

Book Reviews

Trauma and the Soul: A Psycho-Spiritual Approach to Human Development and its Interruption

By Donald Kalsched

London and New York: Routledge
2013, 339 pages, \$45.55

Reviewed by Thomas Elsner

Trauma and the Soul: A Psycho-Spiritual Approach to Human Development and its Interruption is Donald Kalsched's long-anticipated second book, the first being *The Inner World of Trauma*, published in 1996. This new volume offers fresh perspectives on the psychology and spirituality of traumatic experience. Those interested in learning more about trauma and soul will be rewarded with discoveries gleaned from experiences in both contemporary psychotherapy and myth, described clearly and directly, and framed within a theoretical perspective broad enough to incorporate both personal and archetypal points of view. Jungian-oriented readers interested in learning more about contemporary developments in psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and psychosomatic medicine and how these relate to Jungian psychology will find much of value in this book, which holds a deep current of human feeling and is filled with wonderful personal, clinical, and

mythological stories. For this reason, as well as for its clear and engaging style, the book will appeal to the passionate interests of the general as well as the professional reader.

The author begins with debates going back to the founding fathers of depth psychology. Describing the Freud/Jung letters as "one of the most extraordinary collaborations in the history of Western thought" (p. 257), Kalsched focuses feeling attention on the profundity of that seminal collaboration and its collapse—a collapse which, he argues, the protagonists failed to adequately mourn. That failure has kept the field antagonistically suspended to this day between the two worlds of personal and archetypal experience. As an offering towards healing this rupture, Kalsched understands that he agrees with Jung that the spirit world is real, potentially healing, and creative, while he also understands that he agrees with the traditional psychoanalytic perspective that the spirit world contains powers that can be used as a defense against reality. These two positions are paradoxically related, and Kalsched draws on over forty years of clinical experience to demonstrate how real both are.

The relationship between fantasy and reality involves suffering. Kalsched's main theoretical idea throughout, his "tentative hypothesis" applied over and over in many different settings, is that suffering is necessary for the incarnation of the poten-

tial self into reality, but that too much suffering will prevent or interrupt human development. He brings contemporary developments in psychoanalysis and neuroscience to bear on his tentative hypothesis in order, he says, to keep Jungian psychology up to date, relevant, and grounded. At the same time he argues that conventional reductive tendencies in psychoanalysis and neuroscience are broadened by contact with Jungian psychology. Especially illuminating in this context are the concise summaries of theoretical and applied developments in neuroscience that appear to support well-known Jungian concepts. For example, it is a mainstay of Jungian thinking that archetypal, mythological images express psychological truths. Today neuropsychology proposes the hypothesis that implicit memories are more likely to become available through mythopoetic images than personal recollections. "Often the transpersonal, sacred, story," Kalsched argues within this context, "holds the survivor's pain before a human story can be told" (p. 5).

New developments not found in *The Inner World of Trauma*, appear in *Trauma and the Soul*. For instance, the author is no longer so pessimistic that the self-care system of defenses is ineducable; in part his optimism deemphasizes intellectual interpretations in favor of right brain to right brain communications and dyadic regulation of affect that he believes are more embodied and relational ways of working than the classical psychoanalytic approaches that informed his earlier work. In addition, he more explicitly

develops an approach to the spiritual dimensions of psychotherapy implicit in *The Inner World of Trauma*, as reflected in the new book's subtitle, *A Psycho-Spiritual Approach*. He proposes that traumatic experiences open up spiritual experiences, breaking apart the personal layer of the psyche and making encounters with the numinous archetypal world possible. For this reason trauma survivors often have access to transpersonal realities which better adapted personalities are unaware of. These experiences of the other world (Jung's collective unconscious) are not inherently positive or negative; rather, they can be used either defensively or creatively. Kalsched consistently demonstrates that the reality and validity of the inner world does not depend on the specific ways in which an individual relates it to his or her situation; the opportunity to use the "spirit world" as a defense or an avenue of healing is an ever-present option.

Archetypal narratives from Dante, St. Exupery, various poets, fairytales, and the Bible depict encounters with the inner world that trauma survivors know so intimately; two examples are the descent into hell and the recovery of the soul lost in purgatory. According to Kalsched, such stories are neither literal facts nor fantasies, but archetypal metaphors that describe how psychological defenses "keep an innocent core of the self out of further suffering in reality, by keeping it 'safe' in another world" (author's italics, p. 24). The goal of psychotherapeutic work with trauma survivors who find themselves in metaphorical hells or purgatories, therefore, is to recover the lost soul or

true self encapsulated in defensive attempts at self-protection and lead it into relationship with reality. Thus, psychotherapeutic work with trauma survivors can be imagined as soul recovery. The true self, or lost soul, often appears in clinical material as a child or special animal.

One dimension of recovering the lost soul-child occurs in psychotherapy within an inter-subjective field that becomes a mythopoetic intermediary between reality and fantasy. Archetypal images constellated in the transference awaken the dreamer in the patient, a phrase taken from Philip Bromberg's book, *Awakening the Dreamer: Clinical Journeys* (2006, Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press). This awakening of the transference dream brings the patient's previously isolated or secret fantasies into relationship with another person. The type of relationship that ensues helps heal the necessary, but nonetheless schizoid, retreat of the true self into fantasy that took place when reality became too dangerous to contend with post-trauma.

Kalsched's historical and theoretical analysis of Jung challenged me and led to an illuminating process of clarifying my thinking. For instance, Kalsched cites Jung's letter to Mircea Eliade explaining how in 1914 Jung was, he feared, on his way to "doing a schizophrenia." As World War I broke out, "nobody was happier than I," Jung wrote. "Now I was sure that no schizophrenia was threatening me. I understood that my dreams and my visions came to me from the subsoil of the collective unconscious. What remained for me to do now was to deepen and

validate this discovery. And that is what I have been trying to do for forty years" (pp. 261-2).

Kalsched interprets this letter as describing a "half-truth" that seems "highly suspect, grandiose and one-sided" because it ignores the personal level of Jung's suffering, particularly Freud's traumatic abandonment of Jung, Jung's aggression towards Freud, and Jung's self-directed aggression (p. 262). Jung's explanation of "his tormenting visions as premonitory 'knowledge' of the collective violence surrounding the outbreak of World War I in Europe," Kalsched argues, "seems like psychic slippage that Jung unfortunately indulged many times" (p. 277). I have to admit that, as a Jungian analyst, I had not thought of Jung's letter in that way before.

Appreciative readers of Kalsched's books and articles will likely agree that he consistently demonstrates an almost unique capacity of fairness to both personal and collective as well as reductive and prospective analyses of Jung's life and work. Kalsched's widely recognized capacity to empathize with and carefully give voice to both sides of the depth psychological coin (a coin flipped, he asserts, during the Freud/Jung split) creates a portrait in which Jung appears a model for courageously suffering the tension between fantasy and reality and gradually integrating and healing it. This is convincingly expressed, for instance, in a letter Jung wrote in 1959 after one of his students reminded him of a statement he made almost fifty years earlier in a letter to Freud about psychoanalysis as a religion:

Best thanks for the quotation from that accursed correspondence. For me it is an unfortunately inexpugnable reminder of the incredible folly that filled the days of my youth. The journey from cloud-cuckoo-land back to reality lasted a long time. In my case Pilgrim's Progress consisted in my having to climb down a thousand ladders until I could reach out my hand to the little clod of earth that I am. (quoted, pp. 266-7)

Was, as Kalsched suggests, Jung's World War I premonition also from cloud-cuckoo-land, another example of the "incredible folly that filled the days of [Jung's] youth"?

The question seems important. In the report to Eliade we discover not a youthful, but a mature Jung reflecting on his experiences of World War I almost four decades later. He describes them as essential to his life's work, not only because they relieved his fears of developing a personal psychosis, but also because with the war came a "discovery" deepened and validated over the next forty years. He knew about the *inner* world of trauma long before the war; that cannot be the discovery he has in mind as he reports to Eliade. Jung knew the potentially destructive side of the inner world so well by 1914 that it terrified him; he had for over a decade witnessed his schizophrenic patients being swallowed up by "God's world," the quintessence of unreality, and this is what he feared was happening to him as well at that time. The new discovery with the war seems to have been that the "subsoil of the

collective unconscious" was not only an inner subsoil, but inner and outer at once. Somehow there seemed to be a real connection between inner fantasy and outer facts; in this case the link was between the dark, destructive aspects of both.

In *The Red Book* Jung reveals more about how deeply taken he was by the realization that his inner personal life was connected to the collective after the outbreak of World War I. For instance, he states that "the spirit of the depths in me was at the same time the ruler of the depths of world affairs" (2009, pp. 230-1). "Because I carried the war in me, I foresaw it. . . . I struggled with mirror images of myself. It was civil war in me" (ibid., p. 241). Carrying the war within himself, struggling with his own civil war and in this way foreseeing the collective war, the sense that the war outside is a mirror image of the war within—these are statements of a man who understood that the personal and collective aspects of experience are related. Kalsched contends that Jung bypassed his painful inner personal suffering in favor of an outer explanation for it. Yet in *The Red Book*, Jung writes that being conscious of and carrying his personal war—not denying it or dissociating, or slipping out of it—is what allows him to foresee the collective war: "because I carried the war in me, I foresaw it."

As we witness Jung pondering the relationship between inner and outer during World War I, we discover not so much a defensive move, or one of the foolish ideas of his youth that he would later disavow, but the seeds of his mature concept of the collective

unconscious, his theories of synchronicity and the psychoid nature of the archetype, his essay "On the Nature of the Psyche," his book *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, and his twenty-six year collaboration with Wolfgang Pauli on the relationship of psyche and matter. Although Jung no doubt had his fair share of cloud-cuckoo-land ideas, to which he would later embarrassingly own up, his premonition about World War I does not appear to be among them. Rather it seems that even decades later Jung regarded his belief that he knew about the war before it happened as *prima materia* upon which he worked with steady, careful, and mature reflection.

Keeping *Trauma and the Soul* in mind, I begin to wonder if perhaps, by taking this perspective, I'm revealing that I am one of those people who tend to value impersonal ideas over personal problems—an example of the type of influence the book is having on one of its Jungian-oriented readers!

Trauma and the Soul is a major contribution to the depth psychological community. It brings Jungian analysis up to date with advances in related fields and gives voice to the contemporary experiences as well as the dimly sensed intuitions of patients, therapists, and others who are deeply and passionately engaged with the causes, effects, and meanings of trauma. As I return to what I value about the essence of this unique book, I find myself grateful for its influence and many unforgettable stories, both personal and archetypal, and I offer my thanks for

the equal doses of theoretical illumination and practical wisdom.

References

Jung, C. G. (2009). *The red book: Liber novus*. S. Shamdasani (Ed.). M. Kyburz, J. Peck, & S. Shamdasani (Trans.). NY & London: W. W. Norton.

Thomas Elsner, J.D, M.A., is a Jungian analyst with the C. G. Jung Study Center of Southern California and a faculty member of the Counseling Psychology Department at Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Dreams of Totality: Where We Are When There's No-thing at the Center

By Sherry Salman

New Orleans: Spring Journal, Inc., 221 pp., 2013. \$32.95

Reviewed by Jeffrey Rubin Morey

"Monotheism of reason and heart, polytheism of imagination and art, this is what we require." *Systematic Program of German Idealism* (Santer, 2001, p. 130)

"If there were no song, you would have this song..." *Theme for the Eulipions* (Kirk and Neals, nd)

In this thoroughly "of the moment" book, Sherry Salman takes us on a journey starting on a train platform in Penn Station in Manhattan carried on the wings of her dream, to multifarious

cultures, places, times, technologies and ideologies. She seeks to make a case that the "story before the story" lies in the human imagination. If imagination extends everywhere in all directions, where would we find its center? As she says elsewhere, "In *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung imagined the imagination as the most important key to the understanding of the alchemical and analytic *opus*." (Salman, nd, p. 1) She sees the approaching reckoning, the slouching monster headed toward its postmodern Bethlehem, as a confrontation with imagination itself rather than with the multitudinous posited parade of ideas, religious, cultural and political systems that History has presented through the Veil of Maya.

Salman begins her book by sharing a dream she had shortly before the presidential election of 2008. She credits this dream with inspiring this book. Her dream appeared out of the psychesoup of the post-millennial, post-9/11 period. With the waning of the Bush presidency, our world was careening on the verge of the collapse of the "too big to fail" financial forces dominating capital and colonizing cultural discourse. Thus, she implicitly offers her efforts to make sense of the postmodern circus that we now face in life, culture, and the consulting room. I would add that she is contributing to the "Post-Jung" conversation.

Salman's title suggests her central concern: that we experience and hold onto dreams of totality. Focusing beyond the individual's tendency to dream in totalities and the implications this may have in the clinical setting, this is more a work of cultural criticism

than a parsing of the gap between totalities and the unfolding of wholeness in the individual human subject. It is a short drive from dreams of totality to totalitarianism. Behind the marshaling of Salman's arguments about the primacy of the human imagination I see the specter of totalitarianism and the heritage of Twentieth-Century Holocaust. "[D]reams made reality ... have become loci for the coercive implementation of power" (p. 8).

Salman's medium for exploring our tendency to produce dreams of totality is the human imagination. She asserts upfront, "rather than imagination being the antithesis of rationality, it may actually be the basis for rational thinking, the process by which we begin making sense of our experience" (p. 19). She repeatedly points toward the danger of either diminishing the value of human imagination or overvaluing it through literalizing belief systems. Thus, her call to face imagination on its own terms takes on a powerful urgency. It also represents the methodology through which she joins analytical psychology with postmodern deconstructionism. Not surprisingly, she uses the unfolding history of human imagination as the basis for making her arguments: "In their particular completeness, dreams of totality have punctuated the story of humanity's creative...a living record of symbols that have left traces of the evolutionary path of the human mind and heart" (p. 17).

Let's examine the structure of the argument. Salman says, "[W]hat I hope to convey is that holding to that solvent, the imagination, is the solution"