

# CALL FOR PROPOSALS

## **Announcing the 2016 JSSS Conference**

### **Earth/Psyche: Foregrounding the Earth's Relations to Psyche**

Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico, La Fonda Hotel

Dates: Sunday evening, June 26<sup>th</sup> through the evening of Wednesday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

### **Call for Proposals:**

In his essay "Mind and Earth" in which he theorizes about "mind," Jung offers a vision of earth that claims that earth must be transcended for consciousness, yet implies in his vision of connected levels and in his premise of "everything" being "alive," that earth is in a deep way connected to mind. He writes:

[In the psyche] everything is alive, and our upper storey, consciousness, is continually influenced by its living and active foundations. Like the building, it is sustained and supported by them. And just as the building rises freely above the earth, so our consciousness stands as if above the earth in space, with a wide prospect before it. But the deeper we descend into the house the narrower the horizon becomes, and the more we find ourselves in the darkness, till finally we reach the naked bed-rock, and with it that prehistoric time when reindeer hunters fought for a bare and wretched existence against the elemental forces of wild nature. The men of that age were still in full possession of their animal instincts, without which life would have been impossible. The free sway of instinct is not compatible with a strongly developed consciousness. . . . Phylogenetically as well as ontogenetically we have grown up out of the dark confines of the earth. . . ."  
(*CW* 10 par.55)

This formulation roots mind in earth, but places consciousness, the exciting possession of evolved humans, clearly above it. Still, Jung maintained a commitment to including earth in his understanding of psyche. This commitment appears in his writings on alchemy, the feminine, the psychoid, and most resonantly in his late-life writings about synchronicity. These essays, like the thrust of his work, attempt to persuade others of the existence and functioning of psyche. In that sense, Jung assumes earth in the background of his interpretations.

For example, in the famous scarab episode, his emphasis is upon the transformative effect of the synchronicity upon his overly-rational patient who is discussing the golden scarab in her dream as a beetle arrives beating at the window. Jung uses the beetle to shock his client into acknowledging a psychic dimension beyond her reason. Jung's interpretation of the coincidence of the dream scarab and the beetle at the window is that "the scarab dream is a conscious representation arising from an unconscious, already existing image of the situation that will occur on the following day, i.e., the recounting of the dream and

the appearance of the rose-chafer” (*CW* 8, par. 857). This interpretation supports his thesis that psyche objectively exists, contains knowledge, and is not bound by the ordinary experience of space and time.

An unintended consequence of Jung’s purpose of persuading readers of the objective existence of psyche is a relegation of earth to the level of the assumed. In his interpretation of the scarab coincidence, for example, Jung assumes that the earth is bound to behave in a particular way at a particular time—the beetle beating at the window—and that psyche can therefore know this event is going to occur and can provide a dream whose recounting will coincide with that event. When he considers the beetle itself, he focuses on its symbolic dimension that relates it to a sun-god myth. He writes, “The scarab is a classic example of a rebirth symbol. The ancient Egyptian Book of What Is In the Netherworld describes how the dead sun-god changes himself at the tenth station into Khepri, the scarab, and then, at the twelfth station, mounts the barge which carries the rejuvenated sun-god into the morning sky” (*CW* 8, par. 845). This emphasis does not address the earth-based phenomenon of the scarab who receives this symbolic projection because it rolls earth between its front legs and eventually from that earth issue baby scarabs. The possibility that the earth is unaccountably responding through the appearance of the beetle at the window is not entertained. Jung commented on the reciprocal relations of earth and psyche by claiming they are unknowable: “[on the point of] whether the psychic energy process exists independently of, or is included in, the physical process—in my view we know practically nothing about this” (*CW* 8, par. 33). Yet his collaborative work with Pauli demonstrates his desire to find connections between physical and psychological phenomena. By focusing on the subatomic level of earth, Jung rarely gave attention to the macroscopic dimensions, the very ones human activity currently threatens. Jung, himself, died the year before the first major alarm concerning our earth was sounded through the publication of the findings of the Club of Rome in Donella Meadows’ *Limits to Growth*. He thus was not able to respond to the book’s warning of the destructive effects of human behavior upon the ability of the earth to continue to generate and sustain life cycles. As Jung took for granted the existence of the beetle and did not explore what might have occurred if his patient had been posed with the role of the earth in the synchronicity, modern humans typically take for granted the earth’s stable existence and provision of life’s needs. It falls to post-Jungians to focus on earth/psyche relations with an emphasis upon the role of earth.

“Nature” and “matter,” two concepts that Jungians have richly addressed, are not earth. They are abstractions that can be considered without consideration of the earth/human relationship. Human progressive destruction of earth’s life-giving and life-renewing capacities (earth’s oceans, ozone layer, topsoil, air, forests, grasslands, wetlands, rainforests, potable water, and interdependent life communities) has continued irrationally even after repeated and ever-more-insistent scientific warnings and alarming evidence of planetary degradations. This self-destructive behavior which has the characteristics of an addiction calls for psychological explanation.

The priest Thomas Berry, a cultural historian, maintains in *The Dream of the Earth* that humans are guided by myths, and that we currently suffer from addiction to a myth of industrial and technological wonderworld. He argues that this myth needs to be replaced by a new myth of creation, one based on scientific thinking about the birth of the universe, a creation story that for the first time could be shared by all humankind. He predicts that as the scientific story acquires mythic power, it could replace our self-destructive addiction to the myth of wonderworld that underlies human blindness to our destruction of the ground for all life. He perceives humanity and all our works as an expression and unfolding of the earth

and the earth as an unfolding of the universe, an idea with intriguing similarities to one that Joseph Cambrey expresses in the Afterword to *Synchronicity: Nature and Psyche in an Interconnected Universe*:

[Jung's] intuitions about principles of psychic ordering and organizing involved in acts of creation in time, to be placed on an equivalent footing with space, time, and causality, have truly radical significance. . . . In the light of modern cosmology I have come to see this insight as identifying the organizing principle that is at the origins of the appearance of space, time, light, and matter, and in fact is behind every major originary event in our world. I believe this is what Jung was pointing to with his use of the term *psychoïd*; it refers to the capacity or propensity for organization that emerged out of the hypothesized singularity (from which came the Big Bang), the origin point of our universe. The self-organization implicit in the psychoïd is thereby linked to synchronicity; **in consequence the psychoïd would hold the principle that has allowed the emergence of everything, including the mind and soul** [emphasis added]. (109)

Cambrey does not include specific mention of the earth in this vision of the interconnectedness of all being in the universe; Berry focuses on earth in his. He sees human cultures as earth unfolding into imaginations of language, music, architecture, art, society, economies, history, and philosophy—in other words, all fruits of human consciousness. He claims that the earth is an unused Archimedean point for evaluating human activities: “we have in the earth an extra-human referent for all human affairs, a controlling referent that is a universal concern for every human activity. Whether in Asia or America or the South Sea islands, the earth is the larger context of survival. All human professions, institutions, and activities must be integral with the earth as the primary self-nourishing, self-governing and self-fulfilling community” (88).

**Jung ascribes creative power to the unconscious. Berry ascribes it to the earth. This conference seeks to explore connections between the creative forces of earth and those of the creative unconscious. Possible areas of inquiry include:**

- 1) The relations of earth to image and thus to psyche;
- 2) Exploration of Jung's writings about the relations of psyche and earth, such as his development of his concept of “psychoïd”; or limitations of his vision of the earth in his elaboration of the hero myth;
- 3) Identifying repetitions of earth structures in psychic functioning (e.g.: A. self-organizing processes, as in Hogensen's theories using fractals; B. artistic use of the Fibonacci sequence);
- 4) Exploring the metaphor of earth as archetypal alchemist;
- 5) Identifying historical instances of specific earth manifestations leading to the creative unconscious producing art (e.g., running animals leading to cave paintings);
- 6) Effects of cosmological narratives and myths on relations between human cultures and earth (e.g.: A. Christian attitudes toward earth and spirit; B. revisiting Jung's God-dropping-a-turd-on-the-church dream in terms of earth/psyche relations and of Jung's unconscious relation to earth);

- 7) Reconceptions of how to educate, including reconceiving curricula, in order to bring to consciousness relations of earth and psyche;
- 8) Revisioning identity-formation processes to bring to consciousness biological identity in the earth's biosphere and in one's bioregion as more fundamental than national, ethnic, etc. identities;
- 9) Implications for psychic health of conceiving the human species as one of a community of interdependent earth-generated species (e.g. examining the denials involved in anthropomorphism);
- 10) Approaches to addressing psychological sources of human activities that endanger the earth's life-giving and life-renewing capacities;
- 11) Literature and art that contribute to gaining awareness of earth-human relations;
- 12) Implications for clinical work of acknowledging earth-psyche relations (e.g. treating borderland personalities as described by Jerome Bernstein);
- 13) Psychological exploration of any aspect of Santa Fe and its environs as a case study of human/earth relationships.

This list is intended only as suggested entry points into the conference theme. Presentations that illuminate the relations between earth and psyche from whatever entry point are welcome. Presentations that challenge the premise that earth has generated living communities, life cycles, humans and our cultures are also welcome.

The Program committee invites submissions for research papers (single, joint or multi-authored, round tables, panels (general theme with 3+ presenters, workshops (experiential only), poster sessions, and creative practice. We invite you to submit a proposal (350 words maximum, complete with an abstract (50 words) and biographical note (25-50 words) by Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016 through the JSSS website: [www.jungiansociety.org](http://www.jungiansociety.org). We will review your submission and notify you by Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Note: the committee may exercise its prerogative to reallocate presentation formats other than those originally requested. Please check the JSSS website for unfolding information about the host site and conference.