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JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVES ON POWER AND LEADERSHIP IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

At a time when our world is faced with destruction from many sides, our psychological knowledge, experience and attitudes may be potent resources to help us meet and hopefully transform these threats. In this lecture I look at some points where Jungian psychology can and should be developed for this purpose. I have chosen to focus on our attitude towards power and groups and the new challenges of leadership in a globalized world.

With the experiential warm-up exercise at the beginning, I aimed to stimulate the associations and feelings of those present in a playful way. I hope that, as a reader, you will enjoy it too. You will see that I use the outcomes of this exercise later to introduce the main topics of the lecture.

WARM UP EXERCISE

With this short exercise I would like to give you an opportunity to make a personal contact with the themes of this lecture and to experience more about us as a group here today. Just sit comfortably and relax for a moment, feel your body and close your eyes if you want. I will give you three little tasks.

1. The first is a question: what is your first association when I say “power“?
2. Please put your hands in front of you. Think of leadership and express what “leadership“ means to you in the moment with a movement or a gesture of one or both of your hands.
3. What picture do you see when I say “globalization“?

If you like, please take short notes or make a sketch of your findings. We will come back to them later.

A DOOR OPENING

I first met Dr. Arnold Mindell during my studies at the C.G. Jung-Institute in Küsnacht, Switzerland. I experienced him as an inspiring analyst and a passionate researcher who had an almost never-ending curiosity and energy, which somehow reminded me a bit of Jung himself. In particular, it was his attitude and spirit which fascinated me. During my studies and since, I went over many edges to learn the new methods which Mindell and his colleagues have developed over the years. While building up my private practice in Zürich, I stayed in contact with his work in the United States and around the world. Increasingly I began to include what I had learned from Mindell in my own work and teaching.

My experiences of studying the field which Mindell calls “Worldwork” as well as my own experiences of private practice in an outlying district of Zürich, convinced me that the Jungian Psychology I had studied can and should be developed further in order to meet the challenges of our time and, that there are ways to do this.

I have chosen to discuss some perspectives on power and leadership because these two subjects are so crucial for our own personal development and that of our communities.

My lecture is, on the one hand, based on Mindell's research and my own experiences with Process Work and, on the other hand, on my love for and commitment to Jungian Psychology, which anyway underlies all that I present here today.

The interviews Jung gave in the last 5 years of his life have always touched me. They emphasize his deep concern about the future of humanity as well as his passionate efforts to find and reach a public willing to listen and to understand him.

In the "Face to Face" interview in 1959 he says:

One thing is sure. A great change of our psychological attitude is imminent.. That is certain ... we need more psychology. We need more understanding of human nature, because the only real danger that exists is man himself.¹

In the Huston Films from 1957, Jung talks about the Self, the totality of the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche and about our potential:

The whole personality of man is indescribable. His consciousness can be described, his unconscious cannot be described ... we don't know our unconscious personality ... Nobody can say where man ends. That is the beauty of it, you know; it's very interesting. The unconscious of man can reach God knows where. There we are going to make discoveries.²

I have always seen these sentences as a door-opener for the new developments to come which I will discuss more as we move on to the subject of "globalization".

GLOBALIZATION

What picture did you see when I said the word “globalization” earlier? When I prepared and tested the exercise with some friends, I found that what came up for them were highly symbolic pictures of the Self. Most people in the group saw the globe, others saw a net, a tree, a big (human) being, a group of human beings. As we move on to consider Jung’s work, it is also interesting, that he never saw a photograph of our planet as seen from outer space.

Even if Jung was not himself confronted with the phenomenon, the symbolic images which come up in us today when we think of globalization can be found in his work and later reflections: the Unus Mundus, the Mandala and the Archetype of the Anthropos, which he brought together with the symbol of the coming astrological age of Aquarius represented as a huge human figure pouring water from a pitcher.

Towards the end of his life, Jung studied these symbols thoroughly and recognized that they would be crucial for understanding the coming time and its psychology. His statements on Aquarius and on the Anthropos lead us to think that he also foresaw that the population of our planet would become increasingly interconnected—in one big body as it is expressed in the symbol of the Anthropos and the Aquarius—in a “globalized world” as we say today.

The quote about the Self cited above: “nobody can say where man ends” and Jung’s findings about the structure of the psyche as an interdependent system with self-regulating qualities has interesting parallels with current research and knowledge about the theory of systems and fields. We know how important the practical applications of these theories are for today’s world, be it in psychology, sociology or in the natural sciences and technology.

To actually work with the “big man”, the interconnected Anthropos will require us to further develop field and collective aspects of Jungian Psychology. Already in the last decades of the 20th century, analysts around the world have begun to work on this

challenging task. The rich diversity among these colleagues is itself important and necessary and will hopefully develop even more.

After these considerations let us now move on to look at power.

POWER

What was your first association when I asked about “power”?

In the lecture we looked more closely at what I called the “emotional spectrum” of the associations to power reaching from negative-evil (“Hitler”), to pure potential (“electricity”) and positive-empowering (“Lamborghini“.)

My impression is, that generally power has a bad reputation among Jungians: we all know clearly judgmental terms with negative connotations like “power complex”, “power shadow“ or “power-ridden“ and also warnings about getting possessed and inflated around power.

There are many good reasons to mistrust power and to be afraid of its misuse, but our attitude towards power still concerns me. I think that many of us are not really picking up and using the power we have. Therefore I will discuss the question of how Jungian psychology could be further developed around attitudes towards power. One focus will be on the fear of mass psychology, and the second, on the need for more self-knowledge around power.

1. Fear of „mass-psychology“

During his lifetime Jung saw two world wars. It is understandable that this experience deeply shocked and frightened him and, that he warned against what he called mass- or mob-psychology or collective psychosis. But it is evident that today we need to also study and develop skills to work with the psychology of bigger groups.

The question is: what can be done if groups and especially big groups are under emotional stress, feel threatened or ecstatic and get into a collective complex, into an altered state, which can also be described as a “possessed” state, an experience which is beyond of the ordinary ego state of the group’s members?

One of the dreams I had when preparing this lecture was, that I should take up a practical training job in the biggest stadium in Zürich (the Hallenstadion). It made me assume that there is still a lot to learn and train!

One important possibility we have, which has proved helpful when groups are under stress, is to bring in as many participants as possible who are familiar with their own states of consciousness arising when they are confronted with collective altered states. If we can train ourselves and those around us to get to know our own altered states of consciousness in group settings, we will be potential helpers for any group of which we are part. We will hopefully be less afraid of our own altered states and those of others and more able to support fellow group members and groups as a whole to first de-escalate and then go deeper into emerging issues.

It is to be recommended for any group to develop an open attitude towards altered states, not pathologizing or suppressing strong feelings and unusual behaviors more than absolutely necessary. We can even support such states and welcome them as harbingers of emerging group issues. I still remember how I started to learn about this: at a party at the end of a seminar one male participant started to dance like a ballerina in an ecstatic and, for us, weird looking state which frightened and paralyzed all of us. After a short moment of shock my colleague, Max Schüpbach, started to join the ballerina dance in a heartfelt and playful way. Soon, the whole room was full of ballerinas who had a lot of fun and everybody relaxed. If we can befriend a certain diversity of states, the general atmosphere in groups gets more fluid and inclusive supporting the group itself and individuals within it to grow.

Jung's courage to study diverse states of consciousness and to question the psychiatric belief systems of his time provides us with a good model for open, unprejudiced study and research of the psychological dynamics of big groups in our own time.

2. Self-knowledge around power and accessing the potential of power

Our attitude towards power has a lot to do with our personal, familial and social history and, even among well educated people, tends to be surprisingly unconscious and unconsidered. It is for this reason that colleagues, like Andrew Samuels, insist on exploring the social history in analysis—our childhood patterns of power so to say—as an important part of the development of the personality.³

Almost everybody tends to marginalize their personal power and prefers, in certain moments, to stay in the so called “victim position”. If you have ever worked with couples, or if you look at your own relationships, you will know this phenomenon. It is a chronic issue, which causes much pain and hopelessness. Of course we can look at this dynamic as projective, but I often ask myself: why do I, why do we project power on to others? Is it so painful to have power?

I don't want to go deeper into this here, but, to continue with the theme of my lecture.

The confrontation with painful, sometimes even devastating experiences and memories and the loss of perception of and access to personal power and potential brings many clients to psychotherapy. In private practice we have options and tools to work with such situations, especially with a Jungian attitude of picking up unconscious material and finding contact with the healing powers of the Self. But there are many situations where individual sessions are not available or where group work may be needed first. For people who live in traumatized communities, these dynamics demand a new approach working with individuals, sub-groups and the group as a whole as appropriate to complement individual sessions.

In order to show you such a setting and its effects, here an example of a workshop held by my colleagues, Arlene Audergon and Lane Arye, in a United Nations High Commission for Refugees project in the former Yugoslavia. They describe in an article, how they first had to work with the group on what they called a “chilling fog coming up and silencing everybody”, whenever the war was mentioned. Only after working on the

dynamics creating this silence and fog could the participants go further, listen to each other and go deeper into their feelings and issues. When the group returned for the next meeting, a young woman told the leaders, that listening to the other participants and working in her small group had enabled her to overcome her feeling of helplessness and to take responsibility and leadership around a planned nuclear waste dump in her town. Step by step she had started to act. Finally she was invited to meet the mayor of the town.

“He told me that he is too small to make a difference. I told him that he is not small. Imagine me, a young woman, telling the mayor that he is not small! Now I feel much more powerful and free, because in spite of all odds, I have changed something in my community and in my head.”⁴

The process of this young woman is not just a story about social activism (which is of course important as well!), but also a story of transformation of consciousness. The fact that she names the change in her community first and only then the change in her head looks to me like a part of the “change of the psychological attitude” Jung foresaw, a change on the Anthropos level so to say.

As in this example groups, as well as individuals, often get stuck in feeling victimized and powerless. They no longer have access to their resources and their communication gets blocked.

One way of helping groups to develop awareness of the dynamics in the background is to work on the archetypal roles in their fields. I use the term “archetypal roles” in order to describe patterns which structure groups around certain issues and which can be found empirically in every group. If these roles are worked on—and if all parts of the group’s diversity are represented and listened to—groups can develop trust, a sense of connectedness, hope and deep insights.

Here an example of my personal experiences of such a work. In 2008 about 400 people from around the world came together for a Worldwork conference in London. One

morning the group divided into three subgroups to explore issues around trauma, one group using drama, one movement and the other, sound.

The three archetypal roles in the background of trauma are: perpetrator, victim and bystander. This structure is also known as the “trauma triangle”. Even to hear about this structure can be a help to avoid getting stuck in only one role, but to work on it in a group has a bigger and more lasting effect.

I was a participant in the sub-group working with sounds.

Within our subgroup, participants were invited to choose which archetypal role they wanted to represent and explore: perpetrator, victim or bystander. As a privileged person in a multicultural group, I chose to join the “perpetrators”. Each role group was given a different corner in the room. We moved to our own corner to work amongst ourselves.

First we worked individually on finding a sound which expressed what we felt in that role. By and by, all of us in the “perpetrator” role started to make our individual sounds together and, in a next step, to move together as a group. (In this phase I felt locked up in the energy of the “perpetrator” group and started to cry and shout “no” in the middle of the group feeling trapped with no possibility to get out of it. This evoked in me a deep feeling of sadness and compassion for my ancestors who had to go to the battlefield, in the same way having no chance to escape).

Then, the three archetypal role groups “perpetrators”, “victims” and “bystanders” were asked to move towards the center of the room, where they met. One main phenomenon was, that the “bystanders” started to facilitate the relationship between the “perpetrator” and “victim” groups. As the three role-groups met, their sounds began to mix in a texture containing all sounds in the room. Finally, we all found our own places in the middle — with a mixture between meditation and ecstatic feelings taking over —and some participants starting to move in a kind of common dance.

At the end, we were asked to write down what we had been through. As a group, we listened to recordings of the sounds we had made and participants talked about their

experiences. We left with a strong feeling of having been part of a shared experience that had transformed something in us.

This example also shows how important it can be, that groups work—depending on their cultures—on different levels: individual, subgroup and whole group level—as well as in different modalities (sound, movement, body feelings, words) and are open to different states of consciousness (strong feelings, personal memories, dreams, synchronistic incidents).

Yes, there are good reasons not to be naive about groups and to be cautious with them, especially if you try to control them out of fear. But, on the other hand, groups and especially diverse groups have a rich potential to process their issues and to develop their own power to support and share deep feelings.

Let me give you one last example, this time from the Worldwork conference in 2004 in Newport, Oregon, USA. A leaderless subgroup of children of mixed race sat in the middle of the circle of the other seminar participants to work on dialog with their parents. First, they talked about their pain of never fitting in anywhere and shared what they called “the mind fuck of having to change appearance, depending on your environment in order ... to survive.”

The anger and the lack of understanding between the children and their (absent) parents came out. The children cried and yelled at their parents, the pain of not fitting into the prescribed categories, of being “colored outside the lines” was expressed. One member of this subgroup wrote about her process later:

As the “children” sat there, supporting each other, I felt as if the ancestors had returned and were cheering us on. We shared a space, a moment in time, and a glimpse into the future. I found myself asking the “parents”, the “mothers”, to believe in us, to support us for what we could do, for what we didn’t know we could do, but for what we dreamed we could do.⁵

Members of the larger group who had provided the “vessel” for this touching work in their midst, also connected to a deep place that corresponds to the Self, to a place where the ancestors, as well as the future dreams, are contained and became part of a supportive and transforming experience.

LEADERSHIP

Can you make the gesture with your hands again which represented leadership for you?

Based on lecture-participants gestures, several key aspects of leadership were apparent: Eros, spirituality, creating community, creating a vessel, reaching a goal, manipulation, tyranny and greed, leadership energy wanting to be lived, the calling to be a leader in a certain context.

Leadership is an essential role wherever we live together: in every social field leadership gets constellated. Leadership has more fluid aspects that can be shared in everyday life and more institutionalized or political aspects, where one or more people in certain social positions are the designated—or secret—leaders and have more influence than others. (The spectrum of the secret leaders goes from the Mafia to the Jester).

The German word for “leader”—“Führer”—brings up painful associations to Hitler and the Third Reich—so German speakers often avoid using the word, preferring instead to use the English word “leader”. Hitler still represents the diabolic inhuman leader for many of us and his Third Reich the disastrous effects of following such a leader.

The archetypal pictures coming to mind when we think of leadership are numerous: the parents, the teachers, the wise man or woman, Jung’s „Mana-Personality“, the hero, the redeemer, the king or queen, the commander on the battlefield, the CEO in modern companies, political leaders in all kinds of systems. In the archetypal background we see the interaction of two interconnected principles: the Senex (the old one who knows the tradition and stands for continuity and respecting the law) and the Puer (the young one who brings in new ideas, spontaneity, enthusiasm and flexibility).

The world has changed since Jung's lifetime, but still the psychology of people in leadership positions is a highly important and crucial subject. When I prepared this lecture, I especially focussed on how leadership has developed in new directions in our times and brought up new challenges. I studied the autobiographies of four gifted, outstanding leaders of our time: Nelson Mandela, the first president of the new South Africa, the Iranian lawyer Shirin Ebadi, who was the first moslem woman to get the Nobel prize, Wangari Maathai, the founder of the "Green Belt Movement" in Kenya and Barack Obama.

As you see I didn't choose European leaders because I wanted to learn more about the diversity of global leadership. These autobiographies provide a rich insight into what it means to become and to be a leader in an ever more globalized world setting.

People in leading positions today are confronted with demanding inter-cultural tasks and challenges. A shared perspective of these authors is their emphasis on the necessity of change and flexibility, as well as on the necessity to keep contact with cultural values and the traditional background of their people (in a Jungian language we could say between Puer and Senex qualities). Only if our leaders can do that, will we be able to befriend recent developments instead of just hating them or suffering from them.

I will focus momentarily on one of these leaders, Barack Obama, as he is the most recent example and also the one with the most diverse background, being himself a child of globalization. Already as a candidate for the presidential election Obama brought people together in a way that moved many of us. How did he do that?

One important component of this phenomenon was his team's knowledgeable use of the Internet and television, the "blood circulation" of the Anthropos so to say. His most important personal leadership tool is his ability to include very diverse groups of people, naming their diversity when he addresses "the Americans". When doing so he often comments on why he does this (he "talks his walk"!) so that people on the street understand that it is important for their president not to be one-sided and why he can not only support the interests of a single group (for instance of the African Americans).

With such statements Obama is directly working on a change of attitude towards leadership in a very far-reaching way. Such a leader is in charge of the whole community and emphasizes the importance of including everybody as you see in his slogan “yes we can”, which brings new hope for the “us” (vs. “yes I can”).

Obama also incorporates another important characteristic of a leader: he is not only connected to his people in everyday life on the conscious level, but also to their deepest fears, concerns, hopes and longings (on a level of “dreams” and visions) and he challenges them to be part of a shared project on this level.

In the remaining time I want to address the diversity of different styles of leadership. To recognize and support all kinds of leadership-energy when it shows up is, in my experience, a key to growth and hope for groups and individuals. A traditional role in the field of leadership is the elder. As Jung stated, eldership is connected with the Mana as a special kind of spiritual energy. Sometimes the elder even shows up together with the leader:

When Barack Obama visited Prague, the huge square in front of the historical castle was filled with young people bursting with enthusiasm and waving their arms. After Obama’s speech the former Czech president Vaclav Havel came to the microphone and talked in a short address about the difficulties Obama would have to face in the next months and years—and wished him well.

Vaclav Havel represents in this case a perfect example of an elder. If all goes well the elders are just there in the background—old souls who have wisdom and compassion for all parts of the community. But in moments of stress and emergency and also in ritualized contexts, they come forward. When an elder speaks in a group others tend to get quieter and are touched on a very deep level.

Our most famous elder in Switzerland was our national Saint, Niklaus von Flüe. Some of you know Flüeli Ranft, the hermitage where he lived, from a former Odyssey. At a very difficult time in Swiss history in the 15th century, the representatives of the government, who were faced with a conflict which they could not solve alone, sent

messengers to him and asked for his advice which they also accepted and followed.

Bruder Klaus as he is called in Switzerland incorporates the traditional idea of the elder.

But elders are neither always Saints nor always old: eldership can spontaneously arise in a group when it is needed. These elders are sometimes even very young and come forward quite unexpectedly. I am sure that all of you have known such moments when this kind of eldership came up, when somebody said just the right thing helping the group to reconnect with its roots and essence.

In the future—perhaps more than ever—all forms of leadership and eldership will be needed. The conscious attitude and ability to encourage and support leadership on different levels will be ever more important, especially in difficult situations. If groups and communities can learn to recognize and support leadership among their members it will create more flexibility and trust within the group and individuals will feel more related and alive.

Think back for a moment to the example of the young woman in Croatia and to how she could pick up leadership after a time of feeling hopeless. Leadership qualities in young people are very important for the development of each society and should be given space and support. If the leadership-energy of the younger generation has no chance to be lived it might find it's way into gang-leadership and criminal energy, this is a big loss for their communities.

“Only here, in life on earth, where the opposites clash together, can the general level of consciousness be raised,” said Jung in his late talks with Aniela Jaffé.⁶ Jung's solid trust in the potential for growth and transformation of consciousness—in relationship with the unconscious and the unknown—is an encouraging and challenging ground for us to study and develop new ideas and tools for our time. And by doing so we can hopefully also support the power and leadership of those who will come after us.

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- ¹ John Freeman “Face to Face Interview” with C.G.Jung in: C.G. Jung Speaking, Interviews and Encounters, ed. William McGuire and R.F.C. Hull, p. 436.
 - ² Richard Evans “The Huston Films” with C.G.Jung in C.G. Jung Speaking, Interviews and Encounters, ed. William McGuire and R.F.C. Hull, p. 301.
 - ³ Andrew Samuels, “Politics on the Couch? Psychotherapy and Society – some possibilities and some limitations” in: The Politics of Psychotherapy, ed. Nick Totton, (Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006), p. 13.
 - ⁴ Arlene Audergon and Lane Arye, “Transforming conflict into community: post-war reconciliation in Croatia” in: The Politics of Psychotherapy, ed. Nick Totton, (Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006), p. 144
 - ⁵ Jennifer Kleskie, in: Alternative to War: Creative Aftermath of Worldwork 2004, ed. Sara Halprin and Ursula Hohler (Portland OR: Changing World Publications, 2004), pp. 69–70.
 - ⁶ C.G. Jung in: “Memories, Dreams, Reflections”, ed., Aniela Jaffé (London: Fontana Press, 1995), p. 343.