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Opening of the Way Through Dreams--An Inner Journey

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**OPENING OF THE WAY THROUGH DREAMS--
AN INNER JOURNEY**

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Culminating Project Presented to the
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Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Art
December 7, 1993

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Abstract

The author and a female client use dreams as the vehicle in counseling, following theoretical and practical considerations outlined by C.G. Jung. Included are discussions of theory, the function of dreams and dream symbols, selected dreams, and the content of some of the sessions. The author and the client met for one hour per week over a period of three months for a total of twelve sessions. Both recorded their impressions and experiences in journals during this period. The results of the counseling sessions validate Jung's thesis--that work with dreams leads to a cooperative alliance between conscious and unconscious psychic processes as well as to increased feelings of emotional stability, freedom, and well-being.

Opening of the Way Through Dreams--

An Inner Journey

Theoretical Considerations

In a short essay from 1938 entitled "Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower,'" C.G. Jung outlined an approach to psychotherapy that has long interested me. The essay is indeed a commentary on an ancient Chinese text but, more importantly, in it Dr. Jung writes about "that secret way" which he had been unconsciously following in his work with his patients. In "The Secret of the Golden Flower" Jung discovered an ancient wisdom that paralleled the psychic development he had observed in many of his patients. About the discovery, Jung wrote (1965):

I devoured the manuscript at once, for the text gave me undreamed-of confirmation of my ideas about the mandala and the circumambulation of the center. That was the first event which broke through my isolation. I became aware of an affinity; I could establish ties with something and someone. (p. 197)

The existence of a parallel between the psychic development of modern people and the content of an ancient Chinese text was no surprise to Jung. He had already demonstrated that there is a common substratum

to the human psyche just as there is to the human body. This commonality exists across cultural and racial boundaries. It can be seen again and again in the various myths, fairy tales, symbols, and modes of communication that emerge in isolated cultures and yet have common, sometimes identical themes. Jung called this substratum or underlying pool of human experience the collective unconscious'. He says, "The collective unconscious is simply the psychic expression of the identity of brain structure irrespective of all racial differences" (1967, p. 11).

We can think of the collective unconscious as "a second psychic system available to all individuals. It is universal, impersonal, and largely inherited. It contains pre-existent forms, or archetypes, which become conscious only in a secondary manner. The archetypes can be thought of as patterns of instinctual behavior" (Friedman, 1990, p. 116).

The intriguing point of Jung's commentary on "The Secret of the Golden Flower" is his description of the psychic development of some of his patients, a development he concluded was rooted in the collective unconscious and, presumably, is the heritage of all humankind. The way to and then through this secret way is, according to Jung, open only to those whose

conscious development has diverged far from its unconscious roots so that an atrophy of instinct has set in. Further, the way may open only when "the laws of the earth are obeyed" (p. 8). For these reasons, Jung felt that this approach is inappropriate for neurotics who already suffer from excessive influence from unconscious forces or for those who have life demands that remain unfinished or unfulfilled. This secret way of development has "scarcely any meaning before the middle of life . . . , and if entered upon too soon can be decidedly injurious" (p. 14).

In a lecture Jung first delivered in 1929, he spoke about the different demands of the first and the second half of life:

It is of the greatest importance for the young person, who is still unadapted and has yet achieved nothing, to shape his conscious ego as effectively as possible, that is, to educate his will. Unless he is a positive genius he cannot, indeed he should not, believe in anything active within him that is not identical with his will. He must feel himself a man of will, and may safely depreciate everything else in him and deem it subject to his will, for without this illusion he could not succeed in adapting himself socially.

It is otherwise with a person in the second half of life who no longer needs to educate his conscious will, but who, to understand the meaning of his individual life, needs to experience his own inner being. Social usefulness is no longer an aim for him, although he does not deny its desirability. Fully aware as he is of the social unimportance of his creative activity, he feels it more as a way of working at himself to his own benefit. Increasingly, too, this activity frees him from morbid dependence, and he thus acquires an inner stability and a new trust in himself.

These last achievements now redound to the good of the patient's social existence; for an inwardly stable and self-confident person will prove more adequate to his social tasks than one who is on a bad footing with his unconscious. (1954, p. 50)

In his autobiography, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, Jung describes his own personal crisis that signaled the end of the will-directed portion of his life. After his break with Freud in 1912:

... a period of inner uncertainty began for me.

It would be no exaggeration to call it a state of disorientation. I felt totally suspended in mid-air, for I had not yet found my own footing.

Above all, I felt it necessary to develop a new attitude toward my patients. I resolved for the present not to bring any theoretical premises to bear upon them, but to wait and see what they would tell of their own accord. My aim became to leave things to chance. (1965, p 170)

His break with Freud led to a feeling of intellectual isolation that lasted until he discovered "The Secret of the Golden Flower" text in 1927 in which he felt he had found corroboration for the secret way he had discovered for himself and in working with his patients.

After the now-celebrated Freud-Jung break, Jung began to experiment with himself, to let himself happen in an undirected "leave it to chance" kind of way. He returned to activities of play he had enjoyed as a child. He preoccupied himself with his own dreams, fantasies, and waking visions. During this period Jung withdrew from his academic post as a professor, left his job at the Burgholzli Clinic in Zurich, and resigned from his position as President of the International Psychoanalytic Association. He moved with his family into a house in Kunznacht and set up a private practice in the home (Wehr, 1987).

Only several years later, between 1918 and 1920,

did Jung begin to understand that the apparently random process he and his patients were undergoing had a goal—the goal of psychic development, the realization of the self (p. 196). For Jung, the self is a full expression of a person's individuality and personality (Samuels, Shorter, and Plaut, 1986). It "embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of the conscious mind" (p. 135).

What is this secret way that leads to the realization of the self? It has little or nothing to do with solutions to problems. Indeed Jung concluded that "all the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble" (Jung, 1967, p. 15). His patients slowly and quietly began to grow into a new level of consciousness where they were able to place their problems and their emotional upsets in a larger context so that their importance diminished. Something new came into their lives that "In no case was ... conjured into existence intentionally or by conscious willing, but rather seemed to be borne along on the stream of time" (p. 16).

This way required inaction (*wu wei* or the Taoist idea of action through non-action). When Jung's patients learned to let spontaneous fantasies happen,

they were allowing the psyche to unfold unimpeded. This openness to the autonomous psyche was the essential thing; above all, it required a hands-off approach from Jung. He was simply present and watched the unfolding psyche along with his patients. He would have his patients report dreams and fantasies, asking them only questions like, "What occurs to you in connection with that?" or "How do you mean that, where does that come from, what do you think about it?" (1965, p. 170). He soon concluded that interpreting the dreams in this way was the best way to proceed since dreams represent facts. This work with his patients was a slow, unfolding examination of these facts.

Eventually Jung began to see that with this method his patients learned to accept those things that came to them rather than use their conscious ego judgment and will to sort out of the flow of events everything that did not fit some preconceived pattern or framework deemed "acceptable." This secret way led his patients to learn to live so that "conscious and unconscious demands are taken into account as far as possible" until: ... the centre of gravity of the total personality shifts its position. It is then no longer in the

ego, which is merely the centre of consciousness, but in the hypothetical point between conscious and unconscious. This new centre might be called the self. If the transposition is successful, it does away with the *participation mystique* (1967, p. 45).

Participation mystique is a phrase Jung uses to describe an unconscious identity between subject and object. The hallmark of such a condition is projection and introjection. Today we would use terms like "boundary issues" or "undifferentiated portions of personality."

Certain dream and fantasy symbols serve as expressions that "symbolize an attitude that is beyond the reach of emotional entanglements and violent shocks--a consciousness detached from the world. I have reasons for believing that this attitude sets in after middle life and is a natural preparation for death. Death is psychologically as important as birth and, like it, is an integral part of life" (p. 46). The onset of this attitude marks the dissolution of the *participation mystique*.

Jung refused to speculate on the fate of the detached consciousness after death except to point out that a view holding up immortality as the goal is:

... in harmony with the religious thought of all ages and with that of the overwhelming majority of mankind. Anyone who thought differently would be standing outside the human order and would, therefore, be suffering from a disturbed psychic equilibrium. As a doctor, I make every effort to strengthen the belief in immortality, especially with older patients when such questions come threateningly close. (p. 46)

Perhaps a short digression about the role of symbols would be helpful since dreams can function to bring symbols of many kinds into our waking awareness. In general a symbol (1) points beyond itself to something else, (2) participates in that which it points to, (3) opens up levels of reality otherwise closed to us, (4) opens up levels within us that correspond to outer reality, (5) cannot be produced intentionally, and (6) grows and dies (Tillich, 1957).

Of course, what we are talking about is the development of a religious attitude in a person. By "religious attitude" Jung did not necessarily mean "religion" or even "spirituality." Rather such an attitude develops in individuals "toward whatever has impressed a person sufficiently so that he is moved to worship, obedience, reverence and love" (Samuels,

Shorter, and Plaut, 1987 p. 130). Obviously, however, if nothing has moved a person to such an extreme degree, there is no need or impetus for developing such an attitude.

Jung felt that people are by their instinctual nature prone to be religious, that the instinct toward religion is as powerful as that toward sex or aggression. Atrophy or distortion of instinctual drives occurs in the religious area just as it does in other areas.

Jung always stressed working with his patients in an ordinary, down-to-earth manner, dealing with feelings, dreams, and fantasies as they came up in the process. He felt that everything is relevant: "In the living psychic structure, nothing takes place in a merely mechanical fashion; everything fits into the economy of the whole, relates to the whole. That is to say, it is all purposeful and has meaning" (1965, p. 246). What he discovered happened when he and his patients followed a natural unfolding of the psyche is that they began to experience "a sort of release from the compulsion and impossible responsibility" that is the natural result of a consciousness identified with its contents, the condition Jung described as *participation mystique*.

Personal Appeal to this Theoretical Approach

As a beginning counselor well into mid-life, I am drawn to Jung's ideas for two reasons. First, I was introduced to his way of thinking and to the therapeutic process he describes when I entered a period of confusion and disorientation several years ago. My personal experience, although ineffable and difficult to explain, confirmed for me that there is a way that can bring about a feeling of inner stability and self-confidence. This state is accompanied by a degree of freedom and detachment from concerns that at one time were conflictory and emotion-laden for me.

The second reason is that Jung's way of working with clients requires less reliance on theories and techniques of psychotherapy and more reliance on an accepting, patient attitude coupled with some understanding of literature, philosophy, the history of religions, and mythology. An accepting, patient attitude is a natural development of several decades of living and a lot of work to understand and conform to the demands of both my outer and my inner life. A life-long love of reading and an innate curiosity about the world have led me to a broad-based, if somewhat undisciplined, liberal education.

Whether my understanding about myself and my life

is "true" in any absolute sense is irrelevant to me. What is important is that I believe the events and seeming dead ends in my past were actually purposeful and meaningful--precisely those that were necessary to bring me to this point. This belief or set of beliefs arose in me out of my work with dreams and my reflections and thoughts about the symbols and stories that were parts of dreams. In the sixth decade of my life, I am a great deal more interested in what works than I am in what is "true."

Norma--the Client

It was this attraction to Jung's intellectual ideas coupled with my own personal experience with his psychotherapeutic approach that made me eager to work with someone ripe for a similar approach. My idea to work with Norma grew out of two conversations we had. She knew of my interest in dreams and sought me out to tell me two dreams. Her intrigue with the dreams was heightened because, as she put it, she "never dreams." I told Norma of my desire to work with someone, using a rather unorthodox approach, as part of the required practicum hours for my master's degree in counseling. I suggested that we meet for twelve one-hour sessions, each of us keeping a journal describing our experience. My thought was that this culminating project might grow

out of our "experiment."

Norma agreed to the proposal with the proviso that we start in plenty of time and that we not be locked into the sessions as part of a culminating project. Dr. Pam Nickels, my advisor in the Lindenwood Counseling Program, approved the project as part of my practicum. She cautioned us not to share our journals with each other until after we had completed our twelve sessions. [The original "Practicum Proposal" is included as an Appendix to this paper.]

At the outset I knew a few bare facts about Norma. She was married and the mother of adult children. Her oldest grandson, a child of six, had serious health problems which continued to threaten his life. Norma had quit her job at a bank about two months prior to our beginning this project. I knew Norma was interested and active in social and charitable causes. I had met Norma when I worked on a charity benefit committee which she and her husband chaired.

One of the reasons I was delighted that Norma agreed to this project was that I viewed her as someone representative of the type of client I want eventually to work with, i.e., people interested in self-exploration and personal growth; people who are highly-functional and seemingly have fulfilled societal

obligations and are seeking a deeper meaning for their existence than their experiences have brought them.

The Sessions with Norma

Norma brought this dream to our first session:

I was John Smith's second wife. Mary, his first wife, was there, but I was taken on as a second wife to care for the new baby. It was a beautiful child, and I was responsible for it completely. We were always walking in water in the dream. It was difficult, with an element of danger from what I don't know, but John always knew the way. The water came right up to the front door of our house. Every place we went we walked in water to get there. There were huge tarantulas that lived under the water that were frightening, but they didn't come near me or the baby. It seemed that we always had to be walking, but I don't know what the destination was. I was tired but I had to take care of this baby and find food for it and feed it when I really wanted to rest. I remember thinking as I fed the baby how beautiful it was to look at, and it really wasn't bad to do this.

In keeping with Jung's approach, I simply elicited Norma's thoughts and connections to the dream story and images. Her associations:
The Smith Couple--He, organized, knows where he is

going just as he did in the dream when he acted as guide. She, bright, intelligent, "all over the place," exact opposite of him.

Tarantulas--When she was a kid, tarantulas were thought to be deadly. Now she knows they are not nearly that dangerous. They were clearly visible but "just below the surface."

Baby--Cute, adorable. To my question, "What in you is about five months old, what was born in you about five months ago," Norma responded, "This urge to explore some of these inner issues."

Much came out in the hour. Norma articulated what it is she was seeking. As she put it, she had thoroughly explored her "house" but had never dared look into the "basement." Now she was ready, indeed had an inner compulsion to look into what she had stuffed into her basement. She felt her unresolved issues centered around her early life and her relationship with her alcoholic father. The little girl in her still had not forgiven him. Now she was finding that after a lifetime of consciously choosing never to be like him, she found she sometimes was and couldn't help it.

In the hour, I said little. I had lots of thought about the dream, most of which I kept to myself. I

know that for effective work with dreams, it is what the dreamer understands, what he/she does with the dream and how he/she is affected by the dream that count. Jung wrote that his experience taught him that:

... all coercion--be it suggestion, insinuation, or any other method of persuasion--ultimately proves to be nothing but an obstacle to the highest and most decisive experience of all, which is to be alone with his own self, or whatever else one chooses to call the objectivity of the psyche. The patient must be alone if he is to find out what it is that supports him when he can no longer support himself. Only this experience can give him an indestructible foundation. (1968, pp. 27-28)

I believed that almost anything I suggested or any influence I had on Norma would get in the way of her eventual need for being alone with herself. This being present but doing nothing is what Jung called "wu wei," action through non-action.

My ideas about the dream included the following: The *child* in a dream has an extremely important symbolic meaning and has been researched extensively. For example, Cirlot says that the *child* represents: ... formative forces of the unconscious of a

beneficent and protective kind. Psychologically speaking, the child is of the soul--the product of the *coniunctio* between the unconscious and consciousness: one dreams of a child when some great spiritual change is about to take place under favourable circumstances. (1962, p. 45)

Another researcher writes: "The symbol of the child points to something new and future-oriented; it can have a religious meaning; and finally it can symbolize creative possibilities" (Asper, 1992, p. vii). I took it as a hopeful sign that this person who "never dreams" brought this dream image to our first session.

The meaning of the *tarantulas* was transparent from Norma's associations about them. Whatever had been threatening and dangerous when Norma was a child was now depotentiated and very near to awareness, i.e., just below the surface (of the water). *Water*, like the *child*, is another symbol with a fairly universal and highly-charged meaning. Like the sea which is the source of all life, water symbolizes the unconscious which is the source of all psychological or conscious life.

About the couple named Smith, I relied primarily on Norma's associations also. From the little I knew

about Norma, she could be very focused and directed, like John. On the other hand, she had the capacity to be "all over the place," like Mary. Two seemingly contradictory and opposite states within Norma, a coupling, had given birth to this third thing, the child or the new development.

The fact that Norma had to care for the child, that they were always walking but with no known destination spoke directly to the psychological state Norma described for herself. Walking always in the water would indicate that her standpoint, (i.e., where she was connected to the earth, took up her position), vis-a-vis this new development was still unconscious, outside ego awareness.

After the first session, Norma wrote in her journal:

When I left I felt lighter, not like the release of a burden but more like taking off some protecting cloth. Kind of a naked feeling. Some discomfort about removing layers in front of someone. Reluctant and self-conscious. Hesitant. Tiptoe forward but o.k. (Journal Entry, March 29, 1993)

At the second session we discussed this dream:

Allison, my daughter, is taking an exam for her

master's degree and has asked me to help her cheat. She is concerned it's the only way she can pass. We argue about it. She's frantic to pass but I won't help her. I talk about principles and honesty and how the degree will not be worth anything unless she does it the honest way but to no avail. She still wants help to cheat because she's too upset to listen. That's how the dream ends. There's no resolution.

Norma's associations:

Allison--Favorite person in the whole world, perfect, a wonder; the one I love in a way that makes rules less important than she is.

Master's Degree--That extra step; difficult; beyond what is expected or ordinary.

And we discussed a second dream:

The contractor for our new kitchen refuses to sign a lien waiver because if he does he won't be able to work for his next customer. I insist that he sign because my husband has told me of the consequences if the contractor can't pay his suppliers. I want to trust the contractor, but know Dan is right about the risks.

Norma's associations:

The Contractor--The actual man who is remodeling her kitchen; fine, Christian person, trustworthy.

Lien Waiver--Some form of security.

In our discussion, I suggested that both dreams seemed to be challenging Norma's view of right and wrong, of how things should be; that she was being asked by inner "others" to open up her thinking to help them. My thinking was that we often bring ego consciousness into our dream world where it is seemingly irrelevant or at least acts to impede the unfolding of the psychic process. Although my comments somewhat exceeded the limits I had placed on my role, they seemed to meet with assent from Norma.

When we touched on issues in her waking reality that the dreams seemed to speak to, mainly areas where Norma is challenged or conflicted, Norma tended to use humor to deflect or diffuse difficult topics.

After this session, I made the following entry in my journal:

Norma may use humor to maintain some distance. It feels to me something like that, but I honor such traits in people. Who am I to challenge methods and ways that someone has found so effective and useful for so many years? The dreams perhaps may, then I will follow up but not until then. Norma is witty and very effective at using her wit in tight situations--in many ways a gift. (April 7,

1993) was interpretative with inner figures and thus

During our next session we continued to discuss dreams and dream images. Our exchange about them led to a broader discussion about where Norma placed limits on herself and places where she is being asked to expand those limits. Many people were making demands on her, and she felt pulled in many directions. Norma felt her "Christian Contractor" (an interesting symbol in itself) was calling her to a new level of trust. And her daughter Allison, as an inner figure, was challenging her to respond in ways she felt were cheating or represented some breaking of the rules that governed her life. In the session Norma came to a realization that the rules were her old "shoulds and oughts," many of which were no longer applicable to her current circumstances. *feeling you get from a wonderful*

I felt reassured about the suggestions I had made in the previous session. My comments had indeed hit a responsive chord in Norma that led her to some insight into her own processes. Since I believed, as did Jung, that, "The general function of dreams is to try to restore our psychological balance by producing dream material that re-establishes, in a subtle way, the total psychic equilibrium" (1964, p. 50), I felt that Norma's previous two dreams were showing her areas

where she was uncooperative with inner figures and thus not in psychological balance.

Further, I could rely on the opinion of the master who wrote: "The analyst who wishes to rule out conscious suggestion must therefore consider every dream interpretation invalid until such time as a formula is found which wins the assent of the patient." (Jung, 1954, p. 147)

That Norma assented to this interpretation was apparent from her journal entry after that session:

I have just finished a session with Rose, and I feel light and more comfortable than I have in a few days. I have just about decided to relax and listen to the indicators who call me to do things in a little different way than before and it feels light. It's that feeling you get from a wonderful spring day, clean and light and energizing. I believe I need to go to France with the _____ group; and it feels right in spite of all the reasons it could be considered wrong at this time. It feels good to be aware of being poised on the brink of a new life and excited to see what direction it will take. (April 12, 1993)

Shortly after this, Norma dreamed:
I was in an apartment with my friend, Susie, who

is destitute. While we were there together one of the neighbors who is on "L.A. Law" came in and died. We put him in a box and carried him through the neighborhood looking for a place to bury him. A big black man helped us carry the box. At some point I gave all my money to Susie to pay the electric bill.

I have abbreviated this dream somewhat in the interest of space. The "story" the dream tells, which we delineated in our work with it, is that some "lawyer," i.e., an interpreter of the rules, shoulds, and oughts, in Norma has died. Norma is in touch with a destitute, impoverished part of herself and is now willing to provide energy for that part; she gives this Susie money to pay the electric bill.

Symbolically, Susie would represent a part of Norma that she has not paid attention to or invested in so it lives in very poor circumstances. In this Susie's living space, (which would represent a very real part of Norma's psychology, albeit a neglected and not previously-visited one) Norma experiences the death of some form of "law" and decides to help a sadly-neglected side of herself.

Although we did not discuss him specifically, I understood the black man to be some helpful but indistinct factor within that helps Norma "carry" this

dead part around until she can rid herself of it. In sorting through this material some months later, I believe the function of the "lawyer" probably was necessary to protect Norma from parts of her experience she had been unable to assimilate previously. Like humor, a conformity to established ways, i.e. one's shoulds and oughts, can be a very helpful and protective mechanism.

I realize that all of this must seem extremely obscure and am getting the uneasy feeling that the reader might wonder why the unconscious doesn't speak more plainly or more directly. Again I turn to Jung (1954): "In themselves dreams are naturally clear; that is, they are just what they must be under the given circumstances" (p. 145). And:

Dreams may contain ineluctable truths, philosophical pronouncements, illusions, wild fantasies, memories, plans, anticipations, irrational experiences, even telepathic visions, and heaven knows what besides. One thing we ought never to forget: almost half our life is passed in a more or less unconscious state. The dream is specifically the utterance of the unconscious. (p. 147)

The intellect, primarily limited as it is to the

realities of our waking life, is constantly challenged by the dream. The unconscious with its dream emanations is a phenomenon that encompasses all of the person including the intellect. The challenge is to "map" one's own psychic house from inside it. A helpful factor is that "third eye" which sees all the action of the dream, including the role of the dream ego.

Is it any wonder that the intellect, in the face of the great mystery of the dream and the symbols contained therein, can make so little sense or develop even a modest degree of certitude that the dream is understood correctly? Jung even said: "In dream-analysis we must never forget, even for a moment, that we move on treacherous ground where nothing is certain but uncertainty" (1954, p. 148).

Already in the few sessions we had completed I realized that unconscious factors in Norma were having a real impact in her lived experience, some of which lay outside her waking awareness. Further, Norma had found she was entangled in old parental shoulds and oughts (*participation mystique*) and unable to free herself by a mere act of will. I believe it is the case that we are much more influenced by unconscious factors than we either realize or will admit. For most

of us, to do so would be to accept real limitations on our freedom and will. We would have to acknowledge the unconscious as a co-determiner of our lives. "The more one sees of human fate and the more one examines its secret springs of action, the more one is impressed by the strength of unconscious motives and by the limitations of free choice" (Jung, 1954, p. 177).

After our fourth session, I had a dream which I believed was a comment on the work we were doing:

I go to Norma and Dan's house, a gigantic four-story house, truly unbelievable. Behind the house is a river and a swimming pool. A child comes up and wants me to ask the hosts to get the pool ready for swimming. I think that I'm too much of a nobody to ask that, and tell the child to get Fr. _____ to do it. There is a party of sorts going on, and I fill up a plate.

Looked at from a subjective perspective, this dream would say that I have discovered a whole new space in my own psychology in which I am nourished (the plate of food). From an objective perspective, you could say it is a comment on the process Norma and I are engaged in. Or perhaps (and this is the interpretation I chose) it is both.

In the dream I don't feel capable of interceding for this inner "child," deferring instead to the

priest. The dream seems to be showing me that I projected onto "priest" certain functions that were mine to handle. In the work with Norma this refusal of a request from my own inner *child* ("child" taken in a symbolic way with all the implications outlined in the discussion about symbol) might have reflected a certain hesitancy on my part about probing delicate areas.

Norma came to our fifth session deeply saddened. She had learned that her oldest grandson, a boy aged six with a history of brain tumors, was not doing well and that a life-long friend had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Although this news was dominating her life, she had already developed in our time together an awareness that working with her dreams could help her through the turbulence of her own emotions. She was eager to continue.

She brought two dreams: (1) *I was taking the milk count at Resurrection, the parochial school I attended for grade school, and (2) I was again working at the bank, looking for proper records so that an unknown man could get into his safe deposit box.*

These two seemingly inconsequential dreams took us into a discussion about:

- (a) the 35-year history with her in-laws, especially her mother-in-law;
- (b) her fourth grade experience;
- (c)

the meaning of the word, "resurrection;" (d) the impact of nuns in Norma's life; (e) the emotional injuries she suffered because of an alcoholic father; (f) current difficulties; (g) Norma's mother's health as well as her mother's history of concerns about health; (h) Jansenism (human beings are no good, sinful, etc.) as a heresy of the Church; (i) problems that have been a recurring theme in Norma's life; (j) symbolic meanings of "kitchen" and "bank;" (k) rules for living; (l) finances and money.

After this session Norma spent several hours sitting in a local park on the Missouri River. She made the following journal entry:

After our session this morning I went to Yoga (exercise class) and shook something loose. An old therapist of mine firmly believed that our experiences are stored in our bodies, so to complete any emotional work there should be a physical release also. For this morning this is true for me. Toward the end of Yoga I became violently sick to my stomach. In the session earlier, I was recalling a lot of old stuff about to be revisited. It shook some things loose so Yoga could take them the rest of the way. (April 28, 1993)

Later that same day she wrote: "I had the feeling that I was opening the different doors and fixing what needed to be fixed. As I did awareness was not required; neither was understanding and never any kind of control." (April 28, 1993)

About this time in our work together, Norma and her husband were well into an extensive remodeling of their home. She began to realize that the work on her home was a direct reflection of what was going on in her inner life. She wrote in her journal:

I look at my old kitchen that is like me, worn and tired but full of the finest memories of jobs well done and conversations from the heart. I have a close parallel with this house. I need so much work til I'm o.k. Progress is always painful and inconvenient, and there will be no reward unless the discomfort is taken on, (May 2, 1993)

At about the same time I made this journal entry:

My impression of what Norma is doing is this: She is discovering more and more about her own inner self and those mysterious/profound recesses which make up our personhood. As she put it, 'I only agreed to talk about a few dreams--if I had any. I had no idea it would come to this.' (May 6, 1993)

During session #6 Norma said she felt like she had jumped--or been pushed--out of the safe confines of an airplane. She had only to decide what her attitude would be. Was she going to spend the rest of her life dreading the "thud" or would she spread her arms and enjoy the ride? As she put it, "It is up to me. I have never felt more free." Although I said nothing to Norma at the time, I was reminded of Jung's story about the importance of living in a psychic house where one knows the roof will not cave in at any moment. A belief in immortality makes for greater psychological health.

For one hour a week over the next several weeks Norma and I continued to discuss dreams and to follow the threads of the dreams that Norma provided through associations. Two dreams in particular stand out:

A luncheon and conversation with the Archbishop at DuBourg High School wherein he questions me closely and I answer. The dream ends with my hugging and kissing the Archbishop after he approves of my answers.

And the other dream:

Carrying a baby, I knock at the door of a house where I feel unwelcome. I enter and meet a boy who loves me. An aunt of mine is upstairs painting the rooms. I feel that I am intruding because the boy is

married to someone else. Then, still carrying the child, I am walking underground in catacombs, fearful and anxious. I arrive at a hotel. The baby climbs into a box, and the box closes him in. I am very anxious and work to open the box. Eventually it opens of its own accord. The baby is inside smiling and happy. The box is mirrored inside and out and brightly lighted.

We talked about both dreams at length. In the first, Norma has lunch with the Archbishop. For Norma, a Catholic from birth, "archbishop" would represent an inner authority figure. The act of eating on a symbolic level is to take into one's self, to make one's own, to assimilate something that adds "weight" or gives life. In this return to her high school, i.e., an inner place for education, Norma is revisiting and relearning something from her past. The dream seems to hint that she is now able to relate to an introjected Church authority figure in a way that she gains his approval and they are both "nourished."

Norma felt this dream was a comment on her changing feelings about the Catholic Church and her sometimes problematic relationship with it and with its authority figures.

In the second dream, Norma felt unwelcome even

though there is no evidence that she *is unwelcome*. In fact, this boy tells her he loves her. Through the insight she got from this dream, Norma began to see how the attitudes she brings to a place, i.e., her own worries about not being welcome, are at times a self-fulfilling prophecy. This led into a discussion about how her own view about them had affected her 35-year relationship with her husband's parents.

I think the important insight Norma got from this portion of the dream is reflected in a statement Jung made: "Very often our relations depend almost exclusively on our own attitudes, though we may be quite unaware of this fact." (1977, p. xxxi)

In the discussion about the baby and the lighted, mirrored box, Norma thought the "box" spoke to a kind of "reflective place" she can get stuck in when thinking about certain issues. The dream suggests that the box will open of its own accord, and that the baby (some new part of Norma) is quite happy and content inside it. Symbolically "light" represents consciousness. I think the fact that the box is brightly lighted would say that Norma understands what is going on but perhaps not yet on the level of intellectual awareness.

Soon after this session while trying to make sense

about her grandson's illness, Norma seemed to experience what Jung called dissolution of the *participation mystique*. She made this journal entry: "I seem to understand what I was being prepared for now. That uncertain question and sense of expectancy is gone. There is a quiet inside me now. A stillness." And, "I feel normal again--like myself but changed. It's like giving birth to something. Whatever it is, I don't quite understand but 'it' has arrived."

Later in the same entry: "Something has begun, something soft and quiet. I get that I'm just a participant in this movement. I'm not in charge or responsible, just a participant. I have no idea what I am to do or what is expected of me and that's o.k., too." (May 21, 1993)

For our last few sessions Norma and I continued to look at and examine her dream stories and images. She made a one-week religious pilgrimage to France during this time. While away she came to the realization that she often had allowed her special spiritual moments and her own personal insights to be discounted by the opinions of others. By doing so, she discounted them herself. She saw that it was her own "shoulds and oughts" that provided the mechanism for the

discounting. Only by abandoning them could she enter into a new sense of freedom.

Discussion

At the end of our work together, I wrote in my journal:

It seems to me that Norma and I are in process, and that each of us is 'the way we are the way we are with each other'. I am keenly aware that all I do with Norma is elicit her thoughts, memories, associations, feelings, and ideas about her own experience by listening and following her lead. Then, with a lot of material 'out there,' we, but primarily Norma, try to make sense of it. I start from the assumption that all experience makes sense to the person having it--after all, it is the total lived reality of the person. As that person's Life, it makes perfect sense on the level of being. What, however, I think about Norma's experience (how I "story" it) has only limited relevance. Better I not have a story and thus more accurately hear and understand how Norma stories her life.

But, being human, I story our joint experience in the following way: We have developed a relationship of mutual trust and

affection. We each are involved in an interaction that we only partially understand. We each respect the other and neither tries to control. We each interact with a high degree of autonomy. Each of us believes that dreams can, if given time and attention, introduce us to a wider reality and fuller personhood.

I further believe that Norma is coming to trust her own experience and her own ability to make decisions more than she has in the past. Others' opinions of her are less important than her opinion of herself.

In our session yesterday Norma said two things about herself that really struck me--one was that she has arrived at self-acceptance; the other was that all her 'shoulds' are falling away. She characterizes herself as a rock. Until recently she always thought that she really should be an eagle and so was dissatisfied with herself. Now not only does she accept the fact that she is a rock, she glories in that fact. (June 2, 1993)

Jung told a humorous story that points to the state Norma describes for herself:

We are all like a little liver cell that has wandered away from the place where it belongs.

The little liver cell escapes and wanders through all the tissues. When he finds the brain, he says, 'This is a nice high place, there is good air here' but his neighbours say, 'Get out, you are no good here,' so the little cell is pushed out and it wanders along to the lungs but the same thing happens there. It say, 'The world is very hard, nobody understands me.' If it understood itself it would know that it didn't belong there! Finally it wanders along through the tortuous passages of the blood vessels into the liver and there it falls into a hole, a fatal catastrophe. The little cell says, 'Damn it, most unsuitable place, how did I get here?' But God says, 'Hold it fast,' and it turns out to be a liver cell.

(1984, pp. 287-88)

Conclusions

Norma and I completed our twelve-session "experiment" in June. On the surface all we did was spend twelve or so hours talking about her dreams and her associations to them. Sometimes I offered input based on my knowledge of mythology, symbols, and work I had done with my own dreams. Our experience, simple as it might appear, had a profound impact on the both of us. I would say that on the whole Norma's experience

somewhat paralleled the outlines of psychic development sketched by Jung in the essay I used as my guideline. By not knowing our way, we did indeed stumble onto the secret way Jung wrote about. Our method--although it could hardly be called that--was simply to watch together what unfolded in Norma's psyche as revealed and hinted at in her dreams. Ours was the way of action through inaction, the *wu wei* of the ancient Chinese text.

Although I focused a good part of my attentions (but none of our discussion) on Jung's theoretical ideas, Norma was interested only in her own psychic processes as they were revealed to her in her dreams. She had no interest in theory. Sometime after we ended, Norma wrote me a letter describing her experience. I have used excerpts from that letter to conclude this paper:

I am very content with the felt experience of ours, but it's selfish to not share a very precious jewel with anyone who has the eye to see or the ear to hear.

Our sessions were a step in the preparation for change in my life's journey to a destination I'm sure of but what roads will be traveled to get there are still an exciting mystery. I took

inventory and asked what in my heart of hearts I really valued and what my lived experience asked me to change, expand or perhaps leave behind for the rest of my journey.

I had no preconceived expectations for our meetings or any past experience to compare them to. I had no goals to achieve and certainly no rules to use as guidelines to judge our progress. Goals, guidelines and expectations can be good and useful tools but I will be forever grateful for their absence at this particular time.

Another positive element in our sessions was the absence of right or wrong. I had no control over the content of my dreams so all I did was to tap into what relevance there was for me, and recognize what pattern the dreams were drawing. I didn't feel the need to resolve or to fix any issue, correct any flaws in my character or in any way amend my life. I had nobody to answer to as far as results. I valued this freedom so much I was excited and enthusiastic about our sessions. This of course was all possible because of your input, companionship, lack of judgement, acceptance, solid presence, ability to laugh, common sense, and trustworthy responsible

responses to whatever came to our attention.

For me these facts are the easy and obvious consequence of what we did. What is more difficult, illusive and harder to define are the results of our sessions after I began to realize this was something out of the ordinary. I see it now as a gift by a generous and caring God for his child, as well as the formation somehow to understand life at a deeper level, thereby enriching my service to others by my experience.

(August 19, 1993)

[In the summation letter Norma also talked about a deeply tragic personal event she was able to weather. In respect for her privacy I have omitted any references to that event.] She concludes the letter with:

I have now the possibility to see old things with new eyes. The possibility of the person. The value I bring to others by just being real and doing what my life journey asks of me in a quiet unassuming way.

This is just some of the richness I have received from our time together. I certainly thank you for choosing me. Even if you were not aware of where we were going you were certainly a

generous companion. (August 19, 1993)

I have given certain definitions from analytical psychology for use in this paper. They include:
 The ego complex - ideas which form the basis for consciousness and which appear to exhibit continuity and a sense of self-identity.
 The unconscious - a psychological concept for all those psychic contents or processes that are not related to ego consciousness yet can be demonstrated empirically.
 Will - that energy which is at the disposal of ego consciousness, the existence of which depends largely on early education and culture.

Endnotes

1. I have adopted certain definitions from analytical psychology for use in this paper. They include:
Ego--a complex of ideas which forms the basis for consciousness and which appear to exhibit continuity and a sense of self-identity;
Unconscious--a psychological concept for all those psychic contents or processes that are not related to ego consciousness yet can be demonstrated empirically;
Will--that energy which is at the disposal of ego consciousness, the existence of which depends largely on moral education and culture.

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Student: Name: Bill
124 South Kingshighway
St. Charles, MO 63301
(314) 347-2207

City: St. Charles, MO Start Date: 01/29/88
124 South Kingshighway End Date: 02/06/88
St. Charles, MO 63301 Total Hours: 91

Description of Practice

Overseas counseling session, during total sessions, with a client interested in personal growth and awareness of his life issues through the use of dream analysis. Client and student will meet once a week for one hour over a period of twelve weeks. Each will keep a journal about the experience and will share their journals with each other only at the end of the twelve week period. In addition student will tape record and transcribe some of the sessions for consultation and guidance in counseling the relationship. Supervision class.

Appendix

PRACTICUM PROPOSAL

Student: Rose F. Holt
136 South Kingshighway
St. Charles, MO 63301
(314) 947-6207

Site: Office/Study
136 South Kingshighway
St. Charles, MO 63301

Start Date: 03/29/93
End Date: 07/06/93
Total Hours: 60

Description of Practicum

One-on-one counseling session, twelve total sessions, with a client interested in personal growth and exploration of mid-life issues through the avenue of dream analysis. Client and student will meet once a week for one hour over a period of twelve weeks. Each will keep a journal about the interaction and will share their journals with each other only at the end of the twelve week period. In addition student will tape record and transcribe some of the sessions for consultation and guidance in concurrent Practicum Supervision Class.

Practicum Learning Goals

To establish an effective counseling relationship with an individual client.

To use client's dreams as the primary vehicle for exploring current and pressing issues in the client's life.

To track student's personal assessment, reactions, feelings, thoughts as they occur during the counseling process and to record them in a journal.

To understand the experience of the client both as shared during the sessions and as assessed by the client in her personal journal.

To understand, from the client's perspective, the personal meaning of story, image, and symbol as they occur in the client's dream life.

Pamela Nickels, Ed.D.

Date

Practicum Supervisor

Lindenwood College