

Chapter 9

TYPICAL RELATIONSHIP PROCESSES

CHEMISTRY AND TYPOLOGY

When studying typology it is useful to see people as an alchemist would. Alchemists worked with chemical elements which gathered together and formed compounds through meshing. People gather together and through fighting, loving, and hating combine to form compounds. Think of the typical older couple. The logical, thinking-type man has split-off, unintegrated feelings. Because his feelings are free floating, he dreams his wife up to act them out. In this typical couple, the woman takes over the household and the man earns the money. She does his earthly, eros tasks for him and he loves her for this. Meanwhile, he is dreamed up by her to be logical and rational, which are exactly the elements missing from her consciousness. Together they form a completed, functioning unit.

He fulfills her archaic needs and vice versa. Thus, in the beginning of their relationship, they may experience heaven on earth. Like the celestial marriage of sun and moon, they are fascinated by each other and bound together by their mutual completion. During this phase, they feel like mirror images of each other, and even begin to look alike. They unconsciously integrate each other. He may begin to act more feeling while she acts more rationally.

THE PROCESS OF LOOKING LIKE YOUR PARTNER

Later in life, they may even assume the same body gestures,

postures, and peculiarities. How does this unconscious integration of the partner happen? It usually happens without effort or control. As you will remember from earlier chapters, the husband projects an inner image consisting of his own gestures and double signals on to his wife. She does the same. In the course of time, he slowly identifies with the gestures he projects on to her and starts to take on her facial and physical expressions. The same process occurs with her so that they begin to resemble each other. This comes about through unconscious identification with double signals and the integration of dream figures. You see this change happen quickly and radically (albeit temporarily) in body work when an individual feels and then moves like the dreambody experience within him.

HOW RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN

Typology explains a lot about how and why two people come together. It tells us that they feel completed through the experience of the other person who carries something which is secondary to them. However, typology does not explain everything. It predicts that any two opposite types would come together, and, as we know, this is not always the case.

There must be thousands of connections which illuminate the mysterious experience of love and relationship. One is typology and, as we have seen in previous chapters, another is a common dream. Remember for example the young couple from the last chapter, Paula and Don? They may hate each other, they may fight and try to beat each other up, they may part and come together but the factor which holds them together through this immense journey is a shared dream, a myth which is symbolized in the dream of fighting and loving on the Zürich tram or by the dream of the unusual grandmother. As long as this couple is together they share these dreams, they are coupled through the metaphor of the wild and unusual feminine element. In ordinary language this means that they share unusual and unconventional ways of relating. Whatever Don might do, whether he is a scientist or artist, whether Paula becomes an

accountant, psychologist, or housewife, regardless of what becomes of them, they are together as long as they share this unconventional feeling attitude. She may want to leave him because he hurts her feelings, and he may get fed up with her because she is so unconventional, but when they are parted, she will continue to be unconventional, and he will continue to deal with others in an unusual feeling manner. Thus, even if they do not like it, they are still coupled.

COLLECTIVE CONNECTIONS

It seems that couples, families, and groups have a dream or myth behind them, a saga searching for people to populate it. The myth dreams up the people to come together. The local myth is connected to the immediate environment in which the people live. It belongs to the city, nation, state, world, and universe. In fact, the kinds of myths and dreams which bind people together are aspects of the time, place, and universe in which they live.

THE LONELY HERO

Another way of describing this aspect of relationships is that there is almost always a creative, un-lived, unusual, and mythical part in each individual which the individual finds difficult to support and which finds understanding, recognition, and appreciation in the new partner. Typical parts finding recognition are the heroic male, the artist, the passionate or powerful female, the sensitive boy, the dreamy girl, the chivalrous male, the mediumistic female, etc.

This powerful bonding in the beginning of the relationship creates unconsciousness so that the figure in each individual obtains support to surface against the rest of the personality which normally cannot support it.

Troubles begin when the individuals involved begin to integrate these parts themselves. At this moment they have less need for the other partner and they begin to grow out of the myth which has held them together. This is the point where the discussion of the early dreams and events in relationship can be very useful.

Remember the couple mentioned on page 72. His memory was that they didn't make love when they first met. Her first dream was that he shot her in the vagina. His sensitivity and need for freedom from performing in bed was nourished by the beginning of that relationship, and her need to contain what she called her promiscuous sexuality was supported. But as he grew, he no longer needed that protection and she no longer needed to be a nun; their relationship crisis and need for separation mirrored their growing out of the old pattern. They had lived through part of their lives which no longer existed and were in need of and ready for a change.

FACTORS IN SEPARATION

Thus, integration of unconscious aspects of the personality and growing through early patterns strains a relationship. But there are other psychic changes which also manifest themselves as relationship problems. An entire culture may be in the midst of change, and the dream dreaming up a given couple may begin to change in accordance with the changing times. Such changes create and destroy relationships. I have frequently seen how homosexual relationships occur after heterosexual ones in accordance with an emerging myth of our modern world that people must learn to love, wherever and however it appears, merging individuals who otherwise would be separated by religion, color, class distinction, and sexual preferences.

AN EXAMPLE

This reminds me of a couple which demonstrated the myth structuring a family system. They came from a Third World country where they enjoyed an immense and extended family life encompassing several hundred people and many generations. Each time this couple came to see me they complained about one another and said they wanted to work on their relationship but sat at opposite ends of my practice. One day, after amplifying his sitting position, he said, 'You know, we do not belong together.'

'Tell her why,' I said.

'I do not know' he said, 'I just do not know, it is like a bad dream.'

'What do you dream?' I countered.

Whereupon he said, 'I do not believe in dreams.'

'Tell me just a little one,' I said, 'one you do not believe in.'

'I dreamed recently that the world has changed,' he answered, 'that all the fairy tales which have been are no longer valid.'

I thought to myself, this is the dream of a new world, but what will this mean in their relationship? We worked together, first as a threesome, then together with some of their children, and once with their entire family of origin. It turned out that this family should not try to understand this man. Her family sided with her in rejecting his ideas about needing to live in a western country. He wanted to stay in their land, but finally decided to leave his family system and country and move to the 'new world.'

This was simultaneously a relief and tragic parting for all. It is the kind of process which must have occurred frequently during the colonization of America. It is an archetypal parting in which one member is called upon to change. He must then take the blame or credit for creating a chain effect or disturbance in the tradition of which he is a part. He is the dream of the community.

DEALING WITH THE OUTER FORMS OF RELATIONSHIP

How a couple integrates their relationship in a given culture is an utterly individual matter. Some couples need to keep their relationship a secret; others integrate it directly into their culture. Homosexual couples in certain cities must now stand up for their relationship; it is necessary not only for them but for the world around them. Others must get married or live together in a household. Ending relationships and separating is more fashionable and more of an option today in the western world than it has ever been.

RUNNING AWAY FROM RELATIONSHIP

Many separations and divorces are due to the individual's

inability to process the strains occurring from the individuation processes of one or both of the members, not from incompatibility. When a separation occurs for this reason, the same problems will be recreated in the next relationship with another partner. The same problems arise again, creating a cycling effect of dropping and beginning relationships. Such cycling coincides with depression and hopelessness.

There are also many couples, however, which should be parting and which cannot for one reason or another. In these cases terminal illnesses arise (particularly in the latter part of life) and are often experienced as a chance to leave an imprisoning relationship. Trying to live a myth which does not belong to the individual creates violent psychosomatic reactions. Periods of *individual* individuation, typological change, transformation, external economic changes, death, marriage, and birth in a family produce the greatest stress on the family dreambody as it begins to dissolve, separate, and recreate itself. Without the tools of communication theory, dream work, and family therapy many couples suffer through these periods in the most isolated and painful ways. Some become permanently estranged without ever having realized that the changes responsible for the stress were only temporary phases of individuation. Of course there are other couples who seem to be born with a sense of fairness and good will and manage by luck and sheer ruggedness to live through crisis periods.

Since each couple, family, and group is different, there are no typical periods in a group's development. But certain phases are outstanding from a psychotherapeutic viewpoint and may be worth discussing. I want to stress, however, that the phases which follow are not stages which people 'should' go through.

HEAVEN ON EARTH

The experience of heaven on earth may occur spontaneously and miraculously in the beginning of relationships. Powerful attractions arise by either consciously or unconsciously integrating the other. This period is experienced as a

breakthrough; each member feels complete internally and externally. Double signals disappear, and there seem to be no edges blocking relationship and communication. Secondary processes become primary and the ensuing high is usually accompanied by a justifiable fear that the harmonious structure will not last long.

CULTURE

This phase of the relationship process usually consists of role assignments. Each partner identifies with a main typology and edges are formed to prevent role switching and continue the homeostatic functioning of the partnership, family, group, or society. As all partners fulfill their roles and functions, aggression, negativity, and unhappiness drop from awareness and reappear in dream figures and double signals. The edges become firm laws which may be implicitly or explicitly formulated, as in the case of a marriage contract. Our culture's marriage laws correspond to the ancient belief systems of Judeo-Christian theology and Roman law.

BOREDOM AND IRRITATION

Edges and the associated laws create homeostasis, the attempt to maintain harmony. During this stage of a couple's evolution, the drive for freedom and individuation resist the role-oriented primary process. It's usually in this phase that the family is planned. While the laws and edges are primarily respected, the double signals of individuation begin to surface. At this point the glow of harmony begins to wear off and partners recognize annoying and irritating characteristics in each other. They typically attribute this to the confines of married life and say that 'the honeymoon is over.'

CRISIS

Little irritations come and go, and in time produce a crisis; one partner's need to be an individual attacks the primary idea of peace and harmony. The other partner responds with rage against the threatening dissolution. But since the

first partner's drive for freedom is still relatively unconscious and appears only in double signals, he cannot understand the other's rage. Because neither can fully identify with the secondary processes they are double signalling, they cannot accept the accusations levelled at them. Thus, they next accuse each other of lying. A communication crisis arises; one side no longer trusts the other. If mutual mistrust prevails, the crisis is usually dealt with by splitting up and abandoning communication altogether. Couples who cannot bear the tension of the battle switch or drop partners in the false belief that being alone or finding another partner will recreate the permanent state of harmony which was promised and protected by the preceding laws.

WORKING WITH CRISES

A governing paradigm of process work is that the process which presents itself in the moment contains all the elements necessary for its own solution.

If the therapist works with just one member of the couple, that member's disturbing double signals will disappear. In cases where the other partner refuses to come into therapy, it seems to be the first partner's fate to develop alone and learn how to adapt to the other's process. Some couples insist upon coming together. With the therapist's help the couple can learn to use the attacks and accusations as a challenge to further development. The attacks challenge them to come closer to their feelings and to stand up more strongly for their individual needs. Although both members want to win a battle, no one wins a war between secondary processes. The apparently weaker element always finds indirect and powerful methods which destroy the apparently stronger element. In most cases, processing the relationship results in more powerful and awakened people and a more differentiated couple.

A couple which has been together gets reborn when the cycle of blaming and denying comes to an end. Either this period ends by itself or one member admits to the other's accusations and tries to change. In situations where the accusation is of unpredictability, freedom, or independence

the accuser must eventually face the end of dependency, while the accused has to stand up for the consequences of the process he initiated.

An interesting paradox lies at the center of this phase of development: the same process separating the couple may connect it as well. Most couples act decently, yet are simultaneously consumed by the drive for greater freedom. Getting beyond the edge of decency allows both to interact and contact levels of experience and freedom previously only dreamed of. The identification with the role of the victim or persecutor then switches, creating a strong sense of relationship which was only vaguely implicit in the earlier accusations.

THE DOUBLE EDGE FACTOR

Regardless of their goals, couples and small groups find that in a relationship crisis, the greatest relief occurs when each individual involved has gone over an edge. If two people are involved in a crisis, the factor determining whether or not the relationship experience will be satisfactory is the double edge factor.

An example of the double edge is a couple who came to see me because the husband wanted help for his wife who had been hospitalized two years earlier because of a psychotic episode. This couple has been in a steady, unending conflict for years. As they came in she murmured in a drugged state, 'I'm sick.' I immediately said, 'I believe that, but only in part. Your illness must in some way be a reaction to what is happening in the world around you.' She countered, 'I have never been unhappy with my husband.' I said, 'Not even the last time you were unhappy?' Then a story slipped out in which she got angry at him because he stayed out late, drinking with some of his friends.

She said, 'He is a good man . . . oh . . . oh . . . here it comes . . . I see the nuclear catastrophe on the moon.' I said, 'Let's all go to the crazy moon, and make a nuclear explosion about his drinking. Now!' Whereupon she yelled at him in the most sober, undrugged fashion, 'You were mean to me.' He was naturally not the least bit happy about

her now normal behavior and yelled back, 'Stop being so emotional,' and then he yelled at me, 'You supported her, but not me.' I then sat behind him to support him and held him while he cried like a child, begging for help. Later he told me that this was the first time he had ever cried as an adult.

There were two edges in this work; there was hers, the edge to being aggressive and his, the edge to showing his emotions. Both needed support to get through the crisis created by their own necessary growth. Going over only one edge creates an imbalance in the homeostatic functioning of a couple or family and throws the group into great turmoil because the individual who has not gotten sufficient support to go over his edge resents the therapist.

Whenever possible, either both edges should be crossed or none at all. If only one edge is crossed, then the couple should be warned about the potential irritation of the partner who has not gone over an edge. He will complain about injustice or frustration after the session. The same happens in individual work if only one part of the personality is supported, i.e. only a dream or secondary process. In this situation, the individual should be warned that his primary process, which was not fully appreciated during the sitting, will soon have a big reaction.

INDIVIDUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

The result of processing relationships is that couples become individual. It is virtually impossible to understand them from the outside because what one expects two people to feel and do is rarely what they are actually doing. Programs such as support, mutual love and understanding, free expression, individuality, etc., are usually not the patterns which tie people together. Some of the momentary individual processes of couples may be: mother one another, mother the son, doctor the patient, repress feeling, hide sexuality, do not communicate, become shamans, etc.

THE TAO OF RELATIONSHIPS

The faltering laws of our society governing relationships

indicate the necessity for a new form of relationships. What will this new form of relationship look like? Process concepts imply a new paradigm for relationships. The process worker not only forwards the rules and regulations of the primary process, but is also trained to be aware of the subtle and extensive dreambody language of love, friendship, and growth. There are already many couples and families who have developed the necessary awareness to relativize cultural rules and regulations with moment to moment awareness of communication signals. These people may be the first Taoists: those learning how to let process organize the evolution of love and friendship. An apparent paradox lies at the bottom of love; having deep and growing relationships depends upon courage and disciplined signal awareness.

In a relationship crisis, this means that instead of holding on to your position and defending your opinion, you become aware of your process and that of your partner. If the Tao sends the message of softness, let go and be soft. Instead of acting like a rational computer when you are unhappy or jealous, be unhappy, follow your jealousy. Instead of being proud when you are hurt, pursue your hurt and pain. Instead of acting like an adult when you are really a cry baby, cry like a baby. Instead of being democratic when you have a personal need, try to wear the clothes of a dictator, but do it consciously. If you feel loving in the midst of a fight, then be affectionate. If you are depressed, sink to the bottom of the earth. If you are hopeless, express your fears about never being loved. One thing then changes to another, making relationships an indescribably, simultaneous initiation of two or more people into the essence of life.