



Revista Guillermo de Ockham

ISSN: 1794-192X

Universidad de San Buenaventura Cali

Perrone, Claudia; Gurski, Rose
Oneiropolitics as politics of psychoanalysis
Revista Guillermo de Ockham, vol. 20, no. 2, 2022, July-December, pp. 305-314
Universidad de San Buenaventura Cali

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21500/22563202.5850>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=105373098009>

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Oneiropolitics as Politics of Psychoanalysis

La oniropolítica como política del psicoanálisis

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Received: 30/03/2022

Revised: 2/05/2022

Accepted: 9/05/2022

Cite as follows: Perrone, Claudia; Gurski, Rose (2022). Oneiropolitics as Policy of Psychoanalysis. *Revista Guillermo de Ockham* 20(2), pp. 305-314.
<https://doi.org/10.21500/22563202.5850>

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Statement of Interest. The author declares no conflict of interest.

Availability of data. All relevant data can be found in the article. For further information, please contact the correspondence author.

Funding. None.

Disclaimer. The contents of this article are the sole responsibility of the author and do not represent an official opinion of his institution or the *Revista Guillermo de Ockham*.

Abstract

This article aims to reflect on the existence of politics of psychoanalysis. To do this, we take some results of the research carried out in Brazil, "Confined dreams: what Brazilians dream in times of pandemic (2020/2021)", to propose oneiropolitics. Combining psychoanalysis with the thought of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin, oneiropolitics refers to politics of desire. Due to the urgency of our temporality and historical context, it is necessary to dream of a future and nurture a political imaginary capable of sustaining insistent thought and practice in the sense of criticism, democracy, and the possibility of another future.

Key words: oneiropolitics, psychoanalysis, dreams, politics of desire, politics of psychoanalysis, Walter Benjamin.

Resumen

Este artículo pretende reflexionar sobre la existencia de una política de la psicoanálisis. Para ello, tomamos algunos resultados de la investigación realizada en Brasil "Sueños confinados: lo que sueñan los brasileños en tiempos de pandemia (2020/2021)" para proponer la oniropolítica. Combinando el psicoanálisis con el pensamiento del filósofo alemán Walter Benjamin, la oniropolítica es una política del deseo. Por la urgencia de nuestra temporalidad y contexto histórico, es necesario soñar con un futuro, alimentar un imaginario político capaz de sustentar un pensamiento y una práctica insistente en el sentido de la crítica, la democracia y la posibilidad de otro futuro.

Palabras clave: oniropolítica, psicoanálisis, sueños, política del deseo, política del psicoanálisis, Walter Benjamin.

(...) I am in a very big house, this house is not strange, it has several doors, some I can open, others I cannot. It is located in a historic city and right next to it, there is a subdivision with another house under construction and with several plantations. The front of the house faces the center of the city, and there was a funeral - I knew it was a funeral, but I couldn't see the coffin, at the same time, the current president of the Republic was sitting in a wheelchair, but, with a very aged appearance, like a corpse; a crowd formed around them, meanwhile they wouldn't let people pass. I go up to this subdivision to try to get around the crowd and I see a lizard's tail passing by it was too big and someone tells me I couldn't touch it.

Dream report during the pandemic period, research database "The oneiropolitics in times of pandemic", 2021.

Dreamer's Associations:

this recent dream was the night they released the video of some people with torches in their hands in front of Congress. The house has several doors, some I can open, some I can't. I think of doors as collective issues, since one of the doors leaves the house exposed to the center of the city, where there was an agglomeration of people. At this moment, I perceive the figure of the President of the Republic, as a collective shadow, or, like his representation, his decrepit face does not remind me of a wise old man, but rather a feeling of disgust, repulsion, and fear. The lizard's tail appears in my path, reminding me that when the lizard loses its tail, it regenerates, it can be considered the end or the beginning of something (...).

Since the beginning of Psychoanalysis, Freud proposed an intense dialogue with culture and with the problematizations of society. His method was not limited to a clinic of individual psychic suffering, but also served as a critical way of thinking about the collective aspects of social life (Safatle, Silva Junior, & Dunker, 2018).

Erik Porge (2009), poetically, said that, by reporting the clinical case in a romanticized way, in a temporality other than the medical one, Freud would have inaugurated, in addition to the psychoanalytic treatment, a way of transmitting unconscious knowledge. Such an observation leads us to the notion that, in this way of understanding psychic suffering, he revealed not only listening to the unconscious of patients but his desire for the insertion of psychoanalysis in the social field (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

Such an understanding of the Freudian position can even be verified through historical records from the time of the Weimar Republic, they show Freud's engagement with the so-called Red Vienna (Danto, 2019). After the First World War and with the end of the monarchy, the Austrian envisioned a society based on the ideal of social welfare in which the servitude of some classes would give space to a better distribution of income and living conditions, health, and education to a broader social spectrum.

According to Danto (2019), many conditions changed after the First World War, among them, a significant discursive movement about psychoanalysis: "(...) the narrative changed from psychoanalysis as a solitary clinical construction to psychoanalysis as a modernist ideology of transformation (...)" (p. 21). In our days, the urgent need for social transformations is illuminating the work of several psychoanalysts and researchers in the humanities in Brazil; for these scholars, the urgent demands of our time present themselves, especially, through the helplessness and sociopolitical dimension of the psychological suffering of historically marginalized social groups.

In our Research Center¹⁰ over the last few years, we have built investigations and interventions to establish bridges between psychoanalytic listening, the University, and the public space. We work to operate a re-reading of the foundations of psychoanalysis that makes it possible to validate the listening we carry out through research interventions with social institutions, public policies, and the city in general. Thus, in the wake of investigations that already addressed the theme of free association, floating attention, and interpretation, a new question was posed for us: the importance of working with dream narratives (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

Not by chance, in this constellation of questions, we seek a dialogue with the writings of Walter Benjamin, a German philosopher and cultural critic linked to the Frankfurt School. Benjamin lived and produced in a time similar to Freud's, the 1930s; and, despite not being a psychoanalyst, he had, in dreams, an important subject of analysis and study.

10. We refer to NUPPEC - Nucleus for Research in Psychoanalysis, Education and Culture (NUPPEC/UFRGS), - Axis 3 whose research in the field of psychoanalysis, education, sociopolitical interventions, and critical theory investigate the conditions of the contemporary social bond with an emphasis on the theme of adolescence of subjects in a situation of vulnerability. The group is made up of professors, associate researchers, master's students, and fellows. For more information see: www.ufrgs.br/nuppec and www.facebook.com/nuppec, at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS),

For Benjamin (2006), the dream carries in its montage the articulation between falling asleep, dreaming, and waking up. In the book “Passages” (Benjamin, 2006), we find the notion that the dream also has a dimension of social analysis to be explored, that is, the remains of the day, which appear in each one’s dream material, establish a connection with the dream. collective in which the dreamer is inserted (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

The articulation of Benjamin’s texts with psychoanalytic listening, politics, and dreams led us, in 2019, to the construction of oneiropolitics - a strategy of ethical-political analysis that seeks to fill holes in flat, hegemonic discourses, rescuing the complexity of thought (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021). An attempt to build a passable path in order to offer multiple meanings amidst the flattening of thought, intolerance in ties, and hopelessness.

We assess that, currently, social discourse and political power assume the regressive¹¹ form of rescuing what we used to be. In this sense, oneiropolitics proposes the opposite of regressivity, constituting a proposal to conquer what we want to be. This proposition has allowed us to work, through the structure of dreams, the link between the articulation of two spheres that, at first, seem contradictory: the particular narrative of the dream that carries the singular of the subject and the politics, a collective dimension of the desire for the production of the common (Dunker, 2022). With oneiropolitics, we believe, along with Benjamin and Freud, that there is, in the dream, “a knowledge not yet conscious of events and phenomena, whose promotion has the structure of awakening” (Benjamin, 2006, p. 434).

We start from the premise that dreams made in nightlife, by offering something beyond rational and conscious perception, evoke an innovative and creative element, loaded with perceptions and understandings that launch new meanings to daytime experiences. Such elements, in addition to enunciating singular aspects of the subject, show nuances of the historical and collective structure. It is in this direction that we have understood the polysemy contained in the oneiric structure, it would be an alternative to the limitation of meanings that is anticipated in current ties due to ideologies and a dystopia of reality that is gaining more and more space (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

Dreams and the arrival of the pandemic in Brazil

The new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was identified in China in December 2019, having arrived in Brazil in early March 2020 – when the WHO declared that it was a pandemic with a short-term spread and alarming levels of contamination. Quickly, in the country, the dynamics of the health issue produced intense devastation of the social bond, taking on a concreteness that is far beyond the biological, especially, by an overlap of crises: apart from the virus, a geometric spread of the political and social crisis.

The Brazilian society - especially for the socially disadvantaged, both in economic, racial, and gender terms - suddenly found itself a spectator of an arena of political and ideological disputes unrelated to the fight against the virus and full of precipitation. inconsequential conclusions. The conditions of the pandemic seem to have staged, again, the script of a country in civil war, a country of nameless genocide and undocumented massacres (Safatle, 2020). It is unbelievable, but not surprising, that in five months of the biggest health crisis the world has seen in the last 100 years, the normality of denialism in the face of pandemic issues was installed with abundant ignorance and misinformation.

11. President Jair Bolsonaro has declared that his goal is to make Brazil similar “to what we had 40, 50 years ago”. The project is coming to fruition as the country has undergone changes in labor, electoral and, mainly, environmental laws. <https://oglobo.globo.com/politica/bolsonaro-diz-que-objetivo-fazer-brasil-semelhante-aoque-tinhamos-ha-40-50-anos-23158680>

Immersed in a scenario of growing social polarization, fostered by an architecture of destruction that includes the rhetoric of hatred, necropolitics, the persecution of minorities, the devaluation of science knowledge, and the establishment of death policies, the pandemic, follows the notion that, in Brazil, the installed policy actually follows the logic of civil war.

It was in this context that we began to seek the construction of some alternative paths from the articulation between dreams, psychoanalysis and politics. A few years ago, we had already, in research with adolescents from Socioeducation,¹² sought to establish, through different listening devices, among them, the Circles of Dreams,¹³ a listening device that also presents itself as a point of resistance in the relationship with the tragic narratives of destiny that usually accompany young Brazilians from the periphery, especially the black and poor.

This is how we decided to collect night dreams amid the nightmare of the Covid-19 world pandemic in Brazil. With social confinement, we started to hear people saying that they were dreaming more, that the dreams were more vivid, and that when they woke up, they remembered more of the dream images.

Faced with a complex scenario, where the virus and politics intertwined, we started to ask ourselves if dreams could work as a critical element with the possibility of helping us to wake up from a time of pain and numbness. As Benjamin (1940/2012) discussed in the text “On the concept of history”, perhaps we are a bit like the angel in Paul Klee’s painting, paralyzed by the repetition of what has affected us and without the possibility of opening up to the new through elaboration. Benjamin, in this writing of 1940, suggested that the angel of history, instead of letting himself be torn away by the winds of reason and progress, could stop and wake up the dead, that is, he could gather the fragments of the ruins and rearrange them from new and other senses (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

We have bet that night dreams, by offering something beyond rational and conscious perception, evoke the dimension of an innovative and creative element, loaded with perceptions and understandings that can come to launch new meanings to day life. In Rouanet (1990), we find the interesting notion that it is through the “dream that the dreamer appropriates the force that emanates from the dead world of things” (p. 89). In other words, the force that emerges from what was repressed due to the absence of elaboration is precisely what cannot be remembered by the subject and history; however, it is also that which, due to the absence of symbolization, cannot be forgotten. We understand that the multiple meanings that dreams carry can evoke alternatives for both elaboration and the eventual creation of the new.

Since the beginning of the articulation between dreams, psychoanalysis, and politics, we have been inspired by the book “Dreams of the Third Reich, by the German journalist Charlotte Beradt (1966/2017). In the writing, she narrates the compilation of 300 dreams of Germans after the rise of Hitler, between 1933 and 1939. In the dream narratives of these Germans, we can identify criticisms of the social moment that aroused anguish, fear, and impotence. Beradt was not a psychoanalyst, but, through the account of his book, he inscribed the important articulation of the dream as a production that resides on the thresholds between the subject and the social. It is important to note that Freud (1900/2012) had already observed that dreams are overdetermined and that, in addition

12. The Brazilian public policy that emerged from the enactment of the ECA (Brasil, 1990) with the aim of monitoring the implementation of socio-educational measures, a type of pedagogical-sanctional intervention applied to young people between 12 and 18 years of age accused of having committed an infraction.

13. Circles of Dreams are called in Brazil *Rodas de Sonhos*.

to personal issues and circumstances, other layers of fragments of the social and political context work for dream creation.

As in other moments of great catastrophes, we think that psychoanalysis could not be separated from the critical discussion in the face of the disruptive effect of the social bond and the conditions of current culture. It cannot be denied that it was the legacy of Freudian thought that made possible, above all, access to another type of logic, the logic of the dream narrative. The dream from Freud subverted the idea of experience, making experimentations that are not only those of consciousness accessible to the subject. In this sense, it is important to understand the differentiation he made between the experience of dreaming and the narrative about the dream, the latter being an experience of construction, an experience that brings out something that was potentially there, but which, before, could not be stated and be recognized (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

When analyzing the narration of the dream, Freud (1900/2012) sticks to what he called dream thoughts, a passage between the Real, that is, what is not accessible to consciousness, to the modes of rational analysis and the awakening, composed by the remnants of the day's experiences and the reconstruction in the form of narratives. Along with the Freudian premises, we emphasize that only traces of the dream experience remain, and it is to them that psychoanalysis directs its interrogations; it will be in them that we will find fragments of time and space, that is, traces of the history of what could not be assimilated. In the psychic work of the dream, Freud shows that we are given over to the meanings that the ruins of records offer us.

In this work, it should be noted that we are not interested in collecting dreams to interpret them. The starting point of oneiropolitics, following Freud, Benjamin, and Lacan (1964/1998), is to make the Real of the dream speak, to present, in a benjaminian way, what Freud (1900/2012) called the *navel of the dream*, showing that there is, in the dream material, something that resists interpretation and that must be stated and narrated. In the extreme, we can say that it is the limit that inhabits the very notion of representation in the dream. In this sense, Benjamin seeks dialectical images and the notion of the constellation in order to show that it is not about elucidating the truth of the object and/or phenomenon, but rather letting the Real speak and showing the possible movements and meanings from the several layers that form the shape of constellations (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

The dream constellation, the Real

João Barrento (2013), in the book *Thresholds on Walter Benjamin*, states that Benjamin used, in his writings and formulations, a method that was more imagistic than conceptual, a method that did not separate the form of thought and that, above all, chose borders, deviations and thresholds as a place and object of reflection. In this space of thresholds, as suggested by Alexia Bretas (2008), it is as if the oneiric touches the Real. Such a description, somehow, makes us think of the Freudian and Benjaminian intention of making the dream fabric resonate in the space of wakefulness (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

Benjamin, like Freud and Lacan, knew that it was impossible to reach the truth and the Real of the phenomenon, just as it would not be possible to reproduce its beauty in conceptual architecture. The truth and the Real of the object and the phenomenon, for Benjamin, should not be laid bare to the point of enclosing their mystery and secret. In this sense, the Benjaminian method is similar to the structure of the dream, since, in both, it is not about solving a problem, but through montage, in its own form, to enunciate what is problematized.

For the work of articulation with politics, we take dreams as the manifestation of the subject's fulguration, the creative singularity of the dreamer thrown into zones of erasure like a kind of firefly. A way of considering the power of resistance in the intermittent and not-all luminosity of the oneiric narrative that is composed of fragments, pieces, fleeting glows with strength to touch the Real and, perhaps, move it.

In the book *The survival of the fireflies*, Didi-Huberman (2010) evokes the "Corsair Writings" (Escritos Corsários) by Pasolini (1975/2020) and the figuration of fireflies to problematize the growing neo-fascism "that hesitates, less and less, to reassume all representations of the historical fascism that preceded it" (p. 39). According to Didi-Huberman (2010, p. 17-18), the Italian filmmaker, when writing, in 1941, the famous letters to his teenage friend Franco Farolfi, produced important notions in defense of a good debate of ideas, of the survival of polemics and political struggle. The interesting thing is that, in the corsair writings, already close to the time of his death, Pasolini suggests that, in his country, the fireflies were dead, that is, he could no longer see the possibility of resistance to the totalitarian practices in Italy of that time (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

Didi-Huberman (2011) problematizes the supposed death of modes of resistance, leading us to realize that when we see only the night on one side and, on the other, the blinding light of the reflectors, we become blind to the improbable, to the opening to the new, for the glimpses and, especially, for everything that, despite you, may be able to reconfigure the future (Didi-Huberman, 2010, p.42).

Working with dreams has shown us that there is no totalitarianism that can prevent the subject from dreaming and, in the dream, forge an alternative to the absence of polysemy in life and in events. Psychic dream work can flood day life with unique and unusual ideas, concepts and thoughts. The images of dreams are close to the concept of Benjamin's dialectical images and the psychoanalytic notion that the imposition of univocal meanings, typical of totalitarian systems of thought, only occurs when the subject surrenders to the imposture of what we call the totally Other.

With Benjamin, therefore, we see that dream materials resemble runes, mysterious elements that, depending on the arrangement, form different expressions of the subject and culture. With the rescue of the dream in the work of critics of the culture of his time, Benjamin (2006) asserted the idea that he had more to show than to say. His criticisms were produced through an intervention that sought to touch the Real of problematizations.

Benjamin's (1984) thesis on German Baroque Drama, for example, shows much more through its form than through its content. The numerous citations present in the professorship thesis, which so irritated the professors of the time, were like a kind of intervention of a political nature since the format of his writing already contained an epistemological critique of the intellectual and cultural productions of his time (Lima, 1994).

Similarly, we have thought that evoking the dreams of the population as an important material of knowledge for academic research, in itself (per se), already evidences an intervention in action, an act of an ethical-political character, as it increases the importance of the most unusual ones and inventive nocturnal constructions - as if we were doubling down on the knowledge that refers to the other scene. In this sense, we understand our dreamers, similarly to the way Benjamin understood quotations: a kind of robbers who randomly pick up events and traces of day life to reinvent them in dream texts.

Could there be a more transformative and revolutionary function than the act of dreaming? The dream operates a fundamental transgression in the temporality of the world: it puts us, in the present, to build, through the ruins of the past, what does not

yet exist in the materiality of life, only in the images of dreams, of what is to come. Proposing a listening to dreams today is like proposing to the dreamer to take seriously the construction of their constellations, a way of betting on the knowledge that emanates from the dream mosaic of each one (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021, p.121).

For Benjamin (2006), in the formulation of the dream, we could find the articulation of several temporalities, which would allow the materialist historian to save the dreams of other times, through the language and updates of the present. In the allegory of baroque drama with dreams, Benjamin will locate the meeting of shards of ruins and fragments, a larger image of an open work that, in addition to producing a dialogue between different times, leaves an empty space for the reader to experience him/herself as an author.

As in the Freudian dream, where the speaker is the subject of the unconscious, in the dialectical image of the Benjaminian dream, the labyrinth and the primacy of getting lost in the midst of multiple senses and images are established. We can, therefore, think of the dreamer as the one who collects the pearls of daily life, as a researcher, a collector, and a revolutionary, close to the materialist historian who shows, with his narratives, a logic against the grain.

In this mosaic of questions, thinking about constellations consists of sliding from one image to another, building an arrangement of fragments that are constantly changing, always marked by tensions in which each trait remains as a remainder and, simultaneously, as a whole. The monad would be the smallest part of the constellation, a portion of the whole, a fragment that carries the totality within itself. Benjamin's analysis of the thought expressed in the image would have a structure of the sky of stars, a constant movement of transformation that never ends. This figuration can be thought of in association with dialectical images or with dream images as *monadological structures* (Benjamin, 2006), the minimum unit of the constellation, which refers to the relationship between the particular and the collective.

For Benjamin, constellation, dialectical image, and monad are like cuts, in progressive and linear time, occurred from processes of remembrance that take place, for example, in the form of surrealist montage, or even in the format of what Freud (1937/1980) called constructions under analysis. To enter the tuning fork of a constellation, it is necessary to think in images, forgetting the conventions of progress and linearity.

In this sense, can the images of dreams be understood as records of perceptual ruins from another time that present themselves, in the present, as a possibility of being rearranged both from the singular and collective point of view? Could the dream, an element of singular history, be a device for the rearticulation of social history, also placing itself at the service of the critique of culture and social bonds? (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

We understand that part of our work is to resume the Benjaminian project that remained incomplete with regard to the architecture of dreams, interrupted by his death in 1940. We think that the whole discussion about awakening and its emancipatory possibility was also the moment when Benjamin most strongly approached psychoanalytic thought.

In Benjamin's view, the dream is an expression of the diurnal and material remains that managed to escape repression, being, therefore, loaded with historical indices and the particular experience colored by social universality. It is the idea that socio-historical universality no longer means a fixed point to be known, but an open point in which the political and the social can be read in the particular time of a subject.

We have thought that inhabiting the threshold zone with Benjamin, with the dialectic of dream and awakening, allows us to detect and intervene in the sociopolitical nuances

of the subjects' psychic suffering, opening possibilities for social transformation. In the analysis of dreams, we think of the construction of oniricopolitics as a way of reading the critical threshold of awakening that can give a place to dream productions in their articulation with social history and the space of wakefulness.

The emancipatory element pointed out by Freud is considered by Benjamin as reminiscence (*Eingedenken*) and it will be, precisely, from the subject's implication with the reminiscences in the dream work that we will see the configuration of a continuous and historical experience of the ruins of the past with the present. The awakening process takes place precisely on the threshold of undifferentiation between the singularity of the subject and the universality of the social and, in this sense, we suppose that the experience of dreaming and waking up can become a mode of knowledge and action (Gurski, & Perrone, 2021).

The awakening and the political dimension

Benjamin understood that the registers of dream and wakefulness did not correspond to two antagonistic realms that were rigidly demarcated and incommunicable with each other. On the contrary, from Benjamin's point of view, the dream element corresponds, in the limit, to the very "material" environment in which reality is embedded.

This is the reason why one of the constant efforts in his work is precisely to point out the presence of traces of the dream at the very heart of reality, as a propaedeutic for the political praxis represented by the "historical awakening". Thus, the position of a pole called "dream consciousness" as opposed to the pole of "awakened consciousness" highlights the tension envisioned by Benjamin between a dimension that operates from a "not yet conscious" logic and another regime of reflective consciousness. These are, therefore, the two "extremes" of the Benjaminian configuration of 19th-century pre-history. Although apparently contradictory, they do not cancel or exclude each other. Instead, they indicate relationships of affinities and estrangements that are fundamental for understanding the constellation of capitalist modernity as "sleep filled with dreams" (Benjamin, 2006, p. 436).

Articulating Freud with the category of "images of desire" and Marx with the model of "historical awakening", Benjamin proposes what he called profane enlightenment or the onirocriticism of the 19th century; this from the shock produced by the tension between the essentially imagistic register of "dream consciousness" and the preponderantly discursive regime of "awakened consciousness". So much that, in *Passages*, the transposition between the two moments is made only through the mediation of the dream interpreter – the materialist historian who submits the positivity of dream images to the sieve of the negativity of linguistic exposition.

Following the idea of a political awakening from a sleep filled with dreams, Lacan states in his text "My teaching", its nature and its ends:

The sleep of reason – that's all. What does that mean then? Which is the reason why we stay asleep. (...). What one wanted to leave out, to exclude, that is, the realm of sleep is thus seen attached to reason, to its empire, to its function, to the taking of speech, to the fact that man inhabits language, as the other says. Is it irrationalism to realize this and follow the courses of reason in the dream text itself? Entire psychoanalysis might unfold before what might actually happen, that is before we reached a point of awakening". (Lacan, 2006, p. 93)

Lacan finds that reason keeps us asleep, in the dream-filled dream of century capitalism discussed by Benjamin. The subject remains in his/her house in the dream until the point of awakening comes. Awakening involves passing through unconscious deciphering, but

there is no awakening outside of language. It dreams, it thinks, it sleeps. As Koretzky (2019, p. 88) indicates, awakening is close to the appearance of the subject of the unconscious, like a flash, evanescent and contingent.¹⁴ The awakening point would coincide with the end of the analysis, with the attributeless self-experiencing desubjectivation. Aligning Benjamin's historical awakening with Lacan's attributeless self, it is possible to think that a policy of psychoanalysis would not be "educated in the tactical assumption of the individual form and the traditional means of its association by identification" (Dunker, 2022, p. 21), would be the politics of dream and desire. Dreaming together, wishing together is the production of the common, of a democratic community yet to come.

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14. See Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud, p. 524.

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