

EDITORIAL

In conceiving of a special edition of *Self and Society* on dreams one of my aims was to push myself into writing about a subject which has interested me for many years. Since being involved with dream groups I have wondered why such groups regularly appear so powerful and meaningful to dream sharer and listener alike, independently of particular techniques and theoretical backgrounds; and how it is that people's understanding of dreams so often develops when they focus on them.

In a fascinating article on Hypnotic Dreams Farber and Fisher found that under hypnosis subjects would show a capacity for understanding and interpreting the unconscious psychic production of others, a capacity which they did not appear to have in ordinary life. Many of the psychologically naive subjects independently produced identical meaningful interpretations to the same dream. The authors are quick not to jump to the conclusion that dreams are like puzzles which have only one answer, but the experiment does point to our having a latent understanding of the meaning of dreams.

This has made me think of a dream group in terms of being a hypnotic induction which takes the participant to a different level of consciousness in which the suggestion given is that dreams are meaningful and comprehensible. The dream itself, coming from whatever level of consciousness reinforces the non everyday atmosphere, at first offering the safety of "only a dream", until one realizes that unquestionably some form of communication is going on between group members via their dreams.

In our culture today the dream is still very much neglected outside the analytic situation and growth groups, I would like to see dreams taken out of such a narrow focus and incorporated into our everyday life. The family and schools, for example, seem natural settings for the ritual intrapersonal and interpersonal communication that results from dream sharing. The dream can also be a starting point for drama, art, creative writing and storytelling. By compiling this special edition, I hope that people may be stimulated into realising the potential that dreamwork can offer.

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