

## Response to Altan Loker and “New Facts about Dreams”

*Lionel Corbett*

I believe that Altan Loker’s examination of Jung’s approach to dreams does not do justice to the dreams Loker quotes, and also misses some important aspects of Jungian theory.

With regard to Jung’s dream of hurting his neck when he looks up at his patient: the fact that Jung develops a pain in the neck when he looks up at his patient suggests that it is painful to do so. Jung says this means he had been *underestimating* the dreamer, but the author says that Jung had been *overestimating* her and this hurts him. How on earth does the author know this without asking Jung more about his feelings towards his patient? Why should we not believe that Jung is simply telling us how he felt? I don’t think the author can merely contradict what Jung says he feels about his patient with no evidence. Jung may have consciously devalued her even though he also recognized her intelligence. Even if the author is correct, and Jung overestimated her, this overestimation could only be true unconsciously, because consciously he clearly says he was undervaluing her. I don’t see that this dream disproves the theory of compensation and I am not impressed with the author’s understanding of the dream, since he cannot know how Jung felt about the dreamer other than Jung’s expressed opinion.

The author says that the right brain produces brain thoughts, and throughout the paper implies that the brain is producing the dreams. But if this were true, it would mean that the psyche can be reduced to the workings of the brain. This raises the whole mind-brain problem, which the author ignores as if it does not exist. For most Jungians, the Self is the maker of dreams. The right brain may be *necessary* for dreams to occur, but

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only a convinced materialist believes that the brain *makes* the dream out of its neurochemical functioning. Furthermore, daily clinical experience belies the author's assertion that true symbols cannot occur in dreams unless they become concrete through frequent use. Authentic symbols are a product of the transcendent function, and I do not want to reduce this to a brain function, which would be to reduce the soul to the brain.

The dream about the father driving drunk could be simply a comment from the unconscious about the dreamer's father, but since we are not privy to the clinical details, we cannot put the dream in context, whereas Jung could do so. Since the author does not know anything about the father, it is impossible for the author to assert that the father was unable to think straight or was overambitious. Jung, in contrast, did know the family situation, and could make the appraisal that the son was overly reliant on the father. I don't think we can comment on the dream without this information or without the dreamer's associations to the dream, which presumably Jung had and the author does not have. As well, Jung points out that his interpretation "struck home." By the way, it is not true, as the author asserts, that compensation "carries a positive affect": a compensation can be emotionally painful.

The author says that Jung used ideas such as the mandala, the archetype, and the collective unconscious whenever he does not find a perfect fit between the content of a dream and the compensation theory. The author implies that we really don't need these ideas to understand dreams. Thus, when a man dreams that he puts on a stranger's hat (Jung, 1943/1968, par. 52-53), the author says this merely means the dreamer too easily accepts other people's views, depicting a one-sided attitude rather than a compensation for anything, and Jung only invoked mandala symbolism because the dream was not obviously compensatory. The author ignores the fact that this dream is part of a series of mandala dreams: it is not an isolated event. In any case, Jung does not say that all dreams are compensatory: some are complementary, underlining the conscious attitude. This was an initial dream of a large series, so it was clear to Jung in retrospect that the mandala/hat represents the emergence of the unconscious, and not simply the adoption of the attitude of others. (This dreamer, Pauli, was not in the habit of taking on the views of others.)

Tellingly, the author refers to latent and manifest aspects of dreams, the very attitude that Jung did not use with respect to dreams. The author also states that dreams present "only the truth as it is known to the dreamer," which misses the whole point of dreams, since they present what we do not know.

The author's interpretation of Dora's dream is simply naïve. He equates fire with sex and the jewel case with female genitals, thus turn-

ing complex symbols into signs, and while he purports to give a Jungian interpretation he actually repeats Freud's own interpretation of the jewel case. This image has also been understood as mother's vanity or her reputation, and without Dora's association it is hard to say what it really means. If there is a wish in the dream, it may be Dora's wish that her father would save her emerging identity or her real sense of self. All these are pure speculations.

## References

Jung, C. G. (1943/1968). Individual dream symbolism in relation to alchemy. *CW 12*.