

INTRODUCTION

Dora M. Kalff

Estelle Weinrib has written a very valuable study on sandplay therapy that helps to understand many important ideas that underlie its practice. She has aptly commented on the practical and theoretical aspects of sandplay and illustrated her experiences with a case. This case shows that sandplay can serve as a powerful medium to reach strong, transformative, inner experiences. From her description one gets the feeling that as a therapist she is able to truly participate in these happenings and to create a favorable space for their arising and transformation. At the same time she is able to offer a consistent and convincing interpretation of the material without ever becoming dogmatic about her views. According to my own experience it

is very important when we offer our own interpretation that we leave enough space for the possibility of further suggestions and insights. Because in sandplay we are dealing with a living experience it would be presumptuous to think that it is possible to exhaustively describe it on a conceptual level.

Estelle Weinrib has rightly emphasized the nonverbal character of the process that is occurring through sandplay. It is perhaps possible to say that the healing occurs on what Neumann calls the matriarchal level of consciousness. Although this level of consciousness may be termed matriarchal it does not mean that there is a preponderance of feminine symbolism. The symbolic union of opposites, be it

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on the abstract level of principles such as sky and earth or be it on a human level of man and woman, is an important feature of the process also on this preverbal level.

I agree with Estelle Weinrib that initially we can talk about a creative regression towards an instinctual level of being. It is also true that the developments occurring after the Self-constellation, which lead to a new ego structure are progressive in nature. We have been able to observe that in a nonverbal phase of the process when analytical interpretation is still withheld a positive shift in attitude to the external world and other people can take place. This is the case even when I abstain from a simultaneous analytical discussion of dreams and general behavior patterns. Especially in the beginning phase I prefer to create an open space for the unconscious inner impulses to manifest without the interference of premature conceptualization. When the process has proceeded to a point well after the constellation of the Self, the verbal and analytical work becomes more important. It is at

this stage that the unconscious process, which has expressed itself in sandplay can be integrated into a conscious appreciation of the changes that have occurred. As I understand it, this phase of elucidation is an integral part of sandplay therapy. In some cases, people do not wish to talk immediately after the last sandplay picture has been created because of the very depths of the experience they have gone through. They may come back at a later time to look at the pictures and do more analytical work on them.

I have been very impressed by the work of some of my Japanese students, which shows very positive nonverbal communication through sandplay resulting in an impressive change in the client. Professor Kawai talks in this context of a transference on the Hara level—a direct communication from one center of a person to the center of the other person. We have to take into account, however, that there exists a considerable difference in the mentality between most of the Western world and the Japanese culture. It is therefore con-

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ceivable that a conceptual integration of the experience is more important in our culture than in theirs.

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FOREWORD

Katherine Bradway, Ph.D.

I felt extremely honored when Estelle Weinrib wanted me to read her *Images of the Self* before she sent it to the publishers. We had first met the year before in the dining room of the Hotel Sonne on the shore of Lake Zurich. In our irrepressible way as extroverts, we had introduced ourselves and had begun sharing and exploring our thoughts and feelings about sandplay. This was in September 1982 when Dora Kalff had invited eleven therapists from three continents to gather at her home to exchange views about sandplay and present an illustrative case. This turned out to be the birthing of the International Society for Sandplay Therapy (ISST). The following year Dora Kalff took our group to Jung's tower at Bollingen and had us sign the

guest book as the "First Annual Congress of the International Sandplay Society." The majority of members of that early group were Jungian analysts. This was a magnificent time, as we had therapists from a variety of cultures with four different native languages sharing their therapeutic experiences in the common language of sandplay images.

As a thinking type, I was at once attracted by Estelle Weinrib's strong feeling function. She had a delightful sense of humor and it was a joy to be with her in both work and play. She was talented in many ways and was rich in stories and ideas. All of her wonderful and spirited qualities, combined with her great feeling capacity, brought profound depth to her work in sandplay.

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Estelle was able to empathize with each sandplayer. Her capacity to resonate with each one put her immediately into the process. She let the sandplayer's psyche guide the two of them. I remember the story she told about the woman who said she felt like turning the sandtray upside down and dumping everything on the floor. Without hesitation, Estelle said, "Well, maybe that is just what you need to do." When we remember the attitudes and practices in psychology at the time, what Estelle did so naturally, as in this example, would seem then as outrageous.

Estelle was continually surprised that the analysts in the larger Jungian community did not seem to "get" sandplay. After all, sandplay embraced and gave form to the very dimensions of the psyche Jungian analysts talked about and wrote about. I shared her concern about their lack of enthusiasm for sandplay. We had endless conversations about this. We thought it must be the non-interpretive aspect of sandplay that was one of the stumbling blocks since interpretation is one of the hallmarks of analysis. The value of not making

interpretations during the process was readily apparent to Estelle. She realized that without the limitations of interpretation, sandplay allows the psyche to move deeper more quickly. I am pleased to see in recent years that sandplay is being integrated into the curriculum at some of the Jung Institutes.

As a teacher, Estelle was marvelous. When I taught with her, I always thought of her as the senior teacher. When we had time together, we spent many hours looking at slides of sandtrays. Because we did not always agree about everything, our discussions were rewardingly lively and penetrating.

Estelle and I were active in forming Sandplay Therapists of America (STA) with the legal help of Estelle's husband, and then her son, both attorneys. Neither Estelle nor I wanted to be president, but finally she accepted the role. Her running of business meetings was far from conventional. Following Roberts Rules of Order was just not her way. But we had fun and things did get done.

I do not believe it is com-

monly known that Estelle Weinrib and Dora Kalff had originally planned to write this book together. This project proved difficult, however, as sitting down and writing was never at the top of Dora's schedule. Estelle ended up writing the book by herself, but Dora Kalff's influence is felt throughout this book.

I am delighted that *Images of the Self* is being republished. In sandplay history, this book is immensely significant. It was one of the first books written in the field of Jungian sandplay therapy. I find Estelle's early comparison of sandplay

therapy with verbal analysis and her chapter on eight basic concepts to be extremely valuable in teaching sandplay. And her glossary is always a helpful reference.

It is a tragedy that Parkinson's disease has disabled this brilliant, vivacious woman. She had so much more to give. Estelle Weinrib was an authentic Jungian analyst. She felt deeply and thought clearly. It is now through her writing that we can continue to learn from this profound and passionate sandplay pioneer.

Katherine Bradway, Ph.D.
2003

PART I

**SANDPLAY THERAPY:
THEORY AND PRACTICE**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sandplay is a nonverbal, non-rational form of therapy that reaches a profound preverbal level of the psyche¹. In this psychotherapeutic modality, patients create three-dimensional scenes, pictures or abstract designs in a tray of specific size, using sand, water and a large number of miniature realistic figures.

Unlike the customary practice in verbal dream analysis, interpretations are not offered at the time the pictures are created. Although the patient may associate to the sand pictures as he or she would to a dream, the therapist is receptive but makes minimal comment. Interpretation is delayed until a certain degree of ego stability

has been reached. The rationale for this unusual practice and other points made here will be discussed later.

A basic postulate of sandplay therapy is that deep in the unconscious, given the proper conditions, there is an autonomous tendency for the psyche to heal itself.

In the verbal analysis of dreams, personality and life problems *progress* in the direction of consciousness. In contrast, the sandplay process encourages a creative *regression* that enables healing. In short, when both modalities are undertaken two separate but related therapeutic processes occur, and the interaction between them seems to hasten

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and enrich the endeavor.²

Sandplay enables the three-dimensional tangible expression of inchoate, unconscious contents. Sand pictures represent figures and landscapes of the inner and outer world. They materialize to mediate between these two worlds and to connect them.

Sandplay therapy provides the conditions for a womb-like incubatory period that facilitates the repair of a damaged mother image. This enables the constellation and activation of the Self, the subsequent healing of the wounded ego, and the recovery of the inner child with all that implies in terms of psychological renewal (see Chapter 5).

END NOTES

¹ See **Glossary** for definition of terms.

² At a certain point the sandplay process becomes progressive. This development will be discussed later.

CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLUTION OF SANDPLAY

Magic Circles and Fantasies

Perhaps the earliest precursors of sandplay therapists were primitive tribes, who drew protective magic circles on the earth. The nearest cultural parallel to sandplay therapy seems to be the sand painting of the Navajo religion. The Navajo people use ritual sand pictures extensively in ceremonies of healing, as well as for divination, exorcism and other purposes. Chanters, medicine men or initiated assistants make pictures by molding and painting symbolic figures out of sand on the ground.

The sand paintings are composed according to prescribed arrangements, and they are enclosed by "guardian"

boundaries marked in the sand. The figures represent mythic deities in human or animal form, as well as natural or geometric symbols. Usually, all the figures are arranged in quadrants around a center, strongly suggesting a mandala form. The exception to this is the outer boundary (circular, square or rectangular) that has an opening to allow evil a way out and good a way in.

These sand paintings can be quite simple or very elaborate. A sand painting may be as large as 20 feet in diameter and require up to forty assistants eight to ten hours to complete. When the painting is finished, the patient or seeker sits on it, while the chanter applies sand from the various figures of the painting to specified parts of the patient's

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body. This is done to identify the patient with the deities represented in the painting. Additionally, the sand itself is felt to have healing properties. It is said that the patient absorbs good from the sand, while the sand absorbs evil from him or her.

The pictures are believed to carry manna and are held sacred.

*To watch the laying
of a sandpainting may be*

*somewhat dangerous for
the uninitiated . . . There
is, however, a time when
even he must not witness
the completion of the
sandpainting preparation,
a moment of sanctification
when the painting be-
comes sacred—the in-
stant when the encircling
guardian [boundary] of the
sandpainting is started
(Reichard, 1950/1974, pp.
160-161).*

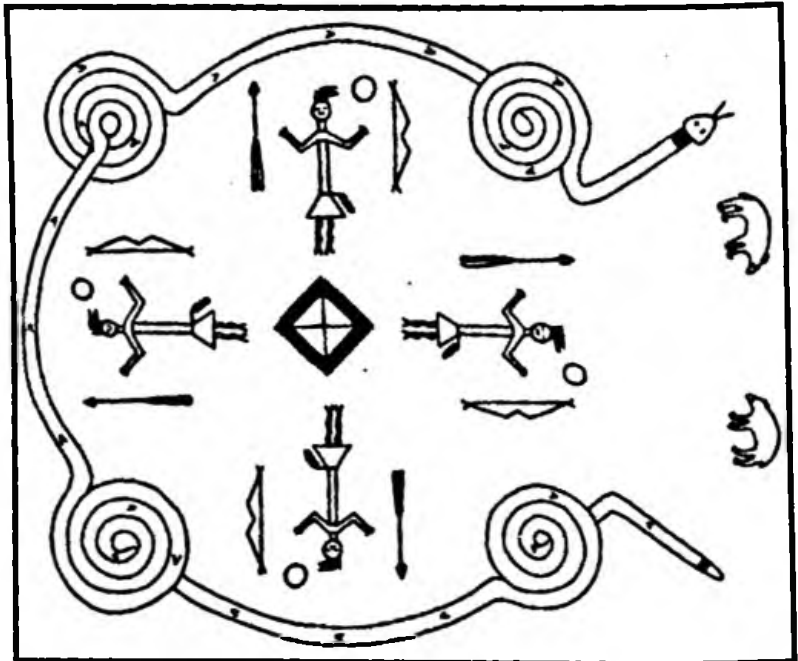


Illustration 1: Never-ending snake sandpainting. A Navaho healing rite.

Editor's Note: REICHARD, Gladys A., *NAVAHO RELIGION*. c1950 Bollingen, 1974 Princeton University Press, 1978 Renewed. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

Sand paintings represent blessings only. They attract good and repel evil. They are believed to be particularly efficacious in the treatment of trauma, when the patient has been shocked or frightened into unconsciousness. The sand paintings also "...correct symptoms due to the contemplation of supernatural things too strong for the patient" (Reichard, 1950/1974, p. 717).

The first Jungian to be involved with sandplay therapy might be said to be Jung (1963) himself, who described in his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, how in 1912 he happened upon a healing form of play.

After his break with Freud, Jung wrote that he found himself in a painfully confused inner state that yielded neither to

analysis of his dreams nor to re-examination of his life. He decided to submit himself to impulses of the unconscious, to do

whatever occurred to him. He remembered that as a small boy he had built castles and buildings of stone and mortar, made of earth and water. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he writes:

"Aha," I said to myself, "there is still life in these things. The small boy is still around, and possesses a creative life which I lack. But how can I make my way to it?" For as a grown man it seemed impossible to

me that I should be able to bridge the distance from the present back to my eleventh year. Yet if I wanted to re-establish contact with that period, I had no choice

"...as a grown man it seemed impossible to me that I should be able to bridge the distance from the present back to my eleventh year. Yet if I wanted to re-establish contact with that period, I had no choice but to return to it and take up once more that child's life with his childish games."

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but to return to it and take up once more that child's life with his childish games. This moment was a turning point in my fate, but I gave in only after endless resistances and with a sense of resignation. For it was a painfully humiliating experience to realize that there was nothing to be done except play childish games (Jung, 1963, p. 174).

Jung (1963) reports that he played regularly and seriously day after day with the earth and stones on the edge of the Lake of Zurich:

In the course of this activity my thoughts clarified, and I was able to grasp the fantasies whose presence in myself I dimly felt.

Naturally, I thought about the significance of what I was doing and asked myself, "Now, really, what are you about? You are building a small town, and doing it as if it were a rite!" I had no answer to my question, only the inner certainty that I was on the way to

discovering my own myth. For the building game was only a beginning. It released a stream of fantasies, which I later carefully wrote down. (p. 174-175)

The building game, which he continued for some time and later extended into painting and stone-cutting, released a flow of fantasies that eventually led to his appreciation of fantasy as, "...the mother of all possibilities, where, like all psychological opposites, the inner and outer worlds are joined together in living union" (Jung, 1954, *Collected Works* (hereafter cited as CW) Vol. 6, p.52).

Giving concrete form to his own fantasies and his later observation of those of his patients, led Jung to his discovery of the process of *individuation*, the *transcendent function*, and the *technique of active imagination*.

Pioneers In Sandplay Therapy

Sandplay was originated in England by Margaret Lowenfeld, who in 1939, published a paper called *The World Pictures of Children: A Method of Recording and Studying*

Them. She attributed the inspiration for the method to H. G. Wells' book *Floor Games*, published in 1911.

The method, soon called the World Technique, was used by Dr. Lowenfeld, a Freudian psychiatrist at the *Institute for Child Psychology in London, and subsequently at clinics in other countries.*

In 1954, after attending the Jung Institute for six years, Dora M. Kalff went to a psychiatric conference in Zurich where she was impressed by Lowenfeld's exhibition of her World Technique.¹ Encouraged by Jung, who was her mentor and friend, Kalff left for London to study and work with Lowenfeld and others, including Michael Fordham and D. W. Winnicott. Kalff's experience in London helped clarify the direction of her future work.

Returning to Switzerland, Kalff began her practice with children, using Jungian symbology and developing her own version of sandplay therapy. She started with the basic hypothesis postulated by Jung, that there is a fundamental drive toward wholeness

and healing in the human psyche. To allow for the healing, she decided to give the patient "a free space," to accept him or her unconditionally, to observe without making judgments and to be guided only by her own observations (Kalff, 1890/2003). Since she was the only Jungian analyst doing therapy with children in Zurich at that time, there was no one to talk to, save Jung himself. Jung gave Kalff encouragement, advice and such psychological aid and comfort as time allowed.

Kalff used a nonverbal approach, doing nothing to intrude upon the child's process. She simply observed and accepted what happened in the hour. She prepared herself for the next hour with the child by trying to assimilate what had happened in the previous one.

Kalff's approach was not unlike Jung's, who in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1963) recounts the beginning of his method of dream interpretation:

...I felt a necessity to develop a new attitude toward my patients. I resolved for the present not to bring any theoretical