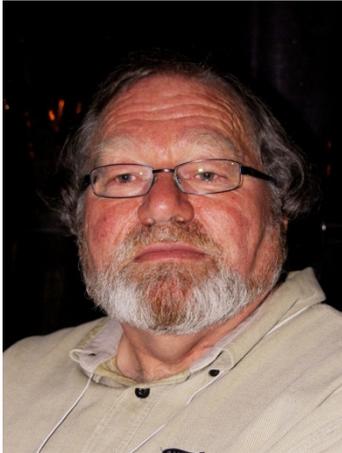


Looking, but not seeing

Some interpretations



The Freewheelin'
Peter Geyer

How individuals see things has a lot to do with their levels of consciousness

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This consciousness of ours has the appearance of being stable and reliable, but in reality it is a fragile thing and rests on very insecure foundations.

CG Jung

For many years I've wondered about Jung's idea of the psychological conscious and unconscious, in particular how it relates to what is claimed about psychological type in models and applications. My current thoughts are that the consciousness of an individual is overstated in type use, sometimes by a great margin, regardless of the approach taken.

If I weren't constrained by the demands of daily life, I would devote my time to watching the sea.

Andrew Denton

Should the media producer and presenter **Andrew Denton** achieve his aim, would he do so in unconscious reverie, or as a conscious means to gather his energy and just think? The two activities are quite different, but would look the same to an observer.

Psychological consciousness (or its opposite) can be subject to personal considerations for the not-always-disinterested observer. What is 'self-evident' from one typological perspective or knowledge base may not be so from another. Type preferences (and by this I mean dominant and

auxiliary functions) are presumed more conscious than the rest, and an equilibrium of sorts is required. Jung makes a distinction between a psychological 'truth' and what a truth might be otherwise.

Being unconscious, a regular occurrence for everyone, isn't necessarily a bad thing; in some respects, even in personal development, it's essential. Many aspects of society and individual life rely on archetypal and other manifestations – unconscious typical behaviours and experiences. They seem compulsory at sporting events, for instance, and in families, to say nothing of marketing or the internet.

Some people choose a newspaper not on content and factual reliability, but on how easily it can be folded in a train or at a table, or just because it's free. The proliferation of tattoos on various bodies, in particular those of my own generation, remains a personal mystery.

Appearance

Our present day consciousness is a mere child that is just beginning to say 'I'.

CG Jung

An individual's type preferences and their own level of consciousness (the latter a subjective consideration) have a lot to do with how things are seen.

Power dressing can be either a deliberate strategy unrelated to the personality of its practitioner, or a device hiding personality from self and others. Cartoonist **Michael Leunig**, a dabbler in Jungian ideas, once speculated whether a suit might possess personality and that attribute denied to its wearer.

In checking my post box recently, I encountered a manicured man encased in a suit, armour-like, closely accompanied by a well-dressed woman from whom perfume emanated a considerable distance. Oblivious to anything other than the task at hand, they did not sense my presence. Clad in shorts and T-shirt, I struggled to attract their attention so that I might pass by and get my own mail.

Attractive appearance is consistently reported as a significant factor in corporate success (Stranger 2012); the more cynical might wonder whether paying more attention to other criteria might result in better decisions and workplaces.

I am much more than a number on a scale.

Jennifer Livingston

Jennifer Livingston, a regional television presenter in the US, responded publicly to email criticism of her weight. The emailer, displaying an almost religious fervour, identified obesity as a ‘choice’, and offered to help Ms Livingston to meet his standards of appearance.

The dress and antics of the Russian band **Pussy Riot** might suggest otherwise, but **Marina Warner** notes that their purpose was to appeal to the Virgin Mary, and they see their activities in the context of being ‘holy fools’ (2012).

Warner also comments on a ‘popular revival of religious practice’, by believers and non-believers alike, with ‘events [of] pilgrimage, procession [and] ceremony’, including ‘wayside shrines’ where someone has died. Driving on local highways, and recent events following the murder of Jill Meagher in Melbourne, come to mind. Jung said that if you throw religion out the door, it will come in through the window.

Judgements

I can become anyone they want me to be.

Marilyn Monroe

*Take me with you
Where you're going to
Miss Lonely*

Jack Bruce

A person can seek recognition by not being themselves, leaving it to unconscious forces. This may be crucial to particular success, and is implied in some notions of workplace flexibility.

One might seek solace in another, someone who appears complementary, different, or promising. Here, being conscious is an option which may be discarded for preferable archetypal imaginings.

It's not unusual for people to presume that their experience is universal – or, at least, self-evident – and to be surprised to discover that isn't the case. Jung attributes this to an insufficiently differentiated consciousness (1970).

Writing about the Afghanistan conflict, **Tom Hyland** says, ‘Our army is a reflection of our society. Australians assume they are likeable, easy to get along with and tolerant.’ The quite different Afghan culture makes this problematic (2012).



A suit may possess a personality denied to its wearer

For **Michael Short** there's no time to waste in life, and anyone should be immediately able to list '10 things you most like doing': 'these are things we know intimately' (2012). And **Damon Young** appears to think that everyone must enjoy exercise, because *he* does (2012).

News media routinely represent the prospects of youth or the wisdom of age by the lives and opinions of three or four people. Nations and 'communities' are 'in mourning', 'shocked' or 'devastated', sometimes 'celebrating' or 'ecstatic', with little supporting data.

Method and principle

That which brings dissension creates relatedness.

CG Jung

Privileging one particular logic above other methods of perception and judgement can lead to denial that other useful ways of looking at the world exist, and to repetition of dubious strategies. Cutting wages and reducing workforces come to mind (Verrender 2012; Elliott 2012). Contending that those who identify problems must also provide solutions is an obvious barrier to organisational, personal and social change.

Unconsciously, finance matters have become the core of all life. The debate about Scottish independence is apparently about economics and value for money (Stanley 2012). Pay systems and business management are solutions for a better education (Job 2012).

This must be what Jung meant when he said that modern life operates without myth and meaning.

The elect(ed)

Archetypal images are so significant in themselves that people never think of asking what they mean.

CG Jung

Royal visits guarantee some kind of archetypal appearance, usually from those clamouring to cheer and greet them: dressing up, waving flags and the like. An attendant surprise is the revelation that the visitors, in this case, the **Prince of Wales** and the **Duchess of Cornwall**, bear some resemblance to human beings, able to talk with strangers and possessing similar interests to various groups and individuals.

Dressing up, flag-waving, and a frenzy of excitement are also key features of that political battle of the unconscious, an American presidential election.

Daniel Flitton reports that Australian 'political junkies' prefer the American world to the British system, notwithstanding the latter's closer relationship to our system (2012). Business ideas follow the same line of thought. One wonders whether an examination of similarities, differences and usefulness has been undertaken by either group.

Apart from online speculation about which type makes the best president (startlingly naïve, on both typological and political fronts), **Chloe Angyal** gained my attention in reporting her friend's suggestion that women would vote Republican because **Paul Ryan** is handsome. Acknowledging the vice-presidential candidate's appearance (interesting in itself), she identified Ryan's policies as anti-women, therefore unworthy of her vote (2012).



Surprise that the visitors resemble human beings

If you're for it, I'm against it, even if I agreed with it yesterday.

Norman Ornstein

Radiating the persona of a 1950s man (or even earlier), Republican **Mitt Romney** made a gracious concession speech that received a muted response, much as did Barack Obama's reciprocation. For some, it is better to maintain animosity than to collaborate or understand.

People who say 'no' a lot may never get to 'yes', perhaps fearing disintegration or implosion. The American political commentator **Norman Ornstein** calls this a 'tribal' approach (2012).

For commentators and politicians alike, the Australian Parliament – an environment largely driven by considerations of objective logic, sometimes illogically presented – can provide startling displays of absence of consciousness.

Although visible and audible worldwide with or without social media, the archetypal significance of prime minister **Julia Gillard's** 'sexism' speech was missed by most commentators. Their typologies may be too similar, amongst themselves and to their subject matter, to avoid groupthink in this entangled environment.

In the same way, the outpouring of emotion at asylum-seekers' deaths by people who rarely exhibit this form of expression. Left unaddressed, consciously or otherwise, were two decades of decision making on both sides that may have contributed to this sad event.

Issues such as immigration and education seem archetypal more than anything else,

with a long history. They require examination of a number of interleaving factors in the context of values and obligations.

And a conscious recognition that a simple, logical solution may not be available, nor relevant. ❖

It is amazing how people get caught in words.

CG Jung

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Parliament provides displays of absence of consciousness