

EXCERPT

GENERATIVE DREAMWORK:

APPLYING GROUP THEORY TO SMALL JUNGIAN GROUPS

Presented at the AGAP Forum:

Reclaiming the Symbolic Way in Spirituality, Analytic Practice, and Culture

JULY 16-19, 2006

by Martha Blake, MBA, LP, NCPsyA, Psychologist Resident

Diplomate Jungian Analyst, Zurich

Keywords: group theory, group analysis, group process, dream group, generative dreamwork.

The group's experience goes no deeper than one's own mind in that state....

By engaging the individual's interest and attention, the ritual makes it possible for him to have a comparatively individual experience even within the group and so to remain more or less conscious (Jung, 1940, paras. 226, 227).

We Jungian analysts practice in an era when the economic environment necessitates that we expand the classic on-to-one model of analysis and offer transformative experiences of Jungian analytical psychology to those who are considering analysis and to those who cannot afford traditional analysis. Many of us struggle to build and maintain a full practice when the traditional one-to-one analytical model is all we have to offer to potential clients. Concurrently, potential clients are searching for interventions that are economically accessible and for venues that offer a felt experience of healing. As analysts, some of us offer seminars or conduct workshops. We are comfortable planning the *content* for groups to experience. However most analysts are not trained in facilitating the *process* of group work.

This paper surveys what is known about small groups—from Freud to Whitmont to Senge-- then combines theory with practical experience. The group structure and process that I describe are not one-to-one analysis. Neither are they group analysis or group process gatherings. This paper surveys the challenges, dangers, and opportunities that emerge with small groups. It then proposes the structure, method, process, and outcome of what I call generative dreamwork with small groups.

Jung on Groups

...our personal psyche bears the same relationship to the collective psyche as the individual to the society (Jung, 1928, Vol. 7, para. 234).

Jung's early works explored psychosis, neurosis, and individuation—individual experiences of unconsciousness and consciousness. He focused his energy on understanding the individual experience as a subset of collective experience. His forays into group experiences such as the 1911-1912 years when he was President of the International Psychoanalytic Association and the Psychological Club in Zurich, founded in 1916, distracted him from his calling and confirmed that his gifts lay elsewhere. As Jung remarked in his *Introduction to Toni Wolff's studies in Jungian psychology*, he was concerned about the dynamic between individual consciousness and group consciousness:

The bigger the group, the more the individuals composing it function as a collective entity, which is so powerful that it can reduce individual consciousness to the point of extinction, and it does this more easily if the individual lacks spiritual possessions of his own with an individual stamp (Jung 1959, Vol. 10, para. 891).

Group observations have confirmed over and over again that the group subtly entices its members into mutual imitation and dependence, thereby holding out the promise of sparing them a painful confrontation with themselves....(Jung 1959, Vol. 10, para. 892).

On the other hand, no one likes or dares to mention in so many words the negative effects of group-existence, because this might bring up the frightening problem of self-knowledge and individuation (Jung 1959, Vol. 10, para. 892).

While Jung observed the tendency for loss of individual consciousness in groups, he acknowledged the opportunity for greater individual consciousness and individuation by participating as a group member. James Hillman once entitled a lecture *From mirror to window: Curing psychoanalysis of*

its narcissism (1989), encouraging analysts to move beyond the mirror of self-reflection-- what is going on in the individual soul-- to the window-- what is going on in the soul of the world, the anima mundi.

In sharp contrast to Jung's focus on the individuation process in the life of the individual psyche, and Hillman's encouragement to look out the window into the world, Wolfgang Giegerich (1996, 2003) maintains that the life of the psyche is already out in the world. Giegerich calls upon us to see that the Soul is in the world. Both Jung and Giegerich observe that individuals are part of a collective and that collectives house the imagery of a culture. With apologies to Giegerich, it is my reading of him that he places globalization and profit in opposition to individuation, or at least he subordinates the opus of the individual soul to the magnum opus of the world soul. I hold a middle position between Hillman and Giegerich that does not subordinate the individual opus for the collective one. It attends both by focusing on small groups—groups working to transform organizations, and Jungian groups of individuals working to transform themselves. Working with small groups offers us an opportunity to participate in both the individual and the collective individuation phenomena simultaneously.

The idea of an analyst working with groups is not new. Edward Whitmont (1974) advocated Jungian group therapy thirty years ago. Whitmont maintained that the multiplicity of group member interactions is more real than the analytic dyad. Group analysis offers a wider range of perspectives, demands a greater level of honesty, creates situations accessible to direct experience, and may constellate a more intense emotional impact than one-to-one analysis. Whitmont maintained that group and individual analysis were complementary. However he also observed that group work is not for everyone because it requires a flexible, observing ego. Notable for the topic of this paper on small group dreamwork, Whitmont believed that a period of individual work should precede group analysis. I maintain that small groups may precede analysis, although the analysis if the focus of the group is on learning about dreams rather than group process and if the analyst facilitating the small group of dreamers

has adequate background and experience in small group work to contain the process and to identify when an individual member needs ego support.

Groupwork

Although our clients live and work in groups, most Jungian analysts are not trained to work with groups or organizations. Traditionally, training in analytical psychology has focused on dualities-- the dyad, dialectic, tension of the opposites, and the ego-self axis. The emphasis is on the dualities within the analysand and within the analyst/analysand relationship. There is little theory offered about the dynamics of group process, although each training candidate learns by osmosis in group seminars, colloquia, and various group offerings on fairytales, psychodrama, and dreams. The emphasis is always on the individual experience rather than the group, how to lead a group, or what is happening within the group. One exception is the program at the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco described in the *Journal of analytical psychology* (Kirsch & Spradlin, 2006, pp 357-380). Following divisive ethical violations in the 1980s, the institute added required first year didactic and experiential group process seminars to its curriculum. Kirsch and Spradlin reflect on the value of group process training and experience for the healthy functioning of organizational life of the institute. The emphasis in San Francisco is on the group rather than the individual as a member of a group. Analyst facilitators are not group leaders. The focus of learning is the group process itself.

Teamwork

Whereas some Jungians are becoming interested in group process, the corporate world is increasingly oriented toward teamwork. One recognized expert in teamwork is Jon Katzenbach, a former director of McKinsey & Company, Inc., a large consulting firm in the United States. Katzenbach is the author of several articles on team work and leadership published by the *Harvard business review* (1993, 1997). According to Katzenbach, teams are a unique form of small group. Teams share a common

understanding of vision and values, dedicate individual energy to a joint product, and attempt to set aside individual bids for power in order to accomplish a shared purpose. Peter Senge, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is the author of books on how organizations learn, including *The fifth discipline* (1994). According to Senge, teams of individuals need each other in order to become conscious of their individual assumptions. Each of us can explore how teams learn by (emphasis mine) *first turning the mirror inward*.

As a Jungian analyst, I combine what is known about the psychodynamics of groups and the performance of teams to create effective small dream groups. Even though the groups I facilitate are designed to unfold more like a team than a group, I prefer to use the label *dream group* because it is familiar terminology to clients, while the term *dream team* has a sports connotation in American English. Nevertheless, we analysts may build upon what is known about small groups and teams to facilitate meaningful, effective—generative—Jungian dream groups.

Generative dream groups

Let us explore what the meaning of the term *generative*. The American heritage dictionary (2000) defines the verb *generate* as “to bring into being; give rise to”. The adjective *generative* is defined as “having the ability to originate, produce, or procreate; of or relating to the production of offspring.” Both words derive from the Latin *generre, genert-*, to produce, and from *genus, gener-*, birth. Whereas some group dynamics tend toward disruption and degeneration, the intention of a generative dream group is to produce, to give birth to something. The focus of generative dreamwork is the individual dreamer and the individual individuation process. Generative dream groups are not primarily about group process, although group process is observed and gently folded back into the work by the analyst facilitator. Generative dream groups are not structured as group therapy, although the Greek concept of

therapeutikos, “*attending, serving*”, happens as members listen and inquire in service to the dreamer. Generative dream groups are not about collective dreaming, lucid dreaming, precognitive dreaming, or even about objective interpretations. Generative dream groups are about subjective experiences of inner reality unique to the individual—that may also be shared experiences of the human condition, archetypal, collective experiences. Generative dream groups are structured to mitigate individual and group shadow, projection, transferences, and constellations. Generative dream groups assimilate shadow and projection, observe transferences and constellations, and facilitate the emergence of the transcendent function within the individual.