

WHEN IMAGES START TALKING: TEXT AND IMAGE IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

EVA DOROTA UHROVÁ

In psychotherapeutic methods that use imagery, particularly where imagery is the focus, a close link between the imaginative and the verbal is not only self-evident but also indispensable. Imagery is closely linked to the internal world and the experiences of the imagining person. At the same time the imagery can be both represented and further processed and elaborated verbally. The imagery enables us to access both the contents of the declarative (explicit) memory but also, and especially, the contents of the (implicit) procedural and emotional memory, which are unconscious (but not repressed) and represent "internal images" of our early experiences. The contents, as a record of the early experiences of an individual, are very important in shaping an individual's personality. They are crucial for the character of perception and the way in which the external world is processed. Again, it is the verbal processing and elaboration of the imagined content that participates in this stabilization and the creative process during which the patterns of relating and understanding the surrounding world alter. We shall look at the problems outlined above from the perspective of the neurobiological findings that cast light on the importance of the procedural and chiefly emotional memory for the formation of our wishes, motives for actions, as well as for the final decision-making and its implementation.

As the title indicates, this paper concerns the use of image and text in psychotherapy. It should be said at the very beginning that the image under discussion is the internal image, fantasy, which is not necessarily visual: it can relate to any sensory modality. The image of an appealing musical motif, the touch of an important person's hand, the taste of spring water—these all could be examples of experiences for anybody. However, internal images are not necessarily simply bound to vividly experienced situations, they can also arise from the flow of fantasy, daydreaming—and they start "talking". Talking about our wishes, desires, fears, anxiety, self-image, the relationships we have established with others, and many other things. We can work with such internal images by means of words, language.

This is why we should first of all deal with the question of where the link between the internal images, mental images and the flow of imagery comes from? What do we actually understand by the concept "imagery"? How can imagery and its interconnection with the word be used in psychotherapy? What can such an interconnection bring to our client? It would be useful to point out that the word

“client” is used in relation to the fact that it is the therapeutic situation which is under investigation. The client need not necessarily be a person with psychological problems but could be someone who requires greater self-knowledge and a means of expanding the ways in which that individual copes with his or her own life, in a creative sense. All these ideas will be analyzed from the perspective of depth psychology, in other words, by considering the internal dynamics of the individual’s psyche and in particular the unconscious aspects that shape that person’s life.

How does the internal image arise?

In seeking to answer the question of how the internal image is formed, we must make an apparent digression. It is interesting to look at this question from the point of view of two authors, Piaget (1970, 1997), who focuses on the cognitive development of an individual and Stern (1992, 2000), who takes intersubjectivity as his starting point. These problems might not seem to be directly to the point of the relationship between the image and the word in psychotherapy but as we shall illustrate later, the link between the image and the word can help in the revealing, naming and processing of the psychic content that is formed in the pre-verbal stage, but which can still significantly influence the current life of our client. Piaget (1970, 1997) and the baby-watchers research (Stern 1992, 2000; Dornes 1996, 2001) indicate that in children before the age of 18 months it is not possible to think about the presence of the images in terms of their being freely evoked without the presence of an object being involved and/or without the actual perceptions indicating the absent object (e.g. a piece of mother’s clothing). According to modern depth psychology, freely evocable internal images can be understood as an expression and consequence of the process of symbolizing, through which early experiences of sensory and pre-verbal character can be re-encoded. They become a constituent element of thought and experience after the age of approximately 18 months is reached (Dieter 2000).

If we agree with the view of the above authors and we would stress the importance of freely evocable images (chiefly fantasies), the question of what “happens” before the age of 18 months remains. It is the stage which is considered as very important from the point of view of depth psychology for the formation of the structure of the Ego and the associated ability to use symbols that is crucial in enabling daydream/imagery, i.e. images that represent the internal contents of the human psyche, to be revealed.

Piaget calls this period sensorimotor and divides it into several substages (for details, see Piaget, Inhelder 1997) up to the level beginning from 12 to 18 months of age. During this stage, the child explores the world not only through random contact with objects, but also by interiorizing different combinations and this can lead to sudden understanding. Delayed imitation and symbolic play are important

in creating the internal image. This is also the stage in which the child begins to use language. The language enables contact with other people to take place and so the image being created can be communicated and thus its influence is increased. At this stage, the semiotic function creates two kinds of instruments: (1) symbols that are motivated, which means they resemble the thing they denote in some way; and (2) signs created by convention, and which the child acquires on the basis of imitation and learning (language acquisition is characteristic).

Piaget's conclusions stimulated further research and the findings were summarized by Dornes (2001). The findings show that rudimentary representations (whose duration can be calculated in seconds) begin emerging at ages lower than Piaget suggested. Whether we are concerned with images or structures that resemble images is, however, still debatable. Piaget considers the formation of object permanence, occurring at about 8 months, as important for the creation of such rudimentary images. The image is created at the stage where the child understands that objects continue to exist even when they are not actually present. It is questionable whether we can actually speak of freely evocable images at this stage.

When studying the creation of images from the point of view of their possible use in psychotherapy, we are interested not only in the (empirical) images that relate to memory, but also imaginary (hypothetical) images. These images can be characterized using the colloquial phrase "what would it be like if". The point is that the fantasy creates situations and contents that have never actually been experienced. In this connection Dornes (2001, 49) writes: "fantasy is the connection between evocation and change".

Stern (1992, 2000) has drawn some interesting conclusions to the question of "what happens before the age of 18 months" (that is before the advent of the semiotic function). The focus of his work is intersubjectivity, where relationships play an important role in the construction of images. Words, symbols and images (in terms of the internal image) are not available during the infant's pre-verbal phase. Rather, these are probably quite short, dynamic sequences of events that take place over a particular time span. These short periods can probably be understood as the basic communicative experience of the child in the pre-verbal stage. Stern (1992) assumes that the child is quickly able to segment the flow of interactions into episodes, i.e. situations which the child experiences several times a day are placed into a "group" of interactions of one type, called "invariants". This is the "prototype" of the situation. Importantly, Stern (*ibid.*) does not simply deal with what is happening in the situation, its factography, but he also looks at motivation and, crucially, experience and affectivity. Similarly to Piaget (1970, 1997), he does not consider the freely evocable image before the onset of the semiotic function at 18 months. His research focuses on the way in which a child's experiences are used and processed, how they are extracted and made into invariants, and how prototypes are constructed. He assumes that later freely evocable images consisting

of units, which because of their duration, contain beginnings, middles, and ends, have the character of a “mini” story. This would suggest that the child perceives the world in the form of narrative units from the very beginning, “...she simply needs more time to be able to begin talking about it” (Stern 2000, 102). The fixed image or symbol further develops until it is condensed or abstracted into a narrative unit. These stories, occurring mainly in the pre-verbal phase, are very short and therefore called “micro-narratives” by the author.

Emotional and procedural memory

In considering the internal “images that talk” or stories, we need to discuss another important item—what happens to the child’s experiences that are stored in the micronarrative units? The presymbolic and preverbal experience of the child does not disappear, but persists. It can be addressed, as we will show later, through therapeutic methods using imagery. Stern (1992) stresses that the real character of child’s interpersonal experience, affected by interpersonal invariants, determines the process of his or her development in the early periods. The different strategies for coping are a form of adaptation bound to reality. What the child experiences in relationships is stored, by means of the limbic system, in the emotional and procedural (implicit) memory (see neurobiological research by Roth 2001, 2001/2003; Deneke 1999; Hüther 2004). According to Roth (2001/2003) the activities of the limbic system can be seen to correspond to Freud’s unconscious Id. The limbic memory is the emotional basis of our behaviour and controls it far more significantly than the conscious Ego does. Stern (2000) states that the implicit memory or knowledge is neither verbal nor symbolic, it is unconscious but not repressed. It does not yet have the form of words. At the same time, in the early years, the child’s perception is amodal, i.e. emotional gestalts can link any sensory modality that is interchangeable.

Logically, we therefore need to discuss whether early experiences stored in the procedural and emotional memory can affect our future: our experiences, emotions, wishes, the way that relationships have been established and developed. We would also need to consider whether this is the case in both infancy and throughout the life cycle. Here we should again mention the neurobiological findings associated with the system of the ventral circuit (Roth 2001, 2001/2003) and the characteristics of the implicit (procedural) and explicit (declarative) memory (Deneke 1999). Roth (2001/2003) regards the tissue system of the ventral circuit to be fundamental to the effect of the unconsciousness on consciousness in the area of sensation, images and wishes. By means of the ventral circuit, the unconscious contents linked to the activities of the limbic system encounter the conscious contents, or rather they affect them in the way that positive or negative experience, thoughts and associations emerge. This means, however, that although as Roth (*ibid.*) states the conscious Ego is lived as a source of our wishes, thoughts, images, plans, and

actions, it is the unconscious and the limbic experience memory that control our behaviour more intensively than the conscious Ego. Stimuli from the environment are, of course, also important, but in order for them to become the motivation for action, they have to meet internal motivation. This is determined by the individual emotional memory. It seems then that it is not the Ego, nor consciousness that is the decisive force in our behaviour but the unconsciousness that arises ontogenetically before consciousness, and that early on creates structures that determine how we cope with the world around us. The emotional experience memory is crucial both in the formation of our wishes and intentions and in the final decision-making process and its implementation. Deneke (1999) emphasizes that emotional experience memory should be distinguished from the implicit and especially the explicit—declarative memory. Emotional memory is chiefly associated with the activity of the amygdala and contains emotionally charged experiences, as Deneke puts it (1999, 100): “What is emotionally charged can be remembered for a particularly long time, because we focus on the important content with increased alertness and attention.” These memories are, however, connected to the brain structures that are already functional in the early phases of life (earlier than the structures that are responsible for the explicit declarative memory—i. e. what we remember). According to the author, this might explain the fact that emotionally intense experiences from early childhood can be reactivated in situations at least partially similar to the character of the early experience (and this can take place at any time over the full life course), without the content of the situation then experienced emerging. Emotions are, however, not static states; they have the character of processes and are an important component in the production of our experiences. The question then is not what is “more important”, be it the contents of the declarative, processing or emotional memory, but the potential mutual influence—since the subcortex and cerebral cortex are reciprocally connected. The early contents of the emotional and procedural memory are formed in the everyday experiences of an individual interacting with surrounding objects (chiefly from the material and social world), and represent the basis from which consistent ways of experiencing of the world gradually emerge. In relation to the above, Stern (2000) emphasizes that narrative connections (that have already emerged in micro-narratives) are the basis of a feeling of identity and human personal history.

Intersubjectivity and narration

We have already noted that the age between 12 and 18 months is the turning point: the semiotic function appears to condition the formation of the internal freely evocable image and gradual language acquisition, using symbols and signs. According to Stern (2000) it is important that the child learns words as elements for later narration, for recounting the stories of his/her parents in an emotionally

engaged way. It is the emotion that lends them their meaning. The child not only learns the word, but interactive understanding arises between the mother and the child. The child knows that the mother knows; the mother knows that the child knows; the child knows that the mother knows that the child knows; and according to Stern (*ibid.*), this gives rise to little islands of intersubjectivity.

Symbol and narration

The symbol is the last item in the chain image—imagination—word—symbol to be discussed. As we know, the word ‘symbol’ comes from the Greek word “symbolon”—a token for identification. An ancient Greek habit is often depicted in this connection: friends used to break a coin when saying goodbye. Once the friend or even a friend of the friend returned, he could show his half of the coin. If the two halves fitted, that person was recognized to be a friend and had the right to a warm welcome. What had originally belonged together had been separated, and then re-joined and both halves regained the meaning and sense indicated by the relationship. If we transfer the etymology of the term to the account of symbols above, we can say that the symbol is a visible token of invisible reality. The symbol and the symbolized are interconnected. As Kast (1990/2000) says, they refer to our relationship with an invisible reality, which transcends us. To symbolize would mean to search for the reality hidden behind the reality that is in the foreground. A symbol expressed by a particular person can have the form of an image, a fantasy, or a word or phrase and can serve as the expression of his or her instinctive tendencies, perceptions, needs, wishes, thoughts, and experiences with others (mainly with important objects), hence of everything that creates the inner life of the subject. The symbolic function allows the imaginary to express itself, the mental material to be represented, and importantly, it enables sense and meaning to be attributed to these images. It is not only the symbol, but also the borrowing of the meaning that is important, as it enables the internal images to talk.

Guided Affective Imagery

What does all this mean in terms of our research into the “stories of talking images” in psychotherapy? Before we can consider this, however, we should first look at the psychotherapeutic method, Guided Affective Imagery (GAI), as it was termed by its author Leuner (1994a, 1994b) to reflect its character, that of “symbol drama”.

GAI is a psychotherapeutic method based on depth psychology, consisting of a series of sessions, in which the focus is initially on the verbal, on dialogue, and then these are followed by sessions characterized by their use of imagery and daydream. Guided emotional imagery uses imagery/daydream induced in relaxation. The therapist encourages the client to recall the image by offering

relatively vague motifs (for instance the image of a flower, meadow, brook, etc.). The client describes them and shares the emotions that have been evoked by them. The therapist guides the client and, through verbal interventions, influences and structures the imagery. The empathic, emotion-supporting guidance is of great importance in GAI. It supports the intersubjectivity between the client and the therapist (as stressed by Stern (2000)), where the cooperation in creating the imagined story makes it possible for confrontation with conflicting contents to occur. In particular, it also enables resources to be located and other possible connotations of the old stories can be explored. These images or stories can start developing, moving, losing their frequent one-sidedness and stiffness, in short, they start “talking”.

Imagery and daydream

Imagery and daydream are two mutually interchangeable terms, which, however require, a more precise definition. Imagery is defined as the “ability to create pictures in your mind”. The word imaginary leads us to characteristics that are often emphasized and to the “unreality” of the imagined pictures. Imaginary then means “unreal, invented”. Imagery is often used alternately with the concepts of image, fantasy, daydream—not only in colloquial speech but also in works written by experts in psychotherapy. Imagery is probably connected more with “fantasy” or “daydream” in the sense of something that is beyond tangible reality. Thus, it not only changes, but can refer to images that have yet to be perceived. They may even be unprecedented, since “anything is possible in fantasy”. As Wunenburger (1991) states, the imagery allows us to move beyond the conscious tangible reality and open the door so that we can explore other sides of our existence. It is our internal response to the stimuli we carry within ourselves. These are our inner processes which can be denoted in accord with Singer (1978) as “images in our mind’s eye”. Similarly Kast (1988/1999) refers to imagery as a space for freedom. In her very first sentence, in seeking to bring the concept of imagery closer to the reader, she speaks about imagination, fantasy and daydream. Imaginative ability embodies the possibility of “seeing more or less consciously the image of something that already exists or does not yet exist and that may never happen” (ibid., 13). It is necessary to add that this concerns not only visual images for all the senses can be involved, even those that adults forget sometimes like the amodal perception, where all senses are equally important, that is so natural in children.

Imagery as a means of expressing the internal contents of the psyche

Returning to psychotherapy, we can state that imagination or daydream can be used as a potential means of meeting the internal, often unconscious contents of the client’s psyche, but not in terms of “fantasizing” about unreal contents and stories.

Internal images also tell us something about the client or, more generally, about an individual. They tell us something not only of his or her memories, but also of his or her desires, wishes as well as fears and anxieties. Such an account is indirect, indicated, symbolically represented or encoded. We can surmise that the symbolic character of our internal images may be tied up with the important contents and particularly the accompanying emotions, without which it would otherwise be difficult to penetrate into consciousness and make it the object of our exploration. Thus we are concerned with cognition and self-knowledge. We are aiming to find new resources, but also reveal those which, although present, have become inaccessible, perhaps "forgotten" for different reasons. All this can help clients find a feeling of safety or the belief that they can actively influence their own life. They can also "test" their competence at the fantasy level of imagery by considering the possibility of transferring it into reality. As Kast (1999, 23) put it: "Imagery tends to shift its borders and simultaneously to demarcate new ones".

Coming back to the GAI method and the possibility of addressing the client's internal contents, we approach the symbolic "charge" of the motif, which we shall offer as an incentive for the development of his or her daydream. We select motif according to the problems being addressed in therapy but also as a stimulus for dealing with the subjects that are important in the further development of the client. The connotative field of the motif and the quality of its forms, which contain suggestive moments that can be used as required, is important. The offering the motif should encourage the client to depict his or her needs, wishes, anxieties, conflicts but also to reveal possible solutions. We must take into consideration the fact that any object or phenomenon can become a symbol as long as it is emotionally engaged. The focus of GAI is on the symbols and the way we work with them. In the imagery phase, the image with its characteristics, i.e. not only what people see, but also what they hear, feel, smell or taste, expresses the emotionally significant contents closely related to the client's personal history, in a symbolic form (in terms of Jungian understanding on subject or object levels). It is crucial that it enables them to experience emotions that are linked to the symbol. It is precisely the significance of experience in this method that its author Leuner (1994b) emphasized from the very beginning.

Lang (1997, 19) considered symbols as "nodal points of mental power which, with regard to experiences, function like a magnet towards iron filings" The symbol thus gains the strength of a coordinator in expressing the internal contents, particularly in cases where no other possibility is available. According to Benedetti (1989) it concerns the "translation" of the content, which is not accessible (or is only partially accessible) to "the known communication system", with which the coordinator shares a common core. The symbolic expression is not a direct reflection or image of the internal contents. In the same way that it corresponds to the basic characteristics of the symbol, it replaces its source and simultaneously maintains its content, sense and meaning. This is how its task of "translation" can

be understood. Contents which is not accessible thanks to defense mechanisms, or where access is limited, can serve as an example. At the same time, the symbolically expressed content provides protection. When we participate in creating a client's daydream in the imagery phase of GAI and afterwards, when we refer to its symbolic representation in discussion, we are actually often talking about the important inner contents of the client's psyche in a mediated and thus also protective fashion. Lang (*ibid.*) considers GAI therapy to be a therapy by symbols and under the protection of symbols. Thanks to this protection, it is possible for the client to look at such contents, perceive it with all the senses, and gradually create a panorama of his/her internal country. In addition, it also allows for an examination of its recesses and conflict topics can be touched upon. Protection provided by the symbolic expression of imagery will enable a gradual maturing of the Ego, its structure and functions, which is a precondition to the individual developing a more mature attitude in coping with his or her internal and external reality.

Guided Affective Imagery thus offers an imaginary symbol in its motifs as a developmentally verified element, which can introduce a structure to which emotions associated with important events and people can be linked. We are clearly also referring to emotions associated with the contents of the emotional and procedural memory and procedural knowledge. Again, we can return to the neurobiological research that indicates the importance of the previously mentioned areas of memory and knowledge, which although unconscious (and to a large extent not repressed) are of immense importance to our current life. Therefore the way in which a person perceives particular situations, the way he or she establishes relationships and how he or she copes with them also depends on the "internal images" of the procedural knowledge. Hüther (2004) understands "internal images" to mean everything hidden behind external, visible and measurable phenomena and that simultaneously regulate and control human reactions and behaviour. The representations of procedural knowledge, which is structurally at the level of assumptions, but which is significant in terms of influencing the level of the structure of the Ego, can also be included here. The contents that enter the unconscious through the activity of defense mechanisms that are the vehicle of the Ego, thus secure the possibility of mitigating the emotional pressure of the situation linked with the particular (often conflictual) content, should also be mentioned here. They enable the individual, although often at the cost of narrowing the life space and producing rigid behaviour and experiences, to "survive" the difficult situation. The content of the motif and chiefly its emotional charge joins such "internal images", which have been externalized in imagery and become accessible for elaboration and processing at the conscious level through language. It should be stated that imagery does not become symbolic thanks to the verbal assignment of the motif, but thanks to the emotion which joins the motif and develops the image. The source of imagery is thus an emotion (e. g. if we consider

the motif of a “lion”, it is not the infuriated lion that frightens me but my fear of aggressiveness induces a picture of the roaring lion).

Image and text in GAI

The symbolic “speech” of images is a part of the imaginative phase of GAI therapy. Verbalization is another inseparable part, which comes into play on presentation of the motif. Moreover, in GAI we accompany the client in his/her daydream, verbally entering the process of its creation and actually become its “co-authors”. What is the role of language and verbalization in the imagery or story? Does language—words, sentences, verbal expressions—also have the strength of a symbol? In speech, a particular expression or word has its content. The word denotes and its meaning is given by agreement. It therefore has a representative function. Speech consists of individual words (as representative signs) but within the context in which they occur another dimension can be introduced bringing a new meaning into the verbal expression. The meaning of individual words as signs can be exceeded and become highly symbolic. The symbolism of bizarre expressions or metaphors can have an emotionally discharging function (Aristotle 1980) discussed this in his “Poetics”).

Poetic language can serve as an example. Seithe (2000) argues that it can offer an articulated “image” that also contains emotion. In perceiving it, the reader has an almost autochthonous emotional experience that must surely relate in some way to his or her personal experience.

It is also possible to draw a parallel with the therapeutic process. On the one hand, important cognitive language supports cognitive processes, but on the other hand, emotional processes are crucially important in psychotherapy. “Emotion is a melting pot in which pathogenic and rigid patterns can be released or dissolved” (Seithe 2000, 52). If the therapist is successful in using key phrases in expressing an understanding of the client’s emotional situation and the words are able to evoke an emotional response on the client’s part, they become indispensable. Thus, “Now you look like a little girl longing for her dad’s hugs” will evoke a greater emotional response in a female client and will also create an intersubjective space for the consequent processing and elaboration of the conflict more than the emotion-free expression “You are looking for support and understanding from your father (or from persons important to you)”, which is an example of an expression found at the level of “cognitive” speech.

The use of “verbally created pictures” in relation to GAI seems to be particularly important. Perhaps, we can say that chiefly in the imagery phase the movement is from emotions through image to text. Text and language can be both image-evoking and image-processing. The cognitive and emotional roles of the speech come together here. The emotional role, where the verbally created picture is a medium through which feeling, sensation, and an empathic sharing of emotions is

communicated, is only present to a significant extent in the imagery phase. The cognitive role, important for understanding, processing and elaborating the emotion-based contents, comes more to the fore in the dialogue phase of elaboration and in the processing of the material formed in imagery. "In verbal communication, in addition to nonverbal means of expression, the image "painted by language" is conducive to the emergence of emotions" (Seithe 2000, 55). In this connection Seithe also points to the potential use of idiomatic expressions (imaginary conventions) and individually verbally created pictures. The use of idioms can directly express the currently created feeling or emotional experience: e.g. idioms such as "jump out of your skin", or "the exception that proves the rule". Naturally, their place in the context is important, whether in imagery itself or in the dialogue phase of therapy—this will make the particular meaning of the phrase used more precise. It is, however, often a shorter and more direct pathway towards expressing the client's emotional experience. The individually verbally created pictures are a still more significant means of accessing the current emotional state. They can be regarded as the creative expression of the current feeling or emotional experience of that particular person. At the same time, they indicate that access to important contents can be reached. For instance, the client's expression "I am a dried flower" tells us more about the current situation of the client than a long-winded description and explication of the factography of his or her life.

Image and text are two essential parts of imaginative therapy that together form a whole. The story can be produced only after they have been mutually interlinked. Together, they depict and symbolize a story, outlining the inner space of our client, a space with its atmosphere, and unrepeatable characteristics, a space where protagonists—not only human—talk, just as they do in myths, fairy-tales and stories. Does a client or patient not tell his or her life story during therapy session, a story that seen through his or her eyes, is his or her subjective "truth"?

An example from GAI therapy

This seems to be the ideal place to include an illustrative example (since it is a case study from the work of the author of this contribution, it is given in the first person).

During my psychotherapeutic work with clients, I contemplated the possibility of working with the topic of identity by means of a motif that implies a meeting of the very self. I expected that the encounter with the self-image might address Eriksonian "crises of the Ego" in the sense that they are understood as creative tension, as a quest for identity in various life periods and constellations (social reality, social institutions, cultural effects and patterns...) (Erikson 2002; Mitchell, Black 1999). I decided to use the motif of a "mirror". The introduction of imagery into the session is, as always, very simple. "...And now please, imagine that you are in a space with a mirror which you are approaching. When you have formed this (or any other image – it does not matter), tell me about it and I will accompany you".

Imagery: a thirty-year old female client imagined a long, dark, and high vaulted corridor, probably in a castle with a large framed mirror at the end. When she came closer to the mirror, she could not see anything in it, because the glass was opaque. After a while, the glass cleared and she saw a mysterious, probably female figure veiled in black from head to toe, probably the burqah Islamic women wear. Her huge shoes looked like men's, and the only thing that was visible was her fine hands that did not match her overall looks. She felt like touching her and she did. She realized that the hands were real, but frail; the rest of the figure was artificial. She went up to the face and again saw that it was the living face of a beautiful raven-haired woman. She had a pale complexion, "like Snow White". It was her eyes that were most interesting, dark but lifeless. She tried to catch her eye, which remained dead and indifferent. She reached inside her pocket trying to find something to give to the woman—she took an apple out of her pocket but when she found a little pipe in her other pocket, she decided not to give her the apple. She began blowing the pipe and she knew she was playing for a woman wearing a burqah. The woman's face brightened, she began moving to the rhythm of the music. At first with difficulty as if trying to recall motion, which was hindered by something. She threw away her veil, let her beautiful hair loose and threw away the black burqah that made breathing difficult. Suddenly she was beautiful in her light, loose dress, shining all over and carried away by music. The client discovered that they were no longer in a gloomy corridor but in a beautiful bright hall and she longed to go out with the woman and she would play and the woman could dance and dance...

Commentary: after the imagery, the client described two feelings: the first, associated with the beginning of the image was unease; later, looking in the mirror, she asked almost with a shock "is that me?!" Her feelings changed when she began playing and the figure started dancing, dancing to her tune (probably in accordance with the saying "she dances to a person's tune"). The woman (the client) began dancing to her own tune and she threw away all the veils that were a burden to her (the burqah that covered the slightest sign of femininity, did not permit any contact, and created the apparition of a woman rather than a living being), and was able to develop into an attractive woman full of life. This topic was very important at the time when she began developing a relationship with her partner and she was processing doubts about her femininity, attractiveness, and exploring the possibility of being interesting to others as she really was (and not just in terms of the relationship with her partner). To her that meant being able to dance to her own tune, and maybe to accept an apple in the future— this can evoke the idea of the Garden of Eden and the original sin: sexuality.

GAI as a means of influencing human "stories"

The example put forward above illustrates that imagery creates a "stage" in GAI. During this stage, an action, story or drama develops. It is being expressed by an image symbol with a condensed story (the client's life story). This allows for communication through metaphor and analogy. The client sees his or her imaginative story developing "before his or her own eyes". It has the power of reality, and as such, it is also a very intense, emotional experience. Emotions touch the contents of the procedural and emotional memory, thus enabling us to find a

symbolic expression for the unconscious contents that motivate and affect the life story. The client verbally describes the internal imagery, his or her daydream, and talks of the accompanying emotions. The therapist verbally intervenes in the client's daydream and helps to look for alternative ways to develop it that will enable a new understanding of the developing story to arise. The use of language creates a space between the therapist and the client where confrontation, action, redefinition and a common search for a new perspective on the story that is developing at the imaginary level, can be offered. All this is expressed in the linguistic structure of the conditional, which enables the client to manage the boundaries and simultaneously maintain his/her power in and impact on the development of the story. It is the client, not the therapist, who decides which of the possibilities on offer should be selected to create his or her story and which resources to use and where to find them—indeed some of them may have been temporarily forgotten and can be used again.

So we can assume that language in the form of the assigned motif evokes the imagery that then develops with its own strength. It is through language that the imagery obtains its expression, and at the same time, it is through language that it can be influenced. Imagery carries within itself an image and the emotional means to address the contents (as the contents that is bound to the pre-verbal period or that has been repressed by the defense mechanisms of the Ego) that are placed in the unconsciousness. They will be present in the imagery at the symbolic level. The client is able to extend his or her life space by searching for meaning and sense, whether in the imagery or in the verbal dialogue phase of therapy, and again this occurs through language. In this way, the client is able to view the important events of his or her life, the possibilities or restrictions he or she has, the reality of his or her relationships and the inner self through different perspectives.

The life stories of people who come for therapy sessions are often stiff; these people are often foreigners in themselves. Their stories can be shaped through a daydream, where they can be mediated and created through the help of language which enables them to be modified, continued and revived. New stories can be constructed that will offer different ways of coping with the different situations that occur in life—including a creative life.

References

- Aristoteles. *Poetika. Rétorika. Politika*. Bratislava: Tatran, 1980.
- Benedetti, C. Annahmen zu einem axiomatischen Verständnis von Zeichen und Symbol. In Benedetti, C., Rauchfleisch, U. (Hrsg.). *Welt der Symbole*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989.
- Deneke, F.-W. *Psychische Struktur und Gehirn*. Stuttgart: Schattauer, 1999.
- Deneke, F.-W. *Gibt es eine Anatomie des Unbewussten?* Lecture presented at 51. Psychotherapeutic Days, Lindau, 2001.

- Dieter, W.** Imagery und Symbolisierung bei neurotischen und ich-strukturell Gestörten Patienten. In Salvisberg, H., Stigler, M., Maxeiner, V. (Hrsg.). *Erfahrung träumend zur Sprache bringen*. Bern: Huber, 2000.
- Dornes, M.** *Der kompetente Säugling*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996.
- Dornes, M.** *Die frühe Kindheit*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2001.
- Dornes, M.** *Die emotionale Welt des Kindes*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2001a.
- Erikson, E.H.** *Dětství a společnost*. Praha: Argo, 2002.
- Hüther, G.** *Die Macht der inneren Bilder*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004.
- Kast, V.** *Imaginace jako prostor setkání s nevědomím*. Praha: Portál, 1999.
- Kast, V.** *Dynamika symbolu*. Praha: Portál, 2000.
- Lang, O.** *Das Symbol als therapeutisches Agens*. Imagination, No. 2, 15-25, 1997
- Leuner, H.** *Katathym-imaginative Psychotherapie (K.I.P.)*. 5. Aufl. Stuttgart: Thieme, 1994a.
- Leuner, H.** *Lehrbuch der Katathym-imaginativen Psychotherapie*. Bern: Huber, 1994b.
- Mitchel, S. A., Black, M. J.** *Freud a po Freudovi*. Praha: Triton, 1999.
- Piaget, J.** *Psychologie intelligence*. Bratislava: SPN, 1970.
- Piaget, J., Inhelder, B.** *Psychologie dítěte*. Praha: Portál, 1997.
- Roth, G.** *Wie das Gehirn die Seele macht*. Lecture presented at 51. Psychotherapeutic Days, Lindau, 2001. www.lptw.de/lptwdocs2001.html
- Roth, G.** *Fühlen, Denken, Handeln*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003.
- Seithe, A.** Die Rolle des Bildes bei der verbalen Kommunikation von Gefühlen. In Salvisberg, H., Stigler, M., Maxeiner, V. (Hrsg.). *Erfahrung träumend zur Sprache bringen*. Bern: Huber, 2000
- Singer, J.L.** *Phantasie und Tagtraum. Imaginative Methoden in der Psychotherapie*. München: Pfcifer, 1978.
- Stern, D.** *Die Lebenserfahrung des Säuglings*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992.
- Stern, D.** Das präsymbolische Denken beim Kleinkind. Einige Implikationen für die Psychotherapie. In Salvisberg, H., Stigler, M., Maxeiner, V. (Hrsg.). *Erfahrung träumend zur Sprache bringen*. Bern: Huber, 2000.
- Wunenburger, J.J.** *L imagination*. Paris: Press universitaires de France, 1991.

Department of Psychology
 Faculty of Arts
 Comenius University
 Gondova 2
 818 00 Bratislava
 Slovak Republic
 E-mail: d.uhrova@stonline.sk