Ezekiel, Jung, and Integrity

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The founders of modern psychology focused a great deal on the unconscious mind. They recognized that there was a resistance between the thoughts that we held in our unconscious and those that were present in our conscious minds. It was through the enigmatic riddles of our dreams that they saw the unconscious attempting to make itself known to us and bring the latent parts into the manifest.

Sigmund Freud noticed that when he would analyze a patient's dreams through free association, the patient would often resist the uncovering of the latent content. It was partly because of these unwanted elements of the psyche that Freud and many of his followers saw the unconscious as holding the primitive, introverted, and even evil aspects of our personalities. They saw it as the *source* of our problems and neuroses and that it should essentially be recognized and overcome in order to achieve mental health.

Carl Jung, once a reluctant follower of Freud's, veered from this theory and developed a different approach to understanding the unconscious. He believed that the majority of mental illness did not "reside" in the unconscious as Freud believed it did, but rather, that the cause of our neuroses was in the *dissonance* between the content of the conscious and unconscious mind.

Jung saw much more than repressed sexuality and childhood trauma in the unconscious. He believed that it stores a wealth of wisdom from our personal experiences and that it holds several components of our full, complete identity or what he called the "psyche" (originally meaning the "soul" or "spirit"), which creates essential parts of our being. He also believed that we hold a collective unconscious that holds components of our identity that is shared similarly in every individual and that is inherited as part of the human condition.

A major aspect of Jung's understanding of our psychology included the idea that there were many initially disassociated components to our psyche, that he called archetypes, that themselves can be at odds with each other. Jung posited that it was essential for individuals to connect and integrate the various components of the unconscious mind into consciousness, and bring them into harmony and equilibrium. Only in such integration of the self could a person live without significant psychological

disturbance and instability. This integration, or achievement of integrity, is how a human being achieves a healthy psyche through forming a consistent and whole personality.

Jung called the process of integrating the various components of one's psyche "individuation"—to denote the process by which a person becomes a unified whole. In other words, it is the process in which one becomes oneself. The process has many layers and is lifelong.

It is sensible to consider that this notion is not only manifest within us as individuals but also in aggregate. A group is, after all, a collection of individuals, and groups tend to develop meta-personalities and characteristics as though they are a single, cohesive entity. We can essentially see society and various groups of people as super-organisms that are comprised of constituent parts. On their own, many individuals seem incompatible and even antithetical to one another, but they nonetheless have the potential for a level of integration.

To follow Jung's theories, the way to achieve this synthesis has much to do with the mining of unconscious aspects of thought that occur within us all. If we are aware of their existence and prepared to acknowledge that there is more to us than what is manifest above the surface, we can allow these aspects of our thinking and behavior to unfold from within. We can begin to look at those with whom we share our lives as holding depth and value beyond the personas that they exhibit superficially. We might indeed find that we tend to shun certain people and thinking because we are resisting aspects of our own collective identity that we do not understand or want to expose.

To best understand the parts of the Jewish people, it is useful to look back to the very first children of Israel, the actual children of our forefather Jacob. The strife between siblings in that story suggests a great deal of unconscious knowledge that lies just beneath the surface of the tale. It all intriguingly begins with dreams. Joseph reaches the position of viceroy because of dreams, and Joseph's story begins with his dreams about himself and his brothers where he is depicted in a leadership role. His brothers resist these dreams and reject him along with them. This rejection was not simply a rejection of Joseph, it was a rejection of his thinking, his personality, and his worldview. But these were brothers. They were a family. Surely there must have been a possibility for all of their attributes to converge and comprise a whole and multifaceted unit with a unified identity. Jung might have suggested that there was something valuable to be drawn from these dreams, not just for Joseph but for the family.

As the story develops the brothers come close to revealing the truth about what has become of their brother and what it might mean to them as a family, which could possibly mend the gaps in their relationship. It is as though he orchestrates a living dream (or nightmare) that urges the brothers to look deeper. Indeed it is his recollection of his own dreams that gets the ball rolling.

> When Joseph saw his brothers… [he] was reminded of the dreams that he had dreamt of them. (Genesis 42:7, 9)

And they do begin to unravel the enigma.

> They said each man to his brother: Truly, we are guilty concerning our brother! That we saw his heart's distress when he implored us, and we did not listen. Therefore this distress has come

upon us! (*Ibid*., 21)

It all comes to a head at the beginning of the parasha when Judah, the one who led the sale of Joseph, now finds himself turned 180 degrees pleading for the life and freedom of Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin. In no fewer than 16 verses, he speaks out the events that have transpired as if he is analyzing the "dream sequence" through which Joseph has put them.[1] And just as he is about to finally reveal the major issue that is literally staring them in the face, and bring it out of the unconscious, it is stolen from him by Joseph himself.

> Joseph could no longer restrain himself…he called out:… I am Yosef. Is my father still alive? [2] (*Ibid*., 45:1, 3)

Because it was not finally discovered in the mind of Judah, it remained with Joseph. The shocking revelation of the unconscious truth did the opposite of what might have been achieved with Judah's careful and self-discovering analysis. It brought out the reality abruptly in all its horror and it was met with resistance and disdain. The unwanted unconscious remained unwanted and buried, and it was not allowed to integrate.

We find this subtly at the point where Joseph hugs his brothers and cries. He, however, is the only one crying. They are not quite as moved.

> He kissed his brothers and wept upon them. After this his brothers spoke with him. (*Ibid*., 45:15)

It is more blatant at the end of the parasha when the brothers plead that Joseph not harm them after their father's death. Clearly there is still a strong lack of trust and brotherhood.

> When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead they said: What if Joseph holds a grudge against us?… So they charged Joseph saying: Your father commanded before his death, saying: Say thus to Joseph: pray forgive your brothers' offence and their sin, that they caused you ill! (*Ibid*., 50:15–17)

Ever since this time, the work of individuating the Nation of Israel as a whole and integrated entity has been progressing, with elements of our unconscious pushing to manifest in the conscious mind of the nation. For fleeting moments in history we were a unified people, but never without at least the undercurrents of schism. The disparate parts of our national psyche as exhibited in the various sects of our people have yet to come together.

Interestingly, the haftara chosen for Parashat Vayigash, Ezekiel 37:15–28, proclaims that it will happen. Ezekiel's prophecy is of the individuation of Israel. It sees the coming together of the splintered nation not just physically upon their land but in identity as well. They will not be two nations, or scattered[3] — they will no longer be susceptible to the fetishes, fixations, and proclivities in which human beings engage[4] because of the dissonance in their psyche. They will be whole and healed with a crown atop their head and with God residing within them.[5]

When we care to build a whole identity, we attempt to individuate by unpacking, understanding and integrating the various discordant parts of our unconscious truths into our conscious mind. Just as with our own individual psyches, there are many opposing aspects that cause us dissonance of self, and struggle between our various aspects of character; so it is with the meta-psyche of our nation. Jung believed that dreams provided the greatest opportunity to access the unconscious, and we might do well to pay more attention to them if we want to achieve wholeness as a people. If we strive for it they will help us unlock solutions.

There are many disparate and opposing parts to us but Ezekiel has seen the individuation of the nation itself and that it will indeed be wondrously achieved as if in a dream.

When God brings together Zion's returnees—we will have been like dreamers. (Psalms 126:1)

[1] Genesis 44:18–34.

[2] This was clearly a rhetorical and cutting question. The entire conundrum was based on Jacob losing Binyamin. It was as if to say: "Now you care about my father—where was that care when you sold me?"

[3] Ezekiel 37:22.

[4] 37:23.

[5] 37:23–27.