Some Relations Between Clinical and Transpersonal Approaches to Dreams

HARRY HUNT
Brock University, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada

The complex relations between clinical (more or less psychoanalytic) and "transpersonal" approaches to dreams can be clarified by the notion that there are natural varieties in dreaming experience and that these may suggest appropriate ways of using dreams. In other words we can use and/or interpret dreams with or against their own natural grain.

I'll start with the existential approach of Erik Craig and his colleagues (as exemplified in Psychotherapy for Freedom, a Spring, 1988 special issue of The Humanistic Psychologist). Its strength is its emphasis on dream experience as such—prior to any different dream forms or interpretive strategies. The dream exemplifies our mode of being-in-the-world, as oneself, with others, and ahead of ourselves in the curiously open dimension of lived time. For Heidegger there are two ways we can "face" within our being-in-the-world—although since each is complementary and implied by the other the present separation will have its artificialities. First we can locate a mode of everydayness, where our embeddedness in daily projects shields us from the openness of time, at the price of a forgetfulness of our sense of Being. Then there is the mode of openness, our potential to sense being-as-such. Heidegger implies that such "being experiences" are the spontaneous core of mystical experience. They confer a powerful sense of presencing—a feeling of "being real."

Already we can see that Deirdre Barrett's approach to dreams, based on Freud's views of disguise and repression, is dreaming within the mode of everydayness and that Jayne Gackenbach's descriptions of the immediate subjective power of lucid dreams mark them as potential experiences of being in Heidegger's sense (Barrett, 1989; Gackenbach, 1989).

Following Craig, each of these ways of facing might be said to have its own "constraints" and its own specific "potentialities"—which indeed may help to understand how the attitudes of everydayness and transcendence are ultimately complementary and necessary to each other (Craig, 1989). I mean this in Kierkegaard's sense, where the despair of finitude is the lack of infinity and the despair of infinity is lack of finitude. The psychoanalysts Kohut and Winnicott distinguish between two forms of conflict which would show the negative or constrained side of each of these "ways of facing"—and which more generally show more than an analogy with Hartmann's distinction between thick and thin boundaries (Hartmann, 1984). Thus,

Freud's unconscious and repression point to the mode of conflict within the heart of everydayness, where we defend ourselves against the dilemmas of love and work. Narcissistic dilemmas and self pathologies would correspondingly appear as the conflicted side of what D.W. Winnicott termed the "dimension of being," where grandiosity, idealization, and withdrawal block a potential for feeling real, alive, and present.

We can illustrate this dialectic through a brief look at the actual dreams of Freud and Jung, where very different methods of using the dream are a natural outcome of the kind of dreams each had. Freud's own dreams are clouded, fragmented, and vague, with numerous sudden changes in scene. No wonder he used free association to further deconstruct what was already in process of dissolving into a complex of everyday memories, hopes, and fears. Consider his dream of old Brucke. He dreams that his first physiology teacher has set him the task of dissecting his own pelvis. He sees it eviscerated, fishes out bits of tinfoil (that later in his free associations remind him of his early study of the nervous system of fish). His friend Louise N. helps him (later he is reminded of her challenge to him to produce his own book). Abruptly he finds himself in a cab being driven into a house and out again. Then he is being carried by a guide into mountains, where he sees Indians (later re-minding him of Rider Haggard's She, which he loaned to Louise N.). Finally, there is a house on the other side of a chasm and he realizes he is supposed to cross over to it on the bodies of children (Freud, 1900).

Freud's free associations take him, as ever, into his intensely political world of scientific recognition, reputation, and would-be fame. He largely ignores what later psychoanalysts like Richard Jones and dreamworkers like Delaney or Ullman would see as the dream's positive potential for emergent metaphors expressing on-going life issues, beyond issues of disguise, showing the dream's inherent possibilities of disclosure. Here we can see self dissection as a marvelous metaphor for the rigors and limitations of Freud's self analysis (which he mentions), and the bodies of children as the text of psychoanalytic discourse—or Craig's treatment of Freud's Irma dream as a poetic depiction of his later concepts of transference and resistance (Craig, 1988). There is even less hint in Freud of that dimension of dreaming filled out by Jungians and lucid dreamers, where we find an openness to an immediate sense of totality and wholeness. Although we could follow Grinstein's approach to Freud's dreams (Grinstein, 1980) and (in Freud's associations only) find some distant allu-sion to his identification with Moses or even see some hint within this dream of his later preoccupation with narcissism and thanatos, as precursors of notions of self pathology.

Jung's dreams are as coherent and subjectively powerful as Freud's are frag-mented

and allusive. We find vivid detail, numinosity and ineffably significant encounters. No wonder Jung stayed with and amplified dreams already so full of felt significance and portent—although this approach may be ultimately as one-sided as Freud's transpersonal blind spot.

Consider Jung's dream of being with his deceased father in the court of Sultan Akbar the Great, in a vast hall shaped like a geometric mandala pattern—Jung's symbol of wholeness of self. His father indicates the room above, where lives the "highest presence," Uriah, the Hebrew general betrayed by David. Jung tries to bow his head to the floor, along with his father, but he can't quite manage it (Jung, 1961).

For Jung this dream has a directly given archetypal or transpersonal significance. It also anticipates, he says, his later Answer to Job, where he discusses how a creature can surpass its creator by virtue of the capacity to doubt. Jung totally ignores what leaps out if one knows anything of his life—his potential guilt over his relation with his father and later with Freud, as the betrayed Hebrew general. In-deed, Winnicott suggests that a mark of those persons where the dilemma of being and feeling real predominates is failure to experience or recognize guilt.

It is within these very different modes of dreamt being-in-the-world that we can locate Barrett's and Gackenbach's recent research.

Clearly, each form or dimension of dreaming would have its own characteristic constraints and potentialities for genuine development. Barrett concentrates on the constrained end of ordinary normative dreaming, with its clouding, confusion and hallucinatory intrusions. She manages to locate experimentally the defensive constellation at the core of Freud's theory of dreaming. One of her measures of repression correlates with low dream recall and shorter length. What needs defending against here becomes clear if we follow Van de Castle and Hall on the typical "Oedipal" structure of dreams—negative relationships with members of the same sex, positive with the opposite sex, and for male dreamers considerable aggression from older men (Hall & Van de Castle, 1966). It is interesting that Barrett reports higher sexual and aggressive content from the dreams of high repressors—typically initiated by the dream others. Craig might see this as part of the thrownness or facticity of the everyday mode. (Certainly it is also of interest that Hall found an inverse or negative Oedipal pattern in Freud's dreams, perhaps hinting at the later necessity of developing a model of narcissism and the barriers Freud would face in that attempt. Meanwhile, the dreams of Jung show the more typical Oedipal configuration that he may not have faced as fully as his more personally compelling path of individuation).

There is of course a positive, expressive pole of "dreamt everydayness," where

defensiveness is minimal and dreamworkers look for creative metaphoric insights into specific dilemmas. Here we might find, in Barrett's terms, those subjects with higher manifest anxiety and capacity to tolerate imaginative absorption, at least in some contexts.

The dimension anchored by Barrett's research is very different from the form of dreaming studied by Gackenbach, where lucid dreaming is a subjective "empowerment" directly conveying a sense of openness and feeling real. Here an experiential impact predominates over specific personal insights to be gained from the dream.

Gackenbach concentrates first on the positive potentialities of this dimension—its own "freedom." She places lucid dreaming in the context of meditation, in terms of cognitive psychology, physiology, and phenomenology. We see the same development in lucid dreaming and meditation of a contemplative, receptive attitude and the same vividness and sense of immediacy that Heidegger called "presencing" and Maslow termed "peak experience" or "being experience." Gackenbach has also located the cognitive factors associated with lucid dreaming—imaginative absorption, vivid imagery, visual-spatial skills, and physical balance. I found the same measures associated with subjects who dream in an archetypal form and, indeed, the same nonverbal visual-spatial skills predict responsiveness to meditative techniques and proclivity to spontaneous mystical experience. These states, dreaming and awake, seem to entail a symbolic intelligence that falls outside the linguistic construction of everyday social existence (Hunt, 1989). And for Heidegger our most direct expressions of sense of Being-as-such are "presentational," not representational.

However, Gackenbach also calls our attention to some unintended consequences of an exclusive absorption with lucid dreaming that involve much of what Kohut and Winnicott term self pathology and narcissism. Indeed, we can start to see a parallel between miscarriages of lucid dreaming and the self dilemmas that can constrain long term meditative practice. Engler has shown how grandiosity, lack of a sense of self, and/or withdrawal can be mistaken by some for the goals of med-itation, while Wilber has suggested that the experience of the numinous—with its fascination and power—can actually create similar narcissistic vulnerabilities (Engler, 1984; Wilber, 1984).

Gackenbach shows how lucid dreaming can miscarry in these same ways. Thus we find the potential sense of openness and releasement that can come with lucidity instead deflected into inflation and grandiosity. Craig has located something like this in the over-emphasis in some lucidity research on control, perhaps demonstrat-ing the inability of such researchers to accept the thrownness and limitation inherent in any developmental path. In addition some experienced lucid dreamers begin to report panic attacks and grotesque nightmares, as the dread denied by defensive idealization

and grandiosity breaks through—not despite, but because of exagger-ated efforts at control. Finally, preoccupation with the "powers" of lucidity—what Kastrinidis in Psychotherapy for Freedom in another context calls the premature "being one" with beauty and wholeness—can be associated with a narcissistic flight from the real complexities of everydayness, masking despair and futility.

Conclusions

We can locate from the present perspective two dimensions of dreaming and methods of using them—a dimension exemplifying pragmatic relating and doing, and a dimension of openness to Being. Each would have its own developmental stages and forms of relative constraint and pathology or fullest expression and realization. Dreaming, like much of living, would be a developmental dialectic across these dimensions.

Freud's own dreams and Barrett's research show the first dimension, Jung's own dreams and the research of Gackenbach and myself show the second. With regard to Freud and Jung the blind spot of one is the special strength and open possibility of the other. Jung misses the dilemmas of love and work that pervade Freud's dreams and dream interpretations, Freud misses the possibility of an open self-validating dimension that intuits wholeness and Being.

With respect to dreaming in both the therapeutic and transpersonal traditions, dreams will be encountered which in their disorganization, confusion and brevity ask to have their defensiveness and disguise undone. At the other extreme of this dimension there will be dreams whose direct presentation of creative metaphors in the manifest dream offer new insights into specific life issues. There is another dimension of dreaming where we find "self-state" expressions of narcissistic dilemma—whether in terms of overly rigid idealizations and illusory perfections or persecutory and grotesque horrors. Here dreams split apart the fusion of uncanny dread and open releasement in Heidegger's version of "Being-experiences." At the other extreme from dreams thus caught in narcissism, there are those spontaneous dreams—often lucid—where a "calm abiding," receptivity, and resulting sense of energy and clarity become temporary approximations to the goals of the Eastern meditative traditions. Of course, the same dream may shift across these forms of expression.

Finally, at times reports of no dreaming will reflect that dimension whose pole is anchored in Freud's repression. On other occasions, it will not be a lack of recall of probably existent dreams, but an actual inability to stand the tension and dilemma in sense of self involved in having any dream experience at all—leading to those blank and stuporous states in place of REM dreams that would be the true opposite of lucid

dreaming, just as they are the ultimate failure of meditative practice.

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