

The Setting

Jung's *vas Hermeticum* Bion's container↔contained

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Current literature on psychedelic treatment emphasizes that the experience of the *set and setting* strongly determines treatment outcome. The set and setting is defined as the inner and outer conditions involved in the preparation and execution of a psychedelic journey. The security of the environment and sense of wellbeing of the journeyer are essential considerations in undergoing a psychedelic experience (Leary, 1964). The importance of set and setting can be extended into the experience of analysis as well. The inner and outer conditions of the participants play an important role in the couple's capacity to traverse the inner world of the patient's trauma and, through analytic fielding of dreams, imagination, and intuition, rebuild the patient's capacity to self-contain, soothe, and connect with the outer world.

Psychedelic research shows that feelings and memories can be accessed and experienced again where trauma has foreclosed on one's capacity to feel. The upsurge of feelings, emotions, and experiences becomes material ripe for integration in post-psychedelic sessions. However, questions arise around the integrity of the individual's ego, the state of the transference, and the impact of bypassing important alchemical procedures in service of a direct experience of the self. A porous or rigidified ego may have difficulty integrating psychedelically induced material, because it has not been slowly acclimatized to the depths of the unconscious (Hill, 2013). This process is exceedingly delicate and needs the support and trust of an analyst whose capacity to be a container is solid and dependable and whose treatment plan contains specific protocols for containment before, during, and after treatment. The work of Carl Jung and Wilfred Bion can be helpful in the development of protocols for the use of psychedelics because both men have a comprehensive understanding of psychotic states and how to treat and contain them.

According to psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, *container↔contained* represents the unconscious, dynamic urge to seek and find meaning through object relations. This urge begins at birth with the “infant's searching and being found by the mother's breast” (Symington, p. 52). Accessing the unconscious often involves working in liminal states where the couple may dream the patient's life into being by utilizing dreams as a safe harbor for revisiting traumatic experience. Current research supports the notion that working in liminal states with dreams, imagination, and intuition is healing for trauma patients (Kraehenmann, 2017; Zang, 2013, 2015). In infancy, the baby experiences these states through reverie with the mother.

The essential query of this writing revolves around the integrity of a “psychedelic psychoanalysis”¹ when psychedelically induced images are introduced into the *temenos* from the outside as tincture. To what extent are psychedelics effective in repairing trauma when structurally introduced and maintained in a healthy container-contained environment, and finally, what role do psychedelics play in dreaming the patient's life into being where trauma has created an impasse in a patient's access to the unconscious? In exploring these questions, Jung's *vas Hermeticum* and Bion's *container↔contained* will be explored and discussed while analyzing a psychedelically augmented psychoanalysis with a patient.

Jung's Self and Bion's O

Wilfred Bion and Carl Jung shared a primary interest in the cosmos of psychic life; its creative expression through intuition, dreaming, and imagination, all borne through the *temenos* of relationship. Jung and Bion both held an intense reverie with the transcendent realm, defined in terms of Jung's concept of the archetypal Self and Bion's idea of O, and their respective relationships to these ideas were important to each. In recent decades, contemporary psychoanalytic schools, particularly relational psychoanalysts such as James Grotstein, Michael Eigen, and Stephen Mitchell, have been increasingly interested in the transpersonal aspects of the psyche. Here, Winborn (2017) cites Grotstein comparing Bion's and Jung's ideas of the transcendent:

So I think that with Bion's notions of myths, of transcendence and transformations, and of prenatal, unborn selves, we are hearing someone who was very much influenced by Jung and/or working parallel to him without knowing it ... Bion is also one of the very few people in the psychoanalytic field who respects religion, spirituality, the numinous, the ineffable. And that certainly is Jung. (Grotstein in Culbert-Koehn, 1997, p. 16)

Indeed, the cohesion in the depth psychology schools seems to point to an emergent interest in the transpersonal realm of the psyche. Repeatedly, Bion and Jung springboarded into the depths of their understanding of the psyche through the door of the infinite and ineffable Self and O. Essentially, Bion and Jung's ideas of the transcendent refer to a life of meaning beyond the boundaries of an ego-defined life. Throughout his writings, Jung emphasizes that an individual's singular urge is not to get to know one's own ego, but instead, to have a relationship with the divine. Indeed, the urge of the Self is transcendence. When the Self announces its presence through an archetypal experience, it can induce tremendous alterations in the personality and the ego's sense of omnipotence. Jung (1959) states,

I usually describe the supraordinate personality as the 'self,' thus making a sharp distinction between the ego, which, as is well known, extends only as far as the conscious mind, and the whole of the personality, which includes the unconscious as well as the conscious components. The ego is thus related to the self as part to whole. To that extent the self is supraordinate. Moreover, the self is felt empirically not as a subject but as object. (CW 9i, § 315)

Bion, like Jung, also expounds upon the transcendent aspect of the psyche through his idea of O. Similar to Jung's archetypal Self, O lives in each individual, yet also intersects with a cosmic O. Bion emphasized that O in the consulting room exists within and between each individual; the in-between is a subjectively held experience similar to Jung's archetypal field emerging between and within the analytic couple. Jungian analyst Barbara Stephens Sullivan states:

The domain of O has been explored by philosophers and mystics under titles like the absolute, ultimate reality or ultimate truth, the ground of being, God or the Godhead. O is the world of Plato's ideal forms, Kant's things-in-themselves, Bion's pre-conceptions, Klein's inborn phantasies and Jung's archetypes. (2020, p. 38)

Like Jung's archetypes, we can sense Bion's O through our feelings (Sullivan, 2020). He refers to emotional and psychological experience as Knowledge (K). Bion emphasizes the idea of experience, or K, and the importance of surrendering preconceived notions in analysis as much as possible to experience O in its truest form. It is a highly creative, mysterious process. Here, Stephens expounds upon "domain K":

The 'domain K' is that aspect of the universe of one's life experience that one can hope to get to know by interacting with it in an open and receptive frame of mind. Here, Bion is emphasizing that he is not talking about book learning, which will never reveal O. We sense O by sinking into our experience and letting it absorb us until we can intuit the intangible fundamental reality that is making itself known through our lived experience. This will not lead us to know O. What we can hope for is a sense of the leading edge of O as it evolves into material existence. (2020, p. 40).

An increase in K is similar to a newfound awareness that occurs when the ego is defeated by the Self, introducing one to the transcendent aspect of psyche. Depth psychology, psychedelics, religion, and theology all support the desired contact between the human being and the transcendent.

Jung's *vas Hermeticum*

In the Jungian *cultus* reverie and soul-making go on in the outer world in the cathedral of the analyst's office, and in the inner world where it is known as the alchemical *vas Hermeticum* (the grail cup). Depth psychotherapy is a form of *cultus*, a religious culture shaped by the two individuals participating in the ritualistic act of creation. The paradigmatic experience of psychotherapy culls the unnecessary, revealing a universal truth of Self, located at the core of one's being and becoming. In his

book, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, Walter Otto discusses the concept of *cultus*, and its power to emotionally and psychologically transform. *Cultus*, a system or variety of worship, is seen "as a totality belongs to the monumental *creations* of the human spirit" (Otto, 1965, p. 18).

Jung's work on alchemy focused on the act of creation or the revelation of the inner deity through one's devotion to self-awareness. The image of the *vas Hermeticum* is one of a glass container representing the subjective experience created within an individual when encountering the Other. Jung believed that two people hold the mysteries of the universe within the infinite number of experiences that can be made from the union of their psyche. Jung states,

For two personalities to meet is like mixing two chemical substances: if there is any combination at all both are transformed. In any effective psychological treatment, the doctor is bound to influence the patient; but this influence can only take place if the patient has a reciprocal influence on the doctor. You can exert no influence if you are not susceptible to influence. (CW 16, §163)

The transformation takes place within the unconscious attraction in similarities and differences held deep within the couple's unconscious world. This *participation mystique*, a term initially coined by Lévy Bruhl, drives the couple, urging them to newer landscapes of development within each other and themselves. Indeed, the unconscious base matter of the psyche, or *prima materia*, becomes enlivened through the *participation mystique*, leading to an unconscious attraction. The couple begins their mutual developmental life through projection (transference) and projective identification (countertransference). This phenomenon, the projection of inner contents onto and into the other, becomes a critical change agent.

The burgeoning field of psychedelic psychoanalysis is designed to augment treatment with a substance that weakens the ego's calcified defenses, thereby introducing the patient to aspects of the Self that exist beyond the ego's impaired field of vision—but within the ego's reach to experience something

new. It will be through the fertilization of the relationship that the death states may transmute into a living substance, germinating into a language and image the analytic couple can understand. Within the *vas Hermeticum*, the dismembered parts of the soul relegated to the storehouse of the unconscious may be called back through the relationship with the other, and through *re-membered* suffering, the soul may stand a chance for resurrection. Otto explains the mystery:

The creative phenomenon must be its witnessed. And its testimony has only one meaning: that the human mind cannot become creative by itself, even under the most favorable circumstances, but that it needs to be touched and inspired by a wonderful Otherness; that the efficacy of this Otherness forms the most important part of the total creative process, no matter how gifted men are thought to be. (1965, p. 26)

The act of creation is born through the imaginal world and the liminal spaces of the psyche that burst through the gates of relationship in imagery and feeling. In trauma, the dream world is impaired, and the dreamer struggles to access solutions that feeling provides, such as the critical capacity for self-reflection. Through dream work, untenable feelings may be approached and metabolized through active imagination. Psychedelic psychoanalysis is designed to augment this process. But Jung disagreed with the use of psychedelics due to the unpredictable and wily nature of the unconscious, and the forces let loose on the ego in a confrontation with the Self: “Generally speaking, the ego is a hard-and-fast complex which, because tied to consciousness and its continuity, cannot easily be altered, and should not be altered unless one wants to bring on pathological disturbances” (CW 8, § 430). Here, Jung warns against disturbances in the ego's capacity to integrate unconscious content. The other's emergence then, whether induced through psychedelics or cultivated through the analytic relationship, bears consideration. Bion's theory of container↔contained offers another prism of exploration into psychic development through the augmentation by psychedelics.

Bion's container↔contained

Wilfred Bion emerged from the Kleinian school of psychoanalytic thought. His psychoanalyst was Melanie Klein; his foundational thinking stems from that experience. For Bion, the relationship between mother and infant asserts a primary influence on the child's becoming and an equally destructive erosion in the integrity of the personality when early experiences are foreclosed by trauma and/or maternal deprivation. Bion emphasizes the patient's experience of themselves in the analyst's presence. More importantly, Bion's work focuses on the healing potential of the analytic bond. Grotstein explains:

He aimed to acquaint man with the awesomeness and wonder, rather than the dread, of the effable Otherness within and beyond him and to lead him to respect the truths that constantly evolve from it. Bion's analytic stance is to encourage man to allow himself to become incarnate by his ineffable, infinite reservoir of cosmic being. (2007, p. 52)

Jungian analyst Barbara Stephens Sullivan states,

Bion's theory is revolutionary. It focuses on the ways the individual fails to *have* his emotional experiences rather than the ways the person defends against knowing about them. This theory describes a hypothetical inner 'apparatus' that we must have in order to handle emotional life, an apparatus that develops throughout the life cycle, hopefully towards increasing levels of robustness, but never attains perfect reliability. (2010, p. 68)

The inner apparatus Sullivan refers to sits at the core of Bion's theory. It is the foundational psychic capacity to hold and contain raw, inchoate psychic material and transmute this energy through relationship into a living experience informed by feeling and image. Stephens aptly describes this apparatus as the α (alpha) function:

Raw sensations of life, saturated with unformed protoemotional energies, assault us at every moment. At first, these are neuronal impulses traveling to the brain. How does the mind turn this raw data into something thinkable and feelable? Bion (1962) calls this

fundamental process 'α (alpha) function,' and I would suggest that it accomplishes a task that all higher mammals (and perhaps other creatures, too) must accomplish. (2010, p.68)

To appreciate the subtle and powerful complexities of Bion's descriptions of the α (alpha) function and container↔contained, it is important to comprehend the role of the α (alpha) function and its relationship to α (alpha) elements, β (beta) elements and the contact barrier.

Psychoanalysts Joan and Neville Symington describe psychological development as an unconscious phenomenon whereby outer and inner experiences find each other and through their union, experience is born. "The mating of container and contained is how mental growth occurs at every stage of development" (2004, p. 53). The container simulates the mother and her ability to physically, emotionally, and psychologically attend to her baby's needs (contained), and through reverie (holding and containing) or her alpha (α) function, she can dream her infant's becoming (Grotstein, 2007). The potent image here is of the infant's locating and latching onto the mother's breast (Symington, 1996). The reverie that was once defined by an in utero cosmos becomes in the outer world a psychic container born from mother's eyes, arms, skin, and prosody of voice. In reverie, whether it is between outer and inner or through image to experience, the union is a dynamic process of seeking and finding, culling and sorting, as relational sparks begin enlivening the archetypal experience of being.

Reverie is central to the integrity of the α (alpha) function and the maternal capacity for transmuting proto-sensorial and proto-emotional (beta elements) states into alpha elements (emotions) or dream (waking and sleeping) material and psychic nutrients for symbolization. "The primitive matrix from which thoughts develop, the processed and unthought data, are named beta elements" (Symington, 1996, p. 39). Psychic landscapes begin taking shape as beta elements are transmuted. According to Stephens, "Bion's hypothetical alpha function turns beta elements into alpha elements: integrated atoms of sensory emotional experience that have been symbolized and taken in as parts of the person's developing

self. These elements can be stored and used by the psyche in any of the psychological activities (like thinkingⁱⁱ, feeling, dreaming, or remembering) that constitute emotional work” (2020, p. 71).

The α (alpha) function can be witnessed in the mother's reverie and ability to psychologically and emotionally hold the frustrating, untenable, negative bits cathected from the infant's overwhelmed psyche. In reverie, a calming, soothing experience indicates that beta elements have penetrated the contact barrier. The image utilized by Bion to express the contact barrier is the nervous system's synapse (Bion, 1962; Lopez-Corvo, 2003; Symington, 1996). Both beta and alpha elements come in contact with this barrier as energy is transmuted. The form of the transmutation (conversion to alpha) depends on the integrity of the alpha function, a reflection of the mother's capacity to contain the infant's inchoate states:

The contact-barrier is supposed to be located amid the conscious and the unconscious, demarking their contact as well as separation between each other and discriminating outside from inside realities. It will perform as a kind of permeable membrane whose nature will depend, on how the supply of α -elements is established, and on how they relate with each other. (Lopez-Corvo, 2003, p. 69)

According to Symington: “It is while this membrane is being produced that there is an ongoing correlation of conscious and unconscious elements which, after abstraction, results in comprehension of the emotional experience. It also allows for storage in memory and for repression” (Symington, 1996, p. 65).

Containment provides an environment for the conversion of beta to alpha elements as some psychic bits make their way through the barrier and others fall away. The baby's experience of the mother's containing α (alpha) function provides an environment for the baby who can, through the shaping of a healthy contact barrier, begin breaking ground into the relational world. In essence, the mother's alpha function “absorbs, defuses, transduces, detoxifies—that is ‘dreams’—her infant's projections” (Grotstein, 2007, p. 45). It is within the container \leftrightarrow contained experience that the relationship

with the other emerges and later produces in the infant the ultimate capacity for self-containment and symbolization.

Symington states that the container↔contained is an internal-external experience: “The container is *internal*, whereas, holding or the holding environment is external or in the transitional stage between internal and external; the container is non-sensuous, but the holding environment is predominantly sensuous; the container together with the contained is active” (1996, p. 58). Grotstein supplements Bion's idea of the container↔contained by considering the internal model (self) that the infant is born with, which becomes activated by the maternal reverie: “While I certainly believe that Bion is correct in his conception (of the container↔contained)...I posit that the infant is born with rudimentary (inherited) α -function with which it is prepared to generate pre-lexical communications and to receive prosodic lexical communications from mother” (2007, p.45). Grotstein echoes Jungian analyst Michael Fordham's model of the Self: that the infant is not born *tabula rasa* but that the Self is born incarnate and unfolds through an ego/Self paradigmatic phenomenological relationship (Fordham, 1956; 1973).

Through the ego's states of de-integration, integration, or disintegration the archetypal world is activated and mediated by the mother. Her capacity to contain the infant's falling apart and re-integrating greatly effects the buoyancy of the baby's developing ego (Fordham, 1973). The mother's emotional acuity informs her level of faith, the strength of her (α) alpha function and her relationship to O. According to Bion, “faith is a state of mind that is receptive to O, the source of what we call reality” (Sullivan, 2020, p. 44). Faith is critical to the couple's navigation of the unknown, for it directly impacts the couple's dreaming and becoming together. The mother's alpha function, in waking and dreaming states continues to process alpha elements, organizing sense impressions. “These elements as they proliferate, may cohere, agglomerate, get sequentially ordered to give the appearance of the narrative, get logically or even geometrically ordered” (Bion, 1962, p. 17). Resonances of the alchemical process of *coniunctio* can be detected here as archetypal patterns constellate and shape the mother/infant relationship, the Self's expression organizing the couple's cosmos.

Psychedelics and the container↔contained

To discuss Bion's concept of container↔contained and the effectiveness of psychedelic psychoanalysis, I will utilize the article entitled *Psychedelic Psychoanalysis: Transformations of the Self*, by psychoanalyst Megan Rundelⁱⁱⁱⁱ. Rundel describes a ketamine-supplemented psychoanalysis with a patient named Ari, who she treated for approximately four years. At the age of ten, Ari had suffered the loss of his father, and had very few childhood memories prior to his father's death. Consequently, he had developed dissociative defenses to cope with a childhood of impending death. His mother was equally opaque in the analysis, her ghostly presence palpable. Rundel states: "Ari's mom hovers around the analysis like a phantom, almost as absent as the father. He doesn't remember much about her, good or bad: no comfort, no punishment, no contact...She didn't seem depressed or afflicted; just remote. Ari was on his own..." (2022, p. 471).

Ari was ensnared in the archetypal experience of the dead mother. Any movement towards life was met with a dread of the other's engulfment. To expose himself to the negative or the unknown was risky at best. His dissociative defenses contributed to the mutual state of emptiness, filling the container with dread, shifting Ari's experience of O from awe-inspiring and numinous to an awful dread of the other. Rundel iterates: "Transformations in O can feel turbulent and anxiety-producing, as anchors in normal narrative security and identity are threatened. Bion spoke of "an intense catastrophic emotional explosion, O" (Bion, 1965) that brought about a radical shift in one's sense of knowability and separateness" (Rundel, 2022, p. 476).

Ari's descent into the underworld occurred before his ego could handle such a trauma. Without maternal mediation, archetypal forces engulf the ego leaving it incapable of coping. Splitting ensues, fragmentation and dissociation result and self-integration is thwarted.

Rundel describes an ongoing transference-countertransference experience:

...[W]e couldn't find life or feeling between us. His relational trauma had locked him in an emotional dissociation that felt impossible to enter. I grappled with questions about how to work with the impasse. For months and years, we tolerated it, spoke to the felt sense of it, and linked it to the absence of both parents. I could feel despair settling in for both of us. (Rundel, 2022, p. 471)

The reported lack of feeling between the couple points to an impairment in the container↔contained. The health of the container↔contained can be compromised when the container is highly taxed in its capacity to contain psychic content, or when the container is “so rigid that it compresses the contents, rendering them static or even depriving them of their qualities” (Symington, 1996, p. 53). Indeed, Ari's parents had impaired Ari's alpha function. Such an impairment causes a disruption in the “translating of sense impressions or beta-elements into more sophisticated elements, useful in the process of thinking, or creating alpha elements” (Lopez-Corvo, 2003, p. 263). In such circumstances a screen of beta elements is constructed between conscious and unconscious (Lopez-Corvo, 2003) reflecting not just a reversal of (α) function, but “is responsible for a state of confusion similar to dreams, as well as massive projections of beta elements” (p. 203). Indeed, one indication of this occurrence can be experienced in the therapist through projective identification, such as when Rundel describes states of apathy and frustration at not being able to make contact with Ari. She is caught in the throes of Ari's parental interjects “that arrive in the internal world either due to parental projective identification interjected into the self, or to trauma from the real that violates the self, or both” (Bollas, 1999, p. 94).

The stuckness experienced in the field also indicates that the dreaming states accessible in reverie are lacking, making the forging of being through dreaming difficult at best. Here, Bion describes the disconnect Rundel might be experiencing in the transference/countertransference:

Instead of sense impressions being changed into alpha elements for use in dream thoughts and unconscious waking thinking, the development of the contact barrier is replaced by its

destruction. This is effected by the reversal of the alpha function so that the contact barrier and the dream thoughts and unconscious waking thinking, which are the texture of the contact-barrier are turned into alpha elements, divested of all characteristics that separate them from beta-elements and are then projected thus forming the beta screen. (1962, p. 25)

In Jungian terms, the couple exists in *participation mystique*, a state of unconscious identification. Ari has descended into the alchemical state of *nigredo*. In the *nigredo*, nothing is moving; it is the beginning of the alchemical procedure defined by Jung as the “chaos, the *massa confusa*, an inextricable interweaving of the soul with the body, which together formed a dark unity” (CW 14, § 696). It is only through the peeling back of projections that the soul can begin to be freed. According to Jung, projections can be withdrawn only when they come within the possible scope of consciousness” (CW 14, § 697). However, in a container↔contained environment defined by maternal deprivation, consciousness may not come for some time because the soul has yet to be born. The self-egg is still very much in incubation. It will be through renewed feeling states that the unfolding of the self begins.

Rundel and Ari eventually decided on ketamine therapy. They hoped it would help to loosen the grip of the archetypal dead parents, allowing for something new to emerge. Rundel's treatment plan prescribed several pre-ketamine sessions followed by a few low dose sessions “in which we both got a feel for the ketamine and how we could best form a relationship with it in service of his healing” (ibid., p. 472). The low dose consults were followed by four high dose sessions, as well as sessions in between for integration of the material. Rundel was present during all of the sessions.

Rundel reports on the results of the initial sessions: “The low-dose sessions were remarkable in themselves; Ari was able to perceive more subtle aspects of his experience than he ordinarily could, and he developed an awareness that there was ‘something missing’ inside. He could feel the presence of an absence” (ibid.). His capacity to notice the subtleties of his absent mother, while becoming aware of an inside emptiness, indicates that Ari has made contact not only with his shadow, but the feelings that are linking up to an existential trauma that must be grieved. New relational ground is being broken as the

archetypal experience of the dead mother is emerging in the field. The container↔contained, or Rundel's capacity to hold and feed Ari's projective contents allows for a shared intimate experience to take shape, this intimacy providing the *prima materia*, or base matter for dreaming, while giving a name to the previously unknowable and dreaded other. For the couple, this dreaming is critical in repairing the lost reverie with the mother and delivering Ari's world into technicolor.

Ari states that in his first experience, he encounters hospitable and inhospitable life forms, and at one point, gets petrified as he comes upon his father's grave. Critically, Ari does not flee but instead decides to stay and face his fears:

I decided to just stay there and see what happened. Nothing happened, it felt dark and stagnant, oppressive and claustrophobic, and I wanted to find a way out. I found a kind of escape hatch above me, which relieved me, but I realized that I needed to stay a while longer. Then spirits gathered around me in a circle, and I knew they were ancestors... Their presence was comforting. They were there to support me and offer me guidance. (Ibid., p. 475)

Ari's ability to sit with anxiety indicates a shift in his capacity to hold the unknown, an essential discipline in psychological health. His holding and containing of fear during a regressive condition indicate an increase in trust in self and other, serving as a metaphor for a bridging between the ego and the Self. This capacity is supported by neuroscience and the effects of psychedelics on emotions, and in Ari's case, on his relationship to fear (Matte Blanco, 1998a, 1998b; Hill, 2013; Krahenmann, 2017; Rundel, 2022; Strassman, 2001).

Recent research with animals indicates that the use of psychedelics may play a large role in elimination of conditioned fear memories (Krahenmann, 2017; Zhang, 2013; 2015). Not only do psychedelics “enhance associative learning and memory consolidation... it is conceivable that psychedelics might facilitate conditioned fear extinction if the conditioned fear memory is retrieved (e.g., via exposure to the relevant stimuli), and if the psychedelic-experience during and after this fear exposure is modified

and re-consolidated by positive, self-protective information within a trustful interpersonal context” (Kraehenmann, 2017, p. 1035). Ari's psychedelic encounter with his father, along with the presence of Rundel in a contained, trusting environment confirms the current research. The increase in feeling and trust, and the decrease in fear, allows for a dreaming of Ari's new world. Since dreaming for Bion includes the processing of conscious and unconscious states, the psychedelic sessions serve as dream material for integration.

Ari is liminally altered in a state in which dreams become a mediating safe harbor, where he can tolerate the unknown while allowing the analyst/mother to provide a reverie he has been deprived of in his trauma. In integration sessions, the experience serves as dream material for psychic integration. Psychedelic experience as dream material is affirmed by neuroscientist Rainier Kraehenmann: “Given that both dreams and psychedelics acutely induce characteristic changes in subjective experience, one may hypothesize that therapeutic effects of psychedelics in psychiatric patients may be mediated by the dreamlike experiences of the patients during psychedelic treatment” (2017, p. 1032).

In Jungian psychology, dream work is critical to overall health, and neuroscience affirms this notion. Dreams can revitalize and restore imagination and creativity, encourage self-understanding, and restore feelings once numbed by trauma. “The broad overlap between dreaming and psychedelic states supports the notion that psychedelics acutely induce dreamlike subjective experiences which may have long-term beneficial effects on psychosocial functioning and (Kraehenmann, 2017, p. 1038). Furthermore,

...[D]reaming has the cognitive advantage of facilitating creative insight—the forming of associative elements into new image-based combinations which lead to greater understanding and are useful to solve a problem. This notion is further supported by some data which support the idea that dreaming cognition can be superior to waking cognition in tasks which require cognitive flexibility, formation of new associations, or insight into hidden abstract rules. (Kraehenmann, 2017, p. 1034).

As the ketamine sessions unfolded, Ari could make contact with an existential state of loneliness he carried around in and outside of therapy. Rundel states:

Ari became intensely aware of his painful loneliness and tracked it through his daily life, interactions with friends, coworkers, and especially his mother and sister, and his somatic sensations. At first this sensation was overwhelming for him; it was frightening, and he worried that he would be forever exiled to solitary confinement. He felt intense energy and pain in his heart and belly, areas where he had always been numb (2022, p. 476)

Early trauma can impair the infant's capacity to self-soothe, creating a rupture in the psyche-soma relationship. For Ari, the psyche-soma ruptures would play a significant role in his psychedelic journeying and his ability to feel emotions moving through his body, a significant ailment in the dead mother archetype. According to Rundel:

He felt a quickening of feeling around his heart that was spacious but often painful, a literal experience of heartbreak...for Ari, the change emerged from a previously sealed off world of the death, which also contained his affects and meanings. Each journey took him back to the underworld; he felt a mixture of fear, grief, and expansion with greater depth of emotion that we had accessed in prior work. (2022, p. 477)

Ari's suffering begins to feed the dreams of the life to come. Through his relationship with Rundel, several areas of psyche soma repair are witnessed. Ari's capacity to face his fears and work with his loneliness indicates an increase in what Bion calls *Negative Capability*, the capacity to suffer uncertainty, doubt, ambiguity, and frustration. The *negredo* activates the deep sadness which is finally released up and through the body.

Ari's ego has undergone a *solutio*, the shadow integration allowing for a new appreciation of things. Neuroscientist Lawrence Fishman affirms the neurological and psychoanalytic benefits of ego dissolution from psychedelics: "This process coincides neurobiologically and psychodynamically

deactivating defense mechanisms which mitigate the threat of losing the loved object. It also enables the dreamlike imagery, symbols, and metaphor of the primary process, a regression to earlier ways of relating to objects, and feelings of love and connectivity” (2019, p. 53). Rundel also began integrating aspects of her own shadow as she openly admits to finally feeling pent up anger at Ari for his lengthy withholding of affection for her. It is here that an increase of K occurs as the couple begin circumambulating the whole human relationship. The bouyancy of the container↔contained reflects the couple's capacity to navigate these truthful, relational waters.

These robust affective states reflect a restoration of Ari's alpha function. Equally, Rundel's alpha function provides a substantial container↔contained experience for Ari, as he responded with deep feelings of grief. The *solutio* of grief closed the chasm of the distance between the couple, opening a wellspring of deep feelings previously capped off from trauma. According to Rundel:

When psychedelic agents are used in a safe, therapeutic setting, the opportunity arises in which to experience a range of effects in a safe and reliable container, so that they can be defended against less and a greater range of emotions can become available. This can allow for the repair of old wounds. (2022, p. 478)

Integration sessions are essential in post-psychedelic experiences. The consults serve as metaphors for the great mother and the container↔contained where images, feelings, and memories become food for dream work. Indeed, “it is plausible to assume that the lucid dreaming mindset may enhance core processes of psychotherapy such as self-understanding and psychological insight, and may therefore facilitate psychological change—a prerequisite of symptom reduction and behavioural adaptation” (Kraehenmann, 2017, p. 1038).

Finally, psychedelic therapeutic augmentation sublimates the ego to Self through the transpersonal experience of visits from ancestors. “Through the ketamine work he consulted that circle of ancestors he contacted in his first journey for guidance, and they helped him to share his feeling of

isolation with others, including me, which brought them together” (Rundel, 2022, p. 476). The ancestors provide faith and experience of the ineffable O through contact with the archetypal Self. This is a remarkable example of the states of betwixt and between (liminality) that can provide a safe passage for Ari's going on being, finding meaning in his life, and the dreaming of his future.

Rundel's work with Ari is a poignant example of how psychedelic implementation in psychoanalysis can enrich a patient's life, creating an adaptive bridge to overall wellbeing; however, there were also challenges that emerged in conjunction with the Covid-19 pandemic. Enforced separation of pandemic lockdown gave rise to Ari's emotional distancing. During the electronic sessions, Rundel states that Ari experienced “my voice as remote, tiny, flat, vanishing. He was again all alone, sealed off, and even I couldn't reach him” (2022, p. 480). A deep period of mourning ensued, but with an important caveat: Ari could feel and sit in the suffering, which was different than before. Indeed, Rundel reports that she no longer feels invisible to Ari, even though they still “oscillate between times of connection and painful disconnection” ((Rundel, 2022, p. 480).

Rundel's work with Ari is impressive, and if the results are long-term, she provides a solid case for the implementation of psychedelics. The unearthing of image and feeling through the ketamine provided rich dream material which restored his faith in the other, while also introducing him to his greater potential. However, it is useful to question the short circuited ascent of Ari from the *negredo* through the use of psychedelics. While sitting in the stuckness held a particular agony for Rundel, it may be important for the patient to hold the stuckness until their ego is ready to transition from the *negredo* on its own. What cost does the ego pay when its organic seeking and finding of the Self is bypassed through the use of medicine? Developing a relationship between the ego and Self is essential to overall health and is a skill set which unfolds over time in the analytic work. Active imagination and dreaming provide the road map. But what might happen when the map is forced by psychedelics instead of arriving organically within the temenos of the work? The answer may lie in the bouyancy of the ego. Michael Fordham believed that the difficulty lies not in whether psychedelic images engage one, or whether one can engage

the images in active imagination, but whether one's ego “relates actively to unconscious material that initially emerged without conscious intention or participation, that is a valid integrative process” (Hill, 2013, p. 150).

The capacity to attend to and participate in the unconscious material is an indicator of a healthy ego capable of withstanding the intensity of the engagement of the psychedelic experience (Fordham, 1956). Moreover, the ego that can engage in the unconscious material can access the liminal states required for bridging to the self and dreaming themselves into being. Indeed, Rundel’s container, along with Ari’s preparedness and symbolic capacity, as well as his attitude towards the engagement of psychedelics, played an important role in the progress made.

The health of one's ego, trust in the analyst and the analytic process, and the capacity to hold suffering fulfills many of the requirements for psychedelic augmentation. Indeed, the bouyancy of the ego sits at the center of one's capacity to withstand the unconscious realm and its tendency to overwhelm the ego during developmental storms. Ongoing research indicates that: chronic instability in character structure; regressive, entrenched negative transferences; and narcissistically inflexible or dependent ego structures are more apt to identify with the darker side of the Self, making psychedelic augmentation dangerous for some patients. It is within the throes of archetypal possession that adaptation is thwarted and psychosis threatens to consume the ego. It will be up to the analyst to determine with great refinement whether the patient’s ego is functioning in relationship to the Self, or if the ego is unable to manage the forces of the archetypal world.

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Endnotes

ⁱ Psychedelic Psychoanalysis is a coin termed by psychoanalyst Megan Rundel (2022).

ⁱⁱ For Bion, thinking was not just the cognitive capacity to process thought, it also included feeling.

ⁱⁱⁱ I have not treated Rundel's patient, and therefore, it would be inappropriate to analyze him. The skeletal information is utilized to discuss, define and explore the ramifications of psychedelic augmentation in treatment, as well as to imagine what might be happening within the unconscious world of patient. It is with great respect that I appreciate the contributions Rundel's work has made in the pioneering field of psychedelic psychoanalysis.