

**Foreword by Alberto Passerini and Flavia Valtorta from the book**

**Immaginario: Cura e Creativita' –  
L'Esperienza Immaginativa dal neurone alla psicoterapia/**

**The imaginary – Cure and Creativity –  
The Imaginative Experience from the neuron to psychotherapy.**

This book aims to highlight the clinical experience of over twenty years using the waking dream psychotherapeutic methods of *Reve Eveille* and its corollary, the method of *Procedura Immaginativa* (Imaginative Procedure), which our group has adopted under the name of *Esperienza Immaginativa* (Imaginative Experience). This new therapeutic model has been developed in the light of neuro-scientific developments on the study of the imagination and the psychotherapeutic relationship itself. It is very encouraging to read about the studies on mental imagery using neuro-imaging techniques (Positron Emission Tomography), functional magnetic resonance, transcranial magnetic stimulation.....) which have given us extraordinary results that have allowed us to clarify better what had been intuited before about the inner workings of the mind. Furthermore, the studies on the structures and cerebral functions of the brain implicated in imagination are helping us understand and to develop further our therapeutic model of working with the imagination, which is the royal road to the unconscious.

The theoretical framework that encompasses this work, is the Waking Dream (*Reve Eveille*) of Robert Desoille (1890-1966) that has been further developed after his death up to this day by G.I.R.E.P (International Group of Psychoanalytic Waking Dream). Our ideas using the *Esperienza Immaginativa* have been appreciated within G.I.R.E.P and left an influence on the French group itself. Our recent opening of S.I.S.P.I, an Italian Psychotherapeutic Training school using the waking dream method, which is a member of G.I.R.E.P also aims to develop the clinical applications of the method and to make the therapeutic method more known in the international scene. The theoretical model of the latter school has a solid psychodynamic basis and understands the production of images according to the contemporary principles of depth psychology (Marhaba 2007) which is characterised by an idiographic research approach (Carta, 2004).

The name of *Procedura Immaginativa* has been introduced in Italy in the early 1990s, to indicate the imaginative material produced during the oneiric part of the analytic session dedicated specifically to having a waking dream (Rocca & Stendora, edit. by Passerini, 1991). At the time, the term *Reve Eveille* (Waking Dream) was used interchangeably with *Procedura Immaginativa* and many times one term appeared next to the other in brackets. However, after the mid-1990s (Bondi, Passerini, 1997) the situation changed since for the first time, the term *Procedura Immaginativa* started to refer to a specific theoretical and methodological model of psychotherapy. This model gathered a series of operational terms and definitions from Desoille's Waking dream method, that had been translated and further developed by the Italian group within G.I.R.E.P starting from the 1980s (Marafante, Frei, 1983), (Rocca, Passerini, Giampier, 1986), Rocca, Stendoro, Passerini, 1988). Then, from the mid-1990s the method of *Procedura Immaginativa* developed its own specific identity,

characterised by an internal coherent methodology albeit an off-spring of the original *Reve Eveille* method. Within S.I.S.P.I. the term *Esperienza Immaginativa* is used.

Throughout the years, several different groups all members of G.I.R.E.P, originating from different countries have shaped *Reve Eveille* into their own particular style although all groups share a common Desoillan heritage. This issue of theoretical diversity have also been raised in France itself after the death of Desoille himself. There were some members who would have liked Desoille's method to be fully integrated as part of psychoanalysis while another branch insisted of keeping their individuality offered by the waking dream itself which nonetheless could benefit psychoanalytic theory. The latter is the philosophy of the current group within G.I.R.E.P. The present book falls part of this tradition.

We have tried to formulate a model based on recent research neuro-biological developments which can help us understand better the dynamics involved in the clinical practice of the *Esperienza Immaginativa*. However, one may pose the question of how much relevant is the inclusion of neurobiology in the theory and practise of psychodynamic psychotherapy? The neuro-biologist Eric Kandel (a psychiatrist with a psychoanalytic background and winner of Nobel Price for Medicine in 2000 for his research work on memory) emphasized the fact that the future of psychoanalysis depends on the possibility of building a dialogue with neuro-biology and cognitive sciences, in order to build a new and valid conceptual working model (Kandel 1999). The affinity between the two approaches is based on the fact that they both agree that the development of the mind is experience related.

In the scientific field it is understood that there is a certain concordance in the results of both molecular and cellular analysis. The mirror neuron studies have shed important light on the capacity of imagination itself as well as on the circularity involved in the giving of the imaginative stimulus and in receiving it, which is crucial in the waking dream methods (*Procedura Immaginativa/Reve Eveille*). The theory of the selection of neuron groups, formulated by Gerald Edelman, has also been analysed in the context of the building of neuron pathways and circuits and how this can lead to behavioural change in psychotherapy (Edelman, Tononi, 2000).

This book gives particular attention to emotions and to their function of linking the mind with the body as proven by a series of experimental research results. It is know that the quality of the attachment process in humans affects the experience and the regulation of emotions which in turn leaves an impact on the formation and stability of neural connections in the brain and ultimately on the construction and plasticity of the brain itself. Similarly, the steady development of a new emotional relationship in adult life can considerably change the processing of emotions in the brain, eventually leading to a new adjustment. This concept can be translated to the analytic relationship, and in particular to the practice of psychotherapy with the *Esperienza Immaginativa*, which in turn can help us re-read the developments in our clinical cases. These neuro-scientific findings, confirm what has already been suggested in psychoanalysis, namely the emotional relationship has a central role, both in the representation and in the processing of experience itself. One can thus conclude, the conscious and unconscious experiences are not processed independently from how the brain is structured.

The attempt to understand the neural correlates of the clinical experience is certainly worth investing in. However, there is a risk of transplanting the neurobiological explanations and terminology directly and superficially on the existing clinical terminology, thus repeating what is already known. Our challenge has been to try and widen our knowledge of how our brain works and to try and understand the implication of the mechanisms behind our cerebral functioning in our clinical practice. Consequently, we tried to formulate hypotheses which could be tested empirically and in line with our theoretical methodology.

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