

Ron Schenk, IRSJA Panel, Fall Conference, 2011, "Initiation and Training"

### **Sailing to Byzantium: The Candidates' Ceaseless Struggle to Initiate Analysts Through Training**

As an analytic society we are again engaged in a conversation regarding the nature of training in our work, an *opus* that might be described as: acting upon the psyche with the psyche for the purpose of changing the psyche. A discussion regarding the tension between initiation and mentorship is an important one, loaded enough to come up in historical cycles for IRSJA, while it causes outright splits in other societies.

As a prelude to the main topic I wanted to give a personal vignette:

Looking at what we do as Jungians is an enterprise I find myself ritualistically engaged in every year when I come home from the Texas Seminar summer meeting and am greeted by my wife, Charlotte, at the door. She, a veteran of over 25 years of being a spouse to a Jungian who comes home from these meetings with eyeballs rolling, arms flailing, and blathering incoherently, has taken a response to Jungians much like the bemusement engaged in by the Elizabethan court when they visited inmates at the first asylum for the insane in the town of Bedlam for the sake of their own entertainment. When she asks, "Well, what exactly did the Jungians 'do' at this 'meeting'?", I decide to take a direct approach and give a simple summary. Keep in mind that, for analysts, the Texas summer meeting is made up of an analyst process group, followed by a discussion of candidates, then the interviewing of candidates, a report on the interview, decisions on candidates being made, a report of decisions to candidates, a report on the candidates' reactions to decisions, a further process group, and finally, the business meeting....all very straightforward. So my response goes something like this:

"Well let's see. The meeting was actually divided up into seven meetings.

In the first meeting, A, we talked about our feelings about meeting.

In the next meeting, B, we talked about what we were going to do in the next meeting, C, in which we were going to meet the people we were supposed to meet, so that they could ask permission (local seminar) to ask permission (Review Committee) to do what they are supposed to do in the first place, in light of our situation as it emerged in the previous meeting, A, in which we talked about our feelings about meeting.

In the next meeting, C, we met the people we were supposed to meet so that they could ask permission to ask permission to do what they are supposed to do, and talked with them about the previous meeting, B, in which we talked about the subsequent meeting, C, in which they were to ask permission to ask permission to do what they are supposed to do, in light of our situation which emerged in meeting A, in which we talked about our feelings about meeting....”

This verbatim-like description continued through the various meetings with each meeting adding on another layer of complexity until we got to the last meeting which was

“...In the next meeting, H, we talked about what rules we want to apply to ourselves based on meeting G, in which we talked about our feelings in light of meeting F, in which we gave feedback on meeting E, in which we gave feedback to the people we were supposed to meet from meeting D, in which we gave feedback on meeting C in which we met the people we were supposed to meet so that they could ask permission to ask permission to do what they are supposed to do, and talked with them about the previous meeting, B, in which we talked about

the subsequent meeting, C, in which they were to ask permission to ask permission to do what they are supposed to do, in light of our situation as it emerged in meeting A, in which we talked about our feelings about meeting.”

As it turned out, it didn't stop there as we had to spend the week after the meeting awash in e-mails trying to figure out what we did at the meeting.

Charlotte's response indicated that we, in our meeting, seemed more pathetic than disgusting. She didn't say we were "sick," just that our program was "byzantine" and needed fixing. Now, the word "byzantine" caused me to pause and ponder. It comes from the word "Byzantium," the 16<sup>th</sup> Century name for the ancient city of Constantinople which is now Istanbul. It refers to the art and architecture of the city which was marked by ornate, intricate and elaborate designs grounded in rigid, inflexible forms, and referred also to the politics of the royal court indicating fixity but at the same time deviousness and intrigue. A word, it seems, for us to keep in mind.

Turning to the topic at hand, initiation and mentorship: The word "initiation" comes from the Latin *initium* which means initial, entrance or beginning, literally "going in" or "entering in" across a threshold or boundary. We might say, initiation renders all involved as borderline. This etymological root stands somewhat in opposition to the etymological root for education, the act of the mentor, which is to "lead out." "Out" gives the implication of beyond boundary - freedom, choice, possibility, growth, enhancement, expansion. The word "mentor" comes from the Indo-European root *men*, "to think," and refers to Odysseus's friend in whose form Athena, goddess of wisdom, takes in guiding Odysseus' son Telemachus to his meeting with his father. What is often overlooked is the fact that Homer's character, Mentor, is not a

trustworthy guide, but an overbearing old codger. Homer, it seems, was being characteristically ironic in inserting Athene into his form. In any case, the mentor may be seen as the teacher, leading the student out of ignorance. The two concepts, in and out, are qualitatively different, two existential worlds, but still related in that you can't "go in" without coming "out" of somewhere, and you can't be "lead out" without first having entered in somewhere. Although mentoring has an appropriate place in our training, I want to focus mainly on initiation which I see as the archetype most predominant in our function of preparing candidates.

Initiation as entering "in:" Jim Hillman talks about the preposition "in" which he includes in the realm of Hestia, in-visible deity of in-timacy and container of in-ner realms of all kinds, architectural and psychological.<sup>1</sup> "In" is fundamental to depth psychology itself with its traditional location of soul as in-terior, leading to notions of "in-ner" beings such as child, parent and demon. "In-troversion" is the preferred mode of our work with in-tuition gaining special privilege, with its in-vestigations of the somewhat in-accessible world of the personality a process which James Joyce calls the "agenbite of inwit." This process, the impossible one of knowing oneself through oneself, can in-evitably be in-stitutionalized by groups like ours into in-veterate, in-grained dogma to be at first in-dulged in or in-gested, but which often leads to in-digestion and further in-quiries of the sort in which are engaged today.

So what is "in-nate" about "in"? What is "in" about? .....Limits, boundaries, surroundings, ensconced, enveloped, entrapped, or negation (like incoherent, inconceivable, or incontinent), in short – "in" implies a motion that is at the same time leading toward the more and more static but never completely in-ert place which at some point becomes primary, be it that of in-sider or prisoner. So when we are in-viting or in-vited in, we are in the realm of initiation, initiator and initiated alike, privileged, yet trapped and negated at the same time, in

service to something more than we know. It is this condition which gives rise to the change in being for which initiation is intended.

Initiation is a staple on the Jungian menu,<sup>2</sup> and we are all well versed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropological view of initiation,<sup>3</sup> how as an archetype it presents itself at crossings over or rites of passage between life stages and induction into intangible aspects of psychological life. One piece of literature that I think bears on a more contemporary view is offered by Victor Turner in his emphasis on the “liminal space” created through initiation.<sup>4</sup> The liminal is the sense of threshold or of time and space related to but separate from the central community. In the place of liminality, identity is ambiguous with regard to gender, life/death, and societal role, all becoming a matter of both/and, betwixt and between. The idea of liminality is useful for a notion of training related to the life of the psyche because the psyche, as we imagine it, finds its base in the liminal world of “not this, not that” and “both at the same time.” At its best, analysis is practiced as a liminal phenomenon between the space/ time of community and analytic chambers, practitioner and patient, consciousness and unconsciousness.

I think that a recognition by the IRSJA of the predominance of the archetype of initiation in training, with its liminal quality, is important and beneficial. My sense of the model used by the Society is that of the crafts guild with its necessary classes of apprentice and craftsman. These categories are analogous to our candidate and analyst, but with the line between being highly permeable, so that in many situations, the roles pass back and forth, just as they do with doctor and patient in the analytic situation. The craft of the guild is the work of the psyche toward its own healing. The candidate is invited into the more differentiated circle of craft workers by the members of that circle, the analysts. The criterion for invitation is inevitably subjective and based, by necessity on a sense of readiness or preparedness for the particular work

of the psyche. The long and painstaking process of entering the “inner circle” is the initiation, with both analyst and candidate alike subject to the forces of the bi-polar initiatory field.

What is the work into which the initiation is taking place? As we all know, it is tremendously complex. The best graphic model I know was created by our former colleague, Jess Groesbeck, from his classic essay on the archetype of the wounded healer in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology*.<sup>5</sup> The worker in the craft as doctor listens to the subject’s monologue as patient, attuned to voices of past sessions recent and long term, at the same time hearing the patient’s various personal unconscious contents, while sensing the elicited aspects of his/her own complexes at work, simultaneously having an eye toward the way the personal worlds of relationship, family and work of doctor and patient interface, meanwhile taking into account a common or uncommon cultural context, at the same time listening to the way the doctor becomes a part of the patient’s conscious and unconscious story, while intuiting the way the patient becomes a part of the doctor’s conscious and unconscious story, simultaneously sensing how the unconscious personal desires of doctor and patient interpenetrate in an underlying intercourse of complexes, informed all the while by separate personal archetypes, which together form a third configuration, all in service to the overarching archetype containment of the wounded healer. In short, in a liminal space we become multiple, each analytic session an initiatory event in itself.

This is our work and it renders us anxious, analyst and candidate alike, a necessary occupational hazard. I believe the training society is created, in part, to contain the anxiety generated by our work. Inevitably, the will to power arises as a defense to this anxiety, also on the part of analyst and candidate alike. “The work,” as we have characterized it, is at once an impossible *opus contra naturum* and a liminal phenomenon, using psyche to know and work on psyche while being worked upon by psyche. I believe training in the work requires a process

beyond the confines provided by our mainstream cultural recourse to humanism and rationalism (which can be the appropriate pillars of mentorship,) and that the archetype of initiation with its liminal space provides a vehicle for this training. Because the psyche is the tool at hand, I believe it is appropriate for the society to make overt the fact that an evaluation of the candidate's readiness at each stage of the process comes about through a sense of the candidate's relationship to his/her unconscious life.

It is a delicate, artful business. For years, as a member of review and examination committees and in hearing reports of committees, I have been impressed and moved by the care with which committees practice their incalculably complex work with a sense of the humble, an ear for the "other" and an eye to the care of the candidate. I have been equally impressed and moved, (and I say this having carried the banner of the Society "heavy" in these interviews and examinations for many years,) with the way that candidates, for the most part, take in, assimilate and integrate painful committee experiences.

I also have seen ruptures in this consciousness in complexed committees, and I think that happens when parental figures sneak into the bedroom, the membrane between analyst and candidate rigidifies, and candidates are perceived as children to be evaluated along developmental lines that hold a notion of "psychological maturity." The will to power then appears in the form of a fall into parental demands on the part of the analyst and into childlike compliance on the part of the candidate, each form, parent and child, holding a kind of power over the other. The candidate is disadvantaged, however, by being placed in a double bind twice over. First, the analysts as parents are requiring the candidate to "grow up" when they, the parents, are infantilizing the candidate. Secondly, while analysts rightfully require candidates to be in analysis, they lose sight of the fact that an adequate analysis involves what the Freudian

analyst, Ernst Kris, called “regression in the service of the ego” wherein the undermining of neurotic defenses uncovers regressive material for analytical consideration. Inevitably the effects of this temporary regression spill over into the candidate’s attitude toward training in such forms as hostility, dependency, and ambivalence. When the candidate is evaluated for “readiness” in terms of an ego-based fantasy of maturity rather than from the sense of a particular individuation process with its own meandering path which should not necessarily preclude advancement, the candidate is in effect punished for behavior derived from being the subject of a “good enough” analysis.

There are other ways in which the paradoxes of liminality inherent in the initiation archetype come into play leading to experiences and assumptions about training expressed by analysts and candidates over the years which I find different from my own.

- Questions have been raised whether a one hour interview is enough for a review committee to form an adequate opinion of the candidate’s condition, and I believe that for the most part, it has proven to be so. A committee of analysts, using analytical acumen, within the time and space allotted seem to be able to sniff out the situation presented by the encounter with the candidate, and for the most part an adequate conclusion is achieved by the psychological event as a whole.
- Concerns are expressed regarding the “fairness” of a candidate’s being examined by analysts of schools and orientations different from those of the analysts by whom the candidate is being locally trained. Aside from the fact of the wide range of analysts accessible to candidates within and outside of the society, it is my experience that examiners bend over backwards to extract from the candidate what the candidate knows and how it is known. The final result comes not from the two-person majority of analysts



on the committee, but ultimately from the entire configuration that presents itself. A failure is a failure of all concerned including the entire society, just as a pass is shared by all.

- Candidates and analysts develop time frames for training and then exercise acts of will either to retard or excel the process when, in fact, liminal space has its own time to which analysts and candidates are all subjected. More often than not exams are failed because of the emergence of complexes, not because of inadequacy of knowledge, and complexes, as we know, take their own time in becoming integrated.
- A larger problem generally in the workings of the Society by both analysts and candidates is a gross lack of imagination regarding power, wherein power is seen to lie exclusively in the formal structure of the Society, its stated policies and rules, and power is claimed by individuals and small groups only through manipulation of the structure, completely negating the many means of personal empowerment the Society offers.
- The issue of the candidate's feeling "supported" comes up time and again, but the real question it seems to me is not , Does the candidate feel supported?, rather, What in the candidate should be supported and what not by the review and examining committees?
- Finally, analysts and candidates alike have conceived the goal of training to be that the candidate becomes an analyst and have organized their thinking around this assumption. The psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, said that the first symptom that needs to be cured in a candidate is the desire to be an analyst. Following this perspective, becoming an analyst is merely a side effect of the drug of training or a side show to the circus of training. To me, the goal is something else - the evolution of a craftsman in an at times impossible, at times mysterious, work governed by a sensibility of liminality. I believe examinations

are not so much vehicles for passing and failing as they are what the Navajo call photographs, that is “shadow catchers.” They simply give an indication of where we are, what we are in-to.

In conclusion, it strikes me that our work of analysis, difficult as it is to analyze, might well be sensed through a nonverbal medium. J.S. Bach’s Baroque “Concerto for Four Harpsichords and Strings in A Minor” offers an example that strikes me very much as an echo of the analytic encounter. In the beginning you hear a single note, held for a certain duration, followed by another note of lesser duration above the original note, followed by the original note, followed by the higher note leading to the original note repeated three times for emphasis, and that last sequence repeated for further emphasis, and one more time with the original note having an altered rhythm of repetition, and then yet one more time, only this time leading to a lower note at which point the orchestra enters with a harmonious chord and then takes off with its own repetition of the sequence. In other words, the line of music is expanded and then complemented by another line as the voice of the “countersubject.” Then another voice appears, then another, and so on until you have eight lines of music, played by eight hands on four keyboards, all in point and counterpoint with each other. In addition, an orchestra, with its individual sections is emphasizing certain parts in the piece with amplifications of its own. As a line tumbles down the scale it is “caught” and held by an orchestral chord, or as a line strives upward, the orchestra will meet it at a climactic point. We might imagine these different voices as “streams of consciousness” or psychic reverberations appearing in our patient and in ourselves as they explore different aspects and levels of the psychological terrain together, an inquiry that itself, creates and reveals a different world. If our work is otherworldly, then our training should reflect the multi-valence of this other realm.

So, Charlotte, yes, we are on a different planet, not Byzantium perhaps, but rather Baroque, and if baroque, what needs fixing?

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<sup>1</sup> See James Hillman, “Hestia” in *Mythic Figures*.(Putnam, Ct.: spring Publications, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> See Joseph Henderson, *Thresholds of Initiation*, Louise Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little, Editors, *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court,1987), Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (New York: harper and Row,1958).

<sup>3</sup> See A. van Gennep (1960) *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

<sup>4</sup> See Victor Turner (1967) “The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage” in *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Jess Groesbeck, “The Archetypal Image of the Wounded Healer,” *The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 1975, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp 122- 145.