

## The Social Dreaming Matrix as a “double founding myth”: Explorations in the building of collective identity.

### La matriz social de los sueños como un “doble mito fundacional”: indagaciones sobre la construcción de la identidad colectiva



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#### Abstract

This paper examines the function of SDM as an experience of a double foundation of the mind and as a device which highlights the founding aspect of the dream and its semiophoric characteristic. The paper try to find out a vision of the function and the characteristic of the matrix thinking as a double foundation myth. The first is “symbolopoietic” and is characterized by its unsaturated and creative nature, that is open to new symbolizations. The second image is defined as “aetiological” as it is dominated by the annulment of the allegorical morphology of the image, which is transformed into a fact which obeys a precise cause. Finally the Matrix becomes the constituting of what we can call “the psychic intentionality of the social in becoming”. The study of dream icons is the final step to observe the concept of “semiophore”.

#### Key Words

Social Dreaming, dream, matrix, icon, group

#### Resumen

Este artículo examina la función de la Matriz Social de los Sueños (SDM) como una experiencia mental fundacional doble y, como un dispositivo que subraya el aspecto fundante del sueño y su carácter semiofórico. El trabajo trata de obtener una visión de la función y del carácter del pensamiento matricial como un mito de doble fundamento. El primero es “simbolopoyético” y se caracteriza por su carácter insaturado y naturaleza creativa, abierto a nuevas simbolizaciones. La segunda imagen se define como “ezológica” ya que está dominada por la anulación de la morfología alegórica de la imagen, que se transforma en un hecho que obedece a una causa precisa. De este modo, la Matriz se convierte en la constitución de lo que podemos llamar “la intencionalidad psíquica de lo social en el devenir”. El estudio icónico de los sueños es, por ende, el paso final para entender el concepto de “semióforo”

#### Palabras clave

Sueño social, sueño, matriz, icono, grupo

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the function of SDM as an experience of a double foundation of the mind and as a device which highlights the founding aspect of the dream and its semiophoric characteristic.

As a psychological device to analyze the social, SDM is a collective mental space which always refers to a context and is always impregnated with elements which characterize the specific culture. It becomes a work model of observation of what can be defined as *psychic intentionality of the social in becoming*.

In its representation of ideal social models SDM, in the “*place-space*” of the Matrix<sup>11</sup>, reveals the aetiopathogenetic dimension of the social (conflicts) and is thus useful in research, prevention, research-action and anthropological analysis work. SDM is therefore an original tool in the study of collective psychic intentionality with regard to the history and culture of a people and a shared social and political theme, deeply rooted in the unconscious dimension of the specific culture analyzed.

<sup>11</sup> “Matrix describes the space from which everything that exists in our Universe, indeed the cosmos, has its origins. Matrix exists before mankind developed groups. And it may well be that group is a defence against the experience of the formlessness of matrix. The social dreaming matrix, purposely convened in the here-and-now, is a reflection of the primordial matrix of humanity”. (Lawrence, 2003, p. 3).

In this sense, the dream is also a psychic foundation because it defines and reveals *group forms of psychism* in the Matrix. These forms and structures are present in the dream and are elements and factors *a priori* of the minds of dreamers and the Collective. Our basic assumption defines the Mind and the Unconscious as constants and not as variables.

In the oneiric experience regarding how the subject sees the representation of relations in the culture of belonging, these unconscious *a priori* forms are defined as *oneiric icons*. In the space of the Matrix they are founding elements which, in the associative modality of the process of building the SD, are in fact structural and processual elements of the Mind and are thus constant and not variable. We could define this as a “group foundation of the Identity”. We feel that the term icon allows us to understand why repetition and recursivity are central aspects of the work of the SDM as a device which reveals but also creates awareness in the Collective.

In this sense we regard the dream exactly as a semiophore. The semiophoric characteristic of the oneiric experience (Agresta D. 2016) is linked to the fact that the dream is already in itself a “carrier of meaning” - symbolic aspects, plots interconnected with historical events, memories etc. - and is thus the tool that facilitates the foundation of the group identity of the dreamer precisely in the experience of the Matrix. Unlike *things*, these object carriers of meaning or semiophores (as they have been defined) have the prerogative of connecting the visible and the invisible, that is, connecting events or people which are distant in space and time. In fact they have the capacity to go beyond the area of immediate sensitive experience in terms of psychic representability and construction and an affective link with the culture of belonging by means of images.

The oneiric icons are visual images of the dream, which represent and condense fundamental unconscious meanings. They are constructions through which the mind expresses itself, its past mobilized by the action of phantoms and its creative impulses. The icon is a visual structure which draws from the phantasmal past of the family and projects itself towards the future. In this sense it is a production of the transpersonal, a collective image through which the transpersonal represents its incessant processuality and its history in the time of the group.

### WORK FOR IMAGES, THE ICON AND ITS FUNCTION

Working in free association we can build a semantic dimension of the dream and thus translate a new dimension which puts the visible in contact with the

invisible into a cultural object (semiophore). From our research on passage and religious rites we have ascertained that SDM becomes a means not only of doing research but also of understanding some aspects of the mind which can be associated with what has already been observed in therapeutic groups. In a certain sense there is not much difference, but what we wish to underline in this work is that the Matrix is actually the founding element and thus essential to the building of the Collective Mind and that, ultimately, it coincides with the tout court oneiric experience.

The experience of SDM in the field of ethnoanalytical research and in particular in the study of religious rites and in the field of history has enabled us to make some important observations on how the matrix takes shape, what it is and what it represents in terms of the collective unconscious and hence of the social unconscious. The Matrix creates culture; it is thus founding. It is only a short step from rite to ritual and from the dream to the founding of cultural identity.

We have hinted at the anthropopoietic characteristic of the dream and we now feel it is important to better explain this concept. Francesco Remotti (2013) introduces this concept by associating the process of building social individuals by modifying the body: the modification and *dramatic* transformation of the body determines the building of social individuals. This aspect is absolutely fundamental to understand, in my opinion, the problem of the undifferentiated and the fragmentation of the body in the area of psychosomatics. It is also fundamental in the discovery of unconscious factors which determine the roles, relations and institutional functions in social organisations and groups. The community, that is, the corporal dimension in culture, also involves the social area. We would add to this a movement, of an exquisitely psychological-clinical nature, on the mind and above all on the oneiric experience as a system and a specific way of thinking of the mind. In order to build the body, the individual and the personality in a symbolic, allegorical and iconic way it is necessary to consider the dream a system, a process and an icon. These are three coexisting and co-present levels which enable the clinician to observe the building of the thought and thus of the individual.

In the absence of a cultural artefact we have the emergence of a dream and thus an icon, which builds the object in its aspect of being a shared and creative image. The contrary also happens and this is what basically builds our enquiry into the anthropopoietic question of the mind. What image?

What we mean by anthropopoiesis of the mind is easy to

interpret: man builds the mind from the experience of the body and from the body records and transforms, through relations, the mind (Agesta, D. 2016).

Building social individuals does not exclude determining individuals who, in their minds, are part of cultural and social groups. This aspect is equivalent. If we work by images, we work by memory. If the objects create memory, the semiophore - that is, the object carrier of meaning - is the proof of this with regard to the relationship between the body and the mind and vice versa in culture (ibidem).

It is not difficult to imagine how one can work from a perspective of anthropoiesis of the mind in clinical and research psychology. The dream is the most suitable tool. Working on the dream is the most useful experience. The clinician can observe and use the dream passing from narrative and language to imaginative structures which are common to all cultures and cross affective and emotional aspects in a complex and original space-time. We feel that the dream is the means to understand the anthropopoietic nature of the mind but also, as a consequence, man.

Therefore there is an actual collective dimension and a creative-symbolic dimension. In the model we propose, the concept of the icon explains in what sense founding aspects of the mind are constituents of culture. The icon is a sacred structure as it represents the creative dimension of the collective soul which expresses the sacred mystery of origins. The oneiric icon is a mental shape or a visual content of an image, which expresses a pure metaphorical potential and, like the artistic icon, is an allegory which implies some psychic realities hidden behind sensitive appearances. Such psychic appearances are nothing more than expressions of the unconscious, which is a mediator between mind and body, single and group, mind and culture.

The peculiarity of the icon is that it builds the object or psychological theme it represents visually because it possesses identical nature and substance. Being a construction it has a symbolic symbolopoietic value and thus a transformative dimension which is present, in the here and now of the group, thanks to the constellation of the associative content (Giovanni V.; Menarini R., 2004). As a product of the unconscious, the icon is a pure mental form which does not yet possess immediate imaginative, perceptive and symbolic presence. It really exists but is not directly present and expresses a project in development as it refers to possible events, something which could happen and so change (ibidem). Consequently the dream is a deep expression of the neotenic nature of the sapiens species and defines as

necessary a study of the process and not a separation of the mind and the body and vice versa.

Thus we mean the “anthropoiesis of the dream”, a psychic and corporal process in which the symbolized body becomes the narrative and construction of thought. As the anthropoiesis is a process of construction and definition of the human identity, the analytical and processual work in the Matrix proceeds from an aetiological image (saturated matrix) towards a symbolopoietic image (unsaturated matrix): thus the dream becomes a semiophore, a carrier of meaning. The function of the icon, detectable in the matrix, enables us to study these phenomena of the mind. The two images are thus the passage from the transpersonal to the transgenerational; from the experience of a saturated matrix to an unsaturated one. These are two images that the SDM reveals in its process of construction and analysis. According to Menarini (2015) there are in fact two images. The first is symbolopoietic and is characterized by its unsaturated and creative nature, that is open to new symbolizations. This determines an opening to new allegorical connections. Thus this is not a structure with rigid content. The general symbolic tendency is thus expressed by motives and iconic themes of an oneiric, mythical, religious and artistic nature. As the symbolopoietic image is observable, it can clearly be considered open to inner subjectiveness and the development of the identity. The second image is defined as “aetiological” as it is dominated by the annulment of the allegorical morphology of the image, which is transformed into a fact which obeys a precise cause. It is a universal theme of static and repetitive nature, ideologically dogmatic and perceived as being completely objective: the identity of mass takes the place of the identity. This type of image cannot but be associated with that rituality which, by coincidence, is transformed into an ever increasing repetition of the particular, not of the maintaining of the process which would, in the case of the work of the SDM, be understandably necessary for it to be maintained. On the other hand, maintaining the particular as more and more complex and constituent the structure itself of the transformation of the Matrix would allow the phase of transformation on the underlying meaning and hence allegorical of the constituting of the rite itself in the fact that in the Matrix free association allows an amplification of the theme. This generative and transformed function is the equivalence of a rite on the dream, a rite of passage on the oneiric experience to create culture. The observation of this rite on social dreaming enables us to determine how the Community thinks. It can be assumed that the SDM is the tool which should be associated with work on the dream in order to define the identity aspects of a social group. In fact, according

to our model, the cultural dimension has its own mental base regarding the problem of adaptation of the social actors to the group of belonging, that is the capacity to be egosyntonic and egodystonic with the Community. The group setting is in fact a mental field which integrally occupies the oneiric space of the patients (Amaro, 1997), made evident by the characteristic configuration of the icons present in the dreams related in the group and refers to participation and involvement in the group itself. The mind, in fact, always has an affective base. This enables us to observe the possibility of discovering how the Matrix can also be, as we have already said, not only a mental experience but also a solution to a conflict - in the sense of a social meta dramatization - its structuring as a social symptom, that is, as a shared representation, "immersed in the unconscious" as if it had been removed, a problem of building an unborn identity. We feel that the concept of the work hypothesis is the solution to the iconic representation present and revealed in the Matrix regarding the constituting of what we have called *the psychic intentionality of the social in becoming* (Agresta D., 2016). Consequently the dream enables us to integrate the complex reality of the mind and the mental concept itself, which is equivalent to the unconscious process expressed in the conscience with reference to social groups and thus the culture of belonging. In my opinion culture does not exist without the presence of a psychic representability revealed in the dream. Thus building/relating/sharing a dream means building a thought. Representing a thought means building a memory, that is, objects which define a weight and a concrete contact - which is expressed in relations - with history. We believe that, in this sense, the central element of Social Dreaming is in fact the matrix as it is the neotenic place in which the Collective is found discovering its own identity. In other words, beyond its social value, according to Lawrence's innovative discoveries the dream of the SD Matrix becomes a place of creation and hence a founding experience of the mind precisely because it is located at a space-time level in a structure process which we call matrix in the sense of a space which involves, in the connection between the common elements of dreams, forming the "structure of the conjuncture". Social Dreaming travels in a unique and original temporality. Thinking, in fact, is a process through which the mental image of the object of the thought is freely manipulated. We can distinguish four different types or ways of thinking (G. Lawrence, *Tongued with fire*, Karnac, London, 2000): "thinking as being" which reflects the thought inherent to the human condition: such a thought is the background to everything we do. It is a background noise which accompanies our existence. Man also thinks about the way of improving his condition, trying to progress, imagining a future

state and striving to reach it. This kind of thought is defined as "thinking how to become". These two kinds of thought "being and becoming" tend to be associated with the light of conscience. There are two other kinds of thought which transcend the conscience and which are associated with the shadow of the unconscious or the infinite: thinking as dreaming and thinking as something known but not thought. The first of these is the way in which human beings experiment their daily actions emotionally while they sleep; in this way human beings have access to their immense unconscious part and thus the infinite thought present in their oneiric activity and culture. The "unthought known" (Bollas, 1989) is recorded in our internal world as an effect of the events of life. When similar events are experimented later in life, they evoke a memory of the initial forgotten experience. Such ways of thinking are connected to each other systematically since they interact with each other. Being fully conscious of these different ways of thinking gives us a mental disposition which refers to the faculty of being able to know and extend everything which originates from the conscience, time and environment in which we are immersed and which is revealed through the unconscious and infinite ways of thinking reflected in the dream. The process of giving the dream a narrative order consists in making the implicit content explicit and it is this that marks the beginning of the transformation of the thought.

Thus the Matrix is a place in which something is born because it is correlated, in its founding nature, with the dream. The Matrix without a dream is the equivalent of saying that the work of the Social Dreaming Matrix does not exist. We feel we are able to clarify the matter because we suggest that the SDM is a psychological device and not a method. The difference is in the fact that it is a device which maintains a firm relationship between dream, matrix, dreamer and culture. These elements are systems and structures which are already coexistent in the Collective since culture/the unconscious and the Mind are constant and not variable. We can define this building process as a "primary structured process". It permits a dialogical relationship between psychic instances and regards the mechanisms of self-representation of the mental apparatus according to the principles of Freud's theories (the Conscious, the Preconscious and the Unconscious; the Id, the Ego and the Superego). The primary structured process involves a work group and is analyzed in terms of free associations. The free associations can be interpreted as metonymic (movement) and metaphoric (condensation) rhetorical meanings. The movement concerns the symbolic meanings of the chain. The primary structured process translates the conflicts between the instances (the ES,

the Id, the Super-Id) into an internalized image, which has the specific structure of fables, literature, mythology and dreams (Menarini, Montefiori, 2013). The Dream, in fact, is given by images which enable us to observe the internal world of the dreamer and also express the world through which the dreamer tries to come into contact with his original identity. Although the dreamer is not important in the experience of the Matrix, in reality we discover some anthropological structures translated into images. The Matrix as a place and space is a primary psychosensorial experience. For this reason the dream, as a concrete and visible expression of the Matrix, can be considered a semiophore with an anthropopoietic function. The dream represents an attempt of the mind to speak about itself, its origins and the environment it creates. The dream is thus neither separable from the concept of the matrix nor from the place and space which we call matrix.

## THE MATRIX AS A CONCEPT, THE MATRIX AS A PLACE OF THE MIND

As we have already hinted, the observation of the Matrix<sup>[2]</sup> as a place of the mind cannot be separated from its appearance in the dream, which is the way through which the Mind structures and processes images and cultural elements on an affective basis which we call icons. We will try to clarify this passage in order to understand why we make this distinction between place, concept and experience regarding the term Matrix. During the social matrices we have carried out over the years, we have been able to notice that the dream can be subdivided into three levels of analysis and reading precisely with reference to the complex nature of the Matrix: System, Process, Icon (Agresta, 2016). Lawrence has defined the experience of the Matrix<sup>[3]</sup> as a multiverse of meanings, emphasizing the systemic and dynamic nature of the work associated with the SDM.

The question of defining a multiverse of meanings in the SDM allows us to clarify how the dream has its anthropopoietic and semiophoric nature in the same instant in which the collective, associating with it, creates new thoughts. As the dream is a way of thinking of the unconscious mind, we can also define how the characteristic - precisely from a social and anthropological perspective - of the mind is that of building individuals by means of images. By mental, as we have already pointed

out in a previous paper (Agresta, 2016), we always mean the experience of the other. The intersubjective aspect is expressed, in my opinion, through mental images, dreams, the body, social rites and interpersonal relations in the Institutions. All these elements are always within a cultural and hence group system and are always determined in the oneiric experience in order to analyze them in their original dimension which we define as founding. Just as we can talk about *primary scene* in time in the Freudian metapsychology, we can also talk about *primary social structures* or hyperthemes of the matrix which in the SD we reveal through what Lawrence called the work hypothesis. In fact the oneiric image refers, going back in time, to multiple space temporal aspects linked to the history of the individual - in our opinion the individual is always the Group - showing that it possesses a symbolic nature *ad infinitum*. In this sense, according to the reflections which we propose, the dream has the characteristics of creating and founding the mind: for this reason its temporal dimension is *ad infinitum*.

Every Matrix is, in fact, a fractal vision of it. It is the past, present and future in the same instant in which the Collective experiences it. It creates the plot and develops it by transforming thoughts. At this point there is only an experiential difference between the Matrix and the dream. As the SDM is a device, it is the environment and also the deeply social experience which defines, in an associative way, the determination of the observation and the *hinc et nunc* creation of the identity.

We feel it is interesting to refer to a concept of Marshall Sahlins (2016) concerning the possibility of observing intersubjective aspects which are present and observable in history as "structures of the conjuncture". Sahlins (ibidem) states that the "structure of the conjuncture" is the practical creation of cultural categories in a specific historical context, expressed by the action of historical agents, including the microsociology of their interaction. The Author sustains that this modality of observation is neither fixed on the question of de facto social organization nor on the so-called underlying "social structure". In this way, according to Sahlins, we will avoid the risk, implicit in our ingenuous phenomenology of symbolic action, of seeing in the symbolic process just a more attractive version of the ancient juxtaposition between individual and society (ibidem). The Matrix is a container and a psychosensorial experience with an affective basis which

<sup>2</sup> With the concept of "matrix" Foulkes wanted to indicate the place of conscious and unconscious communication, of transference, of transpersonal processes, as well as of the specific phenomena of the therapeutic group. The matrix is a psychic network of communication which is indivisible property of the group and is not only interpersonal but transpersonal.

<sup>3</sup> *An Introduction to Social Dreaming* (Lawrence 2005, p14 ff). Lawrence distinguished between the 'Matrix' as both a form and a process, "as a form, it is a configuration of people that provides a unique space, or 'container' for thinking out of the content of dreams to consider and discover their hidden, elusive/infinite meaning. As a process, the matrix is the system or web of emotions and thinking that is present in every social relationship, but for the most part unattended and not acknowledged. It can be thought of as mirroring while awake, the infinite, unconscious processes in waking life that give rise to dreaming when asleep".

is determined in the formation of a “structure-process” defined as the building of meanings by means of dreams. This is our base which refers to what we have defined as the “structure of the conjuncture”. This dimension is linked more to the process than the structural dimension in and for itself, an equally fundamental aspect in understanding how the dream is also a system of thoughts. In working with the Matrix, in fact, we can observe that although the temporality perceived is *ad infinitum*, it is built, through connections and by means of free associations between dreams, like a transgenerational historical present. In this sense the Matrix develops as a double founding myth. The past, the present and the future are *now* visible in the images and the iconic dimension of the dream and in the hypertheme of the Matrix itself. Now if the dream is in the Matrix and the Matrix encloses the dream, it is clear that in the collective mental experience they are the same thing. In fact the dream and the Matrix now create a transgenerational and thus transformative space. The Matrix is now a place of the mind which is formed by a concept through which the Collective proposes work hypotheses. It is a dream. This is a dimension which can be observed by the Host during the associative work since it is a “dimension without space or time (transpersonal)” which, through the saturation of the matrix, appears as if it were photographed in a segment made visible in a mental dimension which is nothing more than the dream itself. I feel it is interesting to remember that the whole Freudian work is permeated by a relational model regarding the decisive importance of family constellations in the processes of building the psychic structure highlighted by metapsychology (Napolitani, 1987). The phenomenon refers to what René Kaes (1996) defined in terms of group forms of psychic, which, in turn, is shown in the experience that the subject has of himself in relation to his personal identity. This is the notion of group foundation of the identity.

In work with the SDM the Matrix assumes the function of pattern and unsaturated experience and is thus transformative. The interpretation would saturate the matrix with regard to how the work is carried out in this original device. The translation and the passage between the visible and the invisible - the semiophoric function of the dream - takes place with the creation of the theme of the Matrix, in its form and identification of the oneiric icons, that is mental objects which express the psychic intentionality of the dreamers. As the icons are mental events, they are potential symbols.

As the Matrix creates a complex representation by means of dreams which is repeated and modified in time (Agresta, 2016) - albeit putting its founding dimension at the base of its creative process - the network of dreams or the multiverse of meanings is a complex construction of social thinking.

## CONCLUSION

We feel that the SDM refers, in its creating and becoming, to the principles of Mandelbrot's set as it is fractal, non-linear and of an isotopic nature at a linguistic or rather semantic level. According to Greimas (2000) the isotopy is “a set of redundant semantic categories which make the uniform reading of a history possible. The isotopy is an intrinsic characteristic of the text, which must be recognized through the encyclopaedic competence of the reader. The overlapping of the common semantic traits (semantic overlapping) of two or more lexemes constitutes an amalgam, of which the isotopy is the result”. In our opinion the SDM (intended as fractal) is nothing more than a semantic field, a geometrical organization (mental field) of the dreams reported in the section. The semantic field of the SDM focuses on this type of isotopic characteristic and is built on the rule of free associations: the fractal is not linear because, in the hermeneutic session, the same interpretation functions as a transformation. If this does not happen, there will be a linear fractal which is repeated infinitely without a plot. The interpretation is nothing more than the capacity to find the narrative identity or plot. *Avoiding* the SDM, the interpretation creates a summation of connections which contain a part of the whole (the Hypertheme of the Matrix) and is developed in conceptual patterns (semantic subcategories) which have form (gestalt) in common and which are nothing more than an “anthropological ideal in being” in the Community. Social Dreaming is thus based on the assumption of “self similarity” of all the dreams as they are isotopies of a group field. The dream in the matrix is thus an attempt to free a personal and/or collective history from the bonds of a future necessity, that is, a symptomatological predestination. This is why the SDM represents ideal models of action and observation of the social in terms of conflicts or work hypotheses. The associative link is a representation of a possible semantic field to be transformed in terms of conflicts in one's culture of belonging. The Matrix observes its creation of the Identity.



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