

The Myths of the Group

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Abstract

You want to show how the analytic group to organize the first expression and sharing narrative needs to develop old and new myths. The ancient myths and formalized are especially useful in the early stages of the process by encouraging the natural myth-making of the group and allow you to approach the unconscious worlds inaccessible individually, for their wide social relations and their language polysemantic. In addition, the analytic group, especially when processing faces difficult times of deprivation, tends to create new myths that have developed within the group and in which the group feel represented, as they resonate with its main elements and the narrative qualities specific a given point in the process. This production of mythical elements - narration of events, memories, dreams, styles, mythologized by the group - has the function of ensuring a deep base and continuity of identity with the group and it will return there in times of evolutionary transition complex or fear of change : the " re- mythologizing " in this sense would be as important as the work of producing the legendary and myth used by the group to defend themselves at the beginning or at times regressive and deconstruction of the process, from the anxiety of confusion and disseminate the experience of community activate it.

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Myths, dreams and the other linguistic and ideative terms that are considered by Bion as the elements of the C row of the Grid, are portrayed as elements or literary categories. These are of interest to the analyst because they are equivalent both psychologically and linguistically to elements and levels of psychic and mental activity that can correspond during the analytic session to equivalent or transformative levels and mental functionings of the analyst. Mythological, oneiric, iconic (etc.) narration in the group assumes particular value, because it favours the development of a semantic and representational container that is well anchored to the threads of the narration being wide enough to comprehend diverse and unsaturated elements, and at the same time distinct and sequential to enable and maintain constant a level of symbolic signification. The elements present in the analytic field of a group can produce anxiety for the single individual who can be helped to elaborate them through the myth. The nucleus or nuclei that are represented in the myth don't have subjectless qualities but are more general; their theatrical nature and tendency to dramatize action makes them non-saturated and therefore adaptable for new thematic development. In that way a broadened, thematic nucleus articulated at different levels of expression could be recognised and revived in a "transitional" (Winnicott), dreaming (Bion), or "phantasy" dimension that would facilitate a developmental elaboration. The amplifying and at the same time condensing features of the elements, and the narrated events of the myth together with the unrestricted reaction

of the subject, produce a sense of relief from the subjectively weighty, more painful nuclei, and encourage a more unrestrained involvement in the group. The coming about of smooth flowing representations that the group has in common, strengthens the sense of belonging and the cohesion of the group, but also facilitates individual realization through resonance processes, diffusion, affective and trans-personal communication (Neri).

In particular I would like to discuss F. Corrao's idea of thematic amplification seen as an ideative resource that helps to reconnect the verbal and semantic mechanism of the group to the representations pertaining to its foundation. This same idea is taken up by A. Correale not only employing it in the treatment of borderline cases in groups, but also in the technique and conduction of groups. The thematic amplification is "...the group conductor's way of intervening, centring not so much on rapidly giving an explanation of the facts, but rather on developing the theme to the greatest extent... any discourse has qualities that are not as unconscious as they first appear, but are hidden, or not taken into account... and it is better if they come to light, not in reference to a single person, but in reference to the theme". In this further example, we can see how a statement made by the group conductor that unveils a hidden sentiment in a communication of one of the participants, could be much better expressed by amplifying the subject that makes the communication by connecting him/her to a more general subject or experience.

Thus we can state that amplification of the theme avoids saturation and dispersion of thoughts and sentiments; and amplification of the subject frees him/her from direct communication, and utilising a wide modality and collective communication. Correale's pertinent theme on the utility of the group to contain borderline patients, in other words those particularly fragmentary patients with a tendency to impulsiveness, throws light on a specific aspect of the function of the mythical tale in the group and on thematic amplification. For instance its cohesive, stabilizing and invigorating quality, that valorises the development and the use of healthy mental functions to help face trauma, interference and intermittency of the borderline side of the personality.

I would also like to consider Bleger's idea of syncretic sociality as a significant contribution to this area of thought, where the fusional relation and indistinction with the other isn't in need of words, but on the contrary, physical contacts, like seeing, listening, "going with someone", participating, and contributing with impulses, desires, and memories to the setting and to the group's habits. Syncretic sociality contributes to creating the primitive mentality in the group and enables us to draw closer to portraying the mythological, oneiric or iconic communication from a different point of view that could utilise the model –attention towards self and the idea of the group as a self object. This point of view outlines the creative value of the mythical tale as an experience of de-personalisation and beneficial confusion of identity that precedes the possibility of individuation. The features of mythological communication and mythical thought have multiple qualities. This Congress will indeed contribute to considering it undoubtedly with richness of thought and

enthusiasm, as I have already had the privilege of foreseeing from behind the scenes of the organisation. In this paper, I have only mentioned a certain aspect of its presence in the group as an important function activating profound affects towards the experience of communication, and the oscillation between the collective and indifferentiated element, and the element of subjectiveness.

The tragic myth

I would now like to refer to a particular type of myth, the tragic Greek myth, bound to cycles and the saga of families struck by wrath and divine vendetta, through hubris, pride and arrogance. This myth was born in an historical epoch of wars among cities, family and social groups to obtain supremacy. For this reason it was necessary to create both current and retrospective representations of these conflicts, portraying the events in a temporal and historical manner to legitimise, celebrate and simplify the gravity of the elements contained therein, by the exegesis and theatricality that being handed down would have produced.

In the Greek myth the hero, persecuted by fate or divine vendetta, is identified both as the responsible artificer and the fatal victim. His heroic gestures contain both free will and submission to the laws and wishes of the gods. The tragic enormity and the possibility for cathartic theatre are to be found in the fact that these two elements are jointly present and the area of universal representation of sentiments is contained by the watershed of impersonality and subjectivity. The subjectivity becomes involved in transcendence (Duez) and this allows contact with the original phantasm (ibid), eternally restaged by the presence of the other, allowing a confrontation with the primitive element. The appearance of the primitive elements, by their depth, complexity and grandeur, stimulates in the individual and in the relationship, the most primitive of defences like scission, denial, change into the opposite or the institution of ambivalence, dualistic or iridescent, mimetic or anamorphic (ibid). Alternatively, it might stimulate more sophisticated defences, represented in the icon or in the tale – the dream and the myth (see “The Transformative Image in the Group, with Oneiric or Mythical Qualities by R. Snell).

Rife with dangers, the encounter with the most primitive conflicts and their de-individualising and depersonalising quality requires collective elaboration of the limit, the boundary, the individual threshold as well as a multi-vocal participation, as confirmed by the chorus of the tragic Greek theatre, to help us feel a sense of belonging, of the way to salvation and reinforcement, a solemnity, which provides legitimisation and a breadth of recognition considered appropriate. The limit can then be compared to the phylogenetic scenario, containing the anxiety of guilt transmission (Speziale Bagliacca). Thus, while the chorus narrates the inevitability of human destiny (many are the terrible things, but more than any other it is man who is terrible, Antigone, Sophocles), the individual or the hero might attempt to find his place by making an elaboration and a feasible contact towards knowledge, awareness and broadening the anxiety of limits. The individual faced with catastrophe or the sphinx, who knows it and could reveal it, is destroyed. But, invested with a regal and social power, the priest, who learns it on his behalf, can interrogate the Gods and

decipher the knowledge of the sphinx. So, too can a hero designated by his group, such as Oedipus, who saved Thebes from the plague by revealing the mysteries of the sphinx, thus meeting his own destiny, connected with the revelation of his crimes of incest and parricide.

There is no reversibility in the tragic myth, no exchange of points of view, or any possibility of avoiding one's destiny. Unlike the fairy tale, in which all the narrative elements are reciprocal, symmetrical and reversible, the tragic hero and mythology are one, a single subject and irreversible and thus also his destiny, which leaves no space for imagination. Imagination is contained within the drama. The responsibility is subjective and lives in the incommensurate and majestic background of the TuXe, fate, which widens the boundaries of individual contact with evil, renders it solemn and dreadful and defines with inexorable precision the field of guilt, crushing in the individual dimension and lacking in the action.

In the group, therefore, there can be representations, dreams, thoughts, feelings and experiences circulating in a semantic framework of the fairy-tale or myth type depending on the contents to be elaborated and the emotive need to amplify, restrict, clarify, fade a shared scene, an affection, a representation.

At times, it can be extremely useful to be able to succeed in transforming, in one's imagination and memory, a previously internal and confused event into an event, or chain of events, or into a character or group of characters, which has become external, defined and so strong as to be almost sculpted – like the tragic hero. In the group we may find such needs which correlate better and more completely with icon-like or personified portraits and are more adapted in that particular form to become enduring, synthesizing and significant interiorisations, equipped with a cohesive value. This is because the dramatisation of the figures sculpted in the group memory, through the construction and birth of the icons, has been shared and solemnified. If it is to be forgotten and repressed, an event must first have been rendered affective and interiorised and have been part of the linguistic, narrative and iconic elements of a group. Its unconscious quality must have become accessible for the perception and the affection linked to it as well as for its representation.

The mythical level seems to assist those elements not yet recognised by the general level of the individual or group identity as “belonging”, to enter into the memory. Subsequently, I will also attempt to investigate the reason why and the way this seems to happen and the function it has in certain cases. I will also take some examples from what I would define as the mythical way of dealing with representations of self, found in both individual and group analysis, in patients with anorexic problems. We will see, in particular, the analytic myth or the group myth dealing with the fear of suffering or of becoming mad and therefore provoking the need to organise a history of the self which can be told or mythologized and even felt as a mythical rite stemming from the group myth.

But first I would like to give another example of mythical thought.

The Myth of Eden

The possibility, as studied by anthropology, of imagining the myth as a myth of origins and as a form of eternal descent into the mother figure in order to repeat regenerating rebirth, is an idea indirectly present or deductible in diverse psychoanalytical orientations and models. Bion, in particular, who valorised study of the myth and its resources for the psychoanalyst, has emphasized the enormous value of the contact of knowledge with the affective and regressed object and with the real object O, the ultimate truth.

I believe that the affect surrounding an event or a relationship, or even the end of a relationship, or the affect retaining a trace of the trauma, which wounded it, or of what it has become after the traumatising wound, is a major affect on the analytic scene, whether it is present or absent. It is not a vehicle for reaching a scene or an object, perhaps wounded, cancelled or which never existed. The affect is the text and the leading actor of the search, given certain conditions. At times affect is the only thing we have, while it seems – and the continuation of the analysis shows that it is not in fact true – that the whole psychic apparatus is involved in a kind of collapse. But if this affect, the witness and heir to the trauma, is visualised, traced, contained (Speziale Bagliacca) and helped to express itself and to evolve, then what has also been buried in the depths can rise again and reorganise itself. This leads us to the idea of the historical background of the trauma: I think that the trauma is both historic and definitive. The work of reclaiming its territory and the method used is another thing (Giannelli).

The myth and the dream are not only the main road to the unconscious, but also to that lost unconscious or that which never existed. It is as if the experience and the re-enacting of the descent undertaken in the myth by the individual and his species to their primordial origins recreates the primeval conditions for a sense and a pathway to new birth or regeneration. In the beginning, in fact, the world was not separated, violated, differentiated and the conventions of before and after, of low and high, of who makes the action and the action itself, of the inside and the outside, which language and social organisation subsequently agreed on in order to give shared and communicable meanings to events, were neither present nor significant. Within the mother and her system, as in Eden, the abyss and the power of the creation of life and its development, emanate quietude and order requiring no explanations. The precocious or unjustified breakdown of that system will have been equally as powerful and deadly.

When fragments of these memories or lost identity appear in a session, we have a web to weave (tessere) or a piece of mosaic (tessere) to put together.

It seems that just as cycles and repetition form part of the illness, they can also form part of the sedation of terror and of the rehabilitation of development (Soavi: 'Fusionalità, L'Eterno Ritorno'). Occasionally in the group, especially during the stage of healing or let us say maturity, from time to time memories of a mythical era and of that which was once its denomination of objects, events, conditions, characters, etc. re-emerge. Their strength is diminished. Language, based on new needs which have been maturing in the meantime no longer has either that sense or value or almost mystical aura: the reverse prospect, however, seems to help reinforce

the confrontation between different historical eras and to indicate like road markers the route followed, by re-mythologizing the present. Who among us has not desired to travel in primordial places? Who among us has not intuited the tranquillising power of the earth's magnetism and of unexplored natural unity, like a primary force which the measure and adaptation of the human community has not yet modified? Who has not dreamed of participating in the great celebration of creative nature, as in a personal resource of vigour and of nourishment? I believe everyone who has crossed the equator, has felt a strong emotion on catching sight of the constellation of Ursa Major above, if before we saw the Southern Cross in the night sky, or vice versa. The undivided and circular form of primeval nature contained a division, which only the time-space factor of social debate has rendered discontinuous.

The myth as an alternative mental skin

Once the majority of patients suffering from mental anorexia or even bulimia succeed in facing development in the group, or better still, in an individual way, sooner or later never fail to bring to analysis one or more dreams containing mythical elements. The myth may be chosen among those linked to classical antiquity in the Indo-Mediterranean area or those belonging to the Christian religion, in particular that of mystical nuptials and the mystery of consubstantiation or of crucifixion. It may also be chosen among the oriental religious mythologies. This depends on the formative cultural background. Or simply, the images of the dream may have a claim, an emblematic, mysterious, quality, which at first sight appears enigmatic.

What is surprising in these tales is the naturalness with which a text so rich in evocative characters is presented, as if it were part of the ordinary, every day surroundings and of the common expressive language. Similar to the way a confusing and unexpected element can appear in a surrealist painting, treated as normal.

In other circumstances, on the contrary, the religious and mythical element may remain veiled in respect to the narrative whole and the images presented, as if it was only reverberated there. The correlated, unconscious contents, on the other hand, which emerge in the meantime like scattered shreds, give sense to the entire narrative context and to its mythical and mystical qualities.

The relation we may find on the level of the contents, between the "oral" scene of an analysis and the mysterious scene of a mythical or mystical environment does not interest us here and should remain in the background with its manifestations and queries. I believe, instead, that greater interest lies in what might be the reason behind the recourse, I would say certain, to this representation (Christ crucified; Christ betrayed at the last supper), as if we were faced with a foreseen and compulsory ritual. And that is the reason why its suggestive character is not easily recognised and can be mistaken for the ordinary one in daily use.

In the group of anorexic patients I had thought that it involved the emergence of a ritual as a result of being in group and the need to proceed in developmental stages in the collective construction of the identifying features and foundation of the group Self. Unless, however, we consider that an analyst's individual patients think of themselves as members of one of his internal groups (De Toffoli), an idea which I

consider extremely valid and which could help us build new models of the mind's functioning and the link between minds, we must perhaps also theorise that the identical repetition of a common phenomenology derives from a characteristic containing a high grade of fusional sensitivity of the symbiotic and epidemic type, which belongs to the life "style" or to fashion or to the automatism of a standardisation (Corrao) and not to the Bionian "fact" of the eating disorder.

My own theory is that these patients, like all those who present borderline and/or psychotic personality problems are obliged to use psychic or proto-psychic, imitative, substitutive fragments, possibly similar to those which they never had, or were taken away from them, or traumatised. Mythical and religious insistence serves the purpose of restoring, before finding and becoming acquainted with those lost fragments of the origin which rendered impossible both the subsequent development of the psychic apparatus and its integrity, and the symbolic activity and sublimation processes, that would have allowed it to be expressed and made productive.

It is not of course certain that by regenerating the original wounds and violence suffered, one can correct the errors of this process and eventually re-establish the data and their functioning, or even re-start a new store of other data which had never been input, --to continue using information technology metaphor.

It seems that the myth and the mythical dream have two parallel options in common, which could help the elaboration process, especially for those patients who have a fragile, empty, inconsistent or wounded sense of self. These options would also assist those stages in the life of the small group, in which the individuation processes of the individual remain in the background enabling to bring forward a state of "syncretic sociality", to quote Bleger. These two elements constitute, on the one hand, proximity of the myth to the elements of the unconscious. The latter would furnish a sense of belonging and of communication for the psychotic part of the personality, for which there is no difference between inside and outside, between conscious and unconscious and between reality and symbol. On the other hand, the collective composition and the historic form of the semantic container of the myth would offer a sense of confluence and of reinforcement and also of time-space scansion, even if elementary. Thus, this type of adhesive or imitative borrowing of the myth or the mythical dream would have the enormous value of producing a containing skin and at the same time an intermediate area between self and non self, or between self and the other considered as non self, in which to take familiarity with unknown elements.

Myth of the Group and ritual of the procedural elements of the group setting.

On learning of the forthcoming entry of a new member into the group, for the first time a man, the anorexic or rather the ex-anorexic women, who had already been working in the group for five years and had overcome various stages of clinical recovery and not only clinical recovery, reacted by bringing a particular type of dream, or rather a triad of dreams to the session.

In the first session two patients recount their dreams, which both appear to be rather personal. They are dreams related to their identity problem, their concern at hosting an extraneous object: the women are afraid of being seen from the "outside" by a

stranger who would certainly increase the onus of requests and would recommence confrontation with the danger of the disorder, causing the pain of the past to resurface.

The first dream recounted:

A) Giovanna, also a doctor in real life, arrived at the hospital without her medical card and had to return home, look for it and go back to the hospital.

The second dream recounted:

A1) Clelia went to the gynaecologist, who found a “sarchiapone”-tumour in her uterus. Alarm was generated. The medication was applied but there was no definite conclusion and the dream remained full of suspense.

Perception of the generative power of the analyst, the person who has conceived and given the group a new son and brother, is alleviated by the possibility that she is part of the group, that she is the common group as well as its gynaecologist. This conviction will help the group to make a choice: that of enabling one of the two dreamers in the first session, who were discussing a new identity and its dangers, to be selected to continue the ritual series of oneiric representations during the forthcoming sessions. The choice would fall on the one, who includes in her dream the mythical aspect, relating therefore to the group myth. The group myth seems in particular that it relates to the capability of transforming the hunger of anorexia and its genitalic equivalent expressed in terms of sexual and generative appetite, into a totemic meal, generating a new society and new laws capable of regulating it.

From that first session the entire group had secretly agreed to make room for Clelia’s dreams. No-one will dream for three sessions but her. She brings, in sequence, a triptych of dreams whose meaning derives one from the other and from their succession. The rest of the group, united, worked on them in an orderly fashion.

The ritual had begun. The invitation to participate had been given by the sarchiapone, which the group felt was linked to the theatre and to the unknown. Clelia is the daughter of a famous theatre-cabaret actor. The sarchiapone formed part of the gags of his era and not of the current era of the patient, who was also acting. It was a portrayal not only related to the generational past omitting the present but, owing to its mysterious nature, was also inexistent. The sarchiapone arose in a casual and surreal conversation between two strangers who met by chance on a train. They began a conversation, which gradually drew them into competing to show their expertise in order not to admit they knew nothing about that strange and mysterious creature, born only from its name, by chance or by jest, by desire or by provocation. They gradually attributed to it a quantity of characteristics, attributes and definitions of the most fantastic and contradictory type.

The dream in the second session narrates that:

B1) Clelia went to the gynaecologist and he found a kalajhnikoff in her uterus. He told her it was dangerous and tried to extract it.

The dream in the third session narrates that:

C1) Clelia is definitively cured. She is pregnant and will give birth.

If we look at the contents of these three dreams we notice that they all start from the undefined (sarchiapone-tumour) to the better defined (Kalajhnikoff) to the identified

object (wound, cure, birth). The encompassing style of the dreamer, or rather of the entire group, adopted in defence against the new participant, trying first to kill him and, afterwards, to give birth to him, does not seem destined to dissolve the wait but to assure it an affectionate climate as long as the threats were perceived.

If we look at this theme of aggressive sentiments and their gradual attenuation and solution, we also find here that the sequences contain a kind of progression, a marked evolution from the mortal violence of the tumour attacking inside and the gunfire introducing, from inside, a possibility of attack against the outside, up to the medication of the internal wound which had caused all those violent elements and disorders.

An important aspect of this dream is to be found in the vehemence with which it communicates new information on the idea of the boundary between internal and external space, between the private and social experience. The dream also provides more precise information on the conception of the need to localise the homicidal violence in that profoundly internal confine, that of the female uterus. Once it is visited in its depth, it becomes ready to strike, communicating with the outside because it is recognized as having a quality, a depth and a place, that of coupling and birth.

In this progressive chain of links represented by the oneiric sequences, I see the presence of a recurring and progressive ritual element re-evoking a procedural sentiment of the elements of cure and of the group cadences, its setting, its rules and its cycles. The triad of dreams is ordered like a ritual and mythical sign of the setting and its procedural elements. A rite, which re-evokes the times and the rhythms of the events of a community has enormous value, related to reassurance, continuity and knowledge. It seems we are dealing with a developmental and identity stage. The painful effort of welcoming and recognizing the prospect of a new and unknown element (the new group member) creates a need for the rite and the creation of a myth-oriented group. The new arrival will bring out a new and till then unknown group identity. New configurations might emerge, seen in a new and unexpected mirroring. The past might re-emerge while it had been believed that this had been superseded or immersed in the memory of times past. The expectation, linked to the new arrival, of imminent experiences of vacuums (or also the fear of too full spaces), of new and further regressions and conflicts, seems to suggest recourse to the group myth as to a recurring and ritual element having the function of reassuring, refurnishing elements of common identity, reinforcing the sense of self and reactivating the production of cohesive substances based on the elements of habit and fellowship, which can strengthen individuals inspite of their personal fragility.

The mythical reaction seems like the reaction of the endometrium, which organises and stretches itself to cooperate with a new event and element. This can occur only within a cyclical chain – that of the fertility and reproduction cycle.

The group also establishes or had already established its own cyclical procedure in which it recognised itself and was thus preparing to place there the event which

would revolutionise its future, and the extent of its contact with the repetition of the past (Neri, 'Group' the entry of new members and the return of the dead).

Some months later, Clelia will make a definitive cut with her past, which had contained repeated suicide attempts. And she will have a revitalising and regenerating pregnancy. Her child will be given her much loved grandmother's name, while her own mother had only vented her hate on her, hitting her: a love regained, through the generational myths and cycles and the myth of the analytic group.

The modern myth

The myth contains the fabulous narration of the origins (see Zanasi, Menghi, Corrente and Lombardozzi) or the epos of the deed and tales of divine and heroic beings and their relation with human society and nature. The myth is also in the national and family saga. The religious myth, on the other hand, hands down mystical elements and practices, whose meanings, very rarely transposed into lay form, stay fixed in time like icons enclosing divine command and prohibition, human morals and the boundary with the ineffable.

In all these sources of mythical literature we find rich sources of inspiration, expression and representation to which the group's unconscious and preconscious phantasy can be traced and be stimulated to conceive a search for its own original experiences and the connection with its current ones.

And it is thus also in dreams and in their semantic sources amplified by contact with the unconscious. The circular time of oneiric communication as of mythological transmission (Fachinelli) plunges us into the chaos of a pre-logical life – at least in the sense of Aristotelian logic based on the principle of cause and effect - in which the causes and effects are seen and categorised as belonging to functions, each different from the other and placed in time sequences as if they were part of a linear succession.

We have the experience of this circular time of dreams, even when we are awake, as Bion points out when he talks of the Alpha function. However, it is probably the need for the vigil and for reality to be ordered which helps us to keep these two states separate or to create an organisational relationship between the figure and the background, which gives us a working rhythm suitable for maintaining mental order and conscience. I believe that, in a similar sense, we also have the experience of circular time in the myth.

As rational citizens of the technological Western world, we know and produce our modern myths in a new and different dimension compared to the ancient ones. The ancient myth, in fact, corresponded to the need to be in contact with a grandiose element, allowing contact with the origins, with dreams, with eternal renewal of the descent into the body of the origins, of the mother, without being destructively overwhelmed by the call of regression, but able to conserve its creative and regenerating value. This probably helped the early civilisations in the task of affirming the possibility of developing progress and in dealing with the enormous difficulties which this involved. The modern myth, on the contrary, seems connected with the need to restore a human sense and proportion or historic solidity, sphere of

competence and capability to a society with great potential but also flattened and threatened by its own progress. There is the risk therefore of feeling separated from primary needs, from the recognition of biological life, as well as a lack of capability to mediate and harmonise them. Filographic and literary myths which stage alien and violent objects, often monstrous or very primitive and chaotic, endowed with supernatural powers, good or bad, seem to provide an imitation of extreme experiences stimulating the need for reorganizing mediation or for communicational access to allow sharing. The minimalist myth itself, annihilating representation, can be considered as pointing to the same need for a lacking equipment.

The melancholy of the modern myth, which stages the infinite treasure of new capabilities, the fear of change and loss and human shyness which should surmount the obstacle of pride, is perhaps asking that nostalgia for the past and the fear of being rootless, because of a terrifying change, be transformed into a rebirth of identity – yet again, into a regenerating dream.

We dream as individuals and as peoples. We dream in group and when we are alone. The group is no longer tribal, close and corresponsive and undisrupted by the individual component of the community. The natural and rational cultures are not harmonious and continuous. The group then presents itself as whole, total and distant, oppressive and levelling by its global extension, or even too complex and detailed, binding, exacting, or tyrannical and greedy. The search for new words and languages continues and new (artificial) integrations, not only linguistic ones but also cultural, ethnic, family ones, etc. are testimony to this. It appears there might be the idea of an unelaborated and impossible to elaborate mourning, like unspeakable or never-known thoughts, for which it is ever necessary to keep on creating new words, produce new, certain meanings, create new links ensuring the possibility of entering into new worlds, to be felt as approvable and approving and in which the imponderable element can be controlled.

The group with an analytical goal finds within itself these new needs or myths, produced by the general group, in which the fragile or more sensitive individual is lost and asks that understanding and subjectiveness be restored to him/her.

Freud had talked about those dreams produced by patients, not to communicate elements to elaborate during analysis, but to please the analyst or confuse him. Bion subsequently placed the element of truth at the centre of a theoretical construction showing the work of the mind and its functions during analysis sessions to be a particularly complex procedure, tending towards access to transformation into O, the ultimate truth. Prefabricated dreams, not produced by the alpha function, were then recognized as false and incapable of producing new alpha elements or of enriching the alpha screen.

In the light of more modern experiences in the method of treating dreams and their narration during sessions, to which many authors have contributed- many of whom are in fact here today - the picture changes. We are no longer talking about dreaming with one function or another, or of an organ, which produces the dream. Now these aspects contain something very different: such as the pleasure of dreaming in order to

feel alive and have oneness of mind (Fossaghe, Lichtenberg), the opportunity to have an insight; the stimulation for an experience of shared narration, of modulation of the register and syntony, as well as contact with other minds, which dream and listen to dreams; dreaming to increase the truth of sentiments experienced, demonstrated during wakefulness; desiring to link oneself to the oneiric world and to that of the feelings of individuals comprising a group to which to belong, family (Nicolò) or an institutional and work group (Lawrence; Bernabei); the search for new horizons and relationships to harmonise the experience of the past and of tradition, thus providing hope for change and rebirth.

Dreams and myths appear to intertwine in the search for subjective intimacies and the relationship, not so much to recreate the grandiosity of the myth but rather because the grandiosity of the myth and the emblematic power of the icon, which endures in time, can contribute to reassure us of the validity and the legitimacy of small things, of the continuity and real vitality of the new myths, which the golden heroic era of the ancient myth, incorporated in the agonising and threatening divinity of technological power, has created.

It would seem that we are searching for a new function, that which in the Freudian conception is indicated as a function of the preconscious, that is, within a group, of a function capable of mediating and transmitting unconscious appeals, which the collective element would render blind and dependent on the ideal of the boss-father (Psych: Group Psychology and the Analysis of Ego), through a passive identification, undistinguishing and omnipotent; as well as through the conscious and social ones, desirous of re-establishing law and moral order, in which renunciation and postponement of satisfaction and of indistinctness, could compensate by producing the advantages of secondary organisation, pardon for the violence suffered and the stability of developing progress. This function of the preconscious, or, in the framework of Bion's thought, the Gamma function (Corrao) , equivalent to an organiser of the group mind corresponding to the activity of the Alpha function of the individual mind. This function, the lack of which the fundamentalisms and the imperialistic greed of those groups, which in our times are fighting for ethnic, religious and economic supremacy, seem to denounce more explicitly (Kaes) and have an urgency to reformulate, seems now to have to measure itself with the new needs of the new groups. In order to flee the experience of annihilation of the individual in the group and the destruction of the groups among themselves, their new functioning attempts to generate a new, intermediate function, developed by the experience, even ferocious, of the rigidity of radicalisms and by the terror of destructive power produced by technological arrogance and the greed to possess resources.

The new competitive environment of the planetary group and its division into two halves, one extremely well supplied and sure of itself, the other extremely poor and vulnerable or rather one very developed and the second exceptionally primitive, is continually and repeatedly presented to us, at close quarters and flattened down by mass communication and by its pervasive and intrusive artificial quality. We are instead dealing with a system, which conceals within it other subgroup systems, real

and imaginary, in which the division of resources, appanages, spheres of competence and regenerating capacities is inverted. Only a new intermediate function, created by a diverse configuration of the conflict between radicalisms could re-establish a functioning capable of transforming the needs produced by the extremism of interests and their representations.

Can the myths and dreams help us perhaps to generate in our group these possible new directions? It seems that only poets know how to restore to them the magnificent power, which they had in primordial eras and in the mysteries of ancient civilisations. It is as if we narrators are in a laboratory to scrutinise, or a textile factory to weave, or behind the barricades to medicate: but are we capable of dreaming behind and near our patients? Together with our groups?

Often perhaps, sometimes perhaps, always perhaps, never perhaps.

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