

[GUNILLA MIDBØE PSYKOTERAPI OCH KONSULTATION AB]

When the Eye holds to Vision

Towards a Grammar of Sight

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“Dialogue at the Threshold between East and West: Cultural Identity Past, Present and Future.”

INTRODUCTION

First introduction powerpoint.

My name is Gunilla Midbøe, I'm from Sweden. Previously a social worker in different fields. Now a psychotherapist, supervisor and Jungian analyst in private practice in Arvika and Stockholm. I have been an Individual member of IAAP since 2007 and I think it's great to be here in Vilnius and be a part of The First European Conference of Analytical Psychology. A communicating domain.

(press punktknapp to make screen dark).

The theme of this day of the conference is 'OUR DIFFICULT HISTORY' and my presentation is about an analytical journey together with Björn, my analysand and a reflective analytical journey together with myself. So there is **the analytical dialogue** and **the dialogues about the dialogues**, now taking place in this communicating domain.

Sometimes experiences of a special dignity are so painful for us that we ask for a relationship with an analyst. We want to enter therapy or analysis. We want someone to whom we can tell our story and we want to be listened to. Perspectives are totally different in a contextual way depending on your position in the analytical encounter. If you are the one seeking for help, bringing the story of your life into the encounter or if you are the one responsible for the process of analysis. But most of all, I think there is a mutual wish for a special and unique relationship to emerge, apart from everyday life struggle. Both consciously and unconsciously. And both of us, within this room and frame, have 'OUR DIFFICULT HISTORY' in life.

But for us in the analytical position as we are right now, we also have difficult experiences in the analytical process. They can make me stop, feel uncomfortable and even lose self esteem. But I also become curious and want to understand deeply what is going on in the analytical encounter and that is part of why I stand here today presenting a part of my difficult experience with Björn, my analysand.

So I am going to present two clinical vignettes from the analytical work with Björn and connect them to my analytical reflections on image, language and dialogue in analysis.

My theoretical influence here is of course from Jung but also from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951) and the anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1904 – 1980).

Wittgenstein is important because of his theory of language. He devoted his whole life to explore the limits of language to mysticism, the unknown. Therefore I find him useful to analytical work in the interface between image and language. What words do we consciously choose and how do we use language and speech in the analytical dialogue? What do words show us? Is there a perception of language? That is part of my interest.

Gregory Bateson is important because of his thinking of dynamic energy in human systems. Important ideas from Bateson are: wholeness, relationship, circularity, pattern and structure.

For my own development as an analyst these two thinkers formed a vivid and lucid emotional bridge that connected me at heart to analytical psychology and the way Jung understood the human psyche.

My hope is that you will walk away from this presentation with some new inner images and reflections about **the connection between image and dialogue in the analytical work**. So this is a presentation with **two perspectives that mutually interconnect**. **One is on image, vision and seeing** and **the other is on the connecting process of language, dialogue and the meaning of word**. Maybe you can call this an attempt to formulate a grammar of sight and thoughts about how to connect tongue to eye (language to image) in analytical psychology. It's a presentation of basic concepts for how to use and reflect on language in analysis. It's a working model and I hope for new curious words from you to enter the reflective space after our presentations!

Now let's turn to the first image.

IMAGE 1



ROTTWIELER image

It is important for you to know that Björn with warm heart gave me his permission to show some vignettes from our work for you here today.

When Björn (his name means bear in Swedish) entered my practice he was not alone, he brought this image with him. It's an image from a dream he had some months before our first appointment. This dream helped him decide to enter analytical work. And indeed he entered; with powerful steps and an expression of being both determined and with fear in his eyes.

A short background is that now, he was nearly eighty years old and lived by himself. He had been married and had both children and grandchildren. In his professional life he had worked as a journalist. Now he wanted to understand why this dream image did not leave his mind. It was late in his life and he felt he didn't have much time left although he was healthy and in good shape.

Björn was shivering with pure fear when he told the dream;

'I'm standing in a garden, sunlight and it's daytime. I hold the Rottweiler dog close to me, I can even feel his cheek to mine and his breath. It's an exhausting **and fearful** position to hold. And the Rottweiler says in a distinct voice: 'If only you stand still, nothing will happen....'

Björn was terrified and he wanted to know the meaning of this dream. Now! Immediately! And I was the analyst who should know and just deliver the right answer. So how could I stay close with him and at the same time hold the position of not making a prompt deliverance of **the** interpretation? Well as an analyst you connect to your partner the analysand in number of different ways. This is the field of transference and interaction.

I think I began by asking him when this dream arrived, and I also entered into the dream image by asking him what he could **see in the words he used** when he told the dream. 'What do you see in the **word fearful?**'

So he came up with a story of an authoritarian upbringing during second world war in a wealthy family. The family of his father being the owner since generations of an iron works but they lost their position and money during the economical depression in the thirties. Father was the repressive force and mother could not hold stability and be secure for her children. 'She was a neurotic bundle of nerves'. When Björn had been too enthusiastic about something he was put in a dark wardrobe, alone, but with a small window where he could see the moon. This was his primal experience of fear. Again and again, repeatedly. In my inner dialogue I thought I had to stay close to what 'fearful' meant for Björn from different perspectives.

I also think I said something about; if he could have a look around in my practice, see and notice colors and details and if the room could also be a place and space for him where he could share his fear with me. Well, he said, he would consider this option.

So I tried to connect him visually with words when we looked at and he told me about the Rottweiler image by saying: 'What do you see in the word 'fearful?'

And I tried to connect him to me in dialogue in the present situation by asking him if he could notice details from my practice and to think of the room also as a space in his inner world where he could

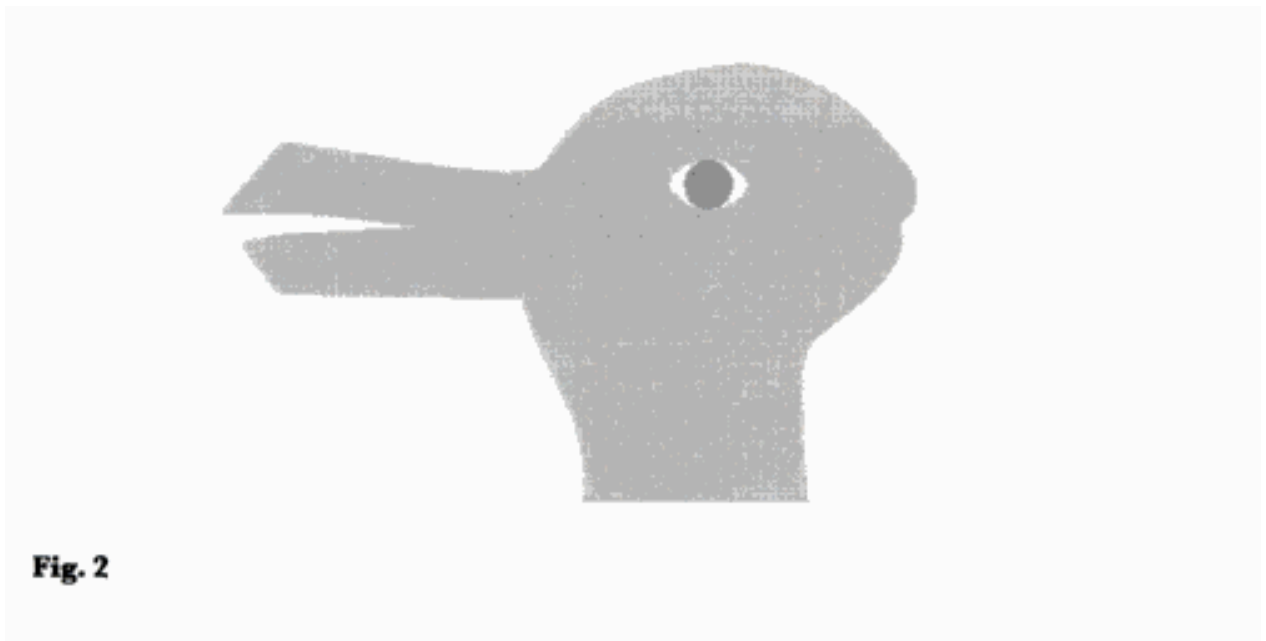
find a space for sharing the pain, the fear with me. I tried to connect fear to a present space that provided security and a holding frame.

In a way I tried to create a safer wardrobe for him where I entered but now in his present life and where it could be possible to connect both past fear and present fearful reaction with safety.

Language is the connecting tool we human use to try to understand inner and outer reality. Language makes our existence understandable and manageable. Words are emotional and they carry feelings we can experience in our body. Language is also the tool to connect different worlds, different realities and serves as a help hold the tension between opposites.

Now let's move to the image of analytical reflection.

IMAGE 2



DUCK RABBIT image

What do you see??

When Jung wrote 'A study in the process of Individuation' he highlighted the images of his analysand. A Scandinavian young woman. And in the analytical work we experience **the eye as the key to the process**. I understand this as to stay close to and to follow the analysand's seeing and vision.

But what does it mean to see? Do we know and do you already know? And what is the question asking about? For Jung the psyche expresses itself in images and symbols. And in *Psychological Types* he writes the following words;

*The inner image is a complex structure made up of the most varied material from the most varied sources. It is no conglomerate, however, but a homogeneous product with a meaning of its own. **The image is a condensed expression of the psychic situation as a whole**, and not merely, nor even predominately, of unconscious contents pure and simple. It undoubtedly does express unconsciously contents, but not the whole of them, only those that are momentarily constellated. This constellation is the result of the spontaneous activity of the unconscious on the one hand and of the momentary conscious situation on the other, which always stimulates the activity of relevant subliminal material and at the same time inhibits the irrelevant. **Accordingly the image is an expression of the unconscious as well as the conscious situation of the moment. The interpretation of its meaning therefore, can start neither from the conscious alone nor from the unconscious alone, but only from their reciprocal relationship.***

CW 6 § 745

It's an interesting text and let's stay with the concept of image and try to put it into language. It's an expression of the unconscious as well as of the conscious situation of the moment. And the interpretation starts from their **reciprocal relationship**. How can this be understood in the analytical setting?

So let's move from the case and go to theoretical reflections on the concept of seeing and **problematize the 'what is it?' question** of the image. For me to see in the analytical frame is also to use language and to listen to spoken words and for my understanding Ludwig Wittgenstein is useful. As a philosopher he explored the language and its limitations and I think he is situated close to mysticism and numinous experiences and that makes him interesting for analytical work. How can we consciously use language for individuation? This now shown picture is meant as a helpful tool to illustrate a 'grammar of sight' and a 'language of perception'.

This picture of the duck-rabbit could be used as a metaphor for seeing aspects of language. It's from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and illustrates the difference between a '**continuously seeing aspect**' and an **aspect of 'this is it'**. You could see it as the head of a rabbit but also as the head of a duck. You could see it as nothing else but a rabbit, never ever. But also as your own image of a duck rabbit. So you see, there are several possible perspectives and I think it's important to hold in mind that when you in the given moment in a dialogue chose a perspective there are a diversity of other perspectives not chosen right then. You include and exclude at the same time.

In analytical work I use this picture as help for **not falling into the pitfall of delivering an interpretation or a proposal** and for me it works as a **bridging help to hold** image until it had worked out its meaning and not to push meaning prematurely.

In the work with Björn this was utterly important because he saw me as an authority so every word from me was extremely important for him. That was a part of our strong transference sometimes painful for him and difficult for me.

To hold the conjunction tension between the two persons involved in this outstanding journey as an analysis are is a great challenge. It's holding different aspects of meaning, different aspects of inner and outer psychic reality and different aspects of seeing in balance. Sometimes you succeed in the respect of growing consciousness. Sometimes very special moments occur in the transference relationship that can make you in the first place feel as you have not succeeded in doing a good work. These moments I call lacunas or ruptures where numinous experience also can be very intense.

The next clinical image is an illustration of such a difficult experience between us.

IMAGE 3



FATHER MURDER or A FAIRY TALE, JUST A FAIRY TALE image

When Björn came with this image he was extremely excited! Like an eight year old boy. And our analytical work was in a vulnerable phase where he grew in his creativity, a creativity his father

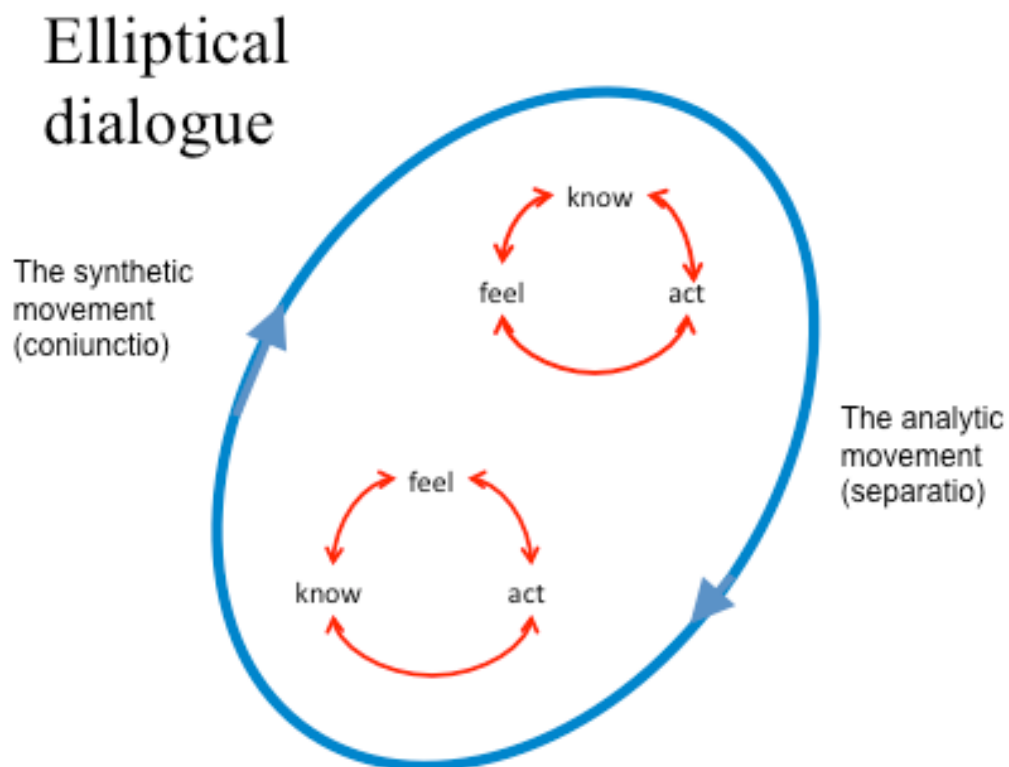
punished both physically and psychologically. He constantly devaluated and despised him. When entering with this image Björn was so excited that I felt overwhelmed by his emotional reaction. Physically I pulled back and created a distance between us. And he expected more of a joyful, confirming reaction from me than I was capable of. He instinctively noticed my cooler response and for him this meant rejection and refusal and punishment on a deeper level.

So did I destroy this important numinous experience or could it be also an experience to work through in our ongoing dialogue?

Complex dynamic forces are at work in this moment. It was a part of my negative mother complex that colluded with his negative mother complex. We can also understand it so that he projected his negative father image in me - I became the abusive father that threw him into the wardrobe. And all this is good and useful perspectives for understanding. But I would like to return to the concept of language and mutual dialogue.

So let's move to the next image of analytical reflection.

IMAGE 4



THE ELLIPTICAL DIALOGUE image

Dialogues are based on telling, listening and reflection. The drawing indicates an ongoing 'inner' process which might be regarded as a circle. The 'inner' process partly **serves the conservation of the person's integrity** but also **serves as a basis for the person's expansion of sensing, understanding and being.**

The condition necessary for this expansion is the connection of the 'inner' process with an ongoing 'outer' process of exchange which occurs when one takes part in relationships with others, as indicated in the drawing. According to this, one might say that two 'inner' processes and one 'outer' process occurs in parallel when two persons encounter each other.

If this encounter is a dialogue in analysis or therapy it might be of importance to think of three parallel conversations going on at the same time: two 'inner' talks and one 'outer'. I think the 'inner' talks serve at least two aims: **dealing with the exchanged ideas and dealing with my participation in the 'outer' talk. Like now...**

Part of the 'inner' talk is about **what** the meaningful content of the 'outer' talk is and also: **how** can this 'outer' talk be best performed. So I think it looks as if we as persons constantly talks to ourselves about how can I be connected through a conversation in order to achieve new and helpful perspectives (meaningful understanding) without that my own or the other person's integrity being offended?

When I as an analyst take part in an analytical dialogue I think I should ask myself all the time: is the talk I have with this person **slow enough** so that the other person and I have time for our 'inner' talks?

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surprised but learned gradually to be utterly attentive in an active listening position. Now I think this position kept our 'outer' elliptical dialogue ongoing but not with outspoken words.

Now let me say something about how I understood what happened between me and Björn, with the help of Gregory Bateson and differences, and differences that make differences.

Bateson brought to our attention that we do not see things as something in themselves. We see a thing as something different but not separated from its background. We make a 'picture' of a man as something distinct from his background. The picture contains both background and man. Man himself sees and describes his background in terms of the differences he sees. He will be acquainted or familiar with his background in terms of differences he can see and hear and smell and touch and taste.

So there are immanent differences in the background available for searching senses. To define something as different from the surrounding Bateson calls '**the making of a distinction**'. There are many distinctions that can be made. Think of all distinctions just one sense can make; then contemplate what five senses can do! Then contemplate what two persons with five senses can do in an analytical dialogue. Then contemplate what happened in my dialogue with Björn when he entered with 'THE FATHER MURDER'. He was eight years old showing the image to me and I did not confirm him as he in his inner making of distinctions wanted to. And I think I saw both the eight year old boy and the eighty year old man coming in and that was my making my distinction of the situation. But these distinctions were too different and we had **two too different 'maps' over the same 'territory'**, as Bateson would have commented on this situation. So our elliptical dialogue had a rupture.

In other words, there is always more to see than one sees.

Here I think many people have not grasped Bateson's idea. They believe that there is one correct history, one correct picture and one correct 'different map' over the 'territory'. If one thinks in this way, one can easily be involved in heavy discussions or even fights about who remembers correctly or who sees correctly. This was my challenge when Björn confronted my cold response and when he talked with me as if I was his father.

I think it's exciting to follow Bateson's idea because it makes my curiosity to flow. What did the other person see, smell, hear or feel that I was not aware of in the same situation? These new aspects of the moving 'picture' of the situation can stimulate differences in my own evolving 'picture'.

In short, this leads to **Bateson's famous sentence: 'the elementary unit of information – is a difference that makes a difference'**. The verb 'to make' induces the idea that the difference that is made is made by a difference over time. **Bateson says a difference over time is a change.**

In short, there are two different meanings in Bateson's use of the word *difference*: First, something is distinct in its being different from its background, and second, a change is a difference *over time* brought about by a difference.

I think these ideas are important basis for clinical analytical work in the way we use our words (come into being) in the elliptical dialogue. So let's shift the word difference to the more every day word '**unusual**'. If people are exposed to the usual they tend to stay the same. If they meet something unusual, this un-usual might induce a change. If the new they meet is very (too) unusual, they close up in order not to be inspired and in order to keep and conserve their integrity. Therefore what we, when analysts, should strive for is to provide something unusual but not too unusual in the ongoing elliptical dialogue. This comprises the setting and frame in which we meet, the themes or issues the elliptical dialogue covers and the way or the form it takes.

So when I stayed attentive to vigilant listening to Björns words when he told me of how he experienced his father, as if I was his father and towards the end of each such session asked for his feelings, right in the moment and he answered 'good and thank you for listening', I made the understanding in my inner dialogue with myself, that we were engaged in an unusual but not too unusual elliptical dialogue.

TO CONCLUDE

Analytical work always engages differences. So now Björn and I are engaged in a dialogue about 'Leaving, being left out and to leave'. Of course this is about our analytical reality, about his history and about where he is in his individuation process. He is 81years old and engaged in the most intense living of his life and perhaps he gradually prepare himself to leave and to go on with the rest of his life without the further need for our elliptical dialogue. And I am left with my reality and trying to make meaning of words and image as an extension of life itself in our analytical profession.

So these are the **three perspectives** I would like to underline in this presentation;

- **Your own image of the duck rabbit in analysis**
- **Your own words of the difference that makes a difference over time in analysis**
- **Your own care for the elliptical dialogue in analysis.**

Thank you for listening!

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