

# **I Love You, Let's separate. Shadows of the Couple, Archetypal Roots and Analytical Work. (Michel Cautaerts)**

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"He has only the mystery of his living soul to set against the overwhelming might and brutality of collective convictions". Jung C.G.(1963), CW 14, 165(198)

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

"(...) when the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner opposite, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposing halves." Jung C.G.,1959 CW 9/2,70(126)

Why talk about the couple? Because some people do not want, or do not need, individual help. Because analysis affects the couple. Because there is sometimes synergism between marital therapy and individual therapy. And finally, because in order to be able to enter a commitment with a partner we must stop projecting the peculiarities of the unconscious onto his or her unfamiliarity. To do so we must go to the origin of our fears and recognize - if we can, without being petrified or paralysed with fear - the figure of the god, of the primordial force, the archetypes which have been constellated by the relationship and are present.

If the man is fleeing the woman, and if the woman is hesitant when faced with the man, it is Nyx, black night, and her daughter Thanatos that they are both more afraid of than each other. These strange figures are projected onto the unfamiliar, the other sex. Has it to do with the fact that Nyx is the mother of a lineage which seems to have refused to develop upwards towards greater awareness? Who does not feel perturbed before the most terrible of couples, the couple of Life and Death?

"Life wants not only the clear but also the muddy, not only the bright but also the dark". Jung C.G., (1963), CW 14,334(471)

For many couples, after a fairy-tale beginning all hell is then let loose. What demons urge the partners to stay together nevertheless? Why the endless discussion? Where is the dynamic of their relationship leading them? Is it not enough simply to trust in life or, if it comes to the worst, to embark on individual therapy?

Jung (1967, CW 13, 243(291)) says " ...clarification of consciousness necessarily entails an obscuration (...) so that sooner or later a split occurs in the psychic system". This split occurs in the subject's perception of the world. The couple is confronted with this split between body and mind. Nowadays, the couple is seen as a unique adventure on which two individuals embark in search of pleasure, no doubt, but also of their identity and then of their individuality.

From the point of view of the unconscious, the couple is an archetype, a matrix which preforms meaning. One of these ancient figurations is syzygy, the conjunction-opposition of the sun and moon. As soon as an unconscious content becomes conscious it actually presents itself as two opposites.

What is at stake in the couple is somewhere between pathological dissociation and creative dissociation; it is connected with the pressure of the unconscious on the conscious and the compensation of that pressure by cohesive forces.

We are in fact concerned with four couples : the parental couple, the "life couple", the internal couple - which only gradually becomes conscious - and the transferential couple. In research on the couple there are inevitably areas where these four couples merge or overlap similar to those of marital life.

I do not propose to discuss the parental couple, if only to say that the resistance to letting go of our parents and ceasing to regard them as such is connected with the fact that they often serve as a screen between us and death. You are well familiar with the transferential couple. The internal couple is the main theme of Jung's work; he summarises the action of the animus and anima on the ego in his text on syzygy. (Jung C.G.(1959), C.W.9,16(34))

## B. THE LIFE COUPLE

"He has only the mystery of his living soul to set against the overwhelming might and brutality of collective convictions". Jung C.G.(1963), CW 14, 165(198)

### 1.\*Definitions

The couple is a lasting relationship between two free persons who are involved in a process of development. It is the scene of alternating regressions and progressions, which liberate the individuality of the partners. Regressions refer us to our origins, to the question of our development and its difficulties, the archaic; progressions refer us to the question of individuation.

The couple is an undifferentiated, inaccessible, mythical object and at the same time the arena of structuring processes where elements are opposed and articulated in genealogies and in levels of value or of differentiation.

### 2.\*The life couple: conscious development and personal unconscious

Partly conscious, partly unconscious, the couple holds the life of the mind and the life of the body together. The future partners recognise each other by reading each other's conscious and unconscious. The relationship will only endure if their unconscious is animated and if the archetypes interact. For even if it is unconscious, the internal couple interacts with the life couple.

1. In order to enter a relationship the partners practice courtship; they orient themselves in relation to the other partner, eliminating what does not please or what they think cannot appeal.

These exclusions constitute the courtship shadow.

2. In an initial period of life, it is the complementarity of the sexes and of the abilities and strengths of each individual, the sum of reciprocal achievements which seems to be the most important. It is based on the structures of the conscious, the psychological types, identity. Each individual, for example, likes to see himself or herself as only male or only female. This creates the typological shadow.

The couple build a structure, the conscious contract between the partners, which defines the couple's territory and modes of operation. When a couple seek counselling, this contract, which is connected with the psychological types and defences against the unconscious, is called in question. Conscious contracts are established by the ego, which is still embroiled in the family; they are thus an amalgam of the personal and family ideas and habits of each of the partners and of stereotypes.

3. It is in the couple that our incarnation, our "soul incarnate", is put to the test. Each partner is required to create meaning on the basis of the emotions and sensations s/he experiences every day.

The incarnation of the one comes up against the different incarnation of the other and against the way s/he is accustomed to qualifying perceptions and using them to form his/her world view. The meaning the individual sees in it will be coloured by the trials of previous relational experiences and, ultimately, by the relationship with the mother. For it is our mother who is the first to receive our emotions and to endow them with meaning.

Memory interposes conclusions of the past between us and reality, conclusions which we call the personal and family unconscious; it is a colouring which can distort.

One aspect of incarnation is to raise the question of the body, of sensations which are accepted or desired, of bodily pleasures and habits. The reference here is the parental couple. The other aspect of incarnation is the way in which certain archetypes - the Puer-Senex archetype, for instance - influence us more than others.

The quest for identity has left parts in each of us which have not been developed, which have not been integrated into the ego: contents which have been repressed or split and which have never reached consciousness form the individual shadows, which can overlap, become intricately, eliminate one another, etc.

4. After a while the contents which each partner has repressed begin to exert pressure. Repressed material is usually not too far removed from consciousness; the couple can talk about it. For example, they bring up things again like "in my family, in your family..."; "what I enjoy, what you enjoy...", etc. It is the genealogical shadow which intervenes here, made up of all of the instances where the original families which the partners have come from have interfered.

We work on this shadow with recollections of the parents. One good technique is to use the classical genogram or, better, the "landscape genogram". The former is a genealogical diagram, the latter, - which is advocated by C. Nève-Hanquet (1988) and J. Pluymaekers (1992) - is a method where the clients are asked to draw up a creative picture of their families. It highlights the myths, false secrets, habits and influences of those original families. It also reveals defects in symbolisation which date from previous generations and occur as archetypal imagoes or instances of acting-out in the following generation.

5. Split material is intrusive and poses more problems. It affects the partner in whom it is projected in particular, but there are projections on both sides. The "projective shadow of the couple" is connected with the mechanism of projective identification and is made up of the elements which the partners have split and deposited in the couple and which have been "petrified" and immobilised by archaic defense mechanisms.

When a containing partner develops, he (or she) presents to the other partner the content which that partner has projected in him (or her). The archaic defenses of the projecting partner play a role, for if he has split his personality he has done so in order to survive and to form his ego. The projecting partner thus does not know how to reintegrate what has been projected.

The containing partner is consequently faced with the choice of either continuing to serve as container or destabilising the projecting partner. But acting as container can become unbearable; the limits of what is bearable for each partner are discussed again in the couple.

3.\* The vicissitudes of the normal development process of the couple

It can happen that one partner wants the other to continue to carry the projection of the oedipal partner and to be only a parent. Sometimes the mother of renewal is projected on the spouse with the wish that s/he contain the dissociated state.

Like the man who, unable to understand what was disturbing him, told his wife that her womb was "a cemetery", without realising that he was expressing an inverted request for rebirth - in very blunt terms.

The individual can become fascinated with the images produced by the unconscious or can cling to the collective values of the group. He is unable to come to terms with his shadow. This is the whole problem of guilt and shame.

In order to avoid dissociation of one's person the couple is broken; one is thus able to avoid calling oneself in question, and the projection can be maintained.

The shadow can be projected on the partner and the partner takes command of the other in order to control him or her - keeping him at a distance in an obsessional attitude, or, in a hysterical attitude, discharging the wish in an immediate emotional explosion (theatricalisation).

Sometimes the animus or anima takes possession of the ego of one of the two partners, who refuses to call himself in question.

If the dangerous parts of the self are projected into the other and it seems impossible to reintegrate them without dissociation, the other becomes the scapegoat.

One partner may perhaps insist on believing solely in action and may overwork in order to avoid self-questioning directed at the subject of the action; he is conforming to collective norms.

Sometimes the couple content themselves with the sensual pleasures that are accessible or they give concrete expression to fantasies, which they make a reality.

And finally, it can happen that the partners cling to the couple in order to avoid loneliness. Tisseron (1992, p. 26) says that it is impossible to confront this if there has been no mother to whom the child could cling.

#### 4.\*The process continues

The partners will take decisions which, at best, will lead to sacrifices - will require them to relinquish certain values for higher values - and, at worst, will lead to mutilations. They will sometimes, in good faith, sacrifice part of themselves on the altar of the couple. They will do so for the other or for the couple, whereas the underlying motive is often to allow the neurosis or the splits to persist.

The decisions taken are intended to clarify confusions but are liable to involve pointless sacrifices and mutilations. In order to pull through, it would be better for the couple to understand what is happening. Genuine understanding is not a compromise; it is lucid acceptance by the intelligence and the heart. As we shall see later, it is connected with the Zeus-Ares-Hera-Aphrodite quaternion.

A new and more rigid "conscious contract" is established. Any changes one might wish to make in it will come up against archaic defences. There are several possible solutions.

The couple live on common ground. If there are too many projections, one of the partners is "empty" and the other "too full" - a circumstance which can arrest the relationship for a long time.

The couple become fixated in collusions; as Willi (1982) has suggested they obey an established system so that each partner can avoid being confronted with what has been split. One of the two, or indeed both, may live outside the couple, a situation which is unbearable for the other partner.

The relationship breaks down because the containing partner refuses to continue to contain. The projecting partner, who no longer has a means of expelling what or s/he cannot bear, may form a new life couple or seek a therapist capable of accepting the projective identification and helping him or her to develop. The subject may decompensate suddenly and violently by dissociation of the ego in a paranoid, schizoid or depressive episode, or s/he may commit suicide so as to avoid the unbearable archaic anxieties.

#### 5.\*An ancient portrayal of the couple

Let us turn our attention for a moment to Jean Van Eyck's work, "Arnolfini Wedding" (Fig. 1). At first sight, an ordinary couple in an interior of the period with fruit, the symbol of sensual pleasure. But shall we take a closer look? Why the dog? A symbol of fidelity, perhaps, the *domini canis*? But the mirror? And the centring? Is the apparent pregnancy an allusion to maternity or to the sea or to an adoption? Or is it a reference to the mother of rebirth? He is holding her hand with his left hand - what does this evoke?

In the construction of the painting and the use of colours, this apparently ordinary couple conceals and - in the mirror - reveals a different problem. Is the red the passion of spouses or the colour of blood? Is the green the colour of Venus? What does the man in midnight blue represent? And the lighted candle? And the reflection of another couple in the mirror, the couple that is said to be the artist and a stranger? Or is it the reflection of an unconscious couple in the mirror of the relationship?

What is the purpose of the inscription? So far we have seen that the couple has been seeking an identity: the inscription would seem to point to one. But what is the mirror image, the inversion, the chiasmic construction about?

In the *Cantilena Riplae*, we read:

The Mother's bed which erstwhile was a Square

Is shortly after made Orbicular;

And everywhere the Cover, likewise Round

With Luna's Lustre brightly did abound.

Jung C.G.(1963), CW 14, 316(438)

#### 6.\* Life couple and/or internal couple?

"Can one hold together measure and lack of all proportion, order and poetry? Jung endeavoured to do so." Elie Humbert, dedication of his book

A further stage can occur in the couple's relationship giving rise to an inversion of forces and problems.

As Elie Humbert says: "It can happen that the action of the anima and animus becomes unbearable and re-triggers the questioning, which then relates to the nature of the forces with which the ego is identifying; the result is the recognition that those forces are collective in nature." (HUMBERT E.G.(1983), Jung., p.128)

The ego becomes less important; it is the self which directs the processes. Movements suddenly occur which the couple do not understand; they are connected with the activation of archetypes.

To begin with, the sudden appearance of the animus and anima figures complicates the relationship, which becomes confused, the partners are disorientated. Their points of reference concerning their identity - one of which is the couple - disappear for a while. Nothing conscious seems to be of interest any longer. The archetypes become constellated, and it becomes necessary for the partners to detach themselves from the roles they induce - father, mother, ogre, witch, etc.

Why are the archetypes activated? Because of the unilateralisms of consciousness; because the body changes with age and in mid life, because adolescents challenge the couple.

The atmosphere changes. The shadow was relatively precise. But here things are blurred; it is the territory of mood and affect in the case of the anima and of stereotyped or cut-and-dried opinions in the case of the animus.

The relationship seems to have lost its meaning. The partners may get caught up in bouts of endless quarrelling, but they are unable either to separate or to stay together.

The ego will have to detach itself from its identifications with the archetypes in order to acquire more flexibility and more freedom. It is the psychoid that is animated. The life couple progresses between dulling rationalisation and chaos-inducing acceptance, between fascination with images and archetypes and systematic sexualisation, between the collective imaginary and the reality of the body. To deny the archetype or to identify with it amounts to cutting oneself off from one's perceptions, becoming disincarnate. The partner's reaction will sometimes be physical, although s/he will not realise the connection between this movement of the body towards the body and the danger of disincarnation.

We call the interplay of the interaction, intrication and overlap of the individual shadows and the animus and anima figures the psychoid shadow of the couple or the archetypal shadow.

#### 7.\* Working hypothesis

My working hypothesis is that the shadows of the couple, and particularly the projective shadow and the psychoid shadow, are not accessible, or can only be accessed with difficulty, in individual therapy. If they are to become apparent they require the physical presence of both partners at the session, one of the reasons being that the partner does not have, or thinks that he or she does not have the means, the apperceptive concepts, necessary for addressing what emerges.

The psychoid shadow of the couple is particularly dense and often can only be perceived by the partners with the help of a third person. Identifying it requires a decentred eye and a certain amount of experience.

There can be at least two types of development: identification with or differentiation from the archetypes.

1. If the subjects identify with the archetypes, the life couple becomes an archetypal couple, in which the roles take over the partners, so to speak. They suffer in their incarnation, since the "body of the gods", if I may use the expression, is different from our own bodies. What is more, one cannot talk to someone who has identified with the archetype.

This is where Jung's hypothesis of the collective unconscious comes to our assistance. If we can manage to detach ourselves from our identifications with the archetypes we acquire more flexibility and more respect for our bodies.

How can one bring about this detachment? By identifying what is redundant, that is to say, the fact that a certain interaction automatically - i.e. without the intervention of consciousness - induces a certain role: the warrior, the witch, the princess, the king, etc. Young-Eisendrath (1993) develops this approach.

Once triggered, the role exhausts the energy while the conscious is unable to stand back and observe: it is not possible to talk about it. The body is implicated in the partner's reaction: it is more a question of affect than of emotion. Narcissistic equilibrium is affected each time, and the subject feels s/he has been tricked, or is no longer allowed to speak, or is going through a nightmare or playing an absurd role.

If the couple can manage to identify these dictated roles they can then distinguish between what is an archetypal dramatisation, connected with an unconscious identification and resulting from flaws in the incarnations of the previous generation, what is an effort to seek meaning, and what is a defence against the archaic or the archetypal, which is frightening.

2. If the subjects detach themselves from their identifications, what was experienced as biological fertility becomes an effort on the part of both partners to seek to renew both themselves and their relationship.

The couple go through phases of disorientation. Symbols appear, dreams indicate development. The partners talk to each other about their relationship, about what animates them, about what gives them energy even if it does not give them pleasure. Whereas in the identity phase it seemed important to them to define themselves as male or female, from now on they talk in terms of masculine and feminine.

The creative process is resumed through the work on projections which are difficult to mobilise. The couple will only continue to exist if it promotes renewal. This necessitates the progressive integration of the internal couple and the life couple, which prompts the partners to travel the road of development many, many times.



In the first part of life the body is an object of pleasure or a tool for living. In the second part of life it is a source of information.

#### 8.\* Comments on and illustrations of the shadows of the couple

To sum up, the process of the couple's development has left aside the courtship shadows, the typological, projective and genealogical shadows, and the archetypal shadow. The partners are unable to identify these shadows in their relationship, but once they have identified them they are able to confront and integrate them.

The couple's shadow is like Mercurius, transient and difficult to perceive; it has many names and many faces. In order to convey the atmosphere I propose to give you an analogy with several images.

The perspective known as the Italian perspective - that of the painting by Van Eyck, for instance - would correspond to the ego. The couple in crisis is like an anamorphism (fig. 2): something is visible, but the meaning is not clear. The work on the couple's shadow produces a result similar to what is obtained by anamorphosis: by placing a cylindrical mirror in the centre the meaning becomes clear.

What form does the shadow take? It is invisible to begin with, just like the first aspect of a stereoscopic image (fig. 3). But if we move our eye off centre, by squinting, for example, we see a fleeting three-dimensional image (fig. 4).

### C. MARITAL THERAPY PRACTICE

"People want to be loved? Not so. They want to be preferred. [...] It is terrible, because you are asking a companion to be at the service of your wounded narcissism, and that really is not what he, or she, is there for." HUMBERT, E.G. (1994), p. 25.

#### 1. The session procedure, couples' questions, the themes

##### a. The procedure

This quote from Elie Humbert is the cue for me to discuss the session procedure. I see couples for one hour for about ten sessions, my purpose being to identify the shadows and enable the partners to perceive them. Sometimes I use the "landscape genogram", sculpting, drawing, or, less frequently, role-playing.

The partners seem to want to be preferred by the therapist, to form a couple with him or her. To acquiesce would be to create perverted triangles, as described by Hochmann J. (1971). To refuse is inappropriate. The therapist can let it go if he refers this behaviour to the following three questions, which the couple ask the therapist.

##### b. The questions

1. The couple want to be helped to understand what they do not understand.

It is a question of communicating, of clarifying confusions of attitudes - extroverted or introverted - and of functions. The shadow between rational functions - thinking and feeling - is the belief that logic prevails. But the partners are unaware of the fact that the logic of thinking promotes separation and abstraction, and the logic of feeling promotes the relationship.

The non-rational typological shadow is the confusion between sensing and intuiting: both types want perceptions, but the intuitive type needs distance, whereas the sensing type wants closeness.

2. The couple want to know what they are playing at or what is at issue between them.

It is a question of finding out who or what takes over the relational sphere of the couple. Family imagoes? Things that intrude in the name of the law of kinship (blood tie)? The question is on the borderline between this complex of problems and the following one. It is this: what are the couple's implicit contracts?

3. The couple want to know what is dictating their roles.

The answer is, as we have said, the archetypes. Every therapist has his or her own frame of reference for obtaining a clear picture of the principles involved: P. Caillé (1991) refers to the invariable protocol; J. Willy (1982) refers to the collusions; my frame of reference is based on Greek mythology as the figurative representation of the archetypes. It is an internal frame of reference.

This internal frame of reference enables the therapist to identify the specificities of the couple seeking therapy by perceiving the discrepancies between the real couple and the archetypal couples. The symbolic language of the partners is respected in the therapist's formulations.

Three clinical examples:

Enter couple

Two young people who have been living together for two years are separating. Both of them have in fact been unable to commit themselves. Their relationship has been one of two children who shared the same fear of being deserted or of being trapped. Through analysis the woman discovers problems of incest in her childhood. She has known about them, but has been unable to mobilise them. She finally dreams that she vomits black matter. She is thus vomiting the shame of what happened to her, which left images of men coloured by a Chronus who was arresting her life and her development.

Here is an example of the typological shadow:

She is the extroverted sensing type and wants to encounter reality as it is - imminent, immediate. He is the intuiting type; he senses opportunities and wants to explore them.

She wants to be loved "just as she is - unadorned, no frills". He would like her to be "changing and varied". He suggests that she buy sexy clothes. She is totally offended, since she feels that in that case it is not her that he loves, but a fantasy of a woman. Her narcissism is wounded.

When they eat, she appreciates the quality of the dishes; he admires the garnish. When they travel, she starts off at the last minute; he frets for months in advance.

Since her intuitions come from the fourth function they consist of dark, archaic images, which she immediately represses. If she tries to talk to him about them he has neither the patience to listen nor the means of explaining how she can herself make use of her intuitions. He goes too fast.

They are satisfied with the complementarity of their union and continue, vaguely frustrated, sensing that leaving some of the things they are able to do themselves to the other partner because he or she is so good at them is not conducive to developing their possibilities.

\* A further example: He is the extroverted thinking-intuiting type: he senses possibilities and translates them into theoretical projects and plans. She is the extroverted sensing-feeling type: she talks to him about practical achievements - which exasperates him - and of their relationship - which to him, in the middle of his theorising, is a provocation. He feels powerless whenever he has to put his plans into concrete action; and she feels powerless whenever he translates ideas into abstractions. They are unable to find an intermediary.

### c. The themes

I shall draw attention to two of the themes which couples bring - that of the child and that of the parents.

#### 1. The child

This is an overdetermined symbol:

- the partners feel like children in the presence of the therapist, with the ambivalence of wanting an all-powerful therapist who will resolve the problems for them and of wanting to be regarded as adults at last but then having to assume the responsibilities they have been evading.
- the partners as children of the previous generation,
- the children they actually have themselves, who put pressure on the couple to live without pretence, or who are "parentified" and sometimes even determine the couple's sexuality;
- the original child, who was split by the parents in the past and whose split, which is maintained by the unconscious couple, must be remedied;

- the puer aeternus in both of its aspects - refusal to develop, refusal to make the sacrifice required when one reaches adulthood and sexual initiation, for example, or new forces which are just evolving and are mobilised by the individuation drive.

One of the difficulties is that the puer and senex archetypes illuminate the parents with a numen, an aura, and make them into deities which cannot be confronted without guilt. The other is that some parents prolong the dependence of their children unduly.

It is the positive aspect of the PUER which brings renewal. It represents what is fresh and dynamic and changes attitudes. The negative aspect of the Puer is the child which remains dependent on the mother, makes blunders and dreams of grandeur.

The opposite archetype, the SENEX, often manifests itself as an old man, who can be devouring or wise. In its positive aspect, the Senex, as the custodian of traditions, brings wisdom and fertility. In its negative aspect it is a clinging to outdated traditional values.

A clinical example: Anne is separated from her husband. The man she met at happy gatherings has become cold and distant since they got married. He reasons with her but shares neither her enthusiasms nor her emotions. When he says that he adores his daughter there is no discernible feeling in his words. It transpires several months later that this is a manoeuvre aimed at making the wife who has left him feel guilty. He wants power and nothing else. The only reason why he talks about seeing his wife again is that she is the stake in the contest with the new man on the scene.

As long as he could regard his wife as light-headed he felt secure. She was entertaining, "like a puppy". But now that she has acquired a sense of freedom he cannot stand it.

With her vivaciousness and freshness, Anne lends herself to the projection of the puer. Her husband, who has aged before his time, never misses an opportunity to lecture her or to keep reproachfully silent.

## 2. The parents

The couple and the family are not ruled by the same law. The family falls within the province of kinship bonds, the couple only within that of commitment.

To what extent can a man and a woman sever the bonds of kinship, fusion and identification which united them with their parents? What vengeance will they bring upon themselves? Where are they to place themselves between the law of kinship and the law of commitment? Since mythological times man has recalled the struggle between Horkos and Diké, between solemn oaths and the evaluation of circumstances, the sentiment of justice. In the couple, solemn assertions mask unquestioned family beliefs.

Here is an example of a genealogical shadow which is connected with families the partners have come from.

\* Romeo seems dominated by sensations, which he demands in grandiloquent discourse. Juliet, a feeling type, gives precedence to the relationship, especially since it is her second marriage. Unconsciously, Romeo is still tied to his mother. Juliet has a cold mother and an infantile father. Romeo's archaic intuitions make him suspicious of his wife to the point of accusing her of lesbianism if she has a woman friend. Juliet does not dare to use her objective reasoning to put an end to these accusations: the typological shadow.

The circumstances of absence of a father - an accustomed state in the case of Juliet - and possession by the mother in the case of Romeo are understood by neither partner. When Juliet is reprimanded for something she thinks she is facing a father, whereas in actual fact she is facing a demanding son-lover, who wants to impose a model of femininity on her into the bargain. There is no parental couple in the partners' original families.

They both went through analysis, but were unable to break the vicious circles in their relationship.

A modern illustration of the couple

In "Hommage à Apollinaire" (1911-1912) (fig. 5), Chagall organises chaos. Taken from a previous painting, Adam and Eve, this work shows us the dial of eternity. The couple is timeless and androgynous. Their bodies are joined and form wings. The world is represented by the figures and letters on the clockface. The nocturnal opens at the bottom of the painting. The colours and the inscription are reminiscent of those of Van Eyck. Has development prompted what was in the centre of the mirror in Van Eyck to emerge in Chagall?

We have mentioned chaos, the androgenous, and cosmic forces. And with these we broach a further dimension of our work with couples.

2.\* Archetypal points of reference:

a. Primordial forces: Chaos; Gaea, Chthon, Nyx; Eros

These forces underlie the psychoid and accompany its emergence.

In his Theogony (lines 116 to 128), Hesoid says the following:

"First of all, the Void [Chaos] came into being, next broad-bosomed Earth, the solid and eternal home of all, and Eros [Desire], the most beautiful of the immortal gods, who in every man and every god softens the sinews and overpowers the prudent purpose of the mind. Out of Void came Darkness and Black Night...."

Chaos, chasm, opening, cleft. The anxiety of fear of heights.

Earth, (Gaea) and her three layers:

- the upper layer, which bears crops: GAEA

- the middle layer, which holds the dead: CHTHON;

- the deepest layer: NIGHT (NYX)

Ramnoux C. (1959) writes that there are three forms of dread which correspond to these layers:

- the dread of being let go, without support, without a secure hold: GAEA;

- the dread of density, of the tenacity of the rock that holds roots, and of the clay that holds the dead: the obsessive fear of being buried alive or clutched by jaws: CHTHON;

- the dread of insubstantiality and of smoke, the dread of falling into a bottomless pit (fissure, chasm) or of being buffet about by the winds without direction: NIGHT.

Psychologically, the terrors and fascination of confusion, the dread of being unable to grasp a firm hold which Tisseron (1992, p. 25) has named as the source of shame, the anxiety suffered when faced with possessiveness.

Eros, or, rather, the two Eroses:

the original Eros, which prompts the primordial forces to produce what they contain within themselves;

- the relational Eros, who accompanies Aphrodite after the castration of Uranus.

Clinical example: Lania seeks counselling because her husband complains of her immobility during sexual intercourse. "She is like a block of wood," as he puts it. Lania has difficulty walking, a condition which is related to a disorder of the sensitivity of the lower body. She has decided to have both legs operated. Her husband says literally : "Elle a quelque chose qui ne marche pas." ["There is something wrong with her." The French has a double meaning; the literal meaning is: "She has something that doesn't walk." - T.N.]

The situation can be understood on three levels:

1. During childhood, incestuous sexual fondling confronted Lania with darkness.
2. Her sexual inertia is the counterpart of her husband's stubborn will to exert omnipotent control; his obsessional neurosis can hardly contain his mortiferous drives.
3. Through these symptoms they both avoid having to confront their anxiety. The man is afraid of being imprisoned in an all-powerful and deadly mother-wife. The woman flees devourment and immobilisation by her husband, who holds her in the jaws of a language which consists solely of caustic questions and criticisms.

Their bond consists of their common resistance to the realm of the night. They are on the verge of yielding to the pressure of dangerously fascinating perverse fantasies.

## b. The generations of the gods

Theogonies such as Hesiod's Theogony (verses 116 ff.), for example, are full of images of evolution representing the archetypal roots of the genealogical shadow. Gaea, Earth, produces a companion of like stature: Uranus, the starry Sky. He does nothing but beget children who never leave Gaea's womb.

Clinical example: A woman comes with her husband to ask for advice for their relationship, which has been shaken by the criminal acts of their youngest son. The couple already have twelve children but cannot imagine not having any more. They say they will continue to adopt children. In this family, the father's role is limited to providing the sperm and the material goods so that the mother can continue to procreate.

Chronus, the youngest, then arrives: "After these came cunning Chronus, the youngest and boldest of her children; and he grew to hate the father who had begotten him..."

Sky took pleasure in doing this evil thing. In spite of her enormous size, Earth felt the strain within her and groaned. Finally she thought of an evil and cunning stratagem. She instantly produced a new metal, gray steel, and made a huge sickle..."

Chronus seizes the sickle and castrates his father, and Aphrodite, is born of the sperm and blood of Uranus mixed with the foam of the barren sea, Pontos. "Aphrodite.... a goddess tender and beautiful, and round her slender feet the green grass shot up.... Eros [Desire] and beautiful Passion were her attendants..." (Hesiod: Theogony, lines 190 ff.)

Chronus, in turn, swallows the children he begets with his sister Rhea: the inversion of swallowing. Rhea hides their last-born, Zeus, who enters into conflict with Chronus and finally defeats him. In order to ensure his power definitively, Zeus then swallows a woman: Metis, who is ruse and cunning: inversion once again.

The series of fantasies which haunt families and also groups, as Béjarano (1974) has described, is endless: devourment, dismemberment, joined parents, oral and anal primal scene alongside incest, murder, theft and struggles for power. We find exclusion and inclusion, from the mother's womb to the father's belly, from the mantle of the family to that of society.

The House of Atreus continues these acts of violence: there is nothing but parricide, fratricide, infanticide and, with Orestes, matricide in every generation.

These figures - these archetypes - doubtless correspond to the energies which possess men and women. They also illustrate the non-integrated masculine, the archaic animus, the unconscious feminine, the narcissistic anima.

But let us leave this chapter and conclude by outlining the full cycle. To do so I must recall the shadows of the best known divinities, Zeus and his consort Hera, and thus mention Ares and Aphrodite.

### c. The Zeus(Metis)-Hera-Ares-Aphrodite quaternion

#### 1. Ares

The only son of a couple - Hera and Zeus - who hate him, or the parthenogenetic son of an enraged spouse who rivals the father, Ares is a figure who springs from the shadow of the Olympians. Here there is no cold distance or ruse plotted in secret, the appanages of his father. Nor is there any territory; that is reserved for Poseidon, Hades and Zeus.

A dancer and warrior, he is energy, fire, enterprise, ardour, immediate and impetuous presence. A rebel, he is the only one to denounce iniquity in order to defend his children. Devoid of cunning, he sometimes falls prey to the hubris of the poltroon, who defeats him, as Vernant (1974) puts it: "not in combat but through devious promises and perjuries".

His conquests are achieved on the bounds of the Night, Nyx, the dread of falling through space and being buffeted in all directions, or of Styx, the guarantor of Horkos. He was imprisoned in a jar by trickery and deprived of the divine power of instantaneous travel.

He is a god of proximity, who belongs to no one and certainly not the favourite of those who claim to lay down the law in the name of fate or principles. The Greek endeavour to attain measure and distance through the word was perforce distrustful of this figure of emotion.

Ares intervenes whenever life is arrested because the distance between two clans, two opinions, to ways of doing things becomes too great. He does not belong to either camp. Ares takes on a positive aspect in our civilisation of control and distant reserve: he brings back warmth of contact where distance and rigid or perverse controls have sterilised life.

His energy emerges in the partners of the couple whenever it becomes necessary to accept change and to link and confront opposites. It is not cold distance, but the warm closeness of hand-to-hand combat, the courage of venturing forward.

To the alchemists the name meant creative, forming, preconscious force. As the rejected son and shadow of the parental couple's domination, Ares illustrates the energy of couples who confront the rules laid down by their parents and differentiate themselves from them.

They have to face the indeterminate nature of sensations in the contest of love, the shimmer of emotions in their quarrels. The price they have to pay is the recognition that they do not belong to the previous generation, nor do they enjoy its privileges.

The therapist enables the partners to invest the energy of conflict in building up a new couple-system which is open to achieving identity and then individuation.

#### 2. Aphrodite, goddess of emergence

Two of Botticelli's works, "Birth of Venus" and "Primavera", depict the atmosphere surrounding Aphrodite. In the Theogony, from the birth of Aphrodite onwards Eros is presented in a



favourable light. As Rudhart (1986) puts it, "In the dialectic between desire and courtship, the two partners who are in love each have their share of initiative." And Vernant (1989) adds: "The birth of Aphrodite, who unites and brings together persons who are separated by their individuality and are opposites by virtue of their sex."

Golden light, bond of love, awakening of the senses and of the emotions, the mirror of Aphrodite offers those who stop to look the beauty of emergence, the lightness of moiré silk, the depth of a love devoid of self-interest.

Aphrodite is the joy of the right movement, the sparkle of an eye, a breeze that caresses the skin, the calm after the storm, the water lily on the dull blue-green of the depths, the smile of a child, and tender desire. For lovers, she represents the pleasure of discovering each other and, above all, the vision of god in each other's eyes.

The person in whom this archetype is constellated enters the relationship without focusing on the obstacles of which he or she is nonetheless aware or at least has an inkling. As one child put it: "He doesn't think of his life at all any more. He only thinks of his joy."

The original child awakens in the soul of the lovers; Puer aeternus, no doubt, but with a strength which will enable him to foil the snares of confinement by the father or the mother.

Born of asymmetry and severance, Aphrodite makes them forget the family and kinship rights. Her power of enchantment deploys a force which obliterates all vows and leads to decisions which later seem incomprehensible even to the person who has taken them.

Horkos, the oath, is the appanage of the Erinyes, who were born of the blood of Uranus which fell on the earth and who are one of the shadows of Aphrodite. In the ancient concept of justice, the Erinyes personified vengeance, which is sometimes passed on from one generation to the next. It is they who pursue Orestes after his crime.

Aphrodite is the marvellous superfluity of flowers - but not fruit, which is the work of Demeter; she is the "vision carrier", as Bolen (1984) calls her. Under her eye, the other feels ready to undertake anything, recognised as he is for his specific characteristics and exalted for his personal qualities.

Like the young woman who has been ill-treated to such an extent in her childhood by a cold mother and an inattentive father, compounded by a sadistically jealous brother. The latter certainly represents the mother's intuitive jealousy of the qualities she senses in the child. She has numerous relationships with men: with some, it is their attentiveness which has appeal; with others, their taste of beauty and their creativity.

Throughout the first part of her life she meets with repeated misunderstandings: she is such a good listener and so attentive to her vis-à-vis that they confuse this exclusive attentiveness of the moment with love or desire. But when she refuses to marry them they are frustrated and jealous and accuse her, quite wrongly, of being a vamp.

She thinks she is unintelligent because in her family background only cold, rationalising intelligence is valued, whereas in her case it is the intelligence of the heart which prevails. An encounter with an Ares-type man, who is emotionally close, a man who has a fighting spirit but is not hurtful, eventually awakens in this woman the possibility of love.

### 3. Zeus and Hera

We shall only touch very briefly on these well-known figures of power. Hera only yielded to Zeus on condition that he promised to marry her. Jealous of his privilege, she watched over him; she was more a spouse than a mother.

#### d. The Oresteia

With Aeschylus' Oresteia the Greeks illustrated the transition of the law of kinship, which dominated the family and small communities, to the law of commitment, which is the basis of the couple. They also tried to establish a form of justice which, rather than being based on oaths and solemn declarations, was founded on common law, the examination of circumstances, and sentiment.

In the couple, partners will need the courage of Ares as well as Aphrodite's trust in life if they are to pull through certain crises. It is difficult to separate from one's family or from the group to which one belongs - which sometimes replaces the family - or to part with one's theories, which, as Elie Humbert puts it, serve as surrogate mothers.

We are used to Oedipus, but less accustomed to Orestes.

The Oresteia followed a curious course of development - an indication, perhaps, of a development of the collective unconscious. Authors are attaching more and more importance to Elektra. Marguerite Yourcenar (1954) makes the myth the story of a family secret, in which Orestes becomes the son of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra's love-making in the absence of Agamemnon. Orestes learns this just as he is confronted with the death of Aegisthus.

#### E. CYCLE OF TRANSFORMATION: the Ares-Aphrodite couple (fig. 6)

The Ares-Aphrodite couple as portrayed in Botticelli's "Mars and Venus" expresses the phallic aspect which is certainly present, but, at the same time, the aspect of the creative and playful child: cherubs, mischievous and smiling, play with Mars' weapons. There are four of them - a reminiscence of Empedocles, perhaps, or a premonitory illustration of Jung's four functions.

The partners in a couple know the roles they are playing and the roles they have seen around them either in real life or in fiction. Identifying those roles can serve as a basis for marital therapy, as Caillé (1991) and Young-Eisendrath (1993) describe it.

Personally, I propose the following: Ares and Aphrodite are figures of transformation at the centre of the chiasma, of the transition from the predominance of the ego to that of the self:

- in equilibrium, these opposites generate harmony;
- in opposition, they produce Discord, Unhappiness;
- in regression, they retrace the cycle of transformation.

Ares may become Chronus, the intemperate. Ares was imprisoned in a vase; Chronus imprisons in the time of repetition, in a closed definition of the relationship. Aphrodite may become Rhea, who inspires severance and hatred and promotes dissymmetry so as to redynamise the relationship.

If the opposites become even more regressive, Ares becomes Uranus, the starry sky, the creative mind, and Aphrodite becomes Gaea, who is unceasing fertility but also pure instinct and thus produces both monsters and progress.

Regression is followed by a clinging to a figure of stability, Chthon, the unchanging earth. Fascination with this archetype, or the wish to end the unbearable in the face of despair, can plunge a person into death or can plunge the couple into the will to paralyse all movement.

Nyx, the scene of perpetual, aimless, undirected agitation, empty talk for the sake of relieving anxiety, uncoordinated movements, tics or starts - Nyx is terrifying, like a manic crisis or a non-ritualised trance.

All we will say of Chaos, the abyss, the chasm, is the opening, black and white, the opening of the nightmare which shakes and informs at the same time. That opening can be the suicidal lure of the abyss.

- In progression, Ares and Aphrodite develop towards other deities.

The Zeus-Hera couple is the will to establishment and to democracy, but it can soon develop into tyranny unless it is shaken by crises. Zeus is a factor of order, but if it becomes accentuated and rigidified it is a sterile order.

With Hera, the couple comes before the family, whereas with Demeter the relationship with the children overrides the couple's relationship. The father is no more than the support, the provider for the mother and the family.

Athena and Artemis, virgins and warriors, give precedence to the masculine and are thus the opposite of Hera and Demeter.

With Poseidon it is the emotional which predominates, with Hades the esoteric, paranormal processes and all the beliefs they involve, as well as material wealth.

As to Artemis and Apollo, the rival brother-sister couple, Apollo is the cold defender of objectivity; he keeps his distance and sees himself only as the image of his father.

The industrious Hephaestus tends to lapse into fascination with objects.

- More personified, the figures of Ares and Aphrodite take on the appearance of Orestes and Elektra. This is the stage in the differentiation process where parental ties are severed.

We shall end our examples here, for the more differentiated the figures become, the more they multiply. Art presents them to us in roles with which we are more familiar. I do not doubt that everyone knows them and can identify them.

Why this schema?

Couples create if they are capable of renewal, i.e. of integrating the products of the psychoid into their daily lives.

The reason for my proposing that the therapist use a mythological frame of reference is that the polysemy of the archetypes allows greater flexibility of adaptation to the particularities of the couples who seek therapy. As well as the fact that the presence of a figure in the conscious mind evokes that of its opposite in the unconscious, that of the partner or that of the couple. The therapist's attention is thus aroused to what is emerging. And furthermore, given the diversity of couples, it is important that the therapist should have a point of reference. Some will find that reference in theories. I myself prefer to enshrine it in the creative symbolic, since it is in that sphere that the soul feels more respected, more alive, more present.

Brussels, 20 August 1995

Illustrations

Figure 1. Arnolfini Wedding. J.Van Eyck.

Figure 2. Anamorphose with mirror

figure 3. Stereoscopic image (first aspect) ANDREWS & McMEEL, (1993).

figure 4. Stereoscopic image (second aspect) ANDREWS & McMEEL, (1993).

figure 5. Hommage à Apollinaire. J.Chagall.

figure 6. Mars and Venus. Botticelli.

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