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Madness and Creativity

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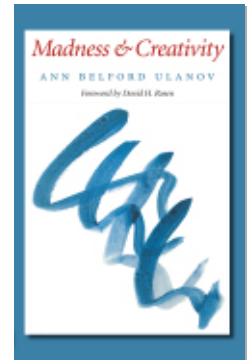
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Creative Return

The fourth legacy of our repeating complex is so surprising that it needs its own chapter. What is this rebirth like? What gets born? What is living in the space transformed from the gap our complex opened up in us? We know that the repetition of our complex is the psyche's attempt to widen the space between our ego and the complex's reiterations, to push into ego consciousness this bundle of archetypal image, affect, behavior, so we can respond to it and moderate it, get its energies into our living. The repetition is not just madness that bedevils and rends a gap into which we plunge; it also aims to expand consciousness. This happens not through conceptualization but through affective experience. Our complex intensifies in behavior, in emotion, and in dreams to cross over into consciousness. Meeting up with something powerful, both other than us yet belonging to us, imbues a sense of purpose that feels meaningful. Our flailing about in craziness yields to perception that something creative is emerging, albeit with our ambivalence. This hint of meaning rescues us from despair at being caught, held fast like a prisoner in lunacy. The madness of once again suffering the chaos of unraveling that the complex inflicts gets rescued into emerging meaning.

Rebirth

Repetition transforms into return, not a recurrent cycle always back to the same beginning again, nor a linear progression leaving the beginning behind, but a circling around at different altitudes, so to speak, perceiving from different perspectives. We trace again, for example, the original event of wounding in personal experience; in another circuit we see more clearly where a parent, confined by cultural norms, could not differentiate from such norms and hence handed them down like tablets of law. Our injury exists, but each time we compass it, come around it, return to it, while suffering its effects, we stand outside it, hence not denying it but no longer confined in it. We find and create that space.¹

The archetype cannot be apprehended directly, but only in its effects. The young woman whose complex manifested itself in being “on the train” that brought bulimia and stealing, then, later, in getting flung off the train through a bad car accident, also began space-making to trace what started this train-going: namely, lack of any notice taken of her small girl self, no feeding her with guiding truth. Hence she gobbled signs of success she discerned as her father’s fantasies and her culture’s norms. Addiction to these cost her many teeth.² Circling around this injury through omission, discerning what was not there, a sort of shadow of nonbeing in both her parents, she strove to achieve badges of being through various culturally sanctioned accomplishments. I heard myself say, “Thank God for your bulimia,” which shocked me, as it had brought great suffering to her. But her complex also spoke of soul hunger, food for soul, stolen, eaten in secret, thrown up again to ruin of teeth and wreckage of this false route. In this gap dots of light gave evidence of another path where her truth could be found. Without it the train would have taken her away.

Creative return means not an idea, not even an image, but a process that unlocks meaningfulness for us in the mystery in our daily lives.³ The complex re-creates a hidden aspect of the emotional truth of what is going on; returning to it uncovers this truth and compensates for our ego’s trying to master and get rid of the com-

plex. Instead, we unearth the truth, develop it and ourself, and grow to join its view with our view. This new mixture shifts the center of gravity from ego to Self, to use Jung's hypotheses. A new center grows in consciousness that joins parts that had been split apart.

For most of us caught in a complex, there is a component of personal experience in which some element of us got left behind, usually in some wounding of us as a child.⁴ But underneath wounding lives the child's form of perceiving. It is that which we experience as reborn. Not that we go back to being a child, because now we also have adult forms of reflection and discernment. It is the connecting of the two that makes for new life: the astonishing freshness of a child's way of just being in the moment, responding with wonder, not having to get there, joining with the adult's way of reflecting on what is perceived to find mental representation for it. Critical thought, study, a functioning ego located in the world, intentions grounded in a place and time, with historical and cultural images to draw upon, have built up our adult mind. A new form of consciousness combining both modes becomes possible. It does not succumb to madness but puts it to use. Thus, we temper any ambition toward omnipotence because we are aware of the body and its finiteness, the heart and its yearnings, the spirit and its dependence on a larger whole.

We retrieve a path that seems to be emerging to find again a child's mode of perceiving without presuppositions while we bring adult deliberation to meet it. In place of repetition compulsion, we move into *complexio oppositorum*. The mark of child consciousness is openness, immediacy, willingness to give radical attentiveness to what is and is not there without foregone conclusions. The mark of adult consciousness is bringing critical differentiation to what is perceived, sifting good from bad, recognizing that not every stranger is hallowed. I remember one great-granddaughter looking at her cousin, a second great-granddaughter, both four years old. The cousin was suffering a meltdown; greatly distressed, crying, she collapsed in a heap. The first small girl showed in her face and body stillness an alert sadness as she witnessed her cousin's anguish. She saw that misery can fell us and stood quietly near her cousin, ac-

companying her in her unhappiness. A child knows what is there and not there and responds to both. We link up opposite modes of perceiving and apperceiving, beholding and reflecting. Furthermore, it is not just the joining, the *coniunctio*, of modes of child and adult perceiving, but also the *anthropos* image that lies behind the complex, urging reintegration of this child mode, pressing us to live it as an adult, to flesh out the whole psyche, all of its reality.

A bigger wholeness presses on us and makes us include what before we excluded. We might have to forgive someone whom we hate for thoughtlessly injuring us as if we did not matter. We might have to tolerate hating someone whom we would rather rush to forgive. We might have to recognize we harbor impulses of kindness that threaten to leave us open to every kind of sufferer asking for our help. We might have to see not only that we have lost our way of making a living, but also that we do not want to work at all, and then how do we find money to live? We might have to recognize we have locked step behind a group image of the right way to do things, and in fact our experience shows we feel the opposite.⁵ We might have to admit we can hardly bear beauty that turns up everywhere—in trees, a child’s glance, an elegant dream, a dog’s furry paws—and that we duck it through texting, twittering, TVing. It is as if we live in a provincial village and discover that a big city presses to come into our livingness. Can we stand it? How do we compass it, think about it, hold it in mind, tolerate its energy in body?

Here we touch on the divine child image of the archetype of wholeness. Jung writes, “The nature of the redeeming symbol is that of a child . . . childlikeness or lack of prior assumptions . . . [that] brings with it another guiding principle in place of self-will and rational intentions, as overwhelmingly powerful in effect as it is divine.”⁶

I want to say a bit more about this child consciousness. It is openness to what is there and not there; a sensibility that is beyond splits into insoluble either/or exclusions, what today is attacked as binary thinking. In contrast, child consciousness opens to infinite possibilities, multiple meanings or interpretations (as we would later call them), not as chaos but as plenty, a sense of bounty, givenness. In

such consciousness a coinhabiting of tenderness and monstrousness dwell (witness children's fairy tales), awareness of presence and absence, of body-based experiences of taking in and pushing out. This childlike mentality reemerges from its unconscious matrix with unending freshness. In it we feel wonder, exuberance, as well as contemplative looking. Original thoughts and generative feelings assemble in us, even if what we come to is already known by others. It is our original perception, a personal inventiveness that emerges between us and the world which is real to us and exciting. Merleau-Ponty cites Cezanne "to say that one should be able to paint even odors." Perception is primary, as Merleau-Ponty avers, and "the perceiving mind is an incarnated mind," a "mind in its body and in its world." These give us the real. In this perceiving lives recognition of others, which develops into ethics: "From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behavior of the other takes place within my perceptual field."⁷

To be reborn in this childlike perceiving is not regression to primary process thinking, to nondirected thinking, because we bring with it our adult capacity to reflect. We focus on selected possibilities from the bounty, the plethora, and mentally represent sprouting insights and thoughts, making words and finding images to give voice to the new.⁸

That conjoining of child and adult makes the difference. This creative child perceiving, "undisturbed by conscious assumptions," is markedly different from the childish, which Jung in *The Red Book* calls "unfruitful" and "withered." In contrast is the child from whose hand comes "everything living." Jung even says, "My God in my soul is a child." He celebrates the fabulous names of the child god: "The Shining One," "Resplendent Day," "the hope that enlivens the void," "the immortal present," "the step on the middle way, its beginning, its middle, its end," "liberation from imprisonment," "the completion of the moment."⁹

Psychic Creativity

Rebirth from the matrix of the unconscious symbolized by the self-creating divine child is creative return to the process of psyche, to psychic creativity. The child consciousness belongs to each of us. Nor is revisiting childlike consciousness a self-centered, solipsistic venture. It opens to the world and to time past and future. In the space between us and the natural, social, cultural milieu in which we live, something beckons us or strikes into our attention, inviting our response. Every child knows these moments of epiphany, in which a yellow and black spider in the middle of its web on slender tree branches solicits from us both fear and fascination. We wonder at its colored beauty, its being there. Or something we read in a book inaugurates in us a fresh departure point and conversation with the author. Or horror at the mounds of trash along the roads in a foreign country meets amazement at the bright fuchsia skirt and orange blouse of the woman bent over from the waist to tend the rice field. Or something said by an analysand in the midst of again reliving a past trauma of devastating annihilation makes an aperture, an opening in which a validating meaning is glimpsed and heralds an advent of a future. Linking to what was lost in the past resurrects, as if for the first time, what comes into view between analysand and analyst. The point here centers on the conjoining of childlike and adult consciousness that emerges between self and an other, our self and the world.¹⁰

In conjunction with reflective capacities of our adult mentality, our consciousness opens, I believe, to another level of psyche, beneath or beyond the chaos of tumultuous affects that Jung describes and beyond the unending instinctual conflict that Freud opined. This level of the psyche seems chaotic, meaningless to the solely intellectual perspective. Even with its possible devouring effect on the sense of I-ness, it shows itself as just all in all, what Ehrenzweig, talking about art, calls the level of dedifferentiation; Winnicott, talking about personal development, calls unintegration (not disintegration); and Jung, in his alchemical researches, acknowledges as the image-making, combining and uncombining, mythopoetic patterns of psyche.¹¹

In this level of psychic creativity we experience opposites cohabiting—as Jung says in *The Red Book*, “the fullness of life, which is beautiful and hateful, good and evil, laughable and serious, human and inhuman”—and engage in what Jung found in Schiller as “serious play.” Such play is serious because it stems “from inner necessity, without the compulsion of circumstance without even the compulsion of the will.” Instead, “the creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect, but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the object it loves.” This serious play feels reinvigorating, full of the real. We create the world by endowing it with our imagining and forms; we also find the world there, given, before anything was made of it. From this space in between creating and finding we construct syntheses, narratives of our loves, histories. Marion Milner likens psychic creativity to “the lilies of the field . . . as a way psychic creativity works.” Can we say the creative process is to psyche the way breathing is to the body? Wallace Stevens eschews fixity of prescribed ideas, including religion and any teleology, in favor of “the fiction that results from feeling” that registers our original perception of the particulars of reality in front of us and what we imaginatively make of them. Here again, destructiveness finds its place in life in the “primitive, forceful nature of the creative act that must ruthlessly subdue the old in order to create the new.”¹²

The divine child as symbol of the new returns us repeatedly to an elemental something in each of us that can perceive naked reality and create in relation to it. Here is an image of God in the human and of the human in God, by which we can also be endlessly destroyed if we do not destroy the equation of our forms with the ultimate center of life. For then we substitute our form for that God in the central place and wreak destruction of self and others and of the nonhuman world because now we are God. In touch with this psychic creativity, with this other level of psyche in us, beneath the unconscious, so to speak, we do not equate it with the center. We become the one who attends, gazes at, glimpses, witnesses to the center, as its servant.¹³ We serve the something that survives—indeed, is the myth before the myth, what precedes our beholding and creating.

Great artists speak from this space. You must have the eyes of a child to see the colors fluid and undulating (Cezanne), of the universe pressing in upon you until words catch it in poetry (Rilke). Duke Ellington, America's greatest artist, says, "The band is my instrument," meaning a tune he found or made would be improvised upon by Cootie Williams, or Johnny Hodges, or Billy Strayhorn, to return to Ellington for smoothing, extending, showing in the miniature of their musical group how creating goes on between and among us as well as within us.¹⁴

Repetition to Ritual

How does this happen for each of us, different from Jung but in the same pattern? If psychic creativity is a God-image for depth psychology, indicating that something elemental to the human connects us to reality out of which relation is fashioned, broken, refashioned, old forms destroyed for new forms to emerge, and that it is the going on that turns up in people's images of this central relationship—Martin Luther King Jr. speaking of going on going on—then how does this connection to reality appear in our particular lives? How do we create it and get re-created by it?

We create rituals, or rituals grow out of the repetition of our complex, that old familiar fiend that dogs us all our days. Its chaos-making churns up the compost that nourishes new ways of living with the anxiety, the depression, the food addiction, the grief that holds us fast, the trauma that threatens our destruction. Our adult mind notices a detail in the appearance of our complex that is particular to us. In that detail, that personal scrap, we find just where we are vulnerable to the old song of the complex, just where we take offense at another's behavior, just that access point where poison enters our emotional bloodstream to trigger the replay of the whole complex. It is just there, that dangerous point between new life and annihilation, that we must remark. We must give it radical attention. For there also the spark appears that hints toward a new structure, understanding, direction of living.

Finding ourselves again reimmersed in past trauma repeats its annihilating effects on our capacity to be at all. Once again we are

dispossessed of any hope to be valid as a person. Instead, we are a damaged thing, a spoiled impulse, devoid of meaningful contact with others, forsaken from the world. But even there, a faint jot, a flicker casts a new light on our old plight. Our two steps forward in recovering from trauma are countered by twenty steps backward into trauma again reverberating through our body. But the tiny dot of light reveals that the forward two steps added substance, weight, to our stance liberated from captivity to trauma. Because of that added strength from the two steps, we are able to spade up another layer of annihilation into reparative imagination. Such a dot of light sponsors our creative gesture toward building something new. Just there we dip into the unconscious matrix to destroy the conscious composition of the complex that binds us, to surface again with the start of a new gestalt in the making. Destructiveness finds its place in our life.

Our choice is involved as well in the emergence of ritual from repetition, of creative return from compulsion. Sometimes the choice is outright, such as going into analysis with all its rituals of time, place, fee; looking into fugitive thoughts, missing memories, dreams that surprise, coming like bulletins from a self we didn't know. Sometimes the choice is a barely discernable shift of posture, a leaning toward perceiving the light and staying there with it, or a momentary certainty we must accept the dark, for it has its life, too. Sometimes the choice comes from a daring to trust that the body has resources, the psyche too. We cannot solve this, but something in us, through us, coming from somewhere else arrives, and we trust it to see us through. The choice is to stay true to the truth of what we experience, with faith in resources from within and from without. Sometimes the choice is an all-out response to the numinous that arrives, and convinces, and lasts through reflection and critical examination. Sometimes the choice opens our heart to the world, an *amor mundi* in place of an *amor fati*. We love the world and others in it, including colors, music, trees, animals, courageous souls in history, as well as our own neighbors.

Examples are countless in as many variations as we are to each other, each playing the same theme in our particular way. A woman

identified with being a mother both literally to her daughters and figuratively to the world in her work, for whom maternal giving was her ruling principle, left undeveloped her own growth and assertion of what she wanted and needed. At the bottom of that lack evil stares at her coldly. How should she forge it into her foundation stone for her life? In the brutal attack of cancer in herself and in one of her daughters, too, this process of facing and forging fell upon her, breaking her identification with mothering. For she was helpless to save her daughter. Her mothering was not omnipotent. She could not protect her daughter as every mother seeks to do; her daughter died while she lived. That trauma broke her identification with all things maternal. A new meaning emerged between them during their treatments for cancer, a form of closeness as two women carrying the burdens of illness, as two sister sufferers facing death. This new axis destroyed the parent-child one and made room for them as two beloveds helping each other.

Repetition gives way to ritual that includes the complex but breaks through its bounds. It is other people's repetitions that seem ridiculous to us; we want to urge them to get over it. It is our own repetitions that require all our effort to admit the large revealed in the small. Jung says in *The Red Book*, "I had to swallow the small as a means of healing the immortal in me. . . . I resisted recognizing that the everyday belongs to the image of the Godhead." Our conflict between our conscious viewpoint and the unconscious working of the complex continues. The complex behaves like an antagonist who thwarts our understanding of what is going on, despite our intellectual map for it.¹⁵

Active engagement with these opposing views helps a lot, as we grasp more deeply that we hold at once two rivaling moves to action. Such understanding enlarges the space in which we live but does not stop our being flung back and forth between the conscious and unconscious poles of what grips us. We are also helped by discerning what the complex has sheltered all these years. In my experience a piece of aggressiveness always hides in the complex that has not been lived and may be lived now.¹⁶

The ritual that emerges, however, is what changes the whole landscape. The suffering of the complex as it destroys the meaning of our now dethroned “ruling principle” gives way to a new sense of meaning: what our form of service is going to be. There are many case examples of these moving transformations that involve countless details to communicate and hence cannot be included here. What enables the ritual to take concrete shape in a person’s life is the discovery of what they venerate, finally what they serve.¹⁷ This is not so much a choice of exerting our will to do that as it is an uncovering of what summons our passion. The ritual evolves as our form of response to what unfolds as vocation. Two vectors then present themselves: our personal life and our god-making capacity.

Personal Life

Living our actual lives here and now with all their troubles and simple happiness in being becomes the site of transformation. Here we come to terms (or fail to) with destructiveness as it assaults us from outside in such things as market recessions, joblessness, illness, war, and the indifference of insurance companies and from inside in the violence we keep exporting instead of wrestling with as our own. Our complex bridges inside and outside by erupting into the world to bedevil friends, family, and coworkers and by laying waste to inner peace and fruitfulness. Our complex becomes the site within the site of transformation or its failure. Our complex is both our madness and the scene where dots of light appear. Jung writes, “If I accept the lowest in me, I lower a seed into the ground of Hell. The seed is invisibly small, but the tree of life grows from it. . . . It is forever about beginning again down where nothingness widens itself to unrestricted freedom.”¹⁸

Connecting to child consciousness within us gives access to psychic creativity. Child consciousness, which is perceiving without authorized assumptions from a space of beginning before beginnings, not yet fixed in exacting patterns, opens to psychic creativity beneath the unconscious of instinctual conflict and of chaotic af-

fects. In psychic creativity flows a kind of peace that mystics speak of, an imaginal interpenetration of reality and image of reality, fiction and fact, inner with outer, that liberates us from fixity of any teleology.¹⁹

This experience is so rousing and endearing, for here oppositions meld to grow together in unity (“I am smelt anew,” as Jung said he was²⁰). For example, the big distinction of good and evil that falls apart into hostile strife the moment we stop growing, if we are growing, shows the kinship of madness and creativity. A path unfolds that allows for meaninglessness along with meaning, destructiveness along with building a life.²¹

That other half of life—chaos—must be included because it exists, too, and is not just tolerated but accepted as part of the whole. Jung asks, “What is there, where there is no meaning? Only nonsense, or madness.” And his soul answers, “Nothing will deliver you from . . . meaninglessness, since this is the other half of the world.”²² That indicates, for example, that we stand right there in our fear when our particular madness threatens, or the madness of our group. Giving fear a place puts fear in its place, a place in the status of the whole self. When we rigidly defend against fear, it must overwhelm to get a place in our emotional economy. It exists, and it is our job to find where to put it lest it puts us.

Giving hate a place connects us with energies that defy the force in the other or in the world event that would crush us. Hate galvanizes intense energy to assert that we exist and have not been destroyed. Accepting its energy means holding it, surviving it without inflicting hate in return on the other, not acting out destructiveness. In time, all we value will be destroyed in death. Our task is to do with full heart, soul, mind, and strength what is our part to do. As Philemon, Jung’s guide in *The Red Book*, says, “man is a gateway.” Transformation, if it happens, happens here between us and in us. For Jung, in that volume, this is the individuation that takes place in the human.²³

For this task we need devotion strong enough to surmount the resistance we feel and what Jung describes as his nausea, horror, defiance, brooding gloom. We return to the nowhere in us, where the

complex delivers us, paying close attention to the scrap, the detail of how exactly our foot gets hobbled, and taking seriously, as Jung says, “every unknown wanderer who personally inhabits the inner world,” giving “due attention to everything that crosses your path,” looking into “everything in your Hell that excites your contempt or rage,” and engaging “the utmost concentration of expectant attention.” This is how “you make yourself into . . . a vessel of creation in which opposites reconcile.” Thus, we also serve others: “If we are in ourselves, we fulfill the need of the self, . . . and through this become aware of the needs of the communal and can fulfill them. . . . Then the life of God begins. . . . May each one seek out his own way. The way leads to mutual love and community.”²⁴

It would not be accurate if we did not also note that we can say no to taking up our own life. We may shy away from it, refuse it outright, refuse it by playing at it but in fact closing up against any transformation. We do this; many times we settle for this. We just brush by our complex and its eruptions and thereby force our children to do the same, to walk around, even on tiptoe, Dad’s repeated temper, Mom’s repeated lecturing how things should be. This looks like acceptance of the complex; it is not. It is avoidance of dealing with what is under our nose. We let each other down by letting each other get away with this evasion.

We in our smallness, where repetition compulsion transforms into creative return, are the gateway, the location where whatever happens, happens. We come around again to the bad and vexing, both individually and culturally, to spy the way that can only be seen there in the nowhere place, to submit to what holds us fast, to hear its communication of what must be included.

Jung chooses to experience the complex that confronts him in many guises. He lets himself have the experience of his madness, and what acceptance of it requires of him. He submits to what presents itself, not trying to impose premature resolution. He overcomes his previous power fantasies, forfeits illusions about himself, gives up his ambition to be the hero, the prophet of the new, the shepherd leading sheep who are less than the shepherd. He ends up in his garden, tending his own life.²⁵ He accepts the

limits of his madness, that he can go so far, no farther, for example, needing to choose freedom over love with Salome; they do not go together for him. He sees he must return again to the Middle Ages to find a creative solution for the barbarian in him.²⁶ Indeed, the book breaks off midsentence with no final conclusion except that he is led to a new way to pursue what he records in *The Red Book* visions.

The dots of light sketched a path into research, now into materials that involved not just his individual experience but that of many minds, many people's fashioning of their responses to the work of creative return. He turns to alchemy and to comparative research of myths and religions to discern the workings of individuation. He feels this route is now more productive than trying, as he did once, to resume the adventure of *The Red Book*. The creative opened from his personal problems into service of the whole: "There were things in the images which concerned not only myself but many others also. It was then that I ceased to belong to myself alone, ceased to have the right to do so. From then on, my life belonged to generality. The knowledge I was concerned with, or was seeking, still could not be found in the science of those days. I myself had to undergo the original experience, and moreover try to plant the results of my experience in the soul of reality. . . . It was then I dedicated myself to the service of the psyche."²⁷

For us in each of our lives in our own times and places, the task is the same, to live our ownmost life, not someone else's but what comes before us. Jung is insistent in *The Red Book*: "Who should live your own life if not yourself? . . . There is only one way and that is your way. . . . No other way is like yours. . . . You must fulfill the way that is in you." And though we share the same kind of mental life, we do not share the same mental life. So Jung cautions against imitating his path, even saying it can be an obstacle to our path. And further, we find our way only "by living your life to the full. You live your life fully if you also live what you have never yet lived. The life that I could still live, I should live. . . . The thoughts that I could still think, I should think."²⁸

All this falls to us to meet and do—to make the impersonal

events personal, to let go our own illusions and power trips, to find and tend our garden, to find the immortal that nonetheless lives in us, for “only my life is the truth . . . we create the truth by living it.”²⁹ Investing in our own way, we serve the whole; a path eventuates where we take up our individual service to the whole.

It can be frightening to discover our life matters in the ultimate scheme of things, even if we do not know exactly how; it places upon us ability to respond, responsibility. We live under regard, recognition. But by what? By whom? Here we come to our god-making capacity.

Our God-Making Capacity

The ritual that replaces repetition of our complex circles around that elemental something we venerate. That reference point is there whether we acknowledge it or not; it is what acts in us like a center around which the rest of us revolves. Our complex makes its form evident. The food addiction, for example, reveals what we think of all the day, argue with, resist, surrender to, as if a deity we worship. The same with inferiority, or power, if that fuels our lifelong complex; its dominant image acts like our directional compass for the universe in which we live.

The archetypal image can be positive: love of our child, partner, work, country; our cause of justice-making; our devotion to simple acts of kindness, nature’s beauty, music; our belief there is no god but instead imagination, enigma. With luck this image that acts like the centering reference point brings vitality and joy. I remember a patient long ago telling me of her discovery as a teenager of rock ‘n’ roll music and Elvis Presley. The sheer rhythm and beat of the music moved her body, counteracting the sharp attack on her budding sexuality by her mother (soon to be transferred to me). Such vitality in body, opening to jubilant sex that sabotaged the strictures mother’s voice imposed, not only compensated the straitlaced ego recommended to her, but opened a portal to the wide world, a joyous being in movement through body sensuality.

The madness of being identified with the archetypal premise of

our complex also contains our creative power to venerate something elemental that includes meaninglessness in its meaning and beckons us to return and circumambulate it to uncover and name it. Failing to do that living of our own truth leaves us under the sway of our complex. I know women in their eighties still worrying if they are thin enough.³⁰ Old age is hard with its physical and mental crumbling. We cannot just go to bed anymore, but first must do more and more things—for teeth, eyes, joints—but if we are still under the sway of the complex, it is harder still. The bill comes due before we die, to finish the unfinished work. Our complex intensifies as if now barking and biting at us to get us to deal, engage.

By god-making capacity I mean the fact that we do center around something that acts as if it is a god to which we devote time, energy, and effort, whether in the madness of our complex or in the freedom of veneration. My garage man gives an example. At the annual pizza party men bring the old cars they have rebuilt, painted, shined, perfected in engine and styling. These gems are parked out for all to see. I feel I am in a monastery beholding sacred objects to which literally a thousand hours are devoted to honor the invention and reinvention of these machines of power and beauty. You might object and say these are idols. Even if so, the idols function to draw our gaze to something transcendent. The patience, the discussion of methods of care, the daily voluntary giving of self to this work of creative restoration speak of their gaze being drawn toward something that matters and confers on the men relation to it.³¹

Remember my thesis: our problem shows up in the resolution of the problem, and more, creativity generates pathways through our problem; our problem itself opens the pathway to its transformation. For me, after decades of work with psyche, madness and creativity share kinship. I find this hopeful. A sustaining passion in my work as an analyst is to see how this happens in each person's case. Another terminology might be to say that our human symbol-creating power to create images of what matters connects us to what matters. Yet those images do not lie solely under our power. They arrive; they surprise; they are foreign, not invented by us, yet make us feel deeply recognized. Jung says, "Shouldn't we rather let God

himself speak in spite of our only too comprehensible fear of the primordial experience? I consider it my task and duty to educate my patients and pupils to the point where they can accept the direct demand that is made upon them from within. . . . I have gained a deep and indelible impression how dreadfully serious an experience of God is.” And further, “It is not a matter of indifference whether one calls something a ‘mania’ or a ‘god.’ . . . When the god is not acknowledged, egomania develops, and out of this mania comes sickness.”³² We must note that this experience is for God’s sake. Repetition gives way to ritual, which bespeaks service to others and to Otherness that is never domesticated into human terms. This is not self-realization, though that may be a by-product. Attention focuses on what is, on its behalf, there; there it is and I am witnessing it. That is the veneration, a cherishing.

The catch is how to get it into our life, how to move out of repetition compulsion into creative return, turning around the complex, as that which crosses into visibility and invites our reverence. If we only have an idea of it, even a formed intellectual understanding, the god stays out of our life, or we out of it; it is a theory, a concept, however fine, but not the coin of life. How to get our madness to work for us, to put it to use. When that happens we enter into multiple instances of conversation—between us and what comes through our unconscious, between us and the analyst if this happens in analysis, and between us and the other of the artist or teacher or text or Scripture or poem or jazz or car that bespeaks this venerable reality.³³

We could say Jung sees psyche as a means of access to what transcends it. For Jung it was crucial to find his contribution from his human side to this conversation, not to comply with inherited dicta he should believe. He says he lacked the gift of faith, and his writing conveys the idea of a faith as blind, even coercive. It was not a fructue, fertile, engendering ground for him. Indeed, the ground for Jung included the unconscious, which is unknowable. Hence, ground included groundlessness.³⁴

Is the creative psyche, then, the God-image around which depth psychology circles, offering a housing of the unknowable within the

knowable category that must be lived to be grasped in its vitality? This view grants protection against rigidifying reification that is associated with religion as superego pressure. But still, this is a God-image. Can we risk a religious daring to ask from whence comes the creative psyche? Who is its author? Its source beyond us? For we find it, develop it, but do not originate it. We do not make it, though, as Winnicott notes, we facilitate its recognition in personal relations and in cultural locations.³⁵

Here we move into great darkness, celebrated by Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairveaux as the acme of religious knowledge that dissolves into relationship with the Source beyond our knowing. Bion writes of proceeding from darkness by way of darkness into darkness.³⁶ Alone and together each of us must answer what is Source beyond Source. Our creative psyche makes a diamond net of associations gathering a multitude of dots of light into a whole constellation that includes us and others together as creators, helpless victims, sufferers of the unspeakable, and victors over shame and hopelessness. The psyche offers portals through which come love and wisdom.

But in *The Red Book* Jung had to fight to do this. And he would say we all must fight to get our self free from God. He means by this, God is not the self, but behind the self, and, uniting with the self, we reach God. His struggle was to own his own self and soul and then give it to God. We must wrestle God for the self because he (Jung) had not been with the self, and it was left in God; and God, who also includes meaninglessness, hate, powerlessness, by sheer force just sweeps away the self. So we must free the self from God so we can live. Jung had lost touch with his soul, and the whole book is about finding that soul and what it shows him. He has to get his soul for himself and his self in himself. Then he returns to God: "I believe that we have a choice. I preferred the living wonders of the God. . . . I cannot deny to myself the experience of the God . . . since I want to live. My life wants itself whole." Jung wants to feel his freedom and his own force, not have it all lodged in God, but to live it from within himself.³⁷

The same issue of freedom versus intimacy with Salome had

come up for Jung, and he found them incompatible. Jung does not solve this opposition. He urges Salome to carry and live her own life, not to give it to him. He values his freedom more: "Love would bind me like an iron ring that would stifle me." Now he wants his soul to return to him the precious love and not make man labor for the soul's salvation but let the soul work for "the earthly fortune of mankind." He wants the treasure of warm human love for himself, not in the hand of the soul giving it through him, but his to give: "Love belongs to me." He solves the Salome problem of love of another versus freedom for self by voluntarily submitting to love itself (not to a person). Similarly, Jung must know his own free will toward God, his own self distinct from God. He must not submit in blind faith, but gain his self separate from God and then choose God. He recognizes that "one does not live one's self; one is lived by the self; it lives itself." However, Philemon, Jung's guide through the book, then tells him "to enter even deeper into God," and Jung encounters Hap, the lord of the frogs, of "the bodily juices, the spirit of sperm and the entrails, of the genitals . . . of the joints . . . of the nerves and the brain . . . the spirit of the sputum and of excretions."³⁸

Jung gives the name Abraxas to this God behind the Godhead that includes Hap, the lord of the frogs. Abraxas is "the creative drive . . . form and formation. . . Abraxas produces truth and lying, good and evil, light and darkness, life and death in the same word and in the same act. Therefore Abraxas is terrible." In relation to this life force our human task achieves distinct personal life via individuation, for "our very nature is differentiation." If we are true to our essence, we differentiate, and "the primordial creator of the world, the blind creative libido becomes transformed in man through individuation, and out of this process [comes] a divine child, a reborn God, no more dispersed . . . but one and individual, and in all individuals . . . actually born in many individuals but they don't know it, a spirit in many people, the same everywhere."³⁹

Philemon says that Christ's work would be completed if "men lived their own lives" as Christ lived his. But instead, they make demands on Christ "and still ask you to take pity on them and beg

for . . . the forgiveness of their sins through you. . . . Men are still childish and forget gratitude, since they cannot say, Thanks be to you . . . for the salvation you have brought us.” Philemon says to Christ, “The time has come when each must do his own work of redemption.” And Jung responds full-heartedly: “I decided to do what was required of me. I accepted all the joy and every torment of my nature and remained true to my love, to suffer what comes to everyone in their own way.”⁴⁰

Each of us makes a similar but not identical decision when we wrestle our compelling complex to fetter its bit of evil in the foundation of our life. This means living with the scars and effects of the complex—the trauma that can still bleed, the inferiority that can still burst on the scene, the remnants of betrayal that can still excite us to violent ultimatums. We recognize that evil bit as our potential to participate in violence in the world. Yet wrestling thus with its compulsion can transform into sustained return to the creativity lurking in the madness of our awful suffering and behavior. Those dots of light that sketch another path lead to our particular kind of service to the whole.

We do not encounter Jung’s figures of Hap, Abraxas, Christ, and the divine-child image. We have our own encounters, such as, to cite analysts’ experiences, the whale scarred and wounded, the deer, and the child left in the crib in a strange place, or the fetish object at the opposite end of a mandala vision whose compartments of colors align with directions of north, south, east, and west, creating an order that surpasses the lure of the fetish. Or we have theoretical glimpses of the whole: that the self, in Jung’s vocabulary, is both multiplicity and unity and can be conceived as “a space of openness” rather than pinned to a specific definition. Philosopher of religion Richard Kearney proposes a “fourth reduction” (in the history of phenomenology) that opens a free space where conflicting beliefs can converse. This space does not belong to an elite but to all of us, as if the absolute needs to dissolve itself provisionally into a moment of nothing to return to itself in the simplest of things, in ordinary finite daily events. Speaking of the freeing effect of analysis with Bion, a man says, “I found that utterly miraculous and some-

thing for which I feel eternally grateful. . . . My mind was amazingly open to invitations that I had never been able to have before.”⁴¹

Difference and Unity

I think of the juxtaposition of the Tower of Babel story in the Hebrew Bible and the Pentecost story in the New Testament. In the text, following the flood and God’s covenant with every living creature never again to wreak such destruction, the “children of men,” who speak one language, decide to build a tower “whose top may reach unto heaven” and “make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). But the Lord saw “the people is one; and they have all one language . . . and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do” (Genesis 11:6). The Lord confounds “their language that they may not understand one another’s speech” and scatters them “upon the face of the earth” (Genesis 11:7–8). Sameness as identity, oneness as uniform, as invariable, is not to be, but is broken up. In psychological terms, falling into unconscious identification with one’s point of view soon becomes prosecuting one’s view as The One, an equation of our view with the truth, the real, the good for everyone. Feeling connected to archetypal reality and what comes through it of reality itself feels like being plugged into what matters, what lies at the center of everything; it comprises a great treasure. But then equating our experience of God with God, lest we lose it, be scattered, no longer in this certain oneness, displays power creeping in against fear. Then we seek to dispel fear by all becoming one, which means to have power over others and to be God. As the text says, nothing then restrains us or our imagination of what we can do. We dictate who lives, who dies. That is omnipotence, an attempt to control good and evil.

Pentecost shows the opposite (Acts 2:1–8): “Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind.” The Spirit descended on everyone present, “and there appeared tongues of fire resting on each one of them . . . and they began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Hearing the commotion, many

men who had gathered in Jerusalem “from every nation under heaven,” drew near and were “amazed,” because each one heard them speaking in their own language. The locus of power remains in the Holy Spirit, not the mortals. They join together in that presence, not in all becoming alike, but in all the individuals becoming united in looking to the same generating source. They are different, yet in a moment of unity, multiple, and yet for a moment in oneness, looking to the same beginning and end point. This communicates a vision of place for difference and unity granted to us, not owned by us—momentary, not fixed. We recognize each other’s God-images and their connecting ability to what lies beyond them. That is how churches, mosques, synagogues, sangas are created. People gather together around a vision of that elemental something in which each partakes. Yet sustaining that vision depends on not closing the space of differentiation of each from the other, so each has her or his experience of what that vision is and room for it to be held in the common container, making room for each one’s madness, so to speak, and putting it to good use as nutriment for the health of the whole. An equation is not sealed. Open space preserves the space for all. In this story sameness and difference abide together.

The point is that we all revolve around something elemental that functions as a center even if we do not accord it reverence. The brunt of Jung’s *Red Book* moves us to name it to ourselves, pushed by our major complex to surmount its compulsion by circling around its communication to get creativity hiding there into living. This is our God-making capacity. To know it frees us, makes a passage for the energy of the original experience of connecting with truth to flow over into life. But how do we give heart, soul, mind, and strength to the source and object of the beginning and the end of this experience when we also know, and our complex daily reminds us to know, that we are finite, that our images bring the peculiar standpoint of our limited perspective? We cannot know if what we call truth is universally so for everyone for all time. For us it may be true, and this is the experience of mystics and those grounded in life-giving religion.

We face the paradox of full-out commitment alongside not-

knowing, and yet we do know, and yet we do not know. We cannot close that space into an equation. Psychic reality, reality of the unconscious, even the astonishing freshness of psychic creativity display the ever-changing images of the center of the All. When we fasten on one definition, we close from our side the openness of the I AM to reify a single name for this reality, and the worm of corruption comes in. For now we want to dictate to all people for all time our version, to make our small into the large.

Can we know then anything for certain? Yes and no. Yes in that the heart is moved and pours out in responding love and awe; no in that we cannot prove nor prosecute this truth. We can point, image, symbolize, experience its sacramental presence, offer our intellectual thinking around it, our sensuous making of representations of it in our imaginations and in our arts, our words; we can love it, as Augustine says, and let it do what it will. What makes truth vivid is living it, serving the whole through it.

