

Comments to the interview with Balbino

René Kaës

Abstract

The interest that such an interview brings about is in comparing an interpretative system of dream that is different to the model proposed by psychoanalysis and that was initially elaborated around the clinical individual cure. The interview poses questions that we must solve using other analytical systems, such as that of group analysis or family therapy: Who dreams in the dream? How can telepathic dreams be understood, the shared and mutual dreamlike space? The practice of shaman dreams, the different traditional therapeutic practices used via the means of dream, the dreamlike journeys of the Pumé of the Andes, all these issues that have been highlighted and analysed by numerous anthropologists that introduce us to another concept of dream, to the extent of the whole experience of continuity in human relationships, nature and gods.

Key-words: dream, group, gods, premonitory dreams, destiny

I read the interview with Balbino with great interest. It evoked many things in me: above all during my first trip to Rio in 1987, the participation to an initiation séance in a terreiro in the outskirts of the city near the legendary football stadium. I was shocked, slightly bewildered by what I saw and felt, confused for the lack of my theoretical references in comprehending what was taking place in the group, in this institution and in each and everybody.

The interview with Balbino enlightens me on what's involved in the possession of the Orixà and the system of representation or interpretation that sustains and justifies its efficacy. It is in effect a world vision, a *weltanschauung*, but also a world practice, in conclusion to which our western concepts open up few access routes. Therefore only with caution and unpretentiousness can we attempt to say something that isn't simply a reduction of our personal concepts.

This is particularly true as far as dreams are concerned, this drew my attention and will be the topic of some comments.

I'm not sure of the productiveness in wanting to make our systems of representation and of dream interpretation coincide. I'm under the impression that many of Balbino's answers to the questions posed during the interview left the interlocutors bewildered, in a similar manner to how there is a clash with our psychoanalytical concepts of dream: for example when he says that "wish is one thing and dream is another, (that) there is no link between dream and wish". I can understand nonetheless that he is telling us something else about dream, something that we're not used to taking into consideration, or that it became of minor importance with the Freudian critique of chapter 1 of "The Interpretation of Dreams".

If we're interested in the anthropology of dream, we can conclude that Balbino's affirmation is widely spread throughout traditional cultures: first and foremost dream is a mediation between the human world and that of the gods, from beneath and beyond, between known and unknown, that allows to *see* and *foresee*. Thus the importance of premonitory dreams, those dreams that warn the dreamer that destiny or fate is being fulfilled. Balbino speaks of these kinds of dreams. Dream is an action whilst one is dreaming, a drama in which the dreamer is temporarily the subject and the spectator of forces that possess him and to which he belongs. It is for this that dream, possession and trance are so tightly bound together. They are experiences, ways of knowledge in which there is an intimate feeling of belonging.

Seeing, vision, premonition and knowing

In the interview with Balbino, the topic of dreams came up after that of trance: from the moment in which Claudio specifies that mental states differ when we dream to when we sleep without dreaming. In response to Claudio's comment, Balbino opposes trance and dream and introduces the notion of *seeing-knowing*: "during trance we don't *know* anything, we don't *see* anything, yet there are some people that go into trance and they are aware, they can see, they don't have control, so when they return from the state of trance they can't remember anything". This category of seeing-knowing is soon after applied to dream.

Claudio returns to the topic of dream by asking Balbino if some dreams can highlight the relationship between a person with an Orixà. Balbino is categorical: dream doesn't show this relationship. We dream about something because our Orixà goes away when we go to sleep. The Orixàs reveal what they find in our spirit: you switch yourself off completely when you fall asleep; it's in these moments that your Orixà isn't beside you. In this case you'll dream and see things happen because you will experience a *vision* through (as an intermediate of) your Orixà. You can *see*.

When Claudio attempts to gain a further explanation if whether "the Orixà sees something", Balbino confirms that it's exactly so: "the person sees through the Orixà, he sees what the Orixà is seeing".

Reading this passage from the interview makes me think of the importance of "seeing" in the Freudian concept of dream: dream is a figurative, dramatized, visual form of the unconscious wish. Yet it is fundamentally an *internal perception* not the *real vision* of a scene. It's a hallucinatory production, a denial in seeing. There is no remaining trace of the scenes that have been seen, the objects and the actions that made it up, as if it were the relic of the object or of the scene, but their psychic trace is transformed from the primary process that becomes necessary due to the necessities of the censor, thus the unconscious matter of dream. For the dreamer, dream is an enigma of meaning and wish that are linked to him. This doesn't manifest itself in an *evident* manner; it becomes knowledge through the long and costly work of interpretation.

Balbino says something that is close to this concept: we should abandon ourselves in sleep and be abandoned by our Orixà to dream. The distancing of the guardian angel

is necessary for the dream to occur, this opens at the vision of the Orixà. It's an intimate bonding. The dream allows us to see what the Orixà sees, that what we're unable to see when awake in his presence.

Premonitory dreams as a dream prototype?

When Claudio asks Balbino if there are dreams that are of particular importance, Balbino responds that there are indeed, that there are premonitory dreams: "dreams that make you see beforehand, and warn you". Balbino gives two examples. Both examples are what Freud calls "death dreams of people that are dear": Balbino dreams about the death of his own mother, the announced murder of his nephew.

In these dreams, the dreamer directly sees and participates in the scene in question, he knows that the person is about to die, the dream indicates what he must do, but he can't do anything to avoid this. In recalling the death of his nephew, Balbino concludes by saying: "He had to die, it was his destiny..."

Premonitory dreams form a dark area of psychoanalytical research on dream, just like the spiny questions that regard telepathy and thought transmission. Freud's constant interest in these areas have been affirmed, but the explanations remained unsatisfactory (Freud, 1922; 1932).

This interest developed itself around the theme of identification and the phenomenon of the double: "or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing – the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations" (SE. XVII, P. 234).

I have attempted to understand Freud's pathway in my recent work on *La Polyphonie du revê*, in order to take into consideration the "true core of the facts that are still unrecognised" by psychoanalysis, Freud resorted to dreams to hint that from "out of this chaos we should pick the subject of telepathy" (1932, SE. XXII, P.36).

If he chooses dream, it's because "sleep appears to be particularly favourable to the reception of the telepathic message". Once this project had been established, Freud showed that it's not so much the (telepathic) dream but it's interpretation, the psychoanalytical work, that produces "some new thoughts on telepathy". Hence, Freud proposes to "overlook dreams and to take interest in thought transmission and induction". However he conceives them "as if it regarded subjective productions, ghosts, or dreams told by the patients". In the following pages after this statement, Freud's embarrassment stands out. In the main case that he presents, that of the astrologist and the graphologist, without it even being mentioned he highlights the fundamental importance that the expert bears in discovering the wish of his client and to draw predictions that conform to this wish. The "subjective productions" are placed in an inter-subjective relation, in which a slight perception enacts a role of

the wish of others, more precisely the identification process, that strangely enough Freud never mentions.

Hence, it's the transference that is fundamental: the transmission of thought (*Gedankenübertragung*) exists because there is transference (*Übertragung*). Freud allows the word to slip out, quoting H. Deutsch, he then drops the subject and doesn't ever return to it, the conference didn't come to anything.

We can be only but aware of the little use that Freud makes of his own theory of identification in regards to thought transmission and dreams. I think that in this case it's a kind of resistance to his "obscure perception" that the dreamlike experience belongs to an intermediate world; that dream isn't only an encounter between the ego and the internal objects, but also between the ego of the dreamer with that of other dreamers.

If we leave aside Freud's resistance to the matter, we can acquire what he actually showed us without mentioning it: an inter – psychical space in which thought transmission, archaic communication base themselves on identification, with instead transference in the psychoanalytic situation. Henceforth, it's necessary and possible to reintroduce dream to the area of thought transmission and transference.

Therefore, here we have a point that creates a link with the dreams that Balbino recounts. However, there is another point which is more difficult. This concerns the statute of destiny and wish.

Destiny and wish

Balbino's dreams tell us that it's impossible to escape one's own destiny. We can't escape what's going to happen. Balbino adds that it's a foresight that the Orixà gives us. In response to a question posed by Mecha, Balbino clarifies that destiny is determined by Olorum (the supreme god).

It seems to me that the idea of fate and the strength that goes along with it release the dreamer from his wish. Not only the dreamer, but also the person as a whole. The supreme wish is in fact to desire the Orixà. Is this formulation too subject focused in saying that the dreamer delegates "seeing, knowing and foreseeing" to the Orixà?

When Claudio insists: doesn't wish express itself in dreams? Balbino's answer clearly states: "Wish is one thing dream is another. There is absolutely no link between dream and wish. We dream when we go to sleep and our guardian angel shows us things that seem to have nothing to do with anything we live when we're awake. How many times do we dream of making love to a woman! It's a party!" Balbino says with cheer. Dreaming has nothing in common to when one is awake, even if the dream tells us about what's happening in reality. An ulterior manner of stating the importance of seeing-knowing: no one dreams for pleasure... *Yet through dreams, one can see and know.*

Dreams aren't only knowledge or omens, they are also fulfilment. Maybe at this point it's necessary to admit that there is an element of wish, and Balbino seems to

be saying this in regards to the plane ticket: “There are some dreams that come true”.

The interest that such an interview brings about is in comparing an interpretative system of dream that is different to the model proposed by psychoanalysis and that was initially elaborated around the clinical individual cure. The interview poses questions that we must solve using other analytical systems, such as that of group analysis or family therapy: Who dreams in the dream? How can telepathic dreams be understood, the shared and mutual dreamlike space? The practice of shaman dreams, the different traditional therapeutic practices used via the means of dream, the dreamlike journeys of the Pumé of the Andes, all these issues that have been highlighted and analysed by numerous anthropologists that introduce us to another concept of dream, to the extent of the whole experience of continuity in human relationships, nature and gods. Yet, do these topics still have meaning in post-modern society? What can psychoanalysis add?

René Kaës is Emerytus Professor of the University Lumère, Lyon 2; psychoanalyst (IPA); Group Psychotherapist; doctor in Psychology and Letteres and Human Sciences. He is a Member of the French Society of Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy (IAPG) and Founding Member of European Association for the trans-Cultural Analysis of Group; President of the Center of French Studies for the formation and the activ research on the psychoanalysis of group: Group, Psychodrama, institutions (CEFFRAP). Author of several books and articles.

E-Mail: reneaes@orange.fr