

Dream Appreciation

ONLINE
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THERE IS NO MAGIC INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS. IT RESTS ON THE PREMISE THAT THE DREAMING PROCESS IS A NATURAL HEALING SYSTEM.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MONTE AND DREAM GROUP MEMBERS

After participating in one of Monte's ongoing dream groups, I asked the participants for their thoughts on what it has meant to them to be in the group, and what they have experienced being in the group. The following are Monte's thoughts, followed by theirs. — *Wendy Pannier*

From the mid-forties to the mid-seventies, most of my professional life was involved with psychoanalysis, including practice, teaching, and supervision. I participated in the formation of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and subsequent to the development of the experiential dream group process I attempted to interest my colleagues both through talks and workshops — but failed. There were three reasons for the failure.

Two were covert, the first of which was the real-

ization that in my effort to reach the public with dream work I was deprofessionalizing dreams and this did not sit well with the concerns of the psychoanalysts I was addressing. The other was the resistance I encountered around the notion that the group, in the second stage of the process where the game was played, could, through their projections, often be of considerable help to the dreamer before any of the dreamer's associations were made known.

The most overt reason was because they expressed the feeling that the success I encountered was due to my experience and talent in working with dreams. They failed to see that it was the input of the entire group that was the central feature of the process.

Over the years several of my colleagues did participate in my groups, but only a handful did it to the point of leading groups themselves. I felt disappointed because I hoped that analysts would be the ones to assume some responsibility to master a technique that could make dreams universally available and not limit them to the select few who came into their offices. They failed to see the two main features of the process — the richness of the game in which the group made their own imagination, creativity, and self-sharing available to the dreamer, and the safety features built into the process that lowered resistance and enabled the dreamer to engage in a helpful and nonintrusive dialogue with the other

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Note:

Monte's **new** website is: <http://siivola.org/monte>

Monte's **new** e-mail is: dreams@siivola.org

CONVERSATIONS WITH MONTE AND DREAM GROUP MEMBERS

members of the group.

There is no magic involved in this process. It rests on the premise that the dreaming process is a natural healing system. There is also a natural curiosity about our dream life that plays a role in stimulating the dreamer to go ever deeper. The various stages in the process are designed to help the waking ego gently remove the impediments that keep the dreamer from moving into the dream. The safe, empathetic, nonjudgmental atmosphere, indeed the love that is generated, facilitate the work and are essential to its success. All we do is confront the dreamer with his or her dream in a way that lets the relevant life experiences rise to the surface and allows the dream to speak in its own voice.

The work the dreamer and group do together often evokes deeply moving experiences. Kleenex is essential. The most profound depths of our being are sometimes exposed, painfully but always with relief. What is remarkable is the readiness to risk this in the presence of relative strangers. Radical life changes can follow. More often change is incremental.

Dreams are born out of a nocturnal creative im-

pulse. Most people are unaware of the unending source of creativity that is available to them every night of their lives.

The dream group work I have engaged in over the past thirty years has been a self-healing ex-

I THINK THAT WHAT TROUBLES MOST PEOPLE IS THAT THEY WERE NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS CHILDREN. ONE OF THE THINGS I THINK THIS GROUP EXPERIENCE DOES — IT'S BUILT INTO NATURE OF THIS TYPE OF DREAM GROUP — IS THAT YOU ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR DREAM IS YOU AND THE DREAM IS IMPORTANT.

perience for me. In many ways it has been a continuing second analysis. My first analysis with Dr. Bernard Robbins (1946-1949) kept me afloat at a trying time of my life. The group dream work has helped me deal with the residual sore spots.

— *Monte*

Bruce — The group dream work process is Monte's passion and we are the beneficiaries.

Claire — The dream group is a place where one can really sit and be in one's own space and, from the projections and whatever one is feeling, can really sense that deep connection to one's own

dreams and who you are. I've been here for eight or nine years, off and on. I think the group was a real constant; I knew there was a real connection here for me. I have felt such a deep connection with the group — everyone some-

how knew how to be with each other. It's hard to put into words, but that's what made me consistently come. I almost felt as though there was a real sense of not being complete if I were not here. Now having not been here for a couple months, it feels so right again — so connected. I'm here and it just feels natural to my system.

Bruce — I think all of us in this imperfect world with imperfect parents have had a 'wobbly table' to deal with. Our parents had their own problems. Here in a way it is like an idealized family — the group being the mother and Monte being

the passionate father. We are all getting now what we didn't get growing up — feeling safe and secure and nourished emotionally as well as other ways. It's an extraordinary situation. I have known Monte more than 20 years and still keep getting something from people in the group, as well as from Monte.

Abby — For me one level of why I participate is a kind of linguistic education in that before being a member I didn't really understand that dreams are really a kind of language that exists between you and yourself. What I have learned how to do in some ways is to use that language to communicate with other people about their dreams.

Deborah — I came into the group because I was seeking a group experience and my friend suggested I try it. I had been working with dreams since my twenties in Jungian analysis and I didn't know what to expect. From the beginning I could feel such a safe and loving environment where people have such respect for one another's psyche and self. I was touched at how it was possible for me to reach levels of feeling in

the group — in part in response to the wonderful feeling I get in the 'game' of people taking the dream on and really being with me. It's a very profound feeling for me and brings out levels of connection to the dream that always astonish me. This means so much to me in my life. I feel the same way when working on someone else's dream as well as my own. I feel so fulfilled.

Deborah — Projection to me is a kind of holding — people putting themselves forth. It provides a safety to be in the dream with people that is profound.

Abby — I think that what troubles most people is that they were not taken seriously as children. One of the things I think this group experience does — it's built into nature of this type of dream group — is that you are taken seriously. People understand that your dream is you and the dream is important.

Claire — I had found that one place that I for the first time could be heard — really heard — was in my analysis. I thought this was a gift that would always be with me. I felt that every time

I left my analyst. Then to be able to be here and feel was special. At first I was defended here; when I could relax in myself I could have the same experience of being heard as in my analysis. Being heard is so moving. I have taken workshops at the Unitarian Church that have been wonderful but the people were very much into their heads, very talky. And to see people come in and sit down and take in Monte's dream process—WHOA—some of them are really starting to get it. I see it in my own practice when people get it. Again, that is special.

Dorothy — I'm pretty new to the group. I'm not a therapist but a librarian, musician and other things. However, I have felt accepted and comfortable here. The very first time I came I brought a dream about a tremendous loss I had. I used a whole box of Kleenex. The healing of that session was tremendous. It was a magically healing experience — I walked out of here a different person.

Arianne — The first time I came I was amazed that people you don't know would listen and participate. There was so

much emotion and compassion. I never felt that from my family. It was very healing too.

Deborah — Monte said the change is incremental. Over two to three years it's very moving to watch the progression of issues with each person — similar issues come up, watching the progress people make with their stuff, and knowing that the dream work is helping — that in part the dream work is activating that growth.

Bruce — We all have our own healing potential that we bring to the group.

Abby — I have read books on creativity and none of them comes close to the real experience of creativity in a dream group.

Jeffrey — I'm the most recent member and have only been here several months. I have been struck by several things. Monte has discovered and created an extraordinary method that taps into an incorruptible truth telling and self-healing dimension of ourselves. He has created an atmosphere in the theory of his dream work and he lives it. And every-

one together has created it. I have studied with some Buddhist and yogic teachers. Monte lives what he discovers. Some people discover but there is a gap. Monte is more than just the process — he lives it. There is no gap between the theoretical and what he practices, which touched my heart.

I had been going through an intense middle age crisis that came out in some dreams. I felt immediately accepted by the group — it was seamless and people just created space for me spiritually and emotionally. I felt right at home. It was easy and thrilling! I have gone through a profound inner process that has been healing through sharing dreams with the group and continuing to work with them. I think — maybe this is obvious and what a lot of us feel — sensitive people feel that daily life is characterized by a lot of superficiality and corruption. There is something about Monte's dream group process and the atmosphere in the group that cuts across that. People are being real and honest and natural and right. It feels right to come here and tap into that realness, lack of pretention and honesty. ❖



DREAMWORKERS' CORNER

THE TALE OF TWO TELEPHONE POLES

By **MARKKU SIVOLA, M.D.**

It was autumn 1980 in Boden, a little town in Northern Sweden. I worked there as a psychiatrist when I heard my fellow workers talking about a psychoanalyst who was coming to lead a dream group there. They asked if I was interested, and I said "No!"

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The reason for my negative reaction was that I did not want to experience again the claustrophobia I had so intensely experienced during my psychiatry training years when every oblong, elongated object symbolized a penis and every bowl-like formation a vagina according to my teachers. How could this psychoanalyst be different?

I remembered an embarrassing situation in the early days of my medical training. It was the first psychiatrist meeting I had attended. I arrived late, sat down and tried to get into the discussion. For a while I thought I had come into the wrong room, because the behavior of the older colleagues was so strange.

For a moment I thought that they might be rehearsing some strange burlesque play, perhaps for some personnel party. Everybody was extremely serious, talking about mother breast in a way which made the situation so absurd that in all my inexperience, I really believed that they were joking!

Then they changed the topic where the earth represented the vagina which the hoe as penis penetrates. I still remember my embarrassment and anxiety about how I could manage to hide my bewilderment, when it began to dawn to me that these gentlemen were seriously serious! They did not pop out of their theorizing, continuing to exist as though in a theoretical bubble, closed from the life outside, seeing only their own intellectual projections on the walls of that bubble, not the world outside.

The claustrophobic experiences continued throughout my studies but, fortunately, only a couple of them were as grotesque as this first en-

counter with traditional psychoanalytic thinking. During the years of my medical studies I became more and more conscious about the devastating effect of placing life into the Procrustean bed of all kinds of conceptual systems, whatever their nature. I began to recognize that whatever the system, it always acts as a filter between the observer and the observed, diluting the artistry of life.

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My fellow workers in Boden did not give up but continued persuading me to attend the dream group. At last I gave in. This decision turned out to be one of the most important turning points in my life.

During the first workshop day the strange feeling about the leader of the group, Montague "Monte" Ullman, began to grow stronger. This man did not interpret anything but, in an extremely gentle way I had never seen before, guided the group to listen to the dream. I saw for the first

time how the dream opened into its full glory, beginning to speak with its own voice to the whole group.

There was something in him, something I recognized deeply inside myself, some similarity, some indefinable connection, resonance. Longing for something long ago forgotten and lost, I recognized a living force inside me, a spark of energy I had always been after, something beyond all explanations and theories. I saw this man catch the uncatchable, creating the atmosphere where the dream was able to burst into flower in all its touching innocence.

And how different we still were, he and I! I was young, he was old; I spoke English laboriously and he was fluent; we were from different cultures, living on opposite sides of the earth. But all these differences could not explain away the common factor. He was a stranger to me and at the same time he was not.

The second dream group day dawned. Monte asked who had a dream to

share. No one had. He then said he had one. It was a short sequence, and it was about me:

In his dream I had come to his hotel room and asked two questions which he did not remember, nor his answer to the first one. The answer to the second one was this: he took me to the window of his hotel room, and pointed at two telephone poles outside. He said to me: "If you understand why those telephone poles are just there and nowhere else, you have received the answer to your questions."

That was Monte's dream. And the turning point for me. Monte said he did not know the message of the dream. But I did. The dream immediately opened to me. The opening was not a logical process but a strong immediate emotional impact. The dream symbolized perfectly the intriguing feeling I had had about Monte during the previous day. There we were, Monte and I, like two telephone poles, irrevocably apart, without any possibility to come closer to one another. Just like I had felt it the day before! But between the two poles

there was an electrical unifying current. Just like I had felt it the day before!

The dream said that if I understand the position of the poles I have received the answer. I understood, and received the answer just like the dream said I would!

The dream was his, not mine. How could I know if my view of the metaphors was right or wrong? It became irrelevant. Right and wrong belong to the realm of the rational world where dreams cannot be understood. The flashing impact opened to me the living view about the potential of dreams. The dream illuminated my feelings much more clearly than what I alone had been able to understand.

The last act of this dream was played out twenty years later. I had been busy some months building up Monte's Internet site, scanning hundreds of pages of material which Monte kept sending me partly through fax. One night my wife said: "now the dream has really come true," pointing to the way Monte and I communicated: we, the two telephone poles, were there again, the connective current of faxes flowing

through the telephone lines between us, now across the globe! Then I felt that the dream at last had conveyed its contents at all levels.

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Right or wrong? Was it a coincidence or was Monte's dream precognitive? I do not care. I can never know. I know that the dream does contain more, like all dreams; they are limitless like life itself, that everything they may contain cannot ever be grasped completely.

Either way, this incident gave me at last the key to dreams, which during the following years has helped me to maintain my

faith in the incorruptible core of all human beings, irrespective of how deeply it may have been buried behind the barriers we have put up against each other in our daily struggle of existence. Dreams have been the oasis of innocence, the purity of the human soul during my journey through the desert of every day routines and the overemphasis on our separateness from each other in the competitive atmosphere of our culture.

Dreams are the common realm, the connective, healing tissue for us, who have lost our way to the connectedness of the human species.

— Markku Siivola