

Shrink Rap Radio #295 – March 2, 2012, Mythology and the Spiritual Journey

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Richard Naegle, PhD

(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Jill Ebsworth)

Introduction: My guest today is Jungian therapist Dr. Richard Naegle, and we'll be discussing the Jungian understanding of mythology as it relates to the spiritual journey. To learn more about Dr. Naegle please consult our show notes at ShrinkRapRadio.com. Now, here's the interview.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Richard Naegle, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Dr. Naegle: Thank you.

Dr. Dave: It's wonderful to be here in your Forestville home—I can see out the window here, I can, I can see trees out there—so, Forestville, well named.

Dr. Naegle: Yes, lots of trees.

Dr. Dave: How long have you been here?

Dr. Naegle: Ten years.

D. A beautiful place, beautiful place. Well, for a long time you've been affiliated with a group called the Guild for Psychological Studies, and I think that's played an important role in your professional life, so maybe that's a good place for us to start, to touch on kind of briefly. So tell us a bit about that group and what it was that drew you to it.

Dr. Naegle: Well the Guild has been around for fifty or sixty years...

Dr. Dave: Wow!

Dr. Naegle: Yeah. It was founded by two analysts in the Jungian tradition, Elizabeth Howes and Sheila Moon who were in Zurich for the founding of the Jung Institute, and were Mrs. Jung's last clients.

Dr. Dave: Oh really!

Dr. Naegle: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: See, I've heard the name Sheila Moon over the years but without any real clear fix.

Dr. Naegle: Yeah. She's written a lot on mythology.

Dr. Dave: Ok

Dr. Naegle: Yeah. And they started the Guild for Psychological Studies, they never officially aligned themselves with the Jung Institute in San Francisco, and when it was founded, for a variety of reasons, they weren't asked to join, primarily because they were already doing seminars and workshops with clients.

D; mmhm

Dr. Naegle: which, back in the fifties, was not a good thing to do.

D; Oh, ok.

Dr. Naegle: and, my own hunch, politically it was because they were two women.

Dr. Dave: uhuh

Dr. Naegle: In any case, they went their separate ways with a Jungian bent and they applied that to the Western religious tradition, and particularly looking at the Synoptic Gospels—"syn" means together, "optic" means to see, so there's three gospels in the Christian scriptures that purport to be the life and teachings of Jesus, and

Dr. Dave: So which three are those?

Dr. Naegle: Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Dr. Dave: ok

Dr. Naegle: and if you compare them you can see that they all came from earlier original sources,

Dr. Dave: Ok

Dr. Naegle: it's very interesting to follow along and you can see all three quoting the same thing, and then one of them adds something.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Dr. Naegle: and you have to say, where did that come from,

Dr. Dave: Right

Dr. Naegle: was it added by that person or was it deleted by the other two?

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Dr. Naegle: Anyway, it's a very interesting process that helps get back to, um, perhaps what were the earliest reports of the teachings of Jesus, which are very different than Christianity.

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm

Dr. Naegle: So that always really intrigued me, it was already kind of doing archeology of the soul and spirituality.

Dr. Dave: So you were already on the Jungian track way back when you first got involved with that group?

Dr. Naegle: Yeah, I was already very interested, had read some Jung, was very interested in mythology, had spent “my summer of love” in 1968 at Esalon [sic] and hung out with Joseph Campbell and other people and so I was very interested in that and the spiritual journey.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. And is that group still going?

Dr. Naegle: Yes, yes, it's still going, not as gang-busters as it used to be

Dr. Dave: Was it like, a Sonoma County, California group, or

Dr. Naegle: No—located in San Francisco and actually we do regular workshops in Seattle, and Los Angeles, Denver, the east coast, I've been to Australia, England, Israel, doing workshops for the Guild. It can be found under guildsf.org

Dr. Dave: Ok. And you were president of it for a while, right?

Dr. Naegle: I was on the Board of Directors

Dr. Dave: On the Board, ok.

Dr. Naegle: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: So you've had a long-time interest in issues having to do with Jungian thought, mythology, and religion,

Dr. Naegle: hmhmm

Dr. Dave: so what do you see as the function of mythology, we'll get down into it now.

Dr. Naegle: laughs

Dr. Dave: what's it good for?

Dr. Naegle: Hit or miss

Dr. Dave: What can you do with it?

Dr. Naegle: Yeah. You know, so many philosophers and human beings including Jung talk about the search for meaning in our lives

Dr. Dave: Right

Dr. Naegle: Humans want to look for meaning, and the places we find meaning we often call spirituality, we call religion, we call myth. Joseph Campbell once said, "Myth is what we call somebody else's religion."

Dr. Dave: mhmm

Dr. Naegle: So, you know, we can talk about Hindu mythology and Muslim mythology, and the Hindus and Muslims can talk about Christian mythology and Jewish mythology

Dr. Dave: Right *laughs*—yeah, they don't think of it as mythology, theirs, they don't,

Dr. Naegle: No, no.

Dr. Dave: Hindus don't think of their...

Dr. Naegle: No

Dr. Dave: as mythology

Dr. Naegle: It's their religion, it's what they know to be true, and when you live in a myth you know it to be true, there's an experience of truth there. Another one of my favorite lines from Joseph Campbell is when Moyers is interviewing him and he says "So myths are about understanding the meaning of life", and Campbell said, "Oh no—it's the experience of being alive."

Dr. Dave: hmmp

Dr. Naegle: Myths are about the experience of being alive. So, that's what's always pulled me, and interested me, in terms of world myths.

Dr. Dave: So, again I come back to the "what is it good for?" question. Does anything come to mind in response to that?

Dr. Naegle: Yeah, well, a living myth, a living myth, acts like a lens that aligns your inner world with your outer world.

Dr. Dave: Ok

Dr. Naegle: and, when it's alive it works, you have a place in the world, in the cosmos, in community, and your inner world, you understand your experiences, your dreams, your

feelings, your inclinations—and when it doesn't work anymore, when they're out of alignment then there's trouble.

Dr. Dave: ok

Dr. Naegle: and we see that a lot in our cultures today

Dr. Dave: Yeah. We'll come back to our culture today. Ah, you sent me—we had some correspondence before this, and one of the things that you said was that what's unique about humans is not our consciousness but our capacity to tell stories. Certainly that must fit in with this mythology theme—tell us about that.

Dr. Naegle: Well, as I said, a lot of people say what's you know unique about humans is consciousness except we know that dolphins have consciousness, even plants have a rudimentary consciousness, so that's not that unique. What seems to be unique is our capacity to tell stories. Apparently, as far as we know, bees and whales and dolphins don't tell stories. They may communicate location of a food source, or a sexual desire, but they don't weave stories. One of Jane [sic] Houston's favorite stories was when she was in Australia with an aboriginal friend, she asked her friend, "Well, what's the difference between the Widgidee People and the Kangaroo People and human beings? And her friend laughed and she said, "Well, it's we human beings who tell stories about them."

Dr. Dave: Uhuh. Well, we used to say that man is the tool-using creature, but we've since discovered that other animals use tools.

Dr. Naegle: Uhuh.

Dr. Dave: They're always discovering new

Dr. Naegle: Yeah. But the stories are about meaning. They weave past, present and future. They give us a place in the universe.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. One way that I've talked about that with my students is that I think the stories, myth, provides a kind of exo-skeleton if you will, where animals have these internalized instincts, our stories...and those instincts lead to the survival of the species—I think that our stories, our mythology, is what holds us together so that we can move forward into the future

Dr. Naegle: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense, yeah.

Dr. Naegle: There's a—in ancient Greek there are two words for the word “word”: mythos and logos.

Dr. Dave: Ok

Dr. Naegle: They both mean “word”. But Mythos is about an intuitive grasp, it's a story, it's a sense of meaning, and “logos” is rational, analytical thought.

Dr. Dave: Ok. I often encounter those two words but I've never had it explained that way, so that's helpful.

Dr. Naegle: Uhuh.

Dr. Dave: Does it make sense to talk about a personal myth versus a collective myth?

Dr. Naegle: Does it make sense—I, uh, the jury's out in me about that. I see us mostly living in larger cultural myths that impact us.

Dr. Dave: Ok.

Dr. Naegle: I think we do find our own individual journeys have meaning and we identify with different myths. I think it's about finding our own story.

Dr. Dave: Maybe that's the better word, is our personal story?

Dr. Naegle: 'Cause I see myth as much more of a collective phenomenon, not tied to the consciousness of an individual.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Do you think our story, our personal story, is coming from, I mean in one way, our story you could look at it looking back and say well my life has gone this way and this way and this way and that's kind of the story of my life, but I'm wondering is there a deeper way in which our story is driven, almost predetermined, or something along those lines.

Dr. Naegle: Well that's Hillman in how character develops and how, and Giegerich and other Jungian writers and other philosophers talk about rather than the western tradition of creation coming from the top down, and let there be light, let that happen, let that happen, that it's much more organic and emerging, like the Navajo emergence myth it's from the ground up, so something unfolds and you can't predict exactly what that's going to be but there is a meaning and purpose of meaning.

Dr. Dave: Mhmm. I'm thinking also in Jungian psychology isn't there a sense of, we're not being just pushed by the past but also pulled by the future or by our potentiality?

Dr. Naegle: Yes. That's part of the unfolding—it's a process. It's not linear.

Dr. Dave: Now, you mentioned earlier that you got to spend some time with Joseph Campbell, at Esalen, which I envy you—I got to hear him do a presentation, but I never had a chance to, I think you said you had the opportunity to "rub elbows" with him. Can you tell us anything about what that was like, or what he was like, or what impressed you?

Dr. Naegle: Well, the main thing I can say, 'cause this was back in '68—it's been a while—fascinating man, very genuine, I liked him, wonderful energy, very knowledgeable, but what struck me, the thing that I walked away with mostly out of that whole experience with him was hearing him talk in workshops about various myths and symbols and during a break, I

remember I was talking to a woman and I said, "You know, the one thing I miss, is he'll talk about, like, the symbolism of the cross found cross-culturally as the intersection of above and below, and we need to deal with our above and our below, our vertical and our horizontal."

Dr. Dave: hmm

Dr. Naegle: "Fascinating, I said, but what I miss was when he didn't say, he turned to us and the crowd and say, now how do you know that in your own life, where do you struggle with the verticality and the horizontality, and her comment to me was, "I'm not interested in that. I just want an intuitive sense of the wonder of things."

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm.

Dr. Naegle: So that's where I felt, I don't know if it's his limitation or the limitation he found himself in as an educator

D; Yeah

Dr. Naegle: and not being able to help his audience go the next step in terms of really finding out where these things live inside.

Dr. Dave: Mmm. That's probably something that you and I would both have in common, as people who are oriented both to being therapists and workshop leaders,

Dr. Naegle: Mmhmm

Dr. Dave: right, so always want to sort of concretize it and get people to bring it down to their own life.

Dr. Naegle: Well, and also, and this is where my latest interest is in Wolfgang Giergerich, who's a Jungian analyst in Germany—he argues a great deal how we can have these wonderful insights but we're not transformed.

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm.

Dr. Naegle: The semantics of the sentence changes but not the syntax of the sentence, so how does one really change, how does one really find healing and transformation and it's not just by intuitive insights—we have those all the time and then go home and yell at the guy who cut us off on the freeway or whatever.

Dr. Dave: (*laughs*) Yeah, yeah. So what's your answer to that, or his answer?

Dr. Naegle: Well, it is struggling with finding what's the transformation in consciousness that you can intuitively see, oh yes, the above, the below, the vertical and the horizontal, but then you have to know, well how is that alive in me?

Dr. Dave: And also that's why analysis takes so long, right, that's what the Freudians referred to as "working through", so, yes, you'll have insights, you'll get interpretations, but the process of implementing it in your life is hard work and takes repetition over and over, you have to keep encountering it over and over again, "Oh, there it is again!"

Dr. Naegle: Mmhmm. Right, right. Yeah.

Dr. Dave: So, I asked you, what did you see as the purpose of, of the function of mythology, so, similarly, what do you see as the function of religion, what's it good for?

Dr. Naegle: *laughs*

Dr. Dave: Or are they one and the same—you suggested that maybe they're one and the same.

Dr. Naegle: Well, I see them as one and the same, now some people might baulk at that because myth and mythology's become kind of a dirty word, it kind of means a "fiction" in our culture

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Dr. Naegle: but in fact, if you see it as basically just somebody else's religion, it's an expression, a human expression of a sense of the truth in the universe, ok, and I know, Baker Roshi from the San Francisco Zen center was being interviewed once and the interviewer commented, "So, Roshi, you're saying that all the roads of different religions lead to the same place?", and he said, "No, what I mean is all the roads of the different religions get lost in the same place."

Dr. Dave: *laughs*

Dr. Naegle: Which I thought was a great answer. So, religion, if it works for someone, really holds them, it is that lens that aligns them with the world, um, so it can be very positive—the flip side though is it can become very rigid and it gets identified—the reason why people don't like the word religion because it gets identified with institution. It fascinated me when I found out—you know, the churches talk about "heathens"—well, "heathens" means somebody who lives on the heath. And "savage", savages—that's French for somebody who lives in the woods,

Dr. Dave: mhmm

Dr. Naegle: and "pagan" comes from the Latin *paganus*, if that's how you pronounce it, it means a country dweller. So basically, heathen, savage, pagan—anybody who doesn't live in a city is unorthodox.

Dr. Dave: *laughs* Fascinating.

Dr. Naegle: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: So, do you make a distinction between religion and spirituality? I think many people today think of themselves as spiritual but not religious.

Dr. Naegle: And I think that's because they don't want to identify with the institution anymore.

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm.

Dr. Naegle: People are kind of fed up with the abuses in institutional religion, although many people miss the community that they used to find in an institutional religion, and look for that now in other places.

Dr. Dave: I think, uh, in the material that you sent me, you remarked that religion, institutional religion, it protects and it excludes. What did you mean, what is it protecting and what is it excluding?

Dr. Naegle: Well, I was actually paraphrasing Jung there,

Dr. Dave: Oh, ok.

Dr. Naegle: is that a religion, a codified religion, a dogma, is generally an understanding of somebody else's religious experience, whether it's Jesus, or Mohammed, or Buddha, and our understanding of it keeps our experience of it one step removed. I'm not sure I'm being clear here, but it, the dogma, the religion protects us, because many scriptures say it's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, it's an awesome light and dark cosmic event, and so the myths or the religions contain us,

Dr. Dave: Uhuh

Dr. Naegle: they tell us how to experience, they provide a channel to experience some of the numinosity but not too much, and if we begin to get overwhelmed or flooded by spirituality the institutions can tell us how to fit that back into the dogma to make sense and provide container for it.

Dr. Dave: Does that mean then that those of us, and I think I would identify with this, who regard ourselves as spiritual but not religious, are at risk of being overwhelmed by not having that container of some kind of traditional religious structure.

Dr. Naegle: It can be, yeah, because those structures have traditionally helped contain, so when one is on the individual journey they may have powerful mystical experiences that can be overwhelming, and then what do you do with them?

Dr. Dave: Yeah. In fact, they might become persuaded themselves or somebody else might become persuaded that in fact they're psychotic.

Dr. Naegle: Exactly. And what they do then, where do you go then, if you're not in a religious tradition, you go to a psychotherapist or a psychiatrist, and then it gets defined as a psychological problem not a spiritual problem.

Dr. Dave: And yet the boundaries between being a psychotherapist and a psychiatrist and being a spiritual advisor are not as sharply drawn as, as we might have been taught in our training,

Dr. Naegle: No, absolutely not, they tried to train us that way and they didn't like..in..my experience in graduate training is nobody liked to talk about spirituality or religion, it was kind of kept out, and yet it's one of the main sources of ego-strength for many people, and working at, make transformation—it makes such a difference in therapy if you feel like you're working on your "stuff" alone or whether there's something larger in the universe that's supporting your process,

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Dr. Naegle: whether you call it nature, God, Goddess, um, yeah

Dr. Dave: Yeah. And I think that's changing somewhat in training, at least in certain institutions, words like soul and spirituality aren't quite as loaded as dirty words as they used to be.

Dr. Naegle: No, but what's interesting is, and I haven't looked recently, but at least a couple of years ago when I checked, some of the schools, the transpersonal psychology, they are offering courses in spirituality, but a lot of it's Buddhism, Hinduism—there's virtually, practically nothing on Judaism or Christianity, except mysticism—they'll do the Kabbalah, and Hildegard of Bingen, but nothing about mainstream Jewish or Christian spirituality, which I find very interesting.

Dr. Dave: What do you think that's about?

Dr. Naegle: That's about the struggle in our culture that the culture has been for many many years a Judaeo-Christian one, and that's changing radically now, but those traditions have been kind of monopolized by the seminaries and psychology has sought to distance itself and dis-identify from institutional religion.

Dr. Dave: Uhuh. Yeah, yeah, fascinating. And also maybe a bit of "the grass is greener on the other side of the fence" or something.

Dr. Naegle: Mmhmm.

Dr. Dave: There's a way in which we can, in which we know the failings, I guess, of our own traditions and the gloss and the invitation of something that's kind of different and foreign.

Dr. Naegle: Exactly. It's where, I'm going to give a lecture soon at Eugene "Friends of Jung", and the title is "Psychology and Religion—Not Throwing the Baby out with the Bath-water", and part of the problem is that a lot of people felt quote "burned" by an early experience in a

religious institutional structure and they said “to hell with that”, and then they go to the East or some other place, but they don’t want to deal with any of the positive nature of what had been in that religious experience for them.

Dr. Dave: I can identify with that, actually, myself, having come up in a fundamentalist Protestant Christian tradition that I later rejected, and so, uh, there’s a kind of wariness that I have as a result of that.

Dr. Naegle: Yeah, uhuh, and understandably so.

Dr. Dave: I feel like it’s protected me in some ways.

Dr. Naegle: Well, the thing is, especially when you’re working with yourself or with a client in therapy, if a fundamentalist came into my room, I would not necessarily agree with him but I would be interested to know what it is about their fundamentalism that they find meaningful and help as they deal with their own suffering. Okay?

D; Yeah

Dr. Naegle: And I would be open to calling upon that, or suggesting that they use that to support them, even if I don’t agree with it and it’s not my way.

Dr. Dave: Yeah—good for you, good for you. I think you wrote something about the problem of monotheism and dualism?

Dr. Naegle: Oh yeah...*(laughter)*

Dr. Dave: What were you thinking of there?

Dr. Naegle: Well, I’ve been really chewing lately on this whole idea, “What’s beyond Theism?”, and I’ll tell you a little story. When I first moved up here to Sonoma County, my wife whose father was a tavern owner and grew up in a tavern, and we always go to local taverns to check them out, so we went to the local tavern and we were sitting at the bar with martinis, and this couple, about our age, sat down next to us and turns out he was an Orthodox, had been an Orthodox priest from Greece, and she was Swedish. So we started talking spirituality, religion, and they were pretty much three sheets to the wind, and I turned to her, and said, “Well, what do you think it is?”, and she said, “Well, I think it’s all bullshit, I don’t believe in any of it, you know, there’s no God, none of it, it’s just a load”, and so I thought about it and I said, “You know, I agree with you in many ways, and when I go off to the Russian River on a spring day and air is warm and the birds are singing and the light’s glistening on the water, um, I just have a sense of something larger in life that’s great beauty and support”, and she said, “Oh yeah, I experience that all the time,” and I realized what she couldn’t do was call that God because God has become a dirty word for many people because of that, just because of that kind of background you were talking about.

Dr. Dave: Hmm, yeah, yeah.

Dr. Naegle: Because of the institutional associations. So, I talked to a friend of mine at the Graduate Theological Union who was getting his PhD, and I said, "Ok, Hal, this is what's up. I'm feeling this wonder and awe and beauty and support and patterning and unfolding in the universe, um, but I don't want to call it God because that makes it an other, somehow I'm not part of that, and he said, "Well, you're a non-theist", and I said, "Ok, theos is God."

Dr. Dave: Mmmhm.

Dr. Naegle: And I thought about it and said, "Well, is there any way to put that positively?"

Dr. Dave: *laughs*

Dr. Naegle: and he thought about it and there wasn't, in his understanding of the Western religious studies, there was no way in our religious, Western religious language, to say that in a positive form, which shows our cultural bias towards a theistic bias that does not allow this whole other level of experience. So, what's beyond theism? And part of the problem with theism is "monotheism", the one god, which combines everything, but that immediately sets up dualism, because, even though it's supposed to be one god that combines everything, there's evil over here that isn't part of God.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, and I was just listening to that very topic in a podcast by a Jungian analyst, and he made the point that monotheism is inevitably militaristic,

Dr. Naegle: hmmm

Dr. Dave: because there are the good people who know the truth, and the right way,

Dr. Naegle: right

Dr. Dave: and the others are the enemy,

Dr. Naegle: right

Dr. Dave: and ultimately you need to get rid of them.

Dr. Naegle: hmmhmm

Dr. Dave: You've either got to convert them or get rid of them.

Dr. Naegle: because part of that is the duality that whatever the god is one worships is different than human beings, because some human beings are wrong so they need to be shaped up

Dr. Dave: yup

Dr. Naegle: because they're not part of God.

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Dr. Naegle: but if you don't see it as a separate dualistic kind of thing then you have to struggle with, well as Ghandi said, it's easy to see the many in the one but it's really hard to see the one in the many.

Dr. Dave: (*laughs*) I'm trying to get my head around that. Maybe it's too early in the morning for me! I'm going to think about that one. So, do you consider yourself spiritual, religious, or both?

Dr. Naegle: (pause) Sure.

Both laugh

Dr. Naegle: All of the above,

Dr. Dave: All of the above

Dr. Naegle: as long as it's not closed ended. I ran across a line in Campbell once where he was talking about monistic, myth with a monistic approach to life, and I'd never heard the word, so I looked it up and it is about a sense about belonging to oneness, everything is one. And it was very interesting, it has a very spotty background, etymologically [sic] and how it's been used philosophically and spiritually in the West, but one of the lines I loved about it in, Kerényi wrote, was that it's seldom used as an "ism", a monism, it's more monistic as a process rather than a closed container one arrives in.

Dr. Dave: I remember an intense debate among my friends in the dorms when we were freshmen about whether there could be One Thing,

Dr. Naegle: One thing meaning?

Dr. Dave: Anything that, whether you could talk about just one thing, because there's always another, there's a background, there's kind of figure-ground, so I guess, at some level, we were talking about monism versus dualism and whether monism is philosophically possible.

Dr. Naegle: Right. Well, but then you go back to the root meaning of psychology—psyche and knowledge of psyche; Giengerich's argument is that most of what is going on today is "ego-ology", knowledge of the ego. If psyche, and physicists agree with this, we are in psyche, we are never outside of psyche, so we can't stand outside of psyche and observe it. We can only, it can only, it can only observe itself from within through us.

Dr. Dave: *laughs*

Dr. Naegle: If that makes sense.

Dr. Dave: I think I, I think I got that. According to Jung the idea of this, something again that you wrote to me, according to Jung the idea of God is an absolutely necessary psychological function which arises naturally from the unconscious. Do you want to expand on that just a little bit?

Dr. Naegle: Well, Jung's research in the phenomenology of dreams and working with people in mythology, that was the conclusion he came to, I think that's accurate. He goes on in the same paragraph to say, and if you're not conscious of what your god is then something inappropriate and probably stupid will become your god. I love the "inappropriate" and "stupid".

Dr. Dave: Mmmm.

Dr. Naegle: and I think in many ways what he means by that is then money, greed, power, addiction, sex addiction, alcohol, whatever it is, can become one's motivating force, that is what one serves in life. So if you're not consciously aware of what you're serving then you will serve something, but it may not be very good for you or for the world.

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm. I think many people are drawn to Jungian psychology out of spiritual hunger. What are your thoughts about that?

Dr. Naegle: Well yes, and I think it's because Jung has a very positive view of the psyche, that's there's a purposiveness and a movement, we just don't go back and try to figure out what went wrong and heal, although it's, that can be an important piece, but as you mentioned earlier in our discussion there is that sense of moving into the future, and his willingness to look at mythology and the religious traditions and try to see what's behind that in terms of what's moving, and that there's an excitement and a truth there.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. I really do think that he speaks to that spiritual hunger, you started off talking about meaning and our quest for meaning, our need for meaning, and he really addresses that.

Dr. Naegle: Exactly, yeah. Modern Man in Search of a Soul was his most popular, popularized book for the lay person and it was all about the search for meaning.

Dr. Dave: Now some people have suggested that Jungian psychology has become, or might become a religion in itself—your thoughts on that path?

Dr. Naegle: Well, couple of levels, one I think that was why Jung's family for so long kept the Red Book from being published, because it was his own internal, you might even call it mystical experience, non-rational working with the psyche, um, which was not what a quote "scientist" unquote is supposed to do. So that's leant credence to oh, he's a ooey-wooey mystical kind of guy, which is not the case. He was willing to drop into and work with the unconscious, which I find very challenging and exciting. But the second piece of it is, um, it's what I said before about religion, religion is about somebody else's spiritual experience,

and I think Jungianism can be the same thing, it can be about Jung's experience of the unconscious,

Dr. Dave: Exactly

Dr. Naegle: but not about ours. Its light stops with him because it opens many doorways—wonderful ideas and ways to get into the unconscious, but it can also stop there and become locked up there and become orthodoxy.

Dr. Dave: I really like the way you put that and I totally agree with you that we can become overly reverent about Jung

Dr. Naegle: yeah

Dr. Dave: and really put him on a pedestal

Dr. Naegle: yeah, yeah.

Dr. Dave: I just saw *A Dangerous Method*, the movie

Dr. Naegle: uhuh,

Dr. Dave: and, if nothing else, it really depicted him as a man

Dr. Naegle: mhmm

Dr. Dave: it really brought him down to, you know, a man, *laughs*, with flaws and, you know, and struggles, just like the rest of us

Dr. Naegle: uhuh

Dr. Dave: so I thought that was a useful thing about that film. Have you seen it yet?

Dr. Naegle: I haven't seen it yet, but I talked to some members of his family about what it was like growing up with him, and it wasn't easy.

Dr. Dave: Oh really—you've been able to talk to members of his family?

Dr. Naegle: Yes,

Dr. Dave: Who?

Dr. Naegle: Well, I've met two of his daughters and they spoke of it, and I met his son, and so it's, he was an interesting man, a struggling man, and he had his faults, I mean when I went, to Bollingen and I went into his bedroom I was blown away because on the far wall right

across from the foot of his bed was a twelve-foot high painting of a winged figure that he would wake up to every morning, and, so, he's a very complicated, interesting man.

Dr. Dave: Hmm. A winged nude, or, uh?

Dr. Naegle: No, it wasn't

Dr. Dave: (*laughs*) that's my unconscious

Dr. Naegle: I'm blocking the, it's a Latin name, it appears several times as a spiritual guide for him.

Dr. Dave: Okay, uh, and is this one of the figures that appears in the Red Book?

Dr. Naegle: Yes.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah, 'cause there's a lot of images. I was, on the way over here, one of my listeners referred me to, wait a second, one of my listeners referred me to a podcast or a recording of a presentation by Lionel Corbett, a Jungian analyst, which is on the Houston Friends of Jung website, and, um, so I was listening to that on the way over here, it was very interesting and he was kind of talking about that issue of whether or not Jungian psychology is a religion, and he's really emphasizing it calls us to awakening of our own original experience rather than pursuing somebody else's experience.

Dr. Naegle: Mmhmm

Dr. Dave: and so I like the distinction that you just made that, it's kind of a tool-kit really for moving towards one's own experience

Dr. Naegle: yeah

Dr. Dave: and also he calls us to, to do that, rather than to exalt somebody else's experience, including his own.

Dr. Naegle: Yeah, I always loved the fact that towards the end of his life, he wished he'd never used the word wholeness as the goal of individuation

Dr. Dave: Yeah?

Dr. Naegle: he said, at least, he always changes his mind, at least he wrote it towards the end of his life. He wished he'd used the word "specificity", that each person has to find their own specificity, which is their own unique wholeness, not this big wholeness, goofy, huge wholeness, every-thing, every-one, it is that individual path and that individual becoming.

Dr. Dave: Well, yeah, he talks about it as the process of individuation

Dr. Naegle: Yeah

Dr. Dave: and always talks about differentiating oneself from the crowd, I forget what the word is that he uses

Dr. Naegle: the collective

Dr. Dave: the collective, yeah, thank you, thank you. Uh, you sent me a workshop description about, you've already alluded to this workshop that you're going to be doing up in Portland, which has among other things says, and I quote you here, "soul's journey requires healing and transformation in the concrete struggles of our personal lives and relationships; soul also requires us to have a deeper resource than just ourselves, to have a greater meaning in community and cosmos." Can you expand on that a little bit?

Dr. Naegle: Well maybe the simple way is, um, there's been a lot of people who've written about the difference between East and West, and, um, the caricature, of course, is the Eastern guru who comes to the West and ends up with a fleet of Cadillacs and sleeping with all the women

Dr. Dave: (*laughs*) Yeah

Dr. Naegle: and, uh, one of the comments is, in the East, people there grow up in a very clear community; their roles are defined, their relationships are defined; very tight container in which the spiritual process happens, so they can have this great sense of oneness, but have very little idea about the nature of projection, dealing with shadow, all the things that we over here in the West have to deal with in terms of our individuality.

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm

Dr. Naegle: they don't have, they, at least the caricatures, they have not had to deal with as much individuality because they have been more identified with the community, the tribe, the collective. The flip side is true from the West—we know all about that stuff, or at least we *can* know about it if we want to

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah

Dr. Naegle: what we can't know is some of these larger spiritual sense of the Oneness, which we go to the East for. So those—they need each other. It's very hard to, as I mentioned before, to do the work, especially on shadow work in one's own life because it's so much not who I am, and yet it is who I am. How do you hold that together, and to have a larger framework for that in terms of life, universe, power, God, whatever word you want to use, it makes a huge difference, uh, for example, when I do couples' work I always have a couple light a votive candle on the table in the middle of the room when they start the session, and it's burning the whole time, and at the end of the session they blow it out. And I

Dr. Dave: And you do that because...?

Dr. Naegle: and I, yeah I do that because, I say to them that, at a minimum this is just a little ritual to get you used to knowing that you are here, bringing your best, your most consciousness to work on the relationship, and you're not coming tired, it's not the end of the day, this is your focus, and the candle kind of just symbolizes that level of consciousness and commitment to do the work. Okay? Um, that's the minimum—at a maximum, if anybody has a spiritual framework, it's also evoking that which is larger than us, in me, around me and in the relationship that can support this work. I may not know how to get through to my spouse, but something larger may be at work and I need to evoke that and trust that,

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm

Dr. Naegle: my deeper, my deeper self.

Dr. Dave: Somewhere in this material that you sent me too about this upcoming workshop, there, I saw the word “altar”, and your talking about this candle sort of brings that back to mind and,

Dr. Naegle: yeah

Dr. Dave: what, what is it that you do around that, or what's your take on altars?

Dr. Naegle: Well, it's always very interesting, if you ask somebody, “Well where do you find altars in your life?” most people, right now, would say, “I don't—altars aren't meaningful for me,

Dr. Dave: yeah

Dr. Naegle: [] I find it in the church or in the synagogue. If I ask them, I don't use that word at all, and I say, “Well, where do you go, what do you do, what do you listen to that makes you feel most connected with life, where you feel most at home in the universe, where you feel related to something larger in life that kind of supports you and the life around you, you know, whether it's by the ocean, or a certain kind of music, favorite poem, a picture, a stone you picked up some place, a certain time of the day, a certain chair in the morning with your tea, what would it be for you?” Ah, and more often than not people come up—it takes them a while but they begin thinking about, well, what do I, what are the symbols I've collected around my house that I just have there because they mirror something back to me that connects me, or those favorite poems, or the piece of music I've put on, whether it's Country Western or Rachmaninoff, um, or it may be a certain food—those are all altars, in effect

Dr. Dave: Ok

Dr. Naegle: because an altar is where you meet God—that's what an altar is. But if you use those words, a lot of people just immediately pull back, because they can't deal with the language-ing, but if you change the language, people know the experience immediately.

Dr. Dave: Some number of people who are listening to this are either therapists themselves, ah, therapists in transition, or are students who are in the process of becoming to be therapists, so, say a bit more about how—you've given us a couple of examples here—say more about how your interest in Jung, mythology, religion, informs your work as a therapist.

Dr. Naegle: Ah, on a different level, let me wander into that.

Dr. Dave: *laughs* Yeah, sure.

Dr. Naegle: When I first start working with a new person, um, I tell them my background and I talk about my training as a therapist in the Jungian tradition, and I add, they don't have to know about Jung at all, it doesn't matter at all, in fact they would not even realize that about me, the only one way—I don't use the language, all that stuff, unless they're interested

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Dr. Naegle: the way it comes across is I always have an antenna out for the unconscious. One of my favorite lines of Jung is he said, "wonderful thing about the unconscious is that it's really unconscious"

Dr. Dave: *laughs*

Dr. Naegle: and that when people come into therapy it's because they keep tripping over something they can't quite see, or they're feeling the gravitational pull of something they can't quite put their finger on, that's the unconscious. So that's where we are, so I'll look at dreams, if that's, if people are interested in dreams, I'll be looking for that level of things.

Dr. Dave: Uhhuh

Dr. Naegle: Another way I'll bring it in is in my, in the very first introduction, I'll talk about the fact that I'm very comfortable working with people's spirituality and religious background, that I have no axe to grind, I have no agenda, I have no dogma to espouse, but that I do know that if people have a spiritual source, um, that that can be enormously helpful in the journey and I'm happy to talk with them about how to use that even more effectively in the work that we're doing and that I'm very open to doing that.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Dr. Naegle: And the other piece I'll do some times is, people who are religious and are comfortable with the word God, they'll be struggling with their boss at work, or a terrible dream, and after a while, I'll say, Okay, so where's God in all this?" And that usually shocks people right away.

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm. Yeah! (*laughs*)

Dr. Naegle: Is God present? I don't have any answer to that, but it shocks people into thinking, where is my reference, what's going on?

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm. What's your concept of healing in that process, what is healing, what does it look like, what does that mean to you?

Dr. Naegle: Well, this is where I agree with

Dr. Dave: and is therapy about healing, or is it about something else?

Dr. Naegle: Well, in the back of what is it, C. A. Meier's book Ancient Incubation in Modern Psychotherapy, he talks about Jung's definition of healing, and in it he's, according to him, Jung's definition, let's see, how can I put this, he said that symptoms kind of come and go, they can change or not change, we can work on them forever, and they come and go. Okay? But real healing is when the attitude towards the symptom changes,

Dr. Dave: Mmhmm

Dr. Naegle: so that even if it's still around, the attitude is different, ah, here's my old friend

Dr. Dave: yeah

Dr. Naegle: Okay? And I think that is, I think that is for me now, is my definition of healing. Of course I'd like to see people who've been profoundly wounded have that change somehow on a deep level and sometimes it doesn't, but their attitude towards it can, and that makes all the difference in the world.

Dr. Dave: yeah, ok.

Dr. Naegle: I think the one time I had a, somebody wanted to stop therapy, and I said he wasn't ready, 'cause I usually honor where people are, was a PhD student who was in a very high-powered intellectual program, and he came in one day and announced he'd done his work and he was going to stop, and I said, I didn't think he was ready, and he said, "Why?", and I said because when this issue, his particular issue, comes up for you, you're still surprised.

Dr. Dave: Hmm.

Dr. Naegle: And it was true. It always shocked him, that it came up again.

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Dr. Naegle: There was, Sheila Moon, one of the Guild's founders, had a conversation with Carl Jung once, and one of the things she shared that they talked about was the individual journey, and they described it as a "tholos", which is a round Greek temple, so you can imagine a round temple with the Greek columns,

Dr. Dave: Yeah. I can picture that.

Dr. Naegle: in a circle? And if that's who you are and each of those columns is a given in your life, it may have been the alcoholism of your father, or the fact that you're a male or a female, or this or that, whatever that was, each of those is a column that goes up that goes up, a major influence, a major part of your life, and the journey is like a spiral that's going round and up those columns, so periodically we come round and hit that column again, "Oh, here's my anxiety coming up again."

Dr. Dave: Okay

Dr. Naegle: [] being interviewed about who I am as a therapist

Dr. Dave: *laughs*

Dr. Naegle: Okay. It doesn't mean do not pass go, do not collect two hundred dollars, I'm back at the beginning, I'm just chasing my own tail; part of it is realizing, "Yes, of course, that's part of who I am, that's one of the old friends I'm going to have to deal with. I may not like it, I may wish it would go away, but I'm not surprised by it anymore." Does that make sense?

Dr. Dave: It does, and in fact I've used that spiral metaphor myself, because, you know, 'cause I've seen people go into despair with, "Oh my God, I thought I'd dealt with all my mother issues, I'm so tired of dealing with that".

Dr. Naegle: Right

Dr. Dave: But no, well it's come around again and we're dealing with it at a different level.

Dr. Naegle: So real healing would be, "I'm tired of dealing with my mother issues, and, of course, here it is again."

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Dr. Naegle: Not, "Oh God..."

Dr. Dave: and you're okay with it.

Dr. Naegle: Well, that's the change in attitude, it's like, well your mother who was your mother was, and she did what she did, and you can't erase that, so then one has to change one's attitude.

Dr. Dave: You know, one of the thoughts that was going on for me as you were talking about that is that I'm always trying to look at things through different theoretical perspectives and lenses and so on, and put on my, uh, "behavioral headset", I guess, and I'm thinking well, ok, would be, the old behavioral headset would have said, "Oh, well, that's not healing, that's just, that's some kind of rationalization, that it hasn't really worked", but I think these days

behaviorists would tend to look at that and say, in fact, getting a person to change their attitude towards their symptoms, to reframe it, to experience it in a different way, is success.

Dr. Naegle: Uhuh.

Dr. Dave: So I see actually a lot of the schools of therapy actually converging around the issues

Dr. Naegle: Interesting

Dr. Dave: Sometimes they talk very different talks but it boils down to much the same thing. We've sort of run out of time here, and I'm wondering as we wind down if there's anything that you'd like to say, to kind of wrap things up.

Dr. Naegle: Oh wow, to summarize?

Dr. Dave: Yeah, well, you don't have to summarize, but if there is something you thought you were going to get to say that you didn't get to say, or you want to subtract something you said

Dr. Naegle: *laughs*

Dr. Dave: *laughs* and take it back

Dr. Naegle: I've enjoyed the conversation, and you can tell I'm passionate about the material and I think mostly I make a plea, especially for people who are doing therapy, to let ourselves be open to our clients' spiritual journeys, and not dismiss them because we don't agree with it, or not tap it as a resource because we don't agree with it, or not try to push on them our theoretical understanding, um, but use it as a resource, let alone use it as a resource for ourselves, and part of that's going back to, just as you were talking about your fundamentalist background, how to go back and find the baby—you still want to get rid of the bathwater,

Dr. Dave: Yeah

Dr. Naegle: but there was something probably that was very meaningful for you in that, and how to go back and find that without getting caught in the institution again, there's gold there.

Dr. Dave: Uh, believe it or not, for me, Shrink Rap Radio, these interviews, is part of that baby,

Dr. Naegle: Mmm. Uhuh

Dr. Dave: This is kind of my mission, and there is something about my own spiritual journey that hopefully infuses these interviews, so, I love your summation, and, Dr. Richard Naegle, thanks for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Dr. Naegle: You're welcome.

closing music

Dr. Dave: I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Jungian therapist Dr. Richard Naegle. I think the whole question of the relationship between Jungian psychology and religion is a fascinating one. On the one hand there is the tendency to deify Jung, which he would not have wanted, and his famous quote comes to mind in that regard, to wit, "Thank God I'm not a Jungian!". We know that Jung tended to feel that there was often a spiritual crisis underlying the symptoms of the patients he saw, and he also felt that patients needed to come to terms with whatever religious tradition they were raised in. I'm under the impression that as much as he studied Eastern religions and philosophies, that he was skeptical about the ability of someone raised in a different religious tradition to migrate to another one. I wonder what he'd think today about the vast number today of Westerners who've become Buddhists. Would he change his mind? And then too there are large numbers of us who define ourselves as spiritual but not religious. I think Jung is the one who has given us the conceptual framework to embrace that idea. So I don't see Jungian psychology as a religion, but I do see it as providing a path to the realization of our spiritual nature.