Spiritual Aspects of Clinical Work

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Chapter 13

Transference, the Transcendent Function, and Transcendence

We need to take a fresh look at transference and transcendence which, I believe, are linked through what Jung calls the transcendent function. Clinical experience has taught me that through the transcendent function people in analysis come into direct contact with transcendence — that which surpasses not only our ego consciousness but our whole psyche — whether or not they give it a religious name.

Transference

Whatever theory of depth psychology we adhere to, we agree on the centrality of transference and countertransference in clinical work. There we reenact traumas that ruptured our original connection to self, or traumas that resulted from absence — what should have happened failed to and thus blighted our fledgling self from fully unfolding. We agree that in the field the analyst and analysand share the currents of transference and countertransference include ordinary human response to one another in our own idiosyncratic styles, activa-
tion of unconscious complexes that require analysis, and clues, through the impact of the other's unconscious on our own, to the specific unconscious dynamics constellated in the other and between us (see Racker 1968; Carotenuto 1986; Ulanov 1996, chapter 7).

Jung understands the transference as purposeful; it serves the individuation process by bringing up unconscious material to compensate for our one-sided conscious orientation (Steinberg 1990, 9ff). Jung analyzes psychic material with two methods—the reductive and synthetic—and on two levels—the objective and the subjective, but all of them serve to connect the ego as the center of consciousness with the Self as the center of the whole psyche, conscious and unconscious (Jung 1953a, paras. 121-140).

In reductive analysis, we ask where transference expectations directed toward the analyst come from, what role they position the analyst to play, and what the analyst is being used for. The analysand's psyche will press toward communicating what contents need to be admitted to consciousness and will use the analyst to carry them. Such projections cross the usual divisions of sex, age, race, or creed. For example, after our first meeting, a man sensitive and ambivalent about what he called his lower working-class origins, dreamt me swilling beer and smoking, much like his factory working father. All that was missing was the undershirt.

Using the reductive method, we analyze such an unconscious projection back to its historical antecedents. Interpreting on the objective level, we relate dream figures to the actual objects pictured—here, his father in the past and me in the present. The early object relation to his parent and the present object relation to his analyst combine in the dream to initiate in his ego a working free of the complex with his father and form a more adaptive relationship with me. This type of interpreta-

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tion uncovers how the unconscious dream and transference material compensates for a one-sided conscious view. For this man consciously thought of me as opposite to his conscious orientation. He saw me as upper class and educated, about which he also felt ambivalent, suspecting I might be too refined, not tough enough to do the work he needed done. The dream yokes us together, as if to assure the dreamer he can find his father in me. From this reductive objective point of view, what starts out as symbolic, really turns out to be a sign, designating specific objects and psychic processes of wishing or striving that can be uncovered and recognized as belonging to one's own ego identity and assimilated to enlarge it (Jung 1971, para. 788).

An analysand's personal drama of transference, however, not only replays early object-relations, but also announces a person's particular process of individuation as well. The transference anticipates the new. The same facts when interpreted on the subjective level, for example, direct conscious attention to what father represents in the dreamer's own psyche and between us in our field of interaction. The synthetic method tries to put together all the parts gathered in reductive and synthetic analyses and in objective and subjective levels of interpretation to open our consciousness to the wider vision of the psyche's whole enterprise. What is the psyche aiming at with this working-class father and analyst in this first dream? If the reductive method returns us to the ego's point of view, the synthetic method conducts us to the Self's perspective.

The dream told me, among other things, that a sturdy psychic field constellated between us because the analysand unconsciously linked with a fact unknown to him, that a similar fathering figure existed in my own background, as I was raised by Yugoslavian peasants, and the man did go around in an undershirt.
Archetype as Object

The synthetic method of interpretation introduces another type of transference object Jung calls archetypal which refers to contents that arise spontaneously from a deep layer of psyche Jung calls collective or objective. The synthetic method of interpretation tries to gather together archetypal and early object relations as they appear projected in the transference onto the analyst, so that the analysand grows conscious of where a complex around his relation to his actual father and now the analyst embroils him (the objective level), where that father attitude operates in himself and between us in the analysis (subjective level), and how the psyche employs this complex to further his development. This first dream gives inklings of the future self of the patient (Jung 1976, para. 549). The psyche puts him in relation to this father image as he embarks on analysis. If he corresponds with the psyche’s aim, his individuation process will include finding his particular path, influenced by his personal history and by the culture he lives in, and by his particular analyst, to relate to the originating power of the father archetype (see Jung 1938, paras. 198-199; 1954, para. 400; 1959, para. 301; see also Ulanov 1996, chapter 5). How will he integrate what the father image symbolises—the invisible spiritual power to author and beget the new?

Instead of breaking the material down into its component bits, as in the reductive-analytic method, the synthetic-prospective approach seeks to find how the bits go together toward constructing a new reality. The symbol does not collapse into a sign of contents the ego can now assimilate, but points toward the unknown which is just coming into view.

The reductive method returns us to ego-knowing. We know what an unconscious content means because we know where it came from and why; it disguises itself because its intent opposes the ego’s conception of itself; it deconstructs ego reality. The synthetic method leads the ego into unknowing. It builds up, elaborates and follows the lead of the symbol that aims toward an unknown or even unknowable purpose (Jung 1971, para. 820). We ask of the dream symbol or the transference-countertransference blockage or even of the neurosis itself: What is the Self engineering? Here our ego does not assimilate contents to itself, but instead is pulled across its borders toward a Self that paradoxically confronts and receives our ego with a coincidence and complexity of opposites, which it is our task to bring into a union.

The Self

This Self that addresses our ego is collective, a process of centering we share. We experience it as a push toward others and otherness: “We only become ourselves with people and for people ... the self is like a crowd, therefore being oneself, one is also many ... one can only individuate with or against something or somebody. Being an individual is always a link in a chain; it is not an absolutely detached situation, in itself only, with no connection outside” (Jung 1988, 102). Yet, in the opposite direction, the Self “by definition is the most individual thing, the essence of individuality. It is the uniqueness ... It knows you” (Jung 1988, 105; see also chapter 10).

In the history of depth psychology, we can hazard that the present problems people bring to analysts figure around the Self, whereas the early ones Freud outlined (hysteria, obsessional neurosis, paranoia, dementia praecox) focused on how the psyche looked from the ego’s point of view (Fine 1962, 108; Freud 1894; 1895a; 1895b; 1896). Today we speak of narcissistic and borderline disorders that affect our whole character.
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and demand for their resolution that we find new orientations in which we can put together inner and outer reality, chaos and complexity.

We feel pulled into this journey, or even dragged there by our neurosis (Jung 1920, para. 518). But to be whole means including all our parts—the loony ones, the mad bits, all that lies undeveloped alongside our most developed skills, talents, and desires. Our ambivalence about this task mirrors the outer chaos we find in our societies. The disorder of our societies results in part from our avoidance of the Self that addresses each of us. Jung says: “You see, the Self is such a disagreeable thing in a way, so realistic, because it is what you really are, not what you want to be or imagine you ought to be; and that reality is so poor, sometimes dangerous, and even disgusting, that you will quite naturally make every effort not to be yourself” (Jung 1988, 99). “We would rather accept anything in the world, any devil or any hell, than accept ourselves in our particular concreteness. That is the thing of which we are most afraid ... But only when we accept the thing which is loathsome to us, have we a real will to change, not before” (Jung 1988, 86, 87).

Jungians must ask what advantage accrues to clinical work from using the symbolic concept Self and seeing it working from the beginning in the transference-countertransference field. What difference does it make?

Many. For example, we all know that analysis, if successful, recreates in the transference original injuries to our core self so that it went into hiding, or split into warring opposites, or dissociated into unconnected chunks, or fragmented into bits. Jungians see as well injury at the archetypal level so that the archetype presses its claims on the ego in damaged form. The ego is not in right relation to the archetype. In addition to relations to objects which originate outside us and from our internalised creations of them, Jungians recognize archetypal objects that arise from the psyche to speak to us about itself. It addresses us from territory different from the ego but needing our ego response to be lived here and now. The analyst must give attention to both sets of objects, charting the personal history of the analysand and the archetypal history as well.

Healing includes setting the archetype free from inflating the ego in compensation for missing pieces of ego reality, or deflating the wounded ego by driving it into masochistic substitute satisfactions. The archetype is set free for its function of making a bridge for the ego to the objective reality of the psyche, to what the Self is engineering, much as we might see setting our liver free from the pollutant of alcohol so it can perform its proper function in the body's economy.

Jungians agree with the object relations school that therapy aims to consolidate our ego and object constancy, but also see healing as linking our ego to the inner world of psychic reality whose center is the Self. A damaged relation to an archetype can kill us just as surely as a damaged relation to our liver, and not just us, but others too, as Hitler’s identification with the savior archetype tragically illustrates. The Self brings us bulletins of what transcends our ego—the archetypal psyche.

I would add, that the Self’s archetypal reality acts like a bridge to what transcends our whole psyche—to what we symbolise by the name God, or It, or Isness. Hence, when we engage through the transcendent function in ego-Self conversation, we move ever further toward what the Self witnesses to: reality which transcends the whole psyche. That transcendent reality affects us here and now, our ego, our body, our world.

The Self concept helps analyst and analysand verbalise that impulse toward another kind of consciousness than our usual ego functional one. Here our knowing gives way to unknowing; we enter into a surround of energy that inhabits all life and annuls our ego separations into subject-object, inner-outer,
self-other, us-them. In those moments we feel part of something larger that we may rebel against or accept. But it feels bigger and shifts our center of gravity. We feel addressed, shocked into wonder that there is something and not nothing. To recover this field of relatedness gives us entry into what Paul Ricoeur calls "second naiveté," where our childlike gladness in being finds itself tempered by life's suffering, but also strengthened like steel on stone (Ricoeur 1970, 543). Momentarily, we are granted new vision that sees through the tragic sufferings of human life to the objective presence of the center of life that knows us. Jung uses the word Self to designate that presence.

The ego-Self relationship is a process that assembles meaning whose referent is the transcendent. Living with this knowledge affects not just psyche and spirit but releases physical events in the world, in our sexuality, in our metabolism, in cures of illness, in social epidemics and epiphanies. The Self acts as bridge to this transcendent presence, points to it, witnesses to it. Through symbols of the Self we find names for the presence and our process of living toward it. We need the concept of Self, or one like it, to express our experience that something lives in each of us and among us that mirrors the mysterious process of the origin and goal of life. Its mirroring process underlies the mirroring that occurs in the transference-countertransference relationship.

It is the mysterious factor the Self points to that urged a man, for example, to persist in analysis over two decades, first with one analyst and then with me. He sought not only to find what failed to be given in childhood, with a father overwhelmed by rage and a mother caught in narcissistic wounds, but to reach durable connection to the creativity of being as it lived inside him and to know it existed outside him, external to his efforts. The transference to me broke open to this other level of relatedness, a level that is not the analyst's to give or withhold, for it holds both analyst and analysand in its unfolding.

The Self concept matters because it gives us a way to describe the shift that happens when treatment succeeds. The analysand comes to dwell in a bigger field than the transference-countertransference one. The ego-Self couple within, and also shared with the analyst, comes to replace the analyst- analysand couple; and then the analysand can leave analysis. Transference-countertransference skirmishes give way to moments of tangible evanescent presence which generously endorse life in each of us. We see that we are parts of a larger whole. We shift from asking, Who am I? to, What am I? meaning, What am I, and what are we together, part of? What larger purposes work themselves through me, and through this analysis, and summon our cooperation?

The body experience which accompanies transference and which we must always look into, brings home to both analyst and analysand the here and now reality of the transcendent. The man with two decades of analysis, for example, knew in the intimacies of the pressure of his blood when he was aligned to the center and when he missed it. Risky, elevated blood pressure signaled his off-course direction; lowered pressure ratified his correspondence.

Take a much less finished example of the bidding presence through the Self. A woman, also in a long analysis, suffering from borderline affliction that she manifests in still forgetting days or times of her sessions even five years into treatment, employs as her major defense a fragmenting of herself into bits. She can tolerate one bit of pain at a time, not all of them together, so she scatters herself into confetti. This defense protects her from massive pain, but dissipates her integrity. Slowly she has grown into an ego that can house all the bits together. In those moments, she feels aligned with a center that exists deep inside.
her and far outside her which she finds best in relation to her dreams, she says, “because they speak truth that doesn't come from me, or you, or textbooks, but from some other place.” She illustrates the metaphoric speech we all utter when joined with this center: “It gives me sovereignty of the self” (see also chapter 14).

**The Transcendent Function**

Transference inevitably introduces the transcendent function. Transference makes the analytic couple consciously recognize and converse about the process already going on. With luck and success in the treatment, the analytic couple will be replaced by the ego-Self couple in each person.

The transcendent function is not a theoretical speculation but raises a concrete and practical issue: how to come to terms with “the Unknown as it immediately affects us” (Jung 1959a, 68). The transcendent function is part of the compensatory function of the transference. Like dreams and symptoms, the transference also brings up unconscious contents to offset the one-sidedness of our conscious viewpoint. The transcendent function is Jung’s name for the process by which the psyche slowly moves our ego out of its fiction of being captain of the ship, say, or queen of the May, and builds up a bigger center for the whole psyche, conscious and unconscious.

Analysands come to treatment because they already know this process going on in their psyches, but usually in a negative form, of feeling opposite emotions in themselves colliding or violently alternating so that they can find no peace and no way forward in their lives. One young woman I saw for consultation and referral said she had “come for help because my life is completely stalemated.” Yet she feared that help because if “I let go to all my feelings, I might not get myself back.” She felt some other self looming on the horizon which threatened the narrow, but familiar, self she presently housed.

The analyst and analysand take up consciously what the psyche does naturally. We participate in the opposite points of view the psyche presents to reach its goal of building up a bigger center. We engage in imaginative conversation with both the conscious position and its opposite that presently has fallen into the unconscious! We listen, we look, we try to give form to this counterposition while holding on to our ego view. One woman, for example, danced into being a current of energy she could not capture into words. When she attended closely to it, it moved her to arch her back and lift her legs and arms up and down. She drew this impulse as well, forming what eventually amounted to a closing circle of her pelvis lifting backwards to touch her head. She formed the opposite of the ouroboros symbol where our tender underbelly is tucked within the circle and protected. Here, the inner side of her body opened outward to the energetic beat. The meaning of this idiosyncratic symbol did not reveal itself to her until much later in her recovery in sexual intercourse of the rhythmic movement of her hips backward and forward toward her mate, which delivered her to long-sought orgasm.

This odd symbol communicated through her body impulse addresses her consciousness as a picture the psyche gives of itself. We could ask, Who took this picture? For the angle of vision differs from our conscious one; it supercedes the analysand’s conscious and unconscious categories, and links her personal efforts to reach her sexual potential to an ancient symbol of wholeness, but now turned inside out. The symbol arrives as an additional object for her to take into consideration. It does not substitute for her personal efforts but moves through them. Both contexts are needed – the ego’s and the symbol’s. We cannot take the archetypal symbol in place of
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her ego’s effort to connect with her body in the context of all the object relations that served to disconnect her. Nor can we so emphasize her object relation history and its repetitions in transference to defend against the spontaneous thrust of the archetypal into her consciousness. Only with all these parts taken together does the psyche transcend the conflict with the arrival of the new.

The New

The transcendent function inaugurates transition to arrival of the new. The new initiates a third point of view that includes and surpasses the former two conflicting ones; it creates a third space combining conscious and unconscious from which symbols arise that address the ego like a bigger encompassing other which is what Jung calls the Self.

A new symbol comes on the scene, bringing some new attitude in us that permits us to feel greeted and to house the full impact of this novel presence and perception. It announces itself in symbolic form which possesses its own life; we see we could not have invented it. Hence we experience it as transcending our ego. It feels like a creative solution which is not the product of our will or thought, but is “in accord with the deepest foundation of the personality, as well as its wholeness” (Jung 1958, para. 856). We feel addressed by something that “possesses compelling authority not unjustly characterized as the voice of God” (ibid.). Through this solution that arrives from the bigger Self territory, we glimpse a unitary field that holds all of us in being. Thus does the process of transcendent function within us act as a bridge to what transcends the whole psyche.

But the transcendent function also involves a descent away from ego reality, “to the deus absconditus, which possesses qualities very different from those of the God who shines by day” (Jung 1971, para. 427). Hence the initiation of this process of moving from a smaller to a large container begins with our sense of dis-ease, disorientation, even falling into a gap or a void. We feel threat, a breaking down of accepted categories, even a sense of our cracking up (Aimé 1994). We go down before anything appears which could be said to go up to transcend the opposites. Like the woman in the consultation who feared she would plunge into emotions and not get herself back, we feel the deconstruction of our known world, our known meanings.

Yet this downgoing road also leads us to the fault lines, the seams, the points of distress in our world view, and thus exposes us to what lies beyond, that our very valuable world view obscures from our vision. This presence cannot be represented in language or other human forms, for its infinitude outruns the uttermost boundary of our finiteness. We regress from the ego to the Self world which grants us new perception and perception of the new. What arrives as solution bespeaks a different order of consciousness. Although the process of the transcendent function begins with destruction of any system of meaning we create, it does not destroy the implication of presence. In this way, depth psychology overlaps with negative theology. There, the advance of the infinite strips away any equation we make of it with the finite.

In the process of the transcendent function we not only struggle with opposites in ourselves, we also inhabit the opposites of our historical time. Here is spirit in the body, not in the head alone or in some distant stratosphere, but right in the midst of people’s specific lives, affected by their society and historical era. Our unconscious mirrors conflicts which seek resolution in our society. For example, a life-long communist who dismissed analysis as navel-gazing because true change could only originate from without, through society, found his
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personal world crack-up along with the collapse of Soviet Russia. His marriage, his job, his relation to his child, crumbled along with his former beliefs. He found himself driven into analysis as into an unknown country where he looked within himself for help.

In the struggle to go into ourselves and enter this unknowing state, we are not embarked on a hygiene project as one analysand insisted by hissing at me that she was not in my office “to get mental health!” We are participating in uniting our world. From what arrives as creative solutions, we contribute something new to others. In arriving at the space where the new arrives, we aerate the earth on which we all stand and from which we all grow. This insight lends dignity to analytical work. Working on personal problems feeds the psyche in all of us. The humiliation we suffer from being caught in complexes shifts to humble participation in the shared burdens of humanity. Every analysis is original research into the reality of the psyche.

The transcendent function and the transference that facilitates it are serious business, with concrete consequences and grave dangers. We enter with all our knowing and civilized ego values into dialogue with unknowing. We do not stand outside the circle in intellectual or aesthetic appreciation of “psychic process.” We step in; it grips us. When, for example, a woman imaginatively confronts a huge man with iron teeth from her dream in which he trashed a whole restaurant, smashing the furniture and throwing the dishes, she faces violence in the raw about which we read in the newspapers every day. The violence inspires such terror in her that at first only her dream can bring it into the transference field. Then she feels it in response to my interpretations. When I stay quiet, which allows the destructive energy to live between us, we descend into not knowing whose violence this is, and explore how it feels when coming from the analyst, when coming from the analysand, when coming from

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the field between us. Only then does the analysand imaginatively face this terrifying man. Slowly, she and he become a couple whose conflict makes a third space within the analysis. She no longer experiences me as smashing all her psychic furniture nor herself as trashing mine, and she now possesses enough space to keep him from invading her in violent self-attack. But what was she to do with this guy? And with his TEETH!

She engaged him directly, imaginatively. This was not cordial conversation but a slanging match. She yells at him, “Never do that to me again, that shouting banging, bashing, violently intruding!” He yells back: “Then wake up and use me! If you don’t, I’m using you!” Imagine our last explosive fight, where we really meant what we said, and said it top volume, in high emotional pitch. To do this sort of active imagination is to sweat, turn pale, tremble. We feel it in the body. Our pulse races. Our glands secrete. And all this conflict and urge to solve it, falls into the transference field and onto the analyst.

The analysand depends on the analyst to be really there, in it too. Hence danger lurks everywhere – of inflation, seduction, power plays, defensive intellectualising. Body means definite form. Spirit housed in body means bodily consequences – sexual arousal, explosive bowelts, white nights of sleeplessness, as well as ecstasy, a thrumming of joy throughout ordinary days. Bumping around in the psyche and the spirit it witnesses to will suddenly release physical experiences.

Dependence

The antidote to danger, the pharmakon for both analyst and analysand, and on both the personal and archetypal levels, remains the same – acknowledging dependence on each other and on the advance into consciousness, through the transcen-
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dent function, of the mysterious presence of what lies beyond
and undergirds the whole analytical enterprise.

As analysts we acknowledge dependence on a source of
wisdom greater than our own and on all those who mediate
it to us (see also chapter 9). When we feel our need, our
poverty, even at times our bankruptcy, we disidentify from the
power or whatever else the analysand would transfer to us. We
see the power, do not deny its presence in the intersubjective
field, but we do not claim it as our personal possession (see
Atwood and Stolorow 1984; Atwood, Brandaeh, Stolorow
1987). This contemplative action takes us into a whole realm
of countertransference which is the subject of another paper.

As analysands we acknowledge dependence on various
central figures in our life and also the effects of their lack of
mediation. We feel the gaps in the development of ourselves
from others not loving or seeing us, from our experiences of
abandonment because of war, or a parent's illness, death or
divorce, from being used as a substitute for a parent's lack.
Some of the darkest work in analysis occupies itself with these
gaps in ourselves. Mourning and rage swirl because we were
looked at as objects to be annexed, not subjects to be greeted
and enjoyed. All these dependencies, met and unmet, fall onto
the analyst and into the treatment to be relived, filled out, cor-
rected, or felt for the first time.

Where no object has mediated, say, mothering, the archetypal
presence of Mother looms large. It threatens to swallow
up the client precisely because no human being brought mater-
nal presence down to life size. I have known negative trans-
ferences directed at me because I did not fulfill the archetypal role
by providing as a result of the analysis admission into programs
for professional advancement, a loving mate, success in money
ventures, all things that to the client conveyed unqualified
acceptance by life. It falls to the analytical couple to bring the
mythic down to life-size while still communicating validation by
meeting dependency.

On the other hand, the gap left by failed object relations
also offers direct access to archetypal presence, less cluttered
by the intricate web of projected and introjected mediating
objects. If we can stand the force and remain rooted in finitude,
such direct access to an archetypal realm breeds unusual gifts
for the individual and the world. My clinical experience has
taught me that this insight comforts clients who suffer a serious
lack of appropriate objects in their upbringing whether through
parental madness or abandonment, or as a result of illness,
poverty, war, or ghetto violence. Artists, witches, people of
original insight and intensity fall into this category.

Transcendence, Transference and the Transcendent Function

This example comes from a small bit of a long analysis. It
shows the radical effects of the transcendent function on trans-
ference and how, through the transcendent function, we expe-
rience firsthand the presence of the Transcendent, whether or
not we call it by religious names. The first dream that began the
analysis of a middle-aged woman I will call Grace, announced
the first transference theme. Subsequent material comes from
a six-month period of the second year of our work.

She dreamt she was summoned to help a little girl whose
parents thought she was seriously ill. On her way there, she
passes a prison which contains only one man, a war criminal,
who is allowed only one visitor every ten years of his sentence.
She feels the lonely pain of his punishment. On arrival, the
dreamer sees that the little girl is not ill but simply has been left
alone too long and needs someone to play with her, which the
dreamer does.
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The dream announces the first transference theme: I was summoned to play with her; we were summoned in our work together to make space for this child-part left alone too long and thought to be ill. We noted that the criminal was locked up for some massive scheme of destructive aggression, but he was not yet at center stage. This dream responded to something that had occurred in our first session. In order to better look at some drawings Grace brought, I sat on the floor, which aston-ished her; in her dream she sits on the floor with the child.

Gradually our work revealed how a whole chunk of this woman had been left alone too long as a child and continued split-off from her adult life. As she identified with the little girl, she found herself needing to bring into analysis and to me specifically “every piece of my life, all the work I’ve done, all the things I’ve hidden away that I love, memories, scenes, places, things I’ve created. Each piece needs to be valued, cared for, known about, and I cannot do that alone.” The love inhabited her body and impelled her actually to bring things to our sessions. In this first transference theme, I was positioned to carry the good mother and she the little girl, and we worked as well on getting her aggression out of prison for use in facing various tests and burdens in her daily life.

At its most intense, her identification with the hidden little girl who needed to tell all her secrets compensated for her feeling outcast because she was fatally flawed. At those times of depression, self attack, and anxious sleeplessness, she played over a particular tape someone had given her of a public lecture I had delivered some years before in my work as a Seminary professor in which I had quoted Lady Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century mystic. She felt deeply humiliated by this practice and referred to it as a fetish. She said “I hate the part of me which longs for and needs to hear Ann’s voice on that tape.” What made the tape comforting, she said, was what she heard in the sound of my voice as a willingness to speak out of myself, to expose connection to a deep place from which I lived. She heard me speaking not from authorities or hearsay but from myself which she longed to do, but felt there was nothing there. Hearing the tape turned out to be important—hearing as opposed to seeing (an image). The sound as well as the content made her feel held from a deep place which counteracted her feeling something was deeply wrong with her, that, in a basic way, she existed outside of life.

She also felt ashamed to heap upon me all the materials of her life: what could I possibly do with them? But she made good use of analysis and endured this burgeoning child’s longing that she housed as an adult sexual woman. Hence the longing carried with it unspecified sexual desire which made her feel exposed. Nonetheless, she risked bringing me copies of actual journal pages where she showed her innermost feelings, memories, thought (see also chapter 13). They seemed to her to be trivial meanderings, far distant from contact with any center. My reaction was the opposite; I remarked she was already in touch with a center; these were conversations with the Self. This struck lightning and she said she desired “to bring all of my life somewhere— to the Source of life, really to the God Julian of Norwich knows who treasures and knows us, who hides us in Himself.” In these exchanges, I was positioned to carry the mother and the Self, but it was a mother she had never had and a Self she felt distant from, and she the little girl; the aggression she got out of prison to use in her life tasks, as she lived a busy, fruitful life with many demanding relationships and aspects of work. The aggression did not yet take center stage between us.

When we explored her feelings of being irredeemably flawed, the second transference theme announced itself. Here she carried the negative mother she experienced in childhood,
and I carried the link to the little girl who wanted to be seen. She described her mother as "always rehearsing me, even at lunch I had to recite lessons, and thus invalidating me. I was part of mother’s project." From the point of view of one who ought to accomplish lessons in school, in music, dance, art and athletics, she viewed this hidden little girl side of herself as "a shameful, formless place in me, damaged, something wrong." It filled her with humiliation. "Like a birthmark?" I ask. "That’s too superficial" she answered. I saw that she felt the wrongness came with her; it was not even a wound inflicted from the outside. I said this part, different from her view, wanted to be seen because it left clues like bread crumbs in the forest, like forgetting her pen or her eyeglasses after sessions when the little girl had been around and having to return to fetch them, or like giving me the journal pages. She said she was lugging the transference around like Linus with his security blanket and it was mortifying.

Two views occupied our transference space. Her ego wanted to avoid and reject this little girl in herself whose needy longing and passionate desire to be in touch she saw as formless shameful wrongness. "I can’t live from this place," she said, "because it is not viable." The little girl got transferred to me to deal with. It was speaking to me and I to it and Grace was listening in. The little girl’s longing was just at the seam of her ego consciousness, its fault line, and, when followed, disrupted her ego stance, deconstructed it and took her down to a dreadful place of invalidity. For the little girl introduced an opposite view: She, shameful or not, wanted to be found; she longed to be seen and played with. She desired and wanted to be desired, a preview of adult sexual responses. She was not daunted by the invalidity that threatened Grace’s ego. She talked to me and I listened to her and at times we ganged up on Grace. The analysand acknowledged this when she said, "this part is not ashamed of neediness; she wants to eat and run after the analyst." Increasingly, she felt our sessions contained dialogue between these two parts of herself—the wrongness, and the needy, passionate appetite. We made room for both.

The dreadful place in her psyche where she felt invalid also attacked her work, making her feel there was something she ought to know but did not and she did not know what it was. Therefore her reasoning spun on, "There must be something terribly wrong with me; this is a danger place: I could easily go into panic." I said, "Stay with the not-knowing place and look around and see what goes on." After this session she dreamt she is driving her car and comes to a construction site. She discovers where the earth has been dug up by big "earthmovers," shards and arrowheads of amethyst and stone; the construction work has uncovered American Indian relics. "It is a treasure hunt!"

The psyche began in this dream to dig up what was to become a new transference object; the Indian. But first we took another tack. When she held in consciousness both her self-rejection and her longing for connection, her aggression burst out of prison. I was the bad mother, or she was, aggressively repudiating her, finding her a burden, hopeless, tiresome, outside the pale. She dug up a lot of memories of feeling banished by her mother who could "withdraw behind an iron curtain if you disagreed with her and she felt affronted. She would take care of me and fulfill her duty and let me go off if I chose something different from her way. But she would have nothing to do with me." As a child, Grace saw her mother cut off contact with her own sisters and her few friends when they offended her. She never saw them again. Only her father kept contact with her mother, but “he never pressed too close.” The client experienced him as a benign gentle refuge but never a help with her mother. I said a non-negotiable space existed
around her mother and Grace had taken it as belonging to herself and that kept her a pariah.

When Grace held together the opposites of the aggressive mother and the child who was outside the pale, she dreamt of coming to her session and her mother came too. Grace feels awkward, stupid, a mess, isolated from me. The same night she also dreams that a young woman is put to death; "the front of her head blows off; it's ghastly. No one deserves to be treated this way."

Once out, the psyche started playing around with her aggression in relation to her desirous longing. The transcendent function of going back and forth between opposite points of view was operating. She dreamt of me lecturing in a public forum; she longs to speak with me afterwards but I am surrounded by "Harvard types," so she feels "utterly humiliated" and scorns herself for feeling a schoolgirl crush. Leaving, she sees a "herd of alligators" nearby in a wildlife refuge where animals can return to their natural state. On waking she remembered an earlier dream of a woman she took to be me with an alligator on a leash, telling her she must learn to lead it and take its temperature. Working imaginatively with the alligators, walking unconstrained in their mud, Grace came to appreciate them: "My alligators like their mud. Their huge jaws take big strong bites of life lived adventurously." I noticed aggression moving into service of living.

She also engaged her longing imaginatively and it changed too. She talked to it, received it and surprised herself. Such desire no longer seemed shameful and degrading but evidence of connection to what she called "this other level," to which she associated God. She said, "The longing is God coming to us. I received it, whereas usually I am ashamed of it or outside it." From this crossing back and forth between opposites of desire and aggression, and their influencing each other, the transference began to change. The analyst she longed for seemed now to her more a "mythic person who lived life with passion, not in fantasy, but with others." A dream took this further and announced the third theme of the transference: I was now the red Indian. The transference object changed.

Change of Object

Again she dreamt of me lecturing in public but this time does not know me personally though she feels I am terribly important to her. She says, "I want to see who she is, for apparently I have never seen her before. Again Harvard types are around her. When I finally make out who the person Ann is, I see that she is actually an American Indian. Though the center of a large group, she herself is very inconspicuous, plain looking, a traditional long braids down her back. Her appearance greatly surprises me."

This change of the transference object that the psyche initiated, strengthened her acceptance of the little girl longing. She began to see it heading somewhere and it felt less humiliating. But that meant the humiliation got dug up again. When suffering it palpably one session, I asked what sort of image does this affect of shameful invalidity give of itself. She answered, "It is like a deformed child ... no one wants around, something dwarfed, ugly, grotesque." When I asked where she felt this in her body, she suddenly remembered a dream of ten years before when she entered analysis for the first time: "I gave birth to a premature fetus, shrunken, deformed and thought this is awful, my husband will be horrified. I felt I needed to kill it because he would not stand for this sort of disaster. But as its mother I couldn't.... As I held it, it turned into a red Indian and became red liquid."
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We both felt amazed. Here was the red Indian at the very inauguration of her analytic process a decade ago with the first analyst. She said it was like jello liquid, not yet set, and she thought the dream had depicted her initial fear beginning analysis that she would be too frightened to take on what it opened up, hence it would never get born. It would not reach bodily form. The analysis did open her but she could not keep it alive after her first analyst's death. Remembering this old dream in our session joined up the work of the two analyses and returned her to a loving connection with that first analyst. She felt a continuity. I was struck by the red Indian making its appearance even then.

Right after this session she dreamt again of construction, now done by giant cockroaches tunneling under the dirt floor. She says “They will not harm me, but I know I can’t live here anymore.” I say that the unconscious has reframed the issue from, What is wrong with me? to, I can’t live here anymore. The psyche unites the feeling of being a deformed fetus changing into red Indian liquid with recognition she must change the place she lives, the location of her identity. This led to a change in the transference field between us. Not only did the transference object change – me carrying the red Indian temporarily – but she, the subject, her own ego consciousness – changed as well.

Her ego descended to an unknowing place where she just had to look around and see what is there. In contrast to the growing up process that Winnicott describes so well (1971, chapter 6), when we move from subjective-objects to objective-objects in the external world, here we grow down to the archetypal realm where the objective-object again becomes subjectively real. We move from subjective-object to objective-object to objective-subject. This happened to the analyst as the transference object, who became in this woman’s psyche a stand-in for the eventual disclosure of a new part of herself.

Change of Ego

First, however, her ego needed to change, to house the new. Boundaries enlarge in this down-going road; our ego is not lost in regression to a pre-ego or splintered-ego state, but finds itself in relation to the surround, the whole that centers and circumferences. Grace said on a personal level that she knew she must let the analyst in which went against her life long stance of maintaining relation only by keeping distance, namely keeping the other from the deformed part of herself. She knew that admitting me meant pain. She said she knew I would fail her; it was inevitable. “I know I will get hurt. This is mother stuff. I will disappoint or offend you or you will just lose interest, or you’ll make a mistake or just be getting on with your life and I will feel let go. That’s how deeply I resist letting you in on a deep level because I will get hurt, whether I or you wanted to or not.”

Yet she also felt me as connected to some deep place, some transcendence, that the Self witnessed to and that would hold her. Reaching this place is not the result of some technique the analyst can employ. Rather, both analyst and analysand arrive there as a return to sentient being, to Self as unconscious ordering factor that works in collaboration with the ego, anchoring it, feeding it, generating it, and linking it to what lies beyond the psyche.

In this new space we are directed to new attitudes toward living, with new objects. It is not quiescent or removed from life. We are pressed instead toward specific tasks. Grace found her task in response to a dream which connected her to her
own analyst within. She dreamed she was rushing off to a lecture leaving her house "a mess and too small to hold all my things and all the boxes are around needing to be unpacked. The analyst drops in for a visit. I think horrible! No place even to sit and what will she think of the mess! But she just pushes the boxes out of the way, willing to keep me company."

Grace said this dream-analyst is like a friend who just hangs out with you; she is not there to be entertained or to do, but just to be, taking time, which is very different from my expectation she will be horrified by the mess. She summed it up by saying, "This is my Ann." The real Ann and the "my Ann" do not substitute for each other or cancel each other. Both exist distinctly. And weave in and out, expanding the ego’s vision in two directions: the analyst who is the red Indian who wants to be with her even in the dreadful invalid mess place, and the analyst, me, linked with doing the analytical work with her.

The work, we discovered, was to unpack the boxes which meant something very specific. In the company of this inner Ann, who is not me, but her own, and working together with me, we discovered where her dreadful feeling that she ought to know something and does not really belonged. In Jungian vocabulary, we were asking, Where does the negative animus voice really belong? It belongs in the task of unpacking her own boxes. Not going out to hear a lecture of how someone else thinks or feels, but how did she? She needed to unpack her own way of thinking and feeling, both personally and in her business life, for there was something which she should know and did not: how her own mind and heart worked. In this new place she could and did find out, and found herself delivered into a long period of successful work.

Jung says that when something crosses over from the unconscious to consciousness, it imposes an ethical obligation on us to realize its concrete form in life. This is the second stage of alchemy in Dorn’s scheme, of joining up the unio mentalis to the body (Jung 1963a, paras. 686-687, 690, 694-695; Jung 1963b, 193). Body means definite, finite form in this life. We are directed to discover the specific thing we need to do to make real our new perception in relation to reality tasks and real people with whom we live. In this way each individual analysis contributes to society as a whole. Living from this deep place breeds kinship. Spirit exists in the body. Body houses spirit.

Naming Transcendence

This analysand described her change in transference terms: "This Ann, in the dream of the boxes, which is my Ann who just came to be with me, is like the goodness of God," she said, "something that comes of its own accord and wants to be with you. In the dream I change from rushing out to hear what someone else says to unpacking my way of being." She said, "The harmonics have changed. On a personal level, some way or another we would hurt each other." That was the lens of what she called her “mother stuff,” what I called the mother complex. “But on this other level where someone comes to greet you and be with you,” she said, “there is an absolute relation which does hold and is holding you and it doesn’t matter if mistakes are made. This is not about mistakes or even about analysis. This is long term; a level where none of us is forgotten. It is primary commitment. It isn’t that you couldn’t hurt me. You could. But at that level, you won’t … I know I am important at another level that you are committed to and there you won’t let go. Your absolute commitment to that level means I’m never let go of.”

The culmination to this particular phase of our work came a month later, again with the red Indian now directly relating to
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her. She dreamt, “I am with others and an Indian in full head-
dress of feathers and silver appears in our midst and shows us
where to go. Then I am alone with him and know that with him
I shall learn to be completely myself. It is some kind of initiation
and I need not be frightened ... so I am ready to open myself
to him (including sexually). It is almost impersonal yet intensely
personal. The climax becomes so powerful that I am awakened
from my sleep. I remember that as part of his lovemaking to me,
he first put his penis in my ear and semen on my head.”

In associating to the dream, she remembered listening to
the tape and saw now it previewed penetration of her through
her ear in this dream. She heard something new about herself
through the transference and the transcendent function work-
ing between us in our making space for the opposite points of
view in herself that produced such conflict. The ear was her
way of getting into a deep space of unknowing and out of the
ego which knew all about herself as “wrong.”

In her ego, Grace had been captured by her experience of
her mother’s negative attitude. And it was that premise — that
something was basically lacking in her and had to be rehearsed
and given lessons to fix it — that comprised what was wrong
with her. She was living from her mother’s premise, not her
own. What she needed to know, and did not know, was her
own way of being.

In the new unknowing space where she was penetrated
by a new object that aroused her spirit and her body, she
heard “new harmonics.” Her thoughts were fertilised. Her
old “knowing” something is wrong with her changed to her
new relation to the Indian. And she remembered her mother
saying sharply to her, “Stop being a wild Indian!” Through that
personal association to the Indian, we explored some of its
power as an archetypal symbol. The redness in the American
Indian tradition bespeaks joy, passion, ardor, energy, festivity,
renewal of life. And the Indian himself stood forth as masculine
aggression for living. In alchemy, the rubedo stage marks our
getting into life what has been refined in the retort of analysis.
The red unset jello liquid takes on red-blooded living. The
Indian animus presence bridges to the Self, and the Self bridges
to reality beyond the psyche.

In this phase of analysis, Grace named the transcendent as it
broke in upon her and as she experienced herself arriving there
through the crossing back and forth between the opposites
of the transcendent function operating within her psyche. She
brings home to us, with her names of the “new harmonics”
and the “American Indian” that transcendence brings with it a
name, or, we arrive at a name for our personal experience of
its collective reality. It is just such idiosyncratic images of the
Self that make a bridge for us to the unknown that intimately
touches us.

Transcendence is not something up in the sky, far away from
us, abstract; it is a change of place here and now — in the ego,
in the object, in the body, in the world. Spirit and body go
together. Transcendence always effects a striking conjunction
of the particular and the universal, the awe-inspiring and the
humdrum, the vast and the concrete. To live toward it we must
name it. Analysands will find their own names and they must
utter them, I believe, to realise and ritualise their relation to
the reality to which the Self points. Otherwise, transcendence
hangs in the air, or we wrapp it up as precious and keep it in
the back of the drawer, or in a locked safe. The transcendent is
much too alive for such treatment. It wants to be lived, housed
in our body, in our society, in different forms. We can all think
of various names our analysands have created to speak of their
unspeakable experience — now not the agony of being lost, but
the joy of having been found, known, created.
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Jung sums it up as the goal of treatment: "Analysis should release an experience that grips or falls upon us as from above, an experience that has substance and body such as those things which occurred to the ancients ... then it is convincing. It must be organically true, that is, in and of our own being. If I were to symbolise it, I would choose the Annunciation (Jung 1925, 80).


Note

1. The opposites, Jung discovered, exist in and comprise the nature of the unconscious (Jung 1967; see also Thibaudier 1995). As our consciousness grows, we experience the opposites at first as spanning a conflict between the ego and the unconscious, that is, we will house one opposite in consciousness, and the other will oppose us from the unconscious, performing a compensatory role to our one-sided consciousness. As the transcendent function operates and our ego grows big enough to hold both opposites in consciousness simultaneously, it is as if the ego now mirrors the unconscious: both contain pairs of opposites. The construction of the Self and of the ego's conversation with it is not identified with either pole of the opposites but includes both. The opposites may still conflict, but the ego takes up its position outside this opposition, being preoccupied with its relation to the Self.

References


13. Transference, the Transcendent Function, and Transcendence


Freud, S. 1895b. On the grounds for detaching a particular syndrome from neurasthenia under the description "anxiety neurosis." SE III, 87-121.


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