

# DREAMS AND PSYCHOLOGY

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## Historical introduction

Historically men have been interested in dreams. We can find dream references in the Sumerian culture in the fifth century BC and in the Ancient Egypt about dreams. The predominated idea in these cultures was that gods sent messages to mortals through the dreams. Dreams are also present in the Greek mythology.

Hippocrates considered the father of medicine, believes that we can find the elements to the diagnosis of the disease inside the dreams.

Plato said that through dreams is manifested the true nature of man. This idea connects with the concept of unconscious that will later be developed by Freud and Jung.

Aristotle contradicts the dominant thought of his time and believes that dreams were not message from the gods but were the product of the life experiences of the person.

At the end of the nineteenth century Freud make an extensive study in psychoanalysis about the interpretation of dreams. Until Freud man is a simply recipient and dreams are a message from another entity. With psychoanalysis dreams became the creation of the human mind, a particular creation with the own language of the dreamer unconscious. Freud defines dreams as the great path to the unconscious. The task of psychoanalysis in relation to dreams is an intellectual fixed interpretation of symbolic elements that appear in the dream.

Carl Gustav Jung, disciple of Freud and founder of analytical psychology, was convinced of the role that unconscious plays in neurosis and psychosis and the importance of dreams to reveal the sources of the unconscious problems. However, Jung goes beyond than Freud and says that the usual subjects of hallucinations of his patients could not arise from personal

unconscious conflicts, but originated in a shared resource: the collective unconscious. His deep knowledge of comparative religion, mythology and symbolic systems, led him to believe that there are common symbols that appear in all cultures. Thus was born his belief in the collective unconscious level of mind, producer of myths, shared by all humans as a source of psychological life. Jung called archetype at the primordial images of the collective unconscious which appear in our deepest and significant dreams.

## Dreams in the gestalt psychotherapy

The way of working with the dreams in the gestalt psychotherapy will break in a new approach. The dream is not interpreted, but represented.

Fritz Perls was the founder of Gestalt therapy and like Jung and Freud, emphasized the symbolic content of dreams, but also considered that each character and object of our dreams is a projection of our own selves and the way we live our lives. For Perls dreams represent unfinished emotional issues and arise from personal experience rather than collective. Perls was convinced that to the interpretation of dreams, the role play is the most efficient technique to the integration. For him, all of the parts of the dream are different fragments of the personality which the person has renounced through repression or projection. The identification is achieved by becoming each one of the parts of the dream, representing them until we recognize a part of us.

Perls devised the following methodology to work with dreams:

- 1) Explain the dream as if it were really happening now, in present tense and with all of details.
- 2) Dramatize and represent the dream, becoming each of the dream parts and feeling all the sensations. In the dramatization is very important change physically of place and position in order to represent the different objects or situations that appeared in our dream. To work a dream need not be long. In a dream in which there were many elements can be chosen the part you want to work.

3) Establish a dialogue with each part to the other. We take each of these objects, characters and parts and we have a meeting with them establishing a dialogue between the opposing parts. We found that they always start quarrelling among them but little by little there is mutual learning, until we came to an understanding and appreciate the differences and we integrate the two opposing forces.

#### Repetitive or recurring dreams

A repetitive dream is a message from our unconscious that aims to solve the problem raised in that dream. In the dream we can find the problem and frequently the solution. The dream is an attempt to try over and over again of resolve the problem. These dreams show how to end the problem situation.

#### What is the purpose of the dream work?

Perls expands the idea of dream, not only the time when we sleep, but as most of our mental activity.

The dream work can also help us to integrate those parts of the personality that are alienated and rejected, in those parts with whom we do not identify and project onto others. Integration occurs as we recover and integrate these parts and we recognize as our own. This gives us greater vitality and wellness in our lives, because in that process we become full human beings.