens the eruption of a complex into the everyday life of the individual to the presence of “an animated foreign body in the sphere of consciousness.”⁴ “Complexes are psychic fragments,” Jung writes, “which have split off owing to traumatic influences or certain incompatible tendencies. . . . complexes interfere with the intentions of the will and disturb the conscious performance; they produce disturbances of memory and blockages in the flow of associations; they appear and disappear according to their own laws; they can temporarily obsess consciousness, or influence speech and action in an unconscious way.”⁵

When, for instance, two individuals are drawn together romantically it is often the case that this experience will activate unconscious themes or complexes that exist in the psyche of at least one of these individuals—unconscious themes constructed out of that individual’s past experiences of intimacy. If it is the case, furthermore, that such an unconscious theme should contain unpleasant associations with intimacy, an alarm will go off warning the individual to pull away. The message to consciousness will be that intimacy is dangerous. What then usually happens is that the individual will begin to rationalize why the relationship can’t work—“we are getting too close”—without ever realizing that the real problem is not a defect in the present relationship, but rather a defect in that individual’s experience of intimacy which is now being projected onto the relationship.

It is at this point that the compensatory dynamics of the psyche will go to work to sort things out. Here the unconscious will not only seek through its compensatory symbolism to indicate that a complex has been activated, but it will show, moreover, with the long-term developmental needs of the individual in mind, how the problem presented by this particular unconscious theme is to be ultimately resolved. As regards, therefore, the time dimensions of compensatory symbolism, we would say that

whereas the *present* dimension symbolically depicts the romantic relationship as it exists in its failing attempt to unfold, the *past* dimension would present those unconscious assumptions about intimacy that have been transported to the present encounter from one's psychic past, while the *future* dimension would relate to the manner in which the unconscious utilizes its compensatory symbolism to move the individual forward in keeping with a specific developmental agenda.

Psychic compensation, it should, therefore, be taken from the above, encompasses the total personality, complexes and all, and thus leaves no psychic stone unturned. Along this precise line, an individual with whom I had only recently begun dream analysis once described to me in the week-in-review portion of our session how on the previous weekend the team he was coaching was soundly defeated by their opponents. Not knowing this individual well at this point, and he not being all that familiar with the nature of the unconscious and its workings, I felt inclined, for both our sakes, to see exactly where he weighed in emotionally on this issue. So I asked him about his reaction to the defeat. My curiosity was even more strongly aroused by the manner in which he shrugged off the loss as having been of no consequence. I then asked if he had happened to remember a dream following the game. He had. The central image of the dream immediately following his team's crushing defeat depicted a man performing oral sex on him after having been forced to do so by the analysand. The defeat was apparently not taken so lightly after all.

The discrepancy we find here between the conscious and unconscious assessments of the defeat is characteristic of the type of split that in the absence of an analysis of the unconscious most individuals carry with them throughout their lives. Essentially, it is a split between an ideal to which one aspires and wrongly imagines oneself to live and that to which Jungian psychology refers as the *shadow*. The shadow is the unknown, often inferior side of the personality. We might also think of it as something of a reservoir in which the complexes reside. Now in this particular instance the ideal that the analysand sought to uphold and ultimately transmit to his players held that in sport what is most important is not whether one wins or loses, but rather *how* the game itself is played. His shadow, however, as his dream indicated, saw things much differently. For its part, it resented its defeat. It wanted to win and dominate, nothing less.

Ideals do not always point us in the right direction, but even when they do, as I feel this one does, their shortcoming is that in themselves they have nothing to offer us when it comes down to the problem of how we

are actually going to find the correct way to our intended goal. All too often in the pursuit of an ideal one has only personal will at one's disposal, and that alone can never properly carry one forward. To truly develop and achieve genuine personality change, both conscious and unconscious factors must become part of the transformative process. Otherwise the resultant "change" will be no more than an illusion.

Certainly will may succeed in keeping the destructive power drives of the shadow from erupting directly in connection with the presenting incident, as was true of this analysand's experience when it came to the actual sporting event, but this is never the end of them. What usually happens with these power drives is that they later find their way into one's life with no less force and destructive consequence through some unrelated incident, thus avoiding conscious detection and censor. Specifically, one may be sufficiently willful to keep oneself from exploding over the game as such, but unrestrained anger may erupt shortly afterward in connection with another problem. Perhaps as a consequence of the slightest of tensions with a family member or with someone at one's place of work. Much as the most devastating blow in combat is the one that is never seen, here the shadow's secretive blow will be the one that knocks consciousness out entirely.

The art of defending oneself as well as those individuals in one's life against such unseen blows of the shadow is certainly, at least in part, exactly what the compensatory tracking of psychic dynamics is about. It is about detecting what was before undetectable. It is about seeing connections between events that previously appeared to be entirely unrelated. In the absence of such insight, the individual assumes he possesses what he does not. In the absence of such insight, the individual assumes she lives something she does not. In complete contrast, then, to the path of will, the compensatory workings of the psyche makes genuine progress possible because it places before us the complete pictures of our psychological predicaments, conscious and unconscious. It shows us, not simply how things appear on the surface, but rather how things really exist in terms of the conscious and unconscious dynamics of the psyche in its entirety. Only when we have such critical information in hand—only as we begin to unfold, through the compensatory workings of the psyche, the comprehensive blueprints of our psychic lives—can we track with absolute clarity the manner in which our psychic energy comes and goes, and develop the type of informed resolve that characterizes genuine and comprehensive forward progress.

But what comes of all this compensatory activity, I am often asked especially in lectures, when an individual has no conscious understanding

of its symbolic meanings? Does an individual benefit in any way from such ongoing compensatory activity in the absence of depth psychological knowledge? The answer to the second question is yes one does to a limited degree.

The dream experience, I would suggest, registers with one in much the same manner as the experience of going through a day will do. Whether or not one can, at its conclusion, recall and understand the events of the day one will not have been untouched by that which one has gone through. Dream symbols similarly influence the behaviors of individuals without the meaning of those symbols ever coming within the range of conscious understanding. For example, an analysand once dreamed that a snake was coming out of a table lamp he had had as a child. When I asked for his associations to this particular table lamp, the analysand explained how as a teenager he had used this lamp as his “microphone” when he was lip-syncing to his Beatles records. Doing this, he added, was incredibly energizing. Now as he was explaining all of this to me it was clear that something was suddenly coming together for him. He then told me that immediately following this dream, which was a week before our analytical session, he had actually begun to listen to music in his living room. This was something he had not done for a long time, perhaps even a few years.

As regards the meaning of the compensatory symbolism of this dream, the snake, as a symbol of the movement of psychic energy, depicted the process of psychic renewal underway in the analysand—a process of renewal, I would add, that called for the activation and movement into life of the analysand’s much neglected feeling side. Music, which is so greatly feeling based, was introduced by the unconscious to launch this process. Especially noteworthy, however, is how in the absence of any conscious intention whatsoever to do so, and as a consequence of nothing other than his actual *experience* of the dream, the analysand was compelled to act in a manner that was entirely in accord with the compensatory direction of the unconscious.

As the above case example indicates, compensatory dream symbols impact on consciousness and behavior, at least to some degree, even in the absence of conscious understanding of their meanings. Having said this, however, it nevertheless remains true that the depth of one’s experience of compensatory symbols will always be proportionate to the degree of consciousness that one is able to bring to bear on their analysis. The more one comprehends, in other words, the greater the potential compensatory benefit.

Now the unconscious, as we have seen, is very thorough and systematic in its presentation of symbols. Accordingly, compensatory meanings are seldom presented in isolation, but rather appear in conjunction with parallel symbolisms. Indeed careful examination of dream symbolism indicated to Jung that the same compensatory meanings pattern themselves out within a single dream or even within a series of dreams, the latter either taking place during the same sleep period or over the course of several sleep periods. A key to interpreting dreams is, therefore, knowing how to identify such patterns so as to verify compensatory meanings contextually. We can take the following dream series as an example.

An analysand dreamed that he visited a martial arts dojo accompanied by a low-functioning boy. Once inside, the boy discovered a vintage guitar, which he began handling. The men who were training at the time in the dojo, the analysand especially noted, were not bothered by the boy doing this. That the men did not stop the boy certainly struck the analysand, even though he wasn't sure exactly why it had done so. I, for my part, was struck with the fact that the analysand had entered the dojo without apparent intention to compete or train. Perhaps, it seemed to me, the dream was depicting the analysand's experience of arrest vis-à-vis his father complex. His father, after all, had been someone with whom the analysand had decided long ago he could not and thus would not compete. The much-esteemed vintage guitar would symbolize, then, his long-held, highly idealized, almost otherworldly feeling for his father. The low-functioning boy, on the other hand, would symbolize the analysand's own rather *unique method of self-defense*, which, having had its beginnings in his noncompetitive relationship with his father gradually came to extend to his relationships with all others. I am referring to the presentation of himself as witless so that others might be caused to pity rather than challenge him.

The analysand resisted this interpretation, and not surprisingly, for I was also not without my own doubts. The interpretation had, after all, been drawn from the more implicit compensatory structure of the dream rather than its explicit content. So, as one should do in such situations, conclusions were not reached and we moved on to the remaining dreams to see if they could shed further light on the problem. I will outline three dreams.

The next dream, which was the following evening, directly picked up on, not only the martial arts theme, but also the analysand's fear of competition. In this dream, the analysand and a friend, who was a skilled martial artist, were training together in the basement of the analysand's home.

In his reflections recorded along with the dream, the analysand specifically noted his feelings of intimidation. He described how the very presence of this more powerful and skilled individual had caused him to hold back and not fully engage the experience at hand. Far more overtly than in the first dream, therefore, in the parallel "dojo" experience of the second dream, the arresting influence of the father complex, especially with regard to competition, very much made its presence known.

The third and fourth dreams that took place the following two evenings carried things even further. In the third dream, the analysand was in an old factory with his wife. At one point, she went into an elevator that went up. He did not follow. Later, as he once again approached that same elevator, its door opened to him automatically when he unknowingly stepped on a sensor on the floor. Yet again, he did not enter it. At this point the entire building went dark.

Typically in dreams, upward movement, such as would occur on an elevator, symbolically depicts the processing of psychic experience into consciousness and life. The analysand's refusal to go up on the elevator, either with his wife or on his own, would symbolize, then, the analysand's choice, and I do emphasize that word in keeping with the dream, to be far less conscious than he is capable of being. The analysand's refusal to go up on the elevator would constitute a choice whose symbolic parallel is to be found, if we were to refer back to the first dream, in the figure of the low-functioning boy. Yes, self-organizing nature would have the analysand claim in no uncertain terms that he had chosen the path of unconsciousness. Yes, self-organizing nature would have the analysand acknowledge that he had chosen to be low functioning. But there was one further point still with which self-organizing nature especially believed it time for the analysand to come to terms. That point being, that as much as one may choose to be low functioning, the one thing over which one will have neither choice nor control is exactly how low functioning one will ultimately become. This was the big cautionary flag of the third dream. When the analysand refused for the second time to go up on the elevator, the whole place, it should be recalled, went completely dark, which is to say consciousness was knocked out entirely.

There is no neutral position in the journey of the soul. Accordingly, when the opportunity exists to go ahead and one chooses not to do so, to all intents and purposes, one is judged by self-organizing nature to be going backward. Such inaction and regression is, from another point of view of self-organizing nature, rather like stealing, for in resisting an opportunity to live more fully one is after all stealing life not only from oneself, but from those with whom one is closest. Not unrelated to this, therefore,

in the fourth and final dream, which was undoubtedly the most disturbing of the series, the analysand's daughter was under the threat of being kidnapped, which is to say, stolen. And we can only imagine that this most frightening of threats presented at this point in the dream series for no reason but to awaken in the analysand a much-needed emotional response to the problem into which he would now be most directly led. I am of course referring to the problem of his father complex. The dream continued as follows.

Fearing that the kidnappers were closing in on him and his daughter, the analysand grabbed her and raced across the street to the residence of an older, "fatherly," as the analysand put it, European gentleman. The European man was not, however, at home. The analysand then fled with his daughter to a parking lot, symbolic yet again of the analysand's tendency to escape into inaction and unconsciousness—his tendency to put himself into park, as it were. The kidnappers, however, persisted. So the analysand and his daughter were forced to take flight yet again. But this time, as the ever-deepening compensatory pattern would have it, the place at which they arrived, the analysand's final place of wished-for refuge turned out to be a sporting goods store. But this was not just *a* sporting goods store; it rather was *the* sporting goods store to which as a child he went with his father when they needed to purchase athletic equipment for him.

In this fourth and final dream, therefore, we are led directly to that of which in all the other dreams we have but intimations. Here we are directly presented with the analysand's problem of looking to the father—as he exists in a highly idealized form—to do the work that he himself must do. Here we see the analysand looking to the father to protect him from that with which he himself must wrestle and come to terms. Firstly, the analysand unsuccessfully sought shelter with the fatherly, European man. Secondly, the analysand sought refuge in the sporting goods store of his childhood. Clearly no other store or location would link the analysand so directly with his father. Clearly no other location was of such import to the dynamics of the analysand's father complex. It was, after all, the athletic tension that existed between the analysand and his father that was at the very core of the complex. It was, after all, the analysand's experience of inferiority vis-à-vis his father's athletic talents that had once and for all led him to renounce, or perhaps more accurately still, never properly take up as his own, the challenges of life, much as was true of the low-functioning boy who could but cling to the vintage guitar as the competition of life so energetically unfolded around him.

Essential, therefore, to the development of accurate dream interpretation is learning to read and verify compensatory meanings contextually. Compensatory themes seldom appear in isolation; rather they more often pattern themselves out. Sometimes we observe such patterning in single dreams, as was true of the fourth dream with the twice-repeated theme of taking refuge in the idealized father. Sometimes we see such patterning occurring in dreams extending over several sleep periods, much as was evidenced by the symbolic interconnectedness of the four dreams. And, finally, as we will now see, we can also discover such compensatory patterning in dreams that extend over years, even a lifetime.

Through his study of self-regulatory dynamics, Jung observed that not only was the psyche capable of maintaining its own equilibrium in meeting the day-to-day needs of the individual, but that it was at the same time capable of facilitating what we could very well characterize as its own self-realization, what Jung termed its *individuation*. "At first it seems," Jung writes with reference to the self-regulatory activities of the psyche, "that each compensation is a momentary . . . equalization of disturbed balance. But with deeper insight and experience, these apparently separate acts of compensation arrange themselves into a kind of plan. They seem to hang together and in the deepest sense to be subordinated to a common goal. . . . I have called this unconscious process spontaneously expressing itself in the symbolism of a long dream-series the individuation process."⁶

The drive toward individuation, which Jung came to regard as an innate drive of the self-regulating psyche, was the same drive, he also believed, which from time immemorial has found expression in the religious traditions of the world in the form of a quest for self-knowledge and/or knowledge of God. Accordingly, not wishing to rule out either possibility, we find it to be the case that both prospects are intended by Jung's theoretical designation of the *self* as the goal of the individuation process.⁷ The subtle but nonetheless serious problems attending Jung's theoretical ambiguity on this matter will be examined later in this work.

Now although the unconscious is relentless in its efforts to lead us along the path of individuation, with or without our conscious cooperation, our actual progress is still very much reliant on the degree of our conscious participation in this process. The individuation journey, we might picture by way of a metaphor, is rather like being presented with a highly specialized book that one is entrusted to read. If one were to read this book having no knowledge whatsoever of its subject one would no doubt learn at least something from it. If one were to complement one's reading of the book with relevant formal theoretical and practical schooling one would

be all the further ahead. One's comprehension of the book's contents, we can just say, would ultimately be proportionate to the consciousness one brings to bear on that work, nothing more nothing less. One's comprehension of the compensatory workings of the unconscious is no different. But here is where the analogy must be extended, for what we additionally need to understand is that in that the book to which we refer is indeed the book of our soul journey, unlike all other books it is incumbent on us to read and reread this book, if necessary, until we fully comprehend its contents. When it comes to the book of our soul journey as revealed through self-organizing dynamics, therefore, the only question is not whether we are going to read and comprehend this great work, but rather how long it is going to take us to do so.

In spite of all of our conscious inclinations to the contrary, the individuation process firmly holds us to a specific developmental agenda. When, for instance, an analysis withdraws from analysis prematurely after having failed to take up that which he or she has been challenged by the unconscious to address, it will often happen that if that same individual is to return to the analysis, perhaps some three years later, as productive as life may have been in the interim, if ground has not been gained on the critical analytical problem, the individual's dreams will pick up exactly where they left off. The unconscious is that type of taskmaster. No pages, we should understand, will be skipped when it comes to the great book of our soul journey.

Jung describes a man who once came to him not as a patient, he was quick to assure Jung, but as someone interested in analysis from a literary perspective. "He admitted," Jung writes, "it must be very boring for me to have to do with a normal person, since I must certainly find 'mad' people much more interesting." Jung then came to the subject of dreams, and asked this man if he had remembered his dream from the night prior to their consultation. The gentleman confirmed that he had and told Jung the following: "I was in a bare room. A sort of nurse received me, and wanted me to sit at a table on which stood a bottle of fermented milk, which I was supposed to drink. I wanted to go to Dr. Jung but the nurse told me that I was in a hospital and that Dr. Jung had no time to receive me."⁸ The man's associations to the dream, Jung goes on to explain, were critical. The fermented milk, the gentleman told Jung, was a "nauseating" practice of his wife's done to promote her good health. Something, he further related, that he himself had had to take while in a sanatorium during a time in which, as he put it, his "nerves were not so good." Here, Jung relates: "I interrupted him with the indiscreet question: had his neurosis en-

tirely disappeared since then? He tried to worm out of it, but finally had to admit that he still had his neurosis, and that actually his wife had for a long time been urging him to consult me."⁹

The idea that our psychic development is directed along specific lines is certainly no more improbable than the widely held assumption that a genetic blueprint determines not only much of who we are, but no less who we are to become. In both cases there exists the notion of a developmental pattern that is preset. There is, however, a significant difference between the two. With individuation, in contrast to the genetic model, developmental progress is subject to the degree of consciousness one brings to the work. Accordingly, if the consciousness factor is completely neglected the developmental process of individuation will grind to a halt; on the other hand, if the individuation process is engaged with the discriminating consciousness of a good analysis, developmental advances will indeed occur in the form of what Stanley Hall describes as a process of "quickenened maturation."¹⁰

Of course to some individuals all of this just doesn't seem fair, or perhaps even natural. After all, as I am often asked when lecturing on the psychology of the unconscious: "If the dreams with which one is presented are one's *own* dreams, why cannot one understand these dreams perfectly well oneself?" "Why is an analysis necessary?" Now although the asking of this question usually belies a problem in its own right, that is to say, the ego's desire to control the show, I simply tend to respond with a question of my own. "Why," I myself ask, "is it the case that few individuals would imagine themselves equipped to deal unassisted with all or even most of their medical needs even though the medical problem is entirely a matter of their *own* bodies?"

The development of an advanced working understanding of the language and modus operandi of the unconscious is a highly specialized training requiring, among other things, years of theoretical study, experience analyzing the dreams of others while under supervision, and most importantly, the analysis of one's own dreams under the direction of an analyst whose own consciousness is commensurate with the analysand's potential. The latter is the *training analysis* of depth psychology—something, as Ellenberger notes, that was first advanced by Jung and also accepted by Freud as a core component in the training of all analysts.¹¹

Now as much as both Freud and Jung could agree on the necessity of the training analysis, the training analysis certainly did not take the same form in both schools. This is not particularly surprising given their contrasting views of the psyche and its workings. In the Jungian system, the training analysis became not only that through which the future analyst

would acquire knowledge of hidden personality traits that could interfere with the therapeutic process, but also, moving beyond Freudian conflict-model assumptions, it no less became the means through which one would learn the art of engaging the sublime, transformative workings of the self-regulating psyche itself. By putting his or her hand to the work of the training analysis, the future Jungian analyst, perhaps most importantly, was meant to acquire an unshakable faith in the self-regulatory process—a faith in the psyche’s ability to support the work of analysis no matter how dark things would become. “You yourself are the instrument. If you are not right,” as thus Jung explains, “how can the patient be made right? If you are not convinced, how can you convince him? You yourself must be the real stuff.”¹²

For Jungians, in its highest form, the training analysis would be the means through which future analysts would descend into, suffer through, and ultimately be renewed by the transformative fire of creative illness. This was how their therapeutic art was to be transmitted, and entirely consistent with this it came very much to be held by Jungians that one’s grasp of their art would always be proportionate to the intensity of the transformative fire of the inner journey of one’s training analysis. “Jung,” as Ellenberger himself writes with reference to this same point, “promoted the training analysis, and Freudians accepted it for didactic value, but the Jungian school later came to consider it as being a kind of initiatory malady comparable to that of the shaman.”¹³

First Principle of the Syndetic Paradigm

The self-regulation of the psyche is a manifestation of the compensatory interaction between, not simply the conscious and the unconscious, but rather consciousness and nature in its entirety.

The theoretical progression from a *conflict model* of the psyche to a *self-regulatory model* is that which most significantly distinguishes the Jungian Paradigm from its Freudian predecessor. What distinguishes the Syndetic Paradigm from the Jungian Paradigm, on the other hand, is its operationalization of a self-regulatory model that extends beyond the intrapsychic to encompass nature in its entirety.

Paradigm shifts, as explained, almost always take the form of non-cumulative departures from their theoretical predecessors. This is because paradigms, far from being receptive to the transformative influences of new facts, tend to force such facts to conform to their own well-established assumptions. Paradigms dictate the interpretation of facts; facts seldom dictate the reinterpretation of paradigms. Paradigms devour facts which

are anomalous, and with them their attendant implications. Accordingly, even though Jung was led to observe through his study of synchronistic phenomena numerous facts, which, as we can now understand, carried profound implications for his psychology and its paradigmatic assumptions, the impact of these facts on his theoretical model was at best minimal. More specifically, the profound theoretical implications of Jung's synchronistic findings were simply lost to the limitations of the strictly intrapsychic paradigm in which his psychology functioned.

We should, therefore, distinguish the respective theoretical positions of the Jungian Paradigm and Syndetic Paradigm on the question of self-regulation by way of the following summation. Whereas the existence of an ongoing, compensatory interaction between consciousness and nature in its entirety is fundamental to the Syndetic Paradigm and as such fully operationalized, in the Jungian Paradigm, even though such a notion was implicit to Jung's thinking about synchronistic phenomena, given the limitations of the Jungian Paradigm's strictly intrapsychic, self-regulatory model its operationalization was precluded, as the one-dimensionality of Jung's synchronistic case examples more than evidences. Yes, Jung reached beyond Freud's conflict model to discover the psyche's self-regulating capability, but what Jung was unable to realize in keeping with his synchronistic facts was the much-called-for paradigmatic shift from a *closed-system model of a self-regulating psyche to an open-system model of a psyche in a self-regulating totality*. This constitutes the critical theoretical shift of the Syndetic Paradigm—a shift, as we will see, that not only affords us the means to receive and reassess Jung's synchronistic facts, but leads us, moreover, much as Jung himself was led to do in moving beyond Freud's model, to reassess in their entirety the facts of the Syndetic Paradigm's own theoretical predecessor, that is to say, to reassess in their entirety the facts of the Jungian Paradigm itself.

In contrast to the mechanistic Newtonian worldview in which the nature of phenomenal reality is understood to consist of solid objects moving in empty space—an understanding with which our sense organs would not have us disagree—the understanding presented to us by modern physics is that of a world which ultimately constitutes a dynamic, inseparable whole. No doubt as a consequence of this unveiling on the part of modern physics of the ultimate dynamic interconnectivity of phenomenal reality, science, more generally, has been led to include in its approach to the problem of nature a perspective that is not at all incommensurable with that reached by Chinese civilization centuries ago. Quite specifically, what has occurred in science by way of these discoveries of the dynamic

interconnectivity of all of life is a shift from an otherwise exclusive preoccupation with the *part* toward what Marcel Granet termed with reference to the traditional Chinese worldview *thinking in terms of the whole*.¹⁴

Now of the various new developments in science that have occurred as a result of this critical shift from the *part* to the *whole*, one of the most striking initiatives as regards our concerns, given its direct as opposed to analogous connection to the Syndetic Paradigm, is the appearance of *complexity theory*.

In the mid-1980s a group of leading scientists in the United States—among whom were two Nobel laureates in physics, Murray Gell-Mann and Philip Anderson, and one laureate in economics, Kenneth Arrow—came together in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to establish an interdisciplinary research center for the study of complexity theory.¹⁵ Under the auspices of what is simply known as the Santa Fe Institute a unique collection of scientists of diverse expertise was assembled, some of whom, it should be noted, arrived by way of their study of *chaos theory*,¹⁶ complexity theory's scientific precursor. What they certainly didn't share was a common scientific background. What they did share, however, was a belief that they were, as M. Mitchell Waldrop puts it, "forging the first rigorous alternative to the kind of linear, reductionistic thinking that has dominated science since the time of Newton—and that has now gone about as far as it can go in addressing the problems of our modern world."¹⁷

Although the Santa Fe Institute is a private research center, its proximity to the government-sponsored Los Alamos National Laboratory is not without significance. Los Alamos, although readily associated with the development of the atomic bomb, nonetheless came to acquire, as Roger Lewin explains, "deep expertise in nonlinear systems analysis." It was, accordingly, as an outcome of a good many lunchtime discussions at Los Alamos involving key members of that scientific community that the Santa Fe Institute came into being.¹⁸ Commenting on the general research orientation of the Institute, George A. Cowan, former director of research at Los Alamos and first president of the Santa Fe Institute, reflects:

"The royal road to a Nobel Prize has generally been through the reductionist approach" . . . dissecting the world into the smallest and simplest pieces you can. "You look for the solution of some more or less idealized set of problems, somewhat divorced from the real world, and constrained sufficiently so that you can find a solution. . . . And that leads to more and more fragmentation of science. Whereas the real world demands—though I hate the word—a more

holistic approach." Everything affects everything else, and you have to understand that whole web of connections. . . . In part because of their computer simulations, and in part because of new mathematical insights, physicists had begun to realize by the early 1980s that a lot of messy, complicated systems could be described by a powerful theory known as "nonlinear dynamics." And in the process, they had been forced to face up to a disconcerting fact: the whole really can be greater than the sum of its parts.

. . . It was disconcerting for the physicists only because they had spent the past 300 years having a love affair with linear systems—in which the whole is precisely *equal* to the sum of its parts.¹⁹

If the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts, that is to say, the parts are ultimately in service of something other than the linear, mechanistic causal relationships that exist between them, what then, one certainly needs to know, is the whole in service of? It is this very problem that led individuals like Doyne Farmer, head of the Complex Systems group in Los Alamos theory division,²⁰ to attempt to step beyond chaos theory which, in his opinion, did not address this question. Chaos theory, Waldrop writes about Farmer's position, "told you a lot about how certain simple rules of behavior could give rise to astonishingly complicated dynamics. But despite all the beautiful pictures of fractals and such, chaos theory actually had very little to say about the fundamental principles of living systems or of evolution. It didn't explain how systems starting out in a state of random nothingness could then organize themselves into complex wholes. Most important, it didn't answer his old question about the inexorable growth of order and structure in the universe."²¹

That the process we call life is an inexorable outcome of the universe's own implicit order and structure is a paradigmatic assumption at the very heart of complexity theory. Complexity theory, its adherents thus anticipate, will one day lead to the discovery of a new scientific law which will be the "counterpart," as Farmer suggests, "of the second law of thermodynamics," which is to say, the tendency of a system toward disorder and decay.²² Such a law, Farmer continues, "would describe the tendency of matter to organize itself, and that would predict the general properties of organization we'd expect to see in the universe."²³ The technical phrase used by complexity theorists to describe this nonlinear dynamic is the *edge of chaos*. In complexity theory the edge of chaos is the point where, as Waldrop explains, "the components of a system never quite lock into place, and yet never quite dissolve into turbulence, either. The edge of chaos is where life has enough stability to sustain itself and enough creativity to

deserve the name of life."²⁴ Similarly, Lewin writes with reference to the edge of chaos that it "has become iconic for the immanent creativity of complex systems."²⁵

Whether we are talking about economic, political, biological, or ecological systems, whether we are talking about evolution or the functioning of the psyche, nature, complexity theory tells us, does not move inexorably to decay and disorder, neither is it ultimately governed by mechanistic dynamics, nor is it a product of randomly generated outcomes; rather, nature, complexity theory would have us understand, is a process governed by what complexity theorists describe as *spontaneous self-organization*.²⁶ And it is here that complexity theory directly aligns with the Syndetic Paradigm's concept of the self-regulating or self-organizing totality.

Now so as not in any way to lose sight of the significance of the critical point at which we have just arrived, I wish to review some of what we have already covered before proceeding further.

As we have seen, the unparalleled contribution of Jungian psychology was its discovery of the self-regulating psyche. Through the compensatory symbolism of the unconscious, consciousness is thus not only supported and balanced in relationship to the challenges of everyday life, but it is no less directed with respect to the realization of the personality's long-term developmental objectives. The latter is what Jung had in mind in speaking of the individuation process. Fundamental to the Jungian Paradigm, then, is the idea that there exists in each individual an *innate developmental pattern or order* which the self-regulating psyche works inexorably to bring to consciousness. The psyche, we could equally say in placing things in direct alignment with the terminology of complexity theory, spontaneously self-organizes along these developmental lines.

Clearly this discovery in itself constituted a remarkable step forward in psychology, yet the next step, which the Jungian Paradigm to some degree anticipated with its synchronicity theory yet never took, is even more remarkable, for the next step has to do with the operationalization of a theoretical model in which the psyche is understood to be coextensive with a totality that is as innately ordered and self-regulated as Jung came to regard the psyche itself to be. This, of course, is the critical theoretical step of the Syndetic Paradigm—a theoretical step, which, among other things, strikingly parallels the research interests and findings of complexity theory.

Nature, complexity theorists tell us, is an inherently ordered system capable of spontaneous self-organization. Stuart Kauffman, for instance, a

scientist studying evolution at the Santa Fe Institute, argues that there “simply was not world enough and time for chance” to have created life as it exists today.²⁷ “To make a single protein molecule, for example,” Waldrop writes with reference to Kauffman’s position,

you might have to chain together several hundred amino-acid building blocks in a precise order. That’s hard enough to do in a modern laboratory, where you have access to all the latest tools of biotechnology. So how could such a thing form all by itself in a pond? Lots of people had tried to calculate the odds of that happening, and their answers always came out pretty much the same: if the formation were truly random, you would have to wait far longer than the lifetime of the universe to produce even *one* useful protein molecule, much less all the myriads of proteins and sugars and lipids and nucleic acids that you need to make a fully functioning cell.²⁸

Because random mutations and natural selection could not possibly account for life as it exists today, given factors such as the above, Kauffman began to question if it were the case that *order* exists of itself in nature to the extent that that process which we describe as evolution might prove to be but an unfolding of nature’s innate order. “If that was the case, he reasoned,” as Waldrop explains, “then this spontaneous, self-organizing property of life would be the flip side of natural selection. The precise genetic details of any given organism would be a product of random mutations and natural selection working just as Darwin had described them. But the organization of life itself, the order, would be deeper and more fundamental. It would arise purely from the structure of the network, not the details.”²⁹ This is not unlike, I would note, what we see with outward compensatory patternings where although the events of the respective compensatory patterns have their own causal chains their ultimate placement and meaning in the patterns in question is expressive of a deeper order. Here causal chains ultimately function in service of the deeper, unfolding compensatory order of the whole. The emerging *whole* is thus in such instances very much more than the sum of its parts.

The idea that nature is innately ordered and that that orderedness reveals itself not only to us intrapsychically, as Jung came to understand so well, but no less in the outward patterning of events, places us on a new frontier that is equivalent in magnitude to the discovery of the unconscious itself. Here we are taken into compensatory intricacies not ventured into before, for far from simply being about the psyche mirroring outward

compensatory processes, we see the so-called inner and the outer worlds interactively conjoined in dynamic process. Compensatory dynamics, in this regard, not being limited to, for instance, the intrapsychic factors A, B, C, & D simply paralleling the outward pattern A, B, C, & D, will also include processes in which the intrapsychic factors A, B, & D will meaningfully interact with, and indeed only find completion through, the outwardly patterned C. Of course the implications of all of this for the study of consciousness are enormous, as Norman Packard, one of the outstanding scientists at the Sante Fe Institute, has himself acknowledged. When asked by Lewin how exactly he foresaw complexity theory contributing to the study of consciousness, Packard responded:

The way I see the science is that it's concerned with information processing throughout the entire biosphere; information processing is central to the way the biosphere evolves and operates. Consciousness is just one part of that larger puzzle, and it's important to remember that. Most studies of consciousness focus just on the phenomenon itself, and that's solipsistic. I'm not saying that's invalid, but you asked what unique contribution the science of Complexity could bring to the endeavor, and that is to place consciousness into the larger puzzle of information processing in the biosphere.³⁰

The clinical ramifications of “[placing] consciousness in the larger puzzle of information processing in the biosphere,” which is to say in our terms, of making the paradigmatic shift from a *closed-system model of a self-regulating psyche* to an *open-system model of the psyche in a self-organizing totality* are very great indeed. Most striking of all perhaps is the called-for reassessment of traditional notions of *transference* and *countertransference*.

Transference and *countertransference* are technical terms used to describe the operation of *projection* in the therapeutic relationship from analysand to analyst in the case of transference, and from analyst to analysand in the case of countertransference. Projection itself is a psychological mechanism by which an individual's own experience is unconsciously assigned to another, which is to say, unknowingly and unconditionally. An individual who had been ill-treated in a previous relationship would be prone, for example, to *project* that experience of ill-treatment on subsequent intimate relationships, especially if the injury inflicted by the initial relationship was never addressed therapeutically. The disturbing bottom line in all of this is that such an individual could very well wrongly

conclude by way of projection that his or her new partner is of the same abusive character as the first one. Of course such an unfounded conclusion would be devastating to a relationship of otherwise good potential.

As therapeutic tools, then, transference and countertransference warrant special attention. But they do so, not because, as is erroneously imagined, the dynamics of projection are unique to the analytical process. Nor is it because, as is no less erroneously imagined, transference and countertransference dynamics present in the analytical process with a greater intensity and frequency than they do elsewhere. Rather, it is because the therapeutic process, if it is to be at all deserving of such a designation, must uncompromisingly concern itself with the bringing of such unconscious contents to consciousness. Projection is not unique to the therapeutic process either in terms of intensity or frequency; rather the therapeutic process by its very definition is simply called upon to deal with the contents and dynamics of projection more technically.

Those who imagine otherwise, it seems to me, have most certainly lost sight of what comes out of people when, for example, they end up in court while moving through separation and divorce. Former partners, who not only swore their lives to each other before God, but went on as a couple to bring children into this world, can do some pretty terrible things to each other when acting out of projection. And cannot things similarly end up on the rocks between those who once were the closest of friends? Projection does not have to be therapeutically “tricked” out of people to go out of control. Transference, Jung himself accordingly writes with reference to the dynamics of everyday projection, “is a phenomenon that can take place quite apart from any treatment, and is moreover a very frequent natural occurrence. Indeed, in any human relationship that is at all intimate, certain transference phenomena will almost always operate as helpful or disturbing factors.”³¹

Why then, we should ask, do the dynamics of transference and countertransference continue to be wrongly elevated both within and outside of therapeutic circles to an almost magical status? Three influences come to mind. Firstly, would be the simplistic notions of power and authority that have come to be so fully entrenched in the group or *collective consciousness* of our culture. Secondly, would be the now widespread fear in our culture of intimate relationship itself—a fear that would cause an elementary school teacher to avoid the potential repercussions of physically comforting a crying child in need of such support. Thirdly, yet certainly not of least importance as it remains the most enduring factor of the three, would be that yet unchallenged, almost universally held core paradigmatic assumption of psychotherapists that the interpersonal dynamic