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THE ROLE OF CREATIVE FUNCTION IN ANALYTICAL THERAPY;
TRANSCENDENT FUNCTION ACTIVATION

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Abstract
The therapy is to enable revive the creative, symbolic function in the psychic life of the patient; the creative transformation in the psyche emerges a result of a high complex process termed by J.C.G Jung “transcendent function”. Is it possible for there to be some conscious changes without there being a change on the inside and through our connection to the innermost psyche? Is the symbol formation the core of the creative transformation in the psyche? We want to find proves that transcendent function is acting as the creative principle in the psyche; it connects the opposed parts, as ego-consciousness and unconscious, and make possible for the ego to produce vivid creative symbols. Comparison the Jungian literature data with our own experience and case study in order to grasp the point of transformation when the real healing involves the conscious participation in the psyche dynamics. Creative resolution of life problems implies the Ego-development to a point where it is no more pushed by personal complexes. The Ego-consciousness liberate itself from the domination of the complexes inner play, is flexible and rich enough to confront the unconscious materials, mainly archetypal Self and so follow the development of the inner destiny. The value of some special symbols emerging as inner guides.

Keywords: Creative symbol; Transcendent function; Ego-Self axis;

1. INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF CREATIVE FUNCTION IN ANALYTICAL THERAPY

In Jungian analysis, the ultimate aim of the therapy is to enable revive the creative, symbolic function in the psychic life of the patient; the creative transformation in the psyche emerges a result of a high complex process termed by J.C.G Jung “transcendent function”.

In Jung’s experience and conception, the transcendent function is a psychological transformative process. It “arises from the union of conscious and unconscious contents” (par. 131), which occurs through “the collaboration of conscious and unconscious data” (par. 167). “A product is created which is influenced by both the conscious and unconscious, which embodies the striving of the unconscious for light and the striving of conscious for substance” (Jung, 1916/1958, par. 168).

It is a complex function of the psyche, and the ability to stay in the tensions of opposed tendencies/contents is a result of strength of the Ego. In creative process, poets and artists while confronting the turmoil of strange visions and emotions (frequently archetypal emotions) confront and intervene with an Ego naturally capable to find and express meanings. In a fragmented psyche (like in psychotic conditions) or a feeble Ego, there is a functional connection between consciousness and unconscious, mainly the archetypal activated contents but there is an inability to make meaning.

In Jungian’s view, the act of trans-formation is a conscious participation to a greater work, which is implicit in Nature and in Humans, embedded in the very matrix of our psychic formation, the Self. By consciously opening yourself to the inside dynamic, we become creative and in a good confluence with life and Natural order.

Transformation is a natural way of psychic evolution, and can involve a centering as a purposeful gathering together of oneself. While studying Jung and Jungians, the questions arose: how we can inter-act in the process or how can we recognize the process in the products of our patients and in ourselves through the therapeutic relations/counter-transferences. Throughout Jung’s collected works, we find that the transformation of the libido and transformation occurs by working with the transcendent function through symbols.

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The transcendent function makes creativity and transformation possible through the discovery of meaning. The transcendent function enables us to encompass the wholeness of our teleological destiny and find our relationship to oneself and to the world.

2. TRANSFORMATION IN THE PSYCHIC STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

Is it possible for there to be some conscious changes without there being a change on the inside and through our connection to the innermost psyche?

Sometimes the conscious mind understands a compensatory dream in a meaningful manner and so the mind realizes something new, perhaps a deep need for relaxation, or the importance of love and self-love. But this realization does not impede the anxiety, or the reappearance of compulsive behaviors and distraction of the ego will. In many other therapeutic schools (apart from Jungian therapy) the focus is on ego enhancement. A certain symptom can be “understood” and “cured”, but nevertheless, in time, another symptom appears, because the root of the problem has not been solved. The broken connection of the ego from the whole Self (which can be caused by cutting off from the shadow, the anima or those parts may take over) was not worked so that the ego can be massively projected in an obsessive way, or it can be possessed by certain conflicts or complexes.

In the Prefatory Note for the second edition of “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious” Jung recorded in the “little book” his entire experience (Having written it in October 1936, this experience included his “Confrontation with the unconscious”). He wrote: “It is twenty-eight years of psychological and psychiatric experience that I am trying to sum up here” (Jung, 1934/1953, p. 122). It is a fundamental book in which Jung writes clear cut statements concerning therapy and the development of personality. Individuation “...aims at a living co-operation of all factors” (idem. par. 268). And regarding the self-regulating processes of the psyche, Jung states: “the unconscious processes that compensate the conscious ego contain all those elements that are necessary for the self-regulation of the psyche as a whole” (idem par. 275).

In the same paragraph referring to the personal versus collective unconscious, he stresses the value of connecting with objective world of archetypal meanings: “...the more we become conscious of ourselves through self-knowledge, and act accordingly, the more the layer of the personal unconscious that is superimposed on the collective unconscious will be diminished. In this way there arises a consciousness which is no longer imprisoned in the petty, oversensitive, personal world of the ego, but participates freely in the wider world of objective interests”.

In the following passages, Jung describes a larger wisdom of ego-consciousness, as the aim of psychic transformation: “This widened consciousness is no longer that touchy, egotistical bundle of personal wishes, fears, hopes, and ambitions which always has to be compensated or corrected by unconscious counter-tendencies: instead it is a function of relationship to the world of objects, bringing the individual in the absolute, binding, and indissoluble communion with the world at large” (idem. par. 275).

The way to this flexible ability to hold the tensions of the opposites in ego-consciousness is a “continual conscious realization of unconscious fantasies, together with active participation in the fantastic events, has, as I have witnessed in a very large number of cases, the effect firstly of extending the conscious horizon by the inclusion of numerous unconscious contents: secondly of gradually diminishing the dominant influence of unconscious; and thirdly of bringing about a change of personality” (idem. par. 358). And here Jung uses the word change for a deep transformation in which the potential is brought to life: “This change of personality is naturally not an alteration of the original hereditary disposition, but rather a transformation of the general attitude.”

Jung was very interested in the unconscious and in the archetypes but he was always stressing the situation and the relationships of the conscious and the unconscious, the ego - self access, the strength of the ego, the amount of the union and separateness of the conscious and unconscious, and the regularity of the compensation function in our diagnosis of the personality, “I have called this change, which is the aim of our analysis of the unconscious, the transcendent function” (idem par. 360). And Jung continues considering “this remarkable capacity of the human soul for change, expressed in the transcendent function” as the principal object of alchemical philosophy “expressed in terms of alchemical symbolism” (idem. par. 360).

Jung refers to a “profound transformation of personality” coming later in personal development as “organic parts of a long series of transformations which have their goal the attainment of the mid-point of the personality” (Jung, 1928/1953, par.364). In Jung’s words: “This would be the point of a new equilibrium, a new centering of the total personality, a virtual Centre which, on account of its focal position between conscious and unconscious, ensures for the personality a new and more solid foundation”. This can come about for a patient through a vision, or a fantasy of intensely visual character, “perceived by intense concentration on the
background of consciousness”, a technique that he elsewhere called active imagination (Jung, 1928/1953, par. 366).

The transformative function in the human psyche in Jung’s is not a simple process, it is a most complex one as it involves a conscious endeavor to come in terms with the unconscious: “How does one come to terms in practice with the unconscious? ... or the unconscious is not a thing or that; it is the Unknown as it immediately affects us” (Jung, 1960, CW 8, p. 76).

Contemporary analysts like Miller (2010), Samuels, Shorter, and Plaut (1986) place the transcendent function at the heart of Jung’s psychology, saying that he “considered the transcendent function to be the most significant factor in psychological process”. They have in view the core function of the living symbol as a mediator: “The function which mediates opposites. Expressing itself by the way of the symbol, it facilitates a transition from one psychological attitude or condition to another” (quote from Miller, 2010, pp. 186-187)

Explaining the social and the individual symbol as a mediatory product including thesis and antithesis in which both play their part, we come again to the core of transcendent function as quoted earlier, the living symbol: “I have called this process in its totality the transcendent function... The raw material shaped by thesis and antithesis, and in the shaping of which the opposites are united, is the living symbol” (Jung, 1921/1971 par 828).

3. THE SYMBOL AS A CREATIVE SOLUTION OF THE NEW CENTER IN THE PSYCHE

From the perspective of the psyche’s functions dynamics and movement towards integration, Jung argued that the central role of the symbol is in bringing together conscious and unconscious material, as the symbol is partly conscious and partly unconscious. In Psychological Types Jung describes the symbol as an extremely complex product: “The symbol is always a product of an extremely complex nature, since data from every psychic function have gone into its making. It is, therefore, neither rational nor irrational (qq.v.). It certainly has a side that accords with reason, but it has another side that does not; for it is composed not only of rational but also of irrational data supplied by pure inner and outer perception” (Jung, C.W. 6, 1921/1971, par. 823). For the living symbol to emerge, it is needed of a developed enough mind.

The most theoretical of Jung’s disciples, von Franz, reinforces once again in her writings that symbol is integral to the functioning of the transcendent function: “Differentiated and primitive, conscious and unconscious are united in the symbol, as well as all other possible psychic opposites... Jung called the unknown activity of the unconscious which produces real, life-giving symbols the transcendent function because this process facilitates a transition from one attitude to another” (von Franz,1980, p. 83).

When describing the structure and the dynamics of functions, von Franz referred to the statement Jung made regarding the process of assimilating the unconscious by the ego-consciousness, (see Jung CW7, par 365); that “there is no fourth in the upper layer” (von Franz, 1993, p. 52). That is, in the tension between Ego (the field of naïve ego-consciousness with three functions) and latent Self (preconscious totality with preformed four functions), Ego has no possibility to integrate the inferior function. The only possibility is to realize the actualized Self, to transform so that a third middle field may appear “where the Ego-Self relationship no longer functions autonomously but is only instrumental” (idem. p. 53).

Von Franz comments about the creation of the vivid symbol: “there is no longer four functions because one transmits one’s feeling of life into an inner center, and the four functions remain only instruments which can be used at will, taking them up and putting them down again....at that moment the problem of functions is no longer relevant; they have become mere instruments of a consciousness which is no longer rooted in them or in a driven way active with the functions, but has its basis of operation in another dimension, a dimension which can only be created by the world of imagination. That is why Jung calls this the transcendent function. Fantasizing this inner ground is what he calls the transcendent function; it creates the united symbols” (von Franz, idem, pp. 142-143).

Concerning the individuation, it seems important to remember the importance Jung confers to the “Transcendental function”: it is the function connecting the conscious with the unconscious and allows for a change in the structure of the psyche. The complexes are no more capable to interfere with the conscience, as the substance have been worked out, and the Ego-consciousness is able to relate with the deeper meaning of the life.
4. THE ACTIVATION IN THE TRANSFERENCE - COUNTER-TRANSFERENCE OF THE CREATIVE FUNCTION

In “The Transcendent Function” Jung devotes a section on the relationship between the analyst and the analysand referring to the transference. He states that the analyst “mediates the transcendent function for the patient, i.e., helps him to bring conscious and unconscious together and so arrive at a new attitude” (Jung, CW8 par. 146). The role of the therapist is to mediate for his patient the possibility of transcendent function. “In this function of the analyst lies one of the important meanings of transference” (idem, par. 146). In Jung’s terms, in transference the patient attaches himself to the one who is able to offer him a change in his approach to life. Interpreted in a constructive manner, transference helps to introduce the transcendent function by asking “To what purpose does it happen?” (idem par. 530) what is the sense and meaning: “…Constructive treatment of the unconscious, that is, the question of meaning and purpose, paves the way for the patient’s insight into that process which I call the transcendent function” (idem par 147).

The ultimate aim of therapy is that the patient activates in himself the transcendent function, i.e. the flexibility of thinking that would allow, even in difficult moments of one’s life, one to connect the conscious with the unconscious, right and left hemisphere of the brain left as the neurosciences say. From this moment onwards, through a continuous process of distillation and elaboration of affective contents that are emerging, i.e. the non-verbal non-symbolic non-removed, will be able to find the way to express itself through a non-verbal symbolic and a verbal symbolic. In terms of modern psychoanalysis, some patients are caught in a state of development considered pre-symbolic and preverbal. Therefore, it is a matter of the “non-verbal non-symbolic” or of the non-removed unconscious (Bucci, W., 2000), that could have representational capacities, i.e. either in a “non-verbal symbolic” or in a “verbal symbolic” only if such representational potentials could be activated through a good primary relation and thus a good and rich subsequent relation with the world. These patients have difficulties to trust the analytical relation, are not able to elaborate symbolically the innermost experiences/trauma in primary relations.

Jung emphasis the several ways in which the expression of the contents can emerge and be confronted and integrated in the sphere of the total personality: “Often it is necessary to clarify a vague content by giving a visible form. This can be done by drawing, painting, or modeling. Often hands know how to solve a riddle which the intellect has wrestled in vain” (idem par.180).

I have in mind the images from Rosarium which Jung commented on that concern the alchemical transformation and the phases of intense & subtle resonances which occur in the transference & counter-transference: the fermentatio, mundificatio and sublimation. This are moments when the symbolic images enter and there is a transformation of the drama. Nevertheless, we have to remember that the ability of the therapist, as Jung says, depends on his personality. The analyst’s personality is not only the result of the mingling between his genetic potentiality and his affective life experiences, but also the result of his analytical process. Through the analyst’s analytical work, the analyst is enriched and has made pathways and connections between conscious-unconscious and the “transcendental function” has been activated.

It is important to ask if the therapist through the “transcendental function” is able to transform the “unconscious infection”, the contagion that pervades him with empathy and the sharing of suffering. The patient needs this kind of compassion and connection which perhaps is being experienced for the first time happens in the patient’s life. The inner guide can appear.

5. CASE STUDY: ALAIN AND THE SPIRITUAL BIRD-GUIDE

The transcendent function performs this spiritual union between a guide-bird and the inner undeveloped masculinity in the case of a male patient, Alain, 35. He was a substitute child for his mother, for the first child, a girl who dies as a new born baby. From his infancy on, he was treated by his depressive mother like a girl, dressed alike and called by girl’s nicknames.

The dream awaked him with a powerful sense of an important meaning or, in his terms: “When I was awaking I knew I have dreamt my destiny! Even if I do not know what to do with it, how should I use it…” “I’ve dreamt that three thinks are going to happen. I knew they will happen…The third is the only one I remember; it was about something that was going to happen to me – physical but spiritual also. I was seeing myself on a bed, and in the same time I was the watching the scene. I knew I have to swallow a bird; and after that swallowing I will see (sic!) 50,000 times better! …Without opening the door, the bird appears in a fraction of a second…I am seeing the fly, she came directly to the mouth of me / the man lying on the bed. As the bird entered in the same moment the bird dissolved herself in thousands of minuscule pieces diffused in the whole body. It was nothing violent… I was seeing with the middle of the eye the whole world reflected in a quick movement. I see!
Everything is ending immediately” and the dream continued with Alain having in his hands "the ticket for the travel of my life".

Alain associated the bird with the flying. “I had the feeling that I am able to fly by the force of that three thinks...when flying I am thinking of God...the solitude of a bird and the flock”.

I myself have my own association with Jonathan Livingstone Gull story. In the dream Alain becomes energized by the bird dissipating in his cells, and he rediscovered his life destiny (ticket); animus appears as a personified figure and takes the ultimate form, the spirit of a bird, the God.

The bird re-appears in psychic symbolic dynamics when it is the moment of the real conjunction: The Rejoicing or Springing or Sublimation of the Soul, and it revels the double face in the last Rosarium image. In that image discussed by Jung in connection with the process of transference-counter-transference in therapy (C. G. Jung, CW 16, An account of the Transference phenomena based on the illustrations to the “Rosarium Philosopharum”). Here a winged hermaphrodite stands upon a Moon and holds in its right hand a chalice or cup within which there are three snakes, and in the left hand a serpent… To the right side is a crow, to the left side there is a Moon Tree with 13 Moon flowers. Sun is inside, as the alchemical container is the Moon and the dove from the beginning (spirit) becomes a crow, as devil is necessary for the process to continue.

Alain touches and grounds the dream in the reality of his body; and he uses the little bird to make steps, to move in his life in whatever direction he wants.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In analytical healing it is needed a good capacity from the side of the therapist to activate his transcendent function, when finding himself immerged in the primary magma of the patient, or in other words in the shared neural unconscious space; that allows the therapist to activate in himself that empathy that enables the patient to grasp a different kind of relation, never experienced before.

In the view of the complex process of transcendent function, maybe that the courage to be oneself is the trial the Self puts on each of us with the life we incarnate in? “As the process of coming intermesh with the counter-position has a total character, nothing is excluded. Everything takes part in the discussion, even if only fragments become conscious. Consciousness is continually widened through the confrontation with previously unconscious contents... But where necessary premises exist the transcendent function not only forms a valuable addition to psychotherapeutic treatment, but gives the patient the inestimable advantage of assisting the analyst in his own resources, and of breaking a dependence which is often felt as humiliating. It is a way of attaining liberation by one’s efforts and of finding the courage to be oneself” (Jung, 1960, CW 8. par. 193).

7. REFERENCES