

The Clinical Practice of the SoulCollage® Method, based on Jungian Psychology

According to Jung, 'Psyche is Image'. The Psyche 'creates reality every day'. The fundamental facts of existence are 'fantasy images' created by the psyche. Our knowledge, thinking, sensations, perceptions, feelings, desires and beliefs must present themselves as images, so they can be experienced.

Hillman, inspired by Henry Corbin, asserts that the psychic world is an 'imaginal world'. He experiences images as something internal, while living among them.

"The psychic world is an imaginal world, just as image is psyche. Paradoxically, whilst these imagens are in us and we live amongst them. The psychic world is experienced at the same time as internal to us, although it embraces us with imagens. I dream and experience my dreams as something internal, but at the same time I walk through my dreams and I am in them". (HILLMAN, J., *Re-Vendo a Psicologia*, 2010, pg. 81; *my translation*)

Jung emphasizes the therapeutic function of the images. They not only reveal our psyche, but also allow us to have access to and work on our unconscious content, thus amplifying in this way our consciousness.

SoulCollage® essentially works with images. Seena Frost, the creator of the method, says in her book:

"When you hold them [the cards] all together in your hands, you will be holding a symbolic reflection of your one, many faceted, evolving Soul. The longer you work with the images, the more power they have to reveal and change patterns in your life." (FROST, Seena B., 2010, pg. 2).

When adequately applied in therapy sessions, the SoulCollage® method helps in the depotentialization(deprivation) of the Complexes. By confronting the Complex, one is capable of liberating the transformative energy of the Archetypes. Therefore, the individual is able to establish new associations with the surrounding environment, contributing to the onset of new possibilities and paths to follow in his/her life.

This process starts by the patient choosing images that resonate from magazines, catalogues, newspapers, photos and even virtual images. The patient does not necessarily know the meaning of the images, but selects those images that resonate in some way. These external images will, by identification, express and represent the individual's internal and unconscious images. It is fundamental the therapist pays attention to the entire creation process of his/her patient's SoulCollage® card. From

choosing the images, the manner of cropping and gluing them to the card, to the number and the content of the chosen images and their arrangement on the card. Some people put very few images on their card, others complain that the card space is not enough for all their images!

One of the crucial points of SoulCollage® is when the patient speaks with the voice of the card the patient starts with the words: “*I Am One Who...*” This methodology allows the patient to give voice to his/her internal aspects.

Through the collage, we are able to personify¹ invisible contents of our unconscious. In the patient’s words: “Things are there, in living color, and there is no way of escaping anymore!” Next, through Active Imagination and with the help of the words “*I Am One Who...*”, we can establish a dialogue with these contents. This dialogue can stir new contents, which can then become themes for future SoulCollage® cards.

The state of identity between the Ego and the Complex is ruptured, as the individual sees and dialogues with his/her dark aspects (of the Complex). This happens when one recognizes the Complex as a ‘You’, something different from the ‘I’; something apart in us. The Complex, while belonging to us and often ‘owning us’, must be experienced as an autonomous identity, separated from the Ego. In this way, one can start an internal dialogue, which will lead to a confrontation with the Complex, and later to its depotentialization. Only in this way we can free the Archetype from its ‘distortions’ and reach its healthy core.

Even though the words “*I Am One Who...*” could at first be processed at the conscious level (with the help of the Ego), they could rapidly reach and access our unconscious. To varying degrees, everybody can benefit from the SoulCollage® process. The manner and depth with which this process occurs depend on each person. Frost used to say that:

¹ Personification: Jung compared the Personification with an unconscious identification or a projection of a certain unconscious content in an object, until the moment of its integration into consciousness. In the therapy session, the patient explores his/her relationship with his/her personifications. According to Samuels: “A fundamental psychological activity, in which everything the individual experiments is spontaneous and unwittingly personified, that is, they become a ‘psychic person’. We find our personifications in dreams, fantasies and projections.” (SAMUELS, A., 1988, pg. 150; *my translation*).

“SoulCollage® is like the ocean. You may choose to enter it with only your toes, or you may dive in with your whole body. Each one of us chooses the depth we dare to reach. Anything is possible.” (as cited by Mariabruna Sirabella, *my translation*).

As mentioned above, SoulCollage® uses the technique of Active Imagination. This technique allows us to access our hidden energies and to go beyond, to places never seen before. In this way, one can access contents that are placed in the Shadow. These contents can be either hostile in nature and conflicted, as well as unknown to the individual and therefore underdeveloped. The integration of these contents to our Personality is an invaluable source of vital energy, creativity, renovation and amplification of consciousness.

In the first stage of Active Imagination, consciousness would provide the means of expression to the unconscious contents to manifest themselves. In this stage, the conduction of the process must be left, as much as possible, to the emergence of images, ideas, and associations of the unconscious. The images cut out from magazines and the supporting material of the SoulCollage® cards allow the projection and personification of unconscious images, helping to promote its assimilation and integration in consciousness.

Therefore, irrational, undesired and unexpected contents arise, leading to the discovery of the Complexes, as explained above. After the emergence of unconscious contents, it remains for us to know how the Ego will behave in this situation. Hence the second stage starts, in which the conduction of the process shifts from the unconscious to the Ego.

In this stage, a confrontation between the Ego and unconscious contents takes place, with an exchange of arguments and affection among them. The approximation of the opposites, between the Ego and the unconscious, results in the emergence of a third element, which is the Transcendent Function. Thus, consciousness is amplified when one integrates these opposing contents through the Transcendent Function.

In short, we can say the Active Imagination would be a way of bringing unconscious contents to consciousness. It would help transform unconscious contents into images, making them more accessible to consciousness. SoulCollage® would help in this mediation between unconscious contents and conscious ones.

“From my experience, I am convinced that it is practically impossible to produce anything in the imagination that is not an authentic representation of something from the unconscious. The integral function of the imagination is to bring material from the

unconscious, cover it with imagens and send it to the conscious mind. Everything that comes from the imagination must be lived somewhere in the unconscious web, before receiving an image-form through the imagination.” (JOHNSON, R. A., 1986, pg. 189; *my translation*)

What is proposed here is that the patient express, in a concrete and symbolic way, contents of his/her unconscious and work on these consciously. In this way, according to Jung, the previously unbounded affection converts itself into a more or less clear and articulated idea, with the support of consciousness.

SoulCollage® as a facilitator of the Transcendent Function, through images, supports the creation of symbols, helping the unconscious to become conscious. These symbols will work as Transcendent Function, creating new contents, which do not identify neither with conscious contents nor with unconscious ones. In this process, the amplification of consciousness takes place, and a new personality arises, more broad, strong and wholesome.

...one has a product that was influenced by consciousness as well as by the unconscious, a product that embodies a yearning for light, on the part of the unconscious, and for substance, on the part of consciousness. (JUNG, vol. 8/2, pg. 168, *my translation*)

I have greatly encouraged my patients to create SoulCollage® cards during therapy sessions, since I have noticed the many benefits obtained with it. Most of them have embraced the method and continued creating the cards even outside the therapy space (Analytical Setting). The patients who learn in therapy how to make the SoulCollage® cards in association with the Active Imagination start to rely less on the therapist, and if they wish, they can carry on the SoulCollage® process on their own.

However, from my experience, the patients end up sharing most of their cards with the therapist, since they are inseparable from the analytical material and they also express thoroughly the essence of the Individuation Process. Furthermore, as it is well known in Jungian Psychology, the therapist is also a catalyst of the Transcendent Function, as he/she views the unconscious contents of his/her patients, helping them to integrate these contents in their consciousness.

This article is part of my monograph conclusion presented to the Post-Graduation Program of the Psychology Department of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Specialist in Jungian Psychology, Art and Imaginary.

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Quote of Mariabruna Sirabella.

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