

OF THOUGHTS AND DREAMS

RESPONSE TO WERNER PELZ' REFLECTIONS ON FREUD'S UNDERSTANDING OF DREAMS .

".. . in the timeless unconscious, in that part of us we had to repress and have to go on repressing, a creativity denied expression in the light of day lives on at night and bodies forth the shape of things unknown and gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name." [op. cit. p.1]

Is the separation really that sharp? Surely my thinking is but the tip of the ice-berg of my day-dreaming, which is a constant milieu of being, an unconscious sea through which those mountain tops of dry land we deign to deem 'rational thinking' poke surreptitiously as tiny islands. Perhaps the distinction should not be between dreaming at night and thinking in the day, but between the constancy of dreaming, which in the waking hours of daylight is, and is also overlaid, by conscious interaction with the real environment within which survival demands work.

Could it be that language leaps into being at that water's edge, lapped on the boundary between the sea and the dry land, including for communication the symbols, pictures, reflection patterns, holograms, wave-forms at that point of interplay between conscious and unconscious realities. Language is a reification, a displacement, a dim digital map of the rich analogue of the intrapersonal image field, as mind meeting mind struggles to share its worldview across the conceptual chasm of the skin boundary.

"... each 'expression', any 'relevation', is a symbolic condensation, an actual displacement. For a symbol is a displacement, at least in the Freudian sense of the word. It stands for something quite different, and yet, for the thinker, it is that for which it stands." [op. cit. p.2)

Every word, dream, symbol, concept, is what it is by distinction from that which it is not. Its sense is given in distinction from its non-sense. It is the is land of 'this' in the sea of 'not-this' and yet "this placement" is also "displacement". Each symbol stands in relation to a definitive ground which is quite distinct from the 'not-this' of the symbol out-field, and yet it stands distinctly other than the symbol itself. If psychosis is the identification of the symbol with that which is symbolised, then for the author the thinker is essentially the psychotic. Perhaps if there really is not so much difference between thinking and dreaming, other than artificial splitting and denial of the irrationality and unconscious content of the thought process, then the psychoanalysis of rationality is an open door. Here the task would be the identification of the symbolic nature of rational thought, the disentangling of symbol and ground, the discernment of displacement and displacement chain, collusions and corporate dreams, projected, transferred, coalesced, reified into common concepts, encoding corporate neuroses.

The process of idealisation, or splitting, relates to night and day, and to the experience of body/mind in being. The thinking and rationality of the night, that mind-work-while-asleep,

is deeply denied and dreaming is deemed to rule the hours of darkness. Yet how often and how deeply are our most creative insights, our most fundamental problem-solving and our paradoxical resolution recognised as being undertaken in depth while "we sleep on it". Conversely, to dream by daylight is to be ridiculed, for dreams must be banished to the realms of darkness and rational thought must dominate the hours of light. Yet leaving aside this defensive weeding out of the unwanted parts, how deeply shot through our every waking moment is with dream-work. We are truly thinking dreamers and dreaming thinkers, 'theaming' beings.

"(It is interesting to note in passing what strong connotations we have given to 'light' and 'darkness':. 'black and white', 'heaven' and 'hell', 'conscious' (light), 'unconscious' (dark), intellect and emotion, thinking and feeling.) We may, perhaps we should ask what would happen, if we did permit our dream discourse to participate in our daily deliberations; to what extent our deliberations may be impoverished or distorted, because we separate them from our dreams; in how far our dream discourse is often so far removed from our actuality, because it has been so thoroughly cut off from the legitimate discourse of the day." [op. cit. p.3]

Our splits make many other polarities than those noted here. Left and right, east and west, north and south, right and wrong, in and out, us and them, body and mind, male and female ... believer and heathen ... no one polar pair can be seen as causal of all parallel polarities, the splitting process resides deep in the human psyche, patterning itself out in the dichotomies of being and language at every level of humanity.

The question is raised as to what might happen if "we did permit our dream discourse to participate in our daily deliberations". My sense is that such participation refuses to wait for our permission. Its effects may be denied, resisted, repressed, but the intercourse between dream and thought is continuous even though distorted and displaced. So our neurotic drives inspire our most rational deliberations, our day and night dreaming moulds and modifies the matrix of our language and our doing, often deeply unconsciously, yet in ways which lead by displacement to the acting out of neurosis and psychosis in our daily life, in destructive patterns gift-wrapped in the crack-covering paper of rationalisation.

It seems to me that the more creative question is to ask how we may raise to consciousness the interaction between dream and thought, taking down the energy of splitting, that generates the idealisation of disparate fields and the denial of their interaction. Such a process of integration could not happen only in one polar pair, but would have to be at the level of the roots of splitting of the human psyche, both individual and corporate, and its effects over time would permeate every polarity.

How deeply we need to affirm that:

"... in our 'reality', in our economic, political, military, technological, academic actuality, it is actually the dream logic which asserts itself, the logic of wish-fulfilment, of the untutored id. Our pretentious intellect, far from ruling the roost according to the guidelines itself has elaborated, is ruled and over-ruled by its own creations, not unlike the dream work by the forces it both expresses and conceals". [op. cit. p.4]

It is this recognition of the irrationality of the rational, of the neuroticism of the normal, that is a fundamental prerequisite for any movement or improvement in social sanity. As for the individual, so for the community, it is the being which denies the neurosis of its normality which is in danger of lapsing into psychosis. If man in his madness cannot admit his insanity then he is in danger of massive social breakdown.

But the madness of man is not limited to his present. His present emanates also from his past, both individual and social. The institutions thrown up over the millennia, encode the neuroses of yesteryear, which are in turn introjected by the persons of today, whose deep internal world is seared into matching the social structures. These in turn come under stress and evolve in response to corporate mismatch with the personae of today, so generating for tomorrow's people a milieu of today's neuroses, through which they in turn struggle towards authenticity.

Not only in conception but also in institution, man corporately and unconsciously reifies his dream world:

"Moreover, the creatures of our intellect, the institutions which we like to consider as the ostensible product of the communal intellect, exhibit some or many of the features of dream images which both fulfil and deny libidinal desires, desires which remain self-contradictory, because they have not been integrated into the public discourse. This explains why our economic, political, military institutions have become nightmares in which we, the dreamers, are trapped, even while we, as thinkers, frantically try to rationalise our situation. Those institutions are communal compulsive neuroses or psychoses. They realise repressed and denied desire. In them the neglected dreams, the suppressed work of the night, manifests itself as superegoic vengeance." [op. cit. p.4]

It is indeed the denied unconscious dynamics of the institutional environment which man creates which act as containers for the displaced common psychoses of the contained membership. The divisions, norms, rules, processes, and structures of the institution reflect, as in a mirror, a collusional mapping of those deep intrapersonal defences used to manage the repressed psychotic anxieties of the inner world. An illusion of safe social space is generated within the institution. Demons lie beyond its boundaries, press through its cracks, threaten it at the point of change and emerge in terrifying ferocity in the corporate personalities of other institutions. When those others become armed nation-states whose defences are reified in fusion warhead, then the neurotic fears projected in dread call their own symbols into reality, so fixating and reifying the very fears whose displacement they contain.

Pelz raises the question:

"Now we must ask: Is dream work neurotic, because the dream is publicly, even privately, disavowed in everyday life, in our wakeful state? And is it possible that the neuroses of our wakeful existence are due to the disavowal of our dreams?". [op. cit. p.4]

Here, as in several other places within the paper, cause and effect are disastrously confused. When he uses the words 'because' and 'due to', then he is postulating a closed causal system. It is essential to look beyond both the suppression of dream-work in the wakeful state and

beyond the suppression of wake-work from the dreaming in order to see behind both presenting symptoms the underlying mechanisms of repression, splitting and denial, which are themselves the roots of the very neuroses here attributed to the interplay of neurotic effects. We must, however, affirm the important insight that both wake-work and dream-work are deeply affected by neurotic material, even though in our defence we deny the neuroses of waking life and suppress the reality-relatedness of our dreaming.

The fundamental question is then raised as to whether "thinking is a form of neurosis or psychosis inevitably and irretrievably" or whether "both thinking and dreaming are likely, even bound, to remain neurotic, only as long as night and day, thinking and dreaming, desire and reality, are kept separate, insulated from each other?". So many analysts over time have, perhaps in collusion with their social environment, perhaps in self-defence, affirmed the normative nature of the norm. Even if norm behaviour were neurotic or psychotic such neuroses or psychoses were deemed by definition not significant which is only a short step from assuming (nay asserting!) the non-neurotic nature of the norm. So in this position, the whole realm of psychoanalysis is seduced into the affirmation of social norms, into collusion stroking of the status quo, into the tautological identification of wholeness with normality. Pelz diverges sharply from this position.

"But it is possible, perhaps even probable, that the separation between dream and dream constituted a schized reality and a schizoid humanity, that we can heal the split only as we learn to let day and night become reconciled in us." [op. cit. p.5]

For Pelz the human is a "theaming" being whose mental activity is neurotically, even psychotically, but most certainly not inevitably nor irretrievably, split into thinking and dreaming. The vital questions of the origin of this splitting and the process of possible annealing are both tantalisingly left untackled. The originating cause is buried behind the author's "no matter why", while the how and the possibility of integration lie interred beneath his "we cannot know". From this point on his paper becomes tangential, a 'dance macabre' over the grave of hope.

"Now as the split between thinking and dreaming occurred and deepened - no matter for what 'reasons' - so did the split between what we were permitted to desire by day and what we were permitted to desire only at night and, gradually, not even then. Thus both our days and our nights became confused and disturbed. Neither in waking nor in sleeping did we really know any longer what we desired. So our dreams became allusive, delusive, self-contradictory, at times nightmarish - turning the objects of desire into the deepest threat to it. And can we honestly maintain that our waking reality is all that different? Is not our consumer society as allusive and delusive in relation to our desire as any dream? Is not our economic and military 'reality' as disdainful of and threatening to our desire as the best of nightmares?

"Would the reconciliation of dreaming and thinking alleviate the nightmares? Is it possible and how? We cannot know." [op. cit. p. 6]

We do not have to search far for the reason for the block. As the author asserts :

"... it may be useful to recognise that - at least by now - the split between dreaming and thinking, i.e. between night and day dreams, between what we may and may not desire, is structured into all institutions of society and into each individual psyche. Both our inner and outer reality is split, because desire is split, is turned against itself: 'my' desire against 'yours', 'ours' against 'theirs', what I may desire against what I must not, what I desire as man or woman against what I desire as citizen or careerist or soldier or bureaucrat". [op. cit. p.7]

Any breakthrough in the analysis of the origin of such splitting, any new achievement of integration would threaten every individual and every level of social system and institution at the depth of its inherent neurosis. Collusional pressures to block out any such insight, to inhibit any such progress are immense. Confusion and impotence alike arise at this juncture, as a displacement, an intuiting into the analytic process of the anxieties to be faced and raised, should the process be pursued. Only when social insanity itself becomes more threatening than facing its causal genesis can humanity tolerate breakthrough at this point. Perhaps now as never before do such conditions prevail.

Like a dog worrying at a bone, Pelz returns to the issue of the inevitability of splitting.

"Is such splitting the inevitable result of humans living together in society? Freud still saw it like this, because, oddly enough, even he still started from the individual, saw the individual as a starting point. So the problem how individual desire could come to terms with social necessity remained insoluble. But if we understand ourselves as quite fundamentally and altogether communal beings - children of parents, members of a tribe, culture, nation, carriers of history, speakers of the human language binding each to all willy-nilly, we may at least ask: Is it not possible that our desire of desire is to find, again and again, communion, that full communication, all-embracing community is the object of our desire?" [op. cit. p.7]

Here the author gets caught in an either/or, hung up between the individual and the social origin of the neurotic behaviour. If hell is other people, and human impingement originates in his social experience, if alienation emerges fundamentally from the economic, political and institutional world, then the intrapersonal splitting does indeed appear to be impotently inevitable. That this position is the foundation of Marxist analysis, leading to the seduction of revolution as offering the Utopian end of alienation, is today little ground of hope, for revolution is seen through as simply a reordering of the social context, a redistribution of the pains of hell. If, on the other hand, causality is seen as intrapersonal and the social as a displacement of the individual, then breakthrough would appear to be possible at the personal level. In practice, however, the "newly integrated person" is subjected to overpowering processes of matching from the social system, the environment of others, whose norms are now challenged. It is essential to recognise that the dynamics involve a combination of both intrapersonal and social, attention must be paid to both variables within the two dimensional field. The polarisation of one dimensional either/or is at this point a collusional expression of those very symptoms of polarisation and splitting, which are themselves under investigation.

Pelz postulates the deepest desire as that searching for at-one-ment, 'communion', 'full communication', 'all embracing community'. It is significant that he uses the words 'again and again' indicating that this process is one of perceived recovery of the lost, and precisely not a discovery of the new, so the archetypal myth of the fall raises its head once more.

Fascinating that religious and primal language coincide at this point... this point of being-at-one-with-the-environment in its all-embracing, supportiveness, this symbiosis of the womb-world, utterly and fundamentally lost in birth, this ground of being, this matrix of dreams, this goal of desire, this heaven of being distinctive individual and yet at one with the God in whom we live and move and have our being. Here Pelz hints that

“... we may have something to learn from 'primitives', from children, from remnants of primitivity in us, from our DREAMS!! There we may recognise a possible existence not as split as ours. We cannot return to it, but perhaps we can move forward towards it?”. [op. cit. p.7]

Pelz appears to be suggesting that humanity at its most primitive is least split. This is in sharp contra-distinction to those analysts who indicate that the most primitive levels of being are precisely those dominated by the "paranoid-schizoid" defences. In other words, that primitiveness and fraction walk hand in hand. There is, however, a possibility that such analysts have not probed sufficiently deep. That what is for them primitive, is in fact a later phenomenon of bifurcation, overlying an even more fundamental unified primal experience. If so, it is to the field of environmental relations within the womb-world that we must look for that common human experience of at-one-ment with the environment whose loss is universal. If idealisation and splitting does indeed normally onset with the trauma of birth, then many otherwise dislocated symbols fit together.

It is difficult to understand Pelz's distinction between returning to and moving forwards towards. The distinction, to make any sense, appears to require some sense of reversed time. If the most primitive is indeed behind us, deep in our intrauterine past then we cannot put the clock back and return whence we were hewn. But in what sense does our most primitive past lie before us, beckoning our advance? Perhaps this reversal in time only begins to make sense as we understand the defensive response to primal trauma as not only splitting, but also a backing off or mirroring away from the primal boundary, the crushing impingement of the birth channel, back in phantasy to the supportive safety of the prenatal womb-world. Such mirroring is only partial. Some psychic energy does pass through the birth canal and interact with positive time-trace in the world beyond. However, at an unconscious level, another part of being appears to be split off into negative time, retreating from the caesura as in flight from some ultimate catastrophe, acting as if sustained in some eternal womb, building forever defences against birth. For this part of humanity, the most primitive is indeed still future, for time reversed before the being was born. For that which consciously passed through the caesura, the womb-world was lost and is forever sought. For this part of humanity, therefore, the most primitive is past, its recall taboo, its re-entry prohibited by the whirling sword epitomising the repression of the primal trauma. While these defences stay in place, the foetal part, forever dreaming, remains unborn, cut off from the conscious part, which, struggling and working for its survival in the post natal world, remains forever in search of its other self, sensing its estrangement from the ground of being, in which the self unsplit enjoyed communion with the perceived infinity of its living environment.

If this diagnosis is accurate, then we also have here a clue as to the process of integration involving recall and cathartic abreaction of that primal impingement in which the post natal self grieves out its loss of the womb-world and the foetal self passes through constriction, so

leading to a more united being at peace in positive time and in touch with the post natal reality. Is not birth the fundamental split? and are not the many splits within society, its civilisations and its discontents displacement, reflection, reification and management of the defences associated with this fundamental caesura?

It would appear that this material is common to the core of metaphysics and ideology, as well as giving rise to the material which Carl Jung described as archetypal. At this point I wish to affirm with Pelz the understanding of archetypal or collective representation precisely as those phenomena of human experiences which "are mediated by universal and yet personal human experiences, like having been born of a mother, having to come to terms with father and sibling figures, having to learn how to contain uncontrollable rage and love ...". Yet significantly, Pelz places birth in the past, while other experiences are named in continuous present. This past-ness of birth is also a passivity. It represents as it were some kind of inert boundary to time and as such shows up with great clarity the lacuna in his own analysis. It is indeed a universal and yet personal human experience being born of a mother and yet that point represents the boundary of prenatal eternity, so how much more is it a universal and yet personal human experience to emerge into consciousness contained in utero? The roots of the unconscious, the deepest domains of dream, press far back beyond birth into this misty Eden of common humanity. Birth itself marks the division between foetal night and post natal day, daily recapitulated in the rhythm of darkness and light till death terminates the procession. Only integration across this caesura can lead to fundamental annealing in the splits of humanity.

"In as far as we split day from night, our reality will remain split: body from mind, self from self, individual from community, nature from supernature, death from life And in our individual dream work, always at second or third remove from the whatever on which our communal dream work has already been at work, we shall repeat - in the full Freudian sense of this word - the splitting." [op. cit. p.9]

With great perception Pelz identifies the splitting at the heart of Hegel.

"With Freudian hindsight we may see the Hegelian dialectic much more concretely as the split and opposition between night and day, conscious and unconscious, oppressor and oppressed, repression and the repressed. This split is reproduced and re-enacted on every level: of consciousness and unconsciousness, of the private and the public, of politics, economics, culture." [op. cit. p.9]

Tragically, however, the author does not make the direct connection from Hegel, through Feuerbach to Marx and the displacement of the split dialectic into the class struggle with its reification into the East/West armament, ideological bifurcation and the mutual paranoia of light and darkness which dominates the macro dynamics of today's world. So the changing institutions of history encode the evolving social dreams. The great rivers of culture, religion, ideology, politics, yes, and science, with their inter-associative matrix of symbol, myth, image and rite present a kind of hologram of humanity, an interference pattern generated from the interplay of dream and reality. So it is that :

"... we may look at history, which means at ourselves, as altogether historical beings, in a new light. For instance, we might look at it as humanity's case history. We might account for it in clinical rather than heroic terms. We might perceive our progress as

a succession of changing neurotic and psychotic, mainly schizophrenic and paranoiac symptoms and responses." [op. cit. p.10]

Once we have the humility and temerity to let go of the assertion that our normality is wholeness, then and only then may we perceive our history as case history, our presentation as open to intervention, our norms as ready for modification, humanity as no longer stagnant celebrating what is, but as on pilgrimage seeking to evolve from more to less neurotic in its social interaction within a real world.

At this point it is as if Werner Pelz meets a mirror. His focus is reflected back to an earlier point within the argument, returning in an eddy which focuses on the process of displacement in language, yet is itself precisely a displacement in language, a case history, a phenomenon, a presentation, a reversal in time, a flight in terror from the vista he has opened up, into the safety of linguistic faceting of familiar territory.

"We return to an aspect of thinking we have already touched on above to look at it from a more specific point of view: There is one fact in particular which we have never yet taken seriously enough, possibly because it threatens us with chaos. This is the fact - we shall have to come back to this word presently - that our thinking, just like our dreaming, is both the result of repression and suppression and oppression and the perpetuation of these three forms of pressure or impressment... Thinking inevitably involves condensation. Every word, phrase, or gesture, 'contains' multiple associations and intentions, whole medleys of conscious and unconscious intimations. Yet at the same time, each expression - another form of and response to pressure (e.g. impression) - is a condensation also in the sense of squeezing out what it does not intend or wish to 'contain'." [op. cit. p.11]

The final eight pages of the paper add little new to material already spelt out, although purporting to deal in greater depth with core issues. It is as if Pelz has taken refuge in repetition as in some kind of responsive liturgy, yet here also, and precisely at the point of departure, the onset of displacement, he presents case history, signifiers of the displacement. He is aware of something which has not yet received serious attention and yet it would appear he is himself unable to identify and give his serious attention to precisely that element. That which he singles out to represent this "fact" is precisely something to which he has given much attention in great depth and seriousness already, and to which his further writing adds little. It would seem that there may well be some deeper facet hiding behind this 'pseudo-fact' of which verbal displacement is itself a displacement, which in its turn cannot be identified precisely because "it threatens us with chaos", and therefore chaoticises our impressions. The next few lines are shot through with repetitive body language of intolerable constriction and pressure, rhythmic crushing beyond toleration. So the words which emerge in association with this displacement are "repression", "suppression", "oppression", "pressure", "impressment". Each and every one of these deep words indicates the compacting, pressurising, crushing containment of the point of parturition, the onset of chaos, from which symbolically Pelz retreats in reversed time and mirrored flight into the safety of the known structure of his previous material. This schizoid displacement of the point of chaoticisation of humanity is sublimated from the vulnerable experience into the distancing of words, seen themselves in terms of "expression" which he describes as "another form of and response to pressure (e.g. impression)". Yet this depth of being, displaced into meaning is recognised as condensation, described so evocatively as "the sense of squeezing out what it

does not intend or wish to contain". Is this perhaps the universal experience of birth? In the depth of every-man is that devastating experience of being squeezed out by an Eden which no longer wished to contain him, with his world split into the knowledge of good and evil, light and darkness, life and death. Significantly, Pelz notes : "this squeezing out process has two sides". Here in this fundamental primal impingement is the origin of splitting. Here is not the point of reversal in the mirror but the point of departure for tomorrow's agenda - the annealing and integration of humanity. It is that agenda which tragically appears to have been squeezed out of the chaoticised consciousness of Werner Pelz and yet it is to that agenda that his writing so creatively and brilliantly points.

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