Abstract

This paper discusses the shadow archetype from Jungian theory and its role in using art therapy for schizoid personality disorder. The research question posed here is: How will the shadow archetype and the integration process be manifested in a Jungian-oriented art therapy setting with a psychiatric in-patient diagnosed with schizoid personality disorder and hospitalized in the closed ward?

Schizoid personality disorder is explained in the literature as an ongoing pattern of distancing oneself from social relationships and a lack of emotional expression. The disorder is characterized by a lack of engagement in enjoyable activities, minimal or no interpersonal relationships, and a lack of interest in relationships (Martens, 2010).

C.G. Jung was a theorist, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst, who was a student of Freud’s and one of the founders of analytic psychology. Jung relentlessly investigated the mental lives of psychiatric patients and believed that he had discovered the symbolic significance of the contents of their psyches. Jung’s writing emphasizes the soul’s spiritual underpinnings; his theories make space for religious sentiments and creative feelings, and draw the connection between creative processes and transformative ones. Jung utilized an interpretive-symbolic lens to relate to images arising from the unconscious. He coined the term “collective unconscious” to refer to such images that are beyond the individual’s personal unconscious, that he believed are myths and structures that arise from humanity, in general. Influences on Jung’s theories include mythology, alchemy, and his research on primitive cultures and pagan beliefs and experiences. He composed a system of archetypes that, he claimed, are the foundational building blocks of the collective unconscious. Some of the prominent archetypes are: great mother, father, anima and animus, the hero, the persona, and the shadow.

The present research will discuss Jungian theory, including a brief overview of central aspects and foundational concepts of Jung’s teachings. It will include writing by Neuman, Jung’s student and follower, about the integral ego and the ego-self axis. This review will be understood in the context of therapy. The paper will also review Jung’s perspective on dream work; discuss the unique contribution of the Jungian approach to therapy and psychopathology; and examine the connection proposed by Jung between creativity, healing, and transformation, with a focus on art therapy.

The study will describe the main aspects of the shadow archetype, as well as shadow work, in Jungian therapy. It will use these terms to understand content that is manifested in schizoid personality disorder, and will examine its treatment through art therapy in light of Jung and Neuman’s ideas about good and bad, the old ethic and the new ethic.

Art offers a direct channel for expressing and processing emotions, turning them into visual representations (Markman Simmons, 2007). Its power lies in its ability to express a broad range of varied, sometimes contradictory, feelings. Art is unique in its ability to transform that which cannot be understood or accessed into something understandable and accessible; to bring together that which is fragmented, to uncover that which is hidden (Markman Simmons, ibid.). For this reason, art and its use in therapy can offer a valuable way to process extreme psychological content, such as that of a patient with schizoid personality disorder.

The concluding section of this paper will present the process of art therapy A., a patient suffering from schizoid personality disorder, during his extended hospitalization in a closed psychiatric ward. The section focuses on analysing paintings and texts created by A. – the core content in this therapy process. The section includes clinical background and describes the evolution of the therapeutic connection and the creative act.

This case study and its outcomes showcase how the various elements of the shadow archetype contribute to understanding and articulating the processes, psychological content, images, and the therapeutic relationship with a patient suffering from schizoid personality disorder. It highlights the deep splitting involved in the occurrence of schizoid personality disorder and the therapeutic qualities in the creative art process – its integrative elements and its unique ability to foster connection between disparate parts of the self.