

# My Experience With Psychotherapy, Existential Analysis, and Jungian Analysis: Rollo May and Beyond

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*Independent Practice*

This article describes my initial psychotherapy experience with a psychologist who combined a client-centered/rational-emotive approach, my existential analysis with Rollo May, and then concludes briefly portraying my current Jungian analysis. I explain how I came to each of these experiences, what I learned from them, and the limitations I have recognized in them. I elaborate on the existential analysis with Rollo May, as it marked a major turning point in my life and thinking. I have been able to describe that experience with the benefit of hindsight, which I do not have with the Jungian analysis. In closing, I offer some suggestions about the role of therapy/analysis in the training of the psychotherapist. © 2011 Wiley Periodicals, Inc. *J Clin Psychol: In Session* 67:806–817, 2011.

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In this article, I describe my initial experience of psychotherapy with a psychologist who combined client-centered and rational-emotive psychotherapy. I trace how I found my way to analysis with Rollo May, as that explains the attitude with which I arrived at his doorstep. Rollo May (1909–1994), the existential analyst and author, was my second psychotherapist, but provided my first experience of depth psychotherapy dealing with the unconscious. I came to him with a great deal of trust and respect already in place because I had read several of his books and sought him out.

Although I knew something about how Rollo thought and would approach the work, I learned much more through the experience of being in therapy with him and through further studies with him. I will describe how what I later learned was different from my expectations. Years after my work with Rollo concluded I entered into Jungian analysis. I will also briefly outline how the Jungian analysis built on or differed from my earlier experiences.

## My First Psychotherapy Experience

My first psychotherapist was in my hometown, in Southern Ontario, Canada, just across the border from Michigan. My mother sent me to Dr. L. because of concern about my teenage “attitude.” I think the high school guidance counselor had recommended him. My mother grew up with a father who was a rural Christian minister, part of the Holiness movement that derived from John Wesley’s Methodism. The Holiness movement expected adherents to abstain from smoking, drinking, card playing and theatergoing. My maternal grandmother died when my mother was only five, and then a stepmother died when she was eight. Although my mother had left the Holiness movement and converted to my father’s Anglican faith, it was difficult for her to contend with teenage attitudes in the sixties, even fairly typical ones. My father, having grown up in the port city of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, had come from a family marked by poverty, violence, and paternal alcoholism. He dropped out of school after the ninth grade for economic reasons, despite having stood at the top of his class every year up to that point. (My mother had graduated from high school.) By the time I was in my teens, my father was becoming a successful business owner with several dozen employees. It is to my

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mother's credit that she sent me to Dr. L. then, whatever the reason, and my father supported it too, footing the bills. (Later, he even sent potential employees to Dr. L. for pre-employment screening.)

I had never met a psychologist before; Dr. L. was the only one in my hometown at that time. He was an American who had migrated across the border. With the help of career testing, he suggested I might be interested in studying psychology. I was skeptical at first but began to look into psychology. Dr. L.'s use of testing sowed a seed because assessment is now an important part of my practice. By the time I started to meet with him, I was away at either boarding school or summer camp, so I did not see him with any great regularity.

Dr. L.'s approach was a blend of Roger's Client-Centered Therapy and Ellis's Rational-Emotive Therapy. He suggested that I read Ellis's *A Guide to Rational Living* (Ellis & Harper, 1961), which I did. I learned about irrational ideas and what became known as cognitive-behavioral therapy through this early exposure. Dr. L. was a kind and empathic man, and I liked to visit him and was intrigued by the book-lined shelves of his office. It is his empathy that I mostly remember as I began to make sense of a complex family background, and his unhesitating belief that I could go to graduate school and become a psychologist if I wanted to. Neither of my parents had been to college, let alone graduate school, so I was heading for uncharted waters.

### Formal Education and Introduction to Rollo May

In college at the University of Toronto in the mid-seventies, I studied English literature, philosophy, and psychology. U. of T. did not have a clinical psychology program. As in many psychology departments across North America at the time, the dominant model was behaviorism. In the first lecture of Psych 101, the professor asserted that we would be studying the *science* of psychology. For a theory to be scientific, it had to admit the possibility of being shown false. Using an example that reflected the obsession with sex for which Freud's theory was known, this professor argued that psychoanalysis could explain both the celibate and the rapist, so it was not falsifiable. Because the hypotheses of psychoanalysis were not scientific, we would not be studying it. I went on to dutifully conduct learning experiments with rats. A course on theories of personality was a favorite because of the text, the classic *Theories of Personality* by (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). The professor dryly lectured on research that either supported or rejected each theory. Nonetheless, that text was my first exposure to the existential and Jungian approaches that were to become so important to me. But like many undergraduate psychology students, I believe, across North America at the time, I was not generally enthusiastic about the offerings from the psychology department. I wanted to be "scientific," but I started to learn from a course in the philosophy department that there were questions about how to do so, especially when studying people. I was able to take my first course on psychoanalysis from the philosophy department.

Meanwhile, a political philosophy professor came to be the undergraduate teacher that had the greatest impact on me and led me to Rollo May. Allan Bloom, who had come up to Toronto from the University of Chicago and Cornell, taught "great books" courses with the theme of ancients versus moderns. We went from studying Plato to Nietzsche over the course of 2 years. Bloom asked us to use his own (1968) translation of *The Republic of Plato*. While we were taking his upper-level course, he was working on his translation and interpretive essay for Rousseau's *Emile: Or On Education* (Bloom, 1979). Bloom wore suits, smoked cigars, and stammered while giving brilliant lectures. Bloom later acquired greater prominence when his 1987 book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, became a bestseller. His friend Saul Bellow wrote a posthumous roman à clef about him titled *Ravelstein* that was published in 2000. One student review described Bloom as a cross between Plato and Groucho Marx. Because of his constant references to Shakespeare, I decided to take a year-long course on Shakespeare from the English Department. Some believe Shakespeare to be the greatest psychologist that ever lived; his words have continued to be an inspiration for me.

I was especially captivated by Bloom's introduction of Nietzsche. Bloom pointed out that some of Nietzsche's insights foreshadowed Freud.

While we were studying Nietzsche, Bloom expressed puzzlement over what they were doing in the psychology department and told me there was an approach to psychology based on existentialism. He said he had once referred a student to Erwin Straus for psychotherapy. I later learned that Straus had a chapter in *Existence*, the book that Rollo May co-edited (May, Angel, & Ellenberger, 1958). That book is often credited with introducing existential psychoanalysis to North America. After talking with Bloom, I went to the campus bookstore and found a little paperback, *Existential Psychology* (1960/1969), edited by May. I was fascinated. I had already been exposed to existentialism in high school English and French classes, and in the chapter from *Theories of Personality*, but now it began to make more sense to me. Something in me had resonated with those early exposures to existentialism, but I couldn't articulate what that was until studying with Bloom and starting to read Rollo May. Behaviorists devalued inner experience and looked for what humans had in common with other animals. In contrast, I began to recognize that existential-phenomenologists made experience their focus and were more concerned with what is unique about humans.

While behaviorism had almost driven me out of psychology, my discovery of existential psychology led me to graduate school. I was attracted to the professional school model because of its emphasis on field experience. I learned that Rollo May was going to be teaching at the San Francisco campus of the California School of Professional Psychology (CSPP) and that settled it as to my first choice of programs. I was accepted and started there in 1977. Rollo was teaching a course on the revised edition of *The Meaning of Anxiety* (May, 1977) that had just been released. The course was open only to doctoral-level students, but I obtained permission to audit it. I was excited to be in a classroom with him. In retrospect, I see that his manner was formal and not overly warm. I suppose I was used to this from my experience of professors at the University of Toronto in the seventies. I don't think I expected anything else. I saw Rollo as an intellectual whose ideas fascinated me.

In that course, Rollo commented on rational-emotive therapy, the form of therapy I had already experienced. Rollo mentioned that he knew Albert Ellis in New York, and thought Ellis had many good, practical ideas. However, Rollo thought that rational-emotive or cognitive-behavioral therapy was ultimately repressive. It wasn't until much later that I understood that comment. Now I see it as referring to the attitude towards the unconscious. In rational-emotive or cognitive-behavioral therapy, the emphasis is on the unconscious as a source of problematic ideas that need to be challenged. In existential (and Jungian) analysis, the unconscious is seen as a source of positives too, and the irrational can mean "beyond rational," not just illogical and problematic.

A professor at CSPP, Murray Bilmes, was a friend and associate of May's. Murray was teaching on psychoanalysis and existentialism; I immediately signed up.

Although it was exciting to be in San Francisco and to be studying what I was passionate about, I struggled with bouts of anxiety. I had moved a long ways from family and friends, and to another country, even if a neighboring one. My parents' marriage was ending, and they were both having a hard time. My sister started seeing a psychoanalyst because she was experiencing some serious depression at that point in her life and was admitted to the psychiatric ward of a hospital in Toronto. But at a level that I was dimly aware of, I also wanted to follow the directive inscribed on Apollo's temple at Delphi, "Know Thyself." I wanted to lead an "examined life," to borrow the language I had learned studying Socrates with Bloom. I was deeply intrigued by the idea that exploring one's unconscious with the help of the *method* of psychoanalysis was one of the best ways to gain self-knowledge, although I did not believe that Freud had correctly identified universal *contents* of the unconscious. I think I was taken with the mystique surrounding psychoanalysis then, but I still believe or am convinced now that gaining more understanding of one's unconscious is crucial for greater self-knowledge.

Given my understanding of the difference between Freudian analysis and existential analysis back then, I knew I wanted an existential analysis. I went to Murray Bilmes and asked if he could recommend a psychotherapist "like Rollo May." With his slightly mischievous grin, Murray said, "Why not see Rollo May? I'll tell him I recommended you." I don't know why that possibility hadn't occurred to me, but thank you Murray!

When I spoke to Rollo after a class and expressed my interest in entering psychotherapy with him, he surprised me by asking if I had a car. He explained that he lived up on a hill, in Marin county, across the Golden Gate Bridge to the north of San Francisco. I would need a car to get there. Fortunately, I did have a car and our first meeting was scheduled for a month off.

### My Existential Analysis

I waited nervously. I arrived too early for my first appointment, and Rollo showed me to the living room of his house until the top of the hour arrived. He then escorted me down a short flight of stairs to his consulting room. A sliding glass door afforded a spectacular view of the East Bay-Richmond and Berkeley. Rollo later told me that when he first thought of using the room as an office, he worried a little that the view might be too distracting. On the contrary, I found that sitting on that hilltop with him and looking out those windows had a calming effect on me and helped with the perspective on my life as well. The two chairs were bowl-shaped, sixties/modern. They were positioned side-by-side, turned in at a 45-degree angle. That chair arrangement, I later learned, was a Sullivanian influence.

Along the wall on one side was a modern couch, with a triangular headrest at one end. I didn't realize that it was an analytic couch, or anticipate that I would be spending some time on it. On the wood-paneled wall over the couch was what looked like a fragment of a Greek frieze with the head of woman on it. There were some small built-in bookcases on the wall behind us, opposite the windows. The room next door, I later saw, was probably three or four times as long, and was where Rollo had his desk and extensive personal library.

I have made clear how I came to Rollo's office knowing something of his thought from his books and lectures. Here is what Murray Bilmes (1978, p. 291) said about Rollo's writings in a brief biography:

The impressive stylistic qualities of May's writings were first fully matured in his next book, *Man's Search for Himself* (1953). Lucidity of expression, broad comprehension and familiarity with Western literature and art, plus an ability to integrate this with clinical case vignettes from his analytic practice ... helped make his work reach and communicate beyond professional circles to exert a large influence on informed circles of society everywhere. May (1953) sought to demonstrate that there was a close relationship between the cultural malaise of our time and the increase of individual complaints of alienation, apathy, and meaninglessness.

I see that my copy of *Man's Search for Himself* was from the 17th printing of that title. I was drawn to Rollo by his writings. I saw him as a very wise man and that has never changed.

In the first session, Rollo asked what brought me to psychotherapy and some family background questions. He asked what a typical day was like for me. That is a question I have used since then. Asking a person to walk you through their day gives a sense of their lived experience. He also asked me to write an autobiography and bring it to the next session. (I have the impression that Rollo may have been inspired by the work of Henry A. Murray in asking for an autobiographical essay, but can't find evidence of this.) At any rate, I was anxious about this assignment because, by then, I very much wanted to be in analysis with Rollo, and I tended to regard it as a test that I needed to pass. At the same time, I appreciated that Rollo was taking an interest in my life story to date.

A week or two later, I gave him the essay and the existential analysis proceeded. It is only in writing the present article that I have become aware of my disappointment with Rollo's handling of my autobiography. Beyond indicating that he had read it by bringing up aspects of my history that I had not told him about in the sessions, Rollo did not give me any feedback on it—he never said what he saw in it. I think it is fair to say that Rollo was using the autobiographical essay as an assessment tool. Personality assessment—integrating the findings from psychological tests and interviews—has become a major focus of my practice. In this work, I have been especially inspired by the individualized/collaborative model of Fischer (1994) and the “therapeutic intervention” model of Finn (2007). The essence of the collaborative approach is the focus on discussing results from the assessment in a two-way

dialogue. Although Rollo was theoretically aligned with this movement, he didn't practice it with the autobiography assignment he had given me.

In one of those first sessions, Rollo also told me that he spent his summers in New Hampshire and asked if I thought I could handle that interruption in our work together. My prior experience of psychotherapy had been intermittent, and I told him I could. (I think that interruption proved more difficult than I anticipated midway through the analysis when I was opened up and had a lot going on. As Rollo suggested, I did meet with Murray Bilmes a few times one summer.)

So began an existential analysis that lasted for 5 years and about 300 hours. These were roughly the same years that I was in graduate school. We started off once weekly, moved to twice weekly, and returned to once weekly towards the end. In the first sessions, Rollo asked me about my earliest memories in life. I later learned that Rollo had adopted the use of anamnesis under the influence of Alfred Adler. Rollo had attended seminars led by Adler in Europe (Bilmes, 1978). Rollo saw early memories as giving clues to the myths by which a person lived. He used the term *myth* as referring to the story, often unconscious, that organized a person's life. In lectures, Rollo emphasized that his use of the term myth was not the contemporary one that defined myth as falsehood. Rollo did tell me his observations about my earliest memories and that was very helpful. In my early memories, he saw implications about my relationships with my parents and the dynamics of the family. He suspected difficulties in my relationship with my mother because of the absence of early memories about her in contrast to the positive memories I had that involved my father. My first memory involving my father is of an incident that took place when I was three, whereas my first memory of mother concerns something that happened when I was eight or nine. In my own practice, I often ask my clients about their earliest memories.

Rollo suggested I keep a notebook by my bed to write down dreams that I should bring to discuss. Once, when I brought up a dream towards the end of a session, he asked me to tell him dreams earlier in the session in future. He could be very direct! The work with dreams was one of the most powerful aspects of my work with Rollo. I learned an existential-phenomenological approach to dream interpretation from his interpretations of my dreams. By this, I mean that he interpreted many of my dreams as giving a ready portrait of my current life situation. When I dreamt that I was driving a big car down a hill and it was accelerating out of control, he wondered if I felt things were moving too fast and if I felt a bit out of control. That resonated with me at the time. When I dreamt that I was in a car, Rollo was interested as to whether I was the driver or a passenger. I saw that he wanted to know whether I was "in the driver's seat" in my life or if I was "leaving the driving to somebody else." Being Canadian, I inevitably brought in a canoeing dream, and Rollo referred to the expression "paddle your own canoe" while we were discussing it. Other dreams he took as shedding light on childhood experiences. I began to understand more about my unconscious. With this training in dream work I began to focus on dreams with my clients as well.

In beginning this essay, I referred to Rollo as an *existential analyst*. I wanted to work with him because I knew that he drew on both existential philosophy and psychoanalysis. It took me much longer to really understand how he saw his orientation. In *The Psychology of Rollo May*, Reeves (1977, p. 256) wrote the following:

Continuing to work as a counselor to male students (1943–1944) at the College of the City of New York (Sahakian, 1969, p. 249), May studied psychoanalysis at the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Psychology in New York (Dangers, pp. 185–186). Note that Harry Stack Sullivan was president from 1933 to 1943 of the William Alanson White Foundation, the Institute being the foundation's training school, espousing a cultural, interpersonal approach to psychoanalysis and therapy and numbering both Erich Fromm and Rollo May among its present associates.... It would, then, seem clear that at least some Sullivanian conceptions, such as the therapist as a participant-observer, would have been influential in the formation of May's general orientation. Later on, in the 1960s, speaking of himself, May said, "I identify myself as a psychoanalyst of this approach (the W.A. White Institute) which does not make me any the less existential in my presuppositions." (Dangers, pp. 185–186)

Similarly, in the last lecture I heard Rollo give, *The Wounded Healer*, Rollo referred to Harry Stack Sullivan and Frieda Fromm-Reichmann as “the two greatest therapists” he ever knew (May, 1995). Rollo gave a pithy summary of Sullivan’s position in that lecture: “Mental problems he defined as problems that always had their beginnings, and their cures, in interpersonal relationships” (May, 1995, p. 99).

I learned from Rollo that he saw existentialism as an attitude that could be brought to different forms of psychotherapy, rather than a necessarily separate approach. He said this despite his enthusiastic endorsement of Yalom’s text, *Existential Psychotherapy* (1980). This understanding of existentialism was freeing to me, as I could pursue my new interests in psychotherapy without having to abandon what felt like a deep allegiance to existentialism. Because of Rollo’s praise for and direct mention of Sullivan, Fromm-Reichmann, Erich Fromm and Karen Horney, I developed a much greater awareness of and appreciation for them.

I think of that first year with Rollo as my encounter with the unconscious. That encounter was both exciting and unsettling at times. It happened through dream interpretation and through learning to track down the source of mysterious moods or thoughts. I learned how to pursue associations with his help in the sessions. Along with encouraging me to write down dreams, he also suggested I journal about associations between sessions. I mean associations as in Freud’s “free association.” I learned to ask myself what came to mind in connection with a troubling thought or feeling. This was not to be a quick or ultimate reason “why” I was thinking or feeling something, but rather a neutral examination of related thoughts, feelings, or memories. One of Rollo’s favorite questions was, “What is going on in you now at the deepest level that you can get a hold of?” Many sessions started with Rollo simply saying “So” with an air of calm expectancy. When my rational mind balked at the direction of a discussion, Rollo reminded me that I had been drawn to Nietzsche’s philosophy, and that Nietzsche valued the irrational. Rollo told me that our feelings guide us, like the rudder of a ship. That has always stayed with me.

In talks and in a paper titled “The Therapist and the Journey Into Hell,” Rollo described Virgil’s relationship to Dante in *The Divine Comedy* as “the therapist-patient in their journey through hell.... The private hell of each one of us is there crying to be confronted, and we find ourselves powerless to make progress unaided against these obstacles” (May, 1995, pp. 20, 22). I am struck by the implication that one cannot get a hold of the unconscious without a guide’s perspective, but I have some mixed feelings about that characterization of the unconscious: It makes it sound as if what one finds in the unconscious is only “hellish.” But Rollo did accompany me on a journey through some uncomfortable inner places. He helped to relieve me of some guilt about separating from my mother and pursuing my adult independence. It was tremendously relieving to make sense of my childhood and to loosen its unconscious grip on me.

In my subsequent Jungian analysis, I often began to see the unconscious as a source of guidance and inspiration, and as forward-looking. I think Rollo was implying a similar view when he reminded me about Nietzsche’s positive valuation of the irrational. I have continued to encourage clients to bring in dreams. I also learned from Rollo to avoid using technical jargon in the sessions. I once used the term *transference* and he firmly stated that “all words like that belong outside the door.” I know that he agreed with Frieda Fromm-Reichmann that patients need an experience, not just intellectual insight. By the time I was in analysis with Rollo, I think he was seeing only therapists-in-training. Perhaps that was all the more reason why he wanted to avoid intellectualization as much as possible. I have followed the practice of using everyday language and avoiding jargon in the therapy work I do with clients. When clients say they are depressed, I ask what they are noticing that they are labeling depression.

I also appreciated that Rollo told me some things about himself or his personal history at certain points. I felt honored that he shared these things with me, but they were in reference to what I was talking about. He certainly didn’t go on about himself. I have followed the practice of sharing something about myself or my experience when and if I think it would be helpful to the client.

Rollo made notes on a steno pad while we talked. My sense was that he was writing more when I recounted dreams. The notetaking was intermittent, and I didn’t feel it interfered with the contact between us. If anything, it made me feel that I was being taken seriously. I doubt his records would meet contemporary APA guidelines, and I don’t think the analysis suffered for it. One little human incident between us comes to mind. I knew that Rollo suffered from

occasional migraine headaches. I arrived for my session one day, and his secretary, who was sometimes there, told me he was down with a migraine and wouldn't be able to see me. She asked if I could drive down the hill and pick up a pack of cigarettes for him, as smoking brought him relief. I was perfectly content to carry out this little mission.

Perhaps the biggest influence of my experience with Rollo is that it inspired me to pursue further training in and to practice psychodynamic psychotherapy. At the time when I sought out Rollo, I was moving away from the behavioral approach and saw Rollo as existential-humanistic. I didn't understand his relation to the psychoanalytic or psychodynamic until I was in analysis with him and heard him lecture. Shedler (2010) describes seven features that distinguish psychodynamic psychotherapy from other therapies: focus on affect and expression of emotion; exploration of attempts to avoid distressing thoughts and feelings; identification of recurring themes and patterns; discussion of past experiences (developmental focus); focus on interpersonal relations; focus on the therapy relationship; and exploration of fantasy life. I experienced all these features in the work I did with Rollo and continue to practice them in my work with others.

One might ask then, how was Rollo's approach "existential?" I think the analysis was existential in multiple implicit ways. With Rollo I knew that we would be looking at unconscious motivation, but I also knew that he wouldn't be reducing everything I said to sexual or aggressive drives. I knew he wouldn't regard everything in our relationship as transference. Existential-humanistic psychotherapists also describe the real relationship. I knew that Rollo was not a determinist, unlike either the classical Freudians or the behaviorists. From my readings, I was aware that Rollo thought we had free will, or at least a limited freedom. I think Norcross (1987, p. 49) was right when he wrote that "Rollo May ... placed the will and decision in the center of therapy as the life-shaping force within the individual. The existential approach to psychotherapy attempts to enhance the recognition and development of the will." It was clear to me in my time with Rollo that I could and should make choices.

Rollo did ask me to move to the analytic couch for a period midway through the analysis. He explained that he thought I was paying too much attention to him and his reactions and that he wanted me to focus more on myself. Although moving to the couch increased my anxiety initially, I was intrigued to encounter that aspect of Freudian analysis. I did gain something in terms of attending to my own experience in that period. Then one day I came in and plunked myself down on the couch in a way that apparently seemed too comfortable for Rollo. He told me he wanted me to come back to the chair. Rollo didn't see being too much at ease in analysis as a good thing!

For the majority of my sessions with Rollo, his chair and mine were at the Sullivanian 45-degree angle. I started off with the chairs beside each other in my practice but have moved to a face-to-face arrangement. This has been partly due to the specifics of my office—the location of the window—and because I grew tired of craning my neck!

One area of my work that has been different than Rollo's concerns people with alcohol or drug problems. I wasn't seeing Rollo for an alcohol or drug problem myself, but learned his thoughts from the study group we had and some talks he gave. Rollo had heard of a psychotherapist in San Francisco who told people with an alcohol problem to come back after they had stopped drinking. Rollo said he thought that was a good idea. In a reprint I have of his 1984 talk, *The Wounded Healer*, Rollo called AA "the one group to my knowledge that can genuinely cure alcoholics." I think Rollo had a point that someone in the throes of addiction cannot benefit from depth psychotherapy. He did not subscribe to the old idea that psychoanalysis could stop a person from drinking by finding out why a person drinks. But what I didn't like about Rollo's position was the idea that psychotherapy had nothing to offer the addicted person. Having come of age in the late sixties when there were so many alcohol and drug problems in the culture, especially among the musicians I loved, I wanted to see what could be done. I think my pursuit of this topic marked my growing independence from Rollo, although when I first came to see him, I regarded him as almost omniscient in the psychotherapy field.

I took a postdoctoral internship position in an outpatient alcohol and drug program. This, in turn, led to a part-time job that I kept for 11 years. During that time, I was very excited to

become acquainted with motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Here was an approach to helping people with these problems developed by a psychologist. Learning about motivations interviewing, I recognized that there were areas where Rollo's knowledge was limited. At the same time, if he had been exposed to motivational interviewing and the research that supports it, I imagine he might have readily accepted the validity of it, even if he wasn't interested in using it himself.

What I remember most of all about my sessions with Rollo was his calm, steady presence. One particular exchange often comes back to me. In the fall of 1978, there were three terrible events reported in the San Francisco news: a Pacific Southwest Airlines (PSA) Flight 182 collided over San Diego with a private Cessna 172; the mass suicide of members of the People's Temple Jonestown, Guyana; and then, on November 27th, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were shot and killed in the City Hall by Supervisor Dan White. I was dwelling on these events in a session with Rollo. He gently acknowledged that these were terrible tragedies, but said it was also true that millions were enjoying the sunshine in California that day. In our discussion, I recognized how, in a low mood, I was practically fixated on these grim events, with little else on my radar. Since that time, I have usually been able to note when the blues lead me to dwell on bad news, and to remember what else is going on in life.

I also readily picture how Rollo frequently dressed. He liked to wear a turtleneck long-sleeved jersey. He had a necklace with some sort of good-sized pendant. I don't know what the pendant design meant, but this combination gave him the appearance of an artist or someone whose attitude was countercultural. His example suited me as I was forging my own identity as a psychologist.

Around the last year of the analysis, another student of Rollo's—and a friend of mine—proposed a study group. Rollo agreed to the idea that we would meet once a month at his house. At each meeting, we would discuss one of his 8 or 10 books, working through them chronologically. There were less than a dozen of us sitting in his livingroom. He began each meeting describing something of what it was like to write the book, what issues he was exploring at the time, and reactions to the publication. We then raised our questions and discussed our experiences of reading the books. I was excited to be part of that group and have fond memories of those evenings, although I was a bit inhibited at the time. It was in one of those discussions that I learned, in response to one of my comments, that Rollo saw Nietzsche, who is known for saying "God is dead," as having a profoundly spiritual attitude. For our last meeting we had a potluck dinner. Rollo led what I think is a Quaker grace, where we held hands and silently reflected on what we were grateful for.

Professional boundaries were more permeable in those days than they are now: I was Rollo's student, client, and study group member simultaneously. The move from one arena to another was not something that we discussed in advance. (When I started the analysis, he once asked in a nonjudgmental sounding way if I had "gotten through" the book *The Meaning of Anxiety* that the course had been about. That was the only mention of the course that I remember.) I liked going to his house for both therapy sessions and for the study group, as it afforded a glimpse into how he lived. I think I saw Rollo in his humanness a little more for this. I may have mentioned to him how I felt in the study group once or twice in the analytic sessions but don't recall that as a subject of much conversation. Perhaps that experience of a "dual relationship" could have been profitably explored more; I do remember some of the competitive and insecure feelings I had in relation to my friends and colleagues who made up the study group. I think Rollo had experienced being both in analysis with and supervised by Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, so this kind of arrangement was not unusual to him. I found Rollo to come across in a similar way, whether speaking in a group or in private meetings. Perhaps his rather formal persona was a kind of safeguard that avoided confusions.

My existential analysis with Rollo ended right around the time when I became licensed as a psychologist and got married. I remember he commented that I was "sitting pretty." In retrospect, I think I probably had a dim awareness that I wasn't done with analysis, but it did seem like a natural ending point for the time being. I had worked through some family conflicts and there just didn't seem to be as much to talk about. Although I have always



remembered many things that I had learned from Rollo, I don't think I carried him with me as an introject or inner presence. Perhaps I thought I was supposed to go it alone at some level, like some kind of exaggerated existential hero. In reflecting on this matter today, I realize that perhaps I can allow myself to carry him with me as a felt presence much more than I have. That thought touches me.

In one of our last sessions, I decided to hug Rollo as I was leaving. I had shook hands when ending sessions before but had never hugged him. His response was decidedly neutral; he neither hugged back nor moved away. I felt a little sheepish and backed away quickly! In my own work, I have occasionally hugged a client. Although it doesn't happen often, this is another way that I am different with my clients than Rollo was with me. I think he was partly of his generation and his training in this regard.

I have come to recognize that one of the limitations of my work with Rollo concerns my relationship to my own anger. As I have already made abundantly clear, I held Rollo in high esteem. I was a bit intimidated by him and sought his approval. Furthermore, at that time in my life, much of my anger was buried. He once asked me, "Where is your anger?" He said we needed anger to defend ourselves like an animal backed into a corner that growls and bares its teeth. Rollo cited with approval the line from Sidney Lumet's film *Network*, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore." But anger didn't enter into my work with Rollo to any great extent. He treated me well and didn't give me any reason to be angry with him. I do remember that I talked with Rollo about my anger towards a psychoanalyst who led a case conference I attended while in training. That psychoanalyst had a generally humiliating way of giving feedback and could be very dramatic. He threw his head down on the table one day to indicate his despair over the supposedly horrible thing one of my colleagues had said to a patient. (A fellow trainee, with some humor, captured the feelings of the group about him after he left the room one day. She began singing "Nobody does it better... makes me feel bad for the rest, nobody does it half as good as you, Baby, you're the best," the lyrics that Carly Simon sang for a James Bond movie.) I thought this psychoanalyst was a poor advertisement for the benefits of being psychoanalyzed. When I expressed my feelings about him with Rollo, he revealed that he had met him and thought he was a "hollow man." (I thought I recognized an allusion to T.S. Eliot's poem, *The Hollow Men*, and this reminded me how Rollo valued literature in his thinking and approach.)

I did express that anger in some work I did with a bioenergetic therapist at the same time that I was seeing Rollo. I was in a group/class with the bioenergetic therapist, liked him, and saw him a few times individually as well. He was a recent graduate of my school. The physical exercises of bioenergetics did help to embody and free my expression of anger. Some tension melted away after the sessions. More of my anger surfaced years later and I was able to be both angry with my Jungian analyst and tell her about it. Although some idealization of Rollo may have interfered with my recognition of anger in the therapy relationship, I think that I was just not at a point in my life where anger was center stage. It came later. I doubt that an analysis that takes place in one's late twenties can cover everything—more will emerge within oneself as life takes its twists and turns.

When my work with Rollo was ending, I asked if I might see him for case consultation. He suggested I go and learn from my clients for a while. I appreciated that. I think I raised the supervision request partly out of a desire to keep contact with him. I was a little sad that the contact was ending, but being told I could learn what I needed from the experience of working with my clients was liberating. My journey to Rollo's consulting room started with studying Nietzsche. What I ultimately took in from Rollo was very much in keeping with Nietzsche's dictum, "Do not follow me—but yourself! But yourself!"

### My Jungian Analysis

Years after my existential analysis with Rollo ended, I started meeting with a Jungian analyst, a woman. I found her by calling the San Francisco Jung Institute and speaking with the analyst who was then in charge of making referrals. From the Jungian literature, I accepted the idea that it was good for an analyst to have the experience of working with both a man and

woman. I wanted to challenge myself that way and so asked for a female analyst. I also asked for someone older than me in hopes of again finding someone older and wiser. I was more comfortable with the idea of seeing a man when I first started with Rollo, and my first psychotherapist was a man as well. The analyst making the referrals also thoughtfully asked me my profession and asked if I wanted to “someone from the same tradition,” which I did. He gave me the names of three women Jungian analysts, all psychologists. I went to the first one on the list with a dream about our initial encounter in hand. I never met the second and third analysts on the list and have no regrets about that. I am sure I would have gone if I had not felt good about the meeting with the analyst, who I will call Dr. B.

My interest in the Jungian approach had been growing while I worked with Rollo. My enthusiasm for existential approaches had actually led to supervision and training with the Jungian analyst, John Weir Perry, during my first year of graduate school. I was interested in the houses R.D. Laing, the Scottish existentialist, had in England, where acutely psychotic people were treated without medications. (A couple years later, I once knocked on Rollo’s door for my session and Laing opened the door without comment. I recognized him because I had just heard him speak in San Francisco a few days previously!) John Weir Perry ran a house for acutely psychotic young adults in San Francisco. While interning and being supervised by Perry, I learned of his perspective that the psychotic break could be a process in which the personality was reorganized. His Jungian perspective addressed the imagery, informed by the archetypes, that people in that process experienced (Perry, 1974).

Rollo expressed different thoughts and feelings about Jung and Jungians at various times, and although he shared an interest in myth with Jungians, Rollo was not drawn to Jung’s theories. I learned that when Rollo was writing his dissertation, *The Meaning of Anxiety*, he had to be told by one of his committee members to include Jung’s contributions on the topic. Rollo didn’t like Jung’s Latin terms, like *puer aeternus* for *eternal youth*. (And yet Rollo himself used terms like *daimonic*—“the urge in every being to affirm itself, assert itself, perpetuate and increase itself”—in his writings, which even Carl Rogers stumbled over; May, 1982) In one of our book discussion groups, Rollo said he was probably closer in outlook to the San Francisco Jungians than the Freudians. I don’t recall how I found out, but I think Rollo himself consulted with a senior Jungian analyst, Joseph Henderson. I also got the impression from Rollo that he thought it made sense to go in and out of analysis at various points in one’s life.

My Jungian analysis, which has been much longer than my existential analysis with Rollo, has brought many of Jung’s concepts to life for me. Like Rollo, Dr. B. is a senior person, whom I visit in her home. Her office is a cozy second story room with a gas fireplace and a skylight. Although I signaled my openness to Jungian concepts in choosing a Jungian analyst, I was skeptical too and have voiced my doubts many times with her. One could say I have been more contentious in my work with her than I was in the previous therapies!

I find it more difficult to summarize my experience of Jungian analysis, as I am still in the midst of it; in describing my existential analysis with Rollo, I was aided by the benefit of hindsight. Nonetheless, I will attempt to describe some of what I have been learning about both myself and this approach. It has been helpful to me to come to understand differences with others as stemming, at times, from differing type perspectives. Jung described introversion and extraversion as the two *attitudes*, while the four *functions*, which he saw as being in complementary pairs, are thinking/feeling, and intuition/sensation. I have personally found the concept of introversion meaningful. I recognize the types as types of *consciousness*, not types of *people* (Beebe, 2006). It is a common misunderstanding that the types refer to people, that the typology is a way to pigeonhole people. Sometimes my attitude is introverted and sometimes it is extraverted, like most others. But I probably lean a bit toward the introverted side and it has been good to be able to discuss these concepts with a Jungian analyst. One might say I have been interested in learning how to “do” both introversion and extraversion better. I am also drawn to the idea that we can develop ourselves more, become better-rounded, by working on what Jung called the inferior functions. That means bringing out the less used functions as we go on in life. This is also something I have in mind with my clients.

It has also been helpful to grasp what Jung meant by the archetypes. My analyst once quoted Jung as saying that “Even orphans have parents.” I took this as meaning that even

orphans carry images of parents that they relate to internally and that they are ready to project. Our experience of our parents is not just a direct photocopy; the parental archetypes are interposed and color that experience. It has been balancing for me to understand that some of what I reacted to in my parents wasn't simply the people they are or have been, but archetypal images of them that made them "larger than life."

I have turned to Dr. B as a consultant too. I have turned to her for help with challenges I have faced as a parent. I have taken the dreams of my clients to her numerous times. I have discussed situations with clients that I have found challenging or even upsetting. We have discussed how doing this kind of work with clients can be overly stimulating to one's own unconscious. It is good to have a safe place or places to discuss the various aspects of my reactions to clients' material, and I have found it helpful to be able to consult with both my Jungian analyst and some colleagues. Overall, my experience of Jungian analysis has led me to a greater appreciation for the reality of the inner world.

### Lasting Lessons

The question as to what role personal therapy should play in the education and development of psychotherapists is a tough one. When I was an undergraduate and first read that Freud said that one couldn't judge psychoanalysis without undergoing a training analysis, I was outraged. I thought that just showed that psychoanalysis was not scientific. For example, in *The Question of Lay Analysis*, Freud (1950/1969, p. 97) argued the following:

If the representatives of the various mental sciences are to study psycho-analysis so as to be able to apply its method and angles of approach to their own material, it will not be enough for them to stop short at the findings which are laid down in the analytic literature. They must learn to understand analysis in the only way that is possible—by themselves undergoing an analysis. The neurotics who need analysis would thus be joined by a second class of persons, who accept analysis from intellectual motives, but who will no doubt also welcome the increase in their capacities which they will incidentally achieve.

Now, I think that Freud had a point: Psychoanalysis is difficult to understand and to criticize fairly without experiencing it. Although there is the argument that the founders of psychoanalysis didn't undergo psychoanalysis themselves or only had occasional consultations with colleagues, they had little or no choice. There was no one that they could go to. Furthermore, that was a rough road that need not be travelled again when there are so many psychoanalysts available today.

The importance of personal therapy may also depend on the type of therapy that the person in training intends to practice. I think it is more important for the psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, or Jungian therapist than for cognitive-behavioral or supportive therapists. Requiring that the graduate student undergo personal treatment presents its own problems. I respect the requirement of the school from which I graduated, the California School of Professional Psychology, that a student have 45 hours of personal therapy before graduation. But students who enter therapy just to fulfill the requirement may not be in a position to learn or benefit from the experience. In *The Wounded Healer*, May (1995, p. 98) wrote about his experience interviewing candidates for the William Alanson White Institute in New York:

What I asked myself was, "What makes a good psychotherapist? What is there in a particular person that would tell us that here's somebody that can genuinely help other people in the fairly long training of a psychoanalyst?" It was clear to me that it was not adjustment—adjustment that we talked of so fondly when I was a Ph.D. student, and so ignorantly. I knew that the well-adjusted person who came in and sat down to be interviewed would not make a good psychotherapist. Adjustment is just what a neurosis is; and that's his trouble. It is an adjustment to nonbeing in order that some little being may be preserved. An adjustment always flounders on the question—adjustment to what? Adjustment to a psychotic world,

which we certainly live in? Adjustment to societies that are Faustian and insensitive? And then I looked further, and I began to realize that the two greatest therapists I ever knew were badly adjusted people.

The 45-hour requirement of my school, with freedom to choose whatever form of psychotherapy one wishes, may be a good compromise. From a psychodynamic perspective, that is not a great deal of therapy, but at least an introduction to it. I believe that those who wish to practice psychodynamic psychotherapy, one of the various forms of psychoanalysis, or Jungian analysis, should be encouraged (if not formally required) to experience that kind of therapy. Perhaps it is a moot point; how many students are there who want to practice one of these forms of therapy but are not interested in experiencing it themselves?

Looking back on my journey through these different experiences, I see that in going from client-centered/rational-emotive therapy to existential analysis, I went to a deeper kind of work that focused more on the unconscious. Rollo once simply stated that the goal of psychotherapy was greater freedom, and he most definitely helped me to attain greater freedom. I then went on to find myself at home with and utilizing many Jungian concepts, while still holding the existential values that made such a strong and lasting impression on me at an early age.

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