

Developing Clinical Indicia for Initiation

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INTRODUCTION

In a 1929 lecture given at the 4th General Medical Congress for Psychotherapy, “The Aims of Psychotherapy,” Jung suggested that in psychotherapy one may learn more from failures than success. Jung explained that early in his career he had the most therapeutic difficulty with older patients (in the lecture described as those over forty) while applying Freudian or Adlerian psychology usually worked well for the younger ones. Reflecting upon his clinical failures, he said the following:

It seems to me that the basic facts of the psyche undergo a very marked alteration in the course of life so much so that we could almost speak of a psychology of life’s morning and a psychology of the afternoon. As a rule, the life of a young person is characterized by a general expansion and a striving toward concrete ends; and his neurosis seems mainly to rest on his hesitation or shrinking back from this necessity. But the life of an older person is characterized by a contraction of forces, by the affirmation of what has been achieved, and by the curtailment of further growth. His neurosis comes mainly from his clinging to a youthful attitude which is now out of season. Just as the young neurotic is afraid of life, so the older one shrinks back from death. What was a normal goal for the young man becomes a neurotic hindrance to the old – just as through his hesitation to face the world, the young neurotic’s originally normal dependence on his parents grows into an incest-relationship that is inimical to life. It is natural that neurosis, resistance, repression, transference, “guiding fictions,” and so forth should have one meaning in the young person and quite another in the old, despite apparent similarities. The aims of therapy should undoubtedly be modified to meet this fact. Hence the age of the patient seems to me a most important indicium (Jung, 1966a, par. 75).

Once Jung recognized that applying Freudian or Adlerian technique to his older patients failed, his *compassio medici* urged him forward to find new ways to help his patients. In this paper I will explore the subject of initiation and propose some clinical indicia based upon the Jungian literature and my own clinical experience. When one finds a valid clinical indicia, such as Jung did with the age of the patient, it can facilitate a new therapeutic approach. It seems to me that it was with this type of compassion for healing that Jung passed on his experience to his medical colleagues.

In clinical medicine, indicia are the physical, historical, and familial facts which allow a physician to apply the proper treatment from among a host therapeutic options. Likewise, in his 1929 lecture Jung asked the clinician to consider the principle of psychotherapeutic indicia. Beside age, Jung included the indicia of attitude preference (introvert / extravert); predominance of one particular psychic function; and whether a patient had a spiritual or materialistic attitude toward life.

Unlike medical indicia, I suggest that the application of psychotherapeutic indicia should be thought of as only a guideline and nothing like a rule. Toward the end of the same year, 1929, in his “Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*,” Jung added what seems to be the exact opposite viewpoint to the “medical indicia” idea which I believe provided a necessary balance to his lecture:

An ancient adept has said, If the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way. This Chinese saying, unfortunately only too true, stands in sharp contrast to our belief that the right method irrespective of the man who applies it. In reality, everything depends on the man and little or nothing on the method. The method is merely the path, the direction taken by a man; the way he acts is the true expression of his nature. If it ceases to be this, this method is nothing more than an affectation, something artificially pieced on, rootless and sapless, serving only the illegitimate goal of self-deception. It becomes a means of fooling oneself and evading what may perhaps be the implacable law of one’s being. This is far removed from the earthiness and self-reliance of Chinese thought. It is denial of one’s own nature, a self-betrayal to strange and unclean gods, a cowardly trick for the purpose of feigning mental superiority, everything in fact that is profoundly contrary to the spirit of the Chinese method. For these insights spring from a way of life that is complete, genuine, and true to itself; from that ancient, cultural life of China which grew logically and organically from the deepest instincts, and which, for us, is forever inaccessible and impossible to imitate (Jung, 1967, par. 4).

Part of Jung’s genius and originality was his ability to generate and hold together at once “opposite viewpoints” like these on the issue of clinical treatment. Combining the ideas in the above two references, Jung is noting that indicia, e.g. the right method, is important, but more important is for the therapist to be the right person. This is one example of the richness in thinking that I believe came to Jung through his regular practice of holding the tension of opposite contents together. It’s my sense that this quality enabled him to integrate the best of causal Western scientific thinking with the finality thinking of the East. As I venture into uncharted waters to explore for indicia of initiation, my hope is that the outcome will aid therapists to find new ways of orientation for the benefit of both their patients and themselves.

Exploring Authenticity in Therapy

Another way to look at why understanding the indicia of initiation might benefit clinical practices is to explore them as being a means of determining the authenticity of the psychic process within the therapeutic dialectic. Within the scope of Jungian practice, I will point out two examples, suffering and active imagination, where this appears to be an obligatory responsibility of the psychotherapist:

Suffering

Jungian theory holds that repression is a way in which the ego complex spares itself the pain of holding conscious contents that are incompatible with its present standpoint. In “Analytical Psychology and Education,” Jung suggested that if a patient could bear the suffering associated with the conscious realization of the incompatible content, the possibility for something of great value was actualized:

Conscious realization prevents the unmentionable atmosphere, the general cluelessness, the blank disregard of the troublesome object; in short, it stops the painful content from being repressed. And though this may seem to cause the individual more suffering, he is at least suffering meaningfully and from something real. Repression has the apparent advantage of clearing the conscious mind of worry, and the spirit of all its troubles, but to counter that, it causes an indirect suffering from something unreal, namely a neurosis. Neurotic suffering is an unconscious fraud and has no moral merit, as has real suffering. Apart, however, from producing a neurosis the repressed cause of the suffering has other effects: it radiates out into the environment and, if there are children, it infects them too (Jung, 1974, par. 154).

From this very important distinction between neurotic and genuine suffering I infer that it is a therapeutic obligation to be aware of the degree of “authenticity of suffering” brought to the dialectic field.

Active Imagination

Similarly, von Franz raises the issue of authenticity in the context of active imagination. She suggests that for active imagination to be beneficial the patient must engage the psychic material in a “moral confrontation.” In her paper, “On Active Imagination,” she relates a case report of inauthentic active imagination involving the split of the dream (vision) ego into two parts. In this way, the patient made “the mistake of entering into the inner events with a fictive ego rather than one’s real ego” (Von Franz, 1993a, p. 167). When such a situation occurs, von Franz in “Active Imagination in the Psychology of Jung” suggests that the therapist must be aware of it in order to make the following judgment:

... In Jungian active imagination, the psychotherapist only takes a position on the question of whether a fantasy is genuine or ingenuine (Von Franz, 1993b, p. 161).

In a similar manner, it seems to me that it is well within the scope of Jungian practice to investigate whether a particular patient’s initiatory theme is authentic. I have not heard this issue discussed at any seminars in the United States nor do I know of any generally accepted standards as to the essential clinical elements of initiatory themes. Also, I have been disturbed by the broad and indiscriminate usage in the U.S. of the terms: rites of passage, initiation rite, and initiation. It appears, at least in the United States, that since no firm criteria exist for determining whether a patient is in the midst of an authentic initiatory theme that therapists must decide the issue for themselves. It is toward the goal of providing such a grid that I will begin the next

section's discussion by defining what I mean by initiation.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In my review of references to initiation in the Collected Works of C.G. Jung and other sources written by Jungian analysts, I found a distinction made between the terms, "rite of passage" and "rite of initiation."

I. Rite of Passage (*rite de sortie*)

It appears to me that for the most part these two terms are synonymous in the Jungian literature. However, I find it interesting that the French term is sometimes used. This suggests that the word "sortie" captures some psychological element that either the equivalent German or English word cannot. *Sortie* refers to the departure of a person from a place; a way out, either literally or figuratively; the removal of an obligation, such as taking a day off from a particular duty; or a trip. It seems that it is this complexity and ambiguity of meaning in the French word that enables one to psychologically broaden the concept of "passage." Therefore, one might consider that psychologically the two concepts, rite of passage and *rite de sortie* have subtle but clear differences of meaning psychologically. In line with this, I have identified four different ways in which the term seems to be used in Jungian literature.

1. Referring to the Transition from a Particular Stage of Life to Another

Though one might refer to one's physical birth as a "passage," I have not found it referred to as a rite of passage, except perhaps obliquely in the context of death and rebirth experience. In connection with development, Jung writes in "The Stages in Life" about the concept of the psychic birth of an individual as the time in between the formation of the ego complex and separation from the birth parents:

In the childish stages of consciousness there are as yet no problems; nothing depends upon the subject, for the child itself is still wholly dependent on its parents. It is as though it were not yet completely born, but still enclosed in the psychic atmosphere of its parents. Psychic birth, and with it the conscious differentiation from the parents, normally takes place only a puberty, with the eruption of sexuality. The physiological changes attended by a psychic revolution. The various bodily manifestations give such an emphasis to the ego that it often asserts itself without stint or moderation (Jung, 1969a, par. 756).

The idea here is that while it may be appropriate to refer to the psychological changes associated with puberty as a *rite de sortie*, a type of psychic birth, I suggest that one must not too quickly judge that a particular subject is in the midst of a psychological initiatory theme. My distinction here is that a genuine psychological initiatory theme indicates that a transformation of personality or attitude is happening. Particularly in Western life, puberty is generally is a time of sparse individual psychological growth or awareness. There seems to be an almost exclusive emphasis on sexual development, appearance, and adaptation to the social demands of the child-

teen's collective.

I suggest that the picture becomes even more muddled when considering the psychological aspects of the next developmental stage – the end of the transition from teenager to young adult. There is an abundance of material written on the aboriginal initiation rites leading into tribal adulthood. Yet to me, most explore these rites as they relate to providing the psychological impetus to help children, particularly males, separate from their nuclear family. From this particular psychological vantage point, much is made of the need to separate from the mother to enable the young child to become a full man or woman of the tribe.

The anthropologist Paul Radin gives us a somewhat broader viewpoint regarding this time period of life by referring to the economic and social aspects of aboriginal societies:

... Puberty became not simply the recognition that an individual had reached the age of sexual maturity; it became dramatized as the period of transition *par excellence*: the passage of an individual from the position of being an economic liability to that of an economic and social asset. Two distinct sets of circumstances, one physiological, the other economic-social, thus conspired to make of puberty an outstanding focus which was to serve as the prototype for all other periods interpreted as transitional. It was certified and authenticated by magic and subsequently sanctified and sacramentalized by religion. ... These puberty rites are the fundamental and basic rites of mankind. They have been reorganized, remodeled, and reinterpreted myriads of times and, on their analogy, have been created not only new types of societal units, such as secret societies, but new ideological systems as well (Radin, 1971, p. 152).

My viewpoint is that Radin's ideas, being shaped more by anthropologic rather than psychological insight, give a clear departure point to frame our discussion here. His focus on the economic-social side of initiation seems to play out in contemporary Western societies. To me, the present-day shift away from the psychologically transformative aspects of initiation to the economic-social concerns explains much of the lack of impact we see in contemporary rites of the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religions. When such rites do not seem to currently constellate psychological transformation, should they still be classified as initiation rites from the psychological standpoint? Should we call such experiences, rites of passage or a *rites de sortie*, implying that they hold the potential for psychological transformation if they are re-vitalized in some fashion? These seem to me to be unanswered questions.

It is interesting that in his book, "The World of Primitive Man," Radin only identifies three stages in aboriginal life: birth, puberty, and death. Perhaps in present-day Western life for the majority there are only two stages: birth and death. From a structural standpoint, Jung designated in "The Stages in Life" that only midlife was a time when the psyche actually changed:

Fortunately we are not rising and setting suns, for then it would fare badly with our cultural values. But there is something sun like within us, and to speak of the morning and spring of

the evening and autumn of life is not mere sentimental jargon. We thus give expression to psychological truths and, even more to physiological facts, for the reversal of the sun at noon changes even bodily characteristics(Jung, 1969a, par.780).

It is reasonable to ask the question as to whether our concept of “life stages” (beside the changes of the psyche that Jung noted at midlife) has empirical validity. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper for a full discussion of this issue, I will digress briefly. It seems to me that the idea of “stage” is itself an abstraction, a thinking conception. One might consider that to divide life into stages, as relevant or convenient as it might be, may in certain instances be no more than a projection that a particular time period has a particular meaning.

I think this idea is applicable to the content of this paper when one considers the lack of psychological transformation in Western countries occurring during the rites of passage of puberty compared to the seemingly monumental effects these rites have upon those living a village life in native settings. It seems to me that the decisive factor in this differential relevance is the meaning that a particular society gives to a stage in life. The meaning itself must arise from the transpersonal factors of both the collective consciousness and the collective unconscious. In Jungian psychology, the *zeitgeist* is the amalgam of these factors as they relate to the collective time-moment as a whole. At certain times, the meaning of rites are more constellated than at other times and it follows that the collective consciousness must get this “energy of meaning” from the archetypal dominants active within the collective unconscious which stand in compensatory relationship to the collective consciousness. Likewise, on an individual level, it must be the psychic fact of an activated archetypal core which enables the association of a particular time period with the concept of one being in a particular “life stage.” This state of affairs must have adaptive advantage for both the individual and the collective and is most easily recognized as a temporary psychic equilibrium, an easing of the intrapsychic tension, that seems to hang in environment. It is an identification with this “mood in the air” that enables empathic statements such as, “everyone goes through that in puberty.”

It seems to me that from an individual’s viewpoint, the idea that one is in a particular “life stage” may only mean that there is a hook in the unconscious for an area or time of life that has too many unknowns for consciousness to handle. Also one should consider, as pointed out in von Franz’s “Time and Repose,” that time itself is a psychic rather than material fact with an archetypal dominant underlying it. Along these lines, our concept of time contains projective factors activated by the “unknowns” associated with the biological decay and death of all living things. Because the concept of “life stage” contains the element of time, it shares this aspect of time’s projective element and thus allows an individual the possibility of “making sense” of the mystery of life.

2. *To Describe a Psychic Formation Used as a Transition from Acting under an Emotion or Complex to Having the Ego Complex in Control of Consciousness.*

In a series of lectures on alchemy, von Franz explains that when one has been too emotional, that is, too caught up in the unconscious, a compensation is needed to restore control by the ego

complex. She describes this psychic formation as a *rite de sortie* in a maid who “sees ghosts and speaks graphically of her experiences”:

To her it is the absolute reality which she lives and she talks to ghosts for hours. It is a great secret into which one has first to be admitted and then she will speak of it with great emotion, but she never ends such a conversation to return to her household duties without saying: ‘Oh well, you know, ghosts do not exist, that is all rubbish.’ And then she gives a broad grin and goes back to work. That remark is simply a *rite de sortie*, for she cannot switch immediately from her experience with the ghosts to boiling potatoes; the *rite de sortie* is her release from something which has moved her deeply. Most people when they get too dramatic, if they have any sense of humor, do the same kind of thing (Von Franz, 1980a, p. 199, *my underline added for emphasis*).

3. To Help Overcome the Lethargy of Unconsciousness

Jung notes that modern humankind takes for granted the ability to direct consciousness toward a particular goal or aim, what we generally call “will power.” He points out both in “Symbols of Transformation” and in a later, 1928 paper, “On Psychic Energy,” that this is not the case among aboriginal peoples, calling their various ceremonies before major activities as *rites d’entrèe*, rites of entrance:

To primitive man the canalization of libido is so concrete a thing that he even feels fatigue from work as a state of being sucked dry by the daemon of the field. All major undertakings and efforts, such as tilling the soil, hunting, war, etc., are entered upon with ceremonies of magical analogy or with preparatory incantations which obviously have the psychological aim of canalizing libido into the necessary activity. In the buffalo-dances of the Taos Pueblo Indians the dancers represent both the hunter and the game. Through the excitement and pleasure of the dance the libido is channeled into the form of hunting activity. The pleasure required for this is produced by the rhythmic drumming and the stirring chants of the old men who direct the whole ceremony. ... Similar *rites d’entrèe* are reported of many primitive tribes (Jung, 1969b, par. 86).

In a similar manner, von Franz describes Jung’s “canalization of libido” as the arousing of *gana* and extends the term’s application to the efforts of a teacher to arouse the relative unconsciousness of children into directed action:

For the great battle with the primitive is to get him out of his lethargy. When they know they have to do it by themselves, they do it by singing and drumming, which is why there are always initiation rituals before every action, whether hunting or sewing the fields; there always has to be a sort of chant and drum ritual to arouse the *gana*, to excite the energy. The same is true of children and is one of the secrets of pedagogy. If there is a teacher among you I can tell you that that is the thing to do, for if you work up their *gana*, you can do anything with children; they are no lazy, they have the same trouble as a primitive does to get going. Once they are passionately involved they cannot stop (Von Franz, 1980b, pp. 86-87).

4. *To Restore the Psychic Equilibrium in a Collective*

In a paper describing the psychic situation in post-WWII Germany, Jung explains that after a society caught in the grip of evil actions is returned to its former state, that it is not enough for either the individual or the nation to say they were not responsible for what happened. He describes such an evil as a “collective psychic infection.” Therefore, Jung suggests that a collective evil on the scale of Nazi Germany (“After the Catastrophe,” requires a *rite de sortie* to activate a healing compensation from the collective unconscious:

When evil breaks at any point into the order of things, our whole circle of psychic protection is disrupted. Action inevitably calls up reaction, and, in the matter of destructiveness, this turns out to be just as bad as the crime, and possibly even worse, because the evil must be exterminated root and branch. In order to escape the contaminating touch of evil, we need a proper *rite de sortie*, a solemn admission of guilt by judge, hangman, and public, followed by an act of expiation (Jung, 1970a, par. 411).

5. *Before and after a Difficult Decision*

Jung notes that *semper ubique*, always and everywhere, when a difficult decision is called for, humankind has appealed to the divine for blessing. In “The Undiscovered Self,” he calls these actions, *rites d’entrèe et de sortie*:

For this reason he has always taken care that any difficult decision likely to have consequences for himself and other shall be rendered safe by suitable measures of a religious nature. Offerings are made to invisible powers, formidable blessings are pronounced, and all kinds of solemn rite are performed. Everywhere and at all times there have been *rites d’entrèe et de sortie* whose efficacy is impugned as magic and superstition by rationalists incapable of psychological insight. But magic has above all a psychological effect whose importance should not be underestimated. The performance of a magical action gives the person concerned a feeling of security which is absolutely essential for carrying out a decision, because a decision is inevitably somewhat one-sided and is therefore rightly felt to be a risk (Jung 1970b, par. 512).

II. Rite of Initiation

Initiation is the admission of a person into a distinct society. Here, I define society as a social grouping of people joined by some commonality of origin, interest, or purpose. In all societies there are strata based upon age, strength, skill, wealth, or knowledge. Exclusivity is a feature of some societies, particularly those that perceive themselves as custodians of a sphere of knowledge that is divine, difficult, or secret.

In almost every culture known to humankind there is record of distinct initiation rites. The following are my sense of the fundamental aspects of such initiation rites:

1. In general, prior to being initiated, one could be described as being a novice – a person who is new to what they are doing or who is received on a trial basis.
2. The period of trial or preparation can be called the novitiate.
3. Typically, a ceremony in which the novice is initiated marks the completion of the novitiate. The initiation ceremony signifies, as the word's root implies, that one is allowed to *inire* (= *in* - in + *ire* - go) to the meetings of the society as a full member with all the rights, responsibilities, and obligations that membership affords.

The Importance of Initiation as a Transformative Experience

It seems to me that unless one makes it a requirements that a transformation of psyche occurs after the completion of a psychological initiatory theme, then not only might one inadvertently leave the process incomplete, but very often the gained felt-sense of the experience is underdeveloped, unrealized, or even lost. It's my opinion that the aborted or ingenuine initiation experience is not much use to the patient. In a letter to Bernhard Baur-Celio, Jung said very much the same thing in the context of comparing his methods with the limited success possible through a Freudian analysis:

But one thing I will tell you: the exploration of the unconscious has in fact, and in truth discovered the age-old, timeless way of initiation. Freud's theory is an apotropaic attempt to block off and protect oneself from the perils of the long road; only a knight dares *la queste* and the *aventure*. Nothing is submerged forever – that is the terrifying discovery everyone makes who has opened that portal. But the primeval fear is so great that the world is grateful to Freud for having proved “scientifically” (what a bastard of science) that one has seen nothing behind it. Now it is not merely my credo but the greatest and most incisive experience of my life that this door, a highly inconspicuous side-door on an unsuspecting-looking and easily overlooked footpath – narrow and indistinct because only a few have set foot on it – leads to the secret of transformation and renewal (Jung, 1973, p. 141).

Jung points out the importance of bringing to the analytical field “the age-old, timeless way of initiation.” Thereby, he links the felt-sense of the experience of analysis with both the heroic journey and the transformation of initiation. I suggest that a therapist must make it a matter of utmost importance to distinguish not only between a *rite de sortie* and a rite of initiation but whether both themselves and the analysand are together feeling the sense and numinosity of the joint adventure.

What Is an Initiation Rite or Ritual?

Whereas in the sections, “rite of passage” and “rites of initiation,” I concentrated on the terms, “*sortie*” and “initiation” respectively, here my discussion is the meaning of “rite.” A rite is ceremony usually associated with a religion or, at the very least, with a solemn or important occasion. For the sake of this discussion, I do not include ceremonies such as high school

graduations or inaugural balls which might occur in the political sphere. I distinguish these “common” rites from “sacred” rites such as the Catholic Mass. Sacred rites can be respectfully investigated if one remembers that “psychology can only approach the subject from the phenomenological angle, for the realities of faith lie outside the realm of psychology” (Jung, 1969c, par. 296).

In addition, I am referring only to those sacred rites that are still capable of acting as symbols of transformation. Only when the archetypal dominants of these rites are constellated can these aid in the acquisition of a new adaptation, orientation, attitude, or vocation. These rites have symbolic features formed by the effects of an archetypal core on consciousness. Because an archetype never was and never will be conscious, such archetypal transformative images cannot be fully described nor can any core of meaning derived from them be thought of as definitive once and for all. A detailed look into rite and ritual is beyond this paper’s scope. In my opinion Jung provides an excellent treatment of the subject in “Psychology and Religion” and “Transformation Symbolism in the Mass” both of which may be found in “Psychology and Religion,” CW 11.

The Initiation of the Shaman and Its Relationship to the Therapist

It seems to me that this paper might benefit from the discussion of how our work corresponds to shaman’s initiation and vocation. In von Franz’s work on the life of Jung, “C.G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time,” she alludes to the connection between therapist and shaman with both requiring the individual experience of the unconscious to help effect healing:

The earliest origins of modern psychotherapy known to history lie in archaic shamanism and in the practices of the medicine men of primitive peoples. ... The figure of the shaman is characterized by individual experience of the world of spirits (which today we call the unconscious) and his main function is the healing of personal illnesses and disturbances in the life of the collective. He heals the sufferer by means of his own trance, he leads the dead into the realm of the shadows and serves as mediator between them and their gods; in a way he watches over their souls (Von Franz, 1988, p. 99).

If, as von Franz suggests, the shaman is considered as a type, perhaps even as a mythic personification sometimes constellated in the therapist, then perhaps like shaman, therapists must experience some of the features of the shamanic initiation rite:

In the course of the shamanic initiatory illness, the initiate succeeds in finding his own cure, which is precisely what the ordinary mentally ill person cannot do. ... The person who is able to heal himself is not the sick one but the one who can help others. For such a person is intact in his innermost core and possesses ego strength, two indispensable prerequisites for the profession of therapist. He undergoes his initiatory illness not out of weakness, but rather in order to become acquainted with all the ways of sickness, to know from his own experience what possession, depression, schizoid dissociation, and so on, mean (Von Franz, 1993c, pp. 277-278).

I think it important that here the therapist, like shaman, must be one who is able to find “his own cure.” It is my sense that like a shaman, a therapist who completes a genuine psychological initiatory experience develops a fuller bodied empathy which can then be brought to the dialectic. In a 1971 discussion of success and failure in analysis at the Fifth International Congress for Analytical Psychology in London, Adolf Guggenbühl-Craig reflected on the absolute need of the therapist, like the shaman, to incarnate healing:

The patient is confused, suffering, and lives in psychic chaos. He seeks a healer who, he believes, knows the labyrinths of the soul and of illness. ... The ways and means of the healing activity of the analyst must in part be understood symbolically. He constellates healing ... (Guggenbühl-Craig, 1974, p. 27).

Some Features of Shamanic Initiation

As done in previous sections, I will call attention to the correspondence between some of the feature of shamanic initiation and the development of the therapist. It seems to me that in addition to intellectual knowledge, a therapist must have the capacity to help others connect to the unconscious. Von Franz refers to therapy as a “vocation” rather than a profession or job to indicate such a necessity. As a vocation, the therapist must have a vital “connection to God or the gods, that is, to the powers that manifest in the psyche” similar to shaman’s “call from the gods or spirits to become a healer” (Von Franz, 1993c, p. 274).

Physical torture is a general feature of ancient initiation rituals. Likewise, shamanic initiation places great physical demands upon the novice and often a physical wounding takes places. Von Franz calls this shamanic wounding a reduction “to a skeleton.” She notes that the skeleton represents “the imperishable basic substance from which the renewed shaman can be made” (Von Franz, 1993c, p. 275). It is a common feature of individuation imagery to depict some type of bodily wounding, dismemberment, or revealing of the underlying skeleton structure. Taken symbolically, these images encourage a lowering of the center of the personality from ego toward the imperishable self.

Another key feature of shamanic initiation is the psychic illness, often depicted in myth as a journey to the underworld. Its therapeutic analogy perhaps relates to one’s journey in the unconscious as a whole or just its feminine-earth (chthonic) side. The shamanic journey is a highly numinous experience often accompanied with a “big” dream or vision relating to their vocation as a healer. While shamanic revelation relates to calling, I conceptualize this numinous “illness” experience of initiation for the non-shaman as relating to the needed disorientation the experience causes to ego. The de-construction of the previous ego standpoint allows for the potentiality of a new one, amounting to a transformation of psyche that is needed for the moment or next stage in life.

Relationship of Initiation with Individuation

Previously, in my section, “The Importance of Initiation as a Transformative Experience,” I noted the linkage Jung made between the “the felt-sense of the experience of analysis with both the heroic journey and the transformation of initiation,” which he called the “exploration of the unconscious.” Here, I attempt to broaden the idea that authentic initiation is an integral part of the individuation process. In *The Grail Legend*, Percival’s actions, his quest for the Grail may be viewed as an initiatory experience which can be compared in some aspects to the potential for healing in analysis, as an act of self-redemption. In this context, Emma Jung and Marie Louise von Franz discuss four different traditions of redemption (*numbers added to text for emphasis*):

[1.] In spite of the Christian religious character of most of the stories, redemption is not effected in a strictly Christian manner, i.e., not through faith in the Son of God, sacrificed for mankind. [2.] It does not happen in a pagan or primitive – one might also say, Oriental – way, i.e. as the result of an *enantiodromia*, where development and regression unfailingly flow into each other in an eternal rhythm and cycle, the one situation being thus almost transformed and redeemed by the other, its opposite. [3.] Nor does redemption occur after the manner of the Indian doctrine of salvation, according to which everything has to be recognized as nothing but illusion. [4.] Here it happens in a different way, not through the action of a god (though naturally it is *Deo concedente*, since whosoever accomplished it has to be destined thereto by God) and also not through nature, but solely by the unflinching exertions of a human being, Percival; just as neither more nor less than this can be brought to the *opus* of alchemy or to the realization of the self. It must, however, be remarked that Percival’s way to the Grail, the *opus* of alchemy and the realization of the self all have this in common with the Christian way of salvation: they all signify an *opus contra naturam*, i.e. a way, not of the least but of the greatest resistance. This is also the reason why the archetypal images that refer to the process of individuation or that accompany it are so often Christian symbols as well, for instance the cross (Jung, E. & Von Franz, 1998, pp. 293-294).

It is the author’s fourth way of redemption, the “exertion of a human being,” that I wish to identify as linked to the goal of individuation – in this passage called “the realization of self.” If one’s patient mix is at all similar to Jung’s “two-thirds of my patients are in the second half of life” (Jung, 1966a, para. 83) then clearly the challenge is to both understand and experience a way of a life that is committed to continued individuation and constellation of the archetype of individuation in the field of the dialectic.

It seems to me that oftentimes the struggle encapsulated within our patient’s initiatory themes is inseparable from the individuation process itself which, in my opinion, is never complete in one’s lifetime. Clearly one of the great therapeutic and life challenges is to understand, experience, and commit oneself to continued individuation and constellation of the archetype of individuation in the field of the dialectic. In this regard, I agree with Von Franz’s advice that therapists remain in vital connection to self through using their own active imagination in the course of their daily work to free themselves from the “ugly affects and morbid, perverse ideas” in the therapeutic field (Von Franz, 1993b, pp. 156-157).

The experience of authentic initiation always involves an enlargement of consciousness. Since this is mediated by contact with the collective unconscious there is always the risk of an inflation. I suggest that the process of initiation is one of highest energetic processes that humankind can experience. Thus, for both the shaman and non-shaman the initiatory experience of the collective unconscious has a high risk of identification with one of its personified figures of the unconscious. Alternatively, and less well recognized, there may be a temporary regression to personified figures of the personal unconscious through failure to recognize the counterpoint of the activation of shadow. It seems to me that activation of the personal shadow is the more predominant feature in life transitions associated with the time of rising adulthood. In addition, it seems relevant here to bring up two particular psychic hazards that have occurred in my therapy practice that may manifest in midlife life transitions especially when occurring in a somewhat individuated patient. Though one cannot generalize about a process so varied as initiation, to my way of thinking, both of the mechanisms delineated below seem to immediately relate to a failure on the subject's part to recognize, at least to some degree, the enormous energy realized in the process of initiation:

1. A “conjunctio oppositorum on the animal level”(Jung, E. & Von Franz, 1998, pp. 255-256). In this psychic state, as far as I understand it, the unconscious compensation to the conscious situation is split into two, at least temporarily united, pairs: the first is an animal and anima figure; and the second pair appears to have the potential to be sol and luna figures in a *hierosgamos*.
2. A “sol niger” activation occurring as synchronistic phenomena and / or as a somatic symptom.

In the first instance I suggest that we are speaking about a symbolic animal activation on the level of the power of a saurian. I'm reminded of Jung's statements in *Dream Analysis*:

... The crocodile, as well as the tortoise and any other cold-blooded animal, represent extremely archaic psychology of the cold-blooded thing in us. ... The saurian is still functioning in us, and one only needs to take away enough brain to bring it to the daylight. ... The cold-blooded relics are in a way uncanny powers, because they symbolize the fundamental factors of our instinctive life If constellated by circumstances, the saurian appears. ... So whenever life means business, when things are getting serious, you are likely to find a saurian on the way. Or when the vital contents are to appear from the unconscious, vital thoughts or impulses, you will dream of such animals. ... In other cases, such a monster is a help: the tremendous force or organized instincts comes up and pushes you over an obstacle which you would not believe possible to climb over by will-power or conscious decision. There the animal proves helpful (Jung, 1984, pp. 644-46).

While saurian symbolic imagery may be one representation of the activation of a “conjunctio oppositorum on the animal level,” there appears to me to be no theoretical reason why the animal representation in a particular patient case could not just as easily be a warm-blooded animal of

great power such as an elephant, bull, or horse. Also, in the case of both the saurian and bull there is the added correspondence of sun and animal symbol as Jung noted in *Symbols of Transformation*:

Amenophis IV achieved, by his reforms, a psychologically valuable work of interpretation. He united all the bull, ram, crocodile, and pile-dwelling gods into the sun-disc and made it clear that their various attributes were compatible with those of the sun (Jung, 1956, par. 148).

Jung also notes that in Nietzsche's poem, "The Beacon," the flame-snake images serve as symbols of libido and likewise:

... that the snake is to be taken not only in the phallic sense, but as an attribute of the sun's image (the Egyptian *uraeus*) and as a libido-symbol (Jung, 1956, par. 149).

In the second instance, the "sol niger" activation also reflects the tremendous activated energy load within the collective unconscious, perhaps with an element of simultaneous emotional activation. Jung's description of the symbolism of the sun is particularly helpful in characterizing this aspect:

... The sun is the father-god from whom all living things draw life; he is the fructifier and creator, the source of energy for our world. The discord into which the human soul has fallen can be harmoniously resolved through the sun as the natural object which knows no inner conflict. The sun is not only beneficial, but also destructive. ... It shines equally on the just and the unjust, and allows useful creatures to flourish as well as the harmful. Therefore the sun is perfectly suited to represent the visible God of this world, i.e. the creative power of our own soul, which we call libido, and whose nature it is to bring forth the useful and the harmful, the good and the bad. That this comparison is not just a matter of words can be seen from the teachings of the mystics: ... they find their own life-force, which they call the sun for a legitimate and, I would say, a physical reason, because our source of energy and life is actually the sun. Our physiological life, regarded as an energy process, is entirely solar (Jung, 1956, par. 176).

Jung's aptly describes the sun's dualistic role of fructifier / energizer and destroyer. Jung's amplification of the sun here fits well with my clinical experience of the "sol niger" representing a breakthrough into either the physiologic processes or synchronistically (relating to the close linkage between these phenomenon and matter).

PROPOSED INDICIA FOR INITIATION

1. Submission

It seems to me important to make a distinction between the journey of the hero and an initiatory theme, though there certainly are similarities. Deriving her concept from both fairy tales and the

treatment and psychology of children, von Franz writes this about the archetype of the hero:

The hero, therefore, is the restorer of a healthy, conscious situation. He is the one ego that restores to healthy, normal functioning of a situation in which all the egos of that tribe or nation are deviating from their instinctive, basic totality pattern. It can therefore be said that the hero is a archetypal figure which presents a model of an ego functioning in accord with the self. Produced by the unconscious psyche, it is a model to be looked at, it is demonstrating a rightly functioning ego, an ego that functions in accordance with the requirements of the self. That is why the hero seems, to a certain extent, to be the self: Because he serves as its instrument and completely expresses what the self wants to have happen. In a way, therefore, he is also the self, because he expresses or incarnates its healing tendencies. So the hero has this strange double character (Von Franz, 1996, pp. 62-63).

Von Franz posits the archetype of the hero as the pre-conscious factor in the formation of the ego, as she puts it, a “model of an ego functioning in accord with the self.” While the heroic journey may involve trials and physical injury or loss these ordeals appear to me to be distinct from the torture / psychic illness of an initiation. The hero’s journey appears to be in service of the individual ego functioning whereas the ritual aspect of the initiatory theme seems more to relate to a transition of life stage. Joseph Henderson, in “Ancient Myths and Modern Man,” in *Man and His Symbols* seems to build on this idea, noting the lack of submission of the hero to his ordeal. In fact, he points out this fact as a distinguishing mark of an initiatory theme:

There is one striking difference between the hero myth and the initiation rite. The typical hero figures exhaust their efforts in achieving the goal of their ambitions; in short they become successful even if immediately afterwards they are punished or killed for their hybris. In contrast to this, the novice for initiation is called upon to give up willful ambition and all desire and to submit to the ordeal. He must be willing to experience this trial without hope of success. In fact, he must be prepared to die; and though the token of his ordeal may be mild (a period of fasting, the knocking out of a tooth, or tattooing) or agonizing (the infliction of wounds of circumcision), the purpose remains always the same: to create the symbolic mood of rebirth (Henderson, 1964, p.124).

For Henderson, it appears that submission to the ordeal of initiation means that one must “give up willful ambition and all desire.” By this I assume that for him submission means that the novice must let go of two presumptions:

1. “If I do this (complete the initiation rite) I will gain such and such a result.”
2. “I want to be X (where X is either the new life stage or a vocation such as shaman).”

Submission is defined as a yielding to the power, control, or authority of another. Derived from the Latin *submissio* the word, submission, combines the verb *mittere* – to let go and *sub* – under which could be imaged as the “releasing of one’s grip or hold upon an object.” In this definition the emphasis is on the object such that one could say that one aspect of submission is a change

from having to not having a particular object. In regard to initiation there are two potential objects: that which one had before the initiation and that which one hopes to gain after its completion. Looking at this first from the reductive standpoint, there must be a letting go of childhood or one's previous vocation for another life stage or vocation. Yet these action cannot comprise the full meaning of authentic submission since one must also "let go" of the object one hopes to gain. Thus it appears that in true submission the individual must also let go of their judgment of what the goal is, leaving significant portions of it as an unknown.

One of the difficulties of such a course is that the nature of consciousness is directedness, the application of libido toward a goal. And while it is important to achieve in life, looking at initiation from a final standpoint, the goal is individuation. This is in agreement with Henderson's statement that it is the novice's submission that creates within the psyche the "symbolic mood of rebirth," a far more profound idea than the achievement of a particular material goal. So it seems to me that initiation has two goals, one causal and the other final. It is the goal looked at from the final standpoint that suggests that within humankind the origin of psychological initiation motifs are archetypes. From this final standpoint it follows that it is the concretization of these death / rebirth images that led to ritualization and/or ceremonialization of the initiation experience into rites and rituals. In support of this archetypal core for initiation is a 1954 letter Jung wrote to John Weir Perry where he pointed out that in schizophrenia, a condition marked by the failure of the ego to contain the archetypal contents of the unconscious, "... there is a marked tendency of the patient to get stuck in the archetypal material. In this case, the rebirth process is repeated time and again" (18).

From the idea of submission as a "change from having to not having" one might raise the possibility of considering that any of the generally experienced life events in Western life such as birth, attending school, graduation, work, marriage, owning a home, having children, the "empty nest," retiring, moving to an old-age home, and death, could indicate such an initiatory theme. Yet I suggest that the above list's presence or absence, either in personalistic or archetypal images, cannot in itself be construed as sufficient evidence for or against that imagery being conceived as initiatory in a particular patient. For example, while the image of birth in a dream may indicate that a profound transformation is taking place, the imagery alone is not enough to support such a conclusion. In clinical practice, a single event of imagery should always be formulated as a hypothesis, an "as if," which future images (dreams, etc.) will either affirm or negate ("The Practical Use of Dream-Analysis," CW 16:322). It is only through taking a careful and comprehensive look at clinical imagery over time that one can with some degree of confidence come to a felt-sense of what the unconscious is saying. Likewise, though it seems that initiatory motifs must include both life stage transition imagery and submission imagery, the formula submission = initiatory is also not necessarily a *sine qua non* of the patient being in the midst of an initiatory theme.

2. The Holding of the Tension Between the Individual and the Collective

The hypothesis for this indicia is that the completion of a psychologically genuine initiation must always include an acceptance of and the ability to hold the never-ending tension between the

varying claims made on the individual by and his or her collective and the demands that arise from one's own individuality. Jung defines individuality as "the peculiarity and singularity of the individual in every psychological respect." In this same definition he also notes that "everything that is not collective is individual" (*Psychological Types*, CW 6:756). I suggest that it will be useful to look at this issue from two perspectives: a point of view based upon the needs of the collective and a point of view of the individual.

Collective

If one wishes to view initiation from the standpoint of the collective the only way to do it is by making inferences from the collective's initiation rites. Through the lens of the collective, an initiation rite appears to mark out a particular time or situation in life identified as a stage. It seems reasonable to me to assume that when one sees an actual initiation rite in a compact society that, as a whole, the collective accepts the notion that the transition or stage in question requires such a rite. Practically speaking, this means that in the society there is little or no dissension concerning both the necessity and benefits of the particular initiation rite; it is *ipso facto* an accepted part of the collective consciousness. Thus, one aspect of the tension one must hold is that, in regard to the initiatory theme in question, the collective allows for no individuality; one must accept the collective position on it.

When there is such a collective position on a particular initiatory theme, the rite in question must have numinous features. At its lowest level, this means that the rite is accompanied by an oral tradition, the so-called tribal lore, that its origins are divine. Such a highly regarded tradition must have an unconscious collective counterpoint: an uncertainty regarding the rite's origin. This factor appears to me to be the psychological origin of the "staying" power behind the particular initiatory rite and is manifested as the "shroud of mystery" surrounding it. As a result only high status individuals such as elders, leaders, medicine men, or shaman know the entirety of the rite. The presence of the "shroud of mystery" also supports the notion that such rites are not invented but happen first from an *a priori* unconscious, archetypal origin.

In addition, from the standpoint of the collective, initiation rites enable exclusivity parameters providing the collective a way to prevent unsuitable individuals from attaining to a higher status level. On purely biological grounds, this has positive survival implications for the group as a whole. In addition, as noted by experts in this field, the rite itself often inculcates the novice with the accepted knowledge of the collective. The revealed knowledge is either peculiar to the life stage that is about to be entered into or general relating to the origin, history, or ethos of the group.

Individual

Through the lens of individual, or perhaps viewing it from an individual psychological perspective, it may feel that one is compelled by a force greater than oneself to undergo a particular initiation. In this case, the collective culture surrounding the initiatory theme has constellated the archetype in the unconscious of the novice. For some, unless the culture's

prohibitions, accepted knowledge, or ethics, activate an unconscious nidus in the individual there will be an inability to muster enough individual will power to complete the rite. This principle is in line with Jung's statement that "when a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness appears, which, like an instinctual drive, gains its way against all reason and will ..." ("The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," CW 9:1:99).

Another possibility, more unlikely in direct proportion to the general unconsciousness of the society in question, is that the individual has enough freely disposable energy to direct their will to accomplish the goal of completing the initiatory theme. The individual, unless psychologically aware, always attributes this to the self-judgment that their personal goals require the end result of the initiation – admission into the collective, the reaching of a particular stage, or the entrance into a vocation or calling.

I suggest that in either case, regardless of whether the individual is more unconscious of the prime movers of behavior or more conscious of them, the requirements of the collective concerning the initiation must be met. In the first case, there is little subjective feeling of individual freedom while in the second there is little subjective feeling of the power of collective compelling the action. In either case, there appears to be no escape from the psychic fact that in order to complete the initiation submission to the collective must take place. Furthermore, the privileges bestowed upon the individual after completion of initiation also confer certain obligations from which the individual is never free.

Synthesis

Thus, it seems clear to me that in regard to initiation, the individual way constantly pulls one to a position of psychic imbalance mediated by the position of undervaluing the collective and overvaluing the individual (the inflation of self-perceived superiority and /or uniqueness). The individual must stay aware of this psychic hazard and fully engage with the collective one is part of. Likewise, the collective way constantly pulls the individual into itself, into a position of psychic imbalance where one loses their individuality with its personal / materialistic and religious /spiritual goals.

3. Numinosity

The hypothesis of this indicia is that unless initiation is on some level a numinous experience it hasn't occurred. It is not enough that a particular initiatory theme has once been numinous in its historical practice, but the proposed indicia here is that it must be numinous to the individual who is navigating it. An example is the contemporary Jewish rite of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. In Judaism there is a distinction between the mark of the covenant (circumcision), that is, the designation of a child as being part of the Jewish people and the rite of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Bar or Bat Mitzvah theoretically confers rights (one is regarded as an adult) and obligations and appears to be an initiation rite into adulthood. Based upon my own experience and my investigation of the experience in Western culture, this doesn't necessarily seem to be the case.

So if Bar or Bat Mitzvah, which clearly involve both submission and the holding the tension between the individual path and the collective, are not always psychologically transformative, then it will perhaps be productive to explore, from a psychological standpoint, what this rite lacks. From observation, I suggest that this element is the lack of numinosity. I'm reminded of Jung's own experience from his first communion (19) which is also generally considered to be a religious rite of initiation. It appears to me that Jung's communion rite was not in itself an initiatory rite though its lack of numinosity made it a decisive experience.

All historical, literary, and anthropologic data suggest that initiation is a numinous experience for the novice. Therefore there appears to me to be no reason to dispute this as being required as one of the indicia for psychological initiation. This position does not hold that the non-numinous rites cannot have profound impact.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has explored some preliminary thoughts on possible psychological indicia of initiation which I hope will prove helpful in determining if initiation is constellated in a patient's unconscious. These include, but certainly are not limited to the motifs of submission, the tension between individual and collective, and numinosity. There are undoubtedly a large number of other clinical indicia for initiation that could be described. I make no claim nor desire to establish any type of general theory of initiation but rather, hope the reader will accept this paper with goodwill as being the product of my own peculiar temperament and the activation of the archetype within me.

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