The questions Mills asks about the archetypal unconscious are very much to the point, and should be thought through in some measure by Jungians thinking about the archetypes and related issues. That being said, the book is not clinically-oriented and thus requires of the reader a willingness to exercise theoretical thinking and make one’s own applications.

References


John White
Interregional Society of Jungian Analysts


The most striking feature of this book is not its content – excellent though that is – but its unusual format. Ostensibly, it is a series of interviews with psychotherapists and evolutionary anthropologists on the origins and impact of trauma. However, each chapter has been carefully crafted and constructed through many drafts and back-and-forth interchanges with the interview subjects, combined with the author’s own research. The result combines the accessible informality of the interview format with the depth and complexity of written work. There is a genuine sense of dialogue here that is refreshing and illuminating.

The scope of the book and its interviewees reflects Daniela Sieff’s unusual background and interests. Having trained in evolutionary anthropology and spent several years living amongst traditional peoples in Tanzania, she came to the world of psychotherapy through the need to make sense of her own trauma. The fact that she is not a therapist herself enables her to retain the perspective of those that seek help rather than those who provide it, while her academic background provides an intellectual rigour that is independent of professional agendas. In fact, the book is not primarily aimed at a professional audience of researchers and/or therapists but seeks to make their insights available to a wider public needing to make sense of their own trauma. It is a rare achievement to produce a book that can satisfy both kinds of audience.

The way the various themes are set out helps to achieve this aim. The first four chapters, offering a psychodynamic perspective, are written mainly with Jungian therapists (Donald Kalsched, Tina Stromsted and Marion Woodman) with the addition of Bruce Lloyd, an addiction therapist. These are the most accessible chapters for a non-professional audience seeking to understand the nature of trauma and how it may be affecting them. Most of this material will be familiar to readers of this Journal, although the interview with Kalsched
provides a fine opportunity for him to convey the seasoned wisdom of a deeply compassionate therapist that goes beyond his own published work and is helpful for therapists and patients alike. These chapters include some of the clearest accounts of shame I have read, a theme that recurs through much of the book and is close to Sieff’s heart and, no doubt, her own therapeutic process. Bruce Lloyd’s account sums up what many of my own patients have taught me:

Shame is a deeply held, embodied and implicit belief that there is something wrong and defective with who we are. It sits as a black hole at the centre of our being.... [It] is excruciating because we become the object of our own contempt. It leaves us feeling profoundly empty, isolated and alone

(Sieff 2015, p. 27)

Tina Stromsted, a somatic movement therapist who has worked with Marion Woodman, emphasizes the importance of attending to the body in healing trauma since dissociation from the body is so often a feature of traumatic defences. She points out that emotions are primarily bodily states so a healthy regulation of states of stressful hyper-arousal or flattened hypo-arousal are crucial to therapeutic work. While practitioners of the talking cure attend to emotional regulation through its psychological manifestations, Stromsted’s Authentic Movement therapy provides a means of addressing bodily states directly, often a problematic lacuna in psychoanalytic work.

The theme of emotional regulation and arousal comes up again in the second group of chapters under the heading ‘Neurological Perspectives’. This includes a conversation with Allan Schore that provides the clearest and most accessible account of his ideas and work I have read. Sieff must take a good part of the credit for this, having thoroughly absorbed all his books and processed and digested the material with Schore through many drafts – an extremely worthwhile effort. Here, Schore’s theoretical ideas about the neurological implications of attachment are deeply integrated with his therapeutic perspective, bringing home the clinical implications of lack of right-hemisphere emotional regulation in early development that leaves us ‘struggling to respond to our social world appropriately and unable to regulate our emotions healthily’ (p. 111). With reference to Pat Ogden’s work in sensorimotor therapy, Schore outlines the result as either a state of hyper-arousal of the sympathetic nervous system characterized by states of dysregulated rage, panic and self-fragmentation or parasympathetic hypo-arousal where shame, disgust, despair and states of implosive collapse of the self are prominent.

Schore is the only analyst in this section of the book – the other chapters are conversations with psychologist Ellert Nijenhuis and psychiatrist Dan Siegel. Siegel’s work covers a lot of the same ground as Schore’s, focusing on the neurological aspects of attachment theory but is also notable for his inclusion of additional therapeutic techniques such as mindfulness. The benefit of such techniques makes obvious sense once we understand the importance of chronic dysregulation and arousal associated with traumatic states of mind.
Nijenhuis is well-known for his ground-breaking work with dissociative identity disorders, providing a detailed description of how the personality splits into an apparently normal personality (the ANP) which hides multiple fragments of dissociated emotional personalities (EPs). His research group have been able to show distinct differences in the states of bodily arousal associated with the different sub-personalities as well as some neurological differences. Their research has also been able to prove that dissociation of the personality cannot be explained by false memories or other forms of fantasy activity since there are clear differences in the neuroimaging of fantasy-prone women and actors and those with authentic ANP and EP dissociation. This neural distinction may also have relevance to the distinction between conscious fantasy and unconscious phantasy, though this is not mentioned.

The final section of the book entitled ‘Evolutionary Perspectives’ offers a fascinating view of how patterns of attachment may have evolved as adaptations to differing environmental conditions. This includes a conversation with Sarah Blaffer Hrdy whose work on ‘allomothering’ has made her an eminent figure in the world of primatology and evolutionary anthropology. Through her research with modern hunter-gatherers, Hrdy has shown that humans are unique amongst primates in our patterns of providing shared maternal care. She argues that co-operative breeding fosters the evolution of intersubjective awareness in children since being able to engage different carers would provide a selective advantage promoting the trait’s survival. In times of scarcity, abandoning some children to die may have been essential to survival and this too would become a selected-for trait, along with the exquisite sensitivity to maternal abandonment that characterizes human offspring. While these arguments challenge the traditional (psychoanalytic) belief in the primacy of unconditional maternal love, they do not explain why mothers (as well as infants) suffer so much pain when they cannot provide for their offspring. Clearly there is a conflict between the emotional (and evolutionary) imperatives of attachment and the circumstances which require mothers to counter that imperative even if that too is an evolutionary adaptation.

The same conundrums arise in James Chisholm’s chapter called ‘Live Fast, Die Young’. Both he and Hrdy argue that supposedly ‘failed’ patterns of avoidant and insecure attachment cannot be simply regarded as ‘maladaptive’ since they too must be adaptive in certain circumstances in order to have been selected for by evolution. Chisholm quotes research on rats which show that those reared in adverse environmental conditions by less attentive mothers play less, breed more early and die young. Thus they are adapted to ensure their genes are passed on while young due to the increased risk of early mortality in adverse conditions. This apparently convincing argument left me wondering how such patterns of fear-based adaptation get ‘turned off’ when conditions improve, if they are passed on by patterns of child-rearing? And, if the live fast/die young pattern is so successful, why not stick to it even in plentiful conditions rather than having differential patterns of adaptation? There is
also the problem common to the ‘reverse engineering’ hypotheses of evolutionary psychology that the complexities of cultural adaptation that characterize the human species tend to be stripped away by explanations which assume an ancient environment of adaptation from which all modern behaviour patterns can be derived. So while these arguments support our understanding of the adaptive aspects of anxious and avoidant styles of attachment, they do not offset the searing pain of trauma and the need for healing, the theme of the book as a whole.

One of the most striking features of the book for the psychoanalytically-oriented reader is that there is no mention of psychoanalysis at all. Yet I did not realize this until I was more than half way through. The fact that I hadn’t missed a psychoanalytic perspective was due to several factors. Firstly, many of the authors have roots in either analytical psychology or psychoanalysis but have branched out and gone beyond their starting place towards finding common ground with other modalities. Secondly, so much of what I had been reading spoke directly to my clinical experience, such as the centrality of shame and the difficulties produced by chronic states of hyper-arousal. This is a powerful illustration of the impact that the growth of trauma-based research and therapeutic approaches is having on analytic practice, enabling us to understand and respond to our patients in ways not previously available. Thirdly, a great deal of the book, including the evolutionary anthropology section, is a convincing vindication of the lasting value of John Bowlby’s work in attachment theory, itself rooted in psychoanalysis. More than half a century later, it is clear that it is Bowlby rather than his psychoanalytic critics who has won the day. This is all to the good for those who suffer and those who seek to heal emotional trauma. As Sieff writes in her introduction:

> there is light to be found at the end of the tunnel but the tunnel is often long, dark and frightening, both for those making their way through the tunnel and for those who accompany them. The aim of this book is to provide points of illumination in that darkness (Sieff 2015, p. 4)

The book amply succeeds in this aim, and it is to be hoped that it also succeeds in finding the wide audience it deserves.

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To properly recognize the value of this collection of papers, it needs to be placed in its historical context. Located in a psychoanalytic tradition which applies the