



BRILL

Introduction

Analytical Psychology and the Digital Turn

Kevin Lu | ORCID: 0000-0001-5512-9635

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London,
London, UK

kevin.lu@cssd.ac.uk

I want to take you back to 2009. I was a visiting lecturer at Heythrop College, University of London, teaching a module on Jung and Freud. Although I was not part of the core psychology faculty, I was invited to contribute to the section's activities, which included the development of a new reading group. I was the first to present, selecting Chris Hauke's 2009 paper, 'Turning On and Tuning Out: new technology, image, analysis' as the inaugural point of discussion. After the meeting, I was rather deflated. Some of the feedback included, 'I really didn't quite follow', and 'it seems to be covering a lot of ground but doesn't really dig deeper into any one area'. I was upset that I did not yet have the requisite experience and knowledge to mount any meaningful defence against what felt like an untimely evaluation of Jungian and Post-Jungian Studies. Nevertheless, I maintained an intuitive conviction that the paper was important, even if I lacked the framework to articulate why at the time.

Fast forward seventeen years, and I can assert—with confidence, clarity and conviction—that Hauke's paper was ahead of its time, a contribution that remains vastly underappreciated. In re-reading this paper, I was struck that even in 2009, Hauke was asking the 'right' questions, formulating how new technology would impact upon mental health services, the way in which therapy is conducted, and our understanding of the unconscious. Hauke (2009) asks, for instance, whether "computer simulations and software diagnostic and treatment programmes offer anything to mental health practice?" (44). In light of patients introducing material inflected by new technology into therapy, he questions if these digital engagements are "legitimate expressions of their inner worlds?" Hauke then delves into AI, exploring a computer programme—ELIZA—that was designed to simulate psychotherapeutic conversations, and even provides an example of such a dialogue.

Chris provided a roadmap—a direction of travel—and it serves as a symbolic ‘north star’ in curating this collection. While all the papers touch on the limitations of new technology—including AI (artificial intelligence), virtual reality (VR), extended reality (XR), and video games—they start from the position that technological advances are shaping the psyche in profound ways; the psychology is to be found in how technology is used, how we come to depend on it, how we withdraw our energies to retain a sense of the human, and how we can ethically leverage technology in the service of mental health and deepening our understanding of the unconscious. I see our own co-authored contribution, “The Virtual Unconscious”, as a creative extension of intuitions that already exist within the field (Hauke 2009; Hockley 2014). We offer the concept of the *virtual unconscious* as a new theoretical formation and necessity given qualitative data we have collected. The unconscious material that arises from an engagement with the ‘virtual’ does so precisely because of the unique affordances of VR. We provide adumbrations of possible futures and research directions, starting from the premise that because technological advancements are an extension of our humanity, our humanity can be recovered within them, provided they are approached with ethical intentionality, profound care, and a critical understanding of what VR can and cannot achieve in therapeutic practice.

In a similar vein, while Dragana Favre does not dismiss new technology in the form of AI and Large Language Models (LLMs), she notes the psychological impact of the immediacy it provides, and calls for an *ethics of friction* to preserve the temporal conditions necessary for *individuation*. For Briony Clarke, AI and contemporary computational systems are located at a *psychoid* threshold. Consequently, research methodologies must fluidly adapt to, and be recursively shaped by, the nuances of this liminal nexus. Rather than interpreting technological artifacts from the outside—an approach reminiscent of the speculative ‘armchair anthropology’ for which early psychoanalysis was heavily criticised (Boas 1920)—Practice-as-Research (PaR) allows researchers to engage relationally with AI, generating knowledge directly through the processual acts of doing and making. Orsolya Lukacs argues that AI is experienced—both at individual and collective levels—as the ‘Other’. Drawing on Sheila Jasanoff’s notion of *sociotechnical imaginaries*, she offers *psychosociotechnical imaginaries* as an extension that acknowledges the affective, archetypal dimensions that drive our collective fantasies of technological futures. Crucially, AI is most productively understood not as an alien Other, but as an extension of the human psyche. The task at hand is one of finding a more reflective, balanced position, one that resists one-sided responses and invites the possibility of both individual and collective psychological growth with, in and through new technologies. Stephen Garratt, drawing on his conception of the *tool use illusion*, suggests that an incor-

poration of external tools into one's body schema leads to a mistaken—and dangerous—perception of mastery over the world. This has extended into a psychological register with the advent of AI, which promises mastery of the world through God-like knowledge. From an analytical psychological perspective, this is nothing less than collective inflation where the ego has identified with the *Self*. The solution lies in bringing this to consciousness, and championing a plurality of the psyche that resists consumption by a projected God-image trapped inside the metaphorical machine. Finally, Andrew Howe mobilises an autoethnographic approach, asking whether playing video games—in particular, *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* (TOTK)—constitutes a new outlet for psychologically significant experiences. Open world video games like TOTK provide rich landscapes for exploration, which may evoke psychological associations and amplifications. Drawing on a three-month period of sustained play anchored by grounding mechanisms similar to Jung's own (Jung 1989), Howe argues that video game play can operate as a contemporary analogue to *active imagination*, providing a virtual canvas where unconscious material may be encountered, explored, and partially integrated.

While synergies between these diverse offerings abound, differences also exist, as they should. As Mark Saban (2019) articulates, locating the place of maximum tension—where opposing elements are all too ready to fragment—and choosing to reside within produces the very conditions for transformation. Doing so means resisting a desire and fantasy to mix opposing positions; rather, we must remain in the discomfort of the interactive field that is created from, and is a product of, that very tension. The therapy, therefore, is found *in* the tension, not in overcoming it. Similarly, I want to advocate for inhabiting and enduring this tension on another register, which has implications not only for what we study and the fields to which analytical psychology may be applied, but constitutes an ethos that can productively shape the future of Jungian, Post-Jungian and Neo-Jungian Studies (Carpani 2021).

In two seminal publications, Andrew Samuels (1996; 2017) delineates future trajectories that could sustain and safeguard the fields of Jungian and Post-Jungian studies and Jungian analysis. My offer, as an extension of Samuels, is twofold. First, we have to contribute to conversations about the impact of new technology on psychotherapy and psychoanalytic (broadly defined) research. Wherever we may stand across the divide of 'for', 'against', or somewhere in between, this is an area into which we must intervene, offering depth psychological perspectives with openness, generosity, and a willingness to hear competing points of view, however uncomfortable and demanding.

Second, collaboration with others from diverse areas of expertise will be essential to the discipline's survival. While our intellectual silos remain safe—

functioning as echo chambers that validate existing perspectives—we must instead occupy the difficult yet generative tension elucidated by Saban. We need to work with others which, on the surface, sounds simple enough, but can be difficult in practice. It requires approaching collaboration with humility, remaining receptive to how alternative disciplines might enrich our own knowledge and practices, and accepting compromise. Productive partnerships must be based on, and truly honour, co-creation as the vehicle through which novel insights are generated. In doing so, we must enter collaborations—and the interactive field inevitably constellated as a result—with authenticity, honesty, care, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, courage, plurality, and above all else, consciousness. By remaining within this productive tension, new trajectories may emerge, offering our discipline a critical path to survival—a reality with which colleagues navigating the current UK HE landscape are acutely familiar.

I have tried to model this approach with the diverse team who supported our research events and workshops. They include academics specialising in psychosocial studies, applied psychoanalysis, applied theatre, immersive storytelling and VR360, alongside psychotherapists, psychiatrists, Jungian analysts, artists, creatives, and senior game developers. The work also draws on invaluable insights from Sesame drama and movement therapists and trainees. It is to this multidisciplinary collective that I dedicate this special issue; without their respective contributions, we would collapse into the very silos we seek to dismantle.

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