

Chapter 2

Fostering Psychological Coherence: With ICTs

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ABSTRACT

As we experience a paradigm shift into a media age, ICTs are altering the psychological parameters of human reality. The premise of this chapter is that the psychological dynamics of interactive images projected as Media Dreams correspond with the psychological dynamics of dream images as defined by Carl G. Jung. (Jacobi, 1973). If this is true, images in media dreams mirror patterns of energy and information in what Jung called the collective unconscious. Jung calls images archetypal representations or projections of archetypal energy patterns that are structured as metaphorical narrative. The most recent cognitive research (Lakoff, 2008) verifies that—indeed—the cognitive unconscious has the framework of metaphorical narrative and that these story patterns correlate with energy patterns in the nervous system. Jung also knew that dreams “have a purpose,” and that the purpose is “compensation” or harmonization of conscious and unconscious psyche. Jungian compensation is essentially the same thing as coherence, and recent research on coherence confirms that coherent states can be evoked with specific feedback technologies. Moreover, coherent psychological states increase emotional and perceptual stability as well as alignment among the physical, cognitive, and emotional systems. The authors’ hypothesis is that the images projected by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)—the media dreams of a population—are subject to psychological analysis in order to disclose unconscious sources of psychological stress in contextual collectives.

INTRODUCTION

Carl Jung discovered that assisting patients to understand the symbols in their dream images led to insight as to the causes of subconscious problems. Because images are projections of sub-

conscious energy and information patterns, such insight has the capacity to harmonized cognitive energy patterns, to compensate for dissonance, and to heal patients by helping them achieve a degree of psychic coherence. More recently, cognitive research has verified Jung’ theories and

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empirical observations from the perspective of neurobiological patterns and cognitive framing. Jung based his method of dream analysis on his observation that dreams have dramatic structure and—like drama—have a purpose or *exposition*. George Lakoff, researching cognitive frames, has demonstrated that the narrative-metaphorical architecture of the cognitive unconscious frames human values. Lakoff defines the two fundamental family metaphors that determine conservative values (The Strict Father Metaphor) and progressive values (The Nurturant Parent Metaphor). Such narratives and metaphors with which we identify at subconscious levels determine our value systems, our worldview, and our actions. Lakoff observes that without reference to cognitive narratives, humans cannot know others. Without these unconscious narrative-metaphorical reference points, people cannot even know themselves. Essentially, we refer our identity and our very existence to our dreamlike cognitive narratives.

Most interesting is that cognitive dream dynamics of the microcosm correspond to the dynamics of the macrocosm. Jung said that, “Disruption in the spiritual life of an age shows the same pattern as radical change in an individual.” (Jung, 1933, p. 202) Also, “A people presents only a somewhat more complex picture of psychic life than the individual.” (Jung, 1933, p. 210) That is to say, the patterns are shared by individuals and collectives, and they are mediated with images in which the potentials for meaningful insight based on symbolic content spans the “gap” between recursive energy patterns of the personal and collective psyche. This suggests that, in order to achieve curative insight, the key to navigation of the *unconscious psyche* resides in the correspondences (based on algorithmic recursions of isometric form) that may be mediated between digital software and the archetypal images that the software projects. Jung also observed that because the psychic process has a quantitative aspect, the conservation of energy in the physical world

is analogous to “compensation” by the psyche. Accordingly, “No psychic value can disappear without being replaced by another of equivalent intensity” (Jung, 1933, p. 209).

These ideas raise questions as to the existence of structural parallels between Jungian psyche and the emergent media sphere. The media sphere has been defined as the collective ecology of the world’s media including newspapers, journals, television, radio, books, novels, advertising, press releases, publicity and the blogosphere; any and all media both broadcast and published. If such parallels exist, it may be possible to analyze the images of the media sphere according to Jungian methods in order to diagnose and heal “contextual” collectives. (Schafer & Yu, 2011) This chapter addresses this possibility and argues that the possibility of fostering coherent psychological states with ICTs should provide the foundation upon which all serious research on information and communication technologies is based.

BACKGROUND

If a culture had dreams, perhaps its media dreams could communicate messages to contextual populations to warn them of impending psychosis. If heeded, media dreams might provide meaningful insight that provokes the collective psyche into coherent psychological states. But that’s nonsense! Or is it? Is the American Dream nonsense? Are the values upon which the dream is based nonsensical? What happens when a culture’s dreams become debased? History tells us. The society degenerates and dies. We all have a vague notion of what caused the decline and fall of Rome or of Babylon. We know something about the values—the dream—upon which Rome was founded, but most of what we know is only the outer expression of its inner psychological disharmony—its tyrants, its aggressive militarism, or its murderous entertainments in the coliseum. And how do we

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