Influence of Dream on Humanity: Analytical Essay

SYMBOL of the individual adventure, so deeply housed in the intimacy of consciousness that it escapes its own creator, the dream appears to us as the most secret and immodest expression of ourselves. Our blindness with regard to our own dreams, our clumsiness in gathering the fragments of it, leaves us powerless and astonished in front of this life - ours - which leads in us without our knowledge and reveals to us intermittently our own truth.

But, in fact, these images that we secrete are not only our own creatures: they engulf the world around us, others, society, the cultural environment. Nowhere is the mixture of individuality and social conformity made of man more clearly expressed.

Brought together under the auspices of the journal Diogène and the University of California, in a conference held in Royaumont, sociologists, ethnologists, mythologists, psychologists and physiologists undertook a reflection on this objective aspect of the dream, whose conclusions appear in a volume entitled Je Rêve et les Sociétés Humains.

We already feel this dispossession of the dreamer when we see our dreams appear clearly under the oscillographs of electroencephalograms. Of course it is not the images themselves which are revealed, but the dreamlike activity, thanks to the rapid movements of the eyes which accompany it, the gaze following on the fly the figures which parade through our mind.

So our memories no longer have the monopoly of detecting our dreams. Psycho-physiologists also teach us that our ability to dream far exceeds that of our memory. 'It is possible to say that most human beings spend 20 to 25% of their sleep dreaming,' writes M. Dement, of Stanford University in California, who estimates that 'we generally have ten to twenty dreams in the one night course. ' The fact of not remembering it does not change the case: 'It is likely that these people (who say they never dream) have a normal number of dreams.'

Speculation about the content of dreams and the symbolism of images was born with man. Keys to dreams, prophecies, oneiromancy ... What strikes in these exegesis, notes Mr. Caillois, is ultimately their poverty: it is indeed necessary to make the wonder of the dream coincide with the banality of everyday life ... ' An encounter, an illness, a gain or a loss, failure or success, ultimately fortune or ruin, a journey, a love, not to mention the inevitable par excellence: death. 'Variants are not not innumerable and in this term-to-term correspondence, between life and the dream, the dream comes out the loser.

History of humanity or history of the culture group !?

With Jung's psychology, the dream appears as the place where man joins humanity. In the endless inventions of each person's dreams and their countless unique ways of being, Jung sees the ever-recurring bubbling of the human adventure: the great myths, the eternal fables, through which humanity tirelessly tells the same story.

For sociologists, however, it is not the history of humanity that appears in the dream, but that of each cultural group. In a very interesting study, Mr. Roger Bastide compares the content of

dreams collected in three very different ethnic and social groups in Brazil: a black female group belonging to the low class, strongly marked by African religious rites; a group also female and of low social condition, but living in a city and entirely cut off from its African roots, and a mulatto male group of petty bourgeoisie, Mr. Bastide believes that the dreams of the subjects examined - or their answers to the Rorschach test - strongly reflect the social structures in which they are enclosed. If the African myths are expressed clearly and naturally in the first group, the dreams of the third are dominated by the essential problem in a capitalist society: money. On the other hand, passing from the first group to the third - that is to say from a very traditional type society to another westernized - appears a mutation in the relationship between waking and dreaming. 'We must reflect, writes Mr. Bastide, on the reversal of the communication networks between day and night life which occurs when we pass from traditional societies to western societies. It seemed to us that in the first the social was all the more part of dreamlike thought, to orient it, direct it, give it a form, in a word, as the dream fulfilled useful functions, regulated by the standards of civilization ... our company, on the contrary, the door of communication with the day before is closed ... '

When the dream is truer than reality

This reflection on the status of the dream in the various societies constitutes the most enriching element of this volume. In so-called 'primitive' societies, which are not governed by the principle of rationality, the dream is adorned with intense meanings. It is the means to communicate with a supernatural truth. Its reality imposes itself with a force far greater than that of daily perception, and its injunctions have an absolute imperative value.

You will have a good and long life if you dream well, 'explains a grandfather Ojibwa (North American Indian) to a young man from the tribe. By this he means that all human possibilities, good and bad fortunes, means of living and of conquering, will be revealed to him during the dreamlike fast of initiation.The young man will only have during his life to conform to the prescriptions of the dream.

Among the Mohaves (Indians of California), a cultural fact is not validated and adopted by the community until it is dreamed of by a shaman. Thus, a healing song is recognized as an effective therapy only if it is supported by the appropriate shamanic dreams.

Since the dream far outweighs reality, or only precedes it, the dreamer finds himself directly engaged by the implications of his dream. He can demand accountability from those he has seen offending him in a dream, from the woman who in his dream has deceived him. Likewise, he cannot leave alive a man whom he has killed while dreaming. To choose between dream and reality, it is the first that we stop. 'H. Callaway, writes Mr. Caillois, reports the case of a Zulu dreaming that his friend had bad plans against him. He now flees from it. He gives more confidence to the revelation of the dream than to the experience of friendship. '

The power of the dream can be pushed beyond all limits and, as with some Orientals, end up absorbing life. Reality is then only one of the facets of an endless dream; one chimera among others.

Thus Tchouang-Tseu, who, says Mr. Caillois, cannot resolve to 'decide if he is a philosopher who dreamed that he is a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that he is a philosopher', or this story

Hindu poet Tulsidas locked in a stone tower, who dreamed the story of Hanouman and his army of monkeys who seized the tower and delivered it.

Our civilization wanted to gradually reduce the sphere of influence of the dream by making it a well-defined area of ??personal life, for purely internal use. Advances in scientific thought have made it shrink. We have less need to dream than our ancestors. And yet psychoanalysis constitutes a noisy rehabilitation. What does it ultimately represent in our society? Where is his place? The climate of troubled resistance that surrounds the psychoanalytic current still shows that the dream realm has unstable borders. On this aspect, however, the book does not dwell much. No doubt because ethnologists are less comfortable in modern life than among the 'primitives.