

## **Generational Attention: Remembering How to Be a People**

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### **Fear or Hope: What may guide us to an experience of being a People?<sup>1</sup>**

In his 1919 poem *The Second Coming*, W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) speaks of humanity's falling apart during which a "blood-dimmed tide is loosed" (p.187). Yeats' fearful imagery holds my attention as I look around for the edge of apocalypse. Environmental degradation, economic collapse, social injustice, and the profound lack of belonging that many of us experience: what are we to grasp if Yeats' "center cannot hold"? For much of my life I have prayed for a rising political will to respond to what Yeats refers to as our "widening gyre." I have hoped for political solutions to the hatred, greed, and ignorance of our time.

Yet, despite my fears, I can imagine the possibility of our coming to a fuller recognition that for all our multiple differences, we are of the same species and capable of uniting to establish a just and sustainable human community. Unfortunately, the available imagery for such unity is not necessarily welcoming. Yeats' "*Spiritus Mundi*" sees a being having "A shape with lion body and the head of a man / A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun." While Yeats' may be talking about historical cycles, I see in this image a fear about humanity "waking up" to itself as a single entity. Whether this might happen fearfully as Yeats' image evokes, or challenging fear with courage and hope, imagining humankind as a single being is fairly common. Since the exploration of the natural world in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, we *are* becoming aware of ourselves as a species, individually and culturally diverse, but also singular. And in our singularity, we have imagined some potential for a collective self-consciousness.

I am writing at the interface between Jung's analytical psychology and a range of new research regarding the function of human emotions. The conceptual breadth presented here draws from currents within the humanities, social sciences, and Western culture for the sake of supporting the emergence of what Jeremy Rifkin (2009) refers to as an "empathic civilization" (p. 1). Here I will develop the idea that, despite all of the ways the human project could go wrong, the budding awareness of ourselves as a species is contributing to a new experience of "generational attention," the capacity to simultaneously think about and feel our history as a people in order to consciously direct group attention toward collective action, to address the multiple crises of our time.

On the one hand, generational attention is always emergent. As a group's or a whole people's collective focus, it rises and falls with the events of a time. It rose to meet Hitler and again in the 1960s to meet the Vietnam War and the need for civil rights. On the other hand, by making generational attention a topic of conversation, a subject matter for psychology, we may be capable of engaging it more actively. Political leaders can consciously manipulate generational attention, and psychology has aided their manipulations. But this use of psychology to analyze motivation, whether of leaders or the electorate, is limited. It may be possible to decipher the psychosocial, political, and religious nature of generational attention and use that knowledge to activate the capacity more consciously.

The cultivation of generational attention is the responsibility of the social sciences. However, much of the scientific language regarding our totality as cultures, or simply groups, is too abstract to give us purchase over the cultivation of this capacity. It often focuses on the structures of society without offering us images of its *life*, which is recognized and criticized by Ken Plummer (1983) when he wrote about how "social structure" is given primacy over "human agency," which he argues must be replaced by an understanding of "concrete human experience" and the need to account for both political and moral necessity through a "corrective sociology" (pp. 3-5). While the technical languages of the social sciences have an essential role to play in our understanding of social functioning, their abstraction restricts our ability to sufficiently *feel* our connection to one another or imagine ourselves as a people, not just our national identity or our identification with a baseball team, but to feel what Pierre Teilhard (1963) has called "the sense of the species in man" (p. 197). In the context of 19th- and 20th-century thinking, science's responsibility has primarily been the development of our cognitive understanding of social phenomena, not the cultivation of any particular way of feeling about it. Nevertheless, as I will discuss, this omission of feeling might be symptomatic of the way Western culture has, so far, focused on the differentiation of its cognitive and sensory abilities while deprecating or allowing to remain fallow its imaginative and feeling abilities (Dunlap, 2008, p. 166). If this is the case it may be possible to extend what can be done with social science language, for the sake of helping us connect more to one another and pull in a common direction, helping us to experience, and act in ways that support, our growing humanity. While diversity of thought is to be celebrated, now may be a time to focus our attention together, thus consciously activating the capacity for generational attention.

Our ability to use our sensory and cognitive experience to track and understand the complexities of individual and social experience is powerful but lacks the potency of imagination that is needed to bring us together for the sake of coordinating our response to that complexity. By turning toward Jung's analytical

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psychology, we can find out more about how to engage the imagination. The Jungian communities have been working to establish a sophisticated understanding of the imagination and have largely been successful, at least within a relatively narrow range. A recent paper by Georg Nicolaus (2012) is noteworthy in relationship to this project. Nicolaus asserts that Jung follows Friedrich Schelling's (1775-1854) understanding of the way in which a reflexive consciousness is capable of using the imagination to encounter what he called the "absolute," or what Jung thought of as the idea of the "self" (p. 110). Nicolaus argues that while the modern individualized identity leads to a postmodern dead end, Jung offers a way out by reimagining the Christian God-image. For all of the risks of psychologizing religion that Jung takes, his translating the Christian image of God into something *psychological* begins to trace a path through which the individual can help move the culture toward a more intimate relationship with the numinous, that is, the energies that activate and give positive shape to transformation. The task of entering into a psychological relationship with the numinous can be aided by Jung's naturalistic God-image; it can guide a group or whole people by offering them a conscious experience of thousands of years of their own history. Were such an image to indeed reflect something "absolute," or at least possible, we could follow after it with thought, moving from image to concept. I offer the term of "generational attention" as a conceptual expression of Jung's image. Exploring the reality of such a concept grounds Jung's God-image into something pragmatic, inviting research in order to bring his analytical psychology more into the world.

Through their hyper-focus on the imagination, the Jungian communities have remained largely in cultural eddies, at times seemingly content to stay out of the mainstream, fostering an identity as an esoteric tradition. They propagate their work in professional organizations and universities; but, with growing but few exceptions, they are not turning their attention to the opportunities to apply their understanding of the imagination more publicly. It is beyond the scope of this writing to analyze such circumstances; however, there appears to be a range of new opportunities to take the wisdom of Jung's analytical psychology actively into the centers of our communities. Arianna Huffington (2010) wishes the progressive and liberal organizations were more attentive to the political implications of Jung's understanding of image and archetype. She is concerned that regressive political elements of our society only too readily know how to connect imagery to emotion and to political success. Huffington calls for the cultivation of a more active use of Jung's psychology; and our community might be ready to meet her halfway. Unfortunately, any effort to come out of the shadows and into the glare of public attention is risky. It exposes our limitations.

In his book *Up from scapegoating*, Jungian analyst and organizational consultant Arthur Coleman (1995) discusses some of the limitations of Jungian training institutes, particularly their failure to understand the group dynamics that influence any organization (p. 44). Coleman's solution would be for such organizations to engage in internal practices that support the development of a group's self-awareness. Such development will require attending to the psychosocial, political, and historical function of human emotions, which has been a distinct weakness in these organizations. The Jungian communities are not alone in this regard. Such limitations may actually reflect developmental issues within our culture more broadly, which I trace to our hyper-individualized social ethic and our failure to understand the role of emotion in keeping us connected to one another. Both of these can be traced back to the beginning of the modern era, though the deprecation of emotion also has more recent reinforcement.

The tendency in the 19th and 20th centuries to associate being "rational" with our cognitive capacity to the exclusion of our emotional capacity has led to a failure within psychology, as well as within other social sciences and Western culture, to see the role that emotions play in individual development and cultural transformation and, more specifically, in the conscious development of groups. Once this role is understood, it becomes possible to recognize and support psychosocial trends toward greater emotional intelligence for community leaders, within political and social groups, and, one hopes, within the species itself. In particular, we are living in the right moment for the cultivation of the capacity for what I call "affect freedom," the capacity to draw from a full range of the biological, psychosocial, and religious function of our emotions for the purposes of determining moral experience and taking effective political action. Affect freedom is the capacity of individuals and groups to use their emotions for what they are actually for: to allow people to—

...*assess* (bring value to) their own and their community's needs; *connect* to one another for the purposes of conviviality, celebration, and social and political action; *motivate* and *direct* themselves and others for the purpose of learning, healing, and community engagement. (Dunlap, 2008, p. 15)

The cultivation of affect freedom is often initiated through good psychotherapy as the therapist helps people question social roles with which they have identified. As a result people become more capable of identifying how they actually do feel and what they actually do think and not what they are supposed to think or feel (Steiner, 1975, p. 18). However, for historical reasons I explore elsewhere (Dunlap, 2008, p. 65), the psychotherapy project myopically focuses on the development of our emotions in our private lives. I imagine extending the capacity for affect freedom into our lives as citizens as well, which activates what I think of as a

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“public emotional intelligence” (Dunlap, 2013, p. 59). This extension supports individuals to engage with one another in the manner required to extend the rising empathic civilization and to reconnect to being a species.

We have learned a lot about affects, how they function in similar ways in old and young alike, across cultures, within our history as well as across mammalian species. However, we are just learning how to apply this growing body of knowledge to the task of helping small and medium-sized groups, whether scholarly organizations, training institutes, or social change organizations, to activate a greater sense of a shared identity and purpose (Agazarian, 2004). Much has been said about the role of emotional contagion in groups and whole peoples; but not enough has been said, so far, about the opportunity to connect people together in groups by focusing on the power of emotion to transform individual awareness and group dynamics (Jung, 1939a, para. 225; Coleman, 1995).

Following the creative work of Aftab Omer, we can learn the way in which cultural practices can transform affect into distinct leadership capacities that influence individual, organizational, and community behaviors. By cultivating such practices it is possible to turn the relationship between the individual and her organizations and cultures from passive to active.

According to Omer (2012) culture is made up of habits, norms, rules, and taboos. He states “Cultural Leaders creatively transgress norms, rules, and even taboos, in ways that evoke emotions that have been denied or suppressed.” and further—

When the cultural center of a family, organization, or society fragments, there is a breakdown in the great transmission of human capacities—capacities such as compassion, courage, curiosity, and dignity—that is part of our evolutionary heritage. Recreating a cultural center entails rekindling the sensitivities, interdependencies, reciprocities, and initiations that enable the generational continuity of these capacities. (Omer, 2005, p. 33)

Were the Jungian communities to take up the task of attending to individual and group affect in the name of cultivating a larger group identity, they would be on the forefront of addressing the multiple cultural crises of our time. Drawing from the Jungian communities advanced understanding of the objective function of the imagination, we can begin to imagine a new type of practitioner, one who takes responsibility for supporting the development of a group’s self-awareness. This work is implied by Jung’s naturalistic God-image as it opens a doorway into the possibility that both individuals and whole collectives become self-aware, thus activating their generational attention.

### **Jung’s naturalistic God-image**

While maintaining an Enlightenment sensibility, Jung recognized many of the limitations of this perspective and wanted to address them by recognizing the profound tension between individual and cultural experience and by imagining a science of psychology capable of identifying and working with this tension (Shamdasani, 2003, Kindle location pp. 302, 338-44; Dunlap, 2011, p. 48). In addition to the knowledge of the natural world that science was providing, he imagined that psychology could shine a light into the hidden nature of individual and cultural identities, thus helping gain a degree of conscious control over the destruction wrought by new technologies in the hands of madmen and out-of-control groups. He thought that by developing what his student Joseph Henderson (1984) calls a “psychological attitude,” human beings would gain greater self-awareness as individuals as well as support the development of their moral leadership (Henderson, p. 81; Jung, 1946, para.451). However, try as he might, Jung could not span the fragmenting pieces of human experience. As much as he likely wanted to maintain the Enlightenment identity as a man of learning focused on the totality of human experience, he came to his maturity in the time of the professionalization of the social sciences, each focusing on a separate piece of a fragmenting human community (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1985, p. 299).

In practice Jung was a doctor of psychology, meaning that his primary focus became the practice of psychotherapy, that is, helping the *individual* with her healing and development. Jung’s theories primarily aided the development of more effective *forms of treatment for the individual*. However, Jung’s theorizing extended well beyond these confines. In his efforts to extend psychology he trespassed disciplinary boundaries in both a creative manner recognized by many but also in a way that has led to scorn and dismissal by many of the disciplines he raided (Tacey, 1997, p. 273; Drake, 1967, p. 322). In order to try to understand what motivated Jung it is necessary to see that, despite his commitment to psychotherapy, he did not think that psychology’s only domain was the life of the individual. In fact, Jung (1939b) thought that the psychological attitude, while intrinsically transformative for individuals, could also enhance groups by providing a degree of self-awareness that would enable them to address shared challenges (para. 509). Jung (1936a) may have been suspicious of groups; in them he saw the basest elements of impulsivity acted out in shame-numb anonymity leading to states of mass-mindedness (para. 97-99). Nevertheless, he also wondered whether some larger group awareness was possible, an aspiration we can see in some of his most imaginative writing. Like Yeats, Jung also imagined the species as a whole, but not fearfully, rather with a hope that surpasses many of the wildest fantasies of most Enlightenment thinkers. It is this optimism that drove him to make statements like the following:

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If it were possible to personify the unconscious, we might think of it as a collective human being combining the characteristics of both sexes, transcending youth and age, birth and death, and, from having at its command a human experience of one or two million years, practically immortal. If such a being existed, it would be exalted above all temporal change; the present would mean neither more nor less to it than any year in the hundredth millennium before Christ; it would be a dreamer of age-old dreams and, owing to its limitless experience, an incomparable prognosticator. (Jung, 1931, para. 673)

Where Yeats sounds fearful and resigned, Jung's vision is expectant and promising, but how are we to take his imagery? We could interpret this picture simply as an excited flash intended only to shine a light into something he called the "collective unconscious" for the sake of triggering our sense of awe and understanding about its depth (Jung, 1936a, para. 88). Yet could he have actually been interested in discovering such a consciousness in the human species? He certainly focused on how large collectives form a group unconscious (Shamdasani, Kindle location, p. 339). Might his story of personification reflect his desire to find and awaken a naturalistic God with the capacity for generational attention to meet the horrors of his time? During the darkness of the early 20th century in Europe, Jung seems to be imagining a great awakening, that is, a fully self-conscious human species waking up and proclaiming *I am*. He certainly pondered this possibility, for he wrote about how such a being would have to constitute a collective "ego center" within the unconscious that would be a corollary to the ego construct of individual consciousness. To tap into this generational attention, Jung imagined the collective unconscious having such an ego that was asleep or "dormant" (Jung, 1939b, para. 509). However, Jung admitted not being able to find such a center, much less knowing how to wake it up. Despite this inability, he did not identify consciousness as restricted only to the individual. Jung did not readily separate human experience into the individual and the social—private and public—compartments within which we live today. Instead he let the image of a Christian God-head filter through his own modern consciousness that had been differentiated by the human and natural sciences of his time. His own modern psyche thus influenced his inclination toward a religious attitude by directing part of that energy into a psychological one, redirecting attention from "creational interpretations" to "evolutionary" and "developmental" interpretations, which he reflected on later when he wrote that "the most we can do is to *dream the myth onwards*" (Henderson, 1984, p. 83; Jung, 1951, para. 271).

While Jung was unable to concretize the image of a "collective consciousness" in a psychological language that could support its activation, there

may nonetheless be some telic imperative to this image that reflects Schelling's understanding of the objective capacity of the imagination (Nicolaus, p. 110). Jung searches for a way to explore our psychic depths and our consciousness for the sake of individual development but also for cultural transformation. Yet this line of thought did not lead to further research. And what self-respecting social scientist would try to use his image of a naturalistic God to guide her research? Nevertheless, in his wondering and wandering, Jung is pointing us in an important direction.

Jung's struggle to find a way to activate some sort of generational attention may simply be foolish or troubled (Dunlap, 2008, p. 13). Or it may be trustworthy but expressed in his particularly introverted manner. I have worked with Jung's image of a personified unconscious for thirty-five years and have only recently come around to thinking of it as an overly-introverted expression of something that is actually possible and, in fact, may actually already be happening, that is, the activation of a unique collective self-consciousness.<sup>2</sup> The notion of such a collective consciousness is a function of Jung's naturalistic God-image; it depicts the actualization of such a group consciousness. Unfortunately we have no language for such a phenomenon. In fact, it simply sounds silly, something out of a science fiction or a fantasy novel.

When the concept of group consciousness is taken up as a topic of inquiry it is typically in a more sociologically oriented language that references group behaviour and social norms; it is not held together as something 'living' and capable of greater self-consciousness.<sup>3</sup> For example, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) uses the term "collective consciousness" to refer to the shared beliefs and moral attitudes of a people (Nemedi, 1995, p. 42). In Durkheim, we do not see any indication of Jung's notion that there is actually some sort of *group being* that is self-aware; he does not imagine personifying the group. What can we make of this? I suspect that the complexity of such psychocultural phenomena is beyond much of our current social science language. Since the 19th century the explosion of social science research has led to invaluable discoveries and to a fuller understanding of human experience. However, at what expense; has there been some loss of viewing the human being in totality? Are the wise men valiantly paddling up separate tributaries, cataloguing the flora and fauna as they go without recognizing the full breadth of the river of human experience? If so, what shared language would we need to account for the complexity among the individual, group, and culture that would evoke the capacity for generational attention? Jung attempts to articulate such a language.

In the passage cited above, Jung imagines a conscious being whose memory draws from the experience of both current and past generations. At one level group memory is commonplace; cultural practices like story-telling are intrinsically about



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remembering. However, Jung is not content with existing traditions; from these he thinks we have become unmoored. Instead he imagines a robust psychology capable of being the voice of an emerging generational attention.

Whether defined psychologically or through the lens of other disciplines, the work of establishing the human species' self-awareness has its own history. For hundreds of years philosophers, social scientists, and others have been differentiating some form of generational attention, initially in an effort to challenge theological knowing in favor of establishing the individual as a source of legitimate cultural knowledge. However, such efforts problematically reify the relationship between the individual and the collective. Through conceptualizations arising over hundreds of years the modern individual has taken on an extremely isolated shape. As a result, the modern language of individualism has become a limiting factor, restricting the collaboration possible between individual and cultural identities. Fortunately, based on this understanding, it is possible to rethread our own history, telling a new story. Within this new story we can trace a developmental trajectory from the differentiation of a cognitively oriented historical consciousness to an emotion-centered, embodied generational attention.

### Historical consciousness

In his book, *The fate of America*, Jungian analyst Michael Gellert cites Thomas Merton as stating that “the person must be rescued from the individual.” By this Gellert is asking us to aspire to a new level of thinking that integrates individualism with social responsibility. He reminds us that Albert Einstein said that human problems could not be resolved from the same level of thinking that led to those problems but must come from a higher level (Gellert, 2001, p. 297). Developmental theorist Robert Kegan (1994) describes how transitions in consciousness are made as an advancing consciousness observes prior and current human experience, treating a current state as an object of awareness, in order to consolidate a new order of consciousness (p. 97). Like Einstein, Kegan's language emphasizes the cognitive dimension of such transformation, which typifies much developmental theorizing; the focus is simply on *understanding*. Change is expected to come from the individual's thought. While this seems obvious and in fact largely trustworthy, it may neglect a fuller, embodied, and passionate knowing of the consciousness that is transforming. Rainer Maria Rilke described an alternative view of change when he wrote:

You must give birth to your images.  
They are the future waiting to be born.  
Fear not the strangeness you feel  
The future must enter into you long before it happens...

Just wait for the birth, for the hour of new clarity. (2007)

While Rilke's poetry is poignant, it is not a theory of change institutionalized within the research agenda of any science. While we might imagine some collaboration between cognitive and somatic/emotion-centered modes of consciousness and while any rising generational attention would seemingly require both, there is sufficient evidence that Western culture has been dominated by the individual's sensory experience and cognitive appraisal of our collective state, which may have enabled us to gain the reflective surface needed to view our premodern, theological consciousness as an object of awareness but has since led to significant distortions within our individual and cultural experience. As I have said and will show, our current consciousness is overly individualized and narrowly rational, lacking sufficient emotional intelligence, which may be now finally following. We can identify this rising historical consciousness and note the way it becomes embedded in a reified notion of individual identity that is dominated by the individual's sensory and cognitive functioning.

Rudolph Steiner (1991) noted "people generally do not know that a worldview or theory will eventually become the social and moral functioning of a people..." (p. 100). I recognize that the idea that thought-becomes-identity is speculative and as "psychohistory" requires the development of evidence from multiple fields (Barzun, 1974, p. 150). With the intent of developing that evidence, the hypothesis here is that we have become modern "individuals" who may lack a clear path toward becoming "persons" and that no amount of thinking in isolation from feeling will get us out of this paper bag. What is required is some direct experience of alternative modes of being that enable us to see the extent of our isolation as cognitively oriented individuals. Such self-awareness might be triggered by thoughtful reflection, such as this paper invites. And such reflection might be aided by looking at the origins of the "worldview or theory" that has since become our "social and moral functioning."

Prior to the modern age, theological consciousness was a primary determiner of cultural knowledge. René Descartes (1596-1660) challenged theology's hegemony by turning attention to the individual's capacity to create culturally valid knowledge through the differentiation of "clear and distinct ideas" (Copleston, 1963, pp. 78-79). Descartes' individual accomplishes her emancipation through an imaginative and cognitive appraisal of herself that depended neither upon sacred texts nor upon the human senses for its validity. As Kegan (1994) describes, we expand our consciousness as we treat ourselves as an object of awareness. A generation after Descartes, John Locke extends the differentiation of thinking by asserting that we can trust our senses as well as our thinking. He believed that, unlike our emotional experience, sensations are passively received from the external world and thus not confounded by a problematic subjectivity (Copleston,

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1964, p. 86). Descartes and Locke's philosophies supported the emerging modern laissez-faire individualism that has since formed our individual and cultural identities and dominated cultural discourse. Its brilliance created an individual sufficiently independent to challenge both theology and the traditions that had restricted human freedom in the pre-modern world (Dewey, 1935, p. 1-12). However, we are coming to see how this individual overemphasizes its sensory and cognitive capacities leaving it severely isolated.

Fortunately, there is a vein of cultural knowing that challenged the Cartesian view. Unfortunately, it did not garner the support needed to keep Descartes and Locke's *individual* from being entrenched as the primary mode of "social and moral functioning." Giovanni Vico (1668-1744) was concerned that Descartes overvalued individual experience. Instead of Descartes' focus on individual knowing, Vico thought that we could "gain a true knowledge of human phenomena through the study of our history, which emphasized the role of the community in advancing human understanding (Polkinghorne, 1983, pp. 20–21; Growen). Much of the creative impulse of German Romanticism followed Vico's turn toward a cultural understanding of human experience. Instead of pursuing an Archimedean point of reference outside of the subjectivity of the individual through cognitive reflection, which was effective in our exploration of the natural world, Vico sought knowledge in a historical context (Polkinghorne, pp. 22-25). For example, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) sought to loosen the hold of religious institutions on culture by replacing strict adherence to theology with the study of history, which he referred to as "historical consciousness" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 27; Meyerhoff, 1959, p. 37).

Unfortunately, the Romantics' historical knowing was not as vitalizing as that of the Empiricists. I suspect that part of the dilemma lies in the way in which there was no clear way around the hegemonic hold on individual and cultural consciousness by the potency of the individual's differentiation of their sensory and cognitive experience. While a century later Hans-Georg Gadamer (1982) continued to argue for the value of Dilthey's notion of historical consciousness, which he thought provided the opportunity to adopt "a reflective attitude toward both itself and the tradition in which it stands," Gadamer's "reflective attitude" continues to be primarily cognitive (p. 207). Dilthey, Gadamer, and many other alternative thinkers are still themselves "moderns," that is, modern individuals created by our times. The modern capacity to reflect upon theology and other cultural traditions releases individuals from bondage only to subjugate them, hold them in place by the very capacities that had set them free. The modern tools of a differentiated cognitive and sensory experience, even when informed by ideas like historical consciousness, do not provide more than an abstract language and an abstracted

understanding of what it means to be a people. What is needed is once again to treat our consciousness as an object of awareness and to gain a greater reflexive relationship with that consciousness. While the emotional bonds that maintain traditional communities can be recognized as, in part, oppressive by today's standards, the absence of such bonds provides its own oppression.

### **Feeling history**

Although Jung's image of the total human requires some capacity for the feelings that move groups—whole collectives—into action, we may not be able to look to Jung for help working this out. Despite his highly differentiated imagination, Jung's own attitude toward emotion may have been too influenced by the "social and moral functioning" of his time. Jung disparages emotion; while his *being* may be able to make its historically limitless prognostications, it has no means for moving people. As individuals we use our emotional experience daily, moment by moment, to assess our circumstances, discern direction, motivate action, and connect others as we do so. However, once we gather together in groups, something different happens.

In order to understand what transpires when individuals join groups and emotions are no longer simply individual but are influenced by group dynamics, it is important to begin with a basic understanding of what emotions are. Over the last sixty years there has been a resurgence in interest in emotions, led by the work of Stanford professor Sylvan Tomkins (2008) who is attributed with founding the new field of "affect science."

Tomkins identifies the biological portion of emotions, which he calls "affects," as fixed patterns, having identical features in the old and young alike, and being shared within the human species, as well as with other mammals due to their common limbic brain structures (Scherer, 1994, p. 172; Lazarus, 1994, p. 163). The "affect system" is thought to have an evolutionary significance in how it prepares an organism physiologically to respond to its environment, making it "adaptive phylogenetically" (Frijda, 1994, p. 116) and a means of "action readiness" and "resource mobilization" (Clark & Watson, 1994, p. 136). Affect science has explored the intra-psychic and interpersonal function of emotions in humans over time. To a lesser degree, affect scientists study how emotions function socially.

Keeping Tomkins' theory in mind, what is it that then transpires in groups? Following one of Tompkins' students, Donald Nathanson (1992), we learn that groups are actually capable of extinguishing our emotional functioning. Nathanson wrote, "...people may be raised in a culture or an environment that denies the existence of certain feelings; even when an affect is triggered they may not feel it because the ability to perceive it has been extinguished" (p. 50).

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The idea that groups can prohibit the biological functioning of an individual's emotional experience sets the stage for Jung's own experience of what takes place in groups. Connecting Nathanson and Jung, we can say that, once extinguished, the emotional energy residing in individual bodies is no longer within the conscious control of the individual but contributes to a group dynamic within which she gets caught up. Jung repeatedly describes what happens when affect is not integrated into the consciousness of the individual, when the power of the unconscious, unleashed within the mass-mindedness of a group, creates a psychic epidemic of pain and destructiveness (Jung, 1946, para. 448; 1953, para.240). He connects these epidemics to affect that easily overwhelms individuals, betraying their weakness. In his 1959 book *Aion* he wrote:

Emotion, incidentally, is not an activity of the individual but something that happens to him. Affects occur usually where adaptation is weakest, and at the same time they revealed the reason for its weakness, namely a certain degree of inferiority in the existence of a lower level of personality. On this lower level with its uncontrolled or scarcely controlled emotions one behaves more or less like a...passive victim of his affects...*singularly incapable of moral judgment*. (Jung, para.15 italics added)

The individual is internally vulnerable to affect and externally vulnerable to the mass-mind. Without the ballast of sound moral judgment—the conscience it brings and the individuated identity it fosters—this vulnerability has led to the worst episodes in history of our inhumanity to one another (Jung, 1936b, para.388).

Jung's critical, even fearful, attitude toward affect has been put to good use in the creative work of Sam Kimbles and Tom Singer, who identify how "cultural complexes" influence individuals and group alike through the contagion of affect (Kimbles & Singer, 2004, p. 2; Singer, 2004, p. 20). Cultural complexes "are expressions of deeply held beliefs and emotions that are characteristically expressed through both group and individual representations, images, affects, patterns, and practices" (Kimbles, 2004, p. 199). Kimbles and Singer also note that attending to such complexes can lead to "growth and development," which Jung seems to agree with when he writes that attending to our emotional experience can lead to our "future development" (Kimbles & Singer, 2004, p. 9; Jung, 1939b, para. 498). He also notes how emotions can be used to face the threat of the mass-mind when he writes, "In the face of this danger the only thing that helps is for the individual to be seized by a powerful emotion which, instead of suppressing or destroying him, makes him whole" (Jung, 1958, para. 722). Could groups do this as well? Would identifying the emotional dimensions of group behavior lead to its future development? Tentatively answering "yes," we can learn from psychotherapy's focus on emotion as a source of transformation and then try to

broaden this idea, applying it to groups and incorporating it into our understanding of history.

Most of us have been through our own process of psychotherapy; many guide that process for others. It is profoundly difficult to work with and transform the emotional repressions that we have interpreted to be about growing up in our families. *Imagine just how much more difficult it will be to do the same sort of emotional work in a group or community working out its own history.* Could groups be emotionally aware of their own history, the history of their community, even as a people in an objective way? Such a sentiment is implied by Nicolai Hartmann's (1882-1950) idea of "*ruckeinführung*," which George Steiner (1976) translates as "retrospective empathy" (p. 249). Stories of positive events certainly flow through a community and evoke pride. I imagine groups telling stories of suffering that help them to be compassionate. I also imagine groups telling stories of being a victim or perpetrator of persecution, both of which could help develop their retrospective empathy. Alternatively, it is even easier to imagine groups who choose to forget, which would lead them to repress any one of a number of emotions: grief, shame, fear, anger.

If we are to risk following Jung's naturalistic God-image and try to create generational attention made up of both historical consciousness and retrospective empathy, what practices would we need to cultivate to go beyond a hyper-focus on the imagination and cognition to include what we are learning about affect and its role in directing group consciousness?

### **From affect to action: The work of a Jungian political psychologist**

While I earn my keep in my private practice, for about fifteen years I have been developing what I think of as my "public" or "political" practice. I work with political and other community groups, helping them with their "political development" (Chilton, 1991; Samuels, 1993; Dunlap, 2008). I help progressive and liberal political groups, their activists and leadership, to develop the capacity for affect freedom. In group meetings, we attend closely to one another's emotional experience; however, this focus is not on their private lives but rather on their lives as citizens. Nor do we simply pursue emotional expression; the cultivation of affect freedom is more complex than this caricature.

When I am working with educators, activists, and community leaders, we talk about the use of their emotions. These discussions include practicing identifying, describing, sharing, and then changing the emotions into a range of leadership capacities, a point I will return to in just a minute. I encourage these folks to take what they are learning in our small group out into their communities. Overall there is a great deal of reticence about what is possible for them to do in public. For example, one City Council person proclaimed "politicians never cry in public"

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(Dunlap, 2008, p. 217). I trace this emotional restriction to their identification as political liberals or progressives, which may support their cognitive grasp of the history of political oppression, but it does not encourage their movement beyond historical consciousness, beyond just *understanding* history, to generational attention. Yes, they are guided by their emotions toward right action, but only passively; when emotions become a topic of conversation they are very uncomfortable and resistant. This liberal reticence restricts their political leadership. By attending to the cultivation of affect freedom I support these leaders to move their emotional intelligence more actively into their public and political work, which directly cultivates their leadership capacities.

The idea that by transmuted our emotional experience we activate leadership capacities comes directly from the work of Aftab Omer, president of Meridian University. Omer (2005) links personal and cultural transformation to the interaction between the imagination, affect, and cultural practices. His Imaginal Transformation Praxis (ITP) is unique, offering a new vision of affect and emotion as the basis of leadership capacities that lead to the simultaneous development and transformation of the individual and culture. Omer views each affect as the physiological foundation out of which specific human capacities emerge. As he puts it, “each affect has a distinct capacity as its telos” (Omer, 2002). According to Omer there are practices that individuals, groups, and communities engage in (current and historical) that transmute each affect into a distinct active capacity and receptive quality. For example, through practices of mourning, grief is transmuted into compassion and generosity; through intimacy practices (being near each other when we are frightened), fear transmutes into courage and equanimity; through conflict transformation practices anger is transmuted into fierceness and clarity; through accountability practices shame is transmuted into autonomy, conscience, humility, and dignity. Fig. 1 presents Omer’s theory and practice of how affect transmutes into capacities and qualities.

**Fig. 1**

Affect (Sensitivity)	Domains of Life	Ritualization	Capacities	Qualities
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Grief	Loss	Mourning	Compassion	Generosity
Fear	Danger	Intimacy	Courage	Equanimity
Anger	Injustice	Conflict	Fierceness	Clarity
Shame	Failure rejection	Accountability	Autonomy Conscience	Dignity Humility

Through the activation of these capacities and qualities, individuals and groups realize a more complex consciousness that supports further development. The following historical events exemplify Omer’s framework: Martin Luther King, Jr. exposed himself to physical violence and incarceration in order to draw the attention of the American nation and the world to the shame of the American people’s treatment of African Americans. King’s acts of cultural leadership transmuted his own and his followers’ fear into courage and the American people’s shame into a rudimentary conscience, one capable of recognizing the social trauma of prejudice and our own active and passive perpetuation of this horror. King intuited the potential transmuting of affect into leadership capacities when he extolled his followers, “If he puts you in jail, you go into that jail and transform it from a dungeon of shame to a haven of freedom and dignity” (King, 1988).

Omer’s understanding of the affective dimension of leadership integrates biological, psychological, and sociological dimensions of human experience. Such



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integration combines what works in psychotherapy with what works in our communities. Omer's work enables a rethinking of history in order to highlight the underestimated creative and potentially transformative relationship between the individual, the group, and its culture. The current research in several social sciences including history, allows us to retell the story of our own history, identifying the role of emotion in our historical development. Based on a new story, we can see more clearly the opportunity to gain our independence from unreflective traditions while maintaining the emotional connections that would allow us to be a people, that is, to activate the capacity for generational attention.

### **From a private- to a public-life emotional intelligence**

A common thread running through several social sciences is the notion that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century our individual and cultural identities divided along public and private lines (Dunlap, 2008, p. 198). While the 20<sup>th</sup> century psychotherapy project sought to remediate aspects of this historical bind, it also inadvertently may have exacerbated it.

In the 20th century we learned to differentiate our feeling function with the support of our therapist. With that help we extend some use of feeling into our families, relationships with friends, and coworkers but not much further. The result has been that psychology and psychotherapy have perpetuated the retreat from the public sphere that began early in the 19th century. In order to understand this aspect of our history we will need to integrate Omer's (2012) approach regarding the way individuals can activate leadership capacities in groups through effective use of affect into our understanding of the development of Western culture.

During the Enlightenment there was a great deal of thinking about the positive role of feeling in supporting the development of a people's moral judgment, that is, their ability to have compassion for one another. This work is exemplified in Adam Smith's (1723-1790) *The theory of moral sentiments* (1759), in which he described how people would naturally have compassion for one another if we could imagine each other's suffering. Unfortunately, Smith's hope was naïve; certainly people are capable of imagining the suffering of others, but his Enlightenment sensibility did not account for what we are learning about a group's tendency to extinguish healthy feeling and Omer's (2002) emphasis regarding the need to cultivate practices that activate not only compassion but other leadership capacities as well. Through cultural practices we form what historian Elizabeth Rosenwein (2006) calls "emotional communities" with one another. She describes how social norms shape the individual's experience of emotion, controlling what types of emotional

displays are considered appropriate or taboo that in turn define the humanity of a group by their attitudes toward their own and each other's emotions (p. 2). Such communities ask and answer questions about what emotions they encourage their children and citizens to feel and act on.

In addition to Rosenwein's thinking we can turn to the research of cultural anthropologist William Reddy (2001) to understand how a public emotional intelligence was at one time highly valued and used as a source of political energy only to backfire and lead to our current entrenched position against the use of emotions in public. Reddy reviews the simultaneous emergence of Enlightenment political philosophy and attitudes toward emotional experience in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He tells the story of how Louis XIV imposed an honor code on the French court that was based on an oppressive "emotional regime" for the sake of pacifying and controlling the aristocracy (pp. 124-6). The emotional community shaped by his edict restricted what type of contact people could have with one another, disallowing much empathy for the suffering of the lower classes. However, this emotional regime led to a significant emotional need that got expressed in new forms of social gatherings. The people attending these gatherings sought what Reddy calls "emotional refuge" with one another that he defines as an "organization...that provides safe release from prevailing emotional norms and allows relaxation from emotional effort" (p. 129). And, prior to the revolution, the pursuit of such refuge became overt, that is, conscious. Regarding this period, Reddy wrote, "For a few decades, emotions were deemed to be as important as reasoning in the foundation of states and the conduct of politics" (p. 143). Passion was celebrated as "the font of morality" (Rosenwein, 2006, p. 198). People sought and found this emotional relief with one another in different settings such as the intellectual salons that appeared in Paris or the Masonic lodges that arose across all of France (Reddy, 2001, p. 145). These settings supported a new egalitarian attitude between men and women as well as between the upper and lower classes. Notice the parallel between his idea of *refuge* and Rosenwein's notion of *emotional community*: both reflect the way a people come together to create something new, beginning with the warmth of their relations with one another.

Unfortunately, the emotional refuge of the French Revolution did not lead to the broader adoption of a new emotional community. Reddy traces how an indulgence in emotion as "sentimentality" actually contributed to the "reign of terror" that engulfed France in 1793, which led to "the end of almost all attempts to establish a positive role for emotions in politics" (p. 200). By the time of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, our emotional life was divided into public and private spheres. Its positive use developed through Romanticism, largely for those middle-income folk who could afford to retreat from the public sphere to cultivate a private life, which

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was chronicled by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) who wrote in 1843 about the new American culture of individualism. He said:

Individualism is a mature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the masses of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends, so that after he has thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself. (de Tocqueville, p. 98)

De Tocqueville's reflection came at a time when we had already begun to see the devastation wrought by modernity to communities, to minorities, to the working class, to women and children. The pressures of industrialization and urbanization precluded the possibility of Adam Smith's hope for widespread empathy that would be necessary to develop moral sensitivity. We simply were not yet capable of being empathic toward people at a distance. At that time there was insufficient warmth in both our private and public lives (Brooks, 2012). I wonder if this may have led people to dissociate, with the middle-incomed comfortably going their own direction and abandoning the commons. What effect on the feeling function would this have had? I suspect that it restricted the existing emotional community, which is reflected in the 1873 autobiography of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), a leading Liberal philosopher, political economist, a member of Parliament, and founding Utilitarian thinker. Mill wrote about the utilitarian attitude toward feeling:

...[we were]...ashamed of the sign of feeling. For passionate emotions of all sorts...we did not expect the regeneration of mankind from any direct action on those sentiments, but from the effect of educated intellect, enlightening the selfish feelings." (p. 98)

Mill became aware of the limits of this perspective. At age twenty he suffered a significant depression that did not remit until he recognized some value of feeling. Upon reading a poignant and inspiring story reflecting grief and renewal, Mill's wrote, "... I was moved to tears. From this moment my burden grew lighter" (p. 117). However, his enlightenment did not represent the standards of his time and culture. Amongst his utilitarian cadre he saw no one who would understand his suffering. He wrote, "My father...was the last person to whom...I looked for help... Of other friends, I had at that time none to whom I had any hope of making my condition intelligible" (p. 113). Despite his own transformation Mill's Utilitarian philosophy contributed to the cultural milieu of a repressed public emotion and a sequestered private life that was institutionalized in professional psychology as we largely accepted unreflectively the new divide between public and private experience. Psychology defined human suffering in terms of events

taking place within the family, seemingly ignoring the sociopolitical tragedies and transformations taking place all around us.

Connecting the research by Omer, Rosenwein, and Reddy, we could say that through the French salons and Masonic lodges new egalitarian relations were developed based on practices that transmuted each participant's emotions into distinct capacities that supported the rise of a new generation of leaders in French culture. Unfortunately, the realization of these capacities was not supported by a sustainable emotional community; it did not translate into a sufficiently developed common language allowing for the maintenance of those capacities, which led, in part, to our current deprecation of emotion.

In order to account for the historical and current "emotional community" that restricts the use of emotion, we need to recognize that, while our suffering begins with our mothers or fathers, it is large-scale cultural and political phenomena that we need to be able to talk about. While we are talking we will need to explore, loosen, contain, and direct the related affect: this is historical consciousness and retrospective empathy in tandem. In individual psychotherapy we learned how telling our story has both a cognitive and affective dimension. As we speak, our understanding and connection to another releases repressed affect opening us to the renewing energy of what emotion-focused therapist Diana Fosha (2000) calls "core affect" (p. 336). Through psychotherapy our encounters with affect are vitalizing, activating our capacity for affect freedom. We can extend this storytelling toward our conflicted histories to develop the retrospective empathy needed to activate a *public emotional intelligence*.

The understanding that comes from Reddy (2001) and others' historical consciousness is this: while cultural oppression makes use of group emotion, it ultimately restricts a people's genuine emotional connection to one another and gives rise to the need for new intimacies. However, realizing these connections is fraught with risk, for it seems only too easy to go too far and open oneself once again to oppression. I suspect that upon closer analysis and synthesis, using the concepts of "emotional regime," "emotional refuge," "emotional community," and "affect freedom," we would be better able to understand cultural ruptures, like the 1960s in the United States and Europe. Based on this understanding we could develop cultural practices that mitigate the suffering of those times while supporting the "psychocultural" development (Dunlap, in press).

Vico sought to use history to free us from the oppressive norms of our traditions without cutting the individual off from the collective altogether, which he fearfully projected would lead that individual towards the unmoored individualism recognized by Jung. Coleman (1995) also is critical of individualism and looks to cultivate a group's consciousness as an antidote. Could historical consciousness

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and retrospective empathy come together to activate generational attention? Would the capacity for generational attention resemble in any way the personified God imagined by Jung? Combining the concepts being woven together in this paper, we can formulate the following question: what type of emotional community would be needed to treat the cultural complexes that perpetuate our excessive individualism while maintaining the modern reflexive attitude toward our traditions?

### **Generational attention: An emergent form of collective consciousness**

The type of emotional community that we need is one in which we are able to combine historical consciousness with retrospective empathy to activate the generational attention capable of moving whole peoples, but not through reactive emotions that stimulate a mass-mindedness, rather a self-aware group consciousness that is capable of feeling history. Fortunately, as Rifkin (2009) describes, there is a rising empathic civilization; however, he does not know if it will emerge in time (p. 1). When we can simultaneously think and feel about history—along multiple narratives—and when we act on that as a people developing our moral integrity, generational attention emerges (Dunlap, 2008, p. 15). Generational attention is simply the capacity of all the living generations to focus simultaneously on current human problems within the context of human history. I come to this concept, in part, by following Jung's God-image. It is in this context that it provides, perhaps, objective guidance to social science research.

There is evidence that generational attention is growing; however, like most of our culture, its current form overemphasizes our thinking and sensing capacities and underestimates the role of imagination and feeling. In his 2007 book *Blessed unrest*, Paul Hawken, describes a rising public consciousness, which he optimistically proclaims is easing the ills of the world through the growth of nonprofits and community organizations that focus on environmental protection and social justice. This *progressive movement* is responding to the multiple tears in the fabric of modern culture. These groups have cultivated some degree of historical consciousness. They are increasingly aware of the way in which modern culture is made up of individuals isolated from both community and their own history. These groups also have cultivated some degree of retrospective empathy. Their understanding of the history of oppression enables them to empathize with the many peoples that have come in harm's way because of modernity. However, there is a risk that these groups focus too intently on social and political practices for the purpose of changing the world while not cultivating the affect freedom within a new emotional community that the French revolutionaries at least attempted to grow with one another. The external focus of political liberals and progressives precludes the recognition of the value of their own emotional

experience as part of a larger process of developing generational attention. Following the Rationalist and Empiricist milieu asserted within Utilitarianism, they do not value their own emotional experience.

The deprecation of emotion, especially its capacity to help us connect to one another, was exemplified for me during a political meeting that I facilitated in my role as a political psychologist. At the beginning of a meeting with progressive activists near the first anniversary of 9/11, I suggested that we start by pausing to remember the people who had died. In response, one man said that we could not take the time for this observance, and he reminded us of what labor activist Joe Hill had said on the day of his execution when he proclaimed, “Don’t waste any time mourning—organize” (Smith, 1969, p. 191). I have found such a dismissive statement to reflect a general attitude within both progressive and liberal communities. This attitude restricts both the grace and inspiration that I imagine these groups are capable of. People in these meetings are dominated by a type of partially necessary technical-speak. Instead of connecting to one another emotionally, they slog through deciding who will put up lawn signs, walk precincts, and who is going to go to the City Council meetings. Activists complain that, as essential as these meetings are, they are too long and people simply end up wanting to go home, where they can get some respite, some emotional refuge, in their private lives. Our public/political meetings lack shared enjoyment.

Whether nationally or locally, the progressive impulse is too intently focused on a dry rationalism, while lacking a coherent relationship to emotion. Rising out of the Enlightenment tradition of *laissez-faire* liberalism and the Utilitarian recoil from French sentimentality, the current identities of political liberals and progressives privilege thinking and sensory experience over imagination and feeling. As a positive result, they have developed the capacity to track the fragments of the modern consciousness. With each dissociative tear in the collective consciousness, liberals and progressives are able to mirror the tragedy. Once mirrored, islands of consciousness form around the injury such that a new nonprofit is created, leading to the rise of thousands of new organizations in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially since the 1960s. However, the capacity for sensation to detect and thought to name is insufficient, for it invites little reassociation. The growth of nonprofit organizations has not nearly matched, much less exceeded, the deterioration of traditional community organizations. The privileging of thought and sensory experience is insufficient in the face of the modern collapse of the affect-laden traditions that have held communities together.

The privileging of thinking and sensory experience is powerful, but it is as if a mirror is broken in space and our heightened sensory experience allows us to track each fragment as the brute force of modernity provides the momentum to splinter away from each other; and our well-educated thinking can only broadcast

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location like beacons dimming with the growing distance. Berkeley cognitive scientist George Lakoff (2005) describes the progressive community's out-of-balance cognitive style as the "bane of liberalism," which Jung would agree with, thinking we have become too lopsidedly intellectual (public lecture, 25 March). As Jungian theorist Marie-Louise von Franz (1986) recognized, "ethics cannot exist *without* differentiated feeling" (von Franz, 2008, p. 13).

### Conclusion

Are we any closer to deciding whether or not Jung's image of a naturalistic God is itself a prognostication or something else? Yes, I think so. When the God-image is recognized as an introverted expression of Jung's imagination that is potentially objective, it leads us into consideration that we have something crucial to learn about being a people. While the social sciences have expanded our understanding of human experience substantially, they can perpetuate the modern fracture between our public and our private lives by making its languages too abstract to help us see our singularity as a people. However, by cultivating historical consciousness, the social sciences have prepared the ground for a more naturalistic image of ourselves. Unfortunately, this consciousness is, itself, restricted by events in history that have supported the differentiation of our thinking and sensory experience without sufficient attention going to the necessary differentiation of our imagination and emotional experience. Fortunately, the Jungian communities have taken substantial responsibility for the differentiation of the imagination, thus helping activate its capacity for objective discernment. The work ahead requires bringing comparable attention to our emotional experience for the sake of cultivating the capacity for *affect freedom* and applying that capacity to the many fractures between us as people, including those in our organizations. The work ahead also includes the opportunity to articulate a Jungian political psychology that could be taken into our communities and social change organizations for the sake of cultivating a *public emotional intelligence*, which would support some unpredictable realization of generational attention that Jung's naturalistic God-image points to.

Using concepts like "generational attention," "cultural complex," "emotional community," "emotional regime," and "emotional refuge," we can treat our lack of "affect freedom" and move towards the development of a "public emotional intelligence." Using these concepts we can articulate a clear technical language to use among ourselves and then go further to cultivate a public language, a rhetoric, that political leaders could use to assert the egalitarian values that foster social justice, economic security, and environmental sustainability, and to treat the lack of belonging that comes from our excessive individualism. Based on this

language it is possible to imagine extending the emotion-centered practices that work in psychotherapy into our communities, not for the sake of emotional indulgence as sentimentality, but for the sake of moral and political discernment and the activation of shared political energy. Jung's naturalistic God-image leads in this direction.

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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks to John Beebe for helping me conceive of Jung's consciousness in this manner and its impact on his thinking.

<sup>3</sup> However there is one in-depth analysis of the concept that introduces several potentially useful parameters. The focus of the present paper does not permit going into that analysis, which has been developed by McDaniel (1982) and is on the cutting edge and which I hope to explore in a later paper.