

# Splitting and Regression in Humanistic Psychology

By  
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**Alix Pirani's keynote address to the 1989 Training and Development Conference of the Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners provides the text for a searching analytic dialogue. The dynamics of any group tend to be dominated by the common unresolved unconscious content of its members and the AHPP is no exception. Patterns of polarisation are noted between powerful and powerless, male and female, in-group and out-group, left-brain and right-brain, implosive passivity and explosive aggression, psyche and soma, good and bad, time-based process and timeless regression, the human and the transpersonal. As a society whose 'world is caught up in the therapy of deviance' the Association is vulnerable to the collusional acting out of the most common and most primitive processes of anxiety defence. The paper concludes with the challenge: 'For humanistic psychology to collude in defence-preservation is a fundamental contradiction of the movement's commitment to health and wholeness. [June 1990]**

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# Splitting and Regression in Humanistic Psychology

[Some reflections on the talk 'Feminine Power and Masculine Politics' given by Alix Pirani at the Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners' Training and Development Conference, October 1989]

In her opening paragraph Alix repudiates the confrontation model of 'feminine power **versus** masculine politics' and endorses the complementary, collaborative model of 'feminine power **and** masculine politics'. One of the disturbing things about the talk is this overt affirmation of integration, but the covert and symbolic emergence of polarisation, idealisation, and therefore confrontation. A problem in generating any serious reflection on the talk is the sense that it could be seen in the words of Alix's own poem, as following in the footsteps of one of those

'... men come to look me over, patronising,  
Mouthing unrealities, pointing at faults'.

However, it could also be recognised as the activity of one of the:

'... few for whom the dark connection,  
The partnership with me, the work at the core,  
Is life itself, community,  
To be fought for with all the passion ....'

These reflections are offered as part of our common struggle towards the deconstruction of neurotic and psychotic defences within our own personal, organisational, institutional and social behaviours, as we work in our own ways towards the common goal of wholeness, within a whole society.

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First, let us examine the issue of power and powerlessness. It is a polarisation which tends to be idealised in the text. Powerlessness is impotence, absolute absence of power and influence. Power on the other hand is omnipotence, absolute absence of weakness. They are undifferentiated concepts - you either have it or you don't. In reality there is no-one who is without power and there is no-one who is omnipotent. These are extremely primitive phantasies which we would recognise in a client and yet perpetuate in our conversation. Alix speaks of:

'the personal and political powerlessness of women relative to men'

and that opens up another polarisation which is the male/female, women versus men, which is quite different from the polarisation between masculine and feminine which takes over during the main sections of the paper. Here it is sexually differentiated. Every person has some sense of splitting between the powerless part of themselves and the omnipotent phantasy part of themselves which then has to be integrated and mediated in reality. So it is

that those who are perceived to have power in a society or a system may, when talking confidentially and quietly to someone, speak of walking the corridors of impotence and of being trapped at the centre of an omnipotent machine. Those perceived as having no power at all may quite conversely have, and exercise, quite significant and powerful effects within their own immediate environment and so by way of the 'butterfly effect' (see James Gleick, **Chaos**) exercise a quite massive influence on the behaviour of a whole system. The issues are not as clear cut as Alix implies. It is not possible to divide society into one group which has no power, and another group which has power. Nor is it possible then to characterise those idealised groupings by sexual or gender identification. There are plenty of comparatively impotent men around, and there are not a few extremely powerful women around, who would be highly incensed to be described as 'men' because they happened to be in a position of power.

What appears to be happening here is endorsement of phantasies of omnipotence and impotence, projection of one pole onto an out-group and identification of the opposite as belonging to the in-group. Differences are then obliterated, both in the gradation of power and powerlessness - they are absolutised - and also in the gender issues of the opposing groups - which are both in reality mixed. So what is it in the social unconscious of the AHPP which validates Alix Pirani in enunciating and validating mechanisms which are so demonstrably neurotic? She affirms,

'Clearly we are all asking "are we powerless to halt the self-destructive drives of our civilisation?'

Is this a clue? Is the in-group of therapists, particularly humanistic therapists, experiencing a corporate sense of impotence, idealising their own powerlessness, projecting all power onto the omnipotent environment of 'our civilisation'? Is the sensitive intuition of Alix being used therefore to symbolise the corporate unconscious of the Association?

These last phrases raise another polarisation which underlies Alix's presentation, namely that between inside and outside, the in-group and the out-group, the self and the other. This homogenisation of the in-group, the denial of differences within the out-group, and the elevation of the boundary as the line of demarcation between absolute opposites is a familiar process of group dynamics, dominated by idealisation, the denial of one pole of the split, projection and displacement of the denied material across a boundary. Powerlessness is inside, omnipotence is outside, self-preservation and preservation of our society, the values of creativity, of nurture of care are on the inside, self-destructive drives characterise the outside. Reality is not this shape. These are phantasies, reified, symbolised, out of the group unconscious. They reflect the neurotic processes of anxiety defence. They do not correspond to the world as it is.

Then comes the poem - beautiful, resonant, rich, deeply moving, reflexive imagery from the mind of the mine, symbol of the world soul, raped and ravaged by power-hungry man (though let us not deny that women also enjoyed its warmth, cooked by it, saw by it, worked with it, depended on it. Men mined representatively on behalf of a community in need, or greed, just as men fight representatively on behalf of a community both male and female, caught up in fear, convulsed in life-threat, struggling for survival. It is so seductive to divide society into two groups, the responsible and the irresponsible, and to deny our part representatively in the dynamics of the whole.) But to return to the mine. This exploited,

ravaged pit, discarded in its uneconomic old age, phantasies of turning its power-base inside out,

'If I were a volcano  
They would respect me, recognise me.

But then they would have to keep their distance'.

So the need to sustain the relationship represses the aggression. It is then denied in the self, projected into the other and acted out vicariously. No, we are part of our civilisation. The self-destructiveness is within us and there is no division within humanity between the self-destructive and the self-preservative, conveniently disintegrated and separated between in- and out-group configurations.

It is a brilliant, evocative piece of poetic writing. So why does Alix have to say,

'I think the Earth Goddess wrote it through me'

Is such creativity too dangerous to be owned? Must it be denied, projected into some fertility symbol, reified, even deified? Humility is one thing, self-denigration is another. Why does that creative, intuitive, symbolic, holistic part of the author have to be split off in this way and externalised? The result is a dehumanisation of the author. She is reduced to an amanuensis, an uncreative husk to be filled with something from beyond. Is not this in itself precisely an example of the giving away of power to the other and the assertion of incorporated powerlessness? The polarisation here is between creativity and barrenness, but it is the same essential duality. Claiming the authority of the gods for the words used is an age-old ruse for the denial of responsibility, for the elevation of the verbal content to a point beyond criticism, of an absolutising of its authority. It serves to deny the humanness of the construct and therefore its openness to engagement, to dialogue, to the creativity of further struggle. It is delivered as an oracle pre-formed, with a 'thus spake Zarathustra', 'this is the Will of Allah', 'Behold the Word of the Lord'.

Immediately after the poem, Alix almost manages to re-own it.

'A successful poem is the marriage, held in creative tension, of feminine and masculine: the interfusion of right- and left-brain activity. It helps us to hold feminine and masculine in tension in other areas'.

Perhaps that is the key. The 'inter-fusion of right- and left-brain activity' which takes that holistic, symbolic, intuitive grasping of multidimensional reality-as-it-is of the right brain and expresses it through the buffering of the speech centres in the left brain, within the limited linear medium of words. The hope is that others will then be able to take it up, reinterpret it, pass it back through the buffer and re-evolve as a right brain experience something as resonant and redolent with the same deep symbolic meaning as that which gave rise to the linear articulation in the first place. These are the dynamics of poetic communication. But the right brain is not feminine, nor is the left brain masculine. Just as the right brain is not the Earth Goddess while the left brain is 'me'. The splitting between left and right is a profoundly powerful and profoundly common defence mechanism. It expresses itself somatically in the polarisation between the dextrous right and the sinister gauche. It is aggregated socially into the splits between left and right of our political world. It is orientated geographically in the north/south polarisation of an east-facing, dawn-worshipping culture. It is used dramatically

and artistically in the polarisation between good and evil, negativities and positivities, in stage presentation or in the polarisation between sheep and goats, the left and right of a medieval judgement scene. We meet it in the phantasies, the symbolic artwork, the somatic presentation of a client and of ourselves.

The polarisation between left brain and right brain is 180° out of phase with the body. The left brain identifies with the right side of the body, the right brain identifies with the left side of the body, as if there is some kind of neural cross-over in the neck or the base of the skull. To be sure contemporary neurologists inform us that the split is not that sharp, that functions tend to be more distributed than we give credence and it is probably better to speak of dominant and sub-dominant functions within brain activity, but it is a near enough generalisation to be a working tool. Under stress, the polarisation between left and right becomes absolutised as a defence against psychotic anxiety, the idealisation process sets in. One side is used to carry the unacceptable, idealised negativities, the other is polarised and used as a container for the antithesis. The dark side, the shadow side, the negative side is identified with the left-soma/right-brain in a significant proportion of the population, so that it comes to dominate social norms and image making. Now we come to understand creativity as the opening up of the gating between right and left brains. So many of our creative geniuses have been left-handed or ambidextrous. The inner game of tennis concentrates on shifting power from the analytic observer of the left brain to the creative actor of the multi-dimensional modeller in the right brain, but that does not mean that Boris Becker has to turn on the female parts of himself on centre court at Wimbledon. He has to use his male right brain. In the same way a woman student presenting her Ph.D. thesis is not using the masculine part of her to do it, she is using her own female left brained dominant verbal activity.

The combination of the two modes of idealisation and splitting, namely between male and female and between left brain and right brain are welded together in this passage from Alix's paper. The primary split is displaced into the gender split. Its grounding is then denied and subsequent manipulation of the concept is confined to the issues of male and female, masculine and feminine, men and women, so blocking the possibility of taking back the projection, of re-owning that which is split off, denied and projected into the other and so effectively prohibiting the possibility of wholeness.

With this foundation of polarisation, reification, projection, denial, focussed into the dualities of impotence/omnipotence, female/male, right-brain/left-brain, inside/outside, the rest of the paper flows as a coherent structure. So she wishes

'to suggest that this conference, the organisation and tradition of humanistic psychology, is within the realm of the feminine'.

The in-group is subject to idealisation. It is emptied of the masculine - that is projected elsewhere. The in-group is the good group. It is an 'us', in contradistinction to the 'bad' group, the out-group, 'them', the others. The two contrasting paragraphs are here reprinted in full:

'I want to suggest that this conference, the organisation and tradition of humanistic psychology, is within the realm of the feminine. We belong with the poets and visionaries of society. Our concerns are the life of the psyche, the soul, and the life-energy of the body. Healing, nurturance, human relations, community, matter to us. We value being as well as doing; intuition, unknowing as well as knowing. Acceptance, tolerance, receptivity are our

watchwords. Feeling, becoming, growing, process are what we attend to. Dreams and the under-world are an acknowledged part of our experiencing. Egolessness is a possible goal, death an awesome mystery.

'In contrast, out there beyond us, but in our shared natural environment, is the split-off masculine: the world of the political-economic system which purports to rule us; more concerned with doing that being, wanting conquest, possession, control, activity, combat; manic, blindly destructive and exploitative, soulless, cynical, debasing life, corruptible, non-collaborative, hierarchical, over-rational, technological, ego-identified, concerned with product rather than process, denying the value of the feminine.'

One of the key values of humanistic psychology is the integration of right brain and left brain, within the wholeness of personality. Similarly the integration of left body and right body within the wholeness of somatic integrity. Similarly the integration of soma and psyche within the wholeness of human persona bringing together emotional, somatic, verbal and symbolic modes of expression in four-dimensional richness. But this has nothing whatsoever to do with being feminine. It is also a myth that the domain of humanistic psychology has some kind of monopoly on these values. The out-group is emptied of them, apparently. Just as the in-group is emptied of masculinity. So Alix uses the words of polarisation, 'in contrast, out there beyond us .... is the split off masculine ...' Here is the idealisation. The in-group, preserved within its boundary, distinguished by its boundary, is contrasted with the out-group, whose characteristics are antithetical. There is no 'we' about the out-group, it is 'them'. They are split off from us, though let us recognise that the split-offness is our doing, it is our split off parts that we dump across the boundary of our in-group in order to generate our phantasies about the out-group. It has no relationship to the realities of the world in which we live. It is a construct of the neurosis of the in-group, in collusion with the processes of the out-group, which share the same kind of neurotic defence structures. The feminine is good, the masculine is bad. With a simple gender conversion, the defence structure could be recognised as not dissimilar to that of Islam. What is so disturbing is the denial of the negativities of the in-group and therefore the dominance of these same negativities within the dynamic process of an association which seeks by projection to locate them in the out-group alone. Perhaps that is why it is so hard to address the politics of therapy. With these defences in play the politics of therapy are unconscious.

Alix was accurate and courageous in owning the perceptions as

'this is my myth'.

It is indeed a mythology, which as any other mythology is a reified construct, generated symbolically out of the primitive anxiety defence mechanisms in play, both personally, interpersonally and societally. That is what gives the mythology power. She owns

'the three P's: Prejudice, Projection and Paranoia - which make for extreme views' but then justifies the perseveration of neurotic modes of perception in the words,

'but the stark fact is that we are in extremis: we've come to a state of extremity in which the polarisation of the feminine and the masculine has reached crisis point, the three P's rule and it is not OK'.

It is not initially clear whether 'we' here refers to the whole of humanity or to the sub-set of humanistic psychology. The statement appears to be about the extremity of splitting within the human condition. However, the ownership of 'we' within the rest of the paragraph refers

to those who are 'here for this weekend', it is not even the members of humanistic psychology, it is the members of this conference. The group boundary is actually being drawn around conference members at this point, let alone the larger sub-sector of humanistic psychology referred to in the polarisation of the previous section. So if anything, the 'we' of this section is a diminishing of the 'we' of the previous section, not an expansion. So in what way has the membership of the AHPP Conference within the larger grouping of humanistic psychology come to a 'state of extremity in which the polarisation of the feminine and the masculine has reached crisis point'? Here we may be dealing with the phenomenon of mirroring. That Alix has been talking about the polarisation between humanistic psychology and the rest is a displacement, a reflection of the dynamics of the AHPP Conference itself. The here-and-now dynamics of humanistic psychology are so polarised, so in extremis, that the primitive anxiety defence structures of prejudice, projection and paranoia are dominating its process. Regression, polarisation, idealisation, in-group/out-group splitting, projection, denial, scapegoating - these are the very dynamics of politics. Because they are common group unconscious processes and therefore denied, they remain in the corporate communal shadow of those whose world is caught up in the therapy of deviance, the healing of sickness, the restoring to the norm of that which has strayed from the path. As such the Association is vulnerable and wide open to the collusional acting out of the most common and most primitive processes of anxiety defence.

Underlying Alix's analysis is that hidden statement that these psychotic patterns of behaviour have gone far enough. We must put our own house in order, own the disowned and displaced parts of ourselves, unpick the defences, internalise and integrate the material and act out in our own internal in-group dynamics a model of wholeness we would wish to see in the larger society around us. We should not deny to that society all the richness and potential wholeness that we ourselves would long to see nor should we deny within our group behaviours the negativities that we tend only to recognise in those from whom we wish to distinguish ourselves. There is a manic arrogance in splitting the world in two and emptying out from 'them' all possibilities of wisdom, so that 'we' alone have the truth, even though 'we' ourselves have to deny that we can originate the truth - we displace it into the word of the Goddess. These are the structures which lead to some kind of new authoritarian of the feminine. The Goddess has spoken, our task is to find Her voice and then we may 'have our wisdom heard by the world out there'. It is a new mythology of salvation, quite as neurotic and impotent as any other.

The transition between the opening section, characterised by the dynamics of splitting, and the central reflections on the theme of being and time is marked by the sense of impending social catastrophe. The pervading images climax in the words and phrases:

'extreme views ... in extremis ... a state of extremity ... crisis point ... Will the eyes of the blindly destructive masculine be opened in time? Will the passive, loosely organised feminine find a voice, have her wisdom really heard in time?'

The words have all the ring of autobiography, whether of Alix personally, of the institution of humanistic psychology organisationally, or of the whole of our civilisation societally. The sense of impending social catastrophe raises the issue of certain preventative processes, whose completion seems to be impossible within the given time-span. Periods of social instability of this kind become the breeding ground for messianic movements as well as the evolution of mythologies of salvation. Psychodynamic resonance is to the world of the perinatal, with its sense of unmanageable crisis, cosmic convulsion, and the destructive end

of foetal ecology. There is a movement across some traumatic boundary, redolent with the myths of birth, regeneration, new birth, resurrection, into some unimaginable world beyond which is at once a continuity and yet also separated from its antecedents by catastrophic caesura. It is a transition at which the perinatal defences of idealisation, projection, denial, scapegoating, the separation between inside and outside, and eventually the motif of regression emerge with predictable regularity.

The assumption is that the transition is unmanageable, that the time before the impact of the transition is inadequate and therefore that the transition is in fact a terminus, characterised by trauma. One immediate defence is to stop the clock, to deny all progression in the dimension of time and therefore in the schizoid construct of timelessness to experience the release from anxiety that is geared to the ineluctable progress of process. It is, of course, the defence of foetal trance, of prenatal fixation, so frequently coded into cosmic construct, superbly illustrated in Alix' next paragraph.

'And have we enough humility to accept that when we say "Can this be done in time?" we are talking about human time, human urgency, and it may well be that outside time an infinite wisdom or process, an unimaginable ecology, involves our destroying our species and our planetary life to make way for some further evolution beyond our limited power to conceive.'

So the transpersonal emerges as a psychotic defence against anxiety at the point of crisis, replicating in individual adult, group and societal behaviour patterns, the primitive defences utilised to handle the perinatal impingement, that titanic struggle which marked the fall, the transition from prenatal heldness to post-natal alienation, which lies at the core of the existentialist philosophy. If the time dimension is removed from the space/time continuum, then the remaining 3 dimensions of the spatial variables appear to be unlimited. The condition attracts words like

'infinite ... unimaginable ... beyond ...'.

At this point feminine power appears to be equated with foetal unconsciousness and characterised as 'awareness of the timeless and spaceless'. Here even the space variables are reduced to zero and the foetal ecology of the prenatal world has reduced to the point of conception. Alix signals the regression to the fertilisation and gametal area of consciousness in the phrase

'Beyond our limited power to conceive'

and at the end of the next paragraph,

'Something new conceived'.

So the still point, without space, without time, the ovum waiting with the sense of expectancy, is separated from the other gamete with its urgent sense of linear progression, searching, seeking and yet ending somehow in self-destruction, which is itself the point of new conception. Under the impact of imminent catastrophe the defence structure regresses, first to the pre and perinatal, then back through the attenuating world of foetal development, through the fertilisation trauma and back into its gametal fixated bifurcation.

In this timeless zone, Alix speaks of 'An infinite wisdom or process, an unimaginable ecology'. Here the cellular, embryonic and foetal consciousness emerges dimly into our adult awareness using symbols and images, projected outside onto the experienced world of space



and time. Here the density of information is infinite, the ecology, the environmental relations, are utterly other than those which emerge in our interactive experience with the postnatal world. From this matrix emerges the myth that the need is for the destruction of the species, of the planetary life, of the ecology, the ending of the old in order to give way to the birth of the new, whether in terms of conception, leading to a new step in evolution, or to birth as a transition into some kind of new world.

Alix immediately moves into denial and dissociation.

'I am not talking about apocalypse, the fundamentalist millennium. That's part of male mythology: the patriarchal disaster, collapse of the phallus, death of the product, the end of heroic civilisation as we know it.'

It is now imperative to ground these mythologies of the Judaeo-Christian construct in something deeper than the castration anxiety and the Oedipus myth of Freudian post-natal sexism. Here, as in so much of the work of Wilhelm Reich, the part stands in for the whole. That which in transient erection as the little man, penetrates the vaginal orifice serves to foster the projection and displacement into sexuality of material which is rightly derived from the matrix of whole person somatic dynamics. The foetal experience of container and contained is transgender. The drama of birth is to be distinguished not only from adult sexuality but also from the experience of giving birth, since only the female partakes of the latter, while every member of the species is born in some way.

In this schizoid world, split off from time and space, the myth of the phoenix once again raises its head:

'I am talking about the death of what needs to die because it has decayed and become corrupt and will give way to some new birth, a new species'

Almost immediately the movement is away from the whole person towards the part, just as in the male side of the mythology, so here in the female side of the somatic imagery, the movement is away from birth to menstruation,

'The matriarchal mythology: death and rebirth, the menstrual cycle. Within which I may acquiesce in, even want, the destruction of the ugly evil world men have made, a destruction so horrifying that something must be learned from it, something new conceived.'

This con-fusion of death and birth into the same point of matrix emerges out of that traumatic engagement with the birth canal as if it were death, rather than a transition under intense impingement. Here, as in the work of Stanislav Grof, birth is designated as the end, death. That which happens beyond birth is re-birth, resurrection. The continuity is denied in the trauma of the caesura and within that split is the ground of the schizoid construct of the mythology of the transpersonal. It is not at all the same thing as 'the menstrual cycle' but the menstrual cycle and its hormonal resonance tends to re-stimulate the perinatal unconsciousness and therefore acts by displacement as a carrier or ground of the primal mythology. It is strange to sense, however, that the menstrual cycle is explained as 'the destruction of the ugly evil world men have made', a destruction that is a prerequisite for the conception of something new. If we are to stay with the logic of the symbol structure, the menstrual cycle is a destruction of the unwanted, unused, and therefore redundant womb lining, which is actually created by the female as a preconception, a preparation to receive the

new being on its way to being born. So even the symbol structure used by Alix will not carry the polarised meaning grafted upon it.

Alix goes on to speak of paradoxes, distinguishing the time-consciousness of male and female :

'Because woman has an inner time clock, a connection with lunar cycles, a body experience of giving birth and of blood-loss, so she carries an awareness of timelessness, of death and the continuity of generations, and trusts the process. And because man hasn't the intimate blood and moon connections, is detached, abstracted, from such cycles, so he carries the determination to act in time and space and make finite unchanging products.'

The paradoxical contradistinctions between male and female are brought out, albeit with paradoxical contradictions built in to the very statements themselves. The common ground of both male and female in a common somatic and environmental pre and perinatal ecology is ignored. Now to be sure, the female of the species from the onset of the menstrual cycle to the transition of the menopause, undergoes a cyclic (roughly lunar monthly) hormonal periodicity, which is not shared by the male. The synchronisation with the lunar cycle, the ebb and flow of the menstrual tide, provides a gender-specific awareness of the measurement of time that is not shared by the male. This is what Alix refers to as 'an inner time clock' but it most certainly does not imply 'an awareness of timelessness'. It carries in contradistinction a most intense awareness of the time of the month, overlaid on the common patterns of diurnal, solar-related time-base which the female shares in common with the male throughout her life.

The interplay of light and darkness, the rising and setting of the sun and the movement of the seasons are imposed upon our common ecology by the entrapment of our home planet by the nearest star. These are time bases shared in common by both male and female. The intervening periodicity of weeks and months resonating with the orbiting lunar satellite is also reflected in the emotionality of the male. It certainly is of critical importance in the seafaring community, with its dominant effect upon tide, but the most profound sensitivity to this rhythm emerges through the coincidental resonance of the menstrual cycle. So we see here different sub-rhythms of the flow of time, but precisely not an 'awareness of timelessness'. That confusion stems from the prenatal, pre-fall, watery cosmos, the nine months eternity in which an awareness of time emerges out of that unawareness of time, which is now mistaken for an awareness of timelessness. That level of foetal consciousness is shared by both male and female. Some of the most evocative statements of eternal timelessness have emerged in the writings of male mystics, symbolising the mythologies of their regression in the constructs of their writing.

The male does not have the experience of giving birth, but he does share the experience of being born. He may not share the monthly experience of blood loss but he does share the catastrophic calamity of world loss, of time running out, of imminent catastrophe, of the impassable convulsion that marks the end of his foetal cosmos. These drives are deep and common and cannot be dissected and dissociated in gender-specific ways. Attempts to do so belie the underlying dynamics of idealisation, projection and regression.

Alix goes on to speak powerfully of the impact and introjection of the social context, its acting out in the inhumanity of the current political regime and of the way the casualties of society present as carriers of its unwanted parts, as symptoms of its underlying syndrome.

She notes the way therapists as individuals, and as a profession, are used in some fashion to modify the intensity of the presenting symptoms and yet in so doing tend also to internalise the transference and the sickness of the societal context which creates them. She refers to the addict and the anorexia/bulimia syndrome as:

'Clear symbols of the global crisis: the fear and fascination of greed and starvation. Behind the distressed feeder is the affluent mother who is concerned only with the feeding relationship and not with the spiritual-sexual-emotional needs of the child. Behind her is the mother whose resources threaten to dry up. Our Prime Minister has become our affluent mother-figure and behind her is a global breast which threatens to run dry.'

The oral dependency and object-relations of the early nursing relationship provide important insights into the dependency of the political process. However to be true to the full range of psychotherapeutic insight, it is also important to press back behind the object-relations of the post-natal field, into the environmental-relations of the pre-natal. The ecology of the holding environment with its apparently infinite capacity to absorb pollution, to sustain exponential growth, to provide the nurture and the resources required without constraint - this is the idealised in utero field. Its attenuation at full-term with the constriction of space, increasing pollution, rising pressure, placental failure, inadequacy of the raw material supply and slowing down of growth, precipitate a much more powerful convulsion in the social unconscious than the oral deprivation at the feeding phase. In this context the myths of imminent catastrophe have great power, the intensity of polarisation, of idealisation, and the depths of regression are more dominant and more widespread than those to which the nursing relationship gives cause. Here, surely, is the matrix of those powerfully pervasive feelings that lead us to resonate with Alix' comment :

'So for us too it is a question of life and death. If my meaning, my creativity, expressed through love and work, is denied and under-valued, and made as nothing by the imminent destruction of my world, then I feel I might as well die.'

Insofar as therapists do not have access to this primal trace within their own unconscious (and it is rendered taboo in the object-relations post-natal Freudian school of thought), then we are condemned to acting it out in counter-transference, psychodrama, somatisation, and in the unconscious group and societal dynamics of our organisational life.

The grounding of psychosocial process within the matrix of its causal dynamics is critical for the recovery of social health. Denial, projection, reification, and re-introjection, lead to the perseveration of psychotic defences at the heart of our individual and social life. It is therefore disturbing to find these very processes not only named as fundamental to the core of Alix' own construct but held up as exemplary processes for our emulation within the therapeutic context:

'And beside the collective social dynamic of which we are conscious there is the collective unconscious, and the archetypal processes which are being played out in these power-struggles, and relate directly to seasonal and cosmic events, energies, entities, to the natural environment we live in which is the source of the myths we live by and the gods we worship consciously and unconsciously. That too is a dimension that it's vital to acknowledge and bring to awareness with our clients. There is nothing in our present global situation that doesn't appear in mythology, be it from the ancients or contemporary science fiction: myths and archetypes that carry the energies of the masculine and feminine and their troublesome relatedness, symbols of human and non-human creative and destructive powers. And if none seem to fit our situation exactly, it's up to us to use active imagination to invent new myths and realise new archetypes.'

The Analytic Psychology of Jung was forged in the crucible of work with the psychotic level of human behaviour. The causal psychodynamics tended to be repressed and denied and the task became one of enabling some kind of viable negotiated dialogue between the split-off parts of the personae. The result is a perseveration of mythical animism, an acceptance of the dissociated and reified world of archetypes as if they have some kind of platonic ideal existence, an ontology of their own. Their ground in the construct of the human unconscious is cut off, denied, and therefore their grounding rendered impossible. We now recognise the primitive foetal and perinatal unconscious, with its titanic struggles at the points of transition and perseverating awareness of the underworld, as the dynamically causal matrix, shared sufficiently deeply and sufficiently commonly across the whole breadth of our humanity to generate the resonant patterns of our common, or collective unconscious process. That the symbols to which we attach these unconscious elements are drawn from the most resonant patterns of our environment, of our history, of our ecology and our cosmology should not surprise us. But to treat these symbol structures as the causal ground is itself the process of psychosis writ large. To affirm this causality is to perpetuate the dissociation and so to reinforce the perseveration of un-health within the social process.

There is here a profound need for a deeper understanding of the processes by which we generate out mythologies, archetypes, symbols, myths, rituals, political processes, out of our common unconscious. Only in so far as that set of cultic displacement steps can be understood and traced back to its matrix in the ground of our biophysical, emotive experience, however commonly traumatic that may be, can we move forward towards a more holistic and life-enhancing level of health and wholeness in our life together, whether at the deep intrapersonal or the breadth of societal existence. To deny the grounding is to preserve the defences. For humanistic psychology to collude in defence-preservation is a fundamental contradiction of the movement's commitment to health and wholeness.

Towards the end of her talk Alix provides us with another autobiographical window of insight into the as-yet-unresolved processes of the foetal unconscious:

'I became aware early on in preparing this talk of a kind of bewildered, desperate inability to get it all together: there's so much to be said and I'm in that place of the chaotic feminine, the hysterical woman who can't speak and is in danger of going crazy in her silence, not knowing the words. And then I realised that like so many women the world over I can go crazy - with grief. I do grieve for what has been lost ... I weep often for what is yet to be lost ...'

As the connections are made across the perinatal caesura, as the dynamics of polarisation, splitting, dissociation and denial, are slowly annealed, de-energised, de-constructed and withdrawn, as the direction of regression is reversed and accepted (instead of withdrawing from the crisis into some kind of idealised world of ever-increasing cosmic consciousness, ever-decreasing physical entity, backwards through the gestation process, backwards through the embryonic phase, dislocating from the womb-lining, into that free-floating point which returns to the ocean and is once more subsumed into its disparate preconceptions), so that the timeline is once again in place and vectored from past through present to future, then we encounter birth as the archetype of bereavement, to use Lily Pincus' memorable phrase. Denial of perinatal grief is one of the most profound defences of our common unconscious. It leads to the denial of separation and loss, grieving and dying throughout our culture. It leads to the mythologies of life after death as reification of our dim awareness of life after

birth. It leads to myths of immortality and resurrection and the psychotic rituals and denials associated with dying and bereavement.

There is a level of grieving and grief work to be done that is associated with birth, which then clears the way for a positive, forward-looking creative, openness to the future which is profoundly different from the preservation of the past as some ideal haven to be inhabited at all costs in flight from the projected trauma of a future birth. Here indeed is the matrix of the chaotic, of the silenced, strangulated, impinged, victimised, craziness that has no words. Here is the matrix of grieving for that world which in contrast to the experienced hell of birth is idealised into a veritable heaven, whose loss precipitates grief pitched past pitch of grief and therefore inexpressible. And yet fixated at this point within the birth process there is an awareness that there is even deeper grief yet to be experienced. There is a grieving for the lost comfort, the nurture, the absorption capacities, the containment of the bountiful pre-full-term womb-world. There is also the coming grieving for the imminent loss of the world itself. If we do not have the courage to work together through these depths of our common unconscious, then we are condemned together to re-enact the content of our common unconscious, in the psychodrama of our institutions and social process. The time has come to move the focus of our work on from the therapeutic restoration of the deviant and the preservation of the common, to the developmental resolution of our common unconscious and the evolution of the whole.

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