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Trends. Troubles: The Northern Ireland Settlement

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Analysis of the recent "landmark settlement" on Northern Ireland forged by various factions of Catholics and Protestants from Northern Ireland, the national leaderships of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and at least two United States interlocutors (mainly, George Mitchell, occasionally, President Bill Clinton) can take two different stances: the same two stances that seem to have characterized the human condition throughout history.

The more common is the Apollonian: a rational, logical, systematic, formal treatment of text with the ultimate goal of harmony. This stance explicates, parses, and interprets features of the settlement's Northern Ireland Assembly, North-South Ministerial Council, Council of the Isles, removal of the Republic of Ireland's territorial claim on Northern Ireland, and general modification of political infrastructure. It also features formal models of fairness--equality and equity--and justice--substantive and procedural--as applied to the settlement's text. Troubles in reaching consensus and reducing conflict through the Apollonian stance include degrees of incompatibility of different belief systems, modes of logic, semantic attributions, and other varieties of social cognition.

The less common stance is the Dionysian: an Apollonian subverted with emotion, impression, instinct, and subconscious dynamics. This stance often underlies the Apollonian and may often be more powerful concerning cooperation and/or conflict. Examples include continuing to fight because (1) one knows only one life and does not care to know another; (2) aggression has taken an ascendant role within the psyche; (3) material and social status will be lost if peace holds; (4) the need for vengeance from proximal and distal inequities of the present and past does not abate; and (5) there is acting out of intrapsychic conflict so common in the political environment. The Dionysian subsumes a powerful subtext less analyzed, less amenable to analysis and modification, but more likely to threaten and destroy even a majority's hopes for peace.

As this article is being written, the Republic of Ireland's Parliament has almost unanimously approved the settlement--setting the stage for a referendum on the settlement within the Republic. Sinn Fein has not formally declared a position--perhaps it will support the settlement in Northern Ireland but not in the Irish Republic. The Ulster Unionist Party has formally come out in favor of the settlement. Other parties and factions probably will ensure that there will be a referendum in Northern Ireland. However, the real scorecard will track not votes, nor accounts of violence by so-called extremists bent on sabotaging the settlement, but murky psychological dynamics that may be misperceived even by their possessors. (See Clarity, J. (April 23, 1998). Irish Parliament gives near-unanimous approval to peace accord. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Hoge, W. (April 19, 1998). Ulster peace accord wins backing of Protestant party. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Mette, A. (1934). Zur psychologie des Dionysischen. *Imago*, 20, 191-218; Stevens, A. (1995). Jungian approach to human aggression with special emphasis on war. *Aggressive Behavior*, 21, 3-11; Stein, S.M. (1996). Psychopathy: The legacy of apartheid. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*, 4, 41-54; Text of the agreement on Northern Ireland. (April 11, 1998). *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.) (Keywords: Apollonian, Dionysian, Negotiations, Northern Ireland, Peace Agreement, Political Psychology.)