

Bushwhacking Through Narcissism: The Making of a Jungian Analyst

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Nine

The Third In Analysis

My work with Kim taught me something else about analysis and human relationship generally, a matter of central practicality that I call the Third.[1] This is the fact that in a relationship of some consciousness, Jung's "transcendent function" operates between two individuals in the manner of a third partner, as though the relationship itself has an intention that may or may not respect the conscious wishes of either of us. When Jung speaks of transcendent function, he confines his attention to *intrapsychic* facts alone. He means that when ego finds itself stuck between opposite attitudes, no third alternative is available to consciousness ("*tertium non datur*"). The individual must "bear the tension" between these opposites, an attitude that produces introversion, the in-flowing of psychic energy from the ego to the unconscious, activating a new possibility, a "Third" that transcends the opposites and shows a way out of the difficulty.

Just as self and anima have proven themselves powerful *interpersonal* factors in analysis, so also the Third. The transcendent function operates between individuals who can bear the tension between their conflicting individual wishes and needs until the relationship itself points out a new direction. If the "individual self vortex" is the source for the transcendent function's *intra* psychic manifestation, then the self field is the source of the Third's operation. Possibly the clearest instance of this between Kim and me was our seemingly independent decisions to seek help from other therapists. At this point the sexual instinct-archetype had become too powerful for our analytic relationship to contain. Neither of us was happy to admit this fact, and neither of us wished to terminate our work, but in seeking outside help we half-consciously responded to the Third's intention to bring about a greater distance between us.

To describe this situation in a more systematic manner, it will be useful to describe three different stages of interpersonal interaction. The simplest and most dysfunctional might be called "unipolar," where we are unable to recognize our partner as an independent other, and we are stuck in a solipsistic narcissism. A "bipolar" relationship becomes possible when we can accept our partner as having equal validity and similar personal limitations as ourselves. Beyond that, ability to recognize the Third requires a conscious sensitivity to the self field as the context within which we operate as independent persons. All three of these degrees of relationship manifested themselves from time to time between Kim and myself.

Much of the material in previous chapters about my interactions with Kim illustrate the unipolarity of her relating. Even the evidence I have presented about our experience of psychic union suggests an undifferentiated state of consciousness that we shared: mind reading and our quality of mental fusion, for example. To some extent this was illuminating for me. I had already experienced some of this with Patricia and my wife, but Kim came from a family in which feelings and bodily sensations were freely discussed -- something entirely foreign to my experience.

She reported sensations in her chest or limbs or that her "stomach dropped" when the sexual charge between us suddenly increased. All these comments were meant to give me direct information about her inner state, but I was astonished to see that hers were the same sensations I was experiencing. Thus she contributed to my awareness of how thoroughly unitary our mystical participation was. They are experiences that happen to any pair of individuals caught in a strong animus/anima constellation; and they point to unitary events in the self field that we presumably share to a lesser degree with all the people, animals, and even plants in our environment. Such a *participation mystique* is constant but goes generally unnoticed in human experience. It strikingly enters awareness only when an archetype has seized our consciousness. We may take it as data without losing our ego's integrity, or we may be overwhelmed and fragmented by it.

Kim was frequently overwhelmed by it to such an extent that she felt in communion with the gods or overwhelmed by demons -- all of whom were projected onto me. For example, when she said that her "stomach dropped" she attributed the power to "make it drop" to me. She would say that before meeting me, she had never known anyone "who could make her stomach drop at will." My protestations that I was not deliberately doing anything and that in fact I felt it "done to me" as well, she took as evidence of extraordinary humility on my part and further evidence that I was an unusually effective guru who could use my magical powers to guide her in her life and free her from her conflicts.

A few moments later, however, she might interpret a similar bodily sensation in diametrically opposite terms. She would become enraged with me for invading her stomach with my invisible powers, probably with the intention of raping her from a distance. If I reported that I had had the same sensation and that I was as much "invaded" as she was, she would be convinced I was lying. Nothing I could do at such a time would not be interpreted in a hostile light, for I had been transformed in her eyes from a benevolent god to a seductive demon.

While it was clear to me that such phenomena were manifestations of the self field, Kim felt herself overwhelmed by powerful energies that were exclusively friendly one moment and thoroughly hostile the next. She found herself in the position of a shaman's apprentice who had opened her "gap" to preternatural forces capable of bringing about the death of her ego. Such extreme vacillations have been named by Melanie Klein as "splitting the object" (me) into a divinely good analyst whose introjected wisdom could save her from her conflicts and fear of madness one moment and a demonically bad sorcerer the next, whose subtle-body penis would aggressively invade her with its load of destruction.

Klein's "paranoid/schizoid position" [2] is thus characterized by an unwilling and terrifying openness to the self field, experienced as the domain of the other. Because Kim's borderline

condition left her unable to "close her gap," she was left with a single primitive defense against the self field: to demonize it and flee. The uncontrollable emotions of the instinct-archetypes were too much for the integrating powers of her self, leaving her faced with the immanent prospect of dissolution. In Jung's language, we would say the self field was experienced by her as the Great Mother to which she responded ambivalently. On the one hand she wanted nothing more than to relax into the good mother's womb, where she would find ultimate security, support, and nurture; but such a dependency would be dangerous to anyone's individuality. The resulting threat of ego dissolution was encountered under the image of the devouring mother who must be fled. It was an unconscious defense against an uncritically positive transference.

Clearly there was very little of "relationship" from Kim's side of our association. I was not perceived as a person of human dimensions but was "split" into forces of superhuman magnitude. The one who had to, in Melanie Klein's language, endure the emotions of the "depressive position"[3] was me; for Kim was always a single, whole being in my eyes. Even when I felt personally fragmented by her demonic projections, I consciously perceived that we were separate individuals; and I saw that her attacks were motivated by her lack of boundaries and consequent need to distance herself from me.

After some months of work with me, she began to experience moments of lucidity when she would say that my job was to bear witness to her potential wholeness, her having a center -- even when she could not appreciate it herself. Even now, more than a decade later, she sometimes phones me when she feels her current therapist or others in her life have been responding only to parts of her. She wants to be reminded through my mirroring that there is more to her being than those fragments and that her parts are related to a center.

Furthermore, she has been delighted by the accuracy of the picture of her I have given in this book, a circumstance that makes her nostalgic for our analytic relationship. She grieves its premature termination and wishes I had been strong enough to contain the sexual instinct-archetype so that we could have continued our work. She says I remember her life better than she does -- a testimony to her continuing struggle with fragmentation. No doubt she still finds herself in the "paranoid/schizoid position" all too often. But I find that typically, now, she sees me as an independent agent, a person with human strengths and failings. She can criticize without demonizing me when I sometimes fail to hear her accurately. She finds me to be the one person in her life who has been constant and faithful and dependably supportive, despite my occasional failures -- a testimony to her attainment of the "depressive position" and her growing capacity for "bipolar" relationships.

The ability to engage in genuine two-person relationships is an achievement for every individual, requiring an ego with sufficient integrity to withstand the force of *participation mystique* without dissolving and to recognize the uniqueness and integrity of one's partner. But there are *two* fields capable of dissolving the ego. In discussing my work with Kim, I have confined my concern to the self field, which may or may not retain its own integrity in the face of the powerful energies of the instinct-archetypes. But there is another danger, as well. The collective values of the persona field may also threaten genuine relationship.[4] Kim and I both had to struggle with defenses drawn from the realm of collective consciousness that threatened to block our engagement in the self field.

For example, Kim would sometimes refer to the boundary-lacking *participation mystique* as a failure on my part to maintain the safety of an ideal therapeutic distance. She desired a therapist who could be more "professional" than I. I would be compared unfavorably with therapists she had left because they had implicitly labeled her as hopelessly pathological. At such moments, the dissolving effects of the self field seemed more painful to her than blatant misunderstanding. I, too, was not free of such longing for safety, and wished I could find some way of imposing distance. I felt guilty of failing to be a "real analyst" with her.

But I also knew that if I had clung to the ethical requirements of "clear boundaries," I might have ended our work prematurely, *i.e.*, before the Third had shown us that termination was a requirement demanded by nature. I would surely have felt my unilateral ending of our work as an act of weakness and cowardice, and I would have failed to learn the lessons of my own dissolving and of the importance of the self field. I would have felt ethically untainted but a moral failure. All of this would have amounted to a significant loss. But even more important, I would have left Kim to bear the greater burden, for then her "guru-analyst" would have declared her to be too sick and too dangerous for analysis.

This had happened repeatedly to Kim before she began her work with me. She described therapists who had left town, changed their phone numbers, and generally stigmatized her as untreatable and beyond the pale of humanity. They had been threatened by the prospect of violating the precepts of the persona field and its ethical code regarding sexuality, clinging to professional respectability to save their careers at Kim's expense. In defensively appealing to the persona field, they relinquished an ego consciousness that might have seen the human value and personal vulnerability of Kim. They suppressed their own responsibility as moral beings to respond empathically to a fellow creature. And they left her convinced she was "the second most difficult borderline in Boston."

Most of us who had worked with Kim in those days found ourselves caught between a painful pair of opposites. To accept the whole woman (a precondition for effective work) meant to accept her wild sexuality, which was a real danger for any heterosexual male.[5] Her lack of boundaries made the disturbed self field the most prominent factor in any interpersonal exchange. The sexual instinct-archetype threatened the very possibility of work insofar as it eroded the analyst's ability to maintain a therapeutic distance. The most obvious refuge in such a case was the persona field with its ethical requirements. Those therapists who held too closely to this alternative -- somewhat like Odysseus tied to his ship's mast while passing the island of the sirens -- made Kim bear the entire burden of the pathology so that she felt isolated on the island of her madness, stigmatized, and misunderstood.

From a Jungian perspective, the only "analytic" course is to try to bear the tension between these opposites: losing sight neither of the need for distance nor of the need to join her in "the soup." My failure to adequately hold that tension has already been discussed. Still, I believe I have done a better job than most; for at least our termination took place when *both of us* realized it was inevitable. I neither forced it on her, as did those who yielded to the professional requirements of the persona field; nor did I lose all vestiges of my therapeutic function by giving up all hope of distance.

When Jung describes the transcendent function as presenting a wholly original *image* that shows a third alternative between the opposites, I believe he makes the solution too neat.

Again and again in my work, I have seen that analysands caught between an impossible pair of opposites and able to bear the tension for months or years may not find an alternative that is truly *new*. What often happens instead is that they find at the end of their painful indecision that one of the alternatives is inevitable.

For example, someone who wrestles mightily for perhaps three years with the possibility of divorce from a marriage or resignation from a job may finally choose one of the options with real confidence. When this happens, the final decision is made from a new standpoint. The time spent bearing the tension is not seen as wasted, for the individual had learned invaluable information about him- or herself in the process. The sadder-but-wiser decision made after months or years of struggle is informed by considerations that would never have been possible, had the Gordian knot been cut in the first few weeks. Outwardly the final decision may seem to be nothing new, but inwardly it is quite a different matter.

The transcendent function, therefore, does not necessarily present us with a completely new and unheard of possibility. Rather it deepens the decision process so that we find ourselves acting confidently in harmony with our own nature. A course that might have felt arbitrary or willful at the beginning of the process feels profoundly appropriate at the end. We go on with our lives freed of any compulsion to look wistfully back and worry about what might have been.

To follow the transcendent function means to bear the tension until we have the concurrence of the self behind us. To proceed with that kind of deep internal support gives us the confidence that we are acting in harmony with our own nature. Frequently this entire process can proceed without any considerations beyond the individual's own intrapsychic dynamics. With regard to *inter* personal processes, however, matters may be a good deal more complicated. A wife might leave her marriage secure in her decision even though her husband remains unreconciled to the move. Such a turn of events is sometimes unavoidable. An analyst, too, may sometimes have to terminate work with an analysand who is unable to accept the decision, but this can easily be injurious to the patient who is left feeling too "sick" to be treated. The analyst bears a good deal of responsibility for the well-being of the people with whom he or she works. A *mutual* decision is always to be preferred.[6]

As a process that takes place *between* two individuals, analysis always implies mutuality; and the domain of mutuality is the self field. Consequently as an analyst, it is never sufficient for me to consider only my own intrapsychic conflict between the persona's requirement for professional distance and the self's pull toward *participation mystique*. The Third must be awaited not only within myself but *between us*. I found it immoral to lash myself to the mast of my professional identity and force Kim to bear the burden of the sexual instinct-archetype alone. At the level of the self field I was infected and dissolved by that archetypal force. I felt obliged to accept my own part in our process, and to do so frankly. We *shared* that pathology. I saw it as my obligation to bear the terrifying tension that threatened me with betraying my profession on the one hand and betraying my patient on the other.

The Third eventually manifested its intention through our separate decisions to seek individual therapy outside of our own work. But there were many smaller instances that preceded this. I had started my work with Kim with a vague but urgent awareness of the

danger that lay before me; and I had unreflectively hoped to proceed as I had with Mara and Joe, staying close to my analyst persona. But as chaotic as it was, the work was again and again brought to a halt by my determination to maintain what I thought was a safe distance. Repeatedly I found myself in an unnatural power position as the one who listened to her feelings of dissolution without revealing anything of my own; and I could see that I was requiring her to bear too great a burden of our mutual fragmentation.

I was aware, as well, of how this appeared from outside the *participation mystique*. For I had worked with the former analysands of certain of my colleagues and heard how the patient was made to feel crazy by the analyst's clinging to a therapeutic persona. In one instance the patient had dreamt of her analyst's physical illness, a condition of which I had independent knowledge. I knew that it had been causing him a great deal of concern at the time of her dream. But he had denied it utterly when she raised the issue, making her feel crazy and giving rise to a series of dreams in which he was portrayed as a demon who was driving her mad. I had also worked with a woman who had intuitive knowledge that her husband was having an affair. His denial of it and insistence that she accept his word placed her in an intolerable position. Her attempts to deny her own intuition and judgment had driven her into an intense paranoia, where the most mundane occurrences took on cosmic significance for her. The numbers and letters on auto license plates, for instance, had all carried hidden messages and commands.

Experiences such as these had convinced me that when the analysand is gathering accurate information from the self field, the analyst's denial can be extremely destructive for a patient with a weak sense of self. Consequently I had gradually to relinquish my persona defenses in the face of Kim's accurate intuitions until I was left with a single argument for holding the tension, the idea that we had to proceed "step by step" and that if "nature" required us to become lovers we needed to know this unequivocally. We had to avoid a precipitate leap that left important matters unexamined. Only this position held open the validity of the self-field communication between us. But it left us so vulnerable that we each had to look for an outside support.

The analysis with Kim failed because I was not strong enough to bear the tension between the demands of persona and those of self. In retrospect I can trace a meandering line running through our work together. Every move I made, not excluding the mistakes, changed our stance toward one another in the self field and constellated another (usually unrecognized) Third. Eventually our relationship became incompatible with further attempts at analysis, and we reluctantly had to recognize that the Third was drawing us apart.

We spent four months of complete separation while we intensified our "inner work" with our separate therapists and never again took up the work of analysis. During those four months I found myself, in my deep depression, exploring a new relationship with my anima; and the work has continued to this day. If my anima had been a mask, it had not been Kim it hid from view but myself. I had overestimated my ability to stand up to the force of the self field without the mask of professional codes for support.

In retrospect, however, I still see no alternative to the course I took with Kim; for I had to work with the strengths and weakness I had at the time. Today I am far more conscious of myself and of the forces of the self field. I like to think that the work might have succeeded

if I had encountered Kim a decade later. But without Kim's challenges to my former notions of the analytic process and of my own vulnerability to dissolution, I could not have grown as I have.

In the language of shamanism, I had had no trouble finding Kim's wandering soul. My difficulty was in finding my way back to the public world, the realm of the persona field. Florinda Donner succeeded with Texoma because she never completely left the rite she was conducting in the social world of the Yanomama village. She groped almost blindly in the self field, half the time doubting its existence. My work with Mara and Lisa had been like this. I had succeeded in spite of my ignorance of what I was doing in the realm of the self. With Kim, however, the archetypal world had become vivid and the public world a phantom. I myself needed to be shamanized, for my soul had lost its way. Having worked my way back myself and with the help of my fourth analyst, I have not lost my appreciation for the reality of the self field. Nor for the power of the instinct-archetypes to turn it into a corrosive bath, strong enough to dissolve the bones of an apprentice shaman.

Analysts flirt with madness as surely as do shamans when we open our "gap" to the forces of the self field. Without our capacity to close it, we are lost, both as analysts and as human beings. But like the apprentice shaman, we can learn from having been lost -- if we are fortunate enough to be found again and brought back. Every experience of being lost and found strengthens our ability to travel between the two worlds without losing our way. Indeed, the self field has no landscape for us until we draw its map; and for this we need consciousness. Finding our way there and back draws the rivers, mountain ranges, and oceans of our atlas. The more we complete it through our successes and failures, the better chance we have of finding and retrieving the souls of our subsequent analysands.

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1. Cf. *Divine Madness*, Chapter Eleven (Haule, 1990).
 2. The *paranoid/schizoid position* is dominated by an anxiety that the persecutory object will get inside the ego and annihilate both the ideal object and the self. This anxiety is defended against by projection, introjection, splitting, idealization, denial, projective identification, and introjective identification. When these fail, the ego is invaded by anxiety so great that *disintegration of the ego* may occur as a final defense (Segal, 1974: pp. 26-30; paraphrased here).
 3. The *depressive position* is the crucial step in the child's development. At this point the infant begins to perceive his dependence on the external object and the ambivalence of his own aims and interests. He discovers his own psychic reality at the same time that the ideal and persecutory objects (split in the paranoid/schizoid position) come together and are experienced as a single whole. The superego is experienced as an internal whole, and the oedipus complex begins to develop (Segal, 1974: pp. 69-75; paraphrased here).
 4. A careful reading of Jung's *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology* (CW 7) will reveal that the theme of that book is the necessity of hewing to a course between the two kinds of dissolution into collectivity: that of the persona field and that of the self field.
 5. She distrusted women and homosexual men, eliminating the possibility of working in the sexually safer environment such therapists might have provided.
 6. I have described the complexity of this situation for the analyst in "Eros, Mutuality, and the 'New Ethic,'" Chapter Two of *Cast the First Stone: Ethics in Analytical Practice*, edited by L. B. Ross and M. Roy (1995).