

## **Rêverie and amplification, gateways to the unconscious**

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### **Abstract**

Many similarities can be observed between Jung's theory and that of Bion, as their ideas converge on several central themes of their theoretical-clinical thinking: archetype and pre-conception, psychoid and protomental, anima and alpha function, alchemical recipients and container, synchronicity and constant conjunction, amplification and rêverie (Manica, 2014). In this paper, we wanted to deepen our understanding of the last pair of concepts and demonstrate that there is a substantial affinity between the two.

Amplification and rêverie can be considered gateways to the unconscious, rather than mere techniques: these are modes of immersion and creation of that space of analysis that Ogden defines as the << intersubjective analytic third >>. The analytic third stands in dialectical tension with analyst and analysand, and both are deeply involved in a relationship in which the affinities tend to become more evident, moving forward to realise the Self, according to Jung, or the transformation in O, according to Bion.

In Bion's transformation in O, the rêverie plays a central role, as it allows the beta elements originating from O to be converted into K, that is, into knowledge of O. Bion thus identifies, in the rêverie, the necessary condition for accessing the unconscious, moving forward the transformation in O. According to Jung, the symbols that emerge from the amplification process can be amplified and connected in the process towards individuation, which tends to reach the psychological phenomenology of the Self.

Our theoretical considerations will be supported by clinical material taken from an individual analysis and group analysis case studies.

**Keywords:** amplification, alpha function, gamma function, rêverie, Self, transcendent function, O, archetype

### **Introduction**

With the expression "rêverie", Bion refers to the mother's ability of receiving the emotional and sensory impressions of the newborn, conveyed on her by projective identification, and to process them in a form that the newborn psyche can then reintroject and assimilate. Rêverie, according to Bion, is applicable to all kinds of matters, but only those soaked with love and hate are worthy of analytical attention. Rêverie, in this sense, is characterised by an open state of mind from the mother side so that she can receive the projective identifications of the child, regardless of whether they are perceived as good or bad by the child, who transforms them into alpha elements.

According to Dorella (2011), the reverie concept encompasses three different levels: evolutionary, therapeutic, and anthropological.

Considering the evolutionary one, through rêverie, the mother can empathise with the baby, embracing the projective identifications caused by the child intolerance and frustration (beta elements), transforming them into alpha elements and then returning them to the alpha function of the child.

On the therapeutic level, rêverie works as a clinical tool and, thanks to this, the therapist dreams the patient's undreamt dreams. Ogden (1997) defines rêverie as an emotional compass that orientates the analytic investigation after drifting away and allows, in parallel with patient's states of rêverie, the creation of the "intersubjective analytic third" unconscious intersubjective construction. Similarly, in the Jungian theory, amplification can light up the unconscious darkness.

Moving on the ontological level, the state of rêverie constitutes the necessary framework, within the larger therapeutic setting, to embrace therapist and patient along the path which, according to Bion, leads to the transformation in O; the same path that Jung identifies in the process of individuation, which aims towards the conversation with unconscious material and the union of opposites.

Elaborating his theories, Jung, in contrast with Freud, avoided relating dream and fantasy interpretations to instinctual elements. He related them with symbols of mythology, fairy tales, comparative history of religions to understand the meaning through which they operated.

This method, defined as amplification, produced extremely interesting results, as this new perspective on dreams and fantasy allowed the reconciliation between conscious personality and archaic tendencies which, otherwise, would have been incompatible with consciousness (Jung, 1930).

Jung found the concept of amplification in his studies on alchemy, which gave an historical base to his theory and analytical discoveries. He noticed that alchemists' work, even if this was destined to fail, guided to psychic projections leading to consciousness of unconscious content that offered, through the symbols created during the process, precious elements, useful to support the interpretation of the emerging material from the analytic setting. The alchemy method was based, in psychological terms, on amplification, which was the only useful way to deal with an obscure experience, of which the vague traces had to be dilated and expanded from a psychological context to become understandable.

Jung resorted to amplification in his dreams' interpretation, considering the dream not a sufficient trace to be understood. It had to be expanded with associative material, to make possible a progressive contact with images of both the personal and the collective unconscious. Through amplification, the individual dream motifs are enriched with a similar material of images and symbols from other sources, such as myths and legends. This allows deciphering the dream in all its facets, and detecting, through the connection of individual elements, the meaning of the entire chain of dream motifs with absolute clarity (Jacobi, 1940).

In an interview conducted by the psychoanalyst L. Veszy Wagner (1982) to M.L. von Franz, the latter stated that, among sixty thousand dreams she analysed, it was not possible to find two identical ones, even if similarities appeared. The Jungian concept of archetype is based on these similarities, recognized as recurring basic structures not related to personal experience, but connected to psychic structures on a collective level. According to Von Franz, one of the features of these structures, was that they will remain unaltered even in mentally disturbed people. For her, amplifying meant expanding a theme by << collecting numerous parallel versions >>. For example, if in a fairy tale (or in a dream, Ed.) a white dove cast an evil spell, we might think that the dove represents a witch or a warlock, but in the Christian tradition it represents the Holy Spirit and in fairy tales a woman who loves. Therefore, we must ask ourselves why something that usually appears as a positive symbol, in this story it is seen as negative (Von Franz, 1969).

Through the amplification process Jung abandoned himself to the solicitations of the unconscious material, creating the common ground between patient and analyst, in which the emerging symbols can be expanded and connected to each other, along the path of individuation to reach the symbol of the Self. In the same way, Bion identified the rêverie state as the necessary condition to have access to the unconscious, moving towards transformation into O.

Considering what has been said about the processes of realisation of the Self and transformation into O, it seems that the focus is exclusive on the patient's individual path, although this can be easily recognised within group analysis as well. The therapeutic group work, not considered as the sum of individual members, but as a Whole (Corrao, 1985), would facilitate the contact with primitive and still unknown traces of collective psyche, returning, through “trans-individual” mental activities, a “multiple, multifocal or polycentric” thinking (Corrao, 1981). In this framework, similarly to the individual Alpha Function, Corrao defines Gamma Function as the ability of the group to transform raw elements, the perceptive and sensorial, into elaborated gamma-elements. Through the Gamma Function, we can reach Group Thinking, consisting of the tension towards meaning reconstruction and the verbalization of what is an apparently imperceptible atmosphere, but which is the fundament of therapeutic work, due to a great impact on individual action (Argentiere, 2018). Quoting Romano, psychic suffering is often related to the patient's unawareness that his symptoms belong to the group sphere. The group facilitates the contact with the other, with the collective suffering, and with the experience << of some mythical group phenomena, namely the descent to hell and back >> (Romano, 2021), through elaboration and subsequent integration of similar contents. In this way, the individual, integrated in the group, acquires awareness of his multiple structure, embodying at the same time a set of individuals, as well as individual parts (Correale, 1986).

## **The dream between rêverie and amplification**

Deepening the understanding of the similarities between Bion's rêverie and Jung's amplification, it can be useful to specifically study the dream and the analytic work that analyst and patient, within the analytic frame, achieve thanks to patient's dream products, considered as raw material to discern, handle and << transform>>. The dream allows the access to the unconscious matter nature which, through a cultural process, namely the work on oneiric images, analogously to the alchemic process, will lead to uncover the individual unrealised potential manifested in the dream with an individuation purpose. The language shared by analyst and patient becomes, for the latter, the tool to be able to stand in the images stream and in the metaphorical transforming power of the oneiric symbol. The word, in its originality, will let the patient to encounter ancient words which, if evoked, will open the doors to a new significance and to the typical transformation of *poiesis* (Gaglione, 2011). Inevitably, this *participation mystique* will put the therapist <<in much the same position as the alchemist who no longer knew whether he was melting the mysterious amalgam in the crucible or whether he was the salamander glowing in the fire. Psychological induction inevitably causes the two parties to get involved in the transformation of the third and to be themselves transformed in the process, and all the time the doctor's knowledge, like a flickering lamp, is the one dim light in the darkness>> (Jung, 1946).

Remaining on the central position of the therapeutic relationship, the individual possibility of dreaming and remembering those dreams, considered as the entirety of unconscious material regarding an emotional experience faced while sleeping, will depend on the introjection of the maternal function, sustained by rêverie during the subsequent development stages; therefore, from the introjection of ability to synthesise and translate raw materials (beta elements) in processed contents (alpha elements). Waking up, the emotional experience converted in alpha elements, will produce oneiric thinking, definable through the conscious dream description, focal point of the personality synthetic process (Bion, 1972). In the same way, Trevi (1993) defines the dream (oneiric event) as a product of the unconscious creative imagination, restlessly working while asleep, which is evoked during the awakening as oneiric memory (recalled dream), and then translated in oral or written oneiric text (reported dream). The oneiric symbol, considered by Jung as alive and transformative, will bring an unconscious content, which, emerging to consciousness, will show the way to the *coniunctio oppositorum*.

The discussion about mother and child relationship (and the relative state of reverie), can be extended to analyst and patient relationship, in which the first, being the vessel of experiences and torments of the second, will discover to be involved not only in a therapeutic relationship but also in a reciprocal transformative process. If we believe << the dream is a spontaneous self-portrayal, in symbolic form, of the actual situation in the unconscious>> (Jung 1957-58), then we might ask to what extent these representations originate only from the patient or might be also related to the patient-analyst relationship, generated by the therapy in the making of the intersubjective

analytic third. As Ogden (1997) stated, from the first therapy session, the personal psychic space of the patient and his oneiric space move progressively towards analyst and patient shared emotional space. Hence, the dream will become the dream of the analytical couple, or to be more accurate, the dream of intersubjective analytic third, generated by the joint work of analyst and the patient unconscious. According to Jung, both parts are involved in a circular and mutual therapeutic process. This circularity, well represented in the *Cross Cousin Marriage* (Figure 1), comprise the interactions between both parts on the conscious and unconscious level, overcoming the individual field, entangling the psyche most obscure and complex traits. This will inevitably lead to connect to the collective unconscious, through what Jung defines as the psychic contamination, analogous to the Levi Bruhl's *participation mystique*. This concept, not distant from Kleinian projective identification (extended by Bion through its rêverie theory), has been largely applied to psychoanalysis in understanding phenomena, otherwise inexplicable, associated to analytical relation (Russo, 2021).

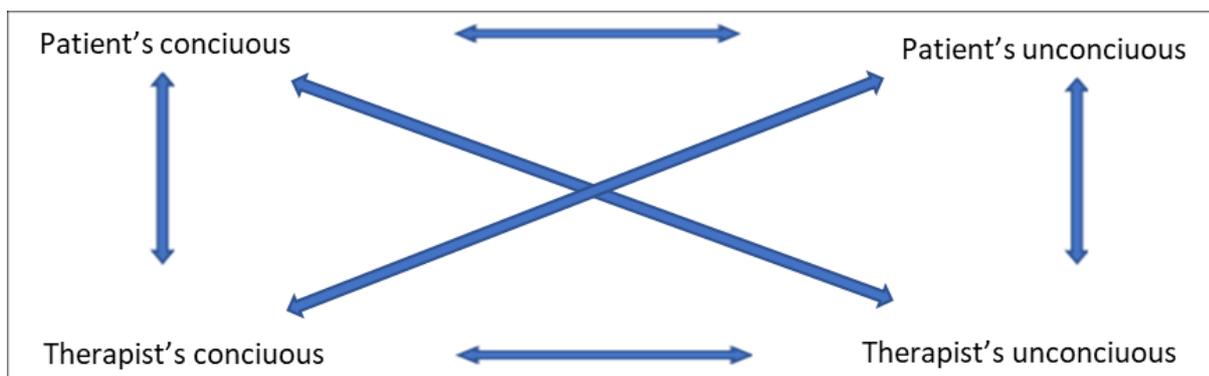


Figure 1. Cross Cousin Marriage.

As the relationship between patient and analyst unconscious that brings collective unconscious content into the analytical space, the dream can be the tool to reach the archetypal content through oneiric symbols' amplification, and, in this way, allow the realisation of the Self through contacting the Other, << crossing the Rubicon of the analytic respectability >> (Dorella, 2011).

Indeed, it is through the relationship between analyst and patient (with their always open reveries, session after session) and the dreams creation (in their progression along the whole therapeutic path) that it will be possible to access the bridge connecting the personal/relational to the archetypal/collective. The analysis will lead the way to investigate the unknown, the ineffable, in the endless force heading to become O, become Self.

### Bion's O and Jung's Self

Speaking of therapeutic process, Bion and Jung point out that the transformation of the analysand is recognisable in the process of the transformation in O and the process of individuation, respectively.

Bion proposes a theory of transformations starting from << psychoanalytic observation >> and focuses on the human natural inclination to observe and perform transformations. The associations verbally formulated by the patient are nothing more than the result of transformations into symbols of thoughts and emotions. According to Bion, the patient, within the analytic setting, in his manifestations of any kind, which can be stories, associations, gestures, dreams etc., starts from an << original fact >> that the author terms O. This original fact undergoes transformations (so-called T-alpha) that transform O into a final product (T-beta), which coincides, in fact, with the patient's manifestation (Grinberg et al., 1977).

In this process, from O to T-beta, there are always some invariants, which are untransformed O elements; thanks to these invariants it is possible backtrack to O.

Grinberg, referring to a Bion's metaphor, compares the transformation process to the creation of a painting, in which the painter, transforming an originally perceived reality into the canvas, leaves some details unchanged to let us recognise the original landscape (ibid.). This is premise to the therapist research that, according to Jung, starts from an image - the invariant element - and goes back to the original unconscious matter utilising the myth, both in the research and in the representation, in the amplification process.

Bion adapted psychoanalysis to metaphysics and ontology by detaching himself from Freudian determinism. His unsuspected tendency to resort to mythology when he claimed that myths, both individual and collective, were "scientific deductive systems" themselves in their own rights (Grotstein, 2007). We can then deduce the unmistakable parallelism with Jung's myth scientific assumption.

Bion's O transcends the Freudian unconscious and replaces the concept of the unconscious represented as a container, with the unconscious as an epistemic function emphasising its creative role. The concept of "O" emerges from ideas such as "thoughts without a thinker", "things themselves", "beta elements", "memories of the future", and "intrinsic preconceptions" (ibidem).

Bion realised that going back to O, starting from a manifestation of the patient, was not enough to reach the psychic reality of the patient. This reality was unknowable, but it was certain, and it had existed. Therefore, it might have been possible to lead the patient to become O, and psychotherapy's role was to interact with the reality of patient's personality, to guide him in this realisation (Grinberg et al., 1977).

The process of individuation proposes something similar; in fact, according to Jung, << everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole >> (Jung, 1961).

The totality mentioned by Jung departs from a unity of opposites concept, also defined as the individuation process, representing the entireness or the Self.

Jung found in alchemy the groundwork to legitimise his discoveries in analytical psychology. Indeed, he could rapidly notice the correspondence between the unity of alchemical opposites and the coexistence, in the human mind, of hostile elements in opposition (Jung, 1954).

Jung highlighted and documented the alchemist skills in symbolising their purpose, which not only involved “contemplating” the unity of opposites, but also, at the same time, “revealing “ them as one. A conflict arises from the unity of opposites process, which is followed by death and rebirth, because of the transformation. Rebirth is symbolized by the *filius philosophorum* or divine child: a third quality that is not a midway quality between the two psychic elements in conflict, but something new that is strengthened by both (Jung, 1954).

Bion’s and Jung’s theories, although are not exactly matching, are not dissimilar; both have reached the same conclusion that psychological growth essentially consists in the transformation, or the return, of the individual to what is or was originally. So, the individual sets own essence as the chief personality trait, abandoning the centrality of the Ego, which ensures to stay in touch with reality, but might result in dysfunctionalities due to complexes, according to Jung, or due to the final products of O transformation, according to Bion, which might result in dominating the personality.

In both theories, the transformation process can take place only if the following conditions are fulfilled:

- Patient and analyst are both actively involved in the analytic relationship in a state of rêverie, for Bion, or a dream state, for Jung.

- The analyst pays particular attention to the interpretations of analytical material that lead to something original and universal through a research process that Jung defines amplification, while Bion exploration.

Jung, as well as Bion, believed that both analyst and patient needed to be actively involved in the therapeutic process, which required a state of dreamy participation, as both subjects were at the same time "transforming" and transformed by the analytic relationship.

According to Jung, it was impossible to relate to any other’s unconscious without letting the spirit of the depths be the guide: that spirit that forced him to speak beyond justification, use, and meaning (Jung, 2009), and challenged the spirit of the time. People constantly struggle because of these two spirits. The spirit of the time concerns the management of daily life and activities that reflect our times, comprising useful and valuable things; on the other hand, the spirit of the depths subjugates, through the judgement power, pride, and arrogance (Jung, 2009), takes away faith in science, takes away the reason and knowledge, making space for the inexplicable and the paradoxical, for the ultimate synthesis between sense and nonsense (Jung, 2009). These two conditions are not mutually exclusive, but complementary and compensatory. What one is lacking can be found in the other: on one side we find consciousness functions steering the behaviour to create << a process of transient

adaptation >> based on homogeneity and continuity of the psychic process; on the other side, we find the unconscious characterised by the forgotten or suppressed traces of individual's past, and by the hereditary and collective traces belonging to the human spirit, as well as spontaneous fantasies.

The neurotic, who comes into analysis, brings to the session a dichotomy of his own psychic instances, conscious and unconscious, which produce a conflict. He tries rationally and naively to explain and resolve on an exclusively conscious and rational level.

The therapist's task is to investigate at an unconscious level to shift the point of view from the conflict to the inevitable human inclination to apply a neat separation between conscious and unconscious. The therapist's response cannot and must not be to provide a solution to the conflict but to bring these elements subject to separation together.

This cannot happen through an intellectually judgmental explanation of unconscious contents, but by seeking the unconscious contents meaning to compensate for the one-sidedness of the conscience, through the passage << from one attitude to another organically possible, without loss of the unconscious>> (Jung, 1957-58).

According to Jung, the analyst's attitude during the session must therefore be open to the images coming from the patient and from the depths, without placing intellectual obstacles or inhibitions of judgement, must allow them to be realised and to change shape and intensity, producing that state, which is Bion's rêverie. The neurotic, who comes into analysis, brings to the session a dichotomy of his own psychic instances, conscious and unconscious, which produce a conflict. He tries rationally and naively to explain and resolve on an exclusively conscious and rational level.

Ogden, similarly to his teacher, believes that rêverie is fundamental for therapeutic relationship success, although he states that << the emotional tumult associated with reverie usually feels as if it is primarily, if not entirely, a reflection of the way in which one is not being an analyst at that moment>> (Ogden, 1997, pp.162-163).

Bion, speaking of the alpha-function, introduced the term pre-conception as something universal and pre-existing.

According to the Anglo-Indian author, who borrows the process of the speech theory and Kant's concepts of secondary and primary quality, some terms, such as the word 'dad', start from a thing in itself, a pre-conception, or, as the German philosopher says, from << an a priori judgement or a priori proposition not coming from experience >> (Kant, 1909).

Bion (1972) does not take into consideration the social value of the noun dad, but the value that exists in itself even before it is made public, something that belongs to the private sphere of the individual while having a universal character.

Jung assumes that the collective unconscious is that unconscious part not belonging to patient's personal history or to suppressed conscious contents but consists of everything that owes its existence to some a priori presence and belongs to its hereditariness. The archetype concept is crucially correlated to the idea of collective

unconscious, suggesting forms of the psyche that are present always and everywhere (Jung, 1934/54).

Considering the above said, it is evident that pre-conception and archetype concepts further strengthen the links between Bion and Jung, as both refer to "Kantian" judgement qualities and, in particular, to a priori judgments (Kant, 1909), which possess such a degree of universality to be both considered to be in the sphere of collective unconscious.

Referring to these qualities of judgement through amplification and exploration, in a dream state or *rêverie*, is a fundamental requirement to pursue that search for oneself, and to return to an original unity, which Jung and Bion name individuation and O, respectively.

### **A clinical case: the case of Luna**

Luna, a young woman, contacted the analyst with a too familiar WhatsApp message that baffled the therapist. This feeling, during the first interviews, settled down “ by itself “, slowly disappearing but, as we will see, left a trace.

During the first interview she was looking stressed out, disoriented, and frightened. With her unkempt appearance she was not looking 35, but much younger. Her long hair was gliding on her shoulders, featuring a darker shade compared to her than olive skin tone. Despite this, the therapist considered her beautiful and harmonious because of her regular facial features.

She attended first interviews with an intense sense of humiliation, because the sender had recommended her a psychiatric visit due to her intense anxiety and mental confusion, as also reported by the patient. It did not seem possible for her to realise her state of evident distress, so she did not agree to see a psychiatrist. The analyst understood that Luna had not been able to bear the frustration and, mainly for this reason, the therapist started to form in her mind an image of great fragility of the patient. From now on, patient and analyst began to dialogue leaving the outer world events in the background of their relationship. The analyst thought that if Luna had not arrived at her practice with that psychiatric referral, she would probably refer her to a psychiatrist because the patient shifted from laughter to tears abruptly, speaking in dazedly state, mixing reality data with fantasy images and parts of dreams. However, introducing the possibility of a psychiatric referral to the patient, the risk was of her abandoning the therapy; therefore, the therapist, adopting a waiting behaviour and exercising Bion's negative capability, soon realised that Luna was softening. The analyst kept listening to the patient, sourcing from her mind images and sensation that were activated in a reverie flow.

Leaving out for brevity some anamnestic notes collected in the exploratory phase, we report just one significant information to highlight the potential connection between Bion and Jung, especially between reverie and amplification. The financial situation of her family, particularly modest and on the edge of poverty, had always represented a painful and narcissistically humiliating aspect for Luna, who, after achieving the

classical high school diploma, decided to work to support herself and her family. After working different temporary jobs, she found a permanent position in a beauty shop, where she specialised in hair colouring products and techniques. This last information about patient's history was no longer considered during psychotherapy until a specific session, which will be discussed in detail later.

The first month of therapy was characterised by a strong ambivalence from both Luna and the analyst. Due to countertransference, the patient communicated such a deep feeling of precariousness that, every time she left the practice, the therapist thought she would never come back. During the sessions Luna despaired, saying that she was very confused and did not know why she was attending the sessions every week. The therapist kept listening deeply to her, avoiding any judgement, and accepting anxiety and uncertainty.

Few weeks later, two significant events occurred. The first, concerns an analyst's interpretation. During the sessions, the patient often talked about her relationship with the mother, describing it as characterised by a mutual dependence. They worked almost an entire session on an episode in which the mother, as often happened, asked Luna to spend the evening together on the sofa watching a movie. Luna explained to the analyst, with a lot of effort, that she would have preferred to stay in her room to devote herself to something else. Thus, a very complex mother-daughter dynamic emerged, characterised by strong ambivalences, entanglements, and guilt. Through the interpretation, the analyst led the patient to understand that the complex dynamic with her mother was not only generated by her requests to the daughter (as Luna kept thinking), but also by her own attempts to keep this dynamic for getting the advantage of avoiding separation from the mother. The analyst's interpretation was confirmed by Luna extending her body on the armchair while and her eyes were full of tears.

The second significant passage concerns an event that solely happened in the analyst's mind, referable to a state of reverie. At a certain moment, while she was listening to Luna speaking and was immersed in a state of suspension, a precise image presented itself to the therapist's mind. It was the silhouette of a wig with long hair, like those found at hairdressers, and looked like a very sharp photograph. This image lasted few seconds and was positioned exactly over the patient's shoulder. When the therapist resumed her focus to the patient's words, she realised that Luna was talking about her experience and specialisation in hair care and dyes. The image that had presented itself to the analyst, a few seconds before, was like an anticipation of the patient's words.

At the next session, Luna showed up with her hair dyed half copper-green and half of her usual colour. The analyst was surprised by this aesthetic change that, suggesting a double form, might have represented elements of division and ambivalence. She reconsidered the patient's ambivalent relationship with her mother and the possible transference links.

The combination between the image that emerged in the analyst's mind and the patient talking about her work with hair dyes was a unique and difficult experience to describe, given its exceptional character on the analyst's internal level. The event remained so much firmly imprinted in her mind, that led her to reflect on the initial interviews with Luna and on her possible excessive unconscious proximity to the patient. Should she have kept a greater distance? Perhaps the pathological interdependence between mother and daughter was being reflected in the transference-countertransference dynamic through a projective identification? Or had something else happened? The analyst recalled the familiar tone of the initial contact as a possible request for fusionality. She felt very disoriented and out of touch with herself and the patient. The image of the wig, although it lasted a few seconds, had taken her to another dimension that certainly concerned a level of common unconsciousness.

It could be hypothesised that what happened between analyst and patient, and which has the characteristics of Jungian synchronicity, might be related to something unknown and unthought, and could be linked to the transformation into O in Bionian language.

This event marked a turning point in the therapeutic process. Through the common rêverie, the analyst felt that the dark phase of great confusion and inner fragmentation was about to end. As Ogden argues, quoting Bion: biologically, human unity is a couple; it takes two human beings to make one (Ogden, 2016). In support of this, later Luna began to remember several dreams, of which one is particularly significant:

*Luna was in a country house built on three levels. She entered the living room on the ground floor, and she was with an ex-boyfriend named Mirko. The whole house was made of wood. The ground floor was very bright, and it had windows overlooking the open sea. Indeed, she realised that the house was like a stilt house. It was built on the sea, so that by stretching an arm out of the window it was possible to reach the water. Mirko express his intention to show her the whole house starting from the ground floor. When they climbed the stairs to access the second floor, completely empty and without windows, Luna realised that Mirko was no longer there and found, instead, his mother. The second floor was completely dark, and she perceived it as old and dirty. Luna wants to go up to the third floor and Mirko's mother tells her that she can go, but Luna realises that she cannot go to the third floor because there are no stairs. There are rope-type supports and light mats. The woman tells her that these supports hold up because they always go up using them. Luna does not believe her and, following her instinct, touches a rope with her foot. In that moment everything breaks down and the dream ends.*

The analyst's attention was immediately drawn to the three-storey house. A stratification on three levels, as the Oedipal triad, which indicated that analysis could proceed according to the classical criteria. The solid and rich first floor, overlooking the sea and, therefore, towards an unconscious dimension, referred to a sufficiently

valid foundation for the analysis. However, the sea was so close to the house, almost inside, that let the analyst to believe that it was a warning for the analytical couple to slow down. Climbing up to the upper floors too quickly would have implicated many risks. If in the initial dream image, the patient is on the ground floor accompanied by a peer male friend, later, going upstairs seems to suggest a regression towards a negative maternal figure that would not protect her but pushes Luna towards danger and failure. Slowly, exercising the negative capability and listening, it was revealed that Luna was finding her own form and structure by herself. Also, on the level of external reality, she was improving.

After a period of somehow recurring dreams, Luna opened relating her suffering, authentic and depressive, to her job and her professional identity. After a few weeks characterised by great suffering, she introduced a new job prospect, which she described as a condition that corresponded to her deeply. In unfolding all this, Luna appeared much more genuinely oriented on her inner plane and, at least in the session, the patient appeared less anxious and calmer.

Observing the relationship of the analytic couple, it is possible to notice a high degree of involvement of the therapist. The analyst deeply felt the patient's need to be listened, welcomed, seen, and even loved. Luna's massive defences, mainly dependent upon projective identification, referred to a borderline profile with important psychotic nuclei. The analyst, recalling patient's psychotic nuclei, could assert she experienced them with and for the patient, immersed in regression in service of the relationship. Today the analyst's involvement is less intense and less entangled, mirroring the patient's decreased anxiety levels. By reviewing herself in relation to the patient, the therapist feels as if she knows nothing about her, nothing about what is happening, nothing about her dreams. She experienced this relationship as faced with something unknown; the feeling of a forceful endless movement, which starts from the inside like a lava. This analyst's feeling of having to deal with a moving and incandescent material is accompanied by a great emotional instability of the patient. Therefore, it can be imagined that moving too much the brazier could cause an uncontrollable flame. In a state of rêverie, and amplifying the therapeutic relationship, the analyst, with her own image, perceives herself on a boat in the middle of the sea together with the patient. There is no predetermined course, but a sort of internal compass, modulated by what happens in the session. This state of the analyst's mind seems to be well described in the concept of Eustokia, mentioned by Claudio Neri (2013), who defines it as this specific analyst mind set up. The term is borrowed by Artemidorus, who describes the concept in his book on dreams interpretation as something made of promptness, intuition, ability to simultaneously analyse many different clues and to instantly choose the solution. Thus, << [Eustokhìa] approaches helmsman's wisdom [...], who must be able to guess [how to direct the course and adjust the sails, according to] the change of winds and weather from small signals. It is therefore a question of adopting a particular system of

thinking: a thinking that does not separate, select, isolate, and classify, but embraces as such the totality of the present events and assigns them a meaning, without worrying about finding a common thread that causally links what happens in the session>>. Neri (1995) assigns to this characteristic the analyst's opportunity to realise events synchronicity, navigating the non-sense.

### **Reverie, amplification, and the group**

According to a Jungian approach, the group setting is now widely applied, declined not only on the therapeutic side but also on the formative and psychosocial side. Today, the question of whether analytical psychology is compatible with groupality is completely obsolete, as it is now widely considered a complex articulation between individual subjectivity and the external world. It is not in our interest to examine the topic further but will only make reference to where it is further explained (1), allowing space to deepen our discussion on the similarities between Jung and Bion's fundamental concepts, starting from some clinical sequences.

We considered two sessions, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of a therapeutic group who met once a week for 90 minutes. The group is composed of three women and three men between the ages of 30 and 40 years old with various issues of a predominantly neurotic type. Our intention is to demonstrate how through group reverie (conveyed by dreams and their amplification), the group was able to start a process that on one hand, made it possible to reconstruct the individual Self, moving from the recognition of transgenerational heritage, and on the other, moved the group closer to a transpersonal reality that we could define Jung's archetypal Self or Bion's O.

Carla is a university scientific researcher who experiences extreme discomfort in her relationship with colleagues and supervisors, often expressing paranoid ideas. Carla started the group therapy session by recounting a dream:

*I was in Piazza Bellini with my university colleagues and the visiting professor from the U.S. currently working in our lab. I was feeling uncomfortable; then we were in an amusement park waiting to ride the Ferris wheel, but the manager told us that it wasn't safe to ride, so I figured we should give up. At one point, the man who usually persecutes me and wants to kill me in my dreams, arrives. I feel anguished. Unlike in my other dreams however, things evolve differently. At first, I try to escape into the sand dunes, then I am in the Modern Art Museum of New York with the American professor's fifteen-year-old son (who does not actually exist). There is an elderly woman nearby; the persecutor arrives and kidnaps the boy, but in the meantime, I take a gun and fire at his arms and legs, freeing the boy. Nevertheless, I keep shooting at the man to be sure that I killed him, this time towards the head. Blood floods over the elderly woman and I feel satisfied because I fought my persecutor instead of hiding in the sand.*

Carla often recounts her frequent, long, and bloody dreams, but the group has learned how to manage and work on the oneiric material, returning emotions and associations. This gives Carla the opportunity to better read her pain, and to reconnect past situations with present ones. Without delving into the dream, even if there would be a lot to say about Carla's story and pain, it seems useful to underline how much the dream situation refers to the group situation, in which she might let herself go, once she faced the internal persecutor.

Marisa, a young woman who suffers from panic attacks that are hindering her relational and professional life and severely undermining her marriage, intervenes: *I feel really sick. The past week was really difficult because of panic attacks. In particular, two days ago I had to go to work, but I was feeling completely unable to drive. I felt really exhausted because of this harmful disease. I feel I am not living; with panic attack disorder I do not have a life. I also had a fight with my father. I do not think he deserves this. My father got married to give me a mother and I am very attached to her. My birth mother died at 26, after one year of marriage. I look like her a lot.*

The group focuses on this similarity already observed in other group sessions, reminded by the fact that Marisa had her first panic attack after the marriage. Arianna, a beautician, carefully observes that in Marisa's fantasies her fate is the same as her mother's: << I don't need to live with panic attack disorder >>.

The analyst observes that Gabriele, a group member who suffered from severe depression that kept him at home for six months, is following the group with great participation and emotional involvement. She asks him if he wants to say something. Gabriele: *My name is the same as my uncle's, brother of my mother, who died young. For everyone, and in particular for my grandmother, it was a tragedy. This event affected me a lot because I was overprotected as a child, being the first of three, and this made me feel fragile and weak whereas I was healthy and strong. I had the sensation that I could die at any moment, and this affected me a lot. There are also many other events, but I think this is the most important.*

There is a lot of tension in the group, and it seems that the only way to handle it is denial. Giacomo, a lawyer affected by obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), says that what really matters is the present, and this return to past events is only a form of childish victim complex: the solution stays in rationality. The group begins to argue until Stefano, an architect, says that the group is going through a process of deconstruction and restoration, and the latter << *does not consist in putting the things in the same place they were before* >>. Carla, with a cracked voice, closes the session by talking about her similarities with her grandmother.

We can notice that the analyst's interventions are almost entirely absent, not so much for a matter of space or synthesis, but because the group revealed great working

skills. In the meanwhile, an image of a spiral begins to emerge in the analyst's mind, expanding out from the top like a tornado. This rêverie questioned the image: was this a revivification symbol, showing the ego learning to rotate around the self? To quote Jung:

We can hardly escape the feeling that the unconscious process moves spiral-wise round a centre, gradually getting closer, while the characteristics of the centre grow more and more distinct (Jung, 1944).

Does this therefore represent expansion and development, or is the tornado devastation and destruction? By exercising the negative capability, keeping the spiral image vivid, the analyst avoided proposing early and conclusive interpretations (even to himself) that would risk only saturating the field and limiting the development of the group.

During the next meeting, nothing significant seems to take place, just a normal conversation that nevertheless leaves a mark, as is then seen in the next session.

Stefano opens the session with a dream:

*I was sentenced to death for a slight negligence, and I was struck by this disparity. Before me however, a friend of mine had to die, Solar, who was very close to me in middle school. I have never seen him since. I question myself about going to support him for the imminent execution, and I find him as one would find a man sentenced to death. While we are talking, we receive the news that condemnation has been suspended. There is a lot of excitement and I hope that the same will happen for me too. I have always been in the shadows, like an illegal immigrant, like one who has no right to live. My name is not in the phone book nor on my doorbell. It is as if I give up living due to this small fault and this punishment which is out of proportion.*

Stefano could be diagnosed as a schizotypal personality disorder, considering his avoidant behaviours and isolation tendencies that lead to unhappiness. It is possible to consider that the group experience, moving from reflection and an exchange between members, as also demonstrated by the dream of the condemned and later saved friend, is giving Stefano the opportunity to break out from his isolation and his deadly enveloping anguish.

Marisa then takes the scene with great emphasis:

*At 4.30 in the morning my father woke me up with an urgent need to talk to me. Despite the late hour, he told me what he was dreaming: he was sorrowfully walking down the avenue thinking about my problems. Suddenly, he felt a hand on his shoulder by a monk who brought in a kind of refectory-church and then he said: << Now I will tell you the way things really are. When the mother died, the daughter suffered a lot: she was tossed side by side without any constant affection. When you created your new family, she put everything in a cube: thoughts, dolls, mother,*

*emotions and affects. She closed everything and she put you as her watchman. Everything outside of the cube is not interesting for her or she is afraid of, and in this way, she does not know what she is missing>>. Then I flinched, because since I was a child, I have always drawn cubes, writing my name on the first cube I draw, then I close all the corners with bigger cubes until I fill the page.*

Arianna, who always has a supporting and connecting role in the group, comments with vivacity on Marisa's story and she adds:

*Another new thing happened. I felt something that is different from rationalising... I do not exactly know how to explain it, but this is different. I also had a bothersome sensation, which often happens when I feel as if I'm being discovered.*

We can see that a developmental creative process is growing in the group, shown by Marisa's insight who, taken by a reality not only built on rational thought, understands the difference between knowing and becoming. Marisa's considerations are like Stefano's consideration about isolation and deadly anguish, as we can say the same for Gabriele who was locked up at home for 6 months. Also, for him it is possible to see a glimmer of awareness, and the ability to go through pain.

*Gabriele: For me is a double rip-off, because on the one hand I bear the name of the maternal uncle who died at the age of 20, on the other, the name of the paternal grandfather, who was a great powerful man, respected and revered by all. I am doing the same job and people continuously compare myself to him, giving me the sensation of bluffing, living another person's life. And I am nobody.*

*Therapist: The dead need to be buried to be truly dead. Marisa's mother and Gabriele's uncle were a living presence that somehow seemed to have conditioned them.*

*Stefano: The undead dead are the real problem. I have never said it before because it seemed unimportant to me, but now, after hearing your stories... I bear the name of my father's brother, who disappeared mysteriously during the war, a strange character, it seems that he collaborated with the SS, I do not know. Then my father also said that he was brilliant, very intelligent, and a great womaniser. He passed down many of his characteristics to me. To be clear, my parents have never made comparisons, but I know for sure that I measured myself with him and this was embarrassing because on the one hand he was handsome, good, etc; on the other, a bit shady.*

*Marisa: Who knows why the dead are always beautiful, good, and intelligent.*

*Carla: I bear the name of my paternal grandmother; we lived in her house with our unmarried aunts. It was a large and closed family, in the true sense of the word, you could not cross the front door. In her final years, the grandmother suffered from deviation of the oesophagus, but symptoms could have had a psychological basis. Nevertheless, she ate and vomited, making it so that she had the attention of the whole family. She was terrible. In those final years she felt offended. I do not know why or what, but she stopped speaking to everyone. As time passed, all her adult*

*children have a strange relationship with food and the fear of choking. By the way, regarding the dream of the blood splattered on the old lady I told you about during the past session, the memory of the blood that splashed all over when they came to us to kill the pig once a year came back to my mind. I am thinking that the traces of blood do not go away.*

In this long sequence, the spiral image prominently returns in the analyst's mind, this time accompanied by the notes of various opera arias, along with the sensation of embarrassment. One of the prominent images is the mouth shut chorus of Puccini's Butterfly, overlying on chorus notes of gipsies' chorus in Verdi's Trovatore. What is happening? Two melodramas talking, in different ways, about death and abandonment, filicide and suicide. Bewilderment and confusion take the analyst, handling the palpable emotional tension generated in the group.

Giacomo breaks this atmosphere, recounting with great enthusiasm one of his gaffes which makes everyone laugh.

Therapist: *We happily support Giacomo's way of breaking the tension both in life and in the group to protect ourselves from overly strong emotions.*

Giacomo nods.

Arianna: *The pig represents wealth and abundance; farmers were surviving a whole year with one.*

Giacomo: *But it is also a metaphor of greed and gluttony. <<You're a pig! >> (commonly used Neapolitan expression to express those concepts, TN)*

Gabriele: *It is also dirty, rolling around in the mud.*

Stefano: *I am vegetarian, for me it is a horrible and heart-breaking ritual. Pig is also an ancient symbol, with a positive meaning for many cultures.*

Giacomo (a bit mockingly): *How cultured you are!*

Stefano, talking to Arianna: *Are you bearing a family name too?*

Arianna: *No, I do not. My mother would not give me my grandmother's name, but I am okay with her, even if my parents are separated. Everyone loves me a lot.*

Therapist: *Do not you think that Arianna is always kind, keeping all together, stitching up ties? Everyone confirms it*

Arianna: *That is true, and it is happening with my patients too. I do not know exactly why this is happening, but I work hard for them.*

Therapist: *Maybe you are reproposing your family role, trying to keep your parents together.*

Arianna: *That is true, but I could not succeed.*

Stefano: *Arianna is a reference point. For example, during awkward silences, I look at Marisa, who immediately starts to speak, or I look at Arianna, who always finds a topic to bring harmony back.*

Marisa: *Actually, the group is really important to me. I get something from everyone. This gives me a little anxiety. How will I make it when the group will be over?*

Therapist: *Maybe for this reason Giacomo does not want to have ties.*

Arianna: *This made me so upset.*

Therapist: *It seems that the group takes up the role of a welcoming family, where it is possible to get the illusion of living in perfect harmony.*

Stefano: *Carla is right, blood marks cannot be erased. (Turning to Marisa) But probably we could lock ourselves up in the cube to protect ourselves.*

Gabriele: *Just a bad joke: we might all be fine; we are three men and three women.*

Giacomo: *That is not possible, there is already Marisa's husband (everyone laughs).*

Marisa: *I really appreciate Stefano's profoundness; Gabriele instead scales me down.*

*Giacomo constantly makes me laugh claiming rationality, even if it is out of context! I feel really close to Arianna and Carla. I do not want to put anything else in the cube.*

*(Then she stops, struck by a strong emotion) Oh my god, in-cubo! (in the cube/nightmare, in Italian 'incubo' = nightmare TN).*

Considering the work of the group from this summary, we could say, quoting Corrao (1985), that the gamma function activation made possible to process anguish in a convivial atmosphere of hospitality and participation, allowing the formation of the group-thinking. At the same time, empowering the individual alpha function (Corrente, 2002), each group member, based on personal history, could reconnect with his personal identity, although sometimes painfully, in an expansion and development process, remaining unharmed despite the destructiveness of the storm! We are facing the elaboration of an understanding process, which we can define, using Bionian terminology, transformation in K. The storm reached its peak, and we passed through the tornado unharmed, or maybe just a little bruised.

We can also find, on another level, a second nucleus of fantasies regarding the image of the pig, arising from the blood traces that Carla brought up in her abovementioned dream. These fantasies are still quite undefined but seem to be related to a deep nucleus that, although still indistinct, might evolve. We are discussing the "evolution in O", the evolution of the unknown, something perceived, but still undetermined. In Jungian words, we might identify in the group those unconscious forces contrasting the consciousness, which generate such tension leading to quest for new equilibrium. That is the transcendent function, which will culminate in the creation of the *tertium*, according to Jungian theories. The *tertium* is a symbol, to which we can assign sense and significance; Jung does not consider the symbol a sign or an allegory, but the best and highest expression of something like a premonition although still unknown. So, in terms of amplification, we can observe that the process started with Carla's dream and gradually has been enriched with oneiric contents, fantasies, memories, thoughts brought up by every group member, moving to a dimension of contact with the unknown, the ineffable, the archetypal, condensed in the image of the pig, primordial symbol, as defined by Stefano. Amplifying the pig image, we leave the dimension of everyday language, realising its symbolic image and its related evocations from different cultures. It is possible to underline the richness of that

symbol, tightly connected with the archetypal image of the Great Mother of Tibetan Samaras:

*In the beginning, in the East, the Great Primordial Pig lived. The Sun and the Moon were his eyes and the stars, dawning and setting, moved along his body. Everything existing was born from the first sow: she was the mother of all of us (Civitelli, 2001).*

The wild pig, for Hindu religion, is one of the ten reincarnations of Vishnu that let the earth to emerge from waters. In ancient Egypt, the sacrality of the pig is well represented in Isis's representations, where she sits on it. In Greek mythology, the killing of the Erymanthian boar, that threatened the region, is one of twelve Hercules's labours; similarly, the Calydonian boar is an enemy of famous mythological heroes. It is also interesting to consider that during the Thesmophoria, celebrations to Demeter strictly forbidden to men, in Athens and other cities of the Hellenic world, little pigs were sacrificed, establishing a mysterious relation between the pig sacrifice and the female sphere. Furthermore, patriarchal culture exploited this relationship; this can be noticed in hiding the sacrality of the female mystery represented in the triangle of Demeter, Persephone, and Hades.

Considering the richness of the meanings, with all their symbolic ambiguity, group members will be able to proceed towards individuation, placing themselves in unison with O or, in Jungian terms, in presence of the archetypal Self.

In conclusion, we have left the synchronicity in the background, despite being a fundamental interpretation perspective for group phenomena, because, due to its significance, beyond the scope of this paper. Manica, who provides important and detailed contributions on different "conceptual confluences" between Bion and Jung theories, emphasises the affinity between Jungian synchronicity and Bionian constant conjunction: both bring to a knowledge not generated through a diachronic process, namely a logical-deductive process based on concatenate association of associative connections. Neri (1995) mentions a star shaped distribution referring explicitly to Jung and stresses out that renouncing to a parting and classifying way of thinking while choosing a synchronic apex, allows for condensing the temporal perspective, synthesising the time in "here and now". This process is necessary to perceive and give sense to a dishomogeneous and fragmented material. This receptivity condition, as shown by the clinical examples, involves both therapist and patient, as well as the group, and describes the psychic contagion that, for Jung, is essential to the therapeutic process. Jung (1948) wrote:

The causal point of view tells us a dramatic story about how *D* came into existence: it took its origin from *C*, which existed before *D* and *C* in its turn had a father, *B*, etc. The synchronistic view on the other hand tries to produce an equally meaningful picture of coincidence. How does it happen that *A'*, *B'*, *C'*, *D'*, etc., appear all at the same moment and in the same place?

We reformulate and revise Jung's question: << How can it happen that Carla, Arianna, Marisa, Stefano, Giacomo and Gabriele appeared all in the same place at the same time?>>.

## Note

(1) For conciseness, the authors have chosen to partially cite the extensive amount of literature available on the theme:

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