

The Reality of Fragmentation and the Yearning for Healing:
Jungian Perspectives on Democracy,
Power and Illusion in Contemporary Politics
The Divided Sky: War and Wisdom

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Acute polarizations with divisions between countries, communities and individuals, and a heightened level of disembodiment and fragmentation has infested our society. Camus intuitively saw in 1946: “An apocalyptic historical vista stretches before us.”¹ Today we are still haunted by the specters of fascism, plagued by inequalities, social injustice, political, economic and gendered oppression. Collective traumata reveal the battle of our divided brain, a mind at war.² Our culture is dissociated from the grounded, imaginative world of the right hemisphere, and trapped in the toxic hyper-rationality of the left hemisphere, devoid of empathy and compassion for Otherness.

Consequently, we are driven by archetypal imperatives to self-annihilation and destruction, becoming a society “gone mad on war” (Martin Luther King), drunk with power. Yet the archetype of War lures us with its numinous, sacramental core; violence is worshiped like a god leading to a crisis of humanity. I think of the religiously charged myths and Canonization of war, the blessing of weapons and Napoleon's cynical remark that God is on the side of the stronger battalions. Our obsession with War and violence reveals an alienation and dualistic splitting of everything into either good or evil, superior and inferior, us and them. We are alienated from the matrix of life, its sustaining unifying source, causing violence and undermining freedom and democracy. The stronger our alienation, the greater our anxiety.

With Simone Weil and Hanna Arendt, I believe in *The Need for Roots*³ as our

¹ Albert Camus, *Towards Dialogue*, 1946 This text is part of a series of articles published in November 1946 under the title *Neither Victims nor Executioners* in the paper of the French Resistance *Combat*.

² McGuilchrist, Iain (2009). *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. USA: Yale University Press.

³ Simone Weil, 1949 [2002], *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties toward Mankind*, Arthur Wills (trans.), New York: Routledge; *L'enracinement. Prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949.

modern uprootedness threatens the human soul. Weil criticizes the deep rift between science and humanism, the lack of relatedness and wisdom in a world governed by violence and inequality. Millions of refugees and asylum seekers suffer from the experience of being uprooted, having lost a life of meaning. Midwifing a global change calls for wiser ways of seeing, being and acting. If we want to evoke ‘the better angels of our nature’ we need to awaken from our collective unconsciousness, and nurture our spiritual needs to transcend war, ecocide and our own extinction.

First, I want to amplify the name of my panel: *Inequalities: Past & Present, Collective & Personal* with the metaphor of the divided sky. *Der geteilte Himmel: Divided Heaven or They divided the sky* is a novel by the prominent East German writer Christa Wolf⁴, set in the years preceding the construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961. It is a doomed love story about inequalities, power and illusion, about love that does not transcend ideological barriers. The sky of the lovers was split into two irreconcilable halves with different ‘truths’: Rita deciding to not follow her lover to the West, but rather follow her idealistic hope for a more just, non-capitalist socialist East Germany and Walter who opts to stay in capitalist West Berlin not believing in socialism. I took my title from this poignant dialogue at their final parting:

In the past lovers who had to separate would look for a star where their gaze might meet in the evenings. What can we look for?

“At least they cannot divide the sky, Manfred said in a mocking tone.

⁴ Christa Wolf: *They divided the sky*. Translated by Luise von Flotow. University of Ottawa Press, 2013 Original title: *Der geteilte Himmel*. Berlin: Suhrkamp 1963

“The sky? This enormous vault of hope and yearning, love and sorrow? “Yes, they can”, she said. “The sky is what divides first of all.”

The divided sky became a metaphor for the divided Germany, the powerful ideological forces and oppressive politics that created a deep rift between the political systems of East and West. The sky that vaulted over the German Democratic Republic and West Germany was neither before the fall of the wall in 1989 nor after the fall the same sky or ‘shared heaven’.



Image 1 The Berlin Wall

The iron curtain had divided their sky, split their identities and, after the collapse of the German Democratic Republic, the ‘culture wars’ and the ‘wall in the head’ perpetuated. No real *coniunctio oppositorum* was possible not even after 30 years of German Reunification (October 3rd). The East still suffers severely from their wounded *group spirit*, issues of self-worth and the cultural colonialism of the West (rise of nostalgia, *Ostalgie*). The activated polarizing cultural complexes between, *Ossis* and *Wessis* and the structural gap of inequality in the areas of economy, technology, and ecology

prevails.⁵

A divided sky is also experienced in Cyprus, Palestine and Korea, and at the brink of the American elections, culture wars and deeply polarized politics divide the people and their hopes for a peaceful future.

Second, I want to address The war on Women's Bodies: The appropriation of the female body as object.⁶ I see a fundamental link between a rape culture of violence and exploitation and society's attitude towards women. Women and LGBT citizens as the Oppressed are living in a chronic "state of emergency" (Walter Benjamin).⁷

They are victims of 'Othering', a systematic process of subjugation, gendered violence, gendered nationalism, and gendered militarism.⁸ The power inequalities reveal the invisible symbolic violence in our disconnected cultural master narratives. In our global culture of discrimination, gender binaries have been a curse, whereas social justice is fostered by intersectionality in the analysis of sexualized, racial and national inequalities. Sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), the denial and degradation of the feminine and its subordination to the power of the masculine gaze is ubiquitous.

In war, men exercise their power over life and death, their right to seize whatever is wanted, like the body of a woman. In all parts of the world women's bodies

⁵ See psychoanalyst Bernd Huppertz in his book: *Psychotherapy in the wake of war: discovering multiple psychoanalytic traditions. E-book, 2013, by Jason Aronson*. As a medical doctor from West Germany, living and working analytically in East Germany, he mused on the impact of the wall on the personality types of his East German patients.

⁶ Lamb, Christina (2020) *Our Bodies, Their Battlefield. What War does to Women*. London: William Collins

⁷ Benjamin, Walter 1969 «Theses on the Philosophy of History. In: *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, tr. Harry Zohn, p 253-64, New York: Schocken

⁸ Sjoberg, Laura, S. Via et al (2010) *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives*. Praeger: Oxford, ABC-CLIO

have turned into battlefields.⁹



Image 2 No war on my body

In India the violence of the Partition metamorphosed from the idea of appropriating a territory as a nation to appropriating the body of women as territory. 100,000 women were stripped naked and forcibly abducted and raped. Nationalist slogans were inscribed on their bodies- like *Victory to India, Long live Pakistan* to forever bear witness that they had been claimed and possessed by other men. The bodies of females were considered like blank pages on which a revolution could be inscribed.¹⁰

⁹ The impact of War on Women also led to the insight that women's wisdom might be needed in peacebuilding and security work. (WPS) The Gender, Peace and Security Unit of the UN acknowledged how central women are to global ceasefire efforts. And we have recently seen which role female leadership played in handling the Pandemic

¹⁰ Veena Das: *Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain*. In: *Violence in War and Peace*. P. 327-334



Image 3 France, World War II

In France, as the second world war approached its end, women who were believed to have had sex with a German soldier were stripped naked, their hair shaved, and swastikas painted on their heads, making their bodies a mark of humiliation and shaming.¹¹



Image 4 Burgundy, 1944

¹¹ Between 1943 and 1946, about twenty thousand women were victims of these humiliating acts.

The rape of women as war trophy and legitimate booty has a long history. I think of the 100,000 women raped in Berlin, the mass rapes in Bosnia and Kongo, the rape of Nankingjing , the Yazidi and Rohingya women, and the Armenian genocide.



Image 5 Armenia where women were first raped and then crucified.

A reconstruction of this toxic masculinity is needed to end this gender sadism and war against women.¹² Maybe femicide compensates for a deeply embedded fear and hate of the feminine. From a third perspective I want to address the issue of war and wisdom by asking if terror can be transformed and what seismic shifts would be needed to deal with cultural, political, systemic and structural violence.

I consulted Hannah Arendt's dissertation¹³ on love, love of the world, *amor*

¹² The impact of War on Women also led to the insight that women's wisdom might be needed in peacebuilding and security work. (WPS) The Gender, Peace and Security Unit of the UN acknowledged how central women are to global ceasefire efforts. And we have recently seen which role female leadership played in handling the Pandemic

¹³ Arendt, Hannah (1929). *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* [On the concept of love in the thought of Saint Augustine: Attempt at a philosophical interpretation. (Doctoral thesis, Department of Philosophy, University of Heidelberg (in German). Berlin: Springer, reprinted as (2006). *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* (in German). Introduction by Frauke Annegret Kurbacher. Georg Olms Verlag.

mundi, as a building block for a harmonious society and an antidote for war and dehumanization. Simultaneously I read the correspondence of Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy, discussing non-violence and the nature of man.

For Tolstoy the relentlessly inclusive discipline of love entails the aspiration for communion and solidarity. For him only the ‘law of love’ is capable of substituting the outlived law of violence. When Gandhi in 1908 read Tolstoy’s *A Letter to a Hindu*, he contacted Tolstoy and it changed his life.¹⁴ They became friends and Tolstoy’s ideas had a lasting influence on his political philosophy and the concept of *Satyagraha*, which translates into ‘clinging to the truth’. For Gandhi, truth, like love, is a soul force that can never be destroyed and will ultimately bring about peace by reawakening in the Other their dormant humanity.

Tolstoy and Gandhi firmly believed that, through the doctrine of love, the social and economic inequalities within a society could be abolished and that only the development of humanity could transcend political and cultural boundaries.

Concerning the question of delivering mankind from the menace of war, I read the correspondence of Einstein and Freud. Einstein, an intellectual activist for peace, was engaged to safeguard peace without resorting to arms and violence. He asked Freud: “*Is it possible to control man’s mental evolution so as to make him proof against the psychosis of hate and destructiveness?*”¹⁵

Freud believed violence cannot be avoided and that law is founded on brute

¹⁴ Gandhi had come to South Africa 1890 to work there as a young lawyer and make a living as he could not economically survive practicing law in Bombay. He was shocked to experience in South Africa racial discrimination against Indians that prompted him to fight injustice and racial prejudice.

¹⁵ In 1931 the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation invited Einstein to a cross disciplinary exchange of ideas about politics and peace. Einstein chose Freud whom he had only briefly met 1927 and wrote him a letter, dated 30 July 1932. The correspondence was published in 1933 with the title: *Why War?*

force and maintained with violence. This echoes the controversy between Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre about the legitimacy of revolutionary violence. Camus opted for nonviolence in the face of terrorism while Sartre, drawing on Fanon, believed in the need for bloody catharsis: the marks of violence cannot be erased by gentleness, “only violence itself can destroy them”.¹⁶ Freud holds that man is governed by the primal instincts of *Eros and destructiveness*.

His formula for eliminating war is the emphasis on Eros as war’s antidote. In the letter he even mentioned ‘love’: as a “pious injunction, easy to enounce, but hard to carry out!” As a pacifist, like Einstein, Freud believed in a psychic attitude, shaped by cultural development working against war. For him the progress of civilization and the weakening of the death instinct would ultimately overcome the primal state of the struggle of all against all, as postulated by Thomas Hobbes. The psychocultural evolution that Freud hoped for is, in my understanding, a paradigm change to a transformed consciousness, and a radical change in perception, as we cannot solve our problems from within the same level of consciousness that created them. We need to ‘think out of the box’ if humanity is to survive. The future of humanity, threatened by ever escalating apocalyptic wars, belongs to wisdom, to intellectual humility, acceptance of uncertainty and paradox.

I see the antidote to war in a reconnection with the whole, an awareness of ‘Interbeing (Thitch Nhat Hanh) and ‘Interresponsibility’. If we do not acknowledge the “Hitler in our Selves” (Max Picard)¹⁷ we lack the wisdom needed to repair a ‘culture of uncare’¹⁸ (Sally Weintrobe), and politics devoid of ethics but full of narcissistic hubris.

¹⁶ Sartre, preface to Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*. Quoted in: *Violence in War and Peace*. p233

¹⁷ Max Picard, (2010) *Hitler in Our Selves*. transl. by Heinrich Hauser, Kessinger Publishing

¹⁸ Weintrobe, Sally, *The Culture of Uncare*. Bob Gosling Memorial lecture, 29. Nov.2014

Rebel wisdom and spiritual activism is needed, a new myth of equal and shared power. Nurturing a culture of equanimity and compassion fosters an emancipation process that counteracts an ideology of fatal growth and acceleration.

To bring about change in a society, we need a different mindset that does not rely on heroism and wars. I think of Brecht's comment: *Unhappy is the land in need of heroes*. What is needed is a transformation of consciousness, a paradigm change. The archetype of the hero needs to be replaced by an archetypal system of relating and bonding, that honors the Feminine. Patriarchal images of the dragon slayer and superman must be deconstructed, giving way to images in which the dragon gets tamed and not slayed.

Wisdom as an antidote to violence

I want to evoke Scheherazade, an archetypal image of feminine wisdom, the powerful and highly cultured trickster heroine of *The Thousand and One Nights* who not only saved her own life through storytelling, but became a psychopompos for a wounded one-sided masculine consciousness in need of redemption. She represents an inspiring image for a coniunctio of eros and logos, fulfilling the role of a civilizing and humanizing agent, when reconnecting the king with his abandoned spiritual roots. Her relatedness, creativity and resilience, speaking with the soul's poetic voice, enabled her to heal the king's broken wings of eros. With her compassionate attitude, she redeems and restores the dignity of the feminine and humanizes the king from his disconnectedness with life, fostering his movement from alienation of soul to an ensouled presence and reverence for life.

Wisdom and Peacebuilding

Wisdom and self-reflective consciousness are needed for midwifing a global change. Required is an unending faith into an inviolable integrity of the human soul, like Henry David Thoreau's great faith in a seed. "Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders." With *Chela Sandoval*,¹⁹ I believe that our postmodern world needs a hermeneutics of love. Not only Tolstoy, Gandhi, Einstein and Freud regarded love as an important source of empowerment when struggling for social change in the realms of gender, race, and class. I hope for Love and wisdom, creativity and art to replace the outdated mechanisms of knowledge and power.

Embodied in the Zen Peace-maker movement, founded by the Zen master and social activist Bernie Glassman, I see the emerging vision of an ethics of non-violence and an emancipatory evolution of consciousness that overcomes our present alienation and uprootedness. He encourages a spiritual practice to bring about change by an attitude that embodies not- knowing, but bearing-Witness, and taking action.²⁰

¹⁹ Chela Sandoval, (2000) *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

²⁰ In Auschwitz-Birkenau they meditate, sing and chant at their bearing witness retreats with the prayer for peace: OSEH SHALOM. "May the Maker of peace in high places make peace descend upon us and upon all Israel and let us say: Amen.



Image 6 Auschwitz

A vital part in reconciliation and peace-making entails witnessing our collective wounds with loving awareness and mindful presence, while engaging in nonviolent social action and protest as a path of awakening and service. Collective witnessing with its specific mode of consciousness provides an antidote to our Western entrapment in binary oppositions.

Envisioning a peaceful hoped-for future, we strengthen our belief that it is possible. As we can see the future only in imagination, we must continue to believe in the big dream of freedom, peace, justice and a meaningful life for everyone.

When I feel overwhelmed with the obstacles in my engagement for justice, equality and peace, endangered even to lose hope and trust in the big dream, I console myself with Pablo Neruda's wisdom: "*you can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep spring from coming*".

Let us hope we are at the cusp of spring coming.

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