

# **Analytical psychology as a spiritual practice: An Australian perspective**

**David B. Russell**

*School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, Australia*

After a decade of implementing a postgraduate program in analytical psychology, a psychology shaped by the belief that our human experience of reality is very incomplete, it is timely to reflect on what constituted its guiding intention.

At the very heart of human experience there is a crack, a gap. It is this gap that accounts for the experience of psychological phenomena. The architects of the program had no desire to fill the gap in fact they saw it as a psychological wound that needed, not an anodyne but rather, an active working of the wound. Keeping the wound open by insisting on the absence of a ready-to-hand explanation, they offered a 'no-answer' as a path to a new dimension, one that transcends the ego, one which is akin to the I/eye of the storm, an emptiness/nothingness that is a place of new learning (learned ignorance). This path is usefully understood as a spiritual practice.

The paper offers an account of the conceptual underpinning of this unique educational program and situates it in the Australian context.

## **Introduction**

There are three lines of thinking, intellectual perturbations if you like, that have mutually shaped the decisions that underscored the ongoing development of the Master of Analytical Psychology degree. These are attitudes of mind rather than theoretical or narrowly ideological positionings. The first is represented by the distinction attributed to the writer Vladimir Nabokov: If you say that the king died and then the queen died you do not have a

narrative. All you have is a sequence of events. However, if you say that the king died and then the queen dies of a broken heart, then you have a plot and every narrative needs a plot. The second is the image of the human reach always exceeding its grasp. In more practical terms: the world of the imaginative processes is more encompassing than the world of the physical senses (including any literal understanding of the political and the social). And finally, an appreciation of learning and the expression of an aesthetic attitude, a focus on structure and style, have a more satisfying outcome than a devotion to great ideas.

On reflection, especially given the passage of ten years, it is possible to see that these three attitudes have done more to give structure and purpose to the teaching program than any particular body of knowledge. The title of the program, analytical psychology, might suggest otherwise given that this is the name that the psychiatrist/psychologist, Carl Jung, gave to his particular psychological project. There is a connection, of course, but it's one that needs some further elaboration. But, before that, there is a little aspect of provenance that needs to be addressed.

The earliest precursor to the Master of Analytical Psychology was an adult education postgraduate program established in the early 1970s. Its learning philosophy was strongly experiential and its application was Australian agriculture. By the mid-1980s it had evolved into a Master of Social Ecology degree and was described as a “way of knowing ... [rather than] ... a body of knowledge” (Russell, 1991). Experiential learning had a strong practical application to the workplace and was less concerned with productivity than with a particular orientation to the world, namely, seeing activities as dynamic and overlapping systems. Social ecology was conceived as a design process “... one that interconnects the pattern of events and pattern of images” (Russell, 1999, p. 256). The key characteristics of experiential learning: narrative design and a suspicion of great ideas, which together constituted a valued history, were conserved, first in the development cultural psychology, and then, in the year 2000, in analytical psychology.

## **Jungian psychology as imaginative psychology**

Jung's name, in the history of psychology, is usually associated with a number of fundamental concepts, in particular, terms like 'psychological complexes,' 'collective unconscious,' and 'archetypes.' However, it was not because of these 'great' ideas that we, at the University of Western Sydney, were drawn to his writings. It was his insistence on the 'lived experience' of the individual, especially the fullness of experience including 'religious experience,' that drew us to him. Jung used a rich array of metaphors to give value to these experiences to the extent that he has been judged as being 'too mystical' for the minds of most academic psychologists. His adamant privileging of knowing, experientially, over belief, including theory development, is illustrated in a letter to a colleague: "... Can anyone say 'credo' when he stands *amidst* his experience ... when he knows how superfluous 'belief' is, when he more than just "knows," when the experience has even pressed him to the wall?" (Jung, 1934/1973, p. 141). It was Jung's contention that by engaging with the mystery of the experience of life, the sources of which remain outside of our awareness, that it became for him, "... the greatest and most incisive experience of my life ... that this door, a highly inconspicuous side-door on an unsuspecting-looking and easily overlooked footpath – narrow and indistinct because only a few have set foot on it – leads to a secret of transformation and renewal ..." (Jung, 1934/1973, p. 141). When the going got tough, Jung was going to trust his experience of the unknown over any personal or cultural 'credo.'

Of course, his usage of terms like 'secret' and 'transformation and renewal' do suggest an over-redemptive attitude and give some credence to the too-mystical label. While Jung's enthusiastic language suggested a degree of missionary zeal, it was his pragmatism, his willingness to work creatively with the 'rich thicket of reality,' which caught our imagination (see Russell, 2002).

In the judgement of the author, what matters, psychologically, are the fruits that are derived from the rational dialogue with the fullness of experience. Jung, a great admirer of

William James, emphasised, above all else, the importance of this ongoing dialogue with experience. In fact, no experience was to be disallowed; everything was to be attended to, even if not accounted for. All the interests and projects we have as conscious beings were to be taken seriously (Flanagan, 1997).

James Hillman, more than any other post-Jungian psychologist, extends Jung's project of dialogue-with-experience into the realm of image making, images that disturb the empirical world of the senses (including the social and the political) in order to more fully do the work that we have evolved, through the experience of consciousness, to do. Hillman uses the image of the Virgin Mary's Annunciation as suggestive of just such a disturbance. He pictures Mary as a young childish innocent, nothing more than a schoolgirl at home in her room, who is suddenly confronted with the Angel. Initially, experiencing only shock and astonishment, her mind rejects the knowledge and her face shows the horror of what's implied. Yet, Hillman says, in her body redemption will be prepared. As a psychological writer, Hillman is keen to include us all in this image of Mary, "... for somewhere we are all virgins, sensitive, shy, psychologically naïve, unexplored in our emotional life, unwilling to be called into involvements, unawakened to the terribleness of truth, resistant to the major challenge, preferring where it is safe, at home, familiar and protected, with books or bits of handiwork, kindly charitable, obedient, well-meaning" (Hillman, 1994, p. 108).

For Hillman there can be no soul-making if there is no disruption, psychological disruption, no *imagination* in his sense of the term. He insists that psychological life begins when the status quo, the socially accepted routines of daily life, are radically upset, ruptured. In his poetic language, he reflects on Mary's newly-found situation: "... from all this goodness little can come unless the psyche's womb receives the fiery seed of one's own unique essence which fulfils its creative longing and from which inner fertilization issues the experience of renewal" (Hillman, 1994, p. 108). In order to live life, psychologically, one

must engage with the rupture, be disturbed, and suffer the divine fertilization so that an inner life will grow.

In developing analytical psychology as an educational enterprise we followed Hillman's lead in seeing it as, fundamentally, the evocation of imagination: the exploration of and struggling with imagination. If it had anything to do with healing then it was healing the imagination or healing the relationship to the imagination. And the manner of doing this was the development of a psychological sense of imagination (Hillman, 1983). Evocation of imagination implies being open to new possibilities, especially a possibility that does not have the heroic ego as the centre of one's understanding and thus the measure of everything.

Adam Phillips, best known of the post-Freudian writers working today, has been another foundational influence on the 'structure and style' of our program. In paraphrasing his account of what an analyst does in encouraging a description of a dream, we might ask our students about an experience, not: What does it mean? But, *What was it like to be there?* What were you using that unique space to do? The experience (dream, day-time reverie, disturbing experience) becomes the place of - or psychic space for - different versions of self-experience, a setting for other voices. The psychological experience becomes an evocative object as opposed to an informative one (Phillips, 1997).

Phillips does for Freud what Hillman does for Jung: they tell us stories about the two great story makers of the mind (Freud and Jung) but don't hide from us the knowledge that they are, in fact, fictions, stories. However, fictive realities are realities none the less! Phillips talks about the body, the body and its inherent desires, how it learns to *make do* and, hopefully, to make do with a sense of 'art.' The body takes pleasure in creating a story (or better, stories) of what we do to make do (Phillips, 1998). These basic and original desires cannot be directly satisfied but can create a satisfying experience (a satisfying fiction). In Phillip's view, our stories, including our cultural stories, our myth making, become stories of

loss. The body's experience of loss/lack becomes the source of invention. Our lives become "somehow organised around, in relation to, absence" (Phillips, 1998, p. 20).

Freud's early case histories – the *Studies in Hysteria* – were artful stories about how certain women, in a manner essentially outside of their awareness, addressed the perceived loss of the social acceptance of their particular uniqueness. It was their bodies that told stories back to families and to the wider culture. Freud's new-found psychoanalytic method encouraged them to answer back in words, rather than in physical symptoms (Phillips, 1998). Likewise, in their essays, our students are encouraged to answer back to Jung, Freud and ourselves as lecturers, and not be seduced into offering blind acceptance of anyone's strange, or not so strange, theories. The common ground on which Freud and Jung build their projects was story making. As heirs to their projects, we encourage the same. It is relevant to remember that the precursor of psychoanalysis was the 19<sup>th</sup> century European novel.

#### **Analytical psychology as stories of ruptured certainty**

Jung, in the tradition of William James and Giambattista Vico, advocated an as-if attitude to certainty. However, anyone who has read much of Jung knows that, at times, he would write in a manner indicating that he had fallen into the temptation of certainty; that his own experience of certainty reflected a belief in an absolute world. More often, though, he insisted on an attitude of permanent vigilance against the temptation of certainty. His want was to offer the feeling-of-certainty, in relation to his own experience, as an invitation to generalised learning, but not, as sometimes understood, as a generalisation beyond his person, to the status of a public truth. In like manner, the whole analytical psychology program is a sort of invitation to refrain from the habit of falling into the temptation of certainty. The psychological world that we explore is always, because there can be no other way, a world that we bring forth with others. It is a world that we are forever creating and recreating through our flow of emotions and our flow of language.

Analytical psychology, as a flow of narrative language, is particularly suited to the expression of human experience as it is lived. Its value is that of drawing together diverse threads of events and happenings and integrating them into a temporally organized whole. Not only is the complexity of the situation retained but, importantly for a psychological perspective, the emotional and motivational meanings are emphasised (see Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995). The vehicle of explanation in such stories is a plot. The plot provides a story-like causal nexus which it exhibits rather than deductively demonstrating and thus inappropriately suggesting 'certainty.'

Hillman has spent his entire professional life reminding us not to take Jung's use of language literally and to take psychological events more as social constructs than concrete-like facts: a psychical reality and not a material reality. Freud, long ago, insisted on the same distinction in reference to dream images (Freud, 1900/1954).

### **The person and the self as relatively recent inventions**

It is of note that the concept of person entered Western thought largely as a consequence of sustained reflection on the Judeo-Christian Bible (Novak, 1998). A concept was needed so that humans could be talked about as having a rational relationship with God. A relationship that encompassed a past, a present, and an anticipated future: a concept of an entity responsible for actions and choices. No longer could this be just an individual but, rather, in the terms of the fifth-century thinker, Boethius (489-524 CE), a person as a *substantia rationalis subsistens*. With the advent of the Enlightenment, the view that there was one fixed reality, a reality knowable outside of our own experiencing of it, became increasingly difficult to hold. The 'one true church' increasing became a multitude of churches, a multitude of perspectives. The single universe of the natural world became a multi-verse of experience. What we know of the world is known only through consciousness and it is consciousness that links us to the world. So, in a metaphorical sense, we live in two

worlds: a world of sense perception (with a relatively fixed horizon) and a world of imagination (with a forever shifting and expanding horizon).

The social construct of self offered a certain stability, a new seduction of certainty. The self could be, and has become in common-sense understanding, the soul-like entity that extended the person into the psychological realm; the source of emotions, feelings, insights, and dreams (day-time and night-time dreaming). The self has become the answer to the experiential gap that separates the two horizons. The experience of nothingness was simply too much to bear! (see Novak, 1970). The fact that we can call something by name, such as a 'feeling,' suggests that it is a thing, an entity, and the same goes for self. But feeling and self are verbs in that they do things: they are processes, indeed, complex ones, that generate the experiences of consciousness.

To answer the question: Who am I? I need to tell a story. The more often I tell such a narrative the more likely that the shape of the story will begin to shift. There are many stories that I might tell. Which one is true? Which one represents the real me? Possible all of them and, possibly, none of them! All such narratives become pluralistic and need to be judged on criteria of a more aesthetic kind. Our Western myth of the self, a vision of a personal identity continuous over time, is perhaps the most illusory belief of all. Yet we do experience just such an identity, our 'autobiographical self' in the terminology of a prominent neuroscientist (Damasio, 2000). It seems we do need a particular sort of story (a personal myth) to tell ourselves: an identity story that encompasses a number of remembered events, some of the goings-on of the present moment, and a future that we dream into. A recurring theme in analytical psychology is the need to find one's own voice to tell this story, a need that Jung referred to a 'religious instinct.' When social and political pressures work to militate against the generation of one's unique voice, one's unique life story, as is a common experience in today's culture, the body rebels just as if it were deprived of appropriate food and drink.

### **The experience of nothingness**



The experience of nothingness arises when we consciously become aware of living in the gap between our actual horizons (Novak, 1970). The gap that is our experiential life-space; the experience of Homer's Odysseus needing to sail between the Scylla monster of sense perceptions (the world of fixed realities) and the Charybdis whirlpool of imagination (the world of desire, memory, longing). Accepting the experience of living in the in-between and not giving in to the seduction of needing to fill the gap with a solidity-like self; a felt-certainty that removes the feeling of emptiness, is engaging with what actually *is*. Freud, towards the end of his life, told his friend Hilda Doolittle (the poet H. D.) that his work was really about an engagement with this difficult terrain that is essentially a place of unknowing. In Freud's own words: "My discoveries are not primarily a heal-all. My discoveries are a basis for a very grave philosophy" (Doolittle, 1985, p. 13). The refusal to accept any Archimedean point, any place of pure objectivity, where one can live with a sense of reality without the need for continuous storying of meaning making, that is the challenge of analytical psychology. Such a refusal constitutes a practice of the consciousness of acceptance, even, one could say, of appropriation. The necessary practice is to keep the experience of emptiness empty; the tools, techniques, methods need to be designed to assist us to stay in the in-between and not seek a too-easy refuge with a plethora of the *readymade*, clichés to fill the void. The 'story' underlying the degree program, its myth, is grounded in the experience of nothingness. It recognises the emptiness, terror, and formlessness at the centre of human consciousness. Because it is basic to our consciousness, the experience of nothingness is not paralysing, it is liberating – 'education' in the older sense of the word.

The realisation that insecurity is the natural state for humans, in fact, its healthy state, is paradoxical in today's thinking.

### **Jung and keeping the wound of consciousness open**

Jung's use of the term 'unconscious' is imaginative; it does not designate a physical place between the two horizons of knowing. He wants it to remain a no-place, a place empty

of substance, a place where nothing can be found: “The concept of unconscious *posits nothing*, it designates only my *unknowing*” (Jung, 1943/1973, p. 411). When he uses the term ‘Self’ he wants it to be understood as an archetypal image “... with no stable or definite centre in the unconscious and I [Jung] don’t believe such a centre exists. I believe that the thing which I call the Self is an ideal centre ...” (in Serrano, 1968, p. 50). So, for Jung the self is not a positively existing entity, rather, it exists as an as-if image and brings to our attention the status of a negation, of emptiness; an emptiness that is a fertile space for nourishing an appreciation of the evolutionary status of human consciousness.

Jung’s attitude was to trust that the experiential ‘unknowing’ had purpose and if one trusted this felt-purpose then one’s daily activities would become more meaningful. This characteristic *subjectivity*, this fundamental acceptance of the wound of consciousness, offered a sense of redemption from suffering and ease of living (Jung, 1914/1960, para. 407). To consciously live in this in-between “is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives; it is the sea to which all rivers wend their way, the prize which the hero wrests from the fight with the dragon” (Jung, 1947/1969, ~~para. 715~~). Jung used the term ‘psyche’ to convey the experiential goings-on of this in-between space, this fruitful emptiness. And it is fantasy, the language of the imagination, that “seems to me [Jung] the clearest expression of the specific activity of the psyche” (Jung, 1921/1971, ~~para. 78~~). It is fantasy images, and the sequences of these images, that are the primary activity of consciousness; “the psyche creates reality every day” (Jung, 1921/1971, ~~para. 78~~). Psyche is, in Jung’s view, not a substantial entity but the very processes of consciousness.

For Jung, it is this in-between that is the psychic space of inner experience. In a letter to an American correspondent, he claimed that religion “is not at all a matter of intellectual conviction or philosophy or even belief, but rather a matter of inner experience” (Jung, 1976 p. 183). Jung was convinced that this experience of the in-between was ultimately

uncommunicable except in terms of myth or rich cultural storying. “Myth,’ he wrote, “gives the ultimately unimaginable religious experience an image, a form in which to express itself” (Jung, 1976, p. 486). These cultural stories are descriptions of psychic processes “told by the many and heard by the many,” and as the primal form of communication, “makes community possible” (Jung, 1976, p. 486).

Consciousness, the awareness-of-awareness as a practice, generates a place for narrative imagination. This is a place of metaphoricity: a rich environment for the creation of metaphors. It is a place of desire and promise and, as a result of productively sitting in this place (which, itself is a no-place): “some transfer (*meta-phora*) of meaning is eventually, if always tentatively, achieved ... It is the place where stories, songs, parables, and prophecies resound as human imaginations try to say the unsayable and think the unthinkable” (Kearney, 2001, p. 8).

Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, in developing the notion of a hermeneutic dialogue, point out that human consciousness can never know itself in terms of an intuitive immediacy. Consciousness must undergo a hermeneutic detour in which it comes to know itself through the mediation of images, language, and experience. Paraphrasing the philosopher of the imagination, Richard Kearney, consciousness cannot *intuit* (*anschauen*) its meaning in and from itself, but must *interpret* (*hermeneuein*) itself by entering into dialogue with the experiences of a particular person (or historical tradition) in a particular social milieu (Kearney, 1995). When Kearney talks about living, concurrently and dynamically, in a conscious dialogue between the *first-order reference* to the actual world of experience, the here and now, and a *second-order reference* to the possible worlds of imagination, the God-of-possibility comes into being. One is reminded of the beautiful and poignant words of Etty Hillesum, shortly before she was executed in a Nazi concentration camp: “... one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You [God] cannot help us, that we must help You

to help ourselves ... and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last” (Hillesum, 1996, p. 178).

Consciousness as dialogue, and religious consciousness as the awareness-of-awareness of the dialogue, is akin to the image of a rock face cracking, very slowly and deliberately, and out of the opening comes something different; some unexpected experience. From this fertile space come images, not formed ideas, which are not limited to visual images and are not limited by lived experience, and are unburdened by needing to conform to a fixed reality. If we learn to linger long enough, and become aware of the changing experience in us, this change merits the term ‘transformation’. This is what our imaginative processes do. This is what we have evolved to be able to do and the products of this doing are gifts that we can (and need to) offer back to the community. Jung, in talking about just such a learning process, says that it “... should release an experience that grips us or falls upon us from above, an experience that has substance and body such as those [that] occurred to the ancients. If I were going to symbolize it I would choose the Annunciation” (Jung, 1925/1989, p. 80). However, unlike the pregnancy of the Bible, which was permanent, transcendence in a psychological sense is always a verb in which the movement never comes to rest. It is an experience and not an accomplishment. The term soul-making is used in the literature to convey its experiential and attitudinal nature.

In the title of this paper the term ‘practice’ is used in order to denote the need for ongoing application, ongoing transformation, ongoing learning; a learning to see *psychologically*. Hillman, in emphasising experience, speaks of the ‘image that is soul-making’ as the transformative process that in analytical psychology makes an action or attitude into ‘seeing psychologically.’ He makes his point thus: “The phase beyond fantasy is imagination, which is the work of turning daydreams and fantasies into scenic inscapes wherein one can enter and which are peopled with vivid figures with whom one can converse and feel, and touch their presence” (Hillman, 194, p. 117).

### **Consciousness of consciousness as nihilism**

Analytical psychologist, Wolfgang Giegerich, follows the very Jungian theme of experiencing an absence of God 'out there' and the burden of a religion that does not espouse such an object. As Giegerich says: "Jung saw in religion a great burden from which he *suffered* [and that he did suffer] is the sign that he experienced it on an entirely *new level* of consciousness" (Giegerich, 2005, p. 223). Interpreting our situation, our awareness of consciousness, as nihilism is for Giegerich a defence against the decisive rupture that has occurred as we've become increasingly aware of the loss of the status quo of previous times. Jung accepted the burden, the loss, and willingly struggled with it. He maintained, with a degree of sadness, that the world to which religions has addressed their answers had gone. What was not threatened, if we are prepared to do the psychological work, is the embodied consciousness that is the reality already at hand if we have the mind to accept it. In Giegerich's language: "We have to learn [not to strive for emptiness, but] to live with and in the emptiness that already prevails. We don't need [actively] to sacrifice our religions, nor the notion of religion as such ... We only need to own [the sacrifice], to allow it to *be*" (Giegerich, 2005, p. 230).

### **Consciousness as the bittersweet of Eros**

The experience of consciousness, like all experiences, is fashioned by desire, by body states that we have named 'emotions.' In early Greek literature this embodied experience was attributed to Eros. The Greek scholar and poet, Anne Carson, says that it was the poet Sappho who first called eros 'bittersweet' (Carson, 1986). Carson reminds us that eros denotes 'want,' 'lack,' 'desire for what is missing.' Carson, taking Sappho as her inspiration, develops the experience of eros as a dynamic of ambivalent emotions: 'bittersweet' as in the title of her book. And, "Desire moves. Eros is a verb" (Carson, p. 17). The experience of consciousness is erotic to the core. Its reach (its desire) always exceeds its grasp (of concrete objects). In the poem that is Carson's work bench, "... Sappho begins with a sweet apple and

ends in infinite hunger. From her [Sappho's] inchoate little poem we learn several things about eros. The reach of desire is defined in action: beautiful (in its object), foiled (in its attempt), endless (in time)" (Carson, p. 29). Eros denotes an absence, a hunger, a desire. The space that is experienced as an absence must be maintained or desire ends. The real subject of this love poem is not the human subject but the empty space that brings forth the desire. It is the presence of want that awakens in the protagonist of the poem a nostalgia for wholeness. Clearly this is an early literary expression of what latter psychologists, particularly, William James and Carl Jung, would hypothesize as a biological function, a function that expresses itself as religious life. The so-called empty space, the experience of loss, is for Jung precisely where an engagement with the divine begins. "Psychologically speaking" he writes, "the domain of the 'gods' begins where consciousness leaves off, for at that point man is already at the mercy of the natural order, whether he thrives or perishes" (Jung, 1942/1969, para. 231). And in another place he writes: "The gods have become diseases ..." (Jung, 1967, para. 54), and, to put this bold hypothesis in another way, it is through dis-ease we experience the gods.

### **Analytical psychology and the East**

Analytical psychology, as it is usually understood, is not known for its hands-on, pragmatic approach. Despite being grounded in the careful observation of experience it is pre-eminently an intellectual enterprise in the spirit of a 'talking cure.' As an educational experience it has developed in much the same direction: experience is talked and written about. As the focus has shifted from an acquisition of a fluency in the use of the main ideas inherent in the Jungian project to an engagement with the empty centre of experience, the mystery at the heart of experience, parallels with the Buddhist tradition of disciplined practice have become increasingly obvious. The absence of an experiential self, an ego that centres one's attention and is the ground of one's being, is both a concept and a systematic practice in Buddhism (Stewart, 2005). Embracing the groundlessness and finding new ways

to pursue this experience in a disciplined manner is not totally new in the world of ideas. In the domain of cognitive science, specific integrations of meditation and mindfulness have been put forward as an alternative to the sense of loss and alienation that is most often the immediate reaction to our cultural experience, namely, the 'death of God' phenomenon common to our age (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991).

Hillman, always with a finger on the pulse of cultural movements, reflects on his own thinking and readily acknowledges how it has arrived at the same place that Eastern thinking had long made its own, namely, the illusion of self and all that that entails. He writes: "[my] psychology is nothing less than a parallel formation of certain Eastern philosophies. Like them, it too dissolves ego, ontology, substantiality and literalisms of self and the division between it and things (Hillman, 1983, p. 31). Hillman sees the West as having gone down the path of the heroic ego and, as a consequence, has created the false god of self-centredness which has the self as the beginning and end of its cultural myth.

### **Conclusion**

The Jungian approach to understanding the lived-experience has at times been judged as being too person-centred and lacking in its concern for a world in need. The Australian approach to this material has also critiqued the too personal but with a different emphasis. In a post-modern manner, we have accepted the experience of the empty centre, the lack of a self, and have taken the next step: our desire is to willingly embrace the struggle, to welcome the dark night and celebrate the mystery at the heart of human experience. In general, our students have found this to be a nurturing confirmation of what is already at hand. It is our mutual hope that this validation of what *is* will liberate energies to more freely work with the world in all its complexity and ambiguity.

### **About the Author**

David Russell is an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Western Sydney. Together with his colleague, Dr Brendon Stewart, they have given shape to, and are responsible for, the Master of Analytical Psychology degree. While this paper is a personal interpretation of our teaching praxis, the main ideas expressed here have been the subject of innumerable conversations between the two of us over the developmental years of the degree. As with most learning, some initial ideas have been conserved over time while others have been put aside.

### **Contact Details**

Associate Professor David Russell

Department of Psychology

University of Western Sydney

Locked Bag 1797

Kingswood South 1797

Australia

Email: [d.russell@uws.edu.au](mailto:d.russell@uws.edu.au)

Phone: 02 4736 0328

Fax: 02 4736 0625

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