

FOREWORD BY GAIL GODWIN

Knowing the
QUESTIONS
Living the
ANSWERS

A JUNGIAN GUIDE THROUGH THE PARADOXES OF PEACE,
CONFLICT AND LOVE THAT MARK A LIFETIME

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ISBN: 1453736778
ISBN-13: 9781453736777
eBook ISBN: 978-1-4392-8797-2

I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing, live your way into the answer.

– Rainer Maria Rilke

Author's Note

All stories, dialogues, and dreams in this book, except those I specifically designate as being my own, reflect material people have shared with me. To protect the privacy of those people, I have carefully altered anything that might disclose the identity of particular individuals or permit the identification of actual relationships or circumstances. Any similarity between the people and situations I have used for illustration and actual people or situations is unintended and purely coincidental.

8 (Excerpt)

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER

SEEING THROUGH

Earlier in this book, I said that when I was a child I thought adulthood began with completing school, getting married, and finding a job. Then it lasted until death. But now that I'm older, this naïve view has been washed away, and nothing about life's journey seems simple.

As the second half of our life advances, we always seem to be traveling on a threshold, whether we realize it or not. This threshold divides the outer world from the inner. Gradually, if we are reflective, we begin to see the world *through* our senses rather than *with* them.

As a result of our progression, things that formerly appeared to be literal, concrete parts of a single exterior domain are now seen as parts of a twofold reality that has an interior domain as well. These two domains are separate but interact with each other. We learn that the journey we are on involves both domains, that it is interior as well as exterior. Occasionally, and perhaps to our considerable surprise we find ourselves falling through the exterior surface and plunging into the interior; or some *other* from the interior breaks through the surface of the outer, as if rising up, and seizes us. Self-realization expands the pattern of our experience with our own nature as we move through life. Once we begin a conscious relationship with our anima or animus, it becomes a guide that slowly and inexorably changes our journey across the surface to a spiral-patterned journey inward, toward the center.

As this awareness dawns on us, we begin to sense that all the elements of life are actually *within* us. The contents of our life are here, inside of us, before we live them and they are here after we live them. The same is true of life in general; its contents lie within us, though we seldom realize it. The child, the youth, the man, the woman, the old ones—everything that makes up a human being lies in our interior. But we do not have access to the entirety of our inner nature through our rational mind, through the

one-eyed perspective. Access to our inner totality requires a second eye to be looking inward as the other eye looks outward. And the inward eye sees only through symbols. Because science, the dominant myth of our age, has thrust us all into a region of material, concrete reality, we need these symbols to connect our conscious self to the reality of our nature, the unconscious. Only in this manner we can see that we have a personal pattern to live that is embedded in the larger pattern of life. The symbols that connect these larger patterns to our everyday awareness flow from a source within us that is much older than our conscious mind, reaching us by way of our dreams and imagination.

The unconscious is not a simple dark abyss, for it is founded upon form, as all of nature is—elemental forms, the archetypes of the collective unconscious. The dominating, overarching form, the master blueprint in this structure is called the “Self” in Jungian psychology and is expressed symbolically to the linear eye as a mandala. “Mandala” is a Sanskrit word meaning a “circle formed about the fourfold nature of the square.” Mandalas are depicted universally in religious art and are often subjects for contemplation or meditation. These meditations are intended to lead meditators progressively into a sense of unity and wholeness as they focus on the “center” and how their personal circle is nested within the universal circle of life.

The connecting symbol, like the anima and animus (which is often in symbolic form), acts as an additional bridge to our center. Our inner teacher combines the theater of our sleep with scenarios of our imagination to produce conduits for a symbolic stream that both informs and supports us. The following example illustrates how one analysand saved her emotional life by escaping into a land of fantasies and how her dream-maker then helped her back into the fullness of life.

She had, to all appearances, a healthy, happy, and productive life. But this life that appeared so satisfactory was not her own in terms of the way she experienced herself. In order to survive a dreadful childhood, she learned to split her personality in two. To please her disturbed parents, she became a model child, a perfect student; she was obedient to the role they envisioned for her and terrified of their negative responses. She countered this submission by grounding herself in an inner world of fantasies. In that world, life became real for her.

By finding that island world within herself, she was able to be a survivor in an emotionally shipwrecked family. This split, however, continued well into the afternoon of her life. Her greatest happiness, her own secret, was to take long walks or drives alone, during which she had the chance to live vividly the fictional existence she had created in

her imagination. The focus of our healing work together was for her to come into an experience of herself as a “person” in real life. As she was re-crossing this threshold, she had the following dream:

I was standing on the balcony of an ancient building, looking out over gardens as far as I could see. They were shaped in many concentric circles. In the very center was a square made of plain earth. A man was leading a horse around in a circle within this square, exercising it. He was leading it clockwise, to the right. I knew the horse was mine. Slowly I walked through the gardens to the center. I was afraid he wouldn't let me have my horse. He looked at me, smiled, and said, “We've been waiting for you.”

In the dream's circles and its square, we can see the formation of a mandala, the ancient archetypal symbol used as a focus of meditation to bring the scattered aspects of life together. The connecting symbol of the man—depicting a masculine aspect of her personality—is a link to her center, to her instinctual nature, which is now ready to carry her into life. Their symbolic movement from left to right, from unconscious to consciousness, emphasizes that her inner self is unifying her personality and moving her toward conscious living. It comes as no surprise that she awakened feeling comforted and secure, and that she had a sense of inner support for her life.

The symbolism of this dream dramatically depicts the urge of our interior life toward wholeness. Stories like this—of people and their dreams—leave me sitting in awe, convinced that some deep, unseen force from our center wants to reach through our lacerated selves, into our lost worlds, and heal us. It's a force bringing a great message of love.

Unthinking, one-eyed perspectives on these kinds of symbolic interpretations may lead us to fear that they are not “scientific.” Yet Einstein saw through the physical world with his imagination, his fantasies or “thought experiments,” and Pauli, another physicist, solved some of his scientific problems through dreams. Most of us know of similar occurrences and may have even had similar experiences ourselves. But we often find that trusting their genuineness is difficult because we have lost the ability to validate them. The truth, however, is that we must build our confidence in our own imagination, or else the information that comes into our life from unconventional or non-ordinary sources stagnates and dies. If that happens, the diminishment of our creativity, vitality, and personality soon follows. As I observed in chapter 6, ancient man knew this fact instinctively. Before he learned to write, he illustrated archetypal forms standing behind

the concrete forms he painted on cave walls during religious ceremonies.

Earlier, I also noted that while we are developing, we project parts of ourselves (usually parts we do not like or those from which we are disassociated) out into the world. Generally they stick on people who contain a little bit of the truth of what we have projected on them. Recognizing and reclaiming these aspects—parts of ourselves we have so naively tossed away—is a primary means for developing our total personality and a wider range of consciousness.

But if we fail to participate in life actively and personally, we will not have anyone close enough to us to awaken our projections. Then developing consciousness becomes a difficult proposition. Or in some cases, if others are simply too far away, our projections will turn bizarre, and we may find ourselves lost in a dark cosmos, unable to substantiate our reality. But if we are participating in life, then reflection on these matters can lead us to discover our projected patterns and to bring them home, where they can take their place in our conscious personality. Active participation in the world accompanied by contemplation of what we experience end up in a dance that fuels our conscious development. Often a little creative madness helps us keep both eyes open during this evolution.

These processes demonstrate that in order for us truly to have access to who we are, we must be actively engaged in relationships on many levels. Through our projections and our understanding of them, those other people will arouse within us an awareness of our authenticity and eventually evoke the whole person within us. As individuating eros leads us forth, we will progressively find that we cannot awaken that whole person without somehow getting in touch with the potential wholeness in others.

The expedition to the center compels a deeper journey into our humanness—and it isn't necessarily an easy one. An animal lives automatically, but the nature of Homo-duplex is not so simple. It requires that we consciously reflect and make choices on our journey inward, though the exact character of that task seems continually to elude us. Discovering the meaning of being human truly requires a careful, intentional journey into our center. Such is our nature though that, at least on the surface, we seem to be anxious and controlling even while desiring freedom. But once we are past the surface realms of our humanity, we find ourselves more curious, more attentively open to the unexpected, and more aware of the importance of being with others as well as the importance of being alone.

We do not have to travel far on our inward spiral to realize how distant from our true nature we have been. The closer we get to our center, the clearer our perception of

reality becomes and we begin to recognize the interconnectedness of life—not life as an abstraction, but life as it is being lived through us. A feeling can develop, perhaps at first only a suspicion, that the underlying notions of the great religions may have some validity. To be deeply human is to be divine and to be divine is to *love*. Love has perennially been the binding force in life, recognized in the talks of the ages as well as in the lonely religious cells of the medieval alchemists as they searched for the symbolic gold in human nature.

Love puts us in the mood to risk everything, to give everything, and to dare an unforeseeable future. Desire, as an aspect of love, begins with instincts. As we mature and differentiate psychologically, our desire may evolve into the more spiritual aspects of consciousness and be reflected in aesthetic and cultural interests. Our desire becomes the foundation for passion, and passion means we care more for someone or something else than we do for ourselves. Energy flows through us and we are newly ignited and invigorated.

Desire, individuating eros, moves us along the archetypal path of transformation, supplying both the call to—and the energy that compels us toward—the future. Jung observed that nature itself is transformation and that it strives for union, for “the wedding feast followed by death and rebirth.” Love eternally leads us through and contains us in this unfolding course of life, in both our inner and outer experiences.

Maturing into this stage of evolution gives us the impression of a reality beyond that of our youthful perspective. This impression comes to us slowly, through patience, and only as we develop greater consciousness. As our awareness expands, our relationships to the things in our life change and we enter a new phase of personal reality—seeing, hearing, and experiencing life in a new way. Joy joins despair in the cycle of our existence and the search (or need) for happiness recedes below the horizon behind us, for happiness is a morning concern. Seeking happiness as our only goal in the second half of life is regressive and results in our avoiding depth, avoiding the experience of joy and meaning.

In this new inner maturity, the child, the youth, the man, the woman, the old ones, and others are alive within us and we can be in relationship with them in our interior, allowing ourselves to experience life from any different perspectives.

Self-realization in the individuation process, in Jung’s view, involves carrying on our biological identity—the task of *creation*—through the creation of our conscious personality. The passageway to greater consciousness leads through the various levels of life’s bewildering paradoxes. As we slowly learn to appreciate the deeper complexities of

life and reality, new dimensions emerge. For instance, we may be moved to take a look at the old image of Mars and discover that he is more than a simple god of war and conflict. He is a spirit of life and nature, vegetation as well, giving his name to the spring month of rebirth, March. Mars is also the lover of Venus, goddess of eros and life. His zodiac house is Taurus, which is associated with the month of plenty, and we are face-to-face with the duality of war and life, conflict, death, and new life.

The idea that the ancients were smarter than we have generally thought seems to be catching on. It makes a lot of sense today to look at the primitives and at the emphasis they usually gave to the second birth, the birth into self-responsible adulthood, during their initiation ceremonies. This ritual, like most of their rituals, provides us with a concrete example of the archetypal pattern of transformation and its manifestation at a major turning point in life. These turning points were unconsciously enacted in primitive cultures. In practice, however, the ritual was of immense help to the participants in terms of their learning that life was a matter of accepting their fate, carrying it through, and learning from it.

As this transformation takes place in us today, we must develop a personal context that helps us assimilate the events and experiences of our lives and thereby discover and become ever more fully ourselves. Such a new outlook may allow us to stop fighting life, to quit trying to “take control,” and to develop a fresh attitude of participation toward life’s adventures. The burden of fate is then carried with grace, losing its weighty aspect, and fate is seen as a pattern to be fulfilled.

For most of us, noontime is a threshold requiring a reversal of emphasis, from the development of form to the loosening of form, from looking out to looking in. We must remember, however, that developing form is a necessary task and those who have not done it—due to having been wounded or to other difficult circumstances—must find a way to complete it. Otherwise, they will sink deeper into their noontime distress—their midlife struggles. The woman who had the dream about the man leading the horse found, through her analysis, that before she could begin a journey to the center, she must come into the living world in her fully developed personality, not merely in a social identity.

This threshold of beginning, the late afternoon journey toward the center, may feel like a reversal. Or it may feel like we are arriving at and passing a horizon we have come upon unexpectedly. In any case, we ultimately realize we have reached a critical point. Where we thought we had come to know ourselves, we now realize we are struggling bit by bit to understand more and more about something that cannot be completely

understood. Slowly we realize that we are struggling for a greater and more comprehensive version of ourselves for which we have no blueprint. The deeper we seek, though we do not fully understand what we are seeking or even why, the more we begin to realize that *something has found us*.