



Mandala Consulting's Jung Pages
by Anthony Wilson

THE DREAM: ITS IMPORTANCE IN ANALYSIS

In the opening remarks of *Dream Analysis*, Carl Jung said, *Dream analysis is the central problem of the analytical treatment, because it is the most important technical means of opening up an avenue to the unconscious. The main object of this treatment, as you know, is to get at the message of the unconscious.* [1] The process of Jungian analysis is to bring hitherto unconscious parts of the personality to light and subject them to conscious discrimination and criticism. This is a process, which as Jung said, requires the patient to face his problems and one which taxes his powers of conscious judgment and decision. *It is nothing less than a direct challenge to his ethical sense, a call to arms that must be answered by the whole personality.* [2]

In his earlier research into the Association Method, which he had undertaken at the Burghölzli Clinic in Zurich under the direction of Eugen Bleuler in his first job after qualifying, Jung had used the Association Method as a way to detect and analyze complexes [3]. However, he later gave up probing for complexes by using the Association Test, preferring instead to use dream analysis. [4] For Jung, dreams were *the direct expression of unconscious psychic activity* [5]. He also said, *Our dreams are most peculiarly independent of our consciousness and exceedingly valuable because they cannot cheat.* [6]

Earlier generations took more notice of dreams than we do today. Elihu tells Job that God speaks by dreams or visions in the night [7]. Jung talks of how many races speak of the "big" dream, which leaders have, and its importance for the people they lead, and "little" dream which everybody has. This natural wisdom corresponds to the archetypal dream and the personal dream. Today any of us can have archetypal dreams, but they are rare. Archetypal dreams have significance for everyone, they are of universal import. Mostly our dreams are personal. *We dream our questions, our difficulties.* [8]

The Unconscious

The Unconscious manifests itself in a number of ways, symbol making, projection or, sometimes, fate. Jung chillingly reminded us that the Unconscious psyche has a thousand ways to end a meaningless life. In my youth a wise man once told me, that he very rarely suffered from the common cold, because he was very busy and he did not have time to have an illness. His life had meaning and purpose and he didn't want it to be interrupted by a cold. So it wasn't. Napoleon is supposed to have said, *There is no such thing as an accident; it is fate.* Jung himself said, *The psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside, as fate. That is to say, when the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner opposite, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposing halves.* [9] If we remain unaware of our Shadow, it will be manifested in the world. The corollary of this is that if we can face and hold the tension of our own contrariness we contribute to world peace (something every Miss World wannabe is passionate about.)

To dismiss the Unconscious as unimportant or irrelevant or to treat it as so much detritus is to run the great danger of being dominated by it. As Jung said, we need to try to get at its message. Only then can it be taken into account. The message of the unconscious should not necessarily be followed willy-nilly. It needs to be mediated by the Conscious. That is why we have an Ego. For example, our Shadows which form part of the Unconscious psyche contain not only the repressed and the untried, the undeveloped and unfamiliar, but also pure evil. In each of us there lurks a potential mass-murderer. Whatever the most evil thing we can think of is, we are capable of it. It's not something reserved for other people. Someone, I forget who, in Ireland commented on this potential in a roundabout and witty way when they wrote, *"He became a Saint, through lack of opportunity."* The bad guy is always, as the old Pee Wee Hunt song goes, *"Somebody Else, Not Me."*

Joseph Wheelwright, (a venerable Analyst who operationalized Jung's concept of Psychological Type as the Gray-Wheelwright Jungian Type Survey [10]) said that each morning in the 1930s the American public exercised Shadow projection as they read of the latest crimes and gangster slayings. They tut-tutted and were horrified as they white-washed their consciences. It's so handy to have such convenient people to project one's shadow onto. It's interesting to note that

the same nation was able to project its collective Shadow onto the Nazis, the Japanese, the North Koreans, the Chinese and North Vietnamese, then, in the Cold War, the Soviet Union, or “Evil Empire” as Ronald Regan called it. When the Soviet Union collapsed in on itself in the late 1980s, suddenly there was no one to project the collective Shadow onto. So the Los Angeles riots occurred as America turned in on itself. But soon, along came Saddam Hussein to fill the vacant role.

But let’s not fall into the trap of feeling smug and thinking ourselves superior. We all have our personal Shadows. Every nation, every people and race has its collective Shadows. Since our Shadows are so unacceptable to us, we tend to project them onto others rather than face them. *The faults we see first in others are the faults that are our own.* [11]

One could speculate how history might have been different had a critical mass of people around the world sought to come to grips with facing their personal Shadows. In coming to terms with them, they might not have needed to project them onto others. I believe that if people respected their dreams, and thus their Unconscious Psyche, we could begin to live in a better world.

Jung tells us that our dreams are *a spontaneous self-portrayal, in symbolic, form, of the actual situation in the Unconscious* [12]. Our dreams are up to date. They take into account all that the dreamer has experienced up to that point. The Psyche forgets nothing. Memories, even prenatal and perinatal ones, may not be accessible to us right now, but they are there, somewhere. We carry somewhere within us, the textures, sounds, sights, emotions, thoughts, tastes and smells of our childhoods. Some of this, we might say, is better forgotten. Some recollections might harm us. We have learned lock them away for our own protection. Two things are important here. We need sufficient Ego strength to face our Unconscious psyche and our dreams as we work through them consciously. However, our dreams only seem to give us what we can handle. As horrific, distasteful or distressing as our dreams may be, facing them and searching for their meaning is a challenge that we can meet.

There is no doubt that it takes courage to face your own Shadow. That we need to do it is beyond question. Whether we can “take it” is not always clear at first. Jung reminds us that *...everyone carries a Shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continually subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected, and is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness. At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions.* [13]

I give an example of this from my own life. I have not shared to others before now, although I had written it in my journal and spoken of it extensively in sessions with my therapist. The affect surrounding it has sufficiently cooled now and I can share it. However, to recall it now saddens me and leaves me feeling I ought to have known better.

On the weekend when I decided to tell my first wife that I was going to leave her in a few days, we were working together facilitating an Organization Development intervention for one of our major clients, the management of a global group of private hospitals. This was something we’d done many times before. When cofacilitating this type of event, teamwork, sequencing and timing is everything. The consultants must work together. Things need to flow and gel, messages need to be heard, clues need to be picked up. The cofacilitators must be sensitive to each other and almost be able to keep contact telepathically. It is unprofessional complicates matters if there is something “going on” between the facilitators.

I kept getting the order of things muddled, leaving my ex-wife perplexed and not knowing where I was going or what I might do next. I would steal her “parts.”

She spoke about this in the break and I apologized and promised not to do it again. When we resumed, try as I would, I could not get it right, I’d wander off the “script” in response to what was said, and ad lib, or introduce something that ought to have come much later in the intervention when more evidence was gathered. However, it seemed to me that the participants in some way approved of what I did and were “on my side”. It seemed to be a conspiracy between me and them to make my cofacilitator look the fool.

Over lunch I could keep it in now longer and told her of my decision to leave her.

Perhaps it was my Unconscious was anticipating what I was about to announce to her. When I told her I was going to leave her it would also make her “perplexed and not knowing what to do next.” Perhaps it was simply aggression, the nasty part of me that wanted her to suffer. Or perhaps I was picking a fight.

Had I taken more note of my dreams at that time, I might not have acted so unconsciously. I should add that my recollection of the event lacks specific details. It seemed a haze then and is even more so now. I can only assume it was what Jung called an “unconscious snag.”

When dreams occur

In a sense we dream all the time. Even as I write this and as you read it, we are both dreaming. Unconscious activity doesn't stop just because we are awake. The stars do not disappear during the day, neither do our dreams. The brightness of the sun stops us from seeing the stars and the overpowering presence of our consciousness prevents us from perceiving our dreams. Dreaming does not stop because of our wakefulness. When we sleep we dim the conscious light and sometimes, if we catch them at the right moment, we can experience and recall parts of our dreams.

If you say you never dream, you are wrong. You don't remember your dreams perhaps. A former colleague used to say that vitamin B deficiency could cause people not to remember their dreams. Some medications, sleeping draughts and an excess of alcohol seem to have similar effects. Dreaming occurs during REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. You go through several phases of REM sleep each night and it adds up to around a quarter of your sleep. If you were to be woken during a REM phase you would most likely be able to recall your dream. We dream in phases through the night, so if you say you never dream, a trick you might try is to set your alarm half an hour or so earlier. You may be lucky and catch a REM period.

Dream Analysis: recording your dream

The first step in dream analysis is to capture this highly evanescent form. It is essential to keep pen and paper by your bedside. If you wake in the night with a dream in your head write it there and then before it evaporates. In the morning, don't put a foot out of bed until you write your dream. If you get up and begin your daily tasks, your dream will start to fade. I have found that it is not too difficult for me to write in the dark. That way I don't need to switch on the light. I can drop back to sleep, more easily because I don't wake fully. Occasionally, when I read my writing in the morning, I cannot decipher a word or two. This is often a key word like a noun, verb or adjective, so I cannot be sure what I dreamed. Even by morning, in wakefulness, the dream will have faded and my nighttime notes become even more important. Such illegibility is surely a parapraxis? An unconscious slip or *fehleistung* as Freud originally called it.

Sometimes when you read what you have written in the night over your morning cup of tea, you can remember none or little of it. It sounds like someone else's experience, not your own.

A woman I knew took her dreams very seriously. She had recorded and analyzed her dreams over a long period of time. She used to wake several times a night and write her dreams. Then, for an experiment, she tried keeping a Dictaphone by her bedside and speaking her dreams into it. She also wrote them in the night and wrote them once more in the morning. Interestingly there were differences between the transcribed dictation and the first and second writings. This might be an interesting topic for research. One might argue that as she became more conscious she "forgot" her dream. Freud was of the opinion that there was a "dream censor" that somehow made the content of the dream more palatable to the conscious mind. This woman's experience would seem to support that view. Since dreams describe *the inner situation of the dreamer, but the conscious mind denies [their] truth and reality, or admits it only grudgingly, it would seem natural enough for the Ego to tailor the recording of the dream to make it more acceptable. This would be part of resistance.*

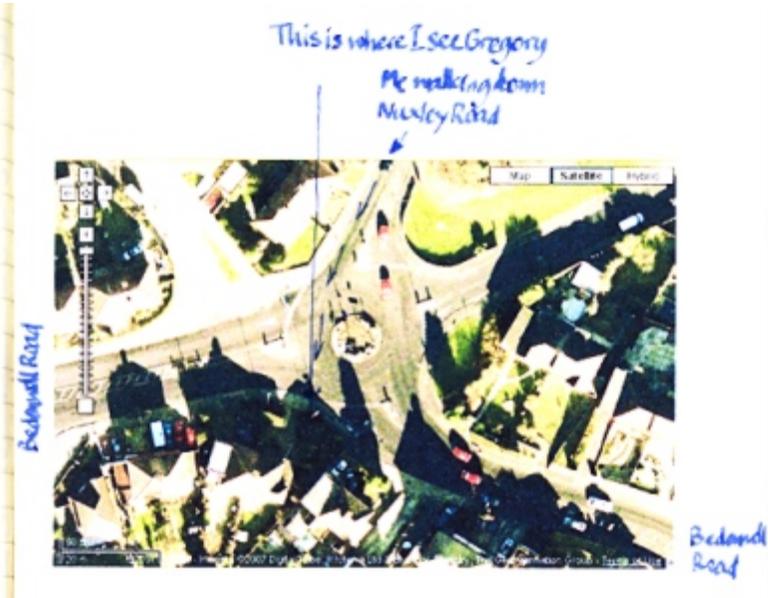
It is very worthwhile trying to recall and write down your dream with as much detail as possible. Use your nighttime scribble or your morning notes to help you. Try to do it as soon as you can after waking. If you truly want to record your dreams well you may need to allow an hour or so.

We tend to dream in images. Try to describe those images as fully as possible. Better still, draw or paint them as accurately as you are able. Even if you go no further than this, to write and try to represent the images, however imprecisely, however distorted by your imagination and skills in capturing the image, you will have experienced some of the healing power of the dream. The symbols of the dream, even without us understanding them, seem to be something we need.

The dream seems to be trying to offer something to balance the conscious attitude. It seems to be offering assimilation. We are all aware that it is often wise to "sleep on it" when making a decision or sending a communication if we are in an agitated mood. In the morning light things seem different. Perhaps it was an unremembered dream that made that difference. We are wiser than we know.

Your dreams are not a trivial part of yourself, so do not record them in a trivial manner. Many of us, these days, are unused to handwriting. We use computer keyboards or cellphone buttons more than pens and pencils. I used to log my dreams on my computer's harddrive, but in the last few years I decided my Unconscious psyche deserved better. I bought myself quality a Moleskine journal, a calligraphy pen and a bottle of blue ink and I now make the effort to write them as neatly as I can. I draw and paste images in these notebooks too. The physical act of writing pays honour to my dreams.

Recently several dreams have featured precise locations. I decided to use Google Maps to get satellite pictures of these. For example, in the dream below I have drawn arrows to show where I walked. In my dream I did not see the topography from the same angle as the satellite, but I have used it to record where I walked and the position of the person I saw. The place is on the outskirts of London.



In another dream record I pasted a reproduction of Rembrandt van Rijn's *Belshazzar's Feast* which was which I associated with an element of the dream. I yet another I tried to represent the shape of the square with a mandorla at 45° to each corner.

Time and energy spent making as full and as accurate a record of the dream is well spent, especially if some parts make you feel tacky or embarrassed and you'd rather gloss over them. They are the very bits you must capture and record as comprehensively and accurately as possible. The dream is a theatre and you, the dreamer, are the scene, the actors, the prompter, the producer, the author, the audience and the critic [15], so every part is important. You are the feeling and tone of the dream, you are the landscape, the weather, the events, everything. So record your emotions in the dream, and record the emotions of others. If the colours in your dream are bright and vivid, make a note of that. Maybe try to reproduce them. If there was music in your dream and you can write musical notation, record that music. In other words, try to capture everything in your dream.

Only then will you be able to move to the next step – Associations, which will be the subject of the next article in the series.

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[1] C G Jung, *The Seminars, volume one Dream Analysis: notes of the seminar given in 1928-30*, edited by William McGuire, Lecture I, 7 November, 1928. Page 3. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Melbourne and Henley

[2] *Op. cit.* para 315

[3] *The Association Method* CW2

[4] Partly as a result of his work in perfecting the Association Method, Jung went on to publish in 1907, *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox*. (CW3, "Dementia Praecox" is the old term for schizophrenia). His views on the aetiology of schizophrenia caused a divergence with Bleuler.

[5] *The Practical Use of Dream Analysis* CW16, para 295

[6] *Op.cit.* page 4

[7] Job 33, 15

[8] *Dream Analysis* page 3

[9] *Christ, a symbol of the Self* CW9(ii), para 126

[10] See for example Wheelwright, J B and Buehler, J A (1964) *The Gray-Wheelwright Test Manual*, Society of Jungian Analysts of Northern California, San Francisco, or Woehlke, P L, and Piper, R B (1980) *Factorial Validity of the Jungian Type Survey Educational and Psychological Measurement*

[11] *I found this quotation attributed to Honoré de Balzac, but I can't locate the reference.*

[12] *CW8, para 505*

[13] *CW 11, para 131*

[14] *The Practical Use of Dreams CW16, para 304*

[15] *General Aspects of Dream Psychology CW8, para 509*