

## **Meditations on Dreaming** by David Westbrook

Presented to the Society for Daseinsanalysis in Canada, 2008-2009 reading and discussion series entitled, "Dreaming".

Introduction to Dreaming: September 19, 2008

Reading: "The Dream of Irma's Injection" by Sigmund Freud

There is an ancient Chinese aphorism that appears in our January reading. It runs as follows:

"I, Tschung-tse, once dreamt I was a butterfly, a butterfly fluttering hither and thither. I knew only I was a butterfly, following my butterfly whims. I knew not that I was human. Suddenly, I awoke. I lay there. I—once more 'myself.' Now I do not know: was I then a man who dreamt he was a butterfly, or am I now a butterfly dreaming I am a man?"

What is the dream and who is the dreamer?

In 1897, Sigmund Freud began writing what to the end of his life he considered his greatest work, The Interpretation of Dreams. If we are to mark a beginning of the psychodynamic tradition that we are heirs to, it must be here, notwithstanding the many precursors and disparate strands of psychodynamic theory and practice alive at that time. Why here, with this book? It is because Freud's understanding of the unconscious meaning of the universal human activity of dreaming represents a decisive break, the moment when psychotherapy first truly breaks free from the constraints of 19th century neurology and psychiatric psychopathology and becomes a *Geisteswissenschaft*, a science of spirit. Since then, the examination of dreams and their possible meanings has become a staple of our art. In this, as in so many other aspects of psychotherapy, Freud has become the foil against which all subsequent approaches test themselves.

Our readings this fall have been chosen to capture psychoanalytic dream interpretation at the precise moment of its emergence, with the very dream where Freud dreams the hard labour of psychoanalysis's birth, the famous "Dream of Irma's Injection." Tonight we begin phenomenologically with the dream itself. Over the next two months we will continue to look at this dream, first through the lens of the newborn psychoanalysis and Freud's attempt to discover the latent dream thoughts behind the manifest dream. In November we will look again, this time through phenomenology's own lens, as Erik Craig turns our attention back toward the manifest dream and what is revealed there by a Daseinsanalytic interpretation. By then, the can of worms should be fully open.

What is the dream and who is the dreamer? Is it Tschung-tse or the butterfly? And who are we to tell Tschung-tse one way or the other?

A client comes to me and tells me a dream. I ask, “what thoughts and feelings occur to you, the dreamer, in relation to this dream of yours?” The client associates—perhaps freely, though perhaps not—and tells me something of this dream’s meaning. Often, though, I am struck by how much more intensely meaningful the dream is to me than it seems to be for the one who has brought it to me. I have my own associations to the dream, based in my own experiences and in my particular understanding of this client, and they are very different than what the client has told me. Are these less or more valuable than what the client sees now? Is this Tschung-tse who has dreamt of being a butterfly, or has the butterfly dreamt Tschung-tse? Or is it my dream, my unconscious, that dreams both in the emergence of this dream’s meaning to me? I do not know, but I suspect that in the context of psychotherapy, the answer to all these questions is “yes.”

The “Dream of Irma’s Injection” is Freud’s own dream, and next month he will tell us something of what it means. In November, Erik Craig will also tell us something of what it means, and something more too of what it reveals about Freud. Tonight, we are free to explore for ourselves what this dream means to us, who simply hear it in itself. I have not distributed the dream by itself before tonight, though it appears in both of our fall texts, in the hope that we may experience it first as a kind of poetic event, a coming-into-presence as free as possible from the enframing contexts of how it has been understood by dreamers and interpreters before us. Of course this can only be approximated. Some of you may have read ahead or, like me, are familiar already with this dream and something of its history. Furthermore, each of us will make sense of this dream in terms of our own pre-understandings, both of the elements of the dream as it appears and of dreaming itself. Finally, the appearance of the dream to us is already infused with Freud’s interpretive activity, both within the dreamwork, as what he called “secondary revision,” and in the explanatory asides that crop up in its telling.

This is a tension at the heart of any phenomenology. The attempt to let what appears show itself as what it is in its appearing, as *poiesis*, without imposing categories of understanding brought to the phenomenon from outside it runs up against the structure of understanding itself. All understanding, all interpretation is limited by the context in which it occurs. Not only is the interpreter situated in a particular history but the phenomenon itself is much more than is illuminated by our attempt to understand and, in its complexity, inevitably exceeds our grasp. Every revealing is also a concealing, and nowhere is this more true than in psychotherapy.

That understanding is only ever partial need not lead to futility, but only humility. No one interpretation, whether of a dream or of the essential structures of human existence, can ever be the whole truth. Each reveals something, however, in the light of its partial truth and I think our ultimate hope lies in shining as many different lights as we can shine to illuminate the mystery before us. Let us hold both sides of this truth, the revealing and the concealing, and turn our lights to shine upon dreaming, here at the beginning with the “Dream of Irma’s Injection.”

## **Dreaming the Freudian Dream: October 17, 2008**

Reading: S. Freud, "Analysis of a Specimen Dream"

Last month we began our series on dreaming at the beginning, with the dream that began it all, the dream of Freud's that has come to be known as "The Dream of Irma's Injection." We attempted a phenomenological approach to "the dream itself," in poetic isolation and free from its natural context as outlined by Freud in his "Preamble" and elucidated in his interpretation and the subsequent history of Freud studies. We abandon this illusion tonight.

As I had hinted in my opening comments last month, the attempt was an ironical one. Our playful fantasy of a pure, contextless phenomenology of "the dream itself" was punctured by one of the first comments made after the dream was read, to wit: "It is a very Freudian dream." So much for the dream itself; there is no such thing as a baby. When we pretend to be members of an isolated Amazonian tribe hearing the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth for the first time, much of the significance of this great work of art eludes us, though the same creative human spirit is present in our play. Every revealing also conceals, and every concealing reveals. The Daseinsanalytical attempt at phenomenological dream interpretation must always keep this in mind, if it is not to simply replace "the unconscious" with "human existence" as the "truth" revealed by psychotherapy. A cigar is never "just" a cigar, hence any phenomenology must be a hermeneutic phenomenology. This theme is a thread that will run through the whole tapestry of this year's readings and I will return to it again. But now, let me touch upon a few points from our reading that I think are of particular importance.

The procedure that Freud gives for unravelling a dream's meaning is familiar to any who study psychoanalysis: simply put it is the patient's free association. This is the manner in which, phenomenologically speaking, the dream shows itself as what it is in its appearing. In the developed psychoanalytic process, the patient's free association is met by the analyst's "evenly suspended attentiveness," which seems to me to be as close to a purely phenomenological way of proceeding as one can get. As this is Freud's own dream, these twinned processes are identical. The ubiquitous critique that paints psychoanalysis as the violent imposition of scientific theories of unconscious drive energy and Oedipal configurations seems to miss the mark, for what Freud discovers are basic human motivations of revenge and self-justification, rooted in the circumstances of everyday life. Indeed, he tells us explicitly that the dream interpretation leads toward the subject of the patient's entire case history. That he equates dreams to symptoms should not deter us either, for in his doing so we begin to understand symptom as less medical and more meaningful.

Freud tells us a great deal of what the dream means, and he also tells us that it means much more than he says. There is a kernel of meaning to the dream that always eludes elucidation. What reveals always conceals, and what appears in the light of our partial truths remains, in this kernel, a mystery. Of course, no account of

this dream would be complete without mention of the scandalous episode that lays behind it, that of Emma Eckstein's nose. In late February, 1895, about five months before this dream, both Freud and his patient Emma Eckstein were operated on by Freud's confidante, the Berlin ear-nose-and-throat doctor Wilhelm Fliess. To tell this story, let me read Peter Gay's account, from his biography of Freud, "A Life For Our Time."

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Freud's response to this episode was of profound denial and defense of his idealized friend and blame of Eckstein for her hysterical bleeding, but the repression of blame and culpability infuse this dream and find their expression here nonetheless. The power of the unconscious lies in its very unconsciousness; the suppression of this side of the dream material has wielded more power in the absence of its telling. I tell it here, in the hope of robbing it of this power and of seeing it in the proper context of understanding the hidden meaning of dreams.

"The Dream of Irma's Injection" is more than a very Freudian dream. It is, in its own way, the most Freudian of dreams, the dream of psychoanalysis itself. In this dream and its context, the method of its interpretation and the discovery of its meaning, we see psychoanalysis in the act of coming-to-be, the ultimate Freudian wish-fulfilment. Behind and around, underneath and outside the motives of revenge and self-justification Freud confesses; beyond the hidden shame of his allegiance to Wilhelm Fliess, we find the Freudian dream of the emergence and discovery of psychoanalysis. Like Freud in the dream we may see the evidence of this, even through the defence of Irma's dress. Represented here is the tentative break with medical psychiatry, Freud's break with Breuer and the nascent realization that simply unravelling the unconscious historical source of neurosis does not entail the removal of the symptom. This dream finds perhaps its clearest expression in the footnote that closes our reading, in the marble tablet that Freud dreams might someday mark his discovery of the meaning of dreams in the house where he dreamed "The Dream of Irma's Injection."

## **A Phenomenological Critique: Nov. 21, 2008**

Reading: Erik Craig, "Freud's Irma Dream: A Daseinsanalytic Reading"

Tonight we come to a threshold. A threshold is an ambiguous place, a stepping across that leaves one behind and opens another, yet does not wholly belong to either. Tonight we take our last steps with "the dream of Irma's injection" that has guided us this far, while also beginning the next segment of our journey, the exploration of Daseinsanalytic dream interpretation that will occupy us through the winter. The ambiguity of this step is concretized in two primary ways. The first lies in the specific nature of this beginning, for our step into Daseinsanalysis will be an interrupted one. We begin something new tonight but will not meet again to continue until January after a two month break. The second is named in the

deliberate irony of tonight's topic, "A Phenomenological Critique." I intend this to be read from both sides, as phenomenology's critique of psychoanalysis and as our own critical evaluation of phenomenology. Let me explain.

A common trope in fantasy literature is the discovery of a secret doorway, a threshold that opens into another world. Often the discovery of this world involves the realization that all is not as it seems. When Alice falls down the rabbit hole or passes through the looking glass she discovers a world that is structurally absurd. When Lucy passes through the wardrobe she discovers that the wintry forest with its friendly faun is ruled by an evil ice queen who keeps it always winter and never Christmas. Freud shines such a light on the dreamworld, he opens the doorway to understanding the meaningfulness of dreams and reminds us that, in dreams, things are not what they seem. Yet when Erik Craig, speaking for phenomenology, looks for meaning in "the dreamer's dreamt existence per se," and analyzes it on the model of everyday life, he seems to proceed according to the opposite presumption, that in dreams things are indeed what they seem. How are we to understand this, except through a critical lens?

What is a critique? It cannot be the kind of criticism foisted upon us by shaming parental figures, whose only real message is that we are, in the very core of our beings, all wrong. Unfortunately, too much critical discourse is of precisely this form, indeed it is the most prevalent kind of attack on Freud, and Craig does not entirely escape this purely negative critique. When he accuses Freud of "prejudice" against the manifest content of the dream, he assumes ideology where there is none. Freud did not presume that the meaning of dreams lay "behind" or "beneath" the manifest dream that could then be discarded. On the contrary, far from "disregarding" it he discovered that meaning was to be found in the associative links sprouting from those same manifest contents. Craig is himself more guilty of projecting his preunderstandings on the dream material when he reads Freud's dream through the lens of the existentials of space, time and attunement. We might see a relative poverty in the discoveries made here by exchanging Freud's self-understanding for the imposition of Heidegger's ontology of Dasein. When we examine dreams rigorously we must be attentive to the ways in which these existentials often diverge from waking existence: space and time are regularly bent beyond recognition and we often experience in dreams a mood that does not correspond to the phenomena we find there. The reflexive imposition of categories, whether Heideggerian or psychoanalytic is like a thoughtless injection of "propyl, propyls, propionic acid... trimethylamin" with an unclean syringe. Furthermore, Craig comes dangerously close to collapsing the difference of dreaming and waking life, as should be amply shown in these next two examples. At the bottom of page 204, Craig introduces Freud's dream in the following bizarre manner: "Freud thus concludes his preamble. The next thing we hear of his existence is that on the following date, July 24, 1985, he found himself receiving guests in a large hall." While rhetorically intriguing it is a deception, for Freud did not receive any guests, he simply dreamt of it. On the top of page 208, Craig concludes Freud's dreamt encounter with Irma thus: "The spontaneously unfolding meaning-creating exchange between Freud and his patient had vanished." Given that this is a dream, we may well ask what Craig is talking about here.

So much for negative critique. It is too easy to become mean. The wholesale destruction of another's thought precludes dialogue and leaves our world empty, populated only with cardboard cutouts and straw men. This kind of attacking criticism is a defense that must be challenged, but in replicating it here I only hope that "dysentery will supervene and the toxin will be eliminated." We must approach critique with an attitude of generosity, for we are truly dependent upon those we engage critically and without the object of our critique we have nothing. Craig's own generosity comes through clearly in the final four paragraphs of his essay where we catch a glimpse of the debt owed to Freud. I find myself wishing that they came at the beginning and could thus determine what comes after. So let us be generous and engage in a deeper kind of critique, one that takes its object on its own terms and explores the fullness of the claim within the context of its being said.

Craig proposes a trio of interrelated oppositions that orient our shift from psychoanalytic to phenomenological dream interpretation. First, we must look for the meaning of dreams within the dream, not behind or beneath it. Second, we correspondingly pay attention to the manifest dream rather than seeking out the latent dream thoughts. And finally, we seek the meaning in the dream itself, rather than in its relation to waking life. These go together somewhat uneasily, to my mind. We have two sequences apparently in opposition here—within/manifest/dreaming and behind/latent/waking—that on examination seem in a more confused relation. I have already pointed to the misunderstanding of Freud's associative strategy of discovery, portrayed here as a prejudicial disregard, and to the confusion of dreaming and waking that shows itself. More pernicious, I think, is the implicit betrayal of phenomenological principles we are faced with. Under the guise of approaching "the dream itself", Craig distances us from the associative interpretations of the dreamer, Freud. It seems to me that if we are to remain phenomenologically rigorous we must accept these first and foremost, before we impose our own motivated and context-ridden associations on another's dream. It is an unfortunate byproduct of the choice of texts this year that it is only Freud who is allowed to speak for himself, and Daseinsanalysis is a particular victim of this.

I think that the only way to adequately understand what Craig is aiming at here is to see it as a profound shift in the axis of interpretation. We are asked to move away from a view of the dream where the meaning is located behind the phenomena in a latent unconscious process that is to be understood in relation to waking life. In this view, the experienced dream is indeed elided somehow: the threshold is ignored in favour of the relation between the inner and outer worlds it ambiguously unites. When we find the meaning within the manifest dream taken as a phenomena in its own right, we remain in the ambiguous space of the in-between. To treat either of these strategies as exhaustive of a dream's meaning would be simple-minded, and a betrayal of human complexity. Fortunately, neither Freud nor Craig is asking this of us.

When Craig explains his method on page 212 by saying: "We began simply by granting Freud's existence while dreaming the same integrity and respect we would grant his existence while awake," I think he has it backwards. I would rather we took this in reverse and granted the unconscious determinants of waking life the same integrity and respect we grant the products of dreaming. There is less

difference than we commonly accept, for none of us are entirely free from the projections and distortions of reality that originate in our own deepest disturbances. Remaining, with phenomenology, on the threshold of unconscious meaning, we take the dream as we remember it at face value, for it reveals itself through the dreamer's associations. And this, I imagine, is how most of us actually work with dreams, either our own or our client's. We may follow Freud in associatively tracing specific elements, but we also grant more relevance, for example, to the dreamt narrative, no matter how fractured it may be, than Freud thinks is helpful.

What does it really mean to take the dream at face value? The meaning of a face is read directly on its surface, but it inevitably refers to something deeper that is not reducible to the facial expression. We read joy in a smile, worry in a furrowed brow, and profound grief in the tears and contortions of weeping. We do not seek the meaning of these expressions beneath the skin, in the musculature of the face, but even deeper in the soul of the human being before us, the soul of which the face is the threshold.

A dream is a phenomena of the threshold between waking and sleeping, consciousness and unconsciousness, a secret door to the concealed and unconcealed world of the unconscious, where nothing is ever only what it seems to be. The remembered dream is the conscious residue of unconscious processes, always already under revision in being remembered and narrativized for the conscious acceptance of memory. But when the dream "opens its mouth properly" we may see its truth revealed in "extensive whitish grey scabs upon some remarkable curly structures". We must beware of merely "percussing it through its bodice", for unless we are open to what lies hidden there, all we may find is "a dull area low down on the left."

### **Daseinsanalytic Dream Interpretation I: Foundations: Jan. 23, 2009**

Reading: M. Boss & B. Kenny, "Phenomenological or Daseinsanalytical Approach"

Happy New Year, and welcome back to our thinking about dreaming.

With the new year, the earth having fallen into its long winter sleep, we are called upon to dream, to reflect on our past and to entertain our hopes and wishes for the year to come. Traditionally, the wish-fulfillment fantasies that go by the name of "New Year's Resolutions" are fairly mundane ones: to quit smoking, to lose a little weight; to find a better paying or more fulfilling job; to finally begin or to finish that long-neglected project, and the like. Calling these "mundane" is not intended to diminish them. Our English word 'mundane' stems from the Latin *mundus*, "world", and thus refers to the everyday concerns of our being-in-the-world, like our health or our vocation. It is fitting, then, that we begin the new year by turning our thoughts to Daseinsanalysis, which finds the meaning of dreams in the dreamer's being-in-the-world.

This also seems an appropriate time to examine where we are in our journey, with reference to where we have been and to where we are going. Though we are

looking at being-in-the-world tonight, there is also a subterranean logic in our progression that is becoming clearer to me as we go along. In my September comment I forecast an open can of worms for us about now, and as it is possible to see the whole in a way that has not been available previously, I hope to express both can and worms a little more concisely than before.

We began in the fall with an in-depth exploration of Freud's Irma dream. We read the dream itself, worked our way through Freud's own interpretation and examined a different interpretation of the dream given from the standpoint of Daseinsanalytic phenomenology. We began with this dream because it provided a ready vehicle to explore the distinction of psychoanalytic and daseinsanalytic dream interpretation, given that we had both Freud's and Craig's texts available to us. Underlying this, though, is the convenient truth that "The Dream of Irma's Injection" is the founding text of dream interpretation from a dynamic psychotherapeutic perspective and thus a natural place to begin.

We leave this dream behind tonight to begin anew, like any new year already *in media res*, or well underway, to continue where we left off, with a deeper look at Daseinsanalysis and what it brings to our understanding of dreams. This will be our focus tonight and for next month's reading, where we will be given a slightly different take on daseinsanalytic dream interpretation in Ute Jaenicke's more nuanced hermeneutic approach. In the following months our can will overflow with worms, rather like the way we saw unconscious meaning irrupting through the conscious associative chains and gaps of Freud's self-interpretation. In March, Jonathan Lear will critique the crucial dichotomy of primary and secondary process in the dreamwork and we will see the psychoanalytic perspective itself approaching the very daseinsanalytic concern with being-in-the-world. With this circle finally completed we will be free to expand our view of dreaming to incorporate what I think are the more essential concerns of creativity, poetry and play, as presented through our final two readings of the year. Inside the circle is where we dance.

To return to the subject of worms, let me take the opportunity of our ambiguous new beginning to reiterate the three main thematic threads of my commentary on our readings so far. These threads are all connected and the tension they contain is what holds the tapestry of this subterranean logic together. You should recognize each one but I will name them tonight in the interest of bringing the picture of this tapestry further into the foreground of our view. They are: the problem of hermeneutic phenomenology; the irony of the critique of psychoanalysis; and finally, the question of who is the interpreter.

In moving from psychoanalysis to daseinsanalysis we have moved from hermeneutics, the process of interpretation, to phenomenology, the analysis of the thing itself. If you have sensed me resisting this movement you have been right, but no matter, we are about to begin the movement back again—to complete the circle, as I have just said. The reasons for my resistance are simple, if a bit disingenuous: I do not accept any phenomenology that is not through and through, self-consciously



hermeneutic. I say “self-consciously” here because it is precisely this aspect of phenomenology that is most often elided in the insistence that the “thing itself”, our being-in-the-world is the primary subject of our enquiry. At times it appears that, in their insistence that being-in-the-world is the thing itself we must find, our esteemed daseinsanalytic dream interpreters are forgetting that the thing itself is always already subject to interpretation.

Interpretation is a double-edged sword and its name is *aletheia*. Interpretation is necessary for understanding, but it is also constrained by the pre-understandings that inform it—understanding is only possible within the opening for truth that exists in a particular place and time. All else remains hidden. Every revealing is also a concealing. This is the paradox that renders a pure phenomenology problematic. It is also the truth that underlies the critique of psychoanalysis or any other theory that becomes ideological, to wit, with enough imagination we can always find whatever meaning we are looking for. Of course we must avoid simply projecting whatever we want onto our material. Hence phenomenology reminds us to stick closely to whatever shows itself in what appears to us, to remain “experience near” in the words of intersubjectivity theory. This is an important reminder and a vital corrective to any tendency to speculatively assume a meaning before the phenomenon even presents itself. But where, in the realm of dream interpretation, do we find that tendency really?

The irony in phenomenological dream interpretation is that it is too often guilty of this tendency itself, while the main object of its critique, psychoanalysis, is not. Psychoanalysis, as we saw in the fall, is founded on the discovery that the meaning of dreams emerges from the associations of the dreamer, not the presuppositions of the therapist. Of course, there are certainly many psychoanalysts who will short circuit the dreamer’s emerging understanding with their own assumptions of meaning. The book from which tonight’s reading is taken is curiously based on exactly this kind of process, where a variety of practitioners are invited to speculate wildly about the meaning of Martha’s dreams seen through the lenses of their own theoretical commitments. But for psychoanalysis itself, we can point to the opposite injunction as its own corrective, the provision at the very origin of psychoanalytic dream theory that the dreamer’s own associations are the vehicle of unconscious meaning. The daseinsanalytic insistence on dreaming being-in-the-world often seems to miss the distinguishing factor. In staying too close to the *world* of the dream-world it forgets the *dream*; in following its own dictates too closely, phenomenology becomes paradoxically non-phenomenological.

In our readings, daseinsanalysis’s act of replacing one locus of meaning with another misses the mark in one more important way. Where psychoanalysis finds meaning in unconscious structures of conflicted sexuality, for instance, daseinsanalysis reads meaning off of the surface of appearing being-in-the-world. But this is not the right focus of the distinction, to my mind. Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein opens the realm of understanding the ontological reality of human being and is not properly contrasted with Freud’s discovery of dynamic unconscious processes. What it replaces is the 19th century mechanistic view of the human mind

that frames and constrains Freud's revolutionary understandings. What is actually at stake here is a reinterpretation of these discoveries, not the simplistic opposition of theoretical approaches that so often appears. The meaning of "unconscious" is not the same as the meaning of "merely hidden" and we eliminate the former meaning at our peril. To insist on the mundane as worldly should not eliminate the poetry of meaning's emergence from concealment, for it then risks becoming mundane in the sense of uninteresting.

But perhaps this too is merely a function of the particular opening for truth that allows understanding. Every interpreter will see only what they are themselves open to allow appear and so the question of the interpreter comes to the fore. This is the question that most impacts on our reading for tonight, for in this volume everyone speaks for Martha, but Martha is only barely able to speak for herself in the sparse associations that accompany her dreams. The case of the cockroach in dreams 3 and 4 is particularly instructive here. When a cockroach walks across the pubic hair of Martha's dream mother we hear, of all things, about the cockroach's place in evolutionary history and about "Swabian beetles", not about the impact of the mother's unspoken sexual disgust on Martha's ability to sustain relationships, something we might easily infer from her association to the squalor of her childhood home and the sexual games of her playfriends. When a cockroach turns into a chicken and then a dog, we hear of this ascension up the evolutionary ladder toward humanity, and not about the meaning of the Friday chicken dinner or of the dog's danger to pantyhose. This is not to say that these are uninformed associations for they are revealing in their own ways. They help to provide a range of possible meanings that might otherwise escape us.

Let us be fair to the individualities at work here. All understanding is founded on the preunderstandings that allow its expression. Our reading is an almost perfect example of both the strengths and weaknesses inherent in this truth. Tonight our worm has caught something fishy and let us keep this in mind throughout, for the blank slate of Martha's real being-in-the-world only invites speculative projections here. How can daseinsanalysis get a fair reading under such perverse conditions? Fortunately we are treated to the sheer honesty of Boss and Kenny here when they say, on multiple occasions, "we do not know, we would have to ask her."

If I am critical of daseinsanalysis here it is only because I believe that there is too much at stake to let half-measures rule the day. To delve into the inner life of a client must be approached both with care and with the light touch of playfulness and humour, for if we cannot laugh at ourselves we will never fully appreciate another's suffering. To hold too tightly to any understanding of our own is to do a kind of violence to the other's integrity of self. Dreamwork is serious work, but it is a work that, in its essence must be identical with play. Let us recall Heidegger's picture of Dasein from the first Zollikon Seminar, a half circle open to the world. Together, therapist and client make a circle and inside the circle we dance. What this means will become clearer as we go, but for now let us play with all our hearts.

## **Daseinsanalytic Dream Interpretation II: The New Wave: Feb. 20, 2009**

Reading: U. Jaenicke, "Dream Interpretation, The 'Royal Road' to the Dreamer's Actual and Existential Suffering and Striving"

The history of psychodynamic theory since Freud is filled with conflict. From the beginning, themes of orthodoxy, inheritance and individuation have defined the disputes and struggles that make up that history. At times these battles have appeared to resemble nothing less than tribal warfare with its roots deep in human prehistory, and I have often found this view reinforced by a certain kind of academic discourse that takes political categories of conflict and alterity as central to its critical arsenal. That one of the more recent shining stars of this critical discourse, Slavoj Žižek, can move from Lacanian analysis to Balkan ethnic cleansing without pausing for breath, lends itself to perpetuating this confusion. The danger in academic discourse, as in any predominantly theoretical pursuit, is the sharp intellect's propensity for simplistic solutions and the need for each point to be sharp enough to wound our adversaries with. We see a similar tendency at work in the major disputes around psychoanalysis.

To view this as tribal conflict, however, now appears to me to be a kind of romanticization of something that is neither so simple, so grandiose, nor (dare I say?) so *clean*. The battles that mark the Freudian legacy are more fruitfully understood within the frame of a *family dispute*, a view which, I think, better accounts for the particular savagery of some of the battles over the psychoanalytic estate. If the dominance of the mechanistic therapies of psychopharmacology and cognitive-behaviourism has had one positive effect it is this: that the common human heritage of the psychodynamic psychotherapies has come to the fore as a unifying force against all that has divided us in the past. Blood has proven thicker than water, and we are fortunate our extended family is no longer quite so dysfunctional that we cannot appreciate our differences and even learn from each other. The truth of this common human heritage has always been recognized within these walls, of course, and we made the conscious decision that the readings of this society would reflect the growing recognition of this truth in psychodynamic literature. In our readings this year we are simultaneously remaining faithful to this truth and enacting the circumstances of its development. Tonight's reading is uniquely positioned to bring this truth home to us, for the themes of family heritage and of overcoming divisions surround the choice of this text. It is only fitting that in our turn away from the divisions of artificially enforced orthodoxy and towards the broader family inclusion, we should be turning to a not-too-distant member of our own family. Uta Jaenicke stands in the same spiritual heritage as our own Society for Daseinsanalysis in Canada, identified by her on page 106 with reference to the hermeneutic approach of Alice Holzhey's *Leiden am Dasein*, and which I am calling here, "the new wave" of Daseinsanalysis.

I want to highlight some aspects of tonight's text that serve to solidify this transition towards inclusivity and openness. Although Jaenicke (or as we might call her, "Auntie Uta") begins by restating the same distinction of Daseinsanalysis from

psychoanalysis that is by now familiar to us, there are subtle differences in her account that distinguish it from what we have read before. For one thing, she seems much less committed to an ideologically rigid understanding of the distinction. When Boss and Kenny, for example, characterize Daseinsanalysis in contrast to psychoanalysis, I am often left with the feeling that, for them, the difference is metaphysically significant, as though the objects of Daseinsanalysis and psychoanalysis are ontologically distinct. Of course, it is precisely one of the crucial points of our critique that the emotional life of human beings is not to be understood on the model of objective medical science, and psychoanalysis has long struggled with exactly this issue. In our text tonight, however, it seems much more a subtle difference in understanding the same ontological humanity, one where the shift in language involved is toward a kind of softness: meaning is hidden and revealed within the dream experience, not behind it in a reified unconscious realm of mental life. Rather than contrasting unconscious intention with the existential situation of the dreamer in some rigid ontological way, Jaenicke understands each of these as “sustaining structures (of) meaningfulness” for inquiring into the human experience of dreaming. The idea that different theoretical accounts provide different “sustaining structures of meaningfulness” is in line with the hermeneutic vision I have been proposing here myself, that different basic understandings shine different lights on the same, infinitely complex structures of human existence. My overall sympathy with the hermeneutic turn in Daseinsanalysis should come as no surprise by now.

The erosion of the Freudian distinction between manifest and latent dream parallels another shift in Jaenicke’s writing vis-a-vis Bossian orthodoxy: namely, that there is less of a distance between what she writes about dreams and the way she understands the dreams she writes about. We are not faced with the kind of disjunction between theory and practice we saw last month, but we remain fully in a world of dreams and their possible meanings that should be familiar to us as practitioners of this art. Of course, her attention to language is not always perfect and the occasional slips can be significant and cautionary. The humanist, non-scientific approach is occasionally belied by the choice of words, such as these, all found on the first page of our text. We are described as “penetrating” the apparent dream to “grasp” the meaningfulness of it. The therapeutic approach to dreams is dependent on what we are “interested in”, “searching for”, or “aiming at”. To reveal the hidden meaning of dreams requires “attention” and “thought”. These may be very subtle indicators of difference when contrasted with the Freudian method of “free association”, but insofar as anything is riding on the language we use, I feel it is incumbent upon me to remain consistent in my attention to the dogmatically motivated misrepresentations that have plagued this family squabble for most of the last century. As I have said before, these dangers are inherent in the hermeneutic approach, and while they are not necessarily wrong, they demand a certain critical vigilance to ensure that our projections are recognized and every effort is made to account for their distorting influence.

In tandem with this loosening of Daseinsanalytic orthodoxy, comes a much

more nuanced sense of which basic structures of human existence actually count for our psychotherapeutic purposes. Two of these structures stand out in our reading, though neither is explicated with any fullness. First, our attention is drawn to the importance of mood in disclosing the world, both in waking and in dreaming life. One of the questions I always ask regards what moods or feelings my clients find themselves in, either within the dream itself, or in relation to the telling of it. This, I am sure, is something we all do with some regularity, though we may or may not concern ourselves with the Heideggerian existential of *befindlichkeit* that informs Jaenicke's introduction of it here. The second example is in the specific theme of attachment that appears within the two dreams mentioned. This is a fact of human existence that explicitly extends far beyond the specific place it may hold in any of the theories that describe it. While it may equally evoke thoughts of Heidegger's thinking about *Mitsein* and Bowlby's attachment theory, the account of it that is presented in the context of this young man's dreaming life and therapeutic development is more firmly grounded in our shared humanity than theories typically allow.

Let me end on a short personal note. Anyone who knows me at all will know that I have never been much enamoured of any kind of orthodoxy. Even when I have been most vocal in my defense of some idea or other against criticism, it is always the case that my interest lies in the evocative power that idea holds for my own flights of fancy, and not in a slavish adherence to the dictates of the wise fathers of intellectual history. My reflexive rebelliousness is always mobilized in defense of my own thinking, but when I have felt free enough to pursue my own understandings I am usually willing to entertain any ideas that don't immediately constrain me. My first therapist, a psychoanalyst, once said to me that sometimes the best thing to do with some families is to leave them. Fortunately the psychodynamic family has grown up enough that we can all find a home here.

### **The Poetry of Dreaming: April 17, 2009**

Reading: L. Binswanger, "Dream and Existence"

What is the dream and who is the dreamer? I asked this question seven months ago when we began this series and the question and its answers have hovered over our readings and discussions since then. The dream's emergence from the depths of unconsciousness carries an essential revealing of the "who" of the Dasein who dreams it: this we believe and can show in the act of interpreting each phenomenal dream that presents itself to us. Each text we have read, each conversation we have had, has presupposed something of the answer, even when it hasn't tried to answer it directly. But are we truly any closer to answering this question or have our understanding and our pre-understanding concealed more than they have revealed? Perhaps even the essential significance of the question itself remains somehow elusive.

With tonight's reading we confront the question yet again, approaching it this

time through what I am calling the poetry of dreaming. Why “poetry”? The reason for the appeal to some notion of poetics is far from transparent, although Binswanger indeed brings poetry into a relation with dreaming as he slips along the chains of association from “falling” through flying birds and dying birds, to dreams, omens and oracles; from earth to sky and the human to the gods. If we are to begin to answer *this* question we must recognize that the meaning of poetry is as obscure as that of dreaming. If we can begin to answer the question of poetry perhaps we will thereby open up the horizon for a deeper understanding of the dream itself.

What is poetry in the context of an understanding of dreaming? According to Binswanger, the emotional experience of “falling from the clouds” is not to be viewed as a mere poetic simile of actual physical experiences of falling. The one is not reducible to the other but reflects a “general meaning matrix” of movement from above to below that extends throughout the various “particular regional spheres” in which this “falling” carries existential meaning. At the level of such “general meaning matrices” language finds its proper home in the ontological structure of Dasein, not in the referential fantasies of either pure ideas or objective materialism. When we say, for example, that metaphor is the essence of language we do not mean the metaphor that carries over a meaning derived from an objective reality and applies it to another object secondarily by analogy. The face and hands of a precise Swiss clock are only partially a carryover from the human face and hands that speak to us through their names. When we look at a clock we literally stand face to face with the Time that stares back at us through the imperfect vehicle of its representation, the hands of which point us toward the flow of Now through the inexorable march of particular moments. It makes no sense to quibble over which face or hands come first. It is this general structure of “carrying over” from the “general meaning matrix” into particular spheres of meaningfulness that marks language as metaphorical. The referential meanings that pertain to thingly reality are themselves carried over from those borne by a “general meaning matrix” that finds its ontological ground in Dasein’s openness to its world. When poetry speaks to us, it speaks directly from this ground of language.

This understanding of language runs counter to those theories of language that see it primarily as communication, as in the dominant so-called “information sciences” of our present electronic age. In these theories, language is understood within a model of discrete bits of information transmitted from sender to receiver and subjected to the distorting effects of noise. Freud’s understanding of dreams is similar to this model in many respects, we need merely substitute “the unconscious” for sender, “conscious” for receiver, and “censor” or “defense” for noise to fairly reproduce the psychoanalytic view. The latent dream thoughts are the information transmitted, and dream interpretation, then, is the attempt to remove the noise from the received manifest dream. Our reading from Jonathan Lear last month has helped us to erode the exclusivity of latent dream thoughts and manifest dream, primary and secondary process, that give such a reading of the dreamwork its cachet. Tonight’s reading enables us to take our critique one step further.

If we take Binswanger's suggestion seriously enough we might see that while the information model is not, strictly speaking, *wrong*, it suffers from a lacuna of self-understanding that impacts directly on how it views its object. This lacuna is visible from our perspective in the very name this model gives itself, "information science". 'Information' stems from 'inform', which means, literally, "to give shape to". Language is information, then, as the process of giving shape to meanings, not their reproduction from one discrete meaning-giving system to another, and much less the transmission of meaningful bits between discrete communicating entities. Language always already exists as the in-between and all-around of any particular expression, the "general meaning matrix" that gives shape to specific spheres of meaningfulness through the metaphorical "carry-over" structure of language. In this context we may better understand the Daseinsanalytical claim that dreaming discloses the world of Dasein's human existence. The world thus disclosed is not a version of the mundane work-a-day existence as reflected literally in a manifest dream. It is the ontologically poetic ground of Dasein's openness to the unconcealment of the mystery of being that is expressed in the dream's emergence from the literal and metaphorical unconsciousness of sleep.

Our word 'poetry' has its root in the Greek word *poiesis*. In "The Question Concerning Technology", Heidegger tells us that *poiesis* is the manner of coming-to-presence, understood by the ancient Greeks under the two forms of *physis* and *techne*. *Physis* is the manner of coming-to-presence from out of itself and it corresponds to the notion in western thought that comes to us in English as "nature"; the word '*physis*' is the root of our words "physics" and "physical". *Techne* is the coming-to-presence through another and is used in the ancient greek to signify primarily the makings of art and handicraft; '*techne*' is the root of our words "technical", "technology" and "technique". We can see how the meanings of these words has been transformed over time. The natural world of self-emerging beings shifts to become the physical world of mechanics and atomistic materialism; the world of craft, art and artifice becomes a technologized mass production. It is no surprise that information theory carries such weight today, when all we are left with is a *poiesis* that no longer bears poetry in its heart. But in an age where the very distinction between *physis* and *techne* seems to have disappeared we may imagine that the possibilities of *poiesis* are not exhausted by this division. *Poiesis* now speaks to something more than the kinds of being meant by "natural" and "made", even in the sense of poetic art.

It is said that art is 1/10 inspiration and 9/10 perspiration. Where art is still understood primarily as the expression of subjective individuality, art is indeed the *techne* reflected in the perspiring side of the equation. But it was not always so, and indeed there are many who would argue that it is still not essentially thus. To turn to the greek world again, this time on the cusp of pre-history, it is not the artist but the goddess that "makes" the work, the goddess who sings the rage of Peleus' son Achilles invoked at the beginning of the Iliad. This art is essentially inspiration, the breath of the Muse that fills the singer, where the perspiration is not borne of hard Calvinist work but of the fear and trembling attendant upon any such glimpse of the

divine source of creation. This is the poetry that connects with our dreaming, and the unconcealment of the underlying mystery of Dasein's belonging-to the coming-to-presence of its world. The dream is not a message from the beyond that must be decoded, it is the expression of the truth of our ownmost human existence that finds its source beyond our self-conscious identity in the very ground of our being.

Perhaps we are not really any closer to answering our question. How could we be, when any revealing is always already a concealing? But where we do not find answers we may reclaim our experience of the mystery, and I think this is infinitely more valuable.

### **What Then Is the Dream?: May 15, 2009**

Reading: C. Bollas, "At the Other's Play: To Dream"

Tonight is our final evening together until we meet again in the fall. When I reflect on what we have been doing this year, the image that suggests itself to me with the greatest force is the tango. I am only an occasional observer of dance and no expert, but it seems to me that the tango, when it is really danced expressively, is clearly a dance of seduction, in which the man repeatedly approaches and pursues the woman until they finally come together at the end. Interpreting this movement through a modernist lens we may see this primarily in its masculine aspect, as the movement of man in his pursuit and eventual triumph. He is Don Juan, light on his feet to anticipate her every move, and she cannot escape his advances or ever break entirely free from his embrace. Like scientific knowledge conquering nature, she may evade our grasp for now but we are certain that our pursuit will pay off in the end, that our lack of success is not a "no", but only a "not yet". In the end, she will surrender.

When I watch a tango, however, I see something quite different. While in the mechanics of the dance the man might lead, he is not the true agent of the tango, she is. It is the woman who dances here, repeatedly whirling away and returning, while he dresses himself like a peacock, rose in teeth, to merely present his intention to her ultimate choice. The tango is a dance of her decision, she plays with him, tests his resolve, his commitment, and his ability to keep up, until she eventually decides he is worthy of her. Every dance with its dénouement of intimate promise bears within it a dozen virtual dances where she rejects her suitor's advance. This is the dance that comes to mind when I think of our approach to dreaming. If we are ever successful in our pursuit it is only ever on dreaming's own terms and she opens herself to our grasping embrace only reluctantly and never fully. This year we have been dancing with a mystery.

The dream is an elusive partner. At times she shows herself as the hallucinated fulfilment of an infantile wish, at others as a reflection of the ontological structure of human being. She appears all depth and we strive to decipher or decode her uncanny speech; she appears all surface and we read the meanings written



directly upon her face; she speaks in a poetic language and we are stirred by a significance that impresses its meaning upon us but is never exhausted by certainty. She speaks to us of our relationships, our histories, ourselves and the world we carry with us, and, yes, of what it means to be a human being with all its dilemmas and conflicts, its sufferings, joys and triumphs, its fullnesses and its emptinesses. And yet, like any truth, as she reveals she also reveals, as each veil is removed the other 999 have moved in behind it again. This may be a tango only in our wildest dreams, for she often treats us less as participants than as observers. The conscious subject may think it sits on the throne while she dances but she puts the lie to our sovereignty every time she whispers the price of understanding. It is not John the Baptist's head there on the plate, it is our own. In watching the play of dreaming's dance we are reminded that we are not masters in our own house, that the cost of maintaining the illusion of modernist subjectivity is a disembodied head.

How may we approach the dream, then, if she must come to us? Poetically. In the end, that is tonight, Bollas tells us we are to view the dream aesthetically, as a dramaturgic production staged by the unthought known. The Greek root of "aesthetics" is *aesthesis*, the open reception of what presents itself in the coming-into-presence of *poiesis*. Bollas' account is diminished by a certain lack of clarity, one that typically arises when attempting to assimilate a philosophical discourse of subjectivity with a psychoanalytic account of the unconscious ego. But he allows us to pose the question: If the dream is a play, whose play is it? In his account, the soon-to-be-conscious waking subject seems to define the scene of the action at least, but it is the unconscious ego, the unthought known, that directs the drama into which the subject is cast. The play is the play of the Other.

We are accustomed in psychotherapeutic understanding to elide the difference Bollas seems to posit here, to insist that "it is *you* who create this dream", despite the almost universal experience of being its passive recipient. This is true of our understanding of all manner of symptomatic action, our clients are responsible for their choices, even when, in the throes of compulsion, they are unconscious of the choice itself. We deny the ultimate distinction between Bollas' "subject" and its "Other" despite the subjective appearance to the contrary. We do not mean to invalidate our client's experience, of course. Perhaps this is the best way we know to promote the integration of what we must understand to be the conscious and unconscious elements of one and the same "self". Any suggestion that there may be genuinely "other" forces at work here are dismissed as holdovers of archaic primitive and infantile modes of thought. And well they may be, but is that really the point? To present this to our clients is surely to risk a traumatic misattunement, despite our faith in the possibility of rapprochement. Nor do I believe that the unconscious is exhausted by identifying its self-like elements with the subjective individual in whom they are manifest. It runs deeper than this, to the material conditions of our embodiment and to the divine font of creativity at the heart of all existence. I think that Bollas' aesthetic view helps us to navigate through the shoals of misattunement. When we can see those archaic, primitive and infantile modes of thought as essentially *poietic* we can grant them their due consideration and listen

properly to what is spoken.

The dream is a play in which we are at the play of an ambiguous Other, an Other that connects us to the core of our being. Play emerges in a transitional space that transcends both subjectivity and objectivity because it is the precondition for the experience of both. Winnicott identifies this transitional space as the root of creativity and spontaneity in later development, the emergence of the true self from the experience of unintegration. Experience teaches us that it is extremely vulnerable to impingement from outside, for example, in the forms of interruption or the imposition of meaning. Regarding the transitional object, Winnicott insists that we must not ask if it is created or found, for to answer either would be to invalidate the meaningful experience of it as transcending both. When as adults or as therapists we smile knowingly, assured of the thingly character of the thing, we only answer for the thing in general but miss the particularity of this thing's meaning to the one for whom it is meaningful in this way. To engage our children in play or to engage our clients in the meaningful drama of their human existence we must forego this stance, lest we remain ever distant from the elusive dance partner of their truth.

To understand dreaming as *poiesis* is to find it at the level of transitional space. The question whether it is created or found by one who dreams it must remain unasked if we are to remain present to the emergence of its meaning. But we too are free to play with the possibilities it presents as it presents itself both as created and as found. The dream is mine and the expression of my ownmost depth and it is also the divine voice that inspires and informs me from beyond: we ignore what is revealed by each of these interpretations at our peril. It takes two to tango, and if we ever hope to unite with our partner in this dance, we would do well to remember that she will make her choice on her own terms. Let us present ourselves to the dream, light-footed and rose in teeth, open to whatever she chooses to reveal.