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Ecological Madness: A Freud Museum Conference, December 1992

Introductory Thoughts

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When I first broached the idea of a conference about 'psychoanalysis and ecology' it was met with enthusiasm tempered with a certain amount of incredulity from my colleagues. What has psychoanalysis - dealing above all with the subtle nuances of an intersubjective communication between patient and therapist - have to say about this global issue concerned with the physical environment? Such misgivings echoed a recurring argument about the proper domain of psychoanalysis as both a theory and therapy.

The problem (of the relation between psychoanalysis and cultural issues) is often couched in terms of the difference between the 'individual' and the 'social' as separate fields of enquiry. Even without resorting to the theories of group analysis or the psychoanalysis of institutions, this may not in fact be the case. Psychotherapy deals with the 'social' all the time in its strictly private and individual setting. Concerned as it is with the minutiae of an individual's life, psychotherapy in practice also involves something of the behaviour we engage in as a (unique, cultural) *species*. It is this behaviour which generates the ecological dilemmas which confront us, and about which psychoanalysis should have something to say.

According to Freud there are certain universals of what we might call 'human nature' which are expressed in our *cultural* productions. All cultures will have to find some way to negotiate the problems caused by the combination of our childhood dependence and infantile sexuality which results in the Oedipus complex; all cultures will have to find some 'social' mechanisms whereby primitive anxieties are dealt with; all societies must find some way to deal with the anxieties associated with procreative sexuality; and all societies will have means to regulate the impact of 'other people' on our essentially narcissistic economy,* and so on. In her introduction to the conference itself Hanna Segal discussed some of these mechanisms (see also Segal 1987, 1989). One of the processes she described was how, as individuals, we hand over to the group or a group authority the execution of our destructive capacities, so that the group can do things in our name what we would never (i.e. only) dream of doing as individuals. With respect to religion, Freud (1907) puts it like this:

* Many psychoanalysts would disagree with this last point. As far as I can make out they take the view that the way we explain the problems of human social existence is to assume that human beings are born as social creatures, with their only desire being to 'relate' to other people. Would that it were so!

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In the development of the ancient religions one seems to discern that many things which mankind had renounced as 'iniquities' had been surrendered to the Deity and

were still permitted in his name, so that the handing over to him of bad and socially harmful instincts was the means by which man freed himself from their domination.

Here we have a quintessentially social phenomenon which is also a uniquely personal and 'intra-psychic' one - a connection between a person and the idea/feeling-tone/internal object we call 'God'. Or as Freud would put it more succinctly, the 'imago' of god.

If we are to argue for the importance of a psychoanalytic enquiry into ecological matters, then it is not the relation between the individual and the social which is crucial. The relevant distinction is rather between what is conscious and what is unconscious. That is to say, the realm of experiences in which we live our problematic lives, and the realm of unconscious factors of which we are not, under normal circumstances, aware. To bring a notion of the unconscious into play is therefore in some ways to humanise the terrain - to connect up our ecological dilemmas with a sense of who we are as cultural beings, and the kind of behaviour we engage in. In view of this, the object of the conference was not so much to 'apply' psychoanalysis (from elsewhere) to social questions, but rather to discover what properly belongs to the domain of psychoanalysis in the debate. Or perhaps to *rediscover* it.

Because in some ways the unconscious was always there in the debate. Only it had often been obscured by the notion of 'values'. For instance, in his testimony to the *Hawaii Committee on Ecology and Man* in 1970, Gregory Bateson argued (1972, p. 490):

That *all* of the many current threats to man's survival are traceable to three root causes:

- (a) technological progress
- (b) population increase
- (c) certain errors in the thinking and attitudes of Occidental culture. Our 'values' are wrong.

This is still perfectly true in many ways. Taking, for example, the fur trade, it could be argued that a change in attitudes about wearing fur coats in 'Occidental culture' has dramatically reduced the killing of many species, and there may be other examples of a similar kind. But we have to face the possibility that our 'values' may be so deeply embedded that they are not adequately understood by recourse to the notion of 'certain errors in thinking and attitudes'. Attitudes and behaviour are motivated by factors which are not immediately obvious. In order to change our 'thinking and attitudes', perhaps something else has to be brought to light and examined which may not fit in nicely with our image of ourselves or our picture of the world. Furthermore, a 'change of attitude' may be only skin deep - apparently there was a 25% increase in the sale of fur coats last year, and the large stores are beginning to open their fur departments again (*The Observer* 21/3/93). Therefore it was in the area of unconscious factors that the programme was to be primarily concerned. The hope was that a *rapprochement* could be effected between the aims and theories of the ecology movement and the work of psychoanalysis.

From the standpoint of the ecology movement, however, I formed the impression that this overture was not entirely welcome. Psychoanalysis has achieved something of a reputation for pronouncing on matters it knows nothing about, and telling everybody else what is what in the world. In fact some of these fears may have been realised for the ecological activists since a number of the papers were concerned not so much with ecological *dilemmas* as ecological *politics*. The underlying question posed by these papers seemed to be 'what sort of things do we need to consider to create an

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effective and realistic ecological politics?'; but from the standpoint of the activist I could imagine that this felt something like an attack. In particular the criticisms of authoritarianism, misanthropy, depression, or idealisations which were levelled at Green politics by some of the speakers might have been felt as unhelpfully destructive.

Even within the ecology movement itself, however, there seems to be a reluctance to engage with psychological issues. Those who do so often come up with similar criticisms of Green politics, and a group in the Green Party called 'The Emotional Needs Working Group' is a case in point. In 1990 they wrote (Bradney & Heeks 1990):

A year ago [we instigated] a discussion within the Green Party about 'emotional needs'. We argued that the party's commitment to meeting basic human needs is

currently expressed overwhelmingly in terms of *material* needs, and that such a restricted definition would be unlikely to lead to particularly green outcomes.

We pointed to what we see as people's *basic emotional needs*, for example, for modes of existence and types of activity that seem meaningful, for recognition of our worth by our peers, for security and variety in our lives, for company and seclusion, for participation and self-determination, for altruism, and for the giving and receiving of affection.

We argued that this was the other half of any holistic definition of basic human needs, and that without it the party would be sunk. We did not - and do not - see much evidence of such values embodied within the party's detailed policies, nor within much of its current organizational structures and political practice.

This is a humanistic way of putting it which certainly strikes a chord with many people, including myself. However, from a psychoanalytic point of view we are more inclined to deal with the level of 'wishes', or 'desires', or 'phantasies'. The psychoanalyst might point out that biological needs can generally be satisfied whereas there is something almost uncanny about the progress and expansion of human culture, which might lead us to suspect that there is something at its root which is incapable of complete satisfaction. I would only add that (i) 'needs' may be in conflict with each other (both my own differing needs and my needs vis a vis other people), (ii) 'needs' can also be thought of as demands which are made upon us from various sources, or forces impinging on us which we are trying to get rid of, and (iii) 'needs' may be the conscious manifestations of unconscious forces. Nevertheless I would argue that the idea of need may be an important one for psychoanalysis to consider (such diverse figures as Jacques Lacan and Anna Freud make use of the term), even if it has been employed in theories far removed from psychoanalysis. Susie Orbach takes up the theme of needs in her illuminating paper.

It is noteworthy that only one other small group came to light in my research for the conference. Evidently political activists do not see the psychological dimension as of particular relevance to their practice.

And why should they? The rationale for their attitude seems irrefutable. The Green movement is concerned above all with political *change*. If you are going to change the behaviour of large numbers of people you have to focus either on specific campaigns to prevent certain things happening, or on policy decisions which promote or compel people to behave in a certain way. People did not just stop wearing fur coats over-night. It was the result of a long campaign on economic, social and political levels, which gradually transformed the climate of opinion. People were shamed, cajoled or threatened into changing their behaviour - and one does not need a sophisticated 'psychotherapeutic' understanding for that. (The fact that this campaign may have tapped into women's complex relations to children (represented by the animals), and to their own bodies (represented by the fur and the blood perhaps), is neither here nor

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there). Or, for example, in Athens: it does not appear that people have restricted the use of their cars voluntarily to help protect their heritage from pollution, or for the health of their children or the elderly. They restrict the use of their cars because there is a law which compels them to do so. Draconian measures were introduced because of the perceived seriousness of the situation, and psychological theorising did not seem appropriate at a time when urgent action was deemed to be necessary. Because of the sense of urgency associated with practical politics, all other aspects can seem trivial at best, or an energy-sapping diversion at worst. What does it matter that our sense of 'ecological dilemma' can be magnified and distorted by phantasy? - phantasies of apocalypse are after all not very unusual in the history of human culture. Such pearls of psychological insight cannot alter the fact that there is a very real environmental threat confronting us and getting worse. The activist might even argue that if the phantasy functions as a source of motivation to do something about the problem, so much the better.

Well, perhaps there is a level of unconscious phantasy which underlies all our activities - those which we value to a high degree and are proud to be associated with, and those which we regard in a

disparaging light and think of as something alien to us. Remarkably, the one can turn into the other in the twinkling of an eye. And this is surely one reason why a psychoanalytic investigation can have some political purchase. (I am using 'psychoanalytic' in a generic sense as the paradigm for psychotherapy generally.) If, in our everyday lives, we are attempting to satisfy, mitigate, deal with, control or unburden ourselves of unconscious phantasies, then the logical thread of our behaviour must be found at the level of this unconscious activity. There will always be more than one way to skin a cat - hence, to return to the example of the fur trade, it may come as no surprise that after the cajoling, the shaming and the threatening, the unconscious comes back to reassert itself once more (and save the profits of the industry in the process). We refuse to deny ourselves the pleasure and security we feel in being surrounded by the skin of a dead animal; pleasure and security we might experience at an unconscious level not *despite* this relation to the death of the ('totem'?) animal, but because of it. In other words, it could be asserted that if there really *is* an unconscious logic at work which expresses itself in our social behaviour, then our policies and campaigns may find they are continually thwarted by the people whom they are supposed to 'control'. As Jonathan Porritt put it to me in response to an early proposal for the conference:

Indeed, it seems to me that the whole Green Movement is in danger of running out of energy and momentum unless it begins to dig deeper into the human psyche to understand why it is that we keep on running up against the same brick wall time after time after time.

Nevertheless, psychoanalysis is not a *Weltanschauung* and does not usually profess to tell us how to live. There *are* values embodied in psychoanalysis - the ideas of 'freedom', 'tolerance', 'intellect', 'honesty', 'communication', 'work', 'self-reflection' and so on are quite fundamental to Freud's work. Unfortunately these terms are so vague that anyone can put their own content into them to satisfy their own political persuasion. It is not easy to *derive* a progressive political programme from psychoanalytic ideas, and few psychoanalysts would stand up and state unambiguously 'where they stand' on a range of political issues. Circumstances change and what may be appropriate in one situation may be unworkable in another. So the tension between our ideas and our political practice will remain for some time to come. However, we

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carry on regardless. We try to understand phenomena in terms of psychoanalytic ideas and psychotherapeutic practice and offer to exchange these understandings with others - *without* knowing immediately of what practical import they may be. What else can we do? This was the attitude I tried to adopt in conceiving of and organising the conference, with the hope that the ideas expressed would be received and criticised in the same spirit with which they were given, and that a fruitful dialogue could be established. To some extent I believe this happened, and the publication of the papers of the conference is a welcome further step in bringing the debate into the public domain. To complete this brief introduction I will describe the initial proposal sent to the speakers, and some of the ideas which occurred to me in discussions with some of them prior to the conference.

The proposal split the subject into four themes: technology, consumption, the environment, and the mythology of nature. Funnily enough these themes emerged as a result of writing a short 'interpretative guide' for the Freud Museum called 'Freud in England', and each of the themes had a direct relation to Freud's life or work. In writing this pamphlet I also came to appreciate a notion of 'balance' in Freud's work, complementary to the paradigm of 'psychic conflict' and related both to the process of psychotherapy and questions about how we live our lives. For Freud, man is inherently out of balance, but perhaps with luck we can find some kind of equilibrium which is not too destructive to ourselves or others. In his paper Barry Richards tries to juggle with, and strike a balance between, some of the conflicting desires crystallised around our attitudes to the motor car.

A number of important aspects were left out of the proposal - principally the issues of 'pollution' and 'the economy'. In the first case it seemed that pollution did not constitute a separate entity but rather an aspect of the other themes (eg. as a concomitant of technology and consumption). However, from a psychoanalytic point of view the subject of pollution does in fact constitute an entity in its own right, in relation to Freud's famous theories of the anal character, or Klein's projection of bad

objects. Psychoanalysis has shown that there are parts of the human being that *want* to pollute his or her environment, and that this desire is implicated in early inter-personal relations. It is also something that links up individual and social behaviour: when a person takes their dog into the park (where children play) in order to defecate, they may be doing something not dissimilar to when we quite happily allow 'our' pollution to fall as acid rain on someone else. That is to say, they delegate to the dog the execution of those wishes which are not allowed expression in other parts of their lives. Hanna Segal brought out the same point in the most forceful manner by pointing out that we do not usually shit in our neighbour's garden, yet we allow society to pollute in our name on an enormous scale.

However, the impulse to soil and despoil the earth may mask an even more destructive mechanism. It has been argued by some that the phantasy of 'rendering Mother Earth completely arid', as a prelude to taking possession of the place one occupied before birth, is part of the 'structural ... organization of the human mind' (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1990). In this scenario, the fertility of the earth itself represents a barrier to our access to the symbolic Earth. That is because the fertility represents precisely evidence of the parental coupling which has excluded us from the act of generation. Bob Hinshelwood's paper deals with a similar theme. It analyses historical

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transformations of the phantasy of the 'combined parent figure' as they have affected our relations to the 'countryside' in different epochs. In this case the different forms of parental coupling are related to the social and economic conditions which pertain to the exploitation of the land.

The subject of the economy is more difficult. Firstly it was too big a subject to tackle in a day conference; and secondly it embroils us in the theoretical conundrum about 'determinism', and in particular how to establish some psychological basis for the relative autonomy of the cultural superstructure. It is not easy to think about the psychological side of things without falling into a kind of demand-led theory of the economy. Such a view might propose, for instance, that the cotton industry during the industrial revolution was fuelled by factors related to the fetishisation of clothing. Or that our 'great car economy' is driven by anxieties about phallic potency, or a need to represent the ego as a tin box or whatever (see Barry Richard's paper for some more thoughtful suggestions; also Lacan 1953 for some comments on the motor car and the ego). Obviously in this way it is possible to bring unconscious factors into the notion of 'demand' - and many sociologists seem to be moving toward the idea of consumption rather than production as the major determinant of social structure. But this misses the fact that the economy is driven by its own internal logic (for instance the profit motive in capitalism), and by the 'tendencies' which result from its operation (for Marx, the decline in the rate of profit due to the continual substitution of variable capital ('labour') by fixed capital (machinery)).

However there may be another way of addressing the problem which circumvents a demand-led theory and which attempts directly to relate psychological functions to economic categories.

What is the relation between the commodity *form* and the *specific* objects which are produced by the economy and which go on to occupy a cultural space when they are consumed? On the one hand the specific objects have symbolic meanings which we can try to elucidate and relate to our psychological theories. But what about the form itself - which we might see as the embodiment of an economic *relation*? If for the moment we adopt a Marxist perspective again (although Marx in *Capital* eschews any psychologising of economic relations), every commodity is a composite structure 'containing' both use-value (a relation to myself) and exchange-value (a relation to others and the world of commodities in general). The commodity form therefore pivots precisely around questions of 'self' and 'other', 'me' and 'not-me', 'individual' and 'social'. The commodity *qua* exchange-value connects me up to the social world outside of me, and thus to the power of the group which has been internalised. We might suppose that any commodity at some level functions like a 'transitional object' or perhaps a 'container' of this dilemma. That is to say, it contains not psychic contents or 'elements' in Bion's sense, but rather what we might see as a structural feature or condition of the 'psychic apparatus'. By relating the commodity to questions about the ownership, possession and inhabitation of the body, Susie Orbach attempted to trace something of this dilemma back to its roots.

Similarly we could think about the idea of a universal medium of exchange - money. Once again most psychological theories which have looked at this (starting with Freud) have concentrated on money-as-object. Thus the significance of money was traced back to the unconscious significance of dirt and faeces - and colloquial expressions such as 'filthy rich' were used to support this assertion. Hanna Segal also mentioned how in some ways the symbol has usurped the thing itself, or what it

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symbolises. A further step in the process of fetishisation perhaps. However, if we forget about money-as-object, can we ask whether there are unconscious phantasies related to the idea of a universal medium of exchange, as such? When money did not hold universal sway over men's lives, and different spheres of the economy (e.g. food and necessities, luxury goods, and kinship goods) were separated by taboos which could only be transgressed with great difficulty, did men dream of a universal system of exchange that could equalise all the elements of their being into a single common denominator? What would be the meaning of such a dream? On the one hand it is as if the barriers which are interposed between our 'selves' and our heart's desire could all be eliminated. A dream of destroying the dead hand of taboos and securing direct access to a kind of homogeneous social space which is the repository of the 'good'. This is an essentially religious vision of reunion with an all-loving father or mother. On the other hand it is a nightmare that only *this* can represent us - that you are *it*, that all the qualities of a person can be split off into this single object - and thus our contact to the world is maintained only by a single thread. I would not want to hazard any further guesses, but there is room here for thinking about these issues in a slightly different way from how we are used to. The main point is to assert that the *form* of economic categories is not outside the realm of psychological investigation (see also Hinshelwood 1983, 1989).

Finally we could consider the profit motive itself. There is an irony at the heart of the capitalist mode of production which can be expressed like this: on the one hand it is based on the idea of equal exchange - a fair day's work for a fair day's pay; on the other hand it is based on 'exploitation' - or getting something for nothing. But is this really such a contradiction? Don't these two social conditions embody some of the universal wishes of childhood? On the one hand the demand for absolute fairness (which for Freud is about both wanting to be loved equally by the parental agency, and the need for equal complicity in the 'primal crime' of parricide); on the other hand the wish to have everything for oneself and to be the 'chosen one'. To get something for nothing. At a very deep level, perhaps the capitalist economic system really *is* like magic! Its basic assumptions might be said to satisfy us unconsciously not matter how anarchic, unfair and destructive it may seem to the intellect. There is also a more virulent form of exploitation, not at all based on the idea of 'equal exchange'. It is perhaps the other side of the coin to Winnicott's somewhat benign view of 'use of an object'. I am thinking about the exploitation of colonial peoples at the beginning of industrialisation, and which continues today in a different form. Andrew Samuels mentioned that the issue of Third World debt is impossible to divorce from our appreciation of ecological dilemmas, and perhaps there is a psychological dimension to this as well.

But what of the conference itself? As stated above, the themes were: Technology, Consumption, The Environment and The Mythology of Nature. This categorisation was a useful one since it made the relation between ecological issues and psychoanalysis very easy to grasp - or at least it showed the possibility of a way in. To complete this introduction what follows is based on the proposal I sent to the speakers, with some additional ideas derived from discussions prior to the conference.

Technology

When the women at Greenham Common were saying 'take the toys from the boys', they may have been expressing a deep and sophisticated understanding of the relation of human beings to their technological productions. Very little work has been done to

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examine the relation between human beings and the inanimate objects they produce, yet psychoanalysts know that toys, for instance, can be used to unravel desires, fears and cognitive/emotional theories of the world which might be otherwise inaccessible.

In *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud looks at the relationship between the body, technology, and the 'fairy tale wishes of childhood'. He begins by recognising technology as one of the achievements of civilisation. With each tool man perfects his own organs, or removes the limits of their functioning. Each tool is the 'materialization' of some human function or a substitute for something lost (Freud 1930, pp. [91-92](#)):

These things that, by his science and technology, man has brought about on this earth, on which he first appeared as a feeble animal organism and on which each individual of his species must once more make its entry as a helpless suckling - these things do not only sound like a fairy tale, they are an actual fulfilment of every - or of almost every - fairytale wish ... Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times ...

Two main issues seemed to be of importance in this section:

(i) whether technology has a particular limited range of forms, and why this might be the case (including the historical relation to weapons and war), and (ii) the use of technology and the unconscious processes involved. The motor car as an example, and the empirical analysis of children's use of toys as a counter-point for the investigation.

Consumption

It is obvious that the massive amount of individual consumption in the Western nations contributes in no small measure to the ecological dilemmas which confront us. Freud himself was addicted to smoking, which eventually killed him. Something about this process of consumption was more important than life itself.

Psychoanalysis has shown that issues around the over- and under-consumption of food, for instance, involve a host of unconscious determinants. If consumption is a symbolic process, the essential question is *what fuels consumption?* What is the hole we are trying to fill; what is the problem we are trying to figure out?

The external economy and the libidinal one. How does our relationship to the external economy function to regulate internal feelings of well-being or discontent? Consumption in relation to the movement of economic cycles.

The commodity as a compromise between two tendencies. On the one hand a whole set of satisfactions to do with prestige, recognition and mastery (being 'grown up'), and on the other hand a whole set of satisfactions bound up with being looked after, dependent, and a baby.

The function of advertising and other cultural representations in orchestrating desires. The role of social structural factors (family, work, school and so on).

The culture of 'shopping' as a kind of holy ritual or 'faith healing'. I am thinking of a quote from Freud's essay 'Mental Treatment' (1905, p. [290](#)):

In cases in which someone proceeds to the holy place by himself, the reputation of the place and the respect in which it is held act as substitutes for the influence of the group, so that in fact the power of the group is once more in operation. And there is yet another way in which this influence makes itself felt. Since it is well known that divine mercy is always shown only to the few who seek it, each of these is eager to be amongst the chosen few; the ambition that lies hidden in everyone comes to the help of pious faith.

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If you substitute 'Selfridges' or 'Brent Cross' for 'the holy place', then you'll get an idea of what I mean. Perhaps when we enter the process of purchasing an item for ourselves we are not only making a choice, but also being chosen.

The psychological determinants of the need for individual possessions. The establishment of (bodily) identity through the delimitation of what is 'mine' and 'not mine'. The relation of this identity to the threat that something precious will be taken away from us. The symbolic function and significance of money. The experience of 'Christmas' as a specific example.

The Environment

It is well known that Freud spent 78 years in Vienna despite the fact that he said it made him feel physically sick. It is reasonable to assume that there was a certain amount of ambivalence in his relation to his immediate environment, and it is interesting to speculate how this may have arisen. Something is being transferred in this instance which has come from somewhere else.

One of the areas of investigation is whether such ambivalence is *intrinsic* to the relationship of human beings to their natural environment, or whether it is a peculiar characteristic of highly industrialised nations. It has been said that for the small baby the mother is the first 'environment'. How does the early separation from this first environment affect later relationships to the environment in general? How are these things culturally inflected?

Psychoanalysts who have worked in therapeutic communities know that the environment can become the repository of all sorts of unconscious baggage. Similarly we transform and structure the environment in order to receive something back from it. It functions in relation to the demands of the inner world ('Home' and 'Away' for instance, or Earth, Heaven and Hell).

In literature, a representation of 'place' functions as part of the emotional substructure of texts. We can use both therapeutic community studies and literary criticism to explore this theme.

The Mythology of Nature

In 1913, a year before the start of the First World War, Freud wrote his essay 'The Theme of the Three Caskets'. In it he explores the creation of the category of 'nature' as something separate and external to human beings, which then becomes capable of elaboration in symbolic and narrative forms (**Freud 1913**):

[The] discovery of Nature reacted on the conception of human life. The nature-myth changed into a human myth: the weather goddesses became goddesses of Fate....
(p. **298**)

The Moerae were created as a result of a discovery that warned man that he too is a part of nature and therefore subject to the immutable law of death. Something in man was bound to struggle against this subjection, for it is only with extreme unwillingness that he gives up his claim to an exceptionable position ... (p. **299**)

The great Mother-goddesses of the Oriental peoples, however, all seem to have been both creators and destroyers - both goddesses of life and fertility and goddesses of death. Thus the replacement by a wishful opposite in our theme harks back to a primaeval identity. (p. **299**)

What we understand here is that mythopoeic thinking may underlie the real historical activity of human beings. By means of mythic construction man masters intellectually (in a magical and omnipotent way, which nevertheless can have dramatic effects in the world) the realities of life and the certainty of death. In the back

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of my mind I had the idea of the First World War as a kind of realisation of a mythic structure, where the older generation of men magically tried to avoid death by sending the young men to be sacrificed for the 'mother-country'. Closer to our own time was Saddam Hussein's 'mother of all battles'.

On the other hand, anthropologists since Levi-Strauss have shown that the eternal oscillation between Nature and Culture finds its expression in the myths and legends of all people from all times, and that the analysis of myth can reveal deep-structural factors of the human mind.

In view of this I feel it may be helpful to understand the present relation of man to 'nature' by seriously investigating the *mythology* of nature. This in some ways overlaps with the theme of

‘The Environment’, but there is an essential difference I think. The mythopoeic process involves concretisations of abstract categories (e.g. the transformation of the idea of nature into the weather goddesses, or the Greek Fates, in Freud's example), which then feed back into the real relations which may be established with nature. In the former case it is about our concrete relations to the immediate environment which may then be elaborated into symbolic systems which can hold, embody or contain underlying phantasies.

The proposal, like the present paper, was intended to be suggestive and to stimulate thought. Clearly, in holding the conference we were trying to make some impact on the terms in which the debate is conducted and to confront the problem in a slightly different way. Instead of arguing for a change of behaviour through the methods of ‘conditioning’ - changing the system of rewards and punishments which govern our manifest behaviour - we were arguing for an *analytic* attitude. Psychoanalysis is essentially a *self reflexive* discipline. Is it possible to change behaviour through *understanding* ourselves better - our hopes and wishes, and more especially our fears - and so loosen the chains which bind us to a way of life that has endangered not only ourselves, but future generations?

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