

## Allan Guggenbühl: Education and imagination

*To hijack the school bus was not that difficult. The bus driver was given a knock and the head. While his unconscious body was dragged away, the youngsters sneaked into the and filled it with explosives. Now the next, more difficult task had to be fulfilled: the bus had to crash the gates of Woodstock High School, smash into the main hall, where finally all the explosives could be ignited by remote control. The students rejoiced, as the bus blew up and debris of the building fell from the sky. Finally their plan had succeeded.*

Fortunately this incident never really happened. Woodstock High still proudly demonstrates its white, impressive pillars, red brick library and meticulously trimmed green to its visitors. The students did not blow up their school and turn it into shambles. Instead they enacted a scene as part of a *Mythodrama* session.<sup>1</sup> Their task was to *imagine* the end of a story, which was related to them. They were given two hours, during which they could fantasise their version of the end of a story we told them. To the bewilderment of the principal and the dismay of some of the teachers, they presented this horrid scene. Were these students out of their minds?

### Myths as the key to resolve conflicts

Mythodrama is an approach, in which stories and drama are used, in order to help schools to deal with conflicts or violent incidents. The seven-step mythodramatic intervention is an answer to the various conflicts schools are confronted with. It includes parent's work, counselling of the teachers and group work with the students. The method was developed by the author and is currently being employed as therapeutic tool and in conflict management by the out-patient clinic of the state of Bern, the institute of conflict management in Zürich/Stockholm, the Konohana Institute in Tokyo and a number of school psychologist in Switzerland and Germany. The core of Mythodrama is the idea that our attitudes and motivations are influenced by *myths*. This term is used to point out, that many generally accepted thinking patterns and explanations originate in modern myths. They function as the base of a certain society. Myths are defined as the distinct stories, which emerge in societies in order to explain mysteries, problems, fears and threats. We lean on myths, when we are existentially challenged and in need for answers. They help us make decisions and give us an orientation. By using the term myth I want to indicate, that these stories are also *psychic realities*. They are more than rational explanations, but symbolise part of soul. Myths touch us, aggravate us, enrage us, motivate us or

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<sup>1</sup> See: Guggenbühl, A. Mythodrama. (2003) In: Rhea, Dan W. & Stallworth-Clark, Rosmarie (Eds.) *Healing the social disease of violence*. Boston: Custum Publishing. p. 135 - 144

emotionalize us. They are called great stories, because they are often adhered by groups of people. Societies of people unconsciously submit to big stories, when seeking an answer to existential challenges or conflicts.

### Modern myths behind general accusations

“Gang rape by balkanise juveniles!” proclaimed the headlines of several tabloids in Switzerland. On the news in television viewers saw pictures of a school in Zürich and told of horrific events among the students. Adolescents were accused to have drugged and raped an innocent Swiss female student. The public reacted with outrage. Discussions on television, political campaigns and heated debates among politicians and experts followed. The incident was on the headlines for several weeks. Finally, some weeks later, the police investigation revealed, that only two adolescents were involved in the rape and the girl had consented. As the public interest had subsided, no one was interested in these facts. People had already identified the culprits and knew for sure, what had been going on: uncivilised foreigners were abusing indigenous children. A school incident had evoked a public outcry and generated an undisputed explanation. The majority of people really believed, that the larger part of the foreign adolescents were vile, sexualised, disrespectful of our laws and codes. The law had to be enforced with strictness and relentlessly. Of course, from a Jungian point of view one would also have to take psychological considerations into account. The whole debate was not just about a nasty school incident, but a myth was rehearsed. We were hearing the story of the rape of women by heinous foreign invaders. People were gathering behind an old archetypical tale. Because it is archetypical, it is embedded in our souls. Incidents, which seemingly have some resemblance to the story, can trigger powerful emotions and convictions. The collective outrage was actually feed by an archetypical disposition, which emerged and temporally turned us blind. It was not just about a rape by adolescents from the Balkans, but about Attila raping our women or Dschingis-Kahn invading Europe.

Myths often emerge in conflict situations.<sup>2</sup> We rely on these big stories in order to find an answer to problems and fears. Myths empower us, so we are able to confront existential challenges. Our unconscious, secret belief systems are mobilized, when we feel threatened or existentially challenged. They help us make decisions, develop visions and cope with personal or professional problems.

In Mythodrama a story is chosen, which depicts the myth of the group we are working with.<sup>3</sup> The story should reflect the issues and psychological situation of the group, in order instigate a debate, release emotions and finally reveal their

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<sup>2</sup> Guggenbühl, Allan: *The Incredible Fascination of Violence*: Woodstock 1996: Spring

<sup>3</sup> Guggenbühl, Allan. *Das Mythodrama.*, Zürich 1999: Edition IKM

secret belief systems. The students are presented with mythology, which might reflect their psychological situation. They gather in hall, be it the gym, the music room or some other, appropriate large room and hear a story. The story is specially selected after interviews, observations and talks with the teachers, students and the parents. The psychologists, who are in charge of the mythodrama session, have to pick or create a story, which reflects the challenges and complexes of the students. The story needs to have a distinct quality. It should not have a moral, political or educational message. The danger would be, that students fall into the *compliance trap*. They start thinking in expected answers and anticipated solutions, instead of freeing their minds. Their stories should not be neat, pacifying and politically correct, but should stir students up. What they hear might cause bewilderment, anger or irritation. In the mythodramatic interventions students are presented with violent or bizarre scenes. We want them to leave their common tracks of thinking and react psychologically on a deeper level.

Younger children are open for fairy tales.<sup>4</sup> We might tell them of Cinderella, dwarfs, trolls, princes and princesses. Older children and adolescents attention can be caught, by relating *mythological themes*. Greek, Celtic or Indian myths are chosen. They hear of Odin, Vishnu or Baldur. These myths allow the children and adolescents to enter a world, which is not coded and defined the same way as their everyday life. In some schools the intervening psychologist might address the students with *modern myths*. It could be the story of the assassination plot by the CIA against Kennedy, the Wehrmacht's position during the second world war or the childhood of Eminem. In Mythodrama these stories are used as a tool to connect the students with the inner, archetypical depths.

The students never hear the stories to the end. Before a possible climax the psychologist stops and invites the students to imagine how the story might develop. What will happen, after the boat capsizes? Apollo accuses Hermes of lying? A gruesome monster enters the house or the storm comes up? Lying on their backs the students imagine, how the story might continue. Afterwards they work with their endings. They might draw their conclusion on a piece of paper or do a short drama in sub-groups. Their drawings are then discussed, interpreted and linked to their personal challenges and situation in school. When the students chose to dramatize their endings, their performances are video-taped, viewed and connected to their specific problems and challenges. The psychologists act as interpreter. They try to make the students aware of the unconscious messages and mythic patterns, which are revealed in their dramas and drawings. What does it mean, when they imagine, that they confront dangers by the use of music or by engaging in a dance? What myth are they

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<sup>4</sup> Büttner, Christian (Ed.). *Zauber, Magie und Rituale. Pädagogische Botschaften in Märchen und Mythen*. München, 1985: Kösel.

rehearsing, when they dream of blowing up the school? The drama and drawings are read on symbolical level. It is very unlikely, that the student's intention is to turn their school into shambles. By imaging a blow up, they are relating an archetypical story. The restricted, highly coded environment of their school breeds a liberation myth. They imagine themselves as heroes, scarifying themselves for freedom or fighters against evil oppressors. On a more banal level: Maybe they are under the impression that the teachers are not really listening to them or are ignorant. The blow up scene shows, that the students are full of anger. Be it drawings or drama: the endings of the students contain valuable information on the psychological situation of the class and offer indications, on what the next step could be. Imagination is possible, because the stories, myths with which the students are confronted, contain symbols and archetypical scenes. By allowing the students to fantasize, one gets a clearer picture of the complexes, fears, myths and the group dynamics in school. Mythodrama offers a vessel for imagination. On the basis of their fantasies and endings new solutions can be sought and concrete changes implemented.<sup>5</sup>

Imagination and education: a contradiction?

Back to Woodstock High in Connecticut: "*If you allow students to imagine, chaos is the result.*" concluded the principal of this American High School. His impression was, that we have to prevent students to use their imagination unrestrictedly. If we allow students to dream up their life by themselves, they might come up with "*drugs, sex and rock n' roll.*" According to him it is our duty as parent or teacher to safe guard our children. We have to *protect* them from their own abysmal fantasies and ideas. According to his point of view it is naïve believe, that imagination is a source of creative ideas and impulses. Psychologists might believe this fallacy, the facts of life tell a different story. Is imagination and education a contradiction?

In order to find an answer to that question we have to identify the root metaphors of education. On what ideas is education based on. "The greatest and best thoughts of man shape themselves .. upon primordial images as a blueprint."<sup>6</sup> Education's aim is to help children to acquire knowledge and competences. As teachers it is our duty to train the children to read, write and

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<sup>5</sup> As part of three year research project founded by the Axel Johnson Foundation in Stockholm mythdramatic crisis intervention where performed in the U.S., Sweden, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, which were confronted with violence and aggression. Among the schools chosen for intervention was Woodstock High in Connecticut: Guggenbühl, A., Hersberger, K. Rom, T. & Boström. P. : Helping schools in Crisis. *A Scientific Evaluation of the Mythodramatic Intervention Approach in Swiss and Swedish School*. Zürich 2006: Edition IKM

<sup>6</sup> C.G. Jung. CW 7, para 109

introduce them into traditions of our culture. Teachers need to convey their students the *basic skills*, which are needed to survive and be successful in our society. Without education children would be helpless, disorientated and dependable. Schools in calculate children, so they will develop into self-reliant, confident and capable men and women. As educators we try to help the next generation, so they can integrate into society and live a happy and fulfilled life.

The aim of education is to guide and concoct the next generation. Due to the efforts of education children and juveniles obtain knowledge and competences, gain an individual profile. Education perceives students as *malleable*. Most educational approaches assert that it is *education* that makes us what we are. The older generation passes knowledge on and encourages the younger generation, to set goals, develop ambitions and make decisions. Children and juveniles therefore have to be *led* by grown ups, which possess knowledge and are aware of the risks of life. They have an idea, what profile is desirable.

Which goals have to be achieved is decided by the schools in cooperation with the educational boards, commissions or educational specialist. It is their task is to describe *goals, standards* and provide the students with *surroundings*, which enhances the learning process. Standards are introduced in order to define the average skills and knowledge, which are expected from a student of a particular age group. School set the goals, which students should achieve, be it understanding a reading text, writing an essay or pursuing a learning task autonomously. Such standards are often insensitive to the psychological needs of students.<sup>7</sup> We want the students to abide to these standards and stick to our goals. *Accountability* is a key word. With the help of curricula and test batteries schools try increase the level of knowledge and skills among students. In some countries a national curricula helps to clarify the goals of education and boost the level of knowledge and skills.

In order to reach these goals education tries to define *concrete objectives*. In the German speaking world teachers and professors refer to the "*Stoff*" (essence/material), when they describe their endeavours. *Stoff* consists of the program, the curricula and knowledge. It is viewed as something *factual*, more than a mental image or entity that can serve various purposes. When educators talk about *Stoff* the common association is of a heap of material, which gradually accumulates in the heads of the students. The information the students are given should be understood and then piled up in an orderly way, so any item can be extracted at any time. Of course this knowledge can be obtained in various ways. Current educational approaches emphasize, that the students themselves decide how they want to learn. The teacher's task is to keep the

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<sup>7</sup> Mayes, Clifford: *Jung and Education. Elements of an Archetypical Pedagogy*. Lanham 2005, p. 98: Rowman & Littlefield.

material attainable and mentor the learning process. The student will have to rely on his *Stoff*, when he is confronted with the respective challenges or problems. Test-batteries and standards should guarantee, that a student reaches the defined levels. Education is founded on the idea, that the process of attainment of knowledge and skills can be *manipulated* or even *controlled*. Educators have an impact on children. They can influence his future profile and personality traits.<sup>8</sup>

Because of these dictums teachers have the duty to *qualify* their students. Part of their agenda is to predict, how successful a student will be and to distinguish the more intelligent from the intellectually challenged, the dunce from the genius. Knowledge and competences can only be transmitted under certain conditions. Teachers discriminate on the ground of standards: norms, which define the level of quality, which has to be reached, in order to stay at a certain school. The purpose of standards is to make students excel. Standards and Norms are of course also a power tool. Because of test and comparisons students can be *relegated* from school or allocated to special classes. The educators are able to exercise *control* and decide the fate of students, who hold an ambivalent stance toward modern schooling. It allows them to exercise control and implement their standards, all in the name of survival in some future society.

Education is a *noble assignment*. Contrary to businessmen or bankers self description teachers point out, that money is not their key objective. They choose to work with children, because they feel it is a *valuable deed*. Students becoming teachers repeatedly affirm, that they want to dedicate themselves to children, because they wish to engage in something *useful*. By choosing the teachers profession they distance themselves from the industrial, economical complex. The majority of teachers believe, that they honestly care about children and their future. They define their work as a task, more than just a job. Their work is founded on *ideals*<sup>9</sup> And their self-image is auspicious.

Some educators might even believe to be fulfilling a *mission*, a honourable, virtuous, magnanimous assignment. *Jean Jacques Rousseau*'s aim was to free children from the oppressive influence of bourgeois society. Back to nature was his message. *J. H. Pestalozzi* propagated the intimate, personal relationship between educator and child as a remedy against crime and depravation. Hapless children would turn into self-confident grown-ups, if they found a loving and demanding adult.<sup>10</sup> Finally *Alexander Neil* proposed, that the abolishment of authority would prevent children to become neurotic.<sup>11</sup> The root metaphor of

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<sup>8</sup> Mallet, Carl-Heinz (1987). *Untertan Kind*. München: Huber

<sup>9</sup> von Hentig, Hartmut (1993). *Die Schule neu denken*. München: Hanser

<sup>10</sup> Pestalozzi, Heinrich (1927): Wie Getrud ihre Kinder lehrt. In: Buchenau u.a. (Ed.) *Pestalozzi's sämtliche Werke*, Berlin 1927, p. 3 – 23.

<sup>11</sup> Neil, A.S. (1969) : Summerhill, *A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*. New York: Hart

education is the adult, who is commissioned to induce or coerce the child or adolescent, so it will develop positively. The idea of education is based in the belief, that we can turn this world into a better place, if we are willing to sacrifice time and energy to children and of course adhere to the right ideology.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Myth of the innocent child*

Professions should not be reduced to competences and knowledge alone. A profession can also be the expression of a psychological attitude. The core of a profession can be distinct *psychic pattern*, which develops in interaction to the challenge or task that metier is responsible for. When we follow a vocation, then we gradually incorporate that approach to life. We begin to perceive the world and our challenges through the eyes of our line of work. We set our priorities and define our values according to the blueprint of the chosen profession. We become policepersons, bankers, traders, builder, soldiers or farmers. As a policeman we see culprits, felonies and people breaking the law. Right and wrong is our point of reference. We develop a sense for justice, seek clarity and try to act persistently. We might also be a bit naïve and have a tendency to reduce complex issues to simple facts. In Jungian terms the blueprint of a profession can be understood as an archetype. The archetype serves as the template of the specific profession. When we become member of a profession we gradually immerse in its psychology and draw energy from the dominating archetype. It defines values, influences the perception and has specific myths to relate. In order to understand a profession on a deeper level, this archetypical background has to be identified. This is also important for education. Education is not just a job but also an archetypical pattern. Generally without realizing it we are loaded with the historical, ontogenetic meanings of that profession and live the myths, which its archetype produces. When we join a professional group, we unconsciously become promoters of an archetype. It's psychological background becomes personal and defines our approach to life.

By studying the wording and declared aims of education why can identify the archetypical pattern of education. By examining it's rhetoric, values and goals, we might recognize the psychological complex, which is prevalent. In education we can observe *two tendencies*. As mentioned *standards, qualifications, testing, accountability and time-out* are emphasized. These words indicate, that performance is crucial. Schools define the criteria's by which you belong to their institution. Their task is to draw a line. Students should comply to goals of education. Teachers have the power to value the performances, developments and profiles of the students. It is their duty to distinguish between desired and unwanted processes. These words indicate, that *controlling* is important.

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<sup>12</sup> Enzelberger, Sabine (2001) :*Die Sozialgeschichte des Lehrerberufs*. München: Weinheim

Education tries to constrain activities, which might get out of hand. It should exclude unacceptable tendencies. "In the field of education... individuals are storage tanks for information, .. nature (the gods) provide nothing."<sup>13</sup> Order is decisive. *Standards, testing, qualifications, accountability and time-out* serve as tools to avoid chaos. A second observation can be made. Education has an aptness for *idealistic wordings and settings*. Currently in education *self-management, the natural environment, self-accountability and personal responsibility* are key words. The student is defined as an individual, who theoretically is motivated to learn and is capable to choose the right goal. Education believes in the good. It wants to encourage students, to follow their genuine calling. According to their view, if students listen to themselves, they can discover their *true* potential. Educators are responsible for the right environment and the appropriate stimuli, in order to enhance this process. This way student might discover their true callings. Deep down they are eager to learn and are thankful for efforts of the grown up. The student is basically seen as a highly spirited, unspoiled being, which could be formatted by the grown ups, is he is protected from bad influences and exposed to the right 'Stoff'.

The archetypical pattern, on which education is based on, is that of the *innocent, compassionate and obedient child*. It is the image of the child, which is open, genuinely interested, honest and less corrupted than grown ups. According to this image the child should by heart be able to differentiate between good and bad, has a potential to re-create and purify its surroundings. If the development of the child is well protected and he or she is confronted with valuable materials, then there is hope for change in our society. The child brings us message, if we are willing to take care and protect it. Because of its attitude and profile it is eager to absorb our cultural legacies. We can pass on our knowledge, but of course carefully excluding vile contents. Shadow issues have no place in schooling. Schools should be a safe havens, where the attainment of good is possible. By following our guidance and positively engaging in the learning process the student can develop to what he genuinely could be. If he absorbs our *Stoff* willingly, this will enhance his personality. Abysmal desires, vile drives and shady fantasies will lose their attraction. According to this myth the student has either self-cleansed himself from vile desires or was able to guard his initial innocence. Education builds on the purity and integrity of the students. It has difficulty in accepting other motives. If we study the rules and regulations, which are imposed in schools in Switzerland and Germany, the tendency is clear: Activities and interests, which are considered normal outside the school setting, are tagged and punished. Students are not allowed to use bad-words, to insult each other, to be distracted, enjoy violence or express sexual fantasies. It is strictly forbidden to use cell-phones in schools, because students might down-

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<sup>13</sup> Nixon, Greg: Education as a Mythic Image (2002): *Spring* 69, Woodstock. CT. p. 105: Spring Publications

load pornographic pictures; if students use bad language, they are immediately punished and numerous efforts are being made in order to prevent students to stop bullying each other, usually a prerequisite for a successful career in business or academia. Everything abysmal should be left in front of the school gates. In school itself the student should experience an ideal model of society. Because of the image of the innocent child we are shocked when we hear of school violence or power plays.<sup>14</sup>

This myth has a long tradition. In 1687 the French priest Fénelon wrote a widely acclaimed essay on the purpose of the education. He argued, that the main purpose of education was to *protect* the innocent souls of the young children. Children should be fenced off from the evil influences of society, so that they could blossom and develop their *own inner potential*.<sup>15</sup> Sensuality and worldly distraction were considered devious. Children could become spoiled, when they are confronted too much with the inner self and the joys of life. The Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau argued in the *Emile ou l'éducation* on similar lines.<sup>16</sup> He proposed to insulate children. He suggested an education in a natural environment, beyond the demonic influences of the bourgeois society. If a child would listen to himself, then it could identify its genuine desires. It would not be sidetracked by vile, superficial and materialistic needs. The Reformpädagogik was founded on a similar idea. Starting from Ellen Kays<sup>17</sup> appeal to define children as artist to Paul Gehebs dream of a society, where children were educated in secluded forest schools, so they would develop into new human beings (*école d'humanité*).<sup>18</sup> The prevailing idea was that education's main task was to help children develop what they genuinely were. The belief was, that it was life, the vile world that corrupted and distracted children. If we provide children with a surrounding and a well-defined setting, they could unfold their true potential. It was the educators' responsibility to protect children from bad influences. In order to enhance this natural process, the students should only be confronted with specially selected materials. Learning materials should be morally cleansed, bowdlerized.

Viewed from an archetypical perspective the school as institution can be seen as a defence system, fortresses against the evilness of human beings. Education is an effort, to hinder insane and base ideas to enter the heads of the future

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<sup>14</sup> Boas, Georg (1966) *The cult of Childhood*. Dallas: Spring Publications

<sup>15</sup> Osterwalder, Fritz: Die Sprache des Herzens. Konstituierung und Transformation der theologischen Sprache der Pädagogik. In: Casale, R., Tröhler, D, Oelkers, J. (Ed.) *Methoden und Kontexte. Historiographische Probleme in der Bildungsforschung*. Göttingen 2006, p. 155. Wallstein

<sup>16</sup> Rousseau, J.- J.: *Emil oder Ueber die Erziehung*. Paderborn 1985

<sup>17</sup> Key, Ellen: *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*. Berlin 1902

<sup>18</sup> Geheeb, Paul: Rede zur Eröffnung der Odenwaldschule. In: Carrirer u. a. (Ed.). *Die Idee einer Schule im Spiegel der Zeit – 40 Jahre Odenwaldschule*. Heidelberg, 1950

generation. The insistence on the correct learning material - the Stoff - is an attempt to control the influences children are exposed too. Educators wish to determine what enters the mind of children, so their endeavours are not jeopardized. Standards turn out to be shields against the quack mire around us. Curricula's an attempt to expound what is allowed to enter.

Children need our guidance and love. Also it is our duty to protect them. What the educational approach fails to realize though, is that children carry within themselves the capability to uncover a lot more aspects of life, than we imagine. They are born with the competence to *psychologize*. From early on they begin to suspect ulterior motives behind the behaviour of their parents, siblings or relatives. They fantasize about what could be behind the friendly smiles and convivial words. They suspect hidden intentions in their parent's behaviour and soon are able to decode and perform mimicry. Children are not born as tabula rasa or naive beings, but with the inert capability to interpret and see through the behaviours of their parents, spouse, relatives, friends and teachers.<sup>19</sup> They intuitively and by observation discover the dark side of life. They connect to the *shadow*, which we all have in ourselves and often guides our actions. Education is therefore not just about the transmittance of knowledge, competences and the good. The effects are multi-layered, paradoxical, difficult to preconceive or rationally identified. Education remains a *psychological process*.<sup>20</sup> The question is though, what impact the image of the innocent child has on the children. The problem with the myth of the innocent child is, that it is one-sided. The shadow is excluded. Students are not just interested in the idealized aspect of our life. Like all human beings they are intrigued the shadow issues. They confronted with each other with all their complexes, dreams, fantasies and attitudes. Students realize, that the image of the innocent child is a projection. The students begin to perceive education as separated from 'real life.' Children are not just a product of education, but carry within them a blueprint. Intuitively they seek out, what is in the world. Psychologically the projection of the innocent child is unbearable for them. Instinctively they realize that it is one sided and psychologically false. When education excludes shadow issues, students try to compensate this fallacy. They do the contrary from what we tell them. We warn them from drinking and of course they begin to turn to booze, as soon as they can get hold of alcohol. When we praise reading and sensible activities, they spend their time with ego-shooters.

## **The power of imagination**

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<sup>19</sup> Plonim, R & Daniels, D.(1987): *Genetics and experience: The Interplay between Nature and Nurture*. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage

<sup>20</sup> Guggenbühl, Allan (2003). *Die Pisa-Falle*. Freiburg i. B.: Herder

Imagination detects hidden caves. We transcend the boundaries of our conscious, ego-world. We envisage scenes, which we cognitively might not have identified. Imagination connects with unconscious topics. We sense issues, which are buried in our personal or the collective unconscious<sup>21</sup>. What we suppress, consider politically incorrect or filthy is uncovered. Shadow issues are detected. Often the contents of our imaginations are obscene. We indulge in the myths and the stories, which are lurking around us. Because imagination is basically an unconsciousness process, it presents us with perspectives, which are not part of school curricula and contradict the idealized perception of the educational process.

Students realize, that education offers them a one-sided entrance into the world, psychologically they are being fenced off. They possess other, powerful tools to understand and connect to the world.<sup>22</sup> If we allow students to imagine, these capabilities are activated. Imagination opens up. Children then can approach their surroundings with help of their inert *psychological faculties*. These abide to rules, which are generally *not* reflected by education. They perceive the world around them not just the way it is tagged by education, but also as perilous, obscure, threatening and full of dangerous seductions. The world around can be a source for inspirations and suspicions. Children tune into the collective unconscious and understand their fellow beings and civilisation from *inside out*. They are endowed with dispositions, which allow them to construct their own version of life and see through the masquerade.<sup>23</sup> These capabilities manifest themselves in spontaneous psychic activities. When they begin to imagine, then their whole inner soul potential reveals itself. Imagination ignores educational standards and political correctness. The control mechanism of education loses their power. Not what is correct or acceptable is fantasized, but what is psychologically induced. When children imagine, then they react to seductions, complexes, hysterias and repressed topics around them. They draw in the world around them and create images, which reflect the ambiguities and monstrosity of their environment.

This capability to *imagine* is vital. By developing their own pictures and scenes, children get an in depth perspective of what is happening in and around them. Their consciousness enlarges and they might even leave the restricted view education presents them. Small children fantasize, that the big black wolf might hide under their bed. They are scared and might even scream. This reaction indicates, that they are connecting into unconsciousness. When parents pacify their sons and daughters and try to persuade them, that the big black wolf is fiction, psychologically they are *lying*. Of course the big black wolf exists! He

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<sup>21</sup> Hollis, James (2000): *The Archetypal Imagination*. College Station: Texas MA & University Press.

<sup>22</sup> Gardner, H. (1995). *The Unschooled Mind*. New York: Perseus Books.

<sup>23</sup> Hillman, James (1996). *The Soul's Code*. New York: Random house.

is a symbol for our shadow, dark motives or vicious endeavours. By imagining the wolf the child connects with a psychological reality. It creates or quotes an image, which encapsulate an important psychological insight. By imagining the big black wolf the child gains consciousness and psychological insight.

Education follows a different agenda. It is an attempt to design the world according to idealistic concepts and goals. What students connect to intuitively through their capacity to imagine *threatens* the school setting. Students might lose their innocence and fail to comply with standards. Psychological realities have to be ignored, because they might irritate the educational undertaking. Ideals, standards, the Stoff and goals serve as defence mechanism. Students of course sense this orientation immediately. They realise, that in order to be successful in an educational environment they need to turn a blind eye to nonconforming realities and fascinations. One should not be perturbed by alternative insights, is what any educational setting conveys. Students are successful, when they identify with this school complex. An extraverted, sensational attitude is the best way to cope with the presented tasks.<sup>24</sup> If analytical thinking is demanded, then the successful students rehearses critical thinking, if knowledge is wanted, then the student puts on a scholarly attitude and if a social competences are on the list, then the intelligent students chooses the right words. Abysmal, unwanted drives, fascinations and dreams have to be repressed. The majority of students abide to these rules. They adapt to the system, keeping their dreams and fascination to themselves. In order to attain a favourable position in society or just to be let alone, they close themselves in. Imagination, which might uncover embarrassing insights and ideas, is certainly not on the agenda. Because imagination might lead to dark caves and unpleasant scenes, it is wise to ignore it. Adaptation to the system is the key word. The bizarre ideas and images, which imagination produce, might lead to confusion.

## Conclusions

In our mytheadramatic crisis interventions it became apparent, that regular schooling and imagination contradicts each other. When students are allowed to imagine, this brings an uncontrollable element into the school complex. Especially when students envisage obscene or violent scenes, this was considered as dangerous and threatening by the teachers. According to our experience their identification with the core myth of the innocent and immaculate child hindered them to recognize the psychological value of bizarre images. The images, they students produced, were understood literally. When they were fantasizing and playing hijacking a school bus in order to blow up their school, the majority of educators were shocked. They feared they were

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<sup>24</sup> Neville, B. (2005). *Educating Psyche: Emotion, imagination and the unconscious in learning*. Greensborough, Australia: Flat Chat Press.

witnessing a heinous schema or that the students were given bad ideas. Most teachers did not read the scenes on the symbolic level, but understood the playing and the fantasies of their students concretely. It was difficult to persuade the teachers, that the imagined scenes were an attempt by the students to connect to ubiquitous fear and anger. The students were not preparing an attack, but trying to cope with a psychological dimension in their lives. Their imaginations were an *antidote* to the nice putted environment educators wanted to create and the image of the innocent child. By imagining horror they were trying to initiate themselves into the abysmal ups. They were trying to connect to complexes, which they felt belonged to our lives.

Instead of hindering students to imagine, schools should offer vessels, where imaginations are possible. As imagination connects us with deeper, even archetypical realities it might lead to places, which are unknown to us. Jung wrote, that *Katabasis*, the descent into the underworld, is necessary for psychospiritual maturation.<sup>25</sup> All energy “can only proceed from the tension of the opposites.”<sup>26</sup> According to our experience and the scientific evaluation of the crisis interventions done in Sweden, Switzerland and the U.S., imagination can even be a tool to solve conflicts. Imagination makes the psychological background of conflicts accessible. The detour into a virtual world can help students to be psychologically grounded. Imaging horror and working through horrifying scenes can be a relief, because the shadow is not excluded. When students express their fantasies in a civilised way, it helps them to understand themselves. They connect to the shadow, which is paramount; influencing their thoughts and behaviour. They relate to the matrix, which breeds socially inappropriate emotions and fantasies. The imaginations should not be understood literally. They have to be interpreted on a *symbolic level*. The products of the students often contain hints, on how a sensitive issue or a difficult situation in school can be tackled. By producing inappropriate, appalling scenes the students were unconsciously appealing to the teachers, to help them integrate and relate to the complexes, which the school setting is trying to shut out.

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<sup>25</sup> CW 15, par. 213

<sup>26</sup> CW 7, para. 34

Script to an article printed in:  
Jones Raya et al. (Eds.) (2008) Education and imagination. New York:  
Routledge