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The use of autogenic training in group analysis of dreams

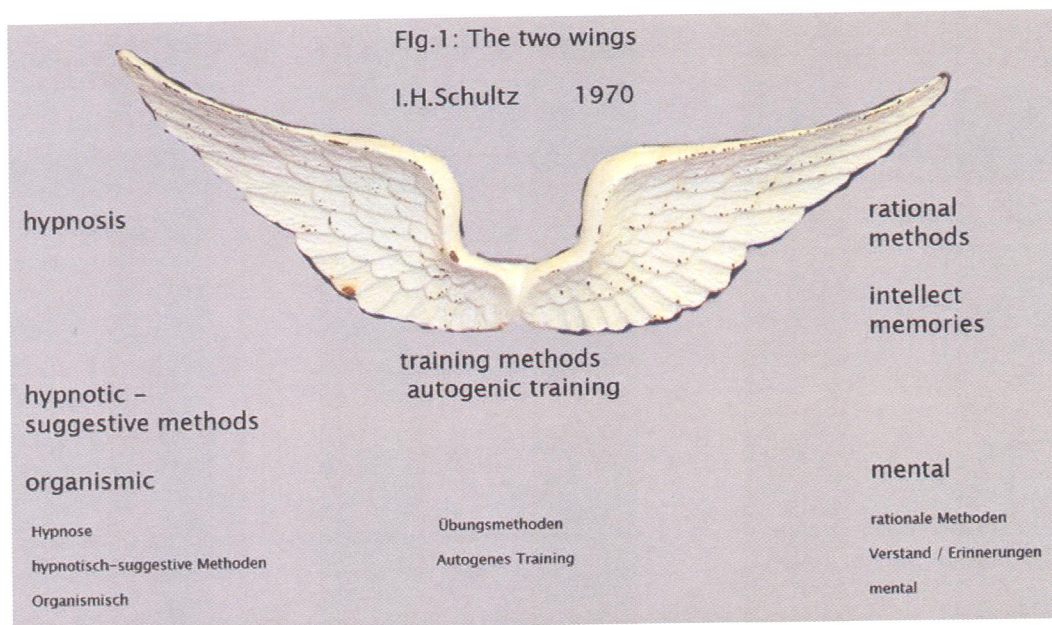
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Summary

An association of methods is presented: associative analysis of dreams by means of autogenic training in groups.

Key-words: autogenic training, dream, associative analysis, group.

During a short interview (an almost impromptu dialogue) given to Heinrich Wallnöfer in Berlin more than 30 years ago, I.H.Schultz proposes some axiomatic views on the positions of several psychotherapeutic approaches, by using very short and precise terms. Starting with the poetic image of the “two wing methods” (“Zwei Flügelmethoden”), he defines a dichotomy between psychotherapies with deep neurological and psychological implications, making implicit reference to the ontogenesis and phylogenesis of our nervous system:



Here are some reflections from the interview: by using the image of the two wings, Schultz makes a distinction between the *organismic approach*, represented by hypnosis, and the *mental approach*, represented by psychoanalysis or psychagogy; in the middle between these two wings Schultz places *training methods* (“Übungsmethoden”), such as autogenic training. The image of the two wings helps to outline the logic and practice of associating methods that are going to be described.

*) Interview published in this magazine's previous edition, for the first time.

As widely known, Freud's own methodological evolution too, implies a passage from hypnosis to the associative analysis of dreams, which, in the Schultzian image of the two wings, corresponds to the movement from the organismic wing towards the mental one. Another logical aspect that can be applied to the image of the two wings will be found in the differences between some Freudian terms such as "primary process" and "secondary revision", "unconscious" and "preconscious" and others. Moreover, the Freudian setting itself, facilitating free association, shows elements of sensory deprivation, such as body-immobilization, a visual field limited to a neutral white background (the ceiling) – due to the supine position of the patient – and the intentional passivity. Right from the beginning, the Freudian setting for dyadic dream-analysis thus contains some well known elements which are essential for introducing some hypnotic and self-hypnotic states, by starting from millenary Yoga. In the interview mentioned Schultz states: "...the old Yoga traditions... are similar to our intention in many respects... the first reports on hypnosis date back to the beginning of the second millennium before our era..." (Schultz dedicated four publications to Yoga, using the translations by Zimmer of standard texts like the Patanjali-sutras or Hathayogapradipika from Sanskrit literature).

In the same interview, first published by Walter Orrù in this magazine recently, Schultz briefly defines hypnosis, starting from the organismic wing of the psychotherapeutic methods: *"a change ("Umschaltung") in the internal attitude towards a form which is similar to sleep"*. Schultz defines the different methods involved as *"hypnotically suggestive methods"* (*"hypnotisch suggestive Methoden"*).

On the contrary, when talking about the mental wing in psychotherapy, Schultz defines *"methods that use reflections, understanding and memories,"* (*"Überlegung, Verstand und Erinnerung"*). It follows that the Freudian analysis of the dream (1900) would be classified here in Schultzian terms mainly as a mental method, except for the constitutive elements of induction of a slight autophypnotic state for free association, and for the implication that the dream itself is always produced beforehand in the state of sleep.

Still following the logical approach to the above-mentioned interview, when explaining his Autogenic Training to Heinrich Wallnöfer – a technique placed in the middle of the two wings by Schultz – Schultz says: *"Autogenic Training is an exercise method, but its fundamental core is the hypnotic process..."* . *"Das Autogene Training ist ein Übungsverfahren, aber sein eigentlicher Kern ist der hypnotische Vorgang"*. Then, in the same interview I. H. Schultz compares introversion and sensory deprivation, which is used during hypnosis, with sleep and dream phenomenology: (*"Bitte denken Sie an den Traum !"*, *"Think of the dream, please!"*). We then hear Schultz making direct reference to visualisations during Autogenic Training: *"...so it is possible to deal with the greatest contradictions in the world of images..."*, *"Es ist also möglich, in der Welt der Bilder sich mit den grössten Widersprüchen auseinanderzusetzen..."* thus implying the manifestation of contradictory pseudo-hallucinogenic images evoked in autogenic training.

The logical conclusion seems to be clear: autogenic training is suitable for integration in the Freudian technique of dream analysis; the argumentative approach adheres to the features of sleep, dream, hypnosis and slight self-hypnosis, thus disclosing new practical possibilities.

The combination of three methodological levels – dyadic analysis of the dream (Freudian, Jungian, etc), autogenic training and group therapy – can be substantiated as follows: the dream itself, even if only on a virtual hallucinatory level, mainly appears as a group process. Günter Ammon (during a conference at the fourth International Forum for Psychoanalysis,

held in New York in 1972) defined the dream as "*group- and ego-function*" in plain terms („*Der Traum als Ich- und Gruppenfunktion*"). Ammon starts with Federn's axiomatic definitions of "*limits of the ego*" („*Ichgrenzen*"). Ammon's definition implies that each series of dreams comprises a multiplicity of personifications and many dreams represent various kinds of interpersonal interactions, at a manifest and/or latent level. Furthermore Ammon: "*...the connections between individual dreams and group situations, to which ... it always refers*".

By keeping the same axiomatic line, Freud states that "*... the dream stages again the childhood family unit*"..., which is a group a priori.

The plurality of personifications in dreams is equally axiomatic in the "content analysis of dreams" by C.S. Hall and R.L. van de Castle (1966). In their terminology, it says "*... classification and scoring of characters*".

As a practical consequence a mixed group setting appears more efficient as a resounding chamber for free association. Contrary to the dyadic setting, the mixed group offers associative material both from men and women, in conjunction with the presence of male and female figures in dreams, and reduces censorship.

In a further approach to facilitate associative resonances in our combined method the group collectively induces a hypnoid state by means of autogenic training.

The dream in analytically oriented group psychotherapy

In specialist literature, the first attempts with group therapy are attributed to Pratt (1906), Marsh (1931), Snowden (1941) and Klapman (1946), while the introduction of psychoanalytic concepts in the strict sense of the word in group psychotherapy is attributed to Burrow (1926) and Wender (1936). According to Wender, group therapy with an analytic orientation offers greater therapeutic results than individual analytic psychotherapy: within a group, the patients' spontaneity increases.

In group therapy with an analytic orientation or, perhaps, with an orientation based on the so called depth psychology ("Tiefenpsychologie" E. Bleuler 1910) - a term which summarizes Freudian, Jungian and Adlerian positions - the indirect use of the primary process (in our case dream memories or the dream record) allows work on interactive situations, such as psycho-social balance or compromise. Working through these becomes efficient from a therapeutic point of view thanks to the mobilisation of affective states.

A wary use of the dream record within the group focuses on the interactive aspect of the dream: as Freud rejects any possible hyper-assessment of individual compared to social psychology.

Working through dreams associatively in groups thus allows a real training in working through transference. In fact, in the dream, personifications of the primary triad (parents and subject) and the childhood family unit frequently already appear on a manifest level.

The dreamer's real associations clarify the different levels of temporal regression and implicitly of transference. Mechanisms of projective identification in the group process (by comparing one's own experiences with those of the dreamer and detecting analogies) allow the participants to comprehend transference dynamics, by cognition and also affectively, thus making them improve neurotic forms and accept or reduce others.

In the group process, which is one specific mediator of the method proposed here, open and covert behaviour, (the latter corresponding to Cartesius' *res cogitans*), perceptions, states of mind, thoughts, even pathological content are involved. All this is introduced by the dream in a hallucinated form.

According to Freud with transference we mean all the behaviour, open and covert, acquired in childhood relationships and repeated in the relationships with others later on.

The elaboration of hallucinated material within the group appears to be particularly suited to reach "*emotional corrective experiences*" (Alexander).

The use of hallucinated material pertaining to the primary process allows an interpretative technique aiming at defence, transference and counter-transference analysis. The structure of the dream material brought into the session facilitates the observation of communication.

This kind of therapy is preferably set within a small group of 7 to 12 members. In the group setting that we propose, a role rotation takes place during a session: in a first phase the group actively participates, associates and interacts, while in a second phase the group remains in an attitude of abstinence, thus favouring the dreamer's free associations. Here, instead of the analyst, who attracts the projections by means of a frustrating abstinent behaviour, we have the emotional effort in a group dimension, an effort of social learning.

We developed this method combination on a pragmatic and experimental base as a technical-methodological variation deriving from different premises, though mainly using psychoanalytic techniques, and applying it to a group of 7 to 12 people. In this setting, we aim at working-through latent pathogenic conflicts, at integration and assimilation of repressed and depreciated experiences by means of some emotional and cognitive corrective experiences.

The hallucinatory and oneiric material which is elaborated enlightens unconscious motivations that restrict the patients' behaviour and, through their repression, cause symptoms.

To support the combination of methods we propose, we assume an assertion by Freud, according to whom the boundary between individual and social psychology is not very sharp and the difference between narcissistic and social psychic acts does not explain this difference. Thus group therapies focusing on leader guidance too much do not allow free and participatory group interaction.

In the therapeutic model that we adopt, we rather try to put the small group sociology mentioned by Homans into action: *"from a sociological point of view, we consider the group as a number of people who frequently meet in a certain space of time, and whose number is limited enough to allow each person to communicate directly with one another, face to face and not through other individuals"*.

By means of transference analysis, we examine the parents' and siblings' experiences projected on group members. Under the leader's guidance, the patients progressively learn to understand the extent to which they resemble each other with the traits coming from their primary and family experience. Within the group setting, the transference scope appears to be amplified and differentiated, thus improving social and affective learning. As to the explanation of behaviour guided by transference, the analytic group thus offers the possibility of *repeating scripts of family relationships* (Schindler).

Foulkes, for his part, faces problems with the different methods and their combination. He distinguishes the method involving the psychoanalytic treatment of a single person within a group without considering the group dynamics; the method implements a psychoanalysis of the group itself considered as an autonomous entity where the group thus becomes the patient; and, finally, the method only focuses on group dynamics, thus neglecting individual intrapsychic processes.

A qualitative distinction between group and intrapsychic dynamics seems quite superficial: in Hegelian language we can similarly say- in a somewhat free translation - *"Das Aussersichsein der Subjekte hat keine Wahrheit"* *"There is no truth in the isolation of subjects ..."* In the dream we notice the hallucinated dissociation of the Ego in the personifications of childhood primary groups or recent groups. During the group activity, on the contrary, we notice the creation of a *"We"* through free interactions. More easily than the analyst-patient dyad, the mixed group produces effects suited to the multipersonal interactions among the dream figures.

As long ago as 1938 and on the basis of Wender's and Schindler's works, Alexander Wolf started to develop analytic concepts of group therapy. He also underlines the importance of heterogeneity within the groups: he considers this characteristic as an *aspect that will never be sufficiently highlighted* since it activates a self-therapeutic structure which significantly surpasses the possibilities of a homogeneous group or, most of all, a dyad. A group which is heterogeneous from a sex, age and social point of view has a greater therapeutic potential and

inevitably incites the patient to change: it stimulates, provokes, stirs up, challenges. The interaction, which is diversified because of heterogeneity, will cause and favour several transferences. It will break the rigidity of dyadic transference reactions due to the diversity of personalities on which the different roles are projected.

Under the analyst's guidance patients discover the extent to which they assign traits of the childhood family situation to one another. In the everyday life of neurotic personalities this mechanism is responsible for the painful experiences deriving from the attribution of unreal characteristics to others. The result is relationship distortion, inevitably leading to frustration and suffering.

Even if it cannot eliminate this process, the psychoanalytic group therapy at least aims at making patients able to correct these distortions partially within themselves and to tolerate them in the behaviour of others towards them.

Using dream material, the attention of the group turns with ease to the general characteristics of transference reactions: inappropriateness, compulsion, repetition, absence of rationality, overcompensation.

In Wolf's and Schwartz's „group psychoanalysis“, the second phase of this setting is characterized by working through dreams as *a fundamental activity of the analytic process* (consistent with Freudian axiomatics).

Working through dreams is considered as an essential therapeutic active principle by them and it persists in all the therapy phases. The analyst hastens to describe all the dreams' details. Dreams where other members of the group appear are defined as particularly interesting.

Historically, the importance of the interactive aspect of the dream structure is highlighted in Hellenistic and Talmudic dream interpretation. Artemidor for example, (in Strauss' translation an important source for Freud), distinguishes five classes of dreams, four of which only represent interactive subdivisions: *idioti* (dreams where only the dreamer appears), *koinoi* (dreams where the partner of a dyadic relationship appears), *allotrioi* (dreams where the partner of a dyadic relationship appears), *demosioi* (dreams where the extended social group – city or country – appears).

Very similarly, the modern methods of Wolf and Schwartz as well as Battegay highlight the dreams where the members of the group appear. *Nihil novi sub sole*.

According to Wolf's, Schwartz's and Battegay's experiences as well as ours, these dreams are quite frequent and cause a high level of reciprocal interaction and group attention. The analytic group facilitates social learning thanks to the rich interactions occurring within the group itself as well as to the *virtual hallucinotic space* of dreams.

By describing his group-setting, Battegay states that the individual analysis allows working through dream associations in more depth. The therapeutic model that we developed tries to overcome this limitation by dividing the group session into two symmetric parts in such a way as to keep a proper place for the dreamer's free (and irreplaceable) associations. Free association –amply used in individual dyadic analysis and more or less neglected in the group settings quoted –, is highlighted by our method since it emerges as a support action of the group itself. The other participants' passive behaviour during the second phase of our sessions is not a passive and sterile silence for each member since the comparisons with the previous states of mind and the richness of the associations allow every single member to have an «unobservable learning». The result is affective resonance, intensity of the emotional approach of the group and thus effective «sympsyndism». Furthermore the abstinent group stimulates the dreamer's free associations by means of *paradoxal intention* (Frankl 1938).

For Battegay too, the dream has an important effect on group analysis since it makes everybody (the analyst, the participants and the dreamer himself, most of all) understand that some aspects of the personality had been underestimated (*compensatory function* JUNG). The

group dynamics can reveal feelings that were considered unconscious. The dream of the single individual talks to the others in a direct and emotional way: it puts the group in the middle of the affective world of the dreamer and of the dream itself.

An aspect that Battergay frequently underlines concerns his so-called "*group-relevant dream*" "... *gruppenrelevanter Traum*" (a dream which contains elements referable to the group).

This type of dream could be defined as a covert group interaction. According to Battergay, this kind of dream facilitates the introspection and reciprocal communication activity within the group.

The use of dreams facilitates contact with the principle of pleasure that pervades the unconscious and, through the activation of instinctual reaction in other members of the group it allows the dreamer's principle of reality to develop ("*Realitätsprinzip*" Freud): thus facing external realities through interactions with group members.

For Battergay, the dream presented and worked through within the group fosters "*knowledge, interpersonal bonds and social learning*".

Another advantage of working through the dreams within the group is that, thanks to the hallucinatory condensation and the oneiric time regression, the transference phenomena emerge in a clear and unequivocal way. Freud, in fact, stated that dreams replace childhood scenes by bringing them into the present context by transference.

Wolf, Schwartz and Battergay obviously refer to the use of dreams in groups *without* employing an autohypnotic technique.

Our actual objective is to present a new method with three technique levels which we developed and studied in the course of some postgraduate training groups on psychotherapy for physicians and psychologists, with primarily didactic aims. This procedure is highly structured and involves some practical notions at various levels. However, it appears to be quite valuable in respect to axiomatic and practical implications.

The initially mentioned quotations drawn from I.H.Schultz' interview point to different axiomatic levels ("*Axiomschichten*" Hilbert) and explain our logical and practical approach.

Literature is rich in contributions to theory and technique of dream interpretation, mainly in a dyadic setting (therapist-patient), and rarely in a group-setting.

Psychoanalysis and, more in general, depth-psychology give the use of dreams a central position:

Let us quote the guidelines Freud proposed in some texts from 1922: he identified four different procedures for a dyadic dream analysis. In a few words, he outlined four variations:

The first, Freud's favourite one, consists of proceeding in chronological order: the patient is asked to tell his dream and his ideas, associations, memories concerning the dream's content, in the same sequential order of the dream elements themselves in the dream account.

A second procedure suggests starting the interpretative work with a particularly striking element of the dream, which gives some intense feelings ("*diathesis psyches*" Artemidor), normally filling them with various emotional colours.

The third possible approach proposes skimming over the content of the dream to focus on the day residues, thus inciting the dreamer to make associations between the events of the previous day and the dream he had.

The fourth procedure is useful when the dreamer knows the technique of dream interpretation: the rule, in this case, is to leave out all the technical rules and make the patient decide in which way he wants to start interpreting his dream.

Freud himself does not indicate which is the best or the most effective procedure, leaving the choice among these possibilities to the analyst, on the basis of his intuition and experience (Freud 1922).

The four procedures described above appear to be a basic guideline to be used both in dyadic and group-settings of dream interpretation.

From a bionomic (Schultz) point of view, these different Freudian procedures appear to be useful not only in interpreting dreams but also in interpreting material which emerges from autogenia during autogenic training (A.T.), (Schultz 1920) and the advanced autogenic training (A.A.T.) in particular, which can be considered to a certain extent in analogy with the dream.

According to Schultz's method, even if it identifies different levels of participation in the imaginal between the basic and advanced cycle of autogenic training, an analytic interpretation of these experiences is important right from the first exercises. This is based on the argument that the "*organ language*" is a symbolic language (Widmann, 2005).

The bionomic-autogenic psychotherapy mainly favours the experience of the symbol and considers what happens in the therapeutic relationship as an opportunity to make a psychodynamic inquiry aiming at understanding the functioning modalities of the subject. Every single element of the therapeutic experience and everything that happens within and around the training is a potential object of working through analytically. The progress of the training from the basic to the advanced cycle is characterized by an ever deeper immersion in the imaginal, so much so, that the record of the material which emerges during the advanced cycle also includes the dreams (Widmann, 2005). The analysis of the training report and of the night dreams, in fact, follows the same procedures which aim at the acquisition of a greater consciousness of one's *destiny line* (Schultz).

The bionomic-autogenic school considers both the individual and the group in psychotherapeutic work. Normally, a group with therapeutic objectives is composed of 7 to 12 participants. *For our specific objective, a group composed of 12 members proved to be optimal as regards to the permutation of interactions.*

The group session we want to describe here is a group composed of psychotherapists (physicians and psychologists) in training at the *Scuola Superiore di Psicoterapia Bionomica in Cagliari*, for three years. In the personal training programme within this group, which is stipulated in the school's curriculum, the integration of the classical Schultz's method with that developed by one of us (Sausgruber 1985) during the 70's has been initiated.

The integration of these two methods led to the definition of a more complex modality of group work, where AT experiences (basic or advanced cycle according to the individual training level attained) alternate with two levels of dream interpretation. The integration of the methods is intended for dream interpretation in groups, in order to favour the communication among several subjects on material deriving from the unconscious: the dream. Therefore, we have defined the new association of procedures as the "*combined bionomic method*".

Dream analysis within the group was already recognized in Italy by Assagioli's school of psychosynthesis (1973), whose basic principles are not too far from the Schultzian and which is orientated on depth psychology (Freud, Jung, Adler).

The original setting for dream analysis in groups (Sausgruber 1985) can be planned in four different working phases: The use of AT, then, was not intended.

1. One of the participants tells the group his dream. The group, including the therapists, does not intervene until the conclusion of the account, and then only asks for clarification of the dream's manifest elements (for instance to specify the hue of a coloured manifest dream element etc.).
2. The group members, including the therapists but with the exception of the dreamer (the person who told his dream), present their free associations that developed around the elements of the dream described. During this second phase, the dreamer is not allowed to intervene apart from when he is asked to repeat the dream or explain details of the manifest content only. This paradoxical rule efficiently prepares the dreamer for free association in phase three. The activity goes on until the group's free association runs dry, the dreamer remaining silent.
3. Once the group stops intervening, the *dreamer* can expound his own free associations, as provoked already by the group's contributions, and his emotional resonances.
4. The therapists, the dreamer and the group reflect together upon the themes in the dreamer's association line, in order to identify and work through *focal conflicts* (French-E.Fromm). It is obvious that the free association of the female group members to a female oneiric personification of a male dreamer improves associative resonance, compared to a dyad male analyst – male analysand.

Preferably both sexes are represented by the leader and co-leader of the group.

This setting is also suitable for working with small series of dreams. As for Freud, the dream is the *via regia* to the unconscious. For Jung the long series of dreams not only accompanies but also partially constitutes the „*individuation process/ Individuationsprozess*“, a vague Jungian term for personality development at different levels. This axiomatic line follows the serial nature of the dream (Freud, Jung).

Let us continue with some remarks on censorship: It goes without saying that the dreamer can freely censor parts of the dream him/herself, and parts both of autogenic material and of his free associations. We know that in the dream itself there are a priori different censorship automatisms, such as symbolization or amnesic lacunae (*negative hallucination*). The same is the case for group members with regard to the pseudo-hallucinogenic content that appeared in an autogenic state or in free associations.

As far as abstinence rules are concerned: the classical concept of the therapist's abstinence historically derives from the psychoanalytic dyadic setting. In a structured but autoregulated group this aspect is relativized: the group leader is a member of the self-regulative group himself. Thus meaningful rules of abstinence can be less rigid within a heterogenous mixed-gender-group than those meant for a Freudian dyad.

By offering for instance personal contributions, a therapist provides some opportunities-also for didactic aims -, thereby reducing censorships and resistances within the group. Moreover, just as any psychotherapeutic work is based on authentic interpersonal relationships, active participation of the therapist encourages content exchange between conscious and unconscious levels in the group.

Thus the therapist-patient interaction, in the Schultzean view of communion (Schultz 1951) allows for the circulation of images, contents and emotions, between the conscious and the unconscious. In the bionomic field, this exchange, in a dyadic setting, can be connected with what Schultz calls "*the therapeutic we*" ("*therapeutisches Wir*"): "*... this therapeutic relationship is mainly transferential as long as it collects some projections of the mundus imaginalis, but it can also develop in multiple registers of interpersonal relationship when the projections channel towards the imaginative activity. This allows for the cultivation of a*

less neutral, strict and detached therapeutic relationship compared to an analytic relationship based on an all-absorbing "transference neurosis". It allows for vividness in the analytic relationship thanks to the input of feeling. And, moreover, it allows for the establishment of a relationship which is not only instrumental and which is based on what Schultz calls the "therapeutic we" (Widmann, 2005).

In the active participation within a group, it is possible to observe an amplification of symbolic contents. The bionomic approach derives from Jungian techniques: the concept of amplification as a method to *"collect partial and complementary aspects of the symbolic constellation and thereby rearrange an account that is complex, even if not complete"* (Widmann, 2005).

With reference to dreams, in Assagioli terminology, it says:

"...the dream appears to be folded. The latent and manifest contents follow one another and present not just one but several interpretations, each of which acquires a therapeutic truth and effectiveness during the evolutionary process" (Caldironi*).

The associative work of the group makes the majority of these possible refoldings emerge, allowing them to be explored, at the same time. To use Schultz- Hencke's terms, if the dream is a dialogue between the instinctual life of men and the antinomies of life, the group work on dreams makes these antinomies more visible through the facets of many introspective efforts.

At the end of the group session the dreamer often seems not to accept the interpretations of the group. The experience shows that this refusal comes from the conscious while the unconscious absorbs and observes everything to give it back at the right time, maybe in a new dream for instance. We can state that dream interpretation is potentially unlimited. It often happens that a dream can receive further conclusive interpretations after some months or even years.

Evidently, this is possible because the dream still has something to reveal, but this revelation follows and accompanies the person's evolution and cannot anticipate it or leave it aside. At its best, an interpretation which is not in step with the person's evolution can only produce rationalizations or intellectualizations but not a real assimilation of new positions. Therefore, *right* interpretations can be multiple but, primarily, they will be right only if they are proposed at the right moment. During his own evolution, an individual can *listen* to *different* right interpretations of the same dream. We thus want to underline the importance of the emotional resonance as a confirmation of interpretation validity, since the dream, being a product of the unconscious, contains a transmutation potential that is at work during an individual's life thus creating opportunities of comprehension and of bionomic *realization of the life plan* (Schultz).

*Caldironi B., preface to *Analisi dei sogni in gruppo*. Sausgruber H., Piovan Editore, Abano Terme, 1985.

If Autogenic Training is integrated in the method described above, we arrive at a *combined bionomic method* ("*metodo bionomico combinato*" Sausgruber), which is structured in five phases:

1. One of the participants tells the group his dream. The group, including the therapist, does not intervene until the end of the description and then only to ask for

some explanations on the dream's manifest content, thus avoiding any association, comment or interpretation of the material which has emerged.

2. After having arranged the setting properly, the whole group, including its leaders, starts practising the autogenic training (AT). It accomplishes the basic autogenic training (BAT) or, as the case may be, the advanced autogenic training (AAT), according to the training levels attained. The autogenic practice as such does not undergo any variation: the dream heard, implicitly functions as a stimulus, a species of "*day residue*" which can be compared with this Freudian concept ("Tagesrest"), in the sense that it inevitably starts a series of resonances within the autogenic state initiated immediately after the dream account.
3. The group members, including the therapist but with the exception of the dreamer, describe the AT experiences and the free associations that developed in connection with the contents of the dream presented. During the whole third phase, the dreamer does not intervene, unless, as is often the case, part of the dream that was previously under the veil of amnesia comes to light. This is quite frequent and in this case the dreamer must complete his dream account. It has been proved elsewhere that AT enhances overall dream-recollection.
4. Once the contributions of the group are concluded, the dreamer explains the experiences of his AT exercise and the free associations evoked by the different contributions of the group. Occasionally additional dream elements, which emerged during AT exercise, have to be appended by the dreamer.
5. In a final step, the dreamer, the group and the therapists, interact in order to work through the different contents that emerged and thereby explain the intrapsychic dynamics of the dreamer. The leaders guide the activity until working through attains an optimal level and, as the case may be, they also highlight elements left out of the group's associations. Sometimes, this intervention can produce new associations and allows further analysis and interpretation. Once the associative flow dries up and working through is completed, the leaders or other group members, according to the level of self-regulation attained, conclude the work or, as the case may be, can decide to start again from phase 1 with the presentation of the dream of another member for a further session after an appropriate break.

This type of highly structured dream analysis lasts about three hours in all for a single dream. A break of half an hour is recommended.

The integration of the method with the use of AT aims at some important objectives:

The first objective is *using the autogenic state to facilitate the emotional resonances and the cognitive associative process*. By attaining the autogenic state, as we know, the use of AT establishes the conditions of passivity and total acceptance that support the introspective work. The AT practice, in fact, allows for the enrichment of the associative processes both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view: not only do the associations become more numerous but they are also more empathic. The better quality of the material evoked of course is due to the reduction of resistance following the inhibition of ego control during the autogenic state. Another effect, of minor importance, is that the use of AT reduces voluntary censorships because it also facilitates the development of an atmosphere of empathetic cohesion and sharing within the group. Moreover, the hypnoid state facilitates hypermnnesia and intuitions. Comparing the method developed during the 80s (Sausgruber), which does not establish the use of AT, with the one originating from applying the combined method, the latter prevails. The group practising autogenic training, in fact, shows a greater productivity,

in the sense that each participant produces a higher number of associations more rapidly and participates more intensively from an emotional point of view and, moreover, the dreamer himself gets a better emotional comprehension of the dream's latent meaning. An empirical test showed that 18 participants out of 20 judged, that working through a dream associatively within a group happens in a more spontaneous, precise and rapid way by using the hypnoid state of the Schultzian technique. Working through not only becomes easier – furthermore the emotionally more intense resonances restore the *bionomic function* of the individual.

The use of AT facilitates and encourages the intervention of the more inhibited group members as well, thus reducing abstentions. This is partially due to the account of the personal experiences in AT, which, in itself, incites active participation: everybody tells his experiences but, most of all, as we have already said, the partial inhibition of the ego control activity during the autogenic state allows the development of more numerous and deeper associations. This not only means that everybody has something to tell, but also that he has more precious material to offer to both himself and the group. Our experience allows us to highlight that someone else's dream is very stimulating since, in an autogenic state, it generates some precise endogenous resonances: in other words, each participant's life resonates with the concentrated theme brought by the dream and the significant and emotionally intense contributions connected to the theme itself become more frequent. We can thus say that listening to the dream, before the exercise practise, leads to a focalization of the associative resonance produced during the autogenic state. Our experience shows that the result is always composed of resonances that are endogenous to the dream presented. As the majority of participants affirms, in the autogenic state the deep resonances are amplified and appear more precise and targeted within a lively associative flow which is less bound by resistance and censorship.

Everybody undergoes some more intense emotional resonances on the themes discussed both in the autogenic state and then within the group. In practice we could notice that by associating the methods, the number of people who do not intervene is zero and this favours an empathetic sharing atmosphere suitable for supporting and stimulating the process of expanding consciousness.

The fact that during AT it is not rare for the dreamer to remember some parts of the dream, is just another facet of the advantages of combining group setting, autogenic training and dream analysis by association.

Frequently, group members associate personal dreams with the dream presented. This type of material can be amplified of course comparing the latent materials involved.

Further advantages of this setting: an atmosphere which favours the introspective activity is attained more rapidly, there is an enhanced interest for daily autogenic training and the respective reports. According to a little empiric test, 15 participants out of 20 appear to be more diligent in daily training and 16 out of 20 state they are more motivated and attentive when recording experiences.

Other features of the combined method: if the setting implies the use of basic AT (*"Unterstufe des Autogenen Trainings"* Schultz), autogenic time does not normally exceed fifteen minutes. This duration of the exercise, always set according to the average training level, sometimes allows a limited image production that tends to increase in proportion to the autogenic time, leading onto the AAT for which the average duration of an exercise is about forty minutes.

For three years, we worked with a mixed group (2 men, 18 women) from 26 to 46 years old, physicians and psychologists attending the first of the four years of specialization in psychotherapy. The group was assisted by two therapists (male and female), according to the symmetry and transference rules noted in the studies of group psychodynamics.

To give an idea of the technical procedure we chose a dream whose essential structure already appears in Artemidor's *oneirocritica* (interpretation of dreams) :

ἵπτασθαι δοκεῖν ὀλίγον τῆς γῆς
ἀπέχοντα καὶ ὀρθὸν τῷ σχήματι ἀγαθόν
τῷ ἰδόντι·

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“...*dreaming of flying not far from the ground in an upright position is suitable*because the more one leaves the ground the more one rises above the people who walk below...it means that one will have to move above because ones feet do not touch the ground..” Artemidor's conclusions consider future journeys of the dreamer.

As we have just said, this type of dream interpretation needs at least three hours. Here is a short summary of working-through a typical dream of flight:

First phase: a volunteer tells the dream he had the previous night.

Dream of M. (male, 28 years old)

“I am in a dirt patch which seems to be the internal courtyard of a big area surrounded by walls, like being in a big cottage with a vast internal non metalled area. The walls that mark the boundary of the dirt patch have some porticoes under which there are a lot people as old as me - they could be my colleagues - , having a feast. They do not care about me and they are quite far away. I start to walk on this dirt patch and I suddenly lift off with both my feet. I start to move forward, suspended in the atmosphere a few dozen centimetres from the ground. I move forward a lot, so much so, that I think I surpass the long jump world record, and I keep on moving forward. A person behind me, whose face or sex I do not remember, looks at me and is astonished at what I am doing and pulls at his/her hair, incredulously. A little later I touch down and this person marks the point where I arrive and, underlining my extraordinary achievement, says: “We must tell everybody what you have done”. On the contrary, I do not care about telling the others what I did, because I don't think they would believe me and would not care that much.”

Second phase: the group continues practising AT for 15 minutes, in this case the BAT as this was the training level attained by the majority of the group members. A longer training duration leading on to the AAT after about 45 minutes would directly produce pseudohallucinotic material provoked by the dream previously presented.

Third phase: the group members go on to describe their associations, including those that developed during the BAT.

Here are the contributions of the participants (D. dreamer, G. member of the group, T. therapist):

G.: the cottage and the people made me think of a graduation party; the ground and the jump of a jump towards the future.

G.: I thought of the book "Three Metres Above the Sky", which describes the experiences of a group of adolescents. But I also associated it with the different way children are lifted up to please them.

G.: the initial scene made me think of a wedding celebration.

G.: the measuring scene reminds me of when I was a child. My father used to measure my height and mark it on the wall to show everybody, full of pride at how much I had grown.

G.: it reminds me of roller skating as a child, when there was separation between my feet and the ground.

G.: it made think of cross-country skiing.

G.: I thought of the long jump.

G.: the satisfaction of the jump made during this dream, reminded me of the pleasant sensation of being on the ground.

G.: it reminded me of a journey in Rome with my boyfriend, during which I really got tired. I am sure I could not do that anymore, but then I experienced it as something extraordinary.

G.: the dirt surrounding the cottage made me think of our group circle

T.: what is the state of mind of the people that are there in the dream? (*Control question*)

D.: they are peaceful, maybe it is a party.

D.: during the AT, I remembered that I felt the pleasure of breathing out while flying, so I was fine when I breathed out.

T.: what is the state of mind of the person who measures the length of the jump? (*Control question*)

D.: the person was astonished and pulled out his/her hair to say: "What is he doing?"

G.: I think that the person who measures the jump can be a person in the dreamer's private life, for example a sport trainer.

G.: it makes me think of a worried mum who sees her son doing something, but is then so proud of him, that she incites him to repeat the jump.

D.: I see astonishment and fear in that person's face, while I get scared because I am taking a 30-40 metre jump, which is not normal. I feel it is unnatural. (*The dreamer intervenes to add some details of the dream manifest content that had been left out during his initial presentation*).

T.: the work on this dream person is not very easy. The important person is the one who watches and has his/her feet on the ground. He/she is astonished and measures thus being a judge and suggests taking a jump again. This context outside the jump leads us to suppose there is a conflict. This person could be a woman.

G.: it reminds me of the canvas by Munch "the scream", which shows an abstract sexless face.

G.: it made me think of a mother's expectations of her son.

G.: it made me think of a gesture of despair, when a mother loses a son

G.: it made me think of my first flight in a hang-glider with my mother watching.

T.: at a subjective level, this personification could represent the dreamer and an ambivalence of his mother who encourages things that he censures.

T.: (*didactic digression*). This is an atypical flying dream. Many flights in dreams are represented as different from those of birds and more similar to the movement of fish in water. The legs and arms of the dreamer do not move but the whole body moves according to the will of the dreamer. According to some authors ("*flying dreams are floating dreams*" Balint) this could be a trace of primitive memories of intrauterine movements despite childhood amnesia. In some dreams, however, the arms function as wings and so in the dream, flight can show the rhythm of breathing, in assimilating a body stimulus: the ribcage rising and lowering (Strümpell, Freud). In Artemidor's dream-specimen quoted above, he

uses the terms "*orthon to schema*" "upright body position" or "upright form". These are aspects of the *hallucinated body scheme*."

Fourth phase: the group has completed the associative elaboration and the dreamer is asked to express what was evoked during the group work. Several contributions from the group are about the theme of growth, symbolized by events such as graduation or weddings, the height, growth, the long jump etc.; other contributions pick out an anxious mother figure and the weight of parental expectations. On the base of these contributions, the dreamer describes his cognitive and emotional associations and resonances:

Dreamer's recollection:

D.: the movement of this jump made me think of when I go swimming when, after a dive, I like to wait and to advance in the water without moving my legs.

D.: if I accept the hypothesis that the person is my mother, I can see my mother's behaviour, since she wants to share my success with everybody. When I graduated I had a great gratification and my mother informed even my second cousins and many other relatives. That annoyed me because I don't think they were interested in my educational success. My mother graduated as well but with some difficulties since she got married when she was very young and had to study while taking care of the family.

Fifth phase: T.: the flight can therefore represent your educational course; the final mark on the ground could be the end of the studies. The hands gesture, the mother's behaviour in the dream (she graduated only after many years of studying) can represent the worry that the son is spending too much time. But in the end, she is proud of him and wants to tell everybody. In this dream the school mates are present, too, but they are not as interested as the mother.

G.: the line marked on the ground made me think of the time I allowed myself for studying and enjoying myself.

T.: until now, this subject had been censored but I think it is good to talk about it as pleasures are a very personal aspect. How did you and your mother experience that? I mean, what was the ratio between study and pleasure in real life during the "flight"?

D.: I studied and enjoyed myself in a balanced way so my mother did not interfere, however she still repeats that I should not have wasted time.

T.: the flight was in fact easy and, at the end of the flight, your mother was positive in her behaviour. However, there is still a point of conflict: the educational course is not concluded because after the degree there is the specialization, so 4 more years of study. How did your mother take that?

D.: she supports me and tells me I must not waste time.

T.: if your mother wasted time as she had to take care of her family, her son probably should not waste time and should not think of a family of his own, so this new educational course will still continue to delay the opportunity to have a family of ones own.

D.: there is actually a problem and delay for me in establishing life as a couple. I am engaged, my girlfriend is specializing in anaesthesia so she still doesn't talk about marriage and children either. Our talks about these subjects stop at a certain level.

T.: in the dream I can see this stop at a certain communicative level in the penguin step. In any case this is a positive dream if we consider the latent material: there is a clear accordance with the mother and the girlfriend.

D.: I would like to add that my main problem is that I am the only child of my parents and this was very hard for me: my parents focused all their expectations on me. Living with adults

only actually made communication less sound. In fact, I noticed that when we had my cousins, the style of conversation was different, more on my level.
T.: communication with peers is different from that one has with adults, because the latter is characterized by adult terms and contents; this focus is also present in the manifest dream, of course.

Dreamer's final conclusions:

D: Following several group associations, it seems to me that the person who measures my jump can be my mother, who tends to describe what I do even to people who I do not think are interested. Moreover, this dream could reflect my condition as an only child in the focus of parental pretences and attentions. In this sense, the "pressure" of the parental expectancies that I could not share with a sibling could unfortunately lie hidden behind the interest of this person in my jump. Therefore, an experience connected to life as an only child and to the communication modalities not suited to a child which I experienced at home, emerged. Moreover, the dream seems to be set during the study period, characterized by a peaceful relationship both with my parents and my girlfriend. At the same time, however, it reveals my mother's anxiety of my wasting time and not thinking of a family of my own, but just concentrating on completing my studies. This choice seems also to appear in the relationship with my girlfriend with whom I have implicitly postponed even talking about the establishment of our family.
But maybe the anxiety of wasting time could be only mine.

Summary:

The dreamer defines his interpretation by grasping some aspects of the dream and, as it often happens, inevitably leaving out some others. In this way the dreamer thinks back to all the stages of the dream connecting them with the most important stages of his life. From a psychodynamic point of view, it is very interesting to notice the final transfer of the anxiety projection from the mother of the dreamer to the dreamer himself "...it could be mine" (*subjective level* "*Subjectstufe*" Jung). In this way, the dreamer recognizes and regains possession of the anxiety for aims in life. He feels forced to delay a family of his own. The anxious mother who is proud of her son represents his own pride and anxiety; and to overcome this is the next necessary step towards an authentic emotional reappropriation and further developments in the outer world.

Conclusions

After more than 20 years of group dream analysis, started in collaboration with the Istituto di Psicosintesi di Ravenna (Caldironi, Sausgruber, Widmann, 1985) during the collaboration between the I.C.S.A.T. and FORMIST Institute of Cagliari (Orrù 2003), a series of seminars was organized involving groups of psychotherapists in training who had already learned autogenic training during their course of specialization in psychotherapy. We started a series of experimental sessions in order to study working through a dream associatively in a group which practices autogenic training. The axiomatic parallelisms have been explained in the introduction to this paper using quotations from a Schultz' interview (Schultz, Wallnöfer 1970). It was not surprising that 18 participants out of 20 confirmed that working through a dream associatively in a group is more prompt, precise and quicker using the self-hypnoid state defined in the Schultztian technique.

By setting a 15 minute time limit to inferior autogenic training, the production of pseudo-hallucinogenic images is poor or even absent, but free association is clearly favoured. This whole setting requires about three hours of working time. A break of thirty minutes is suitable.

The study of dream analysis by means of images in advanced autogenic training implies that self-hypnoid states last about 40 minutes; and working-through pseudohallucinotic material produced by the group members is more time-consuming and requires separate analysis.

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