The construction and analysis of dream metaphors from the standpoint of Co-Creative Dream Theory

Gregory Scott Sparrow

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA

Summary. Co-creative dream theory posits that the dream is co-determined through the reciprocal interplay between the witnessing dream ego and the emergent content. Consequently, the resulting dream can be seen as one of many contingent outcomes based on the dreamer's range of response through the course of the dream, as well as the broad constraints of underlying domains that account for the nature and thrust of the emergent content. From this relational view of the dream, the visual imagery is not the content itself, but rather the "mutable interface" (Sparrow, 2013) between the dream ego and the emergent content. The purpose of this paper is to consider how the Co-creative Paradigm (CCP) builds on contributions by Jung (2014), Ullman (1969), Lakoff (1993), Lakoff & Johnson (1980), and Rossi (1972), in particular, to construct a view of metaphor formation in dreams. By viewing dream content as representing broad domains of human experience rendered as specific metaphoric imagery during the dream encounter itself, this approach can discern where the dream ego stands in relationship to the developmental tasks associated with these emergent domains. Finally, I will introduce a generic approach to co-creative dreamwork that includes several operations that may facilitate effective dreamwork practice. The hypothesis presented in this paper is that this novel view of metaphoric imagery construction, based on the Co-Creative Paradigm, opens up new questions, and fosters insights heretofore unavailable from the standpoint of traditional content-oriented dream analysis.

Keywords: Metaphor, archetype, conceptual metaphor, co-creative dream theory, dream analysis

1. Introduction

During the dreaming experience, the visual content exhibits an autonomous character, appearing to take its cue from some source apart from the witnessing dream ego. Since it is apparently constructed elsewhere by some unknown mechanism, it is natural to believe that the dream imagery is a "strictly determined" (Freud, 1913; Kramer; 1993) representation that says something about our lives. This culturally embedded view was noted by Sontag:

> The fact is, all Western consciousness of and reflection upon art have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation ... it is still assumed that a work of art [or dreams] is its content. Or, as it's usually put today, that a work of art by definition says something" (Sontag, 1966, p. 4).

The Greek theory of art and dreams as *mimesis*, or representation, was reconfirmed by Freud, who believed that each symbol in the dream alluded to a specific waking person or situation in the dreamer's life. In light of this age-old conviction, the central task in content-focused dream work has been to view the dream images as "symbols," defined as "any image or thing that stands for something else" (Literaryterms.com, 2019).

Symbols vs. Metaphors

The word "symbol" is often used interchangeably with "metaphor," even though metaphor is defined much differently. A symbol presumably represents something or someone specific, whereas a metaphor renders a broad, abstract domain of experience in concrete terms. Lakoff (1993) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) refer to this abstract domain as the *target domain* and the concrete images and experiences that are used to anchor it in metaphor as the *source domain*. Both domains are explicitly revealed in a language-based metaphor such as, "Desire (target) is a barking dog (source)," and we are left to feel the impact of this juxtaposition, or reduction, without needing further explanation. In contrast, a dream such as the one below, does not announce the target domain to which the specific image refers.

> I am floating above a barking black dog, which is jumping up trying to bite my foot. I am desperately flapping my arms, trying to remain safely aloft. I awaken in fear.

(The dream examples that I have included herein all feature animal images, in order to demonstrate the kind of metaphoric reductions and transformations that can occur between the dream ego and a common content domain, that is, the instinctual self.)

While the image of the dog was unambiguously present in the dream, any relationship to a broad-based domain of life experience had to be discovered through a process of client-centered inquiry. Through the dreamer's associations with his therapist, it became clear that the dog was not merely a symbol that referred to something or someone else—but rather reduced a broad, abstract life domain into comprehensible terms. Through the dreamer's associations, the barking dog revealed itself as a grounding element for the broad domain of emotional need and sexual desire. In-

deed, according to the client, the barking dog effectively expressed a domain of life that he often viewed as threatening and shameful.

Langer (1948) says that metaphors emerge in response to a need to understand something ambiguous from the outset: "When new unexploited possibilities of thought crowd in upon the human mind the poverty of everyday language becomes acute." She goes on to say that this poverty of ordinary language gives rise to efforts to describe the "unexploited possibility" in *specific* terms. This operation comes at a price, because metaphors render something greater in terms of something lesser, leaving out a more complete array of qualities associated with the broad domain. But Langer (1957) also points out that metaphor construction paradoxically uses concreteness as an instrument for arriving at a deeper understanding of an abstraction.

The Presentational Paradigm

The traditional content-oriented approach to dream analysis treats the dream ego's experience as a given, and the fixed imagery as the carrier of meaning. This approach parallels the classical philosophical position of Realism, or the "objective" myth of reality (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 229-230), which assumes the external world exists independently from the observer. In regard to dreams, we might refer to this as the "Presentational Paradigm," wherein the dream is treated as an independent creation of which the dream ego simply becomes aware. The organizing questions supported by this paradigm reflect the assumption that dream images are constructed ahead of time outside of conscious awareness and, as symbols, refer to something else. Thus, it is reasonable to ask, "Who or what is this symbol *referring* to in my waking life? While this one-to-one equivalency approach can yield results, some dream images may function more accurately as metaphors, which by definition are not simply stand-ins for something identifiable in the waking life, but rather allude to a broad content domain. For instance, the 45-year-old male client, who reported the above dream of the barking dog, had a subsequent dream in which another image threatened him:

I am able to float by flapping my arms. I am floating above a beautiful woman who is trying to reach my foot and pull me down. She is laughing playfully, and saying, "Come on down and play with me." I feel excited, but my anxiety gets the best of me, and so I keep flapping my arms so I can elude her reach. I awaken with mixed feelings.

When the above dreams about the black dog and the beautiful woman are considered together, it makes sense that both images point to a common domain of experience expressed metaphorically in response to the subjective stance of the dream ego. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue similarly that a single underlying "conceptual metaphor" can support a variety of distinctive metaphors, each of which is derived from, and provides a unique rendering of the same "supraordinate" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) conceptual metaphor.

2. The Role of Metaphor in the Co-Creative Paradigm

Jung was perhaps the first to articulate the premise that dream imagery derives from the reciprocal interplay of two sources rather than one, when he said that the dream image…

…is the result of the spontaneous activity of the unconscious on one hand and of momentary conscious situation on the other. The interpretation of its meaning...can start neither from the conscious alone nor from the unconscious alone, but only from their reciprocal relationship (Jung, 2014b).

Jung's view of the dream image as the product of the "reciprocal relationship" between conscious and unconscious challenges the position that the manifest dream imagery is "strictly determined" (Freud, 1913; Kramer, 1993) by a wholly unconscious process prior to observation. It also allows for the possibility that if the dream image assumes a specific form *only* when observed, during the dream itself. Along these lines, Jung asserted that an archetype expresses itself in various metaphors that render an "unknown third thing" into a variety of distinct forms.

…archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors. If such a content should speak of the sun and identify with it the lion, the king, the hoard of gold guarded by the dragon, or the power that makes for the life and health of man, it is neither the one thing nor the other, but the unknown third thing that finds more or less adequate expression in all these similes, yet – to the perpetual vexation of the intellect – remains unknown and not to be fitted into a formula. (Jung, 2014c)

According to Jung, an archetype—the "unknown third thing"—can generate a variety of diverse metaphoric expressions. This view of archetype corresponds to Lakoff and Johnson's view of a "conceptual metaphor" (1980) which, they contend, comprises a metaphorical substrate accounting for specific derivative metaphoric expressions.

Ullman (1969) takes a similar approach by distinguishing between "major metaphors," which are "mapped" onto the dream interface as "minor metaphors." He thus alludes to the same general-to-specific mapping process in the dream, and refers to the dream imagery as the "interface," which is a word that I have also used in co-creative dream theory—more specifically, the "mutable interface" (Sparrow, 2013). In the final analysis, Ullman anticipates the emergence of the Co-creative Paradigm, when he states;

Our main thesis is that dreaming involves rapidly changing presentational sequences which in their unity amount to a metaphorical statement (major metaphor). Each element (minor metaphor) in the sequence has metaphorical attributes organized toward the end of establishing in a unified way an over-all metaphorical description of the new ideas and relations and their implications as these rise to the surface during periods of activated sleep.

In each of the three systems that I've cited—Jung, Ullman, and Lakoff & Johnson—we find descriptions of 1) generic underlying domains and 2) specific metaphoric expressions of those domains. But except for Ullman, who alone implies that the major metaphors are sequentially "mapped" into the unfolding dream in real time, *none of these theorists describe the construction of dream metaphors as a synchronous reciprocal process*, perhaps because none of them acknowledge the traditionally neglected factor in dreams that can account for an unfolding interactive process in real time—the dream ego's *reflective awareness and volition*. To their credit, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) acknowledge

the interactive nature of reality-as-metaphor construction by acknowledging the "experientialist" myth as an alternative to the objective (i.e. Realism) or subjective (i.e. Idealism) myths. They contend that the experientialist position resolves the age-old conflict between the two classical positions by asserting *an interactive synthesis* of objective and subjective realities:

> *The experientialist myth takes the perspective of man as part of his environment, not as separate from it. It focuses on constant interaction with the physical environment and other people. It views this interaction with the environment as involving mutual change. You cannot function within the environment without changing it or being changed by it. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 67)*

A Reflective and Responsive Dream Ego as the Co-Creator of the Dream

The traditional view that the dream as "strictly determined" (Freud, 1913; Kramer, 1993) has come under challenge from those who have observed that the dream ego 1) exhibits the capacity for self-reflection and choice, and 2) that the visual imagery, in turn, adjusts to the dream ego's subjective stance (Rossi, 1972; Sparrow, 2013; Sparrow & Thurston, 2010). Rossi's seminal statement, that "…there is a continuum of all possible balances of control between the autonomous process and the dreamer's self-awareness and consciously directed effort" (1972, p. 163) captures the first of two foundational premises of the Co-Creative Paradigm—that *the dreamer is self-reflective and responsive to some extent in every dream*.

Rossi's observation has since been verified by research studies on the metacognitive capabilities of dreamers (Kahan, 2001; Kahan & LaBerge, 1996, 2011), which has demonstrated that dreamers report the same metacognitive (i.e. reflectiveness and volitional) processes as they do in the waking state, albeit to a lesser degree. A variety of other studies have established that the dream ego can engage flexibly in rehearsing responses to threat simulations (Valli, Revonsuo, Palkas, Ismail, Ali, &Punamaki, 2005), entertain and create "counterfactual" scenarios to offset negative outcomes (McNamara, Andresen, Arrowood, Messer, 2002), or engage in problem solving and trauma resolution

Figure 1. Metaphor Construction as a Reciprocal Process

(Barrett, 2001). Taken together, these modern studies provide empirical confirmation that "a continuum" (Rossi, 1972) of reflective awareness underlies our dreaming activity, and that the dream ego *can* entertain alternative views and responses during the dream. But whereas these adaptive learning studies establish that the dream ego can engage in such tasks as threat simulation rehearsal, counterfactual thinking and problem solving, the Co-creative Paradigm is an overarching view of dream formation that focuses on the way *all* dreams unfold in real time. That is, it views all dreams as indeterminate from the outset, and co-created through the reciprocal interplay between the dream ego and emergent, generic content. Thus, the Co-Creative Paradigm accommodates a variety of specific possible functions, but is not in itself a theory of evolutional dream function. This is the second foundational premise of the Co-Creative Paradigm.

Taken together, these two foundational premises—that the dream ego is self-aware to some extent in virtually all dreams, and that the dream outcome unfolds in real time as a consequence of dream ego/dream content interaction—permit a view of dream imagery, not so much as the content itself, but as the "interface," (Ullman, 1969) or as the "mutable interface" (Sparrow, 2013) of the unfolding relationship between dream ego and emergent content.

The Construction of Metaphors in Co-Creative Theory

One might ask, what determines the specific form that becomes manifests on the dream's mutable interface? Freud believed that the construction/reduction goes on outside of conscious awareness, and that the dream arrives as a strictly determined construction. In contrast, the Co-Creative Paradigm posits that the content domains contain generic material that is rendered as metaphor whenever observed.

That is, as the dream arises in response to the felt dissonance (Ullman, 1969) between the dream ego and emergent content, the dream ego's need to integrate the intrusive content renders the content in specific mutable form as we observe its emergence on an interactive interface. In Ullman's words…

> *…the dreamer, forced to employ a sensory mode, has to build the abstraction out of concrete blocks in the form of visual sequences. The resulting metaphor can be viewed as an interface phenomenon where the biological system establishes the sensory medium as the vehicle for this expression and the psychological system furnishes the specific content.*

If the metaphor coalesces prior to observation, and arrives in consciousness as a fixed product—a la the Presentational Paradigm—then one might ask, What accounts for imagery changes over the course of the dream? One can try to extend the utility of the Presentational Paradigm by asserting that the transformed image is actually a separate metaphor that was also created during the construction process, and appears according to some prearranged sequence. This is the position that traditional linguistics takes in regard to metaphors—that metaphors emerge as unique, standalone creations. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory challenges this view by positing the existence of underlying conceptual metaphors that account for the construction of more specific, derivative metaphors.

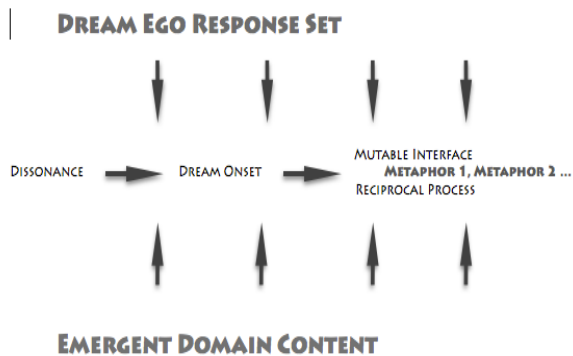Perhaps the most persuasive phenomenological support

for a real-time co-creative process between the dream ego and underlying emergent content can be found in dream reports that depict fluctuations in the dream imagery that coincide with alterations in dreamer mood or response. Indeed, the dream imagery often exhibits transformations as the dreamer experiences commensurate shifts in mood, volition, or awareness, as reflected in the following dream:

I am lying in my bed, and I look up to see rats dropping through a hole in the ceiling onto my bed. I get up and run away from them. I reach the stairway and head up to the second floor, hoping to elude them. As I reach the top of the stairs, I turn around to see if the rats are still behind me. A large rat is coming toward me. I notice that its fur is lustrous, and I am mesmerized by it. So I reach down and touch its fur. At that moment, the rat transforms into a beautiful snow leopard. I awaken in surprise.

In this intense dream shared by a victim of childhood sexual abuse, the dream proceeds as one might expect: The dreamer flees from the appearance of an abhorrent, invasive presence. However, when the dream ego changes her stance, so does the imagery. Parsimony favors the view that the dream ego and dream imagery are responsive to each other in an interactive or circular causal exchange. The rat and the snow leopard, despite their differences, give shape to the same "unknown third thing" (Jung, 2014c), and the *specific* manifestations of that domain take their lead from the dream ego's stance, which moves from terror and avoidance, to curiosity and wonder. Thus, the dream ego and the dream images are responsive to each other, but somewhat autonomous, as well. As Tarnas says, "In a relationship of true reciprocity—the potential communication of meaning and purpose must be able to move in both directions" (2006, p. 484–485). This "true reciprocity" is evident in dreams where the dream ego and the emergent content reveal the capacity for accommodation (mutability), while exhibiting a certain degree of autonomy, or fidelity to their respective agendas. Jung would say that this process reveals the "transcendent function" at work, as if "a dialogue were taking place between two human beings with equal rights" (Fordham, 1958). Jung elaborates more fully regarding the transcendent function when he says, "The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing…a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation" (p. 90). Thus, the "mutable interface" of the dream reveals the "new situation" co-created by the dialectical tension between dream ego and emergent content.

3. Implications for Dreamwork Practice

Converting the Co-Creative Paradigm (Rossi, 1972) into an operational dreamwork methodology has been undertaken (Sparrow, 2013; Sparrow and Thurston, 2010), but for the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the essential components of a generic methodology based on this theory. The essential dimensions of practice include: 1) exploring the dreamer's initial emotional state, 2) discerning the narrative framework, or plot (Sparrow, 1978; Thurston, 1978; Hartman, 1993), 3) analyzing dreamer response and commensurate imagery change, 4) conducting a metaphoric imagery analysis, 5) and assessing the dream as a developmental or regressive process. It is hypothesized that these operations based on the Co-Creative Paradigm facilitate measurable

outcomes more aligned with developmental and therapeutic goals than traditional content-oriented dream analysis.

In the following dream, submitted by a middle-aged woman to an online dream group, one can discern each of the dimensions of practice that I have delineated.

It is night time. I am lying in bed, and hear a wolf howl. I feel that he is threatening my chickens, so I grab a shovel and run out the door into the back yard, where I see the wolf on the edge of the lighted area. At first, I am not only worried about my chickens but also concerned that he might attack me. But as I stand there defiantly between the wolf and the chickens, I then notice that the wolf is actually a coyote, who is missing a leg. While I have compassion for the coyote, and I no longer feel any danger to myself, I am wary because I believe he intends to attack my chickens, nonetheless. I see that the chicken coop has no roof, and that the coyote can see the chickens through the chicken wire. Then I become aware that a raccoon is beyond the fence, as well, and also threatens the chickens. I never see it, but know somehow that it's there.

3.1. The Dreamer's Initial Emotional State

Perhaps the most important initial question one should ask in order to clarify the dream ego's subjective response set (i.e. Jung's "momentary conscious condition") that engages and impacts the emergent content, is, What is the dream ego's initial emotional state? It is tempting to assume that the first recollected event—in this case, the wolf's howl—sets the stage for the ensuing drama. But according to Ullman, a dream begins as a *state of dissonance* that gives rise to a visual interface between dreamer and dream content. Similarly, in Rossi's developmental model, the awareness of "the new" precipitates a crisis in the dream ego's state of unreflective, "one-dimensional" awareness (Rossi, 1972), and provokes self-awareness. And, according to Hartmann, unintegrated emotion serves to generate "contextualizing metaphors" that facilitate its integration. Clearly, the wolf's howl provokes an acute sense of self-awareness and a sense of dissonance with an emergent dimension of life that accounts for the coalescence of the dream imagery. Ullman alludes to this dissonance when he says that the emergent dream content…

…confronts the individual either with new and personally significant data or forces a confrontation with heretofore unrecognized unintended consequences of one's own behavior. There follows an exploration in depth with the immediate issue polarizing relevant data from all levels of one's own past in an effort to both explore the implications of the intrusive event and to arrive at a resolution.

The felt dissonance, or emotion, and the commensurate need to resolve it concurs with Hartmann's view (1998) of the dream. He argues that the dream imagery "contextualizes" unintegrated emotion with the purpose of facilitating its association with prior experience that has been effectively resolved. In the case of the sample dream, we can sense the dreamer's perceived dissonance with the dream content when she reports *feeling threatened* at the beginning of the dream.

3.2. The Narrative Framework or Continuous Plot

Operating from the traditional Presentational Paradigm, the broad relevance of the dream may be lost to the dreamer if he or she becomes fixated on interpreting specific visual content too soon in the process without regard to the generic process or cohesive plot of the dream. In a parallel field of endeavor, systems-oriented couples and family therapists recognize the tendency of family members to be preoccupied with the content of the problem. In contrast, systemic therapists are trained to recognize the importance of analyzing *how* people interact vs. *what* they are saying to each other, because the solutions that clients need depend on changing the ways they view and relate to each other vs. eliminating the problem as it is superficially framed. This cohesive framework behind the specific metaphoric content reveals the *relational process* that is often obscured by the riveting dream imagery. Sparrow (1978) and Thurston (1978) initially applied this content reduction to dreams by proposing the formulation of a "dream theme"--a purely descriptive statement of dream process that eliminated any mention of specific dream content. In support of the importance of acknowledging this background framework or "plot," Hartmann (1998, p. 116) stated that

> All of this discussion of powerful metaphors of dreams does not imply that every element of every dream … can be seen as an emotional concern pictured as an image in dream. There is also an element of "continuity"–an ongoing background … or a background plot. Even the most powerful dreams…also have more ordinary portions that seem to serve as continuity.

Extracting the process narrative thus clarifies a continuous background plot that weaves or "maps" (Lakoff, 1993; Ullman, 1969) the metaphoric imagery into a cohesive story line.

It effectively clarifies the dreamer-dream relational process by temporarily setting aside the consideration of the specific imagery. In the case of the above dream, the dream group and the dreamer arrived as this process narrative: *Someone becomes aware of a threat to something vulnerable and takes action to protect it. She then perceives the threat as less than before, but nonetheless still significant.* This content-free summary disregards the visual details of the dream in favor of creating a generic action statement through which to consider parallels in various areas of one's life.

3.3. Dreamer Response and Imagery Change Analysis

By first exploring the dream ego's emotional state and then formulating the process narrative, the dream worker lays the groundwork for examining the dreamer's responses to the emergent content, and their impact on the metaphoric imagery. This consideration of the interactive exchange between dream ego and emergent content is the centerpiece of the Co-Creative Paradigm.

In the example above, the dreamer's bold defense of her chickens seems to precipitate a transformation of the healthy wolf into an injured coyote, thus by implication reducing the level of perceived threat and increasing the chances of a relationship between the dreamer and the predator.

Interestingly, the dreamer then takes a step back by imagining that the threat continues in the imagined presence of a raccoon. According to the Co-Creative Paradigm, the dream ego's subjective attitude may move toward or away from integration with the content through the course of the dream (Rossi, 1972). Indeed, the dream ego is constantly projecting its emotions and expectations, however unsupported, into the dream, and the dream content will adjust to this internal shift by coalescing new metaphors within a certain range permitted by the underlying domain's agenda. The dream content initially accommodates the dream ego's firmness by precipitating a more sympathetic figure in the form of injured coyote, but the dream interface does not mirror the dreamer's expectations by manifesting the raccoon. One might ask, why the imperfect accommodation? The correlation is never perfect in the dream, perhaps because the interacting parties are, to some extent, functionally autonomous and operating according to different agendas. And so while they are responsive to each other, they remain true to their own sources and agendas.

At this point in the process, the dream worker engages the dreamer in order to assess the quality of his or her responses over the course of the dream. As I have stated elsewhere (Sparrow, 2014), the dream workers should depend on the dreamer to determine if a given response is desirable or not. By drawing on the dreamer's waking life values and goals, the dream worker(s) and dreamer can explore whether the responses in the dream were developmental (Rossi, 1972), or defensive responses (Sparrow, 2014) that may have arisen earlier in life as reasonable adaptive strategies, but which may have lost their utility in one's present life context. The dreamer is the ultimate authority on the desirability of his or her responses in the dream, and should be left free to determine if new responses are called for in future dreams of a similar nature, and in parallel waking relationships. In the case of this specific dream, the dreamer-dream tension subsides, but escalates once again as the dreamer imagines that there is a second source of threat.

3.4. Metaphoric Imagery Analysis

By rendering metaphoric imagery as continuously mutable and responsive to the dream ego, the Co-Creative Paradigm raises the question of how to make meaning from the individual dream images and the dream as a whole. Over the course of the last several years, my own dreamwork methodology (Sparrow, 2013; Sparrow and Thurston, 2010) has emphasized the investigation of the reciprocal relationship between response and imagery change, with an eye to modify chronic responses that may have preserved an undesirable status quo. This, of course, is imminently useful from the dream ego's side of the equation. However, two questions must be considered in order to complete the picture are: 1) What lies on the "other side" of the dream interface? That is, are there stable categories or domains of content that define and constrain the range of phenomenal expression through the imagery? And 2) Why does the dream ego's interaction with the emergent content render it principally as metaphor?

Conventional methods of dream imagery analysis extract the images from the phenomenal context, and analyze them without regard to the way that they are tethered to, and modified by the dreamer's responses. It also overlooks how the images may be derived from underlying content domains that become relevant and specific only when encountered.

Thus, in co-creative dreamwork, it becomes an added advantage to identify the range of possible content domains that the dreamer encounters and perceives on the visual interface, and assist dreamers in understanding how their responses to these content domains *precipitate metaphors* that reflect both the developmental challenges of the content domain and the dreamer's current state of relationship with it. The content domains can be understood as broad *a priori* constants, or archetypal domains that lie "behind" the changing interface of the dream, and which constrain the range of expression of the imagery along predictable themes. While these content domains may represent generic constants, the specific imagery can be seen as the sequential "mapping" in real time into resultant images conditioned by the dreamer's "momentary conscious condition" (Jung, 1966).

The premise that universal content domains produce categories of dream imagery is by no means new. In particular, the ancient *chakra* system (Govinda, 1971; Wilber, 2007) has become a familiar framework for understanding mythological and dream imagery in recent years. These sources, based on ancient Buddhist and Hindu systems for understanding the levels of consciousness, describe a system of seven centers, in which the upper two and lower two are often combined. Compared to modern Western systems of hierarchical psychological development, the *chakra* system arguably encompasses all of them into a comprehensive tiered system of increasing differentiation and integration. Indeed, the Western systems can be subsumed within the larger framework of the *chakra* system, and the symbology associated with these Western systems, including Jung's array of archetypes, can be mapped onto the chakra system with minimal conflict. Wilber (2007), in particular, describes the evolution of consciousness through the chakra levels according to Hegel's formula, in which each successive domain of development is transcended through the "death" or exhaustion of the lower, dominant mode of consciousness, and then recapitulated as a mastered component within the next higher, more differentiated level of consciousness.

From the standpoint of the Co-Creative Paradigm, whatever emerges as domain-level (or chakra-level) content to the witnessing dream ego coalesces in the form of imagery as it is felt and then observed. From the first moment onward, the dream ego's subjective attitude and response to it precipitates its specific domain-congruent appearance. This reciprocal exchange accounts for the dynamic mapping of the content onto the dream interface, and ultimately becomes, from the standpoint of the witnessing dream ego, the "received" dream content. Manifesting as metaphorical imagery, the "mapped" (Lakoff, 1993; Ullman, 1969) content incorporates the respective contributions of broad domains and the observing dream ego, and progresses through time as co-created dream images that reveal dynamically the moment-to-moment state of the relationship between dream ego and the content domain's thrust or agenda, speaking teologically.

An important question pertains to whether the content domains are passive arenas for virtual engagement, or have their own independence, autonomy and thrust. Ullman (1969) referred to the dream imagery as "intrusive," thus alluding to its autonomous agenda. Jung, too, saw the individuation urge teleologically, inherent within each individual, and working its way into consciousness through the agency of dreams and active imagination. For Freud, the dynamic nature of the dream derived its intrusiveness from the bound-up energy of one's past; but for Jung and Wilber, the process is prospective and endpoint driven, and draws the psyche forward toward a level of integration or wholeness that can be rendered metaphorically in dream, vision, and myth, but cannot be fully understood from the ego's current level of partial development. Jung believed that the ego was by no means the end of our evolution, but that the archetypes have an energy and destiny of their own, drawing us into them as a deeper Self emerges. From this standpoint, a dream image retains an underlying fidelity to its source domain, and a distinctive developmental agenda.

The concept of content domains is, as countless dream workers have discovered, a useful supplement in dreamwork, whether one practices from the Presentational Paradigm or the Co-Creative Paradigm. In other words, dream imagery can be conveniently and accurately associated with various content domains, and the meaning to the dreamer can thereby be enhanced by understanding the range of domain-congruent expressions and the nature of the developmental tasks at each domain. However, by downplaying the influence of the dreamer upon the unfolding imagery, the Presentational Paradigm constrains our assessment to an array of static images unrelated to the dreamer's influence. In contrast, the co-creative model treats the dream imagery as an elastic, mutable interface that coalesces and mirrors one's relationship with particular content domains, as if the dream encounter involves, in Jung's words, "a dialogue were taking place between two human beings with equal rights" (Fordham, 1958) .

By examining how the dreamer's initial response initially "maps" the domain into a specific image, and then tracking the changes in both, we can obtain a contemporary view of the dreamer's relationship with that level of development, and help the dreamer to troubleshoot current responses, and define ways to accelerate one's development at that level.

Returning to the dream of the fox and chickens, one might say that the content domain involves an encounter with primitive power, or the third chakra, in the form of the various predatorial animals. In the first moment of the dream, the dreamer perceives power as threat, and takes action to protect what is vulnerable:

It is night time. I am lying in bed, and hear a wolf howl. I realize that he threatens my chickens, so I grab a shovel and run out the door into the back yard.

There is so much to be gained by analyzing this initial statement. By identifying the content domain in generic terms, and then examining the dreamer's subjective felt stance, we can assist her in seeing how her assumptions "map" the domain into a threat, thus justifying her fear. But the mere howl of a wolf does not, in itself, signify a threat, so we have to explore why she "rendered" the domain issue as threatening. As it turns out, she literally raises chickens, so her life experience predisposes her to interpret a predator's presence as threatening to what is vulnerable and needs protection. Her robust response signifies the courage that she musters to intervene at some risk to herself, which is an issue worthy of consideration. That is, it reveals a great deal about the dreamer's assumptions and willingness to take action. The wolf image coalesces her assumptions and the domain into an image that captures the elements of power with a certain beauty, nobility, and suffering (given the threat

of civilization to the wolf), as well. But of course, the connotation of "nobility" and "suffering" had to be supplied and ratified by the dreamer. Her own associations helped us understand why the wolf captured her "momentary condition" in a form that expressed her lived experience with the realm of power.

This may seem overly complicated, so let's look at how the dream worker's use of language can translate into a brief, effective intervention that opens up a conversation with the dreamer. The dream worker combines the analysis of the dream ego's emotional state with the formulation of a process narrative, showing how the method non-invasively advances the dreamer's understanding.

Dream Worker: (Process Narrative) *So in this dream, you are initially alarmed (feelings) by the presence of something powerful, and it created a sense of discomfort, and then alarm. Then you felt protective (feelings) of something vulnerable that, without your help, could have been hurt or destroyed. You are also concerned (feelings) about your own wellbeing. As you confront the threat, it seems to become less threatening and weakened, and you experience compassion; but then you imagine that it still represents a threat, and that there is even a new threat that is not fully evident, as yet. Does this summary (Process Narrative) capture your feelings and your sense of the dream process?*

Dreamer: *It does. I went from fear to relief and then back to fear again, although to a lesser extent. I raise chickens, so this scenario is a familiar one, but I don't think I would have felt personally threatened by these animals in real life.*

Dream Worker: *You certainly countered the perceived threat without hesitation, with firmness and courage. Is that like you, I wonder? I noticed how your fear returned based on your suspicion that a new threat lurked.*

Dreamer: *Yes, I think that I usually respond quickly and fearlessly if something or someone I love is threatened. But I don't understand why I took a step backward. I mean, the wolf was no longer a threat, and the coyote needed help more than he threatened my chickens or myself. I am puzzled as to why I became alarmed again.*

Dream Worker: *I'm wondering what would have happened if you'd stopped short of imagining more threat. Do you think the dream would have ended on a more positive note? What could you imagine having done differently?*

Dreamer: *I wish I would have tried to help the coyote. It was a wild animal, but sometimes wild animals come for help. It could have brought about a different outcome if I'd cautiously offered it assistance.*

Identifying the Nature of Dream Content

The delineation of content domains can be done from the top-down, or from the bottom up. That is, we can draw from systems that delineate levels or discrete domains of human experience, or we can derive them phenomenologically by examining dreams with this goal in mind. Or, of course, one can do both: That is, one can approach the dream with an open mind, endeavoring to avoid reductionistic assessments while acknowledging the accumulated wisdom available from established traditions. As for top-down theoretical systems, we have Jung's archetypes (2014a) and the chakra system (Govinda, 1971), to cite two respected systems that delineate broad content domains. Speaking generally, Lakoff and Johnson (1993) define the nature of content domains as follows:

Each such domain is a structured whole within our experience…as what we have called an experiential gestalt… Some may be universal, while others may vary from culture of culture.

Ullman's view of major and minor metaphors posits two levels of metaphorical expression, as well, but he does not offer an explanation for how the domains of human experience are created in the first place, nor what characterizes them. Indeed, the origin of what might be called "depth components" in Jung, Lakoff, and Ullman is vague. Jung initially theorized that the archetypes were transmitted genetically, but seemed to favor a less reductionistic view later in his life. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) champion an explanation that makes "embodied experience" the foundation for conceptual metaphors, but this approach effectively rules out the possibility of transpersonal, or non-empirical domains. Regardless, the origin of these depth components is always a problematic dimension in any system designed to explain the arousal of dream imagery in specific, and the pre-existing nature of target domain content in general. Of course, the transpersonal theorists, such as Wilber (2007) or Sheldrake (1982) point to structures beyond time and space that account for the source of chakras, archetypes, or "morphogenetic fields," all of which resonate with the ancient Platonic notion of supraordinate Ideas.

Jung drew a distinction between the archetypes of the collective unconscious—shared by all peoples everywhere—and the accumulation of personal experiences, some of which remains conscious and some of which becomes repressed or forgotten as the personal unconscious. This categorical distinction between *a priori* archetypal components of the deep psyche and the historical record of the individual—conditioned by idiosyncratic belief, experience, and cultural context—has had the effect of implying that there are mutually exclusive categories of dream imagery. And yet, Jung's statement that the interpretation of the image "...can start neither from the conscious alone nor from the unconscious alone, but only from their reciprocal relationship" (1966), conveys a different picture, in which a given dream image partakes simultaneously of depth and surface sources. From Jung's formulation, it is a small step to assume that the dream image is, as I have suggested, a *mutable interface* between conscious and unconscious, personal and universal, such that the distinctions of personal and archetypal, conscious and unconscious, are merely convenient. Regardless of one's position on the origins of dream content, from the standpoint of the Co-Creative Paradigm, the manifest dream is simply *what manifests on the dream interface* during the encounter between the dream ego and the emergent content.

Clearly, Ullman sets the stage for the role of dreamer metacognition, but does not embrace an approach that acknowledges the dream ego as the catalyst in the "rapidly changing presentational sequences." One can argue that co-creative dream theory offers the solution: The dreamer's overall response to the emergent novelty of the dream content precipitates the spontaneous production of metaphorical imagery, some of which may seem more obviously impactful or universal in nature. While he stopped short of asserting the real-time reciprocal nature of dream metaphor formation, Ullman leaves the door open to the Co-Creative Paradigm when he says,

We have offered very little thus far concerning the laws governing the movement and development of the global or major metaphor of the dream. It is likely that the full exposition of the developmental aspects of the dream process will have to await further investigative effort.

3.5. Assessing the Dream as a Developmental Process

The final step of a generic methodology based on the Co-Creative Paradigm involves encouraging the dreamer to imagine new responses in the dream as a way to 1) resolve any unfinished conflict in the dream, 2) prepare for future dream encounters with this content domain. By viewing the dreamer's responses as generic indicators of relational style, it naturally supports a free-ranging exploration of where similar relationship dynamics may be occurring in the waking state, and whether new responses may be called for. Of course, the dreamer leads the way in determining any course of action, but is encouraged to overturn chronic ways of responding in favor of implementing new, more creative and functional ways of relating. This process proceeded as follows:

Dream worker: S*o what would like to do differently if such a dream occurs again? And do you see any parallel opportunities in your waking life?*

Dreamer: *I would like to stand firm but be ready to appreciate the value of fierce and predatorial forces in future dreams of this type. I feel that I missed an opportunity to relate to something vital and necessary in the world, and within myself. As for my waking life, I tend to be quick to imagine threat to those I love, and I can become unthinkingly protective. Trusting the primitive power in the natural order of things, and the resources residing with my loved ones, rather than obsessing over their vulnerability, would be a good thing. The wolf lives within them. And in me, too.*

A final dream that was shared by a 57-year-old woman, illustrates how a sense of dissonance can intrude on an otherwise harmonious dream encounter, and precipitate transformed metaphors that capture the dreamer's unsettled state.

I find a stray horse that needs a home and I'm feeding it and giving it water in our backyard in Texas and bonding with it. I feel much compassion and love for the horse. Then suddenly I'm back in my hometown in Pennsylvania and wonder why. As I'm driving down the road I see all these beautiful horses stuck up in trees and power lines. I feel anxious and concerned for the horses. I stop at a nearby house to tell people and get assistance for the horses. They tell me that the horses are up there because somehow they've made the cows meat taste bad. They seem to resist wanting to help, but I tell them they need to help the horses and get them out of the trees. These people seem to be a couple of men and they say they might not be able to get them out of the trees alive. I'm not happy with this, but I tell them it needs to be done either way.

When I asked the dreamer about her initial feelings in the dream, she said that she experienced wholly positive emotions until she found herself in her hometown. It was then that the horses were viewed as suddenly trapped in an unnatural situation. We were able to formulate the process

narrative as, "Something powerful and free has been constrained unnaturally because it has undermined the value of something that has to be sacrificed to be of value. Someone appeals to others for help in freeing what is trapped, but meets resistance."

In terms of her responses in the dream, she initially reaches out to the horses and develops a relationship with them. However, the subsequent awareness of being back in her home setting evoked a sense of dislocation from her current home, which then precipitated a new metaphor that captured the confinement of what was originally free. When the horses were suddenly trapped in trees and power lines, she began advocating, against the resistance of others, for their emancipation, even though it seems that their plight represents punishment of sorts for ruining the taste of the cows. She does not relent in pushing for their rescue even if it means their death, as if to say that risking loss in order to achieve freedom was better that remaining trapped in an unnatural state.

When we explored the dreamer's associations to the metaphors, she saw the horses and cows, alike, as expressing the broad domain of her natural, instinctual self. When grounded by the image of the horse, the metaphorical reduction connoted something she could harness for her enjoyment without harming it. The cow, in contrast, grounded her physicality as something that had no life of its own, and which had to be sacrificed for the benefit of others. She could immediately relate to this contrast, since her hometown represented a place where family and friends still depended on her to provide for them. She could easily understand how the horse's freedom could "taint" her sacrifice with her own agenda, and provoke the disapproval of those who had become accustomed to her willing sacrifice. She could imagine, as well, the pushback from her own inner critic who found her pursuit of happiness in her new life to compete with her "legitimate" sacrificial roles.

When the dreamer reflected on the implications of this dream, she said she wants to push through the resistance of her environment and inner critic to assert her need for greater individual expression. She could easily identify several relationships that had been defined historically as places where her sacrifice had been expected without question, and redoubled her commitment to standing firm in defense of her own needs.

4.   Conclusion

In summary, I have described how the Co-Creative Paradigm of dream theory renders the dream as a successive coalescence of metaphoric imagery along a narrative framework created by the real-time interaction between the dream observer and emergent, generic, domain level content. When one embraces this view of the dream, one can analyze dream metaphors as a product of the interaction of domain-level content with the dream ego's response set—a position originally described by Rossi (1972) and anticipated by Jung (2014b; 2014c), Ullman (1969), Lakoff (1993), and Lakoff and Johnson (1980). While any credible approach to dream analysis depends principally on the dreamer's own associations, co-creative dream work discourages the dreamer from treating dream metaphors as fixed, independent creations. By placing more emphasis on improving the dreamer's responses, co-creative dreamwork encourages the parallel refinement and spontaneous transformation of

dream metaphors, as well as an accelerated integration of domain-level developmental tasks.

While the tentative hypothesis posed by this paper—that the co-creative view of metaphoric imagery construction opens up new questions, and fosters insights heretofore unavailable from the standpoint of traditional content-oriented dream analysis—has yet to be tested, the dimensions of dreamwork practice that would constitute a suitable treatment protocol have been delineated for future research.

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