

Dreams and The Horizon of the Unknown

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Introduction

The capacity to dwell with uncertainty—the Horizon of the Unknown—is the essence of the analytic attitude. The evolution of dreams and symbols, and the paradoxical vitality that can stem from encountering the Unknown, is at the core of clinical work.

The Mexican poet Octavio Paz wrote a poem entitled “Hermandad,” or “Brotherhood”:

*Soy hombre: duro poco
y es enorme la noche.
Pero miro hacia arriba:
las estrellas escriben.
Sin entender comprendo:
también soy escritura
y en este mismo instante
alguien me deletrea.*

English translation:

*I am a man: I don't last long
and the night is enormous.
But I look up:
the stars write.
Unknowing, I understand:
I too am written,
and at this very moment
someone spells me out.*

Paz's beautiful poem conveys a sense of finitude, of death and what I

call the Horizon of the Unknown. In the end there is a hint of an emerging pattern amidst the chaos. Dreams emerge from the Unknown in a similar way. Something from our deepest subjective core often seems to “spell us out.”

Ordinarily we live in a level of reality resembling what Freud called the manifest dream. However, poetry, myth, art, and dreams make other dimensions of Being partly visible to us. They are windows into a deeper substrate of existence. James Grotstein (2000, p. 127) calls this deeper layer the “ineffable subject.”

We usually focus on everyday needs and avoid situations that might jostle things around and make us more anxious. If something breaches our focused control, we tend to become uncomfortable. When we leave the bounds of the familiar, there is a gap in our experience. What seemed contained and familiar now seems to a greater or lesser degree uncertain and unknown. This often creates anxiety, dread, and terror. However, it is amidst such mental turbulence that the imperceptible comes into sight, often bringing with it a renewed sense of aliveness (Rhode 1998, p. 43).

The Horizon of the Unknown

“Horizon” is an old philosophical term I borrowed from phenomenology. A horizon is the boundary of that part of the earth's surface visible from a given viewpoint: the line at which earth and sky appear to meet. There we greet dawn or sunset. The Horizon of the Unknown is a space of psychic percep-

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tion where meaning becomes visible, and may be received; where the invisible articulates into the visible world, like stars emerging in the night. To know it requires a perceptual openness resembling a mother's receptive reverie with her infant.

From another perspective the Unknown is something like the Kantian "thing-in-itself" that can never be known. Paradoxically, it is also the ground of our aliveness. This concept is related to the Jungian Self (big S) or uroboros, to what Bion called "O," and what Grotstein has named "the ineffable subject." Dwelling with the Unknown also produces or provokes surging movements of affective life. This may be overwhelming, but can also keep the flow of life more open. The Unknown may have a sort of cleansing effect that rescues us from a deadly literalness, and enhances the capacity to use symbolic thought (Eigen 1996, p. 45ff.). Keats used the expression "negative capability," by which he meant "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, [and] doubts, without an irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Symington, 1997, p. 169). Freed of the strictures of the literal, truth and insight may be unveiled, and inner space can expand.

Answer to Job is my favorite of Jung's writings, one that by itself would justify his creative life.¹ With passion, he brought together the deepest problems of psychology, ethics, and a kind of metaphysics. Most of his other works show the orderly patterns of symbolic development and the emotions of the human subject are present only by implication. *Answer to Job* is about the darkness of God - the encounter with the vast moral ambigui-

ty of the Unknown and how this affects the individual human being. It provides what many of the *Collected Works* only imply, that which is mostly present only between the lines.

If God is partly unconscious and partly in darkness, where does that leave us? If we sometimes experience God as entirely capricious and arbitrary, what are the implications? This reaches to the heart of the analytic task, as we meet each individual in his or her encounter with the Unknown. We experience these questions in the terrifying large and small lacunae we see in the fabric of experience, epitomized by the "black hole" phenomenon that I will discuss later.

Jung's genius was in mapping the symbolic processes of the psyche. He held that there was an ordering factor in the psyche that he called the Self. This was expressed through and by archetypal patterns. He showed that there were spiritual and meaning-seeking tendencies deep at the core of psychological life. On the other hand, much of Jung's work, though empirical in its way, deals minimally with the human contexts of symbolic experiences and their actual effects on individuals' lives. In addition, affective life is referred to in theory, but seldom described.

My present view is that human symbolic creations are noble attempts to bring containment and meaning to this encounter with the Unknown. I no longer use the term archetype very much because it does not add to my understanding. One could view archetypes as the myriad filters developed by the human race to contain the terror of the Unknown, and as symbolic translators of the potent emotions thereby engendered.

My Personal Journey

During my first analysis, I once became upset because I had no dreams to report. At that time, in the early 1960's, the Jungian analysts that I knew relied heavily on dreams and seemed relatively less concerned with everyday life. I had a strong positive transference and had generally produced lots of dreams. I don't know why my dream memories vanished. At that time, Jungians were very strong on the symbolic and mythic but generally dealt very little with the transference. I had gotten a great deal out of my analysis, but maybe I wanted to talk more about the everyday.

My analyst was very inventive. He smiled at me and said, "Well maybe we could just treat your whole life as a dream!" I laughed a little, probably a bit uneasily. However, the thought stuck with me and opened a new perspective with implications that I didn't consciously appreciate at the time. I can see now that it challenged my sense of control and shifted my basic way of seeing. There was an increased spaciousness in my thought and awareness, and the analysis took on a renewed life.

I still consider dreams very important, but indeed the dream and the everyday are not so separate as we sometimes think. The everyday is as mysterious and enigmatic as dreams, if we can allow ourselves to feel and see that.

I later wondered that this idea emerged in the relationship. My analyst never espoused such ideas in his writings or seminars. He was certainly not a worldly man, but to the contrary had lots of "reality" problems of his own. Maybe this interchange was like a third

element that emerged between us, dreamlike, at that particular time?

Thereafter, more dimensions of my life and work opened up. As a therapist, I had been a rather stereotypical Jungian introvert, much more comfortable with dreams and such than with transference and the everyday. I had been like a telescope stuck in one direction. Through this shift many vistas became available, and the mystery of existence was more unveiled in its fullness.

Originally steeped in existential philosophy, then Freud and Sullivan, I came to Jung later. My analytic training and experiences were crucial to my own evolution. After my Jungian training, the ideas of Kohut and more recently Bion and contemporaries like James Grotstein and Neville Symington have had an impact on my thinking.

One of my early dreams was in the setting of a German gasthaus, or inn. I was having beer and sausage with Jo Wheelwright, a very earthy, extroverted man who was one of the founders of the San Francisco Institute. Jung was there too, along with a couple of anonymous others. Jung looked sort of unhappy. I cautiously asked him how he was. He looked very directly at me and said, "Ladson, you've got to help them put my ideas into *American!*"

This dream affected me greatly. One could say it was narcissistically flattering, and it was certainly that. However, it felt more like a heavy weight of responsibility. Note that he said "American," and not English. That seemed crucial because of my thoughts about the down-to-earth, pragmatic aspect of the American character. What we *actually* experience rather than the ideas given by inner or outer "authorities."

In earlier times, I had idealized Europe as a superior culture and lived

there for three years. I had somewhat disowned my earthy Southern/Southwestern, farmer/rancher heritage. The dream was connected to my own transition personally and professionally. I was coming out of my own intellectual grandiosity, up in the clouds, and owning my own roots.

I was an analytic candidate and was struggling with a tendency to please and conform. The training atmosphere was not especially authoritarian; it was my own projections that I had to fight. Bion or Klein would call it the paranoid-schizoid position. It was an important part of a deeper need to become more real and to live my own truth, as it says in the *I Ching*, without blame. It presented me with a lifelong personal and professional task. The dimensions of such dreams are never-ending!

It is only now as I write this that I am aware that these two experiences are intimately connected. They both say that the everyday and the dream share a common ground that must not be forgotten. Dreams, poetry, reverie, and the everyday are connected to the same core. The dream is just a dramatically visible manifestation of what is going on all the time. I think our everyday consciousness evolves like a dream and that our normal awareness and ego functioning are merely the manifest contents, the tip of a giant iceberg based in a vast Unknown. We seem to get caught up in endless ideas and collective presuppositions about life that screen us from the real thing. It is often too terrifying to see more.

A Case History

The following analytic case provides an example of a profound encounter with the Unknown. In this

instance, the Unknown was a “black hole.” I will include enough historical background to make the person real to you. I will discuss what evolved during the analysis and how it evolved.² I will not emphasize psychodynamic formulations, although there is ample material on which to base such speculations.

Fred was thirty-six years old when I first saw him many years ago. (I should say too that this individual gave me permission to use his dreams and other material, for which I duly thank him.) An old friend of his had worked with me in the past, and Fred, feeling depressed and desperate, had decided to check me out.

He was a bulky man with a strong presence. Much of the time, he stared intently at me with his small dark eyes, sometimes fiercely, sometimes a bit poignantly with an undercurrent of longing. He was very serious and showed little sign of humor until later in the analysis.³

He said he was very “turned off” by a previous analytic experience, which by his description had been quite traditional, with little interaction except for occasional interpretations. Initially, the connection between us seemed fragile. He was a well-educated person, and he often used his knowledge to second-guess me in a critical, accusatory manner. He seemed to know the vocabulary of analysis well, and would often interrupt my attempts to interpret, saying scornfully that he “already knew that stuff.” I frequently felt less than efficacious after the sessions. At times I wondered whether he would come for the next session, and sometimes dreaded them. Nevertheless, he continued regularly twice a week.

He was the only child of parents in their late thirties. His mother was a

schoolteacher and his father a small shopkeeper. Fred said his mother was rather rigid and cold, and his father was a severe, emotionally abusive alcoholic. His mother had died of cancer some years before. A very serious and bright child, he had entered a Roman Catholic seminary in his teens. Just prior to ordination he had left because he was feeling so much interest in sex and relationships with women. Later he obtained a graduate degree. Fred said he married the first woman who seemed to want and need him, but that had turned out to be "hell."

As time went on, the flow of the process was punctuated by bursts of loosely controlled affect. These episodes were not always situation-specific. My impression was that the mere act of focusing attention on the depth dimension often brought on anxiety and undercurrents of terror. After such episodes, he would try to reassert control, generally by attacking me through sarcastic criticism. When I pointed out this pattern he at first angrily rejected my observations, but as things progressed he sometimes considered my input. As the positive transference became more secure, he did not feel quite so compelled to evacuate his toxic emotions into me. There were hints that he felt a subtle, still unexpressed sense of possible change.

Fred was now separated from his wife of five years. He described the relationship as desperately unhappy. His wife had been hospitalized for psychosis on more than one occasion. He said she was angry, paranoid, and demanding. (An astounding resemblance to himself!) A former seminarian, he said he tried to be endlessly helpful but it seemed to make things worse. Though they had been separated for

several months, she continued to demand money, and he was called to emergency rooms a couple of times due to her suicidal gestures.

I wondered how much she had been carrying some of his emotional life. Rather reluctantly he considered this idea. Then one day he came in and announced that his divorce was final.

Thereupon he became more depressed and even more angry and critical toward me. I wasn't helping him, my interpretations were useless and superficial, and he felt in constant psychological pain. He felt "crazy inside," and said he was "worse than ever." I had to resist the temptation to be full of clever and helpful suggestions and interpretations. He helped me avoid that, since he would give me hell when I did!

A major theme was his all-alone-ness as a single child of emotionally absent parents. We talked about the relation of his present emotions to those of earlier times, and began to connect his hostility and criticism toward me to his original disappointment. He longed for something better, but was deeply ambivalent about trust. He did not relate many dreams. The ones he did report seemed vague and fragmented, and he hurried past them, as if giving me a perfunctory gift.

The unrelenting darkness of his depression was very difficult to be with at times. I thought of medication, but he had forewarned me that he did not want that, that he could have seen a "pill doctor" if he had wanted pills. There was often an undercurrent of dark terror in him that made me anxious and uneasy.

One day he confided in me in a new way. He said that I would probably think he was psychotic, but that he had

long been tormented by the sense of a “black hole” deep inside him. It was something that had been there in some form for a very long time, but now it was at the foreground and was terrifying. Immediately as he confided he blamed-me, the analysis, his parents, the “crappy nature of life.”

At first, Fred described it as like a void, a nothingness. I cautiously encouraged him to sit there with it, in the sessions. He would soon protest, get extremely anxious, blaming and angry, and say that he just couldn’t talk about “that crazy stuff” anymore! He said I was making him worse by focusing on this terrifying inner presence, and that he needed something else from me. But in fact he himself could not stay away from the image of the black hole. He would soon return to the subject on his own. But he continued to blame me for his pain. It was clear that the black hole was not nothing, but was all too alive - terrifyingly alive.

In fact, he became quite suicidal and called me through my answering service on several occasions. On the phone he sounded very young and desperate, but would settle down pretty quickly with a lot of listening and some reassurance that the terror would not last forever. His pain was indeed extreme, and I knew that it took a lot of courage to go on. My respect for him steadily deepened.

After about sixteen months of analysis, Fred reported his first dream of significance. It was a long one. He told it in a very intense burst with lots of emotion, barely pausing:

I’m in Hong Kong, then on a trip to Red China. It’s a backpacking trip to see the sarcophagus. I’m with some guys. We have to sneak across the border. There are some

warning shots and we have to scamper up the hill. Then we cross a desert to an underground passage. We come to a room where the sarcophagus is supposed to be. The room is crowded with people. I see some porcelain and granite bulls with red horns! The bulls pull all my attention, rather than the sarcophagi.

I want to take a picture. There are people in my way, and I get frustrated. My tour guide, named Mike, says it’s time to go back to Hong Kong. I have to take a leak first. There is a long row of johns. A guy is there with two bare-breasted women and he yells at me to stop looking, that he’s going to kick the shit out of me. I knock him against the wall and break a chair over his head.

We head for the border. There is a gorge with only a plank across it. A rock falls from above toward me. Mike stops it somehow. I feel the presence of my father and am terrified. As I start to walk the plank, a helicopter lands. I know it’s my father because I see his feet. The plank is slanted and I start to slip. Mike helps me. I say I’ll just fall into the gorge and swim, but I really think I’ll die and that’s okay. Then we go across and reach the border. Mike says you have to run 30 yards or more after you cross - you can’t just slip across. I see buses crossing the border freely. Guards begin shooting at us. I keep running and running and they keep shooting and shooting. I crawl, gasping, up an incline, pulling on a railing. Mike says we’re now at 40,000 feet! I can look out and see clouds. Mike says to come on! I’m not sure what to do.

His first reaction to the dream was one of relieved exhaustion. I felt somewhat the same. It was as if I had been presented with his entire psyche all at once. And I think that is pretty much how it was. After all the testing and working through, he was now able to hold and express his turbulent emotions

in a richly symbolic way. The transference provided a container where hope for transformation was possible. He began to see that he was not fated to be all alone with the dread and terror. This dream was a major creative effort, a profound mythic story.

Fred's reactions were positive, and he expressed amazement at the sheer spectacle of what his dream-maker had produced. He said he hadn't known that he had such strange and intense images "inside" of him. I should note that there was no depression as he told me the dream, or afterwards. There was a lot of anxiety, fear, anger, and terror. But no depression. It was alive! The black hole was now potentially a source of Being, of emotional vitality in the service of life. The analytic process was quite different in tone thereafter.

You probably noted the extreme turbulence, the sense of barely contained energies in the dream narrative. It feels like an emotional seesaw. This "whooshing" feeling occurs especially when the primordial depths erupt into the conscious mind in new and raw symbolic form. Such experiences are common with people like Fred, and during the more intense parts of other analyses.

Some of his specific associations were: "I've always wanted to go to China, but never traveled much. Hong Kong is very modern but Red China is dangerous. Anything could happen to you there. My backpacking as a Scout was one of my few good experiences with a group of guys. The whole thing seems like an endurance contest. The bulls have great power. *They stand out over everything*. They are unworldly, sort of eerie. The last part of the dream seems like I am just frantically running away, sort of out of control, and only

get saved by Mike. My father is as frightening to deal with as when he was alive. I used to call my home a 'mausoleum.' Maybe that has something to do with the sarcophagus."

There is a bit of everything in the dream: the mythic journey to the creative source, the twins of Death (sarcophagus) and Life (the bulls), the breast offered, Oedipal struggles and fears, and much transference material. Endless symbols and emotions.

The emotional vitality of the bulls moved Fred the most. I couldn't resist a few remarks about the bull, spring, and rebirth! However, the affective intensity and the sense of ebullient, creative potency were at the core of this experience. The bulls were a manifestation of some deeper substrate. The Horizon of the Unknown had entered consciousness in all its life-giving strangeness.

From this point on, things were different. The black hole as a tormenting entity rapidly subsided. He conveyed a deepened, open curiosity and at times seemed to bask with pleasure in the transference. Our relationship was still at times a bit fragile but basically changed. I did not spoil it with extensive interpretations. Things began to move in his personal and professional life.⁴ The almost overwhelming encounter with the Unknown was, paradoxically, freeing him to live more deeply in the real.

In everyday life, each little gap in the ongoing process of relationship may provide a hint of this black hole, the Unknown. The anxious silences in therapy are a familiar thing. Each time we meet a new person we feel a tinge of the dread of the Unknown, or of "O," as Bion calls it. The paradox is that this is also the place of life. It is where the new emerges. We must be

able to bear it, to translate it somehow. There are no recipes.⁵

Fred continued to evolve and he reported an active dream life. Five months after he related the dream I told you, he had one of receiving some ground beef - bull meat! - to consume. I presumed that he continued to assimilate or "metabolize" the energies manifested in the initial dream. He remarried around this time.

Six months after that he dreamed of friendly women riding dolphins in a lagoon surrounded by an amphitheater. He connected the dolphins to the bulls. It all felt contained and playful. Only a little water splashed on him and the other observers, frightening them a bit.

A space was now emerging where psychological life could take place. As Michael Horne (2000) has described, there was now an expanded dimensionality. And the energy of the bulls, of the power and mystery of the Unknown, of "O," has not been lost but can be felt in the gamboling dolphins and their frisky riders.

Two months later he had a culminating dream:

My wife and I are in San Francisco. I'm at a dentist's, who is also an oral surgeon. He is working on my teeth. He is friendly. We leave, and decide to drive our new van to downtown San Francisco. We want to walk around; it would be good for her, since she's pregnant. I can't find parking. We decide to take a tour. A guy takes us on a walking tour. We get to a huge plaza, like in Rome. He says this is a Spanish-Mexican area of town. People are running toward us. It is a mass of humanity. A guy has a pack of Pall Malls, and points to a mall pictured on the package, like that's where we'll be safe.

I get separated from my wife. I realize the

people are running from the bulls. It's Pamplona! Something has me from behind. I call to my wife but she can't do anything. The bull has me but it turns into a person with a cat's head. It is a tall, sinewy man, very muscular, who is strong and controlling. I want to get free but he says, "No, you can't!" He takes me to a stage where there are three cauldrons filled with warm, dark fluid. I think he is going to cook me! He has me get into each cauldron so as to put my body scents into each one. There are also herbs and spices that I add.

Fred told me the dream with a lot of intensity, with tinges of fear. At the ending he expressed a note of happy wonder.

His associations were: "The guy seemed vicious, like the devil! His eyes looked right through you. When I cooperated he seemed less malevolent. The feeling was that I had a task and I'd better do it! He seemed in charge of the bulls and was directing their running. He was dressed in a G-string of some sort. Recently I was very preoccupied with the anniversary of the death of my father and my wife's pregnancy. Part of me has just wanted to run away, like all the responsibility is too much."

We talked about the strength of the cat-headed man, and how he could control the bulls. Fred said the cauldron was surprisingly soothing. I told him about the "initiation master" in tribal rituals, the one who directs the transitions from one stage of life to another. Sometimes teeth are knocked out as a sacrifice! He liked these ideas, and passionately described the strength he could feel in himself now, along with an increasing faith and confidence that he could handle whatever came up.

The initiation master is also the "master of the beasts." Animals often carry the energy of the Unknown. They

have their own ways and they are individual. Above all perhaps, they know what they are. The bear does not have to think about what it is to be a bear (Hinton 1993). This sense of purposiveness often connects with the Greek concept of *Anangke*, or necessity (Williams , p. 104); that is, being who one *necessarily* is, rather than following the scripts of the false self. Although we may try endless evasions, what we cannot escape is the person whom we necessarily are. When one tries to evade *Anangke*, a plague of bad conscience, of deep shame, and those things we call “symptoms,” often results (Hinton 1998).

Ethos anthropoi daimon: A man’s character is his fate. Each action has the lineaments of a certain character, of an *ethos*, and at the same time it reveals the manifestation of an underlying power, that of a *daimon* (Williams , p. 136). This is another way of expressing the Horizon of the Unknown.

So there is loss but a gain of life. Fear of the bulls can be contained, so the basic vitality of life is not lost but available. The containers emphasize the cellular nature of his transformation; it was personal, intimate, and less heroic, but all the more striking and penetrating in its meaning. The initial scene of the dream involved a plaza and a mall: human spaces where life can emerge.

There are many other themes here that I leave undiscussed, much transference and interesting symbols. My main point is his continuing, deepening relationship with the creative Unknown at the basis of life, which to me is the main point of analytic work.

His course over the next couple of years was fairly undramatic, and he seemed to be more fully assimilating the

elements of these big experiences. At this point, our relationship was fairly easy and positive, and he was able to articulate the positive feelings on occasion.

Over the years, I have heard from him occasionally, and he has basically done well, though struggling at times. He is married to the same woman, continues to work in his profession, and now has two teenaged children.

Parallel Mystical Experience

Ultimately, one could see the black hole as a kind of hidden God, or with the terrifying divine energy that Otto (1923) describes in *The Idea of the Holy*. To quote Gary Astrachan (2000, p. 453), “The painfully felt *absence* of the gods, paradoxically, provides a bottomless ground for their possible disclosure and presence.”

In this vein, mystics such as Meister Eckhart described the divine spark as being found in “the silent desert [which is] not-Father, not-Son, not-Holy Ghost; in [this] innermost where no one is at home, only there is the light satisfied...this ground is a simple...silence which rests in itself... [an] empty deity, where there is neither word nor image...[the divine] can lose itself there and immerse itself into the wilderness” (Huizinga 1996, p. 259)

The mystic that most fascinated Jung was Niklaus Von Flüe - better known as Bruder Klaus. Pius XII canonized Bruder Klaus, a famous Swiss religious figure and the only Swiss saint, in 1947. He was declared the patron saint of Switzerland, and Jung called him the patron saint of psychotherapy!

Bruder Klaus lived in the rural Swiss canton of Obwalden from 1417 to 1487. He was a well-known judge

and a respected soldier. He and his wife Dorothea had as many as ten children. In 1467, he became depressed and preoccupied with the state of the world, and, with the permission of his wife, moved to a nearby hermit's hut. After a time, he underwent some overwhelming visionary experiences. He eventually became widely known for his spiritual vitality and healing powers, and sometimes hundreds of people were waiting to see him in the village. In a later foray into politics he was a major factor in avoiding a war over the union of several Swiss cantons.

As Jung (*CW 9i*, p. 9) described his original experience during his early period of isolation: "In his ecstasy was revealed to Brother Klaus a sight so terrible that his own countenance was changed by it - so much so, indeed, that people were terrified and felt afraid of him." The symbols, in the beginning a simple mandala, were clearly influenced by an illustrated devotional book by a German mystic. Bruder Klaus is quoted as saying, "Grosses hat der Herr an mir getan" (God has done an immense deed with me).⁶

Woelflin, a scholar and younger contemporary, wrote:

"All who came to him were filled with terror at first glance. As the cause of this, he himself used to say that he had seen a piercing light resembling a human face. At the sight of it he feared his heart would burst into little pieces. Therefore, overcome with terror, he instantly turned his face away and fell to the ground. And that was the reason his face was now terrible to others" (*ibid.*).

The main point I want to make here is the overpowering impact of his dark vision. It seemed to defy any division into the differentiated opposites of normal thought or doctrine. Like a black

hole, like the essence of the Unknown, it had a terrifying impact that was too much for the mind to encompass. It was a long time before Bruder Klaus could translate his experience into the human discourse of known religious symbols.

Comments on the Process

To return to Fred: the richness of his dreams with their hint of possible evolution out of the haunting darkness greatly encouraged him. Like a version of Bruder Klaus's translation of his terrible vision, the dreams provided a symbol container for his overwhelming emotions. The crucial thing for me as his analyst was to maintain my own reverie, and receive and contain the powerful affects he conveyed on multiple levels. I often struggled to maintain my own equilibrium under the onslaught of the black hole and the emotions it constellated.

When images evolved and the emotions became more distinct and communicable, some minimal interpretation was possible and helpful. Perhaps articulation is a better word than interpretation, which sounds too intellectual. It was important not to overinterpret in a cognitive way that would kill the vitality of Fred's process. There is always a lot one might say. It often relieves the analyst's anxiety to voice an interpretation. Many or even most interpretations, when I look back on my own experience and those whom I have supervised, stem from the analyst's underlying terror of the Unknown and not from the patient's true needs.

Even in the telling, every dream has a transference element that could be interpreted if one chose to do so. Every dream also reflects a general human sit-

uation that one could term archetypal. Overinterpretation of the transference dimension may result in a banal caricature of analysis, in which the patient internalizes a model of the watching analyst and loses a sense of spontaneity and relationship. Overinterpretation of the archetypal dimension can result in a lofty, idealized persona that has no real, embodied life. Both these extremes promote a peculiar kind of narcissism at the expense of human presence. And we all fall into such traps at times, due to our own anxieties.

Maintaining the capacity to receive and contain the affective components of this deep material, and maintaining faith in its meaning were the important factors. Various levels of interpretation and articulation can be important, so long as the analyst does not use them in a defensive way. One eye must come from the place of deep receptivity that is in tune with the Horizon of the Unknown, while the other sees with the various lenses of the analytic mind.

Such "bimodal vision," grounded in the Unknown, with its hovering consciousness of uncertainty, can help avoid the extremes of both the "ultraviolet" and "infrared" spectrums of experience and interpretation (Sabini 2000). This type of vision provides a "cleansing" effect that frees awareness for the unveiling of new facets of truth or Being. However, these are only facets of a whole that can never be known. One must accept the reality of a humble wisdom-or lowly wisdom, to use Milton's term-as opposed to an unending parade of symbolic "revelations" or images (Hinton 1998).

Fred's last dream expressed a deepened sense of commitment and truth. The black hole was becoming partly humanized, not just a maelstrom of the

terrifying Unknown. There were obvious transference dimensions. The key was the cat-headed figure who "runs the bulls," the growing *inner* presence who knew and respected the energies of life. He did not kill or suppress the bull-energy, but directed it in a contained flow down the Way of Life.

In summary, there was a transition from an uncontained place of fear and avoidance, through the terrifying presence of the black hole, to the sense of a contained space and a symbolic context that was deeply meaningful.⁷ This process coincided with the evolution of the transference and with changes in Fred's outer life and relationships.

The general parallel with Bruder Klaus's evolution is striking-the movement from a blackness and sheer terror to a symbolic container that enabled life to go on in a renewed and transformed way.

Conclusion

Fred taught me a great deal, and I am grateful to him for that. He deeply challenged me, forcing me to more completely trust my intuition and rely much less on my intellectual understanding. I had to be real.

Had I encountered Fred earlier in my career I think I would have seen his "blackness" as symptom - perhaps a symbolic one, but one to be "integrated." The terrifying emotions would have so churned my psyche that I would have had more need to defend with interpretations. Later on, when I studied analytic theory more extensively, I would probably have acknowledged the meaning of the darkness but attributed it to the "dark pole" of the Self or of an archetype. The problem with this latter view is its teleological implication.

There is an implicit positivism in the teleological view that tends to become a version of the *privatio boni* perspective, over which Jung tragically fell out with Father Victor White.⁸

The black hole—the wholly other, the Unknown, the terror of God—is an experience that defies all other categories and must be honored in its own right, sat with, acknowledged, suffered with. Reduction to a comfortable archetypal category often seems degrading to the experience of the suffering person. The clinical result is frequently a sort of analyzed persona, and sometimes an abandonment of hope by the analysand. I suspect that is what happened with some of my earlier cases that dropped out of analysis for vague reasons, leaving me with an uneasy and foreboding sense about their fate—along with an ill-defined existential guilt that I did not understand at the time.

In Fred's case, the black hole was an intimidating thing and there were times that I felt deeply concerned and also just worn out. There was a kind of act of faith involved for me. Somehow I knew I just had to be present and not judge or even comment except to acknowledge his terror and suffering. My words were of some importance in meaningful containment, although our affective attunement was the most important container.⁹

The key thing is to simultaneously honor the various perspectives, and not prejudice. This is what Fred taught me. Bion called this a “binocular vision” that requires an eye for each dimension. That is the essence of the analytic attitude.

Aliveness comes out of the Unknown. One can describe this in psychological, mythological, or spiritual terms. When listening to a dream - or

to an emotion or any other facet of the process - always keep the Horizon of the Unknown in part of the mind's eye. If it is there in the analyst's mind, it does not have to be expressed in a literal way, but it will exert a dynamic and pervasive effect on the therapeutic process. If we are able to encounter the enormity of the Night, as Octavio Paz described, an outline of stars will at last appear in the darkness.

Like the manifest dream, the process of being human is an experience of constant emergence and creation out of a substrate that is unknown in its essence. We can never fully know it, yet it is the source of all life, vitality, and meaning. At one extreme, it is like a black hole, and at the other a transcendent sense of joy and beauty. We know this vividly through emotions and intuitions, our most profound poetic reveries, our deepest loves, and in our terrors and our dreams.

Notes

- 1) In 1964 I had a conversation with James Kirsch, who first translated *Answer to Job*. It was one of the first books I had read by Jung, and James encouraged my enthusiasm. He felt that many of Jung's Zürich colleagues had pressured him to leave his subjective emotions out of his writings. *Answer to Job*, written in the first person, was a grand exception. As I recall, it was not originally included in the *Collected Works*—perhaps out of that apologetic prejudice. The perspective James provided was invaluable to me.
- 2) The history is a part of personal identity that is crucially important, but emphasis on its causal effect often becomes part of the delusion of rational explanation and control. The deepest experiences of life cannot ultimately be explained, and the mysterious sense of the Unknown is often lost by reductions to personal history. Developmental experiences tone and shape who we become and form our core and matrix. They are the story of the individual's struggle to survive and create a

life. However, the small and large epiphanies of our existence emerge from another, transcendent dimension. All these dimensions appear—or reappear—in the transference.

- 3) In my experience development of a true sense of humor is one of the best indexes of progress in analysis, because humor requires a certain spaciousness of mind and an ability to entertain paradox.
- 4) I recently became acquainted with a paper by James Grotstein (1990) on the “Black Hole.” He describes the experience as the basic psychotic experience, the “place where the mother used to be,” the “gaping hole.” I would see this experience as not limited to psychosis. This patient, though borderline in some ways, was not psychotic. And I have seen various forms of this terrifying phenomenon in many people. To me, it describes an ontological state of terror and aloneness that is a part of our experience of the Unknown, indeed of God.
- 5) Bion describes a case upon which he reflected for many years. It was that of a psychotic man who scratched holes in his skin and who was terrified of the holes in his socks (Rhode 1998, pp. 23-4). Over the years Bion realized that the situation was not that of a symbolic phobia per se. The man did not experience the socks as fabric interrupted by holes, but as a bunch of holes knitted together by a barely containing fabric. The patient’s was seeing a terrifying void, a gap in the world. Bion thought that psychotics might indeed sometimes have a different kind of vision, a capacity to see what “normals” see only “Through a Glass Darkly.”
- 6) I thank Peter Elting for this translation.
- 7) In a recent paper, Brian Feldman beautifully and thoroughly described this sort of process from the perspective of developmental theory (Feldman 2000).
- 8) “Privatio boni” of course refers to the idea of evil as a lack, a privation of the Good (or of God) rather than a force or ontological structure in its own right. The picture that Jung paints of God in *Answer to Job* is not that of an entity whose absence one might regret! There is a contradiction in Jung’s writings between this picture of the nature of things and his emphasis on images and symbols that have a teleological purpose in the individuation process.
Many people lead lives that are stories of pain and disaster. As one gains clinical experience

it becomes dismayingly clear that their pain is often self-created. Is this the “telos” or aim of the Self? Freud suffered the same dilemma between the pleasure principle and the fact of the destructive “repetition compulsion” he observed. In attempt to explain it, he developed the idea of the death instinct, a concept incorporated into Object Relations theory by Melanie Klein.

- 9) The philosophical neurologist Antonio Damasio (1999) has described the complexity of the affective-feeling self. Among other things, he says that the “feeling of something happening” (within the subject) is the basis of consciousness, and is the precursor of any thinking about it. Damasio’s ideas are strongly based in neuroscience, and have many implications for clinical work.

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