



The Role of the Unconscious in Hallucination

Atashi Ghosh

(Assistant Teacher in R.S.B.Vidyayatan, Raina, Burdwan, West Bengal)

ABSTRACT: *The human unconscious is an interesting repertoire of variegated emotions, specially the libidinal, repressed, unfulfilled desires. A constant interplay of these emotions creates a seething turmoil within, which always tries to purge off into the world outside. This uncontrollable desire for fulfillment finds its way through creation of images and hearing of voices that are practically non-existent. These false creations are said to be hallucination - created out of nothing. It is a psychological disorder, medically considered a disease, in which the mind loses rationality to act in an irrational manner. The turbulent mind attempts to find respite from unconquerable unconscious forces through materialization of that which is immaterial. This article delves into the repressed unconscious leading to false creation through analysis of visions or voices seen or heard, respectively by Macbeth, Hamlet, Brutus, Maurya and Simon.*

KEYWORDS: *Human unconscious, conscience, hallucination, false creations, darkness of mind.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Life is not always what it appears to be. Many a times we come across situations and events that have no scientific explanations for themselves. At times we see what we do not see in normal, practical atmosphere. Images crop up in front of our eyes, despite the fact that their existence is subject to question. We see objects or persons in front of our eyes which though unreal, appear to be very much real and their influence on our heart and mind is too significant to judge them by reason. The human mind resorts to reason to figure out the reality behind all appearances. But the strange thing is that it is human mind again that, by virtue of some collected images or experiences, build up the appearances, which it tries to question out. We call these temporary images as hallucination.

Hallucination:

Hallucination refers to an experience or vision of some sight, a person or an object when there is no real existence of the same or anything related to the same. It also leads to hearing of voices by an individual, that emerges out of one's previous experience. It is the presentation of ideas embedded within the human unconscious. The uncanny, unknown unconscious, the seat of all repressed desires, emotions and fear gets projected through some very much desired image or figures or voices to satisfy our psyche. Hallucination can also be olfactory or tactile.

Hallucination emerges from the unconscious, which acts as the repertoire for unfulfilled desires or apprehensions. What the conscious mind perceives is regarded as reality, whereas those of the subconscious or unconscious are considered as something unsubstantial. Hallucinations occur when the mind does not completely switch back to the conscious state. (**Hallucinations and the Human Consciousness, <https://brightkite.com>**).

People who hallucinate often know what they are experiencing is caused by external factors. Therefore their perception of events is being altered, but not to the extent where they believe in a different reality but our perception is only an approximation of reality. While hallucinating, the sensory regions of the brain are overridden by the memory areas of the brain. (1) The memory areas are now in charge and call upon the sensory areas to deliver a hallucination with feeling, smell, sight, etc. (**H.B.Krishna <[http:// serendip.brynmawr.com](http://serendip.brynmawr.com)>**).

Hallucinations have long been associated with mental illness because many people become confused as to what they are seeing or experiencing. Thus, any strong feeling or experience rooted within the unconscious gets reflected through sights or sounds in the conscious which appear to be substantial. Though transitory in nature, these hallucinatory visions generally have permanent impact on the human psyche to such an extent that

they exercise control over the human behaviour and perceptions. At times, individuals also hear voices, they feel they are speaking to those voices. But in reality even those voices are unreal.

Different types of hallucination (Badii):

- i) **Visual:** In this, the individual perceives objects, patterns, people, light.
- ii) **Olfactory:** In this, one has bad or good smell on oneself or in the air.
- iii) **Auditory:** In this case, one hears repetitive sounds or voices, telling one to do things, which can be positive, neutral or negative.
- iv) **Tactile:** One has the feeling of bugs crawling on oneself or someone touching.

The hallucinatory experiences of Maurya in **Riders to the Sea**, Macbeth in **Macbeth**, Hamlet in **Hamlet**, **Brutus in Julius Caesar** and Simon in **Lord of the Flies** project the dominating influence of their unconscious that make the unreal appear as real to them. Their unconscious leads to visual and auditory experiences that are actually unreal.

The Human Unconscious:

The concept of the human unconscious was popularized by Sigmund Freud. According to the psychoanalyst, the human mind is divided into three regions – the ID (unconscious), EGO (conscious) and SUPEREGO (conscience). While ID is the source of all drives and emotions, the SUPEREGO consists of all moral restraints. The EGO maintains a balance between the SUPEREGO and the ID (**Guerin, 129**). According to Gustav Fechner and Wilhelm Wundt, the mind organizes at the unconscious level before revealing it as a cogent totality in conscious form. (wikipedia.org). the unconscious is the storehouse of all emotions, desires, socially unacceptable ideas. According to Freud conflicts or repressed emotions at the unconscious level lead to psychological turmoils. These turmoils give rise to hallucinatory experiences.

According to Carl G. Jung, the unconscious is divided into personal unconscious and collective unconscious. (**Guerin, 177**)

- **Personal unconscious** refers to reservoir of materials suppressed within the psyche of an individual.
- **Collective unconscious** consists of accumulation of inherited psychic structures and images with universal meanings, shared by people on a collective basis.

This article will focus on the role of human unconscious in creating hallucinations in individuals with special reference to the certain characters of some selected pieces – Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*, Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Hamlet in *Hamlet* and Simon in *Lord of the Flies*.

Macbeth in “Macbeth”

Macbeth sees the vision of a dagger, floating in the air, with its handle pointed towards him. He wonders if it is the same dagger that he is supposed to use to murder Duncan. It is an unsubstantial vision but appears to be very much real.

**“Is this the dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have not thee, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight, or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,**

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?”(Macbeth, Act II,1, l. 33-39)

It projects his repressed desire for assassinating the king. Greeted with royal prophecies by witches and kindled by his wife, Macbeth burns with psychological turmoil of murdering Duncan. His obsession with the thought of killing the king to acquire kingship makes him see the dagger in the air. This fictitious vision has a powerful hold over him. It drives him to turn his unconscious desire into a conscious reality.

He later gets Banquo murdered to eradicate all possibilities of contenders in his road to kingship. But guilt takes the form of prick of conscience. This deeply rooted emotion gets its vent through the unreal vision of Banquo’s ghost in the banquet held in Macbeth’s palace.

“The table’s full.”

...

**“Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake
Thy gory locks at me.” (Macbeth, II,4,47,51-52)**

The core of the unconscious erupts with the seething turmoil of guilt to take the form of a violent outburst in the deranged Macbeth. The imbalance within the unconscious seeps in through the dismantled Macbeth, who loses his balance when he repeatedly perceives the apparent reality of Banquo on the chair. He perceives as well as speaks to the apparition of Banquo, which is unsubstantial. His conscience seems to be at war with his unconscious, the root of his 'dark and deep desire'.

“Behold! Look! Lo! How say you?

Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.”(Macbeth, III,4,70-71)

His undaunted spirit makes indomitable declarations of confronting the supernatural, despite knowing about the unreality of the vision.

Hamlet in “Hamlet”

Hallucination also leads to hearing of voices by an individual. Hamlet visualises the ghost of his father, which is also seen by Horatio and two others. But the ghost communicates with none but Hamlet.

**Horatio: It beckons you to go away with it,
As if some impartment did desire
To you alone.**

Marcellus: ...

It waves you to a more removed ground.

...

Hamlet: It waves me forth again. I'll follow it. (Hamlet, I, 4,58-59, 61,68)

Hamlet's desire to go with the spirit of his father reveals his inquisition, latent in his unconscious, regarding the mystery behind the death of his father. He earlier reveals of having vision of his departed father in his imagination.

Hamlet: ...methinks I see my father—

...

Hamlet: In my mind's eye, Horatio. (Hamlet, I,2,184-185)

Only he can hear the ghost. Critics vary in their opinion as to the objective reality and fantasy regarding the ghost of the king. But it can be considered that the troubled unconscious finds a vent through the supernatural existence of the ghost of his father.

**Ghost: Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.**

Hamlet: Speak, I am bound to hear.

When the ghost speaks of revenge, it can be regarded as the external projection of his suspicion about his suspicion about the mode of death of his father. Thus his unconscious comes to play by through the voice of the ghost, that urges him to avenge his father's murder.

Ghost: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Hamlet: Murder!

**Ghost: Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
But this most foul, strange and unnatural.**

**Hamlet: Haste me to know't, that I with wings as swift
As meditation or thoughts of love
May sweep to my revenge. (Hamlet, I,5,25-31)**

Ghosts were often found to be victims of murder and injustice. The practice of revenge instigated by ghost can be traced back to Seneca. (**John Mullan: Magic, Illusion and the Supernatural, www.bl.uk**)

The ghost being seen by others, can be regarded as the suspicion about the death of the King that troubles the thought process of the nation as a whole. It may be considered that the collective unconscious (**Cuddon, 53**) comes into play when people share a common thought or feeling as to visualizing the ghost of the deceased king that has come for revenge. Thus it is not just the individual unconscious that holds its sway, but the “collective unconscious” that is shared by all individuals in all cultures which Jung regards as the repository of “racial memories” and of primordial images and patterns of experiences which he calls “**archetype**”. (**Abrams, 251**)

Brutus in “Julius Caesar”:

Brutus visualizes the ghost of the deceased Caesar. He wonders if it is real or dimness of his vision that creates the horrible image of the ghost.

Brutus: I think it is the weakness of mine eyes

That shapes this monstrous apparition. (Julius Caesar, IV, 3, 276-278)

That Brutus is skeptical about the existence of this image, reveals his inquisitiveness regarding the phenomenon rather than belief in superstition, which was popular among the masses in the contemporary world. He commands it to speak to him:

Brutus: Speak to me what thou art. (Julius Caesar, IV, 3, 281)

The ghost replies that it is his evil spirit.

Ghost: Thy evil spirit, Brutus. (Julius Caesar, IV, 3, 282)

Thus the spirit is the projection of the evil spirit of Brutus, his evil intent, latent within him, that had earlier provoked him to murder Caesar. Thus the hallucination is suggestive of the evil lurking in the inner recess of the unconscious. The prick of conscience within Brutus, that torments his soul, takes the form of the apparition of Caesar. It is thus very much in accordance with Shakespearean concept of 'character is destiny'. Hallucinations have been found to occur in people through the ages. From Elizabethan to Modern, characters are seen to become victims of their disturbed unconscious. This is evident in Maurya and Simon.

Maurya in "Riders to the Sea"

Maurya claims to have seen Michael, her son, on the grey pony, following Bartley. Her words get choked and she is unable to bless Bartley, her youngest son. Earlier we get to know that she buys new boards and ropes to give Michael a decent burial, the day he gets washed down the shore, which makes her daughters Cathleen and Nora assume Maurya's special concern for Michael.

"...the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would anyone have thought that?" (14-15)

Her deep concern for Michael and apprehensions regarding his death makes her so much engrossed that she perceives the dead Michael following Bartley. Though her perception is unreal, it appears real to her, due to her deep concern for Michael.

"Bartley came, and he riding on the red mare with the grey pony behind him...I seen Michael himself...I crying at the grey pony, and there was Michael upon it." (Riders to the Sea, 11)

This obsession makes her later unable to accept the reality of Michael's death. Having lost four sons, husband, father-in-law in the sea, she is too much concerned about his safety but she also anticipates the unconquerable sea might engulf him. This anticipation is also embedded within her unconscious that tries to get its vent through the hallucination of the false image of Michael.

Obsession is a strong desire for something. It might be considered that her deep concern for Michael emerges not only from the repeated loss of six of her family members, but also her excessive attachment to one of her sons. The oedipal fondness for Michael makes her unable to distinguish between the real and the unreal. Again it is the archetypal belief in the indomitable supernatural, that makes Maurya and her daughters, Cathleen and Nora, consider the vision of Michael as a premonition to disaster - the death of Bartley. The fear embedded in the unconscious takes the shape of an apparition.

Simon in "Lord of the Flies":

In Lord of the Flies, we see that Simon experiences hallucinatory voices from the pig on the stick, with flies buzzing around, that they had killed to make a symbol of Beelzebub. The 'Lord of The Flies', erected by them playfully, seem to take the shape of the real lord of the flies. It as if warns him, that the beast is within them.

"Run away, said the head silently, go back to others." (154)

Hallucination is a disease in which a patient hears voices and sees images, which are unreal. Some fictional experiences thus take shape from their unconscious, the seat of all unfulfilled desires, or dark intent. Simon communicated with the 'Lord of the Flies' in a **"silent voice." (161)**

The Lord of the Flies seemed to say:

"You are a silly little boy,"..."Don't you agree?" (161)

As the pig's head hung in space before him, Simon his eyes seem to have been captivated. The Lord of the Flies seem to threaten him.

"What are you doing out here all alone? Aren't you afraid of me?"

...

"There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast." (161)

...

His repressive conscience seemed to rebel against the ensuing troubled unconscious, desperately trying to find a vent into the dark world.

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!"..."You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?" (161)

The entire forest seemed to reverberate with laughter. The 'darkness visible' in the forest reflect the darkness lurking in the human heart. The Lord of the Flies seem to have his complete hold on Simon's mind.

"I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" ... "Get back to the others and we'll forget the whole thing." (162)

The figure conquered Simon to the extent of swallowing him up in the **"blackness within" (162)**. Simon lost his senses being unable to bear the anxiety within him, created by his own imagination about the dictatorship of the "Beast". He was so awe struck that he feels as if to find a living soul within the pig on the pole.

Thus the inner turmoil within the characters gets reflected through unnatural, unsubstantial figures or voices that dominate their conscious self to make them forget their conscious self at times. Just as Maurya forgets to bless Bartley and give him the loaf of bread, so also, Macbeth murders Duncan, who rests great faith on his "most worthy cousin", Macbeth. The irrational unconscious creates artificial images or sounds to engulf the rational conscience leading individuals to resort to irrationality as a whole.

II. CONCLUSION

Thus the turbulent unconscious leads to creation of unrealistic visual and auditory experiences in individuals. These experiences appear to be very much real to the conscious mind. These experiences are different facets of hallucination. Perceiving, hearing, smelling or feeling the existence of something which is non-existent reveals the picture of the disturbed unconscious. This disturbance might be due to sickness, remorse, repressive and unfulfilled desire, obsession or libido giving rise to images or sounds, smell or touch, which are unsubstantial and have no real existence. Though the individuals experiencing hallucinations are quite certain about their reality, it is just the outward projection of their inward emotions. They are enthralled in the thought of real existence of hallucinations. Whether it is inner conflict, prick of conscience, evil lurking within the core of the human mind or suppression of fears and emotions, the unconscious always has a significant role to play in production of hallucinations.

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