

## Who dreams in the group?

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### **Abstract**

The author proposes to investigate the group dimension of the dream. Shows the clinical material of a mixed group, closed, comprising six participants engaged in this approach for reasons of training or treatment, which meets once a week for two years. According to the 'author's interpretation of dreams is the royal road to the unconscious group, in which the work of interpretation rather to focus of metaphors and metaphorical narratives, but it is interesting to wonder if it is possible to understand the associations that arise and cross during a group session as if it were a dream. E 'in relation to this question, which concerns both the quality of the group process is that of listening analyst.

**Key-words:** dreaming, collective, group, listening of analyst

My purpose is to explore one or two ideas concerning the status of the dream in the group with the help of several theoretical and literary references and of clinical material from my own practice. Even if oniric activity is a psychical activity which is fundamentally individual since it requires sleep and thus the suspension of all motricity and communication with the surroundings, its groupal dimension should be questioned and we can only look forward to the fact that this meeting will allow us to do so. Starting with literature, I will mention R. Silverberg who, in the Majipoor Trilogy, describes the history of a giant planet where the dreams collective functions are pregnant, together as way of communication and as tool of power: among the governing instances of that world, the dream-makers play a crucial role. The individual and collective dimensions of the dream merge into one another without letting the dreamer unknit the parts. Here Silverberg exposes the collective dimension of the dream in horizontality and synchronism.

On the other hand, a J.L. Borges account, *Les Ruines Circulaires*, shows a dreamer whose oniric creation comes to life, but is in fact the character of someone else's dream. The dream's collective dimension subscribes itself in the transgenerational, the verticality, the diachronism.

It was said that the analysis session could be considered as analogous to a dream; according to J. Laplanche, quoted by R. Roussillon, it is even composed of a formation of the unconscious as it is true for the dream. As for D. Anzieu, he goes even further by applying to the group a formula on which I will apply my clinical illustration: In the point of view of psychical dynamic, the group is a dream.

Among the questions brought forth by the articulation of the dream and the group, the first one concerns perhaps the function and the sense of the dreams brought to a group by its participants: their autorepresentative and synthetic character was

thoroughly underlined by J.B. Pontalis, who is actually doubtful of their analysability and gives them rather a function of contention.

According to me, the interpretation of dreams is not the royal path toward the unconscious of the group, in which the interpreting activity is rather based on metaphors and metaphoric accounts, but it seems interesting to me to ponder whether it is possible to hear the associations which emerge and intersect during a group session as if it was a dream. I will present my clinical material starting from the particular question, which touches upon the quality of the groupal process as well as the quality of the analyst's hearing.

It is a mixed and close group formed by six participants engaged in with formation or treatment motivations. This group meets once a week during a period of two years. The sessions I will present take place after 11/2 years, in the stable period of the group, before the explicit emergence of problems linked with the end. In such a context, I could, during the session, just listen with a floating attention in a similar way to what I can experiment in individual analytical treatments, without the need to be very attentive to my framing, containing and inciting function, while feeling a kind of anxiety by facing the recent appearance of turning absenteeism in a group hitherto faithful. The first session I am writing about took place in a emotionally calm and not very interactive atmosphere; everybody brought up, in a apparently disconnected way, anecdotes and images on which other could associate. A large part of the session had been erased from my memory when I wanted to transcribe it and I only remembered three images: the evocation of the TV show Impossible Mission which caused one of the group to be aware of the impossibility to please his parents; somebody else talked about his mother who, without even complaining, always took the first piece of bread of the loaf the dry one letting the fresh ones for the rest of the family; a third one talked about the recently-born sextuplets in France and about the enormous work their parents have to face now. In the middle of all this associations, somebody eventually connected this last situation to the one of the group composed also by six people which let me realise that all the different elements brought during the session concerned my maternal position in the group, which they lived at the same time as powerful and weak. The next session started with violent attacks against a missing participant. Relying upon the first meetings material, I could interpretate how important attendance was for the group and how unhappy they were to see my weakness to assume this contention role. Following this intervention, some participants talked emotionally of child memories linked to neglect, abuse or abandon by incapable or mean parents. The support and compassion of the others allowed the expression of some violent contents in a relatively secure atmosphere. At the end of this meeting, I could bring up the story of Tom Thumb, which appeared to me to be the best way to synthesise the groups movements by binding together the ideas of insufficient parental work, abandon, fellowship among brothers, grandiose amend. After this session, the question of the end of the group came up naturally and the absenteeism decreased noticeably.

To sum up this clinical illustration, I considered - a little artificially- the first quoted meeting like a dream of the group given up to our desire to understand what happened through acting out (missing people) around the question of the end, the abandon, the omnipotence. The associations of the group gleaned from this material have allowed a certain analysis and then the gathering in the form of a metaphorical account the tale of Tom Thumb emerging spontaneously in my conscience during the following session.

To conclude, I will come back to my title, letting the question hang: if there is a dream in the group, a dream of the group, whos the dreamer? Do the participants stage the analysts dream while the analyst himself is the concretisation of the groups dream in a circulatory without end? I let the final word to Borges: With relief, with humiliation, with terror, he understood that he too was an appearance, that someone else was dreaming him up.

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