

In the Gap Between Phenomenology and Depth Psychology:

Recovering the Poetic Realism of the World:

A Foundation for a Cultural-Historical Therapy,

With Ethical and Political Implications

Part One: Between Phenomenology and Depth Psychology

In “The Philosopher and His Shadow” Merleau-Ponty opens a space which points to the necessity of a dialogue between phenomenology and depth psychology. To reflect, he writes, is to unveil an unreflected dimension, which is at a distance because we are no longer in it in a naïve way, yet which we cannot doubt that reflection attains, since it is through reflection itself that we have an idea of it. So it is not the unreflected which challenges reflection; it is reflection which challenges itself. In short, it is through consciousness that the philosopher comes to understand that there is an unconscious shadow in our thinking.

Paul Ricoeur will later make the same point but in a more challenging way. In his essay, ‘Consciousness and the Unconscious’ he writes:

‘For someone trained in phenomenology, existential philosophy, linguistic or semiological methods, and the revival of Hegel studies, the encounter with psychoanalysis constitutes considerable shock, for the discipline affects and questions anew not simply some particular theme within philosophical reflection but the philosophical project as a whole.’

(Ref Cs and the uncs, trans Willis Domingo, in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern U press, 1974) p.99)

Both statements pose a demand for a kind of ethics that would establish procedures that take reflection’s challenge to itself deeper into that challenge. The ethical demand here is to

secure procedures that help consciousness descend into the unreflected that founds reflection. Merleau-Ponthe and Ricoeur acknowledge that phenomenology by itself does not achieve that; it points the way. Depth psychology meets that demand. The phenomenologist has to meet the depth psychologist at the abyss for this descent.

Ricoeur has taken up that demand by insisting that the reality of the unconscious is established in a dialectical field between a witness and one who is witnessed. This field defines the unconscious in a very specific way. As Ricoeur notes, “the ‘reality’ of the unconscious exists only as a reality which has been diagnosed.” (WR 255)

Diagnosed is a pivotal term here as it shows uncs reality manifests itself indirectly in disturbances, disruptions and breakdowns of consciousness. Moreover, what breaks through, what slips in between the cracks and fissures of mind, appears in the disguised form of symptoms and dreams.

A diagnosed uncs also accurately defines the therapeutic space of psychoanalysis. The philosopher who makes a place for the uncs works in the same hermeneutic circle as a therapist and patient do, a therapeutic space in which therapist and patient impregnate other with the immediacy of their bodily presence. In this circle therapist and patient witness and are witnessed by each. More precisely they mirror each other, reflecting in both sense of the term **an image through which an untold story waiting within a symptom and coded in dreams might be told**. It is necessary, however, to add that in this reciprocity of reflections the hermeneutic circle twists into a spiral of transferences and counter-transferences where witness and witnessed are not immutable. The one who witnesses has a shadow and in this regard depth psychology is a form of education which, recalling Ricoeur’s strong statement above, would apply and perhaps even be necessary for the philosopher and his shadow

Ricoeur’s work not only uncouples the uncs from Freud’s realism, which is “a realism of the id in its ideational representations and not a naïve realism of uncs meaning,” his work also indicates how the convergence of phenomenology and Freud’s psychology toward each other makes a place for uncs dynamics in all human affairs beyond the therapy room. The key difference however is that outside the therapy room uncs dynamics in all human affairs manifest as complexes which function beyond awareness and act, to use an aptly descriptive

term from Jung, as little devils. They are the stuff of the shared reality between parents and children, friends and lovers, teachers and students, and even colleagues at such august meetings as this one.

Jung's psychology is particularly attuned to this complex character of human psal life, which in effect liberates the notion of uncs dynamims from the issue of neurosis and brings it from the therapy room into the heart of lived life, where it operates in our politics and economics and all the ways we create the bodies of knowledge that shape a culture. Jung's psy is a vastly expanded notion of uncs dynamics which range from the personal through the cultural-historical into the collective archetypal and even the psychoidal level where the uncs is the consciousness of nature subtending consciousness.

This deepening goes hand in hand with J's presentation of the uncs as a reality in its own right, and this claim for Ricoeur is untenable. It fosters a naïve realism that "would end up by giving consciousness to the unconscious and would thus produce the monster of an idealism of unconscious consciousness." (Ref Ricoeur ibid above see pgs 256, 257 WR for ref)

A discussion of this challenge to phen which is posed by Jung's psy would take us beyond the primary theme of this paper -- the issue of language in the gap between phen and depth psy. But before turning to M-P, whose work can accommodate somewhat at least Jung's psychology, I will add that I have made some attempt to discuss Ricoeur's critique of Jung in *The Wounded Researcher*, especially in chapter 9 pages 257-258 and then chapters 10 and 11.

Merleau-Ponty states that phenomenology and psychoanalysis tend toward the same latency, which for M-P is the body. His word for that body where these two traditions encounter each other is 'chair'(flesh), which M-P says has no name in philosophy and which is the site of a new ontology (Lefort Ref)

Describing flesh as an elemental reality, like the elements of air, water, fire, earth, light, this fleshy way of being in the world and knowing it no longer privileges the point of view of consciousness. In his major work, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, the chapter 'The Cogito' already anticipates the flesh. The chapter opens with this remark:

“I am thinking of the Cartesian cogito, wanting to finish this work, feeling the coolness of the paper under my hand, and perceiving the trees of the boulevard through the window.” (REF)

One might be stopped in one's tracks by this simple sentence. Mind can lose itself in this jungle of gerunds where thinking is wanting, feeling and perceiving, where desire is an armature of thinking, where there is a chiasm of a body that is sensitive to the sensuous touch of the world's cool breath, and where perception finds its realization in the perceptible.

Was Merleau-Ponty dreaming when he wrote those words as the Cogito was being drawn out of itself into the boulevard? Or, perhaps, had he slipped into a state of reverie for a moment, seduced by the sensuous charms of the day and the desires of a fleshy mind? Were his words already sketching out the need for a different language that he noted when he said psychoanalysis is also a new ontology, or at least it is that possibility when Freud's psychoanalysis is freed of its Cartesian metaphysical baggage. Already in his first work, *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty questions “whether the conflicts...of which he (Freud) speaks and the psychological mechanisms which he described really require the system of causal notions by which he interprets them.” In reply he states, “it is easy to see that causal thinking is not indispensable here and that one can use another language”(1963:177).

But what is that other language?

The rich fruits of a dialogue between phenomenology and depth psychology ripen when depth psychology is understood as not just or even primarily as a method of treatment, but also, and more importantly, as a new form of education, a lower education as my colleague Mary Smail calls it, which takes place in the night school of the dream and is tutored by the symptom. These fruits also blossom as the foundation for an ethical epistemology that makes a place for unconscious dynamics, which recognizes, as we could say, the myths in our meanings, the images in our ideas, the fantasies in our facts, the complexes in our concepts, the shadows in the light of an embodied mind.

The dialogue between these two traditions has guided my steps along two paths. One path leads to a poetics of psychological life. The focus there is the issue of the language of the

flesh which is the theme of Part Two. The other path leads to a depth phenomenology as a cultural-historical therapy. The focus there is and has been the question of technology which I will discuss in Part Three.

Part Two: Cultivating a Poetic Sensibility for the Poetic Realism of the World

M-P's language of the flesh cultivates a poetics of psychological life, which I would claim supports Jung's view of the uncs as a reality in its own right. To begin, recall that passage in the pivotal chapter, *The Cogito*, where that jungle of gerunds entangles a reader and sweeps him/her along in a flow of action where the 'I' who is thinking disappears in tides of desire that draw the 'I' who thinks into the world. A chiasm entwines the flesh of the 'I' with the flesh of the world, a point which M-P develops in rich detail in his last published essay 'Eye and Mind' and in the text, *The Visible and the Invisible* which he was working on when he died.

Alphonso Lingis, the translator of *The Visible and the Invisible*. says "The concept of flesh emerges as the ultimate notion of Merleau-Ponty's thought." (1968:liv) It is a term that Merleau-Ponty says "has no name in any philosophy," and as he develops this notion it becomes clear that flesh is not just what phenomenology describes as the lived body distinguished from the objective body. Rather, flesh is an elemental reality, like the elements of air, water, fire, earth, light, and to understand its elemental presence one finally has to surrender any positivist notion of the body as an empirical given, a corporeal piece of the visible world over against a mind, "the seer, which must be an incorporeal and non-sensorial knowing agency, an immaterial spirit, finally a pure clearing, a nothingness" (lv).

The other also belongs to this equivalence of sensibility and the sensible, for just as one is a seer for whom the other is seen, that other is also a seer for whom I am seen. In this respect, flesh is the locus of a crossing, the site where the dichotomies of subject and object and self and other are entangled below the level of reflection. The elemental flesh is a chiasm where self and other are dissolved, where the equivalence is an exchange, a transformation in which 'I' who look at a thing or at you am also looked at by things and by you, a pivot where one is simultaneously the seer and the seen, a subject and an object.

Flesh exists within the field of the visible. “Things,” Merleau-Ponty says, “have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence” (Edie 1964:164). But if things have their internal equivalence in me how much more seductive is the internal equivalent of the other, whose flesh so much more mirrors one’s own, whose form situates self and other in a circuit of reflection, in a field of reciprocity that is unmatched by other forms of being. But in all cases, whether it be with the other who reciprocates my gestures, or with the things of the world, one’s body as flesh radiates beyond itself. Looking at the world, for example, one’s eyes do not search out the landscape from some outpost, directed in its gaze like a beam from some flashlight by a mind that is outside the visible. On the contrary, one’s eyes are drawn out of their anatomical sockets and wander over there toward the other. Voyeurism, therefore, is not an ophthalmological problem. It is an existential issue, which shows that larger point that vision finds its fulfillment in the other or in the things seen, in that thing or other that has impregnated one’s flesh and left a carnal imprint of its presence, in that other or thing that has aroused, seduced and enfolded one within its embrace. For Merleau-Ponty, then, movement is the enactment of a carnal desire that flesh has for the other, an expression of a carnal hunger.

The notion of flesh gives flesh to the form of Being and as an element that is the foundation for a new ontology, there is no other word for this circuit of arousal, for this carnal desire and hunger except Eros. What we arrive at with this notion of flesh, therefore, is that place where Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body encounters the body in depth psychology, transforms it and is transformed by it. In this respect it is no accident that in his working notes to his last book, Merleau-Ponty sets for himself the task of describing the “pre-egology” (Edie 1964: 220) of the flesh.

In “Eye and Mind” Merleau-Ponty, quoting Paul Valery, says, “ ‘the painter takes his body with him,’ ” to which he adds, “Indeed we cannot imagine how a mind could paint” (Edie 1964:162). The painter, then, who takes his body with him/her is caught up in this circuit of desire. He or she is one who is impregnated by what he/she paints as much as he/she impregnates what he/she paints. This is why we cannot imagine how a mind could paint because it would have no place within the visible structure of the world, no place from which

to see and be seen, and no flesh by which it is aroused by the carnal formula of things. To illustrate this point, Merleau-Ponty cites the artist Paul Klee:

“In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me...I was there, listening...I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it...I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out” (Edie 1964:167).

Penetrated, impregnated, submerged, even buried, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh challenges any notion of mind as the autonomous author of meaning and any notion of language as the sole creation of mind. Like the painter who paints to break out, to give form and color, line and expression to what has been given and addressed to him/her, the poet also speaks because he/she has heard and listened. Rilke’s *Duino Elegies* are a good example. Situating us between the Angel, who is self-sufficient in its own beauty and who is indifferent to our cries, and the animal, who is content to remain in the womb of nature that has brought it forth, we exist, stand out and lament our fate of being in the between, our fate of being neither Angel nor Beast, neither spirit nor matter, but flesh.

The elegiac songs of lament are, however, also songs of praise that acclaim our place between matter and spirit. In the flesh we, unlike the Angel or the Animal, are here to give voice to what solicits us. Agents more than authors of meaning, we are in Rilke’s fine phrase ‘bees of the invisible’, those who gather the blue honey of the world and in the flesh do the work of transformation. For Rilke we speak in that pause between the two moments of breathing, in that alchemical moment when, having breathed in and been in-spired by the carnal form of the visible, we then breathe out a word in the moment of ex-piration, the moment when we die to our inherence in things and take the leap and the risk of saying. And so, Rilke writes,

“Are we, perhaps, here just for saying: House,
Bridge, Fountain, Gate, Jug, Olive tree, Window,--
possibly: Pillar, Tower?...” (1939:75)

We should not pass over too quickly the slight hesitation regarding this leap. Perhaps we are here just for this saying; and possibly we are called to say this particular word or that one. In the poet's hands, the philosopher's insights are re-imagined. Merleau-Ponty's field of flesh is a con-spiracy, a breathing together, a resonance in which as Merleau-Ponty notes in his comments on Klee, "There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that it becomes impossible to distinguish between what sees and what is seen, what paints and what is painted" (Edie 1964:167). Perhaps! Possibly! But neither poet nor philosopher doubts this vocation that is an obligation. And so, a few lines later in the Ninth Elegy Rilke asks, "Earth, isn't this what you want: an invisible/re-arising in us?" (Rilke 1939:77) It is a question whose answer has already been given in these songs of lament and praise.

With the notion of flesh Merleau-Ponty claims what he says no other philosophy has claimed, namely the passivity that is at the heart of our activity, that sense of being claimed by the visible even as we lay claim to it and seek to possess it. He notes, "he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 134-135).

What Merleau-Ponty works through in the language of the flesh is analogous to what depth psychology works through in its language of consciousness and the unconscious and the transference and counter-transference relations between patient and therapist. As such M-P is amplifying Ricoeur's understanding of the Freudian uncs. **But, I will suggest, he is also on the way toward Jung. For example,** Jung's diagram of the complexities of transference can be viewed as a deepening of Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm. That diagram, which applies as much to the relation between a reader and text as it does to analyst and patient, moves M-Ps phil toward Jung's idea of an uncs reality.

Another step toward Jung takes place when we consider how the notion of the uncs has developed over the course of the 20th century, how the scope and range of the unreflected has been expanded. So, when M-P claims for philosophy that passivity is at the heart of our activity, he is in fact describing what depth psychology describes in terms of the relation of

consciousness to the unconscious, that depth of un-knowing in the center of our knowing. In all levels of the unconscious consciousness as the author of meaning encounters its other side, where it is the agent of meaning in service to what has been repressed, and as well in service to those ancestors who linger as the weight of history and who wait for us to respond to what has been “unresolved, unredeemed and unanswered” (Jung 1961:191) in their lives. And here, I would underscore that Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the flesh as that field where the world in its existential and temporal totality impregnates one converges with Jung’s idea of the psychoid archetype, where psyche and nature are one. In this respect, we are also agents in service to the ecological unconscious, a bit of nature itself with the power to give expression to its inspirations, the power to give form to its dwellings within us. There is a place in each of us where one senses he or she is green, or the wind, or the drop of dew on a blade of grass in the early morning sun, a feeling of a kinship with the elemental world of which flesh is a part.

So, in the gap between phenomenology and depth psychology,

in the darker light of an embodied mind,

in a cogito that already finds itself emmeshed in webs of desire,

in a mind already entangled with the world in the same erotic love affair that plays itself out between the shadows and the light,

in a mind that sees the world because it is itself seeable:

Is not the allure of the mystery of psychological life an education rooted in a hunger for and seduction by the opulent, shameless epiphanies of the world which, like fireflies in the night, cannot be jarred and sealed without their light going out?

Do not these epiphanies of psychological life, those momentary sparks in darkness, require a kind of response to what is almost ineffable, a response that at best alludes to the elusive, an

indirect language that attends to the voices of silence, which, like dreams, symptoms, feelings, fantasies, reveries leave clues for a grammar of soul making?

The sheen of the sheer presence of things as they merely are unfolds the meaning of the world as primarily a poetic realism. One can see this in the simple gesture of the pointing finger of the young child who is not yet the master of words. It also lingers in us who, surprised by the too often forgotten wonder of the world, first points to what in the moment is beyond words. The word is the maturation of this gesture, the moment when the word like the painter's brush arises from the flesh, which reveals the seductive, erotic bond between the sensuous charms of the world and the sensual flesh at the core of a poetic realism.

Bachelard's and Van den Berg's phenomenology invite one to encounter the epiphanies of the world's poetic realism with a recovered sense of wonder. Is this not what phenomenology at its best does: Makes one naive enough to wander as a witness to wonder, to learn to look at the world again? Or, as Merleau-Ponty notes, to be "a perpetual beginner." (NB REF)

Phenomenology is a return to beginnings, a task marked by the difference and the strife between the origins to which one returns and the origins from which one has departed. As John Sallis notes (REF), there is no other term for what sits in the gap and mediates the tension of that strife than imagination.

This return to beginnings is a turning again and again toward things and what we know and believe in order to take note of what still shines with neglected possibilities that seduce us to look again with a soft focus as it were. That soft focus is the cultivation of the eye of the imagination, which William Blake's distinction between seeing through and not with the eye describes. Indeed, Blake points to the consequences when we fail to nurture the eye of imagination. He says, "We are led to Believe a Lie/ When we see **with** not Thro the Eye" (Ref).

The poetry of Wallace Stevens ripples with the challenges of that lie. It is there, for example, in just these three lines from 'An Ordinary Evening in New Haven':

‘We keep coming back and coming back
To the real: to the hotel instead of the hymns
That fall upon it out of the winds...’

The Poet as phenomenologist is in those lines, telling us we come back again and again to the Visible and no longer see or hear or sense or speak in any way to and of the Invisible that companions the Visible.

And then, several lines down as a counterpoint to the above, Stevens says to us what poetry must be if it cultivates the eye of imagination and attends to the Invisible:

‘The poem is the cry of **its** occasion,
Part of the res itself and not about it. (the occasion)
The poet speaks the poem as it is
Not as it was: part of the reverberation
Of a windy night as it is, when the marble statues
Are like newspapers blown by the wind.’
(Poems of W S,147, 148)

These lines exemplify the duty of the poet. “The task of poetry,” Stevens says, “is the writing of a supreme fiction” so that, he adds and this is a key insight, one might realize, “The supreme fiction is the fiction of the fact.” (Ibid,48,60).

Poets like Stevens are a regular part of my continuing education as a psychologist, which, of course, does not suit the demands of the discipline. But it is and has been a task I must take up, because the supreme fiction of psychology today is its belief that it is a science, or a philosophy, or even a poetics. Indeed, I would even suggest that the supreme fiction of psychology today is the belief that it is even a discipline. And yet, as Stevens notes, “The final belief is to believe in a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know it is a fiction and that you believe it willingly.”

So, I believe in the fiction of a poetics of psychological life even as I know I am making believe that I believe it. And I do so because it shows the necessity for and is a condition for an ethical epistemology that opens the space for dialogue and provides ground for action **when** one must choose. Again, Stevens speaks to this point in ‘Asides on the Oboe’:

“The prologues are over. It is a question, now,
Of final belief. So say that final belief
Must be in a fiction. It is time to choose”
(Ibid,102)

It is time to choose because the lie that blinds the eye of imagination fuels the crisis of modernity’s dream of a technologically created world. Part three of my presentation explores this theme by recovering the technological world view as a fiction, or a perspective, or myth if one preserves those terms, that forgets and forgets that it forgets it is a fiction. But a few final words here before that.

A poetics of psychological life underscores the intimate nexus between perceiving and speaking. In one of the working notes to *The Visible and The Invisible*, which I read as the pivot where Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical phenomenology turns toward a poetic phenomenology, he says, ‘we speak because/(as) we see, and we see because/(as) we speak.’ (REF Wking notes to the V and the Invisible)

Attending to the epiphanies of psychological life with that soft gaze through the eye of the imagination, calls for a psychological language, which, aware of the *fiction of the fact*, simply alludes to those sparks of soul that remain elusive. Both words echo their Latin root *ludere*, underscoring a poetics of psychological life as a way of saying that plays with the world (*al-ludere*), while the world playfully eludes (e-ludere) the play, slipping the net, as it were, of our meanings, setting up a rhythm, a flow between embodied mind and world, refusing as it were, the lapidary temptation to fix in stone this meaning or that meaning. A poetics of psychological life is a kind of alchemy where the stone *is* and *is not* a stone, an alchemy, which like alchemy itself works via images, which are and are not what they are,

images that are symbols now coagulating a meaning and then dissolving it. When Jung notes that psyche is image he is creating a psychology whose style of discourse, whose way of speaking says and unsays what it says, reveals and conceals what is, a style with a metaphoric sensibility.

Such a sensibility situates one in the realm of 'as if.' Stevens speaks to the power of the 'as if' when he says his theory of poetry is the theory of life, "As it is", in the intricate evasions of as,/In things seen and unseen, created form nothingness,/The heavens, the hells, the worlds, the longed-for lands.'(Ibid, 150-151)

A metaphoric sensibility is an unveiling of those evasions, a revelation of possibilities where this thing is seen **as if** it were that thing, where one glimpses through an image a thing's dream of being other. The poetry of Wallace Stevens eloquently exemplifies this sensibility. Starting with things as they merely are, the work of the poet is "the incantation of reality under the spell of imagination" (Ref Simon Critchley, *Things Merely Are*, 58). In the space between imagination reducing reality to itself and reality reducing the imagination's power to impotence," (Ibid, 85), Stevens' poetry aligns with a poetics of psychological life crafted in the gap between phenomenology and depth psychology. And like Stevens' take on poetry, a poetics of psychological life "increases our feeling for reality by allowing us to see it, to focus on that which we normally pass over in our everyday activity." (Ibid, 89) His poetics, like the poetics of psychological life even "offers a possible form of redemption...which saves the sense of the world for us." (Ibid, 59) Saves the world and also finds in the world the vessel for soul making: 'Call the world, if you please, the Vale of Soul Making. Then you will find out the use of the world.'

A metaphor is the shortest of short stories. It is a fiction that loosens the thick and heavy weight of reality when it is imagined through something else, as, for example, when, in the grip of the leadenness of ageing one says, 'Old age is the evening of life.' We would believe a lie were we to see this as a fact, or for that matter as an idea. And, we would miss how image is the domain of metaphor and miss how a poetics of psychological life is an attitude, a style of seeing and saying, like M-P describes phenomenology in his Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*. Phenomenology and a poetics of psychological life *are*

inclinations toward the world whose reach exceeds its grasp--, to which I would add -or what's a metaphor!

Part Three: The Need for a Therapy of Culture

Attesting to the birthright of flesh, a poetics of psychological life reclaims the erotic bond between the sensual flesh of embodiment and the sensuous flesh of the world. Returning to the flesh **re-minds** us of what we have lost, forgotten or otherwise disregarded, when we no longer notice those epiphanies of imagination that unfold the extraordinary in the ordinary, the miracle in the mundane, the surprise of the unexpected that erupts from the familiar. Those displays recover the web of enchantment between us and the world. That web has been broken or at least dangerously frayed.

The epiphanies of the world's poetic realism sow the seeds for a cultural-historical anamnesis. James Hillman's notion of a therapy of ideas points to this work. Van den Berg's metabletic phenomenology is this work of anamnesis which he originated and brilliantly describes across multiple books and essays. His metabletics is a return to the origins of specific cultural-historical events whose origins have been forgotten but still live on as a shared collective dream that pervades waking life as a form of amnesia, a condition of collective forgetting, a double amnesia within which we even forget we have forgotten. In a series of metabletic studies over the years, my focus has been on the origins of the scientific-technological worldview as a collective cultural-historical dream. Returning to these origins, metabletics re-collects those origins as a possibility and opens a space for imagination to question what we have made of that possibility. Here is the question that has animated my own metabletic reflections:

Have we become so ensorcelled by that cultural-historical dream that we cannot even remember that the multiple ecological, political, economic, educational, medical etc crises we face today are symptoms of the dark shadows spawned by that double amnesia for those origins?

To conclude my presentation, I offer this closing meditation to illustrate the necessity for a cultural-historical therapy and to set the mood to experience the current crises of this way of

framing the world, and, perhaps, underline the need for effective psychological ways to respond, to be response-able as conferenced citizens, to them.

100 Seconds to Midnight

In 2019 the Doomsday Clock was set at two minutes to midnight. In January of this year, it was re-set to 100 seconds to midnight, the closet we have been to this mark since it was created in 1947.

Midnight is the moment when the annihilation of the human species and the destruction of nature as we know it happens.

Unthinkable? Unimaginable?

When the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima 75 years ago how many seconds did those living in the city have left in their lives before their annihilation? Whatever the number of seconds they had, they did not know how much time they had left.

But for this example, we would know.

We would know we have 100 seconds to midnight.

What does 100 seconds to live feel like?

Let us imagine it now together even in this digital space of disembodiment.

For one minute and forty seconds let us sink into the unthinkable!

NB Set Timer on my phone clock to 100 seconds!!

When the alarm goes off!

Do not ask for whom the clock ticks. it ticks for you and me and all of us.

Do not ask for whom the alarm is sounding, it is tolling for you and me and all of us and all the billion animals burned in the Australian fires, for the dying forests and polluted waters, and for all and each of us and those whom we know and love have ever been and still might be.

The Doomsday Clock is a mirror that reflects back to us a disturbing image of the so called new normal that is a measure of our collective insanity.

How have we arrived at this point?

How do we respond when the alarm wakes us from sleep?

Have we been dreaming?

Are we responsible for our dreams?

Dreams speak the language of unconscious dynamics in terms of images, and regarding such images Jung notes, “The images of the unconscious place a great responsibility upon a man” and “insight into them must be converted into an ethical obligation.” (**Ref C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 193.**)¹⁹

In the bodies of knowledge we create our failure to take into account the presence of unconscious factors make our epistemologies one-sided, fixed truths and ideological exercises of power. As such they become expressions of epistemological violence. One has only to look at the multiple splitting that has plagued the history and development of depth psychology to see how differences with the other, without proper consideration of the other in oneself, lead to animosity toward and the demonizing of the other. In addition, one has only to consider how the ethos of Western science, despite its great achievements, has cast a huge shadow of destruction over human life and the natural world.

We live today not only in the shadow of the bomb, but also in the deepening darkness of environmental collapse as the polar icecaps continue to melt, the seas and oceans become increasingly polluted, the buildup of carbon-based greenhouse gases reaches ever higher levels and raging fires, floods and other weather catastrophes are increasingly destructive, while animal and human habitats are destroyed and the number of homeless refugees swells almost beyond belief. All the bodies of knowledge we create, like the bodies of those who create them, cast a shadow. To come to terms with the shadow side of our ways of knowing and constructing the world, an ethical epistemology would have to make a place for unconscious dynamics in our ways of knowing the world

In the gap between phenomenology and depth psychology, technology as a cultural-historical dream is becoming a nightmare. Coming to terms with our part in this increasingly dire situation is the emergency of our age, the single most important task facing humanity today.

