

[Jung as a Pioneer of Relational Analysis](#)

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David Sedgwick explores Jung's thought on the relationship between client and analyst in this essay honoring the late Stephen Mitchell, founder of Relational psychoanalysis.

Jung as a Pioneer of Relational Analysis

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This paper was presented in March, 2012, at the 10th Anniversary Conference of the International Association for Relational Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis (IARPP) in New York. The conference honored the late Stephen Mitchell, the founder of Relational psychoanalysis. The paper was part of a panel—with Andrew Samuels and Linda Carter—entitled, “The Analyst Is as Much 'in the Analysis' as the Patient: Jung as a Pioneer of Relational Psychoanalysis.”

Unlike many here, I never knew Stephen Mitchell personally, which I greatly regret. I had never even seen a picture of him, I don't think, until this conference, which is very strange in a way: these people whose words mean so much to us are sometimes people we have never met, never even *seen*, much less spoken to. Without sight and sound, they can exist only as words on a page—we have only their written words. We can only *imagine* them. Yet Stephen Mitchell—sign of good writer—seemed in his written work to be so present and vivid: with his clarity, personal openness, his special voice, and his sense of humor, which so many people here have commented on. I am eternally amused by his wry turns of phrase, as when he describes psychoanalytic apostates like Ferenczi, Rank, and Alexander as having been “condemned to the psychoanalytic *gulag*.” (Where of course they joined C. G. Jung, who was a charter member).

Stephen Mitchell was also, as we know, a master of comparative psychoanalysis, the act of which gave shape to Relational psychoanalysis, and continues to. He carefully studied and integrated—and sometimes rejected—the theories and practices of Freud, Sullivan, Fairbairn, Klein, Guntrip, Winnicott, Loewald, Kohut, Schaefer, Sandler, Bowlby, Gill, Kernberg, Jacobson, Mahler, Hartmann, Fromm, Thomson, Jacobs, to name many if not all. This is relevant to today's topic, for one of the things Stephen Mitchell provided, in the welcoming spirit of “psychoanalytic dialogue” that Relational psychoanalysis also embodies, was a welcome too for Jungian perspectives.

In their 1983 book inaugurating Relational psychoanalysis, Mitchell and Jay Greenberg wrote, “C. G. Jung's early writings... *strikingly resemble* the contributions of recent relational/structure-model theorists” (1983, p. 50). Greenberg later added that what he called Jung's “early dissents [that is, from psychoanalysis] . . . *prefigured*” the Relational model (1986, p. 134). I looked at their bibliographies to see what they meant by Jung's “early” writings, and the reference they cite is to lectures Jung gave in 1912—exactly 100 years ago, right here in New York (at Fordham University up in the Bronx, actually). Jung was 37 years old, and these lectures came just at that crucial point—for both Jungian and Freudian psychology—when Jung was leaving Freud and the then-emergent Freudian psychoanalysis. But it was not just these early writings of Jung's that were pioneering but even moreso his subsequent, mature theorizing, which not only prefigures but resonates deeply with many important tenets of Relational psychoanalysis.

One of the many ways Relational and Jungian analysis resonate is in their openness to alternative viewpoints. This is not without tension in Jungian circles, but many Jungians, much like Relational

analysts, have been working for decades to critically compare and integrate—and also sometimes reject—major elements of various other analytic traditions, including, at times, our own. One of the meanings of the term Andrew Samuels coined or adapted, “post-Jungian,” means for me not just those who came *after* Jung—for we are all by definition post-Jungians—but those who wish to go beyond Jung and his early followers.

In an IARPP seminar a few years ago, Jody Davies (2008) described Relational analysts, or the first generation of them anyway, as “immigrants,” who, dissatisfied with their native psychoanalytic homelands, set sail for the New World and landed, as she put it, “on the shores of ‘the relational turn.’” The same is true for many Jungians, who also set sail for unknown lands, some of them making landfall on Relational shores; some exploring the quasi-relational territories of Klein, Bion, Racker, or Winnicott; some embracing neuroscience or attachment theory, or Kohut, Searles, Langs, or Lacan (or Lou Sander, as Linda Carter just noted); some keeping ties to varying degrees to the old country and some seemingly never to return.

Jung himself was such a sailor, and as we know Jung left Freud professionally and personally—a formidable task, for Freud was a formidable man—*specifically* due to 1) Jung’s rejection of drive theory and 2) his different vision of the unconscious, both of which put him in the region of Relational theorists. For Jungians, the so-called unconscious is not primarily, as Linda noted, a place of the repressed (though that is important), but also a place of the dissociated and of what Jung called the “not yet” conscious. On the one hand, the Jungian, if you will, unconscious seems to look backward, past the repressed unconscious, into a postulated archetypal prehistory of the mind. Yet it immediately and somewhat paradoxically circles around and faces forward in an creative way toward what Jung called, again, “the not yet conscious...the seeds of future contents.” From this viewpoint, something is trying to happen, and we don’t know what it is. But it is emerging, not associated or not-yet associated with awareness; hence at present dissociated or in Don Stern’s words “unformulated.” In Jung’s words, “The unconscious actually creates *new* contents” and “appears as the totality of all psychic contents that are *in a state of being born*.” (1928, 1931, p. 364, italics his).

We Jungians owe Jung a great debt in this regard, incidentally, because thanks to his own individuation from classical psychoanalysis we do not have to fight so hard to find a way out of what Stephen Mitchell called “anachronistic” elements of classic analytic theory and technique.

Jung himself gave post-Jungians license, if they needed it, to leave home, not just by example but by directly suggesting that Jungians not be *Jungians*. He said, or is said to have said, “There’s only one Jungian, and I am it,” and even more amusingly, “Thank God I’m Jung and don’t have to be a *Jungian*.” Now, whether Jung actually said these things, which are part of Jungian lore, is unclear, but what he in fact did write in a letter one time was this: “I can only hope, and wish, that no one becomes ‘Jungian’” (1973, p. 405).

So to be a Jungian is not to be a Jungian. Jung’s paradoxical statements fit well with something Manny Ghent wrote about 20 years ago, namely, “There is no such thing as a relational analyst” (1992, p. xviii). Or with what Charles Spezzano said a few years later when he suggested that the Relational school is “the community of those who have nothing in common” (1998, p. 237).

So, there was only one Jungian analyst and Relational analysts do not exist (and if they do, have nothing in common)—what do we do?

Clearly what Jung, Hirsch, Spezzano, and unnamed others are reminding us about—and helping us laugh about, really—are the complexities of analytic self-definition and analytic identity, and the dangers of facile classification and of over-identification with labels and theories. Which is why, as Mitchell and Jung both said, we should hold our theories sincerely, but lightly. And to be consistent, we should hold our theories and preconceptions about others’ theories lightly too.

Now, when people think of Jungian psychology, what they may think of are some of the things Andrew mentioned, all of which contain some truth. But I mainly think that Jung's work is simply unknown, or known in the wrong way—or for the wrong things—but mostly... unknown to other analysts, including Relational ones.

Sandor Ferenczi nowadays is thought of as the spiritual forefather of Relational psychoanalysis, but Jung in many ways was right there with him—in spirit, technique, and particularly in their emphasis on “mutuality” in the analytic relationship. Irwin Hirsch wrote in 1994:

[The] spirit of mutuality of affective participation, of course, was introduced to the field of psychoanalysis by Ferenczi (1933), the intellectual forerunner of both the interpersonal and object relations schools of thought. His awkward, yet pioneering efforts . . . were met with sufficient vilification to help in the suppression of this theme for many years hence. (1994, p. 171)

The theme of mutual affective participation was not suppressed, however, in Jungian analysis, which is another of the gifts Jung's early separation-individuation from psychoanalysis gave to post-Jungian analysts. You have heard already from Andrew and Linda about what Jung wrote in 1929 about mutual transformation and mutual influence through a quasi-chemical or alchemical mixing of the conscious and unconscious psyches of both participants:

For two personalities to meet is like mixing two different chemical substances: if there is any combination at all, both are transformed. In any effective psychological treatment the doctor is bound to influence the patient; but this influence can only take place if the patient has a reciprocal influence on the doctor. You can exert no influence if you are not susceptible to influence. (1929, p. 71)

Stephen Mitchell says something quite similar: analysis, he writes, is

fundamentally dyadic . . . requiring the transformation of two people in their engagement with each other. . . . The counterpart to the ability to influence constructively is the capacity to make oneself available to influence, to make oneself open to transformation through the impact of another. (1997, p. 26)

Jung writes very similarly about the impossibility of an analyst's being “impervious” to a patient's influence and impact: “It is futile for the doctor to shield himself from the influence of the patient and to surround himself with a smoke-screen of fatherly and professional authority. By so doing he only deprives himself of a highly important organ of information” (1929, p. 71, italics added). This latter about the analytic smokescreen, which Jung also calls the “medical persona,” is a direct reference to the Big Three of classic Freudian technique—*anonymity, abstinence, and neutrality*—and to Jung's pretty much categorical rejection of them, which matches up, of course, with the core position of Relational psychoanalysis. In fact, in 1935 Jung forcefully stated—perhaps overstated—to an audience at the Tavistock Clinic: “I put my patients in front of me and I talk to them as one natural human being to another, and I expose myself completely and react with no restriction” (1935, p. 139).

Jung may have gotten a bit carried away in this latter comment about total spontaneity and self-disclosure, but at any rate in his 1946 paper he adds to this critique of analytic anonymity a further criticism—of what he terms the analyst's “trick of knowing everything beforehand,” which, he says, is “one of the favourite props of the well-versed practitioner and of all . . . infallible . . . authority” (p. 176). This sarcastic remark is probably a jab at Freud personally and, more importantly, a direct attack on analytic authoritarianism; but still more importantly, Jung here is equalizing (rebalancing and making more symmetrical) the entire analytic relationship, and in ways that jibe with Relational attitudes.

If the analyst does not know or pretend to know everything, then this leaves room for her patient to know something too, not just about herself but about her analyst. In some of Jung's early writings that Mitchell and Greenberg did not know about, Jung wrote the following (this is in 1913): It is an “open secret” that patients look “into the soul” of the analyst (1913, p. 198) and that they “read the analyst's character

intuitively” (1914, p. 260). That is, patients see analysts and through them. “The patient *reads* the personality of the analyst...because nothing is finer than the empathy of a neurotic” (p. 277, italics added). Because of this inevitable transparency, Jung emphasized in a series of writings over several decades that the person of the analyst, rather than her technique, is primary, and that the analytic relationship is basically symmetrical. In 1935, for instance, Jung spoke of the analyst this way: “No longer is he the superior wise man, judge, and counselor; he is a fellow participant who finds himself involved in the dialectical process just as deeply as the so-called patient” (1935b, p. 8). Fellow participant, dialectic; *so-called* patient: here the participants are on almost equal footing. In 1945 Jung wrote, “Every psychotherapist not only has his own method—he himself is that method...The great healing factor in psychotherapy is the doctor’s personality” (1945, p. 88).

Jung goes on in that earlier 1929 article to speak in quasi-shamanic or exorcistic ways—Guntrip and Fairbairn also compare therapists to exorcists—about the analyst being *infected* by the “demon of sickness” (p. 72), that is, about illness and affect passing over to the analyst and then back and forth between the fellow participants. Jung is beginning to describe, in nonclinical language, what would later be called projective or introjective identification (Klein): the transfer—the literal transference, between people—of unconscious psychological experience.

Jung did not know Melanie Klein and he meant something different from what she meant, but in 1946, the same year in which Klein introduced her ideas about projective identification, Jung in his major treatise on transference and countertransference, “The Psychology of the Transference,” wrote this:

The doctor, by voluntarily and consciously taking over the psychic sufferings of the patient, exposes himself to the overpowering contents of the unconscious and hence also to their inductive action...The patient, by bringing an activated unconscious content to bear upon the doctor, constellates the corresponding unconscious material in him. (1946, p. 176)

This is induced countertransference, but unlike Klein, Jung does not view this induction as a defensive operation, just part and parcel of a conjoined analytic situation, saying only, “Doctor and patient thus find themselves in a relationship founded on mutual unconsciousness.” In such states, they are ripe for what Relational psychoanalysis calls “enactments.” As the Relational analyst Jody Davies writes: “We assume—indeed, we rely upon—the hope that analyst and patient together will become enmeshed in complicated reenactments of early, unformulated experiences with significant others that can shed light upon the patient’s current interpersonal and intrapsychic difficulties by reopening in the analytic relationship prematurely foreclosed areas of experience” (1994, p. 156).

The mutual, reciprocal transformation involved in unconscious countertransference/transference means mutual vulnerability. Vulnerability means, literally, “woundability,” and Jung and Jungians move here into considerations of analysts as “wounded healers.” (Jessica Benjamin was discussing this kind of vulnerability vis a vis Sandor Ferenczi yesterday.) Here is Jung on the interaction of patient and analyst and its effects:

It is inevitable that the doctor should be influenced to a certain extent and even that his nervous health should suffer. He *quite literally* ‘takes over’ the sufferings of his patient and shares them with him. For this reason he runs a risk—and must run it in the nature of things” (1946, p. 172, italics added).

Jung adds that “psychic infections” and sufferings are not only unavoidable by-products of analytic work but, essentially, our analytic calling or destiny (which Donna Orange also referred to yesterday, speaking personally). “The doctor knows—or at least he should know,” says Jung, “that he did not choose this career by chance.” He suggests that all of us therapists are predisposed, predestined, to doing this kind of work.

Analysis, then, in the Jungian model, becomes mutual analysis, though not in the same way that Jung and Ferenczi first practiced it, which, though “mutual,” appeared to be a one-person, back and forth, role-

reversal phenomenon. Rather, countertransferential and participatory dimensions of treatment and of what Relational psychoanalysis would call co-created, co-determined fields and “third” spaces are emphasized. As Jung noted in his *Psychology of the Transference*, “Psychological induction inevitably causes the two parties to get involved in the transformation of the third and to be themselves transformed in the process” (1946, p. 199, italics added). This is in the theoretical and phenomenological zone of Odgen’s “analytic third,” and Jessica Benjamin just yesterday reviewed her own versions of analytic thirds in her paper.

You may have caught the word “dialectic” above. Much like Relational psychoanalysis, psychological life from the Jungian perspective is viewed in dialectical terms, or what Jungians traditionally have called “the tension of opposites” or simply “the opposites.” “I see the interplay of opposites in all things,” says Jung. “Life is born only of the spark of opposites” (1928, p. 54). Lew Aron characterizes the Relational approach similarly: “Relational psychoanalysis adopts a dialectical approach, attempting to maintain tensions between seemingly opposed principles, balancing the intrapsychic and interpersonal, the intrasubjective and the intersubjective, the individual and the social, autonomy and mutuality” (1996, p. 261). As Stephen Mitchell noted in *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis* (1993, p. 15), Jung’s work emphasizes *psychosynthesis* in addition to psychoanalysis. What Jung called his “synthetic (constructive)” approach typically follows a pattern where, in his words, “The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing (1958 [1916], p. 90, italics added).” This third thing, reminiscent, again, of Odgen’s “analytic third,” is active in the analytic relationship where it is, as Jung characterizes it, “the third party in the alliance” and “flits about from patient to doctor . . . sometimes impish and teasing, sometimes really diabolical” (1946, p. 188).

I/we have been emphasizing the mutuality and intersubjectivity characteristic of both Relational and Jungian analysis. But this inevitable responsiveness is combined with simultaneous awareness of what Owen Renik, whom I will consider a Relational analyst, calls the analyst’s “irreducible subjectivity.” Here is what Renik says:

Everything an analyst does in the analytic situation is based upon his or her personal psychology. This limitation cannot be reduced, let alone done away with; we have only the choice of admitting it or denying it. I think we tend to give lip service to the important truth that an analyst cannot, ultimately, know a patient's point of view; an analyst can only know his or her own point of view. (1993, p. 560)

This resonates first of all with one of Jung’s bravest and most accurate comments on psychological theory: “Every psychology—my own included—has the character of a subjective confession” (1929b, p. 336). But here also is a statement of Jung’s quite similar to Renik’s on the analyst’s “irreducible subjectivity”:

Even the man whom we think we know best . . . is at bottom a stranger to us. He is *different*. The most we can do, and the best, is to have at least some inkling of his otherness, to respect it, and to guard against the outrageous stupidity of wishing to interpret it (1928, p. 220-221).

So in the end we basically have both the irreducible *subjectivity* of individuals and the irreducible *intersubjectivity* of relationship. And the irreducible tension between. These dynamic tensions are not resolvable per se, nor need they be. Or as Stephen Mitchell wrote in a Jungian journal article published shortly after his death: “The analytic situation, in the way I think about it, is both radically intrapsychic and radically interpersonal...The experience is both totally intrapsychic and totally interpersonal” (2002, p. 83).

In closing, since I am in historical mode here, I want to end with a few historical notes concerning Stephen Mitchell, who, though he grew up in New Jersey, was born in New York, went to high school here, and spent his all-too-brief adult life walking these same city streets where we have been meeting for the past few days. I learned recently that it wasn’t just some of Stephen’s final work on comparative psychoanalysis that involved some mutually enhancing contact with Jungian perspectives. As it turns out, his first psychology class in college was taught by a professor who had, as he put it, “Jungian predilections.” Stephen described this course as “terrific” and “very exciting” (Rudnystsky, 2000, p. 102). Through it he also developed an interest in the work of Joseph Campbell, whose Jungian linkages are legion. “Joseph

Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*," Stephen later said, "was one of my favourite books as an undergraduate and had a profound impact on my ways of thinking about common themes in human experience and the ways they are expressed" (2002, p. 88). Although subsequent psychology courses at Yale turned Mitchell off and he turned to philosophy, we can say lightly that at the beginning and also near the end of his psychological thinking Stephen Mitchell and Relational psychoanalysis had important contacts with Jungian thought.

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