Re-Symbolization of the Self

Human Development and Tarot Hermeneutic

Inna Semetsky
University of Newcastle, Australia

This groundbreaking book brings depth of meaning and intellectual scholarship to the field of human development while also lifting the human spirit by offering new dimensions of self-formation through the ancient medium of Tarot. It should be of great interest to health and human service professionals.

JEAN WATSON, Distinguished Professor, University of Colorado Denver College of Nursing; author of Nursing: The Philosophy and Science of Caring and Caring Science as Sacred Science.

Semetsky’s book is a timely antidote for our current crises in education. Drawing on her empirical research with Tarot and her deep knowledge of Jungian psychology, she offers an approach to education that stirs the depths of the Self as it deepens mind into soul. Her Tarot hermeneutic opens a path toward a revolutionary pedagogy that, in its commitment to the complexity, fullness and fluidity of human subjectivity, recovers the ethical and therapeutic dimensions of education. A bold book, a daring achievement, a spark of illumination!

ROBERT D. ROMANYSHYN, Senior Core Faculty, Pacifica Graduate Institute; Affiliate Member of the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts; author of The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind and Ways of the Heart: Essays toward an Imaginal Psychology.

This text elucidates the potential of Tarot well beyond its popular usage. It demonstrates how Tarot can become a pedagogical and counseling tool for enriching human experiences and the whole of culture with wisdom, integrity, meaning, and spirituality. A must to read!

MARY L. GREER, author of Tarot for Your Self: A Workbook for Personal Transformation.

Bringing together popular and academic cultures, Inna Semetsky presents Tarot as a system of transformative hermeneutics for adult self-education and cultural pedagogy. Her research is a decisive and intelligent step ahead from the reductive stereotype of Tarot as fortune-telling. The fifteen life stories at the heart of the book exemplify the author’s commitment to alternative modes of education and counseling that transcend individual, cultural or language barriers. Assembling a rich array of sources, from Hermeticism to Jungian depth psychology, the philosophies of Noddings, Buber, and Deleuze, and the science of self-organization, this book opens a new path to personal and social revitalization. It should be widely read across disciplinary divides by scholars, students, and professionals alike.

PHILIP WEILER, Professor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; author of Symbolic Movement: Critique and Spirituality in Sociology of Education and Holy Sparks: Social Theory, Education and Religion.

Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity—youth identity in particular—the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
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Inna Semetsky

*University of Newcastle, Australia*
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CHAPTER 1

WHY THIS BOOK?

This book originated as an action-research project conducted between 1992 and 1994 under the auspices of the California Board of Behavioral Sciences when I was a postgraduate student enrolled in the Masters of Arts degree program in the area of Marriage, Family and Child Counseling and Human Development at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena. Unbeknown to me at the time, my study was to be a type of research analogous to what Jungian scholar Robert Romanyshyn will have called more than a decade later “research with soul in mind” (Romanyshyn, 2007). Yet back then in 1992 I was not only ten years away from the subject matter of my future doctorate in the area of philosophy of education and cultural studies, but also quite undecided on the topic of my Masters thesis that was eventually to be called “Introduction of Tarot readings into clinical psychotherapy: a naturalistic inquiry”.

Interestingly enough, and once again in accordance with Romanyshyn’s imaginal approach, my topic was about to choose me rather than the other way around! Referring to the imaginal, Romanyshyn emphasizes the role of this “third” dimension between the senses and the intellect as enabling an embodied way of being in the world within the context of complex mind reaching into the whole of nature. It was Henry Corbin who coined the imaginal world – Mundus Imaginalis or mundus archetypus, the archetypal world – as a distinct order of reality corresponding to a distinct mode of perception in contrast to purely imaginary as the unreal or just utopian. Yet, it is our cognitive function enriched with imagination that provides access to the imaginal world with a rigor of knowledge specified as knowing by analogy.

The method of analogy that mystics around the world have practiced for centuries defies the privileged role allotted to the conscious subject that observes the surrounding world of objects – from which he is forever detached – with the cool “scientific” gaze of an independent spectator so as to obtain a certain and indubitable knowledge, or episteme.

Mystics and poets (from whom Plato used to withhold academic status) historically played a participatory, embodied role in the relational network that forms an interdependent holistic fabric with the world thus overcoming the separation between subject and object. This dualistic split has been haunting us since the time of Descartes, confining us to what Corbin calls the “banal dualism” of matter versus spirit.

As for the “socialization” of consciousness, it pretends to resolve the dilemma by making, according to Corbin, a fatal choice: either myth or historical reality. Either facts or fiction! This book avoids the binary fatality of either/or choice: we will see in Chapter 3 that Tarot renders itself to explication in both mythical and real historic, cultural, terms.
The sociological dimension is significant: Philip Wexler (1996, 2000, 2008), pointing out the current importance of religion and spirituality for socio-cultural life, ascribed the status of symbolic movement to sociology of education that aims to bring spirituality to secular, long-disenchanted and alienated, contexts so as to satisfy their hunger for meaning.

Wexler emphasizes an approach from within long-standing religious tradition and focuses specifically on Jewish mysticism. He calls for the “broad-scale revitalization...of the culture of modernity, a re-articulation of ancient religious traditions, and...the anti-institutional, but religiously-oriented movements of everyday life that we often referred to as instances and heralds of a ‘new age’” (Wexler, 2008, p. 9).

I share with Wexler his conviction that our present postmodern age calls for revision of the pre-modern traditions of theory, interpretation and understanding and especially in terms of following “the new age...tendency [by means of] opening the reservoir of the cultural resources of traditional, religious understanding... [in] mystical, experiential and spiritual aspects: from Hinduism, Tantra; from Islam, Sufism; from Christianity, mysticism; from Judaism, Kabbalah and Hasidism” (Wexler, 2008, p. 10).

This book will not only have added Tarot as a spiritual, both metaphysical and practical, system to Wexler’s list of multicultural traditions but will focus specifically on Tarot hermeneutic or on the art of, using the term from popular culture, Tarot readings. Etymologically, the Greek words hermeneuein and hermeneia for interpreting and interpretation are related to the mythic god Hermes, a messenger and mediator between gods and mortals, who crosses the thresholds and traverses the boundaries because he can “speak” and understand both “languages”, the divine and the human, even if they appear totally alien to each other.

As a practical method, Tarot hermeneutic allows us to relate to something essentially other but nevertheless understandable, knowable and, ultimately, known. The relation thus established between the generic “Self” and “Other” in our real practical life is significant and has both epistemological and ontological implications. The dimension of the foremost importance is however ethical, considering that we live in a time of the multiculturalism and globalization when different values appear incommensurable and continuously compete, conflict, and clash!

In our current global climate permeated by diverse beliefs, disparate values, and cultural conflicts, understanding ourselves and others and learning to share each other’s values is paramount for the survival of our species. This requires an expansion of our consciousness using all available means, including the knowledge of the symbolic language of Tarot pictures that are worth more, as the saying goes, than many thousands of words. Classical Russian author Ivan Turgenev pointed out that a picture shows at a glance what it can take dozens of pages of a book to expound. Without making grand metaphysical claims concerning Tarot, this book will focus on its practical side as comprising my empirical research data. Yet, important theoretical stepping stones will be laid down through chapter 1 to chapter 7 to ground the empirical data that will be presented in minute detail in chapter 8. Chapter 8
WHY THIS BOOK

will comprise the fifteen actual Tarot readings that have been documented as constituting the core of my research and published with the written consent of all participants.

So, coming back to 1992, I remember the day when I took the November-December issue of The California Therapist out of my mailbox and my eyes fell on the letter to the editor. The author of the letter was interested in learning of other professionals who were encountering in their practice people who were more interested in learning about their past lives and going to psychics, as the author put it, rather than discussing their parents and more recent childhood. The author felt that she and other therapists working with quite a number of “new age” clients needed more publicity.

When I read the letter written by a qualified mental health professional and published in a respected professional periodical, my first feeling was that of belonging. Wow! I am not alone in my pursuits! At that stage, being a postgraduate student, I did not widely publicize the fact that I was a Tarot reader. Yet the very fact of being a reader is what originally motivated me to want to become a professional counselor and to invest my time, money, mind and soul into the intensive research culminating in the book you are now reading.

Many years ago, eager to listen to anyone who would have provided any guidance to me in my seemingly vicious circle of then current life-tasks, problems and issues, I turned to readers. Nothing seemed to help, and I found myself going from crisis to crisis and losing the thread of connection with not only the external world but myself as well. Moving from one counseling room to another, I did not feel understood, and more and more doubts about my own integrity started to occupy my mind, further contributing to the loss of that connection, that fragile link, which enables one to know oneself.

It was the ancient “Know Thyself” maxim that was inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi and, as philosopher of education Nel Noddings (2006) reminds us, still remains the necessary, even if often disregarded, goal of education. It was the quest for meanings and evaluation of life-experience – an examined versus unexamined life – that Socrates was calling for.

Noddings is adamant about the importance of self-knowledge as the very core of education: “when we claim to educate, we must take Socrates seriously. Unexamined lives may well be valuable and worth living, but an education that does not invite such examination may not be worthy of the label education” (Noddings, 2006, p. 10, italics in original). Still more often than not education is equated with formal schooling (for children) or perpetual training (for adults) thus a priori marginalizing the realm of lifelong human development and experiential learning situated amidst real-life situations.

For me, such an informal – or, rather, post-formal (Steinberg, Kincheloe, and Hinchey, 1999) – education grounded in an existing cultural practice began when, on the verge of despair, I found myself sitting opposite a man who was a genuine Tarot reader. It was his reading that precipitated a catharsis: something that sub-consciously I did not want to know or accept, that was repressed and stored away in my unconscious mind and thus not dealt with, was brought to my awareness,
then explored and discussed by my reader and me, becoming in this process a meaningful reality.

I left that reading session fully aware that I had to deal with the emergent information as this new knowledge was me, my selfhood that so far has been denied, displaced, or sublimated. This process of informal guidance by means of a Tarot reading, that transgressed the boundaries between education and therapy, facilitated a process of development and personal transformation. This developmental, at once healing and learning, process is still going on, and in this quest I was and still am accompanied by the wonderful world of Tarot: I became a reader, in the parlance of popular culture. Or, in terms of academic discourse, a “bilingual interpreter” who can translate the “language” of the unconscious, projected in the array of Tarot pictures (chapter 7), into verbal expressions; and I consider this one of the richest and most liberating experiences a person can have in life.

The word education derives from Latin *educare* that means to lead out as well as to bring out something that is within. The word therapy derives from the Greek *therapeia* in terms of human service to those who need it. Education and counseling alike involve either implicit or explicit inquiry into the nature of the self and self-other relations. Carol Witherell notices that, ideally, each professional activity “furthers another’s capacity to find meaning and integrity” (1991, p. 84) in lived experience. Importantly both practices are “designed to change or guide human lives” (Witherell, 1991, p. 84).

In the area of human development, which is the focus of this book, the rigid boundaries between those apparently separate, in the contemporary context, disciplines of education and therapy become blurred: both are oriented to creating meanings for our experience that includes the realm of the yet unknown and unconscious. The role of unconscious learning has been systematically addressed by the Australian higher educator Marian de Souza (2008, 2009) especially as a means for focusing on emotional and spiritual intelligence grounded in “the processes of feeling and intuiting” (de Souza, 2009, p. 681) in the combined context of education and mental health.

Tarot hermeneutic provides an unorthodox epistemic access to the realm of the unconscious analogous to Carl Gustav Jung’s analytical or depth psychology, to be addressed in chapter 2, when the effects of the archetypal dynamics comprising the field of the collective unconscious – a theoretical construct posited by Jung – is analyzed in practice. Jung’s biographer Laurens van der Post, in his introduction to Sally Nichols’ book *Jung and Tarot: An archetypal journey* notices her contribution to analytical psychology by virtue of the “profound investigation of Tarot, and her illuminated exegesis of its pattern as an authentic attempt at enlargement of possibilities of human perceptions” (in Nichols, 1980, p. xv).

Contemporary post-Jungian scholar Andrew Samuels mentions “systems such as that of the I Ching, Tarot and astrology” (Samuels, 1985, p. 123) as possible even if questionable resources in analytical psychology, and quotes Jung who wrote in 1945: “I found the I Ching very interesting…I have not used it for more than two years now, feeling that one must learn to walk in the dark, or try to discover (as when one is learning to swim) whether the water will carry one” (p. 123). Irene Gad
connected Tarot pictures with the stages of human development in the context of Kabbalistic teachings and alongside the Jungian process of individuation towards becoming authentic selves. She considered their archetypal images “to be…trigger symbols, appearing and disappearing throughout history in times of transition and need” (1994, p. xxxiv). Such historical and socio-cultural value of Tarot hermeneutic in the context of collective – not solely individual, but social – consciousness will be addressed in Chapter 9.

This book will demonstrate that Tarot, as an existing, albeit marginal, cultural practice traditionally located at the “low” end of popular culture, plays a significant role in the process of self-formation or construction of human subjectivity, thus becoming a means for the re-symbolization of the Self. Philip Wexler introduced the concept “resymbolization” as focused on the “collective symbolic or cultural work” (1996, p. 115; italics in original) constituting a process of cultural, societal change due to the reinterpretation of human subjectivity as grounded in “the interactive dynamics of relationality” (Wexler, 1996, p. 115) especially as it pertains to Jewish mystical teachings, Kabbalah, which is literally translated as Tradition. It is a relation as ontologically basic (versus an isolated and self-centered moral agent) that is also central to Nel Noddings’ ethics of care in education.

Hasidic philosopher Martin Buber, whose concepts were instrumental for Noddings, referred to the “wordless depths [when we] experience an undivided unity” (1971, p. 24; brackets mine) between the two people at the soul-level in the form of the famous I-Thou relation. These depths are filled not with words but with images, and the task of this book is to elucidate the images, to articulate them, to appreciate their role in the re-symbolization of the relational Self at both individual and collective levels.

For Buber, it is the lived world that engenders the personality of a particular individual. It is the world comprising the whole environment, both natural and social, that “educates” the human being: it draws out his powers and makes him grasp and penetrate its objections” (Buber, 1971, p. 89). Buber deliberately puts the word educate in quotation marks to distinguish his new mode of the relational, shared, erotic educational experience from the old one-sided model based on the will to power and authority that neglects “experiencing the other side” (p. 96). It is the integrative dynamics between self and other, between consciousness and the unconscious, between I and Thou that constitutes an element of inclusion comprising education in which educator “is set in the midst of the service” (p. 103).

A relational, integrative approach is also a formidable Zeitgeist in the area of another human service profession, that of psychological counseling and therapy (Corey, 1991). In the early ‘90s, Corey has been already advocating an integrative perspective taking into consideration therapists’ willingness to look into the expansion of their own outlook and into possibility of widening the range of techniques to accommodate a diverse population. Including rapprochement, convergence, and integration in the psychotherapeutic Zeitgeist, Corey envisaged that the current “Zeitgeist…will continue with this trend toward convergence and integration and that there will also be an increased emphasis on a spiritual perspective” (p. 429).
Michael Murphy (1993) also called for the integral practices that encompass a wide variety of domains in human nature in a comprehensive way; including somatic, affective, cognitive, volitional and, importantly, transpersonal dimensions. Edward Whitmont (1985), in the context of post-Jungian practices of psychotherapy, pointed out that solely verbal or reflective methods may not be sufficient. Acknowledging the limitations of just “talking therapy”, he emphasized that the development of psychic awareness achieved a new quality in terms of a novel relation to spiritual meaning. Whitmont pointed out a new developmental phase in the evolution of consciousness that demands a broader scope of awareness encompassing but not reducible to intellect alone.

Understanding that human consciousness undergoes evolution, growth, and expansion is an important premise in the present approaches to education for spirituality, care and wellbeing (De Souza, M., Francis, L., O’Higgins-Norman, J., and D. Scott, 2009; Gidley, 2009). Jean Gebser, a French polymath, referred to the evolution of human consciousness in terms of its intensification by means of progressively going through the archaic, mythic, magic, and mental structures to be finally superseded by the integral consciousness, which will have incorporated a spiritual dimension. Gebser pointed out that mythical bards like Homer are represented as being blind because their task was not to observe the visible world with the organ of sight, the eye, but to use insight, “a sight turned inward to contemplate the inner images of the soul” (Gebser, 1991, p. 271). It is an insight into the meanings of Tarot images, as this book will demonstrate, that leads to intensification, expansion, and re-symbolization of consciousness.

Another memory comes to mind. It is summer of 1993. I am busy working in my clinical internship in West Hollywood. The client population in the area, and accordingly in the agency I am working for, consists of mostly gay men. I am having a counseling session with “John”, in his thirties, and HIV positive. We are discussing his outbursts of sudden anger in the relationship with his live-in boyfriend, when abruptly John switches the issue: “I saw my spiritual guru yesterday,” he says. “She said she didn’t see a speck of death in me.” The impact of that phrase on me, and the timing of it, was like a turning point. It brought a paradigm shift in my professional relationship with John. The session became illuminated by what was of paramount importance, significance and value in John’s painful and uncertain internal world. It redistributed the weights of issues he was overwhelmed with. It indicated that John was reaching out to whoever could understand his hopes and fears, acknowledge them, reflect back and help him in working through his problems. It happened to be his spiritual guru who cared about him and was able to provide him with the necessary reassurance.

This emotional desire as “the longing to be cared for…is manifested as a need for love, physical care, respect or mere recognition – [and] is the fundamental starting point for the ethics of care” (Noddings, 1998, p. 188). Such was John’s internal subjective reality – and this reality was addressed and mirrored in his spiritual quest. I began to wonder about the ambiguity of my professional role in this situation: what response or intervention could I, in my capacity as a counselor, provide in agreement
with the framework of the behavioral-cognitive approach advocated by the agency I was working for?

What could one do within the limitations of a solely cognitive orientation aiming to behavior modification for this particular person whose initial assessment, according to his intake form, indicated an early stage of dementia? Desperate and overwhelmed by the turn of events in his personal experience, he turned to somebody outside this formal counseling room, to somebody he perceived as a spiritual guru. My immediate feeling was: if only I could introduce into our counseling sessions a spiritual dimension – and specifically by means of Tarot readings – John may very well benefit! At the very least his world view, which obviously included spiritual aspects, would be validated; at the very best, the meanings of the events in his life and the value of his personal experience, however tragic, would become open to his awareness.

Slowly the idea emerged. Nothing should prevent an existing phenomenon from becoming the subject of inquiry. The phenomenon of Tarot readings does exist; the shelves in the bookstores are crowded with popular publications; there are more than two hundred and fifty various decks available. There is a variety of advertising in popular media. TV channels have their own “psychic networks”; yet all of this exists mainly at the level of popular culture.

As noticed by Emily Auger (2004) in her research on Tarot and other meditation decks in the context of aesthetics, Tarot decks represent a popular, or “low”, rather than “high” art forms such as painting, architecture, or sculpture. Yet, it is Tarot that was to become the subject matter of my postgraduate research in the area of behavioral sciences, thus transgressing the borders between popular and academic cultures. Similar to Robert Romanyshyn’s “wounded researcher” (Romanyshyn, 2007) I was ready to step into the untapped unconscious field and to explore the many “wounds” underlying our perceptions and judgments.

There was no aim to prove or disprove anything, to qualify or disqualify, to compare or contrast. This study grew out of a desire to bring light to the often misunderstood realm of Tarot which is so much richer and valuable than its reductive popular role as a fortune-telling device, yet which is more often than not considered as such. The main “objective” of my study was, is, and will remain, the wellbeing of those who are seeking Tarot counsel.

A Tarot deck consists of seventy-eight pictorial cards, or Arcana. The meaning of Arcana (or Arcanum, singular) is that creative, but often missing, element in our lives, which is necessary to know, to discover in experience so as to be fruitful and creative in our approach to multiple life-tasks situated in the midst of experiential situations, events and our complex relationships with others. If and when discovered – that is, made available to consciousness – it becomes a powerful motivational force to facilitate a change for the better at our emotional, cognitive or behavioral levels and thus to accomplish an important ethical objective.

What is called a Tarot layout or spread is a particular pattern of the picturesque cards with a variety of images that are full of rich symbolism. Each position in the sequence of pictures constituting a particular layout has some specific connotations that will be addressed in detail in chapters 7 and 8. Tarot pictorial symbolism
CHAPTER 1

embodies intellectual, moral, and spiritual “lessons” derived from collective human experiences across times, places and cultures.

As such, Tarot “speaks” in a mythic format of symbols, the metaphorical universal language full of deep, even if initially opaque, meanings. The interpretation of Tarot images and pictures indicates a specific “hermeneutic, composed from the juxtaposition of disparate elements, [or] what Freud called pictographic” (Grumet, 1991, p. 75). As a symbolic system of reading and interpretation, Tarot is oriented toward the discovery of meanings for the multiplicity of experiences that would have otherwise appeared to lack meaning and significance. Thus the readings necessarily “honor the spontaneity, complexity and ambiguity of human experience” (p. 67).

The educational function derives from the holistic dimension embedded in experience that transcends the dualistic mind-body split and the scope of which expands to also incorporate the spiritual, transpersonal, domain. We thus acquire a better ability for self-reflection, self-knowledge, and a sense of value, purpose and meaningfulness of our experiences. Importantly we achieve a better understanding of what may appear to be the otherwise irresolvable moral dilemmas and which subsequently leads to the choice of right action and developing a better-informed, intelligent, decision-making ability.

In their monumental study, Crawford and Rossiter (2006) equate young people’s search for meaning, identity and spirituality with their very reasons for living and point out that

meaning and identity are the same psychological reality looked at from different perspectives. From the viewpoint of meaning, it is an explanation of individual intentionality. From the viewpoint of identity, it is the individual’s distinctive self-understanding and self-expression (p. 33).

Noticing the link between the search for meaning, personal identity and spirituality, Crawford and Rossiter suggest that teachers should help their students “to look on their experience of education with a greater sense of its value” (2006, p. 321).

It is a noble task, indeed, but it should be performed by teachers equipped with at least an equal if not greater sense of value and meaning of their own professional practice and their own personal development in terms of what Jung called self-education (chapter 2). Nel Noddings (2002) keeps reminding us that the aim of moral, holistic, education is to contribute to the continuous education of both students and teachers, in the dynamics between selves and others embedded in the caring relation.

“The attitude of care” (Noddings, 1991, p. 161) is characterized by the presence of attention or engrossment and is especially significant in the context of Tarot. Noddings refers to the story of the Holy Grail as told by Simone Weil (1951):

In the first legend of the Grail, it is said that the Grail...belongs to the first comer who asks the guardian of the vessel, a king three quarters paralyzed by the most painful wound, “What are you going through?”... It is a recognition that the sufferer exists, not only as a unit in a collection, or a specimen from the social category labeled “unfortunate,” but as a man, exactly
like us. ... This way of looking is first of all attentive. The soul empties itself of its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth. Only he who is capable of attention can do this (p. 115).

Yet, John was not asked the question, “What are you going through?” within the agency’s behavior-modification approach. Nor that he would have been able to – consciously – answer this straightforward question anyway or wanted to engage in an explicit dialogue so as to intentionally share his pain and suffering with me. The counseling sessions under the adage of behavioral modification of the agency were supposed to “instruct” John to not get into arguments with his boyfriend. John’s referring to a conversation with his spiritual guru was an indication that he was looking for an alternative way to be cared for, to get attention especially because the probability of his early passing was his very reality.

To connect with the Other at the soul level means to connect via corpus subtile – the subtle, spiritual, “body” of emotions and feelings that are so often difficult to articulate precisely because they are buried deep in the unconscious, in the psyche. Their expressive language exceeds and spills over the limitations of our conscious discourse. It is the Tarot hermeneutic as the metaphorical, symbolic, quest for the Holy Grail that helps us in articulating what otherwise betrays words. This takes place because of the symbols’ functioning to bring the unconscious wounds and pains to the level of cognitive awareness, therefore engaging with the psyche and making it whole, healing it.

The psyche becomes filled with the new meanings of experiences and the acquired sense of not only interpersonal connection but, ultimately, spiritual communion. The plurality of evolving meanings express themselves indirectly, in symbolic form, and symbols act as transformers capable of raising the unconscious contents to the level of consciousness, therefore ultimately performing what Jung called the transcendent function when the implicit meanings become explicit by virtue of “becoming conscious and by being perceived” (Jung in Pauli, 1994, p. 159).

The readings described in chapter 8 of this book were conducted in the spirit of what Jean Watson (1985) called, in the area of nurse education, the occasions of caring. Noddings explains that the occasions of caring constitute the moments when nurse and patient, or teacher and student, meet and must decide what to do with the moment, what to share, which needs to express, or whether to remain silent. This encounter “needs to be a guiding spirit of what we do in education” (Noddings, 1991, p. 168); such a guiding, relational and caring, spirit ontologically preeminent in Tarot hermeneutic.

Referring to “a hermeneutic lag [as] a poor reading of cultural tendencies” (Wexler, 1996, p. 5) that have become frozen in the dominant structures of the over-rationalization of knowledge, Wexler calls for the cultural, theoretical, and educational renaissance. His intent is to gather the holy sparks of the Kabbalistic creation myth told in the mystical Judaism as “the vital residue of an uncontainable supernal light [that] remain glowing in the dross of fragments of worldly vessels unable to contain them. So it is with...reinterpreting ancient traditions in contemporary fields of thought. We have some glimmering, but only within the prevailing cover
of opaque and limiting fragments. What I hope for...is an opening toward those premodern traditions, and their inspirational ‘sparks.’” (Wexler, 1996, p. 113)

To reclaim the divine sparks at the level of human cultural practices is a challenge that this book intends to meet. The restored light as the central metaphor will have contributed not to the over-rational Enlightenment of modernity but to a postmodern spiritual Illumination that would defy pessimism and the frequent fatalistic resignation currently permeating individual and collective consciousness, locally and globally.

In the remarkable book Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief, Nel Noddings (1993a) comments that some of the new age criticism appears superficial and “lacks the intelligence” (p. 39) which she encourages in her work. Noddings points out that this type of education will put “great emphasis on self-knowledge... that... must come to grips with the emotional and spiritual as well as the intellectual and psychological” (p. xiv). Analogously I encourage an intelligent and open attitude in the book you are going to read.

Furthermore, you will discover that Tarot hermeneutic paves a road toward such expanded self-knowledge and that using Tarot symbolic system as an educational and counseling “aid” enables us to learn from life-experiences hence becoming able to acquire intelligence and wisdom, indeed urged by Noddings. Philip Wexler suggested that many of the assumptions underlying the new age culture should be deeply deconstructed into the ancient core religious traditions from which they perform their bricolage. The next chapter 2 will focus on the notion of bricolage per se as constituting a theory-practice nexus in which the Tarot hermeneutic is embedded.
CHAPTER 2

DOING BRICOLAGE

Addressing a significant role in the process of identity-formation of post-formal education and cultural pedagogy, Kincheloe (2005; 2008; also Kincheloe and Berry, 2005) conceptualized bricolage as drawing from multiple theoretical and methodological resources, including hermeneutics, phenomenology, and narratology, while retaining the rigor of the best critical thought. The term bricolage was coined by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) with regard to spontaneous human action grounded in the characteristic patterns of mythological thinking and in the context of structuralism defined as the search for the underlying patterns of thought in all forms of human activity. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari referred to the bricolage as a “schizoanalytic” (1972), transgressive, mode of production.

Deleuze’s post-structuralist philosophy, which has been inspirational for expanding the range of qualitative methods in educational research (St. Pierre, 1997a, 1997b) and has made a significant contribution to educational theory (Semetsky, 2006; 2008), will be addressed in detail in chapter 6 as it pertains to Tarot hermeneutic. A bricoleur constructs the object of study paying particular attention to the webs of relationships, processes, and interconnections among phenomena within which he himself is situated.

For Kincheloe, doing bricolage involves marginalized practices and the development of transgressive conceptual tools as well as exploring the breadth and wealth of typically underestimated human cognitive capacities. A bricoleur embedded in phenomenology of lived experience acts as the first explorer to discover new territories, trying new strategies, and opening new avenues for research while aiming to help people in reshaping their lives. While hermeneutics came to connote the ambiguity of meanings, the bricolage implies the fictive and imaginative elements present in research methodologies.

From this perspective, Tarot hermeneutic represents the work of a bricoleur. A bricoleur – a genuine Tarot reader – makes a creative and resourceful use of the “material at hand” that is, the images and symbols on Tarot pictures. My research was grounded in the broad material provided within the framework of Carl Gustav Jung’s analytical, or depth, psychology. As for the empirical data presented in chapter 8, they were grounded in naturalistic inquiry employing both phenomenology and hermeneutics.

The essential identity of human experiences reflected in worldwide myths and folklore led Jung to postulate the existence of the collective unconscious as objective psyche, which is shared at the deepest level by all members of humankind and manifests itself through archetypal, symbolic and latent, images. Jung called the deepest level psychoid and asserted that it is at this level where, in a holistic manner,
CHAPTER 2

body and mind, \textit{physis} and \textit{psyche}, become united as two different aspects of one world, \textit{Unus Mundus}.

The archetypes underlying our subjective perceptions and judgements are “located” at the unitary level of objective reality that transcends both the human mind and the external physical world. Jung’s great achievement was his anti-dualistic and unifying approach to what we today call human sciences. He insisted on the multiplicity of inner, spiritual, meanings for the unconscious that would have exceeded its overt, even if latent, meaning posited by Freud as merely repressed.

These deep evolving meanings express themselves through archetypal images that act as symbolic transformers capable of making unconscious contents manifest at the level of conscious awareness. Archetype is seen by Jung as a skeletal pattern, filled in with imagery and motifs that are “mediated to us by the unconscious” (Jung, \textit{CW} 8, 417), the variable contents of which form different archetypal images. In his memoirs, \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections}, reflecting on his own development as an adult and on his own “second half of life”, Jung said that the years when he was pursuing his \textit{inner images} were the most important in his life; it is via images that the essential decisions were made.

The unconscious is capable of spontaneously producing images “irrespective of wishes and fears of the conscious mind” (Jung, \textit{CW} 11, 745). \textit{Typos}, as the composite of the archetype, means imprint, stamp or pattern. As the multiplicity of dynamic patterns “acting” in the collective unconscious, archetypes exist \textit{in potentia} and are beckoned forth by our experiences. The unconscious “archetypes [as] …structural elements of the psyche …possess a certain autonomy and specific energy which enables them to attract, out of the conscious mind, those contents which are better suited to themselves” (Jung, \textit{CW} 5, 232), thus helping us achieve much wider scope of awareness than rational thinking, in terms of solely cognitive reasoning deprived of what Jung called feeling-tones, is capable of providing.

The actualized archetypes are charged with psychic or spiritual energy, exceeding Freud’s solely sexual libido. For Jung, “psychic energy is a very fastidious thing which insists on fulfilment of its own conditions” (Jung, \textit{CW} 7, 76). Archetypes “reside” in the dynamic field of the collective unconscious and form an unorthodox virtual foundation upon which many individual real-life experiences lay down their own structures. Multiple combinations of innumerable experiences – the constellations of the actualized archetypes – produce diverse archetypal images that manifest overtly through their effects at the level of the body in the form of particular behavioral unconscious patterns.

The activity of archetypal dynamics determines where an individual stands within the process of individuation, the goal of which, for Jung, is the achievement of a greater personality culminating in the Self, the archetype of wholeness. Wholeness as the integration of the unconscious into consciousness is marked by a change of attitude when the centre of the personality shifts its position from the Ego to the Self. We will see the unfoldment of archetypal dynamics in real-life individual experiences expressed by the constellations of Tarot pictures in chapter 8 as symbolic stopovers in the individuation process. We will also see the elements pertaining to
the change in attitude and the connection of the latter with the individual ability to learn from her experience.

Individuation as an analytic and healing, therapeutic, process was defined by Jung in terms of self-education during which both unconscious and conscious aspects of life-experiences become integrated. Jung was explicit that education should not be confined to schools nor should education stop when a child grows up. Presenting his depth psychology as a method of self-education, Jung (1954) was adamant that self-knowledge remains an indispensable basis of adult self-education and emphasized an indirect method for attaining such inner self-knowledge by means of its symbolic mediation in the analytic process:

There are...many extremely psychic processes which are unconscious, or only indirectly conscious...there is... something as impersonal as a product of nature that enables us to know the truth about ourselves ...Of the unconscious we can learn nothing directly, but indirectly we can perceive the effects that come into consciousness (Jung, 1954, p. 49).

To bring the multiple, and often painful, effects of the unconscious processes into our consciousness is the task of depth psychology and Tarot hermeneutic alike. While human development potentially tends toward the Self, this archetype is fully actualized only when the unconscious becomes completely integrated into consciousness. We will encounter multiple archetypes of transformation in the series of images of the Major Arcana in chapter 4.

Human development engenders itself via the symbolism of the pictures as the expressions of the unconscious that precedes and exceeds the verbal expressions of the conscious mind: “it is not the personal human being who is making the statement, but the archetype speaking through him” (Jung, 1963, p. 352). Jung asserted that the real communication becomes possible when the conscious Ego acknowledges the existence of an unconscious partner. It is through a symbolic dialogue with this virtual partner represented by the archetype of the Self, which is present only implicitly, in potentia – yet will have been actualized during the journey through the constellation of Tarot images – that we can achieve this critical level of self-knowledge that forms a threshold for self-education and manifests in the individuation process.

When I started my project in the early 1990s, Jung’s depth psychology as the analysis of the unconscious has existed not only just on the margins amidst many theoretical orientations in clinical or counselling practice but also was rather foreign to mainstream educational discourse. It is only recently that several pioneering studies (for example, Neville, 2005; Main, 2008; Mayes, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007; Semetsky, in press) have focused on the implicit value of Jung’s analytical psychology for the field of education as a powerful complement to its therapeutic value, crossing the boundaries between two disciplines, both oriented toward development and individuation and blurring therefore the absolute line of division between pedagogical and clinical aspects.

Robert Romanyshyn (in press) addresses Jungian psychology as a mode of ethical pedagogy and showcases a Jungian classroom modeled on the paradigm of


“The Wounded Researcher” (Romanyshyn, 2007). Undercutting the Cartesian dream of reason, Romanyshyn weaves together phenomenology, hermeneutics and Jung’s psychology so as to analyze the unconscious dynamics between a teacher and a student as leading to ethical ways of knowing and being. Romanyshyn points out that educators indeed have an ethical obligation to take responsibility for their own unconscious prejudices that form complex “characters” implicit in the transference field in a classroom as a deep unconscious connection arising in a genuine relationship.

Laura Huxley, the widow of the famous author and herself an Honorary Doctor of Human Services and recipient of the World Health Foundation for Development Peace Prize in 1990, was asked whether she had found any psychological techniques to be especially valuable or whether the success of a particular method varies for different persons (Brown and Novick, 1993). Her answer was that, despite many existing techniques being effective in the hands of a capable practitioner, the most important factor remains the relationship between the guide and the client. From this standpoint, the relationship per se as developed with fifteen participants in my study became a significant therapeutic and pedagogical component. Some of my participants have benefited from even a single session, as will be seen from their feedback; some, however, were not yet ready for a therapeutic change.

The effect of any session depends on many factors, a particular modality being only one of several. I always follow these timeless guidelines (Paul, 1967): what method, by whom, is the most effective for this particular individual with this specific problem and under what set of particular circumstances. However the multiple what and this are being conveyed in Tarot hermeneutic with clarity and accuracy so as to ensure a professional and ethical approach.

I agree with Romanyshyn that we have to master metaphors – in other words, to become bricoleurs – in our very practice, and that education understood as ethical should become a vocation oriented towards human development, that is, bringing up individuated and caring human beings who can take up the universal conditions of human existence in a manner that is transformative both of themselves and also of those very existential conditions. In order to fulfil Romanyshyn’s intent to cultivate a special, even if uncertain, metaphorical sensibility so as to lead us out of linear and literal ways of thinking, we should learn to read and interpret the metaphorical pictorial language “spoken” by Tarot images that represent this extra, imaginal, dimension of real, both actual and potential, human experiences.

Jung observed that a relationship situated in the transference field between an analyst and analysand can “lead to parapsychological phenomena” (Bolen, 1979, p. 33), I Ching and Tarot notwithstanding. As existential psychologist Rollo May stated, “therapists cut themselves off from a great deal of reality if they do not leave themselves open to other way of communication that human reason” (1991, p. 163). Freud pointed out that a relationship developed in psychoanalysis at times comes close to a telepathic connection; and Jung’s intuition during dream analysis in his analytical practice “bordered on being psychic” (Bolen, 1979, p. 13).

A renowned Tarot author Mary Greer comments that Jung wrote in one of his letters, “Yes, I know of the Tarot. It is, as far as I know, the pack of cards originally
used by the Spanish gypsies…” and has referred to Tarot cards as the descendants from the archetypes of transformation. Importantly, for Jung,

The symbolic process is an experience in images and of images. Its development usually shows an enantiodromian structure like the text of the I Ching… Its beginning is… characterized by one’s getting stuck in a blind alley or in some impossible situation and its goal is, broadly speaking, illumination of higher consciousness, by means of which the initial situation is overcome (Jung, CW 9i, 82).

The term enantiodromia (from the Greek enantios, opposite + dromos, running course) has been used by Jung to refer to the unconscious acting against the wishes of the conscious mind, but in accord with the psyche’s grand, yet inaccessible, plan on the basis of which the unconscious life is constructed.

Respectively, our customary perception of a given situation being “impossible” and our lack of control over such an insolvable problem persist. In chapter 8 we will see many of the initially impossible situations embedded in the Tarot layouts that become resolved when the transcendent function implicit in Tarot hermeneutic enables one to get out of the “blind alley” of habitual narrow ego-consciousness thus empowering people with the revealed feeling of value and meaning when what seemed to be an impossible, really problematic, situation has been overcome.

Jung was adamant that the impossible situation produced in the unconscious is the means to abandon one’s personal will reduced to the ego-consciousness and to begin trusting the impersonal power of the unconscious as the means for growth and adult development. Jungian psychology postulates that typical situations in life are the reflections of archetypes as patterns of spontaneous behavior which are practically engraved in the psychic constitution.

As primordial images embedded in the Tarot Major Arcana (chapter 4), archetypes can inflict strong psychological pain. An emotional situation that corresponds to a particular archetypal constellation may develop, and mental pressure may become too strong to be contained within one’s coping abilities: “Colloquial expressions acknowledge this change in psychological level: ‘What the devil got in him anyway?’ or ‘He got caught in the grip of an idea’ or ‘She went out of her mind with fear or rage’” (Bolen, 1979, p. 19). Tarot symbols hold together contents that individual consciousness alone is incapable of holding at the rational level, but which nonetheless express themselves at a subtle emotional level.

Archetypes do have two complementary poles, one expressing a “positive, favorable, bright side [and the other a] partly negative…partly chthonic” (Jung, CW 9i, 413). It is “a natural process [as] a manifestation of [psychic] energy that springs from the tension of opposites” (Jung, CW 7, 121) expressed in the dark and light archetypal aspects, both pertaining to Tarot imagery (not unlike yin and yang as an interplay of opposites in the Chinese Book of Changes) that give rise to the transcendent function performed by symbols embedded in Tarot hermeneutic.

By bringing to awareness many initially unperceived, unconscious and latent, meanings, the pictures serve the function of what Jung called amplification. The meanings, even if implicit, are nonetheless highly structured or organized, and a
Tarot layout (such as the Celtic Cross shown in chapter 7) amplifies the unconscious contents of the archetypal images via their representation in the material medium of the pictures. Because of the amplifying, synthesizing, nature of symbols, the meanings expressed in the multitude of images hiding in the unconscious can be elucidated, interpreted, narrated and potentially integrated into consciousness.

The amplifying and synthetic character of symbols reflects the dynamical and evolutionary approach to knowledge and, for Jung, a “psychological fact...as a living phenomenon...is always indissolubly bound up with the continuity of the vital process, so that it is not only something evolved but also continually evolving and creative” (Jung, CW 6, 717) as a function of our life-long learning from experience per se in the process of individuation and re-symbolization of the Self.

The Tarot pictures that are full of interpretable symbols relate to archetypal ideas; thus they are subject to hermeneutic interpretation involving intuition, insight and creative imagination. Jim Garrison, a philosopher of education, suggests sympathetic data as a term describing intuitions and perceptions that enable our understanding of others, and expresses his regret that “our culture has not evolved highly refined methods of collecting [those] data...researchers do not perform careful interpersonal experiments, [and] the theories of human thought, feeling, and action remain...remarkably underdeveloped” (Garrison, 1997, p. 35).

There is a sad irony here with regard to the fact that it is precisely sympathetic, inter-subjective, data that are maximally “relevant to the topic of teaching” (Garrison, 1997, p. 36) as well as to counseling, which are a central concern in the present context of Tarot hermeneutic grounded in relational dynamics. An expert reader as a genuine bricoleur can translate the pictorial language of symbols and signs into spoken word, thus creating a wealth of sympathetic, emotional data embodied in the unfolding narrative for the subject of a particular reading.

Many typical life experiences are represented in the patterns that appear and can be discerned when the pictures are being spread in this or that layout, and a person can learn from her experience when it is being unfolded in front of her eyes in the array of images. Respectively, the latent meanings of experience become available to human consciousness, and a person can discover in practice a deeper, spiritual and numinous, as Jung would say, dimension of experience. Thus Tarot, in terms of its archetypal dynamics, and despite being traditionally considered irrational and illogical, helps us achieve an intense scope of awareness exceeding narrow instrumental rationality.

It is what educational psychologist Jerome Bruner called an intuitive sense of rightness that allows a genuine reader to articulate the implicit meanings of Tarot images and symbols. For Bruner, intuition “implies the act of grasping the meaning or significance or structure of a problem without explicit reliance on the analytic apparatus of one’s craft” (Bruner, 1966, p. 61). A symbolic, intuitive, approach creates a dialectical relationship between consciousness and the unconscious. In this respect Tarot images may be viewed as a bridge between the personal unconscious, via the archetypal field of the collective unconscious, to the conscious mind.

Similar to the interpretations of dreams in Jungian analysis, Tarot hermeneutic as reading and interpreting pictorial images becomes the core means assisting people
in the process of individuation. The task of the reader is to make the information concealed in the unconscious available; thus to facilitate a growth-promoting process for the subject of the reading who is an equal participant in the emerging, therapeutic and learning, relation. Like in any relationship, human subjective experience is critical. The human factor is a precondition for us experiencing what Jung, in collaboration with physicist and Nobel laureate Wolfgang Pauli, called synchronicity (Jung and Pauli, 1955).

Synchronicity is defined as a meaningful coincidence when “an unexpected [mental] content which is directly or indirectly connected with some objective external event coincides with the ordinary psychic state” (Koestler, 1972, pp. 96–97). The ability of mind to be about something, to have mental content, constitutes intentionality as a subject-matter of phenomenology. According to its founder Edmund Husserl, a faithful description of any phenomenon as it presents itself within one’s concrete experience represents a prime objective of phenomenology.

Husserl’s phenomenological method supports the very process of Tarot readings during which noemata and noiesis are related in such ways that the archetypal structures embedded in the unconscious become intuitively present to consciousness. Noiesis as intuition is an operation of the Nous, or Intelligence, and represents the highest portion of human knowledge. In Eastern Orthodox Christianity human nous is described as the “eye of the heart or soul” or the “mind of the heart”. Noema is a structure of experience that appears to consciousness in the form of implicit, as yet unconscious, pre-linguistic meanings embedded in the patterns of experience. We arrive at the noematic structures through self-reflection mediated by symbols.

For Husserl, the noetic and noematic are ideally two sides of the same experience, and it is the bricolage of Tarot as a mix of phenomenology with hermeneutics that enables us to see – in the form of sensible material patterns – that which otherwise would have remained outside of sense-experience, in the intelligible realm of Platonic Ideas, or archetypes to which we have no direct access. Yes, the archetypes per se cannot be known directly, but can be transcended – or brought “down to earth”, so to speak – when being mediated by the images and symbols embedded in the Tarot pictures.

Understanding the symbolic meanings embodied in the archetypal images of Tarot Arcana and bringing them to consciousness contributes to re-symbolization of the Self in the process of gradually removing the Ego from its privileged, egocentric, position and enriching the human mind with other ways of knowing that complement its solely rational functions. For Jung, an intuitive function is non-rational, and the contents of intuition “have the character of being given in contrast to the ‘derived’ or ‘deduced’ character” (Noddings and Shore, 1984, p. 25) pertaining to two other Jungian functions of thinking and feeling. Feeling is considered by Jung to be a rational function as determining our value judgements.

Jung insisted on intuition’s unconscious nature. While the “fostering of intuition as an aid to learning and knowing was not on [Jung’s] agenda” (Noddings and Shore, 1984, p. 27), it is the Tarot symbolism that triggers the stream of the unconscious and serves as a device to educate and strengthen the human intuitive function invaluable for meaning-making. Noddings and Shore (1984) notice that
phenomenology has contributed a dynamic quality to the notion of intuition in terms of its sense-fulfilling (that is, meaning-making) feature so that intuition becomes essential to the acquisition of knowledge. Husserl referred to intuition as “a source of authority...for knowledge, that whatever presents itself...in primordial form...is simply to be accepted” (Husserl, 1962, p. 83 quoted in Noddings and Shore, 1984, p. 31; italics in original).

Implementing a phenomenological approach means to accurately describe a “given phenomenon as it presents itself in one’s own experience – not [to explain] its genesis through reference to antecedent causal factors” (Casey, 1976, p. 9). Such absence of a direct, unmediated causal link pertaining to phenomenology relates to Jung’s a-causal principle of synchronicity as it manifest itself in Tarot. It is synchronicity that indicates the “unitary aspect of existence” (von Franz, 1992, p. 40; italics in original) which is difficult to explain rationally, especially since our thinking is heavily conditioned by deductive reasoning from premise to conclusion and the linear cause-effect connection prevalent in classical mechanics.

Still synchronicity is primarily connected with psychical and not physical conditions, that is, with the archetypal dynamics of the unconscious mind. Archetypes are the constellations of psychic energy dispersed in the collective unconscious, not unlike the “holy sparks” of the Kabbalistic vessels. Jung described synchronicity not only in terms of a coincidence between mental content, or a dream, or a vision with the physical event, but also as a premonition about an event, “a foreknowledge of some kind” (Jung, CW 8, 931; italics in original). The reality of this implicit “self-subsistent ‘unconscious’ knowledge” (Jung, CW 8, 931) of what we are meant to be and where we stand within the individuation process demonstrates itself empirically in the archetypal constellations of Tarot images as will be seen in chapters 7 and 8.

It is the archetypal symbolism of the images that presents us with those inner unconscious meanings that, while being outside of the conscious thought, are nonetheless “located” inside our intensified experiences. We learn from our very experience, the archetypal patterns of which unfold in front of our eyes in this or that layout. Tarot therefore performs two functions, existential and educational, the latter focusing on the ethical and spiritual dimension of experience and the former on the construction of identity – in terms of the re-symbolization of the Self – within experience itself which is symbolically represented in the pictures.

In terms of its archetypal dynamics, and despite being traditionally considered irrational and illogical, Tarot helps us achieve an intensified and expanded scope of awareness exceeding narrow rationality. The bricolage of Tarot as a theory-practice nexus is a process of the education of the Self: self-education that encompasses two processes, that of learning and counseling. Since Aristotle, the relationship between theory and practice has been controversial. Theory is derived from theoria defined as a philosophical contemplation of higher truths and as such disengaged from practical, political, contexts and social life; that is from praxis, which is defined as the process of putting theoretical knowledge into practice and is embedded in actions, relationships, and experiences that by definition have an ethical or moral dimension.
This detachment, in modern times, has led to a spectator theory of knowledge and strict disciplinary boundaries between sciences and humanities. The detached gazing at the “spectacle” in antiquity is, quite ironically, a precursor to modernity’s scientific method. Scientific, intellectually certain, knowledge (or cognitive episteme, in Greek) became distinguished from, and opposed to, the creative arts (as techne or τέχνη).

Tarot pictures are artistic productions – techne; the pictures mastered by a human skill inspired in turn by the creative imagination of a particular artist, who designed this or that deck. Techne is often translated as craftsmanship, handicraft or skill; the products of techne are artifacts, such as Tarot pictures. In its dimension as a techne, Tarot becomes a powerful, albeit alternative, educational aid in the context of post-formal holistic education and mental health alike. But Tarot as praxis is equally if not more important.

In Greek mythology, Praxis is also another name for Aphrodite, the goddess of love who was a central character in the story of Eros and Psyche. The myth tells us that it is by virtue of active learning from novel life-experiences imposed on her by Praxis/Aphrodite – rather than by a theoretical contemplation of the objects of knowledge already possessed by the conscious mind – that Psyche, as a personification of human soul, was eventually able to reunite with Aphrodite’s son, divine Eros.

For Plato, the highest philosophical vision is achievable only by one with the temperament of a lover, a lover of wisdom, who will allow himself to be grasped by, and to grasp in turn, the erotic passion in the process of recollecting true ideas. In Plato’s Symposium, Diotima the Priestess teaches Socrates that Eros or Love is “located” in-between lack and plenty; it is a spirit or daimon that, importantly, can hold two opposites together as a whole, therefore to eventually reconcile that what analytic thinking habitually perceives dualistically, that is, as binary irreconcilable opposites. Jung used the Latin term coincidentia oppositorum for the apparently mystical coincidence of opposites, such as psyche and matter, which takes place in synchronistic experiences.

The term philosopher literally translates as a lover of wisdom who has a passionate desire for deep inner knowledge, Gnosis (from the Greek for knowing). It was Hermes, the messenger of gods, who finally summoned human psyche to Olympus where she reunited with her beloved, divine Eros, having been granted a godlike immortality in this loving union. It is through being driven by Eros/Love that Psyche was able to meet the multiple challenges and win over the obstacles created by Praxis.

And it is only through love and compassion for the often suffering human spirit that an expert Tarot reader can intuit, understand, and narrate the subtle meanings encoded in the symbolism of the pictures, hence making each reading a precious learning experience.

The art of using Tarot lies in the knowledge of its symbolic language as the means of communication between another pair of supposedly binary opposites, consciousness and the unconscious. Jungian psychology postulates that all products and expressions of the unconscious are symbolic and thus carry or guide messages. The symbolic messages can be perceived by a reader as the information implicit in
the collective unconscious because one’s personality and life circumstances at any
given moment reflect the actualized archetype or the constellation of archetypes.

Jung insisted that it is through the integration of the unconscious that we might
have a reasonable chance to make experiences of an archetypal nature provide us
with a feeling of continuity not only throughout our life-experiences but also, in
a spiritual sense, before and after our existence, in virtue of the immortal soul. The
better our understanding of the reality of the archetypes, the more we can participate
in this reality, progressively realizing the archetypes’ eternity and timelessness.

We learn from the constellation of Tarot pictures that embody real events,
thoughts, and feelings implicit in the problematic situation (or, as it is called in the
context of counseling-reading sessions in chapter 8, presenting problem) and become
able to understand the situation better when it is amplified, clarified and brought
to consciousness by means of the Tarot hermeneutic. The interpretation of symbols
not only enriches a session with information but also makes this information meaning-
ful. Many experiences start making sense for us when their disjointed fragments
assembled in the bricolage of pictures ultimately form a unified meaningful whole,
hence contributing to our self-education and meaning-making.

The experience of Tarot readings is both learning and therapeutic in terms of
providing insight into the archetypal dynamics, thus enabling better communication
and a greater understanding between a person and her potential Self. The actualized
Self is fully individuated, yet it strongly contradicts “individualism”. Vice versa, “the
Self” always involves “the Other”. As the archetype of wholeness, it is inherently
inter-subjective and transpersonal, encompassing many experiences that the human
soul learned in the “school of life”, which is full of diverse situations, relationships
with significant others, and ever-varied empirical contexts.

Jungian self-education therefore should be understood as constituting the develop-
mental and learning, individuating, process towards achieving a “greater personality”
(Jung, CW 7, 136) ultimately reaching towards the re-symbolized, integrated Self.
Referring to self-education, Jung said:

At present we educate people only up to the point where they can earn a living
and marry: then education ceases altogether, as though a complete mental
outfit has been acquired… Innumerable ill-advised and unhappy marriages,
innumerable professional disappointments, are due to this lack of adult
education. (Jung, 1954, p. 47)

Jung was adamant that “the education of the educator… will eventually rebound to
the good of [the] pupils” (Jung, 1954, p. 47). Such self-education, however, should
not be defined in terms of the currently popular professional development or life-
long training, but “should make him properly conscious of himself” (Jung, 1954,
p. 46).

The adults are educable; however such education should not proceed along the
lines of compulsory “schooling”. Jung considered the analysis of dreams
whose constancy of meanings is exhibited by archetypal images to be “an eminently
educational activity” (Jung, 1954, p. 94). It is becoming conscious of the archetypal
field of dynamic forces-in-action that constitutes the method of indirect post-formal
adult education as a “process resulting from the independent activity of the unconscious” (Jung, 1954, p. 49); and Tarot hermeneutic represents but one example of post-formal pedagogy.

It is our learning from life experiences embodied in the symbolism of the pictures that not only leads to human development and eventual individuation but can also reconnect an individual psyche with its symbolic origin in *Anima Mundi*, the soul of the world, because our unconscious ideas are archetypal in nature and partake of the collective unconscious. Jung noticed that such conceptualization is particularly true of religious ideas, but the central concepts of science, philosophy, and ethics are no exception to this rule. In their present form they are variants of archetypal ideas created by consciously applying and adapting these ideas to reality. For it is the function of consciousness not only to recognize and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses, but to translate into visible reality the world within us (Jung, CW 8, 342).

This is the ultimate function of Tarot hermeneutic: to translate into visible reality the deep and invisible, internal world within us.

The Tarot hermeneutic via the mediation or embodiment of archetypal ideas in the material medium of pictures makes the invisible visible, and the expressive, yet silent, “voice” of the symbols and images becomes articulated with the help of creative imagination during constructions of specific narratives as will be demonstrated in chapter 8. The correlation between inner and outer realities has to make sense and become meaningful; but not because a particular cause has brought about a specific effect as in the case of mechanistic causality.

In the next chapter 3 we will address the Hermetic tradition that posits the existence of relations, correlations, analogies and correspondences akin to Jung’s synchronicity principle that enables meaningful connections between a person’s individual psyche and the collective unconscious. Like a genuine bricoleur, Hermes – the messenger of gods – crosses borders and transgresses boundaries; inhabiting a liminal in-between place, the Imaginal world.

NOTES

1 See http://marygreer.wordpress.com/2008/03/31/carl-jung-and-tarot/