

Duty and the Death of Desire

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Abstract

An archetypal need to maintain autonomy may override other archetypal intentions, even if they would otherwise be considered desirable behaviors. This is typically the result of a combination of environmental and constitutional factors that leads some individuals to feel that they must refuse obligation and duty. The teleology of autonomy is to ensure the development of the unique individual through the process of individuation and in doing so respond to the calling of the Self. However, if autonomy has been impacted negatively by the environment, a defensive autonomy may develop that actually prohibits the full development of the individual and all of his or her capabilities, including the capacity for relationship, spirituality, and mastery, which serves as the primary example. Defensive autonomy may also lead to more dangerous conditions such as anorexia, obesity, and substance abuse. Legs are seen as symbolic of autonomy and hands as symbolic of mastery.

Keywords

Autonomy, freedom, individuation, teleology, mastery, legs, hands, desire, duty

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“When I *have* to do something, I no longer *want* to do it.” I have heard this from my patients often enough to conclude that when they say it, powerful archetypal dynamics are at work in the background. There seems to be a universal tendency to maintain ego-autonomy in response to demands from outside the ego. Sometimes this need may override all other archetypal intents and lead to refusal and resistance, even if they result in the denial of other intrinsic desires. This refusal can paralyze us because we are often *required* to do things that are both enjoyable and indispensable to our individuation. To refuse can crush our capacity to savor life, to find meaning in life, and to move toward wholeness. Desire for the fullness of living dies.

How are we to understand this from the point of view of analytical psychology? Is it possible that there is more than defense and avoidance at work in these situations? If so, what is the teleological gradient that has gone awry? And, as Jung would have asked, what is the patient doing it *for*?

Many of these patients, in their own misguided way, are trying to ensure that the process of individuation can transpire. In these cases the archetypal need for the ego to be able to choose behavior freely, without overwhelming pressure from either the unconscious or the collective, has hypertrophied, leaving no room for other archetypal intents to thrive. While this archetypal energy ideally assures that individuation can be pursued, if it has been shaped negatively by the environment, duty and obligation may set off alarms and defensive maneuvers that override all other aspects of the individuation process. Individuals may respond to duty with defiance because their sense of autonomy, and thus possibilities for individuation, feels threatened. Consequently they refuse to cooperate in order to protect their innate potential. In this stance of *defensive* autonomy, sovereignty prevails over all other interests or desires.

I am using the term archetypal in the sense of an innate, instinctual pattern of behavior, inherited genetically, the symbols of which emerge after birth (Knox, 2003, p. 205). While the number of these patterns and the extent to which they emerge through development is in question, the early and adaptive nature of autonomy (and, as I shall discuss later, mastery) indicates that it is likely one of these basic building blocks of the psyche.

But autonomy is only a means to the end of individuation and vocation. By individuation I am referring to the process in which individuals inhabit and engage their unique collection of potentials, which differentiate them from the collective. Psyche calls for more from us than freedom for freedom’s sake, and this can result in conflicts. These conflicts may arise in regard to the many basic satisfactions and archetypal desires which constitute wholeness, including eros, spirituality, and mas-

tery, whenever they are experienced as obligatory.¹ Even the denial of the primary need and desire for nourishment found in anorexia may be caused in part by defensive autonomy (Bruch, 1973). Further, the analytic process itself can become the victim of defensive autonomy.²

I. Archetypal Autonomy: Intents and Hazards

If an archetype is “an inherited mode of functioning,” as Jung states, then the universal tendency to strive to function independently of external influence, that is, to be autonomous, is certainly an archetype. This mode is manifested through virtually all of the stages of human development, and there are many examples of it in mythology and fairy tales. Symbols of this archetype include legs, birds, cars, and bicycles, all means to move at one’s own liberty.

This archetype has its own inescapable intent: if the natural inclination to develop mature autonomy is frustrated by the individual or his or her environment, psychological problems will ensue. One such problem is the development of a defensive autonomy, one that rigidly places self-determination above all other inclinations, leading to a very limited repertoire of behavior and little hope for individuation. No alchemist worth their salt would restrict themselves to the *separatio*.

One patient was having difficulty starting her session. When we explored it, she told me she resented being forced to initiate the process by speaking, so she refused to talk. Here, even though my intent was to leave her completely free to do as she chose, she interpreted the freedom as a requirement and refused to express herself—asserting one need to the exclusion of all her other needs.

Developmental approaches to the archetype of autonomy

Numerous psychologists, psychoanalytic theorists, and behavioral researchers have postulated a discrete need to be independent or autonomous. If we trace their thinking and investigations, we can discern a common thread among them consistently supporting the idea of an innate requirement to be free in order to fulfill individual personality. The myth or story that all of these writers have elaborated goes something like this: we are born without having a sense of being able to act independently of our caretakers. Yet there is a universal and natural tendency to build this capacity. It is so important that it can override other aspects of development. Further, if it is not well developed, interpersonal or intrapsychic problems may occur further down the line. All children need to have their autonomy mediated by caretakers in such a way that

they have an experience of being able to choose—within limits—what they do. If this doesn't happen, the individual may need to fight against any sense that he or she is being controlled by others.

Sigmund Freud (1905) and Erik Erikson (1959) postulated that the sense of autonomy is developed during the anal phase and toilet training. If the parent tries to control this process too much, the child may develop the need to rigidly maintain his or her own control. Margaret Mahler (1972) described stages of separation and independence that children need to navigate, the need for parents to tolerate this process, and the elation that the young child experiences in being able to act independently of the mother. Daniel Stern (1985) wrote of the importance of a sense of agency and a sense of volition that the infant starts to develop as soon as he or she is able to choose whether or not to gaze at the mother. Joseph Lichtenberg (1989) postulated "the need to act aversively through antagonism or withdrawal or both" as one of our primary motivations (p. 186). Edward Deci and Richard Ryan at the University of Rochester developed Self-Determination Theory (2002), which postulates that humans need autonomy to fulfill their innate tendencies toward psychological growth and development by mastering ongoing challenges and integrating these experiences into a coherent sense of self.

Autonomy may manifest early on when the infant chooses to turn the head from the breast rather than take milk, and later and more dangerously this need to be free to choose may be a contributing factor in anorexia. Toddlers go limp to resist parental control. Adolescents act passively and withdraw in countless creative ways. One can imagine how, given poor development of this skill, the individual could live his or her life unable to differentiate when and how to use it. If refusal as an archetypal intent is not well constellated, it will function in an unconscious and destructive way.

For instance, one very bright and talented adolescent was challenged by his teachers to achieve more. Generally he did not present as an angry boy, but he did develop a sleep disorder which seemed to account for missing classes and not completing assignments to the point of failing school. We explored his resentment at being "unfairly" pushed and how important it was for him to choose for himself how he lived his life, and how this manifested as a symptom in his need to sleep. As he came to see how he was responding to the expectations placed on him by withdrawing, he eventually learned not to cut off his nose to spite his face. Issues of sleep no longer had the impact on his life that they had before. He chose instead to invest his energy in the work that was most meaningful to him, and he was able to succeed on his own terms. This is an example of differentiating the capacity to withdraw or act aversively in order to protect one's autonomy and authenticity.

There are significant adaptive benefits to this mode, whether one views them through the theories of group or individual selection: autonomy functions as nature's way to ensure adaptation through mutation. While Lichtenberg (1989) equates the antagonism-withdrawal response with the fight or flight tendency, paleopsychologist Howard Bloom (2000) describes the genes involved in this process as diversity generators. In both theories, individuals and species are more likely to survive change if the individual can behave differently from the group. If we are unable to resist the demands of conformity, we risk losing additional adaptive strategies. If we are unable to question social constraints, we would be unable to find new solutions to problems. Therefore nature selects some individuals and their genes that are resistant to cultural demands.

Jungian approaches to the archetype of autonomy

Jung (1921) stressed the central role of autonomy in the individuation process:

Any serious check to individuality, therefore, is an artificial stunting. It is obvious that a social group consisting of stunted individuals cannot be a healthy and viable institution; only a society that can preserve its internal cohesions and collective values, while at the same time granting the individual the greatest possible freedom, has any prospect of enduring vitality. (para. 758)

He goes on, however, to make it clear that he does not advocate a hyper-individualism: "As the individual is not just a single separate being, but, by his very existence, presupposes a collective relationship, it follows that the process of individuation must lead to more intense and broader collective relationship, not to isolation"(ibid.). Elsewhere he writes, "Individuation does not shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to oneself" (Jung, 1947/1954, para. 432). The solution to this apparent conundrum is to be an individual in the collective, to maintain one's autonomy while in relationship.

As Erich Neumann (1963) wrote, "We encounter from the very outset the automorphism of the individual, his need to fulfill his constitutional and particular nature within the collectivity and if necessary, independent of, *or in opposition to it*" (p. 8, italics added). Neumann stresses the importance of the primary attachment to the mother in achieving a relationship to the world and Self that is open and flexible rather than reactive. If the primal relationship is disturbed, the individual may be driven into a premature and self-negating independence (p. 69).

Joseph Campbell (1949, p. 77) approaches autonomy from the point of view of the hero, who needs to remain free from the collective, yet submissive to a greater calling. He describes one step of the hero's journey as the crossing of the first threshold into the desert, forest, or other uninhabited place, respectfully challenging the boundaries of the known world, and breaking with conformity. As Campbell points out, when the Knights of the Round Table rode off in search of the Holy Grail, each knight was required to *make* his own path. This implies the importance of self-direction (in the vernacular sense) in the path of individuation. The individuating hero needs to remain autonomous in regard to the collective, but at the same time open to the dictates of the Self, the sum total of our potential being. Thus the hero's journey requires subtle differentiation within the archetype of autonomy.

This differentiation between inner and outer requirements is particularly important in work with resistant patients. While the Self does make demands on us, these demands compromise only the freedom of the individual ego, not the authentic person. However, we may lose sight of this and feel that we need to protect ourselves against the demands of the Self. Humans as a race and humans as individuals have worked hard to develop the sense that the ego is not controlled by unconscious forces. So, the reluctance to give up this freedom is understandable. Nevertheless, trying to maintain ego autonomy in response to the Self's demand to individuate abandons the true end of autonomy, a differentiated individual true to his or her uniqueness, and embraces only the means, acting independently of the collective.

Hexagram number 38 in the *I Ching*, Opposition, describes this dynamic well:

Above, fire; below, the lake:
The Image of opposition.
Thus amid all fellowship
The superior man retains his individuality.

The two elements, fire and water, never mingle but even when in contact retain their own natures. So the cultured man is never led into baseness or vulgarity through intercourse or community of interests with persons of another sort; regardless of all commingling he will always preserve his individuality. (Wilhelm, 1950, p. 148)

This conscious commingling is both an early developmental task and an ongoing one. For those individuals who fail to achieve it, reacting aver- sively to others outweighs the individual's best interest.

Teleological Perspective

Jung's concept of teleology—interpreting personal problems as efforts to move toward wholeness—offers a way of viewing the supposed conflict that may lead to productive solutions. By understanding the original, archetypal intention of the resistant behavior we may be able to differentiate it, make it conscious and flexible, and help the patient out of a stalemate. The urge to separate that leads two-year-olds and adolescents to revel in hating whatever we require of them is the same urge that may continue unconsciously into adulthood. For some, resisting duty is a holdover from a period in which digging one's feet in the ground was part of the dance of individuation. It stands to reason, then, that this dynamic—resistance to obligation—must in itself be the manifestation of an unfulfilled archetypal intention. For, as Jung (1998) said, "Nothing can repress an instinct except another instinct; it is a conflict of instinct" (p. 170).

If we understand defensive autonomy teleologically, we must conclude that it is *as if* psyche were saying, "I will not let you move any closer to wholeness until you do it of your own free will and authentic self." The resistance is in service to Neumann's automorphism, which wants to claim precedence. This is fine as long as things go along well. But if, for whatever reasons, the individual does not feel autonomous, then he is stuck, because he can't really reach a sense of wholeness, or individuate, without integrating a diverse range of archetypes.

II. Autonomy versus Mastery

Man needs difficulties; they are necessary for health.

—Jung, [1916]/1957, para. 143

As an example of how defensive autonomy may block other archetypal intentions, this paper will now focus on the conflict that may arise between mastery and autonomy. Mastery is *the archetypal inclination to labor toward competence and effectiveness in both the inner and outer worlds* (White, 1959; Hendrick, 1943; Erikson, 1968, pp. 123-4). It is the felt experience of pushing through a challenge, be it physical, emotional, or intellectual. Externally, it motivates play and can make work satisfying, even when it is required for survival. Internally, it motivates the process of psychological and spiritual transformation. Mastery is experienced in a wide range of activities: from the challenges of one's job, raising a child, playing sports, facing painful emotions, to analytic work, the *opus*. Symbols associated with this archetype include the hand, forge, hammer, sword, yoke, plow, spinning wheel, mountain, and the labor of child-

birth. One might think of mastery as large or small heroic callings (Wagenseller, 1989) of the sort that fairy tale characters and heroes face. Mastery is of central importance in both inner and outer work: it provides the energy that permeates and motivates both analysis and employment.

Resistance to mastery vividly demonstrates how something that is intrinsically desirable becomes anathema largely because of its association with obligation. As James Hillman (1983) has written: "We don't want to work. It's like not wanting to eat or to make love. It's an instinctual laming. And this is psychology's fault: it doesn't attend to the work instinct" (p. 169). He goes on to stress the intrinsic pleasure to be had from work, and the damage that the work ethic has caused it:

We moralize work and make it a problem, forgetting that the hands love to work and that in the hands is the mind. That "work ethic" idea does more to impede working . . . it makes it a duty instead of a pleasure. We need to talk of the work instinct, not the work ethic, and instead of putting work with the superego we need to imagine it as an id activity, like a fermentation, something going on instinctively, autonomously, like beer works, like bread works. . . . I merely want to speak of working as a *pleasure*, as an instinctual gratification—not just the "right to work," or work as an economic necessity or a social duty or a moral penance laid into Adam after leaving Paradise. The hands themselves *want* to do things, and the mind loves to apply itself. Work is irreducible. We don't work for food gathering or tribal power and conquest or to buy a new car and so on and so forth. Working is its own end and brings its own joy. (p. 169)

Mastery plays a central role in the analytic process. If the drive for mastery becomes the core of a complex and thereby inhibited from healthy expression, it can prohibit individuation in analysis or in any other mode. I have heard a number of patients say, quite emphatically, that preserving their autonomy was much more important than any "positive" change. The implications for treatment are enormous.

Analysis and work both offer opportunities to engage in the archetypal experience of mastery if the challenges are within the range of the individual. Work with too little challenge results in boring drudgery. Challenges beyond our capacity lead to anxiety. Either extreme can lead to depression. These problems are quite real for many people, but are not the subject of this article. My concern here is that *what we feel to be within our optimal level of challenge is highly subjective and may be distorted by an*

autonomy complex. Even if work is required for survival, it is still possible to have the fulfilling experience of mastery. I will address the loss of desire to do work (both analytic and professional) that under most circumstances would be considered not only satisfying but also desirable.

While nature has invested us with a love of mastery, if it is required, the requirement can spoil its pleasures. Obligation implies a loss of autonomy to many, and the desire to work or achieve competence may pale in comparison with the need to be autonomous. People can train for years for what they imagine will be a fulfilling career, only to have their enjoyment dwindle once they have to show up every day at 9 a.m. Many patients have said in one way or another: "If I *have* to work, it couldn't possibly be desirable or playful, and my autonomy would be compromised. Therefore I will either refuse to do it, or I will resent doing it." Given our needs for freedom and spontaneity, this is to be expected to some extent. Still, we need to ask, Why does autonomy so often and so destructively exclude mastery?

There is no inherent polarity between autonomy and mastery, but the need to establish autonomy often does take precedence over the achievement of mature mastery: Mastery presupposes that a degree of autonomy has been established.³ In both phylogeny and ontogeny use of the hands for mastery precedes use of the legs for autonomy. Apes and infants are both able to be effective with their hands. But *full* use of the hands for mastery requires the development of the capacity to stand on one's own two legs and to move about freely. Otherwise we can master only what is within arm's reach. Further, as long as the hands are busy with the locomotion of crawling or scampering, they are not fully available for mastery. If autonomy is not properly developed, the options for mastery are limited.⁴ This sequence of development was clear with one patient who struggled to maintain her autonomy in the face of her mother's pressure: "I was thinking about becoming a psychologist. But I told my mother and she really liked the idea. I didn't want to do it anymore. I'd rather kill myself than let my mom influence my identity. She used to think that the two of us were one—that we thought the same way. But I didn't tell her how I thought, so she didn't know. I had to put up a wall between us." In this instance the patient chose the legs of freedom over her own desired form of mastery.

To make problems worse, when autonomy is favored to the exclusion of mastery, mastery's energetic intent becomes unconscious. It continues to operate, but outside of our conscious control, both within and without us. All the energy that would go into mastering and working out the problems of life is instead invested in avoiding them, supposedly so that we can be free. Many people have told me that they spent

more energy avoiding challenges than it would have taken to actually struggle with them. Further, the inner drive to mastery is projected onto the environment, and we may imagine that we are being pressed to labor by outer forces. In fact, external pressures may also mount, because if we don't develop mastery consciously it tends to be imposed on us from an external source. The energy for mastery doesn't just disappear—it only migrates from one master to another.

A negative feedback loop may occur in which the energy normally invested in mastery is instead invested in autonomy, with the result that the individual achieves less and less mastery. The ensuing feelings of insecurity feed more defensive autonomy, with less and less possibility to overcome it with mastery. One patient who had been moved to a different department within his company said, "They didn't give me a choice about which department to work in so I just rebelled and didn't work the way they wanted me to." He was subsequently let go. The vulnerability to outside control and low self-esteem from failed mastery then inclined him to become even more resistant. As with the *Star Trek's Enterprise*, most of these patients' energy is diverted to shields, the defensive patterns, when they feel their autonomy is under attack.

Ives Hendrick, who served on the clinical psychiatry faculty at Harvard and as president of the American Psychoanalytic Association, describes how defensive autonomy becomes the only avenue for the experience of mastery. According to Hendrick (1943), the child's need to accomplish mastery cannot take a mature form because that need is preempted by the need to establish its independence from the parent. The energy normally invested in mastery is spent refusing to comply with the parent in order to prove the child's independence. "The work principle is manifested in an infantile way. The desire to master is not lacking, but the ability to gratify it by adult types of work is defective" (Hendrick, 1943, p. 326).

One could also study the opposite configuration, individuals who, unable to achieve autonomy, try unsuccessfully to compensate by overworking. One such patient who had not been able to achieve any sense of his own individuality tried to compensate by being perfect at his job. His father was driven by a need for success and a fear of intimacy, and had severely neglected developing a relationship with the patient and the cultivation of the patient's uniqueness and capacity for independent initiative. The patient's experience led him to believe that if he could prove himself through business success (competency), he might gain his father's approval. In the course of his unsuccessful attempt to get this approval, he sacrificed autonomy and authenticity. He dreamt that he was trying to ascend a flight of stairs. But because his legs did not work, he was trying, in vain, to use his arms. Once again, the failure to develop

the legs of autonomy prohibited mature use of mastery. The analytic work involved the development of his own autonomous inclinations before trying to enlist mastery in pleasing his father.

Defensive autonomy is natural and effective for a young child in adverse circumstances. However, when an adult uses autonomy defensively, it becomes very limiting. I see this as a specific instance of the self-care system that Jungian analyst Donald Kalsched (1996) describes in *The Inner World of Trauma*. Some individuals feel that they can best protect their integrity (in Kalsched's terms, the personal spirit) by refusing to do what is required of them. As Kalsched suggests, it is important for us to remember what the patient was trying to accomplish in doing this.

III. Clinical Applications

The transference-countertransference field

The clinical setting offers a unique opportunity and a necessary challenge to observe, explore, and resolve the resistance to obligation. If we are not aware of how it plays out in the transference and countertransference, years of work may be lost. Most of our patients do come with a sincere desire to work on themselves and change their lives. But as duty sets in, through transference and the reality of the frame, things aren't so clear any more. The need to change or to develop mastery over our psychological problems may be felt as if it were for the analyst, the collective, the boss, the spouse, or the children. Consequently, the process may be experienced by the patient as if it were actually working against his or her individuation process. One patient told me that it felt far more important to be "herself"—angry, bitter, and entirely negative (Lichtenberg's "aversive" mode)—than to consider whether her refusal was self-destructive. In this case the aversive mode had developed into defensive autonomy, and it felt like her identity, her true self, rather than something that was initially adopted for the sake of the protection of her autonomy. Here, while the need for autonomy was quite self-destructive, it had to be respected first in order for any change to occur.

The patient's attitude toward mastery, work, and ultimately the analytic process is significantly determined by how much autonomy they believe they have in the work. An autonomy complex makes it more likely that patients will imagine that they have little freedom in the analysis and resist the challenges. The sense of pleasure they might naturally have through mastery is unavailable to help them withstand the demands of psychological growth. If they have difficulty experiencing a healthy, satisfying sense of mastery, they will be less likely to take on the challenges of the *opus*.

The dynamics of an autonomy complex create manifold complications for the transference-countertransference field. To the extent that the patient may be unconscious of the need to achieve mastery, the analyst may be induced to require it of the analysand. In such cases the patient has skillfully recreated the situation in which his or her autonomy was restricted, and they then feel they have the *duty* to resist the work. They also have created the opportunity to work it through to consciousness.

Similarly, illusory countertransference may induce the analyst to interfere in the process if the analyst is not aware of his or her own needs for freedom and competence. If not integrated, these needs could become unconscious motivators in the treatment. The analyst may work too hard to try to attain results, or he or she may try to resist the influence of the analysand. Here Wilfred Bion's (1997) instruction to be without desire must be taken as an *ideal* for behavior, while we hold in awareness our intrinsic need to feel that we have an effect and our need to be free.⁵

Defensive autonomy and its negative feedback loop may occur in the clinical setting: the individual strives for a sense of mastery by trying to maintain autonomy. They control the effect that the analyst has on them to the point that they inhibit their own desires, including the desire to effectively work through a task. The challenge they set up is *not* to be challenged by the process, and it feels good—but not for long. The result is quite hollow, for they don't actually achieve anything that way. The more empty and insignificant these patients feel, the more they try to solve the problem by "accomplishing" autonomy, by refusing to do anything other than achieve a defensive autonomy. All of their energy therefore goes into trying to master by being rigidly independent, and it only reinforces the problem itself.

My experience with one patient serves as an example of how a negative feedback loop can develop not only within the individual, but also within the field. This patient had experienced significant trauma in her life. Understandably, when things felt out of her control she became quite anxious and extremely controlling. This feeling was particularly strong in one session, and it led her to act it out by first raising and then quickly avoiding negative transference issues. My experience—after trying to explore the negative transference—was of being forced to be absolutely still, and of having no possibility of being effective at all. My own need to be effective had been crushed by her need to feel effective by being free of my influence. I kept trying to be more effective in exploring the transference and she kept trying to keep my influence at a minimum. In this way she was able to get me to carry her negative experience (of having no mastery), and to achieve a short-lived positive sense of mastery (by freeing herself from what she imagined to be my control).

Finding the teleology embedded in the resistance can break the cycle of defensive autonomy. Jung (1911-12/1954) proposed a way of understanding resistance which neither avoided or reduced it. By following its original purpose and applying that to the overall individuation of the individual, we can work with the energy rather than against it.

While some resistance may actually be passive-aggressive behavior aimed at the analyst, other instances may be more accurately and productively understood as passive *autonomous* behavior. Being late for sessions, for example, is often a misguided or immature effort to establish autonomy. Harold Searles (1986, p. 9), in his seminal work on countertransference, describes this dynamic in an early form when he writes of resistance as a striving for autonomy, indicated early on by the infant turning the head from the breast. This is a developmental milestone for an infant, a potentially deadly position for a fourteen-year-old anorexic. Consider the possibility of a teleological thrust: the individual is attempting to bring a unique personality into being, and so far believes that they can only do so by going on strike, protesting what they feel to be restrictions on his or her individuation process.

In many cases patients inhibit themselves in service of a fantasized autonomy but believe that it is the analyst who is inhibiting them. The resolution of the resistance requires that the patient not only *remove* the projections from the analyst but also *claim* them for him or herself. For what they imagine we hold they have inside and need to integrate consciously. The control that they project onto the analyst is the missing part of their own puzzle. For when patients are resistant they are controlling and mastering, but in a highly unconscious way, and actually achieve only a pseudo-mastery.

Resistance to the demands of the collective

The demands of the collective also become the subject of analytic work. Patients often present, directly or indirectly, their complaints about what society requires of them and its hypocritical and manipulative professions about freedom. Some patients react to the demands of the collective by refusing to join in, refusing to "toe the line." They might not pay taxes, get a regular job, get married, have children, or bother with paperwork, even if these might be rewarding. Anyone that wants something from them becomes suspect. Some patients may feel that their particular lot in life is unfair due to circumstances. Their freedom feels compromised by their social or financial standing, so they feel justified in their evasion. Life becomes a heroic avoidance. But, while their "beef" may be justifiable, their reaction is self-destructive.

Marie-Louise von Franz (1970, pp. 26-27) wrote that there was something genuine and justifiable in a revolt against the overwhelming power of the state, and that this sort of revolt draws its energy from a nearly universal complex striving for freedom. She goes on to say, though, that some *pueri aeterni*, men who resist mature identity and responsibility, overreact to the obligations of society. The cure for them, she claims, is to join the collective and work, forgo the fantasy of being so special, and accept the seemingly low kind of adaptations to which most people submit (p. 40).

Freud (1930/1961) believed that the resistance to work was

a continuation of oedipal struggles for freedom against the oppression of authority, the parents who are experienced as a constraining force. People who cannot work are not able to identify with these early authority figures. . . . [They are] not able to invest his/her aggression against authority into his/her superego, and therefore unable to fully internalize authority. (quoted in Czander, 1993, p. 15)

The solution, according to Freud, is to accept the suffering that comes with limitations. His conclusion is that “to be able to work with joy and satisfaction means accepting the position that one must give up freedoms” (ibid.).

Von Franz and Freud are both accurate in their prescriptions for resistance to the demands of the collective. However, if the “medication” isn’t administered with cognizance of the complex and its teleology, the patient may have an adverse reaction. The analyst’s attitude toward the patient’s revolt may either aggravate the infection or lead to a holistic and healing understanding of its source. Acknowledging the pressure and manipulation of our culture, and understanding what the patient needs freedom *for*, can reduce the inflammation of the complex and help the patient fight the infection naturally. This acknowledgement leaves the complex with less to fight against and allows the patient to contend with the issue, rather than distort it. Further, it gently redirects the energy, rather than channeling it into more defensive autonomy. If the patient merely takes a job without understanding what he or she previously needed the autonomy *for*, the symptom is addressed, rather than the underlying cause.

IV. Autonomy, Mastery, and Resistance to the Self

For many in our culture, any indication of an authority greater than themselves is cause for outright war—war between countries, or

war between the ego and the objective psyche. While this stance has its legitimacy in some instances, it is more often a Self-denying and self-denying overreaction. As Jung (1926) wrote:

The question will certainly be asked whether for some people their own free will may not be the ruling principle, so that every attitude is intentionally chosen by themselves. I do not believe that anyone reaches or has ever reached this godlike state, but I know that there are many who strive after this ideal because they are possessed by the heroic idea of absolute freedom. In one way or another all men are dependent; all are in some way limited since none are gods. (para. 636)

The story of the Fall in the Old Testament sheds light on the relationship of autonomy, mastery and the Self. In Genesis, God gives man the task of cultivating the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). Once Adam asserts his autonomy and disobeys by eating the apple, he is cursed. From that point on he will not only sweat and toil, he will also have to contend with thorn and thistle, making his work that much worse. If we translate this psychologically, we could conclude that when we become separated from our highest meaning in life, work becomes drudgery rather than a significant and fulfilling experience.

But the Fall is only the beginning of the story, a necessary step in the development of consciousness. While autonomy may initially separate us from God (or the unconscious), in the long run its purpose is to lay the groundwork for an authentic, conscious connection. Until that connection is reestablished, work is quite difficult and meaningless. If we can understand our patients' negative experiences of mastery as a consequence of their attempt to separate, we can begin to understand the original intention: a separate consciousness that can relate in an authentic way.

Ideally we fight for the freedom to be who we are called to be, to be free to answer to a higher authority, not just to be who our ego wants us to be. We must not forget that vocation means "calling," that work and everything it represents is not something chosen completely by free will. Who we are, and what our tasks are, are not totally within our choosing. The more we fight vocation, the more it will fight us. We can choose whether to see this in humanistic, existential, moral, sacred, or purely psychological terms. But if we are to grow toward wholeness, we need to see beyond what we would like our tasks to be, to that which our personal individuation requires of us.

Jung (1934) saw this issue as a psychological fact, a psychic law that describes how the human psyche works:

What is it, in the end, that induces a man to go his own way and to rise out of unconscious identity with the mass as out of a swathing mist? . . . It is commonly called vocation: an irrational factor that destines a man to emancipate himself from the herd and from its well-worn paths. True personality is always a vocation and puts its trust in it as in God, despite it being, as the ordinary man would say, only a personal feeling. But vocation acts like a law of God from which there is no escape. (paras. 299-300)

Our society appears to support this emphasis on individual prerogative. But it overlooks the original purpose, and while many in our society are given the opportunity for freedom, many only end up following the collective. The early American colonists originally sought to worship freely, not merely to buy and sell freely. The purpose of freedom has been lost and needs to be differentiated: it is the freedom to fulfill a calling rather than merely to escape the social order. If it is not differentiated, the internal call from the Self and its inevitable obligations are drowned out by the collective.

The formation of a healthy ego and the cultivation of autonomy go hand in hand. But where this begins to get confusing is where one's conscious autonomy—the autonomy of the ego—comes into conflict with the direction of the Self. Joseph Campbell (1949, p. 60) calls this the Refusal of the Call, the would-be-hero's resistance to his required tasks. Individuals who develop defensive autonomy rather than healthy autonomy are psychologically disposed to refuse the call, for they experience the call from the Self as a threat to their existence. They may be unable to distinguish between the demands of the Self and demands of the collective. Mastery, as a demand of the Self, may then be sacrificed in an undifferentiated attempt to try to achieve autonomy from the collective.

The Self and its process of individuation do oblige many to develop mastery. If this is not faced consciously and it is experienced as a duty to impinging external obligations, its intention may be missed. As our society has largely jettisoned age-old spiritual priorities, what would have been seen as sacred duty is now seen as dumb compliance.

Interpreted intrapsychically, the phrase "turning swords into ploughshares" has an entirely new meaning: the energy that sometimes goes into fighting external enemies who we imagine will control us can be redirected into a creative, productive tilling of the fields that have been given. Rather than a defensive resistance to what we experience as impingements on our freedom, we can once again savor the work of individuation.

V. Case Example

Autonomy and a blocked desire for mastery were central issues for a man (whom I will call William) who entered analysis in his early thirties to deal with depression and a sense of paralysis. He could not get on with his life or his career, and at times had difficulty leaving his apartment. While he had resources of intelligence, talent, and education, he was unable to pursue the things that meant the most to him. He led a marginal life, barely getting by financially and passively engaging in unsatisfying relationships.

William had previously been reluctant to enter analysis for fear that the analyst would exert too much influence over him. Eventually he decided that he might need to risk some degree of surrender in analysis in order to make his life more satisfying. As the therapy progressed, he was able to rely on the analytic relationship to explore more deeply his need to be free at any cost. He discovered that this obsession had actually kept him from pursuing what he really wanted.

William's family history had left him with a very damaged sense of autonomy and mastery. His mother became severely depressed shortly after his birth and left home for two months to learn meditation as a cure. This separation, and ongoing oblivion to William's emotional needs, seems to have left him reluctant to depend on others and despairing about having any effect on them. A chronic sense of futility set in, magnified by the parents' devoted practice of Transcendental Meditation, which he experienced as very passive, submissive, inhibiting, and unrelated to his emotional needs. He experienced problems at school and with other children, but saw no way to get his parents' help. In order to compensate, he tried to be self-sufficient. He remembers adamantly insisting on learning to tie his shoes by himself at a very young age, succeeding after three hours.

Similarly, his intrinsic need for mastery and creativity were also inhibited by pressure from both his family and his school. "It's like a kid that just loves to skate, but the parents insist he become an Olympic skater," he told me. In school his teachers recognized how bright he was, but made the use of his talents a duty rather than a pleasure. "Why aren't you doing better?" his teachers would impatiently quiz him. An already self-conscious boy became resentful and defiant. One perceptive temporary teacher inspired him and he began to thrive on the process of writing and thinking. His intrinsic pleasure in it, however, was soon hijacked by external demands. He internalized critical attitudes that were overly intellectual and highly vindictive in order to protect himself from failure and humiliation. His distaste for school and fear of his peer community

led him to avoid schoolwork. His mother stepped in and completed projects for him when he “wasn’t able.” The enduring message was that she felt that he was unable to achieve either mastery or autonomy, and that that was acceptable because someone would come in and rescue him.

The family was quite enmeshed and continued to exert a profound influence on William. For instance, he felt an obligation to take care of his parents financially, which produced a resistance so strong that it outweighed his desire to be creative and make a life for himself. He hated the idea of having to take care of them so much that it added to his work resistance: without money he couldn’t be required to take care of them. He said, “I can’t separate work from the feeling that I have to work. It all ends up feeling pressured so I end up not doing it.” But the solution also cost him the loss of his own capacity to be productive in a satisfying way. It imprisoned him rather than freeing him.

One way to conceptualize William’s inner world is to see the frustrated and hypersensitive needs for autonomy and mastery as the central and controlling motivations in his life. As a result of these failed archetypal intentions, all of his life was organized around a sort of holy crusade to reinstate his autonomy at the expense of anything else. His creative drive, his social relations, and his relationship to the Self were all sacrificed to the god of autonomy. His battle to be free of the influence of anyone or anything damaged his capacity to be closely connected to feelings, people or the Self, and in each case consequently inhibited the capacity to work.⁶ Further, the more William limited himself, the more distorted was his view of the outside world and the more he fought against it, as if the control were from the outside. As a result William resisted mastery on three levels: requests from other individuals, requests from society, and requests from the Self.

Because he had not developed a conscious sense of his own autonomy or mastery, he often imagined that other individuals were controlling him. He felt that the world wanted some sort of conformity from him and that he wouldn’t be loved if he didn’t conform. He also felt that to be self-disciplined—to deal with the realities of what was required of him by the collective—would be capitulating to a society that was determined to bring him down. Consequently he felt he had to limit social contact in order to maintain some sense of his own control.

Creativity and mastery felt like something that was demanded of him by others, rather than a need that arose from within his own psyche. He feared that being competent would actually hinder his freedom: “I can’t allow myself to do anything well, because that would mean that I want people’s approval and affirmation. That feels bad because that would mean I’m dependent on them and that I have not been affirming myself.”

These feelings were experienced in the transference when he imagined that I just wanted him to get a “straight” job and be conventional. He fought my influence, real or imagined. On one occasion he was offered cocaine at a party. His first thought was that I wouldn’t approve of it. So, in order to be autonomous, he tried it. We explored this as a way of asserting his independence, but in a reactive rather than conscious way. As he recognized these projections he was able to consider integrating them into himself in a more conscious and effective way.

The Self had been constellated in such an authoritarian way by his family and its religious practices that it was not possible for him to consider having the Self play a positive guiding role in his life. His experience at home and later at a religious university was one of being rigidly controlled. For him it followed that it was unsafe to have a relationship with something greater than himself. To submit to the demands of the Self was unthinkable. I once asked him what he enjoyed about writing. He replied, “The freedom to be able to write anything I want and the challenge of it. But I resist it because I feel there is something I am supposed to write, and I resist it out of the feeling that I am supposed to write at all, as if I needed it to make me happy. I avoid any possibility that someone else could be controlling me.”

At the same time, he had a persistent hope that a divine authority would come in and grant him enlightenment. This also made it hard for him to relate to the Self because the fantasy granted it too much power. He resisted the actual calling of the Self by projecting it onto me and refusing to comply. I was the Pope, who required that he submit to his calling and who would give him a blessing that would cure him if he did. This gave him more reason to resist what he imagined I expected of him. Further work was done on how he did not want the Self to make any expectations of him. He did experience an inner need to write and he did have talent to do it. Coming to terms with his calling was part of our work.

Similarly, his uncontrollable drive to autonomy also constellated another issue: a deep craving to be taken care of by another person. This is a primary instinct which may be impinged upon by other issues. In William’s case, his need for complete independence required that he be entirely self-sufficient, thus triggering a compensatory reaction from the more primary need to be taken care of. This shadow desire, the longing to be taken care of, was so intense that he felt he had to fight it off. For example, all competent and successful women were off limits because he feared he really only wanted them to take care of him. In this case, he wanted to be free of his own desires. This also came up with me. He both craved and feared depending on me and losing his autonomy to me. He wanted my approval and assurance, but was ashamed and frightened of that need.

Working (and playing) through

Our work together included transference exploration, active imagination, and processing the week-to-week events of his life. He often used imagination to become familiar with different parts of himself. It was a serious sort of play that allowed him to bypass his usual efforts to make analytic sense of everything.

In one session he had a vision of three parts of himself: an angry stubborn child, a controlling parent, and an adult that could be more objective: The child said: "I can't let this oppressive motherfucker get away with telling me what to do. I have to stand strong and NOT do whatever he tells me to do." An equally adamant parental side was saying, "That stubborn little mother-fucker is not going to get away with this, I'm going to make him . . ." As we spoke about it we could feel an adult, William himself, walk into the room to negotiate between the two adversaries.

In another session we discussed his arriving ten minutes late. He said that he noticed two reactions inside of himself as he was traveling, aware that he would be late. One was to apologize in a submissive way. The other was to take a rebellious attitude and not say anything, since it was his time and money and because he felt he had good reason to be late. We noticed the seeds of autonomy in the second response, but we also noticed how alienating the attitude could be. I asked if any images came up in regard to this. He said that he imagined his competent part inside a prison. Holding the door closed on the outside was someone very small who said that it was too dangerous for William to come out and that he should stay inside. As we worked with the image he became aware of how flimsy the door was and how he could easily go outside. But something felt good about listening to the little person. Somehow, paradoxically, that little person's control of the competent side left William feeling that he was being effective, strong, secure and independent: "It's like one of those movies where the little guy controls the big guy." He struggled in the session to decide whether this little character was benign or sinister. We explored how it had originally tried to protect him but over time had become very destructive. We discussed how William's original intention of protecting himself when he had no support had insidiously stayed with him in a way that drained him of his energy and initiative. He became aware of a feeling in his shoulders of always being "on guard."

Most of the energy that might have gone into a productive sense of mastery actually went into mastery over himself, and mastery over anyone who he imagined was trying to have an influence on him.

Consequently he had none of the positive feeling that comes from an experience of competence. The worse he felt about himself, the more he needed to control and protect himself. It resulted in the sort of negative feedback loop described above. When I asked him what the little man wanted from him now, he said, "To be his slave."

We worked extensively with the image of this little man that kept his competent self in prison. Eventually it became clear to me that this little man was a manifestation of the archetype represented by the dwarf Mime in the story of Siegfried. Mime had adopted Siegfried when his parents died. He tried to convince Siegfried that it was he, Mime, who was mother and father to him. In fact he was only using him to try to get the Ring that would give him absolute power. In a similar fashion, William's little man at the door was now only using him and precluding his growth. Mime sat on the forge the whole time, unable to reforge the father's broken sword, Notung. If we take the forge as a symbol of work and mastery, all the energy that would ideally have gone into creating a sense of effectiveness was actually used against him. Mime *appears* to have the capacity for efficacy, but in fact he only holds Siegfried back from his own potentials. Like Siegfried, William had imagined for years that someone else would take care of him and "forge his sword," that is, give him a sense of his own strength. But also like Siegfried, he was tiring of the wait and was ready to take over. It is Siegfried's desire to know his true parents that motivated him to move past Mime. Similarly, William's desire to know who he really was, the blueprint of his authentic psychology, eventually helped him to overcome his little man.

His rebellious resolve began to be replaced by more enlightened self-interest. On one occasion he said: "Last night I thought about indulging in my usual avoidances, and said 'No, I can't do that, I'll have to answer for it in session tomorrow.' I thought about it and realized that you weren't really the issue. It's about me." We processed these events and feelings and it became clearer to him how he had been projecting the disciplining part of himself onto me, and sometimes rebelling against it. He originally imagined that I wanted him to come to terms with the realities of life merely for the purposes of conforming, not that there was something inside of *him* that wanted to. Part of my role was to carry this for him, without oppressing him, until he was able to take it on himself.

He eventually realized that freedom had taken on inordinate importance for him. He had refused to get a "day job" for fear of losing his authenticity to a cultural norm, a straight-laced and controlled way of living. He also feared that if he fully pursued his creative interests he would become a slave to them. He felt that his creative projects would never end and that they would control him, rather than him creating

them. This resistance to commitment created another negative feedback loop: energy that would otherwise have gone into productive and creative work was channeled into an adamant autonomy. Then, because he had little to show for his life, he felt defensive and even more adamant.

His insight into his need for autonomy and his subsequent willingness to enter into situations where he could achieve mastery eventually helped him to break the cycle. William took a position as an adjunct professor at a college about two years into our work. This gave him an opportunity to exercise his own authority and to experiment with being subject to the authority of the college in a more productive way. Later he accepted a difficult free-lance writing assignment and completed it with great success. The immense satisfaction and sense of competence that he experienced gave him the incentive to take a salaried position with the same firm. While the position did limit his concrete freedom somewhat, he was able to consciously differentiate how much freedom he needed and what he needed it for. The rewards well outweighed the limitations. In fact, the benefits allowed him to pursue his interests in a way that he had not been able to before. His strong desire for creativity was actually freed.

His mood improved and he felt stuck far less frequently. His awareness grew considerably as did his willingness to take on appropriate responsibility, neither blaming himself inordinately nor avoiding his role. Perhaps most noticeable, though, was his growing sense that there was a center of gravity within him, and a decreasing need to go on strike so often. He became far less on guard with me. He could note and verbalize his fears when they arose rather than act on them, and he made a conscious effort not to be passive in our work. He gained the capacity to sort out what was actually being threatened by external demands: if the collective or the Self asked for more from him and he responded, this did not mean that his essence was threatened. What was threatened was an overly protective mode of being that had kept him limited in his expression and his capacity for work. He sought to find a way of being in the world that allowed him the freedom to be authentic without having to react in a childish or rebellious way.

As an example, he had previously refused to use an outline in writing his novel because it felt like a hindrance to his freedom. He eventually came to find it quite helpful in expressing himself. He had previously felt that freedom meant, literally, having "nothin' left to lose." Freedom came to mean the opportunity to express himself honestly, through his writing, or through interaction with other people.

During the analytic process it was important for both of us to respect his need to be free, to find the meaningful seed in it, and to help him find a satisfying place for it in his life. He developed a way of look-

ing at his feelings and behavior with an effort to understand the seeds of intention, particularly the call from the unconscious to be free in order to integrate more. Included in this was a greater appreciation for that part of him that both *needs* and *desires* to work creatively. Now the hands and legs are able to respond in coordinated fashion: he can now love what he must do.

VI. Conclusion

This article can only serve as an initial foray into these issues, for when we are no longer working with a single archetype, but rather with the dynamics between multiple archetypes, complexities and possibilities expand exponentially. Nevertheless, it is important to work toward understanding archetypal interaction because these energies seldom move in isolation. Just as physicians must monitor possible medication interactions, analysts must monitor the different energies raised by analysis.

These particular intrinsic, universal tendencies, to achieve mastery and to be free to fulfill our individual personality, have a significant impact on our lives, our culture, and the process of analysis. Attention to these issues from the point of view of teleology, the intent of the Self to create a unique individual, helps us to understand behavior that might otherwise be misread as purely defensive or avoidant. Working with that seed of purpose can help to turn resistance into progress. Using the metaphors of mastery as the hands of our psychology, and autonomy as the legs, we can see what important roles these archetypal modes play in fulfilling the heart's desires.

Notes

1. Not everyone has a negative reaction to obligation or duty. There are many examples of individuals who have entered fully into mastery (at least in an extroverted sense) despite intense pressure and loss of autonomy: Beethoven and Mozart were both forced by their fathers to excel in music, and both were able to work with great intensity. Some people will go so far as to slip into a pattern of submissive compliance. They respond to obligation with none of the archetypal energy to be independent. This dynamic has its own problems, which cannot be addressed in this paper.
2. Autonomy is also a pervasive social and political force. While space will not permit exploration of the issue here, it is important to note that the psychology of personal freedom is inextricably intertwined with cultural notions of freedom.

3. David Shapiro (1965, p. 81) discusses the interdependency of competency and autonomy when describing the paranoid personality style.
4. One example would be Laura in Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie*: her crippled leg symbolizes her inability to get out from her mother's influence and achieve her own mastery.
5. One of Bion's reasons for this stance was to prevent the patient from experiencing the desires or memories as demands or expectations.
6. While my focus here is mainly on the capacity for work rather than relationships, it is difficult to completely separate the two, for work usually connects us with others. Resistance in one area may lead to a problem in the other.

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