

On Depth Psychology, Time and Eternity

A summary of Joseph L. Henderson's April 4, 1993 lecture presentation before
The San Francisco Friends of ARAS, in the symposium on “Time and Eternity.”

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Images selected by Kako Ueda and Stephanie Fariss

Dr. Henderson's presentation was a part of a larger conference sponsored by the San Francisco Friends of ARAS on the topic of 'Time and Eternity.' Other presenters in this conference included Michael Flanagan, Tanya Wilkinson, Minou Alexander, Alan Ruskin, Tina Stromsted, and Richard Stein.

Dr. Henderson chose, as his focus, the timelessness of the collective unconscious and the historical development of the idea of the collective unconscious. He began his presentation with an anecdote.

"Jung once said to a young psychiatrist who came to him for instruction 'Can you accept that the unconscious has a double bottom?' Presumably this refers to the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious which Jung saw as lying one beneath the other as a source of psychic energy." (JLH) Henderson then went on to briefly trace the history of the discovery of the unconscious.¹

¹ Otabe, Tanehisa. *The Unconscious. Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*, 2019, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp.95-102 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/20539320.2019.1672278>

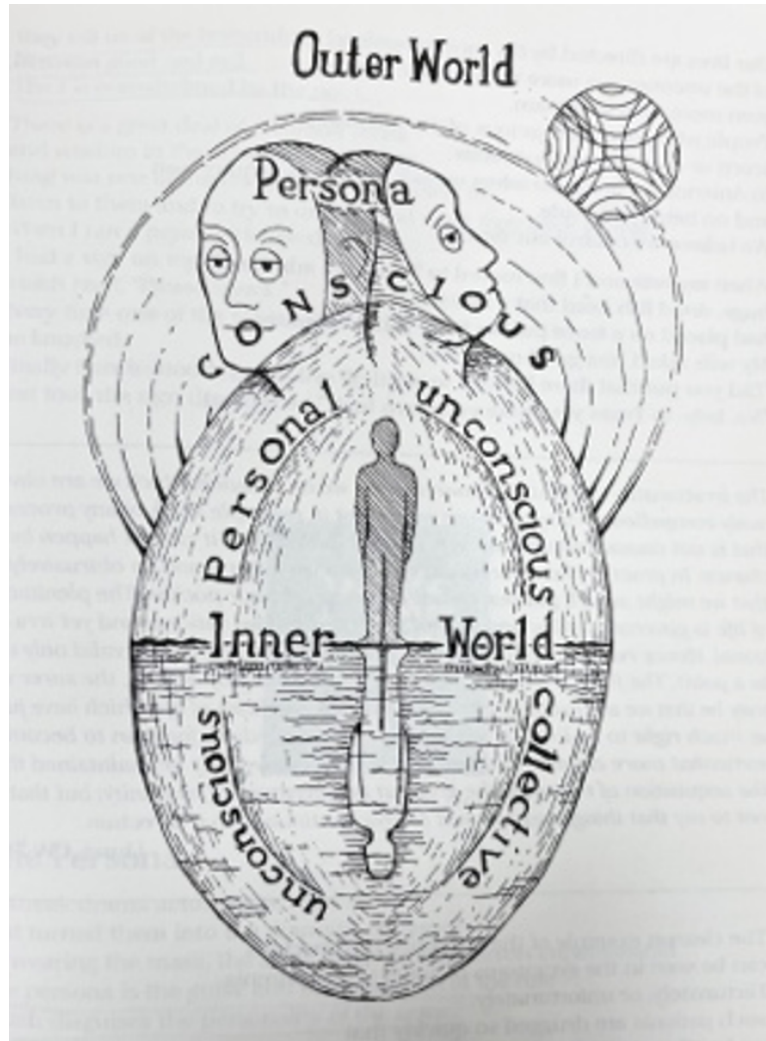


Figure 1 Wilmer, Harry. *Practical Jung*. Chiron Publication (2013), p. 63 (illustration by author).

Henderson spoke of the 18th and 19th century German contributors such as von Hartmann², Leibnitz³, and Schopenhauer⁴ who called our attention to unconscious memories, unconscious perception, and unconscious ideas. He also acknowledged the

² Von Hartman, Eduard. *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Induction Method of the Physical Science* (1869).

³ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Leibniz, chapter 5, *Apperception, Desire and the Unconscious*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz-mind/>

⁴ Aftergood, Steven. "Schopenhauer and Unconscious Thought." Federation of American Scientists, 2.22.2006. https://fas.org/publication/schopenhauer_and_unconscious_t/

contributions of Shakespeare⁵, Rousseau⁶, Schiller, and Shelly⁷. Then in a refreshing twist Henderson pointed out that the word "unconscious" was originally used as an adjective to describe memories, perceptions etc. and only later began to be used as a noun - as THE unconscious.

He said, "A recognition of the unconscious not as an adjective but as a noun then challenged the strong rationalist convictions of the 18th century as represented by John Locke who said that there was nothing in the psyche that had not been placed there by a conscious mind - a mind that was an empty slate on which nothing had been written⁸."

(JLH)

There then developed a split between the scientists who tended to be rationalists studying unconscious aspects of cognition and the mystics reflecting on a wider range of non-rational experience including religious experience and dream experience and madness. The question then became: How can one study, scientifically, the wider range of non-rational experience? This was where Freud came in with his scientific experiments and clinically informed view of the unconscious. Dr. Henderson said "Freud, of course, became its first true champion⁹." (JLH)

Dr. Henderson then quoted L.L.White from his book *The Unconscious Before Freud*, "No-one can consider all known aspects in a scientific and comprehensive manner. Yet

⁵ Characters in many Shakespeare's plays act out on their 'unconscious' desires that have devastating consequences.

⁶ <https://mau.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1801171/FULLTEXT02.pdf> Rousseau's 'negative education'

⁷ <https://www.123helpme.com/essay/Concious-and-Unconscious-Mind-in-Frankestein-by-402053>

⁸ Lock, John. *An Essay Concerning Huan Understanding* (1689)

⁹ Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretations of Dreams* (1899)

to separate too sharply those contrasted conceptions is to misunderstand them. The mystic believes in an unknown God and the thinker and the scientist in an unknown order. It is hard to say which surpasses the other in non-rational devotion."

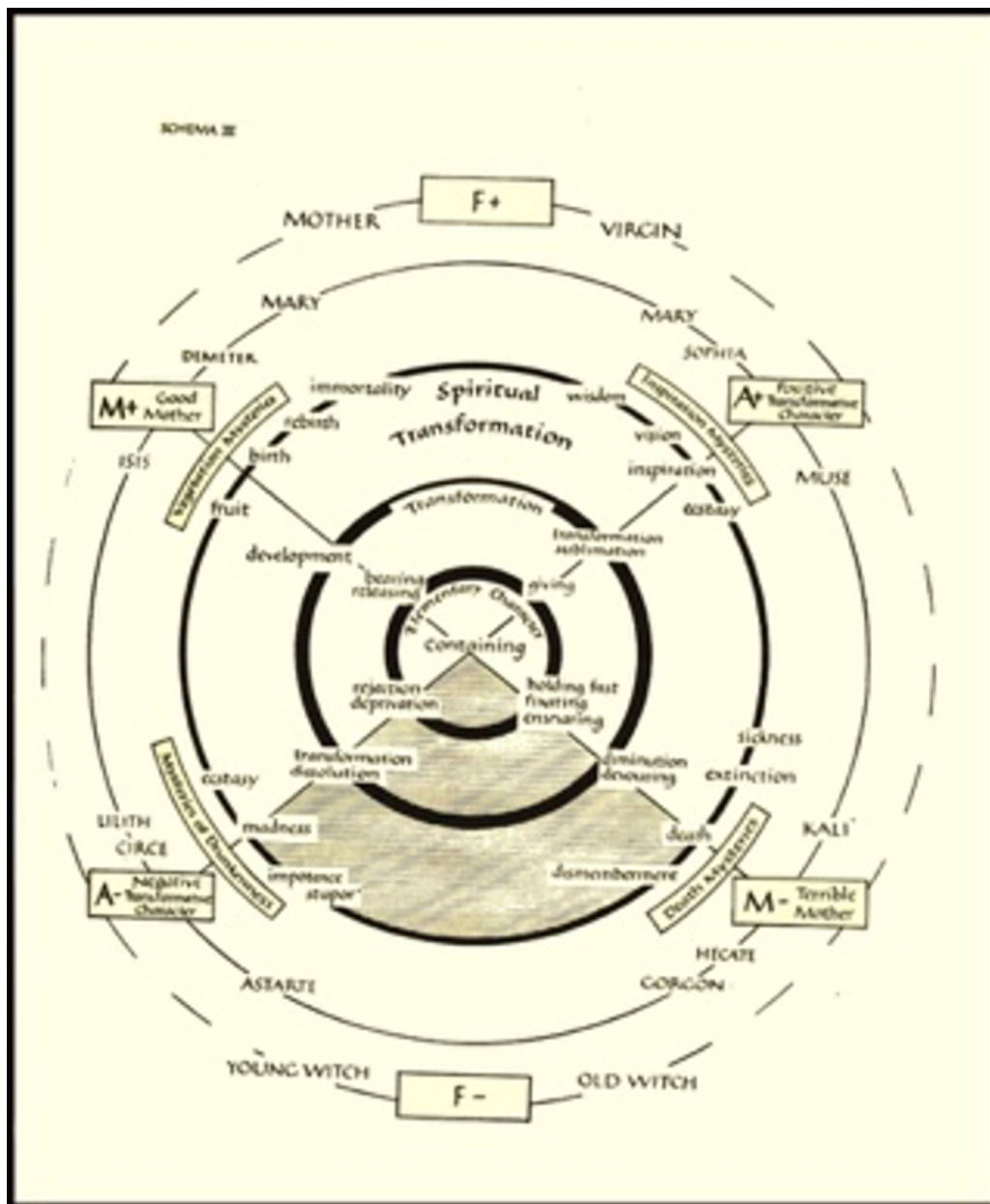


Figure 2 "Schema III", from Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother*, between pages 82 and 83.

Henderson continued, "This is where Jung came in providing a concept that acknowledged the irrational nature of the unconscious and at the same time demonstrating that, unlike the mystic image, it has a structure that can be studied in detail containing the archetypal images thrown on the screen of our minds from some deeper source - that second and lower bottom to which he referred when speaking to his student. It wasn't until 1930 that Jung began to study the structure of the collective unconscious and make a rough classification of the archetypal images - that is, the wise old man, the anima and animus, the Great Mother, divine child, and so forth." (JLH)



Figure 3 *Face of an old man* (Mayan), 600-900 CE, Stone and stucco. Mexico.
©Photo: Haupt & Binder

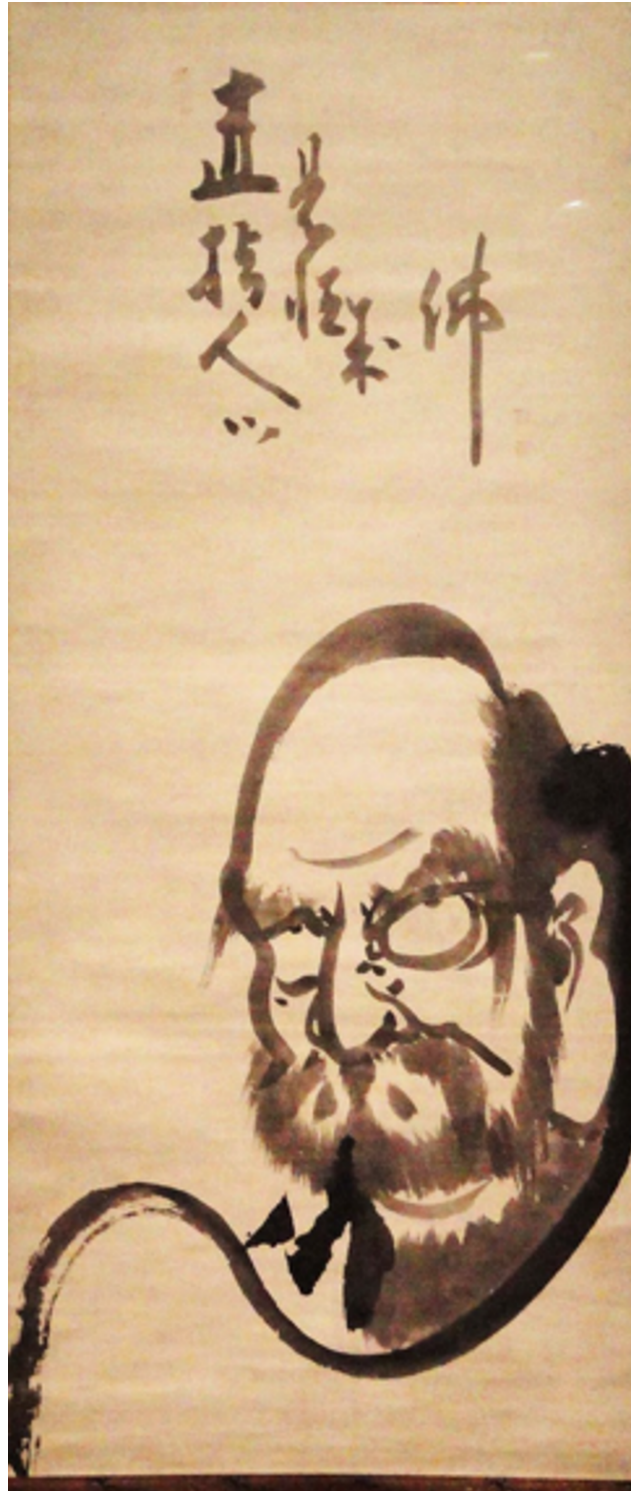


Figure 4 *Dharma in meditation* (zen monk), by Hakuin (1685-1768), sumi-ink painting on paper, Japan. The Indianapolis Museum of Art, USA.



Figure 5 Philemon from Carl Jung's *The Red Book*, pl. 154.



Figure 6 ARAS: 5Fo.053. From *Aurora consurgens*, first title page, alchemical manuscript, late 14-early 15th century.



Figure 7 ARAS: 5Gs.003. Engraving from *Rosarium Philosophorum* (alchemical treatise), 1550 CE, Germany.



Figure 8 ARAS: 2Bb.517. *Snake Goddess and Child*. Terra-cotta with bitumen, First half of the 4th Millenium BCE, Ur, Iraq.



Figure 9 ARAS: 1Ca.073. *The Venus of Laussel*, limestone relief with red ocher, ca. 25,000-20,000 BP, Laussel cave, Dordogne, France.

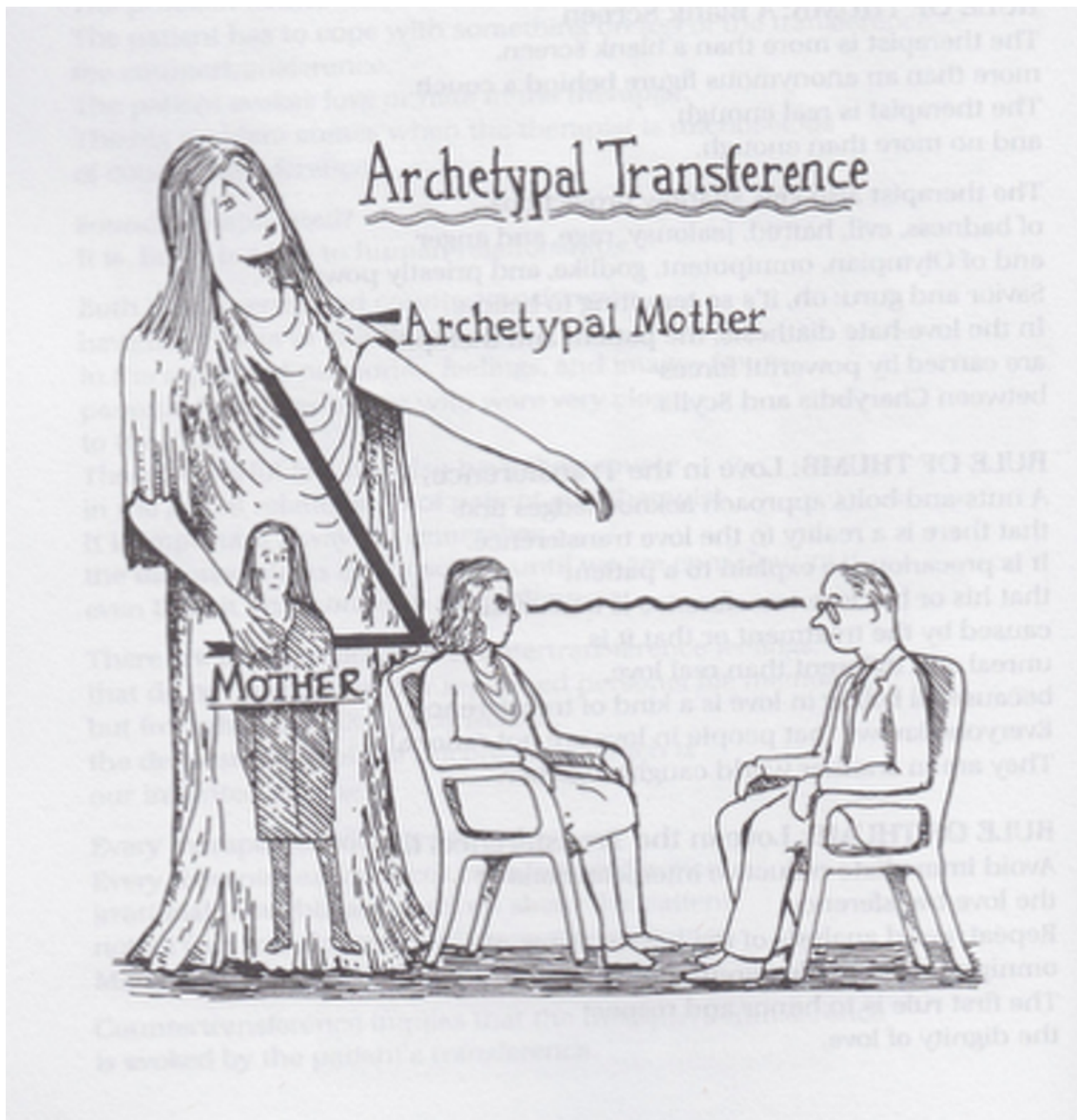


Figure 10 An illustration (by author) from: Wilmer, Harry. *Practical Jung*. Chiron Publications, (1987/2013), p. 30.



Figure 11 Detail view of *Shaka at Birth Bronze Basin*. 8th century CE, Japan.
Tōdai-ji Temple, Nara, Japan (ID: 201:216)

"Jung's later work and our ARAS Collection¹⁰ and research are examples of an on-going exploration of the collective unconscious. In one of his books, Jung called this kind of work 'research toward a science of mythology.' This has not been followed up by Jung's followers for the most part though some brilliant intuitions of its possibilities have been made by James Hillman¹¹ and followers, in the mythological studies by Joseph Campbell¹², and in comparative religious studies by Mircea Eliade¹³. David Ulansey's work¹⁴ also demonstrates this very well. Maud Oakes and I also made a small contribution in our book *The Wisdom of the Serpent*. This book has now been re-issued as part of a new series called *Mythos* by Princeton University Press and it includes works by Campbell, Corbin, and a reprint of an old seminal work called *From Religion to Philosophy* (1912) by a professor of Greek philosophy at Cambridge, F.M. Cornford." (JLH)

Francis Macdonald Cornford called to our attention the "continuity between the earliest rational speculation and the religious representation that lay behind it." (JLH)¹⁵ He said that philosophy had inherited religious ideas like god and soul and destiny and law. Furthermore, while religion speaks poetically and mythologically and philosophy prefers dry abstraction their outward differences merely disguise their common interests and inner affinity.

¹⁰ <https://aras.org/> ARAS Online Image Collection

¹¹ Hillman, James. *Re-Visioning Psychology*. Harper Collins Publishers (1975)

¹² Campbell, Joseph. *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*. Penguin Books (1976)

¹³ Eliade, Mircea. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Sheed & Ward (1958)

¹⁴ <https://archive.org/details/originsofmithraiooooooulan> Ulansey, David. *The Origin of the Mithraic Mysteries*. (1991)

¹⁵ Cornford, Francis McDonald. *From Religion to Philosophy*. Princeton University Press, (1991)

Much of Cornford's work was based on the studies of mythology conducted by Jane Harrison and reported in her books *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1908) and *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912). "Harrison was one of the first to point out that the Olympian Gods were not primarily images of religious belief but were late-comers. She was able to show, in great detail, how the Gods had lost their roots in an older mythological tradition predating even the early Greek philosophers and their place of origin. The gods were plants, animals, or elemental forms. Gaia was simply earth. Poseidon was water. Hephaistos was fire. Zeus was air and wind. Hermes was a boundary stone with a primitive caduceus carved on one side. Athena, Artemis and Persephone were originally only snakes and Dionysus was either a snake or a bull." (JLH)



Figure 12 From *Prolegomena*, fig. 6, p. 21. ARAS: 3Ka.001. Man and child with Zeus as serpent. Attic stone relief, 6th century BCE, excavated from Boetia, Greece. Berlin Museum, Berlin.



Figure 13 From Prolegomena. Fig. 60 & 61, p. 265. 'Lady of the Wild Things'. Boeotian amphoras in the National Museum at Athens.



Figure 14 From Themis, fig. 135, p. 436. ARAS: 3Ja.034. Jason disgorged by a dragon; Athena standing by with his helmet and holding an owl. Attributed to the painter Douris, terra-cotta vessel (Kylx), ca. 470 BCE, originally from Athens but discovered in Cerveteri, Italy. Museo Vatican.

Harrison and Cornford agreed with Emile Durkheim, the French anthropologist, who saw that religion had a social origin¹⁶. But what was missing for Harrison was Jung's

¹⁶ Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912)

collective unconscious, which was being formulated at the same time that Harrison was writing *Themis*. Nonetheless, Durkheim had posited the notion of 'collective representations' and "Jane Harrison almost formulated the theory of archetypes herself when she wrote the following "Religion has two factors indissolubly linked - ritual and myth. Ritual is custom, collective action. Myth is the representation of collective emotion. And a point of supreme importance: both are incumbent, binding, and interdependent."¹⁷

Though Harrison did not live long enough to benefit from Jung's formulations, "Cornford in subsequent writings acknowledged Jung as the discoverer of this deeper vital principle which allowed the collective representations to be seen as archetypal images and their patterns of behavior." (JLH)¹⁸

After reflecting on the development of the formulation of the unconscious and the collective unconscious, Dr. Henderson talked about the timelessness of the collective unconscious. He spoke of the aboriginal culture of Australia and their ancestral mythology which is said to take place in the alcheringa period or dream time - a purely abstract past time that is actually going on at all times. It is a kind of eternal present within which the Gods and Goddesses of all mythology live.

¹⁷ Harrison, Jane E. *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913)

¹⁸ William Robertson Smith, James George Frazer, Jane Ellen Harrison, and Francis Cornford were among the leading lights of the myth and ritual school. They used the comparative method to see analogous relations between myths and rituals. Their work in the late 19th and early 20th centuries significantly influenced thinking in the depth psychologies. While modern anthropology considers myth and ritual to be independent of each other, a psychological view still finds compelling the comparative method and the analogous relations between myth and ritual. Perhaps it should be mentioned that Francis Cornford was also Joseph Henderson's father-in-law.



Figure 15 *Spirit Dreaming Through Napperby County*, by Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 1980. © Artists and their estates 2011, licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency Limited and Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

In conclusion, Dr. Henderson said, "Jung found in his patients, products of the unconscious, in his study of African natives and Swiss peasants and, above all, in himself the timeless nature of dreaming. And it was from these experiences that he created his concept of the collective unconscious." (JLH)