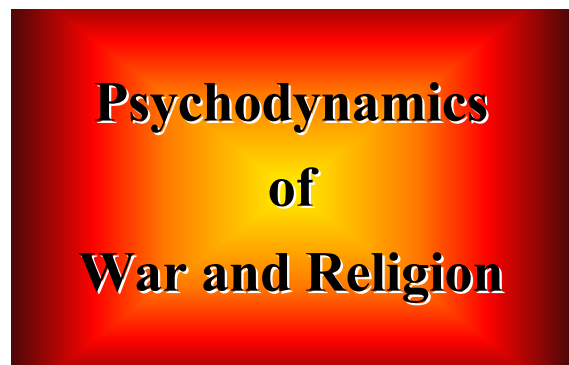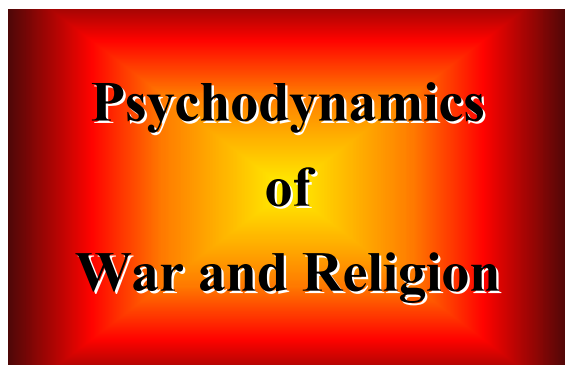# International Psychohistorical Association

Wednesday 4th June 2003

The Psychodynamics of War and Religion, Part II

Transference and Counter-transference in Social Systems

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of
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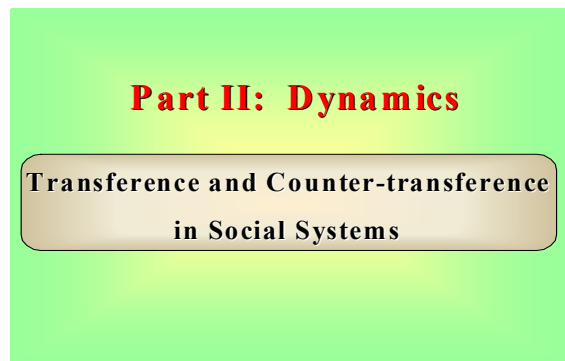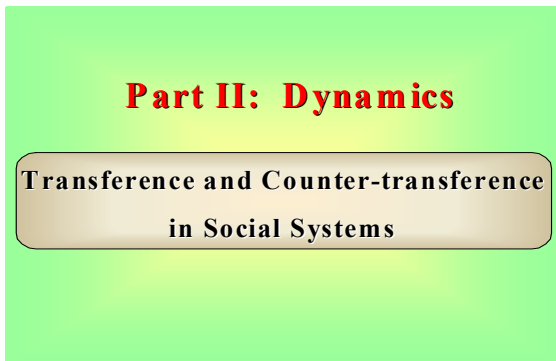<td>Psychodynamics
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War and Religion, Conflict and Ideology are inextricably intertwined. Like the two sides of a coin they present the twin faces of social psychosis, for both are encodings of the social defences of humanity. It is the argument of this presentation that those defences have common roots in the pre and perinatal experience of the species and that any attempt at analysis which ignores this paradigm is inadequate as an interpretation of social phenomena and impotent as an instrument of social transformation.

The searing trauma of September 11th brought home to us the way in which the most intense conflicts are fuelled by the most intense convictions. The dynamics of polarisation and projection at the boundaries of group, race, ideology or nation state irrupt into armed conflict when the primitive defences are challenged and the emergent anxieties can no longer be contained. The pattern is fractal and universal, discernible whatever the scale of analysed conflict and wherever it occurs. In the world of today the intensification of the armouring of social systems is draining an increasing proportion of world resources, degrading the quality of life, threatening the survival of the species and impinging upon an already fragile environment. We therefore face the imperative of a process of social disarmouring which recognises the primitive roots of social behaviour, deconstructs the psychotic defences of social systems and enhances a process of integration at every level of our global dynamic.

In June 2002 I presented Part I of "The Psychodynamics of War and Religion", just nine months on from the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre here in Manhattan. Today, one year later, I would

like to thank President and the Executive Committee of the International Psychohistorical Association for the opportunity to present Part II. The first part looked at Analysis, the second part deals with

Dynamics: Transference and counter-transference in the behaviour of social systems, with particular reference to the psychodynamics of Islam. Timing is coincidental but feels significantly symbolic, for this is the day on which President George Bush is meeting with Premier Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine and Premier Ariel Sharon of Israel at the Aqaba Summit in an attempt to win support for the "Road-map for Peace".
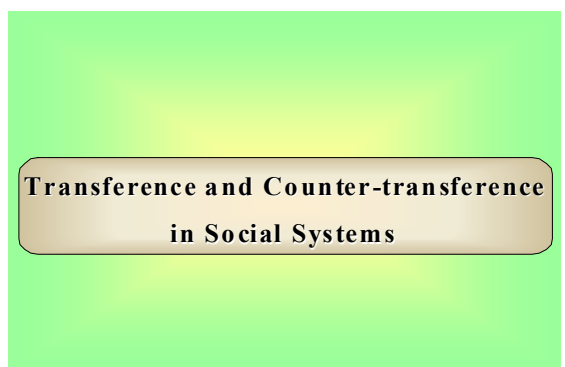
For those who have not had access to the analytic foundation of Part I, on which today's paper is based, let me give a brief summary of
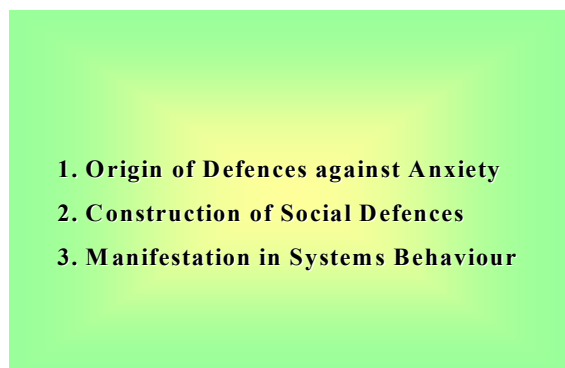

the three main sections of that first part. The initial section outlined the origin of the defences against anxiety in the psychodynamic development of the individual. The next traced the construction of the social or common defences against anxiety. The third section utilised a study of symbolic art and architecture to

explore the manifestation of the defences in the behaviour of social systems over time. In the initial section I indicated that everyone born via normal vaginal delivery
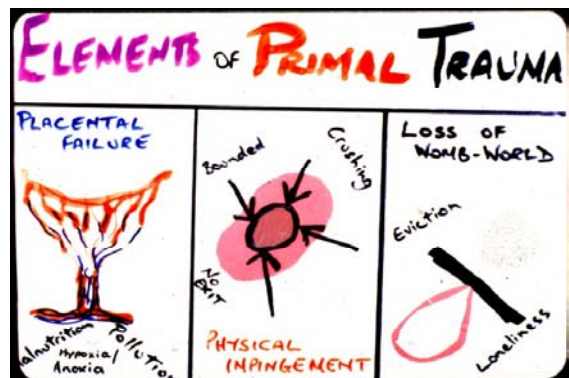

undergoes three elements of primal trauma, namely placental failure (with consequent malnutrition, pollution and hypoxia), physical impingement in the birth canal (with experiences of crushing, blockedness, pain, frustration, rage, terror, fear of death and despair), and loss of the known environment (the womb-world, placenta and attaching umbilical chord). The universal occurrence of peri-natal trauma (of which this is a benign example) leaves every neonate fixated in a condition of post-traumatic stress which is carried forward into the psychodynamic condition.
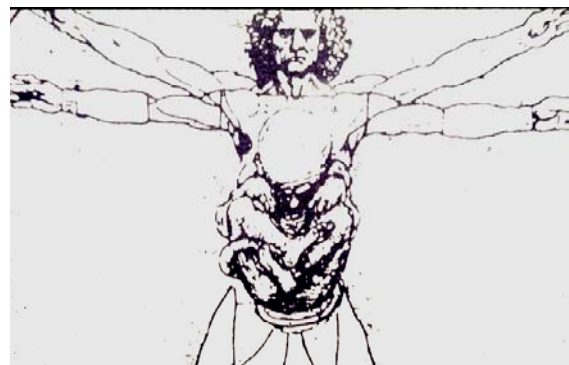
of every adult. These common defences are the result of the species-specific pathology of parturition which pre-dates all subsequent experience of child-abuse , the effects of which are overlaid on them. At an unconscious level we remain psychologically unborn, seeking to maintain regression to an idealised foetal state in retreat from the event horizon of birth while always vulnerable to re-stimulation or compulsive restaging of the traumatic process. The most profound psychodynamic defence associated with this material is the process of idealisation or splitting of reality into antithetical domains of absolute good and absolute bad with subsequent mechanisms of denial, repression or annihilation of the negative or evil side of the split.

That summarises the "Origins of Defences against Anxiety".   The second section addressed the "Construction of Social Defences".
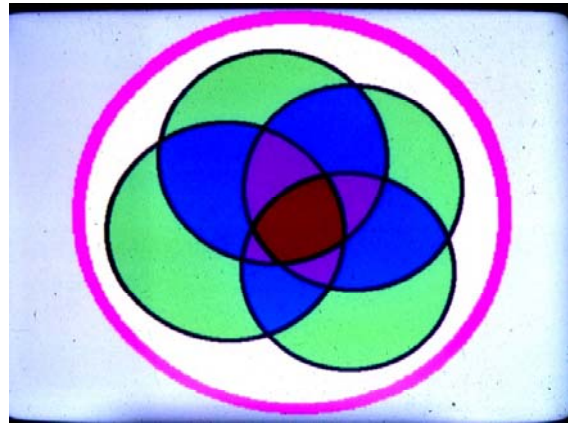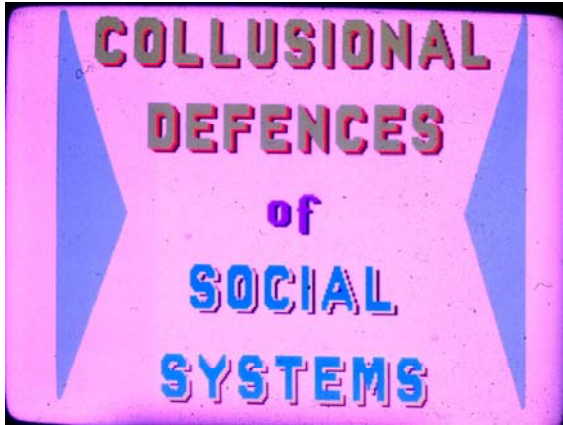
While every individual has their own specific history, the collusional defences of a group will cohere around the most common traumatic events and associated defences of the individuals involved. With rising numbers the statistical dominance of the birth trauma co-ordinates the development of the social or collective defences
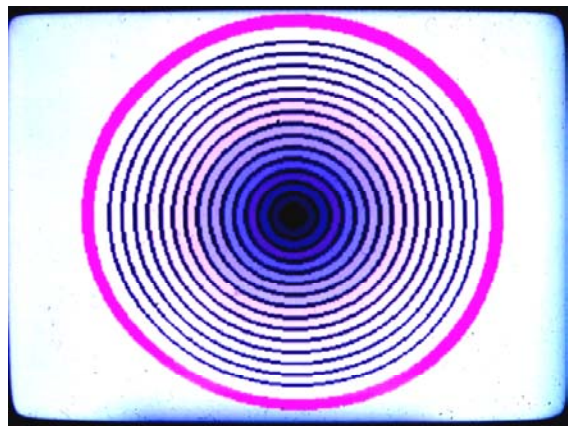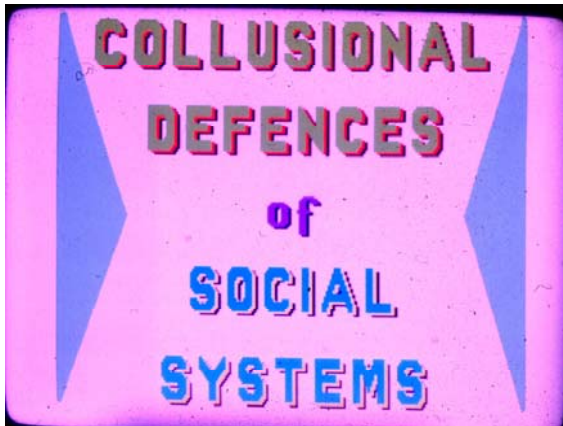
until they become the organising focus of the systemic dynamics. They act as a black hole in the centre of the galaxy of human behaviour, driving its unconscious topology while remaining profoundly resistant to penetrative analysis and resolution.

The third section illustrated the manifestation of the common unconscious defences in the behaviour of social systems down the ages by reference to

the art and architecture of sacred space and place at the heart of the centres of dependency of world systems. These are the nodes of defence maintenance and reinforcement within society. The ubiquitous images of placental attachment and idealised uterine environment act as containers for the living rituals and psychodramatic re-enactments of the human populations, evolving through many stages of displacement down the millennia of human history.

At an unconscious level our social dynamics are a corporate acting out of the pre and perinatal saga, the collective psychopathology of the as yet un-born. Civilisation is a fractal holograph of the foetal unconscious. At whatever level of aggregation the examination is conducted, similar patterns emerge like a Mandelbrot set of primal symbolism. The symbols of the implicate order of the womb-world are explicate in the world-womb. However small the element in view, the whole is present in the part and the part resonates with the dynamics of the whole.

That concludes my introduction. We have opened up a paradigm shift that enables Einstein's ("Why War?") question to Freud, to be addressed in a totally new way. The implications are now to be worked out and that is the agenda for this, the second part, of the presentation on the Psychodynamics of War and Religion.

Part II: Dynamics

Transference and Counter-transference in Social Systems

Part II: Dynamics

1. Boundary Conditions
2. Contextual Destabilisation
3. Escalation v. Integration

Here we examine boundary conditions between differing defence constructs, the emergence of conflict and the dynamics of war. That section leads naturally into an exploration of contextual destabilisation and eventually takes us to the watershed between the continued escalation of defence and the possibilities of integration, which were quite out of the question within the paradigm of the Freudian construct. A brief section exploring effective strategies of intervention leads into the concluding postscript which raises issues implicit in the process of globalisation.

Part II: Dynamics

1. **Boundary Conditions**
2. **Contextual Destabilisation**
3. **Escalation v. Integration**

We look first at boundary conditions. The boundary of the group or system carries the most intense dynamics of the collusional process. The boundary is perceived as the limit of the holding environment. It is therefore symbolically representative of the event horizon of the common foetal unconscious and holds by displacement the terror of parturition. The boundary separates the in-group from its environment or out-group and it is therefore at and across that boundary that the repressed negativities are projected. Collusional patterns of leadership and followership emerge within the group, dedicated to maintaining the boundary at all costs. Since the original ground of trauma is denied, repressed and projected into the boundary, activity is generated as if the boundary contains the very terrors against which the psychic defences are in place.

Just as the armouring of an individual re-presents the defences against irruption of psychic terror, so the armouring of the group serves the same purpose. We need our defences otherwise we would be flooded with anxiety, so the Department of Defence is responsible for maintaining repression of anxiety in the in-group by colluding with the projection of that anxiety across the boundary into the terror of the out-group and defending against it. Now we begin to build up a picture of the dynamics of conflict.

To cross the boundary outwards, leaving the in-group, is to be treated as a traitor, a betrayer and an apostate. Once beyond the Pale the errant person is treated as 'excommunicated', disowned, no longer 'one of us'. Re-entry is forbidden. The scapegoat carries toxic negativity and is no longer welcome. The family may blot out all memory of the one who is symbolically 'cut off from the land of the living'.

Crossing the boundary from outside to inside is met with acute paranoia. The incoming individual or group is seen as an invader, assumed malign, against which the most intense defences are raised. They are people who do not match our own. They carry by association what our defences are in business about, they are the evil to which we are blind in ourselves. Until they have joined us in some process of in-nitiation and accepted our defence system, the boundary cannot be closed. Ritual processes of incorporation have to be undergone and the new group may be treated as internal aliens over many generations. Any deviant presence within the internal space becomes subject to repression, export or annihilation in an attempt to maintain the purity of the internal space. The Patriot Act had this dynamic in the wake of 9/11.

The dynamics accrete to greater intensity with rising aggregation of group size. Procedures become more generalised, more intensive, more ritualised and enforced by higher levels of psychotic terror, rage and retaliation. Very large coherent groups will mobilise massive force, resources, technology and energy into their defence systems. The task is to maintain the unconscious field of the in-group as that of an undisturbed foetal being in an idealised good holding environment. Here it is defended forever from the possibilities of birth. Here it can grow forever without ever meeting the constraints of the limits of the holding environment. Here also its pollution absorption can be handled forever by an apparently infinite sink, the fantasy placenta.

So the universal trauma of birth constitutes the event horizon of the group. The dynamics of the inside are moulded to match the common foetal unconscious within its corporate holding environment. The boundary holds by projection the intolerable stress of parturition.

Looking beyond the boundary, in practice every in-group has its out-group but from the perspective of the out-group, the in-group is itself an out-group, and the out-group an in-group. The inter-group, inter-national and inter-faith dynamics of the world system represent a parallel resonant set of societies acting in concerted foetal collusion.

Inter-group boundaries are therefore characterised by crossed good/bad idealisation. So the in-group and the out-group hold together the two polarities of idealised good / idealised bad at the boundary between them. Each needs the other as a symbiotic shadow of the idealised internal state with the repressed negativities of the in-group projected and displaced into the containing out-group.

Part II: Dynamics

1. Boundary Conditions
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Nowhere is this more sharply illustrated than at the "Western Wall" of the Temple mount in Jerusalem. Each side sees the other as desecrators of sacred space. Here the tectonic plates of differing global defence constructs meet in potentially explosive juxtaposition. The boundary is represented by the wall itself. From the lower left what lies beyond the wall is seen as anathema, the sacrilege, the desecration of the Temple Mount. The Jewish side sees itself as righteous victim and the other side as desecrator. From the site of the Aqsa Mosque, the situation is reversed. It is an interface between different constructs of defence which mirror each other. I need you to be my enemy, you need me to be your enemy, my internal state is idealised good, your internal state is idealised good, you see me as the evil, I see you as the evil, we need each other. If the symbiosis becomes unstable and it starts to crumble in some way then escalating feed-back loops of transference and counter-transference weaken the defences against primal trauma and the titanic struggle of the birth canal is once again unleashed

in massive conflict. The system ruptures into psychotic mutual destruction, with the so-called "winner" being determined by the balance of power and resources. St. Paul's Cathedral survived the blitz on London. The heart of some of the German cities fared worse. Defences were absolutised. The "enemy" was evil, aliens were interned, dissent was suppressed, national unity was the order of the day.

At a different level the splitting between the defensive constructs of Communism and Capitalism was acted out at a distance in Vietnam. There are always victims caught in the cross-fire. Direct acting-out of the primal drama between the super-powers was suppressed because nuclear technology had so inflated the capacity for mutually assured destruction that grand-scale restaging became virtually unthinkable in terms of social survival.
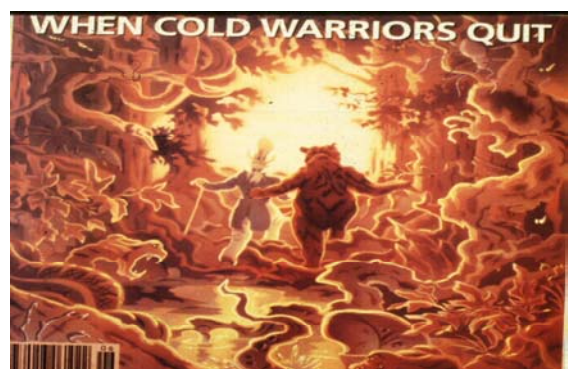
As Uncle Sam and the Russian Bear walked towards the mouth of the cave together at the end of the cold war (or did they regress deeper in towards the golden glow at the source?), they left a seething mass of internecine strife internalised at the fractured and fragmented sub-group boundaries within rather than

between nation states. Two years ago 84% of current conflict was intra-national across tribal, ethnic and religious boundaries.

Carter was shown as the all-good leader and the Ayatollah as all bad, with the hostages needed to maintain the split.

WHEN COLD WARRIORS QUIT
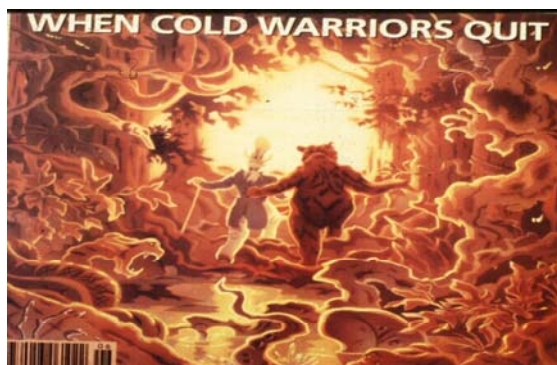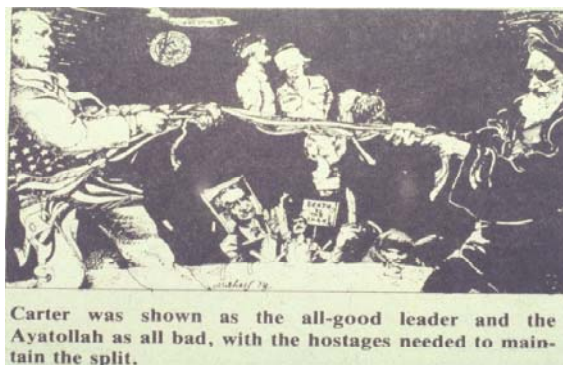
Slowly a new axis of evil was being formed as radical Islam began to fill the gap left by the ideological and economic collapse of the former Soviet Union.. Splitting intensified and the Evil Empire evolved into the Great Satan. Again we had polarisation across the boundary with the victims in the middle needed to keep the processes of transference and counter-transference intact.

Rising population and lower income per capita in the oil-producing nations raised anxieties about resource limitation. Growth faltered. Defences, psychological, ideological and military, were reinforced across the region.

On seeking re-election, George Bush Senior proclaimed: "We have won the cold war, now we have to win the economic war". Today, Professor Eliot Cohen, a neo-conservative on the US Defence Policy Board sees it in a different light. He describes the Cold War against Communism as World War Three, and the conflict with what he calls "militant Islam" as World War Four. "We are locked in a long term war with the radicalised branches of Islam which are deeply hostile to the United States… You have a very large phenomenon which is very difficult to figure out how to beat, which is capable of inflicting catastrophic damage."

That completes the first section on "Boundary Conditions". The scene is already set for the process of

Part II: Dynamics

Transference and Counter-transference
in Social Systems

Part II: Dynamics

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the second section dealing with Contextual Destabilisation.

Worldwide levels of stress and anxiety are increasing in the context of the last doubling time of the Global swarm. The exponential expansion of population began to slow down just over twenty years ago as it engaged the resource limits of its holding environment.

As J. W. Forrester concluded from his classic study of World Dynamics, many factors converge to their limits at this time. I have adapted several of his parameters and updated the list by adding some of my own. For example:

1. The expansion of industrialisation and consumerism among developing nations
2. Limits in the availability of energy, water, food and non-renewable resources
3. Environmental pollution, reduction in global commons and natural habitat with the resultant degrade in bio-diversity
4. Release of CFCs and greenhouse gases leading to destruction of the ozone layer, increased UV radiation at the surface, global warming, climate change, redistribution of rainfall patterns and increased energy in the weather systems
5. Emergence of phenomena of repetitive flooding, extended drought and chronic famine with associated humanitarian disasters and pressure for population migration
6. Travel and mobility lead to cultural and defence-construct relativisation and erosion
7. Bacterial and viral mutation, the HIV pandemic and the possible purposive spread of man-made infections rendered almost impossible to contain in the high-mobility culture
8. The globalisation of capitalism, and the activities of the financial institutions, drive the dynamics of debt, unbalanced trade and environmental exploitation and destruction with resultant increase in the inequalities of wealth distribution
9. The pace of the IT revolution and its application to drive hyper-exponential research and technology change
10. The explosive development of the world-wide web, the internet and digital multi-media communications providing real-time feedback loops in the social dynamics

We are facing a global crisis out of all proportion to any previously encountered transition in the history of our species.

The destabilisation of context has profound effects on the boundary conditions of human systems and on the processes of transference and counter-transference across them. For instance:

1. Any experience of overcrowding, resource deprivation and pollution triggers anxieties from the onset of placental failure, so rupturing the defence of regression to an idealised uterine state, and setting off a hyper-capitalist resource struggle to sustain the uterine patterns of exponential growth on behalf of the most powerful. [As an aside, collective perinatal fixation in conditions of increasing placental failure and imminent primal trauma set up the compulsive paranoid dynamics of greed and wealth accumulation that drive the processes of world capitalism. See my paper on the Pre and Peri-natal dynamics of Capitalism and the Free Market Economy, first delivered in Krakow in 1992].
2. Rapidation and the process of change re-stimulates repressed imprinting of the transition of birth. The assumption is that all hell is about to break loose precipitating the onset of the titanic battle of Armageddon. The forces of good are arrayed against the armies of evil.
3. Social anxiety-defence systems are reinforced in an attempt to contain the situation. Religious renewal movements proliferate. Fundamentalist strands of all world faiths gain in power and influence. Political systems move toward the right with new dominance by the neo-fascist and neo-conservative groups.
4. Repression of internal difference and negativity intensifies with increased projection of the shadow material into and across boundaries at all system levels.

5. Anxiolytic behaviour gains ground with rising alcoholism, drug abuse and dependency on anxiety-suppressing medication. Social passivity and intensified trance state are exacerbated by television and screen-based fantasy gaming.
6. As old defences prove inadequate for the task of containment there is a search for the development of even more profoundly defended social constructs in the timeless, deeply regressive dynamics of idealisation of so-called New-Age spirituality, split off from reality and enforcing the denial of all negativity - the new opiate of the masses, or more appropriately, the heroin of humanity!
7. There is increased expenditure on the acquisition and technical sophistication of armaments and their proliferation and deployment to system boundaries.
8. Those points at which social defences are already stretched to the limit break down into open conflict, destroying those very resources, lack of which triggered the break-down. Reinforcing negative feed-back loops drive the system into a cascade catastrophe with its own inner momentum of displaced dynamic split off from the precipitating signal.

Overall, the current phenomena of conflict, terrorism, war and religion during this twenty-year period can be seen as a response to rising anxiety in world society as a whole and as symptomatic of shifts in the social defence systems driven by the destabilisation of the global context and increase in the processes of transference and counter-transference across all system boundaries.


By way of historic illustration we could reflect on;
1. The removal of the Shah of Iran and the Shia revolution.
2. Strained relations between Iran and Iraq rumbled on with occasional breakdown into outright war. US provided support to Saddam Hussein and his secular Baath party as a bulwark against the spread of extremist Moslem power in the Middle East.
3. Increasing tension in the Arab/Israeli interface with the rising threat from an ever more militant Iraq.
4. Then there was the invasion of Kuwait with Saddam Hussein's avowed intent "To return to Iraq the part that the British scissors had cut off". The lost foreskin in the trauma of latency circumcision.
5. After the repulsion of Iraq in the Desert Storm, the coalition enemy was internalised and annihilated in the guise of the Kurds, the Marsh Arabs and the Shia rebels.
6. Meanwhile there was the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, with eventual US support for Osama Bin Laden and the Moslem freedom-fighters, leading to the eventual withdrawal of the Russian troops.
7. Rise of the Taliban and then, six months before the attack on the Manhattan Towers, there was the symbolic destruction of the ancient Buddhist statues in the very matrix of the set of far-eastern religions, which sent shock-waves around the world.
8. Double trouble with Chechnya.
9. Throughout the period, the Balkans also rumbled ominously with repeated eruptions into violent conflict. Here the three tectonic plates of Orthodox, Catholic and Moslem faiths intersect at a hot-

spot reaching back to the interface of Greek, Roman and so-called Barbarian empires. The less active Protestant/Catholic lines are drawn to the north-west in Poland, guarded by the Opus Dei and displaced into Northern Ireland.

10. Meanwhile the seismic pressures continued to mount in Israel. A supervising analyst from Jerusalem recently described the Dome of the Rock as the "most dangerous point on earth". It is the keystone holding the confrontation of three massively armoured and mutually incompatible global defence constructs.

We could have review material from may arenas of the world. For the purposes of this presentation I have restricted example to the Middle East which is our immediate concern. Returning to the images of Desert Storm, what was it about that operation that gave such offence
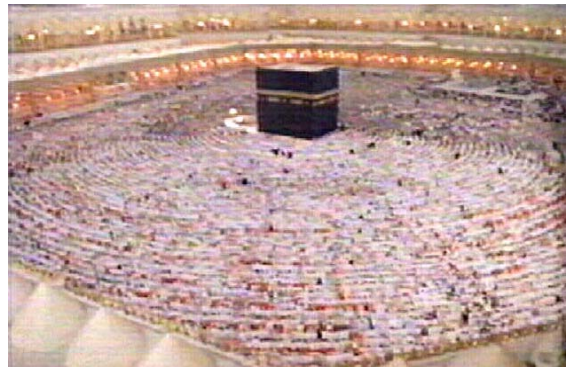

to the hard-line core of Islam? What was the transference that triggered the formation of Al-Qaida, the emergence of Osama Bin Laden as a champion of the faith, precipitated the destruction of the World Trade Towers, ushered in the ongoing "War on Terror", the invasion of Afghanistan, the end of the Taliban, the attack on Iraq, the toppling of Saddam Hussein, the re-emergence of Iraq's Shia majority, the escalation of suicide bombing and the increase of terrorist activity across the world?

To start with there was the desecration of the Holy Land of Islam. Infidel bases in Saudi Arabia. Infidel tanks churning up sacred desert. Women working and fighting alongside men and polluting sacred space. Decadent western culture seeping as a toxic influence into the very heart of holiness. Already the Saudi leaders were seen as apostate leading to the call to the faithful to remove them, to purify the state and re-impose the rule of Sharia. Effectively the battle-lines between good and evil had been drawn in the sand.

To understand that process we must look
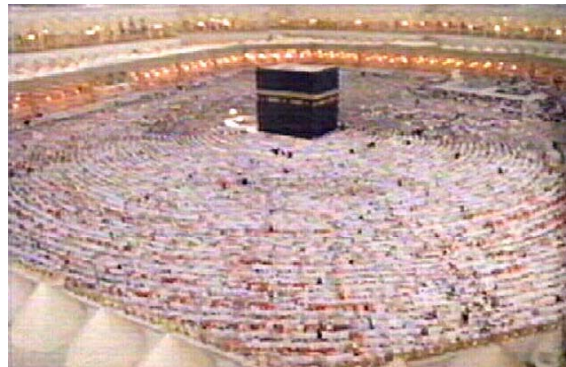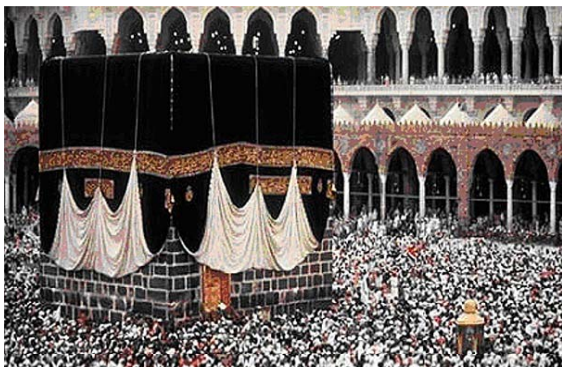
more closely at the very heart of Islam. The pilgrimage of the Hajj culminates in the seven-fold circling of the Kaaba in the focal point of the
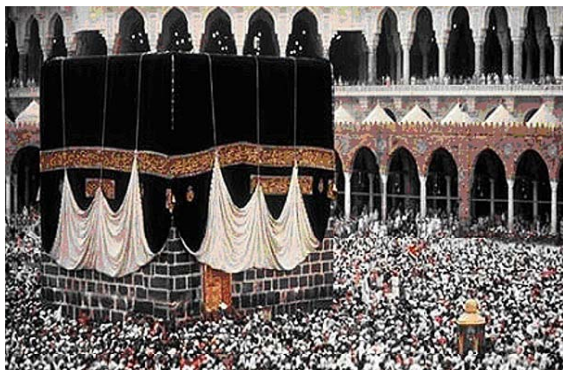
great open-air mosque of Mecca and considered by Muslims everywhere to be the most sacred spot on earth.

The process is a classic example of a primal defence reinforcement ritual. The ancient Black Stone, set in the Eastern corner of the cubic shrine, is kissed and touched by every pilgrim in order to remove his sin. Legend has it that the stone was once white but has been turned black by absorbing the evil projected into it. The pollution-absorbing sink at the heart of the sacred space maintains the idealisation process. Holiness or absolute goodness is sustained in the annulus between the Stone and the outer boundary of the faithful, beyond which lies the domain of evil, the devil, the great satan. The regressed uterine space of the great mosque becomes the container of the pollution-exchange process, the placenta of Islam, the Omphallos of the Moslem world.

The magic stone itself is reputed to have been given by God to Adam to cleanse him from sin. (There are clear parallels to the sin-absorbing role of the Christ figure in Christian mythology and in the ritual of the mass). If the object is in fact a meteorite then it may well have been white hot when it was delivered from the heavens. Certainly the stone with its shrine was a centre of cultic worship from time immemorial, associated with fertility rites, the three goddesses (three pillars of stone still support the roof) and the awe of the feminine. The intense gender splitting in Islam hides the female elements beneath a black cloth.

The developed construct of Islam carries within it the prohibition of radical critique on pain of death. It is therefore not only a very powerful system of collusional defence, but also a second-order system of defence preservation. If I were myself a Muslim, the last few comments alone would render me vulnerable to the Fatwah. The analysis of the personal psychodynamics of Muhammad that follows breaks the most profound taboo of all. I would quite understand if anyone wished to leave the hall at this point.

In the dynamics of complex systems, initial conditions are critical to the formation of presenting topology, so it is to the origins of Islam in the personal psychodynamics of Muhammad and his contemporary social context that we must turn our attention if we are to understand the forces driving the current psychodrama.

Muhammad's family belonged to the clan of Hashim, part of the tribe of Quraysh which dominated Mecca and made up most of its population. Hashim was not one of its more important clans but had some religious prestige derived from its hereditary right to certain offices attached to the Kaaba. The best records we have indicate that Muhammad was born in 570 CE, the "year of the elephant". The reference is understood to be to the year in which an Abyssinian ruler of Yemen sent an expedition to destroy the Kaaba. The expedition, which was a disastrous failure, is said in Muslim tradition to have included an elephant.

Abdallah, the father of Muhammad, died before his son was born. It is possible that he was killed as a martyr defending the Kaaba from the Abyssinian attack. Muhammad's mother, Amina, died while he was still a young child. Certainly the young orphan had been subject to a profound in-utero bereavement trauma laying down primitive defences well before his birth. Early mother-loss would have reactivated the imprint and reinforced the defences.

Brought up by the extended family, he showed early brilliance as a commercial administrator and found employment with a wealthy merchant widow. By the time he was twenty-five she had offered herself to him in marriage, and he replaced the dead husband in the life of the bereaved woman.

It was fifteen years later, at the age of forty, that Muhammad had his first "mystical" or prophetic, experience that was to be the conception point of the new religion. One of the most widespread traditions is that it occurred while he was in a state of solitary withdrawal in a cave on Mount Hira, outside Mecca. Here he "had a vision of the angel Gabriel and an experience of great pain and pressure, so that he thought he was going to die". Commanded to recite words, he felt incapable and ignorant. Eventually he was given the words which constitute the start of Chapter 96 of the Koran;

> *Recite in the name of your Lord who created,*
> *Created man from blood congealed.*
> *Recite! Your Lord is the most beneficent*
> *Who taught by the pen,*
> *Taught men that which they did not know.*

The episode is a perfect example of mid-life presentation of fixated pre-natal trauma. The context is the womb-like mountain cave associated with a site of cultic goddess-worship. The state is one of solitary withdrawal or regression. The experience is of pressure, pain and fear of death. The ground is the intra-uterine experience of a maternal environment convulsed in grief. References to congealed blood may indicate a near miscarriage associated with premature contraction precipitated by the shock bereavement. The classic defence is that of fixation, suspension of time so that the trauma does not complete but stays as a boundary condition, an event horizon of tolerable space and time. Regression is to the pre-trauma state of deep uterine life while the father was still alive, present in the maternal environment, with voice audible to the unborn child. The process of idealisation is absolute. Retreat from the experienced hell of traumatic impingement is to the post-trauma time of pre-trauma space cleansed of all negativities. It is a paradisical state of re-connection to the un-dead. Subsequent defensive presentation is a mode of psychotic hallucination, re-repression of the emergent trauma, male-female splitting, and the imposition of recitation of the written word as defence against anxiety. The experience was life-transforming and repetitive in order to hold the defensive boundary with psychotic grief and terror which constantly threatened to emerge. Any challenge to the psychotic defence threatened to re-evoke the primary trauma and was therefore suppressed with total prohibition.

Like-minded followers quickly gathered around the new holy man finding that the intensity of his process effectively defended them also from intolerable anxiety. The deviant group inevitably became the target of negative transference from the Meccan culture and they were violently expelled. He sent many followers to take refuge in Christian Abyssinia while he tried unsuccessfully to find support in the neighbouring mountain town of Ab Taif. He was eventually persuaded to move with some followers to the predominantly agricultural settlement of Yathrib, (later to be renamed Medina) some 200 miles to the north of Mecca. Here he established the first Muslim community. The cult grew rapidly around its psychotic leader who also proved to be a fanatical and successful war-lord. He led attacks on Meccan trade caravans and won an escalating sequence of battles with Meccan forces. Local tribal groups joined the movement accepting the discipline of Islam as the price for protection. Up to this point the prayers were said facing the holy site of

Jerusalem. The Jews in Medina, however, were the only group to hold out against the new construct. The process of transference and counter-transference at the inter-group boundary led to mutual demonisation and the displacement of the focal holy site from Jerusalem to the Kaaba in Mecca. By 630 he was able to take control of Mecca virtually unopposed. The Kaaba, already the focal point of Islam was cleansed of all its pagan statues, relics and practices. Eventually the ancient sacred site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, now seen from the perspective of the new faith to have been desecrated by the apostasy of the Jewish infidels, was cleansed in 691 CE and crowned with the Dome of the Rock, becoming the third most sacred site of Islam and the provocative sign of abomination both to Judaism and to Christianity. The defence constructs are also reinforced and differentiated by the practice of ritual genital mutilation. Neo-natal circumcision trauma is applied to Jewish males (and incidentally to many American males too). Circumcision of Muslim males takes place in latency. Female circumcision, though slowly declining, is still common in some Islamic cultures, but is not inherent in the faith. The rest, as they say, is history.

The detailed analysis is essential if we are to understand the psychodynamics at the heart of contemporary Islam. The intense, primitive psychotic defences implicit in the personal process of the founder, are explicit in the construct, rituals, behaviour and dynamics of the followers. The defensive pearl has accreted around the grit of pre-natal bereavement trauma.

So the shadow side of the Desert Storm was the desecration of sacred space. The presence of the infidel out-group brings into active focus the psychotic idealisation and projective transference mechanisms at the heart of the construct. It should not therefore be surprising that the system throws up a champion
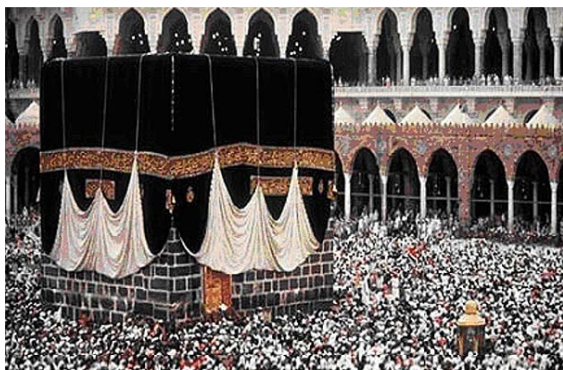

whose personal dynamics and capacity to mobilise cult-like followership into violent activity are congruent with the dynamics of Muhammad himself. He is the avenger, the defender, the purifier, the restorer, seeking to re-establish the effectiveness of the core defences of Islam which are perceived to have been violated, compromised and eroded.
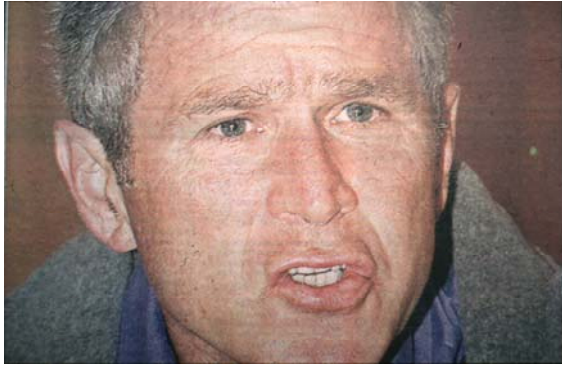
He faced a leader who has also undergone a profound religious conversion experience after similarly profligate earlier lifestyle. The dynamics of the Southern Baptists are not far removed from those of Sunni Islam. As a child George Bush had lived through the devastating illness and death from leukaemia of his sister Robin followed by the depressive collapse of his mother. As family cheer-leader he learnt to defend against overwhelming grief by splitting and denial. Politically he had come to power after the most evenly split election in American history. The twins were separated judiciously, one was crowned, the other symbolically killed. Heartland conservative conformity was elevated at the expense of liberal boundary and environmental diversity. The President needed an external enemy onto whom to project internal negativity and unify his power-base in the electorate. The two systems were complementary. Bush and Bin Laden were made for each other.
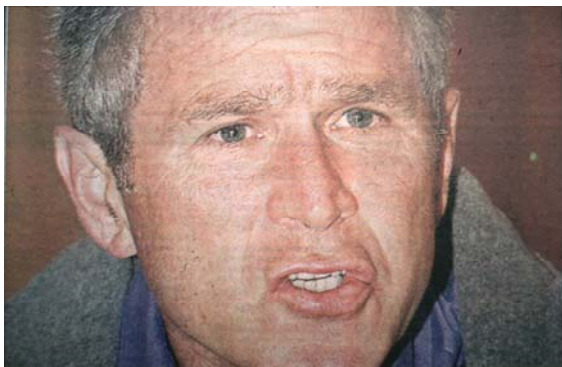
The sights are set. Notice that he holds the weapon left-handedly. A left-handed fundamentalist Muslim is sinister indeed. In his own culture the left hand holds negativity, the right is right. Perhaps after eighteen months we can see
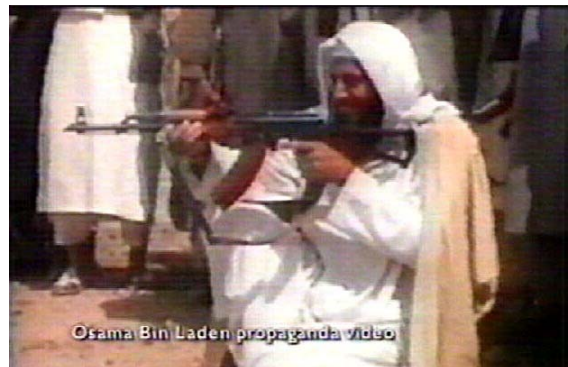
this as the defining moment of transference. It is the boundary transaction by which the internal feelings of violation, rape, desecration, outrage, grief and the fear of death are transferred from one system to the other. If you explore what is going on in that aircraft just before impact, from the point of view of the freedom fighters, the righteous self-sacrificing group, they are achieving the ultimate goal for which they have been born. This is the attack on Satan's stronghold, the symbolic revenge for the desecration of Islam. What is in that building is totally dehumanised, totally evil,

to be annihilated. The transference takes what had been felt to have happened to the Holy Land and pushes it back into the perceived perpetrator.

The in-group, denying all possibilities of common shared humanity, sees itself only in the white light of innocence, the champion of the victim, with a just cause justifying the ultimate sacrifice. Only by the artificial mechanism of splitting, projection and denial can such images be sustained. The processes are reversed as in a mirror across the conflicted boundary. The titanic struggle between the forces of good and evil is represented in the battle and leadership aggregates a kind of cosmic duty and belief that their cause, defined as the right, must eventually prevail.

As a new day dawned through the dust clouds of Manhattan

Americans looked back on the previous twenty-four hours as the Day that Changed the World.

And yet in a way nothing had changed. It had become a little clearer that this is how the world really is. One is reminded of Albert Einstein's words: "The release of atomic energy has not created a new problem. It has merely made more urgent the necessity of solving an existing one. A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive a move towards higher levels."

The new type of thinking did not emerge!

Dinosaur-brain response is to mobilise immediate counter-transference. To initiate a "Crusade of Infinite Justice". That is precisely what motivated Al Qaida itself.

Symbols of Iwo Jima arise from the wreckage. All ambivalence is annihilated. In-group and out-group are separated by absolute boundaries of good and evil.
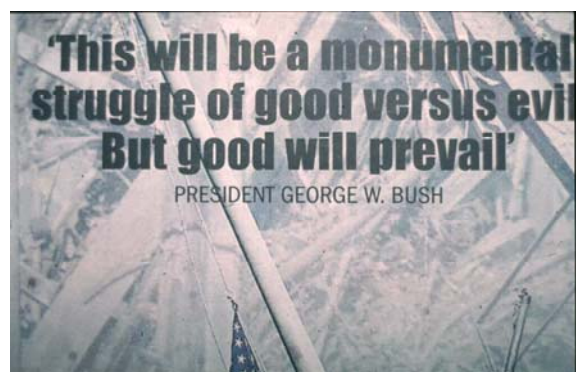
Slogans apply with equal force on both sides of the split.

Internal possibilities of complicity, responsibility, guilt, doubt or self-questioning are suppressed into the collective unconscious on both sides (they are un-patriotic). Boundaries of the secure idealised uterine state have been ruptured with shock and awe.


The titanic struggle of birth is the inevitable outcome.

This is how war evolves through the escalating process of transference and counter-transference; bigger counter-counter-transference, bigger counter-counter-counter-transference and so on, until the system breaks down into a mutually threatening polarisation of good and evil that is then activated into open conflict. Any intervention to damp the feedback process is deemed against the national interest and is political suicide.

Cultures that see their martyrs, heroes and victims as un-dying, passing direct to heaven, may be employing psychotic defences against grief and the fear of death, but they also remove one of the key safeguards that can damp the feed-back process. That applies equally well to the neo-conservatives of the Christian Right as it does to the paradise-seeking suicide bomber of the Islamic fundamentalist. With that construct in place, the unthinkable becomes possible.

The denial of death as a mechanism for repressing grief was profound after 9/11. When, eight months later, George Bush announced that "The past is over", therapists on the ground in Manhattan responded "We haven't got to first base in dealing with the grief".

It was therefore interesting to note that at the memorial service after the shuttle disaster
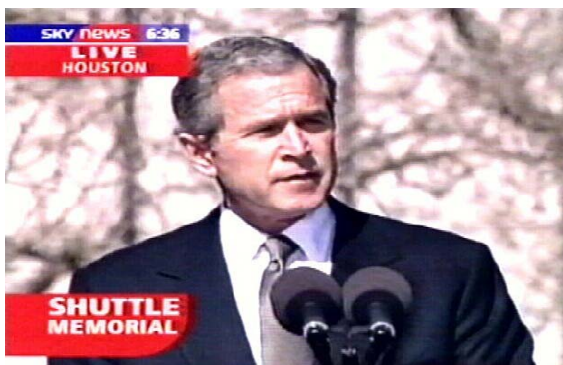
George Bush used the words: "They did not make it back to earth, but they made it home". (Don't cry Mommy, they have gone to be with Jesus. You will meet up with your loved ones again in heaven). His task as national dependency leader of a nominally secular country appears to be the sedation of grief rather than enabling people to come to terms with reality.
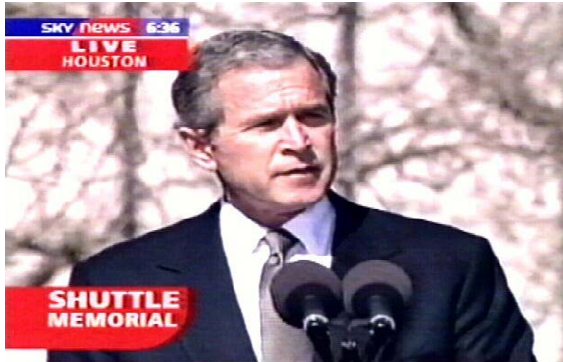
The religious convictions of Prime Minister Tony Blair also seem to hold at bay the "shattering" impact of his father's heart attack when Tony was ten years old. His father survived against all expectations, but his mother then died of cancer. He found meeting relatives of the British victims of 9/11 in Trinity Church, here in Manhattan, was overwhelming and the intense bond between the two leaders seems to have been forged at that point.

Displacement of unresolved grief into aggression and conflict runs like a continuous thread through the psychodynamics of social systems across the world. If birth is the archetype of bereavement (the loss of the idealised womb-world), then grief can precipitate the re-staging of birth in violent struggle between the forces of good and evil.


In seeking UN support for the war on Iraq, George Bush, speaking a year and a day after the World Trade Towers attack described the terrorists as "Bringing grief to my country". The decision to declare war on Iraq seems to have been taken well in advance, the political task was to find some way of justifying it. Many levels of historical motivation have surfaced in the past few months. Perhaps the most disturbing is the role played by the largely Zionist neo-conservative American Enterprise Institute, whose members now hold key appointments in the administration and in the Pentagon. Their briefing paper prepared for Benjamin Netanyahu when he took office as Prime Minister of Israel, recommended the suspension of the peace process, rolling back Syria and removing Saddam Hussein from power. The charge of high-jacking American military resources to carry out the Israeli agenda was met with a smiling rebuttal from Meyrav

Wurmser of the Hudson Institute with the words: "The group would not have been so powerful was (sic) it not for an administration and a president who is susceptible".

Need to prove himself stronger than his father, to complete his father's unfinished business, to take revenge for Saddam Hussein's failed assassination attempt on George Bush Senior, his wife and daughter in law (had young George W's new wife taken the place of the dead Robin in the affections of the family?) may all have played a part. But less conscious dynamics were also in action.

As an abortion survivor, rejected by his mother at birth and brought up in an extremely abusive home environment, Saddam Hussein had a history of restaging the abortion psychodrama. In the original mother of all battles, he hung in there and survived. Politically he was dedicated to holding on come hell or high water 'whatever you throw at me you will not budge me'. His pattern was to annihilate anyone who sought to oppose him or do him harm. He used his grasp on power to leech resources out of his environment in reversed retaliation for his experience of an environment seeking to take his very life. Exponential growth, wealth accumulation, self aggrandisement and massive paranoid armouring against all possible attack were all facets of his compulsive defence against the abortion trauma.
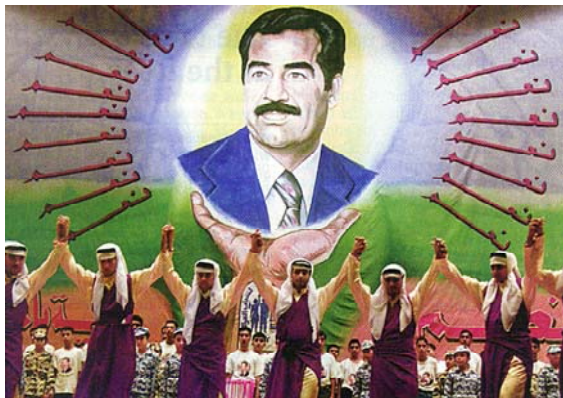
Two images from pre-war Baghdad are particularly symbolic. On the left is a painted backdrop of the haloed head of Saddam with his bust supported on the right hand of God. The exit from the idealised womb is omnipotently plugged. On the right is the flood-lit scene of Saddam Hussein Square in the heart of the capital. His giant statue is supported by a massive cylindrical concrete plug at the centre-point of a ring of pillars each of which represents one year of his life. There were spaces left for new pillars to mark future birthdays. If the periphery of the circle represents birth then the statue of triumph marks a much more primitive victory.

Eventually the inevitable was launched. Saddam Hussein had succeeded in recruiting George Bush as a bit player in the biggest re-staging of all. "Shock and awe" was unleashed on Baghdad in displacement from Manhattan. By all accounts the abortion attempt was unsuccessful again

and could only be completed symbolically. Even then his boots stayed in place! Freedom from the power of a tyrant is one thing, but freedom for what? Massive looting was one answer. Another

was offered by the Shia majority when half a million of them buried their differences and assembled in the streets of Karbala for the climax of a religious pilgrimage which was banned by Saddam's regime for 25 years. Marching to the city's holiest shrine, pilgrims chanted, swayed, beat their chests and even slashed their heads with swords to mark the 7th century martyrdom of one of their most revered saints, - Hussein, grandson of the prophet Muhammad. Hussein has gone, long live Hussein! Perhaps democracy means rule by the Shia majority and the imposition of the Sharia.

Meanwhile, back in Israel, focal point of the whole drama,

Sharon goes to lay a wreath at the Holocaust Memorial and Israelis compare Arafat to Hitler. At the same point one of the Arab members of the Knesset gives the Nazi salute to Sharon in open meeting of the Parliament and hails him as the new Hitler. Transference and counter-transference across the Arab/Israeli boundary restage the holocaust trauma

albeit with reversed roles. Moshe Hasani has been studying identification with the oppressor amongst Israelis and is convinced that it is actually Sharon that has been acting in the role of Hitler in vengeance and in identification with the oppressor.

So Palestinians are standing in for Jewish victims, while some Jews declare that anti-Semitism is in the blood of Moslems and some Palestinians respond that it is a pity the Germans did not finish their work. Perhaps the final solution is the removal of all Palestinians from the State of Israel. Certainly Yasser Arrafat has been side-lined as a precondition of participation in the current "Roadmap for Peace" and a new dividing wall to mark the boundary between inside and outside is being constructed on the Western Bank.

No road map is likely to lead to the desired destination unless it takes into account the intensity of splitting and mutual demonisation inherent in the opposing defence constructs and makes significant provision for the deconstruction of the underlying psychotic processes. Such an intervention would also require a similar movement of deconstruction of the equally psychotic defences of the Christian tradition.

That brings us to the present moment as President George Bush meets up with Premier Sharon and Premier Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen) of Palestine. That is the leading edge in the domain of psychohistory. The rest is psychofuture! Unknown, unpredictable, unstable. Underlying processes provide a strand of continuity. The following set of media images reflects some of the fears of further escalation in the Terror War, with only one of them bringing a note of reality from the global context. Even that is used to up the ante and inflate the underlying angst.

At the other pole of the US/Israeli axis the continuing War on Terror has its consequences. Attacking fear breeds fear. Increased fear is acted out in more violent behaviour, transferring terror from victim to perpetrator in a reinforcing cycle of transference and counter-transference.


Escalation of fear and paranoia is the order of the day in concert with increased suppression of internal dissent and the elevation of a neo-fascist style of social control


the population is prepared to think the unthinkable in anticipation of bio-chemical attack or the manufacture and release of some hyper-bug that spreads out of control.
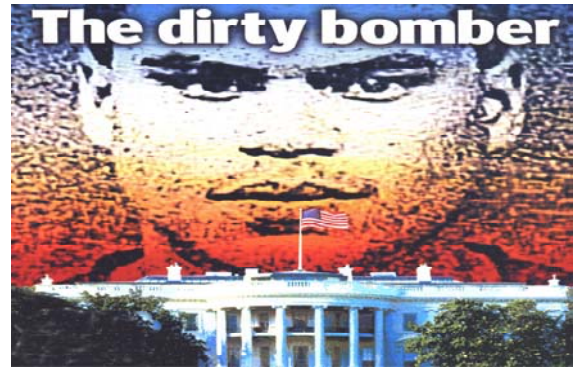
Fear of fallout from weapons of mass destruction returns to haunt the nightmares of the nation which possesses them in greatest measure. The ambivalent image rising from Lafayette Square may be threatening the White house, it may equally well represent perceived threat emanating from the White House itself.
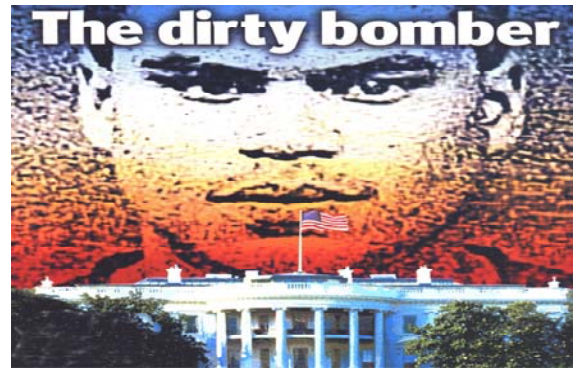
Meanwhile the fog of terror and the smoke of war blur the vision of the real drivers of the underlying realities of the global crisis, in the light of which current levels of terror are insignificant. A brave leader in the New York Times opined that the impact of CO2 emissions was far more frightening than world terrorism. "You ain't seen nothing yet!"
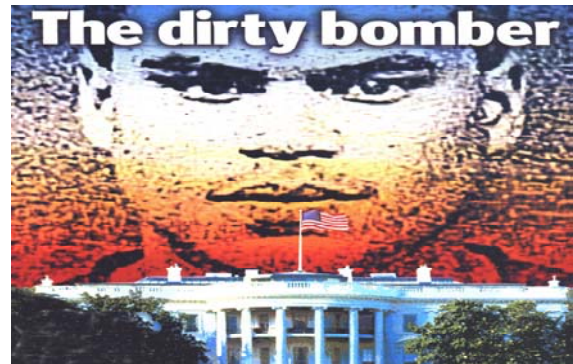
If the American Enterprise Institute and the even more hard-core neo-conservative think-tank, the "Project for the New American Century", continue to control US strategy, then a further series of "rogue states" will face the demand for regime change backed by all necessary force. Donald Rumsfeld has just put the ball in play for the next round.

So Michael Ledeen of the AEI: "This is a conflict between freedom and tyranny…. The struggle against evil is going to go on for ever…. We're going to have to bring down a series of regimes who are the sponsors of a network of various terrorist organisations…. Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, North Korea (although that's not directly related to the Middle East except in so far as North Korea has helped them)".

Please note that it is the Zionist agenda that dictates the selection, not the issue of tyranny in and of itself, nor the significance of threat to the USA.

At some stage in that programme we have to acknowledge the possibility

that the conflict could go nuclear, whether in the build-up of transference and counter-transference with North Korea, across the India/Pakistan boundary or in the increased capacity of distributed networks.

Addressing a workshop on War and Terror sponsored by the Institute for Group Analysis in London, Hanna Segal asserted; "When a psychotic basic assumption dominates a group (and maybe the combination of the military and the religious is the most deadly) then the whole group acts on that assumption, produces leaders who present that madness and through escalating projective processes, drives those leaders madder and madder and further away from reality". She noted that during the Cold War the anxiety stimulated by nuclear weapons mobilised the most basic psychotic defences to deal with the fact that our worst nightmares had become a potential reality. She concluded that it is quite impossible to "annihilate all evil and terror without destroying ourselves, because it is a part of us." [see my recent paper "Terror, War and the Death Instinct"]

The terror of death in the trauma of birth lies at the very heart of the human condition of alienation. Here is the point of fixation, the mirror boundary that reflects the journey into regressive reversal, the process of idealisation denying any possibility of survival and emergence through the hell of the impingement and

offering the only way forward as the journey into the past of uterine bliss. The imprint of birth becomes an event horizon at the boundary of a world with no exit. The only way out is to retreat to the point at the centre. The boundary is invested with the symbolism of death. It is apparently, a fixated engagement with unending agony, shattering fragmentation, ultimate rage, unbearable terror, unquenchable grief and unforgivable guilt. Salvation requires a vicarious death and a regressive rebirth into the idealised domain of the phantasised heavenly womb. Breakdown of the defensive psychosis precipitates the outbreak of conflict. Here the psychodynamics of War and Religion converge.

The fundamental unconscious myth of the human condition is that birth is death. The time has come to challenge that myth to its very core.

15 years of focussed consultancy-research lie behind the beginnings of the answers to the "How?" and "What next? Questions which we will be exploring during the workshop on Friday morning.

Today, the conditions of increasing pressure, overcrowding, degrading resources, malnutrition, pollution, high stress and rapid change, are precisely those in which the perinatal psychodrama is most powerfully re-evoked.

In terms of collective primal fantasy, humanity is reaching full term within its holding environment and is experiencing the onset of placental failure leading inexorably to the anticipated cataclysm of Armageddon. The myth is that after some convulsive conflict between the forces of good and evil, the world will be cleansed and re-born and a new paradisiacal age will dawn.

Reality could not be more different. There is nowhere for the species to be born and any further enactment of the perinatal psychodrama on a grand scale would render the situation immeasurably more damaged for the survivors.

In earlier periods of history primal dynamics have been projected into sub-group boundaries and acted out in win/lose conflict. That is no longer possible. All-out conflict of nuclear exchange leaves no winners. Mutual destruction is assured. It is no longer possible to flee the impingement of an oppressive continent, implant in a new world of wide open spaces (provided the indigenous populations have been dispossessed and ethnically cleansed) and start the process of development all over again.

The globalisation of the problem presents the containing biosphere as the limiting constraint. If the projections are acted out in relation to the environment itself, then we destroy the very ground on which we depend for survival.

At this critical point in human history we face
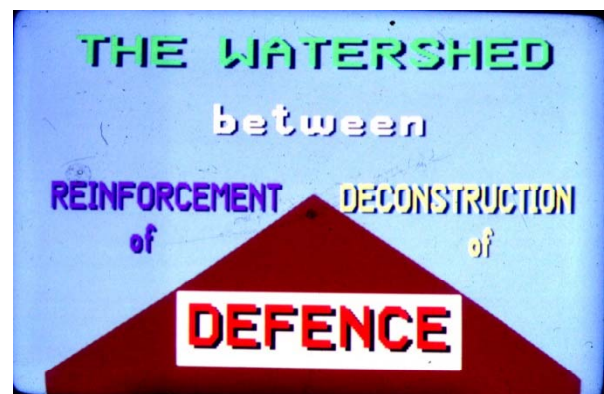
a fundamental choice between the reinforcement of defence and the deconstruction of defence.

On the one hand, we can try to match increase in anxiety by reinforcing psychotic defences and thereby condemn ourselves to the repeated enactment of the primal psychodrama. On the other hand, we can engage in a process of resolution of the underlying traumata and deconstruction of their associated defences. We would then need to withdraw the psychotic projections from all boundaries (both with other social groupings and with the environment itself) and engage on a global process of dynamic integration. The first option would appear to be the current choice.

The tragedy is that the anxieties generated by our critical global predicament may divert so much of our energy and resources into the dynamics of displaced perinatal psychodrama and the reinforcement of its defences, that we ignore our fundamental common task. We are not facing birth. That is the defensive myth of the collective foetal unconscious. We are adults dependant for our very survival on the sustainability of a fragile ecosphere. It is in this context that Mr. Meacher (Environment Minister of the UK Government) noted that failure to engage the environmental agenda with immediate and effective action could well render our planet uninhabitable within 30 years. We must not let the smoke of war or the fog of terror blind our eyes to this far more fundamental agenda.

As our eyes clear and we see our situation for what it really is our essential emotional response may well be that to which Al Gore referred when he said "The healing of the global environment depends initially upon our ability to grieve for the tragedy which our collision with the Earth's ecological system is causing".

We stand together at a most profound turning point in world history. It is the turning point of reversed dependency. We are moving out of an age in which humanity could depend for proliferation and survival upon the apparently infinite resource base of the global ecology. We are moving into an era in which that global ecology depends on the policies and actions of the parasite it has spawned. The transitional phase of that reversal is now upon us. The outcome depends upon our response. The future of our world is literally in our hands.

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