

# Why Explore Jungian Psychology?

by Elizabeth L. Bowen

*“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” — Eleanor Roosevelt*

**O**ne aim of this article is to encourage curious individuals to explore Jungian analysis. Might you intensify your personal inner journey by way of Jungian analysis? If the process intrigues you, might you explore further Jungian training, either for continuing education or with the aim of becoming a Jungian analyst?

The dream of a seven year old child motivated me professionally to pursue Jungian clinical training. As a physician, I was asked by concerned parents to consult about Ben’s recent disturbance. For weeks, he had experienced explosive diarrhea, several times a day. A whole battery of medical tests did not reveal any physical cause. When I met with Ben, I simply asked him an open-ended question:

“What’s happening?”

He said, “I had a really scary nightmare.”

“If you’d like to tell me about it, I’d like to hear about it.”

Ben said, “I had a horrible nightmare. My mom and dad drove away without me!”

“Oh, that is terrible!”

“Yeah,” he said, trembling. “I woke up crying.”

“Oh. Did you know that if you wake up before the dream is over, you can make up the ending?”

Ben frowned, looking at me dubiously. “Are you sure about that?”

“Yes,” I said, “It’s called ‘dreaming the dream on.’ Let’s give it a try. Let’s pretend you just woke up. Now, close your eyes and imagine....What happens next in your dream?”

“Well,” Ben said, closing his eyes, “Dad looks in the rear view mirror. He sees me. I am in my bedroom. I am yelling and waving my arms. He stops the car.”

“What happens next?”

“Mom jumps out of the car. She runs up the stairs. I’m standing there all by myself. I don’t have any clothes on. Mom helps me to get dressed. Then we go outside. We get into the car. We put on our seatbelts. Then we all drive away together.”

“Have you talked with your mom and dad about your dream?” I asked.

“No, it just happened last night,” Ben said.

“May I talk with them about it?”

“Sure!” he said. He then left the consulting room and his

parents came in.

“What’s happening?” I asked.

Ben’s father said: “We’re moving to California. We decided to move a few weeks ago. We plan to drive there in our car.”

“Ben apparently doesn’t realize that he is going with you,” I said.

“What? How could that be?” his mother asked, perplexed and astonished.

I told them Ben’s dream. They were stunned. I then told them how Ben had closed his eyes, and that with some coaching, he was able to dream the dream forward, that is, to dream the dream on. I encouraged them to sit down and talk with him that evening and to tell him:

“Of course, you are coming with us! You are seven years old. We are all going to drive together in our car to California.” Later, they told me that they did tell him that evening that he was going with them. His explosive diarrhea vanished immediately and completely.

**R**eflecting on this single clinical experience, I realized that I had no education or training whatsoever in how to work with dreams. Yet if dream work could be so powerful, I wanted to add it to my repertoire as a versatile physician, and to transform my practice to encompass Jungian approaches. After that encounter, I was determined to learn how to cultivate and to apply Jungian clinical skills professionally, in daily clinical contexts, as well as to continue to explore Jungian psychology for my own personal growth.

*“The goal of Jungian analysis is “movement toward psychological wholeness.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“The prime task of psychotherapy today is to pursue... the goal of individual development.... Our efforts will follow nature’s own striving to bring life to the fullest possible fruition in each individual.” —C.G. Jung*

Five years ago, I went on pilgrimage to Israel to the World Center of the Baha’i Faith. After a profoundly positive spiritual experience, I felt motivated to commit myself personally to the process of Jungian analysis. I also began to redirect my work as a physician and educator to focus on the exceptional healing power of the soul, also known as the psyche. This profound inner calling motivated me to launch a sustained quest to cultivate the knowledge, attitudes, and clinical skills associated with the work of Carl Jung, a Swiss physician and writer. (1875-1961).

Before embarking on pilgrimage to Israel, a prospective pilgrim named Mary Power gave me *The Ring of Power*, by Jean Shinoda Bolen, MD, a distinguished Jungian analyst and author. I was deeply moved by her vivid insights. Reflecting upon “how much our mythology is about us,” I was intrigued by her originality and the profound healing potential of her ideas, on individual and collective levels. This encounter turned out to be a synchronicity, that is, a meaningful coincidence.

I decided to participate in a weeklong conference that included presentations by Dr. Bolen, sponsored by the New York Center for Jungian Studies. I expected it would be in New York. When I called to register, I was informed that the lectures were going to be in Ireland. “Well then, I guess I’m going to Ireland....” I said.

The “Jung in Ireland” conference was an extraordinary ex-

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perience, with a truly international faculty. In addition to superb lectures, workshops, and field trips, there were many informal opportunities to meet with faculty members, to ask questions, and to seek mentoring. For example, Lionel Corbett, MD, of Pacifica Graduate Institute, kindly met with me in a mentoring capacity, provided enthusiastic encouragement, and invited me to call or write to him anytime. Lionel Corbett said, of himself: “I am such an introverted intuitive person that I could throw myself to the ground and miss!” After our consultation, I attended two continuing education conferences at Pacifica Graduate Institute in California on the theme of “Imagination and Medicine” and one honoring Marion Woodman, a Canadian Jungian analyst and her husband, Ross Woodman, a scholar and author.

After embarking on my own personal analysis, I began to experience the uniqueness of Jungian analysis.

*“It is an essential feature of Jungian analysis that in the pursuit of wholeness the unconscious is given a central voice....”*<sup>2</sup>

**H**ow, you might ask, is the unconscious given a central voice? One way is to create a dream journal. My dream life is abundant, full of vivid, diverse, intriguing dreams. *Inner Work*, by Robert A. Johnson, is a practical guide book to Jungian dream work and active imagination, one way to “dream the dream on,” as the child, Ben, had done.

Active imagination is a process of initiating a dialogue so one’s fully conscious mind may engage, create a bridge, and interact with some aspects of one’s more unconscious states of mind. It often takes the form of a light trance, musing, or a reverie. Active imagination is applied widely, in fields as diverse as art, dance, drama, literature, and scientific research. It is one way to approach any creative activity. You may promote active imagination by recording your dreams, drawing and painting images from your dreams, dialoguing with dream figures, and practicing creative writing.

Whether or not you recall your dreams often, active imagination is a valuable practice to provide you with greater access to your inner life. As my dream work and practice of active imagination progressed, I realized I was entering into a creative learning process that was inviting my sustained attention, challenging me to seek deeper levels of understanding.

Five years ago, I participated in the first annual Jungian Odyssey in Switzerland, sponsored by the International School of Analytical Psychology (ISAP). The spirited diversity of the international community of Jungian analysts and training candidates appealed to me greatly. Since then, I’ve enjoyed four Jungian Odysseys, major gatherings, conducted in English. They provide a superb introduction to ISAP’s faculty and international training program, also in English.

In 2007, I moved to Switzerland. Full time, for eight months per year, over a period of two years, I participated in ISAP lectures, seminars, and workshops. Jungian analysts from all over the world taught in the program. Students and faculty came from some twenty countries. In clinical case colloquia, faculty and training candidates met in small groups of five to twelve individuals to discuss specific ongoing cases in depth. Case seminars included confidential reviews of analytic transcripts, dreams, picture interpretation, poetry, and other psychological products that emerged during analysis. During those

years, I also studied extensively in the library of the C.G. Jung Institut in Kusnacht. The C.G. Jung Institut also offers an international training program and conferences in English.

Overall, the Swiss experience was a rich source of personal growth and professional development. It firmly confirmed my determination to continue to pursue Jungian studies and Jungian analysis. Many individuals who go to Zurich to study Jungian psychology continue to collaborate actively with Jungian analysts they met in Switzerland, maintaining contact by telephone, the internet, and Skype, as well as by meeting in person whenever possible. For example, I enjoyed a reunion with many of them at the International Association for Analytical Psychology (IAAP) Conference in Montreal in August, 2010.<sup>3</sup>

In cultivating the science and the art of Jungian theory and practice, most Jungian analysts consult colleagues regularly about clinical challenges. The clinical phase of training requires working with patients in collaboration with clinical supervisors.

In closing, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to share these highlights of my Jungian journey with you. It is a joy to participate in a Jungian community as full of vitality as the C.G. Jung Society of Atlanta is.

Wherever you are in your journey, I wholeheartedly encourage you to explore Jungian psychology more deeply. Please share some of your discoveries with family, colleagues, and friends, no matter how introverted you may be. Jungian psychology is a hidden treasure, yet to be shared with humanity as fully as it might be. To come full circle from the beginning of the article, revisit these key questions:

- Might you begin or intensify your personal Jungian analysis?
- Might you pursue further professional Jungian training and continuing education?
- Might you become a Jungian analyst?

With love, hope, and encouragement,

— Elizabeth L. Bowen, MD, EdD, M.Ed.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Murray Stein. “The Aims and Goal of Jungian Analysis,” in *Jungian Analysis*, 1995, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p.31.

<sup>3</sup> The International Association for Analytical Psychology (IAAP) is the accrediting and regulatory organization for all professional analytical psychologists’ groups. See [www.iaap.org](http://www.iaap.org) for directories of Jungian analysts and training programs.

#### References:

[www.isapzurich.com](http://www.isapzurich.com) – International School of Analytical Psychology.

[www.junginstitut.ch](http://www.junginstitut.ch) – The Jung Institute is located near Zurich, Switzerland.

[www.NYJungcenter.org](http://www.NYJungcenter.org) – Conferences in Ireland and “Jung on the Hudson.”

[www.pacifica.edu](http://www.pacifica.edu) – Pacifica Graduate Institute educational programs and publications.