

Dear Colleagues,

It's a joy for me to be here in Sydney - which is at other end of the world for a European citizen like myself - it's a real dream that was made possible thanks to all the Australian organizers!

INTRODUCTION

The theme I would like to develop is:

How to shift from fantasy to symbolism in psychotherapy ?

Let's first discriminate between fantasy and symbolism.

According to Freud, fantasies are both individual and collective, and represent a defense mechanism, included in sublimation. We can find representations in archetypes, projections and interpretations.

My hypothesis is that, from this point of view, night and day dreams reveal the desire to liberate traumatic memories and to express psychotic and neurotic anxieties through fantasies.

Symbols constitute the universal space in our soul dimension and unify our inner world. They offer us the possibility of an overview and could lead to expressing Oneness reality through the use of our intuition.

If fantasies are reactions to dependency on outside and inside experiences, symbolization is an invitation to access creative impulse and worldwide consciousness that exist within us.

Two propositions could emerge at this stage:

- Firstly: Can we oppose the level of fantasies and level of symbolism?
- Secondly: Can we create a bridge between these two spaces and accept both individual and collective approaches?

These propositions are born during the observation of major steps taken in psychotherapeutic history.

This lecture is being presented after more than 20 years of psychotherapeutic-psychoanalytic experience and proposes to share some hypothesis around the possibility to travel from fantasies to symbolism.

ANECDOTE

Before going further, I would like to share a personal anecdote, which could explain the choice of the title of this presentation.

Once upon a time, after several years in a psychotherapeutic cure and during a spontaneous daydream, I saw a dark wolf that looked me directly in the eyes.

The first reflex that came from my reptilian brain was to brusquely move backwards, with the fantasy that he could kill me!

But while I was looking for some reassurance, the wolf, through non verbal communication, helped me remember my early childhood, when I lay in my bed and all fantasies of him made me scream; when, because I was so terrified, either I couldn't make a sound come out of my mouth, or the fear in my voice was so strong that hearing my calls, my father came to me as a divine protection!

I began to realize little by little how this wolf never really left me...

And you know what, the understanding of his presence was so split in my mind that I wasn't even aware of the protection he represented...

I wasn't aware of how much he was the guardian of my drives, how he offered the possibility for me to express fear, anxiety and all emotions from early earthly experiences...

How much all fantasies about him saved my psyche by constituting the superego I needed to be sane!

From a symbolic point of view, it seems that wolves are known as teachers. Obviously I've thought a lot, thanks him, about the way I've built the ego that allowed me to survive.

So after the awareness I had, and after reconciling with him, the wolf announced that his task was finished and that it was time for him to move away from my psychological field !

Whoo I resisted this idea: "You want to go now, at the very time when I begin to love you instead of fearing you? It's not fair! I insist that you stay!"

But it was decided, and nothing could hold him back, only my tears could accompany him to the end of the path...

When he disappeared, and because « nature doesn't like emptiness », a wonderful white dove came to me as a replacement, and what a great surprise it was to know its symbolism!

I interpreted it as the possibility to fly and to be free; a symbolism of what some people call the presence of the soul.

Further more, a dove is universally recognized as a « peace symbol », and it was the beginning of a bargain between ego and soul, in my experience, the source of peace.

SOME THEORITICAL OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS

So Sigmund Freud invited us to know our psyche through the recognition of fantasies.

Fantasies allow us to release drives (reptilian brain) and sexual energy.

At this stage we could ask if the task of psychotherapy is to de-dramatize such parts of the psyche ? Isn't it a way to prevent psychopathology, especially psychotic representations and neurotic obsessive ideas?

As we can observe, human beings need to create forms to explain the world.

The first question one could ask, to lead people from fantasies to symbolism, is "What kind of symbolism are we talking about ?"

Religion uses symbolism, but doesn't come from a reaction to hide drives ? A reaction that proposes people to see only one side of reality, I mean only the divine and therefore denying our duality which includes our humanness ?

Couldn't psychotherapy take the responsibility of adding another possibility - to accept our wholeness?

Carl Gustav Jung explains that no universal experience is possible without unity between light and dark.

Symbolism for him is related to archetypes and the collective unconscious, which is the definition I will use.

Let's take a psychotherapeutic example:

If we consider our mother as the first loved subject, our natural ambivalence – which is born in my view during intra uterine life and experienced more deeply during our birth journey (cf perinatal matrixes from Stanislas Grof) - this ambivalence constitutes fantasy material nourished with repressed images of murder and hate, compensated by images of idealization as a defensive mechanism. We find the resurgence of this ambivalence during Oedipal phase.

The symbolism of the Great Mother or « divine Mother » from ancient civilization, proposes us to accept the opposite sides of our human psyche and gives us the opportunity to find the middle way between

love and hate, if we can see that it's the same energy with opposite vibrations.

Couldn't our dream be to make a parallel between our Mother, the Great Mother and Mother Earth, and this way to overcome the ambivalence between destruction and construction?

On the other hand could we propose the hypothesis of symbolism of the father, the Great Father or in another word the sky?

Could we imagine that nostalgia could be born through the fantasy of going back to our Father's house, what I mean is that we miss our security and the potential to use our universal attributes?

Could we just imagine that the non recognition of this nostalgia could be the raison why some melancholia seems to be pathological?

Couldn't our dream also be to use psychotherapy as an efficient tool to help people shift from fantasy to symbolism and far beyond, to experience the acceptation of apparent opposite sides and to create peaceful harmony if we include mother and father images within ourselves?

FROM EGO TO ESSENCE

The shift between fantasy and symbolism could also be considered as a shift of identity, from ego to essence.

However, symbolism is also linked to the necessity of forms.

Could we figure out a way to go forward and to allow ourselves to overcome form?

But before this, I would like to ask you a question:

“What is humanity’s age? Is humanity in the Childhood, Adolescent or Adult age group?

Please raise your hand if you think we’re in the childhood stage? Adolescent? Adult?

Yes, humanity is in the adolescent age group (Duane Elgin), and as all adolescents, we are looking for new forms in reaction to the forms our parents created.

An hypothesis is that as an adult, form will be less important than the essence of who we are.

As Rector of the Sigmund Freud University in Paris, I received a medical doctor who was in psychoanalysis for the past 4 years. He told me about how he was progressing, and especially about how his vision of people and of course of himself had gone beyond forms. He said that how for him, age had lost it’s importance in comparison with what he could now feel through non-verbal communication.

Isn’t he beginning the shift from ego to essence? In my view the soul or essence has no age and the body, even if it is sacred, is just the form we’ve chosen during our human journey.

This point of view is in accordance with Teilhard de Chardin’s quote: « We are universal being who live a human experience and not the contrary »

CONCLUSION

Maybe it's just a dream and a utopic aim to consider that we are all one and that we are interdependent, and through this vision to realize that essence is our true nature.

Maybe it's just a dream and a utopic aim to consider that the shift from ego to essence is possible for most of us?

And if we think that the future is made by collective thoughts, and if you are sensitive to this dream and this utopia, then you, you and I could join our energy and create such a reality together in our daily life as a psychotherapist.

Thank you for your attention and for your questions if you have any!