

# I dreamt that I walked, slipped and fell. What is this “I”?

Pierre Ruyneau de Saint George

Lyon, France

*Summary.* On the basis of observations collected by the method involving the superposition of the underlying fabric of affects and oneiric sensations on a framework of real impressions, the author attempts to identify those characteristics of the “I” of the previous day that resurface in the “I” that is the hero of the dream. We propose that this be considered as a psychological excitability that is specific, autonomous and sensitive to deeply seated issues that appear, more or less, furtively in an introspective form residing outside of one’s mental control.

*Keywords:* Dream, Affect, Preconscious, Introspection, Oneiric I

## 1. Introduction

The “Deliberator I”, the “I” in “I dream” was first tackled by philosophers. From this, a psychology that we refer to as “philosophical” emerged; the review of Garnier (1865) serves as a reference on this subject.

Then, the phenomena revealed by hypnosis undermined the conceptions of philosophical psychology and led to the rise of the Psychoanalytical I, which ousted the Philosophical I. At the same time, introspection, as a means of observation, was banned from psychological science. However, given that the very concept of a dream implies introspection, we allow ourselves to apply it here. Of course, the resulting suggestions are but presumptions.

To tackle the Oneiric I, that is the I of the previous day that is transformed into the I of the dream, we use a method previously detailed and presented through the use of examples (Ruyneau de Saint-George, 2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2018). As far as we are concerned, the I is situated: I am present in the first person; others, in their dreams, can see the actions of their own double). This method involves creating a link between the flux of affects in the dream and the flux of similar affects experienced during the previous day and between the sensations from the dream, such as any physical sensations experienced by the dreamer, and any real-life homologous psychological disturbances (changes in one’s cognitive-affective state). In our previous work, we distinguished between Highly and Barely Mentalised forms but without explaining them in detail. Here, we present a first attempt at modelling them and, to this end, we endeavour to integrate concepts that assist in the emergence of the Oneiric I.

We begin by saying a few words on the Deliberator I as it reflects the Highly Mentalised dynamic. Then, on the basis of real cases, we present the specificities that enabled us to define, “philosophically”, this Oneiric I and we conclude by

presenting an important property of the “Reality” in which the Oneiric I evolves.

## 2. Regarding the Deliberator I

The Deliberator I is the theatre in which a dynamic is played out that is introspectively perceived through the impression of being able to control one’s own thoughts. This mode of functioning, which we refer to as Highly Mentalised, typically underlies the intellectual organization of actions, ensuring a well thought out control and is based on judgment and will. The judgment is a more or less conditioned formulation of a decision in response to a “is it?” or “is it not?” question. The judgement should be distinguished from the interpretation, which is the “badly thought out” companion to a representation (arising from its perception or conception). There is, therefore, no effort towards a reflexive shift or a confirmation of meaning. In other words, the interpretation given to a representation is not the fruit of critical thinking. The will is the possibility of making a choice, more or less conditioned, between “doing” or “not doing”. On a reflexive, intellectual level, this implies the possibility of deciding to begin, continue or put an end to a thinking process. At the level of concrete actions, this means having the opportunity to choose the objectives, the means and the method.

## 3. A Profile of the Oneiric I

### 3.1. A psychological apparatus that is concerned with certain registers

Let’s first say that we focus on what is introspectable and so, we distinguish between “psychological” and “psychic”. “Psychological” constitutes an introspectable “effect” of the “psychic”, which is itself an inferred, causal principle i.e. an intelligent invention of the Deliberator I that, with the aim of explaining the actions of a living being, explains their “vital animation” and whose reactivity can also be observed in the amoeba. With regard to this, i.e. focusing on the introspectable fields, we will exemplify the specificities that distinguish the Deliberator I and the Oneiric I on the basis of an extract from a dream, “*I am walking, I slip and I fall.*” As usual, we linked this dream to an experience of the previous day by applying the method of superposition of the flux of affects and sensations. In this case, the previous day, while in a

Corresponding address:

Pierre Ruyneau de Saint George, Lyon, France.

Email: stgeorgepierre@hotmail.com

Submitted for publication: November 2021

Accepted for publication: January 2022

DOI: 10.11588/ijodr.2022.1.84581

state of fatigue - one's reactions can, therefore, be exceptionally and exaggeratedly pessimistic, thus a dream might only replay a single anecdotal phase - an ill-intentioned individual declared, with few words and quite unexpectedly, their intention to perpetrate an act that, if it were actually carried out, would put me in a very difficult situation. I answered, weighing very carefully my words (a Highly Mentalised activity) and, at first, I experienced hate, anxiety and anger. However, at the moment of the attack, a defeatist feeling, that could be expressed as "I haven't been able to manage this thing" broke out in the background (that's the slip of the dream). This incident was followed by a (short) depression that brings a lightning perception expressed as "Really, this milieu is not for me; I am not able to adapt to it and I never will" (that's the fall and the being on the ground of the dream).

Here, another element that reinforces our confidence in this association is the classic symbolism that it presents, in other words, the very frequently occurring relationship between an image and a real-life experience: "I slip" / a failure (analogous to letting things get out of control, errors in managing situations); "I fall" / a disheartenment from which I will "arise" later.

### 3.1.1 A different criticality

Neither the "objectively" crucial element (the individual and their threat) nor the subjective perception of it appears in this dream; this dream just replays another subjective effect, and this is not an exception. That which seems crucial from the point of view of the Deliberator I may appear insignificant to the Oneiric I. In our case, the Oneiric I retained another element: the fact of having, inwardly, conceded. So, the principles guiding the attribution of "crucial" to an event can differ and this means that we find ourselves confronted with two universes.

### 3.1.2 A specific level of attribution

Hate, while powerful (intense and pervasive, Ruyneau de Saint-George, 2018), does not appear in this passage. This, we believe, is a question of an instilled attribution. For example, anger can be powerful but superficial, without any "profound" repercussions. It is "endured", accepted and trivialized. It is transient, it simply passes by. This is in contrast to a feeling that, although possessing little in the way of emotion, has the ability to "move" as it has its origin in a deeper-rooted attribution. (That raises the question of the value of experiences founded on the observation of affects and emotions that arise from Highly Mentalised activity). We believe that dreams are based on elements originating from this level of designation, a level that we can refer to as "psycho-visceral". This is the case in our example, and, incidentally, it is common when "auto-perception" is applied (Diel, 1962, is a very interesting read with regard to this) or when personal ideals, that may be constant or short-lived, are violated or accomplished either by oneself or by another.

### 3.1.3 Sensitivity to a Barely Mentalised experience

I was adjusting my response towards the ill-intentioned individual when, in parallel to this Highly Mentalised process, an impression crept in: the defeatist feeling linked to the "Honestly, this milieu is not for me; I am not able to adapt to

it and I never will." This remained an amorphous digression, out of reach of any intellectual control. The level of mentalisation seems to be defined in relation to the nature of the dynamic and not to a certain introspective visibility. A Barely Mentalised representation may be flagrant (in which case the oneiric image is easily describable) while at the same time being "swept under the carpet". Here, it manifests itself under the guise of an ephemeral scion.

A representation related to a psychological disturbance can disappear from one's mind. Thus, all that remains is a state of arousal that one is unable to link to a specific cause (or that they relate to the last incident that occurred; in which case this incident becomes a scapegoat). In psychoanalysis, this *unconscientization* is typically interpreted as the result of a representation that has become unconscious due to an unconsciously intentional "repression" (that is another inferred, causal principle: "I gave the name of repression to this hypothetical process, and I considered that it was proved by the undeniable existence of resistance", Freud, 1910). Therefore, according to psychoanalysis, a dream involves a "return" to this repression. To use the terms employed by this School of thought, we suggest considering this as a return to a preconscious experience.

Considered as such, we could define the Oneiric I as a specific excitability (a reactive sensitivity) that can be aroused by important, Barely Mentalised elements with a psychovisceral attribution. However, the form in which these stimulants exist has a characteristic feature that needs to be mentioned: the stimulants can, as the Deliberator I would say, be real or imaginary.

### 3.2. An important property: A sensitivity that does not distinguish those psychological disturbances arising from perception from those related to the imagination

In a dream, a cat bites me and I experience acute pain. This long dream was related to an incident of the previous day in which I experienced a sense of guilt in the face of an action which, according to me, merited disapproval but of which I was not the perpetrator. I had merely put myself in the shoes of those who had acted in that manner. Thus, unbeknownst to myself, I was fooled by a phenomenon of affiliation; I had, so to speak, taken their place and stealthily suffered a sense of culpability (the cat's bite). It is in this way that the Oneiric I can experience the imaginary world as if it were an historical fact.

A consequence of the essential quality of "historical facts"/"imaginative stories" is the suppression of temporal relations. Recollection (imaginative evocation of the past) and anticipation of the future (which also constitutes an imaginative conception) have, from the point of view of the Oneiric I, the same consequences and carry the same weight as the perception of an action that is currently in progress.

Another consequence is ignorance of the "objective" outside world, such as it really is. Thus, for example, the extract for the following dream: "*I am awakened or I awake because an intruder may be in my home. However, I really want to go back to sleep. An acquaintance drops by to wake me up. Needing to face the unwanted intruder, I select my weapons...*" This dream is related to an event from the previous day in which, occupied by intellectual work, I notice someone outside who has not been respecting a mutual

agreement. This disturbs my peace of mind as I am troubled by the prospect of having to embark on a conflict that is polluting, unpleasant and time-consuming. In fact, I would have preferred to continue my work in peace. It was at that moment that a little voice, that we refer to as “the voice of conscience” (this was, in terms of psycho-visceral criticality, a matter of duty linked to a social role), whispered to me that I needed to act. (Let’s note that I awake in this dream, the Oneiric I appears with its own arousing mechanisms). These sentiments penetrated quietly while my mind remained engaged in my initial work. Then, there was a sudden switch in the situation: the Barely Mentalised subject became Highly Mentalised; I had, in fact, begun to reflect on the question; I was debating how I should tackle my “client”. I had first thought of taking the approach, “you do know that what you are doing is not good?”, then, doubting the effectiveness of this method, I started to consider the strategy “if you do not do this or that, here is what I will do to you”. However realising that this may be a provocation that could lead to a counter-productive reaction, I settled on the idea of taking a nonchalant approach, of sounding out the person and reacting in consequence; the option that was actually applied. Alongside these Highly Mentalised experiences, an involuntary, interpretive production was unfolding in the background, a production that could be expressed as “How I am going to deal with this? What if I attack them in such a way that they are made to feel guilty (the knife option)? But then, what if my attack serves to threaten them (the pistol option)? And finally, how about a more diplomatic intervention (the option of the hidden pistol to be used only if needed)?”. These were the weapons at my disposition. But, as they were aimed at the real-life trouble-maker, we are led to conclude that the real-life trouble-maker, or more precisely the fantasized perception of them, are the intruder in our dream. Conversely, the ally, “the voice of conscience”, is an influencer that the “Deliberator I” would judge as being native and would associate with their inner world.

For the Oneiric I, these two influencers are essentially one and the same and each inhabits its own outer world (they are external to the “I” of the dream).

So ultimately, for the Oneiric I, the external, “objective” world does not exist. We are, indeed, dealing with two different worlds.

#### 4. Conclusion

We put forward the hypothesis that the Oneiric I is an excitability that is sensitive to the psycho-visceral tensions involved in Barely Mentalised processes (introspectable processes that unfold outside of one’s mental control). In other words, those Barely Mentalised issues that remain unresolved (that are stirring, in a visceral sense) are likely to be played out again in our dreams.

The Oneiric I has a life of its own; for example, we can see it re-emerge in our dreams or being at the point of death when the Deliberator I is at work.

While autonomous, these two “Is” are not independent of each other. In the dream about the cat that bites, we can see the Oneiric I react to “the event that has befallen them” provoked by the Deliberator I. In the dream about the intruder, we see that a Highly Mentalised activity is engaged following a Barely Mentalised process. Their instigation is dependent upon certain triggers; they are trigger dependent. But they also depend on more fundamental influences as each one can, to a greater or lesser extent and for better or

worse, condition the other. By acting on one’s values - and therefore on one’s psycho-visceral character - the Deliberator I can influence the excitability of the Oneiric I. As for the latter, it can influence, more or less permanently, those references upon which our judgement is founded (for example, in the case of the dream of the intruder, if I had decided to persevere with my initial occupation, I would have very likely needed to invent a number of rules that could be used to produce a legitimizing judgement) or it can compromise the freedom that our free-will presupposes (such as when Barely Mentalised needs remotely control one’s actions, these actions being perceived as voluntary initiatives).

Nowadays, we would tend to propose a “siamese twins” type model: the Deliberator I and the Oneiric I each has a life of their own (and their own universe) and each can react to the acts of the other or indoctrinate the other. While one appears to concern physiological workings (that come under psychic effects) and could, therefore, be understood from a reflexology viewpoint, the other presents an “arbitrary” dynamic, (the dynamic of a “thinker”, experienced as having arisen from an autonomous source of a “spiritual” nature). The reflexology viewpoint is represented today by theories founded on the inferred, causal principle of schemas (“Now the schema of an action is neither perceptible (one perceives a particular action but not its schema) not directly introspectible, and one becomes conscious of its implications only in repeating the action and in comparing successive results”; Piaget, 1961, p. 251). These can crystallize “arbitrary” productions, such as  $2 \times 2 = 4$ , which then become a reflex; hence the influence of the “arbitrary” on the physiological.

#### Acknowledgement

Special thanks are due to Deirdre Bolger for her translation.

#### References

- Diel, P. (1962). *Psychologie de la motivation, théorie et application thérapeutique*. Bibliothèque de Philosophie Contemporaine.
- Freud, S. (1910). *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol 21[2], pp. 181-218.
- Garnier A. (1865). *Traité des facultés de l’âme, comprenant l’histoire des principales théories psychologiques*. Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie. Paris.
- Piaget, J. (1961). *Etudes d’épistémologie génétique*, volume 14. PUF. Paris.
- Ruyneau de Saint-George, P. (2016a). *Regarding affects and imagery in dreams*. *International Journal of Dream Research*, 9(1), 93-95.
- Ruyneau de Saint-George, P. (2016b). *Dreams and reoccurrence of feelings*. *International Journal of Dream Research*, 9(1), 96-99.
- Ruyneau de Saint-George, P. (2017). *Oneiric bizarreness and continuity between waking and dreaming*. *International Journal of Dream Research*, 10(1), 83-87.
- Ruyneau de Saint-George, P. (2018). *The Function of dreams – An Exploration of Certain Elements for Consideration*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328173069\\_The\\_Function\\_of\\_dreams\\_-\\_An\\_Exploration\\_of\\_Certain\\_Elements\\_for\\_Consideration](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328173069_The_Function_of_dreams_-_An_Exploration_of_Certain_Elements_for_Consideration)