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1. Introduction

- 1 There are difficulties inherent to living as a “subject,” that apparition of modern philosophy that means something like a consciousness, forever mediated, whose primary task is to know and judge objects. The curious passion of subjects, over which the bulk of modern philosophical ink has been spilled, is tied to that neurotic wish, entirely incompatible with reality, to judge things “objectively.” The progeny of the desire for truth and the anxiety of doubt, the “subject” is torn between the suspicion that the world is not accessible to the senses and the faith that it is. If we grant William James the distinction between the “avoidable” truths of science, and the “forced” truths of values, when we express the problem as mainly an epistemic puzzle, we are merely in the safest and shallowest of philosophical territory. But in lived experience, the crisis of the subject has been transposed into a poignant social-political despair. Increasingly, there is a conviction that subjectivity entails an insurmountable gap between what *my* experience has led me to value and what *yours* has led you to believe, so that dialogue loses its potency. When dialogue degrades into mere discourse we find a pessimistic would-be public, convinced that our “identities” – hastily claimed and often in the absence of lived emotional ties – are the last word on our potential to understand and collaborate with one another. When they are chosen from a set of flat definitions, our identities are templates for unimaginative ideological commitments that divide neatly along party lines and market shares. In an atomized and fragmented social realm of such subjects, our impoverished affective connections fail to provide robust support for the imagination. One is then compelled to assume a kind of prefab psychic structure, a position from which to operate, in a cultural matrix. This is a pre-requisite for participation in a virtual democracy, algorithmically mediated, in which all political action has been reduced to voting, subscribing, and purchasing. Since I

must be a subject, and since subjectivity is a veil of illusions, I must adopt illusions although it hardly matters which.

- 2 Both Sigmund Freud and John Dewey were interested in dismantling our tendency to see the mind as a “subject” by providing an emergent account of a self that is always viscerally invested through interests that may be irrecoverable to self-reflection. They both used biological and physiological terms to describe the psychological, while simultaneously acknowledging the far-reaching significance of the place of culture in the relationship of individual to their environment. Both thinkers were eager to discourage the hasty equivalence of the mind and consciousness, insisting that the latter plays a far less active role in experience than the epistemologically anxious modern philosopher would allow. To bridge the gap that inevitably arises between the pretensions of the conscious ego and the machinations of the unconscious id, Freud conceived psychoanalysis, an inquiry-as-treatment to navigate the hidden conflicts that divide the psyche against itself. Dewey, eager to invite “impulse” to renew customs that have gone stale, reinvented education to focus on the creative renewal of habit through “dramatic rehearsal (in imagination),” and aesthetic culmination. There is significant overlap in their interventions insofar as they both see a reconstructive value in reconnecting affective, non-linguistic dimensions of experience with the secondary, reflective discourses. Where Dewey followed the “negative capabilities” exhibited by the artist back to the revelatory potential of aesthetic experience (Dewey 1925/1981: 39-40), Freud followed the condensations and displacements of the dreamer back to the disavowed dynamics of desire.¹
- 3 I suggest that we should understand both Freud and Dewey as proposing practical methods for relieving the burden of “subjectivity” for the individual who finds themselves immobilized between the compulsion to repeat the past, as a result of either an unprocessed trauma or rigid habit, and the need to imagine new possibilities for a livable future. At first blush, Freud’s psychoanalysis and Dewey’s cultural naturalism seem incomparable, addressing themselves to vastly different realms of experience. A prominent charge against psychoanalysis – which informed Dewey’s dismissal of Freud – is that it reduces all psychological interest to sexual appetite and is therefore a salacious enterprise that projects its own lurid fantasies onto its analysands. If this is so, then perhaps it is scandalous and irresponsible to allege a commonality between the two. Dewey’s most actionable proposals focus on the ingenuity of children as an argument for the expansion and reformation of the classroom into a collaborative and lively space in which a child co-authors its own curricula. But the dread we project onto the analyst’s couch and the wholesomeness we project into the teacher’s classroom are each fantasies that signal a deeper disjunct between the philosophic relationship we have forged with Freud and the one we have developed with Dewey. Paul Ricœur, for whom the task of relating the self to the world is always one of interpretation, described the “hermeneutics of suspicion” and the “hermeneutics of faith” as occupying two distinct and mutually exclusive methodological poles. Although I do not follow Ricœur in his claim that experience is always mediated through symbol, and while this essay is not directly concerned with hermeneutics as such, his distinction between suspicion and faith remains a valuable insight regarding the qualitative character of our intellectual frames. Beyond the logical implications of a theory, it seems reasonable to expect that the fundamental disposition of a thought has significant implications for the praxis that would emerge

from it. There is much at stake in the question of the attitude we take in our project to unmake and re-make “the subject.”

- 4 A life that grows rather than merely subsists depends on its capacity to establish vital connections within an ecologically responsive community. While our capacity to access and benefit from immediate experience requires something like faith, our ability to critique the influence of rigid habits as they degenerate into destructive mediating powers requires something like suspicion. If these attitudes are truly opposed, then we are faced with an impossible choice between a truly “naïve realism” and a cynicism that prevents the development of resilient alliances in the social world. However, a bridge between these two approaches supports a critically sophisticated imagination that still believes in the creative potency of desire. I find this possibility in some middle ground between John Dewey’s theory of aesthetic experience and the psychoanalytic approach to dreams. Finally, the recent work of Matthew Spellberg on dream sharing practices illuminates possibilities for the intimate experiences of the dreamer to contribute to the public work of what Dewey has called “creative democracy.”

2. Confronting the “Dreamer”

- 5 In the Babylonian Talmud, there is a warning about dream interpretation that says, “A man is shown in a dream only what is suggested by his own thoughts” (Simon 1935: 55b). In *The Seduction of the Minotaur*, Anaïs Nin rephrases it: “We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are” (Nin 1961: 124). After Stephen Covey repurposed it in *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, his wildly popular self-help guide for the middle management type with executive tier ambitions, versions of this have reappeared in recent decades as a bit of pop-psychology disassociated both from the psychoanalytic context in which Nin wrote and from the ancient Talmudic practice of critical prophesy. As a rabbinic and literary aphorism, it serves as an invitation to critical self-reflection. However, once the thought is displaced from those wisdom traditions in which it emerged, it is free for reappropriation by a neoliberal order that prefers atomized individual “subjects” with illusions that might be navigated within a market economy.
- 6 The neglect of the significance of dreaming as a reflective tool, and thus the neglect of the dreamer in the project of self-reflection, reveals much about the disintegration of experience and our investment in the fantasy of the disembodied ego, and yet this portion of experience is given insufficient attention, even from the American pragmatist tradition that is so keen to emphasize the importance of community driven inquiry. In an individualistic culture, “my” dreams – which “I” scarcely remember anyway – remain “my” private (and ultimately meaningless) province which dissipates into fog and fragments upon waking. Our assumption that dreams are private and therefore meaningless mirrors our assumption that the pre-reflective and sensory dimensions of experience are also private and therefore meaningless, and we lose access to a range of possibilities within active, waking life.
- 7 Dreams are distinct from most of our ordinary waking experience in that they are fully enthralling. As cognitive neuroscientist Allan Hobson put it, they are replete with the features of “primary consciousness,” which includes perception and emotion, but are notably deficient in the features of “secondary consciousness,” which is marked by abstract thinking and metacognition (Hobson 2009: 803). In other words, unless I am

engaged in the particular liminal state known as “lucid dreaming,” during sleep my attention does not wander away from the images before me and I institute no distance between myself and the experience I am undergoing. I cease to be a subject who judges objects at a distance, and I give myself without reservation to the unfolding milieu. Dewey offers no method for the interpretation of dreams, but the raptness of attention and the pervasive emotional tone that characterizes dreams also characterizes aesthetic experience, which Dewey takes as optimal and indispensable for learning and growth. As Dewey conceives it, aesthetic experience “begins with total seizure,” characterized by a unity of attention, and governed by qualitative awareness which Dewey also aligns with “primary experience” (Dewey 1925/1981: 137; 1952/1981: 26-30). In a culture where dreams are regarded with forgetful disdain, as though they are but embarrassing glitches in an otherwise rational system, how could we expect that the aesthetic phase of experience is anything but superfluous and unimportant? However, in a context where dreams are shared, and where interpretation is a serious business, the meaningfulness of dreams, mine *and* yours, is correlated with the meaningfulness of rich sensuous experience in a shared and co-created world. The way we speak about dreams, and whether we speak about them at all, is a demonstration of our ability to tolerate the raptures that dissolve the division between subject and object.

- 8 While his work officially began with *Studies on Hysteria* from the 1890's, Freud, as we know him, emerges at the opening of the 20th century with the 1901 publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and thus, psychoanalysis begins with the dreamer whose dream the analyst decodes to fathom the depths of the psyche. There are seldom straightforward meanings in dreams; the images the dreamer manifests are polyvalent and enigmatic symbols, so that interpreting them becomes a sinuous and uncertain enterprise. That Freud recognizes the multiplicity of meanings in dreams does not disturb Ricœur, for whom “enigma does not block understanding, but provokes it,” pulling us through a movement in which our imagination participates in the effort to grasp meaning (Ricœur 1970: 18). What bothers Ricœur is that psychoanalysis becomes a weapon in a contest against “the censor,” which masks the aims of desire even when it is relaxed during sleep (Freud 1901/1954: 142). The “primary process” in the creation of a dream belongs to the vicissitudes of unconscious drives that can only find expression by attaching to ideas, images, and memories. In the effort to maintain the sleeping state, the psyche hallucinates those occurrences that would gratify desire, but it must find fulfilments carefully: if our dream gratifies a drive that has cathected an object that we *must not have*, if our desire is too much at odds with our ideals, it must be fulfilled but distorted in some way so that the psyche can accept the gratification without arousing too much disapproval from the censor. To arouse this condemnation would result in a disturbance that would interrupt sleep. The dream is then submitted to further distortion when it is remembered after waking, and then again as the analysand converts the dream images into language while under the sway of a censoring function that is now fully awake. So how does the analyst understand these dreams? Are they fables? Falsehoods? Fantasies? Or “a particular way in which man places himself in relation to a fundamental reality,” as Ricœur (1970: 7) suggests? Freud takes the awakened dreamer, in its conscious life, as unconsciously invested in preventing the revelation of the structure of its desire (*ibid.*: 14). Thus, the analyst listens to the analysand's spoken dream/text with a dubious ear, trying to hear the associative connections that are not directly obvious to the analysand, in an effort to dispel the illusions of the repressive censor. The censorship that restricts the flow of

desire and is then responsible for the surreal and fantastic content of dreams is taken by the analyst to be a dissembler, making use of the imagination to confound conscious inquiry.

- 9 Ricœur contrasts the hermeneutics of suspicion with the “hermeneutics of faith,” exemplified by the phenomenology of religion, which attempts to describe the sacred. The primary means for the transmission of the sacred is scripture, around which rituals and practices develop. Ricœur’s phenomenological hermeneutics accepts that symbols are necessarily plurivocal and seeks to restore meaning to the text. Ancient texts inevitably become arcane because they make use of analogies, of symbols, that are part of a historical context that is increasingly lost to us. But although these symbols are encountered as obstacles to the understanding of a contemporary reader, respecting the text as sacred requires that we do not take them as *intending* to misdirect or prevent understanding. Sacred texts are not written in code but they do employ metaphors that elicit the imaginative engagement of a reader. What is required of hermeneutic phenomenology, then, is the continuous work of sympathetic interpretation in the effort of renewal. A hermeneutics of faith exhibits a concern for the meanings it seeks, neither reducing the symbols presented as univocal simplifications, nor elevating them to an absolute reality. The interpreter takes the signifying intention of the subject as truthful, and from Ricœur’s perspective, quite unlike the analyst, the interpreter participates in the imaginative enactment that the symbol invites. Finally, in the attitude of faith, the interpreter comes to the text with the expectation that meaning comes from outside of the self. The interpreter takes themselves as a collaborator rather than a master decoder and establishes a space where meaning can arise through the generosity of a sympathetic attention.
- 10 If Freud was a master of suspicion, John Dewey exemplifies the attitude of faith. In a way, Dewey’s theory of aesthetic experience outpaces Ricœur’s phenomenology of the sacred in its faithfulness, because in Ricœur’s view, our experiences only become meaningful through the mediation of symbol; reality is spoken to us through language, and we speak it to others in kind. Therefore, a hermeneutic approach extends well beyond textual exegesis, characterizing our regard and respect for the subject of language who intends a meaning. Conversely, Dewey does not see experience as fundamentally mediated. Dewey’s brand of immediate empiricism with its simple but scandalous postulate (“reality is what it’s experienced as,” Dewey 1905/1998: 341-3) offers an escape hatch for the alienated self who has learned to understand themselves as a *subject*. On Dewey’s account, reality is primarily *qualitative*, and quality “immediately exists” as felt. What we are aware of as immediately given is the relatedness of the environment and our place within it. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the aesthetic phase of experience when we sense the suitedness of our intellectual articulations with the qualitative context from which they emerged. Aesthetic fulfillment is the coinciding of our secondary *reflective* efforts and our primary *felt* perceptions. The fulfillment we feel is the restored continuity between the self and the environment: the mediate and the immediate converge, and meaning is directly had and enjoyed.
- 11 Dewey’s continuous conviction is that if we are allowed the freedom to develop practices and to experiment imaginatively in accordance with our selective interest, we will discover resources for the renewal of habit. To the degree that we are encouraged to follow our interests, we become better at attuning to the qualitative character of

reality. The impulses of the young, particularly in the context of education, are also the “agencies of deviation,” that acquire meaning as they become “the means of reconstructive growth” when they are taken seriously as responses to a cultural practice (Dewey 1922/1988: 65-8). Both Dewey’s cultural naturalism and Freudian psychoanalysis recognize that the primary psychological process is a vital, non-linguistic energy which drives the self into the world. Dewey emphasizes that when our cognitive reflections and habits are developed through their connection with these primary processes, culture is not merely a system of discourse, it is a live reality that is embodied in collective, dynamically responsive habits. Living habits require energetic impulsive activity which is “vivid, flexible, experimenting, curious” (*ibid.*: 89). If there is a censor that frustrates the work of impulse, it would come in the form of rigid, intractable habits that have been forced upon the young when education is approached as training and students are discouraged from following their interests lest they be distracted from their studies. The potential for inhumane education to become a widespread means of systemic abuse is apparent, and we should not hesitate to acknowledge that institutions function as repressive operations. However, the difference between the repressive function of the censor and that of the classroom establishes the difference between an approach that embodies the attitude of faith and one that embodies that of suspicion. Unlike the repressive barrier that establishes the split between the conscious and the unconscious for psychoanalysis, rigid habits are not a necessity of psychological functioning that establish the ego, but are rather the accidental calcified deposits of a culture that suffers from too much fear of the precarious. The difference is subtle but has profound implications for the practices we take as offering us modes of access to primary experience.

- 12 The impetus for writing *Art as Experience* was, at least in part, Dewey’s frustration with the tendency we have established to view nature only as “objective” in the sense that it is an externally related mechanical system, observed by a subject who translates observations into cultural meanings. The failure to see the inseparability of nature and culture, the ways in which cultural life emerges from and reaches back into an organic life that is *internally* related, prevents our recognizing artistic creations and aesthetic experiences for what they are: instances in which the “live creature” is allowed to attend to the environment in accordance with the “dynamic force” of their interest, to those intuitions that come from immediate sensuous and emotional experience (Dewey 1952/1981: 271, 39-40). Although he condemns the binary oppositions that split the self between the “subject” of culture and the “organism” of nature, he does not propose that these oppositions serve the interests of a system that seeks to maintain itself by exploiting a disconnected and disempowered organism.
- 13 While Freudian psychoanalysis is a method for understanding the symptoms that arise in the struggle between conflicting elements of the psyche, and Freud did not propose it as offering a method for social and political liberation, psychoanalysis also offers itself as an instrument for revealing and critiquing the subtle operations of power when it has taken up residence within the psyche. Dewey, on the other hand, is interested in the possibilities for the life of the democratic community. Not unlike Freud, Dewey recognizes that there are conflicts and impediments to the optimal conditions under which we thrive. If it is permissible to take up *Art as Experience* as something like *The Interpretation of Dreams* in the attitude of democratic faith, perhaps

we find a productive tension between faith and suspicion in the region where intimate experience collides with public life.

3. The Indispensable Tactics of Suspicion

- 14 Objections to psychoanalysis generally come in one of two varieties: detractors are likely to find fault with the ad hoc interpretations of symptoms that are inevitably employed to confirm the existence of an unconscious in the absence of an “empirically observable” cause, or they are likely to dismiss the “creepiness” of a theory that spends so much time contemplating the residues of infantile sexuality. I will forego responding to them at length here. Even if Ricœur expressed distaste for Freud’s preoccupation with sex, Ricœur’s central objection to psychoanalysis on the grounds of its suspicion has the virtue of being a genuinely interesting objection. It does not undermine the practice for failing to live up to the demands of an epistemic anxiety, nor does it reinforce Freud’s claim that we repress sexual instincts by refusing to engage with the theory on the grounds of its sexual perversity. Instead, Ricœur objects to psychoanalysis on the basis that it presents “a threat to the mytho-poetic core of imagination” in favor of the “rude discipline of necessity” (Ricœur 1970: 35). By decoding the vivid images of the dream as disguises for the hollow press of drives that have no teleology, and no relationship to the sacred, psychoanalysis dishonors the dignity of the sufferer it purports to cure.
- 15 Whosoever should undergo analysis finds themselves in a series of contradictions that are as frustrating as they are fascinating. First, to embark an analysis of my psychic life, I must accept that there are reasons for my speech and dreams of which reason knows nothing, while simultaneously conducting an inquiry in accordance with a method that has been constructed with tools of reason. And, while I must make the attempt to dispel my own projections and defenses that are related to symptoms, I know that the presumed goal of psychological health or “psychical normality,” which might as well be the same thing, is also a fantasy in want of an analytic interpretation. Although I may resolve particular conflicts, the end of an analysis is not had when I dispel my illusions once and for all to become a fully conscious knower that has escaped from the cave of projections, but rather when the degree of suffering that my symptoms cause me no longer outweighs the inconvenience of undergoing analysis. Instead, I suppose, one learns to live with the notion that all suffering is relative, all stability is transitory, and the conflict between desire and the reality principle is a psychical necessity that we cannot do without – I can only speculate about such an end, not having reached it myself. A psychic structure is built, among other things, of the collision between the id that wants pleasure, and the law that prevents unbridled access to pleasure, the so-called “reality principle.” Since both the “reality principle” and the sublimations that compensate for the disappointing nature of that reality are cultural artifacts, the analysand finds themselves caught in an infinite cultural regress: a life that suffers at the hands of a hypocritical culture must be judged in accordance with a rubric that is itself a cultural product. It is no wonder that Freud concludes in *Civilization and its Discontents* that the “individual is always at war with the culture.” Since it is impossible to resolve the conflict between the individual and the culture in which it emerged, psychoanalysis can only address itself to the acute symptoms of a neurotic rebellion against a law that it has incorporated as a precondition of its emergence. This potential

of psychoanalytic theory is what draws in the philosopher whose occupation is aimed at preventing cultural ease.²

- 16 Ricœur admitted that he had no first-hand experience with psychoanalysis. He defends his critique on the grounds that a practice may hide some features of the theory from which it emerges, making them unavailable for appraisal (Ricœur 1970: 3). This defense fails to convince a pragmatist, for whom the test and value of an idea is had only in the consequences that flow from its practice. Since I have had the occasion to test psychoanalysis in experience, it is also from this first-hand experience that I would defend against the implication that the analytic relationship is primarily defined by suspicion. If my speech during the analytic hour, even that which attempts to relay my dreams, were to be met *only* with suspicion, if all interpretive agency on my part were to be rejected as so much resistance and defense, or only temporarily entertained in the effort to appease me, then there would be no relationship within which an interpretation could arise. The analyst and the analysand must form an alliance and a rapport, and it is this fundamental compact which allows both positive and negative transference, both the sympathy and resentment that are the very material of the work, to arise during treatment. We might understand this rapport, established on the basis of a necessary amount of positive transference, as “trust,” easily a midway point between faith and suspicion. The analytic pair sustains a trust that the analysand does their best (and routinely fails) to free-associate, and the trust that the analyst does their best (and routinely fails) to separate their interpretations from their imperfect readings of their own counter-transference. The ruptures and their subsequent repairs establish the relational space in which the therapeutic process can unfold. The trust is had upon the agreement of the dyad to stand together against the symptom that causes the analysand to suffer.³ The suspicion Ricœur identifies as the psychoanalytic weapon against the most efficient tactics of the will to power, is a suspicion that we assume together in solidarity against the rigid as-yet-unknown habit that causes a rift between the inner reality of drives that must be expressed, and the imposition from the order of the outer world that cannot tolerate them (Ricœur 1970: 26).
- 17 It is unfortunate that Freud adopts the modern presupposition that nature is, in the end, blind mechanism. Without the willingness to admit the possibility that instincts and drives could themselves be material for intelligent response, all of the credit for the creative invention of the dreamer is given to the censor that distorts. With the bleak outlines of such a theory, Freudian suspicion drifts toward nihilism, and would then be a genuine threat to “the mytho-poetic core” of the human imagination. However, in the century since, the theory-as-practice has done much more to generate interest in the artistic products of the imagination than discourage it. Simply put, psychoanalysis treats film, poetry, and painting with the same attentiveness it devotes to dreams – evidence of the restorative faith that is demonstrated in the practice of listening to the unconscious.
- 18 Psychoanalysis thus provides an intimate-but-contained space for the subject to unravel, to become less defensive and more porous, so that it no longer expends such great quantities of energy in maintaining the façade of an identity that it has not truly authored. The ego that was formed in accordance with a socio-cultural edict masquerading as natural law is only a portion, rather than the whole, of the self. And, it is through courting the subterranean, nocturnal elements of the self, that the

analysand finds that there are resources for expanding beyond the rigid orders that stifle and blind it.

- 19 Freud, through his overly rigid identification with the occupation and presuppositions of “empirical” science, could not tolerate the paradox of a meaningful cultural life that has its source in the dynamic shifting of drives that can only be explained in terms of “nature.” Even if cultural naturalism is at odds with the views of the psychologist-as-reductive-scientist who must regard the events of nature as the blind, meaningless currents of mere change, this does not necessitate our wholesale rejection of the practice he offers for recovering the dream. In courting the unconscious drives as they are given shape and trajectory by the preconscious, the analytic pair looks for the passion that could become a revolt against the superstructure. In practice, the analyst and the analysand align their suspicion, not as weapons against the “mytho-poetic core of imagination,” but against the causes of suffering that restrict the range of the imagination to discover possibilities for fulfillment. And if the tactics of suspicion threaten to undermine some dream images as deceptions, the invitation to freely associate is also the restoration of the imagination to participate more directly in waking life.

4. Dreams as Resistance to the “Enemies of the Aesthetic”

- 20 If Dewey’s belief in our capacity to experience reality directly is indicative of an attitude of faith, it is not without its moments of suspicion. Over time, the motility of energy that is enjoyed by the young will be ossified as habits accrue. Nowhere is this truer, Dewey warns, than in the widespread social habits regarding morality, religion, and politics. There is a restrictive and tyrannical force that acts against the irreverent tendencies of impulse: fear of the precariousness of life results in a rigidity, and adult caretakers exploit the plasticity of the youth as an opportunity to remake themselves. A distrust of creativity and an unwillingness to tolerate the irreverence of frank interest stultifies the innovations that could renew cultural life. The effort of renewing culture, of revising the approach to public education, requires a critical interpretation of rigid and outdated customs. But, without identifying the interests of the specific actors who prevent the liberation that could be achieved through humane education, the individual who sets themselves at odds with a pernicious custom faces a daunting task. The leverage points for convincing an established regime, habit, or law to oust itself regardless of its inertial advantage are not entirely clear. Perhaps the practice for liberating the aesthetic imagination from the perspective of cultural naturalism requires that we, like Freud, take the dreamer seriously.
- 21 Matthew Spellberg, an anthropologist who studies dream interpretation in the context of indigenous cultural life, sees the possibilities for dreams to reveal democratic possibilities. He suggests that the practice of dream sharing has been developed in some cultures as a powerful way to engage in dialogue with what he calls “the social contract of sensuous imagining.” The imagination that works to project our dreams during sleep brings the dreamer into intimate contact with “the set of images and emotions and unseen realities that govern, even more than abstract ideas, an individual’s relationship to society and to the cosmos” (Spellberg 2019). Since this imagination is still at work in the background of my waking life, I cannot miss the

opportunity that my dreams provide me to consider its wellbeing. Even beyond the question of the responsibility that I might take for my own sensuous imagining, the texture, images, and sensations that my mind projects under conditions of sensory deprivation during sleep, are not creations that I have authored alone. I am informed by the thoughts and images of those with whom I share the world during my waking life, to whom I respond with symbols and thoughts of my own. In dreaming, these images do not appear as hypotheses that I can take up or disregard, they are my immediate actions and sensations. By making the connection that the images and affects in any particular dream are also active components in my living relationship with the world, implicitly operative in tense moments that necessitate rapid choice, Spellberg makes the convincing case that I cannot disregard them as so much cognitive waste at the end of the day. Even if we do not ignore them, when we approach dreams as texts in want of translation, à la Ricoeur or Freud, we miss the unique character of dreams that separates them from the artistic creations that are also products of the imagination. The dreamer experiences the dream as a completely realized world. Like the artist who communicates a full and rich experience through the medium of art, the dreamer “does not fake or compromise” (Dewey 1952/1981: 197). That my dreams are pervaded by a unifying quality, which controls and selects elements from the cache of my memory, and has my rapt, undivided attention, should indicate that they are teaching me something, whether I make the effort to recall the lesson or not.

- 22 Spellberg emphasizes the practicality of dream sharing through recounting the custom of the Dane-zaa people who are native to what is now the Canadian interior. The Dane-zaa regarded the dreams as the prerequisite for the successful hunt. The hunter needed to encounter the animal in a dream before doing so in waking life; they treated the dream as the actual search, so that the hunt as accomplished in waking life was simply the consummation of what was experienced and learned in the dream. Dreams “were in every instance intimately tied to the practical skills required to survive on the ecological knife-edge that is the boreal forest” (Spellberg 2019). We are less likely to dismiss such practices with suspicion if we can see that the experience of waking and sleeping are not separated by an absolute limit, although we have a habit of trying to disconnect them. Dreams are dialectical. What I do or witness during my waking life impacts what occurs during my sleep by providing sensorial and conceptual artifacts that can be reimagined to support the dream, while the dream from which I wake stays with me, sometimes subliminally sometimes explicitly, as I think and act throughout the day. The Onge people of the Andaman Islands would gather as a group and tell one another the contents of the dream they’d had the night before, and of their experiences in the forest during the day. But dreams were not simply relayed, they were negotiated and interpreted until they could be woven together as a whole dream that the community could accept as inclusive of every dreamer’s imagined world. By establishing practices through which dreams are shared publicly, the community regularly recalibrates their imagination into alignment.
- 23 Although the contemporary American lacks customs for dream sharing as a community activity, we are no less compelled to walk an ecological knife’s edge and cannot take the risk of neglecting the “social contract of sensuous imagining” when it is provided to us freely. We are a long way off from the capabilities of the Ongees. Enthralled as I am by my dreams, I am also extraordinarily vulnerable as a dreamer. Dream sharing, for each of the cultures that Spellberg mentions, is made possible by the kind of sophisticated philosophical tradition that is had through a cultural life that has been attuned to a

particular ecological balance. Indeed, dream sharing, and communal interpretation, are part of the process of that attunement.

5. The Prerequisite of Faith for Democracy

- 24 In 1939, Dewey wrote that “Democracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature” (Dewey 1939/1998: 341). Democracy is ensured neither by formal institutions nor systems of law enforcement and economics; it is embodied in a set of habits, always radical, that are aimed at the reconstruction of experience for the expansion of meaning. A portion of those habits must be devoted to supporting the possibilities for aesthetic experience that are the fruits of our efforts, and another must be devoted to the critical enterprise of identifying the rigidities of habit gone stale. Philosophy is the “criticism of criticisms” (Dewey 1925/1981: 297) intervening in intellectual orders when they fail to expand our access and sensitivity to consummatory, immediate goods. The faith that characterizes Dewey’s de-centering of the subject is not a faith in the inherent goodness of individual human beings, but in the possibilities of intelligence. Cultural naturalism does not understand intelligence to be the possession of a subject, but the quality of an interaction. Intelligence is the property of a culture that is dynamically attuned to its ecological function.
- 25 Regardless of the proprietary algorithms that track my data to jam my interactions with advertisements and propaganda masquerading as information, the world we inhabit is still a collaborative one. Resisting authoritarian systems depends on our capacity to identify those portions of experience that have been disavowed or repressed. Dreams destabilize the subject by unfurling a sensorially rich and thoroughly immediate world, suspending the detachment that allows for cognitive control during waking life. Freud was indeed flirting with the esoteric tradition of revelation that fed ancient wisdom traditions, and some traditions for remembering the sacred have survived despite their disavowals in a scientific age. This might give the skeptic pause. But Dewey’s cultural naturalism can withstand the admission of the esoteric and mysterious without the need for imagining a “supernatural” field that is, by definition, apart from nature. A truly naturalistic approach to psychology – and I like to give Freud enough credit to imagine that he might have adopted the stance of *immediate* empiricism if he had been properly introduced – cannot regard such rich manifestations of the imagination as a mere byproduct of a neurological mechanism. The dream, like all of the products of the human imagination, emerges through the interaction of the organic environment and thus reveals something about it.
- 26 More than anything, a dream is a feeling – not a personal feeling-state that is suspended in the void of the mental – it is the tonality of the present situation in which I directly participate. Psychoanalysis is the only widespread practice that encourages the remembering, sharing, and interpretation of dreams. If Dewey was right to value the impulsive energy of children and the raptures of aesthetic experiences as centrally important to a functioning civilization, then we ought to extend this appraisal to the contributions of the dreamer. When dreams are attended to in the course of community life, they may present us with opportunities to interact with the dimensions of the self that are neither subjective nor objective, but are lived through as the immediate life of the mind that knows itself as a thoroughly interdependent, creative contribution to the world.

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NOTES

1. While I acknowledge that Freud has written directly on art and artists, and while these reflections serve as interesting starting points to make a good study of Freud's own personality, I think that the pragmatic value of psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic tool for understanding art blossoms in the context of later 20th century critiques, such as Laura Mulvey's essay on

scopophilia (1975) and Julia Kristeva's theory of the "semiotic" element of poetic language (1984). While this essay courts the legacy of psychoanalysis and its function as one possible cultural practice of self-understanding from a pragmatist perspective, in the interest of narrowing its focus to suit the length of an article, I have treated dream work as paradigmatic for psychoanalytic interpretation. Partially for the reason that dream interpretation is at the core of Freud's method, and because in practice, most psychoanalysts spend more time on dream-work with their analysands than on aesthetic criticism. This is related to the simple fact that, while we all dream, and while we all have aesthetic experiences, not all of us are given to think of ourselves as artists.

2. In "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," Freud (1937) wrote "it almost looks as if analysis were the third of those 'impossible professions' in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government." The philosopher has long found employment in the other two professions, although often as a reformer or a "gadfly," which underscores Freud's point (1937/1964: 249).

3. Freud, in "On Remembrance, Repeating, and Working-through," acknowledges the inevitable failure of the analysand to successfully free-associate despite agreeing to do so at the outset of the treatment. However, the failures arise from the resistances that reenact the symptom that has driven the analysand to seek treatment. The resistances, and the capacity of the analyst to tend to them, are what allows the space between the analyst and analysand to be productive, creative, and collaborative (1914/1950: 147-56).

ABSTRACTS

The dubious relation of "subjective" experience to "objective" reality finds its correlate in the opposition we often suppose between culture and nature. Twentieth century theorists, most notably Freud, have claimed various methods for interpreting the illusions of one realm that hide the truths of the other. Ricœur has famously called the psychoanalytic method of dream interpretation a "hermeneutics of suspicion," which he sees as a threat to the "mytho-poetic core of imagination." John Dewey regarded the binary opposition between culture/nature as particularly dubious, preferring to see them as reciprocal phases of a continuous process; if cultural life is an interpretation of the biophysical environment, that environment surely has its say. However, in the century since Freud, the tactics of suspicion have proven themselves to be indispensable for developing of critiques that reveal the subtle operations of anti-democratic ideologies, perhaps at the expense of democratic faith. This paper considers if there are less suspicious, more Deweyan possibilities for the interpreting and sharing of dreams, not for the benefit of the psychic health of the individual dreamer, but for the sake of a recovery of democratic life.

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