JW: David. I remember when we first met. It was 1970, at a party given for you when you returned to the Bay Area to begin your internship at San Francisco General Hospital. Could you speak to what led up to that occasion; that is, why you decided to become a physician?

DR: My father was a physician (actually an ENT surgeon). So in part, I was following in my father’s footsteps. However, I wanted to go into medicine to study psychiatry. I think this was an unconscious motivation to heal myself which later was realized when I became a Jungian psychoanalyst.

When I was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley I couldn’t decide on a major. I was studying pre-medical courses, but I was drawn to psychology as well as to the arts and humanities. My advisor Dr. John Lawrence (a physician, Head of Medical Physics, and the brother of Dr. Ernest Lawrence the Nobel Laureate & the inventor of the cyclotron and discoverer of numerous elements), recommended an “individual major.” It was a stroke of genius rising out of a desperate situation. First, I had to write an essay explaining and justifying the individual curriculum I devised in Psychological-Biological Sciences. After Dr. Lawrence approved it, the Dean of the College of Letters & Sciences had to approve it. It all went through and that became a template for my future career. I was torn between clinical psychology and medicine (specifically psychiatry). So I applied to both and got into both, but chose medicine. Ironically, now I’m primarily (three-quarters) in clinical psychology although I’m still in medicine one-quarter time. I’m probably the only psychiatric physician in an American psychology department.

My years at UC Berkeley turned out to be prophetic not only in terms of my vocation, but also of my calling. It was you who noticed that I always painted when I was profoundly depressed and that it resolved after my creative effort was com-
pleted. You suggested I read Andreas Lommol’s book *Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art.* Remember? It was then that I made the connection between the shamanic journey and my personal myth. The seeds were sown for my own self-healing odyssey which is discussed in my book *Transforming Depression: Healing the Soul Through Creativity.* It was also at UC Berkeley when I read the newly published autobiography Carl Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections.* However, it wasn’t until thirty years later when I was on a sabbatical in Zurich writing *The Tao of Jung: The Way of Integrity* that I realized the personal impact of that book. When I re-read Jung’s autobiography after the first year of medical school, I made extensive notes. I had written: “This book has changed my life.” Little did I know then how much Jung had influenced my life and its course.

JW: In *Transforming Depression,* you speak of psychically murdering your father, who later returns “from the realm of the dead . . . uncharacteristically smiling.” “This is an image,” you continue, “of acceptance of my personal shadow and father complex (as well as my father) based on a psychic transformation.” (pp.72-3.)

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote that if a man doesn’t make his spiritual quest, his children must go far out into the world/toward the same church, which he forgot. Although you had antipathy toward your father, you chose the profession—shamatically speaking, it chose you—he had practiced, even though practicing it differently. Did Carl Jung awaken in you the premise that you must make the journey that your father hadn’t? Did Jung become a positive paternal figure?

DR: I think my father lost his soul during WWII and because of that I lost mine. And yes, my shamanic journey enabled me to find my soul. Jung always seemed like a positive father figure, a wise old man, and a shaman in his own right. I cannot imagine being without Jung—today he seems like a brother, a friend, and a colleague, i.e. fellow shaman. I feel so fortunate to have read his autobiography—looking back it seems like it was my destiny which is still unfolding.

JW: Among primal people, “soul loss” is a “spiritual emergency” (to use Stanislav Grof’s term), often with fatal results, in which a shaman is called in to locate the stolen, or recalcitrant, soul and return it to the patient. In the West, we render this condition in a more moralistic, less pragmatic, light. With this in mind, can you say

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how, and why, you think your father “lost his soul during WWII; and why, “because of that,” you lost your soul too? Also, how do you see the role of a Jungian shaman, as opposed to the allopathic healer?

DR: My father was a physician in the Navy during WWII. He was assigned to the Marines as a medical doctor. He was with the Marines in the South Pacific liberating island after island from the Japanese. At the time of my birth February 25, 1945 my mother was notified he was missing in action. The PT boat he was in was blown up as they landed on one of the islands. He was shell shocked and shipped back as a casualty. He got a Purple Heart, lost his soul, but it saved his life. Eventually he was shipped to Bethesda Naval Hospital as a psychiatric patient. War is primitive and it was a spiritual emergency! Like many subsequent Vietnam Vets, he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (the new term for having been shell-shocked). Throughout his life he suffered from violent outbursts, which were worse in the early years when I was an infant and toddler. I’m certain that my melancholia stems, in part, from this rough beginning.

My children’s book, Henry’s Tower, was a creative effort to help heal wounds in children who suffer from such early trauma, but it also was part of my own healing process. As you know, I call severe depression coupled with suicidal intent a “soul attack;” it’s the murderous rage [which was unconsciously introjected at a very early age] turned against the soul. I lost the connection with my soul and through Jungian psychoanalysis I was able to reconnect with my anima and Self and begin to actualize my true self. That’s why I’m okay with being called a Jungian Shaman. In a real way Jung saved my life, too. That’s the same thing Frank McMillan told me as to why he endowed the position that I now hold. It always felt (and still feels) like synchronicity was and is at work.

JW: You were a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, but until now I couldn’t trace some of this decision back to your father’s experiences. In our generation, all our parents were, in one way or another, involved in W.W.II, as the whole country was mobilized. My father tried to volunteer for the military, but was told he was too old. So he worked as a mechanic, making Thunderbolt fighter planes, on the night shift. Thus, my early memories only contain vague glimpses of him, although his presence is always there, in a protective, loving way. And yet, I have had more than my share of emotional upheavals. So that, in addition to experience, isn’t a Mystery also involved here, one that moves one toward what you call “egoicide,” instead of suicide? I ask this because there are myriad persons who have been wounded by childhood experiences, but who hear the Sirens, instead of the Shamans, as you did.

DR: Actually, I decided before the Vietnam War (and before I was eighteen) that I was a CO. So when I appeared at the Selective Service Board in 1963 I registered as a CO. In my essay justifying my case, I remember quoting President John F. Kennedy (who was still alive then) as saying, “War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector is just as valued as the warrior is today.” Yes, I’m certain that my father’s experience played a major role in my conscientious objection to war. I just saw Saving Private Ryan, and I saw my father in this movie—just shift it to the South Pacific and substitute the Japanese for the Germans. Imagine the medic in the film ‘flipping out’ (a great expression) and saving himself rather than “staying in” and getting killed. Maybe R.D. Laing was right when he claimed that society was insane and the identified insane were sane. Yes, there was and is a Mystery at work there and here. I love the translation of the Tao as Mystery. I feel that the Mystery is sacred and that it’s natural to accept it and flow along with it.

JW: When I was a child I slept on my stomach and, like many children, I had to have a light on in the room. Now I sleep on my back, and need the darkness. Of course I’m using the dark as a metaphor for the Mystery, the Unknown, or, better still, the Unknowable. But darkness is also a metaphor for depression, an area you explore so wonderfully in your book Transforming Depression. While in your poetic classic of C.G. Jung’s life, The Tao of Jung, you quote Jung: “Darkness gives birth to light.” Can you reconcile the terrible darkness of depression with that of the Mystery, the Tao? Do the two naturally flow into each, or are these mutually exclusive states of mind?
DR: The psyche and its vast dark inner space gives birth to light just as the boundless dark universe of outer space with its black holes gives birth to light. Darkness, whether in mood or in night, is natural. So if we flow with the black bile or melancholia and endure the terrible darkness of depression, eventually we will break through into the light of joy. This is the Tao (the Way) of darkness or depression—this is the Mystery of its evolution.

Often we need to have the light go out in order to experience the solitude of a dark silence, which helps us germinate or incubate a creative idea or image. Depression forces us to withdraw (retreat) in order to conserve energy. My favorite account of this ordeal is William Styron’s *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness*. He eloquently documents his rite of passage through the land of malignant suicidal depression. He concludes his book with these wise words, “For those who have dwelt in depression’s dark wood, and known its inexplicable agony, their return from the abyss is not unlike the ascent of the poet, trudging upward and upward out of hell’s black depths and at last emerging into what he saw as ‘the shining world.’ There, whoever has been restored to health has almost always been restored to the capacity for serenity and joy, and this may be indemnity enough for having endured the despair beyond despair. And so we came forth, and once again beheld the stars.”

JW: Your prescription seems somewhat like R.D. Lang’s and John Weir Perry’s for schizophrenia; e.g., seeing the illness as a creative moment. But what if this fails? What if the person is not creatively inclined, and turns toward suicide?

DR: I see depression as Jung did “the empty stillness which precedes creative work.” The seed of creativity is in all of us. Jung’s healing technique of active imagination allows one to rekindle the creative juices of the kindergarden years. Healing the soul involves creativity. You ask: What if it fails? That is, to see the illness as a creative moment. It is true, suicide can result. But that is unnecessary as virtually no one really wants to commit suicide. Suicide is bad karma. Hence, egocide or symbolic death of the false self facilitates transformation to the true self.

JW: It seems to me that we are discussing two discrete, although intimately linked, conditions. With regards to depression. In order for the depressed person to be able to take up Jung’s path of “active imagination,” must he or she be creatively inclined a priori? In other words, can you offer a profile of who would most benefit from this therapy?

Secondly, isn’t suicide not only a personal act but also a culturally determined performative? For example, in Japan, suicide has been, under certain circumstances, honored for centuries. While in a commensal culture, there was the Vietnamese Buddhist priest Tri Quang Duc, whose self-immolation, protesting the war in his country, was calmly, not fanatically, enacted before the world’s news cameras. Is what you call egocide viable in cultures where the personal ego is not over-determined?

DR: I have the notion that the psyche and creativity are interrelated and connected to an innate healing process. In other words, we all have the capacity to create. For affirmation of this view, visit any pre-school or kindergarten class and all the children will be involved in creative pursuits. Active imagination allows us to return to this wellspring of creativity.

In Buddhism, suicide is not honored. In fact, all religions view suicide as bad karma. I do not believe Buddha would have condoned Tri Quang Duc’s self-immolation. Clearly that is an act of a protesting ego. I favor the other Vietnamese Buddhist priest Thich Nhat Hanh’s way of non-violent protest and peace. After all, suicide is a murder, in which the murderer and victim happen to be the same person. The Germans had it right. Selbstmord means self-murder. In other words, suicide is all wrong.

JW: Can you imagine any situation in which suicide would be an appropriate action?

DR: The answer is “No,” with one exception: Hitler.

JW: Hitler, I suggest, is an archetype of persons who commit “crimes against humanity.” If this rendering is suitable, let’s go on from here. Would you agree that your major contribution to Analytical Psychology, so far, is your concept of egocide? Does “egocide,” cogently discussed in *Transforming Depression* , stem back
to the interviews you did with survivors of suicide attempts off San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge, or even further?

DR: Yes, I consider egocide and transformation to be an important contribution to analytical psychology. The ten survivors were not failed suicides. In fact none of them went on to suicide. It turned out that the dominant ego identity, or the “false self,” died when they jumped, and surviving allowed for contact with the Self and a reconstitution of the true self. I realized a new term was needed so I came up with egocide, since the survivors killed the ego that wanted to kill them. Mainstream cognitive-behavioral psychology understands this term as a form of cognitive restructuring that leads to behavioral change or what I term transformation. After I carried out the research, I realized that I’d committed egocide the only time I was suicidal when my first marriage was falling apart. In retrospect, I came to know that the maxim “research is research” is a truism.

JW: “Falling apart” brings to mind the shamanic initiation of, let us call it, psychic dismemberment. So how does— it does— egocide process traditional shamanic ecstatic practices and responsibilities?

DR: Egoicide is a psychic dismemberment—a state of disintegration and symbolic death (of the false self)—which leads to rebirth of the true self through reconstituted ego secondary to the Self.

Representative of this process (in shamanism) is a healing of the psyche (soul) through creativity, resulting in artistic products or activity, which are (ideally) shared with one’s community. It is noteworthy that analysis, which is about dissolving or breaking up complexes, is a forerunner to egocide and transformation. This is explained theoretically and illustrated with four actual cases in Transforming Depression.

JW: I’d like to discuss a case history. But, first, could you elaborate on what you mean by the “true self,” especially with reference to the “Self.”

DR: The self is the personal being so the “false self” would be an inauthentic representation of one’s self. Whereas, the “true self” would be an authentic representation of one’s self. The “Self” is the Supreme Being and the humble genuine self is secondary to the Self. If the self is identified with the Self, you have a person who thinks he or she is the Supreme Being. In the United States, most state mental hospitals have a daily Jesus Christ census based on an extreme “false self” problem. Usually it’s not this severe and represents a part of the self that is false. For example, a suicidal self, which resulted from internalized abuse, that is, being hurt as a small child, manifests as self-berating during adulthood.

JW: Reading your anamnesis of “Gary,” (Transforming Depression; pp. 129-144.), which addresses what is at once the most solitary and conjunctive of human endeavors: the struggle to live a creative life, what struck me is that analytical therapy is not a linear path, but endows stations of regression. This must be frustrating to the therapist who thinks “progress” is being made, only to find the analysand arriving at the next session apparently more disturbed than ever! Does Charles Olson’s famous dictum, “The motive, then, of reality, is process not goal,” apply here? Is transformation more complex that something to be achieved?

DR: Like life itself, analytical therapy involves progression and regression. Too much movement necessitates grounding. So Samuel Johnson’s epigram at the beginning of the chapter on Gary is apt: “The chief benefit of dancing is to learn how to sit still.” At times analytical therapy is linear and at other times circular. Regardless, it is creative involving the destruction of old ways (symbolic death) in the service of new ways (rebirth). Transformation is a complex process and also the goal, that is, from one’s false self to one’s true self.

JW: What is this “true self?” How does one know if one is living it?

DR: Each person is here for a unique purpose: to live out his or her personal destiny or myth. When one is being authentic and genuine, then one is being one’s “true self.” It leads to a creative life that has meaning. The person senses that it is true as do others. For example, Thomas Merton actualized his “true self”—he knew it and we knew it.

When there is a large discrepancy between one’s false or inauthentic self and one’s true or authentic self, the individual is out of balance, often quite neurotic, and usually emotionally disturbed. When the discrepancy shrinks the

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person is healthier and when there is only one's genuine or true self the person is in balance, emotionally stable, and able to fulfill his or her potential.

How does one know if one is living one's "true self?" The person is humbly comfortable being one of a kind and quietly actualizing his or her creative potential, which leads to meaning and a gentle peaceful nature.

JW: Before Gary ended his therapy with you (mainly because you were leaving the region), he was talking about giving up dancing, to concentrate on choreography and teaching. Then, soon after, he injured his Achilles tendon. You point out that Achilles' heel was "the only part of (the Greek hero) that was mortal and vulnerable." You relate to Gary having "proven himself mortal; he had died in a symbolic sense and was afterward reborn—again, another example of egocide and transformation." (p.143).

There is of course an intimate connection between the archetypes of mentation and physical activations. It goes to whether the shaman, or sorcerer, "really flew," as in Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan stories, or Terrence McKenna's DMT elf-sightings, and whether, as Roberts Avens puts it, "imagination is real." This contention, which belies so much of the human spiritual quest, is so important that I wonder whether you would speculate the imagination's importance to transformation.

DR: So Gary stopped living through the air and became grounded—he gave up dancing in order to teach and choreography dance. The pueraeum died and Gary was reborn as his vulnerable "true self." Interestingly, his genuine self was also to become a grounded and professional race car driver. Yes, imagination is critical to transformation. As Joubert said, "Imagination is the eye of the soul." And Einstein claimed that "Imagination is more important than information."

JW: You close this chapter with "a prodigious dream," in which the subject is walking through a room of sleeping snakes in which there is an unusual, primitive ape . . . Then a tall, black woman in her early forties leaps into the center of the room and comforts him," leading him "through the snakes, past the ape, and out of the room." (p.144) You go on to say that, "According to Jung, 'the serpent is a well-substantiated archetype' of transformation and renewal, a healing symbol . . ." You also see the black woman as a "healing anima figure to guide him through the dangers of the healing serpents and past the ape." I understand that this interpretation comes after working with a client over a substantial period, during which time certain patterns and teleographies can be ascertained. But even with these clues, how can you be sure that your reading is the most viable of what Maureen Roberts calls "the infinite complexity of the human soul."? For example, in Christian mythology snakes represent an evil presence, and the black woman can be seen as Gary's shadow, or negative, side. The ape, which you call "wise," can also represent aspects of the subject's primitive, or potential, psyche.

I also found it significant that Gary gave (or was given) the woman's specific age, "in her early forties." Whereas four is a Jungian sign for wholeness, could the black woman be symbolic of the subject being in the early stages of integration? (Excuse the cultural word play here.) What guidelines to you follow for interpreting a client's dream?

DR: Regarding dream interpretation, the bottom line is that it has to make sense to the client. Jung's method of dream interpretation is called amplification. It utilizes personal and archetypal associations.

This last dream of Gary's comments on his difficulty of terminating therapy. He felt abandoned by me. He was also afraid to leave—it was dangerous—with all the sleeping snakes and the primitive ape. These are frightening symbols and Gary was apprehensive and quite scared. Then an anima figure comes to the rescue. In other words, he is comforted by his feminine side or soul. She is able to lead him out—now Gary can leave on his own accord. On an archetypal level, snakes are healing symbols and apes are wise. It is also true that healing involves a soul connection and a death-rebirth experience or a transformation.

Your idea about the woman being his shadow is generally not true—usually when a man dreams of a man that's the shadow. In Gary's case, it's a woman so it's
his anima. Gary’s associations to a black woman were positive. She was strong and kind. Your idea about her being black and in her forties as indicative of Gary’s integration process towards wholeness does seem accurate to me. You could also say that Gary was being helped by his opposite (feminine nigredo). In other words, he was assisted by his melancholic soul—a powerful healing agent and the central theme of my book on transforming depression!

JW: Here we arrive at the shaman as soul-retriever. Or, can we say that the Jungian shaman is more of a guide than a tripper, initiating the client in the art of retrieving his or her soul alone?

DR: Yes, the Jungian shaman is more of a guide initiating the client in the art of retrieving his or her lost soul.

Reflecting back on your early observation of my painting my way out of depression and reconnecting with my lost soul, anima or muse, my shamanic journey continues. Recently I had a dream that I was in New Mexico with a lot of supplies and books. I was going to house sit and write for a month or two. My response to this dream was to start contacting folks I know in New Mexico and arrange to house sit for someone. My muse is calling and I’m going to go on this retreat and reconnect with her after this semester is over for a month or two of creative active imagination and work on my next book. The year marking the eve of the new millennium promises to be a pregnant one, full of rebirth.

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In 1970, David H. Rosen received his M.D. degree from the University of Missouri (Columbia). He graduated in 1966 from the University of California (Berkeley) with an individual major in Psychological-Biological Sciences. In 1974, he was Chief Resident in Psychiatry at Langley Porter Institute, The University of California, San Francisco, where he became a staff psychiatrist and Assistant Professor. From 1982-1986, he was an Associate Professor of Psychiatry & Medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester, NY, co-authoring, with D.E. Reiser, *Medicine as a Human Experience.* (Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers, 1985). In 1986, Dr. Rosen became the McMillan Professor of Analytical Psychology, and Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Science, at Texas A&M University. In 1989, he also became Professor of Humanities in Medicine at Texas A&M. His three most recent books are *Transforming Depression: Healing the Soul Through Creativity* (New York: Penguin, 1998), *The Tao of Jung: The Way of Integrity* (New York: Penguin, 1997), and co-editing with M.C. Luebbert, *Evolution of the Psyche* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

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