

## The Emergence Of An Aesclepian Psychotherapy<sup>1</sup>

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The idea for this essay was sparked off by a frightening, comforting dream I had about 15 years ago (1984). A woman from Swiss Radio came to interview me about my views on psychotherapy. We both sat on the floor. After a while she switched off the tape and said: "You talk like Laing, I am interested in your own work and theory. I want to hear your voice." I asked: "Is this a threat, or a warning?" She replied: "Again, epigrammatic". I think, missed my chance, wake up disappointed and sad. Like a Zen apprentice I had reached full identification with the master and was now 'invited to use my own voice. Here was a chance to make my own views known.

The aim of this essay is to trace the process through which I came to realise how my work was both similar to, and different from, the work of Ronald David Laing (1927-1989). It is an attempt to situate myself as a psychotherapist within a particular therapeutic tradition. The dreams are both my own and my patients (someone who is in waiting, who can wait patiently), and the links between them will hopefully become clear as this essay proceeds.

One's therapeutic practice is always evolving, throwing up questions and challenges, and for me dreams have been a valuable means of raising questions about my own practice and, on occasion, helping towards formulating answers.

Dreams of psychotherapy have led me into unknown parts of myself as I have continued to discover my psychology. These dreams revealed that the content and context of my own therapeutic practice is in a process of constant transformation. They have also allowed me to voice different aspects of my feelings towards the healing process in which I am engaged.

Dreams are dramas of the soul which can be treasured as a means of shaping our imagination in daily life. Each individual possesses this well-spring of creativity and enlightenment. Dreams can help us to reconcile our hopes and fears with the reality of everyday existence. They weave being, feeling and knowing together in a tapestry of iconographic beauty.

Through them we can study the supposedly domesticated subterranean life we all carry around inside ourselves. They allow us to connect events and things which we would normally see from completely different points of view. Dreams are a nightly miracle which have, to borrow Francis Huxley's phrase, "enough power over reality to contradict it with advantage".

One useful principle of clarifying our experiences, both in dreams and in waking life, is to accept the reality of being one-Self and some-one-else at the same time. The Jungians call this the subjective and the objective part of the dream, since we can see a dream like a drama of the soul, a mythologem, as well as the subjective presentation of different aspects of one's present identity, a psychologem.

Dreams of therapy have a priceless gift in helping me cultivate a sure sense of myself as a therapist. The dreams helped me to compare my approach and methods with those of Laing and Francis Huxley - who are both teachers and friends of mine - and make clear the differences of temper and talent between us. By working with the dream material, it is now much clearer to me where I come from, in whose name I practice and what part dreams play in my own psychotherapeutic practice. As I go on, I make use of Francis Huxley's reminder, "as long as you keep your temper, you do not lose the game even by drinking out of someone else's teacup."<sup>2</sup> Besides my own cup of tea - therapeutic approach - I enjoyed tasting my teachers: Vera von der Heydt, Ronald Laing and Francis Huxley. Nevertheless as the following dreams will show, I have found and, hopefully, am keeping my temper.

Huxley, who has worked closely with Laing for over twenty years, states that there is a close bond between what we feel in our natural, biological body and what we dream about. Psychotherapy, as a ritual of initiation or rite of passage towards becoming oneself (what C.G. Jung called "Individuation"), does effect us as it affects our body-image. Only through these means, can "It" free our imaginations. Our self-image is the basis of our creativity. The vision freed through our imagination guides us through the field of myths and mysteries, both of which are at the root of our everyday habits and way of life.

Once we allow our visions and dreams to be cultivated and shared with fellow human beings, whether in psychotherapy or in artistic practice, we become concrete witnesses to personal and collective imagination and

experience the actuality of transformation and re-enchantment. We are able to integrate and unify what is often thought to be opposed - inside- outside, male-female, life-death, psyche-soma and so on.

"For myth", writes Huxley, " cannot be taken literally; it must be taken metaphorically as well. It describes an experience truthfully, but does so in terms whose real significance you can realize only when you have had the experience. Thus a myth is like a dream; indeed, sometimes it is a dream".<sup>3</sup>

The dramas and comedies of the soul in the theatre of our dream can be compared with, and read in the light of, the myths of Gods and Goddesses: and the effects and affects their actions and daimonic stories had and are having on others. We sometimes even recognise our own experience in a particular myth. Such possibilities are an encouragement to share our own experiences both by day and by night in dreams and let others share theirs with us. Thus we can all learn more about our Selves and each other. Francis Huxley's point on dreams, will be remembered once we come to the last dream in this paper featuring him personally as well.

Ronald Laing has eloquently described some of these experiences in his books *Knots; Sonnets; Wisdom, Madness and Folly; The Facts of Life* and *The Voice of Experience*, to name but a few. They provide pointers for our thinking which I have made use of in my own psychotherapeutic practice. They are a good antidote to the psychology of blame, where we make others the victim of our actions, and ourselves victims of others' action.

Sometimes patients bring dreams which feature Ronald Laing. This is not surprising since they know from conversation with me, that I come from a Laingian tradition.

### **The Neurologist's Dream**

This dream is a pleasant example of one of Laing's basic premises or principles in action - that of indecidability, or the 'mirroring' of the other, the playing back and what is called 'being alone in one's present'. I include this dream since it shows very well one side of the tradition and therapeutic culture in which I work.

The dream is from a 38 year old woman patient of mine. She is both a neurologist and a psychiatrist.

*Ronald Laing came to our therapy session. I was to have one hour with him. I feel very tense wondering what will happen. There he is, slender, delicate and simply dressed. That's him, the master. He speaks very little, he just studies me, thinks about what he sees in me, just as if he were asking himself "What's the matter with her?" I am very aware of my history, my prehistory and development. How I would like to do things without making mistakes, do everything completely right, and behave perfectly.*

*I try to treat him politely, in the way I think I ought. I try with all my might, I do my utmost. But he just mirrors me - everything I do, all my compulsive behaviour. He tells me why I am doing what I am doing He says that it's not important that I have lived falsely, or that my family upbringing was wrong What matters is that I have never valued the essential things in life, and these are what I miss now. I think he would have valued someone more spontaneous, someone more artistic. I have become superficial, nonessential. All that behavioural psychology stuff is nonsense. All this became clear. Now my parents appear. Laing stays in the background, distancing himself yet still very much present. The only way out is suicide. Anxiety. What will happen now? Is Laing going to sentence me, destroy me? No, he tolerates my 'being-so'. Life continues with a new experience and a new insight.*

In this dream of meeting and being with Laing, he is practising what he "deems appropriate to the occasion" (Winnicott's phrase)<sup>4</sup>, without verbalising her nascent consciousness of what she transfers from her past relationships in the family into her relationship with him.

"He mirrors me", is one of the basic tenets of Laing's psychotherapeutic method, which aims to allow the other to experience his or her false and, true selves and the discrepancies between the two. When we talked about what the dream meant she said she felt very strongly held in suspense by 'Laing's' attention to her follies. She experienced the transference as a hindrance, while at the same time, helping her to realise what she was doing. In other words, in the dream she experienced 'Laing's' ability to mimic people - a very powerful therapeutic tool. She was able to recognise that 'Laing' could be with her in that way without condemning her true self. It gave her a chance to move with 'Laing', bringing with her the fear, anxiety and embarrassment she felt at being 'caught out'. The open-heartedness with which it was done allowed her to look at where her past experience and all her learned 'good behaviour' had taken her. (Suicide as the only way out here expresses the struggle between the true self and the false self staged vividly in the dream). Suicide would free her from having to take further evasive action to stay

alive, and from the consciousness of and despair about the faults that remained as she attained greater self-awareness.

In this dream, Laing's therapeutic capacity to be open-heartedly available to the other is evident. In reality she had seen him only once several years before when he was giving a lecture. In the dream she was sharing one hour in a room with him in which, to quote Laing himself, "one human being actually gets into the same place at the same time to meet another human being, and as a psychotherapist, to intervene in the hope that intervention will in one way or another bring some clarity to the situation, so that the confusion of the people will be mitigated in some way".<sup>5</sup> Using harmless means, of course.

### **The first dream of the therapist**

I had the following dream at a point (1985) when I was reflecting upon my psychotherapeutic practice. It centred on the question: 'Is this 'being-with-others', psychotherapy?

*I am in a therapeutic community for ex-heroin addicts. I am there as J therapist for our weekly group-therapy session. We, three women and four men, begin our morning sitting in a circle on the floor. We try to make sense of what is going on between the members of the group, sharing our difficulties in living in a therapeutic community especially in what we 'do' to each other. Among us, which is unusual, sits a guest, Hans-Dieter Leuenberger, a Bioenergetic Analyst, who is also a theologian and a Jungian Analyst. Suddenly, together with Roger and Ester, who are lovers, I find myself at the edge of a swimming pool in the middle of the room. Roger wants to jump in headfirst. Ester and I struggle with him and hold him back. I say to Roger, "I know where the bottom of the pool is, and the water is running in. At the moment it's only about knee-deep. If you jump in headfirst you'll break your neck". The water keeps running in, and I watch it rise higher. "There's not even enough water in there for a decent swim," I continue, "You'll scrape your knees on the bottom and get fresh injuries." Despite what I say, he continues to struggle. Ester now talks to him in a soothing, calming manner, trying to stop his strenuous attempts while I hold him at the edge. We wrestle endlessly. Finally, he sees reason and gives up the idea of jumping. We turn back to the circle of others on the floor who have been watching us attentively. Roger and Ester sit down in a relaxed way. As I am about to sit down Leuenberger asks me, "Is this therapy?" I am taken aback and hesitate to give a reply. After thinking on my feet for a moment I say, "Yes. You see something, someone moves. We move. We get up or down, we hold each other, we argue and are in touch with one another. We look into the pool, hold our temper and face each other in a situation which is dangerous for Roger and for us. You sit and watch what is going on, not knowing what might happen, what might come of all this". Then I sat down.*

This dream also has a therapeutic setting and begins with the therapeutic exchange of experiences. Then there is a change, an unexpected, very physical and strongly emotional event. The dream ends with the question as to what was therapeutic about it and an answer to that question.

Why did Roger want to jump into the water? Difficult to answer, since nobody ever knows everything appropriate to a given situation. Water can be seen as a longing to dissolve or to disperse and undo bodily knots of twisted and dislocated attitudes rooted in childhood experiences. Preventing Roger from inflicting fresh injuries upon himself was in itself therapeutic, as it avoided new problems covering up primary ones. There is a similarity between heroin addiction (the attempt to get rid of problems, which are not in fact solved this way) and his attempt to jump into the pool. He wanted a quick way out of his difficulties, but this would have harmed him more than it helped. He wanted to jump into the water, but it was not yet deep enough to carry him. By preventing him from doing what he wanted, Esther and I were in communication with each other and with him; what he wanted from the water - emotional support - was obtained from us. The question "Is this therapy?" came from a man with a different therapeutic approach (Bioenergetic Analysis) and a definite set of practical guidelines. (He was in fact leading a therapeutic workshop with my wife and colleague at the time). The answer I gave in the dream was to give an explanation by first describing a *pattern* from a therapeutic practice - we move, are in touch with one another: *praxis* descriptions - and therapeutic *process* - face each other in a situation which is bad and dangerous: *process* description - and, following from this, an overview of what might happen or be done, or not be done, about what we had just experienced in terms of therapeutic intervention and goal.

When I am involved as a therapist, I am not in the position, as the guest therapist is, to reflect on what is and has been going on, nevertheless I am moving within a sovereign feeling of certainty - whatever I am living through is therapeutically valid, and need not be the only possible, or true, deed or action.

It dreamt me this dream in the autumn of 1985, at the point when, after three years of being in that community once a week, I began to reflect on the therapeutic approach which I had been taught when in apprenticeship with Laing and Huxley in the Philadelphia Association.<sup>6</sup> I realised there was a great difference between the setting and the people there and in London. There people were in a deeply distressed condition after years of heroin addiction, and dealing with their daily affairs, their emotional turmoil and chaotic past took most of the day. The weekly therapy group which I attended was just one of many structured events in their therapeutic programme. Some were there because they had to be; others, a minority, were there by choice. Despite these difficulties, it was possible to connect with one another's thoughts and feelings and by doing so to relieve and be relieved of much suffering and pain. It was a therapeutic culture which allowed repressed experience to surface so that they could be acknowledged and accepted.

I shared this dream with the therapeutic group, together with other dreams concerning my therapeutic method and my position as a therapist. Cultivating dreams is one means I use - in following the Anazazi custom at early morning gatherings of telling dreams in company which helps to allow the patterns of the daily activity to unfold in common communality - allowing unconscious realities to be communicated to both oneself and those others sharing our company. By "unconsciousness" I mean, with Laing, that which we don't communicate to ourselves and to others. By telling dreams I free my Self from that bondage of silence.

### **The Addict's Dream**

Three months after my first dream, Roger related his first dream during a group therapy session. I describe it here since it is linked to my own dream and they each shed light upon the other. Roger dreamed as follows:

*I was taking a tram to the 'Zentral' station in Zurich. Among the passengers I recognised two plain-clothes policemen from the drug squad. I hurried to get off at the next stop and they followed me. One called out "Hey Roger! Where are you going?" "Ehm, I'm going to my weekly therapy session just up the road." I was lying, and they knew it, and they knew I was on the run. They tried to arrest me, but I got away. I jumped on the next tram and they run after it. I pulled the emergency handle, jumped out of the open door and ran as fast as I could up the hill in front of me. Looking back, I saw them change into a woman with a dog. I reached the top of the hill which turned out to be a cliff by the sea. I jumped in headfirst, diving deep into the water. I had an overwhelming sense of relief at being saved. When I surfaced I found myself dripping wet in the entrance hall of a house in the red-light district of Zurich, where I used to go for years when an addict. I stripped and hung my clothes over a radiator. I stood there naked and waited.*

How does this connect with my dream? In my dream Roger had to wait, he could not jump into the water; in his dream he did jump, but only ended up back at square one, as an ex-addict, waiting. Waiting to be delivered from being dictated to! When an addict wants heroin, she or he will get it, whatever the cost. Waiting also for an arm around his shoulder, for someone who will 'dive' into his and his ancestors' life, to find what the dictatorship - or spell - is, under which he is living. Waiting is chaos at rest, a breathing space, a chance to think and feel about where to turn next.

Yet, what Roger was waiting for - to get out of the community - he did not elaborate upon further.

I shall now make a small detour. In the summer of 1986, a few months after I left this community, I reread Donald Winnicott's account of the psychoanalytic treatment of a little girl. I found the following passage, describing the fifteenth consultation:

*Gabrielle: "I'll show you what I can draw, I hardly do ears, it has long hair beautiful hair- (the picture of the dog they were drawing) - look I've spilt over the paper, and on the table. It's like a scribble.."*

*I said here that it was as if she were drawing to show me a dream, and some of the dream had spilt over into waking life. It seemed that this was what she wanted, for now she told me a dream, and it felt as if this was perhaps what she had come to tell me.*

*Gabrielle: "I had a dream about you. I knocked on the door of your house. I saw Dr. Winnicott in the pool in his garden. So I dived in. ("Daddy saw me in the pool hugging and kissing Dr. Winnicott, so he dived in too. Then mummy dived in, then Susan (here she enumerated the others of the family including the four grandparents). There were fishes and everything It was dry wet water. We all came out and walked in the garden. Daddy landed on the beach. It was a good dream.*

*I felt that she had now brought everything into the transference and had in this way reorganized her entire life in terms of a positive relationship to the subjective figure of the analyst, and his inside.*

*Me. "The pool is here in this room, where everything has happened and where everything imaginatively can happen. She said something about her hands being wet because she was swimming."*

Here I discovered that both mine and Roger's dreams belonged to a specific therapeutic tradition. Donald Winnicott was Ronald Laing's psychoanalytic supervisor when he was training at The Institute of Psychoanalysis London, in the late 1950s.

In my own dream the pool is in the middle of the group therapy room, inviting us to share in its possibilities. Yet Roger and I had to wait until the pool was filled with water deep enough to swim in, and we had to struggle with his desire to jump in as Gabrielle did. In his own dream, however, Roger was running away from therapy, from the challenge of reorganising his entire life, cleverly using therapy at that point to his own advantage, and thus avoiding being 'caught out'. Roger's dream, as an illustration of how he was in the therapeutic relationship, perhaps shows how the feeling of waiting is common, or the common waiting, can evoke a need of surrendering one-self, through which one becomes aware and attentively 'beware' of one-another.

Thus we jump into the 'water of life', often seen as a symbol for childhood and emotional life and, as the amniotic water reminds us, pre- birth experience as Laing's book *The Voice of Experience* testifies. We want to be able to jump into the water of life without fear of loss. In my dream, the combination of water running into the pool and the timing of the jump together can be seen as the core of the relationship between Roger, Ester and myself; it is a picture of the struggle during a period of 'negative transference'.

As the neurologist's dream also shows, sometimes it is difficult simply to wait patiently for an authentic meeting of two or more human beings and to recognise how we run away from authentic being - which we, in the final analysis can't, but still try to - in order to please others. Suicide seems to be the only way out in the neurologist's dream. But there is an alternative: we can also wait for another dream, to give us something fresh to talk through. A fresh dream can open up new possibilities as to where our own healing potential is drawing us.

Implied in the question in the dream, "Is this therapy?" is the continuous musing over, and on, the proclamation of a therapeutic method, which does no harm in the often grotesque longing to be secure in a delicious wisdom of life, to wake up being one-Self and not a bad copy of someone else. In contrast, the compulsion of comparing - more often than not in a competitive mood - the variety of talented methods and aims of psychotherapy (and there must be, by now, over 170 Schools in the West alone) can so often be paralyzingly contradictory, for it brings fresh suffering in its wake to the life of patients, their families and friends but also to the therapists engaged in this competitiveness. It obscures our longings for certainty, for a secure base, home - a need of therapists as much as of their patients.

### **The second dream of the therapist**

*Ronald Laing and I sat facing each other at opposite ends of a large room. Our colleagues sat along both sides of the other walls. I gave a long talk about Laing's work and therapeutic methods.*

*Afterwards he came up to me and said: "You know, we need a new kind of magic to get away and back to ourselves."*

What does the term "magic" mean here? What 'magic' is "Laing" talking I about? Perhaps it can be described as 'producing illusions', or *spells* or *charms*, which could bless rather than deny the great Unknown, shadow parts of our Self. We are talking about the "art" of being "deluded" (Latin: *ludare*, to play). I can become aware that I have been deluded, become disillusioned, in a situation which I took for real and true. We are being offered a chance to recognise self-deception together with a distorted perception of what is going on, thus freeing ourselves from illusions (which seem true to normal perception patterns) and hypnotic hallucinations, as shattering as this can be, yet without destroying the hold on the 'true' self.

Laing has described this self-system in his major early work, *The Divided Self* (1960) and *The Self and Others* (1961). We find in these studies how we get away from what we are, how we get away from what we are not in an attempt to find our 'true' self, often treasured in our dreams and deep hopeful wishes, floating in the vessel of our soul. For Laing, to discover our 'false' self is also to become aware, at the same time, how it relates to, and

depends upon, the 'true' self. The not uncommon dreams of being on bridges while being in therapy might here be allowed to be seen as corroboration of my view that a new magic of therapy might be like a bridge between the 'true' and 'false' self, linking and separating them at the same time in space as illusionary identities. Both are related by what flows - insight, intuition, sensuality - between them. Interpersonal perception is thus guided by "The difference *between* people, not people who are *different*," as Laing wrote.

A dream answer also came, when I had a dream where my cousin Thomas (Aramaic: the twin, the doubter) suggested to me: "Why don't you cultivate sobriety as a magic to clarify what is going on in our relationships, in- and outside of our family. "Why not? Sobrius in Latin means: not being addicted to intoxication of any sort, be that words, silence, ideology, hallucinogenics or methods, models, theories and so on.. It also means, to be unhurried and thoughtfully calm. In fact the concept: sobrius, can gather together all the qualities needed - even for psychotherapists - to deal with the confusion and disturbance of the social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, somatic and religious aspects of life.

In my native German the word for sobriety is *Nuchternheit*, holding, within itself, the sense of nightly (Latin: *nocturnus*) and daybreak, dawn (Old High German: *Uohta*). It dawns on me, remember, how we, as tenders of the soul, are also in an old monk-like tradition, which includes an early meditation before we sit for breakfast, reviewing our excesses, our fantasies and emotions filled with a prejudice which we have acquired in and during the course of daily life. In therapy we can calm emotional-, intellectual-, somatic- and social-turmoils, we can play, we can circle round our human faculties, examining them and making sense of who, what and what for we are with, as human beings. In this way we practice the art of Satisampajanna, which is an essential Langan skill, "the cultivation of being aware of what is going on, without projecting my own fantasy system upon it". Unconditional attentiveness.

### **The third dream of the therapist**

This dream contained the question: "What sort of Therapy is this?"

*Winkler, a garden architect, comes to visit me in my consulting room. As soon as he sits down on the couch he begins to talk and mutter in a strange way about his moods and the problems of living the way he does. After listening to the story he tells, I get up and give him my accordion. I help him to hold it properly, and then we find ourselves in the garden behind the praxis room.*

*There he begins to play. He jumps up and down, pulling and pushing the accordion in great anger. He runs to and fro over the vegetable and flower beds, dancing to his own music. The scope of his actions is limited by the garden fence. When he runs towards it I stand in his way and offer resistance with which he plays. He is playing with the limitations of this garden (process) of growth. He jumps on me, bounces back, then repeats this again and again. The music and our voices mingle with sweat and tears.*

*Windows fly open in the neighbouring houses and people look out to see what's going on. I think that they might think: "What sort of therapy is this?" I feel an answer suggesting itself: It is drama and dance. Here is his music, we are becoming attuned to one another. We are together in his element, the garden. It is like a ritual fertility dance. He plays the accordion in accord with how he feels, and we communicate out there in the open air as strongly as we possibly can. I am protecting him and helping him cultivate the ability to respond. Call it drama-therapy or art-of-living-therapy.*

*Then we are back in the consulting room, panting with exhaustion, breathing deeply. We begin to discuss how we experienced what we have just been through. We speak about our deepest desires, feeling the breath of Psyche flowing through us and giving voice to it; feeling free to experience its limitations and its boundaries in our embodiment, which must be respected. We have been and are still on common ground; we heard the music of his heart's desire which provided the rhythm and pulse for our mutual experience. We were experiencing the innermost desire, spirit and fire of the child within us.*

At the beginning of the dream we were two strangers, meeting to explore what it was that brought him to see me. Then, as we became attuned to each other we found ourselves in the place of his professional competence. There he felt safe to let go and experience guided catharsis as a creative act. When he headed for the fence, I provided resistance, protecting and containing him so that the play could continue. Then came the central question about what I thought was going on, for which I projected myself outside, looking as if I were someone else (neighbours)

into the garden of therapy, seeing and naming the risk - to hurt and be hurt, to loose and be lost, to disturb and be disturbing - that was involved in being together in this way. Finally when we became exhausted, we returned indoors to my sphere of competence to reflect on what we had been through: a choreographic movement from interior to exterior - integrating opposites - but also from introversion to extraversion, soul as personal to soul in the world! At the end of the dream, we are back to where we started from, yet somehow changed.

#### The fourth dream of the therapist

A month after this dream, I had another dream which involved the question: Where is my communal praxis? - which brought the circle (cycle) of questions to a new closure. It concerns my search for a place in the therapeutic community and the place of my own therapeutic practice within it.

*I am outside my practice-building at the back door looking up to the second-floor windows, which belong to the practice rooms. Then I am in my consulting room with Elisabeth who came today for her final (session, having been in therapy with me for three years. It's evening, the hour of fair-well. I give her the opportunity of spending the last night sleeping on the couch, while I sleep on the floor in front of it. I suggested that we tell each other our dreams in the morning and then take our leave of each other. She agrees to my proposal and I put out the light. After a while there is a noise in the hallway and the light goes on again. Some of Elisabeth's friends are standing in the room. I look at them intently. They say that Elisabeth invited them without me knowing, as a surprise. I say that this goes against our agreement and they will have to leave, otherwise we would have to leave. Then my wife and colleague, Heidemarie, comes into the room, complaining about all the noise, saying she can not sleep, so we all leave. In the hallway I come across a printer who is sorting out his prints, he stays in the building while we all leave.*

*Now I am alone in a neighbourhood with a variety of shops, workshops and restaurants, all assembled in one building complex. The next morning I find myself going into the basement of my practice-building, accompanied by Dimitrij and Anatol, my two sons. We all carry wood and enter a video-clip advertising firm which has rented a room at the front of the basement where the wood fire furnace is located. We put the wood in the fire to heat the practice rooms. We go back outside and I am alone again.*

*I meet Barbara who now lives in Le Vaud (the Woods). I haven't met her since my return to Switzerland five years ago (1981), after nine years in London. (We met during the first year I was in London.) I invite her to come and see our practice. As we go towards it, she is replaced by Francis Huxley. We enter the building by the southwest door, but once inside I can't orientate myself. So I ask a cleaning woman: "Do you know where the printer's shop is?" She answers: "No, why?" "Well", I say, "Next to it is the Gemeinschaftspraxis." "Ah", she replies, "Try up the stairs in a northerly direction." We climb up the stairs but only find a theological bookshop. Francis picks up a book and browses while I look down another stairway leading to the eastern part of the building. I put my hand on the bronze railing and notice that it is decorated with a dragon's head, and that these are the 'Spanish Steps' in Rome.*

*At the foot of the Steps, there is a crowd of men, women and children, of all ages. The children are playing, there is a carnival atmosphere. They are watching a dragon dance. At this point I see the entrance of the practice building "Hey Francis," I shout, "I can see the entrance to the practice." Whereupon, I jump down the Steps and join the people assembled there, watching the dragon-dance. It's all very like Chinese New Year. I call Francis again, looking back at him, and see he is still reading a book. "Hey Francis, come down here!" He finishes the book and puts it back, then comes down the Steps with enormous leaps, ending up in front of the dragon's head. He plays with the dragon, coaxes it into a chase and runs, with the dragon at his heels, to the back of the building, where the back door of our practice is. All I can see is the dragon's tail, moving as if it is chewing Francis up. I feel an urge to run after them, but stay where I am for the time being.<sup>910</sup>*

This dream brings me full circle - from its beginning (which takes place) *outside* the practice, to the end (which takes place) *inside* it. After the opening of the dream there are three main episodes.

The first is in the practice and is a final session with a patient; conducted in a variation of the Aesclepiian therapeutic tradition; the second takes place outside again, in the neighbourhood, and going down into the basement (alchemical store), to heat our practice rooms, together with my sons; and finally, finding my way to my communal practice accompanied first by Barbara then by Francis Huxley.

Through my apprenticeship with Ronald Laing, I entered the tradition which grounds itself in what we know as the medicine of Aesclepius, son of Apollo, disciple of Cheiron and friend of dogs and snakes, having underworld

connections with Hades and Dionysos. This tradition, from 600 BC until about 200 AD seriously practiced as a healing cult in Epidauros in Greece, believed that there is a power or *energeia*, which attracts an illness, brings it out into the open, and can also heal it. Therefore, in order to heal, that *energeia* had to be actualised or cultivated. This was done by a process of incubation. This took place underground, in old snake holes, where the patients, after cleansing and singing rituals, spend a day and night of healing sleep. Some say it was for three days and according to other writers, with psychedelic substance, and/or with snakes in company. On re-emerging the patient would tell their healing dreams and visions to the therapist, who often does nothing but listen attentively with unconditional love. The healing dreams would direct and form the basis of the treatment.

It was this vision of healing which is based on internal knowledge, which in my dream, I had intended to be the finale of the therapeutic relationship with Elisabeth. Some stay with us in therapy for quite a while, as an advent, to get ready for the healing dream or dreams, freeing their minds, physis, emotions and social relations of the habitual contamination and turn in to a releasing experience of being re-born. We shall never know what sort, of lead Elisabeth, of the dream, would have been given, since we were interrupted by her friends whom she invited without me knowing it. Perhaps the preparation for the final incubation included her ambition to surprise me in order that the ritual could not take place. Perhaps she wanted to consummate the process without taking the risk of going down, in and re-emerging afresh. After writing the first draft of this essay, in 1986, I found an essay by Ronald Laing, of which I was hitherto unaware. It was first published in Italian, in a collection of essays by Franca and Franco Basaglia-Ongaro, in 1975, the year I first met Ronald Laing in London. Entitled: 'A Dream of Peace', it exactly addresses the theme of this paper. Laing shows that our tradition can help to mitigate and finally heal our fundamental anxieties about separation. The first and most traumatic is at birth, latter from the breast feeding mother, our dual-unity, in growing up and adult life from .lovers and friends. Again and again we suffer the echo of the shock of cutting the umbilical cord. In the ritual of therapy we can have a chance and an experience, writes Laing, of communion in common to find peace of mind, soul and body, embedded in the socio-cultural environment in which we happen to live.<sup>11</sup>

Back to the last dream. Wandering around Sankt Gallen I am in the local neighbourhood where I know people and they know me and what I do. When I go into the basement with my two sons to light the furnace which heats our rooms, it indicates to me that my experience as a father now informs my work as a therapist, and as my children warm my heart, so I try to warm the chilled souls of others, one of the original meanings in the word 'psyche-iatros'.

I take Barbara (Gr. *barbaros*: stranger) back to the practice so that I can show her (who was there from the beginning with me in London, in the strange land and community where I first learned my art of healing), where I am now practising what I preach, and preach what I practice. However, the dream also marks the threshold of our friendship as she gives place to Francis Huxley, my companion in the search for the 'Gemeinschaftspraxis', where, as he once said: "we can garden love with one another".

The last and longest part of the dream is dominated not only by this search, but also by the dragon. Interestingly, 1988 is the Year of the Dragon in the Chinese horoscope, and I was born in 1952, also the year of I the dragon. My grandparents (on my mothers' side) and my parents have all been living in China for many years. My maternal grandfather, Hans Scheurer, wrote a short story on the Dragonking in the province of Guangzhou (Canton).

Francis Huxley has written about the Dragon as "the nature of spirit and the spirit of nature ". This mythic, beautiful beast, as some take it to be, can be see as my totem for therapy, in its feminine, goddess and matriarchal imago. Her true form becomes visible through continued devotions, showing her to be, "the goddess of compassion and the guardian of childbirth", writes Huxley.<sup>12</sup>

The medicine wheel of the old North American Anazazi has different meanings associated with its different points. The southwesterly point is the place of the sacred dream, and this is the point at which we enter the I building where our practice is located in. Once inside, however, I can't 'orient' myself, and turn to a guide who takes the form of a cleaning woman, someone who cleans up and gives us room to move. Via an indirect question - asking about the printer's shop - she indicated how we might 'find' the practice. To go in a northerly direction we found the theological bookshop. North, on the medicine wheel is the place of the philosophy of life, spirit and airs.

In his book on dragons, Huxley writes the following: "If there is one reason for dragons haunting the imagination, it is surely here: they are the outer aspects of an inner knowledge, both animated by that desire which the Upanishads also call hunger and death. These three aspects of the One form the triple bond of Destiny - a bond the Greeks knew as telos, meaning the toils of fate, the issue of a struggle and the completion of things by ritual



initiation, by marriage and by death."<sup>13</sup>

When I thought about the image of the bronze dragon's head on the Spanish Steps in Rome, I was reminded, it was there (here) where Shelley and Keats attempted, through their poetry, to come to terms with time (another meaning for telos). I felt in the dream as if I too was making that attempt, as I touched the Dragon's head. I felt 'oriented', finally, as I noticed the carnival atmosphere which surrounded the people of 'our' community who were taking part in a Dragon dance. It was at that point that I saw the 'entrance' to the practice, and called Francis. All these images - the Dragon dance, the Door of the Practice, the people, old, young, children and middle-aged dancing together in a carnival spirit - came together in a new level of Self-awareness, of sensual enlightenment. I felt that I knew where I was going.

Eventually, taking his time, Francis joins us and jumps in front of the dragon, getting it to chase him, and it ends with what appears to be the dragon eating him up. Perhaps this is saying that now my personal mentors of therapy are being taken in and back to their archetypal source: in the Aesclepien Dragon! Although I felt a tremendous urge to go and see what was happening - my own creativity wanting to be released, to become a witness and take note - I held my ground. I felt strong enough to remain where I am, for the time being, grounded securely within my practice and the local community.

Finally, remember, how Ronnie Laing, may his soul rest in peace, taught us to cultivate the reciprocity of perspectives and innocence of vision by asking us: "*Why don't you try to imagine what you would feel like if you were one of them, patient, and treat them in the way you would like them to treat you, if you were in their position.*"

Feel Free!

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