

## **Jung's Contributions to Education**

*Lecture given at the Conference "Portals to Psyche: Jungian Trends in the Northwest"*

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It is with great pleasure that I take up the task of reflecting on Jung's contributions to education. Part of this pleasure is due to the fact that I believe that Jung's contributions are radical in nature and are just the antidote we need to respond to the historical conditions in which we find ourselves. I have been a teacher in alternative schools for almost 30 years, beginning with 3 years teaching preschool, a year in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, two years of high school social studies, then 3 years teaching 5-9<sup>th</sup> grade at an international school in Japan. The remaining 17 years have been teaching adults at a BA completion program in liberal studies at Antioch University in Seattle. I have succeeded in my goal of understanding education as a life long process and I am proud to call myself an educator.

The word education comes from the root word, *educare*, "to lead forth." As we shall see, everything depends on what it is that we think is being led forth. Traditionally, from a collective point of view, education is the process of imparting knowledge or skill. It is seen as a means whereby the knowledge of the past is transmitted to the next generation, as well as a way to generate new knowledge, most especially technical knowledge that has instrumental value. Institutions that subscribe to this traditional view of education receive the bulk of the money granted by the political structures of society and thereby defines one of the major spiritual commitments of our culture.

To inquire into Jung' views on education, I was reminded of his writings in the Collected Works. There, in the volume on The Development of Personality, are several essays on child development, analytical psychology and education. These essays make a key distinction between collective education and individual education, though most of the emphasis is on the psychic conflicts of the child and how to work with them. I do not hear these essays referenced much in the educational literature and their influence on the field of education as a whole has been minimal. Of much greater significance has been Jung's theory of psychological types, first developed as a critical tool by which to assess the validity of psychological theories, but then expanded to be a tool for the differentiation of the consciousness of the individual. In Jung's theory of psychological types we see the precursor of all forms of learning style inventories, tools that have been so useful in helping educators to understand something about the individual learning strengths and weaknesses of their students and themselves. There is much more that could be said about this. But useful as these ideas have been, they have not led to a movement to establish schools based on Jungian ideas, such as the way in which Waldorf schools are clearly an extension of the ideas of Rudolf Steiner.

To get to the truly radical educational ideas of Carl Jung, at a time when it seems that only radical ideas are adequate responses to the historical moment, we can take a hint by looking more directly at Jung's own education. As with all things Jungian, there is an outer and an inner aspect to it. From an outer perspective, Jung was highly educated in the formal Germanic tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which classical culture was taught alongside the virtues of the scientific method. But from an inner perspective, as we learn in his autobiography, Jung was taught by a mysterious set of figures, most prominently a being called Philemon who Jung describes as an inner guru who taught him the basic

principles of analytical psychology. It was Philemon who told Jung that he “treated thoughts as if he generated them himself.” From him, Jung learned that “there is something in me which can say things that I do not know and do not intend” (MDR, p. 183). It was Philemon who taught Jung the idea of the objective psyche. If we take Jung at his word, and Philemon at his, we are clearly treading on different ground, educationally speaking. It certainly gives new meaning to the injunction, “Know Thyself”, which should perhaps be rendered “Know Thyselfes!” It was Jung’s insistence on the psychic reality of these inner beings that has generated such intense opposition to Jungian ideas on the part of the collective. He has been labeled a quack, a charlatan, and a mystic. In the late 1970’s I was not allowed to write a doctoral dissertation on Jung because he was too weird. This kind of intense and vitriolic opposition can only mean one thing: Jung’s ideas challenge the established order of things.

But what is at stake here and what idea will serve to crack open the fundamental issue? I believe it is this: we live out our imagination of what constitutes being human. In other words, our imagination of what a human being is, limits and conditions what a human being can become. Take, for example, the No Child Left Behind Initiative. When we look at how this initiative plays out in practice, we see schools that are eliminating PE, recess and the Arts in order to teach to the test, so that they can raise their scores, so that they can receive the money that will allow the school to function better, which is defined as obtaining higher test scores. Implied in this way of doing things is an image of the human being as a bundle of desires, a unit in the economic order whose purpose is to consume, work and die. This imagination of what a human being is, colors and conditions what those human beings can become, namely, consumers in a capitalist economy. Any human images that challenge or contradict the collective image will be labeled as crazy or, at best, “unpatriotic”. What we need to heal our culture is what James Hillman calls “a therapy of ideas” understood here as “a therapy of human images.”

So what is Jung’s philosophical anthropology, his image of the human, and how might it influence how we think about education? Now this is a very rich topic, worthy of a much longer talk than this one, but let me take just three ideas of Jung’s that enlarge our imagination of what it means to be human.

First, Jung’s is a depth psychology, which implies that we are divided against ourselves. Outside of the realm of consciousness is an unconscious which has a highly developed structure, and which seems to have a mind of its own. The language of the unconscious is different than that of the ego. It is non-linear and symbolic and thus appears to be irrational from the point of view of the ego. It contains our secret desires, the shadow sides of ourselves, the split off complexes that bedevil our best intentions. If we think of the personality as containing both an ego and an unconscious, then the goal of education is to educate the whole personality. What is being “led forth” in the meaning of *educare*, is our own unique self, the individual we were always meant to be. Jung makes clear that the enemy of this process is the collective mind. In his book, The Undiscovered Self, written in 1957 at the time when the fears of totalitarianism and nuclear annihilation were at a fevered pitch, Jung asserted that we should not depend upon mass movements for the good, nor on idealistic appeals to reason. Rather we should depend upon a recognition of how good and evil runs through every human heart and how it is that understanding the nature of human nature is a matter of human survival.

A second idea that contributes to Jung’s philosophical anthropology is his assertion that the psyche is a self-regulating process that is intentional. Now this is an

astonishing idea. It suggests that the psyche as a whole, conscious and unconscious, is teleological. It pursues aims and intentions that are beyond the comprehension of the ego. It is as if there is an "other" within our own psyche that knows just what we need to achieve optimum health and well being. This "other" reveals itself in and through unconscious processes such as dreams, visions, body symptoms, illnesses, etc. It is giving us operating instructions on how to transform. But acting on these instructions is not an easy thing to do since the compensatory hints given by the intentional psyche often run counter to the aims of the waking ego. It is for this reason that Jung states that an experience with this larger sense of the psyche is "always a defeat for the ego." (CW 14; 778) Moving beyond our habitual ego attitudes usually involves a painful crisis of "letting go", but it always opens up a wider perspective that represents a major advancement in personal growth and a new relationship with the divine.

The corresponding dynamic at the collective level is even more profound. Perhaps Jung states it best when he says:

*Our personal psychology is just a thin skin, a ripple on the ocean of collective psychology. The powerful factor, the factor which changes our whole life, which changes the surface of our known world, which makes history, is collective psychology, and collective psychology moves according to laws entirely different from those of our consciousness. The archetypes are the great decisive forces, they bring about the real events, and not our personal reasoning and practical intellect. .... The archetypal images decide the fate of man. (CW 18; 371)*

What Jung is saying here is that from the point of view of the psyche, the transpersonal patterns of images that he calls archetypes are not located within human beings. Rather, human beings are located in and subject to the intentions of the archetypes. Hence, when the archetypal images that have governed the collective body of a culture begin to shift and transform, so moves the fate of humanity. It is my contention that the twentieth century, a lethal century that has left over 100 million people dead in massive epidemics of violence, is proof that we are witnessing the transformation of archetypal dominants in our culture.

Well, if we are still on Jung's bandwagon after these incredible ideas, that is, if we are still taking Jung seriously, then there is a third element of Jung's philosophical anthropology worth considering. It is that there is no psychological growth without pain. All life feeds on death, and the psychic life is no exception. The painful crisis of "letting go" to which I referred earlier, a crisis that opens us again to new health and vitality, is even more painful when seen from the point of view of the collective. The trajectory of our planetary crisis suggests that we are in for some painful transformation in the future and we need an education that is adequate to the task of guiding us through this time. To what super-ordinate value must people be educated in order to give up their internal combustion engines or for a government to sign the Kyoto global climate agreement? How do we educate people to accept and bear the sacrifice that is coming?

Given this brief outline of Jung's image of the human, I would like to turn to a description of how my teaching has been affected by Jung's ideas. I will do so by telling you about three dream experiences.

First, I recall a dream voice that announced itself to me many years ago. What it had to say has become my teaching mantra. I awoke one fine Easter morning with a dream of Mother Theresa addressing me. She said, "Randy, the point is not to save people, the point is to create the conditions for the possibility of grace." As a teacher, I

cannot tell you what relief this statement has brought me. It tells me that it is not about me, despite the fact that, as a helping professional, my personality is my instrument. It tells me that the best part of what is going on in the classroom is out of my control. What is in my control is how to set things up so that this meta-level of learning is more likely to take place. But I cannot make it come, I can only invite it in. That meta-level, however, is more than an idea. It is a kind of ‘being’, an “other” that is present and which it is my job to tend. It is “the spirit of the class” that is constellated because of the unique set of individual souls that are present. Tending this spirit makes me both a facilitator and a co-learner with my students, moving me away from what Paolo Freire calls “banking education” and into what he calls an “education for freedom.” Furthermore, invoking something unseen like “grace” reminds me that the classroom is a sacred place, and teaching is a sacred activity. Clifford Mayes, who is a teacher educator working on an archetypal pedagogy, speaks of the classroom as a “sacred precinct” and notes that the typical teacher training emphasis on the existential/political aspects of teaching is insufficient because it fails to address the transpersonal domain. Traditional teacher training assumes a secular, Western, objectivist, materialist philosophical anthropology. Jung’s image of the human being, on the other hand, allows us to see education as a sacred act and our students as sacred beings.

A second voice, some inner Philemon of my own, whispered to me as I was awaking from a dream incubation at a local church. The voice simply said, “Education of the soul, by the soul.” Now here is a paradox to match the paradox of the human soul. I have been wondering about it for years, and the only way it makes sense is to validate Jung’s view that the inner world is a world of imaginal substance with an intentionality of its own. There is a daimonic reality that is guiding our lives and shaping our vocation. Jung makes it clear: we are all called. This is one of our crucial task as educators, to assist our students in “knowing themselves” well enough to be able to discern this calling, their vocation. I have often said to my adult liberal arts students that the discernment and enactment of vocation is the single most responsible action we can take on behalf of the planet. How is this so? Because Jung’s image of the human being does not locate soul only inside of us, but rather soul is all around us, existing in the trees and the streams and the air we breath in the form of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world. When we discover and enact our vocation, our work will be precisely matched to the needs of the world soul. Such an imagination of the human soul gives our work in the world cosmological value. In Jung's view, we live in an animated cosmos that is calling us into our destiny and which needs us every bit as much as we need her. In the mutual embrace of the human and the cosmos, a divine love is created that has immense healing power.

The deep connection between personal and planetary healing was revealed to me one night back in 1988, when in the midst of a particularly vapid presidential campaign pitting Michael Dukakis against George Bush, Sr., I had the following dream:

*It starts with a conference dinner at the United Nations. The dignitaries are at a table on the stage, while the rest of us are at dinner tables on the main floor. As a kind of necessary diversion, the coordinators of the event decide to do a quick honoring of the sacrifice of the UN soldiers who have died in the line of duty. A camera pauses to show a snapshot of a young man in his UN uniform, surrounded by his family. Then it pulls back to show another soldier, a woman, surrounded by her loved ones. The camera continues to pull back, showing more and more pictures of soldiers who have sacrificed their lives to the cause of world peace. The conference room is filling with tears. The organizers*

*realize that things are getting out of control, emotions are too high. Finally, in the midst of this atmosphere of profound grief, one well-respected UN leader stands up and gives a stirring speech. He says, "We are all, myself included, held in bondage by forces which we must begin to identify and break free of, that we must give form to and consume. The time is now for huge international shifts of consciousness." There is a final line to the speech, a real zinger that I can't make out. And then the lights go out and the room is plunged into darkness. When the lights come back on, there is confetti flying from the ceilings, a band is playing and champagne flows. It is as if nothing had happened. The people at my table look at each other with puzzled expressions. "Did you just experience what I experienced?" I tell them that I think this whole thing is part of some larger lesson plan*

I have been trying to learn that larger lesson plan for some years now. What I know is true is this: we are all, myself included, held in bondage by forces that obscure the truth and make it difficult to cut through the spin and the hype of our culture. We are all in need of an education that will allow us to see through this miasma without losing our souls in the process. Critical thinking, the province of traditional education, is necessary but not sufficient. Many post-Jungian scholars, foremost among them Robert Sardello, are creating new techniques that privilege the heart as an organ of perception, bringing a balance to the one-sidedness of the intellect. Developing the thinking capacities of the heart is a crucial task for humanity at this time. Consider the words of James Hillman when he accepted the Medal of the Presidency of the Italian Republic in 2001:

*"A great consensus of beings, regardless of their deliberative capacities and linguistic abilities, sense in varying styles and degrees that this planet, their home and the home of their ancestors from the beginning, is now so threatened that its viability, and therefore theirs, may not endure into another century.*

*What role has the discipline of psychology in the widest sense played in the progress of this hastening deterioration and what part might it play in slowing this progress, or better, altering its course? I think this is the only important question for psychology today."*

I would ask the same of education: what role has it played in the progress of this hastening deterioration and what role might it play in its alteration? This is the only truly important question for education today. If we take these words seriously and admit that an apocalypse is taking place, not a literal apocalypse, as the fundamentalists would have you believe, but an apocalypse in the sense of shifting archetypal realities, a changing of the gods, then what should we be teaching these days?

I have addressed this question in an essay entitled "Education for Apocalypse: A Depth Psychological Approach". There I make the claim that to be liberally educated is to know your calling in the context of an analysis of the world's need. In addition to traditional forms of knowledge, I speak of the need for every citizen to know something about the nature of ritual process and how to make ceremony for themselves and others. Ritual is too important to be left to an elite and must be democratized. Every citizen needs to know something about the nature of dreams and how to develop a philosophy of human-divine interactions capable of accounting for their revelatory power. Every citizen needs to be educated into the anatomy, physiology and energetics of the human body, to know how trauma is held in living tissue and how it can be released. Every

citizen needs to know nature awareness skills that allow us to bring imagination to our understanding of nature, including the capacity to perceive the inner subjectivity of the outer world, the *anima mundi* herself. Every citizen needs to see themselves as artists capable of creating new life out of unconscious impulses. I advocate the creation of small ad hoc communities for the express purpose of telling dreams, reading personal poems, showing amateur art, and telling stories of initiation. What do you think every citizen should know in these times?

In the end, I agree with Thomas Berry who points out that under normal historical conditions we turn for guidance to our cultural traditions; but when cultural traditions are insufficiently imaginative, they are themselves obstacles to healing transformation. In such cases we must turn to our "genetic coding" for guidance, the spontaneously creative and mysterious impulses of the world unconscious that originate in the same instincts through which the earth came into being. Jung offers us an image of the human that allows us to perceive this impulse and gives us hope that, with a deep education into what really matters, this experiment that we call human consciousness will not perish from the earth.

## Jung's Contributions to Education

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### Quotes:

1. "We live out our imagination of what constitutes being human. In other words, our imagination of what a human being is, limits and conditions what a human being can become." --R. Morris
2. "The archetypal images decide the fate of man." --Jung
3. "The discernment and enactment of vocation is the single most responsible action we can take on behalf of the planet." --R. Morris
4. "The point is not to save people. The point is to create the conditions for the possibility of grace." -- Mother Theresa in a dream
5. "Education of the soul, by the soul." -- a dream voice
6. "We are all, myself included, held in bondage by forces which we must begin to identify and break free of, that we must give form to and consume. The time is now for huge international shifts of consciousness." -- UN leader in a dream
7. "A great consensus of beings, regardless of their deliberative capacities and linguistic abilities, sense in varying styles and degrees that this planet, their home and the home of their ancestors from the beginning, is now so threatened that its viability, and therefore theirs, may not endure into another century. What role has the discipline of psychology (and education) in the widest sense played in the progress of this hastening deterioration and what part might it play in slowing this progress, or better, altering its course? I think this is the only important question for psychology (and education) today." -- James Hillman (parentheses mine)
8. "To be liberally educated is to know your calling in the context of an analysis of the world's need." --R. Morris
9. (We need) "new techniques that privilege the heart as an organ of perception, bringing a balance to the one-sidedness of the intellect." --R. Morris
10. In such cases we must turn to our "genetic coding" for guidance, the spontaneously creative and mysterious impulses of the world unconscious that originate in the same instincts through which the earth came into being. Jung offers us an image of the human that allows us to perceive this impulse and gives us hope that, with a deep education into what really matters, this experiment that we call human consciousness will not perish from the earth. --R. Morris
11. "What do you think every citizen should know in these times?" -- R. Morris

### References:

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5. Mayes, Clifford, "Foundations of an Archetypal Pedagogy," in Psychological Perspectives 46 (2003).
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7. Sardello, Robert, Love and the World, (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Press), 2001.

