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The body politic: A Jungian perspective

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone

Department of Philosophy, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, USA

Correspondence

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, Department of Philosophy, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-1295, USA.
Email: msj@uoregon.edu

Abstract

This article looks deeply into Jung's writings that illuminate fundamental realities of political life. These realities are evident in the body politic of today's twenty-first-century world. In particular, Jung's detailed description of the archetype Wotan (the "ancient god of storm and frenzy") and his likening of Hitler (whom he experienced in person) to Wotan are presciently relevant to understanding prominent political figures in present-day global politics and the mass movements they incite. Jung's writings in fact challenge us to think specifically about the human dispositions, reactive tendencies, and affective motivations that generate and propel our troubled twenty-first-century international politics and its ongoing wars. These dispositions, tendencies, and motivations, in turn, point us toward understandings of human nature that bring to light its archetypal character, which includes its liability to hysteria, one form of which consists in the "talent" for believing one's own lies. Jung also names, but does not elaborate, a therapy that addresses hysteria, presumably turning individuals away from ignorance and disconnection and toward wholeness.

KEYWORDS

archetypal forms and relations, collective therapy and the individual, human nature, hysteria, leks, male-male competition or the "law of battle," Wotan

1 | INTRODUCTION

Understandings of the body politic require understandings of human nature. Carl Jung's insights into human nature are of particular moment in this regard: they challenge us to think about the dispositions, reactive tendencies, and affective motivations that generate and propel our troubled twenty-first-century international politics by way of its most prominent national leaders and their political actions. Jung implicitly identified the challenge when, in critically analyzing "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," he wrote: "In daylight everything is clear and tangible, but the night lasts as long as the day, and we live in the night-time also" (Jung 1937/1970, p. 93). He explicitly identified the challenge when, elsewhere, he wrote about "psychic epidemics":

[N]othing produced by the human mind lies absolutely outside the psychic realm. Even the craziest idea must correspond to something in the psyche. We cannot suppose that certain minds contain elements that do not exist at all in other minds. Nor can we assume that the unconscious is capable of becoming autonomous only in certain people, namely in those predisposed to insanity. It is very much more likely that the tendency to autonomy is a more or less general peculiarity of the unconscious This tendency shows itself above all in affective states, including those of normal people. When in a state of violent affect one says or does things which exceed the ordinary. Not much is needed: love and hate, joy and grief, are often enough to make the ego and the unconscious change places. Very strange ideas indeed can take possession of otherwise healthy people on such occasions. Groups, communities, and even whole nations can be seized in this way by psychic epidemics (Jung 1934/1980, p. 278).

Jung's keenly descriptive term "psychic epidemics" and his insight into a connection between "very strange ideas" in individuals and "very strange ideas" in "[g]roups, communities, and even whole nations" are acutely perceptive and warrant detailed examination. Jung lucidly describes "psychic epidemics" in *Civilizations in Transition* (Jung, 1937/1970). Four chapters of the book have substantive ties to Nazi Germany, but the descriptions therein are directly applicable to today's political world and its center-stage-seeking politicians, namely, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong-un, and Bashar al-Assad. Indeed, the chapters offer striking observations that illuminate today's political turmoils and their complex psychopathological origins. In effect, Jung's descriptions and insights are not prescient, clairvoyant anticipations of twenty-first-century human politics, but uncanny discernments of what may well be designated foundational human affective dispositions and foundational human kinesthetic dispositions-to-do. The dual dispositions substantively authenticate Jung's psychology of archetypes and the relations those archetypes engender. Indeed, one could with good reason insist that chapters in *Civilization in Transition*, including ones in addition to the four mentioned above, be required reading for anyone wanting to gain sound understandings of psychic epidemics and the motivational and actional character of particular 21st century politicians, namely, those seeking power *über alles* and who are in truth and in a psychopathological sense self-addicted. Wotan is the archetypal figure whom Jung singles out in this context and who anchors these understandings.

2 | WOTAN—THE SEIZER AND THE SEIZED

Wotan is "the god of storm and frenzy, the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle; and moreover he is a superlative magician and artist in illusion who is versed in all secrets of an occult nature" (Jung, 1937/1970, p. 182), a "god of storm and a god of secret musings" (*ibid.*, p. 184). When Jung remarks that:

*the impressive thing about the German phenomenon [i.e., the period of the early and mid-1930s in which Hitler rose to power] is that one man, who is obviously "possessed" has infected a whole nation to such an extent that everything is set in motion and has started rolling on its course towards perdition (*ibid.*, p. 185),*

one might think of George W. Bush and his desire to be a "war president," his subsequent "war on terror," the Presidential memo that established torture programs at Guantánamo and elsewhere, and so on. Jung's point, however, is not simply to recognise "the man," but the effect of "the man." In particular, he lucidly shows how there are two sides to the "general phenomenon" of *Ergriffenheit*, "a state of being seized or possessed" (*ibid.*, p. 184): there is the one who seizes and the one who is seized—the *Ergreifer* and the *Ergriffener*. The one who is seized is not in fact a single person, but a whole society, a whole society that is in the thrall of a political mass movement. As Jung later remarks, at such a time:

*the life of nations rolls on unchecked, without guidance, unconscious of where it is going, like a rock crashing down the side of a hill, until it is stopped by an obstacle stronger than itself. Political events move from one impasse to the next, like a torrent caught in gullies, creeks, and marshes. All human control comes to an end when the individual is caught in a mass movement. (*ibid.*, p. 189)*

We might note that the mass movement that followed the terrorist attack of 9 September 2001 was that of a single nation that ran counter to the commitment by the United Nations to an ongoing assessment of whether weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq. Those in executive power in that single nation—the consolidated *Ergreifer*—inculcated fear, a psychic fear of *the enemy*, a personage or nation that could come from anywhere and which required appropriate measures by citizens, such as duct-taping windows. As noted elsewhere: “Fear of terrorism was willfully injected into public life . . . to secure trust in the federal government” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2016, p. 173). Such trust engendered obeisance to those in power. Thus, trust and obeisance were politically cemented by the social manipulation and control of fear.

Fear of the unknown, of the uncertain, of “what may come if I do or do not do such and such” is an emotion which is both fundamental and ubiquitous in the sense of extending across domains of animate life. Such fear was indeed formerly recognised and studied as such in the biologically anchored movements of approach and avoidance (Schneirla, 1959). Consider the following description, one of many possible examples from natural history that strikingly pinpoints the relationship between the *Ergreifer* and the *Ergriffener*:

There is no mistaking a dominant male macaque. These are superbly muscled monkeys. Their hair is sleek and carefully groomed, their walk calm, assured and majestic. They move in apparent disregard of the lesser monkeys who scatter at their approach. For to obstruct the path of a dominant male or even to venture, when unwelcome, too near to him is an act of defiance, and macaques learn young that such a challenge will draw a heavy punishment A dominant animal controls the space around it It can invade an inferior's space as a right, whereas no inferior would dare to venture into its space without first making a gesture of appeasement On being threatened by a definitely dominant monkey, a subordinate is likely to display submission. Confronted with a fixed stare, it will look away. Faced with a possible charge, it is likely to crouch close to the ground, its head turned away. And if it flees and is chased, it will cringe away from the threatened bite or try to avoid punishment by presenting its hindquarters. (Eimerl & DeVore, 1965, pp. 106, 108, 109)

Though not identified as such, a dominant male macaque is a male archetype in the Kingdom Animalia. The archetype is readily apparent in primatologists' descriptions of the “silverback,” for example, the “undisputed leader” of a social group of gorillas (Fossey, 1983, p. 10), and in descriptions of “the leader” of a group of chimpanzees, a leader who exercises control over others and who is found as well “in many species of primates” (De Waal, 1982 p. 23, pp. 124–125). The leader in such instances is often identified as the alpha male. While Wotan is definitely not an alpha male—he is, after all, a God, not a mere mortal creature—he is definitely an archetypal male who figures not only specifically in Jung's psychoanalytic of “contemporary events” (Jung 1937/1970), but even more extensively in figures Jung likens to Wotan: Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the Roman god Mercury, the Greek gods Dionysus and Hermes, and so on. Moreover, while the mass movement given in obeisance to Wotan is clearly exponentially greater than the group movement given in obeisance to a dominant male macaque, the two males are not wholly dissimilar. They in fact basically resemble one another: each “seizes” others by dint of his superlative power and thereby constitutes a “mass” of others who are “seized.” Those who are seized are well aware that the seizer will not tolerate malfeasance. The archetypal *Ergreifer* is an all-powerful male to whom obeisance is obligatory.

Given his description as *Ergreifer*, “the god of storm and frenzy, the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle” (Jung, 1937/1970, p. 182), Wotan's presence is clearly discernible in today's twenty-first-century human world. He thus has statuesque and behavioral affinities not only to Hitler and to dominant males in nonhuman animal species but to highly visible present-day males who, in general, are cut from the same archetypal cloth. While not all are “superbly muscled,” all are “assured,” “majestic,” and control the space about them, taking no back talk or counter-moves from anyone. In fact, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong-un, and Bashar al-Assad strut their twenty-first-century hour upon the stage in ways coincident with the dominant male macaque—some, like Hitler, in far more deadly ways than a dominant male macaque. Jung's portrayal of Hitler as a Wotan archetype and his psychoanalytic

characterisation of Hitler as a hysteric warrant detailed exposition in this respect for they enlighten us psychologically about our own twenty-first-century incarnations.

To begin with, Jung states that "A more accurate diagnosis of Hitler's condition would be *pseudologia phantastica*, that form of hysteria which is characterized by a peculiar talent for believing one's own lies" (Jung 1937/1970, pp. 203–204). He has in fact earlier remarked that:

[T]he hysteric always complains of being surrounded by people who are incapable of appreciating him and who are activated only by bad motives; by inferior mischief-makers, a crowd of submen who should be exterminated neck and crop so that the Superman can live on his high level of perfection (ibid., p. 203).

He later points out that "For a short spell, such people usually meet with astounding success, and for that reason are socially dangerous. Nothing has such a convincing effect as a lie one invents and believes oneself." (ibid., p. 204)

Clearly, the archetypal male hysteric whom Jung describes is recognisable. Striking resemblances obtain between the *pseudologia phantastica* condition of the hysteric and *pseudologia phantastica* condition of Trump, Putin, Kim, and Assad. By whatever nefarious and deceitful means are needed and employed, these present-day Wotan archetypes plump up their own stature, denigrating and even exterminating those who fail to recognise their Superman authority. They thereby solidify themselves as implacable leaders, opposable by no one. Jung's character assessment of Hitler, one of whose "ranting speeches" he heard in person and thus saw Hitler's harangue "with my own eyes" (ibid., p. 204), is in fact applicable to at least two of these twenty-first-century national leaders and, in part, to all of them:

A sorry lack of education, conceit that bordered on madness, a very mediocre intelligence combined with the hysteric's cunning and the power fantasies of an adolescent, were written all over this demagogue's face. His gesticulations were all put on, devised by an hysterical mind intent only on making an impression. He behaved in public like a man living in his own biography, in this case as the somber, daemonic "man of iron" of popular fiction, the ideal of an infantile public whose knowledge of the world is derived from the deified heroes of trashy films For this theatrical hysteric and transparent impostor was not strutting about on a small stage, but was riding the armoured divisions of the Wehrmacht, with all the weight of German industry behind him. (ibid., p. 204)

Jung's further remarks on "the seized" are equally striking and surely significant in light of present-day Wotanesque archetypes. The leader's "extreme speciousness," which Jung describes as "the peculiar genius of *pseudologia phantastica*" (ibid., p. 205), readily takes its toll on the seized. Yet, as Jung observes, deception may not be the main goal:

Where pseudologia is at work one can never be sure that the intention to deceive is the principal motive. Quite often the "great plan" plays the leading role, and it is only when it comes to the ticklish question of bringing this plan into reality that every opportunity is exploited and any means is good enough, on the principle that "the end justifies the means." In other words, things only become dangerous when the pathological liar is taken seriously by a wider public But I should like to emphasize above all that it is part and parcel of the pathological liar's make-up to be plausible. Therefore it is no easy matter, even for experienced people, to form an opinion, particularly while the plan is still apparently in the idealistic stage. (ibid., pp. 205–206)

Jung's observations concerning deception are of paramount import to take into account with respect to the seized, for the seized may clearly be duped. This may, in part, be because the everyday public does not recognise the hysteric. Shortly after emphasising deception, Jung goes on to clarify just what he means by "hysteria." He first states,

As I cannot take it for granted that the layman knows exactly what is meant by "hysteria," I had better explain that the "hysterical" disposition forms a sub-division of what are known as "psychopathic

inferiorities.” This term by no means implies that the individual or the nation is “inferior” in every respect, but only that there is a place of least resistance, a peculiar instability, which exists independently of all the other qualities. An hysterical disposition means that the opposites inherent in every psyche, and especially those affecting character, are further apart than in normal people. (ibid., pp. 206-207)

He then goes on to explain the nature of hysteria:

The essence of hysteria is a systematic dissociation, a loosening of the opposites which normally are held firmly together. It may even go to the length of a splitting of the personality, a condition in which quite literally one hand no longer knows what the other is doing. As a rule there is amazing ignorance of the shadow; the hysteric is only aware of his good motives, and when the bad ones can no longer be denied he becomes the unscrupulous Superman and Herrenmensch who fancies he is ennobled by the magnitude of his aim. (ibid., pp. 207-208)

Given the theatrical powers of the Superman, it is no wonder that people are taken in. They are themselves ennobled by the good motives of the Superman. They are part of the “great plan,” indeed ardent followers of the Superman's reality. When Jung later describes the Superman's lack of reality in ways comparable to Faust and the convincing way in which that specious reality resonates with everyday citizens, making them equally “hysteric,” he leaves no doubt but that many a follower of today's Superman leader (the *Ergriffener*) marches in step with his or her Superman:

The lack of reality, so striking in Faust, produces a corresponding lack of realism in the German. He merely talks of it, boasting of his “ice-cold” realism, which in itself is enough to expose his hysteria. His realism is nothing but a pose, a stage-realism. He merely acts the part of one who has a sense of reality, but what does he actually want to do? He wants to conquer the world in spite of the whole world. Of course he has no idea how it can be done. (ibid., p. 208)

In sum, the *Ergreifer* and the *Ergriffener* are descriptive of sociopolitical archetypes that are central to understandings of twenty-first-century international politics. In effect, what Jung is describing by these terms is pertinent not only to a description of Nazi Germany but also to twenty-first-century alpha males, and, specifically, to dominant human males leading nations of trusting and obedient believers in their *pseudologia phantastica*. There are not just national leaders and followers but psychologically-anchored seizers and seized. Though not specified as such, the *Ergreifer* and the *Ergriffener* aptly describe earlier human times as well. In the sixteenth century, Montaigne wrote with trenchant wisdom about *pseudologia phantastica* in terms of “believing” and about what amounts to a rendition of the relationship of *Ergreifer* and *Ergriffener*: “Some people make the world believe that they hold beliefs they do not hold. A greater number make themselves believe it, having no idea what ‘believing’ really means, once you go deeply into the matter” (Montaigne, 1580/2003, p. 494). Later in the same essay, he comments about “these know-alls who are ignorant of nothing and make rules for the whole Universe” (ibid., p. 604), and proceeds to observe:

We parrot whatever opinions are commonly held, accepting them as truths, with all the paraphernalia of supporting arguments and proofs, as though they were something firm and solid; nobody tries to shake them; nobody tries to refute them. On the contrary, everybody vies with each other to plaster over the cracks and prop up received beliefs with all his powers of reason—a supple instrument which can be turned on the lathe into any shape at all. Thus the world is pickled in stupidity and brimming over with lies. (ibid., p. 605)

That the world is “pickled in stupidity and brimming over with lies” may remind us of the popularity of “fake news” in today's world, a popularity that includes summarily dismissing what others write and say as “fake” and implicitly or explicitly upholding one's own words as “true.” For example, when Ismail Haniya, Hamas's new leader, circulated a document that specified a more moderate policy—it severed its association with the Muslim Brotherhood and no

longer called for the destruction of Israel—Reuters News reported how the Israeli government, Netanyahu in particular, responded to the new policy:

The Israeli government has said the document aimed to deceive the world that Hamas was becoming more moderate. Netanyahu, in a 97-second video clip aired on social media on Sunday, said that news outlets had been taken in by “fake news.” Sitting behind his desk with tense music playing in the background, he said that in its “hateful document,” Hamas “lies to the world.” He then pulled up a waste paper bin, crumpled the document into a ball and tossed it away. (Lewis, 2017)

3 | ARCHETYPAL CORPOREAL-KINETIC FORMS AND RELATIONS

The body politic is not simply a metaphor by which to describe a nation in bodily terms; it is constituted by real-life individuals, individuals such as Hitler, Trump, Putin, Kim Jong-un, and Assad. As the above section shows, a Jungian perspective on the body politic clearly says as much. An extended consideration of Jung's psychoanalytic of archetypes will in fact show how archetypes are not merely psychic images but corporeal-kinetic realities.

In his psychoanalytic of archetypes, Jung singles out the Shadow. He points out that:

The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort . . . that to become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real . . . [and that] the inferiorities constituting the shadow . . . have an emotional nature, [and thus] a kind of autonomy. (Jung, 1951/1978, p. 8)

That the shadow is “a moral problem” derives from the fact that emotions are “not an activity of the individual but something that happens to him” (ibid., p. 9).

Archetypes commonly constitute the overarching archetype of the shadow. As figures in “the collective unconscious” (ibid., p. 8), they are symbolic figures that one finds in the dreams of humans, in their mythologies and folk tales, and, as is evident in Jung's linking of Hitler to Wotan, in real-life individuals. Even as found in real-life individuals, an archetype is not a conscious representation or formation of any kind but remains precisely a psychic figure. Yet, as Jung affirms, the archetype has “an emotional nature” (Jung, 1964/1968, p. 57). It is thus not surprising that archetypes are “primordial images,” akin to the primordial urges that constitute instincts (ibid., p. 58). In providing empirical anchorage for his affirmation, Jung states that:

No biologist would ever dream of assuming that each individual acquires his general mode of behavior afresh each time. It is much more probable that the young weaver-bird builds his characteristic nest because he is a weaver-bird and not a rabbit. (Jung, 1928/1969, p. 136)

He pinpoints his intended comparison when he writes:

Similarly, it is more probable that man is born with a specifically human mode of behavior and not with that of a hippopotamus or with none at all. Integral to his characteristic behavior is his psychic phenomenology, which differs from that of a bird or quadruped. Archetypes are typical forms of behavior which, once they become conscious, naturally present themselves as ideas and images. . . . Because it is a question of characteristically human modes, it is hardly to be wondered at that we can find psychic forms in the individual. (ibid., pp. 136–137, original emphasis)

It is notable that earlier in this same text, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Jung states that:

Since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another and ultimately rest on irrepresentable, transcendental factors, it is not only possible but fairly probable, even, that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing. (ibid., p. 125)

Taking seriously Jung's affirmation and his reasoning that "psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing," we have the possibility of extending an understanding of archetypes, namely, of showing how archetypes are not simply psychic figures in a wholly mental sense, but, being empirically evident in "typical forms of behavior," they are *corporeal-kinetic psychic figures*. In short, "behavior" is a qualitative, kinetic dynamic: "typical forms of behavior" have an *archetypal corporeal-kinetic character*, a particular "characteristically human" mode that can be spelled out in terms of corporeal-kinetic archetypal forms and relations. Indeed, Jung's descriptive account of the mythological god Wotan and *Ergriffenheit*, "the god of storm" and "secret musings" and the "state of being seized or possessed," implicitly testifies to these forms and relations and to their "emotional nature." Archetypal figures move in ways dynamically synchronic with the archetypal figures they are, thus not only the archetypal dominant male, but the archetypal miser, for example, the archetypal coward, the archetypal clown, the archetypal seductress, and so on. The figures, after all, are not statues but corporeal-kinetic animate forms whose movement and affective dynamics dynamically impact those around them, precisely as do the movement and affective dynamics of Wotan and Hitler, and of Trump, Putin, Kim Jong-un, and Assad, in being "Ergreifer of men" (Jung 1937/1970, p. 184), and as do the movement and affective dynamics of the dominant male macaque that impact "the lesser monkeys who scatter at [his] approach." In such instances, the differentiation between those in power and those in obeisance is affectively and kinetically evident: the submissive and duly obeisant movement of the masses is dynamically distinguishable from that of their leader whose movement and gestures articulate power and demand subservience. In effect, it is not simply a matter of "typical forms of behavior"; it is a matter of *particular and distinctive kinetic-affective dynamics*.

Archetypal corporeal-kinetic forms and relations are implicit not only in Jung's descriptions of Wotan, Hitler, and "mass man," and in ethologists' descriptions of dominant males and "lesser" individuals. They are implicit in Jung's psychoanalytic writings more generally, including his writings on mandalas (Jung, 1934/1980, 1942/1983; see also Sheets-Johnstone, 1994), and implicit as well in ethological descriptions of nonhuman animal courtship rituals—in primate female presenting, for example, and in male displays such as that of male peacocks involving feathers and of male bower birds involving decorated nests (Dolhinow, 1972; Enomoto, 1974; Thorpe, 1974; Van Lawick-Goodall, 1968; Wendt, 1965). They are furthermore implicit in descriptions of human power rituals such as that of bowing to those in higher authority (Firth, 1978; Sheets-Johnstone, 1994). Moreover, archetypal corporeal-kinetic forms and relations are implicit in linguist Ronald Langacker's (1991) delineation of archetypal semantic roles, that of "agent, instrument, and patient" (p. 285; see also Sheets-Johnstone, 1999/2009). Archetypal semantic roles are indeed constituted and experienced directly in archetypal corporeal-kinetic forms and relations, many of which, as should be evident from the examples above, instantiate specific spatial relationships that themselves instantiate meaning, as in being above or below, in front or in back, in being large or small, and so on. Such relationships underlie intercorporeal power relations and center on the optics of power and the power of optics (Sheets-Johnstone, 1994). That they do is an empirical fact that undoubtedly explains why archetypal forms and relations that play out kinetically and affectively offer a far more exacting descriptive specification of nonlinguistic interanimate meanings than do "image schemata" (Neisser, 1976) and "embodied image schemata" (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). In fact, when we straightforwardly acknowledge the foundational kinetics of human life—in truth, *all* animate forms of life—we have no point of entry for such embodiments or schemata, or for that matter, for "body image" and "body schema" as formulae for analyzing and understanding bodily experience and indeed what it means to be a body (Gallagher, 1986, 1995, 2005; Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012; for further critical reflections on this topic see Sheets-Johnstone, 2005/2009). Corporeal-kinetic archetypal forms and relations are in fact dynamically patterned from the start in developmental interactions with mother and caretakers (see Stern, 1985; Trevarthen, 1977, 2005). They are similarly dynamically patterned from the start in developmental dispositions, as in an infant's disposition to reach and thus make inchoate reaching movements and in its disposition to walk and to do so without instructions from others and without an owner's manual. Thus, a body does not need to be added, nor does movement. By the same token, neither a body nor movement needs to be added to the body politic: in addition to being implicit in Jung's descriptions, archetypal corporeal-kinetic forms and relations are implicit in exemplary descriptions of animate life. They are in fact logically entailed in all such descriptions.

4 | REAL-LIFE, REAL-TIME DYNAMICS AND THE BODY POLITIC

Archetypal corporeal-kinetic forms and relations that play out in the real-life, real-time lives of animate forms—human and nonhuman—are dynamic realities that are readily evident in sociopolitical contexts—perhaps most readily in male–male competition, a phenomenon that Darwin (1871/1981) described as “the law of battle” and of which he wrote in multiple pages about beetles, fish, birds, mammals, and man. He began his descriptive study of mammals with the following notable observation: “With mammals the male appears to win the female much more through the law of battle than through the display of his charms.” (p. 239). He further observed that “All male animals which are furnished with special weapons for fighting, are well known to engage in fierce battles” (ibid., p. 240) and that only in reindeer are special weapons—horns—also a female feature (ibid., p. 243).

The exaptation (Gould & Vrba, 1982) of male–male competition from its original biological function of winning females to fighting in wars is a human elaboration of a biological reproductive practice that has territorial and other aims, including the sheer aim of personal glory, national adulation, and an unending place in history. Its reality is apparent in a readiness for battle and actual engagement in battle, a readiness readily seen in the Wotanesque posturings of indomitable power and strength, of threats and fury by Trump, Putin, Kim Jong-un, and Assad. Because leks are an archetype of male–male competition, they are an important step in understanding how the practice of war is related to “the law of battle.” (Darwin mentions leks only briefly, undoubtedly because their study has been more recent.)

Leks are the ritual battlegrounds to which certain species of males return every year to compete. They are formed by species of insects, flies, butterflies, wasps, lizards, fish, frogs, toads, newts, bats, walrus, deer, wildebeest, and antelope (see, e.g., Attenborough, 1990; Höglund & Alatalo, 1995; Johnsgard, 1994; Lill, 1976). They are akin to what the cultural historian Johan Huizinga described in his classic study *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga, 1955) as human competitions: to duels, community clashes, and national conflicts that similarly take place on a consentient chosen ground where combatants fight according to certain rules for a specified duration and a winner emerges. In other words, the formalised, strictly ordered, rule-governed human competitions that Huizinga (1955) describes as “warfare proper” (p. 90) are similar to leks in being duly systematised and disciplined. What is of considerable moment, and particularly now in this fractious and fractionated twenty-first-century global world, is Huizinga’s concern with warfare that is *not* proper:

We can only speak of war as a cultural function so long as it is waged within a sphere whose members regard each other as equals or antagonists with equal rights . . . This condition changes as soon as war is waged outside the sphere of equals, against groups not recognized as human beings and thus deprived of human rights—barbarians, devils, heathens, heretics and “lesser breeds without the law.” In such circumstances war loses its play quality altogether and can only remain within the bound of civilization in so far as the parties to it accept certain limitations for the sake of their own honour. (ibid., pp. 89–90)

While “war proper” may readily be recognised as the cultural elaboration of the “law of battle” waged by equals, and while it may be archetypally recognised in the affectively driven courage, heroism, cowardice, daring, or treason of individuals—and at battle’s end in the affectively driven dominance and submission of individuals—war “outside the sphere of equals,” *improper* war, is motivated and carried out differently, as Huizinga’s examples make clear. His examples include “the surprise, the ambush, the raid, the punitive expedition and wholesale extermination” (ibid., p. 90). In short, non-rule-governed battles do not constitute a true contest. Thus, while what Huizinga terms “[the] political objectives of war”—“conquest, subjection or domination of another people”—may in a general sense remain the same in wars “outside the sphere of equals,” the latter wars are basically *uncivilized* (ibid.). For example, while there might be heroes and cowards, martyrs and turncoats recognised in improper wars, there may well be those who take special pleasure and even delight in killing, even those whose reason for fighting is to kill. When the disposition to kill goes acknowledged, not only is the combatant clearly without “honour,” but “the god of storm and frenzy, the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle” has his unassailable way. The “*Ergreifer* of men” is indeed evident both in nationally driven improper wars in which one kills any and all who would deprive one of one’s power and in religiously or ethnically driven improper wars in which one kills any and all whose beliefs, language, and ways of living are different

from one's own. (It might be noted that a nuclear war involves no fighting, only killing: extermination and total destruction on a grand and even global scale in terms of the spread of radioactivity.)

However driven, the disposition to kill in “uncivilized” wars is readily apparent in certain twenty-first-century Wotanesque world leaders and their mass followers, most blatantly but not exclusively in Assad and his Syrian Armed Forces. The disposition might even be regarded as latent if not present in the bizarre and surely morally contestable desire of George W. Bush to be a “war president,” a desire evident in his not uncommon declaration of himself as such, e.g., “I’m a war President” (as reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, Bush, 2004) and in his well-known two-pouched picture of himself in combat gear arriving on the aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln* on May 1, 2003 with a banner overhead reading “Mission Accomplished” (Cline, 2013). Whether an inclination or straightforward desire, the disposition is not in the service of enchanting females, though that may be a subsidiary element. It is rather in the service of attaining unmitigated and unchallengeable power and glory, even to the point of global power and glory, an authority *über alles* that dictates to the world what the world is and should be.

As should be evident from the example of Bush and the Iraq war, and of Assad and the Syrian war, however uncivilised an improper war, it remains a cultural elaboration of “the law of battle”: it retains its origin in the biology of male–male competition. Recognition of the fact that both proper and improper wars are an elaboration of “the law of battle” allows a straightforward path to understanding how nations, religious groups, ethnic groups, and individuals can devise forms of power and power relations by way of archetypal human possibilities and practices that are straightaway recognisable in today's twenty-first-century world. Jung's comments following World War II offer a substantive psychoanalytic perspective complementary to this understanding.

[U]ntil 1933 only lunatics would have been found in possession of living fragments of mythology. After this date the world of heroes and monsters spread like a devastating fire over whole nations, proving that the strange world of myth had suffered no loss of vitality during the centuries of reason and enlightenment. If metaphysical ideas no longer have such a fascinating effect as before, this is certainly not due to any lack of primitivity in the European psyche, but simply and solely to the fact that the erstwhile symbols no longer express what is now welling up from the unconscious as the end-result of the development of Christian consciousness through the centuries. This end-result is a true antimimon pneuma, a false spirit of arrogance, hysteria, woolly-mindedness, criminal amorality, and doctrinaire fanaticism, a purveyor of shoddy spiritual goods, spurious art, philosophical stutterings, and Utopian humbug, fit only to be fed wholesale to the mass man of today. That is what the post-Christian spirit looks like (Jung, 1951/1978, p. 35).

Whether one espouses belief in a historical Christian consciousness and post-Christian spirit or not, the “end-result” that Jung describes appears an irrefutable description of archetypal dominant males of the twenty-first century and the food they feed to their mass followers. Their Wotanesque character, their “false spirit,” is unmistakable.

Jung's later observations are equally relevant. To begin with, Jung affirms that “the problems which the integration of the unconscious sets modern doctors and psychologists can only be solved along the lines traced out by history, and the upshot will be a new assimilation of the traditional myth” (ibid., p. 181). His point is that the psychological problems will not be solved rationally, but by a symbol that “expresses both sides” (ibid., pp. 180–181), or, in other words, by a unification of opposites, as in the *Tao* that unites *yin* and *yang*, the child that unites female and male, and so on. In whatever terms one might interpret the symbol that “expresses both sides,” Jung's subsequent observations do not simply set forth a further medical diagnosis, but are therapeutically informed and provocatively prescriptive. Jung's conclusion in fact poses a direct challenge to anyone concerned about today's Wotanesque leaders, their “arrogance” and “criminal amorality,” for example, and the “shoddy spiritual goods” they offer to the masses that follow them.

Naturally the present tendency to destroy all tradition or render it unconscious could interrupt the normal process of development for several hundred years and substitute an interlude of barbarism . . . [A]

predominantly scientific and technological education, such as is the usual thing nowadays, can also bring about a spiritual regression and considerable increase of psychic dissociation. With hygiene and prosperity alone a man is still far from health, otherwise the most enlightened and most comfortably off among us would be the healthiest. But in regard to neuroses that is not the case at all, quite the contrary. Loss of roots and lack of tradition neurotize the masses and prepare them for collective hysteria. Collective hysteria calls for collective therapy. (ibid., p. 181)

5 | A STILL OPEN PERSPECTIVE AND CHALLENGE

Supposing the cure for twenty-first-century sociopolitical ills is “collective therapy,” we can surely ask, “In just what would it consist and how would it be orchestrated?” Jung did not elaborate. At most, he indicated that collective therapy was a matter of individuals. For example, he states: “Anxiously we look round for collective measures, thereby reinforcing the very mass-mindedness we want to fight against. There is only one remedy for the levelling effect of all collective measures, and that is to emphasise and increase the value of the individual” (Jung, 1937/1970, p. 379). He goes on to point out that:

the destruction of huge organizations will eventually prove to be a necessity because, like a cancerous growth, they eat away man's nature as soon as they become ends in themselves and attain autonomy. From that moment they grow beyond man and escape his control. He becomes their victim and is sacrificed to the madness of an idea that knows no master. All great organizations in which the individual no longer counts are exposed to this danger. There seems to be only one way of countering this threat to our lives, and that is the “revaluation” of the individual. (ibid., pp. 379–380)

Thus, we are left not only with the question, “In what would collective therapy consist and how would it be orchestrated?” but also with the question, “Just how would a collective therapy promote the value of the individual?” An answer to that further question would surely address the “mass-mindedness” of the hysteric who is plagued by “a loosening of the opposites which normally are held firmly together,” and in whom “[a]s a rule there is amazing ignorance of the shadow; the hysteric is only aware of his good motives” (Jung, 1937/1970, p. 207). The answer might in fact show how aspects of twenty-first-century life lure away from wholeness and help constitute the hysteric's ignorance, thus feeding a Wotanesque body politic. For example, “a predominantly scientific and technological education” rivets attention outward, away from deeper and deepening self-awareness and self-understandings, as in an elevated valuing of science, particularly a neuroscience of *the brain*, over the humanities and the arts, and in an elevated valuing of the Internet, television, and social media for “information.” Furthermore, as Jung also points out, “hygiene and prosperity alone” do not guarantee health: endless pharmaceutical remedies, for example, and an endless pursuit of money, together with “huge organisations,” simply propel people acquisitively toward “more” in each instance. When such aspects of twenty-first-century life are coupled with the fact that “one man, who is obviously ‘possessed’,” can infect “a whole nation to such an extent that everything is set in motion and has started rolling on its course toward perdition,” that “[g]roups, communities, and even whole nations can be seized . . . by psychic epidemics,” it is readily apparent why individuals can remain ignorant and their wholeness sacrificed. As Jung succinctly remarks: “All human control comes to an end when the individual is caught in a mass movement.” (Jung 1937/1970, p. 189)

In sum, Jung's writings are replete with insights into the psychological nature of the body politic, insights that challenge us to probe ever more deeply into the nature of twenty-first-century Wotanesque figures and their mass followers. His writings indeed demonstrate that understanding the body politic requires an understanding of human nature, its archetypal dispositions and emotional character together with its possibilities toward ignorance or wisdom, disconnection or wholeness.

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Maxine Sheets-Johnstone is an interdisciplinary scholar affiliated with the Department of Philosophy at the University of Oregon where she taught periodically in the 1990s and where she now holds an ongoing Courtesy Professor appointment. She began her career as a choreographer/dancer, professor of dance/dance scholar and has an incomplete second doctorate in evolutionary biology. She has published over 80 articles in humanities, science, and art journals and has given many conference keynotes and invited guest lectures in a variety of academic disciplines, in Europe, the UK, and North and South America. Her book publications include *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Temple University Press, 2015); *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations* (Bucknell University Press, 1984); the “Roots” trilogy: *The Roots of Thinking* (Temple University Press, 1990), *The Roots of Power: Animate Form and Gendered Bodies* (Open Court Publishing, 1994), and *The Roots of Morality* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008); *Giving the Body Its Due* (State University of New York Press, 1992); *The Primacy of Movement* (John Benjamins Publishing, 1999); *The Corporeal Turn: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (Imprint Academic, 2009); *Putting Movement Into Your Life: A Beyond Fitness Primer* (CreateSpace, 2014); and most recently, *Insides and Outsides: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Animate Nature* (Imprint Academic, 2016). She was awarded a Distinguished Fellowship in 2007 for her research on xenophobia in the inaugural year of the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham University, UK, the theme of which was “The Legacy of Charles Darwin”; an Alumni Achievement Award in 2011 from the University of Wisconsin where she did all of her graduate work (M.A. in Dance; Ph.D. in Dance and Philosophy; incomplete second doctorate in Evolutionary Biology); and was honored with a Scholar’s Session at the 2012 meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in Rochester, NY.

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