Instructor’s Manual

for

JAMES HILLMAN
ON ARCHETYPAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

with

JAMES HILLMAN, PHD AND J. FRASER PIERSO, PHD

Manual by
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Instructor’s Manual for James Hillman on Archetypal Psychotherapy

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

1. USE THE TRANSCRIPTS
Make notes in the video Transcript for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during and after the video.

2. FACILITATE DISCUSSION
Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The Discussion Questions section provides ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning. The Role-Plays section guides you through exercises you can assign to your students in the classroom or training session.

3. ENCOURAGE SHARING OF OPINIONS
Encourage viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What are viewers’ impressions of what works and does not work? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes; it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

4. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL
Assign readings from Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading prior to or after viewing.

5. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER
See suggestions in the Reaction Paper section.
Hillman’s Contributions to Psychology

James Hillman, PhD, is an American psychologist and is considered to be the founder of Archetypal Psychology. He is a leading scholar in Jungian and post-Jungian thought, a self-described “renegade psychologist” and is both a social critic and revisionist of depth psychology. He is the author of over twenty books on psychology, philosophy, and spirituality.

Hillman received his PhD from the University of Zurich, as well as his analyst’s diploma from the C.G. Jung Institute and was then appointed as Director of Studies at the Institute, a position he held until 1969. In 1970, Hillman became editor of Spring Publications, a publishing company devoted to advancing Archetypal Psychology as well as publishing books on mythology, philosophy and art. His magnum opus, Re-visioning Psychology, was written in 1975 and nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Hillman then helped co-found the Dallas Institute for Humanities and Culture in 1978.

His 1997 book, The Soul’s Code: In Search of Character and Calling, was on The New York Times Bestseller List that year. His works and ideas about philosophy and psychology have also been popularized by other authors such as Thomas Moore, author of the bestselling book Care of the Soul.

Hillman has been critical of the 20th century’s psychologies (e.g., biological psychology, behaviorism, cognitive psychology) that have adopted a natural scientific philosophy and praxis. His main criticisms include that they are reductive, materialistic, and literal; they are psychologies without psyche, without soul. Accordingly, Hillman’s oeuvre has been an attempt to restore psyche to what he believes to be “its proper place” in psychology. Hillman sees the soul at work in imagination, dreams, fantasy, myth and metaphor. He also sees soul revealed in psychopathology, in the symptoms of psychological disorders. Psyche-pathos-logos is the “speech of the suffering soul” or the soul’s suffering of meaning. A great portion of Hillman’s thought attempts to attend to the speech of the soul as it is revealed via images, fantasies, and dreams.
Hillman does not believe that dreams are simply random residue from waking life (as advanced by physiologists), but neither does he believe that dreams are compensatory for the struggles of waking life, or are invested with “secret” meanings of how one should live, as did Jung. Rather, “dreams tell us where we are, not what to do” (1979). Therefore, Hillman is against the traditional interpretive methods of dream analysis. Hillman’s approach is phenomenological rather than analytical. His famous dictum with regard to dream content and process is “Stick with the image.”

Hillman’s 1997 book, *The Soul’s Code: In Search of Character and Calling*, outlines the “acorn theory” of the soul. This theory states that each individual holds the potential for their unique possibilities inside themselves already, much as an acorn holds the pattern for an oak tree. It describes how a unique, individual energy of the soul is contained within each human being, and is displayed throughout their lifetime, and shown in their calling and life’s work when it is fully blossomed or actualized.

It argues against the “nature and nurture” only explanations of individual growth, suggesting a third kind of energy, the individual soul, is responsible for much of individual character, aspiration, and achievement. It also argues against other environmental and external factors as being the sole determinants of individual growth, including the parental fallacy, dominant in psychoanalysis, whereby our parents are seen as crucial in determining who we are by supplying us with genetic material, conditioning, and behavioral patterns. While acknowledging the importance of external factors in the blossoming of the seed, it argues against attributing all of human individuality, character and achievement to these factors. The book suggests reconnection with the third, superior factor, in discovering our individual nature, and in determining who we are and our life’s calling.

Hillman suggests a reappraisal for each individual of their own childhood and present life to try to find their particular calling, the seed of their own acorn. He has written that he is to help precipitate a re-souling of the world in the space between rationality and
psychology. He complements the notion of growing up with the notion of growing down, or “rooting in the earth” and becoming grounded, in order for the individual to further grow. Hillman also rejects causality as a defining framework and suggests in its place a shifting form of fate whereby events are not inevitable but bound to be expressed in some way, dependent on the character of the soul of the individual.

*Adapted from Wikipedia*
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: James Hillman on Archetypal Psychotherapy

- **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.

- **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards. Respond to each question below.

- **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

**What to Write:** Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about James Hillman’s archetypal approach to psychotherapy? What stands out to you about how Hillman works?

2. **What I found most helpful:** As a therapist, what was most beneficial to you about the approach presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?

3. **What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/interventions did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working?

4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you do differently from what Hillman describes in this video? Be specific about what different approaches, interventions and techniques you would or do apply in working with people.

5. **Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?
Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading

WEB RESOURCES
Website for Pacifica Graduate Institute’s James Hillman Collection
www.pacifica.edu/innercontent-m.aspx?id=3502
The International Association for Jungian Studies
www.jungianstudies.org

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT
WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET
James Hillman on the Soulless Society
Rollo May on Existential Psychotherapy
The Gift of Therapy: A Conversation with Irvin Yalom
Irvin Yalom: Live Case Consultation
Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy with James Bugental
Psychotherapy with the Umotivated Patient with Erving Polster

RECOMMENDED READINGS


Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use some or all of these discussion questions, depending on what aspects of the video are most relevant to the audience.

**REVISIONING PSYCHOLOGY**

1. **Thinking Imaginatively about Symptoms**: What do you think about Aponte’s emphasis on paying attention to structure in human relationships? Does that seem like an important part of family therapy to you? See if you can identify specific interventions in the session that indicate that Aponte is paying attention to structure (boundaries, alignment, and power). When you work with couples and families, in what ways do you pay attention to structure?

**THE DANGER OF IMAGINATION**

2. **Dreams**: Do you tend to ask clients about their dreams, as Hillman suggests? Why or why not? Hillman states that asking clients about their dreams isn’t for the purpose of interpreting or analyzing the dream, but “to open the door that you are more than what you think you are.” How do you react to this framework for working with dreams? Is it the same or different from how you work with dreams?

3. **Disturbing Belief Systems**: Hillman states that archetypal psychology tries to disturb some belief systems such as the belief that the earlier something happens in one’s life, the more power it has. Do you agree or disagree with that belief system? What are some other belief systems in psychology that you agree or disagree with?

4. **Milk for the Wolf**: What did you think about Hillman’s suggestion to enter into the child’s imaginary world, and leave a bowl of milk for the wolf? Do you think this would be helpful, or do you think this would increase the child’s fears? Do you take all of Hillman’s statements literally, or does it seem at times that he is acting as a provocateur, trying to shake up belief systems versus actually
providing advice?

TIME TO DREAM

5. Let These Things In: What do you think of Hillman’s belief that “the psyche is not out to get you” and that “when you let these things in, they become by themselves more domesticated”? Can you describe some experiences with clients whose symptoms were so troubling that it was hard for you or your clients to let the symptoms “in the room?” What helps you make space for the entirety of human experience in your work with clients?

ARCHETYPES

6. Wonder: How did you feel when Hillman talked about how being awake at night connects one with all the other people who are awake at night? What do you think about approaching an issue like insomnia, or any other symptom, with a sense of wonder and openness? Do you think Hillman’s suggestion would be helpful for clients? How do you understand his thinking behind such statements?

DIAGNOSIS AS POETRY

7. Diagnosis: What came up for you as you listened to Hillman and Pierson discuss the limitations of diagnosing? Do you agree or disagree that a barrier enters the relationship when the therapist categorizes a client? Did you relate to what Hillman said about how the experience of a diagnosis shifts when the attitude toward the diagnosis is more playful and less confining? What is your experience of having to put a diagnosis on a client? Has this impacted your attitude or mindset, and if so, how?

RESTORING THE SOUL

8. Psychology and the Soul: How did you react when Hillman said, “I think…the ‘ology’ of psychology has been a persistent attempt to eradicate…all that riches that soul carried previously of love, death, beauty, liveliness of things”? Did you find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with him as he spoke about this? Do you agree with
Hillman that the soul lives outside of psychology? If so, does it concern you? Why or why not?

9. **Schooling:** What did you think of Hillman’s critique of traditional psychology courses, namely that students “get a lot of rational, rationalized digested concepts,” as opposed to a nurturing of their longing for an understanding of life in its biggest sense? Did you find this to be true in your psychology classes and in your training?

**STRETCHING THE PSYCHE**

10. **Delving into the Mystery:** What did you think of Hillman’s suggestions for helping psychologists and students delve into the mysteries of life? What helps you personally connect with a sense of mystery? Can you connect with the idea of seeing your clients through a lens of awe and wonder? Why or why not?

11. **Slow Business:** How did you react when Hillman said, “for the soul to come out of its shell takes a little time,” when he was discussing the challenges of working within the current healthcare system that often limits the number of reimbursable therapy sessions? How do you balance and negotiate the needs of your clients (and your own interests) versus the demands of the healthcare system or institution you are working within?

**LIFE ISN’T A JOURNEY!**

12. **Enjoy the Psyche:** What came up for you when Hillman spoke passionately about the field of psychology being peculiar, heavy, serious, deadly, and crazy? Did you find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with him? How about when he spoke about how he wants people to enjoy the psyche and not “psychologize” it? What do you imagine saying to him in response if you were in the room with him?

13. **Over-rationalizing:** What did you think of Hillman’s stated belief that, “psychology does as much bad as good. Bad in the sense of over-rationalizing what’s going on in the world, as if we know more than we ever do know”? Do you agree or disagree with him? If you share his critique and you are practicing psychotherapy, how do
14. The archetypal approach: What are your overall thoughts about Hillman’s archetypal approach to psychotherapy? What aspects of his approach can you see yourself incorporating into your work? Are there some components of this approach that seem incompatible with how you work?

15. Personal Reaction: How would you feel about having Hillman as your therapist? Do you think he could build a solid therapeutic alliance with you? Would he be effective with you? Why or why not?
Role Plays

After watching the video, *James Hillman on Archetypal Psychotherapy*, break participants into groups of two and have them role-play a therapy session based on Hillman’s archetypal approach to psychotherapy. One person will start out as the therapist and the other person will be the client, and then invite participants to switch roles.

Because Hillman does not describe a technique-based approach, therapists should focus on practicing a “way of being” with clients as opposed to practicing specific techniques. Remind participants that the archetypal approach gives value to everything that happens, including the problems and symptoms that often bring clients to therapy. This is an opportunity for therapists to practice cultivating a sense of awe and wonder, while temporarily putting down their diagnostician hats.

Clients should tell the therapist about a specific symptom they are having, such as insomnia, depression, anxiety, or a phobia. This can either be a real issue for the person playing the client, or it could be something made up or based on a client they have seen. Invite therapists to try to embody a sense of curiosity and respect for the symptom when the clients talk about their distress. Therapists should help the client into an exploration of what the purpose of the symptom might be and what the symptom might want. For instance, therapists can ask clients, “What might the insomnia want?” and “Why has insomnia come to you?” The point here is not to try to figure out the cause or to get rid of the symptom, but to inquire into what the symptom can tell clients about their life and life in general.

After the role-plays, have the pairs come together to discuss their experiences. First, have the clients talk about what the session was like for them. Did they experience the therapist as curious and open? How did they feel in relation to the therapist? How do they feel now about the problem or symptom they spoke about? Next, have the therapists talk about their experiences with the role-play. How was it to get curious about the symptom’s purpose? What was difficult or easy about not focusing on trying to eradicate the symptom? Finally,
open up a general discussion of the strengths and the challenges in applying an archetypal approach to psychotherapy.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one client; the entire group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. Before the end of the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the client. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion on what participants learned about using an archetypal approach to psychotherapy.
Complete Transcript of
James Hillman on
Archetypal Psychotherapy

REVISIONING PSYCHOLOGY

Dr. Fraser Pierson: Hello and welcome. I’m Dr. Fraser Pierson, and I’m here on the campus of Pacifica Graduate School with Dr. James Hillman, founder of archetypal psychology. Dr. Hillman is internationally known as the champion of psyche, the soul of psychology.

Dr. Hillman: Hello.

Dr. James Hillman: Hello. I’m already troubled. I’m already troubled. I don’t really like the idea of founder of something. It’s so Saint Peter on his rock or something. I think I’d rather be a renegade psychologist. I don’t mind being a champion of psyche. I think every person is a champion of psyche, or at least a representative of psyche. But I think it’s hard to say what kind of psychologist I am or what archetypal psychology is, so you’re in a difficult chair.

Pierson: Well, I hope between the two of us, we’ll be able to talk a little bit about what archetypal psychology is, and psyche, and the soul.

Hillman: Yeah, I hope so. Another part of that founding is a lot of what archetypal psychology does is criticize or bring critical sense to things, and that’s a little different than setting up a whole lot of principles. It’s working with what’s already there and trying to re-work it.

Pierson: As you proposed in Re-Visioning Psychology.

Hillman: Exactly. Re-Visioning Psychology. A fortunate title. It was a fortunate title, yeah.

Pierson: And you’re describing this as difficult; it’s not an easy process to re-vision something that has become systematized.

Hillman: True. Or that has become believed in, very strongly believed
in as empirically verified. Then you’re challenging very deep ideas. Of course, also psychology has set itself up, psychotherapy has set itself up as helping the disturbed—which do you call, pacifying or making things secure or helpful or…. There’s a progressivist kind of fantasy that things, we will make things easier, better, softer, nicer—more deal-able or cope-able. And sometimes the psyche upsets us in order for us to go further with our lives and our thoughts.

Pierson: Yes. From reading your work, it sounds like it’s quite frequent that psyche upsets us in that way—to help us to go further.

Hillman: Yes, the psyche upsets us. Because that’s really the question, isn’t it? I mean, a person goes to therapy because of a symptom, because of a “problem,” as we call them, or as an upset, disturbance. And the question is not so much how to get rid of that as it is, why is this disturbance coming in my life? What does it want? What kind of a life have I got that it needs this disturbance to it?

Pierson: Yes, that really is a very different vision. And if you say that, I notice a shift within myself of welcoming that. There is a curiosity that’s stirred by that.

Hillman: Yeah. That’s right. Wonderful. A curiosity, a sudden interest in what’s happening: “Hmm, that’s interesting. Isn’t that a crazy, curious thing to happen?” Right in the middle of your life, which you’ve got this in order and this in order, and you’re doing this and you’re doing that, and now you can’t sleep. I mean, what’s going on? Rather than trying to get you back to sleep again. Maybe that not sleeping is the whole waking up that’s so necessary of some kind.

Pierson: Yes. And when you ask, “What does it want from me?” that sounds so significant. That reverberates throughout.

Hillman: Doesn’t that shift the focus from “What do I want?” to “What does it want?” Can you imagine that the symptom wants something, rather than, “I know what I want: I want to get rid of it. It’s bugging me. It’s like a bug that’s come in, and I want to get rid of it, exterminate it, so I can live, keep on going like I’ve been going.” But if I just turn that a little bit and imagine it wants something: “It’s come to me, and in my family there are four other people. There’s
children sleeping. My wife’s sleeping. Why has it come to me, this sleeplessness?”

Pierson: Yes. So that’s difference between pushing the symptom aside as something that’s bothersome and welcoming it as something that can tell me something about me, about my life.

Hillman: Can tell me something, yeah. Can tell me something about my life, can tell me something about life in general.

Pierson: Even the larger picture of life.

Hillman: The larger picture of life. Can tell me something I may never have thought of, never have imagined. And I think that’s what the word “unconscious” means, that it’s bringing in that which was previously unconscious. So that’s how we might use that word. And I’ve been unconscious about what it is that it wants, so of course, that takes a little time in therapy, to begin to explore what it wants. But the very first move you make of saying, “I wonder why that’s happening to you and what it wants,” and giving it a kind of life of its own, this symptom, this bug, even referring to it as a “bug” and being bugged by it gives it its own little imagination.

Pierson: It does. It also amplifies it, or in some way, makes it special. We can look at it differently because of that. It’s both a part of what I’m experiencing, but it’s also something that is more than that, is more than just me.

Hillman: It’s more than just me and it may even invite a story.

Pierson: How so?

Hillman: So that I wouldn’t just try to figure it out. I’d want to hear more about it, so I might tell a story about either not sleeping or about bugs, either way. But simply to get my mind released from the usual idea: this is a symptom. It requires, it indicates an illness, and it therefore needs treatment. That is usually what one comes into therapy with, that mindset, because we are not ignorant any longer in our culture. Maybe 100 years ago when psychotherapy began, people didn’t know what they were walking into when they walked into Sigmund Freud’s office or Carl Jung’s office. But now people are very sophisticated. They’ve watched the TV. They’ve watched all
the programs in the morning that, with all the peoples’ problems of every possible kind. But to think of it very differently than what your family did to you or your childhood or all the reasons that you can pick up out of TV, but to think of it as something imaginative, or think imaginatively about it, is a real change. And instead of the symptom being a disturbance, you begin to realize there’s a purpose in a disturbance—let’s say there could be a purpose in the disturbance.

THE DANGER OF IMAGINATION

Pierson: Several times you’ve used the word “imagination.” That’s very important in an archetypal perspective, it sounds.

Hillman: Very important. Dangerous word: imagination. It’s very strange. In our country, as you know, in the big textbooks, imagination doesn’t play much of a role. In psychology courses, imagination does not play much of a role. And in fact, one of the major textbooks that’s used—it’s one of these huge volumes; you probably know them well—imagination gets one entry in the index and then it’s regarded as a disturbance, something that falsifies the facts of memory. Imagine a textbook of psychology without talking about imagination. When we are imagining every night when we sleep, we are imagining our futures. We’re imagining our love affairs. We’re imagining our histories and memories. Imagination’s going on all the time. We’re making fantasies all the time. Plans, we call them, or projects. Idealizations of this girl or that boy. I mean, it’s constantly…. Or money. But that’s all imagination. Why is it not part of the textbook, really? Do you know? Have you an idea?

Pierson: I wish I had the answer. But, you know, you said imagination is a dangerous thing, because we don’t know what imagination will bring us. We can’t control it, in a sense, and I wonder if that has something to do with it, is, perhaps, our fear of imagination?

Hillman: Fear of imagination. Well, we’re unpracticed with it. I don’t think inventors, artists, musicians have a fear of imagination. They may even indulge themselves with it. Or maybe we all want more of it. I mean, what is one side of addiction? Isn’t it to release imagination? One side is to get calm, pacified and knocked out, but another side is to release imagination, to “blow your mind” as you might say.
Pierson: Yes. So we have a lot to learn from our artists and poets and writers and people who are able to play freely with imagination.

Hillman: When you say “we” do you mean psychologists?

Pierson: Psychologists, and perhaps others who have not indulged in the same way, or have not allowed themselves to go into their imaginations.

Hillman: Yeah. I think maybe we should stick to psychologists because I’m thinking about them. Or psychotherapists.

Pierson: So how do psychotherapists allow themselves to deepen their imaginations or to be more at home, perhaps?

Hillman: To be more at home with the images and fantasies that appear in their practices. Well, first of all, they’d have to be a little more comfortable with their own imaginations, their own fantasies, and their own dreams. And in the practice of therapy, even if they have a restricted, controlled practice in a mental health institution run by the state or run by a charity or organized by a school system, there’s still the opportunity, when sitting with a person who comes in to see you, to ask, “Have you had a dream recently?”

Now, what does that do? That isn’t necessarily to interpret or analyze or put the dream in a box of what it means. It’s not a diagnostic tool. It’s really to open the door that you are more than what you think you are. There are more rooms in your house than the ones you’ve been living in. You’ve only been living in your bedroom and living room. You haven’t been in your dream room. You don’t know who else is in your closets. You don’t know the rest of your home. And your dreams bring more…. You are more than your rational mind or your case history tells you you are. So that opens the door to imagination.

Pierson: And it’s a liberating idea.

Hillman: It is. It’s an expanding idea. Well, can be, but suppose the person says, “Yeah, I have dreams. I have nightmares. I wake up sweating.” Then what? Well, there again: there are boogey men living in your house, or there are wolves, or there are more bugs in the closet than you knew. But as you said it earlier, aren’t you a little curious about that? And must you say, “They were all put there by my father
who beat me”? Or, “They were all put there by the school I went to where they, where all the kids picked on me”?

**Pierson:** By comparison, that sounds almost like a trap. It’s hard to get out of those places.

**Hillman:** Ah, those ideas in which you’ve.…

**Pierson:** Those ideas, yes.

**Hillman:** It is a trap. And could what’s being taught in schools be part of the trap? I mean schools of psychotherapy.

**Pierson:** Yes, the mindset that creates the boxes.

**Hillman:** The mindsets. Yes. The mindset of, “Earlier is the cause of later.” That’s the first bad one. In other words, what happened, the earlier you can show where something began, the more power it has, so therefore you are ending up saying, “Infancy was the most powerful part of my life,” or, “Early childhood was the most powerful part of my life.” That’s a really wrong philosophical thinking because it assumes causality that can’t be established.

**Pierson:** And yet many psychologists do believe that, and it is a belief system.

**Hillman:** It’s a belief system. So that’s what I mean about archetypal psychology trying to disturb some of these belief systems. And instead, one would see this disturbance, this bug, this symptom for itself. What’s it want? “I don’t know where you came from. In other words, I don’t know if you came from my childhood or if you came from the school system I went to or if you are part of my genetic structure. I have no idea about that. But I am interested in that you’re here now, and what you want now with me in my life now, and what you and I can do with each other.”

**Pierson:** There’s a sense of befriending the symptom and what it means and what it brings.

**Hillman:** Yes. Even the boogey men and the wolves.

**Pierson:** Yes.

**Hillman:** See, when a child wakes up at night and says, “There’s a wolf
in the room,” so Dad comes in and he turns on the lights and he says, “Look.” And he opens the closet door and he pulls out the bottom drawer and he says, “There’s no wolf. You had a bad dream. There’s no wolf in the room.” And puts the child back to bed and says, “I’ll leave the light on,” and so on. Five minutes later, the kid comes rushing back: “There’s a wolf.” So Dad tries to get rid of the wolf nicely, sweetly, calmly, rationally. Get that: rationally.

Now suppose Dad, instead of that, took a little dish and put it by the outside door and put a few little things around it and maybe put, dropped some milk in it or a biscuit or a cookie or whatever and said, “That’s for the wolf. If the wolf comes back, it’s probably hungry, needs something. It’s over there.”

See, he’s taking care of the symptom with respect, and he’s entering a story and imagination with the child. He’s not reducing it to reason: “There’s no wolf. The light’s on. You couldn’t see one. It’s a dream.” And you see what that does to the dream; it makes it a bad thing.

Pierson: Yes, it does. Automatically. And the dream is not a bad thing.

Hillman: No, the dream is not a bad thing. It’s one of the most natural things in human life that happens to everybody at all ages in all cultures. Why is it left out of therapy?

TIME TO DREAM

Pierson: It’s an interesting question. So how do we bring it back in?

Hillman: Well, I think just simply asking for it, reminding the individual person that you do dream. Especially in a culture that doesn’t have much time for dreaming. You know, if you’ve got two jobs, you have to get up very early in the morning. You’ve gone to bed very late. All you want is your sleep, but you don’t have time to enter that little state in between waking and sleeping where the dream comes back, where you have to be sort of gentle with yourself to get it.

Pierson: Yes.

Hillman: So it’s not easy to. But simply to ask about it in the beginning of a psychotherapeutic encounter is beneficial and that restores imagination and fantasy such as you asked, I think.
Pierson: I’m interested, too, in not only in the therapeutic encounter, but for somebody who isn’t able, or at the time in their life doesn’t have access to a therapist, might do this work themselves by respecting their dream life. By taking a little time in the morning to allow themselves to be with their dream.

Hillman: That’s very nice. They might do this work themselves. Yeah. Why not?

You see, what psychological work the citizen does himself or herself is usually reductive work. It’s reducing my problem to a cause, analyzing it as, “My father used to do this.” Or, “In our house, no one had time for....” Or, “My mother was always depressed and that weight....” And so on.

So the psychology that is in the citizen automatically is not a productive psychology. It’s not a generative psychology. It’s an analytical looking for the cause.

Pierson: Which then blocks the capacity to open up to imagination and possibilities.

Hillman: Yes. I think it does.

Pierson: You’re suggesting we have this within us. We have this capacity. It comes with the territory of being human.

Hillman: It comes with the territory of being human, and it comes with.... It’s as if the soul wants—or the way I think, anyway—as if the soul wants its images to be enjoyed and respected. All kinds of images. I mean, we do it in the movies. We watch, we enjoy scenes that make us very miserable and very upset, and very moving and brutal and all kinds of things. We enjoy. And when we read literature, when we read stories, even little children’s stories, fairy tale stories, there’s all kinds of brutality, but we enjoy—the soul, the psyche enjoys the richness of life. And that kind of, that’s a—what did you say a minute ago? It’s natural to all of us?

Pierson: It comes with the territory of being human.

Hillman: It comes with the territory.

Pierson: Part of our human natures, wouldn’t you say?
Hillman: Yeah. So psychology isn’t really to be thought of as a science of detection but as a liberator of imagination, so that one can enjoy all the things that happen, or at least find place for them. Because I think the psyche does this. You know, when you say, “What’s the cause of that bug coming at me or not letting me sleep?” I have to say, “The psyche wants something. The psyche wants something, and I may as well pay attention to it because it’s not letting me go.” And as you said earlier, it awakens your curiosity.

Pierson: So psychologists, therapists of all kinds, really have as a central role that capacity—or hope to develop that capacity—to awaken that in others, to see it and awaken it.

Hillman: Yeah. To see it, to waken it, to play with it, enjoy it. Even these really disturbing things. It’s not just, “I can’t sleep,” but, “I keep imagining there’s someone else in the room with a knife,” or whatever. Or that, “When I can’t sleep, I get voices telling me to do bad things,” or whatever. Even that is not the cause for more repression. Even that, the psychologist has to be able to have a large enough sense to let it in the room, in the conversation. And when you let these things in, they become by themselves more domesticated.

Pierson: And that’s a matter of trust. A matter of faith.

Hillman: Yeah. It’s a matter of faith that the psyche’s not out to get you.

Pierson: That seems very important. The psyche is not out to get us.

Hillman: Yes. And give it a chance. There may be a lot you don’t know. You know, way back in the beginnings of thinking about the psyche, Freud thought of the psyche as like an iceberg with only about this much up top, and all the rest is under water. So it’s that all the rest that’s going on that we don’t know much about, and you don’t want the psychologist just to reinforce this tip at the top. Because then you’re reinforcing repression.

See, I’m very old-fashioned in that way that, as Freud said, “Repression is the whole problem”—that we’re constantly repressing.

Pierson: What happens then, when we repress?
**Hillman:** Well, one thing is that we have supposedly—I’m following the traditional way of thinking—we have a lot less energy because a lot of our energy is being absorbed in holding down everything else. Keeping the rest of the iceberg from emerging.

Another thing is that we’re more short-tempered and we get angry quicker, because it takes a lot of tension to keep yourself rigidly repressed. So anything can set you off. Then you get a lot of, not only depression, because a lot of energy is lost to you, but also anger.

**Pierson:** Which seems quite rampant in our culture today. It’s an interesting connection.

**Hillman:** Yes. Road rage. Anger management. It’s not so much to manage the anger. Of course, that’s important. I mean, you do need to know certain techniques. We knew them already back in the 19th century or earlier. Count to 10. Take a cold shower. Walk around the block. Hold your tongue. But there’s something more. The anger has its own needs. There’s something. It’s something that it’s…. It’s not able to get what it wants.

**ARCHETYPES**

**Pierson:** Does that bring us into the realm of archetype?

**Hillman:** It does in a way. I think everything brings us into the realm of archetype because I think that the archetypal approach is an approach that attempts to give value to everything that happens. It says what happens somewhere makes sense, somewhere has a substructure of meaning. And it’s happening to many people in similar…. Many people can’t sleep. Many people have bugs that bother them in the night. Many people have demons in the closet. This is an archetypal phenomenon. This is not just a mass symptom. This is something that has gone on through all times to all kinds of people, still goes on to people in jungles and people in apartment houses. It’s archetypal, therefore it has some value. It’s not merely a disturbance. And that broadens it and makes it, as you said, more interesting.

**Pierson:** It does make it more interesting, and it also takes it away from the idea of a diagnosis.

**Hillman:** Ah. Can you say more about that?
**Pierson:** Well, the diagnosis seems to, to take the symptom and put it into a box that can be understood and is in the common language of psychology today. But there’s more than that, and to be able to be in touch with and appreciative of the more—of the archetypal images, of the imaginative aspects—seems to also reduce stigma associated with having any kind of symptom that’s a mental health condition. This is part of our humanness.

**Hillman:** This is part of our human—This is what connects—In fact, the fact that you can’t sleep connects you with all the other people who can’t sleep to begin with. Connects you to the night.

**Pierson:** Say more about that.

**Hillman:** So you’re waking up in the night, the night which is simply there so that we get enough sleep so we can start the day again, the night as a kind of parenthesis between two days. That’s all it is. No stars. No night life. I mean, no night sky.

The night is....

You keep the TV on as long as you can until you drop asleep, and then you take your sleeping pill and wake up in the morning, groggy. I mean, night is not part of the civilization.

Now where were we? I’m still thinking about nighttime.

**Pierson:** Well, my imagination is going to the full moon last night and the glorious image that that presented last night. So waking up to the night.

**Hillman:** That was very special, yeah. Waking up to the night is one thing, but the first part of what we were saying, if I remember now, was that it connects to us all people everywhere in all times who were awake at night. Then the second thing is, it wakes us up to the night, not just waking us up in the night. You’re awakened to the night. And then you begin to have nighttime time, whatever that is. And it is interesting that many people who write books, novels or poems, work at night, when the day world is gone. Well, now maybe not being able to sleep, even if you have a job that has terrible necessities that you get up at 5:30 in the morning in order to get to your job by 7:30
or whatever, this bug may be trying to revise your whole life system, which you don’t know at the beginning.

**Pierson:** So it’s saying, “Pay attention.”

**Hillman:** Yeah. Pay attention. Give it a chance. Let it in. Wonder. Wonder. Puzzle. And leave the therapist’s office, if you’re the patient, not necessarily with a formula, but maybe with wonder and puzzle. And come back to talk about it again.

**Pierson:** So coming back again to something that you were saying earlier, we therapists need to cultivate our own senses of wonder.

**Hillman:** Yes. That would mean we would not start off with watching what’s going on with the new person who comes in diagnostically. Because that is our training.

**DIAGNOSIS AS POETRY**

**Hillman:** Our training is the DSM and categorizing and being a good clinician means being able to spot. Now, I have nothing against that. You should have a good sense of spotting, of listening acutely, looking for peculiarities and strange little keys. But that’s almost secondary. You wouldn’t look at your child that way, would you?

**Pierson:** No.

**Hillman:** Once you look at your child that way, what’s happened to the relationship with the child? Once you’ve looked at your wife or your husband diagnostically, what’s happened?

**Pierson:** Well, there’s a barrier that enters in.

**Hillman:** Yeah.

**Pierson:** And you’re not able to see them and feel them clearly.

**Hillman:** Yes. You’ve lost your imagination of where the other one is. You’ve got them in the box, as you said.

**Pierson:** That sense of potential is not there, either, when you have lost that way of visioning.

**Hillman:** So if you think about it in those terms, it’s not a matter of expanding your empathetic relationship or the various things the good therapist is supposed to have. Just imagine, you wouldn’t want to be
looked at that way. Until you can play with the diagnostic categories—
Yes, I’m schizoid. Yes, I’m manic. Yes, I’m depressive. Yes, those pieces
are there. But when you can play with them, then the diagnoses can be
used as almost poetic terms for a character. But they’re not part of my
prison outfit.

Pierson: Yes. So there’s a little distance created by doing that. Now
that seems to come back to something that Carl Jung said when he
said, “The gods have become diseases.” Could you speak a little bit
about that?

Hillman: “The gods have become diseases. And they rule…..” He goes
on to say, “They rule no longer from Olympus but from… and they
appear in the consulting room and they appear as symptoms.” They sit
in the bowels or they sit in the heart or something like that.

I guess for me that means that there’s something in the diseases, I
mean, in the symptoms, as we’re talking about. You know, we’ve
talked—I have to skip here—but we began talking with that bug and
with that symptom, and that begins way back with Freud who said,
“As you all know, ladies and gentlemen….” In his lectures, he says,
“As you all know, ladies and gentlemen, we begin with that part of the
world… that is the least appreciated and the most repressed… and
that is the symptom. That’s where psychotherapy begins.” That’s why
we began there.

And yet, if we go on with Jung, then that’s also where the gods live.
Something very important and powerful and irrepressible, and almost
un-analyzable, begins. So Jung’s sentence gives a lot of value to what’s
happening. As I said, to my mind, archetypal psychology’s importance
is that it gives value to everything the soul does. And I use the word
“soul” very freely here.

Pierson: Would you, would you say a little bit more about your use of
“soul”?

Hillman: Since I use it a lot.

Pierson: Yes.

Hillman: I wrote a book in 1964 called Suicide and the Soul, and
it was the first book that used the word “soul” in psychology since
Jung’s 1933 lectures called “Modern Man in Search of a Soul.” Which actually wasn’t called that in the original; it was in German. But when it was put into an English-titled book, it was called *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. But the soul only appeared as a word in churchyards, in sermons, on graves. On Hallmark cards, maybe. I mean, it had no validation in the field of psychology. and I tried to make a point in that little book, *Suicide and the Soul*, that the soul itself is connected to death in some way, and what the urge to suicide is needs to be understood from the soul point of view, not necessarily from the life point of view. What’s the soul seeking? And from then on, I began more and more to elaborate the, or let’s say, restore the idea of soul to psychology.

**Pierson:** How are we doing, do you think, in the field?

**Hillman:** How are we doing?

**Pierson:** In terms of being accepting of the soul in psychology?

**Hillman:** I think soul lives outside of psychology. I think soul lives in soul music, soul food, soul brother, soul sister, but I don’t think it lives in psychology. I think psychology, the “ology” of psychology, has been a persistent attempt to eradicate all that riches that soul carried previously, of love, death, beauty, liveliness of things. You know, for many peoples—not our Western peoples—but for many peoples, the soul is everywhere. It’s in all kinds of things: in trees and rocks and rivers. And they’re all animated. And they can be felt and connected with and learned from and treasured. And that piece is not discussed in most contemporary university psychology. That’s called paganism or animism or something else.

**Pierson:** I have a sense that it may be present under the surface—that there may be other renegades like yourself.

**Hillman:** There may be other renegades. Well, they’re probably in the literature departments. And they’re probably even in the history of ideas, if they still have that kind of courses. And I think it’s present in psychology itself because there is a longing in the individual student of psychology, a longing for something more than merely empirical test results, statistics and, and the latest revised textbook.
Pierson: Yes. I hear it from my students, and that’s what makes me think it’s there.

Hillman: Yeah. They come to psychology longing for the psyche: to understand their life, to understand their suffering, to understand their loves, to understand what it’s all, what’s going on. And instead, they get an awful lot of—I don’t know what to call it—pap? Pulp? They get a lot of rational, rationalized, digested concepts.

Pierson: I think, too, it tends to fall under the rubric of not only the rational, but the fashion of thought of the day, of empirically based treatments or empirically based approaches. And, and you’re offering something in addition to that, that deepens the work, it seems.

Hillman: Empirically based treatments. In other words, we have 46 people of this kind who are going through that and given this drug and these have a placebo and so on and so forth. Yeah. Constant government-funded grants that establish the efficacy of this drug or that treatment or so many hours of this or so few hours, or whatever. Constant experimentation and without enough stopping to think, “What does it want? What does it mean? Why did it come to me? And what is this longing that I have, longing for an understanding of life in its biggest sense?” Understanding of what falling in love is. Understanding of mistakes. What are mistakes? We make mistakes all the time. What, what’s, what is this mistake that we make? Understanding of why you’re moved beyond understanding by some music. Can’t get it out of your mind. What are these real things that affect me every day? And how does the stuff that I get in the psychology courses refer to the real stuff of my life?

Pierson: Yeah, what’s most juicy? And the mysteries....

Hillman: Yeah. And really moves me.

Pierson: Yes.

STRETCHING THE PSYCHE

Pierson: So how about our training programs? What would you suggest? How do we help—

Hillman: Oh, my.
Pierson: —psychologists—not just the young psychologists, but the psychologists who are interested in being able to follow the mysteries and delve into the mysteries with their patients and clients, and themselves?

Hillman: Well, I have my ideas about it. I don’t know how they fit in at all. But it seems to me some of the most useful stuff for reading, since reading is still something we can do—how long that will last I don’t know, but as long we can read—the reading of novels and the reading of plays, theater, show human interactions and human characters, and what happens to them, and all the subtleties of that. Novels are full of love stories, and full of mistakes of life. That’s a tremendous learning to have all those figures in your mind. To see the plays of, say, Shakespeare, but also Tennessee Williams. It doesn’t matter. You know, good character and plot. You enter the lives of people who are not real people but are more than real people, and last forever. And that’s great training. Movies are already part of our training. I mean, the movies that have depth or weight to them. So I think the arts are closer to the soul’s learning than usual psychology courses.

Pierson: So we could infuse our courses with more offerings from the arts or more opportunities to engage in the arts.

Hillman: And also maybe biography. How people got through. How did they ever do it? Many who had miserable beginnings and all kinds of suffering—Eleanor Roosevelt comes to mind. She had a terrible childhood. And how does…. I mean, I wrote about such people in The Soul’s Code, what a miserable early life so many wonderful people had, and how did they do it? So biography is a wonderful way of expanding psychological knowledge. What else? Travel. Meeting other kinds of people besides your fraternity and sorority.

Pierson: Yeah.

Hillman: And then, having to do things that you wouldn’t usually do. And a lot of kids do that. When I say “kids,” I’m thinking of college kids. In other words, they get a job in the summer in some strange place. Or they used to join the Peace Corps, maybe, later. In other words, being exposed to other sorts of people in work that doesn’t suit them, that stretches the psyche, and lasts, and has an effect on you for
a long time afterwards.

**Pierson:** I like the idea of stretching the psyche. Yes

Now, you write—and this is a little bit of a switch—you write about the acorn theory or the acorn myth, and this seems very important in the work of psychotherapy, that therapists recognize the daimon, something about the daimon of their client or patient.

**Hillman:** Well, the acorn theory in *The Soul’s Code* isn’t really my own personal idea. It goes way back to Plato. In other cultures, they have a sense that you come into the world with something. And the elders of tribes look at the new children to see what they are. And in some societies, the young people go on a vision quest or have to go out and be alone or be cooped up in a hut, until they find their name. The name would express their internal—their acorn.

**Pierson:** Yes.

**Hillman:** And that the acorn is there from the beginning and you only really discover it later on when you’re looking back. Maybe. Or you get a hunch or you get, suddenly you see: “I must do music because this music has hit me. I want that instrument.” Yehudi Menuhin had that happen to him when he was four years old. He heard a violin. He went to a concert with his parents who were musically educated people. He’s sitting way up in the balcony somewhere, way up because they were very poor. And when he heard the violinist play, he wanted one. He was given one, then, by an uncle, a little toy one, and when he got it, he smashed it because he wanted a real one. Fantastic story.

**Pierson:** Yes, it is.

**Hillman:** And that’s just one person. *The Soul’s Code* is full of those things and these people who discover that they’re different, or that they have a calling, or that there’s a necessity in them to follow a line, comes in strange ways, often through being sick or misfits or disturbed in their childhood or thrown out of school. John Lennon was thrown out of kindergarten. So it’s a way that the psychologist can look at early disturbances less medically. Not without a medical eye, but less medically.

**Pierson:** Yes, there’s a sense in that, too, of the psychologist, or
someone in that person’s life, looking at that person with a sense of awe, of recognizing something in that person.

**Hillman:** Yeah. “There’s something more here, or something I haven’t seen yet.”

**Pierson:** Yes. So sitting with a client or a patient, to recognize that as part of the mystery, too, seems so important. There’s something more.

**Hillman:** There’s something more. Yeah. But that’s, of course, slow business, isn’t it? And our systemized health system only let’s you have so many hours. And yet the statistics of what psychotherapy is effective is usually, maybe 50 hours. I mean, for the soul to come out of its shell takes a little time. I mean, think of a love affair. You don’t expose—you may rush into it and spend all night long talking, exposing everything. But that’s just the flame. There’s a long, slow getting-to-know-you story.

**Pierson:** Yes. And that’s so in psychotherapy as well.

**Hillman:** Yes. I think it’s the same thing. Do we have enough slowness in our therapy systems? Do we build slowness into it? In our very fast world? Now, I know there are therapeutic schools that are adapting to the fast world and attempting to do quick psychotherapy, quick problem-solving. Cut and measured: this is what we’re going to deal with and we’re going to deal with that. And that’s another school. And there are several schools that work that way. And reduction of the problem to the family system or to this current social situation. And that’s fine. You know, it’s not to tell them they are wrong. They have a different intention. My intention is much more soul, imagination, and wonder.

**Pierson:** It reminds of something James Bugental said at one point about, there are different psychotherapeutic approaches depending on the journey that one wishes to take, like taking any kind of a journey. And sometimes the, the ones that get you there, get you to a certain point, anyway, a little faster are what’s right at that time. And then there are others where you want to take the slow, slower and scenic trip to enjoy the richness of the full experience.

**Hillman:** And also, for me, once you’ve got there via Expedia, then
what?

**Pierson:** There’s the more.

**Hillman:** That’s when it may all begin.

**Pierson:** Yes. So there’s something in the way a therapist might work with their patient or client that would spark that recognition of more.

**Hillman:** Well, keeping this thing unclosed allows the wondering or the pondering to go on. Keeping the image alive—now, that seems to me a very important part of what we called archetypal psychology.

You know, if the patient has a snake that he’s afraid of or a snake that, dreamed of or whatever, what the client should leave the therapy room with is that snake, not an interpretation of that snake. The snake could mean your mother. The snake could mean the sexuality that you’re afraid of, or the snake could mean some kind of deceit that you’ve been involved in and it’s still lying in the grass somewhere. Or it could mean all the things that snakes mean in different symbol systems. And the therapist can interpret that snake into any one of those and begin to explore how deceitful and snaky you are and show your shadow traits, that you really are trying to hide something that you don’t, or that your mother has been suffocating you and wrapping you around and choking you to death like a constrictor. So you can reduce the snake to all these possible explanations. But for me what’s important is that the snake as an image walks out of the therapy room with you, and you and the snake—you the patient, and snake—have some kind of imaginative continuance. So you’re keeping your psyche alive rather than.... You don’t need the dream anymore or the snake or anything anymore, once you’ve reduced it to your mother. And you already know your mother’s constricted you for hundreds of years, you know what I mean? You haven’t really learned anything. Why does it come in a snake form?

**Pierson:** So keeping the psyche alive revitalizes somewhat.

**Hillman:** Yes.

**Pierson:** It gets them, the person, alive.

**Hillman:** Right. It revitalizes something. And it’s like talking back so
that maybe tomorrow there will be another image. It’s like seeding or feeding.

**Pierson:** And that image may continue to be alive, too, it sounds like.

**Hillman:** Yes.

**Pierson:** Yeah, it continues its life. Yeah.

**LIFE ISN’T A JOURNEY!**

**Pierson:** Dr. Hillman, you’ve said that everything that happens in psychotherapy is important, everything is psyche. Would you say a little bit more about that? Nothing’s extraneous, you’ve said.

**Hillman:** No, the thing is that everything can be enjoyed. Jesus, I don’t know what it is about psychology. When we get into this field of psychology, it gets so heavy. It gets so serious. It gets so deadly. It gets so…. I don’t know how many thousands of students go into psychology, their freshman courses, a thousand people in a room being told something from these giant textbooks. And I feel that it’s something crazy, that this is crazy. This is not the craziness of the human soul. This is some crazy invention that was made by I don’t know whom. And it’s called psychology. One of my friends says we should just ban the whole thing, let it all just die because it’s not real. And there’s millions and millions of dollars spent on research into every possible kind of, bit of human nature or human behavior. And none of it amounts to anything that anybody uses or makes sense of. What’s happened? Why even have our discussion, which is to help students understand psychology when maybe the whole field is peculiar? What’s happened to the fun—the fun of living? Does psychology do anything for the fun of living? For the craziness of living? For the uncertainty of living?

The boxes it puts us in seem to eliminate risk rather than encourage risk.

**Pierson:** Yes.

**Hillman:** And it uses very heavy—even what you might call “alternative psychology,” like new age psychology, uses really heavy words like “journey.” I mean, it’s not, life isn’t a journey. Life is life,
with everything that could possibly happen. So you see, I get into a kind of, what? Worry, anxiety, defensiveness, all the terms you can use. But I know there’s something that makes the psychology student unhappy.

**Pierson:** You know, what I hear from you right now is passion, that you’re passionate about this. You want people to hear this. You want people to understand psyche and psychology differently.

**Hillman:** I want people to enjoy the psyche and all the things it does and all the things it imagines and produces and involves life with and messes us up with and so on, and not “psychologizing” it. And the “psychologizing” enters our politics. It enters our foreign affairs—you know, what’s wrong with the Muslims? What’s wrong with the so-and-so? They haven’t so-and-so.... This is a very peculiar field that didn’t exist until 1900. There was no psychology earlier. It was either part of philosophy or it was part of ethics, but in the earlier times, it was simply theater, drama, religion, biography. Or magic. Or magic, yeah.

**Pierson:** So what, in all of those areas, what was helpful, or what is helpful, to people? What is it that theater and art and magic can do, that psychology sometimes misses today?

**Hillman:** Psychology, the notion of helping people is making them calm, passive and stupid. It isn’t an enlivening practice, and that’s why when we talk, the difficulty of addressing psychology has a weight on us that we’re trying to be explanatory—or I am—trying to be explanatory and rational about it. And that is exactly the disease that we ought to be working through instead of being infected by.

What is it that the arts do? Well, first of all, they stimulate. They surprise. And the dreams surprise us. That’s why I’ve gone back to dreams. They surprise us, too. The diagnoses don’t surprise us. The boxes don’t surprise. They take out, they extract the surprise. So surprise is very important.

Another is, as I said before, wondering. Just wondering, “What the hell is going on. Why is it going on to me?” And not, “Why is it going on to me?” so that I’m guilty. “Oh, well. I’m a bad person, so therefore I don’t sleep.” You know, there’s a big layer of that in our culture.
Pierson: Yes, there is.

Hillman: I mean, Protestantism has laid a heavy hand of guilt on us. Not only Protestantism, but Catholicism in its way, Judaism in its way. You know, guilt is a happy investment of religions. They invest in guilt. So, it’s not that, but.... It’s not that, “Why does this happen to me?” is not in order to increase guilt but to increase wonder.

Pierson: What a relief that is, to hear that. As we’re talking, I feel a sense of relief in hearing that and opening to wonder.

Hillman: Do you feel the students who are studying psychology get release or liberation or imagination or fantasy out of their study of psychology?

Pierson: Not typically, no. I don’t think so.

Hillman: No. It’s pretty disappointing.

Pierson: Yes.

Hillman: Then what are they looking for? What is a student who takes psychology as a major or goes to Psychology 101 in the freshman year, what are they asking for?

Pierson: I think many students are wanting to make a difference in the world.

Hillman: Ah. Make a difference in the world. Help people.

Pierson: Yes.


Pierson: Yes.

Hillman: I think a big one is understand themselves.

Pierson: I do, too.

Hillman: Or even understand their father and mother. Yeah. Or understand their relationship.

Pierson: Yes.

Hillman: And this is a strange thing, that instead of living the relationship, they’re trying to understand the relationship. And
this seems to be one of the perversions of psychology, that we want to understand rather than risk. We want to know what to do. If we studied it right, we’d get the right images or the right ideas, and then we would be able to make the next move. But that isn’t the way it works, is it?

Pierson: No, I don’t think it does, and as you speak, I hear that, again, that sense of liberation, of the fun returning, when the need to be right can be let go of, or guilt can be let go of, in the sense that it’s given to us.

Hillman: Yeah, there’s a lot of it. So, the fun. The fun. But you see, what psychology does in this idea that you should understand your life and understand others before you make moves with them so that you make the right move, is inhibiting. It is a fear-inducing thing. You get more afraid you’ll make the wrong move. “I’d better not say anything. I’d better not try. I’ll just muck it up. I need to know better first, so I’ll study psychology better.” Oh, boy.

Pierson: Are you suggesting we have that within us?

Hillman: Have what?

Pierson: That we have that capacity to relate to one another? That we have the capacity to enjoy psyche and that we dampen that down with what we learn, and sort of our conditioning process, really?

Hillman: Well, since we’re really talking to psychology students and psychology, the realm of psychology, I don’t know what’s innate or not. I’m really thinking more in terms of what psychology is doing to the culture, to us, to families, to children. What the profession is doing, and whether the profession doesn’t need—whether the profession doesn’t need to go through a process of falling apart, which the individual is falling apart. The people in it, to my mind, are delusionally thinking they are doing a lot of good. That’s a radical way of thinking, but I do believe psychology does as much bad as good. Bad in the sense of over-rationalizing what’s going on in the world, as if we know more than we ever do know.

For a good many, many years, there has been a lot of work on why certain people fall in love with other people. There are an enormous
amount of studies on coupling and choice, love partner choice and so on and so forth. Nobody knows yet what falling in love is. From an archetypal perspective, it is a mythical event in which the god Eros strikes, and that’s it, buddy. And you can say, “This person is so much like my mother,” or, “This person is completely the opposite of my mother,” or, “This person comes from a totally different class and that’s what I need to do is break out and that’s why I’ve fallen in love with somebody over there.” Whatever.

But that doesn’t account for anything. These are rationalizations of an extraordinary mystery that has to do with your fate, and you have to follow your fate into the mess. And that’s the whole learning experience that the old philosophers said. That’s why you fall in love: in order to grow your wings. That is, in order to be able to go farther with the soul’s life.

But you see, psychology tries to put it all into a rational system of some kind or another, and I think that’s part of why I’m energized right now, is that I don’t want my thought to be put into a rationalized system.

**Pierson:** I think that brings us to a great conclusion. Thank you, Dr. Hillman.

**Hillman:** Thank you. Thank you very much.
Video Credits

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Interviewer: J. Fraser Pierson, PhD

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About the Contributors

VIDEO PARTICIPANTS

James Hillman, PhD, is considered to be the founder of archetypal psychology. He is a psychologist, a leading scholar in Jungian and post-Jungian thought and is recognized as one of the most important radical critics and innovators of psychology. He is the author of over a dozen books, including the best-seller, *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling* and *We’ve Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy - And the World’s Getting Worse* (with Michael Ventura).

J. Fraser Pierson, PhD is a licensed psychologist and Professor of Psychology at Southern Oregon University where she teaches a variety of undergraduate courses and graduate courses within the Mental Health Counseling program. Her current scholarly interests include psychotherapist preparation and training; women’s self-and-world view transformations associated with participation in adventurous sports; and the personal meanings derived from experiences in the natural world. She co-edited (with Kirk Schneider and James Bugental) *The Handbook of Humanistic Psychology: Leading Edges in Theory, Research, and Practice* and recently contributed a chapter to *Awakening to Awe*. The humanistic and existential perspectives have long inspired and informed her work as a psychotherapist, educator, and clinical supervisor.

MANUAL AUTHORS

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Anxiety
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Divorce
Domestic Violence
Grief/Loss

Happiness
Infertility
Intellectualizing
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Parenting
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Sexuality
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