

## **THE FUTURE OF JUNGIAN PSYCHO-SOCIAL STUDIES: AKIRA, GRETA THUNBERG AND ARCHETYPAL THEMATIC ANALYSIS (ATA)**

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### **Abstract (150 words)**

This paper establishes a specifically Jungian and Post-Jungian contribution to psycho-social studies. It locates the position an analytical psychological approach may occupy within existing debates before turning its attention to developing archetypal thematic analysis (ATA) as a psycho-social method that may be employed in qualitative research. Using 2019 as a focal point, the authors argue that an archetypal thematic analysis of texts related to two ‘events’ – the release of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition DVD of *Akira* and the announcement of Greta Thunberg as *Time* magazine’s ‘person of the year’ – supports the assertion that the *archetype of the child* has been constellated. This paper proposes that a Jungian hermeneutic may usefully be mobilised to bring structure to a dataset, and to deepen the researcher’s interpretation of the data. Utilising Jung’s theory of synchronicity, and extending Main’s (2006) argument for a synchronistic approach to a reading of contemporary events, where appropriate, the authors provide an interpretation of the data’s possible meaning.

### **Keywords (up to 8 words)**

Psycho-social studies – archetypal thematic analysis (ATA) – archetypal qualitative methodology – archetype of the child – *Akira* – Greta Thunberg – synchronicity

### *Introduction*

While the possibility of a Jungian approach to psycho-social studies has been intimated (Samuels 2015) and is currently being developed (Carpani 2021), where such a contribution might sit within wider debates on psycho-social (or psychosocial) studies is as yet unclear. The applicability of analytical psychological concepts to the development of psycho-social methodology has yet to be explored. Our paper addresses this lacuna and argues that Jung's archetypal hypothesis affords thematic analysis a useful tool to enable the examination of previously unacknowledged themes and motifs that may be operating in culture and society at specific historical moments. Jung's emphasis on discerning patterns and deducing their psychological – collective as well as individual – significance suggests his thinking may well prove fundamental to psycho-social research. *Archetypal thematic analyses* (ATA) of Katsuhiro Ôtomo's apocalyptic vision in the film *Akira* (1988) – which features children and

child-like beings possessing immense power – and Greta Thunberg's speeches (2019) point to *the archetype of the child* as both the subject and pervading metaphor of *Akira*, and as having been constellated both in the figure of ‘Greta,’ and in the global movement of ‘children for climate change’ that Thunberg has inspired. 2019 is both the year in which Ôtomo sets his dystopian vision of the future and the year in which Thunberg was named *Time* magazine's ‘person of the year’ (Felsenthal 2019). This convergence, in 2019, may arguably be described as *synchronistic* rather than *coincidental*, especially when the apocalyptic theme of the film and the global impact of the apocalyptic core of Thunberg’s message are considered. The convergence of these two ‘events’—to each of which the image of the child is central—calls for an evaluation of the possible psychological significance of a constellation of the archetypal image of the child for contemporary society, an evaluation which may further our understanding of the impact—conscious and unconscious—on individual and collective behaviour of current global concerns, be they political, environmental, social, racial or economic.

Our paper's psycho-social framework provides a justification for the use of a Jungian lens in social science research (Lu 2013a) through which researchers may assess cultural and, indeed, global anxieties constellated at critical junctures. Our objectives are to introduce an archetypal thematic analysis that provides a firm foundation for the development of an *archetypal qualitative methodology* and promotes an understanding of what it means to ‘do’ Jungian psycho-social research, the possibilities of which may indeed be significant.

### **Jungian psycho-social studies**

Any assumption that Jung and Post-Jungians fail to recognise the impact of social forces on the shaping of our ‘psychic constitution’—and *vice versa*—is a misnomer. One might cite, for instance, the tenth volume of Jung's *Collected Works* (1964/1978), dedicated to Jung's – not

entirely unproblematic (Maidenbaum and Martin [eds] 1991) – exploration of the relationship between individual and society, and which includes some of Jung's own forays into applied psychoanalysis. We might highlight the distinction Jung made between *complex psychology* and *analytical psychology* (Shamdasani 2003). For the purposes of our paper, *complex psychology* was conceived "as a vast interdisciplinary enterprise" comprising investigations ranging from the collection and examination of children's dreams (that Jung completed but which was not published in English until 2008 by the Philemon Foundation [Jung 1987/2008]) to analyses of how *compensation* operates in criminal behaviour, emotional relationships and, indeed, in choices and decisions made throughout a lifetime (Shamdasani 2003, 346). Through the application of his ideas outside the clinical setting, Jung recognised and named, from the outset, a psycho-social component to his psychology.

Ira Progoff's (1953/1999) *Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning* provides a concise statement on the inseparability of the psychic and social in analytical psychology, paying close attention to how symbols function in history and the contribution of Jungian theory to an understanding of culture. This vein in Jung's thinking has been further developed by Post-Jungians, with analytical psychological concepts brought to bear on a multiplicity of topics (Barnaby and D'Acerno [eds] 1990; Gambini 2003; McCoy Brooks 2022; and Watkins and Shulman 2008 to name but a few). Our point here is that while Jung and early Jungians did not necessarily refer to their work as psycho-social, the work itself was deeply psycho-social in focus.

Andrew Samuels (2015) was the first to commit, in writing, to the possibility of a Jungian contribution to psycho-social studies. While what Samuels means by the 'psychosocial' is not fully articulated in his 2015 article, the ethos of his considerable contributions has been psycho-social to the core (Carpani 2021). Stefano Carpani develops a critical comparison of Jung's theory of *individuation* and Ulrich Beck's theory of *individualisation*, with the

intention of building a theoretical framework for future Jungian psycho-social research. Both Samuels and Carpani are exemplars of what it means to apply analytical psychological thought to real world contexts. As clinicians and scholars, they demonstrate how their ideas inform their political activism, at the same time dispelling the fantasy that Jungian enterprises are largely introverted in nature. Yet despite the intellectual and therapeutic work currently being accomplished, a Jungian contribution to the on-going debate on psychoanalytic approaches to psycho-social/psychosocial studies has not yet been effectively established. There may well be fruitful lines of inquiry and possibilities for cross-fertilisation that remain unexplored. Equally, we anticipate points of contention that generate opportunities for enriching, productive debate (Rustin 2008, 411).

### **Psycho-social or Psychosocial Studies?**

While the debate central to delineating the parameters of psycho-social/psychosocial studies is now sixteen years old at the time of writing, it is important to remind ourselves where lines in the proverbial sand have been drawn in order to locate our present Jungian contribution. Our use of a hyphen (Hoggett 2008) when referring to psycho-social studies clarifies our research objective and the direction of this paper, although two important caveats need to be made. Firstly, the many valuable points raised by Frosh and Lisa Baraitser (2008) continue to be of importance, in particular: the need to guard against an all-too-easy slippage into 'wild analysis'; the necessity not to lose sight of the subversive edge in psychoanalysis lest psycho-social research becomes an extension of establishment thinking; and the fundamental prerequisite for continual reflexivity, in its many forms, to guard against the comfort of closed systems at the expense of enriching, albeit potentially anxiety-provoking, open systems affording no guarantee of certainty. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, we address the question of *how* and *why* the hyphen is used. Our decision to situate our research

as a *psycho-social* contribution does not preclude the relevance of other, competing positions. Rather, our understanding of the hyphen's importance points to the possibility of a third position that, while respecting existing perspectives in the debate, offers a *rapprochement* that simultaneously resists the polarising tendencies of the original exchange in *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*. In this regard, our ethos is not dissimilar to Wendy Hollway's (2008) attempt to avoid 'splitting' in her response to Frosh and Baraitser's (2008) piece.

The significance of the hyphen, for both Tony Jefferson (2008) and Paul Hoggett (2008), is to distinguish inner (psychological) and outer (social) as separate entities: their argument is that, while inner and outer may be interconnected, the two should not be conflated, as they represent two distinct realms of existence in which we all participate, each "governed by its own rules of structure formation" (ibid, 383). Also relevant is the question of whether clinical concepts that have utility in the consulting room and a profound impact on analysands can be applied effectively to commentary on society and culture. Such an endeavour may be a category error that fails to recognise critical differences between the psychologies of individuals and collectives (Lu 2013a). Indeed, Frosh and Baraitser (2008) warn against an uncritical use of psychoanalytic concepts outside the clinical setting that promotes psychoanalysis as a master narrative. As Frosh clarifies, the fantasy of an all-encompassing perspective that serves as a salve for all ills and intellectual conundrums "hides the conditions of power that make it viable" (2013, 8). Hoggett reminds us that "[r]espect for difference necessitates a constant effort to resist the temptation to blur, assimilate, and merge" (2008, 382 – 83), which is exactly what the preservation of the hyphen in psycho-social studies seeks to accomplish. However, we believe that it is equally important not to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater; there may be another way of preserving the symbolic significance of Frosh and Baraitser's image of the Moebius strip to reflect concerns about

transdisciplinarity in psycho-social studies,<sup>1</sup> not in an attempt to dissolve disciplinary boundaries but as a means of introducing a radical reflexivity that constantly destabilises the questionable certainty of accepted knowledge (Frosh 2013).

Our view of the hyphen is that it may most usefully be seen to function as a *bridge*, linking rather than separating inner and outer. In this way, the hyphen serves as a metaphor for an on-going conscious relationship and evolving dialogue between the psychological and social spheres of human experience; it also recognises that inner and outer continually shape and condition each other. The social, cultural sphere is, after all, a human construct and therefore a *product* or projection of the inner, psychological sphere in both that sphere's lighter and darker aspects. Consequently, we interpret the hyphen in 'psycho-social' not simply as a link but as the potentially creative *interface* between the two spheres. Active interface, confrontation, and engagement between inner and outer, individual and collective, psychological and social/cultural, may lead in a number of directions: challenging the *norm* or *status quo*; generating doubts, uncertainties, questions and critiques; establishing debate and discussion; and developing deeper understanding and fresh insights as a result. As Jung (1935/1989) writes in "The Tavistock Lectures," "Consciousness is very much the product of perception and orientation in the *external* world" (14), i.e., where psyche meets social, individual meets collective. Just as the individual develops at and through this intersection of inner and outer, and in engagement with the environment, so, too, are knowledge and understanding enhanced. However, our use of the hyphen in no way promotes the search for a universal truth but precisely the opposite: it supports a two-way exchange that is on-going and open, as well as, necessarily, nuanced and rigorous; it supports as fundamental to the advance of knowledge the repeated testing of theoretical assumptions and interpretations of datasets.

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<sup>1</sup> For a Jungian perspective on transdisciplinarity, see Susan Rowland and Joel Weisshaus (2021).

### **Thematic Analysis: does Jung fit?**

Thematic analysis is concerned with the discovery of patterns (or themes) in a qualitative dataset achieved through the systematic organisation of sufficient information to bring coherence to that dataset (Braun and Clarke 2006; Reissman 2008). Based on a close reading of texts (which may include but are not limited to transcripts of interviews, newspaper articles, media, existing data, pamphlets, political manifestos, etc.), a systematic process of analysing the data identifies and categorises significant motifs. This process is known as *coding*. A code may be defined as a unit of data that captures and expresses something essential in the larger dataset. In most instances, several cycles of coding need to take place to ascertain the recurrence of certain patterns. "A 'good code'," Jennifer Fereday and Eimear Muir-Cochrane (2006) write, "is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon" (ibid, 83). The completed coding process provides the basis on which key themes are extracted from the dataset. These themes, in turn, are the foundation for an interpretation of the data – what is being said or not said, and what the data might mean, or, as we prefer to say, what *possibilities of meaning* might inhere in the given data.

There are several reasons why we chose thematic analysis as our starting point from which to develop a Jungian method of psycho-social qualitative research. First, while debates on whether thematic analysis is actually a method (Braun and Clarke 2006) are ongoing, the practice does constitute a flexible approach, involving concepts, techniques, and guidelines, that helps researchers organise and extract meaning from data. Flexibility is of paramount importance in the development of a Jungian approach to psycho-social studies. Thematic analysis may be "applied *across* a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches" (ibid, 78, emphasis in original), offering researchers a method that is trans-paradigmatic and trans-disciplinary. There is also no singular way of conducting thematic analysis – it affords an agile approach with a diversity of orientations and practices categorised under an umbrella

'tradition.' Thematic analysis consequently provides ample scope for researchers to design their own method, leaving room for options in terms of theoretical orientation and the types of data employed.

Second, all qualitative analysis arguably starts as a thematic analysis and involves locating patterns of meaning to make sense of data and to render datasets (especially large ones) manageable. Consequently, a first step into interdisciplinary terrain necessitates a way of working that buttresses and informs all other forms of qualitative analysis, such as grounded theory and discourse analysis (ibid).

Third, thematic analysis lends itself to the application of a Jungian lens. At best, the practice differentiates the data and reveals underlying structures. Jung, similarly, helped analysts to appreciate themes, symbols, motifs and psychological dynamics and structures underpinning and informing their own behaviour and human behaviour in general. While the recognition of patterns is a critical first step, what we do to interpret, understand, and integrate the patterns consciously and therefore meaningfully in our lives is of the utmost importance. Similarly, a nuanced thematic analysis will always hinge on the meaningful interpretation of data, rather than simply identify or describe themes that may be obvious to many. At another level, a useful thematic analysis can pinpoint: a) the *frequency* with which a pattern arises (perhaps in different forms, images or symbolic action); b) the potential significance of the *sequence* of its appearance, and c) the *relationship* between specific patterns (for instance, patterns that appear or constellate together).

Fourth, the variety of practice subsumed under thematic analysis allows us to locate the method fruitfully within the *theoretical* tradition (Braun and Clarke 2006) by focusing on the discovery of *latent* or imbedded themes. "'Theoretical' thematic analysis," Braun and Clarke write, "would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytical interest in the area and is thus more explicitly analysis driven" (ibid, 84). This method of analysis tends to



produce in-depth scrutiny of specific aspects of the data and enters the coding phase with a distinct research question in mind. The approach to coding, then, is *deductive*; a pre-existing theoretical framework shapes the coding process and, in some instances, includes the use of an *a priori* template of codes (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). While an objection that such an approach invites confirmation bias is valid, Pat Bazeley's (2009) position is that it is equally disingenuous for researchers to claim that they are not invested in their research (a point on which Robert Romanyshyn [2007] has written from a Jungian perspective), and that pure objectivity in thematic analysis can be achieved. Bazeley questions the frequent claim that themes 'emerge' from the data, arguing instead that what 'emerges' is already shaped by the questions we ask and the coding strategies adopted. "There is no problem," she reminds us, "with a priori categories or themes as long as they are recognised and declared as such, and they are actually supported in the data [...]" (2009, 9). She continues: "There is a problem, however, if something is written up as unanticipated when it was clearly anticipated [...]" (ibid).

So, does Jung 'fit' with thematic analysis? Jung trained as a physician, psychiatrist and medical researcher. He described his work, throughout his life, as empirical; in all aspects of his work—as a psychiatrist, psychologist, researcher—Jung insisted on the importance of working *phenomenologically*, with the images, behaviours, dreams, fantasies, that are the products of human psychic activity. In the opening paragraph of the extensive volume in which Jung details the method, schema (i.e., 'coding') and interpretation protocol of his early (1904) experimental researches with the Word Association Test, he could well be describing his approach as that of a thematic analysis. Jung (1906/1973) writes: "The experiments were carried out alternately by the two authors (i.e., Jung and Franz Riklin with whom he collaborated) so that each one in turn undertook a series of experiments on the subjects concerned" (5). Essentially, Jung is describing the practice of *triangulation* in order to limit

the possibility of individual bias in the collection and coding of data. Consequently, the way in which Jung and Riklin ‘coded’ the data (types of association given in response to 100 stimulus words) is outlined in precise detail under a main descriptor (e.g., external associations, internal associations, etc.), groupings and sub-groups, a meticulous classification schema to which Jung and Riklin rigorously adhered (ibid, 38 – 39). Jung’s (1921/1977) development of his ‘psychological types’ (his psychology of consciousness) identifies two *attitudes* (introversion, extraversion) and four *functions* of conscious orientation (thinking, feeling, intuition, sensation), and further speaks to the methodological convergences between analytical psychology and thematic analysis. One intention behind the development of psychological typology – to provide “a critical tool for [researchers] who [need] definite points of view and guidelines if [they are] to reduce the chaotic profusion of individual experiences to any kind of order [...]” (555) – is clearly aligned with the objectives of thematic analysis.

### **Our subjective positions and some limitations of our approach**

Both authors have a stake in the promotion of Jungian and Post-Jungian Studies and Jungian therapy respectively. The first author is a Jungian academic, while the second is a retired academic and practising senior Jungian analyst. The first author approached the second as a co-researcher for two reasons. First, attempts to define a psychoanalytic approach to psycho-social studies was fraught with 'splitting' tendencies, which included the gulf between Kleinians and Lacanians, and academics and clinicians (Hollway 2008). This tendency towards 'splitting' – especially between academics and analysts – is not foreign to Jungian debate (Lu 2013b). Enlisting the collaboration of a Jungian analyst was intended to defend against, and limit, a proclivity towards 'splitting.' The collaboration also announces our hope for the future of Jungian psycho-social studies, namely, that a number of approaches – academic, clinical, or a combination of both – may co-exist and flourish within the larger

paradigm. Second, our decision to work in partnership reflects the priority we place on *collaborative coding* as a mechanism of *triangulation* – to limit and ameliorate potential biases in our individual coding – which we will describe in more detail below.

Our shared investment in the theory and practice of analytical psychology may arguably lead to a situation in which we find exactly what it is we are looking for; there is a danger of projecting the desire to uncover empirical evidence validating Jung's ideas, which would in turn shape our evaluation of the data in significant ways. We take, however, as our starting position, what Bazeley (2009) and Romanyshyn (2007) have noted, namely, that the pursuit of pure objectivity is a fallacy and that over-identifying with such a position not only damages the research itself, but the 'soul' of the researcher. We are each aware of the potential biases that may creep into our work. The presence of a second researcher introduces a different perspective and disciplinary knowledge base and consequently acts as a system of 'checks and balances' in the coding process.

In addition to the challenge of theoretical bias, a frequent critique of qualitative analysis is that its conclusions are obvious and banal, what Lyn Richards (quoted in Bazeley 2009) calls a 'garden path analysis.' Everything looks 'nice,' but the findings lead to nowhere. We are proposing that a Jungian lens may be effective in both *conducting* the analysis and *interpreting* the data. While our focus in this paper leans more heavily on the former, when we address the latter, our use of Jung's theory of *synchronicity* – informed by Roderick Main's (2006) analysis of the concept's social significance – should protect us from finding ourselves on Richards' 'garden path.'

Our theoretical orientation falls within the 'classical school' (Samuels 2008). However, 'classical' does not equate with uncritical. Our development of ATA stems from a close, critical reading of Jung's work, in particular his hypothesis of the archetype, together with the theory's many critiques by scholars outside the discipline (Drake 1967; Goldenberg 1976 and

1985; Neher 1996) and the fruitful refinements of the concept's utility by colleagues within the field (Colman 2018; Goodwyn 2010; Hogensen 2019; Knox 2003; Pieikainen 1998; Roesler 2012; Saunders and Skar 2001; Stevens 1982/2002).

### **Our Design and Method**

The first author's impulse to develop a Jungian psycho-social method stemmed from the realisation that the announcement of Greta Thunberg as *Time* magazine's person of the year in 2019 corresponded with the release of the 30th anniversary edition DVD of the cult film classic, *Akira* (originally adapted from the manga series). Most of the film's plot unfolds in 2019, long after the envisioned destruction of Tokyo in 1988. The storyline of Katsuhiro Ôtomo's apocalyptic vision of the future, centred around the actions and agency of children and child-like beings as representations of both hope and destruction, strikingly aligns with Greta's polarised reception in the media (Felsenthal 2019 and Butler and Eilperin 2020) as well as the apocalyptic message evident in her speeches. This arguably synchronistic occurrence suggested a constellation of the child archetype. The imperative, then, was to test this thesis through the application of a method sufficiently rigorous to allow the authors to argue, persuasively, that such a psychologically synchronistic event had occurred and then to comment on its potential meaning and significance.

First, we chose the texts to be examined. While thematic analysis usually entails the coding of interview transcripts, we decided to follow an equally well-established form of qualitative research that allows for the analyses of visual data, media, film, etc., (Loizos 2000) alongside written texts. Accordingly, we analysed the film *Akira* as well as the film's script (1988/2022). An examination of Thunberg's speeches (2019), Edward Felsenthal's (2019) article in *Time*, and a selection of newspaper articles featuring Thunberg's reception by the media was undertaken, but due to space limitations, only the findings from Thunberg's speeches are presented here.

Acknowledging the impossibility of ignoring our theoretical orientation, we use Jung's (1951/1959) reflections on the child archetype and the symbolic meaning of the child as our *a priori* code manual (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006) to identify meaningful units in our chosen texts. Our coding procedure is clearly deductive and, while theory necessarily drives the testing of our hypothesis, we feel it need not limit either the coding process or the possibility of discovering unanticipated themes. We therefore use a 'soft' approach.

Key themes were determined by coding the script of *Akira* (1988/2022) and Thunberg's speeches. We viewed the movie independently, and then together, before undertaking our respective coding exercises. The Thunberg texts were initially coded independently. To minimise the extent to which our individual biases might colour our respective coding processes, we undertook a collaborative coding exercise to agree the themes extracted from the data. We want to emphasise collaboration as an important step in *triangulation*.

Collaborative triangulation and the sharing of data, Bazeley suggests, "has the benefit of serving as a reality check on your own interpretation," and more importantly, "prompts fresh ideas, with new questions to pursue" (2009, 7). Once our discussions were concluded, final themes were agreed, as presented below. Before exploring these themes and their potential significance, we describe how Jung's ideas on the child archetype were used as our guiding codebook.

### **Jung's "The Psychology of the Child Archetype" as psychological and thematic framework or 'code book'**<sup>2</sup>

Although *the child* is most obviously associated with the future, Jung (1951/1959) argues that the archetypal image of **the child also reconnects us to the past**, linking present, conscious human life to "the real but invisible roots of consciousness" (160). Speaking specifically of

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<sup>2</sup> Key ideas extracted as 'codes' are bolded in the text for easy identification.

the child motif as a recurring phenomenon in various forms in cultures and religions worldwide, Jung writes: “The child motif represents the **pre-conscious, childhood aspect of the collective psyche**” (ibid, 161), i.e., the *original, unconscious and instinctive state* out of which modern human consciousness has evolved and on which the life of every new-born baby rests and depends. He emphasises that practices such as religious and sectarian observances to celebrate, for example, the birth of the Christ child, a child-god or child-hero, serve “the purpose of bringing the image of childhood, and everything connected with it, again and again before the eyes of the conscious mind so that the link with the **original condition** may not be broken” (ibid, 162).

One of the *functions*, then, of the archetype when it erupts into contemporary consciousness in the image of the child, as we later suggest, “is to **compensate or correct, in a meaningful manner, the inevitable one-sidedness and extravagances of the conscious mind**” (ibid). In other words, the greater the realisation of the human will in terms of ‘progress,’ material wealth, and scientific achievement, that is, “the more differentiated consciousness becomes, the greater the danger of [humankind’s] severance from the root-condition” and of “deviating further [...] from the laws and roots of [our] being” (ibid, 163 – 64). While the child motif therefore has to do with the **past**, with **connecting back**, it also has to do with *futurity*. The child *is* the as yet unrealised future, the next generation, and consequently signifies both **beginning** and **end**. An anticipation of the future that nevertheless looks back, the child motif may at first glance appear to be regressive; as a result, it is often devalued by a *status quo* with its eye on progress. It is both **provocative** and **conservative**, demanding **change and the new** while pointing to **past, forgotten values**. Jung writes, “(the child) is [...] **beginning and end, an initial and a terminal creature**. The initial creature existed before [humanity] was, and the terminal creature will be when [humanity] is not. Psychologically speaking, this means that the ‘child’ symbolises the pre-conscious and the post-conscious essence of

[humanity]” (ibid, 178), i.e., the unconscious state of early childhood and the anticipation of life after death—in other words, the unknowns that stretch beyond the *alpha* and *omega*, the arc of human life and understanding.

In the dreams and psychology of the individual, “the ‘child’ paves the way for a future change of personality” (ibid, 164), for **transformation, growth**. In the religious context, the ‘child’ heralds the dawn of **a new dispensation, a new value and way of being** pushing for integration into conscious awareness and promoting, perhaps, a shift in collective, cultural, indeed global consciousness.

Another quality of the child motif is that it manifests as either a **unity** or **plurality**. Plurality, in the psyche of the unhealthy individual or in the psyche of a disturbed collective, may indicate **fragmentation** and **anarchy**, respectively—in other words, **breakdown** in individuals and the body politic. In the healthy individual or collective, an image of plurality may well point to “**an as yet incomplete synthesis**” (ibid, 165); it may indicate a *future, anticipated unity*. While the child motif “signifies no more than **a possibility**” (ibid), the possibility it points to is one of synthesis and therefore of **healing**, an *anticipation of something evolving toward independence, toward conscious realisation*. Healing and **wholeness** are the product of a union of opposites (conscious/unconscious); hence, many ‘gods’ are depicted as bisexual, as “[t]he hermaphrodite means nothing less than a union of the strongest and most striking opposites” (ibid, 173). The image of the (pre-sexual or androgynous) child therefore often points to a union of opposites, serving as a “bridge between present-day consciousness, always in danger of losing its roots, and the natural, unconscious, instinctive wholeness of primeval times” (ibid, 174).

Characteristics of both the child-god and the child- or young-hero found in religion, myth, legend, and folklore show that “[c]ommon to both types is the **miraculous birth** and the **adversities of early childhood—abandonment** and danger through **persecution**” (ibid, 165

– 66). It is useful to differentiate the child-*god* from the child-*hero*. The child-god personifies a level of the unconscious (the collective unconscious) “not yet integrated” into human consciousness, whilst the child- or young-hero’s “supernaturalness includes human nature and thus represents a synthesis of the (“divine,” i.e., not yet humanised) unconscious and human consciousness” (ibid, 166). Consequently, **the child-hero images the possibility of a psychic process and shift in conscious awareness “which is approaching wholeness”** (ibid). The *miraculous birth* depicts the genesis of a ‘new dispensation,’ world-view or *Zeitgeist*, from the depths of the individual and/or collective psyche, arising as though from ‘out of the blue, out of nowhere.’ “The motifs of ‘insignificance,’ exposure, abandonment, danger, etc., [...] show how **precarious is the psychic possibility of wholeness**, that is, **the enormous difficulties to be met with in attaining this ‘highest good’**” (ibid), as well as “the environmental influences [that] place [...] **insuperable obstacles in the way**” (ibid). As the “child” signifies an evolution of something towards independence, this goal cannot be achieved “without [the child] detaching itself from its origins: abandonment is therefore a necessary condition” (ibid, 168). The child-hero’s **isolation** and **vulnerability** also speak to the very real danger of the ‘future,’ namely, the “creative nature [...] of the emergence of a new and as yet unknown content” (ibid, 167) being “swallowed up again by the instinctive psyche, the unconscious” (ibid, 166) or denied and destroyed by the “one-sidedness and extravagances of the conscious mind” (ibid, 162) and “swept uncritically to catastrophe” (ibid, 163). This is because the ‘child,’ an isolated and previously unconscious content of the collective or individual psyche, seems to bear little or no perceived relation to the conscious factors, current problem or conflict and is therefore ‘killed,’ overlooked or denied.

***Smaller than small yet bigger than big*** is a motif associated with the child archetype that “complements the impotence (and diminutive size) of the child by means of its equally miraculous deeds” (ibid, 166 – 67). The child-god’s or child-hero’s task is nevertheless “to



**overcome the monster of darkness:** [...] the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious” (ibid, 167), of light over darkness, of the enhancement of consciousness and life in all its myriad variety over ego-centric pursuits and the tyranny of previous unconscious states. As overcomers of darkness, child-heroes are *bringers of light*, which means that they “overcome the earlier unconscious state. Higher consciousness, or knowledge going beyond our present-day consciousness, is equivalent to being “*all alone in the world*” (ibid,169), hence the “child’s” extreme **vulnerability**.

‘Bigger than big’ points to the numinous, *invincible and incorruptible*, ‘divine’ character of the “child,” as “a meaningful but unknown content always has a secret fascination for the conscious mind” (ibid, 168). Presenting an image of ‘wholeness,’ the “child” – as future, as possible resolution of conflict – fascinates because it anticipates a ‘completeness’ that transcends the conflicted conscious attitude; the present collective *consciousness* that is, in effect, ‘crucified,’ *torn by opposites*, stuck, transfixed. Any conflict-situation which presents as a dead-end, with no ‘way out,’ is exactly the type of “situation that produces the ‘child’ as the irrational third” (ibid, 169), the ‘bringer of light’ who, however much despised, proffers a vision that promotes culture, enlarges consciousness and, perhaps, may point the way forward for humankind, if humankind has the ear to hear, the courage to suffer the necessary sacrifices, and the will to act.

However, the conscious attitude is often so trapped in a **conflict situation** between seemingly irreconcilable opposites that the appearance of the “child” bears “no resemblance to the conscious factors [and] is therefore easily overlooked and falls back into unconsciousness” (ibid, 170). Jung argues that because the “child” is “born out of the womb of the unconscious, begotten out of the depths of human nature [...] it is a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind; of ways and possibilities of which our one-sided conscious mind knows nothing; a wholeness which embraces the very depths of Nature.

It represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself, [...] an incarnation of *the inability to do otherwise*” (ibid). The “child,” therefore, in whatever form it appears, is an embodiment of “the third,” the *tertium non datum*, the as yet untried possibility, the uncertain future, and the means whereby the conflict situation of apparently irreconcilable opposites may be transcended rather than seemingly resolved through assimilation or repression. The “third,” the “new dispensation” or way forward is, in this way, experienced by the *status quo* as utterly ‘other’—dangerous, untenable, retrogressive, and highly suspect.

This is perhaps a good place to leave our summary of Jung’s “Psychology of the Child Archetype,” as the question of whether or not, and *how* to embrace the “third” – symbolised in the child – seems to be the pivot on which the world turns at the moment *vis-à-vis* climate change, clean energy, equality, sovereignty, security, and a host of other questions that highlight the current perilous position of the future of humankind and the planet.

### **List and Description of Themes in Greta Thunberg’s *No One Is Too Small To Make A Difference***

Guided by our codebook based on Jung’s distillation of the key features of the child archetype, an analysis of Thunberg’s (2019) book of collected talks resulted in the identification of the following themes and sub-themes:

- 1. “Smaller than small, Bigger than big”**
  - 1.1 Inconspicuous, unlikely beginnings
  - 1.2 Vulnerability: Compromised, object of ridicule
  - 1.3 Invincibility: Fearless, inspirational, rational, emotive
- 2. Agent of Change**
  - 2.1 “messenger”/mediator/healer/‘saviour’
  - 2.2 Redemptive ‘larger’ vision affording compensation/correction
  - 2.3 New ‘dispensation’/radical change/new way of being
- 3. Provocative and Conservative**
  - 3.1 Divided reception—revered and abhorred
  - 3.2 Challenges values and interests of *status quo*
  - 3.3 Speaks truth to power

#### 4. Apocalyptic/Catastrophic Thinking

4.1 Catastrophe/“Your House is on Fire”

4.2 Sacrifice/Suffering

4.3 Death/Rebirth

#### 5. Beginning and End – Links Past, Present and Future

5.1 Past—Lost, disparaged values

5.2 Present—Life “as it is”

5.3 Future—Life as it could be

#### 6. Unity, Plurality, Possibility of Synthesis of Opposites/Resolution of Conflict

6.1 Solitary

6.2 Global influence

6.3 Resolution of Conflict-Situation

##### *Smaller than Small/Bigger than Big:*

- As a teenager with mental health issues, Greta Thunberg may be perceived as **vulnerable**.
- She began her School Strikes alone, inauspicious and tentative: “When I told my parents about my plans, [...] [t]hey did not support the idea of school striking and they said that if I were to do this I would have to do it completely by myself and with no support from them” (ibid, 25).
- Greta’s ‘smallness’ and perceived psychological vulnerability have been used to attack and diminish her, her message and its significance.
- However, Greta’s solitary School Strike quickly became a global phenomenon, with school children supporting her message around the world.
- ‘Smaller than small’ soon became ‘Bigger than big’ as Greta addressed the United Nations and other international governing bodies, and met with world and environmental leaders, such as Barack Obama and David Attenborough, having inspired a global movement that transcended racial, generational and economic differences.
- Paradoxically, and indicative of the bi-polarity of any archetypal constellation, Greta’s **invincibility** is grounded in her **vulnerability** and perceived disability (Autistic Spectrum Disorder/formerly known as Asperger’s syndrome) which Greta herself values as a gift rather than a disease (ibid, 28): “I have Asperger’s syndrome, and to me, almost everything is black or white [...] There are no grey areas when it comes to survival. Either we go on as a civilization or we don’t” (ibid, 6).
- A diminutive schoolgirl, Greta addressed the world’s leaders fearlessly and used their ridicule to advantage in her ‘cry for help’ directed “To all the politicians that ridicule us on social media, and have named and shamed me so that people tell me that I’m retarded, a bitch and a terrorist, and many other things [...] To all of you who choose to look the other way every day because you seem more frightened of the changes that can prevent catastrophic climate change than the catastrophic climate change itself [...]” (ibid, 3-4).

##### *Agent of Change*

- The source of Greta’s ‘power’ and appeal appears to lie in the black and white understanding of her autism. “I don’t care about being popular, I care about climate justice and the living planet” (ibid, 13). She describes herself as “just a **messenger**,

and yet I get all this hate. I am not saying anything new, I am just saying what scientists have repeatedly said for decades” (ibid, 31). Greta’s message is simple: “unite behind the science” (ibid, 84). “The science is clear. And all we children are doing is communicating and acting on that united science” (ibid, 82).

- **Greta’s is not an individual, personal message**—she is “repeating the message of the united climate science” (ibid, 55)—but that message is unequivocal and aimed at making those in power understand the need for a **correction** to the current system, for radical change and for the courage to “do the impossible [...] [b]ecause giving up can never ever be an option” (ibid, 95).
- Greta is calling for a recognition of “the overall failures of our current systems” (ibid, 18) and the introduction of a **new dispensation—a new economics, currency, and collaborative political will**: “It will take a **far-reaching vision**. It will take courage. It will take fierce determination to act now, to lay the foundations when we may not know all the details about how to shape the ceiling. In other words, it will take **cathedral thinking**” (ibid, 51).

#### *Provocative and Conservative*

- Greta’s reception has been deeply divided. She is seen by many as a ‘saviour’ and hero, by others as an irritant, a ‘monster’ and, in her own words, as “retarded, a bitch and a terrorist” (ibid, 3): “we [children] become the bad guys who have to tell people these uncomfortable things, because no one else wants to, or dares to” (ibid, 78).
- She is heralded by her supporters for **speaking truth to power** (“You lied to us. You gave us false hope” [ibid, 56]). She is reviled, dismissed and ignored by the powerful: “And just for quoting and acting on [...] these scientific facts [...] we receive unimaginable amounts of hate and threats” (ibid, 78).
- Greta’s message **challenges the prevailing system and status quo**, and the **intransigence of those in power**. “When I tell politicians to act now, the most common answer is that they can’t do anything drastic because it would be too unpopular among the voters” (ibid, 49-50). She argues for a ‘new system’ beyond party politics that is based on equity, cooperation rather than competition, and that makes “the best available science the heart of politics and democracy” (ibid, 50)
- Greta’s message is **provocative**: focusing attention on the **future**, it demands an admission of the failure of the current system, and the need to build of a new system, a new way of thinking (i.e., a new level of consciousness): “People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction. And all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth” (ibid, 96).
- Greta’s message is **conservative**: it connects us not only to our past but to our **origins**, our **beginnings** and **reminds us of our place in the natural hierarchy**: “We are *Homo sapiens*. Of the family Hominidae. Of the order Primates. Of the class Mammalia. Of the kingdom Animalia. We are a part of nature. We are social animals” (ibid, 69); “There are no grey areas when it comes to survival” (ibid, 20), and “we cannot make ‘deals’ with physics” (ibid, 93).

#### *Apocalypse/Catastrophe/Sacrifice/Suffering*

- Greta: “They keep saying that climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all. And yet they just carry on like before [...] To me, that did not add up. It was too unreal” (ibid, 6). After this realisation, Greta started her School Strike. **The archetypal image of ‘the child’ appears when a situation is at a crossroads, when there seems to be no clear way forward, when all else fails.**

- “Our House is on Fire.” In her ‘black and white’ analysis of the current climate crisis, Greta does not hesitate to call it what it is: an **emergency**; a **catastrophe**; a potentially **apocalyptic moment in the history of humankind that threatens our survival and that of the planet**. “Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where we will set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization as we know it” (ibid, 44).
- **Sacrifice** as inevitable and necessary despite being ‘uncomfortable and unprofitable:’ “Everybody says that making sacrifices for the survival of the biosphere—and to secure the living conditions for future and present generations—is an impossible thing to do” (ibid, 93). “Avoiding catastrophic climate breakdown is to do the seemingly impossible. And that is what we have to do” (ibid, 41).
- Greta argues that she and millions of children world-wide are sacrificing their education in order to “wake the adults up. We children are doing this for you to put your differences aside and start acting as you would in a crisis. We children are doing this because we want our hopes and dreams back” (ibid, 66). **“Everyone and everything has to change”** (ibid, 49).

#### *Beginning and End—Past, Present, Future*

- Greta’s capacity to remind her audience of our ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ has been noted above (see ‘provocative’ and ‘conservative’).
- When Greta focuses on the **present**, her message is perhaps most powerful. She reminds her audience that all we have is the present: “We already have all the facts and solutions (to the climate crisis). All we have to do is to wake up and change” (ibid, 10). She calls attention to the **global crisis** but also to the **individual**: “Every single person counts. Just like every single emission counts. Every single kilo. Everything counts” (ibid, 4). She leaves no way out for anyone other than to take responsibility to change. “We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint—the bigger your moral duty” (ibid, 22). Greta also turns the tables on the ‘adults’ in her audience, accusing them of “sitting around waiting for hope to come—you’re acting like spoiled, irresponsible children” (ibid, 38), and “You are not mature enough to tell it like it is. Even that burden you leave to your children” (ibid, 13). She points out that we children “have started to clean up your mess and we will not stop until we are done” (ibid, 38), and, in so doing, demonstrates a wisdom of ‘the child’ that far outstrips that of ‘the adult.’

#### *Unity, Plurality, Synthesis*

- In her straightforward, focused and rational message, Greta models **unity**, a **synthesis** of values, intention, purpose and courage. She also models **possibility**, namely, that of politicians and world leaders uniting with the science to take responsibility for the crisis humanity is facing.
- Once alone, a solitary **unit**, Greta no longer stands alone. She is supported and sustained by a plurality, namely, the millions of others her message has inspired. She throws the ‘opposites’ that constitute the current ‘conflict-situation’ into stark clarity; she does not have the ‘answer’ but clarifies the need to transcend the present impasse.

#### **List and Description of Themes in *Akira***

A thematic analysis of the film *Akira* (1988), as well as the film's script (Ôtomo 1988/2022), resulted in the extraction of 5 recurring themes and several sub-themes:

### 1. Power/Possibility

- 1.1 God-like power/Messianic power/Saviour ('smaller than small yet bigger than big')
- 1.2 Fear of power
- 1.3 Power struggles

### 2. Control

- 2.1 Order/disorder
- 2.2 Reversal of order
- 2.3 Agency/loss of agency
- 2.4 Protest as challenging control
- 2.5 Adults controlling children

### 3. Transformation and Change

- 3.1 Individual transformation
- 3.2 Death/rebirth
- 3.1 Changing relationships
- 3.2 Societal changes

### 4. Future

- 4.1 Prophecy/pre-cognition
- 4.2 Anticipation of a brighter future

### 5. Beginning and End/Apocalypse

- 5.1 Destruction/catastrophe
- 5.2 Apocalyptic and religious cults
- 5.3 Redemption

#### *Power/Possibility*

- Early in the film, there are brief and hushed mentions of a saviour/Messianic power (ibid, 33) referred to as 'Akira' (a deceased child possessing unlimited telekinetic power whose influence continues to haunt a dystopian Neo-Tokyo). The Messianic nature of this child saviour is reinforced when we learn that Akira's origins are unknown (hence, a symbolic **miraculous birth**). In fact, the lineage of all major child protagonists is clouded in mystery; even Tetsuo and Kaneda are orphans (**abandonment** and **vulnerability**).
- Near the end of the film, when Akira is re-animated from his organs (**reborn, resurrected**), his new bodily form is **hermaphroditic**, representing **a unity and synthesis** of polarised positions.
- Tetsuo – who is an outcast (**persecution, isolation**) even amongst his friends – is on a journey to realise the extent of his power but also exerts his power over the three telekinetic child-like beings he encounters: Kiyoki, Takashi and Misaru. These children were 'tested' alongside Akira but, because of the drugs administered by scientists to **control their power**, they are more akin to 'zombified' versions of children.

- The film is concerned with the **fear of the powers** of these children (described as "the next stage in human evolution", [ibid, 14]) and the unruly nature of other rebellious children, which challenges perceptions of children as **helpless**.
- The power of Akira is awakened in Tetsuo, who abuses it and uses it towards destructive ends, fuelled by experiences that compensate his **powerlessness**.
- There is an equal emphasis on **power struggles** between children and adults, government and society, government and military (for example, Colonel Shikishima's military coup in order to overthrow "corrupt politicians"), the police and lawbreakers, and schools and pupils, amongst others.

### *Control*

- The need for those in power to control society, especially unruly children, directly mirrors the lack of autonomy individuals have over their lives. For instance, while Tetsuo struggles to control his powers, officials want to bring his power under their control (ibid, 19, 25 and 37) not only to avert the destruction of Neo Tokyo, but to harness Tetsuo's **power**, something previous administrators were unable to accomplish with Akira (ibid, 28).
- Adults reveal their difficulty in controlling powerful children by keeping them drugged and contained in a high security facility.
- Tetsuo exerts his agency by escaping from captivity and choosing to live his powers in a destructive manner (ibid, 30). In doing so, he initiates the **change** that society simultaneously yearns for and fears.
- While Kiyoki, Takashi and Masaru initially try to control Tetsuo, they eventually relent, realising that Tetsuo "is [their] newest companion" (ibid) (**possibility: anticipation of something evolving toward conscious realisation**).
- The three child-beings use Kei as a conduit to facilitate the realisation of Tetsuo's 'destiny' – namely, to be reintegrated into the source of his power, the re-animated child-God, Akira, who is both **invincible and incorruptible**. Tetsuo's loss of control – i.e., his inability to control his mutation – can only be ameliorated by Akira, who has the power to re-establish control and order (**the child is both 'provocative' and 'conservative'**).
- **Repressive control**, and the **defiant protest** it constellates, are evident in the socio-political sphere. Rebel factions – both political and religious – threaten to undermine the established order to gain control (**plurality: fragmentation/anarchy/breakdown**). They use 'Akira' as a rallying cry, which points to the **past** while **demanding radical change** and **a new dispensation**
- At the level of individual and interpersonal relationship, the theme of control is expressed as a **reversal of order** and established power dynamics: whereas Kaneda dominated his relationship with Tetsuo, the onset of Tetsuo's powers means that Tetsuo is now in control (ibid, 24).
- The tension between order and disorder is expressed by the conflicted actions of Kiyoko. While she is central to the decision to re-establish order by awakening Akira, she is also the mouthpiece for free choice and the subversion of established order (ibid, 35) (**the child is both 'provocative' and 'conservative'**).

### *Transformation and Change*

- The theme of transformation is announced from the opening scene, as Tokyo in 1988 is obliterated. 31 years later (2019), Neo Tokyo is a dystopian society marred by civil

unrest, unruly biker gangs, and a corrupt political system dominated by cloak and dagger governance and diplomacy.

- Neo Tokyo is on the brink of significant **change**, as portended by the politician Nezu: "Neo Tokyo is going to change. In all respects, this city is saturated. It's like an overripe fruit. And within it is a new seed. We only need to wait for the wind which will make it fall. The wind is called Akira!" (ibid, 17).
- Tetsuo's grotesque transformation – a **synthesis** of seemingly incompatible elements (machine technology fused with organic flesh) – supports this theme (**instinctual, biological nature** meets **the extravagances of scientific achievement**). Tetsuo is further transformed when integrated into the Akira energy (**unity** and **hermaphroditic synthesis**).
- Akira is re-born and made whole from his own preserved organs. 'Akira' becomes the symbolic figurehead of both political and religious uprisings (ibid), his **power** the catalyst for the transformation of Neo Tokyo. The re-born child is a **'bringer of light'**, **overcoming** the **darkness of a seemingly insurmountable conflict-situation**.
- The energy released by Akira's awakening and his assumption of Tetsuo is likened by Dr Ônishi to the birth of the universe (ibid, 40). The theme of transformation is repeatedly linked to the motif of **death/rebirth**.
- Transformation occurs individually, interpersonally, and at the level of the collective (**unity, plurality, and possibility**). For instance, multiple relationships change (for better, for worse) including those between: Kaneda and Kei; Tetsuo and Kandena; Tetsuo and his fellow telekinetics; Tetsuo and his biker gang; and Tetsuo and Akira.

#### *Future*

- The future (Neo Tokyo 2019) is envisioned as an historical moment in which both religious cults and political movements await the 'second coming' of Akira, which many later believe to be realised in and through Tetsuo.
- A deep anticipation of the future is further expressed through the pre-cognitive capabilities of Kiyoko, whose dream of the future sets the stage for the unfolding of the **apocalypse** awaiting them (ibid, 13).
- The film ends with a clear statement on **hope for the future (possibility)**, after the assumption of Tetsuo, Takashi, Kiyoko, and Masaru by Akira's life force. Audiences are left with a sense of **anticipation** that, in the future, Tetsuo and his child companions will return (**rebirth**).

#### *Beginning and End/Apocalypse*

- Physical destruction, decay, and disaster are motifs throughout the film (see Nezu's observation above [ibid, 17]). From the seedy bar Kaneda's gang frequent, to the sewers and cold industrial complexes where the film's most significant action occurs, Kiyoko's premonition (ibid, 14) does not feel so much a prophecy as a statement of fact outlining the **future destruction** of Neo Tokyo.
- The apocalyptic atmosphere is lucidly expressed by a priest of one of the new religious movements: "The time of atonement is upon us! The time of his awakening is nigh! The time of Lord Akira's awakening draws near! [...] Oh flames of purity, raze this corrupt city! Consume our unclean hearts! Fear not! Your bodies will be purified in the flames! (ibid, 17 and 32).
- The preservation of Neo Tokyo is simultaneously a destruction and **sacrifice** of the children possessing telekinetic capabilities (ibid, 39).



- The 'death' of the telekinetic children and Akira's act of compassion in stopping Tetsuo's destructiveness signifies a **redemption** of the Child-God, as Akira was believed, by some, to be the source of the initial devastation of Tokyo in 1988.
- The film ends with a symbol of hope and redemption in the image of the spark that is caught by Kaneda, which signals that a new beginning may emerge from the ashes of destruction and the pain of Akira's 'restitution' (**death and rebirth**).
- While children and child-like beings cause a considerable amount of physical damage, children (Kaneda, Kai, and Kei in the final scene) also embody the future potential that can build their culture anew (**smaller than small yet bigger than big**).

Our distillation of codes in Greta's speeches and *Akira* – guided by the central 'coding' or characteristics of the child archetype as abstracted from Jung's essay – has provided what we hope to be a persuasive comparative analysis of the central themes evident in these two cultural artefacts, together with an identification of the psychological patterns and possibilities of meaning constellated by the image or metaphor of 'the child' in each. We feel that there is evidence of a sufficient convergence of themes between the dataset and 'code book' to assert with some confidence that we are witnessing a constellation of the child archetype in art as in life— that is, in the inner and outer, psychological and social, individual and collective 'worlds' or dimensions of human experience. The next questions to address, with the support of Jung's theory of synchronicity, are 'how' and 'why'?

### **Jung's theory of *synchronicity***

We take as our starting point Jung's writings on synchronicity, together with a method for the symbolic analysis of synchronistic phenomena outlined by Main (2006). Jung writes, in 1930:

My researches into the psychology of unconscious processes long ago compelled me to look around for another principle of explanation, since the causality principle seemed to me insufficient to explain certain remarkable manifestations of the unconscious. I found that there are psychic parallelisms which simply cannot be related to each other causally, but must be connected by another kind of principle altogether. This connection seemed to lie essentially in the relative simultaneity of the events, hence the term 'synchronistic' (Jung, 1930/1966, 56).

Perhaps Jung's most memorable example of a synchronistic event (an *acausal meaningful coincidence* between an inner and outer, psychic and physical occurrence) is that of a young female patient who proved to be "psychologically inaccessible" and the scarab beetle:

The difficulty lay in the fact that she [Jung's patient] always knew better about everything. [...] After several fruitless attempts to sweeten her rationalism with a somewhat more human understanding, I [Jung] had to confine myself to the hope that something unexpected and irrational would turn up, something that would burst the intellectual retort into which she had sealed herself. Well, I was sitting opposite her one day, with my back to the window, listening to her flow of rhetoric. She had had an impressive dream the night before, in which someone had given her a golden scarab—a costly piece of jewellery. While she was still telling me this dream, I heard something behind me gently tapping on the window. I turned round and saw that it was a fairly large flying insect that was knocking against the window-pane from outside in the obvious effort to get into the dark room. This seemed to me very strange. I opened the window immediately and caught the insect in the air as it flew in. It was a scarabaeid beetle, or common rose-chafer, whose gold-green colour most nearly resembles that of a golden scarab. I handed the beetle to my patient with the words, 'Here is your scarab.' This experience punctured the desired hole in her rationalism and broke the ice of her intellectual resistance. The treatment could now be continued with satisfactory results (Jung, 1952/1960, 525 – 26).

Main (2004) argues that in this *individual* experience of a synchronistic event, we are confronted with a constellation of the archetype of rebirth, the symbol of which (the scarab beetle/rose-chafer), suddenly appearing, enabled the required shift in the client's conscious position (de Moura, 2019) in order to promote healing.

Jung was deeply suspicious of the dominance in Western thought of the scientific principle of causality, a principle which failed him repeatedly in his research into occurrences that were 'real' because experienced but nevertheless dismissed by science. He refers, throughout his writings, to what he considers a general lack of awareness of the *fact* of unconscious processes and anomalous 'events,' and sought "another kind of principle altogether" to explain the *acausal* relationship of factors (psychic and physical) that he became convinced were part of the same psychophysical system, and certainly as much a part of the same world, as those that could be explained by causality. Jung was initially hesitant to publish his research and thinking on synchronicity; however, in early 1955, when asked to revise Chapter 2 of *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connection Principle* for inclusion in the *Collected Works*, he wrote to Michael Fordham explaining that the final push to risk publication was a product of

his growing concern with science's "blind and dangerous belief in the security of the scientific Trinity (time, space, causality)" (Jung 1976, 216):

Funny how few people can draw the inevitable conclusion from causality being of statistical nature, that it must suffer exceptions. You can arbitrarily dismiss them as indispensable parts of the real world, if you like averages better than random facts. The latter are facts none the less and cannot be treated as non-existent. Moreover, since the real [individual] is always [a] unique event and as such merely "random," you have to label the whole of [hu]mankind in its essentials as "valueless." But on the other hand, only the individual carries life and consciousness of life, which seems to me rather a significant fact not to be lightly dismissed at least not by the physician.

Jung writes that the incident of the scarab, cited above, was just one amongst innumerable examples of meaningful coincidence recorded by many others. Such examples include anything customarily dismissed as clairvoyance, telepathy, etc., "from Swedenborg's well-attested vision of the great fire in Stockholm to the [...] report by Air Marshal Sir Victor Goddard about the dream of an unknown officer, which predicted the subsequent accident to Goddard's plane" (Jung, 1952/1960b, 526), all phenomena that Jung groups under three categories of synchronistic event:

- 1) The coincidence of a psychic state in the observer with a simultaneous, objective, external event that corresponds to the psychic state or content (e.g., the scarab), where there is no evidence of a causal connection between the psychic state and the external event, and where, considering the psychic relativity of space and time, such a connection is not even conceivable.
- 2) The coincidence of a psychic state with a corresponding (more or less simultaneous) external event taking place outside the observer's field of perception, i.e., at a distance, and only verifiable afterwards (e.g., the Stockholm fire).
- 3) The coincidence of a psychic state with a corresponding, not yet existent future event that is distant in time and can likewise only be verified afterwards (ibid).

It is important to remember that Jung's work on synchronicity was interdisciplinary; he worked as empirically and scientifically as possible, and consequently valued his connections with scientists such as Albert Einstein and a number of other physicists, in particular, Wolfgang Pauli, with whom he collaborated extensively. His dialogue with contemporary physicists enabled Jung to recognise parallels between "the deepest patterns of the psyche (archetypal images) and the processes and patterns evident in the physical world [...]" (Stein

1998, 209). Physicists, as well as Jung, were discovering “events and processes for which there are no causal explanations, only statistical probabilities” (ibid, 205).

Towards the end of his life, Jung’s thinking on synchronistic phenomena led him to explore the significance of numbers, research that he delegated to Marie-Louise von Franz as he felt he was too old to do justice to such a complex and important project. In *Number and Time*, von Franz notes that Jung felt that “Number [...] should not be understood solely as a construction of consciousness, but also as an archetype and thus as a constituent of nature, both without and within” (1974/1998, 13) that “regulates both psyche and matter” (ibid, 106) and, by extension, the psychophysical continuum which manifests, on occasion, in meaningful synchronicities. We therefore take a moment to consider von Franz’s insistence that the *significance* of numbers may best be understood from a *qualitative* (i.e., psychically meaningful) rather than a quantitative (i.e., physically quantifiable) perspective in order to appreciate how they, and the patterns they generate, function as symbols of psychic and unconscious psychophysical dynamics. Crucially, we argue that analytical psychology’s contribution to interpreting datasets in psycho-social research lies in its capacity to offer a *depth* analysis which addresses, whenever appropriate, evidence of synchronistic events and the principle of acausality to ensure as differentiated, comprehensive, and qualitative a perspective as possible. Such an approach to interpretation is emphasised by von Franz in her argument for a *qualitative* understanding of numbers:

[...] 1, 2, 3, 4 are not different quantities but [...] time sequences of the same thing [...], (i.e., a series or continuum). The continuum is the continuation of the number one through the whole series, different aspects of the same number, always the same. [...] I am describing a different idea of the continuum from the one found in books of mathematics. This [...] view of the continuum we know already from the famous alchemical saying of Maria Prophetissa, which runs: “One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the one as the fourth.” [...] she counts up to three and then says, but those are really all the one—she reconceives the oneness of the three and then puts them together as four. Our minds run progressively, for when we normally count, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, we make a chain, while when we count qualitatively [...] the four is really the one continuum in the three, so I go backwards: four is the oneness of three, and I add that oneness to the three and make four (von Franz, 1980, 90 – 91).

Similarly, Jung writes:

Although I have been led by purely psychological considerations to doubt the exclusively psychic nature of the archetypes, psychology sees itself obliged to revise its ‘only psychic’ assumptions in the light of the physical [i.e., physicists’] findings too. [...] the relative or partial identity of psyche and physical continuum is of the greatest importance theoretically, because it brings with it a tremendous simplification by bridging over the seeming incommensurability between the physical world and the psychic, not of course in any concrete way, but from the physical side by means of mathematical equations, and from the psychological side by means of empirically derived postulates—archetypes—whose content, if any, cannot be represented to the mind (Jung, 1954/1960, 230 – 31).

Jung’s intuition of an underlying psychophysical continuum, a unity and inter-connectedness between psychic (conscious or potentially conscious) and non-psychic (unconscious and psychoid) factors had earlier led to his hypothesis of the Self as the underlying ordering principle of the human psyche. With the theory of synchronicity, as Murray Stein points out, Jung extended the “theory of the [S]elf into cosmology, [as] synchronicity speaks of the profound hidden order and unity among all that exists” (1998, p. 200), an idea expressed in the term *unus mundus* (unitary world) which Jung adopted from the Medieval alchemists. Grounds that support the hypothesis of a ‘non-psychic’ (psychoid) aspect of the archetype, “where all contents exist in a state of promiscuity” (Jung, 1923/1971, 479), Jung argues, are “supplied by the phenomena of synchronicity, which are associated with the activity of unconscious operators and have hitherto been regarded, or repudiated, as ‘telepathy,’ etc.” (1930/1960, 231).

Following Jung’s reasoning, we may deduce that in the arguably ‘promiscuous’ continuum of the psychoid substratum of the collective unconscious, operating outside of the strictures of time and space (and the principle of causality), ‘content’ is liable to become constellated and manifest to the individual and/or collective psyche in a number of circumstances: when libido is blocked by a desperately one-sided attitude in its conscious focus; when libido is paralysed in a stalemate between opposing forces; when the conscious attitude purposefully and openly turns its focus towards the unconscious. And any surprising content that emerges as a result

will be dismissed as chance, coincidence or anomaly by some, and as synchronicities that are both meaningful and potentially transformative by others.

Fundamentally, Jung proposes that to the paradigm of time-space-causality which has for so long described ‘reality’ be added synchronicity in order to account for the irrational, the emotional, the meaningful. Human consciousness has long had the capacity to perceive an ordering principle at work in the cosmos. The *subjective* experience of an underlying principle of order, relatedness, and inter-connectedness confers a sense of meaning. The theory of synchronicity, with its recognition of synchronistic events on both an individual and collective level, provides a language that supports the development of a perception of ‘reality’ which includes ‘facts’ previously dismissed as anomalous and meaningless. Jung is promoting a paradigm shift, a radical transformation in the way in which we see ourselves, and ourselves in relation to others and to the world, which acknowledges ‘acausal orderedness’ as a dynamic principle that underpins the natural laws structuring all of life on earth and in the cosmos, an orderedness that confers meaning. Jung’s hypothesis calls for a re-evaluation of history, the conflicts of past and present, the crises that demand immediate global action, and our aspirations, as individuals and as a species, for the future.

### **The social significance of *synchronicity***

Main (2006) suggests that Jung re-imagines, through his exploration of synchronistic phenomena, the relationship between inner and outer, unconscious and conscious worlds; and to demonstrate how Jung’s theory of synchronicity may be utilised to explore “possible meaningful connections between collective states of mind and [...] socially and culturally salient events,” Main (2006) provides an analysis of a national event – the wrongful killing of Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes at Stockwell Underground Station mistaken for a suicide bomber in the aftermath of the London bombings. Main suggests that “the theory of synchronicity can provide an additional perspective that focuses less on causes and

responsibility and more on the possible collective meaning of the event” (ibid, 50). An increase in the powers of the police, justified by suicide bombings in central London, were of concern to many: “the killing was not caused by the concerns, and while [...] the concerns were certainly caused by a perceived likelihood that something untoward would follow from increased police powers, it could scarcely have been foreseen that something so vividly and decisively demonstrating the dangers of the increased powers would occur precisely when the police seems so justifiably empowered” (ibid). Main therefore argues that the application of Jung’s theory of synchronicity may serve as a resource for “elucidating by comparison the similar patterns of thinking, as well as their social influences and motivations, that underlie certain widespread trends in contemporary culture”; and that it also provides a perspective on “meaningful connections between collective states of mind and socially and culturally salient events, without the necessity of establishing causal relations between these states of mind and events” (ibid). We argue that such ‘meaningful connections’ may be cultural and cross-cultural, global as well as local and national, and point not only to the possible relationship between collective states of mind and resonant cultural events but to the activation of an archetypal dynamic at the psychoid (non- or pre-psychic) level of the unconscious which then manifests in the conscious realm as ‘synchronicity’ – in terms of our present argument, through the constellation of the archetypal image of the ‘child.’

Main, too, considers it of particular value to “identify the archetypal pattern that may underlie the event,” (ibid) which we have done with our analyses of *Akira* and Greta Thunberg’s influence as each manifests key characteristics of the archetype of the child. And while Jung does not diminish the importance of causal connections, his theory of synchronicity supports and extends the argument that single events do not exist in isolation from others but are *relational* (Aron 1996). Research that addresses the previously unrecognised ‘fact’ of

‘accident’ and irrational convergence (synchronicity) can only deepen historical and geopolitical discourse, and psycho-social enquiry.

### **2019: The Year of the Child**

The unconscious psyche responds to an individual’s conscious attitude and actions (Jung, 1961/1989, 326), as well as to collective attitudes and events affecting that individual, through dream, fantasy images, and the occasional experience of synchronicities when the psychophysiological continuum is activated. Equally, as Jung argues, the ‘promiscuous’ psychophysical continuum of the collective unconscious may be activated in response to collective attitudes and actions in the form of mass movements and global protest which present in the symbolic ‘dress’ of the archetype that has been constellated (in the context of this paper, in the dress of the archetypal image of the ‘child’). Jung also warned that what is not made conscious we meet – individually and collectively – in the outer world as fate, through accident, ill health, breakdown, loss, violence, protest, rebellion, catastrophe. Given that, in times of social unrest and disenchantment, what is not made conscious might well accrue as an unconscious or semi-conscious identification with an all-consuming ‘cause’ or ideology, we feel it is important to take a moment to reflect on just a few of the disquieting events and prevailing attitudes that dominated the headlines in 2019.

2019 was marked by political unrest, growing signs of the environmental catastrophe facing humanity worldwide, and increasingly anti-democratic legislation. Protests were largely initiated by young people. In Hong Kong, anti-government protestors (a large proportion of whom were matriculating students) protested a bill that would permit the Chinese government to prosecute journalists and political activists who dared challenge the mandates of the Communist Party, and extradite offenders to mainland China to face criminal charges. This made a mockery of Hong Kong’s status as a Special Administrative Region (encapsulated in the phrase ‘one country, two systems’). While the Chinese government



eventually withdrew the proposed bill in September 2019, clashes between protestors and police only became more violent. Protestors demanded democracy and an independent inquiry into police conduct, to no avail.

In the UK, in July 2019, Prime Minister Theresa May resigned amidst the failure of her Conservative government to finalise the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Brexit). Boris Johnson succeeded May as Prime Minister, ushering in a period of political instability, the reverberations of which are still felt at the time of writing. Johnson's premiership lasted from 24 July 2019 to 6 September 2022. His successor, Liz Truss, resigned after seven weeks, replaced by former Chancellor, Rishi Sunak.

In August 2019, wildfires raged in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, the result of president Jair Bolsonaro's encouragement of industrial development at the expense of rainforest conservation. Vast tracts of land earmarked for large-scale agriculture were deliberately set ablaze, jeopardising a vital natural resource in the fight against climate change.

By September, 2019, President Donald Trump of the United States was facing formal impeachment inquiries over his alleged encouragement of Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to investigate corruption charges against the former US Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter, who was on the board of the Ukrainian energy company, Burisma. It is alleged that Trump conspired to block nearly \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine unless Zelensky complied with Trump's desire to discredit his political rival.

At the end of the year, news spread of a mysterious virus causing pneumonia-like symptoms in Wuhan, China. By the end of January 2020, new cases of the virus were confirmed in Thailand, Japan, and the United States. 2019 saw the rapid acceleration of global unrest, with bitter political division and polarisation, racial conflict and violence, and massive losses inflicted by the global pandemic.

We feel it is hardly surprising that the child archetype was constellated in response to the untenable extremes and crises afflicting humanity in 2019 (crises that had been developing for many years). Greta Thunberg told the United Nations Assembly, “Our house is on fire,” demanding a radical shift in consciousness and the will to take action, not only with regard to the climate crisis but in numerous arenas (international, political, economic, social) that currently face breakdown or catastrophe. As an incarnation of the ‘child,’ Greta reminds us of the values from which we are in danger of becoming severed (the past), where we currently stand (the present), and our responsibility for how we act (the future). Although *Akira*, released in 1988, was a product of its time and culture, the film’s apocalyptic vision of societal unrest could not be more eerily relevant to the political upheaval and environmental destruction that currently plague the world. When evaluated from the perspective of Jung’s theory of synchronicity, the celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Akira* constitutes what we might call a synchronistic vertex, a ‘wake-up call’ to be understood in the context of the historical moment of its re-release into public consciousness, i.e., in the context of the global events of 2019. At the same time as the screen image of the ‘child’ Akira heralded the *end* of political and societal collapse in an imagined post-apocalyptic Tokyo, symbolising hope for a more conscious, equitable, peaceable future, and inviting a re-evaluation the film’s cultural significance, 16-year-old Greta Thunberg announced the urgent need of a programme of action to save the planet and humanity, a stark pronouncement that continues to reverberate and challenge all strata of society around the globe. Almost overnight, Greta became a polarising figure in a polarised world – a child both adored and reviled, honoured and ridiculed – towards whom innumerable projections were directed. Her recognition as ‘person of the year’ in 2019 constellated extreme responses worldwide: many revered her as a promoter of change and transformation, a ‘saviour,’ warrior, and visionary figurehead in the fight to save our planet and preserve a viable collective future; and others castigated her as

ignominious, deluded and a dangerous threat promoting untenable lies and fantasies. *Akira* re-appeared, and Greta Thunberg most definitively *appeared* on the world stage at a critical moment which many regard as dangerously close to the tipping point after which environmental, societal and cultural collapse may well be irreversible. Whether the ‘message’ of the ‘child’ is heeded sufficiently by those with the agency, power, and will to effect meaningful and lasting change remains to be seen. In the end, responsibility for purposeful action lies with us all: as the title of Greta’s book reminds us, *no one is too small to make a difference*.

### *Conclusion*

The aim of this paper is threefold: first, to locate, position, and develop a Jungian approach to psycho-social studies; second, to develop a rigorous methodology for qualitative research based on analytical psychology’s archetypal hypothesis and inherent psycho-social focus; and third, to demonstrate how bringing analytical psychological perspectives to bear on psycho-social research may not only enhance the selection of data and codifying practices, but also extend and enrich the interpretation of datasets.

This paper started as an intuition: that the release of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition DVD of *Akira* in 2019 is acausally and meaningfully linked to the appearance of Greta Thunberg on the world stage and *Time* magazine’s recognition of her as ‘person of the year.’ We have attempted to ground the original intuition and test our hypothesis by exploring the potential of an analytical psychological research methodology, seeking possible synergies between Jung’s archetypal hypothesis and the practice of thematic analysis. We used Jung’s (1951/1959) essay on the child archetype as a code manual to guide, but not confine, our collaborative approach to coding. Our exercise in triangulation ensures a rich and accurate snapshot of patterns evident in the dataset. We further contend that themes extracted from our cultural artefacts elucidate some of the underlying dynamics dominating the polarised zeitgeist of our

times. *Archetypal thematic analysis* (ATA), as a methodology, can contribute significantly to psycho-social studies. Our method entails a double process: an initial move to *reduce* complexity in the dataset through a rigorous coding exercise in order to *reveal* the research subject's inherent complexity in the interpretation. Step 2 is achieved through the application, where appropriate, of Jung's theory of synchronicity which requires both lateral and vertical thinking, as well as an evaluation of acausal phenomena. ATA proceeds on the premise that rational consciousness is a small yet indispensable portion – a critical epiphenomenon – of the psychic totality or psychophysical continuum on which it rests; it also reminds us that the intricate web of contingencies occurring globally, nationally, communally, interpersonally, and intrapsychically is not a matter of 'us' vs 'them,' but simply 'us' (Brook, 2009).

We leave the final word to Jung:

Synchronicity is no more baffling or mysterious than the discontinuities of physics. It is only the ingrained belief in the sovereign power of causality that creates intellectual difficulties and makes it appear unthinkable that causeless events exist or could ever occur. But if they do, then we must regard them as *creative acts*, as the continuous creation of a pattern that exists from all eternity, repeats itself sporadically, and is not derivable from any known antecedents [without, of course] thinking of every event whose cause is unknown as 'causeless' (1952/1960a, 518).

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