

The Myth of the Self Made Man realistic and function of dreams in patients with eating disorders

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Abstract

In this paper we analyze the case of a patient who comes in for consultation conducted of binge eating. We intend this as an eating disorder that shows early alterations in the psychic structure, caused by the dynamics of dependence of the patient towards the mother who adopted as a way of disinvestment affective behavior. The patient seems to be a myth, which is that of "Self Made Man". In this she finds herself. So are depicted in relation to the divestment mother. This identification with the myth has generated an emphasis on the cognitive component at the expense of the body and, consequently, has developed a hierarchization for the cognitive. In the paper we analyze a Dream and also its latent sentence. This, is not a way to realize desires but is a realistic thinking, and appears as a reality that was previously unthinkable. The jealousy which the patient felt in the dream expresses jealousy that he should hear his mother for the infidelity of the couple. In this sense we speak of jealousy of others. Regarding the boyfriend in the dream work as a double it. He also replaces the 'soul for processing organic alteration.

Key words: myth, dream, eating disorder, function of dream

Paola is 30 years old, she is a physician, and is married since four years with a professional related to her specialization. They live now in a big city. They come from a small village from the provinces of the country. Their parents also come from the same village where Paola was born. Her mother was a textile employee and at present she is a housewife. Her father is a businessman Paola was born in due time after that her mother lost a pregnancy; her mother tells that in her opinion the patient was a nice girl since she slept and ate. Paola does not remember having had accidents or illnesses in the past, and she menstruated when she was 11 years old. Her mother informed her about the menstruation "as if she were speaking about a tragedy" and, thus, she awaited her menstruation having these feelings since she was 9 years old. Her grandmother calmed her down telling her that it was something natural for women. She was the empathic auxiliary adult during her childhood.

Paola is the eldest daughter of three brothers, her other two brothers are students and depend economically from their parents. Since her mother always had worked, Paola was in charge of her brothers. This led her to put herself into her mother's place in relation to her brothers and to be as a sister to her mother.

She does not remember having a childhood during which she played neither with toys nor with a fantasy life. As from the primary school she had to be responsible of herself and not to fear anything, without options. Her parents never appraised her achievements as a student.

Her "golden times" were between the age of 14 to 24 years old. She entered into a juvenile group of the Catholic Church, which allowed her to develop an important "political trajectory", with a lot of social work. Besides she lived a relationship of sisterhood with her own sister.

At the first interview her personal look was not very feminine, she spoke firmly and with a demanding attitude. About her previous treatment she stated: "I consulted a nutritionist because of the same question, and I left him because he was distant, the boy talked to me looking to the screen". She tells that she knows which is the "core" of her conflictive situation. She consults because of big feeds, she put on 20 Kilos during a 2 years period..

She brings about as a recollection that she talked a lot with her parents and that she ended being the receptor of overwhelming confidences for her age. Her father told her that he had had sexual relations with a neighbor who was a friend of her home and that her mother told her that she has induced abortions even though she was not really convinced of carrying out them.

In some moments she had the sensation that her parents had wished a male child since her father took her repeatedly to see the football matches.

Paola reports a dream: "some friends of mine were telling me that my fiancé was deceiving me ". She woke up very anguished, crying. A short time afterwards she confirmed that in reality her fiancé of that time, an all-muscles no-brain, was dating with another girls and she terminated their relationship. At the faculty she obtained the best scores and she could attain a very good position within the residence at the hospital and there she met her husband. It is bewildering for her that him had noticed her because she was on duty during 48 hours at the hospital, she looked emaciated and she slept in a mattress full of fleas. <<*It seems as if for my husband the most important thing is my intelligence*>>.

Analysis

Her discourse reveals lack of expression of her own wishes and the tendency to leave aside her affective states and her illusory life. In the discourse her subjectivity is not represented and in its place it appears what Marty defines as operator thought.

The patient seems to have forged an own myth. The Myth, is that of the self-made man (in this case a woman) and consequently she over-adapted giving hierarchy to her own intellectual development.

In this over-adaptation an emphasis on the cognitive component was produced, with detriment to her body. She slept on a mattress with fleas, without resting, emaciated. The itching of fleas is therefore endogenous. It is frequently said about these patients who had a lack of contact with their mother that this is shown by an intense itch in their bodies. We can relate the myth with these scenes. She is the mother of herself and the mother of her brothers. It was the way she found to solve the absence of her mother since she was a baby. When this takes place she engenders herself.

At the time that the patient listened to what her father said with respect to her extra-marital relationship, it was reactivated inside herself the question of who is the mother, who was characterized by an estate of indifference and of lack of love. Her

mother considered her daughter like a friend, thus, the bonds were inverted and besides she was full of unbearable statements. She talked about abortions with who had come out of her own womb. This is unbearable at the moment but also it remains in her mind and in the long run these sentences may explode in her thought. Regarding this matter Liberman said that the mothers of the psychosomatic patients were "bomb shooters". We assume that when the patient heard this she was shocked. These scenes illustrate and put into evidence an early failure in the relationship with the mother.

As far as the above-narrated oneiric content is concerned, we observe that in patients with the myth of the Self Made Man, dreams of over-adaptation appear, hyper-realistic ones. Some of them are of a laboral content, as those that in his time were reported by Freud. In those dreams appears a reality that in wakefulness resulted impossible to be processed. In the particular dream of Paola the non-accepted reality comes back in the personification of the all-muscles no-brain (Butta fuori) who deceives her.

Besides this all-muscles no-brain (Butta fuori) has the function in the dream of a duplicate of herself who re-replaces the psychic processing of the drive by the organic disturbance. The patient at the moment of the revelation of the truth begins to eat in a unrestrained way damaging her organism in the same way as her fiancé harms his own body with physical over-training.

Eventually, there is other aspect of the patient's psychic life which cannot be expressed during wakefulness, but indeed it can be expressed in dreams, which a peculiar form of jealousy which does not represent her. This jealousy is those that the patient assumes that her mother should have felt, whom she imagines plunged in a condition of apathy and indifference towards the father's deceptions.

When this situation occurs in which a son or daughter is the witness of the infidelity of one of her parents, in front of the indifference of the other parent, this produces personal experiences such as those of Paola in which jealousy is non-inhibible because the source is exogenous. Therefore, the patient feels herself as a maternal representative and expresses the jealousy her mother should have felt, putting herself into the paradoxical place of cuckolded daughter. All this has as a consequence that Paola cannot manifest in wakefulness her own jealousy regarding her fiancé who deceives her and these feelings of jealousy can only appear when dreaming.

We found three aspects, contained in her dreams: the first one is its realistic worth, like return of a reality and not of a wish. A second aspect is that it appears a duplicate of herself represented under the form of her fiancé, the "butta fuori" and the third aspect is the interference by jealousy, which appear in this dream as grafted onto jealousy.

Even if the patient cries when she awakes, this oneiric revelation has the consequence that she leaves her fiancé soon afterwards and that simultaneously she begins to put on weight.

Following the subject of the Myth, we can see the vicissitudes of the conflict in the paternal function. Lacan speaks of replacement of the parental function instead of a symbolic substitute. He says that this replacement appears in patients who should have

to develop a psychosis (by a forclusion of the name of the father) and who hadn't because they had had a capacity to generate a work as Joyce the author of Ulysses. The replacement was writing. In the patient we can also corroborate this fact by her high development and professional performance, but besides in her there was another replacement, the replacement of the maternal function. (D. Maldavsky)

The sleeping of the patient was sleeping in tension. When she was a young girl she took care of her brothers because of fear of the maternal rebukes. As an adult when she was on duty, she slept tensioned, in a bed full of louse and in a permanent condition of alertness. This shows on one hand her over-adaptation and on the hand her more nuclear aspect derived from her lack of empathic encounter with her mother and she accompanies it with hyper-lucidity. Faced with them, it was created an endogenous tension whose deeper life experience is that of her itching for being between louses.

She is a patient talking about the excesses. In her excesses nobody can restrain her. Her sleeping constitutes a permanent alert condition. She is inclined to create a tension for herself and she does it on her body, which is transformed in Paola's maternal replacement.

During the course of the treatment she began to re-connect herself with her subjectivity by developing an apparatus to feel her own feelings; (Bion, Maldavsky) as part of a process of psychic complexitation.

Evolution of the treatment

It was performed on the basis of this theoretical orientation, with a weekly frequency of two times and sometimes were three times a week.

We report an illustrative episode: the patient comes to her psychologist's consulting room, confusing day and hour as a consequence of having felt despaired and needing help before a successful event in the working field. Her need of expression of her feelings was analyzed as well as her urgency to process her desperation condition.

In the euphoria for her success she should have a very high vital tone and she needed to be balanced. It is a chemical euphoria not- processable alone by herself and by going to the psychologist's consulting room she was looking in her therapist a symbolic substitute of her mother instead of resorting to a replacement.

Establishing a difference to this situation, we surmise that when she was a child and obtained good scores without having a receptor she was flooded by painful feelings and anger because she did not have anyone to whom making and offering her achievements. Consequently she became despaired and she could only recover studying even more and creating an intra- corporal alteration.

Conclusions

In patients in whom we encounter this Self Made Man myth (I constructed myself, with my intellectual ability, my own lucidity and here are my concrete achievements) the price they pay for it is the disconnection from her own corporal registers and her pulsative life. This is a way of processing the maternal non-investiture, creating thus a vital tension as a replacement of that vital tension which is created in the inter-

subjective exchange. A psychic helplessness is observed, understanding as such, the early alterations in their structures which explain the presence of archaic organizations in disturbances symptomatically appearing during adult life. Usually there are reported early ego alterations which constitute fixations whose efficiency is symptomatically observed in adult life.

As far as regarding to the hyper-realistic dreams present in these patients some may make reference to work but at the bottom we find these three aspects we mentioned before: the jealousy belonging to another person, the return to reality and the encounter of a duplicate.

Summary

We choose this patient given the magnitude of the conflict she presented. This seemed to us an example to study the self made man myth, the corporal alterations and the use of dreams. These realistic dreams do not express so much fantasy but rather a reality which could not be grasped during wakefulness in all its dimension, due to the painful feelings which would have been caused. The feeding disturbance is a consequence of non-thought feelings. In these patients we find an archaic structure underlying to the present one.

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