

# COVID-19, precarity and loneliness

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*Abstract:* In this paper I discuss Jungian psychological work of the trauma and loss experienced in reaction to COVID-19 with a man who represents a clinical composite. The issues of precarity, a concept used by the philosopher Judith Butler, are combined with the notions of lack and absence of French psychoanalyst André Green. The psychological and societal situation of precarity aroused the man's childhood issues that were long repressed. The loneliness, isolation and death from COVID-19 mirrored his personal and the collective responses to the disaster from this global pandemic. He felt on the edge of collapse as what he knew of his world crashed and he found himself unable to cope. The subsequent Jungian work taking place through the virtual computer screen was taxing and restorative simultaneously for both analyst and analysand.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, global pandemic, grief, loneliness, precarity, trauma

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You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again.

(Butler 2004, p. 49)

'Do you see people in person?' asked a female voice on the telephone. She went on to add she wanted in-person contact as it meant so much to her. I empathized I also value the in-person therapeutic sessions but because of COVID-19 they occur virtually.

A man began a therapy session saying he feels the walls closing in. The country is shutting down and he will not be able to leave, he says. He is panicked. He must go. He knows it. The oppressiveness threatens him and he says he cannot take it any longer.

Both people reflect the emotional, psychological and physical aspects present in our lives due to the pandemic called COVID-19. In this article the composite example of the man, whom I will call Ronald, illustrates the psychological struggle exacerbated by how the world has changed due to COVID-19. Even prior to COVID-19 this man had become alienated from his history. Now he cannot escape the impress of anxiety 'moving between present and past, here

and now and there and then.... The signal refers to a danger experienced in the past' (Perelberg 2018, p. 811). Ronald is an example of the isolation, death, loss, grief and bewilderment aroused by COVID-19, affecting depth psychological work for both analyst and analysand. As British Jungian analyst Jan Weiner noted, 'interest in the concept of countertransference was accelerated among analysts practising in the 1950s, just after the Second World War, because they were so severely affected by their patients' war traumas' (Weiner 2009, p. 59). It seems we may be in a similar era, albeit involved in a different form of trauma.

### **Precarity as an archetypal condition**

Philosopher Judith Butler (2010) noted precarity in references to the disenfranchised others throughout history similar to those now helpless due to the universal economic and political lack. Additionally, precarity can be interpreted as an archetypal condition of vulnerability, displacement and insecurity. This occurs socially, physically and psychologically, appearing in those aspects often negated, unimagined and avoided. Now none of these responses will suffice as the reality is in our faces with masks, restrictions and lack in all aspects of life. The philosophical frame of precarity mirrors the psychological lack manifested by anxiety, disenfranchisement and loss of future hope. Without predictability or security, one experiences a sense of powerlessness. It is what many feel during the COVID-19 pandemic as the economic and physical health of individual and the world shifts radically. Precarity is also an existential state encompassing and leading to the stark realizations of mortality and vulnerability.

Ronald began analysis for the first time in his late forties, expressing issues of precarity both psychologically and physically. He was facing the intricacies of his mind tied up in the internal conflicts no longer able to be denied. Until now, his world had been circumscribed by the rational, organized, planned. He had depended on this approach for survival. Now he described desperation and chaos, all heralding unpredictable emotional states. The inner resources relied upon to cope were dissipated. He could not keep at bay the intense emptiness and neediness. Although facing the therapeutic analysis with openness, Ronald was propelled by an unacknowledged ache in his soul.

Over time it became clearer to us both that Ronald's defences of rationality and predictability were used to escape the childhood experiences of dread. They arose due to the precarious health of his mother who came close to death many times. His adaptation of emotional denial left a small window for any other reality to squeeze through. All this was unexpectedly blown open with the rapid emergence and spread of the pandemic COVID-19. Vulnerability, helplessness and a sense of need aroused the earlier and formerly unmet dependency. He was in a perilous state and knew it. Early emotional

insecurity, although covered over, was now making a disastrous impact on his psyche. Barely hanging on, he could not protect himself from the helpless feelings or the perils of disintegration. The outer situation of the pandemic's threats to life was preceded with months of care for, and the subsequent death of, his father.

Ronald was overwhelmed, re-experiencing the childhood emotional gaps and losses formerly submerged. He assumed they were left in the past as he charged ahead with work and achievements. Never looking back, he did not question himself or allow his emotions to interfere with the pressure to make it financially, gaining success and security. The other feelings dwelling within himself were not accessible and firmly shut down. The inner world or any emotional unpredictability was a closed labyrinth he resisted opening. His childhood grief was privatized and kept compartmentalized within. Now this defence was causing internal retreat to that very place where he had learned to survive and not feel much.

Death of father and the increased pressure at work due to COVID-19 toppled the image of himself, challenging life-values, goals and meaning. It seemed all was in crisis, internally and externally. He could no longer live in the derealization of loss. He now had to tarry with grief rather than put a bandage on the wounds. People experiencing traumas of all kinds are left to pick-up the pieces of a blown-apart self and reassemble them. One of the major casualties of this disintegration is the capacity to think (Cavalli 2012, p. 597). Now his former reality was disentangled, and he literally could not think, function or organize. The pandemic with its death and chaos was changing any certainty, former perceptions or rationality and he was not able to be immune to his feelings. In other words, he was experiencing precarity with its psychological, social and physical aspects. The confluence of events collectively and personally stopped him in his tracks. The complex dynamics of terror and his reactions to it forced him to look inward to activate the self-regulating nature of the psyche.

Ronald had not realized how much he missed belonging to a home, to a place of his own. This resonated with the childhood of lack, fears, and absence of safety in himself or the world. His experience of precarity aroused the wrenching loneliness he had not acknowledged previously. The current situation called attention to the embodied character of life with its needs for love, care, well-being, health – all brought forward by the precarity from COVID-19. He was suffering emotionally in the traumatic events disrupting the rhythms of life, leading to disorientation and discontinuity of his identity. The many-layered concept of precarity was apparent in his difficulty of its expression. Meanwhile his voice as an individual and those of the collective highlighted the synchronistic mirroring and fragility of the personal situations worldwide.

The sorrows around his mother's illness during his entire childhood were coped with by playing video games alone. This is also how he coped as an adult. Ronald was raised predominately by his mother while father was mostly absent. He felt abandoned by father himself but also observed the

same abandonment from his mother who said father was unreliable and untrustworthy. He had no way to symbolize a healthy father, mother, or their interaction. As a child he learned there was no place for emotional expression as he had to be brave, or so he thought. The parental absence created no end of emotional distance, insecurity, lack of internal connection and the self out of kilter with the rest of the personality. In childhood he feared for his life, the life of his mother and the emotional isolation making him different from others. The subsequent sorrows, losses and depression left him with attitudes of self-alienation. Self-worth was outer determined, not inner. Now he felt the passage of time, the lack of inner solidity and absence of security.

When the early emotional and physical losses and subsequent grief suffered affect the imaginary realm and the symbolic process to such a degree, a child cannot name the loss or what he mourns. Ronald described the loneliness in childhood as so painful and pervasive that he was unable to tell his mother, and he worried he would hurt her with his sorrows and bewilderment. The loneliness was experienced as intense emptiness, separate from others both internal and external, and he was filled with grief. According to Kohon (1999) the split in the self, occurring early in childhood, left no inner harmony nor was there life within an understanding of self and other because he did not know it (p. 101). Intimacy remained undeveloped. The loneliness was worse when in the presence of others. At the crux were the psychological tasks of linking the known and unknown, conscious and unconscious and re-balancing the tension between.

Jungian psychology regards the Self as formed by and existing in the cultural and psychosocial experience of the individual. The normative aspects of the Self are created from unconscious internalizations including that of the social order; just as inside, so outside. Over time, sometimes after a long time, we become more conscious of what we carry psychologically from our socio-historical experiences. Jung contended, 'as far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light of meaning in the darkness of mere being' (Jung 1963, p. 326). Life experiences and their challenges are subjective and deeply personal and take their particular shape depending on one's history, personality, living situation, culture, etc. To comprehend the psychological also includes acknowledging the cultural lack of belonging, loneliness and the sense of isolation (Singer and Kimbles 2004, p. 125). However, this man had no previous means for self-exploration and was without relatedness to religious, collective or familial support. What remained were loneliness, isolation, and the lack of emotional intimacy with others and himself.

### Blown apart self

The desire for connection with a person or a place facilitates overcoming self-alienation and represents consonance with one's wholeness (Jacoby 2006,

p. 9). The occurrence of COVID-19 became the violation of his ordered and planned life. His uneasiness and instability were replicated globally while remaining personally his own. He was experiencing the destruction of his former conditions of liveability, and his personality was on the verge of collapse. He no longer could use the former defences, the denials, the rational world for protection or as avenues for psychological escape. The inner dilemmas heightened, creating upset. Since life does not tolerate standstill, a damming of energy results, or what Jung referred to as a tension of opposites. The confluence of events opened for him a precipitous descent into the ashes, an alchemical *nigredo* lying at the core. This replicates the psychological processes beginning with a painful loss of bearings in the alchemy of dissolution, a *massa confusa*, in order to re-form.

Jung paradoxically said, 'The secret is that only that which can destroy itself is truly alive' (Jung 1944, para. 93). Mourning and grief are upon this man. He became disorganized and separated from the staunch ego and persona he relied upon. Now he found himself anxious and unable to concentrate at work or at home. The anxiety signalled the life-threatening danger from COVID-19, the death of his father that linked to the painful recall of feelings about his mother. Because the earlier anxieties and losses were not allowed into consciousness, Ronald had learned no way to grieve. These all combined with the pressure from COVID-19, the lack of preparedness or safety and his diminished functioning. 'Anxiety emerges as a marker of the uniquely human relation to temporality ... the signal refers to a danger already experienced in the past – the catastrophe that has already happened and is about to happen again' (Perelberg 2018, p. 811). Such trauma in the individual and collective conscious and unconscious are passed from generation to generation in an unending spiral, forming a present reality of ideas, beliefs, memories, feelings and images.

'The more extreme traumatically engendered condition is that in which any capacity to represent self-experience is ruptured: a state of paralysis in which even the blank impress is lost within a void' (Connolly 2011, p. 5). In this void were the repressed emotions, losses and fears about what he relegated to a distant childhood, never imagining they would re-emerge or affect him. Nothing really goes away but there comes a time when the old defences become unbearable, unchanging and no longer controllable (Singer and Kimbles 2004, p. 85). In trauma situations, the psyche feels shattered, the defences insidiously becoming as wounding as the original traumas. Psychic growth is halted.

One cannot separate from or understand the traumas until they are recognized. With this man the internal and external situations were presenting material he could not decode. This inability became a protective mechanism like an emotional retreat, indicating the annihilating effects of anxiety and the folding-in on oneself. Because 'Anxiety represents the encounter with negativity, nothingness and lack of object' (Perelberg 2018, p. 821), Ronald

could not face the insecurities experienced at a basic level of existence, so his focus remained on survival, while attempts to find identity and individuate seemed dangerous. Because there was little certainty, he could not accept uncertainty.

This man began therapy because ‘there is something he cannot forget, something he cannot stop telling himself, often by his actions, about his life. And these dismaying repetitions ... create the illusion of time having stopped’ (Phillips 2013, p. 15). The trauma is now making itself felt as he feels alien to himself and distant from others. He cannot explain what is happening to him, as he has no vocabulary for its expression. ‘Through fantasies of introjection and identification, the ‘lost object’ is taken into the psyche, where it takes up a new psychic life .... The ‘acceptance of loss’ in the external world is met with a corresponding recreation of the object in the internal world’ (Lear 2014, pp. 473-74). In other words, the old form of relating to objects is the basis of a new form (ibid., p. 474). However, in the beginning of the therapeutic process this man became more internally lost and out-of-step with his work and old life patterns and could communicate this to no-one.

The anxiety related to his losses was pervasive, personally and collectively. It represented a separation from ‘a loved object, loss of its love, loss of the mother (here also the father) as an object’ (Perelberg 2018, p. 822). When unattached from others and general society, without sufficient holding and containing qualities, one becomes vulnerable to repressed fears and insecurities. French psychoanalyst André Green noted, ‘acute conflicts with those who are close ... an impotence to withdraw from a conflictual situation, impotence to love, to make the most of one’s talents, to multiply one’s assets, or when this does take place, a profound dissatisfaction with the results’ (Green 1983, p. 149). In fact, the world became meaningless.

Therapeutic dialogue over time revealed his psychological history and where past and present coincided. The death and fears earlier in his childhood, intensely replicated by COVID-19, brought him to re-experience death at his door. The French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva described:

an abyss of sorrow, a noncommunicable grief that at times ... lays claims upon us to the extent of having us lose all interest in words, action and even life itself.... Within depression, if my existence is on the verge of collapsing, its lack of meaning is not tragic – it appears obvious to me, glaring and inescapable’.

(Kristeva 1989, p. 3)

Dreams began to emerge arousing his curiosity, emotions and memories. They attempted to communicate the necessary psychological information. About dreams Jung said, ‘They do not deceive, they do not lie, they do not distort or disguise.... They are invariably seeking to express something that the ego does not know and does not understand’ (Jung 1954b, para. 189). In a dream

this man is up high and eating a zebra with knife and fork. Others are around and watching. He is upset at the dream because zebras are vulnerable and they cannot hide. They are black and white and he wants to be grey and disappear. That is why he needs to eat the zebra. This is not the usual food but he has lost his self-identity and the ability to focus. An unfamiliar heaviness, inertia and depression combined with a general lack of interest set in. He said COVID-19 and the death of his father were too much for him to handle. The dream was compensating by supplying messages from the unconscious, letting us know that radical measures were needed to reconstitute his system so as to be able to adapt to the circumstances of the pandemic.

### Liminality and the crossroads

Liminality is an in-between state, neither here nor there, encompassing the psychological themes of rebirth and death. Dante's *Inferno Canto I: 1-60*, *The Dark Wood and the Hill* references this:

In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself, in a dark wood, where the direct way was lost.  
It is a hard thing to speak of, how wild, harsh and impenetrable that wood was, so that thinking of it recreates the fear'.

(Alighieri 2003, pp. 16-17)

The literary excerpt refers to the sociological concept and psychological space of liminality, a word derived from the Latin 'limen' meaning threshold. Life transitions bring up questions of identity and belonging, periods when we are in-between, neither who we used to be, nor who we will become. Identity is in flux, stripped of all we knew. At such times we resemble the snake, an ancient symbol of transformation shedding its skin in order to grow, yet while in the molting process most vulnerable.

Liminal spaces contain anxiety of the unknown. They represent times when one feels naked and vulnerable because the former persona and ego do not work and there is no means for cover-up. Liminality encompasses the alchemical stage called the *nigredo* and depicts a period when life is full of confusion and bewilderment, disorientation, sickness of spirit and confrontation with the repressed shadows. During liminal times the sense of direction is beclouded, one cannot move, the way is uncharted, unmarked and there is a breakdown of identity. Consciously held values and former ways are outmoded. Old habits do not guide any longer. One is at a crossroads, confused and torn. Essentially, ego-consciousness has yet to work out a new relationship with the unconscious.

There are feelings of nostalgia and desire for what belonged to the past, as the present and the future seem precarious. Nostalgia is predicated on separation from the psychological and physical home, accompanied by yearning and mourning. The word nostalgia derives from the Greek *nostos* meaning the return home and *algos* meaning pain. Nostalgia, like grief, is a reaction to loss. It is also triggered physiologically, and as a psychological phenomenon, relates to identity and the need to maintain congruity between the current and past concepts of oneself. Yet we are designed to experience nostalgia, as it is an expression of the passing of time, signifying where we came from and where we are now.

Dreams contain the inner and outer figures and situations for restoring the personality, reflected through their symbolic language. Ronald reported a recurring dream where a man was chasing him over, around and through buildings. The dream took place in a cityscape – crowded, impersonal, chaotic, concrete and amorphous. Throughout the dream he hid and dodged but knew that, although still eluding the chaser, he could eventually be overtaken by him. This city might represent the emotional distance and lack of empathic response from his emotionally distant, unresponsive and absent father. The dream took place after the death of his father. The man chasing him may represent the father's way of achievement and emotional coldness, an attitude devoid of spirit and life. As such, the dream man can also be an aspect of his self, a shadow and unknown figure he could not yet face.

The dream image also revealed much that was present and absent in his psyche. He had no impulse for reaching out, no cry for help, no one else in the dream to assist. He did not expect this, as he assumed no one would understand, much less care. In the dream image we have a sense of what is both absent and present, the psyche struggling to be heard and seen, yet elusive. It is a risk for him to be emotionally exposed, human and vulnerable. His adaptation of aloneness both hides and reveals this psychologically precarious situation.

The dream also expresses the emotional and physical losses and subsequent grief he suffered. In-depth psychological treatment is concerned with the formerly denied, the losses and feelings of anger, guilt, sorrow and yearning. According to André Green, the fundamentals of analysis are that it strives to complete the mourning process. Green (1983, p. 142) further contends that the experiences of our self are achieved against a background of loss and absence. This influences how we do or do not cope with the inevitable lacks, disappointments and directional changes in life.

Ronald related an image of being alone at a religious sanctuary, sitting on a bench, looking out through his tears. Someone comes up to touch his shoulder, sits down and they are both silent. In the next session he feels shame over this expression of vulnerability and desire but cannot explain further. The image exemplifies the loss of contact with his authentic self, the aloneness and loss, inner separation and lack of trust he has carried all his life. His

sorrows also express desire for connection, also desired in the analytic relationship.

For a long time, he was unable or resistant to get in touch with ‘the reality of these interior places distinguished by their lack of structure or organization’ (Green 1983, p. 37). The truths had been frightening and unbearable. André Green (1983, p. 42) interpreted this situation as a person needing the container of the analyst for the content to be presented. According to Green (1983, p. 42) both analyst and analysand witness how the distressing objects, or in Jungian terms the complexes, keep being resurrected, and both face the emptiness returning as layer after layer of the emotional neglect becomes unwrapped. For him the familiar defence of resorting to be alone is paradoxically mixed with a desire to engage with himself and others. The adoption of a grandiose persona needing nothing afforded him a sort of magical protection against the expected hurt and vulnerability. An independent or omnipotent self needs no others as compensation for the absence of safety (Modell 1996, p. 88). Estranged from his affective core and the fears of death and destruction, current life with COVID-19 made all again frightening and unsafe, like when he was a child.

Traumatic knowledge is clandestine and not only haunts, but also strikes back to shatter the protective fictions of infallibility and invulnerability, leaving in its wake precarity.

Jungian psychology attends to the many aspects of the personality through the collective unconscious, the symbolic, imagistic, archetypal and psychological layers. It is ‘Within the framework of an authentic relationship with the analyst’s “unspeakably tender hand” that new images are likely to surface when the unconscious eventually facilitates an internal capacity to make meaning’ (Weiner 2009, p. 103). It is the capacity to make meaning of life events and emotional reactions that this man lacked and avoided because they were not considered rational. Gradually, Ronald responded to the active and challenging aspects arising in the analysis. He was becoming able to comprehend the value or responsibility to deepen into his life through its emotional expression. In therapy the subjective relation to the interior world and its symbols was informing the capacity to create meaning, slowly opening and engaging. In other words, ‘It becomes a matter of opening our hearts and minds to that which is foreign’ (Singer & Kimbles 2004, p. 140).

The nature of the psyche includes the strange and the stranger; arising from worlds he could not phantom and which he tried to diminish. Kristeva considered the notion of the stranger as the foreigner, outsider, or person who feels alien in a society not their own – as well as the notion of strangeness within the self, a deep sense of being or its absence. She suggested, ‘we touch the otherness, escape its hatred and burden though accepting the differences it implies’ (Kristeva 1994, p. 3). She further noted analysis is an apprenticeship in living beyond despair. It offers not a manic defence, but rather receptivity and a way of endowing despair with meaning

(Kristeva 1992, p. 17). Perhaps this man was finding a way to engage with his own inner stranger, the strangeness within himself, where he could enter into an apprenticeship on how to handle his psychological condition constellated by COVID-19.

### The third

History and its memories are incorporated in the living psychic reality of the complexes as personal, cultural and historical processes that are reflected in therapy (Singer & Kimbles 2004, p. 201). This is much like the events in Ronald's life with the parental death, reminders of childhood losses and yearnings, and him resorting to the old isolative patterns. But mostly, he now had lost the ability to pretend or to function. The events of COVID-19 and the resulting deaths announced daily meant the emotional material would not disappear.

The process of forging self-discovery and soul repair arises in the tension of the opposites. In this most generalized and abstract form, the third (area or position) may be described as a representational space for the occurrence of emergent meaning. In this sense, the transcendent function is an attempt to describe the psychic function that is involved in the creation of meaning.

(Colman 2007, p. 566)

If the tension can be sustained without succumbing to the urge to quickly identify with one side or the other to alleviate anxiety, the unexpected images unite the range of psychological elements in new, unexpected and creative ways. Taking the path inward accesses the mystery and the life force including the differences, difficult feelings, and emotions. We need acceptance or else we feel lonely and depersonalized. The division from within is based on the psyche's rigid defences, deemed necessary early in life for protecting the self from dissolution (Solomon 1998, p. 229). Even if we defensively withdraw intra-psychically, we still remain vulnerable, raw and sensitive. This can escalate to a void of futility, meaninglessness, feeling deadened and numb while at the core reside dependency needs propelling the search for connection (Ashton 2007, p. 21). This process is difficult as it entails feeling the precarity of the personality and surrendering control. By exposing the loneliness, we gain a grasp on the psychological complexes rather than their maintaining a paralysing grip on us. Jung commented on this:

In many cases in psychiatry, the patient who comes to us has a story that is not told, and which as a rule no one knows of. To my mind, therapy only really begins after the investigation of that wholly personal story. It is the patient's secret, the rock against which he is shattered. If I know his secret story, I have a key to the treatment. The doctor's task is to find out how to gain that knowledge. In most

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cases exploration of the conscious material is insufficient.... In therapy the problem is always the whole person, never the symptom alone. We must ask questions which challenge the whole personality.

(Jung 1963, p. 115)

Ronald says he is lonely, without self-direction, and no longer knows how to live. 'The therapeutic situation is one that ideally provides enough safety for the self to unfold in the authenticity and safety of the therapeutic relationship' (Solomon 2007, p. 240). This may be where he can recover the jewels to his personality, as the intersubjective experiences in therapy affect the self and foster the capability for transformation.

The emergence of the third could also be described as the development of a capacity for symbolic imagination or simply imaginal capacity. By this I mean the capacity to formulate and creatively explore images of one's own psychic life and the world in a way that feels fully real yet distinct from the actuality of the external world.

(Colman 2007, p. 566)

It requires a self-to-self interweaving, a mutual steeping in the issues. Jung commented:

Individuation involves the transformation of the analyst as well as the patient, stirring up in his or her personality the layers that correspond to the patient's conflicts and insights.... Archetypal dynamics will affect any analyst, but particularly one whose life is not fully lived and needs to be.

(Jung 1954a, p. 172)

The personality is fluid, multi-dimensional, alive and capable of creative development. 'The act of self-recollection or the gathering together of what is scattered indicates the integration and humanization of the self' (Jung 1944, para. 400). The challenge is to emerge from the crises and find authenticity and intimacy with self and others. The task is to delve into finding what is called in Jungian psychology the 'treasure hard to attain'. This is the knowledge residing in the unconscious and the body, and the discovery of self through the minutely reflective process of therapy.

Analytic work encompasses relational as well as interpretive agents to bring about the integration and increased connectivity between and within both hemispheres of the mind-brain that lead to a change in the nature of attachment which will then permit the self to emerge more fully through the process of individuation'.

(Wilkinson 2014, p. 113)

The series of challenges posed by psychological dislocations entail journeys requiring introspection. Likewise, the current precarity in the outward and societal situations bring attention to the internal ruptures for repair and growth.

Analysis dwells in exposing the innermost ravages and co-constructing the patterns of self and other, psyche and soma. The analytical relationship can offer a corrective experience, a kind of restoration that involves remembering the wrenching and broken connections of self to self and self to others. The Self becomes conscious of itself in relation to another (Mattoon 1985, p. 131). Yet, therapists can lack awareness of what diverse systemic social traumas mean to the client due to their own preconceived concepts and personalized responses. Theory can be used as a defence assuming mutual recognition, or become an attempt to slot the client into something familiar; but instead Jung contended both parties in analytic work are changed if they are both willing to be involved in the shadows of pain and loss, opening the subjective material and finding the personal as well as collective symbols (Jung 1933, p. 49).

In further reference to this notion André Green stated, 'The mind has the capacity to bring something back again which has been related to an object, without the object being there' (Green 1979, p. 30). Symbols and metaphors are central to the interpretation of the unconscious. 'The psyche accomplishes its transformation through the creation of symbols which are capable of bringing together opposing aspects of the self' (Solomon 1998, p. 227). Symbols are also impersonal metaphors, sharing meaning from convention, myth and cultural artifacts, and a medium of communication revealing our inherent inter-subjectivity. 'The analytic process gives actual shape to something that had never before reached representation' (Perelberg 2018, p. 824). The different layers of the work unfold and emerge progressively for understanding the psyche and transforming the emptiness and absence. COVID-19 seems to emphasize and bring the opportunity for the process of being led into oneself rather than distancing from oneself.

### Solitude

Solitude does not just refer to this man, but also refers to myself as the analyst alone in my consulting room, due to COVID-19, and looking at him through a screen. As Jung commented, 'By no device can the treatment be anything but the product of mutual influence, in which the whole being of the doctor as well as that of his patient plays its part' (Jung 1954a, para. 163). The times when this man cried there was no Kleenex supplied for him. The times when he looked away, I asked where he went, as I could not tell. He has not been to my office. We are physically separated by many miles, we are also psychologically and physically unknown to each other, yet we are connected by the internal and external environment that is enveloped with fears, death, COVID-19. They are also the places of stress, the strain behind the eyes, the

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pressure of the collective as it penetrates the personal. No one can escape the intensity of these current feelings and reactions. Although we each cope from a different position, the fact that we are all affected by COVID-19 is a uniting factor between analyst and analysand. Analysis includes recognizing the unconscious processes of both participants and the 'art lies in learning to remain psychologically open to our patients' transference projections and in developing the capacity to appraise their meaning, including an acknowledgement of our own blind spots and complexes' (Weiner 2009, pp. 63-64).

Like other forms of suffering, the loneliness resulting from being isolated becomes a messenger, forcing us to address the inner situation. To his surprise and even dismay, Ronald had to acknowledge his loss of self-connection and the price it has cost him emotionally. Due to the pressures of COVID-19 and the deaths including that of his parents, he was filled again with absence and without anchor. Jung commented:

the highest and most decisive experience of all, ... is to be alone with his own self, or whatever else one chooses to call the objectivity of the psyche. The patient must be alone if he is to find out what it is that supports him when he can no longer support himself. Only this experience can give him an indestructible foundation.

(Jung 1944, para. 32)

This man had feared being alone ever since childhood when he was always alone. Yet being in solitude can provide the opportunity to examine our thoughts and reflect on feelings, values, and desires. In solitude, we can get to know ourselves better, define more clearly what is most important and develop self-love and self-worth. In solitude we find opportunities for contemplation, as well as sorting through the complicated issues for individuation.

If we let curiosity about the loneliness outweigh the fears, we can explore what it has to teach us. 'Mapping is one form of experience on another (which might also be described as a link or a conjunction), leading to the emergence of new meaning through recognition of the pattern common to both' (Colman 2007, p. 569). With mapping we may begin to transform the loneliness into fruitful solitude through a change in our perceptions, perhaps offering a chance to know ourselves better. Dialogue, verbally and non-verbally, is part of analytic inquiry. It requires a break in the former symmetry and way of ego-functioning. This is both necessary and hard to manage while being part of what expands the psyche. This includes both analyst and analysand as we encounter new ways of relating through COVID-19. It means negotiating the pandemic and the threats of death; the demise of life as we knew it, and finding the symbolic meanings for going on living.

This paper has illustrated the theory of precarity referred to by philosopher Judith Butler along with references to French psychoanalysts André Green and Julia Kristeva. The process described the composite example of a man entering Jungian analytic work due to the death of his father, COVID-19 and his subsequent inability to function, which drove him inward to find his centre and a connection to the Self. Through re-balancing the loneliness and losses, the grief and death, and arousing other emotions that had been formerly negated, the result has been that this man has engaged in expanding and developing his personality.

There is a pain – so utter –  
 It swallows substance up –  
 Then covers the Abyss with Trance –  
 So Memory can step  
 Around – across – upon it –

(Dickinson 1960, p. 294)

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

Dans cet article je discute le travail psychologique Jungien sur le traumatisme et la perte dont fait l'expérience un patient en réaction au COVID-19, patient qui représente un composite clinique. Les questions en lien avec la précarité, un concept utilisé par la philosophe Judith Butler, sont combinées avec les notions de manque et d'absence chez le psychanalyste français André Green. La situation psychologique et sociale de précarité a activé les problèmes de l'enfance de cet homme, réprimés depuis longtemps. La solitude, l'isolement et la mort liés au COVID-19 ont fait miroir avec ses réponses personnelles et les réponses collectives au désastre de cette pandémie globale. Il se sentit à la limite de l'effondrement alors que ce qu'il connaissait de son monde s'écroulait et il se trouva dans l'incapacité de faire face. Le travail Jungien qui s'ensuivit, au moyen de l'écran virtuel de l'ordinateur fut éprouvant et réparateur pour l'analysant et l'analyste simultanément.

*Mots clés:* traumatisme, COVID-19, précarité, douleur, solitude, pandémie globale

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In diesem Artikel diskutiere ich die Jungianische psychologische Arbeit an Traumata und Verlusten, die als Reaktion auf COVID-19 eingetreten sind, mit einem Mann, der eine klinische Mischung verkörpert. Die Fragen der Unsicherheit (Prekarietaet), ein Konzept der Philosophin Judith Butler, werden mit den Vorstellungen von Mangel und Abwesenheit des französischen Psychoanalytikers André Green kombiniert. Die psychologische und gesellschaftliche Situation der Unsicherheit weckte die lange unterdrückten Kindheitsprobleme des Mannes. Die von COVID-19 verursachte Einsamkeit, die Isolation und der Tod spiegelten seine persönlichen und kollektiven Reaktionen auf die Katastrophe dieser globalen Pandemie wider. Er fühlte sich am Rande des Zusammenbruchs, als das, was er über seine Welt wußte, zusammenbrach und er sich unfähig fühlte, damit umzugehen. Die anschließende Jungianische Arbeit,

die virtuell über den Computerbildschirm stattfand, war sowohl für den Analytiker als auch für den Analysanden gleichzeitig anstrengend und aufbauend.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Trauma, COVID-19, Unsicherheit, Trauer, Einsamkeit, globale Pandemie

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In questo articolo discuto il lavoro psicologico junghiano sul trauma e la perdita nell'esperienza del COVID-19 con un uomo che rappresenta un caso clinico composito. Il tema della precarietà, un concetto utilizzato dalla filosofa Judith Butler, è combinato con le nozioni di perdita e di assenza dello psicoanalista francese André Green. La situazione di precarietà psicologica e sociale ha risvegliato temi dell'infanzia del paziente che per lungo tempo erano stati repressi. La solitudine, l'isolamento e la morte per COVID-19 hanno risvegliato le sue risposte personali, come quelle collettive, alla pandemia globale. Il paziente si è sentito sull'orlo del baratro poiché il mondo che lui conosceva era crollato e lui si era ritrovato incapace di fare fronte alla distruzione. Il lavoro junghiano si è realizzato attraverso lo schermo del computer ed è stato gravoso, ma ha anche dato sollievo sia al paziente che all'analista.

*Parole chiave:* trauma, COVID-19, precarietà, dolore, solitudine, pandemia globale

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В этой статье я обсуждаю юнгианскую психологическую работу с травмой и утратой, пережитыми в связи с Ковид-19. Клиническим материалом послужила работа с мужчиной. Тема нестабильности - понятия, использованного философом Джудит Батлер, рассмотрена в сочетании с представлениями Андре Грина о дефиците и отсутствии. Психологическая и социальная ситуация нестабильности сегодняшнего дня подняла вытесненные проблемы, идущие из детства этого пациента. Одиночество, изоляция и смерть от коронавируса отобразили его личный и коллективный ответ на несчастье, вызванное пандемией. Он чувствовал себя на грани срыва, поскольку мир, каким он его знал, рухнул, и он не мог с этим справиться. Последовавшая юнгианская онлайн работа была одновременно утомительной и восстанавливающей как для аналитика, так и для анализанда.

*Ключевые слова:* травма, ковид-19, нестабильность, горе, одиночество, пандемия

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En el presente trabajo, describo el trabajo psicológico Junguiano, con un hombre que representa un compuesto clínico, acerca del trauma y la pérdida experimentada en reacción al COVID-19. Cuestiones de precariedad, un concepto utilizado por la filósofa Judith Butler, son combinadas con las nociones de falta y ausencia del psicoanalista francés André Green. La situación psicológica y social de precariedad activa temas infantiles del individuo, hasta entonces reprimidos. La soledad, aislamiento y muerte del COVID-19 espejó la suya personal y las respuestas colectivas al desastre de esta pandemia global. Él se encontró en el borde del colapso debido a que lo que él conocía del mundo se quebró, y se encontró imposibilitado de hacer algo con esto. El trabajo Junguiano subsiguiente que tuvo lugar a través de la pantalla

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virtual de la computadora fue arduo y restaurador simultáneamente para ambos, analista y analizando.

*Palabras clave:* trauma, COVID-19, precariedad, dolor, soledad, pandemia global

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文章讨论了对基于荣格心理流派，对一位在新冠疫情中经历创伤和丧失的个案的工作，这位个案是一个临床上的综合案例。关于动荡的话题，来自哲学家Judith Butler 所提出的概念，这一概念又融合了法国精神分析师André Green 关于匮乏的观念。动荡的心理与社会状况唤起了个体童年那些一直表现出来的议题。由新冠引发的孤独、隔离与死亡映射了面向全球疫情灾难所唤起的个体的与集体性的反应。他感到处于崩溃的边缘，因为他感到他的世界要崩塌了，而他没有能力应对。随之而来的透过虚拟的电脑屏幕进行的荣格式工作，对于分析师和受分析者来说，都是即繁重又滋养的。

关键词: 创伤, COVID-19, 动荡, 哀伤, 孤独, 全球疫情

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