

**Reflections on Initiation and Mentoring in the Training of Analysts**

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## Prologue

I walk down a hotel hallway searching for a particular room. I look to my left, then to my right. The hallways are labyrinthine. Didn't I pass that door before? Finally, I find the room for which I am looking. The door is closed. Should I knock, perhaps not? I wait. I lean against the wall and feel the texture of the wallpaper. I begin to reflect on hallways. Who are the dwellers of these hotel hallways: distant travelers, members of wedding parties, college students, seekers of illicit rendezvous, prostitutes? I realize that I too am a member of this fellowship of hallway dwellers. I wait. The door opens and I enter. Before me is a rectangular table with people seated at the table. I am directed to a chair at the end of the table.

## Introduction

As an introduction, I am a graduate of the I-RSJA training program. Personally, I had many good experiences throughout my training. For the most part, my training went smoothly and I experienced support from a number of people. Yet, as I moved through training I saw things that I felt were wrong. I saw power dynamics that exceeded reasonable limits. I saw insensitivity to people's situations, and I saw unnecessary suffering. For yes, not all suffering is necessary, even in Jungian training.

I have also taught at two universities, where I chaired PhD thesis committees. Although academic training differs in important ways with the training of analysts, my experiences have taught me that working for an advanced degree is often fraught with difficulties for both teacher and student. As such, we are constantly challenged to examine our ways of training and, when necessary, to correct these processes. Any institution - at any time - can be improved upon. If an institution is not open to change, then *rigor mortis* sets in and we remain stuck in an unproductive state of *nigredo*. Let me now explore the two topics up for discussion: initiation and mentoring.

## Initiation

What images come to mind when we hear the word *initiation*? What feelings are associated with these images? As analysts, our roots in myth, anthropology and world religions probably evoke images of indigenous tribal ceremonies in which adolescents are brought into adulthood. Pictures of young men being held down and physically cut in various areas of their bodies. Images also arise of adolescent girls sitting alone in huts undergoing their own physical and psychological transformation. There is a wounding that is part of the initiation process, a wound that is carried through life. Significantly, in these tribal initiatory ceremonies, the rituals are performed by members of the adolescent's own community, people whom the initiate has lived with his or her whole life.

Michael Meade (1994, p. xx) has this to say about initiation, "Initiation means beginning the revelation of one's true self. It includes the opening up of the inner life of the spirit and releasing the potentials and possibilities within the individual. Beyond that, the initiation of youths always implies an opportunity for the cleansing and restoration of the life force of the community and the society. The initiation of youths into full life represents a critical opportunity for a society to sustain meaning and teach life-affirming values." Meade stresses that initiation is to the benefit of the entire community, not just the initiate. In the best of worlds, a true initiation provides the community – us – with meaning and a renewed life force.

Meade tells us that initiation is transformative for both the individual and the community. In this light, I would like to make an important distinction between outer (community) initiation and inner (intra-psychic) initiation. This is motivated by Eliade's distinction of three types of initiation: those rites for transformation from puberty to adulthood, those rites for adults to join secret societies, and those rites for individual transformation. I feel we often lose track of the distinction of these various types of initiation. It seems important to me that we remain attuned to this issue regarding training. If we identify

training initiation with the first type, we fall into a destructive power position. If we identify with the second type – initiation into a secret society (often a men's only society), then we again find ourselves in some sort of power fantasy, i.e. we analysts hold the deep secrets, which we will pass onto the trainees when they measure up. It seems to me what is most relevant to training is Eliade's third type of initiation, i.e. that of experience of a personal transformation.

Psychologically, this relates to the issue of who is being initiated (ego/Self) and who is the initiator (training analysts/Self). Each of us is in a process of initiation. Our own inner directed process. For a community to interfere with this process is a violation of something sacred. I don't believe that any of us are wise enough to know what the other's initiation is truly for and about. Falling into omniscience invites the shadow of power dynamics. We – analysts – need to trust the trainee's inner process, a process that they may be struggling to work through themselves. I feel this is the key difference between the anthropological view of initiation – the one we are all raised on – and a depth psychological view of initiation. We need to step out of the picture and let the archetype do its work, which can be extremely challenging for all of us.

I would now like to return to the subject of suffering. All initiatory processes involve some form of suffering. Every candidate I know and have spoken with suffers. In training, we experience the Buddha's First Noble Truth: *life is suffering*. Interestingly the three forms of suffering discovered by Siddhartha/Buddha were: dis-ease, old age and death, forms of suffering experienced by anyone going through training. For candidates seem to often find themselves at dis-ease at these meetings. Given the time it may take to get through training, trainees may also viscerally experience old age. Often some part of us dies in training, which sadly may include a physical passing away before completing training. Given that training adheres to Buddha's First Noble Truth, I don't feel we need to create additional means of suffering for our candidates, since suffering is a natural part of this process.

Let me provide one example of a suffering of death in training. Once at a case seminar the presiding analyst asked the candidates, “So, how is your soul?” As we went around the room, each candidate reported that they had placed their soul “in hibernation, on the back burner or in a safe place” in order to get through training. This was perhaps the saddest moment in my training, facing the fact that this process often forces us to leave our souls behind in order to get through the dutiful requirements of training. I feel this is *unnecessary* suffering.

If we, as I-RSJA analysts, are going to look at training in terms of initiation, then we need to recognize the limitations of this concept given the structure of the IRSJA. Is it realistic to assume that such *community* initiatory processes can be effective when we spend so little time together? We gather twice a year and candidates spend an hour meeting with their review committees. What I am questioning is the effectiveness of the community aspect of initiation in the I-RSJA. I do not question the existence of initiation, since it is archetypal.

To conclude, I feel that initiation in training is a private matter for each of us. Jung (CW 11, par. 842) states, “The only ‘initiation process’ that is still alive and practiced today in the West is the analysis of the unconscious as used by doctors for therapeutic purposes. This penetration into the ground layers of consciousness is a kind of rational maieutics in the Socratic sense, a bringing forth of psychic contents that are still germinal, subliminal, and as yet unborn.” Thus, the candidate’s personal analysis and individuation process is the true initiation process in training, a process of giving birth to the analyst. As in all birthing processes, there is some pain. But, I feel that the internal suffering that we all experience in training is sufficient. I don’t feel we need to create either conscious or unconscious ways that add to the innate suffering of training.

## Mentoring

Let me now turn to the topic of *mentoring*. Who were your mentors? Who were the people who helped you at certain significant points in life? How did these people appear in your life? How do these memories of your mentors make you feel in this moment? Mentoring evokes very different images and feelings compared to those of initiation. Our mentors are often people who appear just at the right time in our development. They are people who care about us and go out of their way to help us. This help can be through pointers to experiences we need or knowledge that is lacking. I think of professors who were interested in me as a person and in my personal development, people enthusiastic about life.

Mentors exhibit various ways of caring for the mentee. Their counsel may come in the form of a strong statement, a wink, or just being present. There is a sense of walking besides, not walking behind a mentor. Mentoring is about balance, not power. I am not suggesting that mentors always be “on our side.” Often, the mentor is our best opponent or foil. They challenge our ideas. They propel us to look at the world in new ways. They can be irritating, like sand in an oyster that leads to the growth of a pearl. Mentors can be wily as a fox or wise as the wizard Gandalf. Mentors can be rascals. The main point is that they are ultimately there with and for us. What develops between the mentor and mentee is a relationship that is co-creative and transformative.

In terms of analytic training, there is a transpersonal element to mentoring. Remember that the original Mentor was the counsel to Odysseus and his son Telemachus. In the story of the Odyssey, there are moments when the Mentor seen by Telemachus is really Athena. For example, the goddess assumes the human form of Mentor to guide Telemachus to search for his father. Psychologically, I take this to mean that at times the gods may act through the mentor. That at times what is needed for the mentee is not an ego viewpoint, but a deeper more archetypal viewpoint. In these moments, guidance from a transpersonal perspective works through the mentor.

The feeling here is very different than that of initiation. In mentoring, we are in a more balanced relational state. Of course, I recognize the shadow aspects of this for training. Mentoring is not a panacea that corrects all problems inherent to training. The mentor can become an advocate for the mentee to the point of regressive dependency. The relationship can become too close for comfort. Boundary issues can arise in these types of relationships. However, I feel the positive potential for a mentor outweighs these shadow issues.

Let me end this discussion on mentoring with a quote from the book, Tao Mentoring by Chungliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch, who have this to say about mentoring (1998, p. 6):

When two parties enter into the Tao mentoring dance, they create a safe environment where truth and wisdom can be discovered by both. Created is a sanctuary where the partners openly stimulate each other to discover the soul within. This “empty space,” the fertile void of rich and everlasting resources, between giving and receiving is called Wu Ji, the place around which the Watercourse Way flows, the place of “not knowing,” from which all is possible. ... Wu Ji gently gives permission for all of us, in all arenas of life, to face our vulnerabilities and insecurities in a light, humorous way as we flow to the vast empty sea of possibility and potentiality. Profound growth and change come when one is willing to let go and settle into the place of not knowing. To sustain this emptiness is to create enormous internal strength and wisdom, so we must take care not to rush in and fill it up. Learning to sustain it takes time.

## The Ethos of Training

I feel what we are really grappling with here today could more generally be identified as the *ethos* of our community and its implications for training. Here I take ethos as the “character” of our I-RSJA community. Ethos also relates to the beliefs and ideals of our community. The original Greek meaning of ethos was an “accustomed place.” This feels right to me for what we are looking for is an “accustomed place” for our training, a place where we feel right or in balance with our approach to training.

We are a community living in dispersion, spread across the country gathering semi-annually to re-discover who we are. We meet in different places over the years. How do we determine our “accustomed place” given this nomadic nature? Clearly we are challenged to carry our accustomed place within ourselves. This means it is imperative that we create a common sense of ethos for ourselves. If we are to carry this ethos within, then we need to discuss what it is we think we are carrying. Specific to this panel discussion, what is our ethos as a training institution? What are our community beliefs and ideals on training? Here – in this moment – we are having a conversation around our ethos.

Note that our word for ethics derives from ethos. The way we live life, our ethics, begins with and is rooted in our sense of accustomed place. That place where we prefer to dwell. This dwelling is not just that of our physical place, but the dwelling place of psyche. When we gather – as we do today – where is psyche dwelling? Upon what does psyche wish to dwell?

Finally, ethics is commonly looked upon as the rules used to create structure in life, rules that exist to give order to and create protection for individuals. There is a sense of duty around our ethics. We are good to one another because it is our innate duty to behave so. There is another way to look at ethics, which is often called an ethics of care. This type of ethics – or dwelling – places the emphasis of the care on others. This type of ethics focuses on how we relate to one another. Perhaps we need to open



ourselves more to an ethics of care. Perhaps that is what we are really talking about today.

## **Epilogue**

I walk down a hotel hallway. I am searching for a particular room. I look to my left, then to my right. The previous evening I spoke with someone about where we would be meeting. So, I have a feel for where we are to gather. I see the room and note that the door is open. I enter the room and see a circle of chairs in the room. People stand up to greet me. I am invited to sit among these people and begin a conversation...

## **References:**

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