

What Remains Undone

There are days when in a kind of half-awake state, the images of one painting move into another. I don't know myself what is where – nothing to do with separate pictures anymore but a sort of confused swarm where everything can become everything else – in a split second. I panic and hate it and desire it to stop fully as much as I love and need it and want to continue endlessly. The curse of image making – as if one wants to gorge and eat up the world – a hunger – but then also deep down is another hunger – for some peace - detachment - for a single form which might contain so much multiplicity. - Philip Guston

Freud, Heidegger, and Derrida can be linked to each other by using the idea of *what remains* as latent content in Freud's dreamwork; the concealment of Being in Heidegger's essay *The Essence of Truth*; and the notion of Derridean *differance* as “a contradiction inherent in language” that reveals the “older” unnameable movement of signification as trace (or mark). All three of these broad concepts point to an absent *quid* which nonetheless remains and irritates the condition of objectivity by partially revealing the the anarchic network of substitutions upon which meaning is constructed. According to Derrida the residual kernel destabilizes objectivity in terms of a “master-name” while opening up the possibility for “play.” For Freud it is the act of psychic suppression which covers the dream content issuing from the unconscious, latent content; for Heidegger there is a double bind in the process of coming to light of Being which involves concealment and lack of openness to Being which he calls *errancy*; similarly for Derrida our language is never concrete as we wish it would *be* because words themselves are unhinged in their relation to the heap of language (not any language specifically but *Language*), the “a” in

differance indicating this slippage and cluttering up of being, what we see as presence is really a product of the primal act of substitution “the trace is not a presence but a simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself.” (24) In all three of these thinkers I see the presence of a fundamental lack in the subject like the metaphor of the biblical cracked vessel. If objectivity must be established through the subject there will always be a seepage of meaning in creatures which are bound to *Language* and the law of death.

For Freud there are two kinds of content in a dream, the manifest content and the latent content. The manifest content is that which the person remembers experiencing, it is only partial as most of the material is immediately suppressed upon waking in order to gear the psyche for the task of living. The true meaning of the dream which is the latent content is a symbolization and abstraction of unconscious desire. The latent content can be accessed through long and painstaking analysis through gaps in the conscious mind which may reveal those thoughts or desires. Freud said the work of analysis was a laborious process, rescuing the ego from the powers of the unconscious is like the draining of the Zuiderzee by the Dutch.

The creative/non-creative force in Freudian dreamwork acts fundamentally in a mode of *horror vacui*. In Freud's psychic-hydraulic system dreamwork is nothing but a temporary smoothing out and multi-layer coating of a porous surface, what he likens to a “pictorial arrangement.” (23) The psychic apparatus cannot hold onto residual material and must merge it with other material surfacing from the unconscious under the pressure of a censoring power as the mind actively suppresses unconscious desires and emotions. According to Freud in *On Dreams* sexual wishes remain in the system since childhood and steer the process of condensation, layering, and displacement of thought-images. Freud's cure rests on the premise that the verbalization of past traumas, desires, and fears will evacuate psychic space therefore

enabling the organism to re-establish a condition of homeostasis. Nonetheless Freud says that when the dream “resembles a heap of disconnected fragments” it is better for the sake of analysis because the latent content might be more easily accessible. More aptly, in relation to Heidegger and Derrida, Freud says: “We are incapable of seeing a series of unfamiliar signs or of hearing a succession of unknown words, without at once falsifying the perception from considerations of intelligibility, on the basis of something already known to us.” (23)

On this latter point, Heidegger speaks of Dasein's fundamental predicament of ignorance. Mostly, beings are lost in the clutter of beings and cannot conceive of Being nor capture its unconcealment: “The inordinate forgetfulness of humanity persists in securing itself by means of what is readily available and always accessible.” (132) Passing up the mystery of Being is what Heidegger calls *errancy*. (133) Heidegger opposes the condition of *ek-sistence* to *in-sistance*, the openness of Dasein to Being, as standing-out, to being closed-off to beings engaging them with the “business of knowing.” (129) Heidegger uses the word *aletheia*, disclosure, instead of truth because the standard notion of truth rests on correspondence by which something is true when it conforms to a standard of truth. Aletheia is the process by which beings reveal themselves as that which they are: “To engage oneself with the disclosedness of beings is not to lose oneself in them; rather, such engagement withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are, and in order that presentative correspondence might take its standard from them.” (125) At the same time there is a process of closure: “Letting-be is intrinsically at the same time a concealing. In the ek-sistent freedom of Dasein a concealing of being as a whole propriates. Here there *is* concealment.” (130)

Heidegger goes further in this point and says how given that truth is in essence freedom humanity tends to cover up and distort beings and “semblance comes to power.” (127) Derrida's

differance points to the Nietzschean idea of truth being linguistic in essence, the “I” is an effect of grammar. Truth occurs as a calcification of the signifier in the general flux of language.

Derrida stresses the destabilizing force of language in play as difference which “instigates the subversion of every kingdom.” (22) The truth effect is a *effect of writing* as presence. (24)

In conclusion, working from the confession of Philip Guston, what is revealed in these three thinkers is the desire to frame, and at the same time *give into* the multiplicity by which any objectivity, including the subject is formed. In Freud we find the crazy idea of dream analysis as a primary vehicle for revelation of the unconscious. Can a “scientific” method be applied in this cavernous region? In Heidegger we see how “truth” and “untruth” move along the same path, problematizing each other in a game of light and dark. Derrida, in a similar vein, seeks to uncover the indeterminacy upon which all our systems of knowledge, our monuments, are founded. In this tension between between the known and the unknown, in that which remains, we go on.

Works Cited

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