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JUNG AND THE BIG CITY

Attempts to influence through the community unconscious

A lecture that was given in Kyoto international Jungian congress

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Attempts to influence through the community unconscious

My lecture today is dedicated to the memory of my wife Shuli Alon, of blessed memory, who was an educational psychologist and Jungian analyst like myself, who passed away five and half years ago.

This lecture is being given one year before I retire from my position as director of the Educational-Psychological Service in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality. This is my opportunity to present a kind of summing up of my work of 40 years as an educational psychologist and as an administrator.

I decided to ground my work in the Educational-Psychological Service in Jungian analytic theory. My premise is that it cannot be that I, as a Jungian analyst who believes and identifies with this theory and its worldview, would not be influenced by this approach in my work as an educational psychologist.

Nevertheless, I don't feel the influence of this theoretical conceptualization on a day-to-day basis. For example, during psychotherapy, analytic theory is always present. But analytic theory generally doesn't deal with families, communities. There is certainly no chapter on educational organizations and systems. Generally it deals with psychotherapy with the individual that is much extended, into culture, religion, and art (in psychotherapy with children and adolescents, very little). Analytic theory is great, broad, deep, and like any good theory, it must include insights into as many fields as possible related to human beings and society.

I would like to tackle this challenge, present it at the conference and deepen it with you: how is analytic theory present in the context of my work as an educational psychologist and director of the Educational Psychological Service?

We will try to follow different directions in order to broaden and deepen the understanding of educational psychology in Jungian analytical conceptualization. This experience is an unusual journey in the analytical world, a journey to understand the individual, the family as part of the community in a big city.

Is it possible?!

The city of Tel Aviv-Jaffa currently has some 180 educational psychologists throughout the city, serving children from the ages of 5 to 18, from city kindergartens to high schools, both regular and special education. To religious schools, Arab schools mixed school, and a wide variety of other types.

This can be seen as a kind of metaphorical " **safety net**" spread out in the city, or "under the city", when apparently all the 180 psychologists are probably connected to each other and certainly connected to their administrators, and all of them to me.

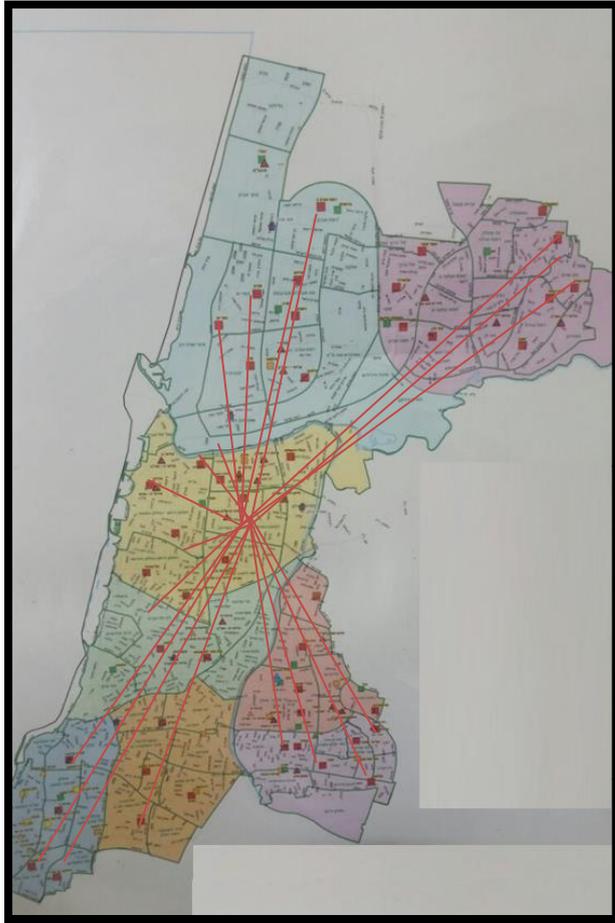


Fig.1 Map of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and imaginary lines leading from psychologists in the field to the administration

An education system anywhere in the world is a seismograph of the society in which it operates. The system responds to events, changes, and happenings, traumas that take place in the environment, near and far. The education system plays an important role in containing the events, processing them, "**being there**" in critical situations for the individual and the community, instilling values, shaping the attitudes of children, youth, and society.

As director of the Educational Psychological Service, I choose to be part of this experience, of this endeavor and influence. We are given an opportunity, because of our placement and deployment, to **feel** the city and the processes in it every day, at various periods, to identify whether the "**net**" is working right, is reading right, is identifying processes and interpreting events correctly.

The concept "**net**" is essential for me. This is a concept that helps me understand what I am doing in most of my work.

I imagine the "**net**" as being held by many professionals, both for the individual, for the educational organization, for the community, and for the city.

This wish is certainly very ambitious and more than a few cases show that this task is extremely complex, bordering on impossible.



Fig.2 "Safety Net" – Exhibit at the entrance to the HaBimah National Theater

Going back to the "net" metaphor: the "net" is held by many professionals for children, teens, and parents. The main people holding it are: school teachers, kindergarten teachers and their assistants, educational counselors, educational psychologists, psychotherapists throughout the city, social workers, truant officers, community centers workers, youth movement leaders, and many more. The educational staff members are extremely important because they see the children every day, over time, at crossroads, transition points, and crises. They are also in contact with the parents. In a normal situation, they are the first to detect and identify changes. Likewise, in a normal situation, as "net" holders they should be the first address for children and their parents, to whom they turn in confidence and ask for help.

Those who hold the "net", from all the professions and fields, are supposed to be in contact during routine as well as emergencies and to be an address for all the city's children and parents. For example: a teenager suffering from bullying, abuse, distress, or suicidal thoughts, severe deprivation, etc., it is expected that in a normal situation they will turn to those holding the "net". These professionals will respond

accordingly and will expand the circle of "net" holders and will move with the "net" and the clients, until treatment has been completed.

Tel Aviv-Jaffa is a very complex city with many, often clashing, communities, representing national Israeli society: secular, religious, ultra-Orthodox, Jews and Arabs, rich and poor, longtime residents, new immigrants from Ethiopia, France and Russia, "non-traditional families ", migrant workers, asylum seekers, special education, right and left, and probably more. All of these communities are also present in the education system. The placement of educational psychologists in the city, and the existing knowledge accumulated by us all the time, should reflect all the communities in the city and their contrasting nature.

I have two statements to make about the educational psychological service in Tel Aviv:

- 1. "The educational psychological services reflect the city"**
- 2. "Someone who knows absolutely nothing about the city of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa and wants to become familiar with it, if he meets ten representatives of the Educational Psychological Service deployed around the city, as well as several major specialty coordinators, through a conversation with them about their work, will be able to**

learn about the city, the complexity of the society here, what preoccupies it, which way it is developing ".

I would like to mention here Jung's most important dream, which was for him a seminal event, confirmation of his understandings and a landmark in his work: What is the ego? What is the personal and collective unconscious and the relationship between them?

Jung dreamed that he was going downstairs in his house with a candle from the ground floor to the lower levels. Each floor he descended was another level into the world of the unconscious mind - so he interpreted it. Thus he went until he reached the lowest level of the house where he found a human skeleton, which to him represented the archetypes and where they dwell: deep in the unconscious. With only a candle in his hand he tried to illuminate large areas; however, the light of the candle is slight and likely to blow out whenever the wind blows or it may burn down. Jung interpreted the candle and its light as the ego and its function: the ego is sensitive and vulnerable, and its main objective is to illuminate the darkness of the personal unconscious and collective unconscious. To do this, one must descend below ground, below the sunlight - the conscious - and expose it.



Fig.3 Person holding a candle in the darkness and coal miner wearing a headlamp

I borrowed from Jung's dream something similar-different in connection with my understanding of my role, and thus my task: I imagine myself as a miner coal such as I saw in the mines in Germany; on their heads they wear a lamp that faintly illuminates their way. The light is supposed to help them in seeing, identifying the direction – not to dig. That is how I experience myself, walking underground the city, at different depths, trying to identify points that should be lit up, to understand them, to dig there, to discover and intervene, together with the "net" holders of all kinds above ground. This is walking in the dark with a tiny light, with great ambiguity, with hypotheses that must be corroborated and translated into a language that is acceptable. The language of the

unconscious is not like the language of the conscious and it is not necessarily accepted by policy makers and officials.

For example, when a new community developed in the city or when new processes are taking place in the city, where there is an unusual, traumatic event, the information from conscious space guides me to put on the lamp and go down and start moving in the tunnels. And if there are no tunnels or if there are obstructions, to start digging to discover, to understand what is there in the unconscious that triggers the conscious or vice versa: to understand how the conscious influences the unconscious? To find out what is my role and the role of the educational psychological service in light of this?

You can see these activities, going down with a flashlight underground and then activity above the ground, as a kind of Hermes-like activity. As PEDRAZA LOPEZ wrote in his book (1977): *Hermes and His Children*: Hermes was the messenger of the gods, he had no temple of his own. He traveled all the time and marked boundaries. He had the ability to move into the world of the unconscious and return to the surface, to the conscious, with relative ease. Hermes was also the "Trickster"; in order to fulfill his missions, he had to be a bit devious.

A number of other analytical concepts in connection with what has been said, before we demonstrate:

The city as the great mother

One might view the city, any city, as "**the archetype of the Great Mother**". At its positive pole, its functions are to contain, to try to accommodate all residents. It should nourish, protect, maintain, take care of everyone, and ensure the safety of everyone. This expectation exists among the residents of towns of all sizes. At the negative pole, the city can swallow up its children-residents, be a sinkhole; it can be exclusionary, unresponsive to the personal needs of the individual or of particular communities. A metropolis also has great potential for creating alienation and isolation.



Fig.4 Municipal Building of Tel Aviv – Jaffa reflected in the ecological pool

Shadow on the city

As in a human being, there can be a "shadow" on the city, more than one shadow. Basically every element in the pairs described above forms opposites; these contrasts are a "shadow" for the others. The unique feature of the city is the possibility of multiple shadows, given the complexity of its population: Arabs to Jews, and Jews to Arabs, secular to religious and ultra-Orthodox, ultra-Orthodox to secular and religious,

"non-traditional families" to so-called "normal families" and vice versa, new immigrants and long-time immigrants, the Ethiopian community as a shadow to the others and vice versa, migrant workers and asylum seekers as a shadow to longtime veterans and citizens of the city, the "right" as the shadow to the "left", and vice versa.

Here we see there is a danger in the city of exclusion, denial, repression of the shadows, ignoring them, an attempt to reduce them, ignore or even fight them to the point of arriving at actual violence. We know that a shadow represents both a threat and a prospect. As a threat, ignoring a "shadow", waging all-out war against it is usually hopeless. Hints sent out by the "shadow" should be heeded; otherwise it could lead to an outburst, disease, riots, violence. We saw this in the case of the gay community; we saw it with the Ethiopian community, Arabs and Jews, Jews against migrants and asylum seekers, and so on and so forth. A "shadow" that is not contained, a "shadow" that is not comprehended - from that place will come events of ACTINGOUT that may not always be identified with their sources, not identified as coming from the "shadow" in the city.

Here belongs the legend of the princess who is about to get married. She invited to her wedding only the 12 good fairies while the 13th fairy, the

bad fairy, was not invited. It was precisely this fairy who spoiled the wedding party, who appeared at the celebration angry and put a curse on the princess. A community which lives in the city and is not invited to the "city celebration" can be a curse, its accumulated energies charged with rage, anger, poison, and they can pour out and do damage. Treating the "shadows" in the city as holding prospects and discoveries can lead to calming tensions, to productive interaction, expansion and deepening the culture in the city, to unique and fascinating human encounters, and more.

The City as Mother – As Spider

One can also compare the city to another familiar symbol, the spider, because of the "**net**" metaphor. The spider is a creature that represents the "great mother", usually in its negative aspect. But we see this as having two poles: at the positive end, the spider spreads its net to move safely, to use it as a shield, to absorb and also to hunt. On the downside, a spider web is a death trap, a dangerous place spinning danger, where any stranger is a threat and must be destroyed.

Anima of the City?

Can we claim that the role we adopt is equivalent to the role of the anima in the human soul?

That's an interesting thought we should check out.

Attempts to understand the urban unconscious, where is the city heading? To connect to this, to understand, to feel, to be a part, to contribute, if indeed this is the case, whether it is being done, are these expressions-functions of the anima?

I will give some examples that demonstrate thinking and acting in this spirit:

1. Suicide of parents within a short time span in the city

Within a period of ten months, there was a spate of suicides in the city of eleven parents!!! These events led to meetings of the major institutions holding the "community net" to try to understand what happened to these parents, to their families, their communities, and what happened to us: perhaps we had fallen asleep on duty, perhaps we were not alert enough to what was happening in the city? It was clear that we must study it thoroughly. Again I was called upon to put the lamp on my forehead and go underground, digging tunnels in areas

where we had not yet been. I asked for a meeting with the municipal welfare department for shared learning. We did not make great progress in understanding what had happened, but the very fact of our convening and our concern were of great value. It was decided to expand the circle and invite Health Ministry officials who deal with loss, as well as members of academia. I may add that the city of Tel Aviv is currently joining what is called "the national plan for the prevention and treatment of suicidality", a multi-disciplinary plan to deal with the subject. Immediately with the announcement that the city was joining the plan, it was clear that the educational psychological service would have a key role in making connections, taking a role in the issue based on values, prevention, and therapy.

2. Jewish and Arab educational system

In the city of Tel Aviv-Jaffa live Arabs, Muslims and Christians, comprising about 30,000 residents. Arab residents lived in Jaffa for many years, even before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Jaffa was an Arab city which numbered between 100,000 - 120,000 inhabitants. Most of them fled / were driven out during the War of Independence in 1948 and then about 3,000 residents were left in the city. Today, Arab students study in Jaffa in a variety of educational systems: Arab public

education for Arab children only; private education, mostly Christian, for Christian and Muslim Arab students; and Jewish schools, where Arab and Jewish students study together, but the curriculum is what is called a Jewish, Hebrew curriculum. I have been investigating this state of affairs with my headlamp for ten years now, with great patience, in several elementary and secondary schools in Jaffa, working with principals and teachers on their special experience in educating children, Jews and Arabs together. Sometimes I come to a dead end, sometimes the tunnels collapse and rescue operations are needed. However, going down to the lowest floors of the topic has led me to understand that the Jewish-Arab conflict is alive, breathing, kicking in the education system and it rises to the surface all the time: whether around educational content, the holidays, ceremonies, memorial days, Independence Day, and during wars and security incidents.

Diving deep into the subject in education has led to several revelations and directions for work:

- Whatever happened in Jaffa, before and after the establishment of the State of Israel between Jews and Arabs, continues to exist in the unconscious of Jaffa in general, and particularly in the educational system.

- **"The expulsion motif"** is a theme relating not only to Jews and Arabs in Jaffa, but is a universal theme found wherever there are human beings, when there is a potential for confrontation or conflict. So it is between siblings, couples, groups, classes at school, different communities, in society, within a country and between countries. Here belong the theories related to "scapegoat "and understanding the "shadow" using the analytical approach.

"The expulsion motif" could be threatening to both sides: who does the place belong to? Who will be dominant? Who will conquer whom? What is the leading language? What is the ascendant culture? and more.

Study and exploration of the unconscious of the Jewish-Arab encounter in Jaffa in the education system and the discovery of the "expulsion motif" have led me to the next important conclusion, which we are trying to instill in teachers:



Fig.5 whoever lives here, belongs here, studies here!!!

This is the motto, leading me to the educational activity of educational psychology in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Two other very general concepts belong to this: **belonging and identity**. The role of the city and education in the city is to help the sense of belonging of each individual and to help develop the **identity** of each individual and the community. Ignoring this work on **belonging and identity** could lead to the development of the "shadow" and its implications. "The Gay Parade" meets this need. Developing a community authority for the benefit of the Ethiopian community which is alert to the needs of this community in Jaffa promotes belonging and identity. Of course, the education system has an important role in this respect.

Summary

Educational psychology is an active, proactive, and responsive psychology. Interventions are preventive in nature, whether made before, after, or during events. Every city has its "**downtown**". It is usually considered a shadowy place, which many residents stay away

from. It is alienated, noisy, chaotic, active, containing both good and bad.

Investment in the "downtown" of the city, both as metaphor and concretely, can be what brings innovation, creativity, different ways of coping, the expression of the shadowy unconscious, the sense of belonging, the identity of excluded people of various types. Analytical psychology can help in understanding communities, understanding the unconscious collective processes and helping find ways to cope.

September 25, 2015

Here is a dream that was dreamt while I was writing these things.

"I am in military reserve duty along with many other people I do not know. We all belong to one unit. We are like a kind of military base in central Israel. You can see eucalyptus trees scattered among the buildings. I see around me many buildings, some in advanced stages of construction, new construction. I seem to be leading a tour, I'm showing the compound and the buildings and saying that the psychological service is getting more new buildings because of professional growth and development, from the mayor, whom I know in the dream, to be around here.

Suddenly a group of people appears. These people are from the municipal audit unit. I say I'm proud that the city sends their auditing people to check the educational psychological service specifically during its growth and expansion.

I see the sentry at the gate sloppily dressed, like a typical reservist.

Someone tells him to improve his appearance, and he does."

This seems to be an archetypal dream, the dream of the city of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa in its development, growth and building all the time. In parallel processes, the educational psychological service is in a stage of development, growth, and construction. The Mayor, representing the self, is there influencing by his power and abilities. We are in reserve duty, which is temporary, and each one has his assignments to carry out within an allotted time. Criticism is important, so that we don't slide into hubris, vanity, an inflated sense of power. There is also a "shadow" to the city, to the educational psychological service: This is the sentry at the gate. Who is this sentry who must be considered, tidied up, connected, and seen?

In conclusion, on a personal note:

I have worked 39 years in Educational Psychology and in a year I will retire when I will have completed 40 years of work.

My name is Moshe, Moses, like the name of the prophet Moses, who wandered in the Sinai desert for 40 years, after he took the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and brought them to the promised land, but never entered it himself only saw it from afar, from Mount Nebo.

Moses accomplished a great deal in his lifetime, and is the most significant figure in the history of Israel throughout the generations. His inability to enter the Promised Land can also be seen as a metaphor: we are all walking in a kind of desert, the unconscious, during the day a pillar of cloud guides us, and at night the pillar of fire shows us the way. These are two complementary symbols for the ego and its functions, and thus we discover ourselves and our environment. We all fulfill ourselves, or at least strive to. We all set ourselves goals, a promised land, reach it and create new promised lands. And always, like Moses, there will be promised lands that we will not reach. They will remain for the next generations to continue to reach, to develop and grow.

Fig.6 Photo of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa seacoast

