

A consideration of the usefulness of Medard Boss's approach to dream explication, in an attempt to reveal the potential for forward movement.

A case study

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the value of using a Daseinsanalytic approach to dream explication in order to reveal the essential meaningfulness of behavioural possibilities for the patient.

After discussing the Daseinsanalytic view on dream explication, emphasizing Medard Boss's approach as the major exponent of this view, the study explores the usefulness and validity of the study as a method of investigating the dreams from this perspective.

The dreams related in this study are examined individually, giving a phenomenological understanding of each and also providing a possible prospective focus for therapy. It will be shown that the phenomenological understanding of the patient's dreams corresponds with his subjective experience of his emotional existential situation and that any positive changes in the content of the dreams over time corresponds with observable and related changes in his behaviour, ideation and mood.

However, if the suggested prospective focus of Medard Boss had been more usefully employed when each dream was explicated in the therapy sessions, it is felt that the progress of therapy would have been greatly enhanced.

This study therefore concludes that the use of Medard Boss's approach to dream explication has not only a hermeneutic value in the process of therapy, but also aids the dreamer in becoming aware of the possible modes of behaviour yet unrevealed in his waking life.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dreaming is a universal phenomenon which has mystified and fascinated man, probably ever since he first existed on earth as a being capable of dreaming and of contemplating his dreams.

Initially man believed that the dream was divine by nature and therefore sent by the gods. Petroneus, a Latin writer in Rome in the first century AD was the first to question this belief. He maintained that each individual makes his own dreams when the mind is set free to create its own images and to pursue its waking interests (Mégroz, 1939).

There are many theories on dreams and many definitions of what a dream actually is. Nearly twenty-five hundred years ago the chinese sage Chuang - Tse wondered aloud about his dreams (Boss, 1977). Is a dream the same as waking life, and if not, what is the difference? Boss (1977) refutes that a dream is merely a hallucination. A hallucination is a secondary illusion and in dreaming one is not employing only one's sensory organs, but one's whole being. Also, the term hallucination leads one to believe that the dream is pathological and should not therefore be perceived by a healthy, awake individual.

One could say that the dream is only a representation of reality as it no longer exists upon awakening. But then, this representation of reality is not the same reality which the dream had for the dreamer whilst he was dreaming.

Freud claimed that the "manifest dream" is a product of self-deception in which the dreamer is fooled by his own unconscious (Boss, 1977). This thinking holds that the dream phenomena are merely symbolic facades, that is, deemed entities usually representing or symbolizing something very different from what they appear to be, sometimes even the opposite. This implies that the dreamer is deceived of and by himself; in other words, deceiver and deceived are one and the same. Freud was never able to explain how this could come about. His use of the term "the unconscious" in an attempt to explain the deception leads one to believe that the dreamer cannot be an integrated, whole being, but is split into conscious and unconscious being. It also demands a personal agent called "the unconscious dream censor" by Freud, within the dreamer who recognizes what is consciously present in the dreamer, and who decides what to provide and what to withhold from the consciousness of the dreamer, and is then able to disguise the dream material. This leads to a confusion between what is reality and what is being, because the censor can only be an unconscious consciousness (Boss, 1977).

According to Boss

"That which we humans encounter in dreaming - just as in waking - is such that it appears into the openness of human perception and is so brought to its presence, to its being" (1977, p. 182)

There is no evidence that the "unconscious" is able to fabricate dream images and to then project them outside the psyche.

The Daseinsanalytic approach to dreaming refutes all previous speculations, practices or theories with regard to interpretation. The reality that we dream is no different to the reality of waking life because both come to being in the light of our perception as human beings (Boss, 1977). Every mode of behaviour open to the waking human being may also occur during dreaming. The dreamer is often able to purposefully intervene in his dream and to carry out decisions within the dream. More importantly, both states, dreaming and waking, are modes of existing of one and the same individual human being. Although the two states may differ, they both belong to the same being. The waking and dreaming existence of an individual belong fundamentally together in a unique, human Da-sein and selfhood that is personal and enduring. And in order to perceive or comprehend reality as it truly is, and in order to be able to respond knowingly and understandingly to it, human beings are perceptively open beings. Man is therefore not an empty container into which things can simply fall and then "be there" (Boss, 1977).

It is the intention of this investigation to present a case study of a patient presenting with severe symptoms of depression who was unable to stand alone but lived his life within the shadow of others. It is intended to demonstrate the Daseinsanalytic approach to dream explication, stressing the unrealized possibilities or potentials that this patient's dreams manifested. It is hoped to provide an example of how these possibilities could have been made known to the patient with the intention of furthering the progress of therapy.

1.2 THE DASEINSANALYTIC APPROACH TO DREAM EXPLICATION

The Daseinsanalytic approach to dream explication, with Medard Boss as its major exponent, emphasizes the dream phenomena as the basis of objective interpretation. Boss states simply "each thing is what it is and nothing else" (1977, p. ix).

"In our dreams we experience real physical facts, a thing is a real thing, an animal is a real animal, a man is a real man and a ghost is a real ghost" (Boss, 1957, p. 106).

Our dreaming world is just as real as our waking world and in both worlds we express our individuality in the way in which we behave and in the way we relate to other people and the objects around us.

This approach attempts to look at what is actually in the dream and to reveal the internal and external articulations of the dreamer's world. "Boss's method is simply, to let the dream phenomena unfold,

to allow them to tell their own story" (1977, p. xiii). So the interpreter needs no esoteric knowledge about symbolic representations or a mass of theoretical preconceptions. He only needs to be able to see very clearly and accurately, what is true, in the dream itself. In fact, one does not correctly speak of interpreting the dream but rather of *reading* it.

But this does not mean that the dream phenomena are approached as spectral reproductions of waking life, only in a smaller, shorter version. Nor can they be judged in the same unchallenged light of waking reality. Boss repeatedly emphasizes that waking and dreaming are autonomous modes of existence and as such, cannot be reducible one to the other. The two modes of being are linked together by the continuity of the dreamer's life history but each exists as either the dreaming or the waking of the dreamer at that particular time (Boss 1977). In trying to understand the dream experience it is not the etiology or motive behind the dream entity that is important, but rather the nature of the dream phenomena themselves. It is the entities that emerge that are important, and not where they arise from. The existence of these entities is unequivocal and, as Boss says

"there is no shining forth and thus no becoming present, no being at all, where there is not primordially also a shining in the form of an open, lucid realm of perceptivity into which all shining forth being can present themselves" (1977, p. 153).

In order for the entities to exist, man has to perceive them. Any subjective interpretation of the dream phenomena and any projection

of the dreamer's psychic content onto these phenomena is not really considering the phenomena. It is assuming that the dream takes place in the dreamer's psyche or brain.

In order to better understand this approach Kruger (1982) suggests that we need to answer three questions, namely:

- a) What does it mean to be human;
- b) What is the world in which we live;
- c) What is the dream? (p. 162)

The answer to the first question, Kruger tells us, is that man is not an encapsulated being but is "always out there in the world" (Kruger, 1982, p. 162) "Man does not simply think but thinks about something; he does not simply love but loves someone and is not simply joyful but is joyful about something. "He is a being with the fellow men and things of his world" (p. 162).

The answer to the second question concerning what the world is, to the Daseinsanalyst it is a meaningful structure, not merely crude materiality. The thing, the animal, the man, the world appear to us in and as a context of meanings. We do not, or must not look for what lies behind the thing.

Thirdly, the dream is "a way in which we exist in the world" (p. 163). We are present to the world and in the world when we dream and it is as valid as waking life.

Waking and dreaming are then two ways in which one and the same human existence are fulfilled, the two modes belonging together in that one existence. Even in dreaming one's historical continuity exists, although in the dream there exist beings and entities which may not exist in waking life. Dreams share basically the same characteristics as waking life and this is why one experiences oneself as a human being when dreaming and not as a "mere dreamer" (Boss, 1977, p. xvi).

A fundamental difference between the modes of waking and of dreaming, according to Boss (1977) is the limitations of the dream existence. Compared to waking life, the dream existence is limited in freedom of thought, movement and existence in time and space. And dream entities are transient and changeable. Another difference (Boss, 1957) is that in the dream we do not continue tonight where we left off last night. In waking life existence is of course, continuous. Thirdly, everything in the dream is immediately sensed, usually visually, "which is in sharp contradistinction to the thematic perception and recognition of the basically immaterial and unobjectifiable possibilities of human beings in their encounters with the world" (Kruger, 1982, p. 163). A fourth difference is that the dream "reveals existential possibilities in a non-personally owned manner" (Kruger, 1982, p. 163). This means that the dream makes known the existential possibilities which are not clear or known to the dreamer in his waking state. A final difference is that the dreamer may not be his waking age in the dream. In other

words there may be a "temporal foreshortening" (Kruger, 1982, p. 163) and the Da-sein does not extend itself, time-wise.

The sameness but fundamental difference between waking and dreaming is the basis for Medard Boss's approach to dream explication. Reading a dream phenomenologically presents one with condensed images of the dreamer's life situation at that given time, and also accurately reflects any changes in this situation over time. So the dreams can be used to gauge the dreamer's progress in therapy. One can often detect themes in the dreams over time and also a progressive sequence. And when the behavioural indications of waking life are unclear, contradictory or unknown, the dreams often reveal any potential for forward movement (Boss, 1957).

Boss does not rule out the use of some translation of dream language but he insists that it must be minimal. The dream texts must not be manipulated too much and the dream imagery must be very carefully transposed into more inclusive existential statements (Boss, 1977). One gently makes the dream speak. And if this is properly done it confronts the dreamer with existential tasks which he cannot ignore and he may not have heeded in waking life. The dream is important because it not only reveals what is hidden from one's waking perception but it also enacts it with clear gestures. It calls the dreamer, not only to take notice of specific tasks, but to act on that calling. Boss (1977) refers to the dream as being a "leading indicator" that can foretell psychic developments

before they occur in waking life. Potentialities not yet realized are often first realized in a dream. Deeply buried and, as yet, alien modes of behaviour can be made known before the dreamer allows them to emerge in his waking life.

1.3 WORKING WITH THE DREAM

The therapist encourages the patient to visualize the dream entities and to describe them in minute detail. He is also asked to recall how he responded to these entities and what they, in turn, communicated to him. This helps one to very clearly apprehend more of the dream without any attempt at interpretation or placing of meanings on the dream phenomena. "None of the significance inhering in the dream entities needed a "dream interpreter" to classify them as "unconscious", "symbolic" productions of a separate component of the human "psyche" (Boss, 1977, p. 167). There is also no need to transform the dream phenomena into what they "really" mean or to defer to mythology. There is a wealth of meaning inherent in each dream phenomenon and these are not elaborations of archetypal forces acting out of a psychological collective unconscious as Jung theorized. There is also no evidence to support that the emotions experienced by the dreamer in the dream are "a universal human dilemma ..." (Boss, 1977, p. 168). The emotions are in fact highly personal in nature. In fact the nature of the dream and its therapeutic message will emerge without any of the trappings of mythology and folklore and without any knowledge of primitive

psychology or comparative religion. No preconceived theories and no doctrines of the "psyche" are required (Boss, 1977).

Although symbolism is not part of this form of dream explication, often the dream entity needs to be looked at from the perspective of what it means to man, or more particularly, what it means to the dreamer in question. The example that Boss gives (1977) is one of human hair and what it would mean to discover that one is bald in a dream. Hair is not simply a cuticular physical appendage on the human head but it holds the significance of being human and has the connotations of "crowning glory" and adornment. Much time and money is spent, especially by women, on their hair, so it holds an importance as far as one's erotic attractiveness is concerned. And in the case of a male it may have connotations of sexual potency and physical prowess. Phenomenologically hair on the head of a human being belongs very much to the body and therefore also to the "bodyhood" or the "bodying" of human existence (Boss, 1977, p. 158). As such hair is related to the behavioural possibilities of human existence. The loss of one's hair is therefore experienced as an existential deterioration, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the existential health of the patient.

Daseinsanalytic questioning appeals to the patients' greater awareness and perceptivity in the waking than the dreaming state. In his dreaming state he may only perceive the phenomena of the dream from the sensually perceptible presence of concrete things

and events. Upon waking, and upon being carefully questioned, he may perceive an essential meaningfulness of the behavioral possibilities of his immaterial existence. Nothing can be in the dream unless there exists an available realm of perceptive openness where it may appear (Boss, 1977). The task of the therapist is to aid the dreamer in discovering the possible potentials of the phenomena for his own existence.

1.4 THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

As mentioned above, the dream often reveals a potential for forward movement. Potentialities or possibilities which are either too deeply buried in the unconscious or which the dreamer has until now refused to acknowledge, are often revealed in the dream.

"The condensed, limpid poetry of the dream state, if allowed to prevail, confronts us, ineluctably with existential tasks we have not sufficiently heeded in waking life" (Boss, 1977, p. xvii).

The dream not only shows one a hidden agenda, but enacts it. By using a phenomenological or Daseinsanalytic approach the meanings of the vivid gestures in the dream become meaningful.

Boss used the dream as a "leading indicator" (1977, p. vxiii) to foretell psychic developments which have not yet been manifested in the dreamer's life. The dreamer often encounters these potentialities in the dream as a person he is unable to identify or in events in which he fails to participate. A skilled therapist may

be able to aid the dreamer to become aware of the possibilities of his existence buried within him. The revelations occurring as a result of the dream phenomena can be astounding and can have a cataclysmic impact on the dreamer's life and his way of being in the world. He can be led by the dream to a freer use of inherent, but as yet unrealized, behavioral possibilities.

If one studies the phenomenological understandings provided for each dream related in this study one will see that a great deal of information could be given to the dreamer about his dream. However, it is interesting to note that Boss chooses to ignore certain aspects of the dream and to highlight others. He carefully looks for what the dream is inviting the dreamer to be or to do and gently provides this suggestion for the dreamer. He frees the dreamer of superfluous phenomena and focuses on the possibilities being called forth.

A good example is provided by Boss himself (1977, p. xii). A young man related a dream in which the fiancée of a friend of his had died of cancer which shocked and saddened him. In waking life the dreamer had felt distant from this friend since he had become engaged. A Freudian analyst interpreted this dream as an expression of an unconscious death wish towards the woman who had caused a rift in his friendship with her fiancée. This interpretation had no therapeutic effect on the dreamer. At a later date, when this dream was related to Boss, what seemed important to him was the fact that

the friend's engagement had attuned the dreamer to the theme of a loving commitment. In the dream he was able to vicariously partake of an intimate, loving relationship by allowing into the dream a close friend in such a relationship. With the death of the woman, this relationship dies and becomes merely a memory. Although this is only part of the total dream related by the dreamer, Boss was able to aid him in becoming aware of his inability to commit himself to a loving relationship with a woman although he needed and longed for this. The death of the woman was not interpreted as an unconscious death wish and, infact the dreamer's feelings of shock and sadness were accepted as genuine sorrow.

When a dream is read phenomenologically poetically condensed images of the dreamer's life situation at that time are presented, giving clear signs of the behavioral indications being called for in waking life. Boss warns against making large inductive leaps which only serve to confuse by bringing in irrelevant facts. His approach is to highlight the existential condition of the dreamer and in the most direct manner, to explode the "private myths and parasitic life-lies sapping the persons being" (1977, p. xvii). The meanings of the dream gestures become clearly apparent when one uses this approach and learns "to read the signature of things" (p. xviii).

CHAPTER TWO

2,1 METHODOLOGY

The aims of this study are best fulfilled using the case study method. The case study method will be discussed, with the intention of demonstrating the appropriateness of this method for the task of Daseinsanalytic dream explication. A paper by Edwards (1990) entitled *Case Study Research Method*, which provides a thorough and explicit understanding of the case study method will be the main source of information used to illustrate why this method was deemed the most appropriate for the explication of the subject under discussion.

The term "case study" is defined by Mitchell (1983, p. 192) as

"a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principle ... A case study is essentially heuristic, it reflects in the events portrayed features which may be construed as a manifestation of some general abstract theoretical principle".

Bromley (1986) defines a psychological case study as

"an account of a person in a situation" which "usually deals with a relatively short self-contained episode or segment of a person's life" (p. 1)

This definition determines that a case study is carried out within

a context of existing knowledge and circumstances. It is limited in scope so is selective in that it addresses certain issues and ignores others.

Edwards (1990) argues that qualitative methods often stay closer to the empirical world than quantitative methods where personal experience is often distorted by operational definitions or experiential manipulation.

He agrees with Barlow (1981, p. 147) that "Clinical research has little or no influence on clinical practice".

The emphasis on quantitative experimental designs is inappropriate and of little value to the practising clinician. The clinician generally does not find research findings useful because the findings usually relate to groups rather than to the individual.

Kruger (1986, p. 199) expresses a similar view when he says

"In contrast to the highly intuitive insights of the founders of psychotherapy, psychotherapy research tends to involve persistent and excruciating attempts to objectify and quantify experiential and behavioral data in order to isolate variables which supposedly would make up what psychotherapy is".

This thinking has lead researchers to increasingly recognize the importance of the case study method as an alternative foundation of knowledge.

Edwards (1990) proposes that the practitioner or clinician can, in

fact, be the researcher himself because, as a psychotherapist he is "inevitably engaged in a scientific endeavour" (p. 7).

He has access to the fundamental data about the life and unique individual experiences of the patient which are seldom, if ever, verbalized in any other setting and not easily accessed by questionnaires or one-off interviews conducted for research purposes. Also, theory can be developed and tested within the context of psychotherapy in which case conceptualization, together with supervision and other forms of professional discussion, are used to further the therapist's knowledge.

Within the process of therapy the therapist is making clinical decisions and therapeutic interventions which require the use of criteria much the same as the researcher uses in the development of her research. The therapist should continually be using what knowledge she has of the patient in order to systematically analyse further information obtained. Edwards (1990) quotes Hayes (1981, p. 194) "... good practising clinicians are already doing evaluation of potential scientific value with most clients they see".

In contrast to most experimental methods, however, the case study is idiographic, examining individual cases in depth. Another difference is that the case study method of research does not use statistical inferences. Validity has to be established by logical

means, termed "analytic generalization" by Yin (1964) and "analytic induction" by Mitchell (1983) (Edwards 1990, p. 12).

The case study researcher does not assume that the case under investigation is typical or conditionate but he can "generalize from individual cases ... by experimental methods of enquiry" (Bromley, 1986, p. 286).

The essential qualities of the case under investigation are opened up, hoping to gain new insights into a particular theory or theoretical construct. Initially a few cases are examined and a tentative outline of a theory or model develops. As new cases are examined the concepts, distinctions and principals of the first cases are tested and perhaps modified or even rectified, or used to establish the proposed hypothesis. Eventually sufficient cases will have been examined so as to have adequately tested the hypothesis in order to formulate the construct. Thus the legitimacy of the case study method is substantiated. It is systematic in its gleaning of material and evidence. The case study provides a framework of understanding from which may be gathered an explanation. As Shapiro (1986, p. 172) points out in Edwards (1990, p. 16) it is our very involvement in the human realm which makes possible an understanding between the object of knowledge and the investigator.

Edwards (1990) proposes that there are basically four types of case

studies. They are conceived to be points on a continuum, rather than exclusive categories. A brief description of each type will be given before discussing the present study.

a) **Exploratory - descriptive case studies.**

This type of case study is, in essence, exploratory and provides a rich and accurate description of an individual case. It does not serve to draw out general principles. The focus is not on developing a new theory or testing an existing theory, but rather on opening an in-depth understanding of concepts as yet only superficially known.

b) **Descriptive - dialogue case studies.**

Although this type of case study also relies on description of a phenomenon, the difference is that it is based on existing theory. It provides an informal test of a specific theory or tests whether conceptualizations are adequately defined.

c) **Theoretical - heuristic case studies.**

This type of case study aims to test existing theory in a more rigorous manner. It is a move from the less formal descriptive dialogue to a more formal heuristic type of study. Obviously cases which are likely to be revealing have to be selected in the context of the theoretical goals of the study.

d) **Crucial or test case studies.**

In this type of case study the process of rigorous theoretical testing is taken even further. The case is selected in order to provide an essential or crucial test of a particular theoretical proposition. The case selected has to provide the researcher with a convincing argument that the theory is falsified if the case fails to support it. The theory being tested must obviously be well developed and operationalized.

The study under discussion falls within the descriptive-dialogue case study type. The basis of this description will consist of an attempt to ascertain the value of Medard Boss's theory concerning Daseinsanalytic dream explication to demonstrate what is being called forth in the patient. The challenge will be to assume an objective stance and to provide a faithful description of the case material so as to ensure the validity of the results obtained.

2.2 VALIDITY

Bromley (1986, p. 24) cites six rules to follow in the preparation of a psychological case study in order to ensure validity. These are:

- 1) The investigation must report only the truth concerning the person. All facts about his life and circumstances must be accurate.

- 2) The aims and objectives of the study must be unambiguously and clearly stated.
- 3) An assessment must be made of the extent to which these aims and objectives have been achieved. Any factors which have prevented attainment of the objectives must be described.
- 4) Systematic, friendly questioning, over a period of time is required in order to obtain information of deep emotional significance. This requires that the investigator be trained and equipped to establish a relationship with the person in order that private thoughts and feelings may be disclosed.
- 5) The person has to be seen in an 'ecological context'. This means that a full account must be given of the objects, persons, and events in his environment, whether they be of physical, social or symbolic significance. The person is studied as an individual in a situation. The person's problems of adjustment (which are usually what are under investigation) are generally associated with basic emotional relationships with other people. The family are usually the most important relationships which influence experiences.
- 6) The case study report should be given in "good plain English". It should be reported in a direct, objective way, without losing the human interest value of the person's story.

Although the person's point of view is reported factually it should be done with sympathy and imagination and due regard should be given to high standards of evidence and argument.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURE

The person presented in this case study was a 23 year old unmarried male who presented with symptoms of severe depression. For reasons of confidentiality all information which may make identification of the person possible have been disguised, changed or omitted. A pseudonym has been used. A release form was signed by him, giving permission for his case to be used for the investigation.

The therapy sessions commenced in August 1990 and terminated in August 1991 with a break from October 1990 - February 1991. For the period August - October 1990 he attended twice a week and from February - August 1991 he attended once a week. Each session was taped-recorded with his permission so that detailed transcriptions could be made and the dreams carefully recorded. The sessions were discussed at regular intervals with a supervisor.

Initially Boss's approach to dream explication will be discussed, outlining his proposal that the dream is demanding that something be manifested concretely in the dreamer's behaviour. A brief outline of the presenting problem and the patient's history will be given in order to provide the reader with a sense of the patient's

existential situation and to make sense of his neurotic symptoms. Each of the dreams related in the therapy sessions will then be discussed in chronological order. This will be done from a Daseinsanalytic perspective, providing a phenomenological understanding of each dream. A possible prospective therapeutic focus will then be given, based on Medard Boss's view that the dream is calling forth possibilities in the patient. In most instances this focus was not effectively employed by the therapist but it will be shown that often the patient became aware of the potentialities himself. Finally, the value of this approach to dream interpretation in psychotherapy will be investigated against the background of the dreams presented.

CHAPTER THREE

3. CASE STUDY

3.1 PRESENTING PROBLEM

Neil was a 23 year old white, single male who was a fulltime university student, studying for his final year towards a Bachelor of Arts degree. He was referred to me in August 1990 after he had approached the Rhodes University Psychology Clinic with the request for psychotherapy after the very recent ending of a long-term relationship.

Neil realized that he had been very dependent in this relationship with Jenny and he was left feeling extremely vulnerable and depressed. He said that he felt very low and extremely unhappy and his appearance bore this out. His movements were slow and he walked with a stoop. He related that he cried a lot lately and often felt irritable. His concentration and motivation had been greatly affected which had resulted in a deterioration in academic results and he found it very difficult to make decisions. He suffered from severe insomnia and awoke early each morning with a depressed mood. His appetite had been only slightly affected and he had lost a little weight. He was concerned about the amount of alcohol that he had consumed as this had increased. He felt constantly tired and suffered a number of minor aches and pains, such as sore eyes and

a feeling of "pressure" in his head. He was not aware of having withdrawn from other people but he felt isolated and "closed in". His self worth was greatly affected and he felt that there was no real purpose to life. He had experienced passive suicidal ideations. His image of his state of the time was "like the bottom of a roller-coaster ride". Neil reported that all of these symptoms had been experienced for about the last six months, during which time his relationship with Jenny had deteriorated. They had all intensified since the break-up of the relationship. However, on further questioning it appeared that Neil had been depressed for a period of at least four years, since failing his first year Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Cape Town in 1985.

Neil said that he had always been a high achiever at school, and failing the first year at UCT as a result of much socializing and very little studying, he had left University, feeling that he was a total failure. He spent the next two years in the army which he related as being "easy" as he had no decisions to make and only had to follow all the rules in order to survive. He became aware of always feeling tired during this period and had little contact with any of his friends from school or university. In 1988 he enrolled at Rhodes University for a Bachelor of Arts Degree. He became aware that "something was wrong" after experiencing extreme examination anxiety at the end of his first year at Rhodes.

Neil related that he felt a great need to find himself. He said "I

am hiding what I am". He also said that he tended to play a passive role in life, just watching and listening and never seeming to make a difference in any situation. He described it as "life passes me by" and how he always "stayed in the shadows" where it was safer. He also said that he "craved" confirmation and affirmation and felt that he did not get it. He often spoke of being unsupported and that this made it difficult for him to venture out. He described himself as "too sensitive" because he had spent too much time with the women in his family, and how he struggled to look after himself.

Neil had become involved with Jenny during his first year at Rhodes. He described her as confident and self-assured with definite ideas about her future. He tended to follow her lead. He said that perhaps he needed too much from her and had not found his own identity in the relationship. He had been "unfaithful" to Jenny by often flirting with other women. He was not sure why he had needed to do this and regretted it deeply and felt very ashamed. He felt that he had "allowed" himself to fail again, this time in his relationship with Jenny.

3.2 HISTORY

3.2.1 FAMILY HISTORY

Neil is one of three children. He has an older brother and a younger sister. Neil described his father as very conservative, a businessman, very decisive and unable to understand Neil. Neil said that there was "something missing" in his relationship with his father as he made Neil feel uncomfortable and unable to be himself. Neil desired a closer relationship with his father and during the period that he was in therapy it seemed that his father was making an effort to get closer to Neil and to understand him.

Neil said that he was a lot closer to his mother. She was described as "pessimistic" and not very confident. "She cares but doesn't know how to show it". Neil felt that neither of his parents really supported him or tried to understand him. He also said that he felt deprived of affection and would love to be hugged by his parents when he returned home on vacation from university, but never was.

Neil's brother was described by him as "a grabber" and "a no good". He had always taken more than his fair share of everything, including what love and affection there was, and Neil felt that he had been further deprived due to his brother's greediness. He felt this especially in relation to his father to whom his brother was a lot closer. Neil's brother and his father shared an interest in

sports and Neil often felt excluded. He seemed that Neil had always tried to make up for his brother's inadequacies by being a high achiever at school and an obedient, quiet, passive child. At one stage in the therapy Neil was able to express a previously suppressed anger at his brother and to eventually say that he would like him out of his life.

Neil had been a lot closer to his sister who was training as a nurse, but this relationship had also deteriorated in recent years. His life at home was described as lonely, where he felt that everyone was too busy to be interested in him. He felt "unimportant" and even invisible at times. He said that his experiences were always negated by his family.

3.2.2 PERSONAL HISTORY

Neil could relate very little about his infancy and early childhood except that he was apparently an extremely "good" baby who seldom cried and who was never ill.

He had close friends throughout his school years and was still in contact with a few of them. He felt inadequate in relation to those who had completed degree courses or who had established careers, so tended not to seek them out when home from university. He also envied their plans to travel and at one point in the therapy said that he felt like dropping out and going with them.

He had no academic problems at school and obtained a C aggregate Senior Certificate. It was therefore a tremendous shock for him and for his parents when he failed his first year at university. After two years in the army, completing his compulsory military training, he came to Rhodes University, unsure of what path to follow in his career. Now, having nearly completed a Bachelor of Arts degree he was questioning the future, undecided about whether to study or to venture out into the commercial world. But he felt unready for the later and afraid of not succeeding.

His relationship with Jenny had become suffocating for him during the previous year and he had felt that he needed to "get out" on his own. So he ended the relationship 6 months before coming in to therapy. But he felt very alone and wanted to be back with Jenny. Although they continued to see each other, the relationship had deteriorated as Jenny was unhappy and began to "drift away" from him. He felt extremely vulnerable, lonely and hurt. Eventually Jenny had ended the relationship, leaving Neil feeling devastated and in need of help. This is what brought him to the Psychology Clinic. He said he felt that he could no longer move and was up against a brick wall.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. THE DREAMS

I shall consider each dream in the chronological order in which they were dreamt, not necessarily in the order in which they were related in the therapy sessions. I shall give an outline of the context of each dream, including any discussion related to the dream and shall then offer a phenomenological understanding of each dream. Lastly, I shall propose a prospective therapeutic focus for each dream from the perspective of Boss and shall include any interventions that could have been made and were not.

Firstly a tabular listing of the dreams is given as follows:

| Chronological order | Dream Title | Page | Therapy Session |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------|--------------------|
| 1 | Fear of Michael | 30 | 4 |
| 2 | All-powerful mother | 33 | 3 |
| 3 | Throwing stones at a car | 35 | 4 |
| 4 | Surfing | 37 | 4 |
| 5 | Battle at sea | 39 | 5 |
| 6 | Fight with brother | 40 | 13 |
| 7 | Fight with guy in res | 42 | 19 |
| 8 | Gangsters plotting | 44 | 31 |

4.1 FEAR OF MICHAEL (Session 4)

The dream: We were socializing somewhere. Michael and I had our arms around each other's shoulders. Then the dream changed. I decided to go and visit Jenny. Michael and Jenny were lying together, intimately, not sexually though. I was standing apart. I was horrified. I slapped the joined hands of Michael and Jenny. I walked out and went to my room. I played loud music and was packing, or getting ready to go out. I returned to Jenny's room. They were still lying together. It was too much to handle. I kept trying to tell Jenny how I loved her. She had no sympathy. I couldn't understand and didn't know how to deal with it.

Then it's the next day, I'm at home. The family are there. My father has just come home from work. I'm still upset. I looked for Jenny and found her writing a note. I went outside. She then made a joke about the previous night - it was 3am so they couldn't have spent the night together. She suggested we each run around as we like with other partners. I said this was not acceptable, that I loved her. Then I woke up. I felt troubled. I found I had an erection and wondered why.

THE CONTEXT OF THE DREAM

This dream was related at the end of the fourth session but it had been dreamt and recorded by Neil some time in the recent past, before entering therapy. The man in the dream, Michael, was in waking life, in the journalist department at university with Jenny and Neil said that he felt threatened by him in relation to Jenny as Michael was more like Jenny than he was. He said "Michael is everything that I am not. He's motivated and self-confident". In fact, Neil gave the title to this dream himself. At the time that Neil dreamt this dream Jenny was "moving away" and his relationship with her was breaking up.

After Neil had related the dream we discussed Michael in the dream. Neil said that he was likeable, open, not devious. Upon reflection Neil said that the dream was like his relationship with Jenny. He wants her, leaves her, then returns and is confused and hurt. The panic he felt in the dream on seeing Jenny with Michael was like the panic he felt when intimate with her; he always felt he had to run. In the relationship he felt that he was always "trying to keep up" with Jenny.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

The initial setting is one of congeniality with Neil and Michael behaving in a very familiar manner with each other. There is close contact with a man whom Neil admires and with whom Neil would like

to identify.

Then Michael becomes the threatening figure in relation to Neil's relationship with Jenny, that he is in waking life. Neil feels powerless and confused and acts in an effectual way by slapping the hands of the other two people. This is not the sort of behaviour that one would expect from a man upon finding his lover with another man. In waking life Neil admits that he avoids conflict and is afraid of confrontation. This bears out his feelings about being unmanly. He is not in charge of the relationship with Jenny. She has the power. He feels impotent and can do nothing which will change the situation. This epitomizes Neil's way of being in the world, where he never seems to make a difference to anything. He then leaves Jenny's room, turning away from the conflict with which he is unable to deal. In his own room he plays loud music in order to drown out the feelings of impotence and frustration. And, although he returns to face the situation which causes him pain, he is yet unable to do anything to change it.

The last section of the dream finds Neil returning to his family home, like a little boy looking for understanding and affection. But it is like his waking life, no one in the family appears to become involved in his emotional turmoil. So he looks for Jenny, his only source of nurturance, and even she turns from him by making light of her infidelity and suggesting a non-committed relationship between them. Although Neil protests against this in

the dream, he awakes to find himself sexually aroused. This may suggest his ambivalence again in his relationship with Jenny.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

If we look at the beginning of the dream we see that Neil is being called to be like Michael, the man whom he perceives as self-confident and all that he would like to be. And Michael prevents him from having access to Jenny in the dream. He is being called by Michael to compete. A question that could have been asked of Neil is, "I wonder whether you feel up to or ready to compete with Michael? In the dream you walked away from the possible competition, returned and were still unable to actively participate. I wonder whether you are still too ambivalent to take up the challenge?" In this way Neil could be made aware that he has the means to be like Michael but is not yet ready to reveal them.

4.2 ALL-POWERFUL MOTHER (Session 3)

The dream: I think I've dreamt this before. This one was about two months ago. It was my mother but she had both female and male genitals. (Neil was unable to provide any details of the dream.)

THE CONTEXT OF THE DREAM

This dream had been dreamt about six weeks prior to entering therapy. At that time he had been very unhappy in his ambivalent relationship with Jenny. He wanted to end the relationship as he

perceived himself to be too dependent on her, and yet there was a longing to be with her. In the session he related how he had felt very confused upon seeing Jenny the previous day, and later in the session, how he felt he lacked "manliness" as he had spent too much time with his mother whilst growing up. He described himself as "weak, a coward" and "non-assertive". Neil was able to link his own feelings of inadequacy as a man to this dream.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

This dream reveals something about Neil's relationship with his mother. The mother figure has not only her own female power, but also the power that Neil perceives to be lacking in himself. He had said that he felt unmanly because he had spent too much time in her company. Perhaps there is a sense of being deprived of his manly attributes by his relationship with her.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

This dream is telling Neil to look at his relationship with his mother. It is saying to him "I want to tell you something about your mother". It seems that she leaves no room for Neil's father by embodying both male and female qualities. Neil could have been asked "Could it be that the dream is telling you something about your mother that you have to deal with?"

In this way Neil could be guided to explore his relationship with his mother which he was generally very vague about. It seems that

this relationship is an important aspect of his inability to stand alone.

4.3 THROWING STONES AT A CAR (Session 4)

The dream: I was walking on a road near campus with two friends (upon questioning he said they were both male). I'm not sure who they were. They decided to throw stones at a car or something. I remember they did it - I didn't, but I was with them so was implicated. I ducked behind some bushes or something. The car went past. Next thing I got up and just ran, across through Eden Grove (on campus) or somewhere, away from the two friends.

Then we were in town. The car that had had stones thrown at it passed and this guy driving recognized me or something. He was like speaking to us but I think he was addressing me. I was thinking "he's recognized me. Why did I get up and run away?" Then I tried to rationalize to myself that I didn't physically take part.

THE DREAM CONTEXT

This dream had been dreamt that morning. Neil related how he had had a negative encounter with Jenny, telling her that he did not want to see her again, and how, the following day he had gone to talk to her, telling her how he felt concerning certain issues.

This had resulted in him feeling "good, adult". He said "it was a mature thing to do. I had to get out of the vulnerable position in relation to her". "I have to start making things work for me". He no longer wanted to "feel guilty and sorry all the time".

When the dream was discussed Neil related how often he felt guilty. He was aware of not being able to make decisions and felt guilty about this, but often the guilt was felt in relation to other people.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

This dream is significant in that it clearly demonstrates Neil's way of being in the world prior to entering therapy. He is with friends who behave in a socially unacceptable and destructive manner. Throwing stones at a car may suggest Neil's deep need to attack the establishment, to break out of his good guy way of being. This issue did eventually arise in therapy (session 34) when he said "something is stirring which wants to be unconventional, to break out". But he only experiences the action vicariously in the dream and as the passive observer has to hide. And he cannot simply walk away. In his guilt he flees, although he has not taken part in the deed. And by running he reveals himself to the driver of the car, so is open to accusation.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

In this dream Neil is taking responsibility for something he did

not do. There is confusion and a split is reflected between the passive observer and the guilty runner who feels he has to flee. Neil could have been asked "Can you begin to see the unfairness in the dream and can you begin to feel it? Maybe you are taking responsibility for things that are not your responsibility, and you end up feeling guilty about this". Neil was aware of how often he felt guilty and this dream is calling him to stop and explore these feelings of guilt. Perhaps he has no need to feel such guilt and can be set free from it.

4.4 SURFING (Session 4)

The dream: This was something about surfing. As I went into the sea the waves like built up. My board smashed on the rocks. I was in the shallows so could run onto the beach. I hoped that the board would be alright but it was in pieces. I remember looking down the beach and there was a bunch of surfers and I said to myself "I don't want to be a surfer any more". I turned my back and walked away.

THE CONTEXT OF THE DREAM

This dream was also dreamt the morning of session 4 so the context was the same as for dream 3. (Throwing stones at a car, p.35).

When asked what he felt about the dream Neil replied that he wondered if the angry sea was indicative of an anger inside

himself. He pondered this for a moment and then said, "I'm angry that I have to be like this. I think, why? I have the right to be happy. I'm a bit angry at the world. At the moment it's more like defiance". When asked about turning his back on surfing in the dream he replied that he wanted to be happy with the person he was, not the person that others expected him to be. After a lengthy silence Neil commented on the "potential in life". He said that he felt he was not yet "up" but that he was definitely starting to feel better. He said that he needed to feel happier about himself.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

This dream tells us something about the movement that is taking place in Neil. The turbulent sea smashes his surfboard, making it difficult for him to venture into the sea. He is not pleased about this but then, upon seeing the other surfers on the beach, he decides to abandon surfing altogether. This suggests a separation, perhaps from always being simply a member of the crowd. He is now able to positively stand alone. There is a strength demonstrated in doing so and a sense of anger.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

This dream seems to be supporting Neil in his anger "at the world" and is giving him permission to be angry and not just defiant as he related. He could have been helped in this by saying something like, "After trying to surf with the others you finally wondered

whether you actually wanted to be part of the surfing scene. Why not listen to the anger about not wanting to surf. Can you begin to feel that anger?" He could have been affirmed in his desire and need to separate, to draw boundaries and to finally be his own person.

4.5 BATTLE AT SEA (Session 5)

The dream: I was on the beach with Jenny. I was looking at the water. A long, beautiful wave, a perfect tube came rolling down. Then the tide seemed to come in. I had to climb up a dune. The next thing a war was raging out on the water, cannons shooting at each other. There were people up there watching with me. (Jenny was reported as "kind of lost after a while" upon questioning.) There was no panic. I was quite calm and not surprised at the things that were happening. I wasn't afraid. I was interested in what was going on. It was like a dream state.

THE CONTEXT OF THE DREAM

This dream was dreamt that morning. Neil had spoken at length about his indecision about the future. He felt he has not, as yet, ready to go out into the world alone and to earn a living. He said that he needed "time to find" himself without the pressure of the commercial world. He also spoke of time passing him by. However, he also reported feeling a lot less depressed.

He spoke of how alone he had felt after failing his first year at UCT, with no one to depend on. He said he felt quite alone at present and without support and how difficult this was for him in decision making. However, he felt better about himself and was aware of having "put things off" for too long and that he had to "tackle" things now.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

This dream appears to be linked to the previous one (Surfing, p.37). Neil has been able to climb upwards and to distance himself from the engulfing water. It seems that he has finally managed to take a stand and to say "No" to being a part of it. It is interesting and holds his attention, but he is not involved in it.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

It seems that this dream is telling Neil that he is capable of standing apart from the crowd. For the first time he is able to see the battle and not feel called to take part. In order to give this even more of a positive focus the therapist could have said, "Isn't it a relief to see that you have the time and the space, that life is not simply passing you by. Can you begin to feel the nourishment achieved in distancing yourself from the crowd?"

4.6 FIGHT WITH BROTHER (Session 13)

The dream: I've had dreams recently of fighting my brother, both physically and verbally. It felt good. I've

had enough. I stood up to him. It seemed quite easy.

THE CONTEXT OF THE DREAM

Neil spoke about feeling more self-assured lately and how difficult it was to "get the unknown into the open". He had heard that a female friend had gossiped about him and was prepared to confront her which he would not have done before. He said that he was "tired of not being totally honest". He had allowed himself to be dominated by others and always felt guilty in a conflict situation, as if he deserved to be punished. (This is evident in the dream **Throwing stones at a car**, p.35)

After relating the dream Neil agreed that he would like some of the love and attention that his brother had always seemed to grab away from him. He said he had always had difficulty standing up to him. In the dream it seemed quite easy and it seemed now that there was a possibility of doing so. He commented on the "wrestle going on inside" of him.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

This is a very positive dream. The distancing in the previous dream (**Battle at sea**, p.40) gave him the courage to begin the fight to be himself and to claim what is rightfully his. In fighting the greedy brother he is making himself known and he finds in this dream that it is not impossible.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

This is a celebratory dream. It confirms Neil in his battle to be his true self. It felt good and something new was happening for him. He could have been affirmed in this by saying, "You are beginning to reclaim what is rightfully yours and you find you are up to it. Can you feel how good that feels?"

4.7 FIGHT WITH GUY IN RES (Session 19)

The dream: I was fighting with a guy in res. I don't know why it was him. We get on ok (in waking life). I like him.

When asked to describe this man Neil said, "Tall, blondish, a lot like me in looks. It's strange, I was punching him and the blows were not affecting him but he wasn't able to hit me back".

THE CONTEXT OF THE DREAM

This was the last session of the year and Neil was still unsure of his acceptance to read for a law degree the following year, so this was taken to be the termination session. In the previous session he had spoken of a need to "go it alone". In this session he appeared angry. At first he voiced it as frustration, but later agreed that he was indeed very angry, but he was not sure why. He said. "It feels like it's trying to break out or something". He also said that he was tired of being "tied down" and that he wanted to be himself. It's like an energy ... a force", he said. He felt ready

to fight against the "old pattern" of being.

When asked about terminating therapy Neil said that it would be "lonely" and that this concerned him, but he saw it as a challenge, an opportunity to do things on his own. The silences in the session were now a good, relaxing time for him where as they had previously been a very uncomfortable experience.

On exploration of the dream Neil said that it would be a relief to get angry and to let the energy out, even if it was not all good. But it was difficult for him to get in touch with it. Neil described the mood of the dream as "strange" because "I didn't feel angry or aggressive and wasn't getting hurt by the punches".

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

This dream appears to be about Neil fighting with someone a lot like himself. The man with whom he fights is described by Neil as looking a lot like him and is someone whom he likes.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

From this dream Neil can be made aware that he is able to express anger without being hurt, or hurting the other. The therapist could have decatastrophised Neil's depressive anxiety by pointing out to him that the dream seems to be telling him that he seems to be willing to fight and there is a sense that the fight will not lead to destructive conclusions. He could have been asked, "I wonder

if this is an interesting thing for you to discover?" He needed to consider the possibility that he could release the "something" inside him that was struggling to get out without destroying the other.

4.8 GANGSTERS PLOTTING (Session 31)

The dream: I overheard some gangsters plotting and was afraid. Then they caught me and I was no longer afraid. They cut my arm open and started to put white powder I thought was cocaine, into the wound. There was no blood.

THE CONTEXT OF THE DREAM

Neil had been diagnosed as suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) after session 24. He had spoken at length about the physical and psychological effects of ME on him. He was angry, frustrated and afraid because it is still such a mysterious disease. At times he was very depressed and lacked energy, and was concerned that he was blaming the ME when in fact he was perhaps simply making excuses for his lack of motivation. At the beginning of session 31 he related that his doctor had prescribed Prozac without informing him what it was. He had since discovered that it is an antidepressant and he was angry that it had not been discussed with him first.

Later in the session, after relating the dream Neil told how he had

very recently taken part in the elections for the university students council. This entailed making a public speech and being questioned in front of an audience. Although he had not won a place on the council, he had felt it to be a very positive move. He had felt exposed, but for the first time this had not been a frightening experience. As a child he had always wanted to be part of a group in order to be able to "hide" in it, so being exposed as he was in the student council elections was a new experience for him.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

In the dream Neil is initially a hidden observer of the supposedly threatening things of life and he is afraid of being seen by the gangsters. But once he is taken by them he is no longer afraid. Once the unknown becomes known it is no longer something to fear. Even having his arm cut open is not painful or frightening and there is no blood. It is evident that Neil is beginning to come out of the shadows of living and to make himself visible as he had recently done in waking life. However, there is still an element of the unknown. The white powder put into the wound by the gangsters is thought to be cocaine and to Neil the drug is an unknown entity, the effects of which he is unsure.

THE PROSPECTIVE THERAPEUTIC FOCUS

In the *Throwing stones at a car* dream (p.35) and the *Fight with brother* dream (p.40), there is evidence of qualities which had not

yet been given a space in Neil's life, such as defiance, assertiveness and the ability to fight for his rights. In this dream he is taken captive and it seems that he does not have to fight. Being exposed is not as frightening as he imagined it to be. Neil is being called to live in the light, to take chances with the unknown (the powder) and to take on more fully his potential as a man. The therapist may have provoked Neil to explore the possibilities of this dream by saying, "It seems that once you faced the gangsters and were taken by them, then what you were running from was not as frightening as you had thought".

4.9 GENERAL DISCUSSION

A definite progression can be seen in the dreams, relating to Neil's way of being in the world and how this changes during the course of therapy. When Neil entered therapy he was severely depressed and described himself as unmanly, a coward and lacking in assertiveness. The first dream (p.30) evidences that, although Neil has the resources to be the kind of man he admires, he is as yet too ambivalent to take up the challenge. The dream about his mother (p.33) was, unfortunately not explicated phenomenologically at the time of them being related, and it is therefore unclear how it would fit into the progression of the dreams. However, had Neil been made aware that he was being asked by the dreams to explore his relationship with his mother, it may have become evident how this relationship had, and still was influencing his inability to

stand alone.

In the dream about throwing stones at a car (p.35) in session 4, Neil is being called to take note of how he takes responsibility for things he should not feel responsible for and how this eventuated in feelings of guilt. He needed to be aware of how unfair this was so that he could break the "old pattern".

The dreams about fighting are significant as they show a progression of their own. They begin when Neil starts to talk about the changes taking place in him and in his behaviour. He had started to believe in himself and voiced a desire that others should believe in him as well. In the first fighting dream (p.37) Neil is being given permission to be angry and to be separate from the crowd. He had said that he had always hidden in the shadows and had related how he wanted to be able to stand apart from others who always took the lead. He had become aware that in order to live life more fully he had to do so alone. Shortly after this, we see in the Battle at sea dream (p.39) that he is able to distance himself and to lift himself to a higher plane. He no longer feels compelled to take part in the "battle" with everyone else. He can stand apart and observe without being engulfed by it.

Soon after entering therapy the depression that Neil had experienced had lifted, but after the fifth session (Battle at sea dream), he again experienced severe depression, with feelings of

helplessness and vulnerability. He described it as "floundering". It was not until a few weeks later that he dreamt the **Fight with brother** dream (p.40). He was fighting the greedy brother at last, reclaiming what was rightfully his and "it felt good". The battle to be his true self had truly begun. The next dream (p.42) is perhaps linked to the previous one as it is also in some ways a celebratory dream. Neil is being made aware that his terror of destroying the other can be decatastrophised. It shows him that he can be angry without being destructive. Neil was beginning to evidence this anger in his life and to confront rather than to retreat into the shadows.

In the last dream (p.44) Neil is called to live life out of the shadows. He is told by the dream that living in the light as his true self will not be as frightening as he fears. It affirms him as someone who can make it on his own.

In a later session, after sitting in silence for a long time, Neil suddenly smiled and said, "It's strange, I have a feeling that someone cares and I think that someone is me". But he was still unsure of the path ahead and spoke of his continued need to withdraw into the shadows or the wings, instead of being out on the stage of life.

Unfortunately Neil terminated therapy after 37 sessions, having decided to leave university. He had found that the ME was taking

its toll and was affecting his ability to study. But there was a sense that he wanted out because he was not happy in his career choice and was still very undecided about the future. He had made the decision to leave on his own and had avoided asking other people, including his parents, for their opinions. He described the ME as "millions of microbes, crawling around in my head" and that the disease was like a prison sentence. He felt that he had to go home and rest in order to "serve the sentence".

CHAPTER 5

5. AN EVALUATION OF MEDARD BOSS'S APPROACH TO DREAM EXPLICATION.

5.1 Introduction

In order to investigate the value of Medard Boss's approach to dream explication, the discussion will focus on the degree to which his concept was employed that the dream is asking for something to be made concretely manifest in the dreamer's behaviour. To demonstrate this the case material will be discussed against the dreamer's subjective experience of his existential condition and whether any changes were reflected in this condition over time. The question will be asked whether the dreams have a hermeneutic value in the progress of therapy, and, more importantly for the sake of this investigation, whether the dreams reflected the changes in the dreamer's waking life.

5.2 The dreamer's subjective experience

Neil's subjective experience before and upon entering therapy was one of being weak and unmanly. He felt that he was ineffectual and not really living life, rather observing it from the sidelines. The situations which appeared in the first three dreams that he related show a close resemblance to his subjective experience.

In the dream, *Fear of Michael*, Neil is in a conflict situation with a man whom he envies for his masterfulness and self-confidence. The

next dream, All-powerful mother, underlines Neil's experience of himself as lacking in manly attributes. He is aware that his relationship with his mother has somehow influenced his ability to be all that he considers a man should be, including assertive and courageous.

The feelings of guilt that pervaded Neil's existence are evidenced in the dream Throwing stones at a car. He had said that he felt "guilty and sorry all the time" and that he wanted to change this.

These feelings of guilt are related to his inability to stand alone. He felt unsupported and therefore unable to separate from the crowd in which he could simply hide in the shadows. But he longs to be able to draw a boundary between himself and others and to "make a difference" in situations. In the dream about Surfing we see that he begins to move away on his own and in the Battle at sea dream he is able to rise above the experiences of the past and to feel separate and not compelled to be lost as an individual in the crowds of life. He had started to feel more confident and stated that he wanted to be happy with the person he was, and not what others expected him to be. He was optimistic about himself and what he might achieve, and more importantly, he began to experience a pride in himself. He said that he felt "more in control" of situations and that he was able to "set the pace" now for himself.

By the time that Neil related the dreams of Fight with brother he



had spoken of his need to separate from the people in his life who did not believe in him and who could not accept the person he really was, including Jenny. A lot was said about his need for affection and how he tended to look for it in the wrong places, resulting in him being quite promiscuous. He said that the "acid test" of his new-found confidence would be to see how he behaved in relation to his brother. He related that he would like to be able to stand up to him and to no longer allow him to bully him. His brother had always been in the limelight during their school days, whilst Neil quietly stayed in the shadows. Neil also felt that his brother had deprived him of a better relationship with their father because he always "snatched" more than his share.

During this time he also related how "something's changing". He experienced himself as vital and more alive. He felt that he had to be responsible for himself and not expect others to always be there to support him. Life was not so frightening anymore. He felt that he was on the "incline" of the roller-coaster ride and no longer immobilized at the bottom of it.

Before the dream **Fight with guy in res** Neil spoke a lot about how he always tried to please others and how he seldom gave his own opinions for fear of hurting others or of being rejected himself. It seemed that he was saying that he wanted to be different, to be able to be his true self, but wondered if he could. Being aware of it made him begin to feel uncomfortable as the "nice guy". This

tremendous desire to please was related to his feelings of guilt when he thought he had not met the expectations of others. So, to fight with the man who looks a lot like him is a true celebration of his power, without the fear of damaging himself or the other.

Neil re-entered therapy in February 1991 after a four month vacation, feeling far more self-confident. He walked and sat upright now and his speech was less laboured. He realized that he had been playing a role for other people all his life and was confident that he was discovering his true self and was happy with what he had found so far. The last dream **Gangsters plotting** occurred seven months after the **Fight with guy in res** dream. The diagnosis of myalgic encephalomyelitis in the middle of March 1991 seemed to pervade Neil's subjective experience of the last five months of therapy. But there was an underlying sense of strength and well-being. He expressed a lot of anger at the disease and at his treatment in the hands of other people.

5.3 Changes in the dreamer's existential condition

The changes that were related by the dreamer in the therapy session will be discussed, relating them to the possibilities that the dreams were revealing.

In the fourth session in which Neil related the dreams **Throwing stones at a car** and **Surfing**, he told how he had decided to apply

for a wardens post in residence. This was a difficult decision for him to make, especially on his own. He knew that the post would require him to stay in residence, often alone, during some of the vacations and being alone for him was very frightening. He felt that he was "making things work" for himself and not simply taking the easy way out.

In the next session Neil related the Battle at sea dream in which he was moving away from the crowd and able to stand alone. He expressed a lot of anger at Jenny, relating how he had insisted on confronting her after she had made derogatory remarks about him recently. This was a really new experience for him. She was no longer the sole one in the position of power. Neil was claiming some of it for himself. It is felt that, had the All powerful mother dream (p.33) been explicated more accurately and Neil's relationship with his mother explored, that he may have been more able to claim this power, perhaps not at this stage but certainly at a later date. Having argued with Jenny he felt slightly remorseful and said that in the past it was always he that apologised because he felt so guilty. He was determined not to do so this time and remained angry with her. He was sad when he realized that he had finally let go of her but also very relieved. He felt hopeful about being able to be alone now. This shows that, although Neil was not made aware of the possibilities being called forth in the Surfing and Battle at sea dreams, he became aware of his potential to walk alone, to stand apart from others, especially

Jenny. He was aware of his inclination to be dependent and was afraid of entering another relationship like the one with Jenny in which he had become so dependent. This resulted in him dating a number of women and always withdrawing when he felt he might become vulnerable in relation to the woman.

Neil's studies started to improve and he was also more motivated. He was able to spend some time alone without feeling isolated and fearful. But he also began to "invite" others into his life instead of waiting for the invitation from them. He related how he had invited someone to spend time in his home with him during the coming vacation. He said he would never have been able to do this in the past for fear of rejection. There was, however still a sense of not belonging and of having to work at being acceptable. He had always taken a "back seat" and was now striving to be a meaningful member of society.

Before the dream about **Fight with brother** Neil expressed anger, not only towards his brother, but also towards his father. He felt that his father made little effort to hear him or to understand him. He would have liked to be encouraged by him and all he received were "demands and expectations". Perhaps his feelings of neglect had reached his father, because shortly after this his father began to attempt to draw closer to Neil.

He was able to confront someone in a conflict situation and it

resulted in him feeling very good about himself. Although he still experienced a great need to be liked by others, he was able to face the conflict and come out without experiencing feelings of guilt. He also experienced situations in which he could comfortably be the "outsider" in a group without feeling inadequate and alone.

It may be significant that the **Fight with a guy** in res dream was related in the last session of the year when Neil was uncertain about re-entering therapy the next year. The dream was affirming him in his ability to be his true self without damaging or annihilating the other. It is a pity that this was not made known to him because it would probably have been a healthy, positive idea for him to take with him for the vacation.

The fact that there was a four month break in the therapy meant that progress was hampered and having only one session a week for the period February-August 1991 also affected the rate of progress. Neil was generally unsure of his choice of law as a career and did not appear to be stimulated by his studies. The diagnosis of ME also affected the therapeutic progress as it was difficult to assess when Neil was "clinically" depressed and when the symptoms were due to the virus. However, he was able to initiate the inception of a chess club at university, along with a friend and was elected chairman. He also took part in the elections for the students' representative council (as discussed on p.44). These were new experiences for Neil in which, for the first time in his life,

he was exposing himself and standing absolutely on his own.

Neil expressed the concern that the ME was forcing him to retreat, to take a "back seat" again, and this made him angry. He spoke of his need in the past to remain in the shadows in order not to be troublesome for anyone, including his mother. He felt that she had always been unhappy and that somehow he was the reason for it, so had to be obedient and quiet. (This reveals something about the All powerful mother dream.) The idea of hiding in a group no longer appealed to him. He wanted to be out in the world, making a difference if he could. The last dream Gangsters plotting affirms him in his striving to live in the light, telling him that it will not be as frightening as he thinks it will be. This may be the reason why Neil was able to make the decision to drop out of university, but on the other hand, this decision could be perceived as a negative one, a running back into the shadows when the going got too rough for him.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion it is clear that the case material provides unequivocal evidence that Neil's subjective experience and the changes in his existential condition correspond to the context and world-tunement of his dreams. The changes in his existential condition and, more specifically, his behaviour, ideation and mood,

are closely related to the progress evidenced in therapy. Neil entered therapy in a severely depressed mood, having spent his life following the lead of others and living an "invisible" existence. He felt that he was unable to stand alone or to make a meaningful difference to anything in life. He had a low self-esteem and experienced extreme guilt in any conflict situation. He always felt that he had to be what others wanted him to be and to give them what they wanted or needed.

A slow shift in this way of being in the world is evidenced in Neil's ideation, mood and behaviour. He is eventually able to begin to be of significance and to face the conflict areas of life without experiencing guilt. These factors are evidenced in his dreams and it is felt that the progress in therapy would have been enhanced and perhaps increased had the suggested explication of the dreams been used. Neil was seldom made aware of the potentialities evidenced in the dreams, although it appears, in retrospect, that he often seemed to make the shift according to what was being revealed in the dream without the intervention of the therapist. This is particularly evident in the last five dreams after he had dreamt the **Surfing** dream and then dreamt a series of fighting dreams. It seems that he became aware of his need to draw boundaries and to strive to exist in his own power. He had perceived himself to be lacking in the necessary "manly" power and yet he eventually began to experience it. Had the fighting dreams been explicated in the positive, invitational manner suggested in

the prospective focus of each dream, it is felt that Neil would have been encouraged to claim his power earlier and more fully. As it was, he was rather encouraged to "enter the fight" which is exactly what he needed to withdraw from. However, as stated previously, it is surprising how the unconscious so often makes manifest the invitation or calling of the dream to the dreamer, without the therapist's help.

In conclusion, it is justified to state that Boss's method of dream explication is able to illuminate not only significant aspects of the dreamer's existence, but also to make known to the dreamer what he is being called to do, how he needs to change, and what potentialities are available. He is called to become aware of existential behavioral possibilities which are heretofore unknown to the dreamer or which he had been unable to acknowledge. If this method is correctly, gently and carefully employed, it is suggested that the explication of dreams would have not only a hermeneutic value, but would direct the patient and provide him with a new awareness of the possibilities in his existence.

This study is intended to aid the new therapist in his work with dreams. The case study method was considered to be a suitable way of doing this as only one case is required in order to apply Medard Boss's approach to dream explication and to further illustrate how the use of a prospective therapeutic focus of the dream can aid the progress of psychotherapy. It has been shown that the patient's

dreams closely matched both the dreamer's subjective experience and the changes in his existential condition during the course of therapy. What is of significance is that the dreamer became aware of the invitation in most of the dreams without the help of the therapist's explication. It is hoped, however, that this study will encourage the use of a prospective focus for therapy, based on Boss's approach, when working with dreams.

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