

Dream Appreciation

Vol. 7 No. 2
Spring 2002

There is nothing like dreams to temper our grandiosity and expose the way we project our shortcomings onto others.

DREAMS AND EVIL

BY MONTAGUE ULLMAN, M.D.

Do our dreams have a role to play in stemming the rising tide of evil? Does the struggle have to go beyond political and diplomatic maneuvering? Is our dream life relevant to thwarting the threat of a conflagration far greater than all others that preceded it?

The answer depends on the answer to another question. Is the current level of diplomacy too self-serving to get at the root causes of the prevailing level of evil? At the moment, it's hard to say which will win out. Forces bent on destruction don't fight fairly. Can we move beyond palliative measures that only seem to result in newer and bigger problems? The ultimate question then becomes: Can the struggle for global unity be augmented from below?

There is something qualitatively different about the current conflict we are engaged in. In the past it

was sufficient for diplomacy and the military to handle matters. They are still necessary, but a whole new dimension has come into being. Like it or not, we are all enlisted as fighters in the struggle. We are up against an enemy that is both effective and hidden from us. To avoid further victimization than we have already experienced, we are going to have to discover what is hidden from us. That is precisely what our task is as individuals. To fight this war effectively, we have to understand the enemy within as well as without. Evil is like dormant cancer cells. When the conditions are ripe, it comes to life. Evil may not be quite the word for it. What I am referring to is the common, ordinary, everyday capacity to, on occasion, be abusive to others and to ourselves.

We are creatures that have significant unconscious determinants of our behav-

ior. We can better understand our antagonists if we better understand ourselves. Here is where dreams come into the picture. There is nothing like dreams to temper our grandiosity and expose the way we project our shortcomings onto others. What may be minor flaws in individuals, when writ large can lead into false and vulnerable ideologies.

There have been and still are societies that have integrated dream work into their culture. Industrial societies have marginalized dreams. Our dreams, when consciously pursued, are a kind of emotional connective tissue bonding us together as social animals. Although in a very small way dreams are making a comeback, we remain a dream deprived society. As a society we have no idea of the price we pay for this one-sidedness.

Let me review some of the features of the dreaming

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DREAMS AND EVIL

consciousness that warrant a more serious investment in our dream life and how that might fit into the struggle we have been drawn into against evil.

1. Our capacity to dream constitutes a natural healing system and serves us as any other bodily system does to maintain optimal functioning and to eliminate any interfering toxic input. It differs qualitatively from other systems in that its concern is with the management of our emotional potential and the vicissitudes that potential is subject to. Authenticity in the expression of feelings is not always easy. Love and anger are the ones most at risk in our society. Dependency can masquerade as love. Hate and hostility can masquerade as anger. Hate, for example, results in the wish — conscious or unconscious — for an actual destruction of the instigator. The goal of anger is primarily self-protection and only under extreme circumstances warrants the destruction of the other.

2. In their monitoring of problematic emotional areas, dreams serve a survival function for the individual and for the species. We are more in touch with what is real if we face the truth rather than deny or

suppress it. Dreams register deeper truths about ourselves than we allow to be manifest in our waking lives.

3. That truth-finding capacity arises out of an incorruptible core of being that registers deviations

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from the truth. Regardless of what games we play with the truth, that core comes to life in our dreams throughout our life.

4. The bonding capacity of the dream is a function of the language it uses. Awake discursive speech is suited to living in and communicating about a world of discrete objects experienced as external to ourselves. We also, however, have available to us the language of metaphor to convey a felt sense of connectedness to others and to the world around us. The poetic metaphor does it for us in our waking state. Metaphorical imagery does it for us asleep and dreaming. A remarkable and on-target ability to create original and meaningful images comes to life in the dream. I refer to

this as the metaphorical transform. It links poetry and dreaming together. It occurs effortlessly and spontaneously with the onset of a dream. The poet has to work at it.

There are many points of view about the nature

and appearance of evil in dreams. They range from the theological point of view where Satan is as likely to take over the dreams as God is, to the psychoanalytic depiction of the Id, as the container of the repressed, trying to break through the censorship of the ego. Although Freud's notion of the death instinct is no longer in fashion, there is still the tendency to consider aggressive drives at play in shaping the dream.

I have outlined my point of view about the nature of dreaming and would like to now briefly explore where, in the vast realm of evil, our dream life may have a place.

There are categories of evil. There is macro-evil defined by the wholesale destruction of human beings. It comes in two main

subcategories. The first is evil perpetrated for the glorification of the leader and/or the state. We have witnessed many examples in recent years. The Holocaust tops them all. In the second sub-category the evil is perpetrated in what is presumed to be in the interest of a higher good. I consider Hiroshima and Nagasaki as examples of this.

There are also two categories of micro-evil, one large scale but impersonal, the other personal. The general criteria that applies to both is the reduction of human beings to the role of objects available for exploitation. Destruction is not the goal since the object as object has value. The difference between the two sub-categories is the scale on which it is carried out.

The first is the social fall-out from corporate evil. The unbridled pursuit of corporate power can, as in the case of Enron, result in a level of greed that can, without warning, transform thousands of human beings into discarded objects. Political corruption can have the same effect. In Eisenhower's final speech before leaving office, he warned the nation about the growth and power of the military-industrial complex. We are witnessing an exponential increase in that

power at the present time in the war against terrorism.

The word "evil" is not generally applied to the second category of micro-evil. Abuse is a better term. It refers to the common garden variety of things we do to each other and to our children¹ that are hurtful to others as well as to ourselves. Very few if any people grow up perfect in this far from perfect world. Most of us carry about unfinished emotional baggage from our past that operates insidiously to hurt the other as well as ourselves. We are not always at our best in dealing with others. It is as if a magical scenario suddenly takes over. The other, as the cause of our pain, discomfort or annoyance, is instantaneously reduced to an object on which we can vent our spleen. (It then becomes a fight with the outcome hinging on who is the more powerful. The fight is at an object-to-object level. The price we pay is the loss of our common humanity. Fortunately, in most instances these situations are resolved when our better nature takes over. Unfortunately, our demons don't give up easily. Technically known as mechanisms of defense, such as denial, rationalization, projection, they hang in and undermine our own humanity and the humanity of others.

When they take over a situation, an object-to-object exchange comes into being. Elsewhere I have written²:

Narcissism has reference to the self-aggrandizement that accompanies the status-reduction of others. Passivity and dependency are descriptive of the techniques of fitting into the scheme of things by transformation of the self into an object capable of parasitic attachment to a powerful being. Withdrawal involves the unreal effort at removal of the self from corrupting influences. Compulsivity derives from the limiting stereotyped fashion in which object-to-object transactional behavior is forced to occur. The obsessional character highlights the ritualistic aspects of a fetishistic mode of life. The hysterical character highlights the denial involved. The phobic character calls attention to the vulnerability to exposure (to circumstances that threaten) a fetishistic existence.

The essence of dream work is to recognize and ultimately resolve this slippage from an I-Thou relationship to an I-It relationship. It is in this category of abuse that dream work could come into the picture. Only through a deeper and truer awareness of our emotional limitations can we come to terms with them and work to change them. That's what dreams

are all about, so why not make better use of them? It is this micro-level of abuse that ultimately adds up to recognizable evil.

At the end of a symposium on evil, the words of Harry A. Wilmer, one of the organizers of the symposium, offered the following thoughtful comment:

We can hope to find ways as individuals and groups to cope with evil as we see it in our lives and in the world. We can hope to bring the light into dark places, to bring hope where there is despair, to bring humor and songs where there is drab emptiness, to bring enlightenment into the shadows and to bring simple understanding into perplexities. We can hope to hear what we do not want to hear and to see what other see with an open heart,

to ponder together on awesome powers, and to think more clearly and more simply about this present, this now, this here, this moment. The challenge of obstacles, knowing good by evil and doing something about it — these are the stepping stones in life. Now we have begun our work here, which we will continue in the words of the medieval alchemist, Deo concedente.³

1 In the latest catalogue of a well-known academic publisher (Sage), 21 new titles appeared on child abuse and 14 on domestic violence.

2 Ullman, M. (1959), *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 429-435.

3 Wilmer, H.A. (1988), Afterword, in (Eds.) Paul Woodruff and Harry A. Wilmer, *Opern Court Publishing Co., LaSalle, Illinois*, (p. 248). ❖

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

A Leadership Training Workshop in group dream work will take place at Monte's home July 19-21. This experiential three-day workshop will cover the underlying premises and key principles on which Monte's group dream work is based. It will explore in depth the kinds of problems that occur at each stage of the process as well as the technique of leading a group.

Even if you have attended one of Monte's Leadership Workshops before, this can be a helpful way to "fine tune" the process.

DATE: July 19, 20, 21
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For information or to register call Monte Ullman at: (914) 693-0156.



DREAMWORKERS' CORNER

ANALYSIS VS. APPRECIATION

By ABRAHAM KUPERSMITH, Ph.D.

There came a time when I knew that I had enough Freudian analysis. For me, it had become an intellectual game whose rules made me feel like an outsider in the search of myself. The game was run by the analyst whose positioning and professional schooling gave him a stance of objectivity not available to me. I was the patient and, as such, I was not supposed to have a clear perspective on my own experience. I needed the doctor to help me separate conscious illusion from unconscious reality.

I realized that my therapist said that we were partners in the search for truth. However, I never felt that way. Maybe I have a jaded view of Freudian therapy, but I do not think so. I believe the principles of formal analysis constitute an ideology that sanctions the therapist's ability to read the unconscious of the patient more skilfully than the patient can.

There were all the trappings of a power relationship in my therapy. The doctor was to be called Doctor while I, who had a Ph.D., was called Mister. Believe me: I do not care

about titles; I do not use the title Doctor at all, but I resent the uneven use of titles in a relationship that claims to be a partnership. Despite his claims of a working partnership between us, my therapist saw himself as the medical expert and me as the neurotic patient. There were a number of elements that reflected this belief. One was the analyst's claim that he had an objective view of my unconscious motivations. The analyst is allowed by the rules of analysis to interpret the patient's unconscious. There can be no real sense of trust when one person has the right to interpret the unconscious intentions of another. There were other elements that reinforced the power relationship between patient and doctor.

The therapist worked from a set of definitions that allowed him to control the therapeutic conversation by reinforcing certain of my responses while dismissing others. This practice left me feeling like a student. The student-teacher relationship is structured by the belief that the teacher is aware of realities that the student does not under-

stand. This belief in analytic therapy is focused on the therapist's awareness of the patient's unconscious wishes. Thus, the therapist's awareness of a reality, the patient's unconscious wishes, is not a reality at all; it is a belief or hunch that the therapist has induced from the bits and pieces of the patient's experience. I do not see how medical expertise can support an interpretation of motives as objective.

In my own therapy, there were two examples of a therapist claiming objectivity for what I believe was at best a hunch or, at worst, a projection of some feeling of his. These examples illustrate how destructive a therapy based on interpretations of the unconscious can be.

The first happened towards the end of a session. I was on the couch talking when I noticed that my therapist had fallen asleep. At first I was upset, but over 30 years of teaching taught me about the fragility of the human attention span. When I mentioned that he had fallen asleep, he apologized. If that had been the end of it, I would not have had a problem

with the experience. However, during the next session, the therapist explained why he had fallen asleep. He had found the cause in my unconscious. As an act of resistance, I had an unconscious need to put him to sleep. For me, this was an example of how a therapist uses the unconscious as a weapon and how any interpretation of unconscious motivation was an act of aggression.

To explain one's behavior through motives that the individual is not aware of, the analyst claims a god-like power over the patient's process of self-understanding. This act gives the patient no firm pragmatic ground in which to build his understanding of his behavior. Assume for a moment that I was boring and, as a result, the therapist fell asleep. It would be unfair to conclude that it was my unconscious wish to put my therapist to sleep. How helpful it would have been if my therapist had better self-control and stayed awake. Then he might have pointed out that I was being boring. That would have given me a chance to examine my own behavior and decide if I agreed with

the interpretation. If I did, then I might have been able to question myself as the cause of that behavior.

It was clear that my therapist could interpret my unconscious motivation but I was not to interpret his. This is how the game is played and make no mistake about it: this is a power game.

Some time after that, another incident took place. While on the couch, I noticed that my wallet was not in my back pocket. I waited until the session ended to make sure about my perception. In fact, the wallet was not there and I was in a bad way. I was without money and I had to return home. Therefore, I asked the therapist for a loan of \$5. He seemed taken aback and told me that he would loan me the money but he had a problem: if he loaned me the money, my therapy would "suffer." I wondered if he really thought that I lost my wallet because of unconscious motives. I really needed the loan so I persisted. I did get the loan and I paid it back. I quit therapy soon afterwards.

One could say that these two examples were evidence of a clumsy use of Freudian psychology. However, that would be missing the point. It is this: any interpretation of unconscious motivations

puts the object of that interpretation in a position of weakness. The patient is unconscious of self-knowledge. The real issue, I believe, is how does the therapist help the patient to acquire that self-knowledge. The patient's behavior, spo-

named Chillingsworth becomes a doctor for another named Dimsdale. Granted, Chillingsworth finds information from Dimsdale's unconscious to use against him. However, it is the very act of spying on the unconscious that bothers

is enlarged to criminal. The repressed wishes of the patient's unconscious become the crimes which the detective-therapist exposes. It is worth noting that Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe developed the genre of the detective story around the same time Freud wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

In that work, Freud argues that the dream is simply evidence of the patient's repressed wishes. The dream disguises the facts of those wishes and the dream detective must make use of the clues of the dream to reveal the patient's crime, the anti-social or repressed information residing in the unconscious, by constructed images of the dream.

In Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Spellbound*, the images of analyst and detective are merged in the character played by Ingrid Bergman. She plays a psychiatrist who treats the character played by Gregory Peck. He has developed amnesia because of some traumatic event in his past, the crime. The Peck character believes he has committed a crime but he cannot remember what it was. This condition is analogous to the Freudian view of neurosis. In this view, the neurotic patient has hidden the real cause of the neurosis in the unconscious and is aware only of

The real issue, I believe, is how does the therapist help the patient to acquire that self-knowledge. The patient's behavior, spoken language, and dreams provide material that can lead to self-knowledge.

ken language, and dreams provide material that can lead to self-knowledge. However, when the therapist interprets the patient's unconscious, he or she is not helping the patient to gain self-knowledge. The therapist is practicing a kind of deductive magic. He believes himself capable of seeing forces invisible to the patient because they are hidden in the unconscious. These forces constitute a pattern than determines the patient's behavior. This is just too neat a formulation and, in my experience, this interpretation of my unconscious made me resentful. I felt spied upon instead of helped.

In the novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne identifies the reading of another's unconscious as a violation of the inner being of the other, a sin. One character

Hawthorne. For Hawthorne, there is a violation of the patient's humanity and leads to a loss of human connectedness. On one hand, Chillingsworth is a cold, detached detective who correctly deduces Dimsdale's crime from a rational exploration of the clues he finds in treating Dimsdale's psychological problems. In this sense, Chillingsworth represents, to my knowledge, the first joining of the image of the medical doctor with the image of detective.

The therapist-detective is the active expert who uses rational rules of detection to discover the hidden motives of the patient who repressed anti-social behavior in the unconscious. Thus, when the image of the therapist is enlarged to that of detective of the unconscious, the patient role

DREAM ANALYSIS VS. APPRECIATION

the symptoms created by the repression. For example, the Peck character is aware that he cannot remember. However, he has repressed being a witness to a murder and he unconsciously has assigned himself guilt for the murder.

Ingrid Bergman aids the Peck character in analyzing a dream which helps him recover the repressed information from the dream. At this point, she is therapist-detective solving a crime for Peck. Then he recognizes who the murderer is. In addition, she is a Freudian analyst assisting him in the identification of a crime buried in the unconscious. For the Peck character, the crime might have been his wish to murder the victim. This triggered the Peck character's guilt leading to the memory loss.

The psychiatrist played by Ingrid Bergman models the Freudian belief that the analyst is a detective using science to identify invisible causes of the patient's behavior. I believe that such a view is based on a view of the analyst-detective as a magician with the heroic powers of a benevolent mind reader.

Freud created a romantic hero in the role of the analyst, one close to a fictional detective who overcomes a world of irrationality with his or her own rational

powers. Freud hoped that the analyst armed with rational principles of psychoanalysis could identify unconscious motives. In my opinion, an analyst's

interpretation of unconscious motivation can never be a scientific act. A problem occurs when the therapist confuses science and art. As a projection, an interpretation of the unconscious is at best an intuition that may

be true or not. The patient should be the final judge of whether such a projection is helpful or not.

After I came to believe this, I could not tolerate analytic therapy anymore. When I told my therapist that I wanted to leave therapy, I was subjected to one final interpretation of my unconscious motivation. In his opinion, I was engaged in a self-destructive act, having the unconscious wish to defeat him by not allowing him to cure me. That was his last interpretation of my unconscious motivation.

Some time after I left analytic therapy, I found

Monte's dream group. The experience has taught me much. The dream group work is like a constant flowing river that provides me

with material that leads to acts of self-discovery.

This ongoing process has helped me because I am in control of my own process of growth. All acts of understanding result from my participation in experiencing my

own dreams or those of others. Either way, I am responsible for what I learn about myself. The process

is important because I am at the center of it. I do not have to accept the opinions of anyone else as truths underwritten by medical authority.

The dream group helps me see my dreams as works of art that need appreciation of an audience rather than analysis. The dreams are my creative responses to my own existential problems. They are messages from myself to me. They are solutions to problems that limit my freedom. It is the dream group process that helps me decode the dream metaphors carrying my unconscious dreaming response to my waking problems.

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**ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF DREAMS CONFERENCE
JUNE 15-19, 2002
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Dreams and Culture is the theme of ASD's 19th Annual Dream Conference. The diverse program of presentations, panels, experiential workshops and a dream-inspired art exhibit provide wonderful learning experiences for all dreamers. Continuing education credits are available

Dream Appreciation editor Wendy Pannier will present a workshop using Monte's group approach.

For more information please visit the ASD website as ASDreams.org. or call toll-free 1-866-DREAM12.

A CAT STORY — AND HOW IT RELATES TO DREAMS

The following piece is by a dentist friend of mine with an insightful and superb sense of humor. I first met Dr. Seymour Lefco when we were billeted in the same dormitory during our service overseas in 1944. He kept the rest of us, about a dozen other officers, in a state of perpetual laughter through his antics and commentary on life in the army.

After a lapse of about 20 years I happened to be in his hometown and looked him up. We have kept in touch ever since. What follows is his latest communiqué. I'm presenting it here because it casts literary light on the nature of our dream life. See if you, too, sense an analogy.

CHARLES (A CAT STORY) **By Seymour Lefco**

Charles is a 12-year old cat we inherited three months ago. Because he is asleep 90% of the time, I figure he has very low mileage on him and could turn out to be a fairly good used cat, except when he vexes me, which is practically all the time.

Charlie is our first cat – too soon for a cat versus dog debate but soon enough for me to admit that Charlie is smarter

than I. In less than a month Charlie has put me through Basic Training and now I know the real meaning of persistence and stubbornness.

Here are my preliminary findings: Dog re-

as a cat on his feet", he will startle you by pouncing on your chest as you doze. Moments later, just as suddenly, he will leave finding better things to do – such as jumping five feet high to a counter top from

ing psychiatrist (never for a moment revealing my deep insecurity or ambivalence toward Charlie), all to no avail. Listed here are more of his antics, each infuriating enough to make me want to kill him all nine times.

If you are looking for truth, you will find more of it in the dream than in your waking self. If you are looking for creativity you'll find it more in the dream.

mains "Man's Best Friend" certainly outperforming any biped, be he brother-in-law or canary. Dog does fetch, guard, hunt and pull a sled, if you happen to have one. Cat just isn't willing to earn his feed. Hovering between disdain and disgust, cat will somehow beguile you with a begrudging purr. Be on guard. Cat will come to you any time he feels like it. You will come to cat any time you can find him. You may start in any of six or seven dark closets or after a back-wrenching search under various beds and sofas, ending up shouting, "Here kitty, kitty, you miserable S.O.B.!" Much later he will emerge wondering, "What's all the noise about?"

Known to be "light

a standing position which, translated to you, is equivalent to you jumping over 25 feet in mid-air. He leaves you pondering your feeble condition.

With only the meager vocabulary of just two syllables, "Me" and "Ow", he covers all his worldly needs. You must figure it out. This usually starts with 20 questions, all beginning with "Do you want?" as he patiently comprehends your stupidity. When you do get it right and rush off to his urgent needs, he will often be distracted by an imaginary spot on the carpet or crouch to attack an improbable intruder.

In my quest to understand this exasperating creature, I have interrogated veterinarians, librarians, and even a cat-own-

1. He is able to spend a lifetime "in hiding" yet manages to be constantly under foot. I swear, one day before he is through, he will send me hurtling down a stairwell or out an open window.

2. He ignores me when I call – unless I happen to be holding a wounded bird or mouse in my hand.

3. He is smug. I just know he believes all this nonsense about his meow, whiskers and pajamas. Undoubtedly he is pleased and proud of the scandalous, amorous terminology he and his clan have added to our sexual lexicon.

4. He "knows me like a book", while I can't even remember his first name. Of late, I just shout, "Where's the dog?" I need answers. I need help!

Hush now! Not another word. His majesty has just wandered into the room, perhaps to grant an

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A CAT STORY — AND HOW IT RELATES TO DREAMS

audience. “Here kitty, come over here sweetheart.”

Postscript to Charlie:
Dear Charles:

We must talk. It is now three months since I have tried to scrutinize your inscrutable depth and wisdom. Did “Sweetheart” shock you as it did me?

Now it saddens me as I see you gazing endlessly out the window. We both know that you belong out there and are a prisoner here, “for your own good.”

Your patience, dignity, fastidiousness, and loyalty, to say nothing of your continued interest in world events, continue to

amaze me. I am learning from you each day. Stick in there old man and keep in touch.

Comment (MU): As I read the above it gradually dawned on me that Dr. Lefco has written a profoundly insightful tale of the essential differences between dreaming consciousness (the cat) and our waking ego. The cat is spontaneously and insistently true to its own nature, blithely ignoring the anthropomorphic expectations of its owner. In every move it make it is manifesting its own incorruptible core of being.

Dr. Lefco and the rest of us are trying to find our

way in the less than perfect world in which we find ourselves and where we are up against certain constraints that elicit expedient rather than authentic responses.

If you are looking for truth, you will find more of it in the dream than in your waking self. If you are

looking for creativity you'll find it more in the dream. (Art is a special form of creativity. All of us possess the natural creativity of our dreams that clearly depict feelings in need of surfacing.) Charles is in tune with himself and in charge of his life; are we?

Dream Appreciation is published quarterly for people interested in working with dreams and the group process developed by Dr. Montague Ullman.

Comments, suggestions, questions and letters are welcome. Contact the Editor, Wendy Pannier, by phone at (610) 925-0758, by fax at (610) 925-0759, or by writing 105 Taylor Lane, Kennett Square, PA 19348. Our e-mail address is dreams@kennett.net.

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