

BOOK REVIEWS

SCIENCE CATCHES UP

Archetype, Attachment, Analysis: Jungian Psychology and the Emergent Mind.

By Jean Knox. Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003; xviii+230pp. £17.99pb.

In his foreword to this groundbreaking book, Fonagy rightly describes it as ‘the first serious attempt to integrate aspects of Jungian psychoanalysis with the explosion of knowledge in neuroscience and psychology’ (p. xiv). He describes the book as ‘pioneering and revolutionary’ (p. xv) in that it will not only stimulate Jungians to think in a fresh way about archetypal theory but will also be a vehicle for developing greater understanding between the followers of the two founders of depth psychology. Freud and Jung both rooted their theories of mind in the best available science of their day; in this book Knox follows in the very best of that tradition as she explores Jung’s much misunderstood concept of the archetype in the light of the research findings that are emerging from the work of the attachment theorists and the work of those who focus on cognitive neuroscience.

Developments in contemporary neuroscience and attachment theory have brought renewed interest in subjective experience amongst those who study the brain. It is clear to many of us that the days of dualism whereby mind and brain could be dealt with

as entirely separate have gone. Yet some who practise psychoanalysis and analytical psychology still choose to shut themselves off from the world of empirical science. If approached open mindedly this is a book that might lead the reader to reconsider this position. Those in the analytic community who, with Knox, are motivated by the conviction that clinical work as well as requiring a most highly developed sensitivity and responsiveness to a patient’s inner world also benefits from a ‘reasonable grasp of the current scientific evidence about the information-processing mechanisms that underpin subjective experience and meaning’ (p. 1) will welcome this book.

In the second chapter, after noting the general neglect of Jung’s model of the mind, Knox draws our attention to Richard Lazarus’s work on emotional appraisal with its acknowledgement of Jung’s work on symbolism and unconscious meaning (1991: 295) and Paul Gilbert’s exploration (1995: 142) of the ‘links between Jung’s concept of archetypes and the emerging ideas in evolutionary psychology about innate mental structures’ (p. 6). Next Knox offers a concise yet comprehensive survey of earlier Jungian thought concerning Jung’s theory of archetypes of value to any scholar of the subject. After examining the complex and varied ways that Jung wrote about the archetypes, she identifies four main strands that repeatedly emerge in the

debate about nature of archetypes. They may be understood as, I quote:

- biological entities in the form of information which is hard-wired in the genes, providing a set of instructions to the mind as well as to the body
- organising mental frameworks of an abstract nature, a set of rules or instructions but with no symbolic or representational content, so that they are never directly experienced
- core meanings which do contain representational content and which therefore provide a central symbolic significance to our experience
- metaphysical entities which are eternal and are therefore independent of the body

Knox points out the ambiguity that arises in Jung's writing when the same term is used with a multiplicity of meanings; for example, when genetic instructions are also thought of as having core symbolic meaning. She stresses (p. 32) that elsewhere Jung was at pains to point out that 'It should on no account be imagined that there are such things as inherited ideas. Of that there can be no question' (Jung 1964; para. 4). She emphasizes her understanding drawn from modern empirical science that we must distinguish between 'implicit memory, that stores learnt information in an unconscious schematic format that provides us with core meanings, and innate inherited structures, which are hard-wired in the genes but which contain no symbolic content' (p. 29). Knox's exploration of the subject is at once scientific and philosophical, in the tradition of Jung, and as such is a demanding but rewarding read. She understands the development of the mind in terms of a complex interaction between inner and outer, between the subjective and the inter-

subjective, and conceives of the complex archetypal imagery of the mind as emerging from the internalization of day-to-day experience that becomes structured into core meanings. Knox concludes this chapter by emphasizing that a choice must be made between a biological and metaphysical view of archetypes and offering her own conclusion that the archetype may be understood as 'a psychological feature arising out of the development of the human brain' (p. 39).

This developmental perspective is further explored by reference to research concerning the way in which innate structures interact with the environment. Innate processes in animals are examined with reference to the classic work by Lorenz, the greater complexity of such processes in the interactive, intersubjective development of the human is stressed. Knox refutes the view that 'innate' implies 'information stored in a genetic code waiting, like a biological Sleeping beauty, to be awakened by the kiss of an environmental Prince' (p. 48). Rather, she understands the gene to act as a catalyst. She illustrates this by referring to the human infant's genetic instruction to pay attention preferentially to a face pattern, which is demonstrable from birth. Later this develops, with the individual baby's interaction with the mother, into the ability to recognize mother's face from others. Thus the self-organizing emergent property of the human mind is stressed and the research supporting this view is cited. Chapter 4 explores the archetype as image schema that is the initial scaffolding for the internalization of day-to-day experience and its internalization into core-meanings. Chapter 5 is entitled 'Trauma and defences, their roots in relationship.' I welcome Knox's exploration here of the clinical implications of the emergent, developmental view of archetype with a description of an attachment model theory of unconscious

defences. It emphasizes unconscious fantasy as truly psychological and I applaud its understanding of the developing child's way of protecting the self from unbearable reality that will determine the patterns of being and behaving that present in the adult in the consulting room. For me a weakness of the book is that the clinical implications of these vital insights are implicit rather than explicit and illustrative case material is sadly lacking. It is left to the clinician to make the links. This is redressed to a certain extent in the penultimate chapter where the process of change in analysis is addressed.

I would like to conclude by quoting Knox who says 'the developmental model of the mind that runs like a thread through this book is that emergence provides the key to reconcile biology with psyche' (p. 205). This thread is indeed the creative heart of this book. It enriches and clarifies Jungian archetypal theory in a way that is congruent with empirical science but more importantly enriches the understanding of all practitioners concerning the emergent, developmental, intersubjective process of coming into mind.

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ANOTHER EVOCATIVE OBJECT

Dark at the End of the Tunnel. By Christopher Bollas. London: Free Association Books, 2004. £16.99 pb.

What can psychoanalysis offer in the wake of 11 September 2001? Some answers are perhaps offered in Christopher Bollas's recent *Dark at the End of the Tunnel*, a politically daring, complex, and affecting novella focusing on the character of an unnamed psychoanalyst with more than a passing resemblance to Bollas, coming to terms with his own mortality and life more generally in a fictional world similar to our own. This is a world in which there has been a significant terrorist attack upon the developed world, in which much of the country seems to be under water, in which there is a nightmarish level of extinction, in which people are too busy to be ill, and in which religious fundamentalists are increasingly homicidal, if not genocidal. If all of this sounds too depressing to contemplate, *Dark at the End of the Tunnel* is actually that rare thing: a genuinely funny comedy with a credible happy ending. For example, the novel provides a witty description of a certain kind of metropolitan middle-class life where Osama dines with Mirabel at the Café on the Green, and where characters discuss the meaning of life over a new recording of the Goldberg Variations or a fashionably adjective-laden supper of 'wild sturgeon with honey-roasted horseradish sauce on a bed of wilted lettuce'; a dinner that, not incidentally, nearly kills one of the characters. I say 'not incidentally' because the pressing reality of death is at the heart of this novel. This is both as a consequence of the psychoanalyst's ruminations on the big questions of life and because of the psychic impact of the 'Catastrophe' on the vast majority of the novel's characters. As a