CONNECTED AND SEPARATE:
A DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF VIEW
OF FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIP HEALING

by
GLENN FRANCIS

A clinical case study
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

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This study reflects the journey of a coaching client who found more equilibrium between her autonomous and relational aspects. “Differentiation of self” reflects this balance of our social and solitary nature, and our capacity to be both feeling and thoughtful beings. Healing wounds of narcissism with her mother and of emotional absence with her father improved her relationships and opened new possibilities in work and intimacy.

Biological Perspectives reveal neurobiological findings paralleling self-differentiation, and narcissistic and emotionally-remote parenting. Cognitive/Behavioral Perspectives suggest changing thoughts and beliefs to relieve suffering. A Psychodynamic lens explores relationship with self and other, illuminating individuation, attachment, and adverse parenting in connection with healthy and unhealthy development. Views from Sociocultural, Coaching, and inner inquiry vantage points affirm possibilities beyond the normative. Imaginal approaches turn toward the passionate nature of the soul, asking for inclusivity, inviting transformation, and engaging depth reflection about the healing of obstacles to healthy development
The year’s coaching journey included events such as the death of the client’s father and the loss of her job. Concurrently she discovered inherent qualities such as being able to disidentify from experience, access affective and somatic truthfulness in herself, and endorse her psychological multiplicity. These, together with healing recognition of the negative impact on her of parental narcissism and emotional absence opened more possibilities of an expanded life.

In unfolding the coaching, learnings emphasize the practical power of aspects of an imaginal approach – particularly disidentification, and inhabiting somatic and affective experience – to bring about change. A discussion of the healing value of trustworthy facilitative relationship leads into an exploration of the depth psychological structures of both client and facilitator, and their constellation.

Reflecting on the significance of these learnings reveals transformation in the client, as well as in the work of the coach and writer of this study. The theme of “love heals” reflects the threading together of the psychological and the religious that is essential to Imaginal Psychology. Bringing heartful kindness as well as psychological depth to the situations addressed by self-differentiation illuminates the client’s substantial healing, and the transformative growth of others accompanying her.
I feel grateful to the following people:

The presence of Premsiri Lewin in my life made this case study possible, as well as fostering the larger, living process of which it is a part. My gratitude to her has the quality for me of being completely here and now, and from beyond time and space. Ritu Esbjorn has been a steady compass of love, wisdom, grounded counsel, and friendship over several decades now, and endlessly encouraged me. Richard Shapiro’s support has been invaluable, in ways both personal and professional. David Maxwell’s companionship on a journey parallel to my own has been inspiring, and a reminder of verities easily forgotten. The care, guidance, encouragement, and clear reflection of David Mars has been crucially important to the completion of this project. My colleagues Mary McBride, Gary Buck, Diane Harnish, and Rachel Gardner have each in their own way waved a faraway lantern from miles further along the tunnel to remind me that they could see the exit, the ultimate eventuation. Geneen Roth's trust in my capacity to support and nurture retreat participants opened a door, and a possibility I will always be grateful for.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Coaching and Clinical Topic

The topic of this coaching case study is *differentiation of self.*\(^1\) Emerging from within Murray Bowen’s family systems theory this term encompasses the level of development of our intimately-linked capacities for both individuality and for intimacy. Included in the meaning of the term is the possibility of being able to balance cerebral and emotional functioning within oneself and within any system of relationships.

Differentiation of self may be considered under the larger umbrella concept of *individuation.* Introduced into psychology by Carl Jung this term denotes “the process by which a person becomes a psychological ‘individual’, that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’.\(^2\) Although Jung’s later remarks about individuation imply a wider meaning of the term, the sense of a crystallized and separate individual predominates.\(^3\) This flavor is different than that offered by self-differentiation, which equally emphasizes togetherness as well as individuality.\(^4\) Nevertheless, the term individuation continues to be used in the coaching and psychological literature and appears in this case study.\(^5\)

Critics of the concept of individuation remark on its failure to honor context and the reality that we are inherently social beings.\(^6\) By contrast, systems thinking, the interwoven backdrop of Bowen’s theory and widespread in coaching includes this context.\(^7\) Bowen proposed that families function like systems, with principles of operation rooted in nature.\(^8\) The concept of differentiation of self (subsequently here
simply differentiation or self-differentiation) with its acknowledgment of the interdependency of individuality and intimacy partakes of these qualities of systemic naturalness.  

One of Bowen’s major principles, that of personal responsibility stands out for its embodiment of a sense of context as well as echoing tenets of indigenous spirituality and resonating with remarks of Jung. Bowen assumed that he himself was intrinsic to any family difficulty and the disharmony could be corrected by him modifying his part in creating the problem. Elsewhere Bowen poignantly questions how to become different – to change as an individual – without “being against” one’s family, in other words without sacrificing relationships for the sake of maintaining individuality.

This reference to the possibility of emotional distancing finds expression in Bowen theory as the concept of cutoff. This describes how people remove themselves physically or emotionally from relationships in order to handle their unresolved emotional attachment to their parents. Peter Titelman remarks this is one of a number of concepts linked together in Bowen theory to describe family functioning as an “emotional unit or system.” Another relevant concept is triangulation, defined by Richard Charles as the bringing in by two family members of a third person to dissolve tension, anxiety or stress existing between them. This sometimes more informally denotes offspring being caught in the middle between parents. Anxiety is defined by Michael Kerr and Bowen as the response to the perception of a threat.

Active contemporary research and theorizing involving concepts from Bowen theory continues, in both coaching and psychology. For example, Cheryl Buehler and her colleagues were able to demonstrate that when early adolescents become triangulated
in their parents’ disputes this poses a risk for their socio-emotional development as adolescence continues. Joanne Wright reflects on the recursive relationship between self-soothing, self-differentiation and intrapsychic and relational processes. Elizabeth Skowron and her colleagues have developed an inventory measuring differentiation of self, and have studied this variable in relationship to adolescent risk behavior, child maltreatment risk, interpersonal and psychological well-being in young adulthood, and college stress and adjustment, amongst other variables.

Summarizing this literature in 2009, Skowron and her colleagues remark that both theory and research suggest that the success of an individual in “developing emotional and interpersonal relational competence in young adulthood is tied to their family-of-origin experiences around emotional regulation, support, connection, and opportunities for autonomy.” These researchers say that lower differentiation of self is associated over time with more psychological and interpersonal problems. In an article entitled “Advances in Coaching” Monica McGoldrick and Betty Carter write that many young adults leave home as children, without working out mature adult relationships with parents.

Kerr and Bowen remark that the possibility of one person increasing their basic level of differentiation can have significant positive consequences for the whole family: “Family psychotherapy in which only one family member participates can produce an excellent result.” The clinical technology used in applying Bowen theory is often called “coaching.” This conjunction of coaching and the clinical well reflects the focus of this case study. Daniel Papero says that in this method of working in the family system the clinician functions more like a consultant and teacher than a therapist. Coaching, he
remarks often involves only one member of a family. Progress comes from the efforts made by that person toward differentiation of self.

In the next chapter a number of different perspectives and approaches serve as lenses examining aspects of the extensive research and theory literature pertinent to self-differentiation. These reviews include the consequences of certain forms of parenting associated with narcissism, an exaggerated emphasis on self-image at the expense of the core affective self. Biological, Cognitive/Behavioral, Psychodynamic, Sociocultural, and Coaching Perspectives are followed by an exploration of Imaginal Approaches, each section contributing enrichment to the comprehensive holding of the subject-client.

A Biological Perspective offers parallels between neuroscience findings and aspects of self-differentiation. Thus, Paul MacLean’s triune brain hypothesis is only a short step from the possibility that the intellectual, feeling, and emotional functioning distinguished in self-differentiation are each attributable to a distinct brain center. Louis Cozolino and Daniel Siegel reflect that the qualities of differentiation and integration inherent in neural systems may be reflected in individual and family functioning. Parental caregiving having potentially negative neurological consequence for self-formation is noted, for example by David Wallin. Allan Schore proposes that the neurological development of self-regulation involves both intra-individual and relational components, much as we might expect from macroscopic psychological observation of the forces of individuality and togetherness, as Bowen called them.

Several of the aspects illuminated by the Biological Perspective are apparent in the life of the subject of this study, Amy Hall (pseudonym). Her predominant intellectual functioning made difficult the integration of her emotions and her understanding. In the
course of our coaching work together, nourishing care from me and its corresponding evocation in her seemed to bring about Amy’s expanding maturation. Enhanced differentiation, integration, and a more stable sense of an emotionally-regulated self were apparent when our sessions were complete. These changes doubtless reflect – causally, concomitantly, or consequently – alterations in neurological functioning.

Cognitive/Behavioral Perspectives are offered by Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck, and Donald Meichenbaum, amongst others. In these, altered thinking, restructured beliefs, and increased levels of internal attention to cognitive events bring about desired changes in behavior as well as alterations in the person’s relationship to their mind and feelings. In the work of Jeffrey Young and Frank Dattilio beliefs and behavior are seen as combining in complex patterns known as schemata. These can be changed, including within the context of family functioning, where they have been hypothesized to govern all family interaction: narcissistic personality disorders seem to incorporate complex distorted schemata. Stephen Hayes suggests mindfulness, sometimes known as “attentional control” is interwoven with these processes of changing cognition and behavior. A number of contemporary cognitive/behavioral approaches to therapeutic change incorporate mindfulness. Somatically- and Buddhist-oriented mindfulness approaches are considered, such as that of Tara Brach, incorporating kindness and loving presence into distinctly psychological work.

Amy brought into our sessions functioning identifiable in the above light. She struggled in relationship to her emotional life and the content of her own mind. Repetitious, fought-against thoughts had laid down in her a bedrock of belief – about herself, about her parents, and about her place in the world of relationships, love, and
vocation. Mindfulness-practice coaching helped her gain a sense of a compass bearing
from which orientation to make changes. This gave Amy a welcome experience of relief:
our sessions had woven into them this and other flavors of Cognitive/Behavioral
approaches, amongst them Marsha Linehan’s integrative Dialectical Behavior Therapy.

“To make the unconscious conscious” was Sigmund Freud’s early aphoristic
rendering of the aim of psychoanalysis, reflected in the Psychodynamic Perspectives
section. This aim persists, albeit rendered in a context more interpersonally supportive
and inclusive of relationship, such as in the work of Margaret Mahler, William Fairbairn,
Donald Winnicott, Heinz Kohut, and others.28 Psychodynamic Perspectives reflect
sources such as John Bowlby and Peter Blos studying separation in development and the
individuation process from the mother. Explorations of comfortably autonomous yet-
relational identity appear in this section, including dynamics developmentally fostering
authenticity or a false self. A brief review of the enormous volume of research and
theorizing about the biologically-driven attachment system is included. While a
significant and increasing number of explicitly psychodynamic applications to coaching
also exist, none of them so far pertain directly to self-differentiation.29

“Poor quality of relationships” – with herself, with her parents, and with her
thoughts and feelings characterized the difficulties Amy met in her inner work, family
life, and in our coaching. As Amy became more conscious emotionally of her own
personal history she became more true to herself in her relationships. Owning her longing
for relational connection and sensing the gathered screeds of emotional pain around this
yearning helped propel Amy closer to a more authentic sense of herself.
Our relative blindness regarding the position we see from is explored in the Sociocultural Perspective. When gender is included in explorations of autonomy, separateness-connectedness, individuation, and identification with mother and with father it is evident that the more traditional male-centric perspective is just one perspective amongst many. Frances Gray, Jessica Benjamin, Luce Irigaray, and others have emphasized this reality. A focus on relationships and how this may overwhelm the psyche of mother and daughter, as well as considering differently gendered constructions of relationality appears in the work of Marilyn Charles, Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, and Jean Baker Miller. The most inescapable element of Amy’s humanness is her gender.

Personal Coaching perspectives have an orientation toward positive possibility, for example in the work of Jeffrey Auerbach and James Flaherty, and thereby resonated with some of Amy’s more light-preferring aspects. Conjoining coaching with a quality of open curiosity in attending to experience – embodied in the practice of inquiry taught by A. H. Almass – provided a neutral counterbalance in our work together, one that Amy embraced with her dispassionately-witnessing scientist qualities.

The rich complexity of all the above perspectives is amplified when Imaginal Approaches are considered. Here the tapestry of individuation is woven with highlights that reflect and engage the passionate and diverse nature of the soul, for example in the work of Aftab Omer and James Hillman. Edward Edinger’s vision of the individuation process is sketched, with particular attention to the ways this can be distorted by unconscious parenting – and how it can be healed. Betsy Cohen’s work on the damaging effects of mother envy is complemented by reflections from Clarissa Pinkola Estes,
Marion Woodman, Maureen Murdoch, and Linda Schierse Leonard about authenticity, perfectionism, and the consequences of an emotionally absent father. In this section too are offered sketches from Imaginal Psychology of concepts, principles, and practices forming part of the overarching descriptive backdrop to the coaching sessions studied subsequently.

Amy had previously been in Jungian psychotherapy, an expression of one of the roots of an Imaginal Approach. Aspects of the work described by Imaginal Psychology became obvious as our coaching sessions progressed, providing Amy with tools, practices, and an orientation to herself that began to lead her out of her suffering. She found a foothold in her pain and confusion from which she could bear witness to herself. Body-centered exploration of her experience, as described by James Kepner helped her to widen her sense of her experience beyond the habitual mental. Normalizing her psychological multiplicity made more space for Amy to have kindness for herself and to see that what had formerly been opposed in her was only waiting for her welcome in order to begin transmutation into longed-for strengths.

Amy’s presenting complaint was that she could not stop thinking obsessively about her parents. My perception, both at the time and in retrospective musing about her was that this difficulty was a fragment of a larger adult-developmental domain, one that could be broadly encompassed under the heading of “individuation.”

Differentiation of self as a focus within the psychological literature addressing individuation was suggested to me by my Advisor at Meridian University. Grateful for the limitation of the potentially too-large scope of individuation as the topic of my study, I still had only passing acquaintanceship with the concept of self-differentiation, and was
not at first aware of its relevance: could the concept be sufficiently complexly-textured to provide a backdrop for this case study?

As I studied the background literature the relevance of the term expanded. Amy initially expressed feeling just as unwilling to relinquish her relationship with her parents as she was opposed to foregoing development of her own autonomy. These apparently opposing dynamics in Amy made sense when I saw them newly as potentially high levels of differentiation of self. Self-differentiation also welcomes the outcroppings in the psychological literature where the lonely heroic autonomy of the larger culture is informed by subjectivities appealing for complexity, relationality, and the inclusion of shadowed minorities of being.

My Advisor’s subsequent suggestion that I additionally explore parental narcissism and emotionally-absent fathering not only vividly magnified the fine grain of Amy's process, but illuminated significant complementary aspects of my own interiority.

**Personal Exploration of the Subject/Topic Choice**

In 2001 I entered the Meridian University Doctoral program in Clinical Psychology. At my first class there was creation of a ritual honoring family and ancestors, acknowledging our birth roots. I was shocked by how familiar and welcome this seemed to everybody else in the class – and how alien it was to me.

In my earliest memories of a schism of trust with my mother I am seven or eight years old. From then on until her death when I was 24, through my subsequent life in India and America with a heart-connected spiritual teacher in whose company I endeavored to comprehend love and existence for the first time, I unknowingly –
helplessly and unconsciously – walled myself away from the deepest familial love I had ever known. I did not know at the time that I had cut off my feelings, nor why.

My parents’ divorce when I was 10 tore me away from any possibility of finding depth relationship with my father and when I saw him again at 15 we began a new quasi-adult relationship in which my son-as-child self was entirely buried. In the intervening teenage years I constituted myself as someone able to be indifferently by myself, making of this a kind of spiritually-glorified aloneness. Nevertheless, I was lonely.

Working with Amy was an opening of the eyes of my heart in respect of issues of familial intimacy and autonomy. I could see – and in the deep retrospective examination of this case study can perceive with clear focus – that Amy was struggling to find and to be herself, without this implying cutting herself off from those she loved. At the start of our work together, this was just beginning to dawn on me as my own situation, five years beyond that initial class at Meridian University.

The seemingly-inherent humbling of this process contains a kind of easeful, relaxed and grounded well-being, which I attribute to a sense of no longer holding up and therefore having no further to fall.\textsuperscript{32} I am writing this as 2011 progresses, deepeningly aware that although differentiation of self is a single concept within a no-longer-popular theory it continues to succinctly illuminate in me essential territory of balancing intimacy and autonomy in my life. I also feel grateful for the further revelation provided me by closely examining the effect on Amy of her mother's narcissism and her father's emotional absence. As will become apparent later, this was also my childhood situation.
Framework of the Coaching

The context in which I met Amy was as part of my work as long-term faculty at twice-yearly Reflections and Revelations retreats created and led by Geneen Roth. Over a ten-year period at the retreats I taught meditation to the whole group of approximately 100 students and facilitated process work in small breakout groups of five to 30 participants, in addition to being part of the creation and delivery of presented material. These retreats took place at Mount Madonna Retreat Center in Watsonville, California; this venue provided support adjunct to the staff of the retreat itself, consisting of Roth, myself, a retreat manager and one or two additional teachers.

Outside of the formal five-day long retreat periods I worked with a number of retreat students as a personal coach, providing them ongoing support within the larger framework of the Path of Eating, as we sometimes informally called it. Amy spoke to me after a small group I facilitated in which she had participated. She explicitly acknowledged then that her particular struggles were not with eating issues but that she had come to the retreat because of Roth’s writings about her relationship with her father. She asked me if I would work with her personally once the retreat was over, specifically to address her difficulties in relationship with her parents. I said yes.

Subsequently, I conducted face-to-face coaching sessions with Amy at my office in San Rafael approximately weekly for the following year, from November 2006 to December 2007. During that time Amy was quite often away traveling for work; this case study focuses on the 28 sessions completed in that year. My last contact with Amy was approximately 3 months ago: intermittent and occasional coaching sessions, sometimes with gaps of six months between them have been the norm since the more intensive work
studied here. Many of these later sessions were only informally supervised by a colleague and were not supervised by Roth: this study focuses on those sessions with Roth’s active supervision.

Adjunct to our conversations, Amy’s best resource was her journal, which she frequently used to beneficial effect. While I sometimes suggested particular materials to read, Amy rarely acted on my suggestions, preferring synchronistic encounters with timely tomes in bookstores.

Confidentiality and Ethical Concerns

I have taken care in this case study to protect Amy’s true identity, both by the use of a pseudonymous name and by sufficiently blurring her life details to provide relative anonymity to her and to significant figures in her life.

After my Informed Consent form was approved by my Doctoral Project Committee at Meridian University, I e-mailed Amy and arranged a phone call, in which I said I was studying for a Doctorate in Psychology which included an individual Clinical Case Study. Would she consider the possibility of being the client whose life-coaching case I studied, with her identity fully protected?

Amy said immediately she would be happy to give something back to me commensurate with the gifts she had received in our work together, and I made arrangements to send her the relevant paperwork. When her completed Informed Consent arrived I called to thank her by phone and in a later email reiterated that should questions or concerns arise for her to please be in touch with me or with Meridian University.

My supervision at the time I worked with Amy consisted of meeting individually and in person from two to five hours weekly with Geneen Roth, to whom I was formally
a non-employee subcontractor in my various roles at the retreats she created. While part of our time together was given to purely retreat matters, much of our meeting time was devoted to her supervising my work with my clients, a process of benefit to me, to my clients, and contributing to the developmental evolution of the retreats as a whole.

Roth is the author of nine highly-regarded books about emotional eating, generally called “pioneering” for their radical approach and now widely recognized as both practical and effective, and employed by many mental health professionals. Without a higher degree, and not professionally licensed, Roth has nevertheless led workshops involving thousands of participants over more than 30 years and has most recently achieved national prominence through repeated television appearances on the Oprah Winfrey show. Roth offers her own vigorous and continuing inner development in the form of her masterful teaching capacities, currently to thousands of students at a time in online and telephone teaching contexts. The retreats at which I taught – which were the basis of Roth’s new best-selling book Women, Food and God – continue, now with a new title: Women Food and God – the Retreat.

Roth’s supervision was invaluable in my work with Amy: many aspects of the work of the retreats, flowing as they do from methodology seeking to integrate psychological knowledge and spiritual wisdom, are universally applicable. Additionally, Roth’s experience in accompanying her father into death, as well as her challenges in relationship with her mother made her an ideal supervisor to oversee my work with Amy.

The potential ethical dilemma of engaging Amy as a coaching client rather than referring her to psychotherapy flowed from the context of the retreats themselves.
Participants at these retreats, despite sometimes having dire and lengthy clinical histories involving eating disorders benefit tremendously from the inner work there offered: many of these participants were also my coaching clients. I could see every indication that Amy would experience similar benefit from my own coaching, given its very close approximation to the work of the retreats. Additionally, I was aware of the therapeutic alliance already established between us.

**Client History and Life Circumstances During Coaching**

Amy was 36 years old when we began our personal coaching sessions together. She traveled extensively as a successful sales consultant for a large global specialty pharmaceutical company. Despite her formal education not exceeding undergraduate level, she was intellectually so accomplished and medically so well informed that her doctor-customers sought her technical input concerning the use of her company’s products. Although periodically involved in romantic or sexual relationships, principally with the doctors she met at work, she lived alone in an apartment she owned in San Francisco and considered herself single. Amy had never married, nor did she have children.

Over the course of our initial and subsequent sessions Amy shared with me information about herself, her family, and her earlier life. Her father, then 78 years old and retired had been a nuclear physicist with five advanced science degrees, but when I first met Amy was just beginning to display early symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease. Her mother, a college professor 10 years her father’s junior had a deeply fractured relationship with her own mother, a former fashion model who had been profoundly fond
of – and important to – Amy. At nearly 90 years old this grandmother had arranged a peaceful exit from her life by arranged suicide.

Amy told me about an early family life so marked by shouting and explosive behavior that she felt very afraid to repeat it in her own life. She also shared about an adolescence in which she was highly compliant with her mother’s wishes, and much affected by her mother’s declared negative attitudes towards men. This culminated in an event when Amy was 22 years old in which her mother in public verbally abused one of Amy’s boyfriends. As the health of Amy’s father’s deteriorated, Amy’s mother became more and more outspoken to Amy about her pursuit of romantic relationships outside of her marriage to Amy’s father. She sometimes spent weeks at a time in Europe and Asia on romantically-oriented trips, and periodically announced her intention of going to live permanently in Europe.

Amy’s only sibling is a married half-brother living in Nevada, her father’s child by a previous marriage and 20 years her senior: Amy said her relationship with him was largely cordial. At the time of our sessions, Amy’s parents continued to live in the family home in Palo Alto where Amy had been brought up. As we shall see below, Amy’s father eventually died in the family home approximately 6 months into the time I coached Amy. In numerous ways Amy gave complete support to her father's process once the inescapable course of his dying became apparent. Her half brother provided considerable additional care and assistance in this respect.

During the course of our coaching sessions Amy underwent significant changes in her relationship to work. She took a two-month leave of absence to attend to her father’s dying process, visited Mount Kilimanjaro on a lengthy trip to Africa after his death and
eventually lost her job in the course of her employer’s business practices being investigated by the FBI. The severance package she received at that point enabled her to start her own medical education company.

Amy’s overall physical health was good. She ate a healthy diet, regularly practiced yoga, and attended a gym several times a week. But her vitality was subject to fluctuations ranging from the concentrated capacity “to do five years work in one year,” as she put it, all the way to needing to sleep 12 hours a day for weeks on end when recovering from periods of such exertion. In most sessions Amy mentioned friends, giving me the impression of a supportive network that seemed to grow over the time I knew her. Towards the end of our year of coaching Amy was in a more sustained romantic relationship with a man she had known for several years.

For two years, terminating three years before working with me, Amy was in psychotherapy with a Jungian psychotherapist. Her comment about the ending of that therapy was that she eventually experienced herself as “smarter” than the therapist and could no longer work with him once she came to this realization. However, she remained interested in Jungian concepts, sharing this engagement with her romantic partner who had himself been in Jungian analysis.

**Progression of the Coaching**

Amy initially asked to work with me because she was struggling with obsessive thinking about her parents, was horrified by her thoughts of wanting her father to die, and felt herself dysfunctional in intimate relationships. She made swift progress in the beginning of our work, sharing with me deep aspects of herself and repeatedly making powerful and helpful discoveries about her relationship with her parents. This was
alongside her feeling relief that her struggles to find her own sovereign life distinct from her parents were both healthy and vital. As she availed herself of tools and approaches from our coaching, such as the capacity to mindfully disidentify from fusion with her experience, and explore somatic and emotional aspects of herself she began to come into a different, more robust and healthier relationship with her distress, her feelings, and her thoughts.

Her father’s subsequent dying process brought about enormous changes in Amy, in her relationship with her mother and particularly, with her father. During his death, six months into our coaching she unconditionally forgave him, amidst a sense of opening her heart beyond anything in her previous experience. After his death she went through a revolution in her relationship with her employer, culminating in the loss of her job and the founding of her own medical education company. Beyond the end of the period of coaching studied here Amy reported forgiveness for her father, being in the best relationship of her whole life with her mother, enjoying sustained intimate relationship with a man she wanted to be with, and full engagement in running her own company. She also experienced continuing engagement with the large challenge of just being alive.

**Learnings**

The most significant learning offered me by this case study is that my trustworthy support can be of real value to the people I work with in coaching and facilitative roles. In reciprocity with this offering of myself, I was better able to take in how the expert psychological community of my colleagues is a potential gift of reflective wisdom.

Inhabiting and expressing a somatic sense of the truth emerged as crucial to accurately discerning depth dynamics in both my clients and myself. The capacity to
disidentify supports healing these dynamics. Through more thorough immersion in the literature of my psychological community this truth sense led to a much richer and more resonant understanding of my client, as well as to the discovery of narcissistic mothering and absent fathering in my own childhood. All these learnings about what is more deeply true enhanced my porosity to compassionate presence for myself and others.

**Personal and Professional Challenges**

The unfolding events in Amy's life during the time I worked with her were indeed momentous. I felt myself challenged at times to hold the coaching work we did together as equal in magnitude, potential effectiveness, and possibility to the enormity of what was going on in Amy’s life.

A specific instance of this arose when Amy shared with me her father's decision to bring his life to a conscious close rather than enter Alzheimer's care. Was Amy's support felonious in caring for her father leading up to this possibility, which he alone enacted? Would my own collaboration with Amy have untoward legal implications? Speaking hypothetically, I discussed the ethical implications with my supervisor and after extensive debate realized I was personally responsible for my decision: to support Amy.

When Amy had depression-like experiences I experienced another dilemma: should I refer Amy to a psychotherapist, the more appropriate professional for this clinical circumstance? Although she and I had begun talking about consulting her family doctor in this regard, this question was resolved by the timely involvement of a psychiatrist-psychologist in the care of her family, specifically including Amy. I felt liberated by this event to more directly explore Amy's bereavement experiences, including those that were anticipatory.
In deeply reflecting Amy’s process the discovery of my own struggles to balance intimacy and autonomy represents a blossoming in my awareness. Ten years ago my personal challenge was to embrace my own roots. Through the process of unfolding Amy’s inner work I now know my hesitation was really the question of whether my autonomy could survive intimacy, or could intimacy have implicit within it the humanly-essential quality of autonomy? Woven very personally with this question are reflections from the literature about the impact on children of self-preoccupied and emotionally-absent parents. I feel grateful for these dilemmas, discoveries, and deepenings.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction and Overview

In the following pages self-differentiation is explored in turn from the Biological, Cognitive/Behavioral, Psychodynamic, Sociocultural, and Coaching Perspectives. The last section turns to Imaginal approaches, under which heading are also found many of the practices brought to life in the coaching sessions themselves.

The Biological Perspectives section reflects neurobiological research with parallels in the realms of self-differentiation and narcissistic parenting, drawing on the work of Cozolino, Siegel, MacLean, Wallin, and Schore, among others. Thus, differentiated functional brain anatomy is suggested to correspond with being able to distinguish feeling from thinking, and “false self” development with hemispheric imbalances. These perspectives may illuminate vintage concepts, increase psychoeducational potential, and reflect the significance of emotional regulation.¹

Cognitive/Behavioral Perspectives suggest behavior results from cognitive activity: monitoring and altering this can bring about desired behavior change, as seen in the work of Meichenbaum, Young, Dattilio, Linehan, and Hayes, among others. Complex beliefs are seen as capable of change, in cognitive/behavioral terms altering the equivalent of self-differentiation. Extensions of these principles to family therapy,
excessively self-involved parenting, and therapy involving acceptance, mindfulness, and dialectics have widespread application.

The Psychodynamic Perspectives section explores an individual’s relationship with the external or internal environment, as well as the capacity therein to change, seen in the work of Mahler, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Kohut, and Bowlby, amongst many others. The vicissitudes of this relationship and its potentials, pathologies, and struggles are considered in relationship to healthy and unhealthy development of the self. Individuation, attachment theory, parental narcissism and absence, and self-differentiation are contextualized in relationship to one another, along with various developmental stage approaches to individuation and self-identity.

Sociocultural Perspectives offer a view from outside the capsule of our own normative assumptions including those of the separated self and gender perspectives. Amongst others, the work of Gray, Benjamin, Naomi Ruth Lowinsky, Chodorow, and Gilligan is referenced here. This section illuminates some of the many ways separation-individuation and differentiation of self have been explored outside cultural norms, including the mother-daughter relationship, moral development, and the ethical dimensions of individuation.

The Coaching Perspectives section reviews the various prevalent flavors and forms of life and personal coaching and describes particular clinical applications of coaching to family therapy and emotional life, citing the work of Flaherty, Timothy Gallwey, and McGoldrick, as well as others. Inner inquiry, a directed, curious, mindful exploration of interiority is described and detailed. This section references the work of Roth, and Almaas, as well as others.
Imaginal Approaches explore different depth-psychological textures of individuation, including amongst others the work of Jung, Omer, Hillman, and Edinger. These include perspectives reflecting disruption of this process, and how healing happens, for example in the work of Cohen and Woodman, among others. The practices and concepts of Imaginal Psychology are outlined, and a distinct perspective on individuation unfolded. The transformative practices and markers of progress of Imaginal Psychology are noted.

**Biological Perspectives on Differentiation of Self**

While the concept of differentiation of self is complex and conceptually high-level, a great deal of attention has been given in the past two decades to the biological mechanisms involved in the development of the psychological and emotional self. The “self” implicit in earlier psychoanalytically-oriented research on infant separation from the mother and individuation has changed. Rather than initial fusion, current research and theorizing points to some sense of self possibly predating birth and organized both from interior and interactional processes. Self-differentiation echoes the latter qualities in its inherent linking of individuality and togetherness – and has been quantified.

The most salient characteristic of differentiation on this scale is the degree to which a person is able to distinguish between their feeling and intellectual processes: Kerr and Bowen propose that high levels of differentiation correspond to greater ability to choose between having one’s functioning guided by thoughts or by feelings. A further distinction made by these authors is between feelings – for them, the capacity to reflect on emotional states – and emotions themselves.
Kerr and Bowen propose a link to the neurobiological via MacLean’s triune brain hypothesis. Although there is controversy about the validity of this hypothesis it remains a useful model. In particular, Kerr and Bowen draw parallels between the differentiations they make between intellectual, feeling, and emotional functioning and, correspondingly, the cortical, limbic, and reptilian brains distinguished by MacLean.

Hypothesizing of this kind leads Cozolino to propose that neural integration – a process he says is largely the opposite of traumatic dissociation – is fostered by the simultaneous activation of emotion and cognition. He goes so far as to aver that Bowen was highlighting this possibility in acknowledging the greater healthiness of functioning displayed by those more able to choose being guided by thoughts or by feelings, that is, possessing higher levels of self-differentiation.

Cozolino extends this perspective from the dysfunctional neural architecture of an individual to similar patterns in the dysfunctional family. He notes shared qualities in both, such as avoidance of thoughts and feelings, emotional dysregulation, inability to contain anxiety, and less ability to balance the recognition of the needs of self and others. These, writes Cozolino, can be also described as lower levels of differentiation.

Cozolino further proposes that the goal of family systems psychotherapy – indeed, of all psychotherapy – is to foster balance and integration of the various cortical and subcortical as well as left and right hemisphere processing networks. Linking neurology and therapeutic interventions, he asserts that cortical involvement with formerly more reactive emotions and behaviors can be beneficial. Training in assertiveness and communication skills as well as exercising new forms of familial cooperation can lead to improved family patterns, increased responsibility-taking, and balancing autonomy and
interdependence. His summary phrase for these activities and their outcomes is “a series of experiments with increasingly higher levels of differentiation.”

Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell use the term “differentiation” in two distinct, yet parallel ways. One sense refers to people being separate and unique individuals; the other use of “differentiation” points to a neurobiological process of elements becoming specialized within an individual’s nervous system. The latter involves a number of experience-dependent change processes within and amongst neurons.

Differentiation for Siegel, of aspects both of interpersonal relationship as well as within our nervous systems is an essential precursor to the cultivation of integration, “the collaborative, linking functions that coordinate various levels of processes within the mind and between people.” Cultivating neural integration, Siegel asserts in agreement with Cozolino, has the power to alter our lives from more rigid or chaotic states towards the potential flexibility and harmonious flow of greater health.

In Bowen theory differentiation of self is one dimension of adaptiveness. Chronic anxiety dynamically relates to this dimension: high levels of differentiation enable maintenance of adaptiveness even when chronic anxiety is present at intensity sufficient to destabilize an individual of a lower level of differentiation. Chronic anxiety has clear correlates in the brain – Etkin et al found indications of intra-amygdalar abnormality and compensatory frontoparietal activity in patients with generalized anxiety disorder.

Anxiety – the response of an organism to a threat, real or imagined – is used by Bowen interchangeably with the term ‘emotional reactivity’. Recognizing the reality of the parallels between “managed emotional reactivity” and “affect regulation” draws us into the territory of the latter, a significant focus of much of the current overlap of
neurobiology and psychology. Affect regulation is also sometimes used synonymously with the term ‘self-regulation’, echoing the Bowenian link between affective competence and the self-governance reflected by the term ‘self-differentiation’.

Peter Fonagy and June Target remark that enhanced self-regulation could be considered the essence of functionally-appropriate child development, the “key mediator” linking genetic predisposition, infant experience, and adult functioning. These authors go on to acknowledge, echoing Eric Kandel that advances in neuroscience methodology have made possible exploration of the brain systems that “control” adult behavior.

Schore suggests that the adaptive capacities of self-regulation involve dual processes, comprising intra-individual autonomous regulation in tandem with regulation through interaction with others. The closely-interwoven nature of these dynamics in development – individuality-togetherness, or autonomous-interactive regulation – shows up in research like that of Irina Ziabreva and her associates, who were able to demonstrate how the interactive regulation of hearing mother rat’s vocalizations could also permanently alter the limbic systems of their developing pups.

The memory system – and sense of self – referred to as “implicit” by Schore, Wallin, and Cozolino takes encoded form within the neural infrastructure of our brains through the qualities of our relationships with caregivers. Cozolino writes “It is within the context of these close relationships that networks dedicated to feelings of safety and danger, attachment, and the core sense of self are shaped.” Graham Music remarks the way relationship preconceptions are viscerally inscribed in our nervous systems, with central involvement of primitive brain regions such as the basal ganglia.
Distortion or even reversal of this mirroring, or as Güler Fişek refers to it “ongoing interactive process involving bidirectional coordination,” is related to narcissism. Alexander Lowen says this common form of disturbance of the self involves exaggerated involvement in one's image at the expense of the self. Cozolino speculates that the brains of narcissistic children are shaped by their parents’ needs for attunement, affect regulation, and nurturance, rather than their molding being governed by the sensibilities and emotions of the child themselves. Massimo Ammaniti and Cristina Trentini ask if the mother can distinguish the reality of the baby from her own fantasies. They go on to reflect the superordinate organization involving cerebral, biochemical, and autonomic processes through which mother and infant are intimately intercorrelated.

Cozolino suggests that what Winnicott called the false self is one effect of this reversal of mirroring. He proposes that this pseudo-adult is embedded in the neural networks of the symbolic and interpretive left brain hemisphere, able predominantly to filter out right hemispheric emotional input and somatic signals. The development of a primary core of social and personal meaning through the process of “becoming oneself by being with others,” as Seligman names it, is distorted. Wallin echoes these themes, writing that when mirroring is non-contingent the child internalizes a self-image not of her own emotional core but the seen-reflection of the parent. Fonagy and his colleagues offer similar and very detailed observations around what they term the alien self. Mary Paige hypothesizes that these failures of empathy – being able to sense others’ moods and feelings – and impaired capacity for shame modulation seen in pathological narcissism is
a pervasive developmental disorder. This disruption of emotional development results from a neurobiological vulnerability in the brain.

Ed Tronick, advocating a “multileveled biopsychological approach” to therapy poignantly refers to the child of a narcissistic parent who, otherwise facing devastating emotional dismissal, has to give up her own feelings and experience in favor of trying to make sense of the parent. This portrayal is a reminder that discussions of narcissism per se may more directly reflect a frankly narcissistic parent than their child, yet may also crucially reveal some aspects of the child’s probable early life experience. The aloof and distant quality of the father in such a family may worsen a child's experience.

At the same time, much of what we know neurobiologically draws on infancy and childhood: Linda Spear, exploring neurodevelopment during adolescence writes that what we know is far exceeded by what we remain ignorant of. Other commentators have remarked on the potential reductionistic pitfalls of encompassing behavior of great complexity through very modest and somewhat atomic neurobiological data. The above focus on narcissism provides high magnification of distortions of the association of individuality and togetherness. Schore emphasizes impairment of affect autoregulation in narcissistic personalities, and underscores the damaging effect of these self-and-other failures on the infant’s “maturing psychobiological affective core.”

This emphasis on regulation is argued by Schore and Judith Schore to represent a further eventuation of John Bowlby’s essential goal of integrating biological and psychological models of human development. These researchers say this unfolding has been brought about by the enormous volume of research results underscoring the way the functional origins of the bodily-based implicit self reflect neurobiological systems that
are involved in emotion processing, stress modulation, and self-regulation.\textsuperscript{45} Schore authoritatively links affect regulation with the origin of the self.\textsuperscript{46} His 1994 book, subtitled \textit{The Neurobiology of Emotional Development} could serve as a text for the way the self can be seen to differentiate neurobiologically, woven into an approach which acknowledges the also-inseparable nature of the togetherness from which differentiation emerges.\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{Cognitive/Behavioral Perspectives on Differentiation of Self}

Meichenbaum remarks that the interventions of cognitive-behavioral therapy (broadly below as ‘CBT’) help clients notice, catch, monitor, and interrupt the cognitive-affective-behavioral chains resulting in maladaptive responses to life.\textsuperscript{48} Behavior is affected by cognitive activity, which can be monitored and altered, thereby bringing about desired behavior change.\textsuperscript{49}

The following section broadly employs this perspective while bearing in mind the essential features of self-differentiation, amongst them its implications of autonomy amidst the capacity for intimacy, and appropriate management of thoughts and emotions. Restructuring thinking and beliefs can bring about changes that reflect improved self-differentiation. Treatments increasing the attentional control of mindfulness, including awareness of the body bring about targeted changes in the relationship of the client to their mind and feelings. Whether CBT approaches can adequately encompass narcissism and narcissistic parenting is considered.

Ellis remarks that Bowen’s work helps people become less bound to their family system, which to Ellis is the equivalent of helping people become individuated.\textsuperscript{50} Ellis avers that his own cognitive-behavioral approach, Rational Emotive Therapy or RET
supports people untying from any system, so they can be in the family yet not too fused with it. RET thereby overlaps with the work of Bowen.\textsuperscript{51}

Young’s Schema Therapy originates in cognitive therapy but emphasizes the developmental origins of psychological problems, integrating diverse therapeutic approaches.\textsuperscript{52} Early maladaptive schemas are cognitive and behavioral patterns beginning early in life that are broad, self-defeating, repetitious, and pervasive.\textsuperscript{53} One schemata of impaired autonomy is ‘enmeshment/undeveloped self’. The excessive emotional involvement and continued parental closeness typical of people struggling with this maladaptive schema deprives them of their full individuation and social development.\textsuperscript{54} Treatment using empathic confrontation, imagery, and behavioral rehearsal in real life support client autonomy.\textsuperscript{55} A newer term, “modes” groups schemas together for manageability in treatment of complex and dynamic personality disorders.\textsuperscript{56} These authors remark “The two dysfunctional parent modes, the Punitive Parent and the Demanding Parent, are prominent in clients with borderline and narcissistic disorders, respectively.” \textsuperscript{57}

Dattilio reviews cognitive-behavioral approaches to family therapy and sketches the nature of family schemata that significantly orchestrate thinking, feeling, and behavior within the family setting.\textsuperscript{58} Dattilio claims that the effectiveness of CBT derives from its focus on schemas, or basic beliefs, remarking that all family interactions are governed by schemas.\textsuperscript{59} Dattilio’s more recent work refers to the abandonment schema and the dependence/independence schema, maladaptive in early life.\textsuperscript{60}

In cognitive-behavioral family therapy, or CBFT treatment of these issues involves restructuring thinking in ways that counter the dysfunctions implicit in faulty
cognitions. For example, an adult dependent son may find his fears of inability to leave the family home to be irrational and distorted, at the same time as his parents track their own faulty thinking leading to them feeling lost without him. This example, offered by Dattilio reflects concrete issues of differentiation/individuation as well as statements about interventions to overcome these difficulties, and the principles they exemplify.

Linking parenting and narcissism, Robert Horton and his colleagues suggest that parental behavior is implicated in all clinical perspectives on narcissism. Mark Reinecke and David Clark write that the cognitive theory perspective is that “harmful, faulty lessons are lived and learned in the households where NPD children grow up.” Elsa Ronningstam remarks that cognitive theorists tend to believe that an excessively doting parental style instilled a sense of specialness in the child, without offering the child empathy for their real needs and feelings. Additionally to the doting mother there is often a detached, isolated, or devaluing father, seemingly critical or rejecting.

Beck and his co-authors remark on the rich phenomenology but poor empirical support in Psychodynamic Perspectives on narcissism, and suggest CBT may offer more accessible treatment strategies. Eshkol Rafaeli, echoing both Reinecke and Clark, and C. Susanne Bennett remarks that the additional dimension of “limited re-parenting” in therapy for personality disorders such as narcissism calls for levels of warmth, caring, acceptance, and validation often exceeding those found in CBT.

Hilda Bruch explicitly links anorexia and individuation in an association frequently made in the clinical literature, often in a psychodynamic frame. Bruch, as well as Mara Palazzoli saw narcissistic mother-dynamics as underlying anorexia. Contemporary behavioral family systems therapy (BFST) combines behavioral, cognitive
and family systems perspectives to deliver interventions designed to help adolescents and their parents overcome anorexia. BFST has been studied in relationship to Bowen concepts, age-appropriate individuation and autonomy.\textsuperscript{70}

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) utilizes “acceptance and mindfulness processes, and commitment and behavior change processes, to produce greater psychological flexibility.”\textsuperscript{71} Mindfulness has been briefly described as attentional control; more elaborate definitions of this term include purposeful non-judgmental awareness and the acceptance of present experience moment-by-moment.\textsuperscript{72} We may recognize here the implicit parallel between psychological flexibility and greater self-differentiation, with its inherent capacity to choose between thoughts and feelings.

Studying ACT to treat anorexia, Susan Orsillo and Sonja Batten refer to enhancing differentiation of patients’ sense of self from their private mental events and physical being, as well as supporting patients’ focus on life directions valuable to them. Although these are only implicit linkages connecting anorexia – which has been suggested to reflect individuation issues – and the differentiation dynamics addressed by the use of ACT, the implications are cogent.\textsuperscript{73} One empirical study of ACT treatment targets unwillingness to experience negative private events, a marker of a low level of self-differentiation.\textsuperscript{74}

Citing comments by Mennin et al., Hayes and Kirk Strosahl remark that individuals with generalized anxiety disorder experience difficulty in identifying and differentiating their emotional responses.\textsuperscript{75} Approaches like these address the modulation of anxiety – a cornerstone concern of Bowen family therapy – through means that appear
equivalent in effect to Bowen’s delineation of the anxiety-protective effects of an enhanced ability to distinguish between the feeling and intellectual processes.

Hayes and Strosahl remark on a quality they call “psychological rigidity,” comprising suppression of negative internal events alongside cognitive fusions with negative beliefs. Emotional indulgence and suppressive persistence, either extreme of which could be construed as a relatively low level of differentiation in Bowen’s model, are seen in the ACT approach as suffering-inducing dynamics, with an implied invitation to a middle path that is neither indulgent nor suppressive. There are clearly parallels between this conceptualization and the qualities of healthy choice inherent in self-differentiation as Bowen conceived it.

Linehan’s clinically well-validated Dialectical Behavior Therapy synthesizes three paradigms. Behaviorism changes behavior; mindfulness fosters awareness, acceptance, and compassion; and dialectics seeks fluidity in the face of rigidity and impasse.

Treatment targets for adolescents such as “Increasing Individuation while Decreasing Excessive Dependence” complement others such as “Increasing Effective Reliance on Others while Decreasing Excessive Autonomy.” These help the adolescent client find a middle way to comfortably access dependence and relatedness and equally, separation, individuation, and identity formation.

Jennifer Block-Lerner and colleagues note that aspects of empathic responding are part of the natural unfolding of the separation/individuation process, and propose using mindfulness and acceptance-based cognitive behavioral approaches as adjuncts to empathy training for couples and individuals. Liora Birnbaum discusses differentiation
of self in relation to aggression. Birnbaum proposes using mindfulness meditation to facilitate adolescents connecting to their inner voice for the purpose of healing and growth toward autonomy.

Several contemporary therapeutic approaches incorporating mindfulness explicitly include the body, among them Hakomi Therapy, and the work of the Lomi School, both of which also incorporate spiritual elements and compassion, or loving presence. The Buddhist-oriented mindfulness work of Brach reflects deeply on the sense of shame, separateness from others, and the thrall of unworthiness, sourced, she speculates in devaluing parental messages about ourselves. Brach suggests that healing this involves cultivating kindness toward our experience.

Intrusive parenting, writes Siegel, may negatively affect the brain's delicately interpersonal capacity to create empathic maps of other minds, via disruption of the integration of the intrinsically body-connected right hemisphere and narrative-conceptual left hemisphere. Mindful parenting may remedy this possibility. Lowen offers a perspective suggesting that the denial of feeling he calls “the basic disturbance in the narcissistic personality” originates with the body being an instrument of the mind. Lacking “life” there is also a lack of the feeling of aliveness “that gives rise to the experience of the self.”

Whether a CBT approach predominantly emphasizing cognition can adequately address the arena of a healthy self – differentiated from others, yet empathically and intimately related to them – remains to be seen. Clearly, this domain is complex, rich, relational, and intrinsically embodied: in particular, early relational failures within it may have significant consequences for the life of an individual and their well-being.
Psychodynamic Perspectives on Differentiation of Self

Fonagy and Mary Target suggest the term “psychodynamic” refers to an account of human subjectivity aiming to understand every aspect of an individual’s relationship with the environment, be it external or internal. This term also implies the conscious mind’s power to change itself in respect of its own functions. By tracing some of the Freudian roots of self-differentiation, the section below sketches the perspectives of major psychodynamic theorists. Over time, these increasingly have been inherently relational. The section ends by considering the pathologizing effect on children of various distortions in parenting. When the mother is unstably grandiose, self-important, and more preoccupied with self-image than with feeling, particularly their female children suffer great difficulties in developing a healthy self.

The psychological terms “individuation” and “self-differentiation” both have psychodynamic roots. As these concepts infused psychodynamic theorizing and clinical practice, infant development has increasingly been seen as inherently relational, with one pole of that unfolding the emergence of an autonomous-seeming self. This relational-while-autonomous quality is intrinsic and implicit in the territory of self-differentiation seen from a psychodynamic perspective.

Mahler hypothesized interwoven processes of separation – a gradual emergence from fusion with the mother – and individuation – the child’s assumption of their own individual characteristics, naming this dual-unity ‘separation-individuation’. Her theory proposes child development taking place in phases, with the last of these being separation-individuation. Each phase has a number of sub-phases. Mahler and her colleagues observed that when primary caregiver pathology thwarts normal separation-
individuation, the result can be impaired object constancy, intense anxiety, and a
desperate effort to self-soothe by clinging to the primary object. Here, an object is that
to which a subject – usually an individual – relates and object constancy essentially refers
to maintenance of a representation of the absent love object. The “primary object” is
generally an internalized primary caretaker.

While Mahler’s account of individuation in infancy has been questioned (on the
basis of infant observation by Daniel Stern and from a theoretical perspective by Michael
Balint, among many others) it remains influential: of parallel tracks, that of separation,
the gradual end of fusion with the mother, and individuation, the steps towards a unique
individual unfolding. Mahler’s relational emphasis on the human dilemma of
successfully gaining distance from – yet incorporating – the lost symbiotic mother is also
the possibility of experiencing the “totality of tenderness, security, and pleasure that is
experienced in a full relationship with another person.”

William Borden writes that some 15 years before Mahler's early studies Fairbairn
proposed the core tendency in human beings is to create and maintain connections with
others. Fairbairn wrote about the relational transition from “infantile dependence” to
“mature dependence”, defined as “a capacity on the part of the differentiated individual
for cooperative relationships with differentiated objects.” Unlike Freud, Fairbairn
suggests we primarily seek specific personalized objects, not pleasure.

Fairbairn also describes an intermediate stage he calls ‘transitional’, characterized
by defensive techniques which are actually attempts to remove internalized early objects,
without terminally losing them. This stage, suggests Jeffrey Seinfeld, is similar to
Mahler's separation-individuation phase.
The emphasis in Fairbairn’s model on unmet dependency needs which can halt the individuation process and fixate the individual on alluring but rejecting objects emerges in the work of Harry Guntrip as “love made hungry.” Hunger and love, the vicissitudes of their linkage and the consequences for development that goes awry are prominent in the eating disorders literature, with connections to disordered boundaries and intrusive parenting.

Winnicott’s very personal orientation of psychoanalytic theory is in terms of human developmental challenges to become real and authentic, and parallels Fairbairn's emphasis on the two person field. A number of his concepts reflect the blossoming child’s transition into the world of others while simultaneously developing an indwelling sense of self. Amongst these is the “good-enough mother,” (a more emotionally-textured echo of Ronald D. Laing’s “... another by whom one is known,”) “transitional objects,” and the “realm of illusion.” Winnicott disliked the word “individuation,” because of his insistence on the intrinsic necessity of a relational facilitating environment in development – but the outcome of what he proposed as the ideal environment for a child may be precisely the possibility of self-differentiation.

In the process of what Winnicott calls “illusion-disillusionment” the child gradually adapts to reality in the presence of a “good-enough mother,” who provides attuned adaptation to the infant. This begins with completely affording the child the illusion of omnipotence, and gradually enables the child to make objects real, which is to say hated as well as loved. Aggression, says Winnicott, is essential in this process.

Maternal distortions of relatedness toward the infant interfere with “true self” development. Under these circumstances the true self of the child fails to form or is
hidden behind a compliant false self that copes with the world. In the case of a 10-year-old boy Winnicott talked to, “...he can employ a false self which pleases everyone, but this makes him feel awful.”

Bowlby remarked late in his life that he and Winnicott were playing the same song. Bowlby’s early work demonstrated a correlation between separation from or rejection by the mother in early childhood and the child’s later antisocial behavior. Subsequently, under the umbrella of what he called attachment theory Bowlby called rigorous attention to the instinctual, goal-directed nature of attachment, a behavioral system basic to survival and reproductive competence, motivating infants to seek proximity, physically and emotionally, to caregivers and having powerful and profound implications for both parents and children.

Bowlby’s avowedly ethological/sociobiological approach claims individual differences in behavior are sourced by individual differences in real experience of the care-giving environment, not by intrapsychic conflict or fantasy. Separation and attachment explicitly and essentially refer to biologically-driven behavior. Attachment, for example, refers to the behavioral tendency to seek the proximity of comforting and care-giving individuals, while separation refers to the loss or inaccessibility of these figures, temporarily or permanently. A number of cogent theoretical linkages have been suggested between attachment and self-differentiation. Empirical studies have supported and illuminated this relationship.

Attachment is de-emphasized in the more traditionally-psychoanalytic model of Erik Erikson, which focuses on the attainment of self-identity and its antecedents and consequences, although in a sentence reminiscent of Bowen, Erikson writes: “True
‘engagement’ with others is the result and test of firm self-delineation.” 120 Carol Franz and Kathleen White, in a comprehensive review of Erikson’s work suggest that this singular focus on self-identity subtracts from being able to account fully for the development of intimacy and interpersonal attachment. 121 Chodorow remarks that the self-recognition described by Erikson and by Winnicott is a form of individuation in which autonomy and agency are forms of responsibility for ourselves in which we effectively replace those people who once had responsibility for us. This position is also taken by Loewald, who names it “oedipal emancipation.” 122

Blos coined the term “second individuation” to indicate the adolescent process of disengagement from childhood parental representations and character formation through progressively higher levels of differentiation and environmental independence. 123 Calvin Colarusso proposes five individuations, the last involving separation-individuation issues in late adulthood, and contemplating the facticity of personal death. According to Colarusso developmental processes are ongoing throughout life and alter object and self representations on a continuous basis. 124 About the development of autonomy and the concurrent development of social connectedness Robert Emde recently reflected that he and his colleagues could make no sense of the separate development of these experiential dimensions, nor of their developing sequentially. 125

Sidney Blatt identifies interpersonal relatedness as being in a lifelong dialectical balance with a corresponding dimension he calls “self-definition,” clearly echoing Bowen. Normal functioning, says Blatt, occurs in a system where interpersonal relations and self-definition develop in stepwise, mutually-enhancing facilitation. 126 Negative interactions of biology and environment may lead to imbalance of these dimensions,
defining two primary configurations of psychopathology. Blatt links an impaired sense of self and disturbed self-esteem with depression, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, and narcissism.

A remark by Bowlby through the lens of attachment theory echoes the explorations of other clinicians about parental pathology from the perspective of separation-individuation. Bowlby writes “…the reversal of roles between child, or adolescent, and parent, unless very temporary, is almost always not only a sign of pathology in the parent but a cause of it in the child.” Jean Knox refers to the friction opposing the individuation process in a child whose parents cannot tolerate emotional separation, eventuating in “reverse parenting” and a fear of love and relationship.

Fonagy observes that when a parent has failed in their own individuation they may depend on the responses of their children to maintain the parent’s identity, with catastrophic consequences for the natural process of the child becoming a separate, independent being. Lowen makes corresponding observations about parental narcissism. In the work of Kohut, this dynamic leads to the result that the child feels enslaved and oppressed by the demands and expectations that the oppressing parent may perceive as love, or “love,” as Kohut deliberately writes it.

By contrast, Kohut views a healthily-nurturing parental environment as satisfying the baby’s instinctual needs: to be empathically mirrored, with care and pleasure. The “gleam in the mothers eye” provides a rewarding reflection where the baby gradually comes to discover its total entity as a self. Mario Jacoby calls this self-confirmation of the child essential. Moreover, the infant’s natural need is to experience the mother and-or father – which Kohut calls the “self-object” – as perfect and omnipotent. Since
the baby is also largely merged with this self-object, the perfection and all-powerful quality of mother (and father, or both) and that of the infant are fused in idealization. In due course, both this mirroring and idealization undergo appropriate development, gradually being replaced by mature ideals and realistic ambitions.\textsuperscript{138} Robert Galatzer-Levy and Bertram Cohler suggest this process continues into the second half of life.\textsuperscript{139}

Kohut's view of healthy development offers a powerful, positive, and nurturing contrast to the perspectives on parental pathology offered in the prior paragraphs by Bowlby, Knox, and Fonagy. Kohut’s subsequent brief glimpse of childhood experiences of oppression and enslavement is the child-perspective counterpart of the narcissistic-parent experiencing an implicit, non-conscious sense of being able to control the child. This is on a level similar to the concept the adult has of themselves, with power over the child akin to a grownup’s expected implicit command over their own body and mind.\textsuperscript{140}

A number of authors, many of them psychotherapists, and female have written evocative accounts of their experience of growing up in families dominated by parental – particularly maternal – narcissism. Karyl McBride, for example reports her daily experience of trying to be a “good girl,” of trying very hard to do the right thing, please people – particularly mom, and thereby gain the longed-for love and respect she craved. By contrast, within herself she experienced self-loathing messages damaging to her confidence and self-esteem.\textsuperscript{141}

Because a child of a narcissistic mother has had her emotional needs ignored, writes McBride, the individuation process is stunted in favor of an infantile part of herself endlessly endeavoring to merge with her mother, and get her attention and approval.\textsuperscript{142} Or the child feels engulfed, unable to unfold and inhabit her own individual desires,
thoughts, needs, or feelings because she cannot see herself as separate from her mother. Elan Golomb writes of the “cold but overprotective” narcissistic mother, both invasive and rejecting.

Both McBride and Golomb write movingly and powerfully from within this experience. McBride mentions the lifelong devastation of feeling like a motherless child, of having to make up a sense of identity as she went along, with a deep sense of unworthiness and invisibility accompanying self-sabotage. Golomb says she inwardly knows the plight of a child of narcissistic parents because she is herself one such child. She writes of the child’s forcible conscription into a supporting role in the family cast of characters surrounding the narcissistic parent or parents, participating – because the love is conditional – in the parent’s unconscious web of projection. In conditional love, she suggests there is no support for the inner self. The child of such a parent feels no sense of worth or personal substance.

Nina Brown comments that superficially-efficient parental functions such as micromanaging and over-controlling can, in reality be manipulations of the child to meet the needs of a narcissistic parent. This perspective is echoed by Richard and Matthew Munich. In later life, writes Brown, such a child may find themselves helplessly catering to others just as they unconsciously did for their parents, unconsciously fulfilling others’ needs for admiration, entitlement, and attention. Eleanor Payson remarks on the transformative possibility in the therapeutic recognition of limited parental love: that a parent’s critical rejection does not in any way reflect the real person within.

Nini Herman writes of the profound upheaval in respect of unravelment with their mothers that brings many women to psychotherapy. Herman remarks on the ‘intricate
issue’ of what women want, and answers herself: “to be myself. . . without offending my mother” 152 McBride, echoing Bowen, writes of the healed capacity to be “a part of and apart from” mother.153

Research and theorizing focused on both narcissistic mothering and emotionally disengaged fathering is limited. 154 Target and Fonagy write of the unstable self-structure consequent on a compromised object representation of the triad of mother, father, and daughter.155 Imprisoned in maternal narcissism, a daughter unable to establish a sense of her own individuality turns toward her father to help her achieve a sense of independence from her mother, observes Anthony Elliott. But her father's emotional distance make this breaking away impossible.156 Sylvia Teitelbaum reflects the exacerbation of psychic damage to a daughter when her father is in thrall to a narcissistic mother, and fails to protect the daughter from the mother's rage.157 Teitelbaum, along with other authors such as Karl Abenheimer draws on the fairytale of Snow White, finding in the huntsman an image of the father who pretends to protect Snow White – when he merely does not kill her, bound up as he is in his dependency on the narcissistic Queen.158

Daniel Shaw suggests that “relational trauma” cumulatively results from exposure to parental narcissism, subverting a child's capacity for intersubjective relatedness.159 The pathologically narcissistic parent shames the child's dependency – and greets her efforts at independence with rejection and abandonment. Condemned in either possibility, the child’s – or later the adult’s – inescapable badness is confirmed.160 Diana Fosha writes about the changes in the child's unconscious orientation towards affect when the child's emotional experiences trigger a caregiver’s characterological defensive reactions to intense feelings. In a potentially pathological shift, affect for the child begins to change
from being a potential source of living information and adaptability towards suffusion with anxiety, guilt, shame, and fear.161 “Defensive exclusion,” altering oneself to get love or to avoid punishment begins to mold the child’s fundamental sense of self.162 The body, says Fosha, is the physical home of the self.163

Shaw poses crucial reparative question in respect of therapy. Can the client and therapist find a new way out of the dissociative impasse that happens when there is the perception of being under assault, familiar from a childhood in which narcissistic parental projection predominates? 164 Fosha emphasizes the ever-present alertness of the self for environments where affect can naturally flourish and the opportunity blossom “to correct, repair, or create anew.” 165 Benjamin calls this mutual recognition, which encompasses experiences common in mother-infant interactions, such as emotional attunement, mutual influence, affective mutuality, and sharing states of mind.166 Benjamin asks how do two people share subjectivities, recognizing the other and making their own known?167 Kerr, reflecting the practical utility of family systems therapy next to psychodynamic conceptualizing, calls this “Working on self in relationship to family of origin.” 168

**Sociocultural Perspectives on Differentiation of Self**

A sociocultural perspective potentially offers a widening of consciousness. From this perspective we can see beyond what is implicitly true within the normative capsule of our own assumptions and those of our *culture* – here taken to mean communities’ cross-generationally transmitted symbolic resources externalized into social institutions and practices.169 In the section below some basic assumptions hidden in culture are considered, such as the separated self, and gender, along with the consequences of
making these assumptions visible and unfolding them, particularly the latter. Separation-individuation is explored as an issue of intersubjectivity – the reciprocal influence of the subjectivities of two people in a relationship – along with research in this respect amongst mothers and daughters. Differentiation of self and other in the context of interdependence and intersubjectivity are explored in domains such as moral development and the ethical dimensions of individuation. A plea for seeing through cultural assumptions is noted.

We take for granted the existential reality of our separated selves, striving toward individuality. Yet, as Kagitçibasi remarks, even our normative sense of separation may be bound by culture. Philip Cushman, focusing a similar, western-hemispheric exploration, remarks how the individual self in America “came to be seen as the ultimate locus of salvation.” Helene Shulman and Mary Watkins write that we are often blind about the position from which we see.

Phrases such as “balanced integration-differentiation,” “unity in diversity,” and “independence-interdependence” express the contradiction, as Catherine Raeff puts it, that we are both “always separate and always connected.” Yet without even changing continents we can discern a similar truthful rebellion against cultural predominance as we unfold the literature exploring individuation and self-differentiation in relationship to feminine identity. Here, we can recognize the resonant keynotes of a similar and entirely relevant paradox, in the context of the struggles of the female child.

Gray critically re-visions the human possibilities available in Jung’s concept of individuation. Drawing on Jacques Lacan and Irigaray, Gray implies authentic individuation for women is impossible without actualizing a “female genealogy” honoring
an immemorial mother-daughter line and a distinctively feminine structuring of the unconscious as the field of image and imagination.\textsuperscript{177}

Gray reflects that this project of truly recognizing difference is inordinately difficult to achieve, because of “projective and appropriative mechanisms” that underlie, for example the supposedly gender-neutral sociocultural setting of psychology. We describe our world in terms of seemingly-natural and inherent features which, unexamined, make content-appear-as-consciousness and thereby blind us to subtle but essential ethical aspects of individuation. The cost of this blindness is borne by women and by us all as the unnoticed circumscription of Jung’s idea of individuation.\textsuperscript{178}

One reviewer of Gray’s significant work remarks that her single focus on a particular aspect of Jung’s theorizing tends to ignore the many developments in relational psychoanalysis in the past quarter-century, as well as exclude from consideration the work of Benjamin.\textsuperscript{179}

Benjamin recognizes in familial culture traditional gender divisions in parenting, where mother is primarily nurturing and associated with dependency and security, while father stands for freedom, separation, and the unfolding enactment of desire. When the rapprochement child concretely expresses want there is the developmental wish, says Benjamin, for the child longing for desire and agency to be their own possession.\textsuperscript{180}

Identification – being like, in Benjamin’s terms – has a particular part to play in the rapprochement girl’s struggle to individuate: a girl recognizes her own desire reflected in her father, and wants to affirm it in herself, through identification. Amidst their own separation-ambivalence because of their bond of likeness with the mother, girls look for a singularly different object denoting independence.\textsuperscript{181} This is often the father
whose polar difference is announced and guaranteed by his unalike genital. When the father is unavailable “envy of the penis expresses the girl’s longing for him.”  

For Benjamin, this outcome also represents the possibility of an evolved and changed sociocultural context. This familial constellation would allow girls to identify with a mother who is ‘outside’ as well as ‘inside’, representing subjectivity and desire just as powerfully as the father. Elsewhere, Benjamin re-contextualizes separation-individuation in terms of intersubjectivity. Realigning the privileging of separation over dependence requires a paradox-sustaining balance. How do we possibly relate, clinically and culturally to minds fundamentally like our own but utterly different and beyond our control? 

The diversity of forms of potential mother-daughter individuation range from Irigaray’s repudiation of mother to Andrea O’Reilly’s welcoming of black female subjectivity connected to her motherline. Lowinsky’s term “Motherline” encompasses the body and soul, female-root wisdom and experience that come through the mother. She writes of the necessity for a woman to have both a manifestation of the mother archetype in her life – and differentiate herself from her own mother. She writes “we yearn for mutuality and fear engulfment,” elsewhere speaking about the reclamation of feminine souls. Lowinsky also powerfully details the dilemmas of mother-and-childhood. In work based on interviews with more than 75 mothers, daughters, and grandmothers Signe Hammer remarks that while not all women become mothers, all are daughters and all daughters have mothers. 

Marilyn Charles and her colleagues studied separation-individuation in two generations of mothers and daughters. They remark on the particular difficulties of
mother-daughter dyads, with their tendency to be relationally more intense, as well as less differentiated than other parent-child dyads. Chodorow acknowledges the way mothers experience their daughters as intimately like themselves, in a certain sense – with a different experience of sons. These unconscious maternal communications have significant outcomes, amongst them that women tend to feel intuitively connected to others, can empathize, and are dependent upon or more intrinsically embedded in relationships than are men. Chodorow comments that her observations especially struck a chord for women trying to make sense of the fact that classical theorizing in psychology and psychoanalysis has historically tended to privilege autonomy and separateness over empathy and connectedness.

Chodorow’s perspective on these consequences has two valences. She provides some remediation of Freud’s evaluation of women as simply failed men, instead offering a vision of women capable of connection and empathy. In the negative she writes how “the mother-daughter relationship may overwhelm and invade both the mother’s and daughter’s psyche.”

The development of an “ethic of care,” as Gilligan names it rests on an evolving differentiation of self and other. This increasingly adequate understanding of the psychology of human relationships paradoxically centers around the insight that other and self are interdependent. Reflecting on Chodorow, Gilligan remarks that while males tend to have difficulties with relationships, females tend to have difficulties with indviduation. “Women’s failure to separate then becomes…a failure to develop,” remarks Gilligan, which is highly problematic when childhood and adolescent milestones of development in the psychological literature are marked by increasing separation.
If relationship concerns appear as stereotypical weakness, over-emphasising instrumental abilities in the masculine domain, this reflects a distorted conception of adulthood favoring individual separateness and autonomous agency over connection to others. When Gilligan considers Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development in this light, she reflects on a distinctively female mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. She thereby discovers a different construction of “the moral problem” by women, one that within Kohlberg’s masculinized perspective may be construed as a failure to develop.

Gilligan’s nuanced discussion of a “morality of responsibility” has overtones of contextual relativism that may be inconclusive and diffuse for men. Here, there are significant echoes of Gray’s sense of individuation having an ethical dimension, an implication not obvious when the myopia of masculinity is the only lens seen through. Gilligan eloquently asserts the importance of attachment in a cultural context that celebrates – sometimes over-celebrates – separation, autonomy, individuation, and natural rights.

The work of Miller and her colleagues at the Wellesley Center for Women provide further substantiation of a very different developmental view. Judith Jordan and Janet Surrey, for example explore the dynamic process of differentiation in relationship that focuses on the uniquely feminine relational self. Paula Bernstein offers a thoroughly non-pathological perspective on mother-daughter relationships, saying “Once normal development is understood to proceed along self-versus-other and self-with-other lines, issues with separateness and connectedness are to be expected.”
A 2004 study remarked on the paucity of research literature on the mother-daughter relationship, despite the large volume of theorizing. Nevertheless, empirical studies exist. Nighat Gilani studied British and Pakistani mother-adolescent daughter dyads and found more intimacy, harmony, and connectedness amongst the Pakistani dyads – and less individuality. Susan Seymour's longitudinal anthropological study of women, family life, and child care in India reveals the operation of a very different cultural model than is familiar in the developed Western world. Yoriko Kozuki and Michael Kennedy examined incommensurabilities between psychotherapist and patient because of mutually-invisible cultural differences. Their study found a number of significant forms of misunderstanding and hidden cultural ignorance when Western therapists treated Japanese clients, including about the social web of norms in which individuation occurs in Japanese culture. Alan Roland explored personality development in India from different psychoanalytic perspectives. He remarks on the child's "central core of heightened narcissistic well-being," as well as the altered ego boundaries emerging from traditional Indian social relationships and child-rearing practices. A further source of related explorations of individuation in differing cultural, racial, and ethnic contexts is in the work of Salman Akhtar.

Sylvia Chen studied individuation as a behavioral construct in relationship to cultural values and social axioms within Chinese and Canadian populations, as well as in relation to gender, revealing more of the complex interweaving of culture and individual relational style. Self-efficacy and self-esteem significantly predicted individuation in both populations. Hyejeong Chung and Jerry Gale researched self-differentiation and
perceived level of family functioning amongst Korean and European-American University students, finding family functioning higher in the latter group. E. Olcay Imamoğlu and Selen Imamoğlu found an association between a relational self-orientation and attachment security. Studying collectivist Druze families, Ora Peleg and colleagues found negative correlations between maternal differentiation and kindergarten children's separation anxiety. Bonnie Cushing and McGoldrick explored religious faith in relationship to differentiation of self and early adult development. Marie Lamothe-Francois, studying Haitian women found a significant negative correlation between a daughter’s degree of differentiation from her mother and her likelihood of leaving an abusive relationship.

In the preceding paragraphs, results are only briefly reported: the full range of outcomes and observations from these researchers, clinicians, and theorists underscores the tremendous complexity of psychological and the sociocultural interweaving. Even psychoanalytic thinkers, with their root origin in a one-person psychology have greatly evolved their position in this respect. Lucy Lafarge, for instance, at a psychoanalytic conference in 2002 acknowledged the powerful influence of social factors on autonomy and individuation.

Seymour remarks that the hyper-individualism prized in American culture is anathema to people embraced within a traditional Indian family. The principal value learned first by children in the latter families is interdependence, understanding they are one of many and that survival rests on cooperation and mutual care. Man Keung Ho and colleagues reflect the further complexity of this when considering family therapy with First Nations families, remarking on the way self-reliance – itself much valued – is
inherently part of a web of interdependent relational connectedness.\textsuperscript{219} They remark that Bowenian self-determination “should not be misconstrued as individualism or narcissism; instead it coincides with the Native concept of individuality.”\textsuperscript{220}

In 2005, McGoldrick, a senior figure in the field of cross-cultural family therapy, prefacing a globe-spanning collection of scholarly research on the diversity of family in the human world, said “Our therapeutic models are generally presented as having universal applicability. Only recently have we begun to consider the underlying cultural assumptions of our therapeutic models and of ourselves as therapists.”\textsuperscript{221} Actively recognizing how the kind of research and theorizing reviewed in this section time and again reveals moments, epochs, and angles of blindness, as well as offering the possibility of seeing again, freshly may be important to foster sociocultural inclusiveness in further studying differentiation of self.

**Coaching Perspectives on Differentiation of Self**

This section reviews different forms and flavors of personal and life coaching and describes the application of coaching to family therapy and emotional life. The directed, curious, mindful exploration that is inner inquiry is then described and unfolded.

Coaching focuses on helping people unleash their potential, remarks Auerbach.\textsuperscript{222} John Whitcomb adds that coaching unlocks people’s potential to maximize their performance.\textsuperscript{223} Flaherty writes that coaching works with people in ways that result in their becoming more competent and fulfilled, able to contribute better to the organizations they are in, and find more meaning in what they do.\textsuperscript{224} Patrick Williams and Deborah Davis emphasize the fact that coaching is a powerful relationship configured to help design the future rather than get over the past – the latter an aspect
they suggest differentiates coaching from psychotherapy. Williams and Davis go on to acknowledge how coaches recognize their clients’ power to find their own solutions “when provided with support, accountability, and unconditional positive regard.”

Frank Salisbury suggests that the process of self-awareness initiated by the coach can release latent skills and talents that are not tapped by training. Appending additional prior terms such as ‘life’, ‘personal’, or ‘executive’ to the word ‘coaching’ makes no essential difference to the principles implied: for example, Anthony Grant suggests that life coaching is “a collaborative solution-focused, result-oriented and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and/or professional life of normal, nonclinical clients.”

Dianne Stober and Grant remark that definitions of coaching vary considerably in the extent of their emphasis on teaching or direct instruction as opposed to facilitating self-directed learning. As an example of a version with less instruction, Gallwey explores an approach to coaching and learning based on three principles, first, that nonjudgmental awareness is curative, second, trust in the inherent self of the coach and the one coached and their capacity to learn from experience, and third, to leave primary learning choices as the domain of the one coached.

Perhaps something like the latter principles, interwoven with instruction and experience of the kind mentioned in more teacherly versions of coaching by Stober and Grant were behind Bowen’s preference to call his therapeutic process of Family of Origin supervision ‘coaching’. A contemporary form of this is described by McGoldrick and Carter, who remark that through coaching clients can proactively define themselves in relationship to others in their families without emotionally giving in or cutting off.
McGoldrick and Carter further suggest that this process begins by fostering clients’ becoming observers of their behavior and family roles, deepens into their becoming family-pattern researchers, and finally helps them to align their behavior with their deepest values. The depth potential of coaching, particularly amidst crisis is reflected by Frederic Hudson.

Papero contributes Bowen’s observation from 1974 that he saw faster progress when people focused on differentiation of self in the context of their families than was true of people in weekly family therapy. From these observations a methodology evolved for working in the family emotional system. Papero observes that the clinician in this method is more of a consultant and teacher than a therapist and goes on to remark that often only one member of the family is engaged in the coaching. Progress seems to flow from the efforts that one person makes towards differentiating themselves within the family.

Holly Donnelly and Megan Gosbee suggest that incorporating this kind of coaching in family therapist training can contribute positively to the professional, clinical and personal functioning of the trainee. Jenny Brown, reflecting personal experience of coaching in this frame writes of finding valuable gains in her sustained efforts to define herself from her inner convictions while she remained in meaningful contact with others in the family system. A coach, in the family therapy terms offered by Irene Goldenberg and Herbert Goldenberg actively assists family members as a calm expert who uses low-key direct questions to define and clarify their emotional responsivity to one another. Such a coaching approach has been used in the context of couples endeavoring to remedy chemical dependency issues, and elsewhere quantitatively
explored to see if parents who better coach their children emotionally have offspring with more self-differentiation.239

We may speculate that among other possibilities, differentiation of self represents the integration of reason and emotion to give rise to a whole that is more than the additive sum of these aspects, as Leslie Greenberg puts it. He subsequently writes that coaching involves a collaborative educational experience involving mutual accountability of both client (trainee) and therapist (coach) in creating an experience for the client who actively participates in the process.240 Elsewhere, Greenberg observes that what he calls “Emotion coaching” directs attention to internal cues so the client can put them into words, helping the client to make sense of their experience.241

Something of this quality of attention to feelings appears in the work of Roth, who writes about her teacher and inner-exploration facilitator suggesting to her that she notice her experience, particularly of feelings instead of attempting to change it.242 Roth states that this method is a part of what is known as “inquiry” in the Ridhwan, or Diamond Approach school in which her teacher was trained. Traditional for millennia, the version Roth writes of is body-based and always begins with one’s direct experience of the present moment.243

Roth goes on to say that this possibility of completely inhabiting a feeling turned out to be, contrary to her fear, not the same as drowning in feelings. She says “With awareness (the ability to know what you are feeling) and presence (the ability to inhabit a feeling while sensing that which is bigger than the feeling), it is possible to be with what you believe will destroy you without being destroyed.” 244 Rather than orienting to feelings with resistance and rejection Roth encourages meeting them with openness and
kindness, the latter a term Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor say is a possibility of knowing others beyond more conventional mental understanding of them.\textsuperscript{245}

The Diamond Approach pursues integrated spiritual unfoldment through a depth understanding of personality and ego using object relations psychology, synthesized together with mystical teachings from Sufism and Buddhism, as well as with practices and technical perspectives from those paths.\textsuperscript{246} Inquiry is a much-used tool in this, the Ridhwan school approach. Almaas writes that the basis of inquiry is an open and curious desire to know the truth of one’s experience exactly as it is. He goes on to remark that inquiry is a spiritual practice facilitating and supporting being with one’s experience.\textsuperscript{247} Elsewhere Almaas points to inquiry meaning investigation and exploration, questioning arising out of the desire to find the obvious and immediate nature of experiences in the inner world.\textsuperscript{248} Almaas also writes about the motivation for inquiry coming from love of discovering what is really present, what is really here within us.\textsuperscript{249}

John Davis, citing Theodore Usatynski says the practice of inquiry enables an exploration of immediate experience that is encouraging, open-ended, and without preconceptions about outcome.\textsuperscript{250} Davis continues by saying that inquiry practice includes a meditative quality of open, present-centered engagement that includes examining developmental and psychodynamic obstacles to complete development, in the process of moving toward insight spiritually, and access to what he names \textit{essence}.\textsuperscript{251} Roth says essence is “who you really are. Your true nature,” and goes on to discern it as an intangible presence at the heart of love.\textsuperscript{252} Janice Crawford remarks that the work in the Ridhwan School reveals obstacles to being through using depth psychology.\textsuperscript{253}
Roth subsequently comments that each time inquiry reveals another intrinsic learning from direct experience within oneself there is another possibility of recognizing love’s apparent absence. In this process of dismantling beliefs and being courageous with feelings, she says “you have the chance to discover that you are not who you think you are. What a relief.”

**Imaginal Approaches to Differentiation of Self**

The following section draws the thread of individuation out of Jungian depth psychology and explores scholarship questioning the goal-directed overtone of the concept, offering instead a more richly textured, relational, and clinical perspective. The depth and cogency contributed to this widening by depth psychologists and clinicians encompasses an acute focus on the sometimes-painful absences and voids of family life. Significant concepts and practices in Imaginal Psychology are explored, affects and transformation linked, and Imaginal Psychology’s distinctive perspective on individuation offered. Various transformative practices are further discussed and some markers of growth delineated.

Imaginal Psychology is an orientation to psychology reclaiming soul as psychology’s primary concern. Soul is defined by Omer as “the mysterious stillness, aliveness and otherness at the center of being.” Jungian depth psychology reveals and elucidates, in a related but different frame some of the potentials significant to Imaginal Psychology. There is very little mention of “self-differentiation” in the depth psychological literature, at least the way this term is used in this case study. However, the larger, background concept of individuation is of great importance in Jungian psychology as well as being significant in Imaginal Psychology. Deeper exploration of
individuation in depth psychology reveals not only aspects of self-differentiation, but reveals the multifold ramifications of failures of parental care.

In what follows “individuation” refers to what Murray Stein simply calls psychological development, or the emergence of the self in psychological structure and in consciousness. Stein remarks on the difference between the meaning of individuation, a term shared by Jung and by Mahler. He explains that while for Mahler the concept of individuation (in the form of ‘separation/individuation’) is a stage on the way, individuation is by itself an end. Elsewhere, Stein remarks the quality of individuation developing spirally toward wholeness. Stein adduces Jung’s statement that to the extent we do not distinguish, we die, remarking, with Jung, that individuation as a principle is a defining characteristic of being human.

Passionate advocacy of the importance of individuation is reflected by Jeffrey Raff, who follows Jung in seeing in individuation a progressive union of human and divine. Margaret Clark draws a parallel between healing and individuation, and Jolande Jacobi likens individuation to the soul’s recurrent journey on a dark sea. Edward Whitmont offers the image of a spiral labyrinth, with the ego - the center of the conscious personality - revolving around the Self at center, recurrently ascending toward wholeness.

A number of commentators, theorists, and analysts remark on the prevailing emphasis in the mainstream of Jungian psychology on unity, undividedness, self-identity, and metaphysical transcendence. Hillman takes strident issue with the thrust of singularity shading the concept of individuation in the penumbra of our psychological culture. He reflects that Jung’s specification of individuation as a differentiation process
means not just differentiation in relation to those around us but must also imply differences deriving from our internal multiplicity. This points to a quality of soul-complexity quite different than the singularity implicit in words like “autonomy.”

Hillman suggests re-visioning the base of consciousness from I to anima archetype (archetype meaning, in Robert Hopcke’s authoritative interpretation of Jung perceptual patterns common to all humans). Hillman points out the impossibility of there truly being individuality if there is only one model of individuation, and following a thread he calls polytheistic, suggests that individuation is nothing but a “particularization of the soul.” Elsewhere, Hillman further throws over any singularity of perspective when he remarks on the diversity of forms of individuation, and that it is without predictable momentum or end. Echoing the ego’s dethronement, and the falling back to the inherent truth of soul-being, he says psychology properly is soul-, not man-centered.

This broadened sense of a soul psychology is illuminatingly present in Edinger’s Ego and Archetype. Edinger substantially elucidates the “redemptive process” implicitly invited into consciousness by the developmental struggles of patients in psychotherapy. These struggles are gradually discerned to be manifestations of what Edinger terms “the individuation urge.” This is a profound effort in the process of the personal, unique, and individual ego encountering and becoming separately-conscious of the Divine self (or “Self” as Edinger writes it) which is, notwithstanding, the ego’s unending and undivided backdrop and source.

This perspective steps beyond the territory of the psychodynamic – without leaving behind any of that terrain – into an engagement with divinity marked by the word
“soul.” Even the remarked-on particularization, singularity, and goal-directed flavor of the concept of individuation is somewhat softened and diffused by Edinger averring that rather than being a goal, individuation is a process.\textsuperscript{276} Ego, he remarks is the seat of subjective identity, while variously describing the Self as the unifying and ordering center of the entire conscious and unconscious psyche, and most simply as “the inner empirical deity.”\textsuperscript{277} Edinger also describes the Self as the seat of objective identity.\textsuperscript{278}

Crucial to Edinger's conception of these two relatively autonomous centers of psychic existence – which nevertheless have a close structural and dynamic affinity – is a concept from Erich Neumann, of the ego-Self axis.\textsuperscript{279} This is the essential link connecting ego and Self that ensures the ego’s integrity.\textsuperscript{280} Edinger suggests that the early phase of the development of this axis is intimately molded by the relationship between the parents and the child, and can be damaged by adverse environmental influences.\textsuperscript{281} In particular, in the infant's initial uroboric state nothing exists but the Self.\textsuperscript{282} Edinger calls this the “primary ego-Self-identity.”\textsuperscript{283} The Self is experienced initially through projection on to the parents. Amidst a helpless experience of indistinguishability between inside and outside, any failure of parental rapport or acceptance is experienced by the child as non-acceptance by the Self.\textsuperscript{284} Then the part, the ego becomes separated from the whole, the Self. The ego-Self axis is wounded.

Two reciprocal processes cyclically complement one another in child and later development: inflated identification of the ego with the deity-Self, and alienation of the ego from the Self when encounters with reality frustrate inflated expectations.\textsuperscript{285} When a parent, lacking in their own full development acts out of an unconscious inflated
identification with deity the consequences from the standpoint of their child may be permanently crippling damage to her or his ego-Self axis.

Parental rejection of some part of the personality of the child, remarks Edinger is involved in the case history of almost every client in psychotherapy. This kind of damaging repudiation by a caregiver is quite different than the situational-discernment of ordinary parental training and discipline, because it proceeds from the projection of the parent’s inflated shadow onto the child. The impact for the child is “inhuman, total, and irrevocable.” Damage to the ego-Self axis manifests in a lack of self-acceptance, giving rise to the person feeling unworthy of existing, or of being themselves. Francesco Montecchi, amongst other writers details other depth consequences of inadequate mothering, sometimes including an inability to separate from the mother.

In psychotherapy, writes Edinger the therapist’s acceptance of the client with a damaged ego-Self axis, while initially unbelievable to the client, can gradually become the basis of a powerful transference. The projection of the Self on the therapist, particularly as the “organ of acceptance” ushers into being within the client a center of order and meaning where before there was only despair and chaos. Initially, this rejuvenating effect, inspiring of hope and optimism wanes between sessions, but gradually the client begins to accumulate trustworthy experiences of their own inner ego-Self axis.

Finally, with the emergence of the inflated expectations and possessive attitudes natural to lessened, albeit remaining unconsciousness of the ego-Self axis, experiences of rejection by the environment or by the therapist occur. Alienation will once again hurt the ego-Self axis. This repeated cycle, alternating inflation and alienation is the putative
process of psychic development in the first half of life, progressively enabling a
differentiation of the ego and the Self. A later and more mature stage is characterized
by the ego-Self axis becoming conscious, and engaged in a dialectic ego-and-Self
relationship. Contrary to an earlier statement regarding individuation being a process
rather than a goal, Edinger writes that this dialectic possibility of consciousness of the
ego-Self axis is the state of individuation: he is, in fact pointing to a dynamic balance.  

A number of experientially informed, authoritative, and insightful clinicians share
their perspectives from within the childhood failures of this process. For example,
projection of a parent’s inflated shadow damaging to the child's ego-self axis may take
the form of envy. Ann and Barry Ulanov remark that healing the ego-self axis will
involve encountering “envying emotion.” Cohen writes about “the Snow White
syndrome,” in which a girl makes the agonizing discovery that her mother's envy – angry,
destructive, and terrifying – punishes her daughter for feeling too good, liking herself,
looking good, or doing too well. Mothers’ envy, writes Cohen is the most frightening
kind of all because of the mother's fundamental role to help the girl feel loved and safe.

Estes links individuation with reclaiming the naturalness of what she calls “Wild
Woman.” Malignantly narcissistic mothering may be the shadow of a parent severed
from her “wildish Self” by trauma, thereby feeling entitled to be a child herself.
Woodman, exploring obstacles to participating responsibly in one's own destiny remarks
on the diminished sense of authenticity experienced by a child whose parents are
narcissistically unable to mirror her.

Cohen’s version of the Snow White tale little mentions the father. For Cohen, this
absence is symbolic of the deficiency of the qualities of balanced reflection and fostering
of healthy sexuality a father can provide – and frequently does not, because of his absence, distraction, or emotional unavailability.\textsuperscript{301} Murdoch writes of the over-compensation and perfectionism that can develop in daughters when father is absent or indifferent.\textsuperscript{302} The stages of what she calls “the heroine’s journey” include separation from the feminine, literally parting from her personal mother. The ultimate integration of masculine and feminine within herself includes healing the wounded masculine.\textsuperscript{303}

Woodman remarks on the possibility of finding the depths of passion through loving our own unravished inner maiden.\textsuperscript{304} Only through this love-opening, she suggests, can we dare to encounter the raging energies at the core of the addiction to perfection, dynamics which are otherwise under the lock and key of patriarchal culture, over-focused on specialization.\textsuperscript{305} Commenting on Woodman’s work, Susan Rowland remarks the impossible perfectionism driving a woman through her sense of her body.\textsuperscript{306}

Leonard reflects how a damaged relationship with the father can lead to a sense of the self being injured, amidst a cluster of despairing, lonely, isolated, abandoned, and rejected feelings.\textsuperscript{307} Murdoch writes in a later book that the unexamined relationship between father and daughter – particularly when the woman over-identifies with, or hero-worships her father – may negatively impact her sense of authority, entitlement, and power in her personal and social life.\textsuperscript{308} A father who abandons his daughter through emotional distance may leave her feeling vulnerable and longing for his love.\textsuperscript{309} For such a daughter, to live an autonomous, yet healthy and emotionally connected life requires an eventual “painful process of separation and individuation” from her father.\textsuperscript{310}

In Imaginal Psychology the concept of individuation is closely connected with the possibility of liberating “the soul’s passionate nature,” as Omer names it.\textsuperscript{311} In Omer’s
theory and practice the nine biological affects comprehensively validated by Silvan Tomkins and central to affect theory are seen as capable of transmutation into key human capacities. To transmute means, according to Karen Jaenke, “to take the psychic energy provided by the affect and imaginatively channel it into creative expression in a way that meets the requirements of the present moment.”

A capacity “is a distinct dimension of human development and human evolution that delineates a specific potential for responding to a domain of life experience.”

This transmutation of affects into capacities has in more ancient terms been called that of passions into virtues. A practice Omer calls reflexive participation can bring this about: he defines this as “the practice of surrendering through creative action to the necessities, meanings, and possibilities inherent in the present moment.”

Disidentification, a key dimension in this transformation of identity is “associated with the emergence of a spacious awareness free from frozen images of self.”

Reflexivity, defined by Omer as “the capacity to engage and be aware of the psychological structures that shape and constitute our experience,” has parallels with mindfulness, a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience.

In Imaginal Psychology reflexivity is held as central to the transmuting of affects and the consequent cultivation of capacities, as well as to the process of individuation, which Omer terms “the emergence of human capacities in a unique and connected way.”

Initiating transformation, this process “requires courage, curiosity, and compassion.”

Generally in opposition to this is gatekeeping, which “refers to the individual and collective dynamics that resist and restrict experience.” Omer remarks “The term gatekeepers refers to the personification of these dynamics.” By contrast, “the
Friend,” a personification of compassionate presence for oneself and others, “refers to those deep potentials of the soul which let us proceed with passionate objectivity and encourage us to align with the creative will of the cosmos.”

Intrinsic to this individuation-initiation is a deep listening, an inhabitation of presence which engages “vulnerability, mystery, and complexity. This gathered listening engages empathic imagination in ways that catalyze mutual individuation.” Empathic imagination, says Omer “integrates and amplifies the somatic, affective, and cognitive dimensions of experience.” Perhaps this is akin to the concept of intersubjectivity, as well as related to empathy itself, sometimes regarded as our ability to know the inner lives of others by vicarious introspection.

Another, related cluster of experience in the therapeutic context is sometimes called the therapeutic alliance involving, says John Maltzberger “intersubjective empathic attention.” The heartbeat of attending to soul, writes Jaenke, is “attending to images, imagination, experience, and affective life” Omer’s concept of autonomy echoes individuation and refers to “the self regulating potentials intrinsic to the soul’s sovereign nature.” Each overtone in this paragraph echoes Schore’s sense of regulation arising from both intra-individual and relational sources.

Imaginal structures are “assemblies of sensory, affective, and cognitive aspects of experience constellated into images; they both mediate and constitute experience.” Personal, cultural, and archetypal influences determine the specifics of imaginal structures; these influences “may be teased apart by attending to the stories that form personal character and the myths that shape cultural life.” Omer goes on to state that during the individuation process “imaginal structures are transmuted into emergent and
enhanced capacities as well as a transformed identity.” Change that is enduring and substantive requires this transmutation which “depends upon an affirmative turn toward the passionate nature of the soul.”

Other concepts, practices, and approaches significant in Imaginal Psychology include *psychological multiplicity*. This denotes individuals having within them multiple distinct and seemingly-separated characters, personas, or “centers of subjectivity” as Omer names them. *Somatic awareness* means to experience the body from within. A special case of somatic awareness is called by Eugene Gendlin “the felt sense” in his practice of *Focusing*, in which a clinician’s attention to the changes therein are posited as healing.

Jaenke notes four dynamics identified by Omer as markers of growth. Further unfolded by Maren Hjul these are *personalization*, involving owning one’s experience; *embodying*, which means to connect “with the somatic and affective dimensions of experience;” *diversifying*, meaning to engage with the reality of our multiplicity; and *deepening*, engaging contact with the mythic dimensions of our experience. These elaborate the emergent human capacities named in Omer’s definition of individuation. In this lasting, real change “imaginal structures are transmuted into *mature capacities*, the ability to respond to certain domains of experience with a corresponding strength. . .” Finally, remarks Jaenke, “It is through this funneling of affective arousal into creative forms that the soul individuates and reaches maturity.”
Conclusion

The biological, cognitive/behavioral, psychodynamic, sociocultural, and coaching lenses seen through in this chapter, as well as imaginal approaches all offer differing views of selfdifferentiation, while collectively enriching the concept.

Disparities are much less in evidence than agreements and resonances: neural integration through a biological lens, for example echoes secure attachment from within the psychodynamic realm. This in turn reflects the stability of relative indifference to anxiety that comes with high selfdifferentiation. Sensitive through a sociocultural lens that self-differentiation looks different from a female perspective may alter coaching using a schema approach belonging to the cognitive-behavioral orientation. Threaded through all of these coherences is the recognizable theme that narcissistic and emotionlessabsent parenting can significantly damage the development of the child, and profoundly affect the adult who ensues.

Practical utility – in terms of the practices, interventions, and concepts utilized in the coaching work that forms the substance of this case study – is preponderant in the imaginal approaches section, alongside dense theorizing focused on individuation. The synergy of imaginal concept, principle, and practice leads to a quality of workability that integrates the material in this review and the account of the progression of coaching which is presented in the next section.
CHAPTER 3

PROGRESSION OF THE COACHING

The Beginning

As the dozen women in the Reflections and Revelations retreat breakout group in turn shared their current experience I worked briefly with each of them in my role as facilitator to unfold and illuminate whatever issue they spoke of. Amy was the only one of them that had questions not pertaining to eating and food, the topic of the larger retreat of which this smaller group was a part.

Tall and slim, with the elegance and self-conscious physical grace of a model, Amy was dressed comfortably, although her attire was more chic and fashionable than the sweats and sweatshirts typically worn by others in the group. While respectful of everybody else’s purpose in being at the retreat, Amy made it clear that her path to being there had been sparked by reading The Craggy Hole in My Heart and the Cat Who Fixed It by Roth, the retreat’s leader and principal teacher. Amy said that her catalyst for attending the retreat was Roth’s explorations in her book of her relationships with her parents, and she asked questions in the group that day about her own relationship with her own parents, and her efforts to find space in herself completely distinct from them.

Amy was one of nearly 100 participants at the retreat. Focused as I was more on issues such as binge eating and struggling with dieting that others brought to the event I could do relatively little to address the concerns Amy brought to the group. She and I
worked briefly with the harsh voices within her alternately telling her of her autonomy deficiencies and then switching to criticism because of her failures as a loyal daughter to unceasingly think of her parents. She appeared to experience some relief when our dialogue illuminated the possibility of having some psychological distance from both these perspectives and in due course, my attention moved on to another participant.

Not having been particularly struck by our work together I was a little surprised when Amy walked alongside me as we left the room at the end of the group. As we made our way to the distant building of the dining room through the crisp October beauty of the mountaintop retreat center, she asked me if there was a possibility, subsequent to the retreat of working individually with me on the issues she had brought to the group. Perhaps part of my surprise was that I could not quite figure out what Amy was doing at this retreat, an apparent misfit amongst dozens of participants struggling with emotional eating issues, some of these life-threatening and ferocious in intensity. I wondered how our work in the group had been impactful for her. Responding directly and sincerely I said to her that I would be very glad to offer her coaching support, and gave her my contact details. Subsequent to the retreat, she made an appointment to see me.

Our first individual session took place at my office in San Rafael approximately 10 days following the end of that retreat. Amy spoke at length during that session about the distress she felt because she could not stop thinking obsessively about her parents. She shared with me events such as her mother saying to her that if she ever contemplated leaving the San Francisco bay area her parents would move to wherever she was going, to continue to be near her. Amy also found herself repeatedly engaging with her mother as a medical consultant and facilitator as her mother explored cosmetic facial surgery options:
Amy was expert about appearance enhancement through her role as a medical company sales representative working with doctors using Botox, and her mother knew it.

In listening to Amy speaking about her struggles I was struck by a number of qualities apparent in her disclosures and her manner of speaking of them. One of these complex qualities was the flavor of habituation to the situation with her parents, as if things being that way were a matter of course. This adaptation was expressed both in Amy’s verbal facility and clear cerebral capacity to contextualize the situation in an ‘adult’ fashion. Underground to these aspects was the distress manifest in her coming to the retreat, speaking with me and the content of her suffering words, spoken there in my office. When I named this background distress to Amy, said how manifest the feeling of it was to me, beneath her capacity to cope and to conceptualize her way past her difficulties, when I advocated for how natural were her struggles to find space for her own being, distinct from that of her parents, there was the first perceptible ripple of affect in the room, and the first wiped-away tear.

Also in that first session, in the context of my reflecting to her that she – visibly – tended to hold her breath at affectively significant moments, she said to me that she regularly experienced “severe” levels of tension in her whole back, especially her left shoulder. I invited her to deliberately occupy the area of tension, somatically inhabiting it from within at the same time as she gave interior attention to more neutral feeling areas like the sensations of her hands and feet, and her backside on the chair. Within a short time the tension released.2 In the next session she shared with me that this release of tension resulted in three subsequent days of acute aching.
When I now look back at my notes – none of which are direct transcription of our sessions, so any quotations here are based on recollection, my notes, and my best effort at accurate reconstruction – I can surmise that by the second session a week later there had already been a deepening of trust between us. I asked her in that second session what she considered so dysfunctional about herself – an echo of the normalcy of the distortion of her parental relationship that she so clearly expressed in the first session. She seemed taken aback, as if this quality of dysfunction was her reality, and therefore completely obvious to anybody. She said that she had never really been close to anybody, nor did anybody really know her. She didn’t like to be alone but said “I’m a terrific entertainer and storyteller, and can make anyone like me when I want.” But when it came to being close or being intimate she felt a nameless terror within herself, as if she was empty, and wanted nothing to do with that troublingly vacant aspect of her interiority.

In my only being able to ‘surmise’ deepening trust in our connection there is another echo, of my initial wondering if our work in the small group at the Mount Madonna retreat center had impacted Amy. Apparently it had – to judge by Amy’s enlisting my support beyond the retreats. However, after the first session I was unsure if the moment of deep affect and tears had meant anything to her. In retrospection my uncertainty reflects a disjunction between Amy’s interior experience of positive reality in respect of trust and being affected – and her being able to credit emotional connection with another about these qualities of relationship with her. Even at that early stage my relationship with her echoed this disparity. By empathically, yet reflectively standing aside from these difficulties, without ignoring them I implicitly offered back to her trustworthy and safe images and evoked feelings of a veridical connection beyond harm,
distrust, and disavowal. Perhaps this offering was the beginning of healing the residual chaos and confusion in Amy from her mother's relational distortions.

**Planning the Coaching**

At the time I worked with Amy I utilized very little formal structure for planning my coaching, and the structure of my supervision by Roth required no such formalities. Rather, I trusted to my inherent sense of the client’s potential forward directionality, to an intuition of their best being. Palpably obvious intuitively, this is often radically at variance with the various protections and defenses offered by the person’s vulnerable – and deep – layers as their customary subjective reality.

In our second session Amy also spoke about taking her then-boyfriend home when she was 22 to meet her parents, and how at dinner in a restaurant, her mother had stood up and screamed at her boyfriend. Amy had never since taken another man home, and the ricocheting echoes of her mother's inculcations to her as a teenager that she “didn’t-need-a-man” remained unhealed in her. Clearly, coaching her meant the possible mending of these wounds of need, vulnerability, and disavowal.

Also in our second session Amy spoke about her father possibly having Alzheimer’s disease and – amidst experiencing terrible guilt about it – her hoping he would die. She spoke about her mother traveling overseas, having extramarital affairs. I wrote in my notes of this second session “It’s as though Amy can’t wait to be released from her family, and doesn’t realize that the imprisonment is within her.” Amy spoke about being repeatedly romantically attracted to doctors who are “off-the-Bell-curve smart,” about her father and his multiple doctorates and her college-professor mother.
She said she equated “being smart” with “being crazy,” and compellingly “dumbed myself down” All these aspects of her, too begged for healing.

Amy said in the third session that her mother repeatedly averred that the only reason she stayed with her father was to keep the family together. Since Amy was the only child living at home (her half-brother, Mike, 20 years her senior and her father’s son by a previous marriage was long gone from the family home), Amy felt intensely guilty and responsible for this. This dynamic, too invited change and reparation. So did the compelling sense Amy felt that she was consigned by her history to repeat the agony of her own parenting, the shouting, lovelessness, and explosive behavior, with “nothing else ever being modeled to me.” I found myself wondering, as her coach, might there truly be other real and heartfelt possibilities in relationship for Amy?

Also in the third session Amy said she not only recognized herself longing for a relationship with someone extraordinarily smart, but ruefully saw her pursuit of relationships with people not very good at relationships. This left her grieving, bereft, and filled with craving. She acknowledged these dynamics reflected her yearning for feeling-relationship with her father, as well as some of his and her mother's violently-frictional relational characteristics. It seemed to be a reparative intermission to take away with her from this session a deeply sincere question about what she truly wanted.

At the time I first knew Amy it was obvious to me that I was interacting with someone of considerable talent, with numerous gifts. Equally obviously, she had a subjective sense of limitation and circumscription by the wounds of her family. She experienced this sense of damage as normative. Only relatively recently had she began to
honor her sense of internal friction, recognizing how it reflected the discrepancy between her life circumstances and ways of functioning, and her nameless deeper longing.

She chafed insistently against the yoke of her parents’ too-close relationship with her – and asked for, and received from me as much support as possible for this to change. In the agonized form of wishing for her father to die she hoped for a transformation of her relationship with him from defensiveness into loving him – and again, our work together supported this possibility of metamorphosis. In the background of both of those possibilities of change and healing was her tortured relationship with her mother: this too, in the course of time underwent positive alteration and even transmutation. This progression was not “planned” in the sense of these changes being anticipated and mapped from present-to-future, but each of these possibilities was yearning to take place – and through the medium of our work together, could gradually emerge.

The Coaching Journey

From our initial conversation during the retreat at Mount Madonna to the end of the period covered by this case study the work Amy and I did together was focused on her relationships, particularly with her father and mother. In the context of support from me these external relationships shifted – in mostly positive ways – in the year of our initial work. During the 28 coaching sessions it was as if Amy found a ground of being of her own for the first time in her life, and stood in it. Here, she could claim her own sovereignty, alongside much more complete ownership of love and care for the people closest to her, as well as their love and care for her. Powerful and compelling life circumstances – in particular the death of her father – in that year lent this transformative process clear undertones of an initiatory journey. Amy found herself at times occupying
dark depths as well as riding wave crests at giddying heights. She emerged from these transitions changed, and in a quite different personal and relational space from that in which she began it.

In Amy’s second-session account of her intimate relationships men seemed to occupy one of two positions. She had partners with whom she felt depth and intensity; often doctors, frequently very smart, alternating with men she distracted herself with, acting out sexually to divert herself from the pain of losing a relationship with a man of the former kind. After a relational rupture with Scott, who she felt very connected with she met Brian and had sex with him immediately, knowing she did not care about him. More recently she had a number of dates with a doctor by the name of Nate, another very bright man who had done a lot of the same kind of Jungian personal growth work Amy had experienced. Subsequently, Nate rejected her and in her sadness and upset she went out and found Todd, a sex partner to distract herself with, knowing very well he was not someone she cared about.

In the second session Amy also revealed her busy, even frantic thoughts about how soon she could get pregnant by whatever man she was with, a hurry sourced in her concerns about her biological clock expiring. Although she said she very much wanted to marry and have children, this issue did not surface again subsequent to her saying in the next session that deliberately, for the sake of her own ease she had backed off the very strong pressure on herself to be wed and pregnant as soon as possible.

During our third session Amy shared with me various reflections around the central, strongly emotional theme of her longing for a relationship with her father. When I invited Amy to pause within herself as she spoke about this longing a wave of tears
came up in her. She saw that her craving for relationships with someone as smart as her father was also a yearning to heal the emotional void of his seeming-inability to connect with her. “He is no good at all at human relationships,” she remarked with sorrowful finality. Seeing that her brilliant father and college-professor mother were ‘crazy’, and that to be smart was to be infected by the same madness, she realized that she puts the brilliant men she’s attracted to on a pedestal which is the inverse of the “airhead” persona she took on in high school.

Amy took in the reality in this session that only a very smart person could engage in these kinds of maneuvers not to be smart, a truth I reflected as an external witness who also mirrored to her the possibility of sanely witnessing herself. She also began to reflect about her difficulty to take any question deeper than just a mental level, or to delve into an inquiry beyond “What can I do about this?” She acknowledged that she’s very adept verbally within herself, often preoccupied with frantically running end-gaining thoughts. Recognizing for herself these various kinds of more surface-level functioning, she accepted my invitation to experience being alone without entertaining herself with TV, alcohol, phone calls, or reading. She also took on, in the form of ongoing heartful attentiveness the open-ended question “In my heart, what do I want?”

The response Amy experienced to this question exemplified several aspects of her, all of which she brought to our fourth session. She said that she had “tried on various adjectives” in her efforts to answer the question. Then, her mother arriving unexpectedly home from Europe, she had gone to her parents’ house in Palo Alto where entering the front door she suddenly knew the answer from a very different, immediate and intuitive realm within her: “I want to have my heart open.” Naming this to me during the session
brought up a wave of Amy’s tears. I affirmed the inherent truthfulness in her answer by reflecting how powerfully her words had affected me, striking me with a resounding impact in my chest, a completely trustworthy affect and sensation.

The same openness that offered her this answer also unlatched the door to her having sudden and strikingly-fresh – albeit considerably less pleasant – experiences of what it was like to be at her parents’ house. While she was there, she did not feel hungry and did not want to eat; unlike many of her friends, she never thought of sleeping there, and was strongly aware of the “life-negative” space of the house, a negativity she perceived as principally her mother’s. Amy disclosed that her best effort to date to control distance with her mother was to never answer the phone when she called but to always use voicemail. During this same session she and I further discussed her afflicted relationship with her mother, interwoven with her repeatedly telling the story of her mother’s practice of relaying her hatred of men to Amy all through Amy’s adolescence.

Amy said repeatedly “I was never allowed to fuck-up,” and painted a picture of an adolescence in which her closeness to her mother was closely tied to behaving herself as her mother wanted her to. This included paying lip service to her mother’s negative attitudes towards men, with the implication that this negativity was caused by the distressed relationship between Amy’s mother and father. We talked about the overtly-syntonic – but beneath the surface distressful – triangulation between Amy and her mother, in opposed alliance to her father. Another triangle in the family was between Amy’s beloved maternal grandmother – who had been a successful fashion model – Amy’s mother, and Amy, encouraged and groomed by her grandmother to be interested in beauty, couture, and makeup, against which trend Amy’s mother strongly fought. A
further element of this same triangle was the extremely poor relationship between Amy’s mother and her own mother, Amy’s grandmother. Amy and I talked at length and in depth about the multiple disparate dynamics in her various relationships.

The confusing concurrent jumble of roles Amy found herself playing at this time in relationship to her parents was poignantly focused in her feeling like “the only sane one in the family.” By default, Amy made the decisions about her father’s medical care - because of her mother's neglect. Her mother’s search for other lovers besides her father led to her enlisting Amy’s adult medical consultation skills in order make cosmetic surgery decisions. Amy felt torn because of the energetic sense of her mother trying to keep her a young child while conferring on her adult status as a medical expert. Amy expressed confusion, and sometimes rage about the “impossible” conflicted relationships she found herself in around her parents.

The theme of relationship with her mother continued to play out in subsequent sessions. Amy spoke about how mortified and horrified she had been during the incident when her mother during dinner at a restaurant stood up and screamed abuse at Amy’s then-boyfriend. When Amy and I spoke in the seventh session about the fact that Amy had never in the intervening 14 years spoken to her mother about the incident, her tears welled up. We talked about the intense anger she felt at her mother, yet how deeply she longed to be connected with her, and the fear she felt to get close to her – and how these dynamics were prototypical of all her relationships. In this same session we discussed her relationship options with her mother: Amy was emphatically clear she did not want to terminate her relationship with her mother, despite the swirling of very strong and sometimes very negative feelings toward her.
In the same session Amy acknowledged that she was “starting to open” after many years of feeling a need to remain emotionally closed. In the Jungian psychotherapy Amy had been in for two years, terminating three years before working with me she had experienced herself understanding more of her history and the concepts of that particular therapy approach. In the work we were doing together, with its mindful somatic and affective focus, there was clearly a different sense for her of more access to her feelings. This was occasionally problematic: Amy would sometimes be reluctant to open deep aspects of herself during a session because her destination immediately after the session was her parents’ house in Palo Alto, where her conversation with her parents was habitually limited to superficial topics.

Amy found it helpful when in the eighth session I again reflected the tension between the surface normalcy of her relationship with her parents and the turbulent rivers of emotional truthfulness flowing underground in her. She reported the emergence into awareness of more tendrils of that truthfulness: Nate, the man who had rejected her not long before asked her to have “a sex affair” with him and she noticed that this was both unwelcome – and “safe feeling” for her. We talked about what, by contrast ‘unsafe’ might mean for her and she spoke about her longings for vulnerability and intimacy – but also the clear association of these qualities with the toxicity in her parents’ house. She noticed that whenever her mother called her, her breath cut off completely. I asked her to pay attention to what she was feeling in those respiration-suspended moments and the response was an elegant dream:
I have painted my bedroom pink and I’m writing an essay about my breath shutting-off. I ask my mother to proofread the essay. As she proofreads the essay, she weeps.

The latter conversation between us occurred about two months into our work. Amy reported her mother confessing to her that despite her previous statements blaming Amy for this, she had really stayed in a loveless marriage for 25 years “because she was afraid to have a real relationship.” She had not stayed with Amy’s father “because of Amy.” At 67 years old Amy’s mother revealed to Amy that she had never experienced intimacy in her life. In this same session Amy said to me that she knew that her father loved her, but he was not any good as a parent, while her mother was a good parent, but never loved her.

Amy made steady efforts to be in touch with herself, despite the challenging difficulty of this: “How do I find out what’s happening in me?” she asked at one point in our 10th session. In the following session she spoke about finding herself drinking a lot of warm liquids like soup and tea and actively noticing the sensation of warmth in her chest, which she speculated was sometimes the closest she could get to feeling. She became increasingly aware of feelings of hatred for her mother as mom spent time “running around looking for a man.” As Amy gradually was able to withdraw her judgmental projection through repeated exploratory conversations with me, her true feelings began to emerge, in the form of her own often disallowed and often deeply pained yearnings for love and intimacy.

Three months after the beginning of our work together Amy reported a number of positive changes. She had been talking almost daily for months to Michael, about whom
she wondered “Why doesn’t he make a physical move with me?” In the middle of lunch with him she realized that he really knew nothing about her and that this did not constitute any kind of intimacy whatsoever. She said that a certain kind of “indulgence and fantasizing” in her died suddenly during that meal, subsequent to which she broke off the relationship. Next, Amy spoke about an exceptionally enjoyable evening – quite contrary to expectation – spent with her mother and half-brother, Mike. Finally, she reported a conversation with her mother in which Amy said “I don’t want to be a young child for you any more, nor do I want to be your best friend: I just want to be your daughter and be in a normal daughter relationship with you.” Amy had said this to her mother before, but this time she said that her mother “got it,” and acknowledged getting it, as well as reflecting that yes, she had indeed been trying to keep Amy young.

I asked Amy what she attributed these positive experiences to. She replied that giving her attention to the ‘cellular’ level of herself – a catchphrase referring to mindfully attending to inner experience – was bringing about deeper awareness and opening possibilities hitherto unavailable to her. Two brief romantic connections with men affirmed these changes. She had four dates with a man called Matt, with whom she felt a kind of connectedness despite the fact he wasn’t “off the Bell curve smart,” nor a doctor. She found herself willing to be in uncertainty with him, forgoing her usual black-and-white decision style about the relationship. She also met a “brilliant” defense contractor who flew from Washington to have lunch with her. Amy commented that three months before she would have jumped at the chance of playing a part in his fantasy but that was not at all what she currently wanted, and could say so to him.
An experience with her boss, Lori, reminded Amy of dynamics within herself still asking for healing. Lori gave Amy high marks in a performance review except in respect of her tendency to completely overload herself with work and set schedules and hold expectations of herself and others quite impossible to fulfill. Very unusually, Amy cried during the review, and then Lori cried, after which Amy experienced a quality of intimacy with Lorraine “because Lori stood to gain nothing from caring about me and being close to me, but she was close.”

This quality of mutually being open – and the way Amy could from this more affectively-porous relational basis make changes in her life – contrasted starkly for Amy with her constricted emotional connectedness with her mother. Amy and I worked repeatedly on her intense judgments of her mother. Her mother’s surgically-altered appearance and “giddy” youthfulness prompted Amy’s friends to say they wish they had a mother like Amy’s. Within herself Amy felt tremendous anger that she had never received from her mother the kind of support for finding love, romance, and relationship that she, Amy, was giving her mother in the form of being her medical consultant.

A poignant and telling instance of this occurred when in Amy’s presence her mother remarked to Gail, Amy’s childhood friend that she regretted very much that Amy had never married and had children. Gail bluntly replied that in her experience Amy’s mother had always actively discouraged Amy from having anything to do with men and family life. Amy was very affected to hear a relatively impartial witness affirm her own experience. Amy appropriately gave back responsibility to her mother for what was hers, and uprooted an introjected belief about herself, seeing it clearly as her mother’s.
At about this point in Amy’s process – after four months of sessions and some longer delays between meetings because of Amy’s work schedule – a shadowy thread that had been interwoven through our conversations from the very beginning began to make a more prominent appearance. When Amy had originally told me about her maternal grandmother she had also said that at 89 years-old this much-loved figure had elected suicide to end her life, and being from a family of physicians had the means to do so (I have no data in respect of this beyond these bare facts). Others in her extended family – for example, her paternal grandfather – had apparently undergone some form of elective assisted suicide in advanced age. From time to time Amy had spoken briefly and in passing with me about her mother’s mentioning this possibility for her father because of his Alzheimer’s disease.

This time, Amy reported, the conversation with her mother was more pressing: Amy’s mother wanted Amy to have a conversation with her father about suicide. Such a conversation seemed absolutely inappropriate to Amy – an evaluation that I robustly echoed and affirmed. However, as Amy unfolded the backdrop of events, it appeared that in the earlier stages of the progression of her father’s Alzheimer’s disease he had spoken of intending to commit suicide, but had become insufficiently lucid to carry it through. Her mother’s intention was by some means to bring this conversation back into currency. Without dismissing this history, I continued to support Amy's healthier perspective.

Leaving her father with paid caregivers, Amy’s mother was frequently away from home, sometimes taking lengthier trips to Europe, often with extramarital romantic objectives. During one of her times away Amy had dinner with her father and was struck by his periodic lucidity. He acknowledged Amy’s mother reinventing herself, for
example, and remembered precisely how many overseas trips Amy had taken. These moments of clarity catalyzed tears for Amy in our session. Sorrowful for the times that her father was no longer lucid, furious at her mother’s pressure around the suicide conversation, Amy was also deeply affected to discover how much less angry she was with her father than she used to be.

The upshot of this dire parental dynamic was Amy saying to her father “You have to go into a residential facility or this situation with Mom will make me crazy.” Her father seemed unresisting about this assessment; indeed, this option for his care had already been discussed at length. Then Amy told her mother that she wanted no more conversations about suicide, or vengeful remarks about how Amy had changed, “and other people think so too.” In the aftermath of these crucial conversations, with their powerful overtones of withdrawing from family projections and setting boundaries, Amy felt unbearably lonely, as if, she said “I’ve lost my family.” She was frequently in tears during our session. As she periodically tended to in the depth of crises, she reported beginning to binge on sleep, averaging 12 hours a night. As previously, I explored the possibility of depression but Amy’s experience of blanketing herself in sleep and withdrawal seemed ultimately adaptive, as if she was wrapping ancient sadness and hurt in healing layers of sleeping.

In the middle of this period of feasting on sleep, Amy spent a weekend completely clearing out a storage basement she had for the longest time been meaning to organize. She also again accompanied her father to the neurologist, where there was a final, very clear confirmation that he did indeed have Alzheimer’s disease.
The next session was almost exactly five months after we began our work together. Amy came in to tell me that her father, in the moments, and sometimes days he was lucid clearly had no intention of entering an Alzheimer’s care facility and was intent on ending his life, on a stipulated date two months hence. During this session a palpable and powerful outflow of energy from Amy’s heart towards her father became evident to me. I reflected this back to her, acknowledging the profound qualities of love and the primal ground of being from which I sensed it emerging. I had previously experienced brief moments of such a tidal flow from Amy, but this had a sustained, powerful, and resolute quality, one that seemed to level obstacles and create vibrant possibilities. Amy said she resonated with my perception.

Amy told me that her brother Mike was moving to the bay area six weeks hence to support his – her – their father’s dying process. He was, she said, completely supportive of her plan to use the large quantity of air miles she had accumulated in the course of her peripatetic work to fly every single one of her father’s many friends in to see him, to have dinner with him and visit with him one last time. Her father thought this was a wonderful idea. Her mother, however – staggeringly, to Amy – had other plans. She was anticipating guests from overseas staying in their house in the period leading up to the planned date of her husband’s – Amy’s father’s – anticipated passing. Amy was completely shocked that when she begged her mother to reconsider this decision, there was even a moment of hesitation on her mother’s part. Some of what Amy was feeling in these moments was a powerful outflow of caring and protective feeling towards her father. What she also became aware of seeing and feeling, up close and very personally, was what she described as “my mom’s narcissism.” Amy’s own sacrifice in respect of her
father’s process was self-evident: she had proposed, and had received grudging permission for a leave of absence from her work and being without income for the following two months.

In the following session, our 17th, Amy told me that her mother had unreservedly canceled her prospective plans for guests in the house in the following two months. For the very first time Amy felt related to by her mother in direct mutuality, as an adult, and as if she was participating in her parents’ lives as a grown-up. The changes occurring within her and within her relationships with her parents were taking place so rapidly and profoundly that it was as if, Amy said, death-in-prospect was speeding up the process of everyone’s alteration to an extraordinary degree. My affirmation of these remarks was that I perceived not just change, but ongoing transmutation.

Her father, adjunct to his process with Alzheimer’s disease had been consulting with a local psychiatrist and psychologist who had seen Amy and her father together in the week before her mother’s change of heart and mind. This clinician had called Amy during the weekend preceding our 18th session and communicated to her the profound and affecting quality of growing he had experienced as a consequence of being in relationship to her father’s process of disease and dying. The doctor suggested that anyone involved in her father’s journey at this late stage could experience the kind of expansion he was experiencing. Amy said she had taken his expression profoundly to heart and had been very moved by it. At this point, five months out from the beginning of our work 18 sessions prior Amy spoke of a sense of connection with her father that she had never had in her life before. She also wondered aloud if it was realistic to hope for a similar healing change in her relationship with her mother.
At the same time, Amy’s vulnerability to her emotions became almost overwhelming. Practicing yoga or writing in her journal brought up more tears than she could comfortably manage and she began jogging for exercise, and spending time in her bed, eating macaroni and cheese for comfort. With her mother on an extended visit to China and Mike still overseas and still only prospectively in transit to temporary residence in Palo Alto, Amy saw her father three times a week, which was hard for her, yet felt somehow right. Amidst increasing resentment at her mother and Mike for failing to support her and her father at this crucial time, alongside filling in the falling-through of arrangements with caregivers and dog walkers set up by her mother, Amy made her way through a period of finding herself closely and frequently being with her father.

There were echoes at this time of our fifth session, almost 6 months earlier. Then Amy had spoken about how “weird” it was for her to be in a room alone with her father, how he gazed at her without speaking and how it felt to her “too close and too intimate for comfort.” There were echoes, too, of my invitation at that time to ask her father what was happening when he gazed at her in that way, as well as for her to explore her experience of discomfort within herself when she felt so “weird.”

In case I was missing any significant symptoms of depression, I encouraged Amy to call her father’s psychiatrist/psychologist and share her own experiences, so she might receive clear feedback about whether she was in the territory of prospective grief – or of reactive depression. As was so often the case with Amy, this suggestion was both welcome and resulted in no action, but during these interactions the clinician in question quietly entered the cast of characters offering care and holding to Amy and her family.
Shortly thereafter Amy experienced a slew of support sliding into place: her optimistic and upbeat godmother, Judith took up residence in her parents’ house, assuming buoyant care of her father. Amy’s mother, as well as Mike arrived at the family home. Amy’s challenge switched from going-it-alone to trying to discover, with my help, how she could experience and enjoy her father’s last month alive without interference by her residual anger at her mother and Mike. She wondered aloud to me several times how they could be so seemingly-indifferent and neutral amidst such momentous circumstances.

In the middle of all this Amy flew to Los Angeles one evening to visit her good friend Becky, a middle-aged doctor who had been enormously supportive of her. Becky examined an irritated skin area on Amy’s stomach and said she had a skin cancer needing immediate removal. She then removed the cancer, put 32 stitches into the wound and Amy flew home, realizing as she did so she was developing an infection. After calling around with urgent requests for medical help she finally found herself in touch with Nate, who had previously romantically rejected her and who she had then in turn rejected. Nate took care of her infection, they had sex and in the contact between them that followed Amy realized “how hungry I am to be able to tell the truth about everything and feel connected with someone, and cared for.”

Subsequently, Amy felt very fragile and emotionally overwhelmed, bitterly regretting the day and a half she had spent with Nate. I reflected to Amy that this regret was actually a part of her endeavoring to protect her from threatened further hurt, and encouraged her to feel the loveliness of the energetic-infusion of connection with Nate.
Contrastingly, when she visited her parents’ house she told her mother about the cancer, and reported to me in shock that her mother’s reaction has been as if Amy had conveyed absolutely nothing of significance to her mother, which shook Amy deeply. The day after the session in which she shared this information I sent Amy the following e-mail:

Dear Amy,

I hope there is some space today, and in the days that follow, for you to at least take a look around your world and see how you might support yourself.

This support might be the way you can remind yourself that there is both a profoundly vulnerable young girl and an adult here, an adult woman supporting her father through his dying process. The stress of not being able to share what you are going through with your dad, and perhaps with your mom, openly and emotionally with others in your life came flooding suddenly into your being when you spent that time with Nate. And your own urgent yearning – or should I say, the urgent yearning of a young girl who knows intimacy and connectedness in her cells and aches to find it where it should have been, with her mom and dad, before that possibility disappears forever – that need too suddenly flooded your being at the same time as the sudden, and surely shocking cancer surgery. All this truly brings you to your knees, as Becky said might happen around the time of your dad’s death.

To be brought to our knees sounds simple in language, but the actual experience from within, the experience you’re in right now, feels like it’s verging on the catastrophic, the unbearable, being shaken to, and into the very root of yourself.

I was reminded, reflecting on our session today, of the fact that in the early work of Jung, emotion, affectivity was the clear base of the human vision he saw. He wrote ‘the essential basis of our personality is affectivity. Thought and action are, as it were, only symptoms of affectivity.’ We tend to have it upside down, construing thinking as prior to feeling, but my sense is that you have, in the space of what seems like moments, dove into an ocean of feeling and the sense, and fear, and possibility of drowning are enormous within you.

In the retreats we encourage people, especially when they are in the midst of emotional experiences of overwhelming depth and power, to sense their arms and legs, to make contact with the place where the backside meets the chair and the feet meet the floor. Bring your awareness now and then into present contact with some of the less triggered parts of your somatic being and give yourself even a
moment or two to reside there.

Please be in touch if I can be of any support in any way at all.

Warmly,
Glenn

Amy brought continuing feelings of great distress into the next session. She made repeated references to her mother’s “narcissism,” starkly revealed, for Amy by her mother’s reaction when Amy had begged her to clear her calendar to make room for her husband’s death, or when Amy had disclosed her cancer. Amy spoke about how very painful and disturbing it was for her to see this in her mother.

A scant three weeks prior to the anticipated date of her father’s passing Amy found herself fully engaged. Being connected with Nate and orchestrating arrangements around her father’s friends continuing to arrive daily contrasted with the void of despair into which she stared when she contemplated thoughts of her father’s non-existence. Her mother’s frequent dramatic announcements of going to live in Europe after her father’s death triggered dreadful emptiness in Amy.

In Nate’s company, Amy found someone who could receive her distraught and raw emotions, albeit agonizingly adjacent to the risk of again being rejected. Her father was slipping away from her, palpably, day by day, even while Amy was grateful to her mother for daily providing familial-food for her father, for Amy, and for her father’s final visitors. I emphatically urged Amy to gather to herself whatever support she could for herself and for the family, but Amy was functioning at maximum emotional capacity, and unable to take in my input except as distant context. Nonetheless, she remained in frequent contact with the psychiatrist/psychologist who had been supporting her father
and herself. She also derived very significant comfort from her close and very supportive connections with the Neptune Society representative intimately following her father’s process of life-closure. As she envisioned it in our 21st session, seven months after we began our work together, Amy anticipated being the only family member present at her father’s passing.

My work with Amy at this time principally took the form of compassionate, empathic witnessing of the profound travail she was endeavoring to pass through as consciously as possible. Most of the time, adding almost any kind of inquiry or reflection to the palpably-momentous flow of experience she was already amidst seemed hardly helpful. When I saw her a week before her father’s death there was little to say from my side, other than to reflect that I could feel in my heart, as clearly as day gradually becomes night, the enormity of what she was going through. This same flavor amplified and deepened when I had the privilege of spending an hour with Amy the day before the anticipated death of her father. Much of that hour was in silence. Our dialogue was pure feeling, and the gaps in the conversation unalloyed depth, dropping into the immeasurable space between life and death, traversing the threshold where Amy walked back and forth, holding her beloved father’s hand, resolute, and agonized by grief.

Amy’s father passed away on July 7, 2007. She and I had begun our work together almost exactly 8 months earlier, on November 6, 2006. At that time she lived in daily agonized disavowal of a loving relationship with her father and in steady grating friction with her mother, and could not, naturally enough, stop thinking obsessively about both of them. She shared with me that as her father died she forgave him, unconditionally, finally, and absolutely. She told me that forgiving him changed her
heart, even as she wondered aloud if a longed-for change in the depth of her heart was not, in fact the source of forgiveness.

In any event, Amy’s father passed over, and Amy loved him through the transition. I was profoundly affected by Amy’s sharing of her experience before, during, and after her father’s death, and could not in any way disguise this. I shared emphatically with Amy that my experience of being close to someone dying is that there is a literal quality of finding oneself hovering on the threshold between life and death; amidst ordinary life, and yet vividly aware of life and death being inextricably intertwined in the most concrete and existential way. I said I had repeatedly experienced gifts I could not deny being given me by those who had gone across the threshold of death – could it be that her father offered her just such gifts? These observations were very resonant for Amy, and perhaps some of the healing she experienced in the aftermath of her father’s passing was the bringing to light of these non-ordinary possibilities and blessings.

The day before his death, Amy’s father dictated a letter and her godmother Judith transcribed it. Amy was kind enough to give me a copy of the letter, at my request: she was so affected by it that passing me the copy left her wordless, tearful and gulping for air:

Dear Amy,

As you know I left a legacy of the emotionally unavailable man. I also left you a legacy of a very big heart. I’m not a wise advice-giver. But I can support you.

I remember you saying to Craig (the psychiatrist and psychologist previously mentioned above), if it hurts this much, you don’t want to go there. Most people don’t. But we have big hearts, we love each other, we have no choice.
You were lying on the floor of your car, in the garage, crying. Well that’s it Amy. You don’t have to go there. You are there. That’s the authentic Amy I love so much.

I am leaving a little gift for you – a symbol of that big open heart – diamonds are precious.

And this is your gift to me: you showed me that you have forgiven me – despite my emotional unavailability, you’ve opened your heart. Somehow, showing your heart again, having the courage to go through this – I believe in you.

I love you Amy,

Dad (the latter two lines were in her father’s handwriting)

In the aftermath of her father’s death Amy began to go through some very significant transitions at work. Her relationship to work – perhaps already compromised to a significant extent by having taking a two-month long leave of absence to accompany her father to the terminal edge of his life – was disrupted to a hitherto-unprecedented degree following his death. Yet when I first made contact with Amy, before we even began our inner exploration, she experienced herself as successful and accomplished particularly – and sometimes only, given her distress with her parents and in relationship – in the domain of work. Certainly, she carried an unmistakable quality of being an extremely well-paid urbane-ly-accomplished professional who was able relatively effortlessly to align work situations in favor of her own and her company’s goals.

Curiously enough, Amy had commented to me at different points in our sessions that the culture of her employer resembled a dysfunctional family, one she had previously found herself relatively comfortable and at ease with. When her father died this equilibrium seemed to undergo a tectonic shift. Where before Amy had found herself valued for repeatedly pointing out the places that the policy of her company was legally
discrepant or compromised, now she found herself increasingly cast in the role of malefactor and whistleblower. In the week following her father’s death she returned to work and her first assignment was to begin the integration of a company being purchased by her parent company. Without premeditation, in meetings with the managerial personnel of this company Amy found herself hyper-focused and unable to restrain the manifest doubt she experienced in respect of the company’s products. She went “up against” the male CEO of the company being acquired – quite uncharacteristically for her – and found herself “called onto the carpet.” She was grilled by her employer’s HR department and put on three months’ probation rather than losing her job immediately. When she initially spoke about this to me during our 25th session she called it “the worst week of my life,” and went on to ask me “Do I have a screw loose? How come I acted like my mom?”

All I could say to Amy was that everything had changed with the death of her father – she was altered, her heart was altered, her entire world was now different. She had, at least from my perspective stepped through an initiatory doorway into a state of quite profoundly altered being. This contextualization resonated for Amy, but seemed almost trivial, even facile in the face of her intense distress and difficulty in relationship to the monumental changes taking place at work. She went through intense depression-like episodes of binging on sleeping and an episodic sense of experiencing herself as profoundly altered and not as automatically-functional as before. Amy found it helpful in these moments when I reminded her that a whole range of automatic beliefs, instilled since childhood, had changed, and that her mind was racing to catch up with her heart
Alongside these large challenges she found herself curiously inspired in respect of certain facets of death and dying. She wrote a cogent and clear opinion article for Newsweek about dying voluntarily, and submitted it (as well as sharing it with me – it did not, in the end get published). She had a lengthy and in-depth conversation with the San Francisco chief of police about the same topic. Entirely lacking attraction to personal fanfare, Amy experienced herself as having been infused with a mission to make assisted dying less frictional and more of a cultural norm. She also realized that during her last six months at work she had been evolving an original program of physician-education using cadavers that many participating doctors had reported as being of inestimable value in their practice with patients. In this experience she had the basis of a medical education business of her own, should she ever think of stepping out in that way.

At this point my offering to Amy was my profound empathy for the depth of her pain and struggle. I repeatedly shared the reality that we were speaking a scant two and a half weeks after the death of her father, a journey of dying that she had accompanied consciously for months, and so intimately that it had changed her heart. Could she, I asked, find some kindliness in herself for all of this so there was a possibility of room for that change of heart to manifest in her life?

Reflections like this encouraged Amy in the longer-term – and were helpful in resonating with some of the more foundational dynamics shifting in deep places in her, to do with work, male authority figures, and death. I sensed her finding herself in a place of loneliness yet also of being with herself, where my presence could be a warm and supportive background to the immediacy of her pain of loss. When she could, she continued to make the trip from San Francisco to San Rafael for our sessions.
In the sessions that followed, the theme of Amy’s travails at work repeatedly predominated. For the first time since I knew her she began to talk about the possibility of leaving her job, a prospect that terrified her. She spoke about how much her boss, Lorraine felt to her “like family,” indeed like a family she felt she had never had. Over the next several weeks Amy reported to me incidents in which her boss’ loyalty to her employer and her loyalty to Amy had different consequences – and she observed her boss repeatedly choosing her loyalty to the company. The accumulation of these incidents culminated in what Amy felt was a particularly egregious betrayal of her by Lorraine, at around the same time the possibility arose on the horizon of the company being investigated by the FBI. This investigation looked likely to focus on the kind of business practices about which Amy has been at one-time an in-house warning bell in respect of her company sailing into legally-questionable waters. These practices she had briefly mentioned to me in our early sessions as legally dubious and troubling to her.

Following her father’s death, Amy’s stand for legality began to be viewed within the company as traitorous, and potentially the actions of a whistleblower. She repeatedly mentioned to me the possibility of her being one of the company’s employees interviewed by the FBI in the course of their investigation. She week by week shared with me her struggles at continuing to work in an environment that at times no longer even felt friendly, but had begun to be frankly inimical. While traveling for work remained pleasurable for Amy, she began noticing that her being “like a good show for my customers” actually had very little authenticity about it, and no qualities of intimacy. Where previously traveling and relationships with her customers – almost all of them
doctors – had felt to her like a whole and integrated life, she shared with me that she was
beginning to become aware that this way of living was not whole, “not at all.”

My sense persisted that supporting Amy as best I could meant continuing to
acknowledge her distressing experience of waves of reaction to what was taking place in
the circumstances of her life. There were times in this process she found herself sleeping
an inordinate amount and feeling sometimes “on the floor.” I was able to remind her that
she had been through periods of this kind of experience before, and always emerged from
them, so far for the better. I continued to be mindful of the possibility of Amy being
depressed. However, both the context of her father’s recent death, as well as the absence
of symptoms like loss of *joie de vivre* and appetite suggested again that these were
powerful and deep bereavement reactions, but not depression *per se.*

In the framework of a larger perspective I could repeatedly reflect to her that the
change in her heart in respect of her relationship with her father truly radiated out into her
life, although such a process was never without disturbance, in my experience – and
sometimes the turbulence seemed so great as to threaten life’s core stability.

One of the other larger themes in her life at this time seemed unmistakably to both
of us a resonating, synchronous echo of her so closely accompanying her father into
death, and beyond it. She remained passionately interested in advocacy for death by
choice despite the fact that she was gradually becoming aware that her father’s dying
process had a different quality than that of her beloved grandmother. The circumstance of
the former was driven by disease, while that of the latter had a more natural quality of life
simply coming to an end via practical and necessary choices. Amy continued to be
infused by visions of possibility – of fostering community in which choiceful death was
celebrated, of changing the current law about death by choice, of altering altogether
cultural attitudes about death and dying – that seemed to come out of nowhere. Every
time she and I landed on the possibility that these were echoes of the gladness of her
father’s soul, released, Amy’s heartMoved tears emerged.

Three months after her father’s death Amy took a long-planned trip to Africa,
spending two months there. The centerpiece of her visit was climbing Mount
Kilimanjaro, which she ascended together with a close friend, both of them attentive to
the acclimatization needed to safely reach the peak, named Uhuru, a Swahili word that
means ‘freedom’. By e-mail Amy shared with me a number of photographs of her trip, all
of which affected me with the sense of bravery and adversity overcome that emanated
from them. One in particular simply made me burst into tears: in the snow, at this peak
Amy regarded as sacred, at an altitude she would only reach once in her life, on the
journey of a lifetime she wrote in the snow “I ♡ DADDY”

**Legal and Ethical Issues**

The question of whether Amy was complicit in the death of her father can be
answered with an unequivocal negative. Nevertheless, this was an issue Amy grappled
with, relying on the conditions of confidentiality in our sessions to provide a secure
context within which she could freely discuss her concerns. Since the question of
complicity occurred in Amy's mind there was also the question of my own complicity.
Had I been at the time a mandated reporter my situation might perhaps have been
different, but I was not, and I was thereby afforded the freedom to simply be in dialogue
with Amy about this crucial part of her life, and that of her father. As is evident from my
raising it here, the legal and ethical issues of being involved in a prospective death were
powerfully apparent in every step of the progress that Amy and I made together once this issue became real and concrete.

Amy initially made contact with me in the context of an inner-work retreat loosely based around the methods of the Ridhwan school, or Diamond Heart approach. While working with me individually certainly engaged elements of practices widespread in that approach, such as inquiry, she also found herself participating in inner work in the particular and unique style I offer. My approach does not exclude past experience – as some more rigorous forms of Diamond Heart inquiry tend to – rather, in it orientation to past experience is crucial. Nor do I explicitly think of helping people to “get over the past . . .” as Williams and Davis put it when they distinguish psychotherapy from coaching. But digesting and transmuting experiences that show up in past history – welcoming and exploring these energies – can be enormously helpful in a person’s unfolding. While I offered Amy coaching and what she received was recognizably that, an external observer might claim the resemblance of some of our work to therapy – and would have to look deeper into the work, into the more fine-grained minutia of our particular inquiry process to see the difference.

There were times in our work together when I heard Amy’s allegations about potential criminal wrongdoing on the part of her then-employer – and I was eventually aware of an ongoing federal investigation into the matter. Although I sometimes questioned during that process if I was in possession of anything other than hearsay evidence, the eventual criminal and civil penalties against her employer provided a cleaning of the slate in that respect.
Outcomes

After two sessions in early and mid-December 2007 subsequent to Amy’s return from Africa I subsequently saw Amy for sessions only intermittently. I was not actively supervised in respect of these sessions – although I did consult with a colleague about them – and they are not incorporated here in any detailed fashion. Nevertheless, over the course of those sessions Amy’s life continued to unfold:

Amy separated from Nate for some months, and then re-entered partnership with him; she said to me at one point in the last few months that she was “with a man I want to be with for the first time in my life.” She and Nate are still in relationship.

Amy rented out the apartment she owns in San Francisco and moved to Palo Alto for 18 months, to live in an-in law unit at her parents’ house and be in close proximity with her mother. Three months ago she said to me that her relationship with her mother was “the best it’s ever been.” Most recently, without disturbance to this well-being Amy left Palo Alto and moved back into her apartment in the city.

Amy’s former employer was fined $600 million by the Department of Justice in September, 2010, including $375 million in criminal penalties for the kind of misbranding transgressions that Amy had repeatedly warned against. Amy lost her job, but received a substantial severance package.

Some months after this event, Amy formed her own company which offers cadaver-inclusive learning opportunities to medical professionals who seek to offer the very highest standards of expertise and knowledge to their patients. Operating her own business has been enormously stressful, particularly in the current financial climate. This is despite Amy remaining firmly connected with the vision that inspired the creation of
the company, one she continues to reiterate as profoundly connected with her father. The first year of her company was an unqualified success in respect of the welcome the company’s educational projects received. The current challenge is to get enough grants funded that more projects can be successfully completed. Amy loves the work she’s doing, clearly flourishes as a creative entrepreneur making full use of her many connections in the industry she’s always worked in – and experiences considerable stress in respect of her continued financial viability.

Amy says she is no longer preoccupied with obsessive thoughts about her parents.
CHAPTER 4

LEARNINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses my learnings through the process of conducting personal coaching with my client. Drawing on the previous chapter’s depiction of the main features of the coaching journey and incorporating significant and relevant concepts and principles from the Literature Review, the following pages offer a more richly-textured sense of the work studied here. Reaching beyond the obvious, reflections from within personal, cultural, and archetypal frames are included. Finally, there is an exploration of my own personal and professional development followed by envisioning the application of an imaginal approach to coaching.

Key Concepts and Major Principles

Several strands of inner work are woven together in the rope loosely guiding the journey of change and healing described in this case study. Some of these – mindfulness, disidentification, and inquiry, for example – can be described in atomic, almost technique-like terms. Each one has a large background of experience, study and in some cases, research of its own. Other strands, attachment, for example, parental narcissism, and intersubjectivity are of wider complexity. These begin to verge on the depth of the richest and most embracing threads, which arise out of depth psychology and indigenous wisdom traditions and have their clearest expression in Imaginal Psychology.
In what follows – descriptive of these strands in subsequent interpretive sections, as well as echoing prior sections containing them – are specifications of the key concepts and major principles in use here.\(^1\) We begin our descriptive catalog with the most elemental of these threads.

*Disidentification* has been acknowledged by Omer as having about it a quality of freedom, apparent when there is a shift from identification with self as frozen image to the recognition of the frozen image as an object of the true self’s perception.\(^2\) In this experience the illuminating nature of spacious awareness, contextual and intrinsic is implicitly obvious.\(^3\) This shift has been referred to by Daniel Barron as the difference between being the experience – and having the experience.\(^4\) John Teasdale and his colleagues remark that relationship to beliefs about oneself can concomitantly change under these circumstances.\(^5\)

Related to this is Shetal Vohra-Gupta’s term “attentional control” describing the concept of mindfulness, sometimes elaborated to include a quality of purposeful nonjudgmental awareness and moment-by-moment acceptance of present experiencing.\(^6\) The open and curious desire for discovering the truth of one’s experience “just as it is” forms the basis of inquiry, another closely related practice.\(^7\) Focusing is somatically-oriented mindfulness paying particular attention to an internal bodily awareness Gendlin calls “a felt sense”, as well as to the changes therein.\(^8\) Somatic awareness is an elaboration of the term “somatics” coined by Thomas Hanna, denoting the body experienced from within.\(^9\) While self-differentiation has overtones of a balance between thinking and feeling, it refers most simply to the capacity to possess autonomy in the context of being able to relate with intimacy to others.\(^10\)
The concept of psychological multiplicity refers to an individual having within them multiple distinct and seemingly-separated characters, personas, or “centers of subjectivity” as Omer names them.\textsuperscript{11} The qualities of intra- and inter-relationship implicit in this formulation can be seen from a motivational and biological perspective in Bowlby’s concept of attachment. This refers to the behavioral tendency to seek the proximity of comforting and care-giving individuals, as well as the many and various sequela of that tendency.\textsuperscript{12}

Wallin suggests that the kind of reparative secure attachment relationship possible in psychotherapy, in conjunction with mindfulness can result in developing a sense of internal presence that is reassuring. This is characteristic of secure attachment relationships in childhood.\textsuperscript{13} Carl Rogers suggests a crucial element of therapy is the clear and obvious presence of “my self.” \textsuperscript{14} Fosha remarks that the primary agent of emotional transformation is the experiencing of vital affects in the context of an attached relationship. “Experience is paramount,” she remarks, going on to say that the defining and most important aspect of therapy is that it is experiential.\textsuperscript{15}

An emphasis on relationship is inherent in the concept of intersubjectivity, the domain of the reciprocal influence of the subjectivities of two people in a relationship.\textsuperscript{16} By incorporating explicit overtones of empathy, sometimes regarded as our ability to know the inner lives of others by vicarious introspection, we arrive in the terrain of Imaginal Psychology.\textsuperscript{17} Imaginal Psychology views imagination as integrating and amplifying the various dimensions of experience, including the illumination of otherness as intrinsically reflecting oneself.\textsuperscript{18} Here, the concept of empathic imagination gathers its widest sense, of a mode of imagination not only most relevant to human relatedness, but
to human relatedness to the “more than human.”\textsuperscript{19} The flow of possibility further widens at this point to incorporate definitions such as Roth’s “presence,” which is being able to inhabit a feeling at the same time as sensing that which is bigger than the feeling; beyond-human, yet also intrinsically human.\textsuperscript{20}

The quality of not-knowing inherent to inquiry, as well as being intrinsic to disidentification is implicit in what Omer calls “good listening.” This requires “that we inhabit vulnerability, mystery, and complexity.”\textsuperscript{21} Wallin remarks that beneath the words we exchange in therapy is a flow of experience that is relational and emotional in a quite fundamental way. In this unarticulated territory we find the most substantial leverage for therapeutic change.\textsuperscript{22} The inhabitation of this unarticulated territory in good listening is recognized by Omer as engaging “empathic imagination in ways that catalyze mutual individuation.”\textsuperscript{23}

Closely related to the concept of individuation, differentiation of self in part reflects a person’s capacity for autonomy amidst relatedness. A narcissistic parent, one whose psychological interest is concentrated upon themselves can have powerful negative consequences for their child.\textsuperscript{24} These repercussions can include difficulties to have a true sense of self autonomous from the parents as well as subverting the child’s capacities for intersubjective, emotionally-connected relatedness.\textsuperscript{25} The presence of a father who is emotionally absent can greatly exacerbate these challenges, as well as add to them in the form of perfectionism and disempowerment.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{What Happened}

In our very first contact during the small breakout group at Mount Madonna Retreat Center Amy experienced a number of elements that would unfold as important
themes in the course of our subsequent work together. Some of these concepts Amy had been exposed to in the previous 24 hours of the retreat in sessions of the larger group led by Roth. Experiencing them in the context of a beginning coaching connection with me provided a different, more immediately relational embrace for them. These atomic aspects of our coaching work gradually became elaborated and bore fruit; similarly, sketched below are some of these elements, subsequently unfolded.

Amy experienced in the group that day my capacity to be an ally for her, as well as her own willingness and availability for this possibility. This initial aspect of the therapeutic relationship – sometimes called the coaching alliance – is considered to be of importance in both coaching and in psychotherapy.\textsuperscript{27} Implicit in our brief initial work was the possibility of providing a degree of disidentification from the harsh voices Amy heard criticizing her from within herself. Indeed, perhaps such a possibility of self-aware witnessing of experience constituted some of the “space in herself” that Amy sought.

Introduced to adaptive ways of working mindfully with psychological multiplicity, Amy found herself not only utilizing but fostering disidentification, as well as opening to being a compassionate presence for herself, a reality personified by Omer as “the Friend.”

Further, inquiry was introduced, and briefly practiced. Somatic aspects of experiencing were emphasized, along with reflections about the potential source of truthfulness available in Amy’s monitoring her felt-sense.\textsuperscript{28} In the context of our just-beginning alliance she found supported the yearned-for possibility of differentiating herself from her parents. This prospect was endorsed by me and reflected to her as potentially healthy, generative of personal expansion, and worthy of the collectively
exhaled “Of Course” that Amy heard from the group in the room that day as a response to her heartfelt wish.

Fosha writes about the lasting, deep, and substantive change that can rapidly occur through viscerally experiencing emotion. She writes about the great power of affect to transform. In our first individual session of coaching, naming the “underground distress” I was aware of in the room with her I was modeling to Amy affective responsiveness from intersubjectivity. This, says Colwyn Trevarthen links the brains of humans in shared cognition and affect.

Beyond her competent conceptualizing I was catalyzing the possibility of Amy experiencing affect in herself. Affirming the possibility of intersubjectivity being loneliness-lessening, and affect trustworthy I also implicitly acknowledged Amy’s position to be an isolated one. Her exclusive diet of believed-in thoughts was thin gruel for sustenance. At play in this linking-connectedness was what Fosha calls “dyadic affect regulation,” involving the mutual coordination of coordinated states, marked by positive affects and a mutually pleasurable sense of attunement, all with bodily concomitants. Benjamin refers to this as “mutual recognition.”

Omer remarks “Empathic imagination refers to the mode of imagination most relevant to relatedness between humans as well as human relatedness to the more than human.” This acknowledges the normative and the beyond-the-normative extent of the sphere that is our experiential actuality. In our sessions I invited Amy – herself, alongside me also an explorer of uncharted terrain – closer to intuitively-encountered experience. I referred repeatedly to the possibility of “deepening,” endeavoring to name an arc of experience that included Amy’s highly-competent cognizing – and a great deal more. In
particular, we together sought domains of her being where Omer’s “enduring and substantive change” or Fosha’s lasting and substantive change might more readily occur.\textsuperscript{35} For Jaenke, deepening means to contact the mythic dimensions of experiencing.\textsuperscript{36} Traveling closer to this dimension, our early sessions invited and began an openness to intense experience.\textsuperscript{37} Here, Amy’s images and beliefs about herself began to soften, morph, and potentially change.

By as early as our second session Amy seemed to have accepted this invitation. She was able to share with me that she had “never really been close to anybody, nor does anyone really know me.” She disliked being alone and whenever she sailed closer to intimacy she found a kind of nameless terror in the emptiness at the seeming center of herself. Empathic imagination helped me to experience these ragged disclosures as being reflective of her deep wish to unfold herself and to heal some of her so long-carried wounds. High functionality in most of the rest of Amy’s life poignantly contrasted these raw admissions. My welcoming and caring responses to her sharing these painful places, hidden in plain view to her, was an experience she had not previously had.

I also suspected that these disclosures reflected a yearning to trust an empathic male figure, someone able not only to feel and be affected but also capable of giving language to felt interiority. Until she had ruffled her smoother surface layers and taken some of these difficult and uncomfortable steps further into herself Amy could not feel deeper into her experience. Once this was possible, she was able to notice how profoundly she had always craved intimate relationship with someone like her father. She was then able to notice, amidst floods of powerful and trustworthy-feeling emotion, that she longed with all her heart to heal her relationship with him.
My notes of our fourth session reflect my repeatedly and emphatically acknowledging to Amy “the tremendous structural stress (in your family) which ends up leaning on you: your father is showing signs of dementia, your mother talks about your father dying – and you feel like the only responsible and non-insane parent.” I plainly declared myself as not only able to hear and receive Amy’s experience, but to provide an anchoring presence – as she went on establishing this firmly and clearly in herself – for the gradual emergence of what she longed for. I affirmed she had real, true, genuine needs, long-hidden from her parents. In occupying this level of empathy and affirmation I was beginning to function beyond Fonagy and Bateman’s sense of existing in the mind of the therapist and move towards Fosha’s sense of healing through “existing in the heart and mind of the other.”

These unfoldings began to reveal and affirm to Amy her trustworthy self, already existing, reliably available in her own presence as affect, image, and sensation. Her interior confidence in these experiences began a resurgence, despite vitiation in early life by her mother's narcissistic focus upon herself rather than upon Amy. Her defensive exclusion of experiences unwelcome to conditional maternal love began to dissolve. Amy found herself gradually unfolding an implicit self more real than the false-self way of being she had protectively adapted to her cope with her mother's projected shadow.

Put another way, I encouraged Amy into the shadowed possibility of discovering in direct affective, imaginal, and somatic experience her “unthought known” as Christopher Bollas calls it. Here, she began to find in self-connected and self-compassionate empathy the fine-grain discernment of her resources to heal what ailed
her. Encouraged, validated, and related to by me from without, and found to be real, true
and substantive within herself, she increasingly discovered reliable inner relief.

Amy was in some ways not an easy client to work with. Her verbal reflections
tended to spring from the well-practiced firmly-constructed layers of herself and
sometimes my curious probing, reflections, and inquiries seemed to go nowhere, or no
deeper than that layer. Amy’s highly composed face, perhaps with some of its
expressiveness smoothed by Botox, would sometimes reveal nothing to me. In fact,
subterranean affect was blossoming quietly into the room, only available to my hovering
query of what was unfolding when it reached her eyes as tears.

But Amy’s sharing in the fourth session that she was “starting to open” seemed to
be consistently true both before and after that point. She became aware of what she
wanted, from inner intuitive feeling – to have her heart open. She directly felt the
enormous tension in herself when she was at her parents’ house. She suddenly understood
that the mutually-undeclared nature of this well of distress was the obstacle to anything
except superficial conversation with them. There was opening, too in Amy’s efforts to
find a healthier basis for relationships in her life. She began to examine her relationship
with her mother, with its cloaked needs, breath-cut-off overtones, and underneath, her
yearning for closeness. Despite the risk of experiencing the hurt and anger she felt so
desperately at times with her mother all these changes powerfully bespoke transformative
motion in tidal movement within her.

In her relationship with me I sensed Amy had experiences in healing contrast to
those she had with her parents. I genuinely regarded her with warmth and care. I was
profoundly interested in the images, feelings, and experiences emerging from the core of
her, and sought to create unconditional safety for that further unveiling. I brought all my empathy to our interactions, trying to reflect that concordance in my statements, questions, and explorations – while inviting her to discern her own truth and discard my input if it did not resonate with her. I supported her wholeheartedly when she shared what was truer for her than my perspective. These relational characteristics, unavailable to her with her parents as she grew up were what she needed to better find herself as well as to discern limiting beliefs instilled in childhood, now found to be no longer true.

By the time we were five months into our work together Amy gave me a clear sense of her feeling significantly less entangled with her parents. She was now the holder of a number of distinct and much more comprehensible threads in relationship to them rather than the single knotted yarn by which she had felt herself darkly bound half a year before. She found herself able to set boundaries and make changes in work and relationships that she acknowledged would previously have been extremely difficult, if not impossible for her.

All this was suddenly thrust into the context of background – and perhaps preparation – by her father announcing the date on which he had chosen to die. Relative to six months prior, the resulting powerful and clear outflow of feeling from Amy’s heart towards her father – increasingly obviously her beloved father – was undeniably a sea change.41 Amy’s highly effective subsequent engagement with fostering her father’s farewell – orchestrating the household, arranging for the final visits of his friends – bore the hallmark of that same purposeful and expressive current of energy. At the same time Amy felt shaken to the very core of herself by longed-for waves of love, these sometimes seemingly alternating with being riven by baleful anger at her mother and half-brother,
and thrown to the floor by grief. I sometimes felt as I accompanied her into, during, and after her father’s dying process that I was being with somebody who was truly, almost literally liquefying in the darkness of their cocoon, outcome unknown.

In the course of her father’s dying process Amy became aware of being connected with her father in a way she never had been before. Concurrently she began to move into a relationship with her mother marked, for the first time in Amy’s life, by an equable mutuality. Almost immediately following the arising of these new waves in her life, she moved into a phase of relationship with Nate that continues to be alive, at the time of this writing. Whether causal, simply concurrent, or consequent, Amy’s sometimes-overwhelming emotional experiences during this period stood out in stark contrast to her difficulties with feeling when we began our work. Amy perhaps summarized and encapsulated these changes when she said, musingly just before her father’s dying that she seemed to be in better relationship with herself.

In the aftermath of a parent’s death, writes Jeanne Safer, there is the possibility of taking new directions in life unimpeded, for the first time. The death of a parent, she observes has more potential than anything else in adult life to set us free. Debra Umberson depicts the turning point in the emotional, personal, and social lives of most adults through the death of a parent. She goes on to write about this change in direction as a rite of passage into a changed adult identity. These observations certainly seemed true of Amy’s life following her father’s death. With a speed and profundity that surprised me, relatively a distant observer of her process, and certainly shocked Amy, close up to it, her work life began to undergo the kind of metamorphosis that had previously swept through much else of her existence.
The changes in the immediately close environment of her family began to ripple out and rectify her relationship with the dysfunctional family of her employment. The beginning of the arc of that process was her sense of tremulous dependence on her job, boss, and company. Mid-arc a new clarity took emergent form in her that she had been blamed, externally-manipulated, and mistreated without complaining, thus far. Amidst this, she stood up for herself and fought for what was true by her own lights. The far end of that transition, at least as far as I know it, was the establishment of a company of her own. Guided for the first time by a vision of work with overtones sourced by energies seemingly from beyond life, she found herself functioning distinctly separate from others yet closely interwoven in the network of her personal and professional relationships.

When Amy began her sessions with me she found herself reactively hating – even wishing the death of – the people she loved who she could not find any distance from. By the end of our work she had established the kind of distance – flexible and responsive, yielding yet strong – that enabled her to occupy experiences of intimacy formerly completely unavailable to her, and feel safe and autonomously resourceful. Her tight functioning predominantly from mentation – perhaps driven by her efforts to have control of her narcissistically-invaded interior space – gave way to a more relaxed blending of mental capacity together with the possibility of feeling deeply.

Amy had prepared for the death of her father and during it underwent an experience of initiation and transformation. Her alliance with me engaged empathic listening, inquired in the dark of the unknown the next step to be taken, and was implicitly willing to be vulnerable to the energies of her soul and heart. These qualities provided a rich and warm holding in which some of the wounds of her narcissistic
mothering and emotionally absent fathering could heal. She found herself discovering her intrinsic capacity for autonomy amidst close relationship. Amy matured.

**Imaginal Structures**

**How I Was Affected**

Amy was a willowy graceful blonde woman 20 years younger than me, a svelte, obviously attractive and self-consciously model-like sashaying feminine presence who showed up in my office yearning for love with a father-figure. She certainly affected me on a number of levels. The most palpable of these was that I found myself sitting across from a young woman I experienced as beautiful who asked for my help in traveling deeper into the territory of her true inner being, and was willing in my company to open her heart. To speak of attraction in these circumstances is not quite right. Certainly, I experienced Amy as attractive, but this sense of her was also spontaneously held in the larger embrace of a quality of sacredness which was, and is the healing contract between us. This sense of sacredness-amidst-beauty was also how I was affected.

My prior 15 years experience of providing bodywork – often with female clients – negotiated with a grounded kindness the delicate line between safety and a quality of healing closeness. I deliberately in our sessions did not follow Amy’s gaze that often fell – early on almost pointedly, sometimes seemingly even provocatively – to the swell and in certain dress, cleavage of her chest. Nor did I let myself be drawn by the way she frequently tossed back or primped her hair, wriggled her crossed legs, or shared by the semaphore of her gaze-and-blinking some kind of wanting that I knew was not being actually directed at me except as a transferential substitute. These expressions – which at
times seemed almost coquettish (a word that means “a woman who endeavors without sincere affection to gain the attention and admiration of men”) – gradually subsided over the course of our work, although they were very frequent and obvious at the beginning. My sense was that for her healing I needed to provide a quality of attention that was loving without being in any way intrusive.

At the same time, I muse on my having a certain investment in Amy finding me competent – not empty, not unknowing, not lost, when in fact these were frequent experiences for me at times in our sessions. Did the times I endeavored to cover up my sheer blank unknowingness to preserve my own image of competence and sufficiency, projected in Amy’s eyes actually served a purpose counter to healing? Did this prevent the open, plunging quality of silence in which complete newness sometimes emerges? I do not know. I suspect to be lost and void was some kind of negation of being smart, and Amy found smart men attractive.

In our sessions I was amidst a welter of experiences: even during our initial contact in the retreat group, Amy’s self-declared anguish asked me to plumb experiences of self-differentiation that in myself I had not yet consciously possessed. “Why would she want to work with me?” arose in perplexity for me, as if I had had none of the experiences she was sketching in ghostly outline of her future disclosures; of narcissistic enmeshment, of obsessive mentation, of anticipatory loss, or of love vanishing unrequited into death. Of course, all of these were in my experience, albeit many of them in my own internal shadow at that point, some at depths where dusk became darkness.

Yet I continued to show up as a provider: the facticity of her coming to me and asking for support was beyond doubt. I could hardly say to her that many gatekeeping
imaginal structures in myself disavowed my capacity to be of help, nor would it have been supportive to her had I identified with those structures as myself, rather than observing them with presence. From the beginning of our work I was deeply, emotively affected by her struggles.

The unfolding of life in session after session with Amy humbled me. Sharing with her my perspectives, feelings, interpretations, affects, I invited her to find out for herself what was really true in her own experience. Subsequent to a session, I would sometimes be assailed by my own internal gatekeeping messages, telling me how useless were my interventions, how irrelevant my reflections, how untoward my feelings, affects, and impulses. Writing fairly extensive notes after most sessions helped to ground my experience, as did discussing Amy and her inner work with Roth, my supervisor.

More often than not in the succeeding session Amy would share with me yet one more profound further unfolding of her life. Many times I had the sense that it was life itself, the full-bore, “life is fired at us point-blank” quality that José Ortega y Gasset refers to that was really unfolding our sessions, our work, and her life.46 Her process, equally, reminded me often of the two viewpoints offered by Ram Dass: “The ego perspective, that suffering stinks. The soul perspective, that it’s sandpaper.” 47 I tried to reflectively share back with her the at-times seemingly disparate-yet-interwoven nature of these two angles. Sometimes I experienced frustration at our slow progress in this regard despite knowing that it is only time and experience that potentially bring about an integration of both, and a more flowing willingness for stink to accompany sandpaper.

As I reflect elsewhere, Amy was not an easy client. Her attractive vibrancy energized our sessions and invited those flights of co-creative possibility in which dives
into a dark void abruptly turned, beyond logic to become embodied, joyous ascent to the highest peaks. But a hundred times in earlier sessions I found myself wondering if this was – in fact – possible for her, or more precisely, for the healing duet we formed. Very often my invitations to her to go toward such dark places were met with defenses from mentation that bespoke the words of the previous paragraph: suffering stinks.

Yet life, in the form of her father’s dying process, drew her there anyway, to the point acknowledged by her father in his letter written to her the day before his death. After acknowledging her remark to his psychiatrist that if it hurts this much, she didn’t want to go there, her father wrote “You don’t have to go there. You are there. That’s the authentic Amy I love so much.” I shared with Amy how deeply moved I was by the courage she displayed, by the persistence with which she went step-by-step deeper into the dark ground, by her willingness, ultimately, not to turn away from that which she dreaded the most. In those moments, when such a trustworthy affectively-obvious truthfulness bespoke the natural inseparability of the light and the dark there were moments of profound communion between us.48

These traverses through the darkest shadows at times brought up anxiety in me, particularly when I was beset by clinical concerns such as that Amy was spiraling into severe depression. I was glad when the psychiatrist-psychologist became involved in the care of Amy’s family because then I could attend to the experience she was having rather than worrying about whether I was practicing outside my scope of competence. Nevertheless, even in deep darkness I could find a thread of trust in myself that a necessary unfolding was taking place – and sometimes I was able to share with Amy my experience of trustworthy contact with that thread in a way that was heartening for her.
After accompanying her on repeated visits to the dark I could also share with her my observing – and celebratory – experience of seeing her return to the light, again and again.

When I asked Amy in our penultimate session how it was for her that I was experiencing pride on her behalf, that I wanted to say to her “I’m proud of you having done the deep and powerful work you’ve undertaken,” she seemed at first a little taken aback. There is a sense of the personal about such statements that might seem at variance with the neutrality of a coach. I seemed to see Amy pause before a slow, innocent, even slightly awkward blooming of girlish pleasure quietly filled the room and brought a slight blush to her face. I asked her if she could take it in, and she said yes, she could. I experienced in my own core in that moment the affect of joy merging into the being quality of deep and sustained pleasure.

**My Imaginal Structures**

The most obvious of my imaginal structures I call Beauty-and-the-Beast, precisely dovetailing with Amy’s attractiveness. At 10 years old I became myopic. In the year prior to discovering and correcting this, the only face I saw clearly close-up was my own, in the mirror. The faces of others existed in a blur, an indistinctness especially generous to female faces which, it gradually became obvious had absolutely none of the flaws – indeed, the ugliness – so obvious in my own close-up face in the mirror. Fast forward 45 years and I’m sitting with Amy, the face of beauty – and my beastly polar opposite end is unobviously enshadowed, amidst my captivation by her good looks.
In the early phases of our work, especially when Amy was seemingly-resident in long patches of chaotic rawness, little foothold existed for this structure to dignify her experience with elegant coherence while my own life seemed ragged and pained. In the later stages of our process I suspect I may have glossed over parts of Amy’s experience that needed to be opened to the light and air, no matter their hidden dishevelment, not camouflaged by a Band-Aid of positivity and reassurance, no matter how attractive and alluring the surface glossiness of it.

Constellated with Beauty-and-the-Beast, another structure played defensively into my work with Amy. The gap of my father’s absence through my parents’ divorce when I was 10 years old led me to assembling a way of functioning around practical tasks that I name Seat-of-My-Smart-Pants. This structure combines arrogance, cunning, and lawlessness with a systematic disregard for the possibility that anybody can teach me anything. It swings, often largely unnoticed into action in the occurrence of any of those void spaces in my life when the absence of warm, supportive, informing-holding and coaching by my own father becomes too painfully obvious.

Amidst this structure I pretend to know what I’m doing, although I may only have the vaguest surmise at the beginning of the activity. Usually everything works out, so that I have capably functioned in many disparate jobs and roles with little training. If I speak from this structure I would say: *Ignorant of any clinical literature on self-differentiation, I helped Amy tremendously. I intuitively know how to be with people with my heart available. All I need is to go on trusting and pretending to be real.*

Amy needed someone to be a good father for her, someone heartful and confident, smart and sure – yet also aware of the terrible wound of an absent father in their interior.
Less obviously, after my father’s departure, vis-à-vis my mother I had been in roles providing some degree of substitution as a husband. This was one of the sources of my alliance with Amy, as well as my capacity to offer a lessening of her loneliness: this part of me knows father loss from inside, both as fatherless boy and substitute husband. From this structure I could also model for her taking progressively deeper intuitive steps into the heart of fathering. This is the kind of tuition that comes from within oneself.

Beneath this fragile confidence I can feel another structure, a shadowed bipolarity of the previous confident-arrogant aspect of myself, one altogether more anxious. Was there indeed a good outcome for Amy, or was I systematically simply fantasizing, defrauding myself and her? This anxious structure asks to be named: Keep-Your-Head-Down-at-All-Costs. This entire case study is a fraud, says this structure, and every bit of success and progress seen in Amy merely a mirage projected by Seat-of-My-Smart-Pants. All perceptions, insists Keep-Your-Head-Down must pass stringent tests that minimize the risks of exposure as foolish, or manifestly wrong in the eyes of others. As I write that, revising this manuscript, for the first time I can feel the living-shudder of my own experience of having been narcissistically mothered.

Disorientation, even dizziness suffuses me when I completely assume the mantle of this structure, and experiment with believing everything it says. Until I reviewed my notes about Amy more than a year ago I could not remotely conceive that hers was sufficiently substantial a journey of experience to form the basis for a case study, so much in thrall was I to this minimizing, safety-creating imaginal structure. Only in the last few years has this structure begun to undergo significant transmutation with the
passionately-perceived recognition of my truthful and trustworthy place as a healer in this world, including a lifetime of experiences contributing to that possibility.

One more structure swims into my perception after writing the above, and pausing to contemplate the way structures in one person constellate those in another. Good Boy provides a polite, eager, compliant face smoothing over the fissures and rifts where arrogant lawlessness struggles with the need to stay safe. Good Boy is inordinately sensitive to social nicety, to what has to be done with one’s face and gesture to be liked, to be inoffensive, to calm with neutrality, and a little charm. Good Boy also pacifies the void between my own denied needs and the demands of my narcissistic mother.

In the surface soothing Good Boy tries to achieve in appearance, between Seat-of-My-Smart-Pants and Keep-Your-Head-Down-at-All-Costs, between the cocky overstatement and the anxious minimizing filtration, there seems to be space for the emergence of another presence. This is the Friend, a compassionate and connected wisdom-source that I can identify as the wellspring of most of what I have written here about Amy and her process.

The Client’s Imaginal Structures

At our initial meeting Amy’s interior seemed predominated by two warring imaginal structures. The first of these inner colonizations was Good Daughter, so comprehensively devoted to the welfare of her parents that even when not with them, their presence continued, steadily obsessive in thought. No demand of theirs was excessive to this structure, to the extent that not to be actively engaged in it was to find herself emptily vacant and unable to be in relationship. This mirrored the disconnection of the parental relationship that had forged this aspect of their child. The symbiotic-with-
parents overtone of this structure lent it a camouflaged quality, unrecognizable except for
the underground fury Amy experienced when her parents said they would follow her if
she were to move away from the Bay Area. She felt powerfully validated in the
truthfulness indicated by her anger when I said my own reaction to hearing of their
remark was nausea.

Both these signals – her rage, my bilious feelings – were perhaps subterranean
flags of the presence of another structure which I call Furious Daughter. This part of
Amy, probably consciously suppressed for many years, dreamed of the death of her
parents as the only possibility of liberating herself from the bind of her introjected
compliance as Good Daughter.

Devastating implications for Amy’s relationships accompanied the friction of this
dualistic, schismatic functioning. In sharing with me the terrifying emptiness she
encountered in the center of her relational self she was reflecting a consequence of
narcissistic parenting. Golomb writes about “our buried selves, so far out of range that
sometimes we feel nonexistent at the core and strangely empty.” 51 These two broad
structures, of compliance and exterminating wishes, Good Daughter and Furious
Daughter – both characteristic amongst children of narcissistic parents – left Amy numb
and with very little room in her awareness to notice the still quietude of her own being.52

Another imaginal structure that only seemed obvious in retrospect I have
characterized elsewhere as coquettish. Coquette does not know why she must have the
admiration and attention of men – only that she must. The root, the quality of sincere
affection manifestly absent in the preening and posturing of Coquette was buried
somewhere in Amy's darkness. This was inaccessible while the empty rounds of
unsatisfying seductive behavior on the surface continued to bring no satisfaction, no deepening. Amy only began to gradually encounter this root when she halted her surface behavior and began to inquire just which man she was truly calling towards herself.

Thereupon, she actively began to grieve the emotional absence of her father, the profound effect on her of his being missing relationally, and recognize the consequences for her adult behavior. Here, for Amy maturing meant coming into right-relationship with her own love.

Coquette too carries another hidden layer of opposition to the all-consuming mother. She embodies the love of Amy’s maternal grandmother, a model, also a beauty who encouraged Amy to cultivate her feminine beauty, in complete opposition to the wishes of her daughter, Amy’s mother, man-hating once she was married. Coquette is a constellation of images of attractive femininity protectively offsetting the unbearable assault of Amy's mother on the possibility of harmonious loving relationship with a man.

A further evidently-protective imaginal coalescence in Amy I call Bubblehead. Characterized by a brittle brightness, this mentally extremely facile structuration of Amy’s is socially highly coherent and given over to the entertainment of all. She offers a rigid and conservative presentation of herself that was another affront to her profoundly feminist-liberal mother. At the same time, Bubblehead represents Amy's necessity to be highly attuned to how she is being perceived – an attunement painfully learned around her critical mother. Like other parts of Amy, functioning from this structure left her secretly wondering if she were ever going to be able to lay claim to the truth of herself, not dictated by introjected beliefs, distinct from others yet able to love them.
Striking in the aggregate of these parts is how much of their energy was invested in protection from invasion of what Amy treasured, yet could hardly find in herself when we began our work together. Aspects of her that were not superficial lived in the secrecy of being dedicated to forbidden purposes, such as parricide. Given the drought of depth she had found herself protectively experiencing in her life one could almost anticipate the wet and immersive quality when a fully chthonic initiation took place. The typhoons of grief, the storms of sadness threatening perpetuity with their overtones of endless hopelessness, all are strikingly reminiscent of the darkest dynamics of depression. From the very beginning of my work with Amy I found her more than collaborative, eager for the declination I offered. When I reflect now on her former frustrated sense of inability to gather herself below the surface, I can feel the fathom thirstiness in her, faint, yet unmistakable, redolent of being, risky and longed-for.

**New Learnings About My Imaginal Structures**

Omer writes “Part of the practice of taking a psychological approach has to do with slowing the process down and applying disciplined steps to the process of meaning-making.” Seat-of-My-Smart-Pants, my imaginal structure described above utterly disdains this process, both for its slowness and for the possibility that there could be anything learned from without. To declare that, and record it here, publicly, illuminates the first new learning about these structures. This is that when I speak the truth about these structures there are ripples, crackles, waves, and rumbles of being affected in my somatic awareness, palpably sourced by the process of noticing, naming, and revealing. If I clarify and condense this learning to myself, it would take the form of acknowledging that I have to go to – and then say – my somatic sense of myself to embody the truth.
The second new learning is that of re-discovering the everything-affected, colored lens-like effect of imaginal structures on my perceived world. When I am looking through the filter of Seat-of-My-Smart-Pants, no new learnings are apparent, and besides, I am in a hurry to get to the next action. All that verbiage in the literature is irrelevant. Seat-of-My-Smart-Pants has been protectively with me for close on 50 years now, in concert with the Beast implicitly limiting growing, individuation, and self-differentiation. In the uncomfortable, soon-filled-in silences working with Amy I did not at the time recognize him. Had I been able to, I might also have noticed – particularly in my body – the softly bereft quality of the heart of him, father-absent and not-knowing.

Writing that, another wave of being affected sweeps through me, manifestly to do with this Friend-like recognition of the way my seeing has been obscured, and the opening to kindness and wisdom this discovery makes possible. Could the tremulous possibility of seeing deeper be real? Might the expert psychological affiliation of many eyes, ears, minds, and reflecting hearts actually be a supportive asset, even a community, not a frictional nuisance to be shoved aside by Good Boy struggling to hide shame and deficiency? These are new learnings, posed here as questions because to assert them seems a step too far. Yet in the layers of me apparent in this moment the yearning for them to be true makes me question to which structure that seems too large a step.

The next learning has about it a quality of monumental arising, and has only emerged as I significantly revised this case study to include self-absorbed parenting. My inner image is of the fractured edge of a great layered rock mass groaning up from the seabed, bursting above the ocean's surface, immense energy in inexorable motion, driven by the heaving of the Earth's crust. This arising has come about, it seems, because of
latterly more closely focusing this study of Amy's self-differentiation to include consideration of the narcissistic mothering and absent fathering she – and I – received.

For the past 14 years I have been deeply involved in working with people with eating disorders – and occupied with the background question of why. The simple fact that my mother was a functioning anorexic, weighing 92 pounds at the time she died, has not been sufficiently resonant to provide causal explanation for my immersion in this population and their struggles. Nor could I find any resonant sense of the underlying soul-level dynamics fostering some of the most significant relationships in my life during this period, with people who prioritized self-image over the deeper truth of themselves, seemingly helpless to do otherwise.

More clearly discerning the fine grain of self-differentiation for Amy – exploring the effects on her of narcissistic mothering and emotionally absent fathering – has had a monumental revelatory effect on me. My maternal grandmother was frankly narcissistic, I now newly-know in my bones. My paternal grandfather was emotionally absent to an inordinate degree – now, finally I can recognize my father's helpless emotional signature. Their children – my mother and father – raised me in an atmosphere remarkably similar to that endured by Amy, and vividly reflective of my own experience in its effects. Amy and I constellated one another – and discovering that constellation, transformational learning unfolds, named in these paragraphs.

Coquette, a stream of self-conscious feminine beauty coming down through the generations catalyzed the Beauty – across from which sat my Beast. This latter creature, made of shame and guilt, was contrastingly lit by my mother's beauty and narcissistic vibrancy. I'm slowly learning about the latter, about the brightness and her shadow, and
the contrast. My mother tried, exhaustedly, to be the mother of five children, but really, she wanted her children vanished and her earliest adulthood back; the wartime lovers, the dancing, the excitement of being rously beautiful. Just a year before her death she had aspirational pictures taken of herself, reaching towards a lost elegance so she could join a modeling agency. She had already ejected my father from their marriage. I am groping toward an understanding to heal the split between Beauty and the Beast

Coquette was also the unconscious stream of feminine beauty brutally denied by Amy's mother all through Amy's adolescence, and then bursting forth in the opportunity of the end-stage illness of Amy's father. My own mother ended her marriage when the incurable illness of Multiple Sclerosis struck my father's life. Then she took frictional and unsatisfactory lovers, relationships just like that with my father. “I never wanted to repeat the shouting and explosive behavior in my childhood” said Amy to me. Nothing else had ever been modeled to her – nor to me. How painful I find that now, to take that in, in sorrow, grief, recognition – and in new learning, tremulous, uncertain, and true.

Good Daughter, compliantly adaptive to every hint of maternal displeasure, anxiously hiding her needs against the unbearable circumstance of their being unacceptable, found herself face-to-face with Good Boy, making the same bargain: I will be anything you want me to be as long as you do not stop loving me. This is the bargain of relinquishing the true self. Amy broke this bargain in my company, and found herself discovering the Friend in me, then found the Friend in herself. I deepened and steadied my experience of the Friend in Amy's company. The Friend softens Good Boy toward the heart’s truthfulness, reassures Good Boy all will in truth be well.
Part of the breaking of this bargain was Amy's repeated revelation to me of Furious Daughter. In this respect, perhaps for the first time in her life she encountered a supportive male presence who endorsed her fury, rather than a father in narcissistic thrall to his wife who turned away from her. Here, paradoxically, my capacity to be my mother's emotional husband worked in Amy's favor: I know that raging fury because I learned to field it in my mother. Also, I knew that raging fury because I acted it out in my own adolescence. As I write this I find myself inhabiting with more understanding the emotional texture of that adolescent uproar against a ruptured life. This too is learning.

Over and against these submerged constellations various normalcy-maintaining dynamics cross the sky of our relationship like the most ordinary of clouds. Bubblehead’s capacity for superficiality was welcomed by Keep-Your-Head-Down-at-All-Costs. No matter the inauthenticity, all offerings of normality and coherent social life are acceptable to these parts – a collusion further catalyzing the way those potential silences in our sessions filled up with words, almost unbidden. Another learning – potential, although asking for a great deal of presence and persistence – is to recognize that when normalcy is compelling, there are riches to be found in the dark well beneath.

Primary Myth

Bruno Bettelheim writes that fairy tales view events from the perspective of the hero “who is always a person in development.” Above all else, Amy gradually emerged in our work together as someone wanting to grow herself, and mature.

In the fairy tale of Snow White a beautiful young girl lives a relatively content existence, despite the death of her mother shortly after her birth. Her stepmother, the new Queen, beautiful but vain possesses a magical mirror that tells her she is the fairest
in the land – until Snow White reaches seven years old. Then her magic mirror tells her Snow White, not she is the loveliest. Violently jealous, the Queen orders a huntsman to take Snow White into the forest, kill her, and bring her Snow White’s heart.

How might loving, nurturing, mothering possibly become so distorted as to want to kill a child, even a child not one's biological own? Two explanatory, illuminating threads emerge out of our soul-darkness. One, given voice by Bettelheim, says this deadly jealousy is a bitter competition between mother and daughter for the love of the powerful King, husband to the Queen, father to Snow White.\textsuperscript{56} The shadowed depths of the myth of Oedipus describe this blurring of the boundaries of personal and parental love. Hendricka Freud remarks that the Electra complex is the outcome of the Oedipus paradigm in girls, leading to “rage with the mother and idealization of the father.”\textsuperscript{57} In another octave, Sibylle Birkhauser-Oeri writes that the Queen brings Snow White death and rebirth because this is the inherent bitter dregs of vanity and jealousy that comes from the unbridled passion of the archetypal Earth Mother.\textsuperscript{58}

These are depth explanations. While Amy never shared with me any sense of being in competition with her mother for her father's love, the Oedipal dynamic constellates one of the most powerful, even unmentionable taboos, against incest, and might not be shared with anyone, even herself. Yet, the rage against mother and idealization of father in Hendricka Freud’s sketch of the Electra complex fits Amy.

Considering competition differently, Bettelheim writes about parents who maintain they are as good as their adolescent children, mentioning the mother who tries in dress, behavior and looks “to be as youthfully attractive as her daughter.”\textsuperscript{59} Amy expressed fury to me after her friends remarked on how they wished their own mothers
were as “cool” as Amy's, who seemed to be living Amy's stage of life again. Only Amy knew, and could not say, how Amy’s mother herself had denied Amy this stage. Echoes of the wickedly jealous Queen abound in Amy's story.

Alvin Burstein and Michael Bertenthal give voice to the second dark thread, like Bettelheim without denying the first: the magical mirror is a marvelous Kohutian selfobject, affirming the Queen's self-esteem – until it does not. Then, unforgiving narcissistic rage emerges. Jacoby reports the case of the daughter of a narcissistic mother who had to provide a “mirroring selfobject” to her mother, reassuring her mother of her beauty – rather than the other way round. When the daughter grew beautiful in puberty she began to experience her mother's narcissistic rejection and pushing away of her. Then, naturally unable to feel outright anger at her mother she became shamefully filled with conviction of herself as a bad and worthless person.

Jacoby's description of the mother needing idealization from her daughter, and the daughter’s helplessly turning her natural and justified rage against her mother toward herself in punishing shame and worthlessness coheres with Amy's reported experience. Bettelheim also remarks that for the narcissistic parent the implication of the child growing up is that the parent themselves must be aging. Amy's mother repeatedly asked for her expert help in rendering her younger. Perhaps more of the fairy tale will provide illumination:

The huntsman, instead of murdering Snow White abandons her in the forest – and returns to the wicked Queen with the heart of a deer he kills as a substitute for Snow White. In due course, Snow White finds refuge in the forest with a band of dwarves. The Queen's mirror tells her Snow White is still alive; the Queen in disguise repeatedly tries
to kill Snow White. In two of these efforts Snow White is enticed by offerings to enhance her beauty; the third, apparently successful attempt uses a poisoned apple.

Teitelbaum explores the “interpersonally exploitative” narcissistic mother – “the Queen,” and the role of the father in relationship to daughter and mother. A daughter's accurate perception of her mother's faulty judgment can be compromised when the father – the Queen’s consort – endorses mother's distortions rather than reflecting the truth, throwing the child into confusion. The huntsman, although apparently an image of a strong protective male abandons Snow White to the dangers of the forest in his fealty to the Queen's narcissistic charisma. There is ambivalence in the huntsman's actions reminiscent of Amy's father, who did not provide Amy a clear and firm sense of being what Teitelbaum calls the “other,” a true alternative to the mother. At the very end of his life Amy's father could finally say declaratively in his last letter to her “That's the authentic Amy I love so much.”

Bettelheim interprets Snow White’s time with the dwarves as a period of growing and working through problems, with Snow White developing a more mature egoic capacity to work well and share with the dwarves. But the inherently developmentally-young dwarves are unable to save Snow White from her stepmother's wicked power. Indeed, Snow White's own narcissism, twice seduced by the bewitching offer of more beauty proves to be her downfall. Perhaps Snow White – perhaps Amy – has more kinship with bewitching narcissistic charm than she might consciously allow. The reminder through the fairy tale that narcissism tends to be the offspring of narcissism invites us to compassionately regard every single one of the participants in these stories. More of our thematic story continues to unfold this possibility:
Unable to revive Snow White, the dwarves place her in a crystal coffin. A passing prince is enchanted by her beauty, and as his servants take away her coffin, they stumble, dislodging the mouthful of poisoned apple. She awakens. The Prince proposes marriage, and Snow White accepts. The wicked Queen, unknowing it is her step-daughter's banns accepts an invitation to the wedding; forced during the celebratory dancing to step into a pair of red-hot iron shoes, the wicked Queen dies as Snow White is liberated into love.

Burstein and Bertenthal suggest the tale begins to come full circle at this point. Snow White in her crystal coffin is an allegorical image of the living death of detachment from feeling, depersonalization, and a sense of her self being artificial that Amy suffered so greatly in the beginning of our work. The empathic contact of the prince’s love finding her resuscitates Snow White's heart. When Amy found reliable empathic reflection in our work together, and could begin to feel herself she began to access a sense of her authentic being. Gaining distance from, and discarding beliefs about herself and life given her by her parents she began to come back to life as her real self.

Jacoby discerningly reflects the apple; given by mother to daughter the red part of the apple signifies blood, life-force, and sensuality, all deadly to the mother who simultaneously gives to her daughter her rejecting relationship with men, poisoning love and relationship for her. The mother eats the white part of the apple, behaving like an innocent victim of her disturbed relationship with her husband, meanwhile unconscious of her envy of her daughter's femininity and its possibilities for true intimacy.

Perhaps the moment Amy coughed up the apple was when she took full responsibility – for herself – to bring to fruition whatever she could manifest of her relationship with her father in his terminal process. In the course of this inhabitation of
sovereignty, Amy confronted her mother's beliefs, which she had hitherto unconsciously introjected – and thereby moved into a space of equable mutuality where she found deepened and authentic individuation.

**Personal and Professional Development**

Studying Amy’s case, I realize that my participation made a positive difference to her life, even though I have subjectivities that deny my value. As I gain clinical experience at the agency where I see psychotherapy clients, the same realization of my value and positive contribution is unmistakable. The source of this giving is quite self-evidently from the essence of me, as well as equally apparently flowing from beyond what I ordinarily call myself. This is particularly obvious when it emerges in the form of what Linda Sussman calls “The Speech of the Grail,” speaking that “heals and transforms.” 71 This is an intimate interweaving of the personal and professional.

I have quietly undergone a shift during the course of writing this case study. When I entered it I felt somewhat embarrassed to be a life coach, wearing the latter rubric like a pink hat at a St. Patrick’s Day parade, wishing I could wear green. From the outset of the study, I saw the comparative depth, richness, complexity, and explanatory power of psychological and coaching approaches. I was aware, too of having stepped onto a boat crossing a river from positivity, aspiration, and achievement to a quality of density, fullness, and soul-level explanatory power that makes my heart sing. I have been becoming a psychologist as I did this work and wrote this case study, fulfilling the ancient healing imperative that is the backdrop of the work I came here to do and the gift I feel lucky to have.
At the time I worked with Amy the imaginal structure I’ve above called Seat-of-My-Smart-Pants lived in denial of anybody being able to inform me about any aspect of her or of our process. This present humbling-by-case-study – of discovering as I peer into the depths of this topic that the layers of going deeper are without end, and at virtually every strata are thoughtful, insightful, wise, and multidimensional people generously sharing their experience with me – has perhaps been the most changeful and sobering.

My question of what Amy reflects about me remained mostly unanswered until this case study’s detailed and personal examination of the consequences for children of being narcissistically parented. My surety that every client mirrors me in some vital way was blurred until I recognized Amy and I both had narcissistic parents. Before that specificity, all I could hazard was that she and I shared Oedipal and narcissistic issues. When I recognized the precise domain – of narcissistic parenting – where the work she and I undertook served us both, a place of deep tension in me relaxed. Simultaneously my self-critical speculation spontaneously vanished that I might have served Amy better had I known more.

**Applying an Imaginal Approach to Coaching**

Considering the possibility of “reclaiming soul as the primary concern of coaching” I find myself initially jarred, principally because this runs so counter to the cultural esprit of coaching. Yet my own negotiation with coaching has been precisely because this prevailing ethos, so far at least has lacked the depth, richness, and complexity so obvious in Imaginal Psychology. Additionally, the sense of coaching declaratively being not about the dark, difficult, even dangerous aspects of human beings gives it, to me a thinness and lack of dimensionality. This begs redress, particularly when
I encounter clients endeavoring to ascend to the heights and finding themselves helplessly compelled to go by way of the depths. When coaches are engaged, rarely is it for ‘personal issues’ – once the process begins however, personal issues predominate as the subject of the work.\textsuperscript{72}

Yet much of the work with Amy, no matter its titular category, partook of flavors significant to Imaginal Psychology as well as of general application from that domain to the precinct of coaching. Two dimensions of our sessions particularly stand out as representative in this respect. The first of these was the importance of somatic awareness for Amy to begin to gather herself and her life in relationship with her parents elsewhere than in the knotted mental net above her neck. From the very first session onward her inclusion of her body in her awareness was helpful for her to become better apprised of what was true for her. When she teasingly referred to “the cellular thing,” as she did in a number of sessions she was acknowledging a quality of somatic attention to herself that had brought about positive change. Somatic awareness is inherent and essential in my current work as a coach and psychotherapist. Offering a lengthy list of psychological and emotional problems a somatic approach can address James Kepner writes that they all “involve the fundamental fact that our existence is an embodied existence.”\textsuperscript{73}

The second dimension is represented by Omer’s sentence “This transmutation depends upon an affirmative turn toward the passionate nature of the soul.”\textsuperscript{74} Amy was certainly passionate when she first spoke to me about lessening her obsessive thinking about her parents, but the passion was of distress, not of affirmation. As she began to discover what she passionately wanted from the depth of herself – for her heart to be open, to have a real relationship with her father, to come into right relationship with her
mother, and to find a quality of autonomy in herself paradoxically more capable of
intimacy – she experienced transmutation. This she did by way of self-identified
openings to dimensions of herself responsive to her life, rather than negatively reactive or
self-protective. The elements of this kind of shift – awakening towards the passionate
nature of her soul, discovering inherent potentials for growing and healing, and an array
of inner-world approaches distilled from human wisdom cultivation – are enormously
welcome. They are offering from imaginal approaches to the relative infancy of coaching.

Omer writes “an imaginal approach is not a specific perspective, but rather
deliberately attends to many perspectives, seeking to bring them into relationship with
each other.” 75 Perhaps in this respect an imaginal approach to coaching provides a wide
sense of potential, inviting the gathering of perspectives into a relatedness further
contributing to the alive possibility that soul becomes the primary concern of human life.
CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS

Introduction

This chapter reflects on the significance as well as the implications of the learnings in the previous chapter. Following the thread of my personal development and transformation in the course of the sessions and reflecting on it here leads to further unfolding my understanding of the topic through the material of the case study. Exploration of the mythic implications of the learnings follow, opening out into a consideration of how these learnings may contribute to the literature earlier reviewed. How these learnings might contribute to applying Imaginal Psychology to coaching and psychotherapy is followed by imagined possibilities for bridging Imaginal Psychology to mainstream settings. A section reviewing some possibilities of areas of future research brings the chapter and this case study to a close.

Personal Development and Transformation

The process of this clinical case study is part of a gathering tide in my life over the last 15 years. Approximately a dozen years ago my partner asked me why I was so angry at psychotherapists. Taken aback at her question, then feeling more deeply into my denial and its roots, I realized that it was because I wanted to be one, and could not let myself. Thus began my journey with Meridian University.
Part of “not letting myself” has been the lifelong operation of an imaginal structure called in the last chapter “Keep-Your-Head-Down-at-All-Costs.” Despite a powerful interest in psychological and spiritual transformation since my early teens, I have always hidden in the shadowy recesses of this pursuit. When I worked with Amy I could not really acknowledge to myself that the work was therapeutic, even as her life improved and I was profoundly affected myself.

f. It was not until she responded affirmatively and very positively to my request for her permission to be the subject of my study that an inner door opened to that possibility of acknowledgment.

Shame has been underneath “Keep-Your-Head-Down-at-All-Costs.” I was unaware of this until I began my doctoral coursework at Meridian University. Shame was behind the stalling of my doctoral process, now resumed in the form of this case study. The personal psychotherapy I have been in the last two years began with asking my therapist if he thought shame could be healed. His “Yes!” gave me encouragement and permission to step further forward into a profession I have danced on the edge of for nearly 40 years. My tango partner has always been shame and a lack of self-esteem.

I do not recall having worked as hard in my entire life as I have in the last year of attempting to complete my doctorate and remain financially viable. Every spare moment has gone into this case study. Any possible interstices of time between continuing to run my private practice as a coach and providing psychotherapy in the practicum at the agency where I work have been filled with the case study. Although this degree of focused presence has not been in any way forced – in fact, has been one of the clearest outflows of wanting in my whole life – the process of it has led me to attend to surfaces
of subjectivity with such closeness and persistence that they have repeatedly relinquished their blankness and opened to untold depths below.

This present section of the case study is an instance. Including parental narcissism and absent fathering in the course of more accurately focusing this case study I found myself exploring Amy's family life – and clarifying clear echoes of it in my own. Until this additional focus – that is, in the version of this case study prior to this revision – I did not experience a fully satisfying sense of resonantly landing in the material I was exploring. Identifying the effect of my own narcissistic mothering and absent fathering through studying the experience of Amy significantly clarified my personal sense of the nature of individuation.

This differentiated meaning has overtones of integrated capacity for authentically bringing what is truest in me – in the sense of what is greater than myself, in some core and essential way – into relationships around me. The autonomous center thus brought into relationship is paradoxical, because it is inherently non-solitary and relational, yet particularly individually crystallized as my own egoic self.¹ This is the mature individuated dialogic quality of the ego-Self axis remarked on by Edinger. It is also an expanded level of Bowen's self-differentiation.

The linkage to shame and self-esteem, and their healing is explored by Jacoby, who writes about tendencies emanating from the Self being experienced as shameful and negative.² Had the parental environment been facilitating instead of obstructive these Self-tendencies, leading to trustworthy feelings and a reliable sense of inner compass would have crucially fostered self-esteem and individuation.³ This is certainly true for me; I strongly suspect it is also true for Amy. Satisfyingly enough – given the fairy tale
forming the mythic backdrop here – the matrix of connection between shame, hindered self-esteem, and the overshadowing of constructive impulses from the Self brings Jacoby to share a clinical case of parental narcissism he calls “The Snow White Syndrome.”

There are strong echoes in this of the transformative process named in Imaginal Psychology: Omer refers to the transmutation of the affect of shame into dignity, and Jacoby writes of shame guarding human dignity. Edinger reflects the “redemptive process” that is the individuation urge manifested. The longing – and the sense of immense distance to travel – that arose in me when I first heard of that potential-transmutation of shame is beginning to feel requited, some of the journey palpably undertaken. I feel deep gratitude, moving and alive in the core of me.

**Impact of the Learnings on My Understanding of the Topic**

The learning process in this case study has included an emergent sense of understanding that plummets in my body to a manifestly deeper level than ever before. Piercing the veil of protecting, assumptive imaginal structures has revealed vistas beneath possessing extraordinary richness and delicacy. Qualities of care have emerged, unimaginable to the seemingly-indifferent surfaces of protective parts of me. I knew little about self-differentiation at the outset of this process and what had gone on in the work with Amy had not been examined at this lengthy and compelling depth. Beyond the unanswered question “What does this work with Amy reflect about the depths of myself?” I also knew relatively little about the effects of narcissistic parenting.

Writing the Learnings chapter continued a process begun in the Literature Review. Jacob Bronowski remarks that all animals are either social or solitary: “Man alone aspires to be both in one, a social solitary. And to me that is a unique biological
The many aspects of this human tightrope of being both alone and together began to become apparent as I unfolded the learnings. Including narcissistic mothering and emotionally-absent fathering brought personally home, with a somatically-resonant landing just how delicate is the developmental balance on this high wire. I found myself viscerally sensitized to the inner emotional experience of dependency and cutting-off as desperate means of remedying an unrealized ill.

This felt sense of further arrival in my topic added to the quality of occupying multidimensional space. This more inwardly-textured luminosity, with hints of atmospheres beyond the ordinarily-known came from reviewing my work with Amy in the context of the key concepts and major principles. Enhanced richness grew with the elucidation of Amy's imaginal structures, and of my own, along with the beginning of seeing and feeling into their underlying relatedness. I am beginning to feel down into the shadowy roots of being, the almost-necessity of our shared constellation.

By this point I am aware with a vividness completely unavailable to me at the beginning of the study that I am at some level closely exploring myself. I am aware that the issues so uniquely crystallized by the concept of self-differentiation – the struggle to be capable of intimacy without surrendering autonomy, and to have the kind of soul-autonomy that opens easily and naturally to intimacy – were – are – within me. I can only suppose that this study of self-differentiation, with its twists and turns through the terrors and voids of narcissistic and emotionally absent parenting is a fundamental part of a journey to becoming a therapist that was born when I was, out of something larger. The ‘me’ thereby encompassed now implicitly expands to become the widest possibility of self, a stepping through into the realm of myth.
Mythic Implications of the Learnings

I have to begin with my own faltering sense of direction in this section: that love heals. I am largely unable to account for my intuitive sense that Amy’s going within herself and seemingly thereby finding healing was a movement of love. Not, that is until I remembered Christopher Bamford’s essay of introduction to the work of Henry Corbin.9

Bamford writes “For esotericism, as Corbin thought of it, is the transformative movement from the outer to the inner, from the rim to the hub. It is a movement of love that, occurring in, by, and through the soul, is none other than the soul’s return to its true self or Lord.” 10

My first and most significant teacher was Osho.11 For Osho, the primacy of love came from it being “the perfume of the self.” 12 Love flows from the self towards all things, he asserted, and he often spoke about love in the same breath as he spoke about the ancient symbols of circumference and the center. These represent respectively the material world of appearances and the still center, within. He also acknowledged that neither of these could possibly exist without the other.13 And while the journey from the circumference to the center began for him with love, a mythic quality was absent from his rendering of it.14

While he asserted that the center is alive in the circumference the lack of a mythic perspective made somewhat abstract for me the possibility of coming to know the essence of the center in the world of the circumference. This question, of knowledge preoccupied the 12th-century Iranian Sufi mystic Shahab al-Din Suhrwardi – and here our visionary and mythic aspect starts unfolding.
Suhrawardi tells of a night of exhaustive study during which he is overtaken by a visionary rapture in which he begins to have a dialogue with Aristotle who visits him in the form of an angel. This kind and beauteous manifestation of the “Helper of souls” crucially asks Suhrawardi if the way he knows himself is by direct perception, or from elsewhere.

Zia Khan explains, following Suhrawardi that self-awareness points to the self being both the subject and the object of knowing, going on to write that this leads inexorably to the conclusion that “the self knows itself by itself.” The Sufi poet Jallaludin Rumi refers to our bright center without self or characteristics where all the knowledge of great mystics lives, unwritten and free of interpretation. This knowledge from presence that Bamford calls presential knowledge advances a further step, mythic-yet-earthy when he goes on to say that this is the equivalent of being in the presence of one’s own angelic being. Elsewhere Bamford says the linkage of the seeker and the sought is love.

Amy’s process could be seen as journey-like, with its qualities of initially finding herself in a dark place compelling an initiatory, threshold experience to bring about the eventual making-more-whole referred to above as healing. Such a journey is so prevalent in the myths of widespread cultures and ages that Joseph Campbell refers to it as “the Monomyth.” Through the eyes and heart of another great Sufi mystic, Ibn ‘Arabi Corbin reflects that love is the yearning propelling this journey, as well as bringing the answer of its eventual fulfillment. He says of this conjunction of human and divine passion “One and the same ardent Desire is the cause of the Manifestation and the cause of the Return.”
The realm where God’s descent towards the human meets the creature yearning for healing is named by Corbin as the *Mundus Imaginalis*, the Imaginal World mediating between spirit and matter. Bamford says this place is one of union, where there is a holy reciprocity in the intermingling in the lover of divine, spiritual, and human love. In the end, he claims, love is a mode of knowing through which one being knows another.²³ Karen Jaenke remarks that Imaginal Psychology with its emphasis on soul introduces an element of the religious into psychology.²⁴ She writes that she uses the word “religious” in an older etymological context, that of meaning “to reconnect.”²⁵ Might it be that this mode of knowledge whereby one being knows another, this ancient taproot where divine and human are reconnected is the unfolding of “love heals”? Myth, remarks Osho, “is the very essence of all that exists at the center.”²⁶

**Significance of the Learnings**

A hitherto explicitly-unspoken overtone of the conjunction of the Friend and disidentification resides in the concept of kindness, perhaps best exemplified by the poem of Naomi Shihab Nye.²⁷ In this poem she writes “Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside, you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.” The paradoxically disidentified inhabitation of sorrow undergone by Amy seemed to enable her to embody a kindness towards her father that I might speculate also infused her heart, or as she wondered, perhaps began in her heart.²⁸ This effect may have to do with the increasing appearance of “compassion” amongst clinical topics, with less than 1000 search results for the term in the century up to the year 2000 in one scholarly database, and 2000 more results in the last decade.²⁹
A parallel thread relates to the difference between Fonagy and Bateman’s sense of existing in the mind of the therapist and Fosha’s sense of healing through “existing in the heart and mind of the other.” While Elizabeth Schoettle’s research implies that kindness may be a dimension of this difference, the implication of my own clinical experience is clear: the full unfolding of gathered listening engages and necessitates qualities of heart-presentation in the person facilitating the process.

Finally, a further correspondence: perhaps disidentification and existing in the heart and mind of the other are so intimately related to intersubjectivity that the possibility of this too involving kindness is moot. But implicit in these learnings is that intersubjectivity, although often cast in terms only of the brain has a kindness of the heart intrinsic to it which is perhaps even prior to thought.

**The Application of Imaginal Psychology to Coaching and Psychotherapy**

This case study demonstrates the viability of applying concepts from Imaginal Psychology to coaching. Just the four continua of growth identified by Omer, namely personalization, embodying, diversifying, and deepening provide a potential enrichment of coaching beyond some of its current constraints. When coaching has non-technical markers for growth, independently underlying performance gains, much has been won.

Is coaching primarily performance enhancing, or also transformative? If the latter transformational domain is included, concepts such as imaginal structures, capacity, disidentification, and reflexivity have a natural affinity with coaching. They provide the possibility of simultaneously standing apart from experience while being more deeply immersed within it, leading to a quality of intimacy with experience saturated with both depth and freedom.
The possibility of transformative performance enhancement through coaching is the opening of depth work to the heights of possibility. For such an unfolding to be robust and sturdy a base is called for grounded in workability, wisdom, and the well of transmutation intrinsic to shamanic traditions and indigenous wisdom. Concepts and practices from Imaginal Psychology offer just such a soundly-tempered foundation.

Applications of Imaginal Psychology to psychotherapy shade more obviously into the edges of psychological discipline hitherto occupied by Jungian depth approaches. Imaginal Psychology also contains wider themes and overtones – some of them emphasized in the Literature Review of this study – redolent of their origin in ancient and indigenous wisdom, re-seen through postmodern eyes. In this study there are echoes – both for my client and for myself – of the healing capacities of shamans, going back and forth between the worlds, for example of life and death, of fusion and separation. Amidst the exploration of transformative learning is the depth atmosphere of ancient spiritual traditions.

Imaginal Psychology brings valuable concepts and practices to both coaching and psychotherapy, particularly by emphasizing somatic embodiment, as seen in the sessions in this case study. The retrospective examination going on here illuminates the value of the depth concept of imaginal structures and invites further turning toward the passionate nature of the soul. Reclamation of soul as the primary concern of either – or both – coaching and psychology would be indeed a revolutionary metanoia.

**Bridging Imaginal Psychology**

Working with clients in both coaching and psychotherapy, I find images have a natural and spontaneous currency. Passion and depth call forward many people, and the
possibility of following that call and embodying those qualities is often welcome as a practice, as well as a compass-bearing to wisdom. The term “gatekeepers” with its personalization and archetypal overtone is also practically valuable and the functioning of these critical parts of ourselves readily familiar, as well as being a useful way to introduce normative psychological multiplicity.

Although “imaginal structures” are culturally unfamiliar, clients gradually recognize their being part of ripples of successively wider layers of being. They welcome means of making sense of these personal, cultural, and archetypal layers. The focused approach to mindfulness implicit in the concept of reflexivity has particular appeal to those whose attention is spontaneously engaged by qualities of vulnerability, passion, complexity, and mystery: who delight in these aspects of their soul. Transmutation calls to those who yearn beyond symptom alleviation. For these individuals, Imaginal Psychology resonates and rings when soul-familiarity is recognized.

**Areas for Future Research**

This study is a fathom exploration of the possibility of the full differentiation of autonomy amidst intimacy, of unfolding an individuation which is inherently both relational and alone. Shining a light down through the lens of narcissistic and absent parenting reveals the darker, more wounded reaches of these potentials. A self is revealed which is both compromised alone and relationally flawed, anxious, and lonely. This is arguably also a low level of self-differentiation.

Elements emphasized in this case study point to possible constellations of healing for this compromised self, and directions for further study. Does explicitly shared
intersubjectivity lessen agonized-yet-accustomed loneliness? When the respectful somatic and affective overtones named here are deliberately included, what then? What effect does repeated, authentic, and reliable welcoming have when it is experienced from a caring and empathically imaginative other? Does pre-existing inherent caring in the one reached toward begin to reach back to others? When mindful disidentification-amidst-immersion infuses pained encapsulated experiences within a person, do these wounds of the self gradually heal, especially amidst intersubjective sharing with an empathic other? Might all or any of these possible interventions also increase self-differentiation?

Differentiation of self admirably encapsulates intimacy amidst autonomy, and the potential integration of cerebral and emotional functioning. Diving from the concreteness of self-differentiation into the subterranean darkness of damaging parenting, soul-texture is the healing harvest. When the light of truthfulness and authenticity gathered in these depths is offered back to the self at the surface the nature of our embodied essence is enhanced and illuminated: we are beings both separate, and inextricably connected. Wounding – and healing – integrate these.
APPENDIX 1

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To: [ ]

You are invited to be the subject of a Clinical Case Study I am writing on individuation. The study's purpose is to better understand how people differentiate themselves from their families of origin and give their own chosen shape to their lives.

For the protection of your privacy, all of my notes will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected. In the reporting of information in published material, any and all information that could serve to identify you will be altered to ensure your anonymity.

This study is of a research nature and may offer no direct benefit to you. The published findings, however, may be useful to others seeking to make sense of their own experience of differentiation and may benefit the understanding of individuation.

The Clinical Case Study does not directly require your involvement. However, it is possible that simply knowing that you are the subject of the study could affect you in ways which could potentially distract you from your primary focus in the life coaching work we have done together.

If at any time you develop concerns or questions, I will make every effort to discuss these with you.

If you decide to participate in this Clinical Case Study, you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time and for any reason. Please note as well that I may need to terminate your role as the subject of the study at any point and for any reason; I will inform you of this change, should I need to make it.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may discuss these with me, or you may contact the Academic Services Coordinator at Meridian University, 47 Sixth Street, Petaluma, CA 94952, telephone: (707) 765-1836.
I, ____________________________, understand and consent to be the subject of, or to be referred to in, the Clinical Case Study written by Glenn Francis, on the topic of individuation. I understand private and confidential information may be discussed or disclosed in this Clinical Case Study. I have had this study explained to me by Glenn Francis. Any questions of mine about this Clinical Case Study have been answered, and I have received a copy of the Informed Consent form. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

I knowingly and voluntarily give my unconditional consent for use of both my clinical case history, as well as for disclosure of all other information about me including, but not limited to, information which may be considered private or confidential. I understand that Glenn Francis will not disclose my name or the names of any persons involved with me, in this Clinical Case Study.

I hereby unconditionally forever release Glenn Francis and Meridian University (and all of its trustees, officers, employees, agents, faculty, successors, and assigns) from any and all claims, demands, and legal causes of action whether known or unknown, arising out of the mention, use, and disclosure of my clinical case history, and all information concerning me including, but not limited to, information which may be considered private and confidential. Meridian University assumes no responsibility for any psychological injury that may result from this study.

The terms and provisions of this consent shall be binding upon my heirs, representatives, successors, and assigns. The terms and provisions of this consent shall be construed and interpreted pursuant to the laws of the State of California.

Signed this _____ day of ___________, 20__, at _________________, ______________.

By: __________________________________________________________

Client's signature

__________________________________________________________

Print client's name legibly and clearly on this line
NOTES

Chapter 1

1. Murray Bowen, “Toward the Differentiation of Self in One's Family of Origin,” in Georgetown Family Symposia: A Collection of Selected Papers, Vol. 1, ed. Joseph Lorio and Francis Andres (Washington, DC: Department of Psychiatry, Georgetown University Medical Center, 1974). Elsewhere Kerr and Bowen remark “As differentiation increases, individuality is better developed, togetherness needs are less intense, and emotional reactiveness is better modulated.” Elsewhere on the same page they remark “The greater the percentage of life energy that is prone to be bound in a relationship, the more a person's functioning will be influenced by and dependent on the relationship. A very poorly differentiated person has no capacity for autonomous functioning.” Michael Kerr and Murray Bowen, Family Evaluation (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 24 (italics in original).

2. Carl Jung, “Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,” in Collected Works of C.G. Jung 9 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 275; also “Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, in so far as ‘individuality’ embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, also implies becoming one’s own self. We could, therefore, translate individuation as ‘coming to selfhood’ or ‘self-realisation’.” Carl Jung, “Two Essays on Analytical Psychology,” Collected Works of C.G. Jung 7 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 266. In the course of this case study the term “individuation” is used by a number of different authors. The reader is cautioned that each of these uses may have different overtones and flavors of definition. For example, one significant authority concerning individuation, Margaret Mahler, writes with her colleagues that individuation is “those achievements marking the child’s assumption of his own individual characteristics,” Margaret Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 4.

3. For example, Jung: “But again and again I note that the individuation process is confused with the coming of the ego into consciousness and that the ego is in consequence identified with the self, which naturally produces a hopeless conceptual muddle. Individuation is then nothing but egocentricism and autoeroticism. But the self comprises infinitely more than a mere ego. . . It is as much one’s self, and all other selves, as the ego. Individuation does not shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to oneself.” Carl Jung, “The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche,” Collected Works of C.G. Jung 8 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 226. In the coaching domain, for example Drake et al. remark that individuation is “the process of becoming whole and realizing one’s unique purpose and path.” David Drake, Diane Brennan, and Kim Gortz, The Philosophy and Practice of Coaching: Insights and Issues for a New Era (New York: Wiley, 2008), 12.


7. Sharon Ting, Peter Scisco, and Center for Creative Leadership. *The CCL Handbook of Coaching: A Guide for the Leader Coach*. (New York: John Wiley, 2006), 422; Roberta Gilbert remarks “From knowledge of human and natural emotional systems, the coach thinks about such issues as anxiety level and its important place in an emotional system. Relationship patterns are observed and explained. The issue may or may not be the issue.” Roberta Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference* (Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 148.


13. Ibid., 29.


15. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 74; these authors also distinguish acute from chronic anxiety, the first being generally in response to real threats, and time-limited, while the second involves perceived threat, greater extension of time, and can constitute a significant non-conscious dynamic in relationship. (Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 74-88.)


25. Ibid., 69.


31. The concept of empathy is defined in endnote 17 in Chapter 4; in writing here of “kindness for herself” I am referring to some of the heartful overtones more often found in meditative and spiritual contexts than in the psychological - see for example the discussion of Jean Kristeller and Thomas Johnson, “Cultivating Loving Kindness: A Two-Stage Model of the Effects of Meditation on Empathy, Compassion, and Altruism,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 40, no.2 (June 2005): 391-407.

32. Alan Watts delighted in repeating a Turkish proverb in this respect: “The person who sleeps on the floor cannot fall out of bed.”


37. This methodology is from the Ridhwan, or Diamond Approach School; significant elements of it are presented in the Coaching Approaches section on pages 54-56 of Chapter 2.

38. Roth, *Craggy Hole.*

**Chapter 2**


4. Beatrice Beebe and Frank Lachmann remark about mother-infant interactions: “Each person is always sensing and modulating her own state, while simultaneously sensing how she affects and is affected by her partner. What is in balance is the degree to which one can flexibly go back and forth, in foreground-background fashion, between both processes.” Beatrice Beebe and Frank Lachmann, *Infant Research and Adult Treatment: Co-Constructing Interactions* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 224; Daniel Stern asserts that the major developmental task of infancy is that of increasing relatedness: “First comes the formation of self and other, and only then is the sense of merger-like experiences possible.” Stern says his view emphasizes attachment and strategies and problems involved in that and minimizes or eliminates such concepts as “symbiosis” out of which the self differentiates. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 70; Gerald Edelman says the (possibly prenatal) capacity to distinguish brain signals originating from within and without arise in what he calls “self” systems, including proprioceptive, kinesthetic or somatosensory, and autonomic components: Gerald Edelman, *Wider Than the Sky: The Phenomenal Gift of Consciousness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 73; Antonio Damasio remarks that “There is indeed a self, but it is a process, not a thing, and the process is present at all times when we are presumed to be conscious.” Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon, 2010); Allan Schore, asserting the centrality of the concept of regulation, particularly of affect (Allan Schore, “Effects of a Secure Attachment Relationship on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation, and Infant Mental Health,” *Infant Mental Health Journal 22*, Number 1, (January 2001): 7-66,) remarks in a later article: “The evolutionary mechanism of attachment - the interactive regulation of emotion - thus represents the regulation of biological synchronicity between and within organisms.” Allan Schore, “Right-Brain Affect Regulation: An Essential Mechanism of Development, Trauma, Dissociation, and Psychotherapy,” in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development & Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel Siegel, and Marion Solomon (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009): 117, (italics in original); Daniel Siegel remarks that “These reciprocal and cooperative processes may characterize the healthy ongoing development of the individual mind, dyadic relationships, and nurturing communities.” Daniel Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 309.


12. Ibid., 41.

13. Ibid., 43.


16. Ibid., 311.


20. Schore, “Right-Brain Affect Regulation.”


33. Cozolino, Neuroscience of Psychotherapy, 287.


35. Wallin, Attachment in Psychotherapy, 51.


37. This sense of empathy is from Lowen, Narcissism, 49; Mary Paige, “EvolvingDomains: Psychoanalysis in Dialogue with Science, Culture, and Technology,” Psychologist-Psychoanalyst 22, no. 3 (June 2002): 34.


43. Schore, Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self, 426: “Developmentally disordered narcissistic personalities, having had early experiences with an inefficient selfobject that impaired the development of affect autoregulation, continually deny their intense need for external self object regulation.” Also, referring to an incipient egotistical narcissistic personality struggling with insecure-resistant attachment: “In practicing transactions, this infant experiences prolonged states of unregulated hyperactivation of the ventral tegmental limbic circuit.”

45. Ibid., 2.


47. For example:

Socioaffective stimulation at the end of the first year induces permanent morphological changes in each of the cellular components of the orbitofrontal cortex. The heightened levels of arousal associated with imprinting experiences lead to... maturation of the micro-vasculature... and this transition makes possible the rapid and exuberant growth and differentiation of orbitofrontal dendrites. These dendrites can now receive axonal input from various subcortical and cortical areas, and it is these varied interconnections that underlie the unique functional capacities of this [sic] prefrontal cortex.

Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self*, 167; on a subsequent page, Schore remarks that this brain area, in coordinated activity with the superior temporal polysensory area of the anterior cortex leads in due course to the infant being able “to efficiently process and regenerate an image of the mother’s face, even in her absence.” Ibid., 169.


51. Ibid., 99.


54. Ibid., 323.

55. Ibid., 324.


59. Ibid., 14.


64. “NPD” stands for narcissistic personality disorder; Mark Reinecke and David Clark, *Cognitive Therapy Across the Lifespan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 177.


74. Orsillo and Batten, “ACT as Treatment of a Disorder of Excessive Control.”


76. Hayes and Strosahl, Practical Guide to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, 24, 32.

77. Ibid., 28.


79. Ibid.


84. Brach writes:

Many of us have grown up with parents who gave us messages about where we fell short and how we should be different from the way we are. We were told to be special, to look a certain way, to act a certain way, to work harder, to win, to succeed, to make a difference, and not to be too demanding, shy or loud. An indirect but insidious message for many has been “Don’t be needy.” Because our culture so values independence, self-reliance and strength, even the word “needy” evokes shame. To be considered as needy is utterly demeaning, contemptible. And yet, here we all are with needs--physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual. So the basic message is, “Your natural way of being is not okay; to be acceptable you must be different from the way you are.”

Tara Brach, “Awakening From the Trance of Unworthiness,” *Inquiring Mind* 17, No. 2, Spring 2001;

By teaching us that something is fundamentally wrong with us, our parents and culture carry forth the message of Eden. As we internalize this view of our nature, we become ensnared in the trance of unworthiness. We can spend years and decades of our life trying to be who they wanted us to be, trying to be good enough to reenter the garden.

Tara Brach, *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha* (New York: Bantam, 2004), 14-15; “In order to awaken from this trance, the Buddha recommended ‘mindfulness centered on the body.’” Brach, *Radical Acceptance*, 101.

85. “With time we develop the capacity to relate to our passing experience, whether in meditation or daily life, with deep clarity and kindness.” Brach, *Radical Acceptance*, 48.

86. “... the capacity for mindsight (the representational process in which the brain creates images of other minds) develops from within the intact neurological structures of an individual who experiences a certain degree of collaborative, nonintrusive attachments.” Siegel, “Toward an Interpersonal Neurobiology of the Developing Mind,” 82; “Mind,” for Siegel “can be understood in the simplest terms as patterns in the flow of energy and information.” Ibid., 69.

87. Siegel and Hartzell, *Parenting From the Inside Out*.


90. Ibid., 4.


96. For example Wachtel writes: “What is central in understanding object relations perspectives is the realization that we experience others as we perceive them, not necessarily as they actually are.” He goes on to say:

The influences that persist in their “archaic” form are either the voices, images, scoldings, and seductions of early “objects” or images of the self that are characterized by an unstable combination of untempered grandiosity, extreme fragility, and feelings of worthlessness and fragmentation. It is these representations of self or other that are seen as primarily responsible for the distortions in our relations to others and in our orientation to the world.


99. In an echo of Bowen, Mahler writes “... in the rapprochement subphase, we feel is the mainspring of man's eternal struggle against both fusion and isolation.” Subsequently she comments:

One could regard the entire lifecycle as constituting a more or less successful process of distancing from an introjection of the lost symbiotic mother, an eternal longing for the actual or fantasied “ideal state of self,” with the latter stemming from symbiotic fusion with the “all good” symbiotic mother, who was at one-time part of the self in a blissful state of well-being.


100. William Borden, Contemporary Psychodynamic Theory and Practice: Toward a Critical Pluralism (Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, 2008), 4; similarly, David Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles remark that “... Fairbairn put the infant and child's need for a relationship at the center of development.” David Scharff and Ellinor Fairbairn Birtles, Introduction, in W. R. D. Fairbairn, Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality (Routledge, 1994), x; Ernest Jones remarks that Fairbairn “... starts at the center of the personality, the ego, and depicts its strivings and difficulties in its endeavor to reach an object where it may find support.” Ernest Jones, Preface, in W. R. D. Fairbairn, Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality (Routledge, 1994), v.

101. Fairbairn, Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality, 145; in this same page Fairbairn casually remarks in passing “... a capacity for relationships necessarily implies dependence of some sort.”; Fairbairn’s relational ancestry is depicted in Steven Ellman, When Theories Touch: A Historical and Theoretical Integration of Psychoanalytic Thought (London, U.K.: Karnac Books, 2009), 330; The latter of these stages has been characterized by one contemporary researcher as tantamount to interdependence, a term not in current parlance when Fairbairn was writing in the mid-1940’s. (Chris Blazina et al. “The Relationship between Masculinity Ideology, Loneliness, and Separation Individuation Difficulties,” The Journal of Men’s Studies 15, no. 1 (2007): 101-109. This paper encourages men to emulate Fairbairn’s 1952 notion of mature dependence.)

102. Ellman, When Theories Touch, 334.

103. Fairbairn, Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality, 146; the necessary complexity and sophistication of defenses of this kind - and Fairbairn's visionary seeing of their roots in objects split in early development - appears in the following paragraph:

The child would rather be bad himself than have bad objects... in becoming bad he is really taking upon himself the burden of badness which appears to reside in his objects. By this means he seeks to purge them of their badness; and, in proportion as he succeeds in doing so, he is rewarded by that sense of security which an environment of good objects so characteristically confers. To say that the child takes upon himself the burden of badness which appears to reside in his objects is, of course, the same thing as to say that he internalizes bad objects. The sense about the security resulting from this process of internalization is, however, liable to be seriously compromised by the resulting presence within him of internalized bad objects. Outer security is thus purchased at the price of inner insecurity.

Fairbairn, Psychoanalytic Studies, 64.
104. “Throughout the transitional phase, the child experiences the conflict between dependence and autonomy.” Jeffrey Seinfeld, *Interpreting and Holding: The Paternal and Maternal Functions of the Psychotherapist* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1993), 71; Fairbairn wrote:

> During this period, accordingly, the behavior of the individual is characterized both by desperate endeavors on (the child's) part to separate from the object and desperate endeavors to achieve reunion with the object - desperate attempts “to escape from prison” and desperate attempts “to return home.”

Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*, 43. Fairbairn also describes the anxieties attending separation - fear of isolation - and identification - the fear of being engulfed, shut-in, or imprisoned.


106. Geneen Roth, *When Food Is Love: Exploring the Relationship Between Eating and Intimacy* (New York: Plume, 1991). Also salient in this literature is the challenges these patients face with deficits in functioning, for example in respect of boundaries and their relationship to their impulses and affects that “imperil the patient’s capacity to develop themselves over the lifecycle” (Kathryn Zerbe, “Psychodynamic Therapy for Eating Disorders,” in *The Treatment of Eating Disorders: A Clinical Handbook*, ed. Carlos Grilo and James Mitchell (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 339-358; 339.) Hilda Bruch remarks that what she calls these “deviant avenues toward self differentiation” resemble other disorders of adolescence and arise from core issues involved in the adolescent struggle for distinct identity. (Hilde Bruch, *Eating Disorders: Obesity, Anorexia Nervosa, and the Person Within* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 375; 376.) See also the work of Swift and Stern cited in endnote 68 above.


117. See, for example, Peter Fonagy, *Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Other Press, 2001), 77.

118. Carol George and Judith Solomon, for example, suggest that particularly for adolescents confident autonomy is best reached through a felt sense of secure connection: Carol George and Judith Solomon, “Couple and Family Therapy: An Attachment Perspective,” in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip Shaver (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 811-832; 814; Mario Mikulincer proposes that the secure base fostered by loving attachment figures promotes a cognitive openness to new information: Mario Mikulincer, “Adult Attachment Style and Information Processing: Individual Differences in Curiosity and Cognitive Closure,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 72, no. 5 (May 1997): 1217-1230; Fonagy and Target and their colleagues, as well as Arietta Slade suggest that the possibility of adjustment to new contexts, in the embrace of secure attachment can enhance the capacity to stand back and reflect on oneself, including feelings, behavior, and mental states: Peter Fonagy, George Gergely, and Mary Target, “Psychoanalytic Constructs and Attachment Theory and Research,” in *Handbook of Attachment*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip Shaver, 783-810; Peter Fonagy and Mary Target, “Attachment and Reflective Function: Their Role in Self Organization,” *Development and Psychopathology* 9, no. 4 (1997): 679-700; Arietta Slade, “The Implications of Attachment Theory and Research for Adult Psychotherapy: Research and Clinical Perspectives,” in *Handbook of Attachment*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip Shaver, 762-782; Drawing parallels between Otto Kernberg’s object relations focus on the two fundamental processes of differentiation and integration, Wallin points to the attachment features of both in terms that are recognizably echoes of qualities of self-differentiation, as is much of the theorizing and observation reported earlier in this paragraph: Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*, 65.


127. Blatt, *Polarities of Experience*, 169: these distortions are characterized by “exaggerated and distorted emphases on either relatedness or self-definition at the expense of the other developmental dimension.” These, Blatt emphasizes, are “compensatory (defensive) attempts to cope with severe developmental disruptions.” Blatt, *Polarities of Experience*, 169.


131. Knox, “The Fear of Love,” 545; Mahler writes of the automatic adjustment of the primitive self of the infant to the vicissitudes of the mothers’ ‘mirroring frame of reference,’’ which in some cases creates a child who reflects the mothers’ own unique and individual needs, not those of the child: Margaret


133. Lowen writes “For their part, children want to be free - free to grow up according to their own natures. They expect the parent to be there for them, not the reverse.” Lowen, *Narcissism*, 106.


135. Ibid., 116.


137. Kohut remarks that people with “analyzable narcissistic personality disturbances” are suffering from “disturbances in the realm of the self and of those archaic objects cathected with narcissistic libido (self-objects) which are still in intimate connection with the archaic self (i.e., objects which are not experienced as separate and independent from the self).” Kohut, *Analysis of the Self*, 3; more simply Jacoby refers to “people in the baby's environment who are experienced as though they were parts of its own self.” Jacoby, *Individuation and Narcissism*, 66.


140. Kohut, *Analysis of the Self*, 33; Warren Kinston starkly contrasts the relational consequences of the child being rejected for her particular and unique constellation of needs, feelings, and wishes:

The interpersonal relation is painful, horrible, and traumatic for the child. Should s/he exist as himself or herself, the child is subjected to rejecting and invalidating attitudes and finds that s/he causes pain, depression, rage, or resentment in the parent. Should the child comply with the parental projection, s/he must destroy his or her own experience. The former course is clearly associated with low self-esteem, identity disturbances, and problems of self-regulation. The latter course results in a spurious sense of well-being due to the receipt of (false) approval and love, and the absence or the psychic destruction of personal need, frustration, or conflict.


142. Ibid., 154.

143. Ibid., 154.


146. Golomb, Trapped in the Mirror, 11; McBride, Will I Ever Be Good Enough?, xvii.


152. Herman writes:

What is it that woman wants? The answer which seems to emerge in the majority of cases during psychotherapy, sometimes after years of work, is in effect: to be myself, to live my life as I desire, by my own personal design - without offending my mother, without antagonizing her or hurting her own views and feelings; without thereby having to make an enemy of her, because I need her as a friend, a comrade and beloved sister, as a lifelong all-in-all.

Herman, Too Long a Child, 6.


154. Outside the specific context of narcissistic mothering there exists a significant literature about emotionally or physically absent fathers. For example, Jacob Segal remarks on the wound created in the inner world of the child by an emotionally absent father, threatening her sense of security, preoccupying her with issues of power, and damaging her capacity for playfulness. (Jacob Segal, “The Return of the Absent Father” in Play and Power ed. Karen Mortensen and Liselotte Grunbaum (London: Karnac Books, 2010), 115-116.); Andrzej Werbart and his colleagues tracked young adults’ representations of mother and father over the course of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Women’s descriptions of their fathers were more frequently negative than of their mothers; frequency of representations of the out-of-touch father decreased in frequency over treatment, while positive representations increased at follow-up. These researchers saw the possibility of their results indicating “…development of self and object representations toward a greater degree of psychological separation differentiation, and as a greater capacity for empathy toward the parent.” One of their conclusions is that “In this process, the young adult patients seem to find themselves and separate from parental figures, rather than revise and relinquish distorted and disruptive parental introjects.” Andrzej Werbart, et al. “Changes in the Representations of Mother and Father Among Young Adults in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy,” Psychoanalytic Psychology 28, no. 1 (2011): 95-116; 111-113.


In benign circumstances, mother and father both become established as object representations within the child’s mind, independent and separate from the child’s self-representation. In pathological cases, one or other of the primary objects may not be represented sufficiently
separately and may become part of the child self-representation, which is inevitably distorted. The two sets of object representations are parallel but not equivalent. Within this framework the father still... can soften the impact of a pathogenic maternal influence. One potential special role of the father as second object is in the prevention or lessening of introjection of the mother's image into the self.

Ibid., 53-54.


160. Shaw, *Enter Ghosts*, 52; “Badness,” is most clearly explicated in the quotation from Fairbairn in endnote 103, above.


162. Defensive exclusion is a concept from Bowlby; Fosha, *Transforming Power of Affect*, 84 elaborates it.


167. Jessica Benjamin, *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xii. Benjamin goes on to express her excitement about the practical and theoretical possibilities that the contemporary focus on intersubjectivity has opened up:

In current relational analysis we see a reversal that restores the analyst’s subjectivity as a fallible being and the analysand’s subjectivity as one who can know and speak with authority. My intention is to push beyond this reversal by contemplating the difficulty of creating or discovering the space in which it is possible for either subject to recognize the difference of the other.

Ibid., xii.


170. See also endnotes 189 and 300, this chapter.


180. In the rapprochement subphase of the separation-individuation process, roughly spanning the developmental period from 15 to 24 months of age young toddlers experience ambivalence when needing comforting contact with a caregiver. The source of this is hypothesized to be their increasingly-apparent separateness from the mother. Anni Bergman and Ilan Harpaz-Rotem, “Revisiting Rapprochement in the Light of Contemporary Developmental Theories,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 52, no. 2 (June 2004): 555 -569; Ruth Lax, Sheldon Bach, and J. Alexis Burland, *Rapprochement: The Critical Subphase of Separation-Individuation* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1980); K. Lyons-Ruth,

182. Ibid., 125.
183. Ibid., 126.


188. Lowinsky, *The Motherline*, 54; xii.

189. For example:

A baby wants to be responded to in the perfect rhythm of her needs. But her mother has different needs. She has just given birth. She is exhausted. She hardly knows her own body, let alone her baby’s. Perhaps she is depressed. Undoubtedly she is deeply disoriented. Her baby’s cry does not always fall on willing ears. No child can help being an assault on a mother’s sense of self. No mother can mother all aspects of her child. And in those moments of feeling overwhelmed, the demons emerge. The mother may wish her child dead because the child is devouring the mother's existence. The child feels the mother's fury and is terrified. Negotiating these differences in the early mother-infant bond is fraught with emotional danger.


194. Ibid., viii.
195. Ibid., ix.
196. Ibid., ix-x.
198. Ibid., 8.
199. Ibid., 9.
200. Ibid., 17.
201. Ibid., 19.
205. Diane Shrier, Margaret Tompsett, and Lydia Shrier, “Adult Mother-Daughter Relationships: A Review of the Theoretical and Research Literature,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis & Dynamic Psychiatry* 32, no. 1 (2004): 91-115; the work of Bernstein in this respect offers a different viewpoint from that of Shrier and her colleagues: Bernstein, “Mothers and Daughters From Today’s Psychoanalytic Perspective.”
207. Susan Seymour, *Women, Family, and Child Care in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); The child is encouraged:

To sacrifice his or her early emotional attachment to the mother for a more generalized attachment to the whole family and acceptance by that group. . . . Attention and affection, he learns, will come more consistently from the joint family than from specific individuals. He also learns that some degree of emotional control and personal sacrifice are required of him to sustain such group membership. A sense of individuation and personal autonomy, the expected outcomes of middle-class American caretaking practices, are not the intended outcomes of Indian child-rearing. A very different cultural model is operative.

Seymour, *Women, Family, and Child Care in India*, 83.


218. Seymour, Women, Family, and Child Care in India, 71.


220. Keung Ho, Rasheed, and Rasheed, Family Therapy, 108-109; these authors further comment: “Individualism requires that uniqueness be deviation from the “normal.” Individuality allows uniqueness to become the refinement of life, and it requires a philosophy that can give understanding and meaning to the world. Hence, a differentiated person is not a self-centered person but an individual who knows and values his or her past, including ethnic heritage and family background.” 109.

221. Monica McGoldrick, Joe Giordano, and Nydia Garcia-Preto, Ethnicity and Family Therapy (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 3; and an addendum, from Helen Shulman Lorenz and Mary Watkins, “Depth Psychology and Colonialism: Individuation, Seeing-Through, and Liberation,” in Psychology at the Threshold, ed. Dennis Patrick Slattery and Lionel Corbett (Santa Barbara, CA: Pacifica Graduate Institute Publications, 2000), 283: Beneath colonialism’s tear in the psychic and social fabric, these authors remark “we each carry the uneasy feeling-sense that there is much about our experience of self, other, and community that can not be said, indeed, even formulated into thoughts.” 283.


225. “Life coaching is a powerful human relationship in which trained coaches help people design their future rather than get over their past. Through a typically long-term relationship, coaches aid clients in creating visions and goals for all aspects of their lives and multiple strategies to support the achievement of these goals.” Patrick Williams and Deborah Davis, *Therapist as Life Coach: An Introduction for Counselors and Other Helping Professionals* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), xiii.


230. W. Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Work: Focus, Learning, Pleasure, and Mobility in the Workplace* (New York: Random House, 2000), 10: “(1) non-judgmental awareness is curative; (2) trust Self 2 (my own and the student’s); and (3) leave primary learning choices with the student.” (Gallwey defines Self 2 as “the human being itself. It embodies all the inherent potential we were born with, including all capacities actualized and not yet actualized. It also embodies our innate ability to learn and to grow any of those inherent capacities. It is the self we all enjoyed as young children.” Ibid., 7.)


232. Ibid., 283.

233. Hudson distinguishes largely stable and linear “life chapters,” essentially providing “opportunities to soar” from the raw depths of life transitions: “In a life transition, people experience the world as basically unreliable, chaotic, and punishing. They are likely to feel discouraged, have low energy, and be pessimistic.” These words of Hudson accurately described Amy at some points in the process of attending her father’s life-exit process: what was also true was the way her experience of tectonic change in her relationship with her parents also involved, as Hudson puts it, “...transformation, amazing growth, and renewal.” Frederic Hudson, *The Handbook of Coaching: A Comprehensive Resource Guide for Managers, Executives, Consultants, and Human Resource Professionals* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 105-114.


243. Ibid., 91; the Diamond Approach is the creation of A. H. Almaas, for example, *Diamond Heart, Book One: Elements of the Real in Man* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2000); Almaas is the author of numerous books – see also Ridhwan School, http://www.ridhwan.org/; Internet; accessed 25 October, 2010.

244. Roth, *Women Food and God*, 92.

245. Ibid.,100; Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor, *On Kindness* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 13; Phillips and Taylor elsewhere refer to other synonyms for kindness: kinship, sameness, sympathy, generosity, altruism, and empathy (Ibid., 6.).

246. Almaas writes:

In this method we have integrated in a specific and precise way some of the ancient knowledge about the Human Essence and its development with the contemporary body of knowledge that shapes the present-day mentality. In particular, we have studied, expanded, and fitted various aspects of knowledge and techniques from the major schools of psychology and psychotherapy, including the body approaches, to the work of liberation and realization. Our methods and techniques have, in effect, developed in the present environment, amidst the latest findings of the various psychological schools.


249. Ibid, 18.


255. Ibid., 210.


257. Cited by Karen Jaenke in “Soul and Soullessness,” *ReVision* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 3-18; 7; James Hillman, Henry Corbin, and Thomas Moore all provide distinct, related, and parallel perspectives on the nature of soul. Hillman, for example, says:

> By soul I mean, first of all, a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself. This perspective is reflective; it mediates events and makes differences between ourselves and everything that happens. Between us and events, between the doer and the deed, there is a reflective moment -- and soul-making means differentiating this middle ground.


262. Ibid., 176.


264. Jeffrey Raff, *Jung and the Alchemical Imagination* (York Beach, ME: Nicolas-Hays, 2000), 104; this perspective resembles the contribution of Edward Edinger, see endnote 275 below.


266. Edward Whitmont, *The Symbolic Quest: Basic Concepts of Analytical Psychology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 93. The definition of ego as ‘the center of the conscious personality’ is from Edward Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1992), 3. Generally in this case study the word self is capitalized, “Self,” when reference is being made to “... the totality of the psyche, which would necessarily include the ego.” (Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, 6), and not capitalized when reference is made to the ordinary sense of “I.” Thus terms such as ‘self-esteem’ and ‘self-differentiation’ are not capitalized. Edinger goes on to say “The fact is, the conception of the Self is a paradox. It is simultaneously the center and the circumference of the circle of totality. Considering ego and Self as two separate entities is merely a necessary rational device for discussing these things.” (Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, 6).

267. John Perry remarks in a more general frame that the latter kind of relative isolation from context fails to honor Jung’s stated inclusion of expanded kinship experiences within the individuation process: John Perry, *The Heart of History: Individuality in Evolution* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987), 176; Mark Saban remarks on a ‘fundamental ambiguity’ at the heart of Jung’s psychology, in particular in his writings on the process of individuation, the prime source of material on the self. Jung’s predominant idea of self, he says, is one-sided, a quality at complete variance with Jung’s intuition of the psyche functioning as embodied social being-in-the-world: Saban, “Staging the Self;” 110-126; 110-111; Andrew Samuels, remarking that “a study of the Other turns out to be a secret and codified study of the self;” adduces the perspective of Fanon, that the soul of the colonialist is as much harmed by colonialization as those they oppress: Andrew Samuels, “Foreword,” in Lawrence Alschuler, *The Psychopolitics of Liberation: Political Consciousness From a Jungian Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), x-xi.


269. James Hillman, *A Blue Fire* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 40; in the same work Hillman remarks that archetypes are “... the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the roots of the soul
governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world.” (italics in original) 23; Robert Hopcke, A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of C.G. Jung, (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1999), 14; in his introductory remarks to “The Poetic Basis of Mind” in A Blue Fire, Thomas Moore remarks “Archetypal means fundamentally imaginal.” Hillman, A Blue Fire, 16

270. Hillman, A Blue Fire, 40; 43.


272. Ibid., 66.

273. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 103; Hillman remarks “Afflictions point to gods; gods reach us through afflictions.” Hillman, A Blue Fire, 146; elsewhere, Edinger remarks “Behind a shadow or animus problem or a parent problem will lurk the dynamism of the Self.” Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 38; Jaenke writes of the implication “. . . that regressions are as important to the soul’s life as progressions.” Jaenke, “Soul and Soullessness,” 4.

274. “Speaking generally, the individuation urge promotes a state in which the ego is related to the Self without being identified with it.” Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 96.

275. Ibid., 96; elsewhere, Edinger quotes Jung on this relationship: “The ego stands to the Self as the moved to the mover. . .”; “The Self is. . . an unconscious prefiguration of the ego.” Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 38; other commentators, such as Louis Zinkin, and Philip Cushman offer cogent reflections about the networked or public nature of the self; Louis Zinkin, “Your Self: Did You Find It or Did You Make It?,” Journal of Analytical Psychology 53, no. 3 (June 2008): 389-406; 404; Cushman, Constructing the Self, Constructing America, 77; see also endnote 279 of this chapter.

276. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 96.

277. Ibid., 3; gods, suggests Hillman, “force themselves symptomatically into awareness. Our pathologizing is their work, a divine process working in the human soul.” (italics in original) Hillman, A Blue Fire, 147.

278. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 3.

279. Erich Neumann, “Narcissism, Normal Self-Formation, and the Primary Relation to the Mother,” Spring, 1966; Edinger notes the primordial name given to deity, Yahweh: “I am that I am,” and notes that simultaneously and concurrently, “I am” also defines the ego's essential nature. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 38.

280. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 6; Neumann, “Narcissism, Normal Self-Formation, and the Primary Relation to the Mother;” as we shall see, this is a statement of positive possibility: damage to this linkage also underlies experiences of ego dysfunctionality or disintegration; implying the dynamic of the ego-Self axis, Edinger elsewhere says:

The Self as the center and totality of the psyche which is able to reconcile all opposites can be considered as the organ of acceptance par excellence. Since it includes the totality, it must be able to accept all elements of psychic life no matter how antithetical they may be. It is this sense of acceptance of the Self that gives the ego its strength and stability. This sense of acceptance is conveyed to the ego via the ego-Self axis.

Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 40.

282. The circular symbol of the Ouroborus, or Uroborus, the snake eating its own tail is described by Jung as having a meaning of infinity or wholeness. The paradox of head and tail, distinguishable yet emerging from an indissoluble unity parallels the sense that amidst the Self “The ego germ is present only as a potentiality.” Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, 6.

283. Ibid., 6.

284. Ibid., 39.

285. Ibid., 40-41.

286. Ibid., 39.

287. Ibid., 39-40. See also similar remarks by Warren Kinston in endnote 140, this chapter.

288. Ibid., 40.

289. Montecchi writes about the consequences of too little or too much mothering care, both of which lead to a splitting of the “archetype of the Great Mother.” This division leads to activation of the dominance of either the Terrible Mother or the Good Mother. If over-care is the rule (see Munich and Munich, “Overparenting”) Good Mother dominates and “adequate development will be obstructed and the child will be prevented from separating from her, owing to lacking integration of the negative side of the Great Mother.” Francesco Montecchi, “The Self and Family Archetypes in Children” in Sandplay Therapy: Treatment of Psychopathologies, ed. Eva Pattis Zoja (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Publishers, 2004), 107-148; 113; writing about healing this split in psychotherapy, Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov remark that “an analytic relationship must submerge both the rigid, idealized good and the persecutory bad back into the turbulent currents of the patient’s hungry love.” Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *Cinderella and Her Sisters: The Envied and the Envying* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Publishers, 2008), 76.


291. Ibid., 40.

292. Ibid., 7.

293. Ibid., 7; clearly, Jungian-oriented writers draw different conclusions about this topic perhaps because Jung's writings on it were so voluminous and diverse. So, for example Jacoby remarks “In the process of individuation, the psyche’s goal-orientation manifests itself as the search for the “realization of one's wholeness.” This goal is at the same time a utopic ideal; in reality there are no individuated persons.” Mario Jacoby, *Shame and the Origins of Self-Esteem: A Jungian Approach* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 104.

294. Betsy Cohen writes about non-obvious aspects of envy, such as “. . . a martyr mentality,” going on to remark “. . . there is power in being a martyr. It is grandiose; you actually think you are better than others.” Betsy Cohen, *The Snow White Syndrome: All About Envy* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 156-7.

295. Ulanov and Ulanov write “Repair of the ego-self axis, first experienced and damaged between mother and child, will take analyst and patient directly into the thickets of envying emotion.” Ulanov and Ulanov, *Cinderella and Her Sisters*, 75

297. Ibid., 68.


299. Ibid., 189.

300. Marion Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin: A Process of Psychological Transformation* (Toronto, Canada: Inner City Books, 1997), 105; When this child grows up, she goes on to say “. . . it continues to love mother, or father as mother, as a power principle, not as an individual person. Mother gives, mother controls, mother demands performance; the grown-up child is still helpless, it’s very life dependent on pleasing mother.” 105.


303. Ibid., 5.


305. Ibid., 10.


309. Ibid., 3.

310. Ibid., 151.

311. Omer, *Meridian University Academic Catalog, 2010-11*, 49; an allied concept is that of “The Friend” which appears on p.64 of this study.

312. The work of Silvan Tomkins is most accessibly found in Donald Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994); Jaenke, “Soul and Soullessness,” 7. For example, compassion may be a response to grief, courage a transmutation of fear, humility the transformed experience of shame, and so on.

313. Omer, *Definition of Key Terms*; Omer gives the following examples of potential responses to life experiences: Compassion responds to Suffering; Courage responds to Danger; Destiny responds to the Future; Dignity responds to Failure; Fierceness responds to Injustice; Faith responds to Uncertainty; Reflexivity responds to Personal Identity, and so on.

315. Omer, *Definition of Key Terms*.

316. Ibid.


320. Omer, *Definition of Key Terms*.

321. Ibid.


323. e-mail from Shoshana Fershtman to Glenn Francis, November 11, 2010. The entirety of this message reads:

Imagination integrates and amplifies the somatic, affective, and cognitive dimensions of experience. Imagination may be further differentiated into various modes of imagining that are sense, capacity, and context specific. Empathic imagination refers to the mode of imagination most relevant to relatedness between humans as well as human relatedness to the more than human.

324. Intersubjectivity is “the reciprocal influence of the conscious and unconscious subjectivities of two people in a relationship.” Joseph Natterson and Raymond Friedman, *A Primer of Clinical Intersubjectivity* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 1995), 1; this sense of empathy is from Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 2009), 306; Carl Rogers elaborates Kohut’s brief definition of empathy, referring to:

Temporarily living in the other’s life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments; it means sensing meanings of which he or she is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover totally unconscious feelings, since this would be too threatening. It includes communicating your sensings of the person’s world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes at elements of which he or she is fearful. It means frequently checking with the person as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive.

(Carl Rogers, *A Way of Being* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 142); see also endnote 37, this chapter.


327. Omer, Definition of Key Terms.


329. Ibid.

330. Ibid.

331. Ibid.

332. Ibid.

333. “The term psychological multiplicity refers to the existence of many distinct and often encapsulated centers of subjectivity within the experience of the same individual.” Omer, Definition of Key Terms.


Chapter 3

1. Roth, Craggy Hole.

2. This approach partakes of some aspects of the Somatic Experiencing work of Peter Levine (for example Peter Levine, Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1997) in which I have some training, as well as drawing from parts of Diamond Heart facilitation technology.


Chapter 4
1. These ideas are defined by Omer: “A concept is a one or two-word term used by an author/thinker that offers a handle/perspective on a phenomenon.” A principle, he says “draws on one or more concepts to state a truth as the author/thinker sees it.” Omer, *Definition of Key Terms*.

2. "Disidentification is a key dimension in the transformation of identity associated with the emergence of a spacious awareness free from frozen images of self." Omer, *Definition of Key Terms*.

3. Ibid.


10. Self-differentiation is “the process by which individuality and togetherness are managed by a person and within a relationship system.” Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 95, footnote.

11. Omer, *Definition of Key Terms*.


13. Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*, 6; To capture the meaning of “presence” Wallin cites Wilfrid Bion’s Zen-like suggestion of approaching the patient in the spirit of forgetting, eschewing desire and understanding; Ibid, 7; Bion writes:

   The capacity to forget, the ability to eschew desire and understanding, must be regarded as essential discipline for the psycho-analyst. Failure to practice this discipline will lead to a steady deterioration in the powers of observation whose maintenance is essential. The vigilant submission to such discipline will by degrees strengthen the analyst’s mental powers just in proportion as lapses in this discipline will debilitate them.

Wilfred Bion, *Attention and Interpretation* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 1995), 51-52; in a different, but relevant context Henry Corbin remarks “that human consciousness discovers in itself, in front of itself, and


17. “vicarious introspection - my definition of empathy - what the inner life of man is, what we ourselves and what others think and feel.” Kohut, *Restoration of the Self*, 306; Maia Szalavitz and Bruce Perry remark that “The essence of empathy is the ability to stand in another's shoes, to feel what it's like there and to care about making it better if it hurts.” Maia Szalavitz and Bruce Perry, *Born for Love: Why Empathy Is Essential - and Endangered* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 12; Fosha refers to empathy involving attunement to core affective experience, with the therapist's immersion in the patient's world enabling them to articulate tacit experience of “what makes it scary, painful, or exhilarating for the patient.” Fosha, *Transforming Power of Affect*, 29.

18. Omer, “Empathic Imagination:” e-mail from Shoshana Fershtman to Glenn Francis, November 11, 2010, see also Kohut “... the continuous participation of the depth of the analyst’s psyche is a sine qua non for the maintenance of the analytic process.” Kohut, *Restoration of the Self*, 251.

19. Omer, “Empathic Imagination:” e-mail from Shoshana Fershtman to Glenn Francis, November 11, 2010.

20. Roth, *Women Food and God*, 92; see also the reference to Corbin in endnote 13, above.


25. For example, McBride, *Will I Ever Be Good Enough?* See also the many references in this respect in the Psychodynamic Perspectives section of Chapter 2.

26. For example, Teitelbaum, “The Queen and Her Consort.”

27. For example Bruce Peltier, *The Psychology of Executive Coaching: Theory and Application* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 113. Peltier remarks how a Rogerian, person-centered approach “is essential for the development of a working relationship with clients.” 115. In the realm of psychotherapy, Carlos Blanco and Myrna Weissman remark that “In interpersonal therapy the therapist is an explicit ally of the patient.” Carlos Blanco and Myrna Weissman, “Interpersonal Psychotherapy,” in *Oxford Textbook of Psychotherapy*, ed. Glen Gabbard, Judith Beck, and Jeremy Holmes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27-34; 28; Hope for positive change in psychotherapy involves at the least attending to the therapeutic relationship as well as fostering client perspective change: Denise Larsen and Rachel Stege,


30. Ibid., 3.


34. Omer, “Empathic Imagination;” e-mail from Shoshana Fershtman to Glenn Francis, November 11, 2010.

35. Omer, Definition of Key Terms; Fosha, Transforming Power of Affect, 2.


37. Ibid., 6.


39. This paragraph draws on Edinger, Ego and Archetype, 39-40, Bowlby (Fosha, Transforming Power of Affect, 84; see endnote 162 of Chapter 2), Kohut, Analysis of the Self, 33; and Winnicott, Playing and Reality; Schore most recently refers to the crucial dependence of therapeutic treatment on “. . . right brain implicit primary process affectively driven clinical intuition.”

“Right brain” refers to the right hemisphere of the brain. This is now generally recognized as the locus of the preverbal (hence ‘primary process’) constellation of experience which gives rise to an inherent sense of self which throughout life imparts an immediate and invariant flavor of implicit unconscious affect and self-regulation to every perception.

Schore, “The Right Brain Implicit Self Lies at the Core of Psychoanalysis.”

41. I unthinkingly used the term ‘sea change’, and then, exploring its origin, came across the following:

*Full fathom five thy father lies;*
*Of his bones are coral made;*
*Those are pearls that were his eyes;*
*Nothing of him that doth fade,*
*But doth suffer a sea-change*
*Into something rich and strange.*
*Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:*
*Ding-dong.*
*Hark! now I hear them — Ding-dong, bell.*


43. Ibid., 2.

44. Debra Umberson, *Death of a Parent: Transition to a New Adult Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6; 8. Umberson’s study was based on substantial sample numbers and in-depth interviews; a 2007 study of filial bereavement based on more than 8000 participants remarked in conclusion that “parental death has an important impact on adults’ psychological and physical well-being.” Nadine Marks, Heyjung Jun, and Jieun Song, “Death of Parents and Adult Psychological and Physical Well-Being: A Prospective US National Study,” *Journal of Family Issues* 28, no. 12 (December 2007): 1611-1638, 1634; as the ‘Boomer’ generation ages and is orphaned a number of relevant books are appearing in the grief literature: for example, Victoria Secunda, *Losing Your Parents, Finding Yourself: the Turning Point of Adult Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), and Donna Schuurman, *Never the Same: Coming to Terms with the Death of a Parent* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003).


49. Stephen Levine writes:

We go through life pretending to be real. We are told from every guarded corner that we are supposed to be “a solid citizen,” someone of merit. We are relieved that no one seems to notice that we hardly exist, that we are only a thought here and there, some feelings floating through, a few frames of color-faded memory, a tingling in the fingertips, a bewilderment of opposing desires and beliefs. We go on bravely posturing, incredulous that no one sees through our ruse.
Impersonating what we imagine a “solid” human being to be, we just keep guessing and taking pointers from the other actors.

Stephen Levine, *A Year to Live: How to Live This Year as If It Were Your Last* (New York: Bell Tower, 1997), 114.


52. Cramer remarks on compliance in relationship to narcissism (Phebe Cramer, “Young Adult Narcissism: A 20 Year Longitudinal Study of the Contribution of Parenting Styles, Preschool Precursors of Narcissism, and Denial,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 45, no. 1 (February 2011): 19-28); Cohen writes of the “wish to harm” representing one end of the continuum of envy; Cohen, *Snow White Syndrome*, 256-257; Bettelheim, writing about competition between parent and child, for example when the mother tries to be as youthfully attractive as her daughter says “Under such conditions the child wants to free himself and be rid of the parent, who forces him either to compete or to buckle under. The wish to be rid of the parent arouses great guilt, justified though it may be when the situation is viewed objectively.” Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 204; Jacoby writes about how a patient’s “. . . newfound ability to entertain negative, critical thoughts and resentments were extremely important attempts by her deeper Self to define her own boundaries. . .” Jacoby, *Shame and the Origins of Self-Esteem*, 108.


55. The composite version of Snow White woven throughout this section is loosely based on the Brothers Grimm’s version of Snow White, incorporating atmospheric, if not factual elements of Michael Cohn’s film, *Snow White: A Tale of Terror*, Polygram, 1997, with Sigourney Weaver and Sam Neill.

56. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*; Teitelbaum also says that at first reading this fairy tale has an Oedipal theme. (Teitelbaum, “The Queen and Her Consort”, 372.)

57. Briefly, in Sophocles’ tragedy *Oedipus Tyrannus* Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother; the remainder of this paragraph continues:

The other extreme, the ‘symbiotic illusion’ with the mother appears frequently as well. This prevents the girl from growing into an independent person. Consequently, she is basically unable to enter into an adult heterosexual relationship. In her intimate relationships she will tend to claim the other, to cling to or fuse with that person. The symbiotic illusion as quasi-intimacy makes the other invisible as a separate individual.

Iki Freud and Hendrika Freud, *Electra vs Oedipus: The Drama of the Mother-Daughter Relationship* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3; Freud and Freud also remark:
Girls need their mother’s cooperation in detaching themselves from her. Sometimes that opportunity for independence is lacking, and women have to find a way to sail between the Scylla of Electra’s murderous hate and the Charybdis of total symbiosis. Both extremes lead to an unhealthy mother-daughter relationship. As always, it is only the happy medium that can progress to healthy development.

Ibid., 2.


59. Bettelheim, Uses of Enchantment, 204.


63. Bettelheim, Uses of Enchantment, 203.

64. Teitelbaum, “The Queen and Her Consort,” 370; Teitelbaum also echoes the mother’s “... stunning lack of sensitivity to the needs of others.” Ibid., 370.

65. Ibid., 371.

66. “The father... is emotionally bound to operate in tandem with his wife's wishes.” Ibid., 378.

67. Teitelbaum writes:

The father is needed to help separate from mother and to enhance the child's individuation. A theme of the role of the father is that of “other.” What does the “other” mean? It can mean an opportunity to offer emotional separation from the mother. It can mean the opportunity to validate a different emotional vision from the mother. It can mean a validation of the child's feelings and thoughts that are different from the mother. It can mean receiving emotional protection from a damaging mother. Finally, it can mean an emotional validation of one's value and worth and simply being cherished. Thus, the potential value of father being the “other” is profound.

Ibid., 371.

68. Bettelheim, Uses of Enchantment, 200-211.


70. Jacoby, Shame and the Origins of Self-Esteem, 108; Jacoby goes on to say:

The constellation is one we come across all too frequently. Mothers who make a display of their own innocence in matters of sex and love - who bite the white part of the apple - often prevent their daughters from having relationships with members of the male sex and to sexuality.
altogether. . . I have also seen that mothers who are dissatisfied with their marriages often take
their daughters into their confidence at too early an age, crying about their unhappiness, for which
they blame their husbands, and accusing men in general of being aggressive, bestial, or utterly
unfaithful.


Transforms* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 2000); a similar quality is expressed in the kindness and
discernment Eduardo Galeano calls *sentipensante*, language that speaks the truth: Eduardo Galeano, Cedric


74. Omer, *Definition of Key Terms*.


**Chapter 5**

1. See endnotes 266, 280, and 282 of chapter 2 for efforts to clarify this paradox.


3. Ibid., 106.

4. Ibid., 106.


8. This is not to say in any way that I am confusing nor did at the time confuse the normative
personal boundaries of myself and Amy. Concepts such as intersubjectivity and empathic imagination
invite, even beg the question of the ultimate origin, the ground of shared-being out of which these
possibilities of sensing one another arise. See also, for example such sources as Judith Blackstone, *The


10. Ibid., xv; also note Omer’s definition of soul as “the mysterious stillness, aliveness and
otherness at the center of being,” cited by Jaenke in “Soul and Soullessness,” 7.
11. Formerly known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

12. “Love is the positive existence of some higher power. This power, this energy, flows from the self towards all things – not because it is attracted to them, but because love is emitted by the self. Because love is the perfume of the self.” Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, The Long and the Short and the All: Excerpts from Early Discourses and Letters of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Rajneeshpuram, OR: Osho International Foundation, 1984), 6.

13. Rajneesh writes:

The outward and the inward are not so different. The outward is also part of the inward, the outermost part, of course. And the inward is also part of the outward, the innermost part of the outward, of course. But they are not separate, they are together. Never separate them. They are one reality, just like the circumference and the center. The center cannot exist without the circumference, and the circumference cannot exist without the center. If the circumference is there without the center it cannot be called the circumference, and if the center is there without the circumference of which it is the center, it is not the center any more. Of what? The center depends on the circumference as much as the circumference depends on the center. The surface is part of the depth as the depth is part of the surface. This is the right understanding.


14. For example:

Start loving yourself – that has to be the beginning and that is also going to be the end. Then the circle is complete – you begin by loving yourself, because you are the closest to yourself. Of course, when you begin to love yourself your love is from the circumference toward the center, because you exist on the circumference. You turn in, you stand at the door which connects your inside and the outside. You look inward – you are still standing on the circumference – and you fall in love with your center. This is the beginning…and the end will be when you have reached the center and you stand at the center and look at your circumference. That will be the completion of the journey.


16. Henry Corbin, Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 119; the question asked by the celestial visitor engages the crucial distinction between direct experience and received opinion, even if the latter lives within the person in the form of bedrock belief.


18. Jelaluddin Rumi and Kabir Helminski (translator), The Rumi Collection (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2005), 84.

20. Ibid., xlii.


25. Ibid., 18, Note 2.


27. Nye writes:

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore, 
only kindness that ties your shoes 
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and 
purchase bread, 
only kindness that raises its head 
from the crowd of the world to say 
it is I you have been looking for, 
and then goes with you everywhere 
like a shadow or a friend.


28. What is referred to here as ‘dis-identified inhabitation’ may also be what Omer refers to in his term Reflexive Participation, “the practice of surrendering through creative action to the necessities, meanings, and possibilities inherent in the present moment.”; kindness in relation to thought and meditative intervention has been explored by, amongst others, Greg Feldman, Jeff Greeson, and Joanna Senville, “Differential Effects of Mindful Breathing, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, and Lovingkindness Meditation on Decentering and Negative Reactions to Repetitive Thoughts,” Behaviour Research and Therapy 48, no. 10 (October 2010): 1002-1011; research on intimate relationships offers another perspective (Irene Pruitt and Eric McCollum, “Voices of Experienced Meditators: The Impact of Meditation Practice on Intimate Relationships,” Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal 32, no. 2 (June 2010): 135-154). Depressed and anxious individuals in another study saw kindness as a significant dimension of compassion for themselves (Gerard Pauley and Susan McPherson, “The Experience and Meaning of Compassion and Self Compassion for Individuals With Depression or Anxiety,” Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice 83, no. 2 (June 2010): 129-143.)

29. The database referred to is PsychINFO provided through EBSCOhost.

30. Bateman and Fonagy, Psychotherapy for Borderline Personality Disorder, 100; Fosha, Transforming Power of Affect, 69.

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