

Editorial: The unconscious psyche and its fabrication in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Korihi te manu	The bird sings
Tākiri mai i te ata	The morning has dawned
Ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea	The day has broken
Tihei Mauri Ora!	Behold, there is life!

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā manu tioriori, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa!

In a paper I presented at our Association's recent Conference I suggested that "psyche is the socio-cultural writ small, and the socio-cultural is psyche writ large". In offering this perspective, my intention was to gesture to the possibility of a dialectic concerning the ways in which the intrapsychic and unconscious nature of psyche interacts with the wider sociocultural context within which it emerges, and that this dialectic is central to the analytic and psychotherapeutic task. It is with this central dialectic in mind that, with great appreciation for the work done by my predecessors in building our associative community of psychotherapists here in Aotearoa New Zealand, I take up the role of President of our Association for the next two years. In doing so I want to express my tremendous gratitude for the creativity and potency of recent Past-Presidents, including my dear friend, Gabriela Mercado, who undertook the role with such energy, warmth and intelligence; Lynne Holdem, who poured so much of her creative energy into reigniting opportunities for us to think and grapple together with the challenges of psychotherapy in contemporary times; Sean Manning who with love and determination, stepped in at short notice when Gabriela took some time-out for family reasons; and to all those Presidents who have preceded me, from Maurice Bevan-Brown in 1947, onwards. As I stand on the shoulders of those who have come before, I bring my mind to the many challenges which we all face, as psychotherapists, and as citizens of this country and this world, in challenging contemporary times.

I have previously suggested that we face as a profession and Association some significant challenges and opportunities, including, in no particular order: the distressing state of mental health treatment in this country; the need to ongoingly enhance depth of

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understanding in relation to clinical theory and practice and in relation to the unconscious nature of psyche, within and beyond our profession; development of educational opportunities for new and for experienced psychotherapists; continuing and focused engagement with te ao Māori and psychotherapy in ongoing dialogue; promotion of psychotherapy generally within public and political spheres; the imperatives of the climate crisis and its extremely imminent consequences for our profession and for all of us; and the disturbing consequences of horrific inequities in our society and its implications for our individual and collective emotional health, and for psychotherapy practice. All these challenges, I suggest, are intimately interlinked; for they all reflect the dialectical interaction of the intrapsychic and unconscious psyche within the context of our sociocultural and political forcefield.

In a book review in 2012, in which I reflected on Donald Winnicott's (1986) collection of papers in his posthumously published book, *Home is Where We Start From*, I commented,

It is in the final paper, in which Winnicott reflects on the symbolic meaning of the monarchy for the health of Britain, that the themes throughout the book are brought to a potent synthesis. I have never been overly enthusiastic about the place of British royalty in our political sphere, much less our psyche; however, as Winnicott invites us to consider that the person on the throne [Queen Elizabeth II] is "everyone's dream" (p. 266), to be suspicious of the logic of rational thought, and to wonder about how this dream soothes and provides holding for us all, I felt drawn back into the poetic comfort of Winnicott's engaging tones. Once again, I felt invited to consider that, if the maternal environment is good enough, things will go well; that if the home that we start from is holding enough, then all will be well. It's a lovely dream, and Winnicott is a brave and evocative dreamer. For a moment at least, I felt lulled back to sleep, to dream this dream, and to feel held by the potency, clarity, and dedication with which Winnicott offers his vision. (pp. 106-107)

Winnicott is ambitious, as he takes psychoanalysis from the couch to the world; the effect is both encouraging and disturbing... The disturbance inevitably arises from reading papers of their time, ... Winnicott's unreflective consideration of his role in facilitating his patients' abortions, perhaps reflects Winnicott's time and context, and suggest that he, like his patients, may be influenced by things other than early maternal holding, or intra-psychic conflict; and that the structures informed by patriarchy provide him with access to authority many of his female patients do not have. Nevertheless, Winnicott's courage, his commitment to infant care, and his understanding of the impact on infants when this care is unavailable, is undeniable and moving. In addition, his emphasis on inviting the general public to consider the uncomfortable realm of fantasy, and unconscious motivations, as he takes psychoanalytic ideas into the public domain, is impressive. (p. 106)

There is much wisdom in Winnicott's reflections. An infant that is nourished by an attentive, loving caregiving other, has an opportunity to build a resilient emotional and spiritual self, an outcome which is impossible without such love, care, and attunement. At the same time,

the sociocultural and political structures which enable or prevent such individual attuned responsiveness, are crucial to the emergence or otherwise of such emotional care and consequent resilient emotional selves. Without a social fabric that is dedicated to the welfare of the most vulnerable amongst us we are all at risk of the inevitable disintegration of psyche and community which manifests in the trauma and dissolution that presents daily in our clinical offices, when body, mind and soul are under pressures that make it impossible for us to grow and develop in creative and resilient ways.

Thinking under emotional pressure

A story, perhaps apocryphal, comes to mind, about psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, whose clinical practice and writing focused upon the difficult and creative challenge of thinking under emotional pressure. A participant at a conference was attempting to enter a room for a presentation, only to discover that the room had been accidentally double booked, by two different groups. A commotion erupted in the corridor as this error was discovered. The participant spotted Bion walking down the corridor towards this distressed gathering, and is alleged to have asked, "Dr Bion, Dr Bion, the room has been double booked. What do you think we should do?". To which Bion apparently replied, "I don't find the circumstances are conducive to thinking", as he continued to walk on. The sociocultural milieu in which we are all engaged in contemporary times, is, in a much wider sense, under analogous, though far more undoing emotional pressure; circumstances of economic fragility, climate crisis induced anxiety, and destructive political polarisation, make thinking so desperately essential, and so tremendously difficult.

Thus, both in clinical practice, and within our Association, I often see divisions emerging between those who are committed to the unconscious and intrapsychic nature of psyche and so attempt to understand and think with patients about how their intrapsychic conflicts, deficits, and terrors, are unconsciously replayed both intrapsychically and within interpersonal contexts, in ways which are often destructive to self, to others, and of the relationships we so desperately seek to create. By apparent contrast, there are those clinicians and Association members who focus particularly on how psyche is fabricated by the wider sociocultural context, be that for example, the horrors of colonisation, and its tremendous harm to indigenous people, and the blindness of neoliberal economics, and its construction of human beings as individuals required to consume, compete, and withdraw from community engagement, in the service of individual productivity and violent domination of the natural world, with horrific consequences for the destruction of our ecological environment. I perceive that these dialectical perspectives are often reduced to attacks from one side or the other, in which the "truth" of psyche, and thus of psychotherapeutic work, is perceived as either entirely a matter of intrapsychic disturbance, acultural, and separate from the social world, or entirely the creation of socio-political forces, with no focus on the inner and unconscious world of the individual. By contrast I suggest that it is essential that these perspectives be continuously in dialogue with each other, for the benefit of clinical work, of our capacity to associate together as a community of psychotherapists, and as of citizens of this world, in very challenging times.

The dialectics of the unconscious intrapsychic and the sociocultural

Therefore, as I take up the role of President of our Association, I ask for your help. I am asking you to engage with me and with each other, not to withdraw, or destructively attack each other when difference arises, but rather to attempt to understand our different perspectives; to continually consider that the nature of the unconscious is intrapsychic, interpersonal, sociocultural, and indeed, transpersonal, and that dialogue with, and exploration of, the unconscious nature of all these realms, is essential to the art and craft of our profession.

Carl Jung defined the nature of a symbol, arising out of a dialogue between opposites, such as between the known and conscious and the mysteries of the unconscious, as “the best possible description or formulation of a relatively unknown fact” (Jung, 1971, para. 814). As a Jungian Analyst, I find tremendous possibility in this simple and crucially creative perspective. If we are willing to engage with the tension of opposites and allow synthesis to arise between seemingly different perspectives, a symbol will emerge amongst us, perhaps somewhat murky and difficult to discern at first, but one that will eventually move us creatively forward.

In this spirit, I am proud of our new name, arising as it has from different perspectives. Whilst we mourn our old name, “the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists” (NZAP), and embrace our new one, “the Association of Psychotherapists Aotearoa New Zealand” (APANZ), I feel invited to recognise more fully the place within which our Association and our psychotherapeutic work is located; to continually hold in mind both the intrapsychic nature of the individual unconscious psyche, and the context of this country, and its cultural, social and political fabric, within which our work with the inner world, the world of the unconscious, emerges, and is fabricated, a context that contains and continuously shapes intrapsychic possibilities.

Associating: An invitation to us all

There is so much work to do, and so much creative possibility before us. Our relatively recently elected government, and its Minister for Mental Health, Matt Doocey, have recently announced a range of mental health policy directions. My intention over time is to engage both in public discourse, and in dialogue within our Association, in order that we might offer our valuable contributions regarding the unconscious nature of psyche and its manifestation in contemporary times and contexts, as these manifest more widely within the unique context of Aotearoa New Zealand. I hope you will join me in this. For, if there is one thing about which I am certain, it is that we need each other, no matter how much we may disagree, hate and/or love each other; for it is within community that we have the best opportunity to counteract the isolating impulses that a neo-liberal economic ethos promotes.

APANZ Council is currently reflecting upon and looking to develop and enhance the vision for our Association, and the implications of this for our communications (digital and otherwise), both within our Association, and in the wider sphere. Our most recent initiative has been “Mind-fields: thinking spaces”. Every third Monday of each month, from 7:00 pm

to 8:30 pm, via zoom, members gather to reflect together on all matters psychotherapeutic. In the spirit of asking for your help in developing our capacity to associate together, to think and feel, and feel and think, in challenging times, I hope you might consider attending these meetings. And whether you do or not, I look forward to working, being, feeling and thinking with you all.

This issue of *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand*.

And thus, in the spirit of associative dialogue, we are delighted to present the papers in this issue. John Farnsworth offers us a stimulating and evocative exploration of the notion of the unconscious, including contemporary ideas regarding this complex concept; Malik McCann and Keith Tudor consider the challenging territory of racialised microaggressions and the implications of these for psychotherapy; Evelyn Shackley movingly considers her learning in relation to Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial cultural history and its implications for her clinical work; Chris Milton reflects upon the nature of states of analysis and states of non-analysis, particularly in relation to education in analytic clinical work; Keith Tudor, Kris Gledhill and Maria Haenga-Collins consider the relevance and implications of the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 for all psychotherapists in Aotearoa New Zealand; and John O'Connor explores the manifestation of intrapsychic persecutory dynamics within clinical and societal contexts; and in a second article John investigates the relationship between Melanie Klien's notion of reparation and C.G. Jung's concept of the *coniunctio*, including conceptualisations of the greater and lesser *coniunctio*, and the significance of all these analytic concepts for clinical work.

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Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

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