

DANGEROUS DREAMS: FREUD, JUNG AND THE PROBLEM OF GOD THE FATHER

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complete references to be supplied= xx¹

On August 20, 1909 Freud, Jung and Sándor Ferenczi met in Bremen to begin their trans-Atlantic journey to Clark University. Jung notes in *Memories, dreams and reflections* (1961/1989) that “We were together every day, and analyzed each other’s dreams” (MDR 158). Their experiment in a putative father/son analysis began to unravel when Freud refused to share his associations to a dream saying, as Jung recalled, “But I cannot risk my authority” (MDR 160). Having revered him as a father-figure, Jung lost respect for Freud because he now saw him “placing personal authority above truth” (MDR 158).

This presentation explores what that historic sea voyage and its aftermath meant for Freud and Jung, in terms of their personal relationship and their theoretical differences, focusing on the subsequent implications of their psychological theories for god representations. Each man, in his own way, and for his own reasons, rejected God the Father. And God the Father remains a problem for many to this day.

Dangerous Dreams

What is dangerous about dreams? Simply the return of the repressed. Freud has taught us that the mind has a mechanism similar to the scar that forms over a wound. A bloody wound must congeal to stop the bleeding after a traumatic event. Few of us can afford to take to our beds with the shades drawn and sleep for days. There is work to do, bills to be paid. Life must go on.

But a scar remains in the skin to remind us of the trauma, the loss, the shock to consciousness that was too great to be borne at the time. And eventually, so the wisdom of depth psychology teaches, the psychic energy required to repress the trauma becomes too great, the cost of forgetting takes too deep a toll, and we must face what we once feared to fully live again.

Resistance to knowing the truth about our repressed experience is normal, because none of us knows, prior to first beginning the uncovering work an analysis requires, whether the cost of facing the bodies buried in our psyches will justify the revivifying results we hope for. Hope, faith and trust are required to begin an analysis and most are driven by distress to make the experiment.

Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (SE xx, 1900) served as his self-analysis. Freud became depressed at age 40, following the death of his father. He felt his life constrained by hysterical and neurotic symptoms, as well as the contextual oppression he experienced as a Jew in Catholic Vienna. Had he not been Jewish, he could have continued his research in neurology and hoped for an appointment as a University lecturer. Needing money to get married, he opened a private practice instead.

Freud's experimental self-analysis was at least a partial success. He was cured of the hysterical symptoms that caused him to faint when he attempted to travel to Rome. Following his self-analysis he was at last able to attain the lectureship he desired. He also did the bulk of his creative work, in terms of publication, after 1900. But his life-long addiction to cigars and ambivalent approach to close relationships remained.

The *Interpretation of Dreams* was far from being a runaway best seller at the time, despite its enduring significance today. Freud, with the frankness of a doctor examining a patient, did not cringe from revealing sexuality and aggression as underlying motivations for human behavior, beginning in infancy, and this was disturbing to his Victorian era audience.

In 1900 Freud was 44 and Jung was 25. Jung first encountered Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* while an Assistant Staff Physician at the Burghölzli state mental hospital in Zurich. Bleuler, Jung's supervisor, had urged him to read it but Jung wrote in his autobiography that he was initially too inexperienced to appreciate the

significance of Freud's methods of dream interpretation. Recalling the impact of this first encounter with Freud's approach to the "the unthought known" (cf. Bollas 1989) in his end of life autobiography, Jung wrote:

In 1903 I once more took up the *Interpretation of Dreams* and discovered how it all linked up with my own ideas. What chiefly interested me was the application to dreams of the concept of the repression mechanism...I had frequently encountered repression in my experiments with word association...

The situation was different when it came to the content of repression. Here I could not agree with Freud. He considered the cause of repression to be a sexual trauma... (MDR 147)

At first the ambitious young psychiatrist feared for his professional reputation if he publicly allied himself with Freud since "Freud was definitely *persona non grata* in the academic world at the time..." (MDR 148). But at the urging of his "second personality", an inner voice that seemed to possess greater wisdom than his conscious ego, Jung made bold to send Freud a recent publication of his own. Thus began a correspondence both professional and intimate numbering 359 existing letters. In April 1906 Freud replied:

Many thanks for sending me your *Diagnostic Association Studies*, which in my impatience I had already acquired. Of course your latest paper, 'Psychoanalysis and Association Experiments', pleased me most, because in it you argue on the strength of your own experience that everything I have said about the hitherto unexplored fields of our disciplines is true. I am confident that you will often be in a position to back me up, but I shall also gladly accept correction." (FJL – 1F)

Freud and Jung before Clark University (1906-August 1909)

By the time Freud, Jung and Ferenczi embarked on their journey to the new world, the seeds of discontent within the Freud, Jung collaboration were already brewing. Freud had been frank about wishing to recruit Jung as his heir apparent, Crown Prince of the psychoanalytic movement, to rescue the movement from being stigmatized as a "Jewish science". My African-American students readily understand why it was essential for Freud to claim and maintain his fatherly authority among his Viennese

Jewish followers and later, before a broader audience. Over against the dismissive, if not outright hostile, disrespect of the dominant culture, Freud became Hannibal for his followers, intrepidly scaling the Alps of Victorian hypocrisy with his elephantine truths about the nature of human sexuality.

Even before the trip to Clark, Jung confessed, late in life, that he had met with a shocking revelation when, with his wife Emma and young colleague Binswanger, he first visited Freud in Vienna (Billinsky, 1969). According to Billinsky, Freud's sister-in-law, Minna, who had joined her sister's household 12 years earlier when her sixth child, Anna was born (McGoldrick, et.al. 1999), took Jung aside to disclose her distress over an incestuous relationship with her brother in law.

But Jung for his part was not free from ethical transgressions. With the discovery of Sabina Spielrein's diaries and letters we now know that Jung was struggling with a sexualized transference that had its origins in 1904, when Spielrein, then a girl of 19, a brilliant schizophrenic from a wealth Russian-Jewish family, entered the Burghölzli as Jung's patient. Bruno Bettelheim, in his introduction to the paperback edition of Carotenuto's *A secret symmetry: Sabina Spierein between Jung and Freud*, (1984) has speculated that Jung's difficulties in managing the intense therapeutic relationship with Spielrein were probably a prominent motivation for initiating the correspondence with Freud.

And here, as a pastoral psychotherapist trained in both object relations and family systems theory, I must remark on the remarkable repetition of triangulation in the Freud/Jung affair. I use the word affair advisedly, because I believe that their relationship, passionate and ambivalent as it was, did take on the intensity of an emotional affair in all but its calmer moments. Note that Binswanger, Jung's former doctoral student, accompanied Jung on his first visit to Freud, just as Ferenczi, whom Freud once fancied as a son-in-law, accompanied Freud and Jung across the Atlantic. Ferenczi, Spielrein, Emma Jung, Abraham, Binzwanger, all found themselves caught or used as third parties to manage the anxiety formed by the Freud/Jung intersubjective field (cf. Murray Bowen re triangulation; Stolorow, Atwood, Brandschaft, Orange re: intersubjectivity).

On Jung's second visit to Vienna 1909 (March 25-30, he claimed precognition, just before a loud report from the bookcase sounded a second time. Jung later wrote "That last evening with you has, not happily, freed me inwardly from the oppressive sense of your paternal authority." (138J). Freud made it clear that while he had some curiosity about the kinds of occult phenomena that were in vogue at the time, toying with a bit of numerology, he generally preferred to maintain the mien of scientific rationality. He wrote: "...I put my fatherly hornrimmed spectacle on again and warn my dear son to keep a cool head, for it is better not to understand something than make such great sacrifices to understanding." (F139).

The first experiment in group analysis

When Freud, Jung and Ferenczi met in Bremen Jung mentioned his interest in peat bog mummies that had been found in the area. This apparently reminded Freud of the first dream Jung had confided in their earlier letters: "I dreamt that I saw you walking beside me as a *very, very, frail old man*". Jung understands the dream as follows: "The dream sets my mind at rest about your +++ dangerousness!" (50J, 2 November, 1907 – add note re: 3 crosses). Jung had confessed to Freud that "my veneration for you has something in the character of a 'religious crush'...This abominable feeling comes from the fact that as a boy I was the victim of a sexual assault by a man I once worshipped. Even in Vienna [during Jung's first visit to Freud] the remarks of the ladies ('enfin seuls', etc.) sickened me, although the reason for it was not clear to me at the time" (49J. 29 October, 1907).

The sexualized, idealizing transference that Jung was struggling to manage with Sabina Spielrein was mirrored by Jung's sexualized, idealizing transference towards Freud. Freud was well aware that the flip side of idealization is often a desire for annihilation so that Jung's mention of the peat bog mummies, coupled with his own fears of old age and death, caused him to faint from anxiety.

Once aboard ship, during the eight day crossing, group dream analysis was the order of the day, the first such experiment, according to Freud's biographer, Ernest Jones. Reading again from Jung's memory of events:

Freud had a dream – I would not think it right to air the problem it involved. I interpreted it as best I could, but added that a great deal more could be said about it if he would supply me with some additional details from his private life. Freud's response to these words was a curious look – a look of the utmost suspicion.

Then he said, "but I cannot risk my authority!" - at that moment he lost it altogether...and in it the end of our relationship was already foreshadowed. Freud was placing personal authority above truth. (MDR 158).

Jung's idealization of Freud as father/mentor was clearly deteriorating. At the same time, knowing of the Minna secret as he did, he was clearly daring Freud to be as candid with his son as the son had been with the father. This Freud the father declined to do. No doubt this rankled because the son was at this point ready to claim his own authority as a peer.

Jung then recounted a dream that led to his concept of the collective unconscious and marked his departure from Freud's approach to dream work, as declared in Jung's following publication, *Symbols of Transformation* (CW5).

"I was in a house I did not know, which had two stories. It was "my house." The upper floor was a salon decorated in rococo style. The ground floor appeared medieval. A stone stairway led down to a cellar from Roman times. A stone slab in the floor of the cellar lifted to reveal yet another stairway "leading down into the depths... a low cave cut into the rock. Thick dust lay on the floor, and in the dust were scattered bones and broken pottery, like remains of a primate culture. I discovered two human skulls, obviously very old and half disintegrated. Then I woke up." (MDR 159).

Jung felt that Freud completely missed the archetypal significance of this dream, which Jung saw as inviting him to explore the deepest regions of the psyche. Freud, for his part, his paranoia already on high alert, asked Jung to name a wish in relation to the dream, thinking the dream was yet another indication of incipient patricidal impulses on the part of his crown prince. Jung then thumbed his nose at Freud by lying, telling him the two skulls were those of his wife and sister-in-law, a reference to the family secret Freud did not know Jung knew. And so the journey continued.

Being invited to lecture and receive an honorary degree at Clark University was a great occasion for Freud, who felt that he had finally won the recognition of a broader public for his work. When Jung first learned of the invitation he urged Freud to accept saying "you ought to speak in America, if only because of the echo it would arouse in Europe" (Jxx). Freud initially invited Ferenczi as his filial traveling companion. Jung's invitation to speak did not arrive until May, almost as an afterthought. Freud was delighted, writing to Oskar Pfister that Jung's invitation was "great news", commenting to Ferenczi "That magnifies the importance of the whole affair".

Freud gave five lectures in German, improvised on the spot during early morning walks with Ferenczi, outlining the major findings of psychoanalysis to date, subsequently published as *Five lectures on psychoanalysis* (SExx). Jung's three lectures, also delivered in German, covered his association test, which formed the basis of the lie detector test still in use today, an early foray into family systems and an exploration of the psychic conflicts of a 4 year old girl. (Both sets of lectures were published in the *American journal of psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 2, April, 1910). William James and Emma Goldman were among the auditors.

Reflecting on the experience of receiving a Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* degree at Clark in his autobiography (SExx) Freud wrote "In Europe I felt as though I were despised; but over there I found myself received by the foremost men as an equal. As I stepped onto the platform at Wooster ...it seemed like the realization of some incredible daydream: psychoanalysis was no longer a product of delusion--it had become a valuable part of reality" (xx). But the high point of the adventure was the day when, during a stay at Putnam's camp following the lectures, Freud found his porcupine (allusion to be supplied - Koelsch, 1984).

Freud and Jung after Clark (September 1909 – April 1914)

It would be intriguing to detail the many ways in which each man's thinking continued to influence the other, even after the formal rupture of their working relationship in 1914. But in keeping with our emphasis on dreams, I'll simply

summarize the differences in their approaches to dream work and suggest the implications of dream work for the problem of God the father.

Both Freud and Jung carried scars from childhood and both used dream work to find healing. Freud's method, which served him well in his self-analysis and subsequent work with patients, can be summarized as follows:

- Dreams are the fulfillment of a **wish**
- Dreams are the **disguised** fulfillment of a wish
- Dreams are the disguised fulfillment of a **repressed** wish
- Dreams are the disguised fulfillment of a repressed, **infantile** wish

(cf. <http://www.freud.org.uk/Theory1.html>)

So when Freud asked Jung to identify a wish in relation to the basement skulls, he was simply following the method he had devised. But Jung in that moment felt that Freud was ignoring the numinous quality of his dream, and reducing it to the realm of the personal unconscious with his efforts at interpretation. Jung subsequently decided to take an entirely phenomenological approach to dreams. He did not see the dream as employing elaborate disguises through the work of the dream censor, that, according to Freud, served to reduce the anxiety associated with repressed memories.

Jung believed that dreams spoke their own language, the language of image, our first language before we had words. He felt that while many dreams might relate to our individual experience, others might refer to broader cultural issues, even predicting social cataclysms, as with the vision of blood that assaulted him prior to the outbreak of World War II. Moreover, the dreamer was understood to be the expert regarding the meaning of the dream, even though the meaning might at first be more evident to others. The analyst's role was simply to ask for associations until at length the dreamer came to an "aha" of recognition in discovered meaning. (This is the method used by Unitarian minister Jeremy Taylor in conducting dream groups to this day. There is no interpreting expert, only peers sharing associations to the dream images.)

Marie-Louise Von Franz has summarized Jung's understanding dream work as follows:

1. A dream represents an unconscious reaction to a conscious situation.
2. It describes a situation which has come about as the result of some conflict between consciousness and the unconscious.
3. It represents a tendency in the unconscious whose purpose is to effect a change in the conscious attitude.
4. It [may] represent unconscious processes which have no recognizable relation to consciousness.

(Von Franz, 1998, p.3)

In this way, dream work is vital for the health and well-being of the psyche. Left to itself the mind may be overwhelmed by the demands of family and society, so that the true vocation of the individual is lost. Dreams provide an antidote to the myopia of rationality, with its emphasis on scientific materialism to the neglect of subjectivity (cf. Wallace, *The taboo of subjectivity*). Dreams have a spiritual function in that they serve to reconnect us to the inner wisdom of the *imago Dei*, that of God in us, the "soul's eye view" (Kelcourse 2008, Von Franz 1998).

In conclusion then, what can these approaches to dreams, as the free product of the unconscious, offer us in response to the problem of God the Father?

The problem of God the Father

With regard to religion, Freud was a self-proclaimed "godless Jew", known today for his cultural analysis of religion as found in *Totem and taboo* (1913), *The future of an illusion* (1927), *Civilization and its discontents* (1929), and *Moses and monotheism* (1938). Jung's view of religion centered on his understanding of the Self archetype. When asked in a 1959 BBC interview if he believed in God, Jung famously replied "I don't need to believe. I know". Freud (1856-1939) the modernist, proclaimed "our god Logos", the triumph of reason and science over religious tradition and ignorance, including the rising tide of Christian/Nazi anti-Semitism. Jung (1875-1961), who also lived to see the horror of two world wars, Nazism, Stalinism, and the threat of nuclear apocalypse presented by Hiroshima, did not reject religion per se but saw the Christian myth as inadequate for the needs of his time.

Freud and Jung were each critical of their own fathers. Freud's father disappointed his son by not confronting an anti-Semitic assailant who deliberately knocked off the father's hat in the street. Jung's father disappointed through his refusal to wrestle with the concept of the Trinity, and above all through the son's realization that his father's understanding of God was not open to numinous intensity of the son's religious experience.

The explosive dissolution of the father/son bond chronicled in their letters attests to the convoluted interconnections between sexuality, spirituality and counter-transference that pervaded their relationship. What I'm interested in here is the interface between the spiritual and the psychological as it concerns the god-image of God the Father for Freud and Jung and for 21st century Protestants. I understand the spiritual as our ground of being (Tillich xx), that which gives life meaning (Fowler xx), places demands on our sense of vocation and announces itself to us in dreams with numinous, mysterious intensity (Boehme, Jung, cf. Madden, 2008). A depth psychological perspective considers the interface between conscious and unconscious knowing, as discovered through dreams and fantasies, and the object-relations that shape our understanding of the world from birth on. So I am curious to understand why for Freud sexuality was a "*numinosum*" (as Jung saw it, cf. *MDR*, 152) and why for Jung only the Hegelian formula of thesis, antithesis, synthesis, as found in his understanding of the "transcendent function" could adequately reflect the "*complexio oppositorum* of the Godhead" (*MDR*, 353). Because of what was truly spiritual for each of them, and because of their own father complexes, they rejected the image of God the Father, while acknowledging its enduring claim on both organized religion and the human psyche.

God the Father is a problem, and not just because Mary Daly says so. I don't know how many of you have had occasion to lead congregations or receive the pain of those who do, but despite the fact that congregations, at their best, seek to effect their own understanding of a "cure through love", there are a lot of walking wounded among the clergy.

At this point I have more questions than answers, but I'm willing to throw out some speculations and welcome your response:

Why is it that so many male ministers get caught up in a “god complex” of over-functioning that causes them to neglect their families, which frequently culminates in the minister having an affair a woman in the congregation?

Why is it that so many female clergy, whether married or single, often feel betrayed by congregations that seem to affirm their ministry, only to fire them in favor of a male minister with a wife and two kids? (Not that male ministers don't suffer from seemingly arbitrary firings too, due to congregational ambivalence over authority and dependency).

Why is it that women are generally more active in congregations than men and are often the ones who are most critical of female leadership?

Why is it that so many congregations and denominations are still ambivalent about the same gender partnerships that increasingly find support in secular society?

These trends may or may not be confined to mainline Protestant denominations. I hope that you've seen some signs of change, as I have, but many churches seem positively reactionary in relation to society as a whole.

It would appear that Victorian attitudes to sexuality, coupled with a fear of conflict that leads to covert aggression, are dominant forces in many congregations to this day. No wonder pastoral theologians find Freud so appealing, since he gives us the tools to analyze the roots of libidinal conflicts in childhood, effectively “outing” the conflicts around sexuality and aggression that each of us harbor to some degree.

Freud the neurologist is at his best when he focuses on the embodied life of individuals. We are indeed influenced by the schemas of our earliest experience, from childhood on (cf. Daniel Stern). As Ana Maria Rizzuto has effectively demonstrated through her work on god representations, familial constellations from childhood have a profound effect on the ways we think of God. For many god is he, a father, because in the patriarchal ethos that still governs much of society, father has the power.

But what of the God who comes to us as a burning bush, speaking out of the whirlwind, descending as a dove or arising as a felt presence in the silence? These visions too, are part of our human experience of God.

You've probably heard about the recent publication of the Red Book, the illuminated manuscript Jung lovingly prepared during his six year struggle with "creative illness", following the break with Freud (cf. Ellenberger, Goldwert). The Rubin Museum of Art in NYC has prepared a series of events in which artists, social pundits and assorted interesting characters comment on the Red Book images, with responses from Jungian analysts. A quote from author Andrew Harvey points the way beyond God the Father:

"I believe the human race will die out and destroy nature if it doesn't learn again how to adore God, the God in all of us, God shining and living in nature, and learn again how to act from and in that spirit of adoration."

Conclusion

For both Freud and Jung dreams provided the means of self-healing and self-understanding that became the basis for their healing work with others. Yet dream-work is not widely embraced as a means of spiritual and psychological growth today, either by church groups or by the majority of therapists constrained by insurance companies to focus on short-term solutions. What is it about each man's approach to the unconscious that either supports or undermines our typical Western understanding of patriarchal authority?

Why was Freud at such pains to debunk the idea of a Father God as a universal neurosis (c.f. Rizzuto, 1998)? How was Jung's understanding of God representations influenced by his childhood horror at the thought of God's turf shattering the cathedral? (*MDR*, 39, Cooper-White, 2009) Why have Protestants and pastoral theologians generally found it easier to accept the reductive analysis of Freud the atheist than to embrace Jung's understanding of God as Self, the eye of the soul?

Both approaches are challenging to the materialist rationality on which Western civilization is based. Both are dangerous in that they call into question the smug assumption that science can save us. Can logical positivism alone save us from global warming, from on-going genocide in the Congo? Perhaps, the wisdom of traditional societies, like the Crow people, who found a dream that could rescue them from cultural annihilation, are not so pre-modern that they can't be of use to us today (cf. Lear,

Radical Hope). Perhaps we too, in a post-modern spirit of phenomenological openness to experience, can learn to dream again. It could be dangerous not to try.

(As a postscript I can't help noticing a certain convergent evolution among psychotherapists of all stripes who do not name religious descriptions of human interiority, such as traditional concepts of "soul", *imago Dei*, that of God in us, but use other terms, such as Self, to describe the state of inner wisdom that the therapist should cultivate. To give only one example, Richard Schwartz, a Purdue trained family systems therapist and originator of Internal Family Systems theory, trains therapists to access their "Self" when treating traumatized individuals. He names eight qualities of Self leadership, as follows: curiosity, compassion, confidence, calm, clarity, courage, connection, creativity. Maybe I'm just a tradition-bound Quaker, but it all sounds like soul to me.)

Cf: The Center for Self Leadership - <http://www.selfleadership.org/>

An introduction to IFS: <http://www.internalfamilysystems.org/model.htm>

Author of - *Internal family systems* (1995) - Guilford

You are the one you've been waiting for (In press)

The Mosaic Mind, Empowering the Tormented Selves of Child Abuse Survivors by
[Regina A Goulding](#), [Richard C. Schwartz](#)

Cf. also Ann Gleig, Rice University, "The return of the repressed Psychoanalysis as spirituality, available from www.pcr-aar.org, 2009)

¹ (MDR = Jung, *Memories, dreams and reflections*, 1961/1989, FJL = 1974/1979, *The Freud/Jung letters*)