

# For a Measure of Left-handed Thinking

By Christian Gaillard, Dr. Psych.

I sometimes hear Jungians complaining. I hear them say: the thinking that we have inherited and that today we try to make our daily fare—beginning with Jung's own thinking—is unstructured, poorly constructed, and, above all, too difficult to present.

In the same thinly veiled or clearly admitted bad humor, some add that because of this it is at the very least uncomfortable and sometimes painful for us Jungians to present ourselves. We find that we are marginal, eccentric, or even excluded from the dominant and surrounding consensus in the universities, hospitals, and professional institutions to which we belong, or wish to belong or should belong. It often seems in this regard that nothing has really changed since the earliest days of psychoanalysis.

These same people and others, not only in France or neighboring countries and not only among analysts in training, say more radically that they feel all too often at a loss, even in their most private and most personal clinical practice. They sense a lack of sufficiently secure landmarks and criteria needed to embrace the demands, the suffering, and the psycho-

logical movements of their patients, to guide or at least accompany them by way of interpretations. Indeed, they feel caught up in the Babelization of contemporary psychoanalytic theories, and even more, they feel torn among the diverse, often antagonistic orientations in the Jungian movement that have taken form in Zurich or in London, and that we find in the multitude of different ways of being a Jungian analyst in today's world.<sup>1</sup>

Yet no such thing comes through in the survey we have received from the United States and that is published here (and was published in the Spring 2001 issue of the *Cahiers*).<sup>2</sup> On the contrary. The question "What does thinking in analysis mean, personally, for you?" produced diverse answers, and yet the tone of each of them is open, the writing is free and flowing, the words often lively and, I would say, happy. Indeed, reading the responses was a true joy for me.

Such was my first reaction upon reviewing the survey. And then this double question arose: "What is it that drives and lends force to our American cousins and that pleases me so? And what can we recognize here in these few pages and perhaps rediscover of a process that could draw us closer to clinicians of other schools of the psychoanalytic community yet also differentiate us and draw us together in our own way of being analysts, beyond the differences that make up the manifest internal diversity of the Jungian movement, beyond even the debates and unsteadiness characteristic of each of us?"

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### Where are we?

Let us clarify these questions, beginning with the simplest one, with our most immediate reaction, with our surprise upon reading the answers to this survey: Where are we, in what place and in what position do we find ourselves as we move forward from one page to the next?

We are indeed not in central square, caught up in the tumult of the debates that overrun and stir up gatherings or conflictual meetings, programs or publications in which we see more and more clinicians of all schools or leanings putting on airs, each one, in his own name or in the name of the group to which he belongs, trying to validate and impose his own point of view, to impose himself and establish his authority or his legitimacy, even if it means discrediting or excluding those who, on their part, would just as soon themselves hold the field.

It is quite different here. One rather has the impression that an ear must be lent, that if we are to have a chance of perceiving the depth of what is being said, attention must be given to the sound and the tone as well as to the words. We are decidedly not quarrelling, nor are we facing demands or, even less, some sort of will to power trying to finally make itself known, recognized, or to impose itself.

Nor are we in one of those fortresses in which a theory establishes itself and proves that it can also organize defenses against all intrusions, any kind of doubt, and, if need be, from any counterattack.

In reading these pages, neither are we in the noisy arena of debates or of the media, where any one of us can sometimes find himself thrust, or in the

ever *a priori* constructions of defensive thinking.

Rather, we are in the hollow of the analyst's chair, in this place where we step back and withdraw into ourselves, into this place of *abaissement du niveau mental* of which Pierre Janet spoke. This "lowering of the mental level" is indeed in accepted agreement with the *lowering of the center of gravity* of the whole body, where feeling gathers itself up and turns inward to become attentive, as well as it can, to the movements, the rhythms, and the expressions of that which is just barely or half-perceptible....

And so Patricia Berry speaks of thoughts and feelings that arise from one knows not where, that simmer slowly or appear abruptly during a session of analysis; Joseph Cambay emphasizes the emotional tension and intensity that can also affect us; Beverly Zabriskie shows how the past and the present are intertwined and conjugate, resisting any immediate comprehension.

In following our authors, we must correct or at least clarify this first observation, and note with them that if the practice of psychoanalysis puts us in this quite sensorial state of introversion, made possible by the protected and protective environment of the consulting room, and is thus and above all deliberately experienced there in the deeper parts of ourselves and oh-so-close to the body, it also opens up quite immediately to a space that is formed and hollowed out between the analyst and the analysand, a *space-between-two*: each person edges this space, as if lying in wait, in uncertain expectation of that which may perhaps arise, so that each is struck, and even looked upon by the other in a quite strange manner,

although clearly remaining in his own place within the frame and according to the rules required of analytical practice.

And so Murray Stein tells of the finicky and critical attention he brings to bear on the thoughts arising in him as he listens, and Claire Douglas how she can sink below the words to lend her attention to the movements that she and her patient are actually activating. Josip Pasic draws this further and takes the risk of speaking of a means of “seeing without a seer.”

### **Emergence and surprise**

Now in recalling this initial condition, ever recommencing and indeed central to all analytical practice regardless of schools or tendencies, we are at the heart of the matter: the question of exactly what we mean when we speak of the unconscious.

Of the unconscious, I would say first of all, along with Freud, that indeed it escapes us. That it slips between our fingers and between our words. That it slithers away furtively. And that in so doing, it resists any verbal and *a fortiori* conceptual, but also plastic and even emotional grasp, that we would like to have on it.

So that I would say, again with Freud, that indeed the ego is decidedly “not the master in its own house.”<sup>3</sup> But even more: I well see and well know, and at my own expense of course, that the ego is part of the question and put into question; in sum, it is dislocated, and loses not only its pretensions to mastery, but also its idealized representations and values, inherited or laboriously constructed.

It is humiliating, Freud tells us in the above-quoted article, written in 1917, in which he treats “a difficulty in

psychoanalysis”—the difficulty being indeed inaugural, radical, crucial, and I would also say moral, or more exactly ethical, and at the heart of all practice of analysis.

It is humiliating, he writes. So be it. And, obviously the ego is suffering along the way. It defends itself. And wants to ignore it. But it is also gripping, thrilling. And passionately stimulating. Simply because it is surprising. A moment to moment surprise.

### **Another scene?**

The experience is indeed disturbing—and how! But at the same time, it opens up onto *another scene*. Another scene that strangely—strangely disturbing but, one adds immediately, strangely felicitous—has its own means of expression, its own *competence for expression*.

And it is precisely here, precisely in this regard, in regard to the competence of the unconscious for expression, that we not only distance ourselves from Freud’s lesson, but also, following Jung, take up the question in a slightly different mode. And from there, we continue in a different manner.

Clearly, Freud, who defined the unconscious in terms of repression—repression of sexuality, notably infantile, and primal repression—drew attention to and taught us to analyze the return of repressed material, its repetitive effects, and the work of displacement and condensation. From this perspective, that of the return of the repressed, in his own way and from the very beginning of his work, Freud treated *figuration*, *dramatization*, and *symbolization*.

And yet here, with and following Jung, we find ourselves digging beneath this Freudian lesson. Digging

it into a sub-body of work, at the risk of weakening the theoretical construction that Freud so firmly and, we must add, fiercely built up.

Indeed, from Jung, and following him, we have learned, notably in listening to the least dream—and I shall come back to this—to allow to emerge, to make a place for, and even to give body, voice, and figure to that which ordinarily leaves apparently so little trace that we would just as soon ignore it, or so easily project it onto our entourage.

### Encounters

For with him, we can learn to discover, to frequent, and to explore the insistent, the recurrent, the loathed, the loved, and the accompanying *presences* which inhabit and obsess us all, most often unbeknownst to us, and which because of this orient, color, and structure our most characteristic representations and behavior from our earliest life onward.

Jung opened to the practice of analysis a truly remarkable, a remarkably eccentric path—and this is just as well, for our consensus of opinions is all too often acquired through a collective consciousness to which we cling fiercely. At the very heart and essence of this path, indeed, lies the living, animated, and thereby unpredictable experience, naturally disturbing and in the end necessarily creative, of *encounters* for which we must, as much as possible, make place, take measure, and which we must face.

Indeed, not only may we learn to welcome and keep company with these presences, but also begin to deal and negotiate with them, so as to better measure their point of view of current events or, if need be, put them back in place,

depending of course on the turns they have taken and the bad turns they could have caused us to take, and the mistakes or alternatively the happy surprises they have brought to our most current lives.

The ego, we repeat, will of course defend itself. It looks elsewhere. It busies itself in other ways. Or it tries to take over, reclaiming the event so as to steady itself and protect itself against the imbalances and the openings which are taking shape there, and which, if truth be told and we are not careful, will slip away or close right back up.

Except that affects, then emotion and from there feeling, which takes its own measure, its own means for evaluation, do not buy into it, and will relaunch the question in their own insistent manner; for they know that the question, often crucial, sometimes vital, that has already been revealed by a particular dream or series of dreams, by an incident or accident of life, often repetitive, by a memory often glimpsed but too-little revisited, or by an experience within the transference emerging from the deepest parts of ourself, is still insufficiently grasped.

One can acquire a taste for such a process, as adventurous as it may be, and for such encounters. One can come to appreciate, with a kind of rejoicing and even gratitude, the privilege of experiencing, within the protected and protective frame of the analyst's consulting room, from one session to the next, from one week to the next, and for a certain time during one's life that continues on its course, a relationship with oneself and a relationship with others, with an other, which until then life had not allowed or which one's personal history had until then distorted, deformed, or violated.

### Living concepts

Jung's analytical psychology conveys and manifests this fondness for relating to the unconscious down to the very special bearing and contents of its principal concepts—beginning with shadow, anima, animus, self—which are obviously not in the least metapsychological, but which are all so alive and animated, easily imaged and even personified, if not sexualized, that they are bound to help us recognize, step-by-step, the diverse moments and the diverse modalities of this relationship. We learn through another ensemble of concepts that are just as dynamic—contradiction, compensation, complementarity—how this relationship signals the *power struggle* with which we are dealing, most often unwittingly, and which therefore becomes more or less difficult to take into account and if possible to integrate.

It was in this way, from his own experience of the unconscious and from his commitment as a clinician, that Jung approached so many different cultures that could seem foreign or strange to us, those that during his time were called primitive and that today we call primal, in Africa or in America, or those that have developed in contexts different from ours, notably in Asia. And in this same way, ever attentive to take into account the tasks and the stakes of our own epoch, he worked on analyzing so many moments of collective history that have been almost forgotten today, and that are nevertheless recorded in the history of philosophy, of art, and of civilizations.

It is gripping to see how in this way his principal concepts, and more generally the problematics with which he is concerned, were themselves reworked

and transformed, down to the very names he gave them, throughout his oeuvre, from one stage to the next of his progression, notably beginning in the 1930s. It was then that he tightened the confrontation of his analytical psychology with the Oriental promises of wisdom and salvation, as well as with that which the alchemists in their time and in their conditions were able to know and tell of their own *opus*, and with that which the different traditions of Christianity have led us to understand and to live.<sup>4</sup>

Of such a process that is constantly relaunched through the exploration of that which seeks and tends to produce itself on the scale of collective history, just as on the quite singular steps that the clinician learns to accompany, to contain, and to sustain, at the cost of a necessary reworking of his own ways of thinking, I would say that it is decidedly *emergent*. And of the relationship to the unconscious that this process tries thus to recognize in its multiple and successive declensions, ups and downs, trials and errors, and accomplishments, I would say that it is, practically and methodically speaking, *animated*, and even deliberately *dramatized*, within and by way of a theory that knows that it is seeking its most exact expression from one moment to the next of its unfolding.

And from here, in the conditions characteristic of clinical work thus practiced and understood, this very particular pleasure one can feel upon becoming gradually more familiar, step-by-step, with the figures, the landscape, and the thousand and one events that make up the history with which each of us struggles; the pleasure as one attends and contributes to its coming to light, its reconsideration of that

which lies hidden, most obstinately and concretely particular and secret, in its own configuration and organization; and, finally, the dynamics of a becoming that has for far too long been man-handled or held off, may break free, and that which we could call an internal universe, *the internal theater*, unique to each of us, takes form.

The foreigner comes closer, the strange becomes more familiar, yet still always maintains the force of its otherness. And most surprisingly, these figures, these landscapes, and even these histories that after a while we thought we knew so well in fact appear or disappear according to the work that advances.

They move to center stage, or on the contrary, get lost temporarily or sometimes permanently in the scenery. And more, they evolve, they re-present themselves in still other ways, transform themselves, and more than once, so that soon they are no longer what they were.

In fact, what one could have known and believed about them is no longer acceptable. One knew the landscapes from a certain angle. The figures from our history (we call them *imagos*) were known under a certain light. This history, which we have taken much time to rediscover, still conceals many more events than we could have imagined. And above all, each analyst lives this surprised and surprising experience, each analyst rediscovers it ever anew: the position, the role, and the way each of us plays out his own history, from his beginnings and from one stage to the next of his life up to the present, discovering himself as very slightly other than what he thought he was, in such a way that the future opens up in a quite different manner than that which we could have predicted or wished.

A dialectic, manifestly and deliber-

ately animated, which is in fact a dynamic punctuated with surprises, encounters, successive discoveries, and, above all, ongoing transformations, has come into play; its center of gravity and axis of development are in this *elsewhere within ourselves*, largely autonomous and truly autochthonous, which escapes us, but also animates, structures and orients us, as well as it can. Thinking molds itself in consequence, and surprised to see what it is becoming, finds itself remodeled in its very self-expression.

### Gaps and convergency

One will have gathered that we are in the midst of an event and an advent, a coming. This produces a whole series of effects, both on the coherence and the future of the psychoanalytic community, and on the very course of clinical work.

Indeed we know that today psychoanalysis is clearly plural. The days of “secret committees,” of major and final excommunications, which are also those of the preservation and administration, of the defense and illustration of the truth of one institution, ideally unique, built up to this effect and to that of a consensus all the more unquestionable as it is *a priori*—those days are now behind us.

Discussion, exchanges, and confrontation among its diverse components, between its diverse manners of being an analyst today, are necessary not only when we meet in our congresses,<sup>5</sup> or when we debate in the labyrinth of our libraries, but also, and above all, within our very consulting rooms.

Discussion, exchanges, confrontation between the contributions from different schools making up the psy-

choanalytic movement, and above all, *the displacements of points of view, of manners of thinking and of perspectives that these discussions and exchanges require*, are today a necessity that arises and can impose itself at any moment, *from the inside*, inside each of the schools that make up the psychoanalytic movement, and even more: throughout each analysis and at any detour or crossroad of each session, and in what is ordinary, ever unexpected, in our clinical work, and therefore, and especially, in our work of interpretation.

We have begun to be accustomed to it, and even to train for it—and to think, consequently, of the training of analysts. This is clear in the programs of our institutes, in the organization of our professional meetings, in the table of contents of some of our journals: debates are more and more on the agendas in our microcosm, at every level and in diverse manners in our institutions. But as for the question of thinking in analysis, have we truly taken measure of this state of affairs?

The ego, we have said, suffers in its relationship to the unconscious. Because of this fact, it is clear that thinking does as well. But which thinking? Undoubtedly, the thinking that, since the earliest times of psychoanalysis, dreams of doctrines, of *doxa*, and—why not?—of orthodoxy; thinking that is only able to consider differences, of approach, of expression, and of elaboration, as an extravagance, a dissidence, to be reintegrated into the corpus, into the common and shared body, *ideally one*, wherein one would so like to take refuge.

This thinking is suffering, and defends itself. And we must admit that this suffering, with the expectations

and the demands that it generates, and the defenses it mobilizes and translates, betrays a more fundamental, infinitely pregnant plea.

Indeed, the stakes involved in our efforts at consensus, and inversely those concerning our differences and divergences, are of importance: it is a question of nothing less than the still pressing, primal dream of an ever sought after unity, forever lost; of an infinitely archaic expectation and plea that never ceases to haunt us, and thereby, of a fundamentally and in fact impossible project that nevertheless constantly holds us and holds onto us, keeping us at the edge of a grieving process that we never truly accept: that of an *untroubled happiness* that remains inscribed, in reality or in fantasies, in the memory of our body.

And so there is resistance to the gaps that separate us; there is hesitation as we face the differences that isolate us from each other; and defenses, sometimes anguished, seize us when we face the newness that emerges and modifies the landscape, cutting into its coherence, its cohesion, in fact into its threatened unity. Particularly, I would add, since being “alone” is painful and awakens a very ancient suffering, and creates a calling for convergency, from the self and to the self (grievance creates a gathering into the self, and it is true that the couch allows and sustains this), it also creates, more massively and often more crudely, a plea for the converging of a group into an ideally perfect and shared theory—even if this means practicing anathema, and exclusion, toward all that could or seems to create disorder....

The suffering in question, which digs in like this, has two sides. On one side, there is the event that threatens.

On the other is the subject who is frightened, who we might say is terror-stricken to find himself there, alone, at a loss, caught in a process of becoming that engages him, with only his stance to sustain him.

### **Straight lines and left-handed thinking**

If the force and the coherence of the Freudian tradition depend on the stubborn attention that it gives to the gap—as it deepens due to the undeniable fact of a radical and primal difference, that between the sexes, and from there, the attention given to the strict analysis of the problematics of castration and repression of sexuality, notably infantile—Jungian practice and theory, precisely because they are emergent, commit us to live out and to recognize, beneath the ideals that haunt us and the projections that deceive us, the insistent figures and presences, ever renewing themselves and thus very actual, of an *internal otherness*, which re-presents itself and challenges us endlessly, and against which we can learn to measure ourselves, in particular through what is played out and discovered within the transference relationship.<sup>6</sup>

The path that thus opens to psychoanalysis, to a psychoanalysis today conscious of the diversity of its achievements and its forward strides, takes a new turn. Following in Jung's steps, and hopefully without neglecting Freudian strengths and requirements, we come to give a place to the necessarily disturbing but also surprisingly creative expressions of our unconscious work, ever ongoing and present, on the other- and under- sides of ourselves.

Indeed, we lose the comfort found in inhabiting established thinking,

which has placed analysis of the present rigorously into the perspective of a return to the past, so much so that it becomes the center of all clinical work—but this thinking, we must admit, as complex as it is, is hard put to avoid setting itself up as an orthodoxy; this relationship to the past that leads from infancy to childhood is hard put to not become linear and to resist the temptations of causal interpretations.

The Jungian process, inevitably, proceeds in this direction, but according to and at the pace of the surprises and encounters of the moment, as they arise in the current life of the analysand, and on the occasion of the slightest dream, and above all with the passing transformations observed and experienced through a series of dreams or within the transference and through analysis of the transference; in such a way, practically speaking, that it will never be inclined to structure itself—with the exception of attempting to produce a truly organic architecture, drawing it closer to the creativity of life itself. For it will move forward and make headway *by trial and error*, trying to get a hold on that which, after all, through its very insistence and consistency, escapes it, or resists it.

And there will be nothing linear about it. I would say rather that it will be *concentric*: we circle around, in fact, that which worries or occupies the analysand, we turn around it, explore it as well as we can, from different angles and in its different manifestations, we welcome it, and hunt it down so as to better apprehend it and confront it.

And very much in contrast to a thinking that reassures by way of ideally explanatory causality, *it will open up at every step to an uncertain, adventurous, and indeed temporary becoming*

and try it on, with few markers and little withdrawal.

Because of this and even more, it knows that *incompleteness* is at the heart of the matter. Regardless of what one may say, nothing is more foreign to analytical psychology as it was launched by Jung than the dream of an accomplished or fulfilled or finished integration. Tension between opposites and radical contradiction remain at the heart of the debate, at the heart of the debates that concern us.

So we may as well admit, and stress, that if orthodoxy is now behind us, fundamentalism, also and all the moreso, is unnatural—including that form of “soft” and ordinary fundamentalism that postulates or makes believe that that which is proposed is already understood, at least implicitly, in the work of the Master to whose work we refer.

On the contrary, our psychoanalytic thinking knows that it only does what it can do. And it is necessarily incompatible with consensus tending always to revive or to reestablish itself; it nourishes itself from that which animates it, remodels it, and relaunches it *from within*. And it knows that it is serving the other, in two ways: it serves that which the analysand can make of it—John Beebe points this out well—and it serves the work of the unconscious as it seeks in each of us to take form, from its most irreducible and its most intimate otherness—Joseph Cambray speaks in this regard of “thoughts of the self,” by which I understand “thoughts produced by the self” or a “self that thinks.”

Our thinking knows that it is left-handed. Necessarily left-handed, groping, disturbing, and temporary. And so much the better. Above all because it

can acquire a taste for this, for forming and transforming itself, and progress in that very manner.

## Notes

[This article was translated from the French by Leslie de Galbert; with stylistic modifications in English by D. Sedgwick.]

- 1) See A. Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), and “Will the Post-Jungians Survive?” in *Post-Jungians Today* (London: Routledge, 1998). See also “Les Écoles post-jungiennes de psychologie analytique,” and “Les post-jungiens vont-ils survivre?” in, respectively, no. 47 (1985), and no. 96 (1999) of *Cahiers jungiens de psychanalyse*.
- 2) “Penser en Analyse” (“Thinking in Analysis”), *Cahiers jungiens de psychanalyse* 100 (Spring 2001).
- 3) “Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse,” *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 12. “A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis,” *Standard Edition*, vol. 17.
- 4) This is what I have tried to show in my *Jung*, “Que sais-je?” collection (Paris: PUF, 1996), now translated into several languages (second edition, January 2001), and in *Le MusÉe imaginaire de Carl Gustav Jung* (Paris: Stock, 1998).
- 5) Some of the practical and epistemological observations which precede as well as some of those which follow were part of presentations I made recently at the *Etats GÉNÉRAUX de la Psychanalyse* (General Estates of Psychoanalysis) held in Paris, at the Sorbonne, July 8-11, 2000; and on the occasion of a round table gathering of representatives of different schools of psychoanalysis, and the workshop I led, at the *Eighth International Meeting of the History of Psychoanalysis*, held in Versailles, July 20-22, 2000, on the theme “The History of Clinical Psychoanalytic Work from Freud to our Day. Retrospective and Perspectives.” Reports on these two congresses will be published simultaneously by *The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, *Les Cahiers jungiens de psychanalyse*, and *Analytical Psychology*.
- 6) See Christian Gaillard, “Otherness in the Present,” *Harvest* 46, no. 2 (2000).

