

# Introduction

*Robi Friedman, Claudio Neri and Malcolm Pines*

The idea for this book was born during a meeting on a Roman terrace one sunny afternoon after a congress about 'Dreams and the Group'. The three future editors of this book - relaxing with drinks in hand, chatting about this, that and the recent scientific meetings - concluded that the congress had been very interesting. But their strongest impression was that they were starting rather than ending a journey of exploration.

It was clear to them that although the dream theme strongly links group psychotherapy to Freud's psychoanalytical tradition, dealing with the dream in the group context goes far beyond psychoanalytical paradigms. The most ancient traditions had addressed dreams in order to decipher the future as representing a different level of 'reality', essential to living contemporary social life in a richer, more creative way.

Soon afterwards, Friedman, Neri and Pines found themselves with paper and pen in hand, planning the outline for a book. The plan was to systematically cover different aspects of the complex relationship between the group, dreams, psychotherapy and contemporary reality. The result - the actual book - is very different. It seems less organised, but richer. While this dream book did not become a handbook, as with daily residues, it ended up collecting selected contributions from psychotherapists and researchers from three continents and seven nations. We - Friedman, the Israeli; Neri, the Italian; and Pines, the Englishman - were in constant communication with each other and discussed the book from a distance. It is hard to imagine achieving the task without the help of email. This new way of communicating, which facilitates sending and receiving messages, shows a strong resemblance to magical processes. For us, the almost instant interaction and feedback from such distances was a dream come true.

The final meeting took place a year later in Haifa, on another terrace, overlooking Mount Carmel National Park. Following Jerusalem's IGPA (International Group Psychotherapy Association) congress, we gathered in order to talk and tour the Jordan Valley and the northern part of Israel during what was still a peaceful situation.

This book draws attention to long-neglected ways of understanding and using dreams. For many centuries, the dream's individual functions have overshadowed its communicative functions in the group or community. From our contemporary perspective, some of these very ancient approaches are worth recovering. Already in the second century B.C., Artemidorus (of Daldia), who, like Freud, wrote a book called *The Interpretation of Dreams*, described the interpretation of dreams for the individual. Both Artemidorus and Freud applied assumptions leading to an individual, rather than a communal, approach to dreams.

Within the urbanised world of the classical Mediterranean - Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, and Greece - dreams became items for individual attention rather than group concern. They were regarded as messages to individual dreamers. Being previously transparent and influential within the shared life of the group, the language of the dream now became obscure: the dream bore a significant message, but for that message to be understood, an interpretation was needed. Thus the dream specialist emerged. The need for expertise to interpret the personal unconscious and decode condensation and displacement resulting from intrapsychic 'day's residues' was one of the main contributions of this development. As Artemidorus puts it: 'A man will not dream about things to which he has never given a thought.' Both Artemidorus and Freud assume the existence of a split between the individual's conscious and unconscious. Both privilege allegorical dreams containing multilevel images. And both use the concept of the 'day's residues', already a common topic in Epicurean literature. Dreams were no longer a vehicle of unconscious attunement within the group, possibly requiring a collective response, but rather revealed the fate of the individuated dreamer.

Before the change in Mesopotamia and Egypt (and to this day in many tribal cultures), dreams, like myths, were not only told on a regular basis, but were seriously discussed to ascertain what they 'meant', what event or development they augured, or what state of the spiritual surroundings they reflected. Because the group shared so much through symbols, language, and culture, its members were able to 'read' the significance of a dream without a specialist's assistance. Their ritual specialists were aware of the multiplicity of voices of the communal symbols, but their interpretative discourse was to accentuate, illuminate, integrate and elaborate dreams by poetic resonance rather than to disenchant them. Dream interchange facilitated the adjustment of group members to each other and became especially beneficial in those areas where cooperation and interdependence had to proceed easily, unreflectively and harmoniously. It contributed to tribal life, which demanded collective confrontation of harsh living, hunting and, on occasion, fighting as a unit, entrusting their lives to one another.

The majority of the contributors in this book think that a recounted dream not only increases the group's empathy and harmony but also permits a shared encounter. Joint work may facilitate any previously blocked personal autonomous growth, as well as enrich the group atmosphere. The social approach to dreams is represented in this volume by two contributions: Traveni and Manfredi (Italy) believe the Large Group itself contains some dream characteristics. In both there is not only a frightening momentary loss of identity, but a concurrent access to a complex, multidimensional representation of the 'external' collective, the social unconscious and the individual experience. The therapist may facilitate the establishment of common thought through continuous recalling of memory material, primary and transgenerational links.

The second contribution is the discussion by Lawrence (United Kingdom) and Biran (Israel) about complementary aspects of social dreaming and therapeutic dreaming. Social dreaming is 'the currency of the matrix', not the participants' relationship nor transference to the conductors of the matrix. Only the authority figures in-the-mind that are given flesh in the dreams are important. In social dreaming one 'has to enter a non-therapeutic state of mind'.

The theory of dreams 'occupies a special place in the history of psychoanalysis and marks a turning point. With it analysis took the step from being a psychotherapeutic procedure to being a depth psychology' (Freud 1932, p.7). In 1900, *The Interpretation of Dreams* disclosed the nature of unconscious mental processes. Freud considered dreams to be symptoms of a conflict with a hidden meaning, the disguised fulfilment of a wish, and the means through which the dreamer copes with drives and reality. The 'royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind' consisted of primary and secondary elaboration of latent emotions into manifest content, and disguising mechanisms like condensation, repression, displacement and symbolic representation.

In this volume, Avron (France), in keeping with Freud's explanatory model of basic infantile drives, describes group participants as trying to re-establish situations of primary satisfaction through hallucinatory representations. Through the stimulation of a shared creation - the scenic exposition of the dream - and its receptivity, a non-conscious capacity for basic energy reciprocity can further dialogue and cooperation in therapy. Avron approaches scenic structure and function as an active whole, the dream's sexual energy pushing towards the object of their desire, giving the group an impetus to new organisations of transference dynamics and interlinking processes. From a different perspective, Puget (Argentina) considers dreams to have the power of generating unconscious material through their disorganising influence. The group's encounters with the dream's incoherence and consequent anxieties of the unpredictable and fragmentation gradually builds its unconscious. Regarding the dream space as an event, a beginning of the group's attempts to complete the dream thoughts which may further the emergence of a new organisation.

Resnik (Argentina/France) considers telling a dream a transference event, referring always to the analytic session. The therapist should behave like an archaeologist, discovering fragments of either a disintegrated or not yet integrated language. Dream thinking is developed through understanding the dream stage grammar and the dream's theatre significance. The group members mutually help one another through Foulkes's 'mirroring', by functioning as lead-backed mirrors, proposing different perspectives on the 'unavoidable problem' from which the dreamer and the other patients try hard to escape. Understanding and repairing meaningful dissonance are considered to be the ingredients in the dreamer's and the group's therapy.

Another very important point in Freud's hypothesis regards the dream as the sleep keeper through stimuli-reducing mechanisms. He also maintained, however, that dreams endeavour to cope with stimuli retrospectively, in line with Ferenczi's approach to dreams as 'attempts at better mastery and settling of traumatic experiences' (Ferenczi 1931, p.238). These were the forerunners of most subsequent considerations of dreaming as mental unconscious coping, and as part of 'thinking' (Meltzer 1980). The dream can be compared to children's play and drama, considering dream-work as self-revealing projections of the self. Dreams are relatively protected transitional spaces (Winnicott 1970) in which a child grows through the creative staging of inner plays. They have a 'psychic envelope'<sup>1</sup> giving a safe boundary. It is imperative to create and protect these playful spaces, differentiating between sleep and waking life, between internal and external objects. Moreover, the dream can be considered a coping process by which the dreamer tries to get rid of unacceptable or unbearable feelings (Flanders 1993).

Neurophysiological evidence gathered by REM research corroborated much of these findings, and is described in this book in Lavie's chapter (Israel) and in Schlachet's paper (USA).

Further order may be made by ascribing various aspects of dream and dreaming to a one- or a relational two-person psychology, i.e. studying communication as descriptions of intrapsychic processes or interactions between people. Of course, these perspectives are more complementary than mutually exclusive.

Sandor Ferenczi has probably been a pioneer in understanding dreams in a relational context: he locates their genesis in intersubjective space and sees dream-telling as often being a communication to an audience. In his clinical diary he writes: 'The patient feels that this dream fragment is a combination of the unconscious contents of the psyches of the analysand and the analyst' (Ferenczi 1932, p.13). Earlier in a short article with the poignant title of 'To whom does one relate one's dreams' he states: 'One feels impelled to relate one's dreams to the very person to whom the content relates' (Ferenczi 1913, p.349).

An expansion on dream-telling as a second chance to further elaborate unsuccessfully processed dream material through the help of an audience is central in Friedman's paper (Israel). Dreaming and dream-telling represent two distinct developmental phases: a first autonomous step is attempted through projective identification<sup>1</sup> mechanisms during dreaming itself, and may be followed in a second elaborative effort by dream-telling, considered an interpersonal request for containment. Friedman also discusses the dream material and the diagnostic value of dream-telling. Together with many authors in this volume, Friedman maintains that dreams further the conscious and unconscious communication of messages, informing about the sender's state while having a transforming influence on both the receiver and the sender.

Kaes (France) deals mainly with 'polyphony' and intersubjectivity in dreams which are either born out of the associative process in a group, or told by an individual analysand representing a group in his manifest content. Traumatic events which had remained unthought (meaningless) are elaborated by one or more dreamers at the intersection of their own dreaming apparatuses, through resonance with phantoms, depersonalization anxiety and confusion of identity. Kaes's new proposition is that the dream is a representation of desires and conflicts, which intersect the subject's identification composition or 'code'. Conversations heard from different sources are woven into the texture of the dream. The dream is not a closed statement: it becomes a transformation process as it is acted and addressed.

According to the late Peter Schlachet, patients narrate their dreams for the therapist. In the group everyone is the intended audience, and telling a dream becomes a relational-social event. Through 'going to the movies', the metaphorical pictorial nature of our dreams' inner states, needs, feelings and subjective experiences are communicated in an interpersonal event.

Bion's many important contributions to the understanding of dream-work have been synthesised for this book by Grotstein (USA). Central is the concept of 'dream-work alpha' which marks the transition from a one-person to a two-person psychoanalytical model, i.e. the 'container/ contained' unit. The analyst must dream the analysand. Bion believed that reciprocal dream-work between analyst and analysand results in the 'alpha-beta(a)-ization' of raw emotion, which is responsible for thinking. Grotstein considers this concept the main launching pad for the postmodern concept of intersubjectivity.

Rutan and Rice's (USA) use of the concept of 'projective identification' re-emphasises the influencing and transforming aspects of the dynamics of container/contained perspectives in group therapy. If the therapist leaves the dreams' adaptive task as container of both individual and collective anxieties unattended, they can lead to acting in or acting out.

Solomon (USA) describes Tavistock's characteristic 'group-as-a-whole' approach, which places the individual's dynamic in the background. Conductors should always try to objectively describe the group's ongoing process in the here and now, often focusing on Bion's basic assumptions and challenging participants' roles. For Solomon, dreams represent these 'common group tensions' and should be stated rather than interpreted.

Livingston (USA) considers the dream a part of the playful and metaphorical communication between analyst and patient. In line with Kohut's selfpsychology, the therapist (and the group) should attempt to remain close to the patient's subjective experience of the dream, the curative process considered to be empathic attunement. The therapist, balancing between responsiveness and reaction, helps cope with 'self-state' dreams.

In her comments on this paper, Harwood (USA) emphasises that therapists should help distinguish between 'self-state' dreams, requesting organisation and working through, and dreams with a more informational character (transference, problem-solving, memory-evoking, etc.).

Marinelli's (Italy) 'dual-faced' dreams - defined as those with less symbolic quality - are in need of a protective skin around them in order to better endure unprocessed pains and losses. The manifest dream represents the dreamer's individual features, the group's transference concerns and sociopolitical issues. Therapy achieves transformation by facilitating 'protomental' states of confusion, and fantasy representations of somatic and psychic events.

A patient once remarked that when a dream is told it is as if a new member is introduced into the group. This volume is about addressing this 'new member', understanding the complexity of its presence and its contents, and using it for the well-being and growth of the individual, the group and society. Group analysis needs technical revisions in order to make sure that dreams are properly encountered, coped with and used for integration and further individual and group development.

Telling dreams in a group may not be an easy task for a number of reasons. From the outset, the sheer size of the group renders dream-telling and working with dreams different than in a dyadic setting. Dreams, usually messages about intimate matters, may initially encounter neither a receptive nor a discreet audience. The fate of the dreams may be rejection, although intended as requests for containment, resulting in potential narcissistic injuries inflicted on the dream-tellers. Individual therapists may readily accept and even encourage the inclusion of the inner world's most dreadful representations in dreams, whereas in a group there is no guarantee of secure reception of such representations. As an audience, participants may not feel bound to automatically contain every kind of

material. Even dream material with strong relevance and relation to the group may engender strong resistance because of the unacceptability of possible group-as-a-whole self-images and other configurations.

While eventual difficulties in group work with dreams are described, many articles in this book emphasise the advantages of the group's coping with loaded dreams. From a technical point of view, all contributors seem to agree unanimously that the therapist should build some sort of secure space by helping the group develop norms of associating to dreams rather than 'interpreting' them.

Pines (United Kingdom), in this volume, gives a *tour d'horizon*, ranging between the individual's approach to dreams in groups, and their social aspects. The dialogue between representational/informational and transformational functions of the dream is synthesised in the notion of the 'widening of vision'. Pines believes that dreaming 'in concert' is the next step to the ecology of mind in our next millennium.

Neri (Italy) describes Fabiana's long group-analytic process, with special focus on two dreams and one dreamlike event. The group transforms the patients' states of mind through gathering up, naming and giving sense, while the analyst helps cope with the unknown and with 'lack of sense'. Together, they help Fabiana find a more secure, alive and balanced identity.

A very interesting contribution comes from Greece. Tsegos and Tseberlidou's supervision approach to dreams in groups consists of recorded formats of presentation, analysis and synthesis, in which mirroring crystallises into fantasies, feelings and main topics.

Common to every one of the papers collected in this volume is the close connection between clinical and theoretical thinking. We believe that this link strengthens a reliable approach to group psychotherapy. The editors -Friedman, Neri and Pines - hope that *Dream and Group Psychotherapy* will contribute to the reader's individual integrative and creative work with dreams in the group setting.

The book ends with a comprehensive index and a glossary composed of entries regarding dreams and psychoanalytic theory, group psychotherapy and group psychology. These apparatuses make it a useful tool for consultation purposes.

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## Endnote

1. The dynamics of projective identification (or any other concepts of a similar interpersonal - intersubjective process) help clarify how information turns into transformation. Freud's view of the dream and its interpretation as the 'royal road to the unconscious' of the patient seems to belong to the representation/information pole of an imagined communication continuum. Levenson (1991), who describes patients' dreams portraying dramatic situations paralleled by the interaction with the therapist, takes a middle position on the communication continuum. The information helps analysts deduce how to extract themselves from neurotic interactions with the patient, leading patients to discover new coping strategies. Joseph (1985) goes even further on the continuum, suggesting that dreams have a tendency to be unconsciously staged and enacted in reality. She describes how 'a dream can reveal its meaning in a fairly precise way by being lived out in the session' (p.451). Ogden (1996) seems to go all the way to the continuum's end by implying that an analyst's understanding of a patient's dream is born in the 'analytic third' (the intra-analytic shared space) through his intersubjective experience.