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JUNGIAN DRAMATHERAPY:

Myth and Archetype Enactment

Jung's theory of the Unconscious is more generalized, primitive, and positive than its Freudian counterpart. Freud's, and that of the many inheritors in the field of modern psychotherapy is essentially a psychology of neurosis. It perceives the negative elements in the ailing psyche but fails to affirm the transforming and healing significance of the images, archetypes, and symbols constellated by the illness. These it evaluates as "infantile", "wish-fulfilment. (i.e. creative?) and dismisses this psychic activity as an epiphenomenon of the brain. Thus, what is offered to the patient by this and similar evaluations which throw out the psyche's baby with its bathwater - be they psychodynamic, organic, or behavioural - may be regarded not so much as a "cure" but as an amputation.

The Jungian contribution upholds that the psyche has its own innate ecology, moving in continual renewal toward individuation. Libido, rather than simply sexual energy, is regarded as a cosmic energy active in all functions personal and transpersonal. The psyche experiences itself as a symbol-producing, highly complex totality, having its roots in a ground of being common to mankind (the Collective Unconscious) and its flowers in individual consciousness. Its progress through the rites of passage, predicaments and conflicts of existence is **imaged** in terms of archetypes and symbols with an intrinsic emotional charge.

These are expressed consciously in the myths, tribal legends, fairytales, folk-tales, shamanism and religious cosmology of the world. In these, as in an individual's dreams, the psyche consists **essentially** of images - not an accidental juxtaposition but a picturing of vital activities and functions. This "inner" structure which so many psychologists are eager to derive from the "outer" would seem to have an **a priori** configuration pre-dating individual conscious experience, but guiding, balancing, and compensating in response to emotional conflict, and carrying the deposits of experience in adaptation ac-

cumulated in mankind's evolution. They point not only to the complex but suggest the antidote - the appropriate way through for the individual.

The enactment of myth and archetypal material leads to an animation of these images in the enactor. One "innerstands" them.

In a therapeutic setting myth-enactment can have a tremendous value. If myth is seen as collective story arising from the psyche in response to a specific need in the human situation, it emerges as a powerful blue-print of collective and individual psychic processes. By tracing this blue-print, in enactment, one puts oneself directly in the path of that process. Its conflict and resolution form a dialogue with the individual's conflict and a channel opens whereby the healing logic in the apparently illogical material may gain entry. Sometimes an individual may choose a role so accurately portraying their life-problem in the psyche's symbolic terms that a powerful breakthrough occurs. The inner individual psychic content corresponds with the mythic expression of collective psychic content. Numena and phenomena are experienced as one. Material that previously lacked form and resolution in the subject's psyche finds both. There is not simply catharsis but a spontaneous insight both deeply personal, intimately subjective, and universal, timeless, and objective. This numinous experience, I believe, lies in store for everyone engaged in the work.

In myth-enactment, symbolic language and story give perspective and lucidity to psychic material - a wholeness and conscious order that is found lacking (though the same material be there) in, say, the image-experiences of the schizophrenic.

Story establishes logic and continuity over chaos. It acts as container and boundary for experience. It is this element in enactment which engages, in the patient, the conscious power of logical thought in productive relationship with the unconscious content of images. Through myth the symbolic quality of pathological images and themes finds a place. The mythic story provides a rationale for the psychic material and, most importantly, a suggested reconciliation of apparently irreconcilable opposites.

Thus, in enactment, the integrity of the plot and of the patient must be honoured. There should be no "adaptation" or random constellation of archetypal material out of context. Either there will be a disappointing neutrality of non-connection with the material or else there will be quite unforeseen happenings of a far from neutral nature. In other words, by the inscrutable laws of synchronicity, there will be at least one person from whom it elicits a psychotic episode.

Our mode of working on myth and related material has been to approach it as ourselves; not "acting" a role but allowing the material to work within and through us with a conscious attitude of receptivity and creative attention. This, as in a spontaneous archetypal experience, can inspire within the recipient the authentic behaviour from the deeper self rather than the ego.

Jung has stated that it is in the living action - the **embodying** of processes - that perception arises. Verbal therapy may lead to a mental understanding of conflicts without a fundamental attitude-change taking place. A deadlock is reached. By moving from the purely verbal level into movement, enactment, embodiment of symbols, the whole organism can be engaged in the problem, and from this **inner**standing the impasse is breached. In this the archetypes are seen as dynamic; they are instinctive images neither intellectually summoned nor invented.

Perhaps it would be appropriate here to delineate the essential differences in approach between Jungian Dramatherapy and Psychodrama, since for many Psychodrama and Dramatherapy in general appear interchangeable terms.

Psychodrama, though declaring independence of origin, has, in common with the Freudian school, a predilection for working with conscious mind and phenomena as entry points in treatment rather than the unconscious and numena. It approaches emotional conflict confrontationally through the dynamics of the **specific** conflict or symptom. The Jungian approach is oblique and looks for spontaneous symbolic expression and reaction to given symbolic material in the same way as the depth psychologist, which material may often point to a more deep-rooted life-problem than a working-through of a particular symptomatic conflict might allow. Psychodrama refers to "gliding" between the archetypal and the "real". We would ideally work towards an experiencing of numena and phenomena as reconcilable opposites from which an integrating process can arise.

We use a variety of "warm-up" approaches to the heart of the work. These differ with the personality of the individual practitioner, but we try to engage all four functions - sensing, feeling, thinking, intuiting - of the human spectrum. Personally I have adapted exercises from T'ai Chi, Sufism, North-American Indian ritual, the Eastern Orthodox Church, Tibetan Buddhism (the usual sources!) - as well as the growth - games, groupwork, and sensory techniques commonly employed in other psychologies. They are, however, **always** related to the context and task at hand - the embodying of the myth - and not used at random.

The energy level and dynamic of the group that day are taken into account and it is hoped to create a contour of energy and engagement which will make the material most accessible.

This, in itself, offers opportunities for self-exploration, creative interaction, spontaneity, touch, and, that most maligned of all human capacity, pleasure.

The essential alienation and isolation of the psychiatric patient is alleviated by close creative groupwork; and, if that person is in great distress, a connection of the personal crisis with corresponding archetypal material may help them feel that their pain is anciently and universally understood, shared, and supported. It can lift them out of a blind personal conflict and open them to a wider avenue of renewal and healing. Reciprocally, experiencing the archetypal intensifies our perception and value of the here and now and infuses new energy into our lives.

A variety of myths are employed from world-wide sources: the primitive African, Aboriginal, North-American Indian, Eskimo - the subtle, practical esoterics of Sufi and Taoist literature - and the Greek, which stands at the roots of our own cultural and social attitudes and which is, perhaps, most suited to the intricacies of psychic processes in modern man. But everywhere it is the same Hero/Heroine, the heroic Self of the psyche meeting dangers from within and without, adapting, transforming, undergoing an alchemical process from which the gold separates in freedom, strength, and maturity. Those who are not aware that their very lives have the contours of myths, of fairy-tales, must live them anyway - but blindly. "Myth is. It always is. However much we say: It was."

It would be presumptuous of me to end this article without thanking Pat Watts, the originator and teacher of this approach, whose work and quiet example made available to me a series of profound experiences in myth enactment without which my work and my life would not be as rich.
