

#### 14. MY PSYCHOANALYSIS AND A DREAM, OTTAWA, 1952-57

Late in my years at the DBS, after I had my doctorate, I went through a full psychoanalysis--three hours a week for all of five years--by Mrs. Martha Wasserman, a student of Jung and fresh from Vienna. For what it was worth, I was attracted by the thought that being analyzed by Mrs. W. would put me close to the great Freud--he analyzed Jung, and Jung analyzed Mrs. W. and if I committed myself to her I would be the third generation down from Freud. At 90, sixty years later, I am one of the very few people alive that close to this formative influence on the 20th century.

Mrs. W. was the widow of Jacob Wasserman; whose Christian Wahnschaffe (*The World's Illusion*), one of the most popular novels of the day, I had read and enjoyed. She herself was a novelist of some standing. No longer young, but with an elegance that I associate with the elite of the capital city of the Hapsburg Empire where she was brought up.

We were enormously impressed with cures by Mrs. Wasserman of two friends who were conspicuously neurotic. Jimmie Henderson was an alcoholic, who by bad luck held a job testing alcoholic spirits in a customs laboratory. He was entirely out of control. His wife Anne told us that he hid drinks all over the house--she even found a bottle inside the toilet tank. After an extended analysis he was entirely cured. Unfortunately the analysis smoothed out the jagged parts of his personality, making him a less interesting person than before he became an alcoholic and before the analysis. Mrs. Wasserman was aware of this effect and did her best to avoid it but in this case that was not possible.

One can surmise what it was that drove Jimmie to drink. I knew him well, sharing a room with him in Mrs. Kronk's boarding house. Of Glasgow Scottish ancestry, first generation born in Canada, and intensely anti-Catholic. He never tired of talking about the wickedness of a Church that could reduce your mother's stay in purgatory by 5 years, but wouldn't ever tell you how long remained. And then he married Anne, Catholic and a beautiful redhead. Is it possible that this clash of religions was responsible for his neurosis? I don't know enough to say. What I do know is that there never was a more sympathetic and devoted wife than Anne, who rose to heights of heroism under the strain imposed on her by Jimmie's alcoholism. (I know another case, Leo Goodman, one of the great statisticians of our age, whose wife, also called Anne, left him when he was threatened with a fatal cancer. He survived and is still flourishing, but no thanks to Anne.)

And then there was Clarence Barber, an economist of some distinction, who was also cured of minor neuroses by Mrs. Wasserman.

I had already read Ernest Jones and other writers, and was interested in psychoanalysis. With that and her successes with Henderson and Barber I was persuaded that Mrs. Wasserman was the real thing.

And so began my five years on Mrs. W.'s couch. In preparation for that I did some free association on a typewriter, turning out dozens of pages, and passed them to Mrs. W. in the hope that these would jump-start the analysis.

The analysis took up many trifling matters, and a few serious ones. Beatrice said as I was leaving the house one day for my regular session, "Ask Mrs. Wasserman why you don't have you hair cut." And sure enough the matter came up in my free association, though I don't recall what answer emerged.

One incident left a permanent impression on me. On arriving at her apartment I asked whether I could use her bathroom. She indicated the way, and for a while this happened regularly. (Since I had just come from home there was no reason for it.) Then one day she answered "No". She had grasped the symbolism of my request, and found it offensive. She never explained why she said no--she didn't have to. Just an example of my unconscious talking to her unconscious, she understanding what was going on and I at first not understanding. I had a piano teacher at one time, who went to the toilet after arriving at our house for a lesson. I interpreted it as Mrs. W. had, and got rid of that teacher--who was teaching me very little anyhow. .

When I started I had the naïve idea that the sessions would have some of the character of lectures on the theory of psychoanalysis. Nothing of the kind--it was I who did the talking. When I slowed down Mrs. W. said something to stimulate my further expression. She often did react to what I was pouring out, perhaps with surprise, perhaps with disgust.

Writing some decades before Freud, Nietzsche said that when we talk about ourselves we are not really trying to reveal, but rather to conceal the facts and ideas of our life. Getting the subject to break through that barrier in a way frames the task of the analyst.

My experience of psychoanalysis by Mrs. W. is entirely positive, or at worst neutral. But that was not true of all analysts. My much admired friend, Bert Hoselitz, mentioned elsewhere in this memoir, an inmate of Concord House, started to have headaches, and he consulted an analyst. After a considerable period under analysis, the headaches became worse, and the analyst told him it was because of the effect of his home and due to his wife, Gunhilde, as fine a person as I have ever met,. You will have to divorce her, he said. He did but still loved her dearly, and kept coming back to see her. One evening when he called, Gunhilde said that unless he promised to see a neurologist the next day she would not let him in the house. That was enough. The neurologist diagnosed a brain tumor, and proposed operating. When it was done Bert gradually

came back to normal. He first recovered Hungarian, which was the first language he had spoken. Then German came back--at which point I could talk to him, even though my German was at that time execrable. And finally he was speaking English, with the same accent that we had known well in his college days.

Bert was an economist, but a Viennese economist, far broader than the economist of the English-speaking world. He founded a magazine that under the editorship of Gale Johnson still goes on--called *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. It was devoted to showing that there was more to economic development than making the GNP grow; that it needed a cultural underpinning without which healthy competitive markets would not come into existence. Instead, as in the case of post-Soviet Russia of the 1990s, the economy would degenerate into the crony capitalism of President Yeltsin's era, in which the vast wealth of Russia, its forests, furs, oil, were simply given away.

But back to Bert and his analysis. The great musician George Gershwin had a similar brain tumor that was first diagnosed as mental, and like Bert had terrible headaches. When he got to a brain surgeon it was too late--he died on the operating table. A genius cut off at the age of 38, and unnecessarily.

Nothing so dramatic in my life. But the analysis did cure me of at least one troublesome habit, one that wasted a great deal of time and nervous energy. I was certainly of a calmer disposition. And later on I was better able to engage in Zen-type meditation than if I had never been analyzed. (As Mrs. W. foresaw.)

What I cannot tell is whether this supports Freud's theories, that require the patient to lie on a couch in such a way that he cannot see the analyst, who comes to him as a disembodied voice. Would the companionship over tea each day of a cultivated and sympathetic woman, for whom I had great respect, have had the same result? I cannot tell.

Meanwhile I can tell friends that am the fourth generation down from Freud Thinking of that quasi kinship I made a pilgrimage to the very source from which psychoanalysis sprang, the place that contained the couch on which it was born, the spacious apartment at 19 Bergstrasse, in downtown Vienna. Now open to the public with its furnishings intact.

The primacy of Freud is challenged by my one-time colleague Professor Ellenberger of the Université de Montréal. We visited him in 1963, and over dinner he explained that psychoanalysis was really due to Charcot in France, known to and respected by Freud; who treated patients on what we now know as psychoanalytic methods. But Charcot's patients were prisoners and others of low status and low capacity to pay an analyst. According to Ellenberger Freud is well known because he invented a machine to support psychoanalysis financially--he

found his patients among wealthy women in Vienna, who had lots of money and lots of time. The movement traveled around the world riding on similar means of support.

My analysis included again and again exploring a dream I had had the previous night. While on the couch I was asked what was the first thing that came into my mind when I thought of that dream. When things went well I could by such free association reveal the meaning of that dream.

Today psychoanalysis is little heard from. Is it possible that toleration of lower ethical practices is what has brought it down? Unless the analyst has high ethical standards analysis is positively dangerous. If the analyst is just running a business, sets as his object extracting as much money as he can from the patient, he could harm the mind as well as the pocket book. I spoke apologetically to one of these types about my being analyzed when I had nothing seriously wrong, thus depriving some person who was suffering with genuine neurosis. He expressed astonishment, as though to say was I so simple minded as not to know that the purpose was the income of the analyst?

In summary, the psychoanalyst used to be a professional in the sense that a doctor is a professional; is he now a professional in the sense that a courtesan is a professional?

### **The object you seek is somewhere else, Cambridge 1995**

One of my habits that the analysis uncovered and dealt with was misplacing things. Absent-mindedly I would put some object in an unusual place where it would be difficult to find, perhaps saying to myself that I did so because it was particularly important. A few days or a few hours later, when I needed it again, I would not be able to find it. I had hidden it from myself.

Mrs. Wasserman devoted several sessions to this habit, using the Freudian technique of free association. It turned out that my inability to find the article caused me much grief. I went about the house mournfully looking in every possible corner, racking my brain. It became plain to me (as it evidently had been to Mrs. W. from the beginning), that this masochistic wallowing in grief and frustration was the object of putting the thing in an unfamiliar place. I was just hiding it from myself.

Once the process became clear, which it did in the course of a few weeks of analysis, then my conscious could take over. Full protection against my unconscious is provided by my mother's "A place for everything, and everything in its place."

But there are other tendencies in my psyche that were not cured or even treated in the 5 years. Beatrice has noticed that in taking a test I have to think that the worst will occur. (This could be anything from a blood-pressure measurement today or a school examination 70 years ago.) If I

thought the result would be good then the gods watching over my action would punish this arrogance, so to achieve the best outcome I must be humble and anticipate the worst. At a conscious level I accept that what I anticipate will have no effect on the outcome, but that is not good enough for the unconscious, that thinks of the omnipresent gods, so jealous of hubris in us inferior beings. .

One current example. When my children wanted to celebrate my 90th birthday a few weeks ago, I asked them urgently to defer that celebration until the 29th of June. Even though a few days before would have been more convenient.

My constantly saying that I am not capable of doing such-and-such, I am willing to try but it will not succeed, gives my friends and relatives the impression of extreme modesty. .Evidently I am out of tune with my age, just out-of-date. For in the current etiquette, let us say of basketball or tennis, one shouts victory, one acclaims himself. Anyone our age remembers with nostalgia how the winner would console the loser with words like "Better luck next time." Such an expression is not to be heard today.

### **A dream**

I was in a huge building, up and down whose corridors I wandered. It was a kind of meeting place, perhaps a hotel in which a great conference was taking place, with many stories, and crowded with people, young people mostly meeting and talking, about what I didn't know. I had been assigned a room, and I wanted to get back to it so that I could go to sleep, and I could not find it. I went into one of the rooms facing on the corridor of the 6th floor, and asked a young man whether he had a list of the people in the building. I told him my name and he looked up his list, and said "You are listed as in room 610." I thanked him and looked for room 610, figuring it must be on the 6th floor and that was where we were. But even given the room number, I couldn't find it. There were all sorts of discontinuities in the numbering--as though it had been devised to confuse me, yet all the young people understood it well.

I had been trying the previous evening to figure out how to scan a document and failed, and was much frustrated. I am afraid that many things in computing that for young people are perfectly natural, and for me are a struggle. Surely that is what the dream is telling me.

But enough for my unconscious.