

# From Oedipus to Isaac: The Abhorrence of Transformation

By Alan Jones, Ph.D., CSW

Through Jung's method of interpretation, we enter a private dimension of the self-as-subject. It is a place within the psyche where the empirical subject, the "I" of the conscious ego personality, is, at the same time, a transcendent subject. Interpreting myth and using it to amplify personal experience, Jung extended the sense of being a subject into the private enclosure of the intrapsychic world of the self. Within this enclosure, the original relationship and the only relationship is with the fact of existence. We enter this enclosure via interpretation and amplification, which is a process that discovers the private enclosure and at the same time constitutes it.

This paper has two parts. First, it is about Jungian interpretation. Jung's interpretive orientation was primarily teleological. Essentially, his hermeneutic method answers the question, "Who is the subject of my being I am incarnating?" Attempting to express the very difficult implications of this question, Jung (1954) remarked, "It is not I who create myself, rather I happen to myself" (para. 390). It was clearly the goal of Jung's hermeneutic method to deepen the encounter with existential concern.

The second part of my paper is about Oedipus and Isaac. It places these two stories within the psychological dynamics of remorse. Remorse is a drawn-out process of transformation. It fundamentally changes the personality. It can result in the capacity to perceive symbolic reality, to bear the conflict of opposites, and to differentiate a fuller sense of being an individual. And at the heart of remorse is a profound moral and spiritual maturation.

This makes two very strenuous demands on a person. Through remorse one must assume full moral responsibility for his or her psychology. This is a deep interiorizing process of withdrawing projections. One enters the private enclosure of the intrapsychic world. Here, a second demand is to reorient to the experience of the finite time of one's lifetime. Within this enclosure each of us asks, "What is the time of my being?" And we find that we are accountable. We say to ourselves, "I am responsible for my life, *and* I must give an account of it to myself." We reconfigure the narrative of our life story. But this is not yet the complete story. The full story of a life needs what is said by the subject who speaks through the narrative of myth.

In myth, we see the reflection of how the subject responds to the demand for accountability and the demand for a new consciousness of time. These responses are represented in the images of abhorrent deeds, for example, inescapable fate, infanticide, patricide,

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Alan Jones, Ph.D., CSW, is a graduate of the C.G. Jung Institute of New York. He is a faculty member and past president of the Institute. He is in private practice in New York City. This paper, "From Oedipus to Isaac: The abhorrence of transformation" was originally delivered at the October 1999 National Jungian Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

incest, God's command "Abraham, sacrifice your son to me," and Abraham's fearful obedience. I am not going to interpret these motifs separately. My approach is to see these horrific images expressing the subject's terror and suffering as it enters this private enclosure of its being. Motifs of the abhorrent are not allegories of interpersonal abuse. This reference to literal meaning is suspended. Instead, these images are the appearance in these myths of what the subject suffers during the transformation by remorse. One must respond to the time of one's existence, and one must respond to the inescapable press of individuation. This is the abhorrence of transformation.

To reiterate; there are two parts to this paper. The first part is about interpretation. The key points here are the teleological thrust of Jung's hermeneutic method, and how interpretation and amplification *discover* and at the same time *constitute* an enclosed intrapsychic depth. Here the subject of the conscious personality is identical to the transcendent and antecedent subject. The second part is about the images of the abhorrent in the stories of Oedipus and Isaac. These images of the abhorrent symbolize the subject's experience of encountering its own transcendent nature as this occurs in the working through of remorse.

### **Jung's Hermeneutic Method**

Here is an example of Jung's hermeneutic method. It demonstrates how the enclosed interior dimension is simultaneously discovered and constituted through interpretation. In a 1949 revision of the essay "The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Child," originally written in 1909, Jung

describes a child whom he says is "over-dependent on his parents, the blame for this lying partly on the too strict father and the too tender mother" (para. 738). He describes the boy's identification with his mother and fear of his father as an individual instance of an infantile neurosis. He is saying that the boy's Oedipal complex appears to be the product of acquired experience from the family dynamics.

However, Jung goes on to say that these dynamics "represent at the same time the original human situation, the clinging of primitive consciousness to the unconscious." He then identifies the neurosis as an expression of "the compensating impulse which strives to tear consciousness away from the embrace of the darkness." In other words, the boy's family drama and his infantile neurosis parallel, as Jung states, "the universal motif of the divine hero's fight with the mother dragon, whose purpose is to deliver man from the power of darkness." Jung then asserts, "This myth...is not to be causally explained as the consequence of a personal father-complex." Instead of this reductive interpretation, Jung claims that the myth, and by implication, the infantile neurosis, has a *teleological* function. The myth, he says, "is an attempt of the unconscious itself to rescue consciousness from the danger of regression." By implication the boy's Oedipal complex is similarly driven by the attempt of the unconscious to rescue him from own his regressive longing (para.738).

There are three steps that Jung has taken in his hermeneutic treatment of the psychology of this boy's Oedipal complex. They profoundly deepen the meaning of this situation. First, he speaks of the interpersonal aetiology of

the neurosis as a single instance of a universal pattern. It belongs to everyone regardless of personal experience. His second step is to shift from speaking of the protagonists as persons in an interpersonal drama to speaking of the protagonists as “primitive consciousness” clinging to “the unconscious.” And, in the third move, he amplifies a personal experience with the universal theme, here the theme of the hero’s fight with the dragon.

By amplifying the individual subjectivity in this manner, Jung discovers a transcendent dimension of the subject hidden behind a pathological constellation. But he not only discovers the transcendent subject, he constitutes it through his interpretation. He shifts our focus to the enclosed intrapsychic dimension. He ascribes to the subject a transcendent core. He is saying that the transcendent subject is both the voice speaking through the myth of the hero, *and* the voice hidden within the neurosis. Moreover, he attests to it in such a way that it is authoritative.

As we move within this process of interpretation and amplification we appropriate a deeper level of being. We see its reflection in the myth, and through the myth we enter the transcendent and antecedent dimension of subjective reality.

To help clarify the issue here about the self-as-subject I want to paraphrase Jung’s thinking in three critical ways. First, the subject’s primary relationship is with the psychic reality of which it is the subject. Second, to use structural language, the ego’s primary relationship is with its unconscious matrix. And finally, to play on the concept of the internal object, for the subject the primary object is the individuation urge itself.

### **The Individuation Object**

My point so far is that Jung’s hermeneutic method opens a second level of the experiencing subject. Jung’s perspective is radical because it includes the transcendent within the realm of the empirical subject. We feel the transcendent reality through interpretation and amplification. This process restores psyche’s mythopoeic function. But this hermeneutic method is, to borrow an expression from the world of computers, an “upgrade.” The old program was mythopoeic thinking; Jung upgraded it to symbolic thinking. Myth had functioned as a kind of auxiliary consciousness. In myth the transcendent could be manifest and address itself to consciousness. Myth metabolized the psyche’s transcendent dimension, making it possible to be experienced. But it was the totally other, the divine. Mythic reality was still “out there.” Symbolic consciousness “downloads” the transcendent into the domain of the experiencing subject.

This metaphor of downloading is one way to look at Jung’s distinctive understanding of the teleological dynamics of projection. Projection, as Jung saw it, is not a defense to get rid of unacceptable contents of consciousness. It is an original condition of a person’s potentials. Jung’s idea of projection helps us to see that the possibilities of who a person can become are distributed throughout their personal life-world. These potentials are dispersed in a person’s symptoms and complexes. They are also scattered throughout all the things a person is fascinated by, recoils from, and in what crosses the path of his or her will. The metaphor of downloading suggests that by with-

drawing these projections we are not restoring something lost. Downloading suggests that withdrawing projections is a taking possession for the first time of something that has not as yet been assimilated and embodied.

I want to highlight the distinctive meaning of Jung's idea of projection at this point for a specific reason. It exposes the workings of the transcendent subject, and it makes the difficult idea of teleology easier to understand. Essentially, projection is part of the unfolding embodiment of the subject towards its *telos*, its final form. Jung's idea of projection requires the companion idea of the transcendent and antecedent subject. This is the source of projection and the regulator of the compensatory function. Projection insists on a teleological interpretation of clinical material.

Jung (1954) puts this in the following way:

*Just as a man still is what he always was, so he always is what he will become... Hence it is quite possible for the ego to be made into an object, that is to say, for a more compendious personality to emerge in the course of development and take the ego into its service (para. 390).*

Analysts work everyday with the projection of the transcendent and antecedent subject. It is always at work in the transference. But it can remain well hidden behind the concept of the internalized mental object, the introject. The transcendent antecedent subject will be overlooked when the emphasis is on early-life object relations over the present-life intrapsychic press for a new adaptation. This is a one-sided privileging of the reductive over the teleological point of view.

The transcendent subject is very commonly mistaken as the persecutory parental imago. This was the implication in how Jung (1909/1949) first described the psychology of the young boy in the case noted above. Recall that he began with a description of the boy's parents: "too tender mother," "too strict father." In a one-sided, reductive view these figures will be seen as the primary constituents of the internal life of the subject. In this view major internal components of identity are taken to be internalized representations of the actual parents. Of course, these introjects are amalgams. To the real characteristics of the parents are added elements provided from the child's own desires and frustrations. But in general the tendency is to stress the acquired elements of the internal imago, the narcissism of the "too tender mother" or perfectionism of the "too strict father." Maladaptation, such as the many forms of self-hatred and inhibition, is attributed completely to the phenomenology of the negative introject and personal history.

But a teleological perspective needs to be held in tandem with this view. The lack of a teleological orientation affects analytic empathy. The "inner child" or "the wounded children within" are metaphors describing the subject from a reductive, developmental point of view. When the subject is identified only through these metaphors, the gaze of empathy is limited. It then becomes difficult to avoid seeing psychopathology only as arrested development located in infancy and early childhood. The empathic gaze only sees the suffering and desiring of the wounded child at the heart of the experiencing subject.

How are these negative persecutory introjects understood from the teleo-

logical perspective? The “too strict father,” for example, can be understood as the unforgiving individuation urge. It becomes something inescapable. It bears down on the subject’s intractable refusal to assume the agency of life. Thus, it is also the compensating reaction to regressive longing. The “too tender mother” represent this longing and the refusal to enter further into life. This situation fosters very strong resistances and virulent negative transferences. Even the most sensitive probing of an analyst can be perceived unconsciously by the reluctant patient as his or her own demand for maturation. We can speak of this as a projection of an “individuation object.” It can be mistakenly perceived as a punitive super-ego dynamic when, in fact, it is the psyche’s compensatory attempt “to rescue consciousness from the danger of regression.” For the one who longs to regress, individuation can be experienced as a very negative object.

Earlier I quoted Jung (1954) about “the more compendious personality.” It is one metaphor behind the idea of the “individuation object.” It signifies the subject who is, in Jung’s words, “an unconscious prefiguration of the ego” and about whom he says, “It is not I who create myself, rather I happen to myself” (para. 391). The more compendious personality orchestrates a life from behind the ego; but it also directs the life from *in front*. It is one’s ground plan but also one’s “ownmost possibilities” (an expression coined by the philosopher Martin Heidegger). It can also be named the “teleological subject.” “Just as a man still is what he always was,” Jung says, “so he always is what he will become.” But to the reluctant subject refusing a new adaptation, the ‘more compendious personali-

ty’ is intensified into the force of the inescapable. This appeared in one man’s dream as a shark that could not even be stopped by a larger “killer whale,” and relentlessly pursued the dreamer. The man’s reluctance to be taken into service by the more compendious personality resulted in its being symbolized as a dismembering and devouring shark.

### Remorse

What is the significance of projection, teleology, and the more compendious personality to remorse? It has to do with how deeply the empathic gaze is able to peer into the internal life of the subject. Looking only through the lens of the wounded-child metaphor it is difficult to see the subject in its relationship to being, to time, and to eternity. This metaphor does not extend the empathic gaze into the subject’s existential suffering. Metaphors like the more compendious personality do extend the empathic gaze. They enable us to see the subject suffering the inescapable demands of individuation disguised in symptoms, and also disguised in the abhorrent events of myth. Jungian interpretation makes this dimension of the subject visible, and also amplifies its voice and makes it audible. Interpretation makes of the myth the amplification that deepens the subject’s experience of remorse.

Let’s review again, but with more detail, what occurs in the process of remorse. Remorse hinges on a *retroactive* realization of culpability. To suffer remorse one must recognize how she made choices that turned the direction of her life away from her desire and psychological well-being. She begins to see how her unconscious disposition,

her complexes, directed her choices; but still she can blame others for this. Weren't there reasons enough in her personal history that caused her to have these complexes and make her decisions? But she comes to see that she betrayed herself, betrayed her own possibilities; she betrayed her own life. She sees how at that time she made these choices unconsciously. To this extent she really could not have made different choices, and she does not now bear the burden of responsibility for them. She may have chosen, for example, to turn in one direction out of an unconscious pattern of avoidance. She was unaware of this at that time. But now she is aware of it, and she realizes, through the utmost sense of honesty to herself, that she could have been aware then. Perhaps at that time she chose to deny inklings, or at least now she understands that being unconscious of her motives does not really exonerate her from the weight of responsibility. She transposes her current sense of responsibility onto the past. She now sees that she is both not responsible and totally responsible.

As a result, in some area of her life, to one degree or another, she wasted a period of her lifetime that she will never regain. It is gone forever, slipped out from beneath her feet, as it were, while she was standing around concerned about things that had once seemed essential to maintaining an idealized self-image. Now they are completely insignificant to her real desire. She had always thought, too, that she had lots of time for gaining what she desired; but now she understands there are finite number of days to her life.

Remorse requires that she mourn for the *self-inflicted* loss of a part of her

life. And it ends in a resolute choice of affirmation. She decides to live from now on affirming her desire, adjusting her goals to what is now realistically possible. She accepts her loss, but also liberates her desire. She has now accepted accountability in its double meaning. She has assumed responsibility for her life. She has embraced agency. She has also given a new account of her life to herself: she has always been the agent of her fate. Her becoming accountable, however, is not based on the exoneration of those who failed her in childhood. It rests on the sense of being an autonomous individual from day one. This is a paradigm shift that makes it possible to conceive that all the circumstances of a life are indispensable openings to depth.

This is, of course, a brief outline of a long process of making complexes conscious, mapping their dynamics, and working through regressive attachments to a great deal of personal history.

### **Interpretation of the Myths**

I want to now give the thesis of my interpretation of the stories of Oedipus and Isaac. Symbolic perception reveals myth as the place where the transcendent subject and the subject of the ego personality come together. Myth exposes where the subject is transcendent and immanent at the same time. This is the locale of abhorrent suffering. But it is not transparent. It can only be seen looking through myth to the intersection of the transcendent and immanent subjects. This suffering is represented by the mythic images of the abhorrent: inescapable fate, infanticide, incest, the willingness to sacrifice one's own son, and so on.

But what do the stories of Oedipus and the Isaac have to do with remorse?

They symbolize two different stages of the process of remorse; not exactly a before and an after, but a before and a during. In a shift from the figure of Oedipus, who blinds himself, to the figure of Isaac, bound for sacrifice but not slain, we will see the anatomy of the early stages in working through of remorse. But what links these stories to remorse? And how are two stories from two distinctly different cultural spheres linked into a single narrative of the movement through remorse?

Oedipus blinds himself because he cannot bear to see what he has done to his life. Here, the unwillingness to suffer remorse is an element of the narrative. But remorse does not at all appear in the story of Isaac. The key to placing Oedipus and Isaac in the symbolism of remorse is found in the history behind each story. They actually share a common history. They are both new versions of the same old story. This underlying story is from an ancient ritual system that was widespread throughout the Near East and old Europe. It was the liturgy of the sacrifice of the year-king. Once a year, or at longer intervals, the old king was sacrificed and a new king took his place. The performance of this liturgy symbolized the renewal of the cosmic order. The figure of the year-king embodied the spirit of nature and the ordered cosmos. The ritual was a celebration of the creation and was considered necessary for cosmic renewal (Gaster, 1961).

The theme of the year-king is very close to the surface in the Oedipus narrative. Oedipus is the new king who kills the old king and then performs the ritual of the *heiros gamos*, the sacred marriage. These have been transposed, of course, into the motifs of patricide and incest in a family drama.

In the Isaac story, the only element of the year-king liturgy remaining in the narrative is the theme of sacrifice. But look in the Jewish liturgical calendar. The story is only read during *Rosh ha-Shonah*, the Jewish New Year liturgy. Isaac is taken to be sacrificed once every year during the New Year ritual. And look further, into ancient Hebrew legends. In one legend Isaac was killed. He was burned as a holocaust sacrifice - which means a whole burnt offering - and his ashes were considered to have the power to restore the dead to life (Spiegel, p. 33ff.). Here is the figure of the year-king.

Also, during the ancient New Year ritual two goats were sacrificed. One was burned, the other was the *scape-goat* banished into the desert carrying away the sins of the people (Leviticus 16). The goats of these rituals appear in the Abraham material as his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael was banished to the desert, and Isaac was the would-be burnt offering.

At some point in time the rituals were transformed into the historical narrative of the Old Testament. This preserved the ritual relationship to the archetypal pattern. And it also introduced a new image of time. The idea that these stories were actual historical events was a new symbolization of time. Now linear historical time itself became a motif in the story. The New Year ritual was no longer a celebration of the eternal return of the year-king. It now celebrated God's intervention in history.

Isaac's lineage as a sacrificial victim extends back to the prehistoric figure of the year-king. The Jewish New Year ritual still holds the record of this history. But why has the story of Isaac all but forgotten this ancient figure? And why is he better remembered in

the story of Oedipus? The story of Isaac represents an enormous shift away from the psychology symbolized by the year-king myth. The patriarchal Old Testament myth has almost completely repressed the memory of the year-king who was the lover and son of the Great Mother Goddess. But we can see in the symbolism of the Oedipus story that the psychology of the year-king was still close at hand.

My interpretation is based on these facts. From the year-king through the figure of Oedipus to the representation of Isaac, there are changes in how the sacrificial victim is represented. For example, the year-king dies, Oedipus blinds himself, and Isaac is bound but is not killed. He lives on. The year-king is also an eternal figure without individual historical identity. Oedipus is more than legendary, but still inhabits a "once-upon-a-time," not history; and Oedipus is still an "everyman." Abraham and Isaac are different. Within their narrative world they are considered actual historical individuals undergoing their deeply unique suffering.

What is the psychological meaning of the metamorphosis in these stories? The changes in how the sacrificial victim is represented mean a transformation in the internal world of the subject. The fate of the sacrificial victim symbolizes how time is experienced subjectively. These changing images chronicle transformations in the capacity to consciously experience the finite meaning of a lifetime. This is a central development transited in the suffering of remorse.

The death of the year-king is a symbol that there is no death, there is an eternal cycle of death and rebirth. All moments are repetitions of what has come before. The classic *puer* who

denies a finite lifetime manifests this year-king figure. We see a similar psychology in how some people come to analysis for a long time with the idea that by just showing up they will be transformed.

The next stage is Oedipus. He does not die as a year-king victim, but neither does he transcend the fate of this victim. His self-blinding is a negation of his life. This is an example of the fate of Greek heroes. In the end there is usually a failure of some kind. Heracles dies through the vengeful treachery of an enemy, and Jason drives Medea to the revenge-killing of their children, to name just two examples. The theme of the failed hero points to the fact that these myths emerge from a time of transition in the ego's relationship to archetypal structures.

The heroes slay their dragons, but in their ultimate failure they represent that the ego has not successfully overcome regressive longing. It wants to be relieved of the strenuous demands of maturation. It resists suffering the conflict of opposites and prefers to oscillate between idealizing and demonizing itself as well as the other. It insists on externalizing, concretizing, and blaming others rather than symbolizing and internalizing psychic reality. Taking responsibility for its own agency is unbearable. The ego needs to merge and finds separateness intolerable. And it cannot suffer the sense of being finite which individuality requires.

The psychology of the Oedipus myth means the authority of the archetypal psyche and its universal patterns remains overwhelming. The degree of the ego's autonomy is too limited. The ego is unstable and fragile. Oedipus fails because he cannot surpass what has been fated, but he cannot assimilate

it either. Oedipus, the failed hero, is unable to bear consciousness of his self-inflicted actions that were simultaneously his inescapable fate. We see this figure manifested in patients who cannot allow the extensive information about their complexes to become a real knowledge sufficient for motivating change. They cannot, or will not, tolerate being implicated in their own intractable condition, nor tolerate the duration of a process of change.

The third stage in the transition of the sacrificial victim is Isaac of the biblical story, not the legend. He does not die, does not suffer the fate of the year-king. He is a symbol, therefore, not of the unchanging pattern of cyclic time, but of the unrepeatable nature of linear time. That Isaac lives means that the subject enters the finite dimension of time. His fate is also a metaphor of the uniqueness of individuality.

In the Hebrew there is a term for Yahweh (*pachad*) which comes from the word that means "sudden alarm," "dread," "terror," "the object feared." In Genesis 31:42, Jacob identifies Yahweh as "The God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac..." The term thus means "Yahweh, the fear of Isaac." Yahweh is the object of Isaac's fear.

In the biblical text it is God as "Elohiym" who commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1-2), but it is God as Yahweh (22: 11-12) who stops him. Elohiym is a plural noun form. It can mean both "God" and also "Goddess." It suggests a very dim memory in the narrative that the sacrifice of Isaac was originally the sacrifice of the year-king, son and lover of the Great Goddess. In essence, the Goddess demands the Sacrifice. But it is not Elohiym who is "the fear of

Isaac," who terrorizes Isaac. It is Yahweh, creator of the Universe *and* the God of History who terrorizes him. This name shift in the text represents a shift in the symbolism of the sacrificial victim. The victim is transformed from a personification of nature into a person living in time. This movement from "Elohiym" to "Yahweh" corroborates the idea that it is not the death of the year-king victim that is abhorrent. Rather, the abhorrent, the terror, is found in the symbolism of Isaac's lived lifetime within the consciousness of history. The epithet for Yahweh, "the fear of Isaac" could thus be translated as "the abhorrence of transformation." Here is the amplification for deepening the experience of remorse.

But the figure of Isaac only represents an initial stage in the subject's relationship to time. When the motif of "death-sacrifice" is eliminated from the Isaac narrative it means that the subject is primarily reoriented to the time of history. To the question "What is the time of my life?" the answer of this myth is twofold. First it says: "The time of your life is a finite lifetime, a limited number of days. You do not have all the time in the world to realize your desire." The second answer from the myth is: "The time of your life is a brief moment in the time of human history." This has its own quality of abhorrence.

But there is a third answer to the question "What is the time of my life?" This answer raises the decibels of the abhorrent. But it is not mediated by the story of Isaac. It is only hinted at in Yahweh's epithet "the fear of Isaac." The third answer is suggested in material from Murray Stein's (1998) recent work *Transformation: Emergence of the Self*. He gives succinct and insightful accounts of the transformations in

the lives of Rilke, Rembrandt, Jung, and Picasso. Through these sketches he explores the idea that individuation is driven by an inherent unconscious pattern of individuality that emerges in the form of a “transformation imago.” A central image for Jung was the figure of Aion, and for Picasso it was the figure of the minotaur.

The third answer to the question “What is the time of my life?” emerges when, for example, we look closely at the difference between the figure of Aion and that of the minotaur. According to Stein, the animal heads of both figures, the lion head of Aion and bull head of the minotaur, represent the divine. However, I believe symbolism points to only *one* element of the divine in man. This element can be called *transhistorical*. The animal images allude to the instincts that extend from the present back to and beyond the evolutionary emergence of the species “man.” But the two images also differ in their connotation of time. Only the figure of Aion—encircled by the serpent, imprinted with the images of the astrological houses, and representing the enduring flow of Great Year following Great Year, aeon upon aeon—symbolizes the sense of cosmic time. Here is the image of the transcendent subject as eternal being. Only the image of Aion and not that of the minotaur surpasses the transhistorical, surpasses the time of history and the time of animal evolution. Only the figure of Aion extends the sense of the subject into an eternal time of cosmic proportions. It surpasses the symbolism of Isaac. The sense of a lifetime within history opens to the sense of a lifetime within eternity. This profoundly increases the amplitude of the Abhorrent.

The emergence of the Aion figure during the period of his “confrontation

with the unconscious” suggests to me the depths of existence Jung was assimilating in his own hermeneutic work on mythology. He passed through the figure of Isaac. I imagine Jung recognized that at the heart of being the subject of his own being was the experience of an eternal identity. But each stage of this kind of journey into the subject’s discovery of personal, historical, and cosmic time is a movement onto the abhorrent dimension of transformation.

### **Clinical Examples**

I want to conclude with two brief clinical vignettes. In an article entitled “Functions of the Internal Object,” Randolph Charlton (1997) analyzes a clinical vignette centered on a patient’s statement “I hate myself,” followed by the gesture of throwing his eyeglasses across the room and against the analyst’s desk. The patient seems to have been responding to a perceived failure in the analyst’s rapport causing the patient to feel the analyst was indifferent to a very important interest he had. Charlton suggests three interpretations in the context of discussing the internal object and the “split-self” of the Jungian model.

The first two interpretations of “I hate myself” use the inner-child metaphor to gaze into the subject.

- 1) “You have taken your father’s critical feelings toward your needy child self inside of you and now when you feel dependent on me, you recreate your relationship to him by attacking yourself in the same way he did.”
- 2) “You fear that your rage at my unavailability to feed and comfort you will destroy me, and this leads you to bitingly attack yourself and the possibility of a good feed by

asserting that real men don't need comfort or nourishment."

The third interpretation shifts to a split-self model.

3) "Because you both fear and ignore your angry, destructive feelings they appear in a guise quite different from your usual frightened, anxious self. The shadow self attacks you and overpowers you with the same zeal you use to run away from your hate and anger" (p. 84).

Here, the patient's conflict is described in terms that reference the intrapsychic dimension of the subject. An angry self fights an anxious self. The protagonists are no longer imaged and imagined as figures of an interpersonal drama. Moreover, there is the suggestion, too, that resolution of the conflict can lead to a new adaptive integration of the patient's potentials now embedded in his shadow.

I am in agreement with Charlton that all three interpretations have "potential merit." However, these interpretations in my view do not penetrate deep enough. They do not perceive the teleological thrust behind the patient's statement and behavior. I know I am looking at this vignette entirely from the outside, like the armchair anthropologist who analyzes indigenous cultures from the field reports of others. So my remarks are really only hypothetical illustrations of how I conceptualize the subject and teleology.

In the third interpretation, "I hate myself" and the throwing of the eyeglasses are considered a shadow-capacity to express anger that comes from an arrested development of this capacity going back to childhood. From a teleological perspective we could, instead, wonder how this capacity for aggression was projected onto the analyst.

Perhaps it was the patient's own potential which was the beam he saw in the analyst's unsympathetic eye. In this view the analyst has become the figure of the patient's own individuation urge. We could call this a projection of a threatening "individuation object." Now we might see "I hate myself" in a different manner. We can see it expressing the patient's own unconscious understanding that deep within he avoids the press from "the more compendious personality" to incarnate a more assertive, self-directed adaptation. It is this unconscious self-knowledge that he projects and then perceives as the analyst's indifference. It is his own indifference to his regressive longing. By throwing his eyeglasses away he chooses, like Oedipus, not to see his self-inflicted refusal to submit to who he must become.

Here is a final vignette. A male patient had a very strong reaction to a scene in the recent movie *Sixth Sense*. In the scene the central character, a young boy who is visited by phantom figures of dead people, encounters one of these phantoms. This phantom is another young boy who asks, "Do you want to see where my father keeps his gun?" He turns around, which reveals that the back of this head has been blown off by a gunshot. He accidentally killed himself playing with his father's gun. This image from the film haunted this man for many days.

As we discussed the dominants of this image we recognized how they were linked directly to this man's own working through of remorse and his fears of the confrontation with his self-inflicted loss of irreplaceable time and possibilities from his life. This image became an amplification of his working through of remorse. The idea of retroac-

tive culpability necessary for remorse and the loss of childhood innocence are also encapsulated in this movie image. In the instant when the young boy, while playing with the gun, accidentally kills himself, he has become completely responsible for his own life. In the prior moment he was unwittingly playing with his life. Collapsed into that single moment is the loss of this unconsciousness, and the realization that he could have and should have been conscious of what he was doing. Guns are weapons and destructive. The flash from the barrel of the gun compresses into an instant the transit from childhood's timelessness, to the adult's recognition of a finite lifetime, to the abhorrence of eternity. In that single

fraction of a second before he died that boy knew "the fear of Isaac," and he saw the lion-headed face of Aion.

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