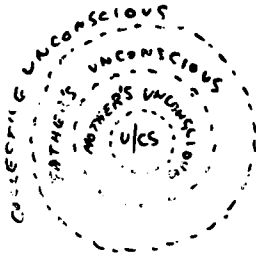


Sue Patman

CHILDHOOD AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

In the beginning, at our birth, the unconscious is both the lower and the higher unconscious. There is no division and no consciousness with which to make a division or a separation between them. As consciousness forms however and the differentiation is made between conscious and unconscious, so time becomes a reality and with the experience of time comes the division between the lower unconscious and the superconscious, past and future, what is and what was and what could be. What is, is consciousness; what was, is the lower unconscious; what could be, is the superconscious. The aim of synthesis is to reduce this trinity back to a fully conscious oneness.

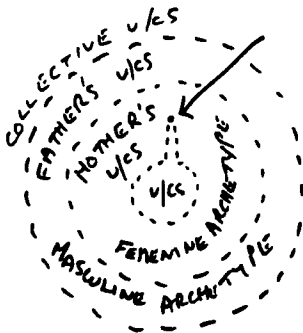
The unconscious is much larger and broader and contains much more than just our personal memories of childhood because it also merges with the collective unconscious. When adult the unconscious merges with the collective unconscious with more or less of a boundary between them - at certain times and in certain people this boundary can be very thin. In normal childhood and babyhood however the unconscious is contained within the unconscious of the mother and father like the fertilised spot in an egg, held inside the yolk and the white, and this psychic womb holds the child's psyche safe from overwhelm by the collective. Ideally, the parent's psyches, first the mother's then the father's, act as a buffer between the child's psyche and the collective until it is formed enough to withstand the collective on its own. When we are first born our consciousness is total, global, and complete - there is no distinction between consciousness, unconsciousness and the collective unconscious; no division between me, you and it; what there is is me, what is not experienced does not exist; there is no past, continuity or future; the whole universe is contained in one omnipotent 'NOW', anowness of time, space, matter and consciousness that is called oneness and the experienced reality is that "I am everything and everything is me".



BIRTH

Baby's consciousness is unconscious unity. ○

Out of this global unconsciousness surfaces a primary need for food. Driven by this need a speck of consciousness is de-integrated from the global unity and sent in search of satisfying that need. The experience is pain in the growing organism caused by hunger and the drive is to satisfy that hunger. The tool used to manifest food is the only tool the neonate actually possesses - the voice - and this is used to its fullest extent!!




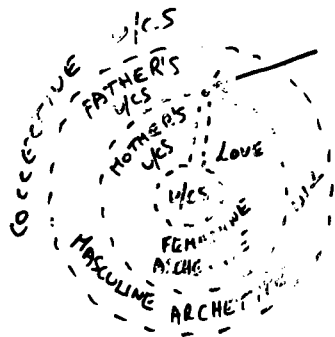
ORAL STAGE 0-2 YEARS

De-integrated part extruded into consciousness for a specific purpose and then integrated again into unconsciousness after that need has been fulfilled e.g. crying for the nipple, feeding from the nipple. There is momentary consciousness; this momentary consciousness is the embryonic ego. Appreciation of me and it. One person area. ○-?


However as the child grows and the functions of the baby's psyche and its needs get wider and more complicated, there are parts of the unconscious that need to be de-integrated or extruded most of the waking time and so they remain de-integrated into consciousness and start to form the core of the ego, or the permanently conscious state. Around this ego point the personality starts to coalesce and we then have the classical division between conscious and unconscious, ego and unconscious, when the point of permanent awareness is switched from the unconscious to the conscious.

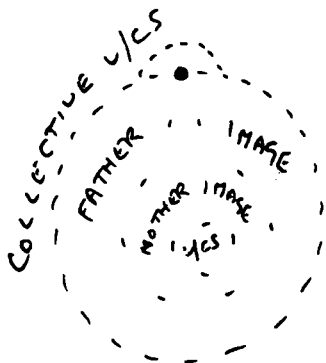
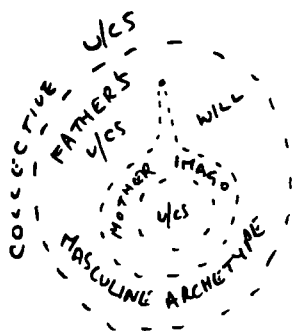
ANAL STAGE 2-4 YEARS

Beginnings of core personality. The permanently de-integrated part or ego has now extended as far as the boundary of the mother's unconscious, the edge of the psychic nest, and another dimension of existence is glimpsed i.e. life without, or as distinct from, mother. The first noticeable impulse of the masculine archetype is felt at this time and manifests as self assertion, with temper tantrums and aggression when this is frustrated, and the first experience of the Will is felt, manifesting as the ability to say 'NO'. Appreciation of me and you. 2 person area. 



OEDIPAL STAGE 4-6 YEARS. Core personality reaching into the future.

The ego has now extended its territory into the masculine archetype and the boundary between the unconscious and the feminine archetype is becoming very diffuse. The mother image is being internalised into the unconscious whilst the child's psyche takes on the work entailed in giving up its emotional omnipotence. This is manifested in the oedipal stage where daddy belongs to mummy and mummy belongs to daddy, the existence of relationships not including the child have to be accepted. Appreciation of me and them. Three person area. 

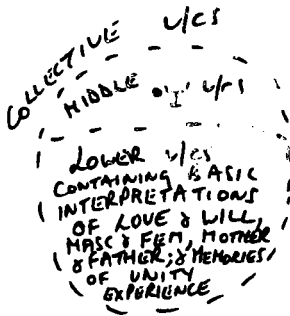


This is a difficult stage because it involves loneliness and the knowledge that the universe does not actually revolve around the child, but that there are emotional set-ups and relationships that lie outside the control

of the child and do not even depend on him for their existence. An effort to disprove this unhappy realisation is seen in the behaviour of children at this stage when they play one parent off against the other and, by that scheme, attempt to keep the parents apart from each other and thereby the fantasy alive that each parent is totally theirs.

LATENCY PERIOD 6-11 YEARS

At the end of the oedipal stage the ego has completed its first cycle, the mother and father imagos, for better or worse, have been internalised into the unconscious and the child's psyche enters the latency period where a sense of personal identity is consolidated through emotional relationships at school. Following the image of the egg, the child has ingested the yolk (mother image, feminine archetype, love), and the white (father image, masculine archetype, will), and now gathers strength, creating the middle unconscious, before hatching into the next cycle of adolescence and sexual maturity.



The experience of adolescence and growth into a sexually mature adult with a firm sense of identity largely depends on the contents and quality of the unconscious. The psyche has by now consumed most of the nourishment available from the parental egg and must now stand on its own and become self-generating. Using the fruits of its own unconscious (however rich or deprived that may be) the psyche must now wean itself from its parents' psyches and give birth to itself as an

emotionally viable and independent being with its own links with the collective unconscious. This is another birth, as traumatic and demanding as the original physical birth, and the prime material drawn on for this growth in awareness is the already existing unconscious.

So we are a self generating process - a point of consciousness that nourishes itself originally from the parental egg of unconsciousness/ consciousness and then, when that has been consumed, moves on to nourishing itself from its own unconscious and the collective.

Children, like animals, relate to the unconscious, not the conscious. The unconscious is probably more of a living reality to them for the first seven years, both theirs, their parents and other peoples, than the conscious and 'consciousness' is possibly something difficult to understand but something that has to be learnt in order to survive and 'grow up'. This is held out to be the answer to all life's problems 'when you grow up'. So the ego, everyday mind, or personal consciousness is progressively and cumulatively de-integrated from the unconscious until it is a stable, functional unit, permanently de-integrated and gradually the illusion becomes reality that that consciousness is all of us.

So childhood is merely the framework of our experience within which we de-integrated originally into our ego. Childhood is our frame of reference, and the framework through which we can integrate again. We enter into the lower unconscious **via** childhood experiences because that is where we came from. The lower unconscious **is not our childhood**, but our childhood is the path we took from our unconscious state to our conscious state. Memories of childhood are therefore a very powerful tool we can use to return to the unconscious with our consciousness and carry out healing.

In the beginning was a pain and it grew and it grew and it grew until it was too big to see. When it got that big, so it filled the sky and the world and the little girl couldn't see it any more she thought it had gone. But instead of looking at it she had become it - but she didn't know that. She honestly thought it had gone. When she became a woman she loved again with a pain and watched it grow and grow and grow but she was a big girl now and when the pain filled the sky and the whole world she hung on still seeing it, refusing to vanish it and become it - but it hurt. Now she has grown up and, triggered and guided by friends, she returns; the journey is taken in reverse, sometimes unwillingly, back to source and then forward again, renewing the past, liberating the future.

(In the next issue Sue Patman writes of the Lower Unconscious)
