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The hermeneutic value of the Daseinsanalytic approach  
to dream interpretation in psychotherapy:  
A case study

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the hermeneutic value of the Daseinsanalytic approach to dream interpretation in the process of psychotherapy.

After delineating the Daseinsanalytic view on dream interpretation, with emphasis on the conceptualization of Medard Boss, the study explores the usefulness and validity of the case study as a method of investigating the content and process of psychotherapy.

A psychodynamic formulation of the presenting problem is based on the conceptualization of the nature and etiology of neurosis as delineated by Andras Angyal, with particular reference to the pattern of non-commitment.

The dreams included in the case material are then examined to determine to what degree they facilitated insight into the subjective experience and phenomenological existence of the dreamer, and what effect the dream interpretation based on the Daseinsanalytic approach had on the process of therapy.

It is established that a phenomenological understanding of the client's dreams corresponds with his subjective experience of his emotional and existential condition, and that positive changes in the content of the dreams during the course of therapy correspond with overt, observable changes in his behaviour, ideation and mood.

Based on these findings, the case study leads to the conclusion that the Daseinsanalytic approach to dream interpretation has hermeneutic value in the process of psychotherapy.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. Introduction

Dreaming is a universal psychical functioning, common to primitive and cultured people alike, and a phenomenon which has fascinated and perplexed humanity since ancient time.

Boss (1957) identifies the oldest dream book extant as a papyrus preserved in the British Museum, which dates back to the 12th Egyptian dynasty, to the years 2000-1790 B.C.

The large library of clay tablets of the last great Assyrian king, Assurbanipal, which was discovered in Nineveh, contained a very comprehensive dream guide, dating as far back as the seventh century B.C. (Boss, 1957).

Over the centuries mankind has accumulated a vast amount of literature on dreams, which represents a great variety of theories and practices by means of which men have attempted to elucidate the inherent meaning they believed to be contained within these mysterious and elusive psychic phenomena, and by means of which they tried to determine the significance it holds for waking life.

The initial belief, which continued for many centuries, was that dreams were of a divine nature, sent down by the gods. This conviction was first questioned in the era of ancient Rome, by a Latin writer Petroneus, who died in the year 66. He maintained that each person makes dreams for himself, and that the mind, when set free in sleep to play unhampered with images, pursues its waking interest (Mégroz, 1939).

Mégroz identifies this statement as the first recorded recognition in dream literature that the dream continues the waking occupation of the conscious mind. Boss (1957) considers it to be the first expression of the rationalism and enlightenment of the Western World.

The Greek, Synesius, who was born soon after 363, in his "Discourse on dreams" (Mégroz, 1939) condemned artificial and arbitrary devices for divination, and the superstition which informed many professional interpreters. He stressed the importance of looking within the self, and his belief that the nature of one's dreams reflects one's way of living.

In his study of dream literature Mégroz (1939) also traced a therapeutic use of dreams back to the era of ancient Egypt: "The very existence of cults of curative dreams, beginning with ancient Egypt, indicates some awareness of the pathological element in dreaming which modern psychology has explored systematically" (Mégroz, 1939, p.71).

In modern psychology the study of dreams has become closely bound up with the healing art of psychotherapy. As Jones (1970, p.5) stated: "The purpose of dream interpretation is to enhance the state of wakefulness."

Nevertheless, despite numerous studies and the development of complicated dream theories, dream interpretation still remains largely an arbitrary exercise, once described by Jung (1968, p.227) as: "Obscurum per obscurius, ignotum per ignotius" (the obscure by the more obscure, the unknown by the more unknown).

The Daseinsanalytic approach to dream interpretation, with Medard Boss as its major exponent, offers a radically new dream epistemology based on existential phenomenology.

Daseinsanalysts discard all previous speculations, practices or theories with regard to dream interpretation, and claim that by a strictly phenomenological explication of the dream content and mood, the following clinical objectives can be realized:

- \* Clear, unequivocal understanding of the dreamer's existential condition and world-attunement.
- \* Evidence of the dreamer's denied existential

possibilities, which can be a source of great value in psychotherapy.

- \* Evidence of progress in therapy, as reflected by changes in the content and mood of dreams over time.

It is the intention of this investigation to present a case study of a client manifesting neurotic symptoms characterized by a behaviour pattern of non-commitment. Through the medium of this case study, which provided ample opportunity to explicate dreams in phenomenological terms, it is intended to demonstrate that the claims of the Daseinsanalysts have objective validity. Through discussion of the dreams, as they are incorporated within the body of the clinical material, it is hoped to illustrate that a Daseinsanalytic explication of the dreams have hermeneutic value, and that a claim of therapeutic progress is not only based on changes in the dream content and mood (which would fall prey to an accusation of circular reasoning), but supported by observable changes in the client's waking life, which may be considered to be empirical evidence of progress.

## CHAPTER TWO

## 2. The Daseinsanalytic approach to dream interpretation

### 2.1 Introduction

The Daseinsanalytic dream theory, with Medard Boss as its major exponent, turns away from all previous attempts to understand dreams by means of so-called scientific procedures or causal and deterministic speculation.

Like two previous pioneers in the dream realm of psychology, Freud and Jung, Boss also regards dreams as the "royal road" to the very core of man's existence (Downing, 1977, p.90), but he considers their psycho-clinical theories to be logically and epistemologically deficient: "... riddled with incongruities and dubious metapsychology to a degree that severely compromises their power of illumination" (Boss, 1977, p.viii).

He maintains that theories impede one's vision by forever looking behind the phenomena instead of straight at them, thus estranging one from the directly observable.

Boss discards the notion that symbolism is adequate or relevant in order to understand dreams. His Daseinsanalytic dream theory keeps strictly to the actual phenomena of dreaming.

Within the epistemology of existential phenomenology he argues that everything is what it is, nothing else, and he seeks to establish what there actually is with the intention "to bare, with subtle accuracy, the internal and external articulations of the phenomenal world" (Boss, 1977, p.ix).

### 2.2 The basic concept of Being-in-the-World

The concept of Being-in-the-World which Boss draws from the thought of Martin Heidegger, undergirds the very notion of a "daseins-analysis" (Lowe, 1977, p.36).

Boss (1963) argues that Heidegger's "analysis of Dasein" is more appropriate to an understanding of man than the concepts which natural science has introduced into psychotherapy, and that analysis of Dasein may well deserve to be called more "objective" as well as more "scientific" than the behavioural sciences - if one understood the word "scientific" in its original and genuine sense: "to bring about knowledge" (scire, to know; facere, to make).

Daseinsanalysts do not see man as an encapsulated entity, lodged within the boundaries of the skin, nor as a body with a repertoire of behaviour which is controlled by reinforcement or by processes of the central nervous system. Man is not inside himself, but is always out there in the world.

"Man never just simply thinks, loves, or feels joyful - he always thinks about something, loves someone or somebody and is joyful about something or other. He is a being - with the fellow men and things of his world" (Kruger, 1982, p.162).

Boss (1963) stresses that man's primordial being-in-the-world is not an abstraction, but always a concrete occurrence: "His being-in-the-world occurs and fulfils itself only in and as the manifold particular modes of human behaviour and of man's different ways of relating toward things and fellow beings. This kind of being presupposes a unique openness of man's existence. It has to be an openness into which the particular beings which man encounters can disclose themselves as the beings they are, with all the context of their meaningful references" (Boss, 1963, p.34).

Boss (1963) considers this primary awareness of Being-ness as the most fundamental feature of man's existence, as "not an attitude or a property which man has, but that man is this primary awareness of Being-ness, that he is in the world essentially and primarily as such. Man, then, is a light which luminates whatever particular being comes into the realm of its rays. It is of his essence to disclose things and living beings in their meaning and content" (Boss, 1963,

p.37).

As such human existence is seen as the realm of illumination into which all particular beings may come forth, appear and be. Man's very existence is the precondition for the appearance of "phenomena" - a word derived from phainesthai, which means to shine forth, to appear, unveil itself, come out of concealment or darkness (Boss, 1963).

Dasein, being there, is thus essentially world-disclosure. This world, which is being disclosed, is not seen by Daseinsanalysts in a natural scientific way as a meaningless system of bare facts or objects. They do not see it as mere brute materiality, but as a meaningful structure, which always has a face. "The thing, the animal, the fellow human being, the world and its horizons, always appears to us in and as a context of meanings" (Kruger, 1982, p.163).

A concept with important implications for Boss's dream theory, as will be explained more fully later, is that the world's phenomena can only come forth into its openness in consonance with man's actual attunement or pitch, the attunement of his Dasein (Boss, 1963).

"An individual's pitch (mood and being tuned) at a certain moment determines in advance the choice, brightness, and colouring of his relationships to the world. In a mood of hunger, for instance, he perceives totally different things than when he is in an anxious mood, or when he is in love. He also discloses quite different qualities and meaningful connections of the things he perceives in these respective moods" (Boss, 1963, p.41).

This links to the Daseinsanalytic conceptualization of pathology, namely an impairment of man's free exercise of vital existential possibilities.

When a person's attunement is only open to limited ways of relating to the world, he cannot fulfil his existential task to be both "servant and shepherd of Being-ness" (Boss, 1963, p.47).

This task means that "man must responsibly take over all his possibilities for world-disclosing relationships, so that whatever may show itself in the light of these relationships can come forth into its being to the best possible extent. Man's freedom consists in becoming ready for accepting and letting be all that is, to let it shine forth in the world-openness as which he exists" (Boss, 1963, p.47).

"Human existence can mature only by allowing itself to be engaged by whatever impinges on it, so that the encountered entity can come to its full being in the open realm of the human world. If a person does away with anything that claims his existence to serve as the open perceptive realm into which it may shine forth and thus come to be, he also deprives himself of carrying out any of his possible relationships towards it. This means to kill also part of himself as human existence. For human existence is basically made up of its possibilities to relate to what is encountered" (Boss, 1977, p.53).

Scott (1977) identifies the goal of Daseinsanalytic psychotherapy as the recovery of a person's freedom to be as that person is in the free, open, non-substantial occurrence of his given existence.

### 2.3 The nature of the dream

Boss (1977) considers waking and dreaming as two autonomous modes of being, in which human existence articulates itself in characteristic ways.

"It is the enduring identity of the human being, now dreaming, now awake, the continuity of his life history, that ties together dreaming and waking, which forever exist only as the dreaming or waking of this particular person at this particular time" (Boss, 1977, p.xv).

As such all the modes of relating to the world that human beings

manifest in waking consciousness are also displayed in their dreams.

In Analysis of Dreams (1957) Boss says that we cannot consider dreaming and waking as two entirely different spheres. In reality there is no such thing as an independent dream, on the one hand, and a separate waking condition, on the other, which could be distinguished from each other by their characteristics. It is always "the identical human being who awakens from his dreams and who maintains his identity throughout all his waking and dreaming" (Boss, 1957, p.207).

"We do not leave the world when we are dreaming and are very much present to the world in which we live. All possibilities to relate to the world remain present. The dream is a way in which we are present to the world in a non-waking state and as such should be seen as just as valid as waking life ..." (Kruger, 1982), p.163).

Kruger (1982) does admit several points of difference between dreaming and waking:

- \* In dreaming our existence is not continuous as is the case in waking life.
- \* Dream existence is relatively limited in comparison to the freedom of thought, movement and existence in time and space in waking life.
- \* The abstract possibilities human beings encounter in waking life take the form of an immediate sensory (visual) presence to the dreamer.
- \* Dream contents reveal existential possibilities in a non-personally owned manner, less clear than in the waking state.
- \* There is a temporal foreshortening in dreams, so that the dreamer is often not his own age in the dream.

Nevertheless, Kruger argues: "Fundamentally, dreaming and waking speak the same language which is the language of our presence to a meaningful world" (Kruger, 1982, p.163).

## 2.4 Understanding dreams

Daseinsanalysts believe that a full understanding of a dreamer's existence during the dream period can be reached by attending to the dream as follows: "We must first consider exactly for what phenomena the dreamer's existence is so open that they may have entered and shone forth into its understanding light. This in turn tells us what phenomena are not acceptable to the perception of his dreaming state, or, in other words, for the entrance of which phenomena the dreamer's existence is still closed. As a second step, we need to determine how the dreamer conducts himself toward whatever is revealed to him in the clearance of his dreaming world, particularly the mood that predicates this way of behaving" (Boss, 1977, p.24).

A mood may be concealed while awake, but in the dream it will call forth dream beings and events that correspond to it. As such, to a person suffering from anxiety, the perceptive open world realm in which he exists will be narrowed down to such an extent that only the threatening traits of all that is encountered will be allowed to enter into the existential field of vision.

In the dream existential possibilities become real in a non-personal way, and abstract concepts become concrete, e.g. having the concept of enslavement expressed in the dream image of being chained to a lamp-post outside a dance-hall filled with music and laughter.

Boss (1977) states that to understand dream phenomena one should apprehend them "in the nexus of their multifold spontaneous references, in their array of actual and latent properties that define their possibilities of interaction" (Boss, 1977, p.x).

The concrete content of dreams had compelled earlier dream theorists to use symbolism. Boss (1977) admits that some translation of dream language is necessary, but he insists that it ought to be minimal.

"It ought to refrain from too vigorous manipulations of the dream

texts, ought to adhere to them as closely as possible, transposing their imagery, ever so gingerly, into more inclusive existential statements" (Boss, 1977, p.xvii).

To consider dream images as symbolic - i.e. to be standing for something else - is to lose the stark immediacy and the emotional charge of the dream phenomena.

Boss (1977) claims that dreaming illuminates the waking life and that his approach spotlights, with uncanny aptness, the existential condition of the dreamer. Understanding dreams in a phenomenological way exposes, in a most direct way, "the private myths and parasitic "life-lies" sapping the person's being" (Boss, 1977, p.xvii).

By looking at what the dream does not allow to enter and shine forth, Daseinsanalysts can also determine the existential restrictedness and gain access to the hiddenness of the existential possibility.

Dreams explicate a person's life situation to a degree that Boss (1977) considers it possible to determine the psychodynamics involved and even to diagnose the nature of his pathology. The dream can also indicate the existential task that calls for attention.

Boss (1977) considers the dream as extremely important, because its agenda is the matter at hand.

## 2.5 Dream interpretation

Daseinsanalysts do not interpret dreams, but aim to explicate the phenomena of dreaming. Boss does that by simply allowing the dream phenomena to unfold, and to look carefully and accurately at what is there with a mind uncluttered by theoretical preconceptions.

Boss (1977) claims that: "To those who possess or manage to acquire this phenomenological vision most dreams will reveal very directly the dreamer's existential condition" (Boss, 1977, p.xiii).

He believes that dreams explicated along phenomenological lines "present poetically condensed images of a person's life situation at a given moment and also accurately reflect changes in this situation over time - hence serving as gauges of a patient's progress in therapy" (Boss, 1977, p.xiii).

In The Analysis of Dreams (1957) Boss refers to a series of 823 dreams dreamt by a patient over the period of three years. The patient, who suffered from depression and impotence, dreamt of nothing but machines during the first six months of therapy.

Then he went through a phase in which he dreamt of plants, trees and flowers, and thereafter through a phase in which his dreams teemed with animal life. Only after two years of therapy did the first human being appear in his dreams. There was an overt connection between the context of his dreams and the quality of his waking life: when he started to dream about plants his feeling that life was devoid of meaning started to recede, and his sexual impotence had completely vanished by the time big, warm-blooded animals first entered his dream world.

Boss initially gains an understanding of the client's particular mode of Being-in-the-world, and then applies this understanding therapeutically to the awakened dreamer by simply asking whether he can sense existential possibilities of his own that correspond to the meaningfulness of the features of dreamed phenomena; whether he recognizes features of his own existence which are identical in essence with the traits of the phenomena which in the dream state were perceived outside himself, from external objects, animals or people.

The Daseinsanalyst never asks for associations to dream material. The most important rule in the Daseinsanalytic explication of dreams, as stated by Kruger (1982) is that "nothing outside the dream should be brought in and that what is explicated should be the dream itself

and nothing else" (Kruger, 1982, p.165).

It is also considered important to examine the mood to which the client's existence is momentarily attuned, "for it is this mood that determines the characteristics, the breadth and narrowness, of the perceptive realm which the existence is able to hold open and as which it "exists" at that given moment" (Boss, 1977, p.42).

Thus, according to Boss (1977), dream interpretation need not be viewed as complex, but can be reduced to two simple questions: "To what phenomena is a person's existence at the time of dreaming sufficiently open, that they may shine forth into it and so come into being? The second question concerns whether, now that he is awake, he is able to recognize features of his own existence which are identical in essence with the traits of the phenomena which he could perceive in his dreaming state only outside himself, from 'external' objects, animals, or fellow human beings?" (Boss, 1977, p.27).

## 2.6 Application of the understanding of dreams in psychotherapy

Daseinsanalysts claim that the phenomenological approach to a dreaming existence is not only scientifically viable, but can also be a source of great value in therapy.

Boss (1977) states that "... significances brought to light during a Daseinsanalytic investigation of dream elements may induce the reawakened patient to visualize thematically every analogous significance that has a place in his past, present, or future life. In this way ... dream content may contribute in an important way to the existential enlightenment of an individual even after he has reawakened and ... self-enlightenment is equivalent to healing" (Boss, 1977, p.55).

He argues that a patient, who in therapy had been made aware of the implications of dream happenings, can no longer overlook his own corresponding waking world-attunement and unrealized behaviour

possibilities which he has not previously allowed fulfilment.

These are laid before him as a fully awake person as existential issues with which he has to come to terms.

## 2.7 Criteria of validity in dream interpretation

The hermeneutic value of the Daseinsanalytic approach has to be considered in terms of the purpose of dream interpretation and the criteria of validity in dream interpretation, as held by other contemporary dream theorists, including representatives of the psychoanalytic and Jungian orientations.

In his discussion of the purpose and validity of dream interpretation, Bonime (1982) puts emphasis on the fact that the action and content of a dream invariably reflects the total living process and functioning of the patient in therapy. This includes the direction, intensity and nature of both his thinking and feeling activity, his behaviour and responses towards other people, the disappearance of pathology, or a struggle against change.

Bonime (1982) states that it is not along any path of clever inventiveness that useful meanings are found: "It is in the daily behaviour, the deeply personal thoughts and memories, and the immediate feelings of the dreamer, that source material for interpretation is found, and in the same places we find the evidence for validation.

In short, validation of the interpretation of dreams is the direct, affective recognition of the symbolic elements of the dream in living moments of the individual's experience" (Bonime, 1982, pp.229-230).

He considers it as more accurate to say that one never interprets a dream, but rather makes use of dreams in the process of interpreting people. "Validation of dream interpretation in the process by which

the action, feelings, and attitudes initially identified in the interpretive activity are further correlated with elements of the dreamer's past and present waking experience and sometimes also with the evidence of past dreams" (Bonime, 1982, p.230).

He emphasizes that it is through validative activity that dreams achieve their full usefulness in modifying personality. A dream interpretation, even if accurate, will remain therapeutically useless unless it is repeatedly correlated with personal experience.

"Dreams direct attention to feeling, thinking, and activity which the individual has been unaware of or is reluctant to acknowledge" (Bonime, 1982, p.230).

Jones (1970) states that it is the purpose of dream interpretation to enhance the state of wakefulness. "The criteria of validity in dream interpretation are that the interpretation should be consistent with the interpreter's knowledge of the dreamer and that this consistency should be reflected in the dreamer's meaningful response to the interpretation" (Jones, 1970, p.5).

In The New Psychology of Dreaming Jones (1970) questions the validity of the traditional Freudian approach to dream interpretation, saying "the regularity with which Freud was able to interpret dreams usefully as attempts to fulfil ego alien wishes led him to the hypothesis that repressed infantile impulses are the universal motivating forces of dream construction", but "... we would be hard put to support this hypothesis on the basis of Freud's dream interpretation alone" (Jones, 1970, p.69).

Nevertheless, he maintains a fluid and rather casual attitude towards the criteria of validity in dream interpretation, saying that the psychoanalyst "typically cares less that his colleagues should agree with his interpretations than that his patients should feel challenged by them" (Jones, 1970, p.5).

Faraday (1976) formulated her own criteria for the validity of dream interpretation after she found that her efforts to interpret clients' dreams in terms of Freudian theory was only useful in a small number of cases, whereas Jungian analysis, although helpful, sometimes seemed to "mystify and complicate dreams out of all proportion by looking for obscure universal symbols and 'archetypes' when a perfectly simple interpretation made more sense" (Faraday, 1976, p.12).

According to her a dream symbol is correctly interpreted when and only when it makes sense to the dreamer in terms of his present life situation, leads to significant insight, and moves him to change his life constructively.

Sanford (1978) supports the view that dreams reflect the psychological and life situation in which the dreamer finds himself. In answer to the question of how to be sure that a dream interpretation is correct, he states: "Only the dreamer knows. When a dream has been understood correctly there is something within us that assents to it. There may be an 'aha! so that's it!' reaction, a kind of gut-level 'yes'" (Sanford, 1978, p.53).

Sanford (1978) points out that dreams tend to change when they are being correctly understood, and that dreams "alter the colour of our minds" (Sanford, 1978, p.56). The complexion of consciousness is changed gradually, in a subtle way, "like adding another dimension to our lives. Sometimes the dreams themselves reflect this. We may dream of finding new rooms in our house we did not know were there before, or of moving to a larger, more resplendent house; in this way the dreams express the change that is taking place in us" (Sanford, 1978, p.56).

Mattoon (1984) in her publication on Jung's approach to dream interpretation, Understanding Dreams, states: "For some dream interpreters, an interpretation is assumed to be correct if it is true to the theories of personality and dreams accepted by the

interpreter. Jung rejected the view that dream interpretation could be verified by a theory and sought a basis of verification elsewhere" (Mattoon, 1984, p.177).

She points out that Jung found some hindrance of objective verification in the greater importance he placed on the contribution of dream interpretation to the therapeutic process.

According to her the purpose of dream interpretation, for Jung, was the dreamer's psychological development. He had proposed four tests of the truth of an interpretation, namely:

- " 1. Does the interpretation "click" with the dreamer?
2. Does the interpretation "act" for the dreamer?
3. Is the interpretation confirmed (or not disconfirmed) by subsequent dreams?
4. Do the events anticipated by the interpretation occur in the dreamer's waking life?

An affirmative answer to any or more of these questions serves to verify an interpretation" (Mattoon, 1984, p.178).

It is clear that, in spite of variations in underlying theoretical orientations, the purpose and criteria of validity of the Daseinsanalytic approach to dream interpretation is largely similar to those of the other dream analysts.

If the views of the abovementioned authors are accepted as representative of the contemporary conceptualization of validity in dream interpretation, it cannot be disputed that the Daseinsanalytic approach - if proved to be effective - must be generally accepted as having hermeneutic value in psychotherapy.

## CHAPTER THREE

3. Methodology3.1 The Case Study Method3.1.i Introduction

This investigation of the hermeneutic value of the Daseinsanalytic approach to dream interpretation is done within the epistemological framework of existential phenomenological psychology, and the method employed is that of the case study.

"Psychology" refers not only to studies of human behaviour, but also to situations as they are lived by the individual (Fisher and Wertz, 1979), while "existential phenomenology" refers to the philosophical approach developed by European thinkers like Heidegger, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.

Giorgi (1975) defines phenomenology as "the study of the structure, and the variations of structure, of the consciousness to which any thing, event or person appears. It is interested in elucidating both that which appears and the manner in which it appears, as well as in the overall structure that relates the "that which" with its mode or manner" (Giorgi, 1975, p.83).

As such phenomenological research takes as its starting point information about the direct experience of the subject and tries to elucidate it descriptively (Edwards, 1989, a, p.5).

Phenomenology investigates the ways events appear when theories and constructs are temporarily put aside by the researcher, and the ways in which a person's world is formed in part by the person who lives it" (Fisher and Wertz, 1979).

A definition and discussion of the case study method, followed by a delineation of its inherent phenomenological characteristics, will clarify why the case study is considered to be the most suitable methodology for the present investigation.

### 3.1.ii Definition

"Case study" is a term widely used, especially in the social and behavioral sciences, to refer to the description and analysis of a particular entity (object, person, condition, process, etc.), existing and functioning within definable boundaries" (Bromley, 1986).

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), and "a scientific reconstruction and interpretation, based on the best evidence available, of an episode (or set of related episodes) in the life of a person" (p.9).

A case study is always carried out within a context of existing knowledge and circumstances, limited in scope, and selective in the sense that it addresses itself to certain issues and ignores others. It includes both a narrative account of the actions, experiences, personal qualities and circumstances of a specific person, as well as comment on the significance of those observations and a causal analysis which attempts to explain the phenomena described (Bromley, 1986).

Thus, the case study, as a method, constitutes the exploration of an area of interest through the reflection, recording and elaboration of the meaning of events which have occurred in particular situations.

In addition, the rules, generalizations and categories which emerge from comparisons and contrasts between successive case studies in the same general area of interest, contributes to the systematization of knowledge and the development of a "case law".

"Provided the similarities and differences between cases have been stated explicitly, and justified by means of cogent argument and empirical evidence, the resulting "patterns of meaning" provide convenient conceptual routines for handling subsequent cases of the same type" (Bromley, 1986, p.7).

Kruger (1988) clearly distinguishes the case law from the mathematico-deductive model of positivist metatheory, and sees its function as that of providing a framework of understanding.

Case law, as it emerges from the case study method of psychological research, is considered by him as "the embodiment of what Dilthey sought when he envisaged a science of understanding (*verstehen*) rather than one of explanation (*erklarung*)" (Kruger, 1988, p.6).

At the same time, case law contributes to the development of theory, the importance of which is stressed by Mitchell (1983) in his definition of a case study:

"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" (Mitchell, 1983, p.192).

The case study method is considered to be particularly suitable for a phenomenological study, due to its inherent phenomenological characteristics:

The case study method is primarily and thoroughly descriptive, and "to describe is to return repeatedly to the phenomenon itself so that it may show itself in ever deeper, richer, and more subtle ways" (Brooke, 1988, p.56).

The case study method observes the clinical material with unbiased objectivity in the sense that material is not interpreted according to theoretical and scientific assumptions or psychodynamic reductionism, but with the intention to explicate the inherent meaning in phenomena, as it unfolds.

Brooke (1988) states that in order to be properly descriptive, the phenomenologist has to give up his theoretical and philosophical prejudices and exercise a phenomenological reduction by returning to the "life-world". The same objective applies in the case study method.

Another phenomenological characteristic of the case study method is the presupposition of intentionality (Brooke, 1988), which means that consciousness is not seen as encapsulated and separated from the world, but always as consciousness within a situation. As such, selfhood is revealed or materialized within the world of things and events, and the world of things and events is a network of occurrences that is meaningful (Brooke, 1986).

Brooke's (1988) definition, namely "Thus existential phenomenology can be defined as a method for describing "and" interpreting lived experience as it is revealed in the life-world" (p.77), applies equally well to the case study method.

### 3.1.iii History of the case study method

The case study, as a method of inquiry, has a long and distinguished history.

According to Bromley (1986) it antedates the natural scientific method and can even be presumed to antedate the rise of philosophy, history, and natural observation in classical times.

The earliest recorded educational case study dates from about 4000 B.C. (Bromley, 1986).

In clinical psychology, as in psychoanalysis, the case study method has been largely based on the concepts of clinical medicine, but contributed to the development of the method by providing more objective and reliable methods of assessment and extending the understanding of a subject's psychological processes (Bromley, 1986).

The fundamental role of case study methodology in the human and social sciences, including clinical psychology, has unfortunately been severely handicapped by the research ideology favouring quantitative methodologies which dominated the scene for most of this century (Edwards, 1989 a).

Edwards (1989 a) states that "respectability as a scientific discipline was sought through embracing the positivist principle that human behaviour could be predicted by a network of concepts tied together with logical-mathematical relationships, a metatheoretical position that has failed psychology completely" (Edwards, 1989 a, p.2).

Only within the last decade the case study method has been re-examined in an effort to utilize it once more as a

fundamental tool in research methodology (Edwards, 1989 a).

#### 3.1.iv Validity

Opponents of the case study as a method of inquiry traditionally argued that it is pre-experimental, and therefore incapable of yielding valid conclusions, but Bromley (1986) disagrees. He argues that the intensive, largely retrospective study of individual cases can be as vigorous and informative as the extensive, perspective study of samples of people, whether in surveys or experiments. He states that one can generalize from individual cases, and that many important real-life human problems cannot be studied effectively, or at all, by experimental methods of enquiry (Bromley, 1986).

Yin (1984) states that assumptions derived from one case are tested against other cases in the process of building up case law, so that the validity of findings is not established by statistical inference but by the logical process of "analytic generalisation" (Yin, 1984, p.39).

Edwards (1989 b) argues that qualitative methods often stay closer to the empirical world than quantitative methods where personal experience is often filtered through scales and operational definitions or distorted by experiential manipulation.

Edwards (1989 b) points out that experimental methodology often sacrifices external validity to enhance internal validity due to its search of the positivist ideal of an objective, abstract, deductive system, and maintains that the case study method offers a solution to this dilemma. He agrees with Yin (1984) that the case study method preserves external validity by investigating persons or events in or as close as possible to their natural contexts, and says that the case study method employs

logical inference to enhance internal validity (Edwards, 1989 b).

Edwards (1989 b) agrees with Kazdin (1981) that a case study can even provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions:

"While the case study method does not always allow firm conclusions about efficacy to be drawn, it can provide a much stronger basis than is sometimes recognized. By making a detailed analysis of the content of case material, it can examine evidence for the effectiveness of an intervention not only on the basis of induction but on the logic of the analysis performed at the assessment, the relation between the case conceptualisation and the interventions chosen, and the ongoing observation and analysis of the interaction between the interventions and the client's thoughts, emotions and behaviours" (Edwards, 1989 b, p.19).

### 3.2 Procedure

The client that was selected for the investigation described in this case study, was a twenty-seven year old, unmarried, white male student, who received brief psychotherapy over a period of three months, consisting of twenty-one sessions.

He was selected because of the relatively great number of dreams he presented in therapy sessions, twenty dreams altogether, and the fact that dream explication made a major contribution to the psychotherapeutic process.

The fact that one of the dreams that was presented dated back to fifteen months before the client entered therapy, made it possible to gain insight into his psychic life and draw comparisons over a wider time span than only within the three months of therapy.

The procedure of data-collecting was to make detailed notes after each therapy session of the content of the session, including each

dream and the discussion that followed, as indicated by the Daseinsanalytic approach. Although the notes did not always reflect a verbatim account of the content of each sessions, care was taken to make the notes as detailed and reliable as possible.

The next steps were to arrange the dreams in chronological order, to investigate the latent nexus of meanings of the dream phenomena, and to determine what information could be gained from each dream about the client's existential condition at that moment in time.

Care was taken to strictly apply the Daseinsanalytic principle of remaining with the dream phenomena in the process of explication and not to add elements that were not present in the dream itself in order to "amplify" the dream content.

In the next section of the case study follows a summary of the content of therapy sessions, with emphasis on the way the dreams and their explications along Daseinsanalytic principles were used within the process of psychotherapy.

It will be noted that not every dream was explicated, and not every potential insight verbalized, but only those that were relevant to the agenda of the session.

Finally, the hermeneutic value of the Daseinsanalytic approach to dream interpretation in psychotherapy is investigated. The discussion focuses on the degree to which the case material verifies the claims made by the Daseinsanalytic dream theory. This is done by addressing the following three questions with regard to the case material under consideration:

- (1) Did the dreamer's subjective experience of his own existential condition and of the dynamics at work in his life correspond analogically to the content and world-attunement of his dreams?
- (2) Did the dreams, over time, reflect a change in his existential condition that may be considered to reflect progress in the

therapeutic process?

- (3) Did the dreamer experience any changes in his waking life which may be considered to be empirical evidence of progress in therapy?

The conclusion is then reached that the Daseinsanalytic method of dream explication does have hermeneutic value in psychotherapy.

## CHAPTER FOUR

4. Case study4.1 Presenting problem

Jim was a twenty-seven year old white male who was a full-time university student, doing an Honours degree in Sociology. He was not married.

Jim was referred to me after he approached the Rhodes Psychology Clinic with the request to receive therapy, three months before the end of the academic year, when he was to leave Grahamstown.

He stated that he suffered from general feelings of anxiety and depression. He had started psychotherapy due to the same complaint about five years before, but dropped out after two sessions because he did not like the therapist. A few months later he had started therapy once more with another clinical psychologist, but discontinued that too after four sessions, for a similar reason.

He said that he awoke every morning with a depressed mood and an anxious feeling of dread in the pit of his stomach. During the previous year it had been so bad that he often did not want to get up and face the day. Lately, the depression tended to fade during the course of the day, but an underlying anxiety remained. He constantly felt tense inside.

His appetite was not affected, but he had difficulty sleeping. Some nights he avoided going to bed, sitting awake and thinking about his life instead. When he did fall asleep, he often woke up in the middle of the night, feeling depressed and unable to go back to sleep.

Jim was concerned about his alcohol consumption. Although he did not often go to a bar, he used to drink every night while alone at home. This usually took place while he was sitting at his desk, intending to study but unable to do so.

He felt blocked with regard to his studies and was aware of underachieving due to work inhibition. It seemed to him that there was a "fight inside of him" which was draining his energy. When he tried to work, he was constantly aware of dreams, scenes and memories from childhood hovering beneath the surface, fighting against his efforts to concentrate.

As part of his presenting problem Jim expressed the feeling that there was very little movement in his life and that the same old patterns were unfolding again and again. He felt that his "moving around in circles" could be due to a fear of entering the world and going out to find his niche.

At the beginning of the previous year he had decided to leave Johannesburg and study in Grahamstown, despite the fact that he had "a fairly comfortable life with established friends" in Johannesburg. The decision had not been made impulsively, but in response to some inner voice urging him to move away. He wanted "to shake things up a bit", but once he had made the move, he missed his old life and constantly yearned back.

Now, at the time of entering therapy, Jim was at a loss about his future direction after finishing his Honours degree. He was also suffering great indecision about his involvement with two girls; Merryll, with whom he had a relationship for the past five years, and Vivien, whom he was dating at university.

He was deeply hurt by the fact that Merryll had had various affairs since he left Johannesburg, but partly blamed himself for having left her and not showing greater commitment. At the same time he was reluctant to demand fidelity and commitment from Merryll, because he would then feel obliged to be faithful and committed to her, which he did not want to do.

Although he was seeing Vivien on a regular basis and having a sexual relationship with her, he did not commit himself to this relationship

either. He avoided commitment to Vivien by keeping her under the impression that he was committed to Merryll.

Jim saw his non-commitment as a way to keep his distance and thus to preserve "a sanctuary of strength", similar to the way in which he, as a child, used to withdraw to solitude when things were "rough".

He preferred to socialize with a small group of friends on a consistent basis. At times he was strongly aware of a distance between himself and others, a distance he described as "a tangible gap". He compared his interaction with others to a chess game and felt that he never seemed to act spontaneously according to his own feelings, but always "relative to the positions of the other players". He had a sense of himself hiding behind a "nice persona" instead of being able to freely and spontaneously express himself.

Jim was also aware of a blunted affect in his response to emotionally-charged situations. He often knew that he should be experiencing a strong emotion, but did not feel anything. When his brother left the country for political reasons, everybody at the farewell party was sad and crying, but he experienced no emotion. Only after his brother's departure did he feel depressed.

When he broke off with a girlfriend, he also felt no other emotion than mere interest in "observing the situation of someone leaving, closing the door behind him, and someone left behind, crying ...." He only felt sad on the following day.

Instead of experiencing congruent affect, he tended to distance himself by adopting an observer's stance.

A sense of nostalgia constantly coloured his experiences. Even in the moment of experiencing an event he was aware of only part of him being involved, while another part was observing with the knowledge that it was passing, soon to be lost and gone.

Others often told Jim that he tended to see things in a negative light. At the same time he found it very difficult to express negative emotions. When he discovered that his friend had had an affair with Merryll, he felt hurt and doubly betrayed, but the closest he could come to expressing his anger was "a bit of sarcasm".

## 4.2 History

### 4.2.i. Family history

Jim was the eldest of the two brothers in a small family, which was strictly controlled by their mother. He described his mother as a disciplinarian with very rigid ideas, which she forced upon her family.

She married late in life and was already past the age of 40 when Jim and his brother were born. Since then she functioned exclusively as a housewife and mother and became highly enmeshed with her family, while at the same time blocking their interaction with outsiders.

She behaved in an inhospitable and hostile way towards the girls Jim took home. Her moral views were very rigid and she strongly objected to sexual activity.

His mother was also very ambitious with regard to her children and had always tried to force Jim in directions that she considered "best for him" without taking his feelings into consideration.

At times when he objected to her intrusive behaviour, he was reprimanded for not being "nice", and for not appreciating the sacrifices his parents make for his sake.

Jim described his relationship with his father as good but not close. His father was a quiet man who passively withdrew when there was conflict in the family. He never expressed opinions, with the result that his wife used to

lay down the law in the house.

There was no tension between his parents, but a lot of conflict and friction between his mother and her sons, with result that both Jim and his brother, Bo, eventually moved out of the family home.

Jim had a good relationship with Bo (24), although they had different interests and friends. Bo left South Africa a year before Jim started therapy and they had little contact.

#### 4.2.ii Personal history

Despite his mother's advanced age, her pregnancy was uncomplicated and his birth normal.

At the age of 2 1/2 he was separated from his parents for a month when they went overseas and left him in the care of relatives.

As a young child he constantly feared that his parents might be killed in a car accident, and used to wait up until they returned, whenever they went out at night. This fear lasted until he finished primary school.

Due to illness, Jim was three weeks late in starting Sub A at the age of 6. He initially felt an outsider in school, where the other children had already formed groups of friends. The situation improved with time, and he had good relationships with both peers and teachers during primary school.

He excelled in schoolwork until Std 4, when he lost interest and no longer did more than the minimum. He could not remember what brought about the change, except that he used to be "bright-eyed, keen and top of his class", until

suddenly he lost all interest and "nothing mattered any more".

This attitude continued in high school, where he preferred to spend his time with athletics and friends, until his mother feared that he was turning into "a Boksburg boy" and decided to send him to a private boarding school in Johannesburg.

He experienced this as a totally different, confusing and threatening environment. The academic level was higher, peers were competitive and aggressive, and he responded by withdrawing into himself. He was reluctant to draw attention to himself and never spoke up in class - a pattern that was to be repeated at university.

His military service was characterized by loneliness and isolation. He was placed in a unit consisting of Afrikaans-speaking men, and found it hard to adapt. He had no "buddies" and no sense of support. He also had difficulty with authority figures and felt very powerless in the situation.

When Jim returned home after completing his military service, his mother tried to impose upon him the same rules that had applied before he left for boarding school. This, and her efforts to decide what course he should study at university, caused a great deal of friction between them.

After Jim had finished his initial B.A. degree he wanted to continue his studies in Cape Town to be with Merryll. His parents object to the relationship and refused to assist him financially unless he studied in Johannesburg. He resented this intensely but obeyed them and enrolled for a degree in law.

Once more he felt an outsider among the other students,

who had already been studying together for three years. He withdrew and made no effort to be accepted. He did not work either, but managed to pass. Two weeks into the second academic year he dropped out of university and joined a publishing firm, where he worked for two years.

Here, too, he felt like an outsider. He was bored with the "aimless routine" of work and felt inferior to his previous peers who had more "respectable" jobs. He saw himself as a social failure.

This had been the motivation behind his decision to come to Grahamstown and continue his studies.

#### 4.3 Brief psychodynamic formulation

Jim's presenting problem can be understood in terms of Andras Angyal's (1965) conceptualization of the etiology of neurosis, and more specifically in terms of what Angyal (1965) calls the pattern of non-commitment.

Jim finds himself in a "state of isolation", Angyal's (1965) term for the life situation of which anxiety is the dominant feature.

This state of isolation was created by the fact that the dissolution of the original unity in Jim's existential experience of the world in infancy (the differentiation between the "I" and the "non-I") was not, within his family, followed by ample opportunities to re-relate himself to the world by means of increased autonomy (mastery of the world) and homonomy (experiencing love).

Two major obstacles that prevented Jim from exercising these two basic human trends, were his mother's domineering and authoritarian control over his life, and her persistent efforts to sharply demarcate the family as an exclusive in-group from the outside world as an out-group. Even as young children Jim and his brother were forbidden to discuss family members or family issues with outsiders,

and when they reached adolescence their mother actively discouraged them from bringing girlfriends home. She would even be rude and hostile to these girls. Jim related with indignation how his mother asked him within hearing-distance of Merryll: "What is that girl doing here?"

As Angyal (1965) pointed out: "The family community is suited to the developmental state of the child only as long as it provides adequate opportunity for the satisfaction of his needs for belongingness and mastery. As his interests expand, this community becomes too narrow for him, and the old forms of participation become confining" (Angyal, 1965, p.94).

This happened to Jim, with the result that he was caught up in a conflict between his need to move ahead and his obligation to remain a part of the family that continued to demand undivided loyalty.

Jim's parents failed to create a pattern of family integration which could accommodate an enlarged sphere of life, and which could transcend his initial conflict between growth and belongingness, to free him from anxiety or the guilt of disloyalty.

Because Jim as a result experienced the world as an alien place which cannot be mastered nor communicated with, he learned to see it as potentially dangerous and threatening, and became more concerned with withdrawing into a safe retreat than with trying to relate to the world.

Jim finds himself in a state of being "narrowed in", a state of self-limitation, "not daring to move out into the wider areas that could be encompassed by personal life ..." (Angyal, 1965, p.76). According to Angyal's conceptualization of neurosis, Jim's tendency to cling to unsatisfactory relationships or life-situations for the sake of "a strange kind of security" can be explained as follows:

In his anxious isolation from the world Jim feels the need to be

utterly alien. Because he expects little good from himself and the world, and values security above all, he is compelled to cling to the familiar. "Unfulfilling as it may be, the familiar is an island of safety amid the dangers of the unknown" (Angyal, 1965, p.127).

Jim's presenting problem fits into a dimension of neurosis Angyal (1965) calls the pattern of non-commitment, which is characterized by great ambivalence in most areas of life.

Jim's ambivalence originates in a radical split between a confident and a distrustful orientation in childhood, as a result of the inconsistency he suffered in the treatment he received from his parents. He was constantly confused by whatever mistreatment he received being reframed by his parents as expression of their love and concern for him, e.g. his mother's constant nagging, and the experience of being sent off to boarding school against his will "for his own good".

There was always the nagging doubt that his parents were not good and loving, as they claimed to be, but were in fact treating him in a mean and insensitive way.

Jim's inhibition of action and emotion is seen by Angyal (1965) as a reflection of the presence of two conflicting orientations: one of confidence and one of distrust. This brings about that whatever emotion he may experience, whatever activity he may undertake, the opposite tendency is always also activated.

Due to his inner confusion, Jim cannot be wholeheartedly involved in anything. "The coactivation of contradictory emotions and their mutual inhibitions can eventually get him to the point where the normal gamut of feelings is greatly restricted. No emotions, save anger and fear, are consciously experienced, let alone expressed" (Angyal, 1965, p.169).

Jim's inability to commit himself to his studies, in spite of the

fact that he initiated it himself, can also be understood in terms of Angyal's conceptualization: "The most crippling manifestation of this automatic resistance arises from a phenomenological transformation of one's own plans and intentions; they acquire the character of imposed demands and are resisted compulsively ..." (Angyal, 1965, p.176). Jim feels forced to go through with his own plans and consequently he resists that, as if forgetting that the necessity is impersonal and that no one but himself is the source of these commands.

Jim's history also contains another factor which is identified by Angyal (1965) as frequently present in the background of the non-committal person, namely the self-sacrificing attitude of the parent. His parents constantly reminded him of the sacrifices they had to make in order to send him to an expensive school to obtain a good education.

For him, as a child, to have expressed his unwillingness to go would have constituted a threat of causing his parents unhappiness, which in emotional terms was also a threat of being abandoned by them as a result. Due to the self-sacrificing attitude of his parents Jim feels severely inadequate. Not only can he never fulfil the obligations thus imposed upon him, but he also feels ungrateful and selfish for not constantly striving to do so, and resentful for being expected to.

Angyal (1965) points out that human life means change and growth, but that the neurotic - much as he would like to move forward - is unable to do so. This is the dilemma in which Jim finds himself. "He is held back by the unresolved issues of his past and the fear of losing the few satisfactions he has by venturing into the unknown. Therefore, he invents methods of evading growth that would meet, if only in an unreal ephemeral way, both his own wishes for expansion and society's demand that he progress and mature. Noncommitment is one of these methods" (Angyal, 1965, p.189).

Jim manages to say "yes" and "no" at the same time, thus refusing to take responsibility in the sense of identifying himself with his actions or saying unequivocally "Here I stand" on any issue.

This is evident in his academic history. He has repeatedly enrolled for a course without being able to dedicate himself to his studies. In a similar way he avoided committing himself wholeheartedly to a relationship with a partner of the opposite sex.

#### 4.4 The Dreams

I shall first consider each dream in the chronological order in which it had been dreamt (which is not exactly in order in which it was related in therapy sessions) and offer a phenomenological understanding.

In the following section the way in which this understanding was used will be discussed within the context of therapy sessions. In order to help the reader, the following information is listed in tabular form:

<u>Chronological Order</u>	<u>Dream Title</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Therapy Session</u>
1	Abyss	37	5
2	Patricia's grapes	40	12
3	Achilles' heel	41	5
4	Unwrapped condoms	42	5
5	Dark, unfurnished house	43	4
6	Funeral pyre	43	5
7	Aboriginals	44	5
8	Rusty gate	45	5
9	Mad mother	46	5
10	Veld fires	47	6
11	Renovated house	48	11
12	Door-handle	48	15
13	Parking on a yellow line	49	15
14	Breast-feeding	50	15
15	Black dog	51	18

16	Naked girl	51	18
17	Dog on beach	52	18
18	Merryll becomes mother	53	20
19	Love-making	53	20
20	Parental garden	54	20

## 1. Abyss

Context: Jim had this dream in May 1988, fifteen months before he started therapy. At that stage he had been in Grahamstown four months, deeply doubtful about the wisdom of having left Johannesburg and constantly yearning to be back with his friends in familiar surroundings. He was living alone, feeling very lonely and isolated, and drinking a great deal. He related the dream in session 6, saying that it had always been at the back of his mind since May 1988, and that the memory had been stirred up by the material that was discussed in session 5.

### Dream:

It was a Friday night and I found myself outside a huge wall enclosing the university campus, with the gates locked.

~~My car was inside, and I had given up on any chance of getting it out, when my friend suggested that I climb over the wall. I did, and inside found a confusing multitude of corridors leading in all directions. I searched my way and found myself in the Psychology Department, in a room where people were doing experiments with time.~~

There were small mutilated monsters around the edges of the room.

In the middle was a circle, which opened into an abyss from which mist was rising. I felt that I had to jump into the abyss, and I did. I found myself falling through a tunnel to land on a beach.

The world was bathed in an apocalyptic light, and I had a feeling of rebirth.

On the beach people were playing, and there was a sensuous, friendly girl, inviting me.

Then I found myself in the waves, and saw a bathroom cabinet from my childhood home drifting next to me. It toppled back and forth, and I battled to keep it upright so that the inner content would remain balanced.

When I turned back, everybody was gone, the girl too. I was alone, there was nothing but the sea.

Phenomenological understanding:

This dream provides significant insight into the client's way of being-in-the-world prior to entering therapy.

It clearly reflects the dreamer's existential dilemma, sets the task that is calling, and identifies both the central conflict as well as the major obstacle in the way of his psychological growth.

On a Friday night, the time to enjoy freedom from the demands of the week and the constraints of authority, he finds his freedom of movement severely restricted by the fact that the vehicle of his autonomy is locked up within the confines of authority.\*

Present in the dream is an initial sense of despair - he has given up all hope of gaining his autonomy - but in contrast to this passive acceptance of the situation the dream indicates the task that is required: the friend suggests that he overcomes the obstacle by climbing over the wall.

Although the initiative was not his own - a reflection of his passivity - he responds actively to the task set by the dream and proceeds courageously on a journey of exploration which leads progressively more

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\* Although the concept "university campus" is embedded within a rich nexus of meanings, the fact that it represents authority seems to be most relevant and significant in this analogy.

inward: after he is confronted by a confusing multitude of paths leading in many directions, the dream points the way to where both the problem and the solution are to be found, namely the psyche.

In the Psychology Department he finds several small mutilated monsters, damaged psyches involved in experiments with time: perhaps returning with a therapeutic framework to the traumatic experiences that caused the mutilation, for healing to occur.

The dreamer responds to the invitation of the dream by courageously jumping into the abyss, and is rewarded with a sense of rebirth in a world bathed in an apocalyptic light. In contrast to the opening scene in the dream, where he was blocked from celebrating the freedom of a Friday night because his car was locked behind a huge wall, he now finds himself on a beach where people are freely playing.

He is not left to remain an observer, but is invited to partake by a sensuous, friendly girl. He responds to this invitation by entering the waves.

Yet, following the invitation to partake in adult life, the dream also points out the obstacle that prevents the dreamer from wholeheartedly responding to the invitation: his preoccupation to keep intact the contents of a bathroom cabinet from childhood - his need for nurturance and the healing of childhood injuries.

When he turns back, everyone has disappeared, including the potential partner for actualizing the sensual dimension of adult life. Once more he finds himself in a state of isolation.

The dream clearly indicates his awareness, in his dreaming state, that his crippling preoccupation with the emotional issues of childhood is the cause of his isolation and lack of involvement in adult life.

## 2. Patricia's grapes

Context: Jim had this dream during the second half of 1988. At that stage he was sharing accommodation with other students and felt less isolated in Grahamstown. Patricia, the woman who appears in this dream, was a person he had known in Johannesburg while he was involved with Merryll. They had spent a lot of time together, although there was no sexual relationship. He described her as "brilliant, unconventional, and her own person, not one of the herd". In her presence he had felt free to be himself and to speak his mind. He related this dream in Session 12, during the discussion of another dream involving grapes (Rusty gate, p.45).

### Dream:

I was sitting at a big table with my parents, Merryll and several friends, when Patricia came into the room with two bunches of grapes - one black and one green. She came to me and the two of us ate the grapes. The other people somehow could not see that, it was only visible to me and Patricia.

### Phenomenological understanding:

The dreamer finds himself in the company of familiar care-givers and in a situation that represents nurturance and security, when Patricia enters - a person who represents unconventionality, individuality, and liberation from the constraints of running with the herd.

Once more the dream indicates an awareness and openness within the dreamer to the invitation of life and of another mode of existence: the unconventional, individualistic woman offers to share her grapes with him.

What she offers is the multidimensional fruit of life, the sweet and the sour; fruit that can be used to make wine - wine that could intoxicate the senses and stir the emotions. He is called to break free and let go of his restricting inhibitions.

The dream indicates a willingness in the dreamer to respond to this

invitation and to actualize the unconventional, individualistic dimension of his own personality - he eats the grapes with the woman.

Nevertheless, the internalized constrictions and taboos of his upbringing are still too strong to allow him the freedom to do so openly. Sharing the grapes with Patricia has to happen in secrecy - invisible to the others.

The dream indicates that there is a split (or a lack of integration) between the part of him that strives for autonomy and individuation and the part that feels compelled to comply with conventionality and parental authority.

### 3. Achilles' heel

Context: Jim had this dream after his first therapy session, during the last week of August 1989. At that stage he was still involved with Merryll, but had also started a relationship with Vivien, a fellow-student in Grahamstown. He related this dream in Session 5, during the discussion of Funeral pyre (p.43) with a similar theme.

#### Dream:

Vivien was wearing clothes of a synthetic material, which suddenly caught fire. The fire spread to me, but did little harm. There was only a small wound on my heel. My Achilles' heel? She was not injured either.

#### Phenomenological understanding:

The central feature of this dream is fire, a phenomenon with the characteristics of being vibrant, hot, beautiful, dangerous, consuming and destructive.

The warmth, vibrancy and beauty of the fire is in sharp contrast to the lack of quality, durability or genuineness of the synthetic material of Vivien's clothes. A relationship that was considered to be superficial and synthetic, suddenly "catches fire", becomes vibrant, and potentially destructive - not only to the girl but also to the dreamer (the fire spreads to him, too).

In his dreaming state the dreamer is made aware of the girl's emotional vulnerability as well as his own; underneath his passivity and observer's stance he obtains a wound on his Achilles' heel - a particularly vulnerable spot.

The fact that the fire did little harm and that neither of them were seriously injured, indicates a continued resistance in the dreamer to becoming responsibly involved in the relationship.

#### 4. Unwrapped condoms

Context: Jim had this dream immediately after the Achilles' heel dream, during the same night. It was also related during Session 5, during the discussion of Aboriginals (p.44) another dream involving condoms.

##### Dream:

I went to a shop and bought a box full of condoms. The box was as big as a container for Christmas crackers, and it was given to me unwrapped. I felt very foolish walking around with the condoms for everybody to see.

##### Phenomenological understanding:

The dreamer buys a big supply of condoms which at the same time indicates a great need or desire for sexual intimacy, and a strong awareness of the need for protection against the consequences of the intimacy - a pregnancy which may demand commitment.

The condoms are given to him unwrapped, and he feels both exposed and foolish, carrying it around with him where others can see it. In his dreaming state, he is aware that his need for protection is exaggerated, and his sense of exposure and embarrassment may be due to having to face this in therapy.

Furthermore, the quality of artificiality is present in both the image of a condom (artificial protection) and that of a Christmas cracker (the artificial gaiety of pulling apart crackers containing worthless

trinkets). The dreamer's perceptive realm is also opening up to an awareness of the artificiality of his "intimate" relationship.

#### 5. Dark, unfurnished house

Context: Jim had this dream while he was in Johannesburg for the university holiday during the first week of September 1989. He related the dream during Session 4, after saying that he had broken off the relationship with Merryll.

#### Dream:

I was alone in a dark, unfurnished house, without any curtains. The windows were open, the wind was blowing, people could look in, and the hi-fi was playing a song with the words "what is wrong with my life, that I need to get drunk every night."

#### Phenomenological understanding:

This dream clearly reflects the dreamer's existential condition and the quality of his experience of being-in-the-world. He feels isolated, in an environment stripped of companionship, comfort, light or protection. He is exposed to nature, and the intrusion as well as potential judgment of other people.

The dream indicates a sense of despair, but at the same time a continued effort to maintain the observer's stance: "what is wrong with my life, that I need to get drunk every night" is not a subjective lament of the dreamer but the words of a song that is played.

In his dreaming state the dreamer is still resisting the need to honestly confront his existential condition. By framing it as a song he is, at the same time, keeping his despair at a distance and romanticizing it.

#### 6. Funeral Pyre:

Context: Jim had this dream, as well as the next three (Aboriginals, Rusty gate, Mad mother) during the second week of September 1989. All these dreams were related during Session 5.

#### Dream:

I was with Vivien on a funeral pyre. I was in a quite light-hearted

mood. A third person I did not know was standing ready with matches to light the fire. Then I got off the pyre and said "There are better ways to die". Vivien also climbed off. The other person lit the fire and I watched with horror how Vivien walked back into the fire and was burnt to cinders. I was horrified that the fire, which I had considered as just a game, could be so destructive.

Phenomenological understanding:

In this dream the theme of fire is repeated, and the dreamer shows a greater openness to the potential destructiveness of his non-committal attitude to the relationship.

He finds himself with his girlfriend on a funeral pyre, with the implied intention of dying together - a ritual traditionally considered to be the expression of ultimate commitment and loyalty.

Yet, in contrast to the solemnity of the situation, he is in a light-hearted mood, does not take responsibility for the situation (leaving it to an unknown person to light the fire) and eventually withdraws from the game.

He is under the impression that the girl is equally casual about the issue (she also climbs off the pyre), and is horrified when she walks back into the fire and is burnt to death.

In his dreaming state, he is made aware of his lack of commitment, his unwillingness to take responsibility for his actions, and the potential emotional destructiveness of his attitude.

7. Aboriginals

Context: Jim had this dream immediately after the dream about the Funeral pyre, within the same night, and related it in Session 5.

Dream:

I was watching a group of Aboriginals, who were grinding a lot of condoms to little bits and pieces.

Phenomenological understanding:

A lot of condoms are being destroyed by a group of people who live a primitive, natural existence. The dreamer is called to live a natural existence, by once more being made aware of the false protection he is relying upon, and the artificial quality of his intimate relationship.

The fact that he does not take part in the destruction of the condoms in the dream, but merely looks on, reflects his passivity and tendency to maintain an observer's stance.

8. Rusty gate

Context: Jim had this dream during the second week of September 1989 and related it in Session 5.

Dream:

I dreamt of a grape-vine, and how I tried to reach up to pick some grapes, but I was unable to reach it because of an old rusty gate I was dragging with me.

(When asked to go back to the dream, he remembered an earlier part of it:)

I was in my parents' house and went outside where I found this rusty gate lying on the ground. I brought it into the house, tried to knock the rust off it, and then dragged it around with me.

Phenomenological understanding:

The dreamer finds himself at the house where he used to be a child, and finds a rusty gate which is no longer used to mark the boundary around the parental home. Nevertheless, he makes an active effort to restore the functionality of this gate, and drags it around with him. This obstacle weighs him down so much that he is not able to reach the sweet life-giving fruit on the grape-vine.

He is prevented from enjoying life due to a preoccupation with the outdated restraints of childhood, as well as a yearning for the

containment of childhood. Although the dreamer is aware of the fact that the rusty old gate is an obstacle, it does not occur to him in the dream to leave it behind. His perceptive realm has not yet opened up to the behavioral possibility of letting go of the issues of childhood in order to live a fuller life.

9. Mad mother:

Context: Jim had this dream during the second week of September 1989 and related it in Session 5.

Dream:

There were houses and darkness, and my mother was sitting in the middle of one house, and she was mad.

I took Vivien into my family's house and opened a cupboard, and showed her a photograph of my family - my father, mother, brother and I - which was taken when I was small. (I felt nostalgic, a yearning back to the simplicity of life.)

Phenomenological understanding:

The dream once more reflects the way the dreamer experiences his being-in-the-world, namely anxiety-provoking and insecure. The presence of a mother indicates the point of view of a child, but being able to see and realize that a mother is mad implies an awakening of adult consciousness in a child.

This adult realization that his mother is mad is so extremely frightening and anxiety-provoking that the dreamer regresses to early childhood - he dreams of showing his girlfriend a family photograph which had been taken when he was small, in a period he associates with security.

The second part of the dream repeats the theme that appeared in Abyss (p.37) and Rusty gate (p.45) namely the pre-occupation with the issues - and security - of childhood.

The dream indicates that these issues are so dominant in his psyche that it obscures the relational possibilities implied by the presence of an attractive girl in his dream. He does not relate to her in a way one would

expect of virile young man, but like a nostalgic child.

#### 10. Veld fires

Context: Jim had this dream during the third week of September 1989, and related it during Session 6, directly after discussing the Abyss. He associated the two dreams because the same friend appeared in both, and in both dreams fulfilled the same function. In waking life this friend is the person who had an affair with Merryll after Jim had left Johannesburg.

#### Dream:

We were gathering wood in the veld. My car was parked in an area of veld fires and there were ugly strangers inside, in spite of the fact that the car was incredibly hot inside.

I tolerated the intrusion and thought that I'd cope with the strangers later.

Then my friend pointed to the highway and said: "There is the way". The thought gave me a sense of exhilaration - an "open road" feeling.

#### Phenomenological understanding:

In this dream the dreamer's car, vehicle of his autonomy, is not only threatened from the outside by external forces (veld fires), but also intruded upon from inside by psychic content (ugly strangers that persevere with their intrusion, despite great physical discomfort due to the heat).

Once more he initially responds with passivity, making no effort to move the car or to confront the intruders, until a friend directs him to the highway, and he experiences a sense of exhilaration at becoming aware of the possibility of another existential option open to him.

The dream indicates an awareness in the dreamer of the existential possibility of autonomy, but a continued absence of initiative to actualize this in his life. It still requires a friend to point out the way to him.

### 11. Renovated house

Context: Jim had this dream during the second week of October 1989, after he had taken Vivien for a walk in the rain that night. They had taken off all their clothes, out in the veld, and he had felt "vital and alive". He related the dream during Session 11, after saying that the previous session had stirred up a lot of things for him which made him feel much more "light and alive".

Dream:

I drove my car and parked under a tree, and looked at a house across the street. I knew in my dream that I had been in front of that house before, but the previous time it had been dark, and I had assumed that there were people living inside, strangers. I had then felt too inhibited to go inside.

Now it was daylight, and to my surprise I saw that the house was open, not occupied, and that it was being renovated and rebuilt.

Phenomenological understanding:

The dreamer becomes aware of a change in his existential condition. The world is presenting itself to him in a different way; where he had previously experienced it as shrouded in darkness, inhibiting and occupied by strangers, it has now become visible in daylight, open, not occupied, but being renovated and rebuilt, inviting.

His perceptive realm is opening up to the possibility that the world is not a hostile and inhospitable place, but inviting and rich with potential enjoyment.

There is also a sense of autonomy present in the way the dreamer is able to freely drive his car and park it where he pleases.

### 12. Door-handle

Context: Jim had this dream during the last week of October 1989, while he was studying for the final examination. He related

it during Session 15, after referring to his parents' concern that he should find direction in his life. The dreams Parking on a yellow line and Breast-feeding were dreamt during the same period.

Dream:

I was washing a door-handle in a little river. While I was doing that, the screws came out and the door-handle fell apart.

Phenomenological understanding:

This dream seems to repeat the image of the Rusty gate (p.45). Once more the dreamer is trying to restore to functionality an article that is no longer serving its purpose. He washes a door-handle, that should serve to shut things off behind it, but the screws become undone and the door-handle falls apart.

An alternative hypothesis is that the dream refers to the process of therapy. The door-handle, that used to shut off emotions, is being cleansed in the process of therapy, with the result that the screws come out and the handle falls apart. Free access is becoming available to repressed emotions and memories.

13. Parking on a yellow line

Context: Jim had this dream during the last week of October 1989 and related it in Session 15.

Dream:

I was driving to town in the middle of the night and got out after parking on a yellow line. I was naked, only wearing a towel which was almost falling off.

I saw a dog running, approaching me, and about to attack, but it ran away.

I was already on the sidewalk when I thought I'd better move the car away from the yellow line, and got into the car again at the back door, which was open.

Inside the car I sensed the presence of something breathing, and suddenly a half-man, half-animal jumped on me, attacking me from the front seat.

Phenomenological understanding:

This dream highlights the dreamer's ambivalent attitude towards liberating himself from the constraints of authority in order to gain his autonomy, and the conflict between the urge for compliance and his anger aimed against his own compliance.

He drives to town in the middle of the night and parks his car in a prohibited area. He also gets out of the car without clothes, only half-covered by a towel.

Linked to this defiant behaviour is the approach of a dog, an animal known for its submissive and subservient relationship to man. The dreamer expects his defiance and non-submissive behaviour to be punished by an attack, but this does not happen.

In contrast, he is attacked when he resumes his compliant behaviour and turns back to move the car away from the prohibited parking area. It is not his defiance that is punished, but his continued submissive tendency.

The dream reflects a shift towards the claim for autonomy, although the ambivalence is still present. The dreamer's urge to comply is only allowed to enter by the back door of the car, but the front seat is occupied by primitive anger which furiously attacks the compliance.

14. Breast-feeding

Context: Jim had this "dream" during the last week of October 1989 and related it in Session 15.

Dream:

I saw my parents visiting in other people's living room, and heard my mother tell the people about breast-feeding. (Comment while relating this: No, this was no dream, but a memory coming to me during sleep.)

At the same time I had an impression of myself being a baby in a cot, with my mother scurrying around, being very busy to no avail, being very anxious to sterilize the bottles and not really concerned with me personally. She was very uptight and clinical.

Phenomenological understanding:

This dream was understood as a memory, and considered to be reality-related.

15. Black dog

Context: Jim had this dream, as well as the next two (Naked girl, Dog on beach), during the last week of October 1989. He related them during Session 18.

Dream:

I encountered a black dog like the one we used to have tied up at home. It looked as if it was about to attack me, but it did not. It ran away instead.

Phenomenological understanding:

The dreamer encounters a dog that he immediately associates with a dog from his childhood, who had its freedom of movement severely restricted by being kept tied up. He expects to be attacked by this watchdog who is now free from its constraints, but it does not happen. The danger he expects to be implicit in the liberation process is proved to be absent, the fear unfounded.

The dreamer's perceptive realm is beginning to open up to the possibility that claiming liberty and autonomy need not be threatening.

16. Naked Girl

Context: Jim had this dream during the last week of October 1989. He related it in Session 18.

Dream:

I am with Vivien in a house, with the curtains drawn. We hear something outside, and Vivien puts on the light, and opens the



curtains and window. She stands naked in front of the window. I am angry with her for doing that. But there is nobody outside, just two dogs nosing around.

Phenomenological understanding:

This dream indicates a change in the dreamer's sense of his existential condition, if compared to Dark, unfurnished house (p.43). He is no longer alone, but in the presence of his lover; the house is not absolutely shrouded in darkness but can be lit up; he no longer feels helplessly exposed, but can protect his privacy with curtains.

The fact that the dreamer allows himself to dream of a naked girl opening the curtains and thus exposing the sexual, sensual dimension of their relationship, indicates a loosening in the constraints that had been imposed upon him by his upbringing.

The sense of exposure and threat is still there - he is angry with her for opening the curtain and putting on the light, and they "hear something outside" - but there proves to be no danger, just two dogs nosing around.

17. Dog on beach

Context: Jim had this dream during the last week of October 1989.  
He related it in Session 18.

Dream:

I see the black dog we used to have at home, where it was tied up.  
But now it is running on the beach, freely.

Phenomenological understanding:

The same image that appeared in Black dog (p.51), when the dreamer saw the liberated dog as potentially dangerous, now is seen in a different light: the dog that used to be tied up is free, and enjoys the freedom of movement by running on the beach. The dreamer's existence has opened up to the behaviour possibility of living freely without an underlying fear of threat being the flipside of freedom.

18. Merryll becomes mother

Context: Jim had this dream during the first week of November, shortly before he was about to write his final examinations, terminate therapy and leave Grahamstown. He related it in the second last session (Session 20).

Dream:

I'm having a fight with Merryll. We're having the same old arguments over again. Suddenly Merryll turns into my mother. (Comment after relating this dream: "After this dream my restlessness disappeared and I could sleep peacefully.")

Phenomenological understanding:

The dreamer becomes aware of a similarity in the way he relates to his mother and his ex-girlfriend.

His perceptive realm is opening up to the awareness that his clinging to the stormy, broken, but still lingering relationship with Merryll is akin to his clinging to the emotional security of childhood.

19. Love-making

Context: Jim had this dream during the first week of November 1989. He related it in Session 20.

Dream:

I come into a room and find Merryll and Patricia in bed together. Patricia invites me to make love to her, and I do. I feel "lekker" and at ease; anything goes.

Phenomenological understanding:

This dream indicates an opening up within the perceptual realm of the dreamer to the possibility of integrating two components of his psyche that previously had been kept apart. The dreamer finds Merryll, whom he associates with the emotional security of childhood and its implicit constraints (see Merryll becomes mother, p.53), in close harmonious companionship with Patricia, whom he associates with unconventionality, individuality and freedom from constraints.

Once more he receives an invitation from Patricia (see Patricia's grapes, p.40) and once more he accepts it, but this time the dreamer has no need for secrecy or hiding. Where it had to be invisible to others when he ate Patricia's grapes in the previous dream (p.40), he now feels completely at ease to interact freely with Patricia in the presence of Merryll.

The dream no longer reflects the restriction that had been internalized from his mother's attitude.

## 20. Parental garden

Context: Jim had this dream during the first week of November 1989. He related it in Session 20.

### Dream:

I'm in a garden, in ethereal light. It is early morning, with birds singing in the trees. I am gladly expecting Vivien to arrive, and thinking: "What a pity that she should visit me at my parents' house."

### Phenomenological understanding:

The existential condition of the dreamer, as reflected by this dream, indicates a significant shift from the quality of his being-in-the-world as portrayed by the dreams related during the first six sessions of therapy.

In contrast to the earlier sense of isolation and despair, this dream depicts a mood of joy and peace. The atmosphere of the garden, bathed in ethereal light, is reminiscent of the promise of rebirth the dreamer had experienced in the Abyss (p.37) when he found himself on the beach in a world coloured by an apocalyptic light. This time, however, he is gladly awaiting the arrival of a girl, and no longer turning away from the sensual, romantic dimension of adult life in order to cling to emotional issues of childhood.

In Mad mother (p.46) the dreamer had recoiled from the awakening adult consciousness of his mother's "madness" by regressing to early childhood. In Parental garden the dreamer no longer tries to deny or avoid this

insight, but expresses a regretful acceptance of his parents' shortcomings.

This acceptance bridges the split that had existed before between his compliance with the demands and the restrictions of his parents, and his need to live an autonomous life of his own. Whereas the split was prominent in Patricia's grapes (p.40), the Parental garden indicates that integration was taking place.

#### 4.5 Working with the dreams within the context of therapy

In this section it will be indicated how the dreams were used to further Jim's self-understanding during the course of therapy, which consisted of 21 sessions.

The reader will note that not every insight that could be gained from the detailed dream-analysis was incorporated into the therapy sessions, but only those that seemed relevant to Jim at the time, and seemed to present themselves as the agenda at hand.

For the sake of preserving context and continuity the theme-content of each session will be briefly summarized.

We started therapy shortly before the university vacation in September, using the first two sessions for clarifying the presenting problem and discussing his personal and family history within the framework of a structured interview.

At that stage his most pressing concerns were the romantic triangle in which he found himself and his uncertainty about a future career or direction.

At the beginning of the third session he launched into a detailed discussion of his relationships with Merryll and Vivien and the conflict he was experiencing as a result. He verbalized his feelings of hurt, disillusionment and anger about Merryll's unfaithfulness after he left Johannesburg, but I was struck by the utter lack of

affect in both his bodily presence and the tone of his voice. My counter-transference was distinctly a sense of boredom, and I realized that it was related to the way he was distancing himself from his emotions and presenting them to me in a rationalized fashion.

Both his detached attitude and my sense of boredom were to disappear in the fourth session, after the first dream he brought to therapy provided an opportunity to address the issue and break down the barrier.

Jim had been to Johannesburg for the September vacation and returned with the news that he had broken off the relationship with Merryll. At the time he had experienced the parting from an observer's stance, but he admitted that he had felt sad afterwards, and missed the certainty of having Merryll there for him.

He was aware of his conflicting needs to belong, on the one hand, and to be free to conduct the course of his own life, on the other, with regard to Merryll, but discarded my suggestion of a similarity between his relationships to Merryll and his mother (who also provided caring, but at the same time demanded compliance, e.g. that he should study from home to receive financial support).

He stressed his unwillingness to commit himself to any relationship and said that he had not told Vivien about having broken off his ties with Merryll, in order to preserve his distance.

Then he related a dream he had while he was in Johannesburg, Dark, unfurnished house (p.43). Together we explored the mood and conditions expressed by the dream, namely being isolated, the lack of companionship, comfort or warmth, the sense of despair, and the pronounced feeling of exposure.

When I asked what analogous situations he may be experiencing in his waking life, he immediately responded by saying that it caused him

great anxiety to expose his private thoughts and feelings to others.

Although the sense of exposure was but one component of the existential condition reflected in this dream, I kept the focus on the issue that seemed most important to Jim.

Considering the fact that these feelings most probably contributed to his two previous failures to remain in therapy, it was important to address them and bring them out into the open.

When I asked him how he felt about therapy, he gave a little laugh that sounded at the same time guilty and relieved, and admitted that he found it very difficult to discuss his feelings.

I encouraged him to verbalize his sense of reluctance and anxiety, and expressed understanding of these feelings, acknowledging his need to develop trust before he could share his innermost thoughts and feelings.

Not only did we experience a distinct deepening of rapport, as a result, but also a strengthening of the therapeutic alliance.

Our working together on the Dark, unfurnished house encouraged Jim to pay close attention to his dream life, which provided us with a rich source of material to deal with in therapy.

When he arrived for the fifth session, he said that he was having disturbing dreams, and first related the Funeral pyre (p.43), in which Vivien was burnt to death.

When I asked about the emotions he experienced in the dream he said "I was horrified that the fire, which I had considered to be just a game, could be so destructive."

I invited him to work with me in order to explore the relevance the dream had to his waking life. When we repeated the elements of the

dream, the idiom that came into focus for him was "playing with fire".

He identified his relationship with Vivien as an analogous situation in his waking life, saying that she is very dependent on him and vulnerable to being hurt, and that he may be playing with an emotionally destructive situation.

This reminded him of the Achilles' heel dream (p.41) he had just before the holiday in which he had broken off the relationship with Merryll.

Before we could focus on this dream, he added that both fire dreams had been followed by dreams about condoms, and related the Unwrapped condoms (p.42) and the Aboriginals (p.44).

When we explored the connotations condoms have for him, he saw it as protection against commitment - forced commitment, which result from playing with fire; playing with fire, which may harm the other and himself, as the fire dreams indicated.

We considered the implications of his embarrassment in the Unwrapped condoms for walking around with a huge supply of condoms for everybody to see, and the dream-demand in the Aboriginals that condoms be destroyed. He admitted an awareness of the way in which his avoidance of commitment limits his experiential freedom.

He spoke about his great caution with regard to a commitment to a romantic relationship, and how this cramps his ability to be spontaneous, saying: "I can be free and easy with girls who are platonic friends, but with ones with whom I am closely involved, my mind tends to close down when I am expected to discuss emotions. It is as if the flow of water suddenly disappears into the sand."

I said it sounded as if the stream of free-flowing feeling is cut off as if by a sluice-gate, and wondered what this "sluice-gate"

could be for him.

He responded by relating a dream involving a different type of gate, which was brought to mind by my image, Rusty gate (p.45): "I dreamt of a grape-vine, and how I tried to reach up to pick some grapes, but I was unable to reach it because of an old rusty gate I was dragging with me."

I said that he seemed to be reaching out to enjoy the sweet, life-giving fruit, but that he is prevented from doing so by the weight of a useless, old piece of iron he is dragging around without apparent purpose.

When I wondered what factor in his life may have an analogous function to the function of the gate in the dream, he said that it seemed to be things from childhood, but that he could not identify them.

I encouraged him to return to the dream, and he did that, recalling more detail: "I was in my parents' house and went outside where I found this rusty gate lying on the ground. I brought it into the house, tried to knock the rust off it, and then dragged it around with me."

We then considered some functions of a gate, namely to close off a certain area, to keep children within the boundaries of their parents' property, to contain. I retold the dream to him, pointing out that in his dreaming state he was aware of the fact that the gate was outdated and rusty, that it no longer served the purpose of enclosing the garden, and that it had been discarded - but that by dragging it around with him he had made it into a stumbling block to prevent him from reaching the life-giving fruit.

In the spirit of the "why not?" questions of Boss (1977) I invited him to play with this image of the rusty gate, wondering why he did not imagine himself putting it down in a corner of his room and

walking away from it, free from the burden.

On the conscious level he responded positively to this suggestion, but the implicit message from his unconscious, contained in the dream of Mad mother (p.46), which he related next, made it clear that the power of imagery would not be enough to open up the growth area or start the process of setting him free. What seemed necessary was first to return, to regain valuable things lost in childhood.

He said that he had had a vague dream the previous night in which "there were houses and darkness, and my mother sitting in the middle of our house, and she was mad." This dream-image was probably too threatening to explore, for it was on the second part of the dream which he focused when we worked with it:\*

"I took Vivien into my family's home and opened a cupboard, and showed her a photograph of my family - my father, mother, brother and I - which was taken when I was small."

When I asked what emotion he had experienced in the dream, he said "nostalgia - a yearning back to the simplicity of life." I explored the meaning of "simplicity of life" and he admitted that it refers to the uncomplicated, unambiguous security of childhood, and "belonging without complications".

When I suggested that the yearning to an early stage of life may be because he had not experienced enough of this "simplicity of life" at the time, he said that he did have enough at first, but that something had changed when he was about eleven.

He could not say what, but recalled one day he was still "bright-eyed and keen and at the top of his class", and the next he had lost all interest, and nothing mattered anymore.

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\* There was a striking similarity in the way he behaved in the dream, by turning from the mad mother to the childhood nostalgia, and the way he focused his attention in waking life away from the threatening image to the nostalgic (safe) one.

In the sixth session he said that the previous one had stirred up the memory of a dream he had during the previous year, fifteen months before he started therapy, and related the Abyss (p.37). He said that he was struck by the similarity between the last part of this dream: "Then I found myself in the waves, and saw a bathroom cabinet from my childhood home drifting next to me. It toppled back and forth, and I battled to keep it upright so that the inner contents would remain balanced," and the old gate in the Rusty gate (p.45). He saw both dreams as being related to things from childhood.

I pointed out that there was also a similarity between the sensuous, friendly and inviting girl he meets on the beach in the Abyss, only to find that she has disappeared while he was preoccupied with the bathroom cabinet, and the grapes he could not reach in the Rusty gate, because of the heavy gate he was dragging around with him. Once more the dream was indicating that his preoccupation with the issues of childhood was preventing him from reaching out and responding to the invitation of life.

We then returned to the first part of the Abyss: "It was Friday night and I found myself outside a huge wall enclosing the university campus, with the gates locked. My car was inside, and I had given up on any chance of getting it out, when my friend suggested that I climb over the wall. I did ..."

When I asked him what a car represented to him, he said "A car is freedom, the ability to move, and when necessary to escape and to get away." He said that the fact that it was behind locked walls in the dream could indicate that he experienced a sense of constriction, of being trapped, a lack of freedom.

When I wondered if the presence of a friend, who encouraged him when he wanted to give up, might indicate a sense of support being available to him, he agreed. He said that the friend in the dream was the person who had the affair with Merryll which eventually led to the end of their relationship, and that in a sense this friend thus

provided the instigation for him to break out of a claustrophobic relationship.

Although we still had not fully explored the many dimensions of meaning contained in the Abyss, it was clear from Jim's train of thought that the issue of freedom versus constriction and claustrophobia was the agenda at hand.

He then remembered another dream in which the same friend appeared, and related the Veld fires (p.47). In this dream his car was parked in a dangerous area, surrounded by veld fires, and he suffered the intrusion of ugly strangers in his car.

"Then my friend pointed to the highway and said 'There is the way'. The thought gave me a sense of exhilaration - an 'open road-feeling'."

I focused on this "open road-feeling" and asked him when in his life he had experienced that. He said it happened when he left Merryll, and when he initially decided to study B.A. instead of the course his mother had chosen for him.

I mentioned that the good, exhilarating feeling of the "open road" seemed to follow when he stepped away from the demands and expectations of others. He agreed, and spoke about the claustrophobia he had experienced with Merryll in Johannesburg, before coming to Rhodes, saying that the claustrophobia had to do with a feeling that he had to go out into the world and prove himself, identify with something and find his own identity.

When I mentioned that it would sound as if he experienced the relationship as a place to rest, even to hide, instead of confronting the outside world, he said yes, it was true, "the relationship did have the quality of being a hide-out from life."

He said that this was connected to the ambiguity he felt in so many spheres, wanting a safe place and wanting to confront the world, and

that it prevented him from doing anything wholeheartedly.

When I wondered at what time he had first become aware of this ambiguity, he spoke about being sent to boarding-school against his will, on his mother's demand. He entered into the memory of that time, and suddenly he was no longer telling me about ambiguity, but about sadness - sadness at the end of every weekend and holiday when he had to leave home to return to boarding-school, sadness about being cut off from his friends, when even going home could no longer alleviate his loneliness, because he had become isolated and a stranger ... He told me that this sadness had been with him ever since, all his life, and was still with him, every morning as he woke up. He could feel it right then, in the session, yes ... in the pit of his stomach; sadness mixed with apprehension, and a feeling of dread.

Jim walked into our seventh session with the news that he was feeling more cheerful and finding it a lot easier to get up in the morning. Since our previous session he was no longer experiencing the sense of dread when he woke up in the morning. He spoke about the possibility of making a commitment to Vivien, and told me that he had called Merryll the previous night to "first check out her vibes".

He referred to conditional love, having to behave in a certain way to "earn" love, and drew a link between Merryll and his mother, saying "Although they are quite different persons, I sometimes feel that they are similar in relation to me." He remarked that, unlike Merryll, Vivien did not demand anything from him, and was puzzled by the fact that amidst this "loose feeling of freedom" he experienced a lack of closeness.

I mentioned the possibility that past experience had led him to form an unconscious link between the two issues, so that he associated intimacy and closeness with restriction and demands, and could not envisage the one without the other. He admitted that he had always felt obliged to please his mother in order to be loved, and spoke

about her strong disapproval and rude behaviour when he took a girlfriend to their house.

I linked this to the Rusty gate (p.45), saying that the gate may refer to his mother's strict boundaries around the family, which opposed his need to go out into the world of other people. In the dream the gate was no longer in its functional position, indicating his awareness of a need to enter the world, but the fact that he still felt obliged to drag the gate around with him may be due to the continued unconscious demand to earn his mother's love. He admitted that it was true, but turned away from his own contribution to the relationship to complain about the ways in which his mother was still trying to restrict his independence.

In the eighth session Jim reported that he had decided to stop drinking "for a while". This decision had been taken six days before, and so far it went well. He said that he was feeling "in a better space altogether", and more alert.

While he was speaking about the distance that seemed to exist between him and other people, he interrupted himself to tell me about a small incident, recently, when he had drifted into a shop that sold fishing-gear, and found himself speaking to the shopkeeper about fishing. He had difficulty saying what it was about this incident that was significant, except to say that it had stuck in his mind ever since and had a "good feeling" about it.

Something about the mood around the little incident reminded me of the nostalgia Jim had experienced in Mad mother (p.46), of his yearning back to the "simplicity of life" and "belonging without complications".

I followed my intuition and asked him if the incident had a cosy, friendly feeling, like chatting to the neighbour over the fence, and had a warm sense of belonging, of comfortable, ordinary human contact. He said yes, that was exactly the feeling he had

experienced. When I stayed with the image and said: "Like your father saying 'get our gear together, we're going fishing'?" he responded warmly by telling me that it was exactly the type of thing he used to experience with his father. He said he now realized that speaking to the shopkeeper had a good feeling because it reminded him of a time "when things were still good ..."

When I reflected his need for belonging and ordinary human contact, he agreed, but said that, at the same time, he seemed to want to get away from it as far as possible - as if it was still too much a part of his life.

In the ninth session Jim spoke about a fight raging inside himself, which was draining his energy and undermined his commitment to everything he tried to do. He said that when he tried to work, he was constantly aware of dreams, scenes and memories from childhood hovering beneath the surface, ruining his efforts to concentrate.

He felt that he was going down one lane after the other, failing to find what he was looking for. When I asked what he hoped to find at the end of each lane, he said "some kind of belonging".

I wondered if the nostalgia that was undermining his commitment may not be an indication that something was calling him back, something of value that he had lost. Linking the childhood photograph in Mad mother (p.46), the childhood memories that constantly hovered under the surface for him, and the good feeling of being reminded of going fishing with his father, I wondered if his non-commitment may not be due to a "state of mourning" as a result of loss.

He said that it made sense to him, that he had felt like that ever since he had been sent away to boarding-school.

Jim then spoke about his mother's critical attitude towards him. To her, everything had to be "nice", and he was not "nice". He was never

living up to her expectations. When I drew out his feelings in response to her attitude, he spoke about anger, sadness and guilt, but once more with so much detachment that I said to him: "You tell me about your anger, but I don't feel it." He said that he used to shout at his mother in frustration, but that he gave up "because it was like shouting at a blank wall".

Jim started the tenth session by saying: "You were right about the anger. It is there, an old anger that has been there since childhood, but I can't express it."

When we explored this, he said that what blocked him could be the feeling of being indebted to his parents, that he owed them "good behaviour". Instead of expressing his feelings, he had always felt like "a sulky little boy".

I stayed with this image and linked it to the nostalgia he felt for childhood, the memories that kept on calling him back, the dream of the Rusty gate (p.45) and of the bathroom cabinet (Abyss, p.37). I suggested that it was the "sulky little boy" whose wishes and needs were overruled by his mother, and who could not express his anger and sadness for fear of losing her love, who was now demanding to be heard.

I suggested that the "sulky little boy", because he had not been listened to for all these years, was still fighting the efforts of the "good child" - even now that he had grown to be an adult.

When he responded with strong agreement, I suggested that we listen to the "sulky little boy" and give him the ear he had been denied.

Jim started to talk and told me how his mother had decided that he was turning into a "Boksborg boy", that he was not achieving well, not receiving a proper education, and how it was pressed upon him that his parents were making a "sacrifice" for his sake by sending him to boarding-school.

When he went off on a side-track to tell me how he could see that it was a good decision, I reminded him that we needed to listen to the "sulky little boy's" feeling and that we were not, for the time being, concerned with the way he viewed the situation as an adult.

This returned his focus to the childhood experience, and he spoke about his departure to the boarding-school, how sad he had felt, how isolated.

I drew out his feelings, and one fragment of a sentence, one image, that stood out, was a reference to "the garden in summer", mentioned poignantly.

I invited him to tell me about it, and he spoke about the big old garden at their home, filled with many big trees and sunlight, and how all the neighbourhood children used to come and play there, soccer and other games, how he belonged without effort, happy; how he lost contact with them when he was sent away and how they were no longer there for him when he came home for holidays. How, afterwards, he used to drift around on his own, aimlessly, during holidays .... not belonging any more.

He had made contact with something valuable lost in childhood, the nostalgic memory of a garden in summer which extended beyond the family photograph in the dream Mad mother (p.46), and I shared it with him in silence as he re-experienced the loss.

"I have a heavy feeling over my heart," he told me at last, "yes, a sadness ..."

In the eleventh session Jim continued the previous theme and said that he sometimes felt as if, by deciding to come to Rhodes, he had sent himself to boarding-school once more. We explored this feeling in relation to both his sadness and his sense of non-commitment. I finally suggested that the move to Grahamstown not only brought

emotions of loneliness and longing for the familiar situation in Johannesburg, but also triggered the old emotions of sadness and loss which he had experienced when he went off to boarding-school - feelings not dealt with nor worked through before.

I also mentioned the possibility that, although he had decided to come to Rhodes of his own accord, he at the same time responded to the internalized "mother" in his heart who was saying that he "should" do this to achieve a better education (similar to when he went to boarding-school), and that the old resentment came into conflict with a commitment to his own decision.

Jim felt that both these hypotheses made a lot of sense. He said that the previous session had stirred up many memories for him, which made him feel "light and alive" inside.

A few nights before, he told me, he had gone to Vivien and invited her for a walk in the rain. This was something he would have thought of doing in the past, but never actually did. They had gone to Mountain Drive, taken off their clothes and walked in the rain. "It was very cold," he said happily, "but I felt alive, vital."

Later in that same night he had a dream, Renovated house (p.48), in which he drove his car to a house which had been previously shrouded in darkness.

"I had assumed that there were people living inside, strangers." In the dream he knew that the previous time he had been to the house he had felt too inhibited to go inside. "Now it was daylight, and to my surprise I saw that the house was open, not occupied, and that it was being renovated and rebuilt."

After we explored the different elements in the dream, I mentioned that the way the world presented itself to him in the dream had changed from being shrouded in darkness, inhibiting and occupied by strangers, to being in bright daylight, being rebuilt, and inviting,

open.

In the twelfth session Jim reported that he had received a phone-call from Merryll, asking him to resume their relationship, and it had left him with a sense of heaviness and confusion. He was considering the possibility, but when I asked him to imagine what it would be like to return to the relationship and previous situation, he said "Fine, I will just have to drink a lot."

When we spoke about the approaching termination and the fact that the year, the course and his present situation would soon come to an end, he said that the very thought brought a tightness to his body, and that it had to do with having to be on his own again.

I linked his heavy feeling about Merryll and his fear of being on his own again, by first reminding him of what he had said earlier on about staying in unsatisfactory relationships or situations because it offered "a strange kind of security".

Then I referred to the images in his dreams, with the repeated contrast between the vital, enticing symbols like grapes (Rusty gate, p.45), a sensuous girl on-the-beach (Abyss, p.37) and a rebuilt, inviting house (Renovated house, p.48), versus the symbols of outdated objects that now served as stumbling blocks, like the old gate (Rusty gate, p.45) and the bathroom cabinet (Abyss, p.37).

I wondered if it was not possible that Merryll and the security of the familiar relationship with her belonged to the realm of the gate and the bathroom cabinet, while the images of the grapes, the girl on the beach and the rebuilt, open house may be calling him to risk the unknown, the scary part of "being on his own" - a risk that may be necessary to gain the life-giving, valuable qualities.

I said: "Your dreams are calling you to reach out to the richness of life."

Jim listened intently, then smiled a happy smile, and for the first time ever, in any of our sessions, leant back in his chair and stretched out his legs in front of him. This was an example of what Gendlin (1986) calls a "felt sense" that brings a liberating shift in the body itself.

Jim then spoke about a dream he had during the previous year, and related Patricia's grapes (p.40). Patricia, who appeared in his dream, was a woman he had known in Johannesburg, and in whose presence he had felt free to be himself and speak his mind. He described her as "brilliant, unconventional, and her own person, not one of the herd."

In the dream he was sitting at a table with his parents, Merryll and other friends, when Patricia entered with two bunches of grapes.

"She came to me and the two of us ate the grapes. The other people somehow could not see that, it was only visible to me and Patricia."

I mentioned that the other people around the table were representatives of security; parents, Merryll, old friends - all belonging to the known and the familiar, but that the life-giving grapes were offered to him in a space of his own, separate from the others.

When I wondered what analogous behaviour in his waking life would constitute a reaching out for the grapes, a move into the rebuilt house, Jim said it would mean moving forward without the old enmeshment with others. He added that there was something else about Patricia ... that during one earlier session he had looked at me, and my face was the face of Patricia.

I said that perhaps, being with me during our therapy sessions, he also felt free to be himself and speak his real feelings, and he agreed.

In the thirteenth session Jim reported that he had received phone-calls from both Merryll and Patricia during the evening after our previous session, and that it had kept him awake all night. "It was like symbols from my dreams stepping into real life to intensify my conflict," he said.

He spoke about going with Vivien to a deserted old church building out in the country, and the strange sense of anxiety he had experienced - as if someone would turn up any minute, some punitive authority figure. He often felt that way when he was alone with a woman.

When I wondered if it could be related to his mother's negative reaction when he brought a girl home, he said yes, it was the same feeling. He was also experiencing feelings of guilt and betrayal for discussing his mother in therapy, after she had always forbidden them to discuss family affairs with outsiders. "My mother probably never expected to raise children like me and my brother," he said, "children that are 'not nice'."

He laughed a little laugh and told me that his unquestioning acceptance of his mother's views had changed one day in primary school, when the family was on their way to the coast for a holiday. They had stopped along the road so that his parents could drink tea, and while wandering around, waiting for them, he had said to his brother: "Nice weather for the Jones'."

He told me that in that moment he suddenly saw his parents in a different perspective, and that after that he never took the "surface stuff" seriously again. I suggested that one part of him began to see through the "surface stuff", but that another part still felt obliged to comply, even in the present time, and he agreed.

When we discussed the approaching termination during the fourteenth session, Jim expressed his sadness about "things coming to an end and not having been enough." He said that his life in Grahamstown had a

feeling of being unreal, "play-play, time-out" - as if the real world was "peak-hour traffic in Johannesburg".

Nevertheless, he felt that something had happened to him in Grahamstown. He had recently re-read a book that he had previously read in Johannesburg, and was astonished at the richness of emotional response it had evoked in him - in comparison to the way it had seemed closed to him before.

"I must have been quite dead inside before," he said. Since he started therapy, he had been keeping a diary, and he was still drinking very little. He expressed surprise at how easy this was for him.

In the fifteenth session Jim spoke about his preparation for the examination, saying that he had been working very hard and feeling quite tense about it, but that it also made him feel "real and alive".

He related the Door-handle (p.48), saying that he dreamt of washing a door-handle in a little river, and that the screws came out so that the door-handle fell apart.

I asked him what a door-handle meant to him, and he said "shutting off things behind it". I mentioned that a door-handle with the screws undone can no longer shut off anything behind it.

Then he related another recent dream, Parking on yellow line (p.49).

Before I could respond to this dream, he continued with a third one, Breast-feeding (p.50), saying that in the dream he saw his parents who were visiting people in their livingroom, and heard his mother tell them about breast-feeding. He paused and said, "No, this was not a dream, it was a memory. It really happened when I was a kid."

He said that in the night he had the impression of himself being a baby in a cot, with his mother scurrying around, being very busy to

no avail, being very anxious to sterilize the bottles and not really concerned with him personally.

I asked him to describe his impressions of the experience, and he spoke about how uptight, anxious and clinical his mother was.

"If you return to the baby's point of view," I asked him, "what would you say to your mother?" He paused, and said in a controlled tone of voice: "Relax", then smiled briefly, and added with more daring: "For fuck's sake, relax!"

The exclamation slipped out so unexpectedly that we both laughed for a moment, but I knew that it was a "pregnant" image and immediately became serious again, suggesting that this anger had been sitting there for a long time and that he should close his eyes and get in touch with it, feel it.

He did, and said that "the voice" (internalized voice of his mother) was saying that he should be grateful for all that was done for him, that what was done was for his best.

I did not want to let the opportunity slip away and leant forward to address, not Jim, but the angry baby in the cot - giving permission for the expression of the intense emotion that lay behind that single swearword by using one myself: "Tell her she's got it all bloody wrong, that what you want is not sterile bottles, but for her to hold you, nurture and cuddle you ..."\*

Jim was listening intently, almost spell-bound, so I continued and said slowly, with pauses:

... "Tell her that she's been doing it to you all your life ..., deciding what she thought was right for you ....., putting her stamp on you ..., forcing you into places she chose for you ..."

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\* I have doubts about using swearwords in front of clients, but made an exception in this case in order to facilitate the expression of his anger.

He listened with great intensity, and continued when I stopped speaking, to say with a thick-sounding voice that almost seemed stuck in his throat: "... and if you don't know how to live your own life, stop telling others how to live theirs!"

He was finally in touch with his deep-seated rage. When I asked him after a pause how he was feeling right then, he said "I am angry!", and this time I could feel it. He was furious.

For a moment I wondered if I had pushed him too much, and whether his anger was directed at me, but when I asked with whom he was angry, he said - still with the thick, choked sound in his voice: "With my mother, and with myself - for all the shit that has been going on over the past years!"

When he arrived for the sixteenth session Jim mentioned that his head had been spinning after our previous session, but that he had experienced an upsurge of energy afterwards.

From what he said it was obvious that he only had a vague recollection of having been "angry about his mother", but that he could not remember the session's content. The need for repression was still present. Nevertheless, when he spoke about his rebellious brother who had left the country for political reasons, he expressed pensive amazement at the loneliness and longing contained in the letters his brother wrote to his parents.

In his voice, too, there was a different tone when he spoke about his parents: "They were old and sad when he left," and an almost kind acceptance of his mother: "She puts such a lot of energy into everything ..."

During the seventeenth session Jim expressed his anxiety about the approaching examination, his departure from Grahamstown and his decision to go overseas afterwards. He did not know yet "where, what, when or how", but he was going as soon as he had the money for an

air-ticket.

"I'll probably have an attack of 'angst' when I get there, but I won't run back ... like I would not leave Rhodes even when it was so bad at first ..."

He expressed regret at having to bring therapy to an end, and said that his head had been spinning for a few days at the thought of returning to Rhodes in the next year, to be able to continue therapy, but that he had decided not to.

In the eighteenth session Jim related three dreams he had about dogs, Black dog (p.51), Naked girl (p.51) and Dog on beach (p.52). We considered the progressive change in his dream experience of dogs, first seeing it as potentially threatening (Black dog, p.51), then as merely nosing around (Naked girl, p.51), and finally as running freely on the beach (Dog on beach, p.52).

I suggested that he, in his dreaming state, was becoming aware of the possibility that it need not be threatening to liberate himself from the constraints imposed upon him in childhood.

In contrast to session fifteen, in which Jim had made contact with his intense anger at his mother, only to repress it again (to the degree that he had only a vague recollection of that in the sixteenth session), Jim had direct access to this anger in session nineteen.

He spoke about the way his mother had been dominating him all through his life, the humiliation he had suffered for being forced to dance to her tune, and the frustration and resentment of never having been able to express his negative feelings towards her.

In discussing the fact that we had only two sessions left before termination, he said that therapy had become an important space in his life and that he regretted having to leave it behind. He considered writing down future dreams that seemed significant, and

mailing them to me, but expressed misgivings that continued contact might indicate dependence on his part.

In the twentieth session Jim spoke about his approaching return to Johannesburg and the fact that Merryll was still a factor in his life, although the relationship with Vivien had become stronger. He then related Merryll becomes mother (p.53), saying that after this dream his restlessness had disappeared and he had been able to sleep peacefully.

He could then recognize that there were similarities in the way the two women related to him. Both put great demands and constrictions on him, and both tried to "lay a guilt trip" on him when he failed to comply.

Then he related a second dream, Love-making (p.53), in which Patricia and Merryll were in bed together, and in which he accepted Patricia's invitation to make love to her without feeling guilty or uncomfortable.

In a third dream, Parental garden (p.54), he was happily expecting Vivien to visit him at his parents' home. Although he felt in the dream that it was "a pity" that she should visit him there, he did not experience any feelings of guilt or anxiety, and in his waking state remembered it as a "beautiful" dream.

He told me that he had become more close to Vivien and intended to continue with the relationship. He intended to return to her when he came back from overseas.

In the termination<sup>\*</sup> session (21) we worked together to identify the themes that had appeared in the dreams and to consider the changes

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\* The issue of termination is only mentioned briefly in this section of the case study, because it was not reflected in the dreams. In fact it was dealt with more extensively than the discussion of the sessions portray.

that had occurred in his own dream behaviour, as well as in the behaviour of other figures in his dreams.

I mentioned that issues from childhood initially prevented him from responding to the invitation of the sensuous girl on the beach (Abyss, p.37), or from reaching the grapes (Rusty gate, p.45), and when he did eat Patricia's grapes (Patricia's grapes, p.40), it had to be invisible to the others. Yet, towards the end of therapy he was able to respond, in his dreaming state, to Patricia's invitation to make love to her in Merryll's presence (Love-making, p.53), without feeling anxious or guilty.

Jim could recognize that there seemed to be a loosening of the "shoulds" and "should nots" that previously governed his life, and also of the anxiety about the consequences if he should not comply. He felt that the dream attitude did fit his waking experience, and also recognized an analogy between himself and the black dog that used to be tied up at his childhood home, in that the letting go of constraints at first seemed threatening, only later to be viewed as liberating.

He was sad that we had ~~come to our~~ last therapy session, but said that his general state of mind was much happier than it used to be before. The anxiety that used to plague him every morning, had completely disappeared after the sixth session, and the anger he used to feel towards his parents was no longer prominent; it seemed to have become touched with a sense of sadness.

## CHAPTER FIVE

5. Discussion and conclusion5.1 Discussion

In order to investigate the hermeneutic value of the Daseins-analytic approach to dream interpretation in psychotherapy, the discussion will focus on the degree to which the case material verifies the claims made by the Daseinsanalytic dream theory. This will be done by addressing the following three questions with regard to the case material under consideration:

- \* Did the dreamer's subjective experience of his own existential condition and of the dynamics at work in his life correspond analogically to the content and world-attunement of his dreams?
- \* Did the dreams, over time, reflect a change in his existential condition that may be considered to reflect progress in the therapeutic process?
- \* Did the dreamer experience any changes in his waking life which may be considered to be empirical evidence of progress in therapy?

5.1.i The dreamer's subjective experience

When considering Jim's responses to different dreams and other self-disclosing statements he made during the course of therapy, there seems to be a close analogy between his subjective emotional experience and situations that appear in his dreams.

This applies particularly to the content of the first ten dreams. These dreams, which were related during the first six sessions, seem to map out in metaphoric language the existential world in which Jim found himself during the first phase of the therapeutic process.

His conscious reluctance to expose himself in therapy, his concern about his alcohol abuse, his pervasive dissatisfaction with his life, and his sense of being distanced from others, were all clearly expressed in Dark,

unfurnished house.

He was sharply aware of his inability to commit himself, especially to romantic relationships, and recognized this issue in the dreams Unwrapped condoms and Aboriginals, as well as in Achilles' heel and Funeral pyre, in response to which he admitted conscious awareness of the potential emotional destructiveness of his non-committal attitude to an intimate relationship.

In Abyss he recognized a reflection of his sense of constriction and his lack of autonomy, acutely experienced in his waking life, and expressed an awareness of his preoccupation with issues from childhood. Although the initial passivity in the Abyss did not receive attention when we discussed the dream, the tendency was confirmed by him during another session when he spoke about his habit of remaining in unsatisfactory situations or relationships.

His sense of himself as hiding behind a "persona" instead of being able to freely and spontaneously express himself, is clearly portrayed by Patricia's grapes.

The conflict between his preoccupation with issues from childhood and the invitation of life is not only confined to dream-images in Abyss, Rusty gate and Mad mother, but manifests itself in his waking life. In session 9 he described his waking experience as a "fight raging within myself", with dreams, scenes and memories from childhood hovering beneath the surface, ruining his efforts to concentrate on his work.

With regard to mood, there is undeniable correspondence between the nostalgia he experienced in Mad mother when looking at a childhood photograph and the nostalgia he experienced in waking life when he spoke about fishing trips with his father and "the garden in summer".

Similarly, he had a waking experience of the "open road-feeling" that occurred in Veld fires, and realized that it was linked to situations in which he had asserted himself and exercised his autonomy.

Although Jim initially discarded the suggestion, he later came to the realization that there was a similarity in the way he related to his mother and Merryll. This was later reflected in the dream Merryll becomes mother.

The evidence that Jim felt his dreams to be reflecting his subjective emotional experience in waking life, is further supported by a remark in session 13 when he said: "It was like symbols from my dreams stepping into real life to intensify my conflict."

#### 5.1.ii Changes in the dreamer's existential condition

The central conflict in Jim's neurosis is represented by two main themes that can be identified among the 20 dreams related during the course of therapy, namely (i) clinging to the emotional issues of childhood, and (ii) being "called" to actualize the denied parts of himself by active involvement in life.

This conflict, which was already manifest in the Abyss (15 months before Jim entered therapy), when he turned away from the sensuous, inviting girl to keep the bathroom cabinet from his childhood home balanced in the waves, can also be seen as the conflict between the healthy core and the neurotic core of the personality structure, as Angyal (1965) conceptualized it in his "Theory of Universal Ambiguity" (p.99).

Angyal (1965) argues that there are both healthy and traumatic features in every child's environment and in his relations to it. Some of the early efforts to master and relate to the world succeed, while some fail. As a result of this dual experience the child's personality develops

simultaneously around two nuclei to form two patterns: the healthy and the neurotic. In the neurotic person it is the neurotic pattern (based on isolation, feelings of helplessness and unloveableness, and doubts about his prospects) that dominates, but the healthy pattern - though underdeveloped - is never absent. The latter is characterized by an atmosphere of hope, confidence and trust, and these qualities can be expected to become more manifest as the neurotic core loses its dominance during the therapeutic process.

Indications of the presence of a healthy core in Jim's psyche can be found in the repeated invitation to become actively involved in life: in the Abyss the friend's suggestion that he climbs over the wall, the urge to jump into the abyss, the sensuous, inviting girl on the beach; in Patricia's grapes the offering of the black and green grapes; in Aboriginals the destruction of the condoms; in Rusty gate the grape-vine; in Veld fires the friend's direction to the "open road"; in Renovated house the discovery that the house was rebuilt and not occupied, but available; and in Love-making the girl's invitation that he should make love to her.

Clinging to the emotional issues of childhood is most prominent in the Abyss (preoccupation with the bathroom cabinet), Rusty gate (preoccupation with the old gate from his childhood home) and Mad mother (preoccupation with a photograph from childhood).

Adjacent to this central conflict, though, there are other features characteristic of the neurotic structure. As Angyal (1965) said: "The person feels and functions as if he were not really a part of the world; he does not feel that the world is his home. As a result of his isolation both his capacity to exercise mastery, to determine his own fate, and his capacity to love are impaired; one cannot reach out to others and share in their lives without coming

out of one's shell" (Angyal, 1965, p.80).

With this statement in mind I would like to consider (i) Jim's sense of his dwelling-place in the world, (ii) his autonomy, and (iii) the way he relates to women, as these dimensions are reflected in his dreams.

a) His dwelling-place in the world

If one accepts the suggestion of Boss that the dream image of a house can be considered to be analogous to a sense of one's dwelling-place in the world, the case material presents five units for the investigation of this dimension of Jim's experience:

In Dark, unfurnished house (session 4) he finds himself alone in a dark, unfurnished house without curtains. He is exposed to both man and nature (people can look in, the wind blows in through the open windows) and he experiences a sense of despair.

In Mad mother (session 5) the houses are still obscured in darkness, and an extremely anxiety-provoking feature presents itself: his mother, instead of representing the archetype of security, nurturance and primal care-giving, is sitting in the middle of one house, and she is mad.

These two dreams correspond with Angyal's (1965) description: "The world of neurosis is foreign and threatening, full of obstacles and dangers, lawless, capricious, a chaos rather than a cosmos" (Angyal, 1965, p.101).

A considerable change is noticed in Renovated house (session 11). Not only does a familiar house that had previously been shrouded in darkness now appear to him in daylight, but he realized within the dream that his fearful assumptions (that there were strangers living inside) which had previously made him feel too inhibited to enter, were misconceptions. To his surprise he finds that the house is not occupied but open, and being renovated and rebuilt.

This third dream indicates a loosening of the neurotic stronghold,

and a shift towards health: "The world visualized in the healthy pattern feels like one's home; it is rich in opportunities, lawfully ordered, and meaningfully related to the person" (Angyal, 1965, p.101).

In Naked girl (session 18) the dreamer is no longer on the outside, but inside a house, and no longer alone, but in the company of a naked girl, which suggests the dimension of intimacy and sexuality in his world. In this house there are curtains to provide boundaries and a sense of privacy. The house is not permanently dark, but can be lit up at will.

Although there is still a degree of anxiety about potential threat (a sound is heard outside), and still some tendency to withdraw to safety, rather than to confront (he is angry with the girl for putting on the light and opening the curtains), the dream shows the anxiety to be unfounded (there is no danger outside - merely two dogs nosing around).

In sharp contrast to Mad mother (session 5) where his parents' home had been shrouded in darkness, occupied by a mad mother, the family's house in Parental garden (session 20) is found in a beautiful garden setting, bathed in ethereal light, with birds singing in the trees.

The dream reflects a world-attunement of happiness, peace and expectancy, and a perceptive realm opening up to the beauty, joy and serenity of nature.

This dream seems to indicate that Jim has recaptured a precious resource of his childhood, the lost "garden in summer", and managed to re-integrate it as a valuable component of his dwelling-place in the world.

#### (b) His sense of autonomy

To gain autonomy is to be able to exercise mastery and determine one's own fate, to feel free from enslavement, and to feel that the locus of control and the locus of evaluation resides primarily in oneself.

In session 6 Jim said that a car represents "freedom, the ability to move, and when necessary to escape and get away"; the locus of evaluation is closely linked to the degree to which a person feels vulnerable to the scrutiny and opinions of others; and when one considers the rich nexus of meanings and contexts of reference provided by the concept "dog", it is seen to differ in essence from humans in that it is limited to one way of relating, characterized by compulsive submission, enslavement and dependency (Boss, 1977).

It may therefore be possible to gain a sense of Jim's sense of autonomy by examining the three sets of dreams in which the themes of "car", "dog" and "feeling exposed" occur respectively.

#### (1) Car

In the Abyss (15 months before he started therapy) he finds himself separated from his car, which is locked up behind a huge wall enclosing the university campus. The vehicle of his autonomy is locked up within the confines of authority, and initially he abandons all hope of liberating it, but the dream does not reflect utter hopelessness. When a friend suggests that he climbs over the wall, he responds hopefully and perseveres with his quest, in spite of the difficulties involved.

The fact that the quest does not lead him to the car itself, but on a journey of exploration which leads progressively inward, reflects an awareness in his dreaming state that the lack of autonomy is not merely due to restrictions imposed upon him by authority but to restrictions within his own psyche.

In Veld fires (session 6) his car is no longer locked up within a restricted area, but there is still a sense of his autonomy being endangered by outer sources - the car is parked in an area of veld fires. Once more the dream reflects inner obstacles to his autonomy - the intrusion of ugly strangers within the car. He is reluctant to confront these intruders and passively accepts the status quo for the time being, but gets a glimpse of the exhilaration of feeling autonomous when a friend points

out the highway to him.

In Renovated house (session 11) he is in sole control of his car and able to drive it to where he wants to be.

Parking on a yellow line (session 15) takes the theme a step further when the dream reflects an openness to the behavioural possibility of defying authority. He drives to town and parks his car on a yellow line, but the urge to comply is still present. Although it is the middle of the night, when traffic regulations are less strictly enforced, he decides to move the car away from the yellow line.

## (2) Dog

The first dog in the dream series appears in Parking on a yellow line (session 15), running towards the dreamer in what seems to be a threatening mood, directly after he had defied authority and asserted his autonomy in a daring way by parking on a yellow line.

He expects to be attacked when his behaviour goes directly against the compulsive submissiveness, enslavement and dependencies associated with doglike behaviour, but it does not happen. In contrast, he is attacked for the opposite behaviour, when he returns to compliance.

The unconscious anger reflected in the dream is not aimed at his autonomous, non-submissive behaviour, but at his continued urge to cling to the status quo of compliance.

In Black dog (session 18) the sense of being liberated from enslavement is reflected by his encounter with a dog from his childhood, who used to be tied up at home, but is now running around freely. Once more he expects to be attacked, but the danger he expects to be implicit in the liberation process is proved to be absent.

The same theme is repeated in Naked girl (session 18) when the

dogs that made a noise outside the house are non-threatening, and merely nosing around.

A sense of joy and freedom appears in Dog on beach (session 18), when he sees the same dog that used to be tied up at his childhood home running on the beach, freely. A shift has occurred in the dreamer's world-attunement. It is no longer focused on potential threat, but his perceptual realm has opened up to the existential possibility of joyous freedom.

### (3) Feeling exposed

In Dark, unfurnished house (session 4) the dreamer is aware of an intense sense of despair and a pronounced feeling of exposure. He has no protection against the scrutiny of other people, who can look in through the uncurtained windows and observe his isolation and unhappiness.

In Unwrapped condoms (session 5) he suffers embarrassment for having both his great need for intimacy and his exaggerated need for protection exposed "for everybody to see".

There is a noticeable shift in Parking on a yellow line (session 15) when he drives to town undressed, wearing only a towel which is almost falling off. Although he experiences some anxiety for not conforming to the traffic regulations, there is a remarkable absence of self-consciousness about his nudity or concern about being exposed to the evaluation of other people.

In Naked girl (session 18) the pronounced sense of exposure to the evaluation of other people had been replaced by a sense of privacy and confinement within the protective boundaries of one's own choice. His perceptive realm has opened up to the behavioural possibility of exposing an intimate component of his life, reflected by his unconscious mind allowing the naked girl in his dream to open the curtain and put on the light.

### (c) The way he relates to women

In the Abyss (15 months before starting therapy) Jim could not respond to the invitation of the sensuous, friendly girl on the

beach, nor actively engage in a relationship with her, due to his preoccupation with the bathroom cabinet from his childhood.

In Patricia's grapes he does respond to Patricia's invitation to share the grapes with her, but it happens in "secrecy". In his dreaming state he cannot allow his parents, Merryll and other friends to witness this. The dream reflects an inhibition to relate freely, openly and honestly.

Both Achilles' heel and Funeral pyre (session 5) reflect an attitude of non-commitment to an intimate relationship, and a resistance to becoming responsibly involved in the experience.

All the same, there is a growing sense of awareness of the unnaturalness of his attitude, first manifested by his embarrassment at walking around with a huge supply of condoms (Unwrapped condoms, session 5), and then by witnessing members of a primitive, natural culture destroy a lot of condoms (Aboriginals, session 5).

In Mad mother (session 5) he takes his girlfriend into his family's house, but once more a preoccupation with the emotional issues of childhood prevents the occurrence of a romantic or sensual interaction. The dream clearly illustrates that his existence and world-attunement is open to nostalgia and loss, and that the phenomenon of romantic love is not allowed to shine forth in the world-realm of his dreaming perception.

Two significant changes can be noticed in Naked girl (session 18). For the first time a naked girl makes her appearance in his dream-realm, reflecting an opening up to intimacy and sexuality as an existential dimension. At the same time the behaviour of this girl (in opening the curtains and exposing their intimate togetherness) is in sharp contrast to the inhibition that was still manifest in Patricia's grapes.

This loosening up of inhibition is even more pronounced in Love-making (session 20) when he freely responds to the

invitation to make love to Patricia in Merryll's presence. He is now open to the enjoyment of sexuality and no longer distracted by preoccupation related to childhood, nor by a fear of being censured.

In Parental garden (session 20) he is once more expecting his girlfriend to visit him at his parent's home, but there is an undeniable change from the world-attunement that prevailed in Mad mother (session 5). The nostalgia for and preoccupation with emotional issues from childhood has made way for a poetic, romantic mood and joyful expectation.

The conflicts around childhood and his parents had receded into the background, and in the dream are acknowledged with regret but resignation: "What a pity that she should visit me at my parents' home."

In conclusion, it would seem that the dreams, over time, indicate a change in every one of the three themes under consideration, and that it would appear to reflect progress in the therapeutic process.

#### 5.1.iii Empirical evidence of progress in therapy

Considering the fact that Jim's two previous attempts to undergo therapy have both failed, his perseverance and involvement with the present therapy indicates a loosening up in his pattern of non-commitment. At both previous occasions he dropped out of therapy after only a few sessions, partly due to an inner resistance to commitment and partly due to a neurotic sensitivity to the scrutiny and potential judgment of others. Although the same ambivalence was present during the initial stages of therapy, the dream Dark, unfurnished house (session 4) provided an opportunity to address this and to strengthen the therapeutic alliance. As a result he never missed a single session, repeatedly verbalized the sense that therapy had become an important space in his life, and expressed regret when we had to terminate at the end of the

university's academic year.

His altered experience of therapy, from a space where one is exposed to scrutiny to a space where one is free to express one's true feelings, is also reflected by the transference implications of the incident where my face temporarily became for him the face of Patricia.

Jim reported in session 7 that the sense of dread and anxiety that he used to experience upon waking up in the morning, and which during the previous year had been so intense that he would sometimes rather stay in bed than face the day, had disappeared. He never complained of suffering this symptom again during the course of therapy.

In session 8 he reported that he had decided to stop drinking "for a while". He had already been able to keep to this decision for six days, and felt not only more alert but "in a better space altogether". In session 14 he mentioned that he was still drinking very little and expressed surprise at how easy it was for him.

After session 10, in which we had focused on the emotions of the "sulky little boy" and especially his nostalgia about "the garden in summer", he reported in session 11 that it had stirred up many memories for him, which had made him feel "light and alive" inside. He had also taken Vivien for a walk in the rain, after dark. This was something he would have thought of doing in the past, but never actually did, and it made him feel vital and alive.

This incident can be seen as a loosening of the inhibition of action Angyal (1965) mentions in his description of the pattern of non-commitment in neurosis (p.166).

Another neurotic symptom referred to by Angyal (1965) is the blunted affect: the "normal gamut of feelings is greatly restricted" (p.169). Here, too, a loosening of the

symptom is indicated by Jim's comment in session 14. He said that he had recently re-read a book that he had previously read in Johannesburg, and was astonished at the richness of emotional response it had evoked in him - in comparison to the way it had seemed closed to him before.

"I must have been quite dead inside before," he said.

In session 15 there was more evidence of a loosening in his inhibition of action when he spoke about working very hard for the examination and feeling "real and alive".

The expression of anger at his mother in session 15 was followed by an "upsurge of energy", reported in session 16. In session 16 he also manifested an openness to the vulnerability of his parents ("They were old and sad when he left") and an almost kind acceptance of his mother ("She puts such a lot of energy into everything ...").

This can also be seen as evidence of progress if considered in the light of Angyal's comment: "In therapy it can be observed fairly regularly that toward the end of treatment the patient begins to talk about his childhood, and particularly about his parents, in a more positive vein than before. A great deal of hostility toward them may have been uncovered earlier in therapy, but now memories of happy episodes are revived, of instances in which the child was treated with kindness. (Angyal, 1965, p.80).

Jim's announcement in session 17 that he was definitely going overseas in the following year, even though he knew that he was likely to have an attack of "angst" when he arrived there, indicates a decrease in his neurotic compulsion to cling to the familiar (Angyal, 1965, p.127) and in his neurotic condition of being "narrowed in" (Angyal, 1965, p.76).

His intention to continue the relationship with Vivien, and

to return to her when he comes back from overseas (mentioned in session 20) is still no evidence of a serious commitment, but indicates a degree of opening up to that behaviour as an existential possibility.

## 5.2 Conclusion

From the discussion it is clear that the case material provides unequivocal evidence for affirmative answers to the three questions that were addressed:

- \* Jim's subjective experience of his own existential condition and of the dynamics at work in his life do correspond analogically to the content and world-attunement of his dreams.
- \* The dreams, over time, did reflect a change in his existential condition that may be considered to reflect progress in the therapeutic process.
- \* Jim did experience changes in his waking life which may be considered to be empirical evidence of progress in therapy.

In the light of the findings of this investigation, it is justified to conclude that the Daseinsanalytic method of dream explication is indeed able to highlight significant aspects of a client's existence which may help him to become aware of impaired existential behavioural possibilities, and thus has hermeneutic value in psychotherapy.

Considering the similarity in stated purpose and criteria of validity with the views of other contemporary dream analysts, this hermeneutic value is not merely limited to dream explication in Daseinsanalysis, but to dream interpretation in general.

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