
OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE ON JUNGIAN HYPNOTIC DREAM-WORK: TOWARDS A JUNGIAN MODEL FOR HYPNOTHERAPEUTIC DREAM INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

Jung's concept of complexes and how they operate in the unconscious, as well as other Jungian ideas, provide fertile ground for a Jungian-oriented hypnotic modality based on dream-work, symbology, and active imagination. This paper delineates what such work looks like in clinical practice, partly from the perspectives of Sonu Shamdasani and Ernest Rossi. It sheds light on Jung's understanding of suggestion as a psychotherapeutic technique that is harnessed rather than produced, and offers a historical sense of how and why hypnosis became dissociated from Jungian work despite the connection to Jung's theories. It further suggests an approach to hypnotic dreaming.

Key words: Jung, hypnosis, dream interpretation, suggestion

INTRODUCTION

Suggestion happens of its own accord, without the doctor's being able to prevent it or taking the slightest trouble to produce it.

(Jung 1954b: 9)

Jung, as evidenced by the above, was no stranger to suggestion; he was also quite famous for his work with dreams. One commonality between dreams and trance states, according to Lee (1999), is that they are both 'powerful non-ordinary states of consciousness'. She describes the interrelationship between Jung, hypnotherapy, and dream-work by declaring that dreams are very useful in hypnosis, especially in depth psychology, experiential and transpersonal work, and in Jungian or archetypal analysis.

Lee further notes that in common with dreams, images arising from hypnosis symbolize unconscious complexes in terms of their structure and movement. Moreover, she comments that the affect bridge technique in hypnosis reflects Jung's own understanding of how emotions cluster around a single, deeper complex, such that the forceful feelings appearing in dreams may be processed in a similar way to the imagery that comes up in trance.

Jungian theory and hypnotic dreaming can also be used in ego-state work, which focuses on ego-strengthening through imagery pertaining to ego states that have become dissociated (Frederick, 2005). It is again Jung's theory on complexes that fits here. Jung wrote that complexes are

autonomous groups of associations that have a tendency to move by themselves, to live their own life apart from our intentions. I hold that our personal unconscious, as well as the collective unconscious, consists of an indefinite, because unknown, number of complexes or fragmentary personalities. (Jung, 1968: 81)

He also wrote that such splits can reflect 'a shadow government of the ego' (Jung, 1954b: 87; cited in Young-Eisendrath, 2000: 109).

According to Young-Eisendrath (2000), complexes also tend to replicate unrecognized or barely recognized feeling memories by playing them out in the present as if today's relationships were virtually identical to those from youth. The Jungian author states that central to every complex is a predilection for experiencing a specific feeling-toned image as if it were a current reality, though in actuality it is a memory of an earlier state of helplessness from infancy or early childhood. Such imagery is a conglomeration of sensory stimuli touched off so convincingly that the person hooks into any perceived warning, intimidation, or cue as happening once more, exactly as in the past. This is one reason why the affect bridge can be such a powerful technique in general hypnosis and particularly in hypnotic dream-work.

Another powerful technique in Jungian-oriented therapy is active imagination, wherein imagery comes not so much from direct suggestion as to what should be imagined, as from an indirect suggestion to follow the trail of an image, for example, from a dream. Active imagination, like hypnosis itself, is difficult to define. In terms of hypnosis, it can be described as an eyes-open form of hypnotic dreaming. From a Jungian perspective, active imagination is a therapeutic tool that was created by Jung to discover unconscious fantasies while patients were awake and conscious. Jung explained active imagination as 'a technical term referring to a method I have proposed for raising unconscious contents to consciousness' (Jung, 1937: 81; cited in Swan, 2008: 185).

The actual process has been labelled by Hannah (2001) as a type of meditation that people have used throughout recorded time, and possibly prior to that, in order to familiarize themselves with their image of the gods or the godhead. As a Jungian author, Hannah explains active imagination as a way of exploring the depths of what is not understood, 'whether we think of the unknown as an outside god—as an immeasurable infinite—or whether we know that we can meet it by contemplating our unknown selves in an entirely *inner* experience' (2001: 4).

Jung's first paper on active imagination 'The Transcendent Function', written in 1916, described its mechanics in terms of a pair of opposing principles—namely creativity and understanding:

The two ways do not divide until the aesthetic problem becomes decisive for the one type of person and the intellectual-moral problem for the other. The ideal case would

be if these two aspects could exist side by side or rhythmically succeed each other; that is, if there were an alternation of creation and understanding. It hardly seems possible for the one to exist without the other, though it sometimes does happen in practice: the creative urge seizes possession of the object at the cost of its meaning, or the urge to understand overrides the necessity of giving it form. (Jung, 1960: 86; cited in Dieckmann, 1971: 127)

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historically, beginning with Henri Ellenberger, various scholars have shown that psychoanalysis and analytical psychology fit within the body of therapeutic work as a recent stage in the evolution of hypnotic and suggestive therapies that reached throughout Europe and America in the late 1800s. For example, hypnosis was practised at the hospital where Jung worked, both on the patients and the staff, as part of hospital management. Indeed, Jung's dissertation was on the case of a somnambulist, his cousin (see Shamdasani, 2001a).

In 'The Aims of Psychotherapy' (1954a), Jung based his style of offering his own images and associations to his patients' dreams by saying: 'As is well known, one only allows something to be suggested that one is anyway already quietly ready for' (cited in Shamdasani, 2001a: 15; translation modified). As Jungian historian Sonu Shamdasani notes, this perspective allowed Jung to recognize the importance of suggestion while also circumscribing its implications.

According to Tart (1969), a complete methodology for exploring hypnotic dreams (as well as night-time dreams) needs to examine all reactions to the suggestion to dream, rather than focusing only on responses that resemble dreams during sleep. In this regard, according to Shamdasani, the idea of suggestion was used in Jung (1957) to explicate the creation of 'somnambulist dream pictures' (Shamdasani, 2001a: 8).

However, Jung stopped practising directive, hetero-hypnosis with the following statement in the fourth volume of his *Collected Works* (1961):

I was resolved to abandon suggestion altogether rather than allow myself to be passively transformed into a miracle-worker. I wanted to really understand what goes on in people's minds. It suddenly seemed to me incredibly childish to think of dispelling an illness with magical incantations, and that this should be the sole result of our efforts to create a psychotherapy. (Jung, 1957; cited in Shamdasani, 2001a: 12)

Nonetheless, Jung continued to utilize hypnotic metaphor and trance-like states, according to Shamdasani (2001b). While he avoided formally inducing trance, suggestion and hypnosis were still components of his therapy practice. Specifically, patient narratives of having been analysed by Jung demonstrate his aptitude for dealing with self-induced hypnotic states and for negotiating patients through any automatic trances that arose in connection with using active imagination. As such, Jung's first forays into hypnosis were seminal to his ongoing practice and style of analysis and therapy.

Indeed, Hall (1989) notes that Jung let go of hypnosis during a period when hypnosis was largely an authoritative and authoritarian act of the hypnotist upon a patient, rather

than a method of permitting the patient to tap into inner resources. The prestige of the 'doctor' was used over the empowerment of the patient at that time.

All the same, Hall observes that Jung's disavowal of hypnosis did have a negative effect on later perspectives taken by a great many Jungian analysts regarding the use of this approach. He notes that the majority of Jungian analysts ended up ignoring the utility of hypnosis, though he also opined that this lack of attention might not be as problematic as it seems on its face, since active imagination and Jungian dream-work tend to replicate several tools of hypnosis while using different terminology and historical bases for their inclusion in clinical practice.

Hall conjectures that while the number of Jungian analysts who use hypnosis is small, there will be others who would undoubtedly deem hypnotic tools to be quite complementary to orthodox Jungian analysis. He further observes that Jung himself brought more focus on the unconscious and subtle mechanisms inherent in the hypnotist–patient relationship.

In sum, Hall notes that Jung concentrated much attention on using imaginative techniques in a similar way to a great deal of the recent technology of hypnosis. He also considers active imagination and Jung's model of dream interpretation to be prime examples of this.

Hall further observes that Ericksonian theory in particular tracks well with Jung's in terms of the issue of complexes. For Hall, Ericksonian hypnotherapy also seems to rely on some basic assumptions that show a definitive kinship to facets of Jung's theories, particularly with regard to the involvement of the therapist, respect for the 'very personal and particular nature of the patients' problems; and, most important, an implicit trust in the movement of the deeper unconscious toward health and psychological wholeness' (Hall, 1989: 36).

Given the above affinity between these two approaches, it should not be surprising that one of the most famous Ericksonian hypnotherapists is also a Jungian analyst, namely, Ernest Rossi. Rossi (Rossi et al., 2007) agrees that he, Erickson, and Jung have in common a 'constructive future orientation' to self-creation and identity, such that it is the '*future, prospective memory system*' aspect of dreaming that helps inform Rossi's perspective on therapeutic hypnosis (Rossi et al., 2007: 27; emphasis in original). It makes sense that since, for Rossi, dreams can replay past occurrences creatively and thereby promote future adaptation, a similar tactic can be taken in the use of trance work to achieve the same ends.

It also follows that, for Rossi, the mechanism of how dreams and hypnotherapy work rests on a single basis: 'plasticity-related gene expression', which then consolidates the 'reconstruction of fear, stress, and traumatic memories and symptoms' for creative purposes (Rossi et al., 2007: 27). Rossi writes that Jung's comprehension of dreams as reflecting 'internal processes of psychic transformation' (Rossi, 2007: 19) fits well with the hypnotherapeutic endeavour, which aims at similar transformation.

Rossi integrates, among others, both the practice and theory of Jung's 'synthetic or constructive method and variations of Erickson's hand levitation approach to therapeutic hypnosis' (Rossi et al., 2007: 41). For example, he explicitly cites Jung's (1971) idea of hypnosis as a 'lowering of consciousness' in favour of an 'activation of the contents of the unconscious' (Rossi et al., 2007: 52). He also references explicitly Erickson's usual therapy sessions of about 90 to 120 minutes, which Rossi (Rossi & Rossi, 2006) conceptualizes as the 'utilization of natural ultradian rhythms of the Basic Rest-Activity Cycle (BRAC) that

typically occur every 90 to 120 minutes while awake, asleep and dreaming' (Rossi & Rossi, 2006: 275).

CONCLUSION

For the present researcher, it seems reasonable based on the foregoing to build a foundation for Jungian hypnotherapeutic dream-work using as a cornerstone Jung's (1954b) 'subjective method', such that just as dreams are conceptualized as a 'dramatic play personifying forces of change and development within the individual's *internal frame of reference*' (cited in Rossi et al., 2007: 19; emphasis in original), so too can hypnotic dreaming be understood and employed in similar fashion. From this perspective, it may be said that active imagination is to Jungian therapy as hypnotic dreaming is to hypnotherapy—in the sense that in each technique, conscious imagery forms the background while unconscious imagery takes the foreground with the purpose of creating 'in-sight' that helps heal inner conflict.

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