

Being in Analysis

Jacqueline Wright

I have been musing about what it means to “be in analysis.” I have also been thinking about what it means to “**be**” in analysis. When someone uses this phrase it’s often accompanied by a kind of heaviness and seems packed with many implied meanings. I am sure to those who are not in analysis, it opens the door to a variety of images and fantasies. So, let me attempt to sort out what it may mean to “**be** in analysis,” in a Jungian analysis.

Analysis involves a one-on-one experience with another individual. It consists of two persons meeting in order to explore together the underlying causes, aims and meanings of the symptoms and conflicts the analysand brings to the analytic process. The exploration focuses on the conscious situation of the person and on the unconscious dynamics at work. In addition, it examines the interactions between the two persons involved in the process.

People seek Jungian analysis for a variety of reasons. Generally, it boils down to the fact that a person has looked at himself and does not like the person he has become. There is a belief that somehow there is the possibility of being the one he was meant to be. The connection has been lost between what the person knows himself to be and the vast unknown. As an analysand said to me recently “I don’t even know what I know.”

I remember well my initial foray into Jungian analysis. I was not quite sure why I was there. I did know that I was in distress and that I was hoping to find some relief from my suffering, as well as some insight into why my outer life seemed so difficult. Inwardly I was closing down and I felt stuck in terms of my ability to understand my own conflict. The problem I presented to my analyst was what was already in my consciousness. The task of understanding what was going on in my psyche necessarily began with trying to understand the relationship between what I knew consciously and the unconscious drives and complexes. Through dream interpretation, active imagination, readings and dialogue with my analyst, that unknown world eventually opened to me.

It is this interplay between consciousness and the unconscious that is the focus of the analytic process and improving the nature of the dynamic interchange is what helps make meaning out of meaninglessness, order out of disorder. The analytic

Jacqueline Wright is a Jungian analyst in private practice in Atlanta, offering analysis and psychotherapy to individuals and couples. In addition to her private practice, Jacqueline lectures and conducts workshops on topics related to Jungian psychology.

process is a way of systematically drawing upon the resources of the unconscious and helping the person progressively integrate these contents into consciousness, while at the same time supporting the release of conscious attitudes and patterns that are no longer desirable. This shift of psychic balance from ego consciousness to the totality of the psyche is rarely understood at the beginning of the analytic process and then only in an intellectual way. The change that may be brought about is the restored dialectic between the conscious and unconscious worlds.

In Jungian understanding, analysis takes place within the context of a dialectical relationship, a two-way interaction in which both parties are affected. The effects of this relationship may be greater on the analysand than on the analyst, but it is true that the analyst’s personality can also be deeply affected by a long-term and psychologically engaging analytical relationship. Each relationship is always unique and it is my belief that the analytic relationship can be as complex as any other relationship. This relationship can also change at every stage of the analytical process.

The dialectic comes into play as the conscious standpoint and attitude of the analyst meets the analysand’s conscious attitude and standpoint in a compensatory fashion. This compensatory process serves to balance attitudes, remove distortions and facilitate a more complete view of one’s self and reality. The conscious ideas and processes that are exchanged during the dialectic process draws upon deeper, unconscious layers of their personalities and both parties are engaging on many levels. The goal is to stay receptive to the many levels and layers of the conscious and unconscious contents that are being revealed in the exchange. This means that the specific aims for analysis and its outcome cannot be governed by ego intentions or conscious knowledge. The idea is to be present to the less rational, more ambiguous and often mysterious manifestations of the psyche as they are revealed.

Jung always avoided stating a precise set of aims for analysis and said that as far as possible he let pure experience decide the therapeutic aims. This may sound confusing but it shows Jung’s high regard for individual solutions to psychological difficulties and conflicts. The aim, as he viewed it, was to stay open to the autonomous workings of the unconscious and to the unique personalities of both people in the dialectical relationship. This does not mean that either person cannot put forward a concrete aim in the course of the work.

Each analyst has his or her own approach to how the analysis is conducted. Some favor a more clinical model, others a more academic or classical model. My own approach to analysis necessarily arises out of my own experience of “being in analysis” during which two fundamental beliefs emerged. The first one is a trust in the natural creativity of the psyche and a belief that everything a person needs to heal himself resides inside his own psyche. Analysis can help facilitate a process that is already trying to happen. The second one is a faith in the analytic process itself. I also believe that the essence of that process lies in the interpersonal interactions between analyst and analysand, not in the content or the interpretation of the analysand’s problems, although that plays an important part. Transformation occurs through the experience of *being* and *being with*, not

doing. In a process oriented viewpoint one is not geared toward an endpoint or a cure but toward an attempt to attune oneself to the message that the psyche is trying to convey.

Christopher Bollas, the British psychoanalyst, makes use of D.W. Winnicott's theory of the true self to describe what happens in analysis. The true self, which consists of inherent dispositions and potential, depends upon the environment for its evolution. The true self finds expression through the choices and uses it makes of objects (or persons) available in the environment. Bollas uses the term "unthought known" to specify the dispositional knowledge of the true self. This term refers to a form of knowledge which has not been thought, the knowledge a person brings with him as he perceives, organizes, remembers and uses his environment. If the environment is nurturing, the person experiences the world as facilitating and is able to re-present himself over and over and celebrate the experience of transformation. (Bollas, C. Forces of Identity).

This true self movement is what occurs in analysis as the analysand uses the analyst to reveal patterns of personality and achieve a true self-experience. Sometimes the analyst is used by the analysand to communicate an old paradigm script, such as a parent-child. But as these old patterns of relating are worked out, the analysand may begin to use the analyst in very different ways, to forge a more authentic self. This expanded use and interaction are moments of creation for both parties and help each person realize a fuller dimension of their personalities.

It is often difficult to see the journey taken by the true self in the analysis. We can identify certain features, but we cannot "see" the whole picture. To some extent, this is because it exists only in experience and is contingent upon the nature of the experience to trigger its manifestation. Recognizing that we cannot ever really know, see or analyze the evolution of the true self in its totality leaves us open to the possibilities that lie ahead. This attitude produces a therapeutic atmosphere in which the question of the other's unfolding always remains open.

Each encounter is unique and there are no road maps, no prescribed routes for the journey that is to be taken. Each person calls forth and uses different elements of their personality and uses the exchanges in his or her own particular way to facilitate change. If the atmosphere that is created by the two parties is truly one of imaginative playfulness, the responses that are elicited are often surprising and revealing to both. Analysis is where not only the question of solution is always open, but where the question itself is often obscured. It reminds me of a quote by Keats in which he describes a state which he calls "negative capability:"

...when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason... (Gittings, R. Letters of John Keats, p. 43).

One wonders, then, why anyone would choose to upset their present lives, endure the agonizing slowness of the analytic process and give great investments of time and money to a process that can't prove results or guarantee success. Jung's theory teaches us that personality development is determined by

innate, a priori patterns or archetypal factors and an urge to realize them. Individuation is an innate pattern, shared by all, and the urge to realize our fullest potential pushes us to make such an investment. The psychological development that occurs in individuation proceeds through interpersonal exchanges, which gradually personalize and concretize the activated archetypal image. Edward Edinger, in discussing the personalization of the archetype, says that all inner and outer experiences are essentially personalizations of the archetypal. (Edinger, E. Science of the Soul, p. 67). Personalization means that we bring unconscious images and energies into experiential reality. We know, for example, that the archetypes of Father and Mother are incarnated through our personal experience of our parents. The part of the archetype which the parent's personality is able to activate and embody is the part which the child will be able to incorporate into his own personality. The part of the archetype to which the parent has no relation will be left largely unrealized, not yet incarnated in a person's personal life history. The analytic relationship offers an opportunity for the personal and concrete embodiment of the missing part of the archetype to occur through the context of the interpersonal relationship. The first step in this process of personalization occurs through projection. Edinger views projection as a striving of the archetype for personal incarnation – the first step in the process of consciously assimilating the archetype. His view puts a positive emphasis on projection and on the transference dynamic that occurs in analysis.

In addition to the more obvious archetypes such as parent, child, shadow, anima, animus, Edinger suggests three others that are often constellated in the course of analysis. One is the physician-healer, who holds and applies healing knowledge to illness. Another archetype that is evoked is that of philosopher-scientist, which represents the capacity through dialogue to teach and arrive at truth. The third archetype he mentions is that of priest who carries and mediates experiences of the transpersonal dimension. These archetypal images are constellated to varying degrees during different phases of analysis. One often witnesses the progress from the first phase in which the analyst carries the projection of physician-healer and the analysand expects to be treated and healed, to the phase of the philosopher in which there is mutual exchange and a search for truth, to the phase of the priest in which there has been a revelation of the numinous and both parties participate in a dialogue with the objective psyche. These images can be seen in people's dreams throughout the analysis. Incarnation of the archetype builds the bridge between the conscious world of the ego and the transpersonal world of the objective psyche. Without the process of incarnation, the gap between ego and Self, or man and divine cannot be closed. Without incarnation the archetypal form remains only that, a form without structure and meaning. (Edinger, P. 83-93).

The story of *Eros and Psyche*, that Virginia Apperson wrote about in the last newsletter, provides a good illustration. The tale is told by an old woman who is servant and cook for a gang of robbers. The robbers kidnap a young bride, who is held for ransom in the forest. The bride has a disturbing dream about her husband being killed by the thieves. To comfort her, the old woman offers an interpretation of the dream and illustrates her interpretation with the story of *Eros and Psyche*, a story

about the relationship between Psyche, a mortal, and Eros, a god.

In the beginning of the story, Psyche is portrayed as living in a world devoid of love. She is worshipped by all for her beauty and yet loved by no one. Her sisters are jealous of her and her parents abandon her. Even the gods are against her. Aphrodite, the goddess of love sends her son Eros to punish her. Instead, Eros falls in love with Psyche. Their love, however, is carried out in darkness and is sealed by silence. In other words, Psyche has no way to frame her experience or tell her story. Because she cannot see or say what she knows in her heart, depression, jealousy and doubts set in about what she does know. This conflict and tension challenges her to move out of her unconscious state and break the taboo on seeing or speaking. She becomes pregnant with new life. When Psyche dares to shine the light on Eros her eyes are opened to the god's beauty and she discovers what it is she was unable to see or speak about. Psyche walks out of her old story into a new one.

In the second half of the story, Psyche searches for Eros who has left her and returned to his mother's chambers. It is a long journey and along the way she is beaten, tortured and hounded by fear and depression. She repeatedly tries to kill herself but nature intervenes by blocking her death. She's given impossible tasks but again is aided by the natural world. She perseveres, is finally reunited with Eros and gives birth to their daughter, *Pleasure*.

Eros and Psyche is a story of transformation and individuation. Psyche begins her journey in a state of self-alienation and de-

pression and ends it by finding love and pleasure in her new life. It is a story about the relationship between the personal and archetypal realms and about the incarnation of the archetype of love.

This tale is found in Apuleius' novel *Metamorphosis*. The word metamorphosis literally means changing shape. In the novel, Lucius, the main character, turns into a donkey and travels through the landscape in this form. Midway through his journey the story of *Eros and Psyche* bubbles up, seemingly from an unknown source. The goddess Isis eventually intervenes and after a time, Lucius regains his human shape. It seems that it is only when Lucius understands and assimilates the meaning of the story that he can regain his human body in its new form. In other words, it is his ability to see the larger picture of the unfolding relationship between mortal and god that transforms his personal situation. (Gilligan, C. [The Birth of Pleasure](#)).

Analysis offers a transitional space where things can change shape and form, where one can risk knowing what one knows. It offers an opportunity to circumambulate the whole circle of one's being, one's strengths, weaknesses, blind spots and unique characteristics and capabilities. It offers the chance to become deeply involved with another human being. Hopefully, there will be a resurrection of libido, a capacity to experience life more intensely and with more pleasure. Hopefully, the person will be freed from bondage to external authorities and discover and shift his devotion to the inner authority of the Self. Individuation is never an accomplished fact and we are always in process, moving toward an ever vanishing goal ■