

# SYMBOLISM, DREAMS, AND HOMEOPATHY:

A Discussion with Jane Cicchetti  
and Barbara Osawa

Since Edward Whitmont published *Psyche and Substance* and *The Alchemy of Healing*, the realm of symbolic and imaginal thinking has captured the interest of many homeopathic professionals. As interest in discovering the themes and symbolism of the case has grown, the definition of materia medica has expanded to include the folklore, biological and archetypal associations of remedies. In her workshops entitled "Connections to the Source," Jane Cicchetti integrates the symbolism and archetypes in dreams to further her understanding of the case. For some this new work is innovative and insightful, others feel it crosses the line into being too speculative, a little weighted on the side of imagination rather than reason. In a recent email dialog, Jane Cicchetti and I engaged in what we both felt was a constructive look at the work at hand and some of the questions it raises.

I want to thank Jane for her willingness to share her knowledge. We both regret that time didn't allow the inclusion of a case that would have illuminated her work.

**Barbara Osawa:** To begin with, I think we need to define some of the ideas that form the basis of your work. First is the premise that there is an intersection of Homeopathy and Jungian symbolic thought. Can you explain this?

**Jane Cicchetti:** In order to at least begin to answer this, I have to go back to how Jung developed his ideas. In his work as a psychiatrist, he had the uncanny ability to observe and be with a person in the way that Hahnemann described as being the unprejudiced observer. Most his ideas come from his observation. This is, of course, what we, as homeopaths do in our case taking. In his teachings on dream analysis, he never interprets or gives his understanding of the dream, rather, he allows the individual to express his or own thoughts and direct associations to the symbols in dreams. We as homeopaths have much to learn from the open-minded, unprejudiced observation that is taught by Jung.

Jung felt that symbols were the best possible expression of a reality and wholeness that is greater than the intellect can conceive; that symbols point the way to a greater reality. It is my experience that when we

open our minds to this reality, we are able to make connections and see the wholeness of a homeopathic case more readily. This is especially true in one-sided cases.

You mention the words, "Jungian symbolic thought." I want to clarify something right from the beginning. We never take symbols literally. This is an important part of Jungian thought. A symbol that we take literally ceases to be a living reality and is useless from a therapeutic point of view. The symbol, as I said before, only points to an unknown fact, which continually unfolds in the awareness of the individual.

Carl Jung investigated the human psyche in depth, and his investigations gave us information that is, in my estimation, a link between the body and mind. This information is not Jungian thought; it is a development in human awareness. We use Jungian names like archetypes, anima/animus, etc., because it is easier to recognize these concepts within the system of thought in which they originated.

Jung's ideas (not necessarily present-day Jungian psychology) differ radically from a psychological point of view. They are a result of the ongoing investigation into the reality of the psyche. He defined psyche as all that is psychic, both conscious and unconscious, individual and collective. He saw from his work with patients that archetypes are pre-thought, pre-form impulses that are inherited with the brain and are the precursors to and generators of archetypal symbols. In Jung's definition of archetypes as pre-form, pre-thought impulses, we see a parallel to Kent's formative intelligence of simple substance.

He also postulated that what goes on in the psyche indicates what is going on in the body, and wrote of a connection between body and matter. We use energy remedies to stimulate the vital force to create changes in the mind and body. The concept of vital force is very similar to what Jung called psychic energy. In his essay on psychic energy he clearly states that psychic energy can only be understood from an energetic perspective, and that no explanation of nature can be only mechanistic. So Jung's perspective is vitalistic rather than mechanistic.

And finally, Jung believed that in order to heal a deep-seated problem, one had to connect with the archetypal energy within the collective unconscious. This is another way of saying that the problem is not simply individual, but connects to older and less individual roots. This is not the same thing as miasmatic predisposition, but it is much closer to the way a homeopath views disease than the way it is viewed by allopathic medicine or by other schools of psychology.

Jung's investigations led him up to the point of beginning to understand the relationship between psyche and matter. He wrote a bit about

this and then left the subject for others. Near the end of his life, he indicated to Dr. Edward Whitmont that further investigation into the relationship between the psyche and matter was up to the next generation, and suggested that Dr. Whitmont look into this. As you know, Dr. Whitmont is no longer with us. With guidance from my mentor, Dr. Walter Odajnyk, a Jungian analyst and instructor, I am doing my best to investigate this realm and feel that Homeopathy has the greatest possibility of making a breakthrough in this area.

**B. O.:** There is no doubt that the psyche, conscious, unconscious, dreams, etc., are extremely important in the homeopathic casetaking and evaluation. This is established in the *Organon*.

**J. C.:** Yes, I certainly agree that the psyche is important in Homeopathy, however, the psyche and the unconscious are not mentioned in the *Organon*. Although Hahnemann speaks about mental symptoms and dreams, he lived in a time where the understanding of the psyche was extremely limited. The main understanding at that time was through Mesmer's work. Since Hahnemann wrote the *Organon* there have been many developments, including a deep understanding of the psyche based on Freud and Jung's work. To ignore this work would be, in my opinion, the same as ignoring developments that have occurred in other aspects of medicine since Hahnemann's time.

**B. O.:** I should clarify my statement. Although Hahnemann didn't specifically use words like "psyche" or "unconscious," the importance he gave to the "totality" and "mental states" in casetaking and evaluation, supported by the way he ranked the proving symptoms, indicates he wasn't leaving anything out. His frequent references to the peculiar, characteristic symptoms of the patient as the keys to evaluating the patient's state, encompass all levels of symptomatology. The work of Freud, Jung, and others has deepened our understanding of the personality, but I don't think it has substantially altered our fundamental approach. In the same way, the discovery of microorganisms, genetic decoding, or medical diagnostics haven't changed the principles of susceptibility or fundamental cause. These modern developments offer supporting data, but aren't diagnostic of dynamic disorder, which can only be found through a principled method of evaluation.

**J. C.:** I agree with you that the study of Jungian concepts would not alter the fundamental homeopathic approach. I do feel that the study of the psyche,

and particular the understanding of archetypes and archetypal symbols, enhance our homeopathic practice, particularly when we look deeply into the pre-form archetypal energies.

**B. O.:** Much of your review [see quotes below from Evann Wilkovsky's notes on Cicchetti's workshop] refers to the symbolism and archetypes of dreams and using these to guide us in case analysis and prognosis. This seems like imposing Jungian methods onto the fundamental homeopathic principles. Could you explain how this is consistent with classical Homeopathy?

**J. C.:** I certainly understand that you may not care for this form of thinking. However, as I stated above, it is a development in medical science that we would be amiss not to understand. As Hahnemann states in the *Organon*, the mental symptoms in the patient are often more characteristic and lead to the choice of the remedy. Because the mental state is so important in discriminating between remedies, homeopaths work very closely with mental symptoms and with the psyche. If we do not understand how the psyche works, and the role of symbolism as the language of the psyche, we are missing a whole area which Hahnemann would have had no access to. As I said before, this was a development in medical science that occurred after his death.

**B. O.:** Your course, "Connections to the Source," is taught in five seminars: "The Use of Dreams and Symbolism in Homeopathic Practice," "Symbolism and Rationalism," "Archetypal Symbolism," "Alchemical Symbols and the Healing Process," "The Inner Landscape," and "The Ego and Development of the Self." Can you give a brief description of them, and an idea how you relate them to our fundamental understanding of Homeopathy?

**J. C.:** In reference to my course, I would like to say that I believe that a firm foundation in classical Homeopathy is necessary to do this type of work. It is not a shortcut; rather, it is a way to more deeply understand people, and a way to find characteristic symptoms in complicated, one-sided cases. A case needs to be well-taken, with all the possible modalities, extensions, and sensations, etc. If after this, a remedy can be found, there is no need to move into the symbolic realm.

Because of this, I am very clear that my course is open only to students who have at least 200 hours of study in classical Homeopathy.

## **Comments on seminars:**

### ***The Use of Dreams and Symbolism***

Homeopaths have been using dreams since Hahnemann's time. I have observed that many homeopaths tend to use them in a way that is inconsistent with basic case-taking skills. I teach Jung's guidelines for dream "analysis": to allow the client to express their inner reality in case-taking. The symbols that appear in dreams have meaning only to the dreamer. That meaning can turn out to be a valuable guide when discriminating between several well-indicated remedies, or can be a clue to consider a remedy that is not well-represented in the repertory. Of course, the remedy in consideration would only be of value if it fitted the rest of the case.

### ***Archetypal Symbolism***

Some symbols are more universal and cannot be solely understood through individual association. These are archetypal symbols, i.e., images that have been part of human consciousness for eons, and have many well-developed associations. When an individual has a dream containing an archetypal symbol, it may help us understand him or her more deeply, or lead to a conversation that results in the client telling us an important characteristic symptom.

One risk in working with archetypal symbolism is the temptation to take the major archetypes and try to fit remedies and symptoms into a schema. Jung stresses that, even though knowledge of symbols and archetypes is very useful for the therapist, it is the patient's individual experience that is primary. This is very similar to Hahnemann's warning against theorizing.

### ***Alchemical Symbolism and the Healing Process***

Towards the end of his life, Jung explored the idea of alchemy as a projection of the psyche of the alchemist onto matter. He felt that the process of alchemical transformation i.e. transformation of base metal into gold was actually a reflection of spiritual transformation within the psyche of the alchemist. Fortunately, the alchemists left many drawings of their process. One well-known series of 15th-century woodcuts of the alchemical process is called the Rosarium Pictures. Jung wrote extensively about this series and how the symbolism in it relates to the healing process. I find this series very helpful in understanding how healing and transformation takes place in certain people.

One of the most useful concepts that we can draw from these pictures is the idea of the Nigredo, or dark night of the soul. Many people going through healing under Homeopathy go through something like this.

It is more than an aggravation. Not only is it helpful for the homeopath to understand that this sometimes happens, but it can be very reassuring for the client to be able to relate to these symbols during a difficult time. I have found this to be true for myself and for many of my clients.

### ***The Inner Landscape, the Ego and the Development of the Self***

Essentially, this is an attempt to understand the formation of the ego and its role in health, healing, and transformation. Understanding symptoms connected with an undeveloped ego is as or more important than understanding the depth of a physical pathology. If we are naive about such psychological facts, we can confuse lack of development with the so-called "lack of ego" of highly developed states of consciousness. This is especially important because lack of ego development is often thought to be a higher state of consciousness by the patient. If we as homeopaths don't understand the difference, at least conceptually, we are both in a muddle.

**B. O.:** The following quote is from Evann Wilkosky's review of your "Connections to the Source" workshop.

*Jane first discussed the symbolic realm and the psyche from the view of Jungian depth psychology. The information from the symbolic realm can form a path for the homeopath to follow; at the same time, the connection of a person to the symbols in dreams can in itself cause healing. Jane used the example of the archetype "cat" and the symptom picture of Lac felinum to illustrate the relationship of the symbol realm to a remedy. Using references to Marie-Louise von Franz's book The Cat, she gave a historical review of the symbolic meaning of the cat and its connection to the expression of female independence, sexuality, and sensuality. She then drew the parallel with the symptoms of Lac felinum associated with a woman's independence and sensuality. For example, a house cat is a pet who is cared for yet still retains its independence, and there is a strong issue in Lac felinum of independence vs. dependence.*

I wonder if you could explain how "information from the symbolic realm" enables us to go from someone's idea of the symbol of the cat, to leaps like finding issues of independence vs. dependence in *Lac felinum*, the proving of which shows no mention of these symbols and issues. I realize that this is an area considered new and ground-breaking. However, many people, including myself, find it to be a stretch requiring more of an imaginative than an inductive process. Could you comment on this?

**J. C.:** I can certainly give you my view on this subject; I would like to spend some time on this point as I feel there is a general misunderstanding

of the utilization of symbols in homeopathic prescribing. I don't believe that it is wise for a homeopath to move directly from a symbol, say, for instance, the symbol of a cat, into prescriptions of the homeopathic dilution of *Lac felinum*. However, if there is a symbolic hint in a case, it is very worthwhile to look into the remedy that the symbol indicates. This takes quite a bit of skill. One must be able to discriminate, as in choosing any other pivotal characteristic symptoms in a case, if the symbol is central enough to the case to be worth investigating. Also, the homeopath must not create her own idea about what the symbol means. The meaning and relevance of the symbol must come from the patient. Of course, the remedy in question must be studied to see if it actually fits the case homeopathically.

As for the "leap" into issues like independence/dependence, these are themes that have been seen in clinical cases and reported in journals. One of the best examples of this is an article by Alize Timmerman in a 1996 issue of *Homeopathic Links*. In this article, Alize not only mentions a proving done of *Lac felinum* by the Guild of Homeopaths of the Netherlands, she also warns of the dangers inherent in symbolic prescribing. Another excellent report on *Lac felinum* is by Karl Josef Mueller. His article in *Homeopathic Links*, 1995, describes symptoms found in 11 people who were deeply affected by *Lac felinum*.

Very often, provings and clinical studies will show a relationship between the substance and the symptoms. An example of this is the desire for salt in *Natrum muriaticum*. If a central issue in a case were around an extreme desire for salt, it would certainly be worthwhile to look into *Natrum muriaticum*, even if it was not the top remedy in repertorization. Of course, many other remedies have a desire for salt, and we would not base our whole case on that symptom.

Conversely, we would be amiss not to look into *Natrum muriaticum* in such a case, based on the idea that we are opposed to symbolic representation of the substance. The same applies to other connections with substance. We cannot mindlessly prescribe a remedy because someone dreams of cats or is in love with cats, but conversely we must be able to investigate whatever hints we can find in a case, particularly in complicated or one-sided cases.

In the Spring 2001 issue of *Simillimum*, there is an interview with Sheilaigh Creasy entitled "One Should Aim to Be a Detective." I like that phrase very much, and it is appropriate to what we are discussing. We need to be investigative scientists. It is important to approach a case with an open mind and to investigate all areas for characteristic symptoms.

**B. O.:** Continuing to quote Evann's review:

*Next, Jane discussed the principles of dream analysis, where the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious together to heal. She listed the ways that dreams uncover unconscious contents because they are not under the control of the Ego, which is a function of the conscious mind. Dream images can be used directly as symbols to point to the remedy, or the theme of the dream can be treated as a delusion. Jane used the dreams of the remedies Pinus sylvestris and Physostigma to illustrate these points, respectively. In a case of Physostigma, the client had a childhood dream of being a castaway. When symbolism from that dream was added to the totality of symptoms, it became clear that Physostigma was the correct remedy because it covered the physical symptoms and has the delusion of being a castaway.*

*The second day of the Dream Seminar centered around techniques of dream analysis, which included these topics: levels of dream analysis (literal, personal, archetypal), the difference between subjective and objective dreams, and the steps of dream analysis. What is most important when analyzing a dream is to put aside any idea of what the dream may mean. Instead, it is crucial to concentrate on the images in the dream and learn what they mean to the person by constantly refining the details of the images.*

*Jane also explained the importance of what she termed the initial dream, the first dream after the remedy. The initial dream can point to a prognosis for the patient, how the remedy will work, as well as bring forth the etiology.*

Can you elaborate on this?

**J. C.:** An initial dream is a dream that gives both the dreamer and the homeopath a peck at the goal. It may appear right after taking a remedy that has acted very deeply, or many months later, or not at all. When we see a dream like this, it is important to keep a record of it, because it is like a prognosis. Through symbolism, the dream tells us just how far the dreamer will progress. Because we must always verify these things in the light of day, we simply record it and see what happens. I liken it to any type of prognosis. No prognosis takes into account all of the possibilities within heaven and earth.

**B. O.:** Continuing to quote Evann's review:

*Jane finished the seminar by enumerating a set of precautions in working with dreams. This led back to the ideas of Jung regarding transference/countertransference between the homeopath and patient, and the idea*



*of the Shadow. The Shadow is that part of the personality that is hidden or suppressed from conscious awareness. The Shadow is often comprised of material which is the complementary opposite of conscious awareness and activity. Tying these ideas back to Homeopathy, Jane asserted that the first stage of homeopathic treatment deals with the Shadow. The transference of the shadow material to the homeopath, who is the mediator of the remedy, would be in itself a healing process from the Jungian point of view.*

*In the second seminar, "Alchemical Symbolism and Process," Jane entered less familiar waters. C. G. Jung viewed alchemy as a process of spiritual development rather than just a physical process. The search for a way to turn base metal into gold was more importantly a personal process of transformation of consciousness. The alchemical stages were symbolic representations of internal experiences projected onto substances. Jane contends that Homeopathy is the most effective form of alchemy because it turns the base, an unintegrated human being, into a person who holds the gold, the Philosopher's Stone. In stating the theme of the weekend, Coniunctio, the merging of opposites, she took the seminar participants upon a fascinating journey.*

*Jane began with a discussion of Jungian ideas which included the Self, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. She used, as an example of the Self, the remedy Aranea diadema, the web-weaving spider. The Self represents Wholeness; wholeness can be thought of as the web of life, the connection with all there is. The archetype of spider is the weaver of the web of life, and thus of Wholeness. A person who would need Aranea diadema would have issues revolving around identity, and feelings of lack of connection to family and other groups.*

*Jane spent time on the formal definition of archetype as a collective image, an impulse behind a particular symbol. The collective unconscious is made up of archetypes; examples are mother, father, tree. These are universal and timeless images that have had expression in all cultures from the start of time. Archetypes are pre-forms, energies that create "states" in the world. This is why Jane sees homeopathic remedies as archetypal remedies: homeopathic remedies are also energetic states that contain symptom pictures, which can be viewed as symbols of the state. Jane also covered the symbolic materia medica for Alcoholus, Lithium carbonicum, and Lithium muriaticum during the Dream Seminar.*

*I admit I find this journey in to dreams and archetypes fascinating, but I feel some resistance toward applying it to the materia medica. If this is true, how can we "see" the image of gonorrhoea when we look at the Arbor vitae? How is it that these archetypes or "symbolic materia medica" only includes a few mental concepts or themes, and not a full, reliable portrait of*

a remedy, including both mental and physical symptoms, which would be brought out by a thorough proving?

**J. C.:** We have several questions here, and I would like to address them one by one. The first point that must be corrected is about archetypes including a few mental concepts. Archetypes are pre-thought, pre-form, so they don't include any mental concepts, per se. Archetypal symbols have vast mental, physical, and spiritual meaning, so vast that they cannot be contained within the consciousness of one individual.

As to the symptoms gathered from provings, I believe that one of Hahnemann's huge contributions was the idea of proving a substance. To this day, it is the best way to understand the connection between the human mind/body and substances. Working with and understanding archetypal energies does not negate information from provings. It adds to our understanding of the human psyche and possibly relates to how our remedies actually work. Archetypes are present in what Jung termed "Big Dreams," which are the dreams that will be most helpful to the homeopath and the therapeutic process. When a person is deeply connected to the psyche through dream work and a homeopathic remedy, the archetype expressed becomes alive in the person to heal and to energize."

**B. O.:** With the above remedies, and in the *Aranea diadema* example, if symbolism and archetypes offer true and accurate portraits of drugs, we should be able to predict the themes of substances as yet unproven, and be able to prescribe accurately on that basis. But too many of our proving symptoms show no obvious symbolic relationship to the substance.

Another area where things get very puzzling to me is illustrated by the *Aranea diadema* example you presented. You state the premise that the self, representing wholeness, is in turn represented by the web of life, which is in turn connected to *Aranea diadema*, the web-weaving spider. From this premise, you say that a person needing the remedy would have issues involving identity, and feelings of lack of connection to family and groups.

That implies that we should therefore find the remedy in rubrics like "Confusion as to his identity," or "Forsaken." *Aranea diadema* isn't there, which makes me wonder what we can really do with the themes if they can't be converted reliably into rubrics. This seems like pure conjecture and a failure to heed §144, where Hahnemann insists that the materia medica be pure, according to the words of the provers, with no interpretation, speculation, etc. Where do you think we should draw the line between the value of provings, versus the interpretive value of symptoms?

**J. C.:** Actually, some of this, particularly about relationships, comes from Massimo Mangialavori's information on *Aranea diadema*. After I located the remedy, I confirmed it with Massimo's remedy picture. His picture of *Aranea diadema* fit my patient beautifully, and she has improved dramatically. This is living materia medica from clinical experience. Do you feel that a homeopath's clinical experiences working with patients are valid, or do you believe that only provings are valid?

**B. O.:** I certainly wouldn't say that clinical symptoms are invalid, but in order for there to be clinical symptoms associated with a remedy, the remedy has to have been prescribed upon some basis, presumably the proving symptoms, or perhaps toxicological symptoms. I believe that adding speculative information to the materia medica is misleading and dangerous, and that clinical symptoms need to be verified by several practitioners before they are accepted as definitive.

**J. C.:** It would be interesting to reprove many of the old remedies, as [the provings] are very incomplete. Also, as times change, so has the way that human beings relate to the psyche, and provings are at least partially a reflection of effect of substance on the psyche. The symbolism of the spider being connected with wholeness is a very ancient connection that has been expressed through the human psyche for thousands of years. I believe that it is important to see that dimension of the substance we are using.

**B. O.:** I would venture to say that a prevalent trend in many modern provings is just this preoccupation with the psyche, so that "themes" of the remedy come out very strongly, while there is little in the way of striking physical or definite general symptoms.

There will always be trends of various kinds in any field. Homeopathy has seen many trends come and go in its 200 years of history, as a glance at Julian Winston's comprehensive history will attest. Only those that are consistent with the principles have remained.

**J. C.:** I certainly agree that trends come and go. What remains of all this will have to stand the test of time. I have discussed how I see Jung's understanding of the psyche as being consistent with the principles of Homeopathy. I am aware that this is pioneering work, some of which may be accepted, and some of which may not. I would like to conclude by reviewing how I believe this work will contribute to homeopathic practice.

1. Understanding dream analysis will allow homeopaths to use dreams in a way that allows the individual's true connections with symbols to be

revealed, rather than the homeopath making an interpretation based on his/her own psychic state. This allows for the possibility of gaining true characteristic symptoms in cases that are one-sided or overmedicated.

2. Exploring the connection between the "formative intelligence of simple substance," and the pre-form archetype creating archetypal symbols, may lead to a greater understanding of the vital force and how it creates symptoms and how this relates to the potentized matter in our remedies. This understanding may help us to better understand our clients and discriminate between remedies.
3. Most importantly, exploring the symbolic realm and training ourselves to look at our own dreams and visions, opens us to the possibilities of human consciousness, which in turn gives us the ability to become better at being the "unprejudiced observer." When we do this, an interesting phenomenon occurs. Clients begin to speak about things they have never spoken of to anyone, and to have dreams that relate to the essence of their situation. When this happens, we are able to find a remedy that may otherwise remain hidden.

*Jane Cicchetti, RSHom (NA), has been practicing Homeopathy since 1983 and is the director of the Five Elements School of Classical Homeopathy in Boonton Township, New Jersey. In addition to her private practice, she directs a three-year course, supervises a postgraduate clinical program, and teaches a three-weekend seminar, "Connections to the Source, The Use of Dreams and Symbolism in Homeopathic Practice." She is currently working on a book on the use of dreams and symbols in Homeopathy.*

# Rajan Sankaran



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