

Eros

The Connecting Principle (or the Complexities of Love and Sexuality)

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Why Eros? Eros was an ancient god—the god of love and lust. How can an archetypal figure help us with the very modern complexities of transference and countertransference, of resolving splits between creative and destructive defences? Surely analysis is a science? If science includes the ‘Eureka!’ principle, of knowledge carefully collated and sifted but then coming together in a flash of unconscious creativity, then psychoanalysis and analytical psychology are science, where Eros as the connecting principle in life provides the basis for such flashes of creativity by integrating the system which produces the energy. Eros, to the Greeks a god, and both child and man, was their way of defining and explaining connections of apparent opposites, including sex, composed as it is of love and lust, tenderness and aggression, relationship and loneliness, trust and paranoia. When we fear the sensations and emotions of the countertransference, if we are in the world of Eros, we can as Psyche in thrall to Eros or Eve tempted by the serpent, seek enlightenment through trying to know something about what is really going on. It could not have been carnal knowledge which Eve sought. She and Adam already had that. It may be that what was sought was consciousness about what was already part of their experience. Non-consciousness had been keeping them in a paradise which prevented them using their brainpower. In other words, sexual lust may be a diversion from the overall task. That which we have learned to call transference is an expression of the strange power of the *coniunctio* (Jung 1946), the instinct to become part of the other. In the containing ephemeral space which is the analytic hour, through the few transformative words which describe and acknowledge change, we try to find some understanding of what it is to be two separate

beings. Where sexuality is not sufficiently recognised as a part of that transference, it can take over and prevent progress in the task.

Although love and lust may be differentiated, Jung's definition of Eros as the connecting principle recognises the curious fact that human beings, the human as part of a species, want to live together in groups yet each individual wants to feel that he or she is uniquely him or her self. (Psycho)analytic thinking has its roots in our cultural group norms and states that our repressions are in the cause of adaptation to the resulting beliefs. A return to the original Eros can free us from such concretised bonds belonging as it does to the infinite from which we can clutch some sense of what it is that we fear, what troubles us, what holds us from the fierce rage of a lifetime of grappling with inner and outer realities. What we fear may be derived from early developmental experiences and a desire to be socially acceptable beings, but imaginings and fantasies also have their origins in less explicable processes, the layer of the psyche Jung called the collective unconscious.

Here, I hope to weave the ancient lineage of Eros, as the origin of our capacity to make relationships, with that of transference and countertransference theory, built over the past hundred years on the discoveries of Freud and Jung and their successors. For most of that time science has been limited to determining causes and effects and to believing that matter and non-matter could not be part of each other. Only recently have we begun to relate analytic work to a newer science of quantum theory through which Jung's quest to understand the infinity of the human psyche can make sense, even when it includes the Greek myths where humans and gods share the same world of chaos and order. Through quantum physics (Bohm 1980; Zinkin 1987; Zohar 1990) it can be seen that we are part of a vast system of movement, of constantly changing matter and non-matter, in which parallel processes go on apparently related and without cause. Through these discoveries, Jung's descriptions of acausal connections such as synchronicity (Jung 1972) can be verified.

According to one of the earliest Greek creation myths, indeed, chaos and time met to produce earth and sky in a moment very similar to the Big Bang theory. Eros then was said to be around as the original

impulse to connect 'heaven and earth', neither male nor female, before being embodied (cf. Hesiod). The *Oxford* and the *Chambers* dictionaries refer to 'erotic' merely as 'sexual excitation'—a definition in line with the difficulty of determining what 'love' can possibly be as a connecting principle other than having a reproductive purpose. Another dictionary (*Reader's Digest* 1996) on the other hand links the erotic with Eros and Greek mythology: Eros is defined as 'the sum of all selfpreservative as contrasted with self-destructive instincts' (i.e. Thanatos). However, it sometimes seems that in contemporary life such links have been lost and that sexual excitation is feared more than any other physical response as if it had no connection with the rest of human feelings. Anxieties about sex have become focused on child abuse and paedophilia, subjects rendered almost impossible to discuss by the revulsion they cause. Love is totally denied. We forget that a few years ago homosexuality caused equal public revulsion and early in the century Freud was reviled for discussing heterosexuality. It still seems to be impossible to allow for desire and for problems of sexuality but still acknowledge the presence of love. In this chapter, love is regarded as the integrating factor in Eros. The quest in analysis and psychotherapy is for the patient to achieve a more effective personal integration. To do this therapist and patient must engage with each other.

In an original Greek creation myth, before anything else existed there was Eros (Hesiod 1988 writing c. 500 BC). The Greeks seemed to be trying to explain the physical world. Gradually, attributions of maleness and femaleness began to be made, no doubt out of observations of behaviour. Later the observations of behaviour were the result of the way everyday life became organised. At first there were a whole lot of gods and goddesses in no particular hierarchy and no particular morality. Eros became Aphrodite, goddess of love, and later emerged as son of Aphrodite and Ares (Mars). But Ares also represented the end of cowardice and the courage for peace. Aphrodite (Venus) was an extremely powerful, often vindictive goddess and a seducer. Eros, child and man, is a tricksterish god who, as Cupid, acts out the connecting principle by causing people to fall in love with each other and forget all else. In his commentary on Amor (Eros) and

Psyche, Neumann (1973) says this is a myth of female development: Eros as an archetype cannot develop, he just is. But Eros is both human and god and therefore the tale seems to be about human development towards acquiring godlike aspects (Psyche is eventually taken up into heaven to join the pantheon). ‘Godlike’, in this sense, means the emerging archetypes become conscious parts of the personality.

The story of Amor and Psyche is curiously akin to that which we have about Princess Diana. Psyche, the virgin, escapes being a sacrifice, is taken to the palace where she can have everything she wants as long as she doesn’t ask questions or otherwise attempt to see what is happening to her. Eventually, she cannot bear to meet her lover only in the darkness and tries to see him by lighting her lamp (of understanding). She drops some burning oil on him and he flees. Then they are both in trouble and have many trials to undergo. Unlike Princess Diana, Amor and Psyche are eventually reunited—and join the gods (Neumann 1973).

Eros, more usually in the later pantheon, is a kind of Peter Pan figure with a rampant and undeveloped sexuality. He is the original hero. With the advent of monotheism, this older mythology of the diversity of human sexuality and its godlike qualities of love became lost in a morality which expressed itself as a hierarchy of power. God (Yaweh, Jehovah, Jove, Zeus) was the creator of everything and therefore the Lord and possessor of everything. This eliminates and does not give a place to much of human diversity. There was a conflation of Zeus and Eros—Zeus, power; Eros love (connection)—which then becomes a division, when God’s Son becomes the embodiment of (non-sexual) love and God himself retains the power and authority. The role of the father becomes confusing. Yet the original Eros, the connecting principle in creation, was neither male nor female and had no specific characteristics except that of bringing opposites together—air and matter, spirit and flesh—continually evolving.

Or notions, including those in psychotherapy, of love, sexuality and perversion are based on the censorship of ideas, usually unacknowledged, and the monotheistic legacy of our time and culture. Adaptation to societal beliefs, achieved as it is by repression, leaves us

unconscious of what is rational and irrational. Useful messages from the collective unconscious, if they get through, for example in dreams, are generally scoffed at or at best often misinterpreted according to 'where the therapist is coming from'. If, as I do, we regard societies as trying to achieve a balance between destructive and positively creative forces, in the way that each individual member of the society does, it becomes necessary to try to work out why conscious rules are so often sabotaged by powerful emotional beliefs. Group relations theory states that the shared cultural unconscious is an unconscious underlay for such sabotage (Bion 1965). But the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious takes this further into the shared phenomenon of our phylogenetic inheritance expressed through archetypes. This accords with the amorality of the original Greek gods and goddesses, playing out human attributes. Later, when these had been contained in a hierarchy, Greek drama enlisted the pantheon to argue out human ethical codes and a social organisation with power allocated to men and moral codes which emphasised gender and power relations in an increasingly rigid way. They reflected the social order, but through the original gods and goddesses it is possible to see how in ancient times people sought ways of explaining not only the unknowable and inexplicable but ways of describing how human beings feel and think. The vast number of gods and goddesses reflect the vast possibilities in each human.

Had quantum physics existed when Jung was writing his thoughts about acausal connections his ideas would have seemed less bizarre to the scientifically minded of the time (including himself!). Or had DNA been discovered with the complex blueprints possible in our genetic structures, where, so it is said, a single hair follicle holds all the information about an individual, archetype theory might have been more accepted. Had Jung himself cared to apply his anthropological studies or his views about collective unconscious to present-day political organisation, his contribution to the recognition that the individual exists only in the context of the environment might have been more influential in studies of group dynamics. As it is, I am writing as a Jungian analyst trained in the Society of Analytical Psychology, influenced as much by Kleinian psychoanalysis as by

Jung. My own experiences, including an interest in social and organisational life fostered during ten years of working at the Tavistock Clinic in London, lead me to regard developmental theory as the basis for understanding in the analytic hour, which I see as rather like expressionist art. The exchange can only happen in that space, at that time with the two people involved, in the Now which cannot be codified or quantified. But still it is necessary to conceptualise about the palette, the context and how connections are made. 'Eros' emphasises that development is continuous, past, present, future, and enables us to put 'love' as a definition of the integrative understanding required in the task of analysis.

Sexuality and Love in the Transference

The problem is not so much sex as love, taking love to mean integration. If the aim of psychotherapy is a rebalancing of internal complexes, erotic feelings obviously are part of what has to be integrated. Yet erotic feelings can be so overwhelming that therapist and patient feel compelled to consummate them. How then can the therapist regain a sense of the task of psychotherapy? At the level of the collective unconscious, the couple are drawn to deny all difference and merge together, everything belongs to everything else. In reductionist terms of developmental psychology, they are drawn to regress to the original mother-and-baby, the object in its environment. From a more teleological standpoint, the future beckons as well as the past, the desire to be part of the infinite again, thus fulfilling the task of life. In prosaic terms, if the couple can just have sex together, they think they will fulfil all their needs: that is the connection required. In its extreme form, this is madness (as is realised in popular folklore—the madness of love) or psychosis, to be more technical. Mostly, as therapists, transference theory helps us to rationalise our feelings, step back from the borderline and continue with the task of analysing the situation. Eros in its broader sense of love as well as desire, steps in to rescue the task. Usually, the patient does not want the madness confirmed anyway, and feels abused when the professional abandons the rules.

A patient, Shannon, referred to me because her first therapist was not

Jungian and therefore could not conduct a training analysis, was angry and resentful comparing me contemptuously to her ex-therapist, B, a man with whom she had felt complete rapport. We worked on the various permutations suggested by this. Some time later, B wrote to Shannon suggesting a meeting to talk over what had happened. She followed this up and, she said, found herself engaging in passionate sex on his consulting-room carpet. He took the view that as their therapy relationship was over, there was no longer any reason not to act on their erotic attraction for each other. She was confused and drawn to have an affair with him. Why not? After all, she had known at the time that much of what she felt was 'transference', but not now, she thought, even if her fate with most men was to fall into sexual affairs because her attractiveness and low self-esteem both appealed to men and made her vulnerable to being seduced. Now she wondered if she should make up to B for having left him. As he was married, she was in a familiar place to her, of being part of a triangle. Usually, she had given no thought to the wife in the situation, except possibly to criticise her. In the analysis, we saw that there was now another triangle, the two analysts and the patient. I was in the position of the wife/mother and feared being jealous and possessive of my patient/child. Daringly, she had, like Persephone, responding to the Eros within her, sought a lover. My role, like Demeter, could be to lay waste and try to win her back, unless my inner Eros could continue to see the overall picture. By acting on her feelings for B, we now had the material to examine the complexities of her needs for love. After a while, she let go of the affair with B because her desire faded as she realised that the physical sexuality was in the context of her emotional development in the process of analysis. The actual sex enabled us to get a clearer insight into the part sex played in her life, but also how much resentful envy towards a powerful mother had motivated her. While she and I had work to do on the homosexual element of the transference, it began to be realised that her relations with men had been more to do with attacking 'the mother' and, thus, herself as a woman, than to do with a need for sex. In this situation, Eros, as Cupid often a trickster, had helped the analysis along by bringing B and Shannon together. The 'acting out', while appearing to be against the

analysis, was more an acting through than an attack on the process of Shannon's therapy.

With another patient, Dee, also referred after ten years of avoiding therapy, the sexuality had not been so useful. She recounted how in her previous analysis following rejection by her lover, she had been engaged in fantasies that her analyst, C, was so like him that she must have sex with him. Suddenly, C took her up on this in the middle of a session, inviting her to go to bed with him. She remained in the room discussing the subject but then left and never went back. Subsequently, she had an acute psychotic breakdown and was hospitalised. Here, it seemed that the need for physical expression had suffused both of them and avoided the meaning of her fantasies in the wider context of the transference. Dee had been too near to psychosis to cope with the concrete offer. Unlike Shannon's therapist, it seems that C misjudged the feelings and his acting on them constituted an abuse of their relationship. Presumably, in this case, the psychotic element had overwhelmed the couple.

In Jung's early discussion of transference phenomena (e.g. Jung 1935), he regards the transference as dangerous, something to be got rid of, a diversion from the work. He says that the transference is definitely not love and while both patient and analyst may be caught up in mutual projections, the analyst must manage to get over his or her feelings and help the patient to do so also. He seems to mean by 'not love' that the mutuality in life outside the consulting room must be recognised as different from that within. His professional persona excluded 'love'. He always maintains that he works from his own subjective experiences (Jung 1963). In a surrealist play, *Sabina* (Wilson 1998), the author is able to give a valuable insight into the involvement Jung had with one of his patients, at the beginning of his psychotherapist life early in the century, and which must have influenced such ideas about transference. Later, Jung does recognise transference and countertransference as a tool to be used in analysis.

The play manages to convey the psychotic element when sexual desire is overwhelming and experienced as love. It is not surprising that Jung felt it was something to be overcome. Sabina Spielrein (Wilson 1998; Carotenuto 1984) is portrayed in this play as a young

patient in the Bergholzi hospital, taken over by sexual fantasies and masturbating continually in a flamboyant exhibitionism. She has been referred by Freud as requiring to be hospitalised and becomes Jung's first psychotherapy patient. In his professional self, Jung is a serious young psychiatrist, ambitious and well regarded. The play succeeds in showing how psychosis can permeate institutional as well as individual systems. For example, there is uncertainty about who has thrown faeces at a picture of Freud, who, at that time, is revered by Jung. Dr Bleuler, also in the play, assumes it was a patient's work but it seems to have been Jung's 'spirit guide' Philemon (Jung 1963), the device the author brings in to demonstrate the collective unconscious and how Jung became erotically intoxicated and was seduced by Sabina, whom he begins to refer to as his *anima* (feminine aspect). Through Philemon and Sabina all sorts of tricksterish things happen as Jung and she have a romantic, sexual affair. Her symptoms diminish and the intensity of feelings recedes until, eventually, Jung realises he must end the affair, referring her back to Freud in Vienna. She is taken there by her parents and subsequently trains as a psychoanalyst.

This seemed to me to demonstrate how the bond which makes psychotherapy possible holds—in all its negative and positive aspects—until the relationship has fulfilled its function, because as 'opposites' both madness and sanity are there in the composition of the personality. Sabina, as a girl of her time, had a symptom designed to be shocking and which had overcome her in an extreme of hysterical compulsive behaviour. The contagion of her desperate need seduced Jung and split him off from his everyday persona. He was able to continue to do his job as a doctor while taken over by fantasy. As usual with his inner experiences, he was later able to make use of the involvement in his writing about analytical psychology. In this sense, again, Eros the trickster acted in the cause of Eros the connecting principle which could achieve what was needed in integration for himself and his patient. As an imaginative fantasy, the play is itself in the cause of Eros. Through it, I thought I could see how Jung might have been shocked into deciding that transference feelings were a danger.

Nowadays we, as therapists, enter this danger area deliberately. The

special space of the analysis or the psychotherapy—secluded, quiet room, structured place or couch and chair, reliance on talking and silences, the ‘rule of abstinence’, the regular meetings with as few breaks as possible—all these ‘conditions’ create a special awareness, in both therapist and patient, that something different from daily life is going on. The therapy is in the present, the here-and-now, or to take account of the archetypal level of experience, the eternal Now. The experience can be ‘shared’ and is not confined to the boundaries of the physical self. Dreams are important, as are the images and physical sensations that arise—from sexual arousal or even small stirrings of erotic interest to physiological impulses such as headaches, backache, stomach and gut tremors and rumblings and gaseous sensations. Attention is concentrated, attention wanders. Thoughts arise and are translated into dialogue.

We call all this transference, the meeting of two beings in a universe on which each has a small perceptual window. By the time he writes of this phenomenon in ‘Problems of modern psychotherapy’ (1929), Jung tells us that it is necessary for the analyst to have been analysed in order that she or he is not lost in what occurs with the patient. Even so, to suspend the ego enough to let Eros make the necessary connections is to become vulnerable to being at the mercy of the patient’s projections or one’s own projective identifications, including sexual desire.

There is a paradox built into our contemporary ideas of the transference in psychoanalytic work. At the same time as we may think of interpretation as a logical process arising from application of a theory about development and/or technique, we believe in ‘not knowing’ of going into the consulting room ‘without memory and without desire’, to enlist Wilfred Bion’s often used saying. We believe that each moment with the patient is unique and should not be predicted. At the same time, the patient is assessed and diagnosed, bearing in mind psychiatric states, to see if she or he is ‘suitable’ for psychotherapy, not too ‘psychotic’, *etc.* Increasingly, transference and countertransference are the main tools of the psychotherapist, offering the patient the possibility of reliving and thus changing the import of early (malignant) experiences. The ‘here-and-now’ is refined to refer

to the infantile projections brought out in the process. It could be said that lying on the couch encourages the sort of regression which enables a response to invitations to consider that the earliest experiences are where the solutions to difficulties will be found.

Sometimes there is a belief that this is a microscopic investigation, akin to the microinvestigations of orthodox scientific tradition. Yet, at the same time, psychotherapists have to be aware that what is revealed in the consulting room is not to be understood in parts without the continual recognition that the human being which is the self seeks something we call wholeness or integration. The feeling of integrity means a capacity to recognise symbol, paradox, the relations between opposites, ambivalence: in other words, to deal with Eros as the connecting principle. Yet as Eros also flits about making connections, so each inner system, as part of other systems, can only be packaged for a moment before it fluctuates and changes balance. In the Kleinian model, this continual shift has been described as reworking the depressive position via paranoid/schizoid states. 'Not knowing' can thus be conceptualised as a kind of fragmentation of the feeling of integrated understanding. Where the therapist has arrived at a relatively integrated stage in development (the depressive position) the letting go of certainty (as in suspension of the ego), although unsettling, will eventually be followed by the realignment of the inner kaleidoscope in some comprehensible form. Chaos can be tolerated because it will be followed by order. Trust in the assessment which has been done allows the therapist to 'suspend the ego' and allow such inner realignments to occur.

The transference, in itself, is part of the whole process and where it is neglected neither patients nor therapist can see the role the therapist is playing in the analytic scenario. A patient was brought to supervision because he was continually 'acting out' and the therapist felt the psychotherapy to be 'stuck'. The patient, Jackson, felt he had become addicted to going to Turkish baths since coming to Britain from Africa. The atmosphere stirred flickering images of exotic excitements which the therapist, D, and he saw as regressive behaviour. He described the saunas as having 'warmth, wetness, darkness and timelessness', which they had been interpreting as

‘womb-like’. Mostly, he lay about in sensual pleasure watching others. For sexual encounters, he went to a park where he met men silently and transitorily in the dark of night feeling after that he had a well of water inside which could engulf him. He kept sexuality away from loving feelings and kept everyone ‘at a distance’ from him. In line with this, in the therapy sessions he endlessly recounted sexual experiences and his times as an observer of human life. In describing his early life he had said that his father disapproved of him as a ‘cissy’ because he couldn’t bear ‘killing things’ (i.e. he disliked fishing and hunting). Although he and his mother confided in each other in a confessional sort of way, he resented that she expected him to tell her everything and judged what he told her according to her strict religious code. He felt ‘seen’ by neither parent. They watched him but mistook what they saw. D felt herself to be imprisoned in the role of unseeing parent, unable to make the connections which might impinge on his insistently recounted, but curiously disconnected, observations. From Kleinian point of view, his anxiety unconsciously attacked the linking necessary to arrive at a more thoughtful (depressive) position.

With my encouragement, D acknowledged that she, too, had lived in Africa (although in a different country) and this began to loosen the split as she allowed her own inner identifications to surface in her thoughts. The Eros *coniunctio* could be realised in a more illuminating form through the feeling both experienced that at last she and Jackson could acknowledge something in common. She felt that she could begin to avoid her role as cleansing mother or critical father. When she wondered whether his family had had any black friends or servants, a whole new population entered therapy from his inner world. As is common with children brought up in a country where they learn to feel they do not really belong, Jackson had repressed his memories of his black nurse and her children, his first playmates. As he grew up, these relationships became forbidden and not spoken about. Jackson’s mother thought his father particularly should not hear of any interest in his nurse or her family, lest he would be even more despicably ‘soft’ than he already appeared. In his adolescence, secrecy and sexuality became intertwined and love was feared as bringing catastrophe.

As with Sabina’s masturbation, Jackson had found the thing which

would most shock his father but at the same time that he needed in order to develop. His warmest relationships had been with his childhood friends but this was now a matter for shame. Sex became a secret sensual activity which gave a fleeting sense of Eros as an integrative wholeness. Because he could only have transient encounters in the dark, as when Eros visits Psyche in the darkness of night, he could not achieve internal acknowledgement.

When Psyche tries to see what her life and love really consists of Eros immediately flies away. Psyche has to face the wrath of the mother who wants to keep him from marrying a mortal. This archetypal triangle seemed to exist in D's consulting room. Jackson feared the wrath of the parent but began to find that D was interested in, rather than envious of, his individuality and did not subscribe to the view that it must be a secret or confessed as a sin. Her Eros, by taking an overview, let in the light.

D thought of the inner well of water as a need for rebirth as an adult man. The fear was of a cataclysmic change as the split-off sexuality was reintegrated with the whole Eros. As Psyche, in the myth, had been cast out to go through tribulations in the cause of developing consciousness, so Jackson feared what would happen if the water burst through. His addictive behaviour, going to the Turkish baths, was intended to alleviate the tension of the fear of destructive madness, but as is the case with any addiction, more and more of the 'drug' had been required. Jackson told how, before going on an important business trip, he had had to spend all night at his favourite baths. He avoided anxiety but was exhausted. In this sense, the steamy atmosphere is of Hades, where Eros and Psyche cannot meet and Logos, the capacity to have conscious thought, is lost until they can return to 'the light'. Can D's capacity for connections continue to enlighten her patient? Incidentally, it can be seen here that the black family had brought the possibility of a more integrated Eros to a white child born into a family rigidly imprisoned in their cultural bonds and into fears of sin and damnation, setting him on the path to eventual enlightenment. His sister remaining near her parents and, presumably, not having been able to find a way out, is constantly depressed and suicidal. Another sibling travels constantly from place to place,

apparently also fleeing Eros.

Summary

In this paper, I have tried to demonstrate that there is a connecting principle, Eros, in Jungian psychology, which is an instinctual underpinning for human development. Psychotherapy or analysis with the aim of integration of the personality, that is the body/mind/emotional system, is helped by this Eros to find ways of understanding the problems which arise in the course of development. In order to comprehend 'Eros', it is necessary to return to early Greek mythology, where Eros is the original 'connecting principle' bringing the environment into being as a psycho-physical system.

I finish with a quotation from Jung (1946:27):

Eros...belongs on one side to man's primordial animal nature which will endure as long as man has animal body. On the other side, he is related to the highest forms of the spirit. But he thrives when spirit and instinct are in the right harmony. If one or other aspect is lacking to him, the result is injury or at least a lopsidedness that may easily veer toward the pathological. Too much of the animal distorts the civilised man, too much civilisation makes sick animals. This dilemma reveals the vast uncertainty that Eros holds for man. For, at bottom, Eros is a superhuman power which, like nature herself, allows itself to be overpowered and exploited as though it were impotent. But triumph over nature is dearly paid for.

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