

Working with Ukrainian Jungian Psychotherapists During the War

Individual Lecture Presentation with Discussion

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A Letter:

On March 7, 2022, two weeks after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, I got an e-mail from a friend at Pacifica Graduate Institute--Dr. Oksana Yakusko--who ran the Ph.D. program in Clinical psychology there. Originally from Ukraine herself, Oksana reported that her mother and other members of her family and friends were trapped under heavy bombardment in Kyiv, with Russian troops advancing ominously on all fronts. She was doing everything she could to help and support them (or get them out), and she said she wanted to ask a favor of me. Needless to say I was puzzled and intrigued! How could I possibly help in this situation?

Oksana had an old childhood friend whom she hadn't been in touch with since they were both teenagers in Ukraine. Now they were talking regularly. And it turns out that this friend was now a psychologist and about to finish her Jungian training through the IAAP router program! In the middle of this crisis, they got to talking about their lives and vocations as psychologists. My name came up and Oksana's friend said that she and her cohort knew of my work and really appreciated my book *Trauma and the Soul* which they had read in its Russian translation! Oksana thought maybe a video message of support from me would mean a lot to these Jungian psychotherapists in this dark time.

Really? I thought? Ukrainian therapists know my work? Having read it in Russian!? And a video message from me might mean something to them? I was humbled, flattered, surprised, slightly intimidated, and suddenly re-acquainted with the small parochial sense of reality I'd constructed around myself. Of course! I said: I would be glad to send them something as soon as I could! I had been rivetted by the tragic news about the Russian invasion and the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people and fighters. I found their whole struggle moving and compelling.

But I couldn't really meet Oksana's request because I was being prepped for back surgery in New York and a video in my hospital gown didn't seem like a very

good idea! But I had my laptop, so I set it on my food tray wrote a letter to Oksana's friends. I wanted to say something that might help set their traumatic fight for survival in a larger context of meaning--including a larger psychological context of meaning. But mere words seemed pathetically pale and inadequate to the task. Nevertheless, by 11 p.m. that night I had something that expressed at least part of what I felt. So I pushed "send," not knowing whether my message would ever reach the people for whom it was intended.

In my letter, dated March 9th, 2022 I began by saying how proud I was of them and the Ukrainian people in general, for their inspiring and courageous stand against the brutality of Putin's war machine. I said that their battle puts them side by side with the early American revolutionaries who fought for freedom and democracy in 1776 against the tyrannical occupation of our own country. I reminded them of one of my favorite monuments of that revolution in Concord Mass. where,

"by the rude bridge that arched the flood,
their flag in April's breeze unfurled,
here the "embattled farmers stood,
and fired the shot heard round the world."

And I said that with that shot they started a revolution--but it wasn't the revolution they intended at the time-- simply to throw off the oppression of the British. Instead, it was *a revolution in consciousness*.
And, I continued...

It was a revolution dedicated to the proposition that all men and women are created equal and are "endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights" including life, liberty, and the pursuit of a full life under a government of their choosing.

Your battle is part of that revolution in consciousness. Dictators will always rise up against this new consciousness because they are afraid of it, but the fight for democracy, for equality, for diversity, and for the sacred reality that all people on this planet contain the spark of a God-given right to life and liberty, is far bigger than any one battle, and it must be waged over and over again in every generation. Those of you who work with traumatized individuals know that this is the same battle waged in the inner world—between a life-promoting new, democratic consciousness and the violent, oppressive anti-life forces in the psyche. Now you are engaging this battle in the streets. You are fighting for much more than survival. You are

fighting for a new birth of freedom and for a new and revolutionary consciousness that is slowly taking place on this earth. You are fighting for a transcendent moral center for your nation. Despite your current trauma, you are fighting for the Soul. I salute you.

The next morning, as I lay in the recovery room, I got a call from my friend Tom Singer, who was attending an international “Analysts and Activism” conference which included Ukrainian members. “Just thought you’d like to know, he said, that--as we speak-- your letter is being read aloud by a Ukrainian colleague--to all the people at the Activism conference. I’m here to tell you that it meant a lot to them!”

Well--even through the fog of anesthesia, that was music to my ears! And it was the beginning of my work with Ukrainian Jungian analysts, which is what I want to describe to you today.

The Process

Following my letter and further dialogue, a group of 9 Ukrainian Jungian analysts, trained through the Router program of IAAP, sought my help to develop a greater awareness of personal and collective trauma--hoping such knowledge could be integrated in their analytic and supervisory work and perhaps in a training program they hoped to establish in Ukraine after the war. At this point, many of them were already supervising other therapists so my role was to supervise the supervisors, so to speak. Translators are present at each of our meetings for simultaneous translation back and forth. We meet every Tuesday morning for two hours on Zoom and rotate the presentations among the participants.

A lot of what these Ukrainian colleagues struggle with is the darkness and despair in their clients and the darkness and despair in themselves--personal and collective trauma are constantly inter-woven. FEAR is everywhere as the bombs drop randomly on their home cities and the living bury their innocent dead.

Sometimes, during our sessions, air-raid sirens go off and participants have to leave for safety. When that happens we pause until a signal is given and we can re-gather. Psychological work under such conditions sounds like it might be impossible, but it’s not. And the reason it’s not, is that the outer trauma isn’t the main problem. *The inner defenses against the trauma are the problem!* This awareness re-locates the problem *in the psyche* where we can witness how the defenses “work” and, if we’re lucky, do something about them --albeit with great

difficulty. In other words, trauma is repeated in the inner world and *there is a powerful and sophisticated system of dissociative powers that accomplishes this*. I have called this system *the Self-care system*, and have been writing about it for 40 years. So, as you might expect, my discoveries in this area, find their way into my teaching.

All serious outer trauma is literal and concrete and the psyche's first response to its impact is fight, flight or freeze--responses that insure survival. These responses are pre-symbolic instinctive responses of the autonomic nervous system--right out of the brain stem. The only thing that ameliorates this level of distress is the physical provision of safety, containment and the warmth of human relationship. Bomb shelters, anti-missile defenses and a community of friends and family, provide these for most of my Ukrainian colleagues and their clients.

So, by the time they get to me, my Ukrainian colleagues are more or less safe in well defended cities in Ukraine and there are internet services, so we can communicate via Zoom. The outer trauma has dissipated, but then, often, the dissociative system I have described (which, by the way, usually originates in early life); this system gets "triggered" and goes to work.

What I call the Self-care system is "trying" to regulate how much anxiety and pain is allowed to be experienced by the ego of the host personality. It attempts this regulation in two ways. On the one hand, it violently attacks the connections between the conscious ego and the impossibly painful feelings that are the aftermath of trauma. Bion called this "attacks against linking" and most of the links that are attacked are links to *feeling*. We now know that all trauma an injury to the capacity to feel," and dissociation is how this happens. Attacking the connections to feeling is tantamount to driving the soul out of the body and into the mind, so the dissociative system I'm describing is mostly a mental defense--a tyranny of what one analyst called the *pathological mind psyche*.

The second way the dissociative system works is by *hijacking the imagination*--turning it over to an obsessional complex of thoughts, organized around real or imaginary fears and dangers, so that the imagination is no longer free or creative or free to dream as personal life evolves. Almost all trauma begins in fear, but then the system amplifies fear with dark imaginings and dire prophecies especially about a dangerous "other" who is often dehumanized or rejected as inferior. The more the hijacked imagination gins up fear, the more the violent forces attack all forms of new life and its vulnerable expressions. The system behaves like King Herod in the Biblical narrative who, out of fear of losing his power to a "child," set

out to “slaughter all innocent children” in the land. The system thus becomes an authoritarian anti-individuation system--perversely attacking life in the interest of “saving” life.

So my challenge in working with my Ukrainian colleagues has been “how to get around or past this system?” There are two main ways to do this: First, to keep *feelings experienced in the moment* in the picture as much as possible--which, to the extent it can be accomplished--keeps dissociation at bay--and in some cases, actually educates and transforms it. The second is to liberate the imagination from its imprisonment by the Self-care system. Jung’s active imagination is one of the most effective means to encourage this liberation, but with trauma-survivors, whose imaginations are frozen, it needs a lot of playful encouragement and gentle suggestion. Often (with my encouragement) analysts in my groups will try to jump start their patient’s imaginations with a fairy tale or a movie scene, or a song, or improvise in the moment with their own fantasies. Sometimes this is successful--sometimes not.

As for cultivating feelings-in-the-moment, in our group I often asked group members questions like: “what are your feelings as you listen to this case?” “Where do you feel this in your body? or “what do you notice about your feelings as you hear this dream?” Another is by making space for and inquiring about group members’ *imagination* about the material. For example: “*What do you imagine might be going on in this patient’s transference to her therapist?*” or “if this were your dream what associations might you have?” Or “*What’s your felt sense about what this dream might be trying to help formulate for the dreamer that he or she might not want to experience yet?*”

All these questions are important because they keep our focus on the *inner* world while the defensive system is always oriented outwardly. It always tries to stimulate fears about some *outer-world consequences*. The inner critic is always attacking the host personality for having failed some outer-world standard or perfectionistic idea. It’s always comparing.....you’re too fat, your ugly, you’re stupid, you don’t have any friends, you shouldn’t have said that etc. Therefore encouraging an internal frame of reference is critical to the healing of trauma and its primitive forms of dissociation.

So to repeat, attention to feelings in the moment, and to activating the imagination are two major ways I try to help my Ukrainian colleagues work with trauma as they work with their highly defended patients. Then there’s a third more educative way that I discovered supports the twin focus on feelings and imagination. This

more educative approach is based on the reality that the defensive system *slowly and gradually over the course of psychotherapy* becomes visible symbolically, in dreams. If this weren't true I wouldn't have had anything to write about for the last 40 years! Because dreams portray the system in action, it is open to symbolic interpretation and understanding. In other words, we can try to make *the dissociative system conscious*--educating therapists about how it works and what it looks like in dreams and clinical process.

This is sort of miraculous when you think about it. The pre-symbolic dissociative powers, designed to attack the imagination--designed to keep everything fractured and unformulated--start to formulate and reach symbolic form in dreams. *Attacks on symbolic representation become symbolic representations*. And here's an interesting fact. Previously dissociated, unformulated experience of early traumatic life--when it begins to cohere and become visible in dreams, does so as mythological images and mythological dramas. That's why I called these powers "archetypal defenses." In effect, (at least in the post-traumatic personality) we get a mythic history before we get a personal one. This understanding links early childhood experience and its dissociative protections with Jung's collective unconscious and its mythic and archetypal dominants.

In any case, it turns out (to my great pleasure) that the Ukrainian analysts present in my groups have found this symbolic map helpful--so why wouldn't I keep teaching it? And also they're teaching me. Any good dialogue raises consciousness and these colleagues have helped me differentiate and refine the model itself.

Archetypal Powers in the Dissociative System

So let's have a brief look at the system that I've been trying to refine and differentiate--and then I'll give you one of their cases where the system shows up. Here's the best picture of what I call the "Self-care system" that I have found. It's by William Blake and called "The good and evil angels fight for possession of a child." It hangs in the Tate Gallery in London.

[Slide of Blake's Image]

Keep in mind that what I'm showing you here might be classified as a *trauma-generated structural model of the mind*. Structural models are basically generic versions of how the psyche is built--the different parts that emerge and how they interrelate. And recent trauma-generated structural models are explicitly

dissociation-based models--like this one. There are many others around. Some of you are familiar with Karpman's useful drama triangle, consisting of Victim/Perpetrator/Rescuer. Richard Schwartz's wildly popular IFS model of Inner Critic/ Exiles/ Managers and Firefighters is another. Ronald Fairbairn's "Internal Saboteur/libidinal ego/Exciting Object shows similarities to my model. Fairbairn is the only one I know who uses dreams to help generate his model. And what you see here is the only one I know with an archetypal basis.

All these models are built around dissociated experiences that influence thought and behavior and become organized internally as different "parts" of the self or as what Phillip Bromberg calls "self-states." They are consistent with Jung's idea of "complexes" but they represent a more comprehensive or systematic *dissociative model of the mind*. For example Bromberg's or Donnel Stern's, or Allan Schore's, or Elizabeth Howell's models depend on dissociation as an organizing principle *from the earliest emergence of the psyche*--even in infancy. That's the new element, beyond Freud or Jung's more "neurotic" models.

One reason why such models are important is that they give us a theory of how the patient's best intentions to heal and improve in psycho-therapy are undermined from within, by dissociative "powers." These "powers" (we now realize) enter the field of post-traumatic therapy through aggressive affects and inflated demands that threaten to wreck the therapy, often resulting in "enactments." Such enactments are thought to be *inevitable* with dissociated patients, where a rupture and repair cycle is seen as central to a very stormy healing process. I will be writing more about enactments in the future, so stay tuned.

Back to our image. On the left is the dark angel, Lucifer in his "fallen" condition, shackled to the flames of Hell: The "spirit of evil" that Jung said "threatens us with dissolution and extinction in the unconscious as negative mother" (CW 5, p. 354). This angel personifies aggression, negativity, hatred, and *Violence*. "He" is the archetypal adversary, the critic, the sadistic voice of inner shaming, humiliation and contempt.

This dark angel--who is well known in the archetypal inheritance of humanity-- is the first inner power that I discovered back in the '80's as I was looking into the dreams of early-trauma survivors. His violence and inner persecution was shocking to me when I first encountered it, as was the self-loathing and self-contempt that my patients felt after "he" was finished with them.

So when I said in my letter to the Ukrainians that they were fighting for a new form of consciousness on this planet, I meant that they were fighting against this ‘authoritarian personality’ ruling them from within--and now, tragically threatening them from without. In a traumatic *personal* life, the dark angel in Blake’s illustration gets installed in the inner world for authoritarian control over a psyche that has been tragically injured and must never be injured again. In the outer world, this dark spirit gets installed over a *people* who have been tragically injured--even humiliated--and must never be humiliated again (like Russia decimated by the Nazis in WWII). For such individuals and nations, democracy is the worst imaginable thing because it means facing parts of oneself that were too dangerous to include as one grew a self--or a nation-- in a hostile world. It means feeling impossible feelings that have *never* been included in a potential wholeness of the self and whose inclusion now would be tantamount to a foreign invasion-- "contaminating the blood of our nation” as one famous politician recently suggested about the immigrant crisis at our southern border.

Jung interprets the destructiveness of the dark angel you see here in Blake’s image as simply the regressive undertow of the unconscious--the powerful devouring threat of the negative mother. But I don’t think that’s enough to account for the sheer volume of aggression and rage in the post-traumatic personality. According to Jung, in depression, the libido has simply sunk into the unconscious (often because of a one-sided ego). There it activates all the painful feeling-memories of early life. Healing therefore involves regressing along with the depressive tendency and integrating the memories so activated into the conscious mind” (Vol 5, para 625). Regression can thus have a regenerative and enriching aspect. This is certainly true in some of the more developed personalities that come to us for help.

But in the system that you see here, which is developmentally earlier and more primitive, there’s traumatic *progression* as well as regression. In addition to the child there are the angels, and, as extreme archetypal dominants, they resist regression toward the human and the vulnerable. Sandor Ferenczi got this right while describing the psyche of a DID patient in his Clinical Diary. At the moment of early splitting, he says, a part of the psyche regresses back to the infantile period where it remains in suspended animation--and a part “progresses”--grows up too fast, takes on precocious archetypal powers, and becomes the “overseer” of the regressed part, and a tyrannical overseer at that.

Such oversight involves severe forms of dissociation and it appears to take on two forms--one malevolent and persecutory--like the dark angel; one benevolent and protective like the bright angel. There’s an uncanny wisdom to these angel. Each,

in their own way, are trying to regulate how much experience is allowed to be experienced by a person--or a nation. Jungian analyst Michael Fordham's glimpsed this "wisdom" and called them "defenses of the Self" although he didn't describe their symbolic personifications or their dynamics as a "system"--which is where my work comes in.

People have found many names for this dark angel of dissociation--"death instinct," "sadistic superego," "bizarre object" "internal saboteur." None of these designations captured the true nature of this inner monster quite as accurately as the name Dante gave him 700 years ago in his famous Divine Comedy. Dante placed him in the nethermost circle of Hell surrounded by Fire and Ice and called him the great divider-- "Dis." A fitting name for the "Lord of dis-association."

Dante knew that Dis was really Lucifer in his fallen condition but he didn't explore how he got there. The story is worth telling. It's about a trauma in heaven.

Lucifer, God's greatest Angel and the bearer of light was hanging out in heaven one day, shortly after the creation, and out of sheer curiosity he decided to look into the Holy Mind to see what God was planning for the future. There he saw something that shocked and outraged him....namely that God was planning to come down into time and space reality to incarnate as a human being.... with decaying flesh and disgusting smells and waste products. Whereupon Lucifer decided he simply could not countenance this human incarnation of the Godhead--this degradation of God's handiwork, so he led a rebellion of 460,000 other angels and they fell and fell into the outer darkness, landing in the nether regions where they became the great nihilists, the purveyors of cynicism and negation, Beelzebub....the Lord of Flies.

In Blake's image we see two angels so we can imagine that Lucifer didn't entirely leave the Godhead. Perhaps he split himself in two--leaving his other half--the resplendent Lucifer, behind as the Bright Angel--still identified with the Spirit World while his dark twin languished in Hell.

So a word about this bright angel. In the course of writing my second book Trauma and the Soul, I realized that dissociation was not only a violent affair. There were other ways to dissociate and another "power" in the Self-care system to assist in these "softer" forms. In other words, I discovered the Bright Angel on the right in Blake's painting. The bright angel could cast spells, put the ego in a trance, seduce the ego into alternative realities or into drugs or alcohol or other addictions. And just like in Blake's image, the bright angel usually seemed to have

a special relationship with a childlike innocence in my patients' personalities--an innocence that seemingly had to be protected or preserved at all costs. This innocence, I discovered, had something to do with their core feelings of aliveness, their openness to the world, their sense of beauty--their passionate love for life itself. As James Grotstein once commented, "innocence is the central element in a person's spiritual life."¹

One highly sensitive female patient who grew up in a brutal, shaming family system had an imaginary pony with whom she could communicate in life-saving wordless dialogues. *She would not have made it through her despairing childhood without the pony to vouchsafe her innocence.* Another woman reported a life-saving imaginal relationship with an imaginary guardian angel who lived (with her infant baby) in a snow-globe on her night table. Each night after violent emotional and sometimes sexual abuse by her father, she would shake her snow globe and commune with this magical presence--until one night, after witnessing the brutal beating of her mother, with blood all over the kitchen, she discovered to her horror that her beloved angel had disappeared. That's the night she lost her innocence forever, she told me. During the following week she tried to commit suicide. Her pain was no longer rendered tolerable, compensated, or protected by her bright angel.

So if the dark angel on the left is "Dis" then the bright angel is "Bliss." If the dark angel is Violence and attacks against linking, the Bright angel would be Illusion, the numbness of a trauma-trance-- the life-sustaining escape from an impossible reality through Spiritual Bypass. The bright angel maintains hope, but hope often based on illusion--what Martha Stark calls "relentless hope." Both angels get their power by getting the ego to identify with them--what Richard Schwartz of IFS fame, calls "blend" with them.

Both angels serve the project of dissociation from impossibly painful feelings. Often they work in tandem, the bright angel setting out a perfectionistic ideal that the host personality is always failing--thereby justifying attacks by the dark angel. Or the bright angel seduces the ego into altered states of bliss or oblivion. "Fake news!" says the bright angel to the suffering personality. "It never happened! You don't have to feel the pain of disappointment and loss. The News media is lying! Stay with Me! Only I can save you!" Such are the ego-sustaining illusions and

¹ Many trauma-surviving patients would report that they had lost their innocence forever--lost their souls in the course of their repeated abuse. But it turned out that just as the bright angel is preserved after the trauma in heaven, so innocence was preserved in hiding and connected to bright angelic beings in the unconscious.

delusions that the bright angel specializes in. Troubled citizens in our nation who are confused by all the suffering and moral complexity of modern life, may long for rescue by such an “angel.” Unconsciously they search for someone upon whom to project this powerful psychological factor. And Donald Trump, with his blonde hair, Midas-like wealth, and golden tower in the sky makes an easy target for such projections.

The Innocent Child

Before I get to a clinical example a final comment about the innocent child in the system--seen here fleeing into the arms of the bright angel. Remember that innocence, is not a human category but an inflated, totalistic one--like the angels. It doesn't “belong” down here on middle earth where we live. So the child shown here is not a human child--not yet-- but an archetypal one--what Jung called the “divine child” and Winnicott the “omnipotent child.” In a traumatic child's history this innocent child is what James Grotstein calls a veritable hostage self--sold to the devil for its own protection. Our goal is to release it from captivity by these resident “angels,”² allowing it to move from the innocent child to the empirical, suffering child.

This will mean the child slowly leaving the system of inflated powers and entering human suffering--the suffering of feelings; the suffering of consciousness, the suffering of democracy. In terms of our image, this will mean stepping out of a two-dimensional totalitarian inflated system with the angels into the third dimension--of mundane, tragic (but also comedic and redemptive) human life. There is a difference between the child's suffering in the system and suffering in the existential reality of existence. Jung called this “neurotic” or false suffering on the one hand and “authentic” suffering on the other. Helen Luke once wisely said that “only when the innocent part of us begins to suffer, can healing occur.” When the innocent part of begins to suffer, she says, we bleed. We shed tears...real tears. We take on our little portion of the darkness of the world. And in so doing, we redeem a little portion of that darkness. That process is what the system of authoritarian defenses is designed to prevent. Trauma therapy must unlock the system and gain access to feelings of the wounded empirical child in the patient and allow these to be experienced in the compassionate presence of an attuned other person. As therapists, that's what we do.

² Remember that this whole system is dedicated to dissociation from the painful feelings of dependency, neediness, inferiority helplessness, guilt, shame, and all the terrible anxieties that the human child begins to feel as it incarnates in reality. They want to keep this child “dis-incarnate”--spiritualized--“in the head.” They oversee an exarnation.

If we can manage this in the therapy process, the system of defenses itself will moderate its extremism. The two angels of violence and illusion will slowly “slough off their mythological envelope” so to speak and become human. The dark angel may end up as related aggression, the light angel as creative imagination. The way this happens, according to our best recent theorists, is through enactments. We can’t get there, they say, through interpretation.

Collective Implications

Perhaps you’ve noticed that this dissociative system with its twin angelic powers of violence and illusion protecting its resident innocent child, has found its way into our common culture. The brutal violence in American culture--especially towards innocent children in schools, from Sandy Hook to Columbine certainly unmask the rage and hatred of the dark angel and his fear of feeling. And the denial of these realities by the likes of Alex Jones with his Q-anon conspiracies and his fantasies of “False Flag” operations, shows in grotesque form the ways the Bright Angel helps us dissociate. (And he’s back now, you know....probably looking for a cabinet position after the 2024 election)

In addition to Violence and Illusion as mainstays of the authoritarian mindset, innocence also appears to play a central role in the dissociative “project.” For example the role of innocence in the current Mideast crisis is illuminating... Israel, understandably claiming innocence in the face of Hamas’ brutal attack on innocent civilians on October 7th, justifies its own violence, killing over 30,000 innocent Palestinian citizens. Palestinians, displaced people for generations, living in the outdoor prison of Gaza--also protest their own innocence and justify their own violence against the occupying state. Progressives who demonstrate on behalf of these Palestinians are accused of anti-semitism. Round and round it goes with a lot of angelic and demonic discharge but no transformation. Violence justified by innocence, turned malignant.

Any resolution of this conflict will require leaders to take responsibility for the tragic human consequences of their actions. That means taking on some “badness” with their “good” identifications and that means letting that innocent child “out” into experience and a corresponding loss of innocence. Currently all the world’s most extreme authoritarian dictators are identified with such “malignant innocence”--including Vladimir Putin, Victor Orban and quintessentially Donald Trump who has “done nothing wrong” and is the aggrieved innocent victim of the deep state and the evil Democrats.

The central question behind the current circus of Donald Trump's trials is not just "is anyone above the law," but does anyone get a pass--like the innocent child in Blake's painting--from truly suffering the human condition? Do we let people get away with this? As a "celebrity" culture we must suffer confusion on this question. We apparently don't like that we're all in this together--that we're all "created equal." Witness the trial of OJ Simpson who just died. The Angels came to his rescue as racial outrage on the one hand, collective guilt on the other--light and dark angels working collaboratively to avoid the realities of coming-into-being as a flawed human being--taking on his rightful part of the darkness of the world. The authoritarian system, always operating in the background gives the wealthy, and the privileged, a pass again. Malignant innocence wins again.

In a true democracy, people can admit that they were wrong.....they can admit that they are not innocent. They can admit they had a racist past. They can admit they lost an election. On the other hand, the insecure post-traumatic ego--puffed up and identified with archetypal energies-- cannot bear to take responsibility for its own limitations, its own failures, its own darkness. Malignant innocence wins again.

As I worked with my Ukrainian colleagues, I realized how much "innocence" I was prepared to see in them, and how much this was fueling both my outrage and my Bright Angel desire to help rescue them from the Putinesque dark angel menacing them with tanks and missiles. (I had one vivid fantasy of buying back my old high-powered rifle and signing up as a sniper in one of their militia groups). Of course I recognized this as my own angelic, heroic fantasy and also my aversion to *feeling their actual suffering and my own.*

Members of our groups rapidly disabused me of these extremist fantasies....pointing out for example, that a big segment of the Ukrainian population was still identified with Russia's authoritarianism--that much of their country--especially the Eastern Russian-speaking segments were deeply divided about the war. Also, I was told, authoritarian trends were still embedded in the culture as a whole. One of our group-- Oksana--pointed out that in the school system for example, where she had worked for many years, classrooms were full of Soviet-style authoritarian practices where kids voices were silenced and they are often scolded and shamed for speaking up. These realities introduced human complications into my black/white thinking and helped me lose some of the naïve innocence that otherwise kept my extreme angels in business.

Clinical Example

OK, now for an example of the work I'm trying to encourage and the awareness I'm trying to promote with my Ukrainian colleagues. One talented analyst in our group, Svitlana, wanted to present a patient who was depressed, complaining of feeling completely stuck in her life.

She and the patient had done some really good work before the war. The patient loved to paint and there were vivid images of broken pots mended with gold and flowering plants, and sea-waves crashing. Svitlana loved this patient and a very positive transference was in the field between them. But now, things had changed in the patient's life; her husband had grown depressed and lost his job. She struggled to stay connected to him emotionally. A part of her wanted to leave but she felt it would destroy him. Her grown daughter had just moved away to college in another country and with that the "bottom had dropped out" of her life. She had always been a "people-pleaser" and a deeply caring person and mother. Without the daughter at the center of her life, who was she? And what possible future could she imagine under these dark circumstances. She told Svitlana that she once heard that slaves, kept in captivity for a long time, lose their desire for freedom and she worried, given the Russian occupation, that she was becoming one of them.

Svitlana worried too, about how she could possibly help this patient. She herself was in despair because of recent advances by the Russians. Her practice is in Zaphorizia--a city now under siege, with the Ukrainians running out of ammunition and losing ground every day. "Last week" Svitlana said "the Russians were 28 kilometers away....now they're 26. I don't want to become a refugee and lose my home but I may have to." How can I possibly be of help to this patient?"

Well, there's no simple answer to that question, but there are some things we can do, not so much to relieve the patient's suffering (that's a Bright Angel task) but to transform it. The first part of such an approach is to make space for the feelings of human sadness under the depression--a space for despair to be shared--a space to feel together the beauty and sadness of the human condition. "Tell me about despair" says the poet Mary Oliver in her poem *Wild Geese*.

Tell me about despair--yours--and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the World Goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving
over the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees,
over the mountains and the rivers....

Meanwhile high in the clean blue air, the wild geese are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination...
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting,
over and over, announcing your place in the family of things.”

Love grows in this shared communion as we all know. But to join the patient in this space, the analyst will have to drop her Bright Angel identifications--and the innocence that supports it. This will stretch our understanding of the “analytic frame” in the direction of greater mutuality. But it may open us also to a mysterious “third”-- to a “transcendent” dimension reached through shared feeling and a willingness to suffer the joy and sorrow of the human condition together. This will be a commitment that our two angels can’t understand--or if they catch wind of it, they might feel jealous, suddenly wishing perhaps, that they hadn’t refused the incarnation in the first place.

Mary Oliver says that even in the midst of despair, the “world offers itself to your imagination...calls to you like the wild geese., over and over, announcing your place in the family of things.” Here’s the second part of an answer to Svitlana’s question “How can I possibly be of help to this patient?” Helping to liberate the hijacked imagination. And so she asked her patient if she had any dreams.

“Yes,” said the patient...

I dreamt that I am with some women. They are familiar to me. We are in a small garden preparing the land for planting. We have seeds. We are digging the ground and we are going to plant something. But some woman comes up and says “You shouldn’t be doing this! Nothing will grow here!” I’m upset hearing this and now don’t want to plant anything anymore. It’s all in vain I think,.....nothing will grow here. I look and see that a very thick shadow is falling on this piece of land, and because of this shadow, nothing will grow here.

Then I’m walking along the seashore. This is an unfamiliar place, very deserted and wild. I am walking along the shore road with a dog--a red shepherd. I don’t lead the dog. She leads me! I walk and the sea is to my left and I see large groups of dolphins jumping in the sea. The dog leads me to a cave and we climb into it. It’s like a hole in the rock. Before I climb in I see lights in the distance. This is either a fair or a carousel--very alive. It’s

something far far away. I go into the cave. I sit down. The dog is next to me and we look at the sea and the lights in the distance. I feel peaceful but sad.

In association to this last scene the patient felt a heartbreaking sadness--but also a kind of peaceful acceptance.

This beautiful dream presents both the problem--in the first half-- and the solution--in the second. The problem in the first part, of course, is the “dark shadow” of dissociation. This is not the dark shadow of Russian occupation but the shadow of the Dark Angel. It’s easy to mistake one for the other. It’s easy to get embedded in the external and lose an internal frame of reference. That’s what Svitlana finally came to understand. And that’s where my model of the Self-care system helped her to see. The outer oppression we can’t do anything about. The inner oppression, we can.

The first part of her patient’s dream illustrates how the dissociative system works--and how it gets the ego to identify with it. At the beginning, the dream ego is full of hope for new life, and wants to plant the seeds of possibility, but old “Dis,” masquerading as the old woman comes upon the scene and says “You shouldn’t be doing this....nothing will grow here!” “Forget it, it’s all useless!” And the dreamer--upset hearing this--does not protest this voice, but her vitality collapses--She “identifies with the aggressor” as Ferenczi described it. Oh yes, “it’s all in vain....nothing *will* grow here!” At this moment, in her dream, the patient becomes one of those slaves she mentioned in her associations, who lose the will to live, and comply with their oppressors.

But then there’s a second part of her dream--a sudden opening of her creative imagination! It’s as if her unconscious is saying “here’s the problem you’re up against” in part one--a negation of your hopes, and here’s the solution, in part two. Suddenly, she is walking along the seashore being led by her red Shepherd dog. She did not own a red shepherd dog but here he is--a furry avatar of her soul’s instinctive life; a guide and guardian of the “seeds” of possibility she had been talked out of planting in the first part of her dream. The sea is erupting with dolphins--a major archetypal symbol of leaping playful life, returning from the unconscious. In the ancient Greek city of Tarentum, the return of the Sun at the Winter Solstice was celebrated by the Sun priests who actually trained dolphins to carry a child through a canal system into the sanctuary at the very moment the sun returned from its dark winter night.

Then there's the safety of the cave, from which the dreamer and her animal familiar can sit together and view the lights and the carousel-celebration of life "far, far away." To me, this is a beautiful image of the sanctuary of the human psyche and its inner wealth and beauty--even under the horrific conditions of war. Her animal in this dream might suggest the generative innocence that returns to us through the inner world--sometimes at the darkest time in the outer world. Like for Jung, at the darkest time when he cried out "meine Seele, meine Seele wo bist du." And a child came to greet him--a divine child that he realized had been at the center of his life all along while he was lost in the "spirit of the times."

Both Svitlana and her patient sensed the importance of the dream's imagery in this second part. The question was, how could she help her patient into more intimate *feeling contact* with the images. Our tendency as Jungians is often to search for the meaning of images. And that can be genuinely helpful. But often the patient is looking for an experience, not an explanation. "How could I work with this dream?" Svitlana asked. "Well," I said--maybe you could re-enter the dream imaginatively with your patient.....ask her how it feels to be on that beach with the sand between her toes....how it feels to see the dolphins jumping....or to sit in safety with her dog in that cave watching the lights glimmering far far away."

"Maybe the dream would come alive for her in that way and lead to deeper feelings. "I even have the fantasy," I told Svitlana--that her dog might have something to say in this situation. Dream-dogs can talk, you know.... right?" Svitlana's eyes teared up. She smiled and said she liked that suggestion. At that moment red hearts appeared in various participants' zoom-boxes indicating that they were moved by the moment we shared.

The session ended and I felt that together, just for a moment, we had embraced the human condition--and each other. Perhaps we had succeeded--just for a moment--in bringing the angels down into our mundane existence--not as Violence and Illusion, but as the agony and ecstasy of what our shared life is really about. In the process, and again, just for a moment, maybe we had recovered a tiny bit of our lost innocence on another level and in the process, left the authoritarian world of trauma behind.

Thank you