



Jung Journal

Culture & Psyche

ISSN: 1934-2039 (Print) 1934-2047 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ujun20>

Pursuing a Method of No Method

Randy Fertel

To cite this article: Randy Fertel (2016) Pursuing a Method of No Method, Jung Journal, 10:2, 89-93, DOI: [10.1080/19342039.2016.1157416](https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2016.1157416)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2016.1157416>



Published online: 16 May 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 5



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
<http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=ujun20>

relative safety, others who paid high prices for their atheism. Some of the interviews were too short, leaving me wanting to know more. Altogether they represent an inspiring array of struggle and achievement. Although some of their stories express the loneliness of nonbelief in cultures that are overwhelmingly religious, most emphasize the truer feeling of self and connection that can come with nonbelief. *Godless Grace* does an important service, documenting the many clubs, agencies, camps, and other institutions that are based on secular humanism, such as the Freedom from Religion Foundation's Clergy Project, the Secular Student Alliance, and Camp Quest. The book also notes how the Internet and social media have helped connect likeminded nonbelievers.

Without a god to unite us, we truly recognize how we need each other to survive and love. Young activist Amanda Metskas, Director of Camp Quest, Inc., which offers summer camps for children of free-thinking families, believes we have to take responsibility for each other. She, like many other humanists profiled, follows the evolutionary biologists' definition of empathy. "Evolution favors survival and we've evolved empathy and trust to build safer communities. We can't and won't survive alone" (Orenstein and Blaikie 2015, 99). It is our need for each other, a need that originates in the authentic, internal self, that leads to a moral, ethical, kinder, safer life. No higher power needed here.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Freud, Sigmund. 1927/1964. *Die Zukunft einer Illusion (The future of an illusion)*. Trans. W. D. Robinson-Scott. Ed. James Strachey. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- Mitchell, Stephen A. 1993. *Hope and dread in psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books.
- Orenstein, David I., and Linda Ford Blaikie. 2015. *Godless grace: How nonbelievers are making the*

world safer, richer and kinder. Washington, DC: Humanist Press.

Wager, Kim, and Sue Cox. 2009. *Auricular acupuncture and addiction: Mechanisms, methodology and practice*. Philadelphia: Churchill Livingstone.

ELLEN CHANDLER, LCSW, is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist in private practice in Manhattan and Garrison, New York. She has taught dream interpretation at the Training Institute for Mental Health, supervised psychotherapists, and been a training analyst. She is a quiet nonbeliever. *Correspondence*: ellenchandler@msn.com.

ABSTRACT

Orenstein and Blaikie's *Godless Grace: How Nonbelievers Are Making the World Safer, Richer and Kinder* is a book that documents the wide range of atheist, humanist activism through a series of twenty-eight interviews with courageous people around the world. The book's purpose is to counter the belief that without God, people will succumb to selfishness and immorality, and it accomplishes its purpose in a moving, graceful way. It also serves to provide community for nonbelievers who may feel lonely or alienated. The book offers a brief history of nonbelief and demographic information on international atheism, but at its heart, it is a collection of compelling stories about nonbelievers who feel it is their responsibility to care for others, often at great personal cost, to create a "safer, richer and kinder" world.

KEY WORDS

activism, atheism, international, secular humanism

Pursuing a Method of No Method

RANDY FERTEL

Review of: Suzi Naiburg, *Structure and Spontaneity in Clinical Prose: A Writer's Guide for Psychoanalysts and Psychotherapists*, New York: Routledge, 2015.

The title of Suzi Naiburg's new book, *Structure and Spontaneity in Clinical Prose*, names the conundrum that we are invited to explore: how do we bring structure to spontaneity and spontaneity to structure? At least since the Roman rhetorician Quintilian, mastering extempore fluency, the ability to improvise, is "the greatest fruit of our studies, the richest harvest of our long labors" (Quintilian 2001, IV:133). Quintilian and Naiburg both challenge us to master the methodology of fine writing so our writing is free of mere method and formula. *Structure and Spontaneity* develops a methodology for improving our writing, all the while setting up "freedom-from-method" as our goal.

Graduate and faculty member of the Massachusetts Institute of Psychoanalysis, both clinical practitioner and writing coach, Naiburg has taught more than sixty-five clinical writing workshops, including one I attended last year. What first and last characterizes her writing is a freedom from jargon, "a drag on contemporary prose" (Naiburg 2015, 55), which she would have us eschew. The eighty-four writing exercises in her book are full of valuable challenges. But Naiburg's graceful prose is never challenging. She inspires and encourages writers, and offers insights for new and experienced writers, editors, and teachers alike.

Hoping we will "consider this book an extended writing seminar" (2015, xii), Naiburg identifies and elaborates five "modes of clinical prose": the narrative, which "organizes experience through time" in the stories we tell (xii); the evocative, which "works by invitation and suggestion" to evoke emotional experience (55); the enactive, which "creates an experience to be lived as well as thought" in the process of reading (xiii); the lyric narrative, which invites readers "to participate in what the analyst

experiences as the analysis unfolds" (xiii); and the paradigmatic, which "abstracts ideas from experience to build concepts and theories" (xii).

In each of these modes Naiburg presents excerpts from exemplary clinical writers in both the post-Freudian and post-Jungian traditions and provides insights and *bons mots* about the writing process from some of our finest contemporary nonclinical essayists, novelists, and poets. Naiburg is quite well read and is a fine close reader. Her readings of resonant clinical examples make us more adept at seeing subtle differences in our modal writing decisions and their effects. These offerings are among the great strengths of her book.

For Naiburg, each mode of discourse is not only a method for presenting knowledge and experience but also a way of knowing—each a way to invite understanding to emerge both for the reader and for the clinical writer. Lyrical narrative, for example, "express[es] a commitment to the priority of experiencing, the nonlinearity of clinical process, and the limitations of present knowledge" (Naiburg 2015, xiii). If asked, Naiburg would say these modes are all equal in value, that our job is to find a good fit between the mode and the clinical experience we wish to convey.

As a counterweight to the dominant paradigm in our clinical prose, the paradigmatic mode, Naiburg highlights and writes most lyrically about the other four modes. The paradigmatic mode, with its reliance on concepts, has its place and can be written with grace and feeling (see "Moving Matters," 99–101), but the paradigmatic is overused and frequently arid. The evocative mode more readily "reverberates" and "propels readers into memories, associations, affects, and self states . . . creating undercurrents and overtones as its vibrations move through the

resonant chambers of our body, mind, and heart” (Naiburg 2015, 45). The enactive mode would have us experience what the clinician experiences and seeks, in the words of Wilfred Bion (1992), “to do something to the reader that I have had done to me” (quoted on 57). Lyric narratives, Naiburg argues, quoting poet and Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney, “feature not only what happens in our consulting room but also ‘the music of what happens’” in an uncertain present (Heaney 1998, 173; quoted on 75). In the narrative, evocative, enactive, and lyric narrative modes, we are not guided or misled by conceptual guideposts that have been used to exert “conceptual tyranny” (182).

Writing in the more experience-near modes can be compelling—compelling because they bring clinical work alive on the page and in the reader’s experience. Naiburg’s book is filled with extraordinary examples that convey the magic those modes can achieve. But privileging of writing-free-of-concepts seems to stand in Jung studies as an unexamined assumption. It lies at the heart of *The Lament of the Dead*, Sonu Shamdasani and James Hillman’s important appraisal of Jung’s achievement in *The Red Book* (2009). Jung’s long-sequestered illuminated manuscript, Shamdasani states, is “Jung without concepts . . . without a single conceptual term” (Hillman and Shamdasani 2013, 8). Free from concepts, *The Red Book* marks Jung’s highest if short-lived achievement.

According to *The Lament of the Dead*, then, Jung stands in *The Red Book*, as do Naiburg’s experiential modes, “face-to-face with the chaos of primal experience” (Hillman and Shamdasani 2013, 68). After *The Red Book*, in their view, Jung fell back into the trap of concept-laden scientism that he rejected in Freud and sought to escape by writing *The Red Book*. And the upshot is that devout Jungians,

“the curatorium” as Shamdasani dismissively calls them—would that be you, dear reader?—have “mistaken the guard rail for the essence” (72–73). The lesson: free yourself from concept-laden writing.

Such an injunction hides another notion—can I call it an illusion?—that direct experience is superior to experience shaped by the mind. This assumption, hardly newly minted, dates, tellingly, at least to Francis Bacon, founder of the scientific method, who imagines Nature as the god Pan, whose spouse, the scientist, is Echo:

For that is in fact the true philosophy which echoes most faithfully the voice of the world itself, and is written as it were from the world’s own dictation; being indeed nothing else than the image and reflection of it, which it only repeats and echoes, but adds nothing of its own (Bacon 1857, XIII:101).

Thus, it is little wonder that unmediated “knowing” promises such authority: My experience, it claims, has not been contaminated by expectation, ideology, or analytic construct. Unfiltered and unshaped, experience is not “seen through a glass, darkly; but . . . face to face,” Paul’s promise of heavenly experience in *1 Corinthians* (13:12)—and apparently Shamdasani’s estimate of Jung’s achievement in *The Red Book*.

Naiburg is right to hold this goal before us of presenting clinical material as a lived experience. As poet Robert Browning has it, “a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for.” But she also understands that complete freedom from concepts is neither within our grasp nor necessarily desirable. As Kant has it, “intuitions without concepts are blind” (1999, 50).

Certainly Naiburg is right to warn an analytic audience against conceptual tyranny. A “concept in German is *Begriffe*,” she points

out with the help of J. B. Pontalis (2003), who explains, “The concept has claws (*Griffe*).’ Concepts are prone,” Naiburg continues, “to reification, impose closure, and may be recruited for the exercise of power” (quoted on 182).

Who would not wish to avoid the impulse to tyrannize? Who would not seek to fill one’s sails instead with the authority founded on claims of direct experience with all that they promise? Hence the allure of the experience-near modes. Seemingly free of concepts, they have the added attraction of seeming to be free of method. But that, Naiburg demonstrates, is an illusion. Spontaneity is also schooled, and bringing clinical experience to life in writing takes method, skill, and practice.

Naiburg acknowledges that we are never free of concepts: “We cannot do without concepts but we can hold them ‘lightly,’” she writes, quoting Donna Orange (1995; quoted on 182). A fine ideal that we would do well to remember.

Naiburg offers “an antidote to conceptual tyranny.” It “lies in the vitality of language” (2015, 182). Naiburg’s close examination of samples of her five modes of clinical writing does much to sensitize us to linguistic vitality, and she exemplifies it herself throughout. If, for Nietzsche, a philologist was “a teacher of slow reading” (1997), Naiburg’s often exquisite and always insightful close readings go far toward making us better writers because she shows us the value of slower reading.

She also directs us toward the advice of college writing guru Peter Elbow, who urges that we “make the text *seem* an enactment-of-thinking-going-on rather than a record-of-completed-thinking” (2015, 131, my emphasis). If we achieve that “seeming”—by whatever method or nonmethod—then we

will have achieved what improvisers at least since Homer have been achieving: not a bad heaven to reach for.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bacon, Francis. 1857. *Of the wisdom of the ancients*. In *The works of Francis Bacon*. London: Longman.
- Bion, Wilfred. 1992. *Cognitions*. London: Karnac. Quoted in Naiburg 2015, 57.
- Browning, Robert. 2016. Andrea Del Sarto. Poetry Foundation. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173001> (accessed February 8, 2016).
- Heaney, Seamus. 1998. Song. In *Opened ground: Selected poems 1966–1996*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Quoted in Naiburg 2015, 75.
- Hillman, James, and Sonu Shamdasani. 2013. *Lament of the dead: Psychology after Jung’s Red Book*. New York: Norton.
- Jung, C. G. 2009. *The red book: Liber novus*. Ed. Sonu Shamdasani. Trans. Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1999. *Critique of pure reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Naiburg, Suzi. 2015. *Structure and spontaneity in clinical prose: A writer’s guide for psychoanalysts and psychotherapists*. New York: Routledge.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1997. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the prejudices of morality*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Orange, Donna. 1995. *Emotional understanding: Studies in psychological epistemology*. New York: Guildford Press. Quoted in Naiburg 2015, 182.
- Pontalis, J.-B. 2003. *Windows*. Trans. Anne Quinney. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. Quoted in Naiburg 2015, 182.
- Quintilian. 2001. *Institutio Oratoria*. Trans. Donald A. Russell. 4 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

RANDY FERTEL, PHD, has taught at Harvard, LeMoyne College, Tulane, and the New School for Social Research. He has contributed to *The New York Times*, NPR, *Smithsonian*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Gastronomica*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and *The Huffington Post*. His *A Taste for Chaos: The Art of*

Literary Improvisation was published in March 2015 by Spring Journal Books. His first book, *The Gorilla Man and the Empress of Steak: A New Orleans Family Memoir*, the tale of two distinctive people—his parents—and his efforts to survive them, is now in its fourth printing. *Correspondence*: randy@fertel.com.

ABSTRACT

Suzi Naiburg's *Structure and Spontaneity in Clinical Prose: A Writer's Guide for Psychoanalysts and Psychotherapists* offers "an extended writing seminar" for clinicians who seek to capture on paper their experience with patients. A clinician and writing coach, Naiburg offers five types of clinical writing and excellent examples and close readings of each: the narrative, evocative, enactive, lyric narrative, and paradigmatic modes.

KEY WORDS

Francis Bacon, Hillman, Jung, Kant, Nietzsche, Quintilian, *The Red Book*, Shamdasani, spontaneity, structure, writing

Improvisation and Craft: Art's (Jungian) Opposites

SUSAN ROWLAND

Review of: Randy Fertel, *A Taste for Chaos*, New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2015.

A Taste for Chaos is important to Jungians because it says something new about archetypal dynamics and literature. In support of this exciting cross-disciplinary opportunity, this book offers a new and powerful multidisciplinary context for Jung's *Red Book* (2009), all the while providing a radical argument about the psyche and its arts.

Fertel proposes that "improvisation," rightly characterized as "a taste for chaos," is a

fundamental creative impulse that has shaped literature as diverse as Homer's and John Milton's epics, the eighteenth-century novel *Tristram Shandy*, poetry by Tennyson, *Huckleberry Finn*, novels by James Joyce and Thomas Mann, and, of course, *The Red Book*. Moreover improvisation itself, and in any form, cannot exist except in dialogue with its own opposite: meticulous craft. The "opposite" consists in improvisation's fidelity to spontaneity, to letting the words just "flow," as opposed to a deliberate conscious adherence to a particular form or genre, a crafting that inevitably entails redrafting and much deliberation. And yet, one of Fertel's main arguments is that, however possessed by archetype or muse, absolute spontaneity is never possible in written form. Improvisers always discover limits to the revolutionary impulse to "let the chaos in" as Fertel quotes Sonu Shamdasani in conversation with James Hillman on *The Red Book* (Hillman and Shamdasani 2013; quoted in Fertel 2015, 377). Fertel here pays tribute to Shamdasani's remarkable and painstaking research that has provided Jung's extraordinary work for the modern reader. He sees the conversation between Hillman and Shamdasani as a tacit recognition of what puts *The Red Book* in a dialogue with major European works of literature. Improvisers revise. The drive to immediacy, to the "poetics of presence" as Fertel astutely analyzes, always discovers something more, a patterning or a limit to the chaos and its presentation to the world through writing.

Such an exploration of a key psychological tension within the depths of the creative process takes this remarkable book away from the confines of literary criticism and into psychology, poetics, philosophy, and complexity science. What the relatively recent research into complexity theory and "emergence" proposes, Fertel shows, is something that has