

# System System dynamics in in-depth psychology - A possible study of the dream

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*Summary.* Everything existing in this world exists in some kind of system. No living being or matter can be abstracted from the system where it came from and to which it belongs. Therefore, the mental life of the human being is part of the so-called world soul and is subjected to the invisible laws of the system dynamics like, for example, in the family, the social system, the national dynamics, and in the whole existence as well. The dreaming, on the other hand, as a psychological aspect of the sleep, is part of the mental system and is subjected to the laws of the individual soul, but also to the influence of the broader mental dimension, especially the subsystem called unconsciousness. This theoretical paper will deal with in-depth analysis, exploration, and explanation of the phenomenon of system dynamics in the dreaming and tries to inform about the world of the dream from a system-dynamic aspect, thus looking at the dream as part of the overall bio-psycho-social whole.

*Keywords:* Dream, depth psychology, system dynamics, system

## 1. Introduction

If we go from the spatial layout of systems in the universe, we will immediately notice that it (the universe) is the widest system, whole, concept. In it, as its constituent parts, we have its elements, celestial bodies, planets, comets, stars, satellites, etc. Each of these elements, on the other hand, is a system-guide or central system-mother of many other elements that in turn make it what it is. The Earth is part of the system of the universe as its member that has its exact place in the history of occurrence as well as in the spatial layout, distance, position, shape, etc. The earth in itself is composed of other subsystems such as its atmosphere with all its chemical elements (nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, etc.), the stratosphere: the great waters (seas, oceans, lakes), the smaller waters (rivers), the solid part of the earth (trees, plants, etc.), the animal world and of course the human community (ecuma) - people. The human community is further a system composed of all its cultural, social, biological and sociological elements. The social human community is divided into different socio-economic strata, nations, religions, cultures, etc. Biologically / organism, the human species consists of a series of subsystems: a physical body with all its tissues, muscles, skeleton, etc.; physiological system with all its functions; neurological system with its subsystems (central nervous system, autonomic nervous system, etc.); endocrine system with all its glands and tissues, etc. So, the psychic life of a man is part of the so-called "world soul" and subject to the invisible laws of systemic dynamics both in the organism, as well as in the family, the social system, the national dynamics and in the

whole existence. In particular, the family system is important from the point of view of the individual-mental dynamics in its development, which certainly determines the individual mental matrix and the quality of life from a distance. The direct socio-psychological system-the predecessor of the individual psychic life is certainly the family and its old psychology woven into the individual system of the heir who carries the remains of the order of his ancestors.

Although some classical psychotherapeutic directions and theoretical concepts (Gestalt Psychotherapy, Psychodrama, etc.) worked with the systemic-dynamic approach, however, family constellations introduced by the German priest Bert Hellinger (1925-) as a special direction in psychotherapy, for the first time, gave the meaning of the familial system and its order in the influence on the individual psychic life. Although it can be said that this direction is also part of a wider system-family system, its specificity is in the fact that he takes into account the depth aspects of the familial unconscious and the order in the family as the cause of many future, current relationships, tangles and functionalities in the individual and his overall psycho-social functioning. The dreaming is part of the soul system and is subject to the laws of the individual soul, but also to the influence of the wider mental dimension, especially the subsystem called unconscious. In the dream as a kind of other form of consciousness or as a special aspect of mental function, the order of love or the family system plays an important role in the discovery of internal mental mechanisms. In itself, the dreaming is a kind of original mental dimension, moreover it is burdened with the family constellation aspects hidden in its scenario. In this paper, the dreaming is seen through the prism of systemic dynamics derived from family dynamics, but from the aspect of the systemic-eclectic psychotherapeutic paradigm of the multiple possible outcomes of the human soul. Pendaroski (2017) developed an eclectic model / method of psychotherapeutic work of dreams, that in itself also contains systemic-dynamical aspects of the script's work, which is the narrative structure of the dream. In a method called The Line of Less Resistance, he examines, among other things, the systemic aspects of the flow

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of manifest content that, with the appropriate interpretation, is revealed in the true latent message through which some profound truths can be invisible to the individual psychological eye. The paper deals with the hidden system-dynamical messages interwoven in the interplay of the characters in the dream recall, especially the representations, the characters of the family members of the dreamer. Considering the significance of the presence of those characters in the screenplay of the manifest dream, brings us to the hidden messages individually profiled for the dreamer. Perhaps the fact that the family dynamics itself is still a kind of secret, due to the many uncertainties and unconscious mechanisms, contributes to the phenomenon where the dream, as an aspect in which the systemic-dynamic aspects of the psyche of the individual are also hiding and which is one of the deepest aspects of the unconscious, remains on the margins of research interests in the area.

## 2. Systemic family dynamics through the prism of family constellations

System dynamics began to be studied with the insight of contemporary theoreticians of psychotherapy and psychotherapists that the monotheoretic, individualistic, and ahistorical directions fell short when trying to give in-depth psychological explanations of phenomena that surpassed the individual-psychic and did not managed to reach beyond the basics woven into the soul of the individual. Ever since the time of Carl Gustav Jung, who introduced the term objective psyche or collectively unconsciously, it became clear that, in order to understand the individual psychic world, it is necessary to look beyond the single system which is certainly part of a larger system from which it originates or whose descendent is himself.

As an alternative psychotherapeutic method, family constellations arise from three sources: 1. Family system therapy; 2. Existentialistic phenomenology and 3. The indigenous spiritual mysticism of the Zulu tribe and their approach to the family.

The creator of family constellations, however, is considered to be Bert Hellinger (1925-), a German priest who investigated the mysticism of the Zulu tribe and developed this new short-term intensive therapy (according to Ulsamer, 2009). As Bertolt Ulsamer points out, this systemic approach is further a deeper development of multigenerational family therapy that exists as a separate course. Hellinger discovered a number of principles and orders that appear in the network of relationships and relations across many generations, which have been proven right and appeared through practical work with people who have suffered predominantly from severe trauma and loss (wars, rape, natural disasters, exoduses, etc.). The family constellations are ingenious in their form of practical work and theoretical approach and have surprising procedures and effects (according to Ulsamer, 2009). Today, there are several influences and developmental lines of the approach initially and orthodoxly proposed by Helinger, which seems to be moving towards less spiritual and mystical religious aspects of the initial approach and tries to bring this direction closer to the psychological science.

Some of the general concepts of the route are: the so-called "Movement of the Soul", or "flow of love". Love in the family must flow, whether positive or negative. To understand the essence of the flow of love (direction, motives,

quality, among whom?); the so-called order of love, i.e. to keep matters in some order, the goal is to understand the order in the family. To understand, you need to let the system act and the order itself will show up. Sometimes the order is invalid (everyone is not in their place!). Such an order affects the actual life of a member who is stuck in it. It is important to see how it is in the family system, not how we want it to be. The great three principles of approach are: 1. Affiliation; 2. Order / Hierarchy and 3. Giving-taking.

The first principle of belonging indicates the undeniable biological fact that - it is impossible not to be a member of his family, i.e. that we all belong to the family from which we originate and practically and literally there is no non-membership. Each person carries in the self-identification with his family, and the I - You relation is actually We - You relation (examples: partners bring up family issues in every quarrel). At last, we are infinitely part of our family, regardless if it is about living or deceased members, which practically make us a continuous part of that system.

The second principle, called the Hierarchy, emphasizes the objective and biologically rooted principle that each has its own, only one and exact place in the family hierarchy that is exactly known and obtained with the order of birth.

The third principle called giving-taking explains the dynamism of giving life / love with the creation of children / heirs and the price that those who received (children) "pay" for being given a life. In this sense, this paradigm claims that in fact, the parents "charge" their love / giving through the giving of their children to their grandchildren ... (a phenomenon - the grandchildren are usually loved more than the children because they are not expecting anything in return, i.e. there is no imperative of taking! (Sayings - "You are better than you father / mother"!)). The basic direction is that - the older child gives to the younger. Hence, there is the dynamics of the phenomenology of longing - the desire is to give in order to take. Exactly here lies the explanation that when we give too much, we also expect too much, which brings us to the specific in-depth phenomenology of guilt - guilt is what comes from the giving-taking ratio, and that is, when we give too much we make the others guilty, and when we take a lot we are feeling guilty, it turns out that it is a fact that the biggest source of guilt comes from our parents that gave us LIFE - something we cannot pay back or give in return.

## 3. Phenomenology of the dreaming through the prism of systemic dynamics in family constellations

The systemic view of human reality led us to the objective conclusion that this world functions in the systemic dynamic principles of interconnection and versatility. If we take the basic premise that the psychic system functions in two larger areas, and that is the conscious and the unconscious, then we conclude that within these two subsystems of the psychic reality as constituent elements of all aspects, these areas complement interdependently and intertwined. So, within the unconscious area are all the subcontracting psychic realities that go beyond the conscious basis of cognitive functioning, and firstly, the states of consciousness are altered, of course, it is sleeping as a physiological aspect and dreaming as a psychologically unconscious aspect of the psyche. From this, we conclude that the dreaming is part of the entire psyche system. As such a complex phenomenon it cannot be abstracted from the entire psychic apparatus

and, of course, it is part of the overall system on which it has influences and by which it is influenced. Man, as a bio-psycho-social being, is part of the system to which he belongs, and the dreaming as one of its essential elements is also influenced by the overall system in which the individual is susceptible to everyday life and the biological, social, cultural, historical, national, and any larger whole to which he belongs. This means that dream is part of the family system of the individual, and thus its scenario is influenced by the accumulated family values, traditions, experiences, events and ancestors that are imprinted in its narrative structure. That would mean that the dream scenario should not be taken merely as a reflection of reality solely and only on the individual as a conscious and unconscious experience, but also as a result of the generational family influence made upon him from his ancestors and through their experiences which genetic, metaphorical, and folklore stories that have been deposited in its structure.

Some studies of familial influences on dreams reach out to the origin of the anthropological and historical facts about the origin of man, the consciousness of the primitive man about the significance of the dream and the family roots of it. According to the author Bynum (Bynum, 1992, 1993, 1994), we are all modern heirs of the genetic code of the first people born in Africa, more specifically the African woman of 150,000-200,000 years ago, the so-called mitochondrial DNA mother of humanity (Vigilant et al, 1991). According to Forbes, 1992, the primacy of these universal truths and facts recognizes the implications and new Evolution rate / level for a new theory of dreams. Like dreams, Binum emphasizes, these familial awareness moves our lives, illuminating or obscuring our motivations, drives and dynamics. Like dreams, these processes are older and deeper than any individual consciousness and spread roots that spirally back to the primordial structures and processes of the human psyche. And as this author adds, at the deepest level, the primal psyche affects the body and the body affects the psyche. These allegations lead us even closer to the primordial truth that nothing starts with us and that everything that exists in our unconscious and thus in our dreams is influenced by the so-called world psyche and especially our family history woven into our DNA, and of course in our psychic and physical functioning. That is why in the family constellations the body is the most trusted object of observation, unlike all other methods, here through the bodily spontaneous movements hidden dynamics of the soul are revealed, both ours and our ancestors. Barbara Genovese gives an overview of how the ancestors appear in some important dreams and how we can work on our own interpretations of the dream, but also in an indirect way to connect with our ancestors and even help them. Namely, she declares that those dreams are different in the way that we are experiencing the regular dreams and literally says - they are unachievable, like smoke, and therefore, when you touch them, they disappear! (Genovese, 2017, 80) She adds, that while she dreamed of these dreams in which the ancestors were connected in some interrelations, she had the need to help them which reflects her urge for giving-taking. If we go back to the basic principles of the systemic approach, we will recall that one of the general principles is precisely giving-take.

The conclusion here is that, when dreaming, the same systemic family dynamics occur, especially those aspects that are not yet calm, i.e. the dynamics which from a con-

stellation aspect carry a psychological weight and require closure within the system and in order for the family energy and love to flow. Genovese still says that it is not clear whether what is content - spoken and seen in a dream is thought by the dreamer or is simply said through him! Or as it says straight away - 'these dreams were not mine, but they should have been dreamed by me, through me.' Those dreams were not mine, but they were related to me. These dreams were not mine, but they were happy to take place right now. It was something as if it had been something exiled, exorcised, relieved, scattered like a bomb, blessed and then made sacred, or as " (Genovese, 2017, 81). Referring to a work by Francis Veller, she describes her experience in groups where the group dreams of one of its members, i.e. the group focuses on him. If that is possible, then why not dreaming about the ancestors and thus get deep messages that cannot come through in other ways. Or, as Weller points out (according to Genovese, 2017), in one's sleep one of the five doors of sadness is opened - the regret of the ancestors. After all, it seems, as Weller points out, that we carry the grief of the ancestors into ourselves and we live it through the dreams that carry it in order to be processed, assimilated and through us, in a way, so that the suffering of the ancestors can be lived through and closed.

If we now look from the aspect of systemic dynamics according to the conceptions of family constellations, we will come to the conclusion that the dreams can be considered and certainly interpreted from the angle of the systemic aspects of its manifest content. The purpose of this use of systemic dynamics is the personal meaning of the dream for the dream owner. According to the clinical observations, it comes to the conclusion that two basic ways / approaches to the use of systemic dynamics in the work with dreams are possible:

- 1) System-Constellation way / approach and
- 2) Methodological-Applicable way / approach

#### 4. System-dynamic family constellation way / approach in working with dreams

Some authors have stated that (Androutsopoulou, 2011), apart from some psychoanalytic therapists who are working with families or couples, there are no special systemic family theories or methodologies for working with dreams (see Buchholz, 1990; Scharff, 1992). Some other family therapists use ideas from various approaches in working with dreams (for instance, Feixas, Cunillera, and Mateu (1990) take the constructivist perspective of George Kelly as their theoretical background for the therapeutic use of dreams). Other as Andrews, Clark, and Zinker (1988) use techniques from Gestalt, and Sanders (1994) takes a pragmatic perspective that sees dream content in relation to family problems. Kaplan, Saayman, and Faber (1981) adopt a Jungian rationale for their empirical study associating the content of family dreams with the degree of functionality in families (according to: Androutsopoulou, 2011, p. 479). Generally, family therapists take the narrative approach, i.e. they consider the dream recall as a story and they are more interested in the family processes rather than in the family relationships. Some authors (Penn and Frankfurt, 1994) give us examples from their own family therapy practice of how changes in one individual can lead to changes in the rest of the family based on a narrative rationale, which is familiar with a systemic constellation work with dreams, from a point that

family constellation work believes that when an individual is working on his personal topic, then the whole familial system is also influenced. There are also individual therapists who have developed their own methods as, for instance, Sparrow, who besides the mentioning of the term Equifinality, which means that a change in a part of the system affects the whole system, derived his own method called – The 5 star method – that reflects many of the principles currently espoused by systems-oriented family therapy and postmodern therapy, especially that the dream is not given but created as a product of a dynamic interaction between the dream owner and the dream imagery and that the dream owner and dream imagery or story are somewhat distinct aspects of the dream (Sparrow, 1976-2015).

One of the modes of working with the dream recall and dreaming from a systemic-dynamic aspect is to use the approach from the typical constellation access. This would mean that we will start from the interpretation of the dream through the prism of his system-family constellations, which means to work on the dream recall through the consideration of family motives and relationships that are woven into the manifest content of the dream. This means that in order to use this approach, it is necessary for the dream to contain elements of the systemic family dynamics that will be shown in the scenario itself by displaying the characters from the immediate and / or wider family of the dreamer. This can be done through the use of the two main methodological approaches to family constellations: 1) The order of love and / or 2) Movement / flow of the soul.

According to the doctrine of family constellations, that should be the Ego displays in the dream of one or both of the closer or more distant relatives of the first-line owner of that specific dream, i.e. from his family tree (mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, brother/sister, half-brother/half-sister, cousins, uncles, aunts, etc.) and / or characters from a family where he is adopted or from the family he created; so-called a secondary family (children, poet, smiling, father / mother of his adoptive parents, children born from his adoptive family, etc.) as well as characters from the family with whom he entered into a closer relationship (husband / wife, her / his parents, etc.). The use of the principle / methodology of the Order of Love, the characters are set according to the hierarchy of birth, i.e. after a chronological trail. When using the Movement / Soul of the Soul method, a free-choice of the representatives will be placed in the role of the characters of the family system of the dream owner. Sometimes the typical order of Bert Höllinger is used, and sometimes it is more important for the actors themselves to bring the dynamics of the scene through their own phenomenology and through spontaneous tracking of the movement of the soul, which is reflected in the feelings of their bodies embodied through specific movements and bodily positions.

So, if the dream in its manifest scenario, i.e. in its narrative structure in visual and / or auditory form contains representations, i.e. ego displays, i.e. the characters of some of the people mentioned above from a relationship with him, that dream can be processed in this way. During this processing of dream recall, the typical family-constellation methods and interventions will be applied, and this is primarily the so-called representations, i.e. the dream recall will take place in a group in which some of the members will take the roles of the characters present in the dream. The ultimate goal is the dream owner who works on his dream to visually see the constellation and system dynamics that the dream brings

to him and become more aware of certain dynamics and thus receive a return message about the personal meaning of the messages. This approach is two-way important because it will help the client become conscious and thus achieve greater personal development, and it will help the participants/representatives who will be part of the constellation for some of their own processes.

## 5. Methodological-applicative way / approach in system-dynamical work with dreams

The question arises: if a dream recall does not carry a typical scenario in which the systemic family dynamics is purified, can it be processed through the prism of systemic family dynamics?! The answer derived from the practical psychotherapeutic and psychological work with the dreams is that it can, but only from the aspect of applying the system-family dynamical methodology in the function of interpreting the hidden messages of personal significance for the dream owner. In this place, one should be cautious about the outcome of the interpretation from two aspects:

A) whether dream messages are linked to the systemic family dynamics of the dreamer or

B) messages should be interpreted through the individual non-systemic aspects of the psychic life of the dreamer

The therapist / consteller should know the history of his / her client / dream owner, which will have a clear insight into whether some of the elements of the dream recall are related to wider systemic family dynamics and / or relate exclusively to some personal individual aspects of the life of the dream owner. This approach should not start from the content of the dream recall but through the use of methods and interventions in this psychotherapeutic direction to enable the client to reach messages that are hidden in the latent content of the dream.

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