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Dream of Insomnia

[Insomniac Dream Workshop – FAR – 17.02.12]

Abstract

In *The Interpretation of Dreams (Die Traumdeutung, 1900)*, Freud advanced the hypothesis that dreams are the guardians of sleep. In ‘To Have Done with Judgment’ (*Critical and Clinical Essays, 1993*), Deleuze’s testament-text and radical re-presentation (or cut-through) of his whole philosophy, ‘The dream is rediscovered, no longer as a dream of sleep or a daydream, but as an insomniac dream. *The new dream has become the guardian of insomnia*’. From Freud to Deleuze (and Guattari), or What Happened (to Us) *alongside* insomnia in this sleepless dream that has taken the real movement upon itself?

[Reading: G. Deleuze, “To Have Done with Judgment”, *Critical and Clinical Essays*, p. 129-130]

Reading *that*, I start from the beginning, the middle and the end – they come back to the same, they return as the same — Insomnia: Deleuze’s text (*my* beginning, *his* end, ie. *a* testament-text, projecting us into the sharpest middle of his thought: a midnight-midday text) — **“To Have Done with Judgment”**, the very last text he wrote in his last book/non-book, a collection of essays opening with life: “Literature and life”, in so far as “Writing is inseparable from becoming”, and from becoming something other than a “writer”; and closing with exhaustion: “The Exhausted” — at least in the English edition, the one I am happy to follow here for this only reason, because exhaustion makes return the dream of insomnia as the dream of the mind that has to be made, produced, constructed, and keeps it from falling asleep, from falling into the dream of sleep which is fashioned all alone *in* sleep — in such a way that exhaustion, the exhaustion of the whole of the possible, of the *given* form of the possible, as a law of division of the real which assigns at once my “*lot*” to a certain field of the possible, the *exhausting* of the possible which language states using exclusive disjunctions aiming at its realization in daytime / nighttime – because *he/she* is waiting to know what purpose *I* want the day to serve *and the night to smooth over* and the next day to deal with, *analytiquement s’entend*, in one way or another, eh bien, the exhaustion of this possible that may, that *will accommodate* psychoanalysis, with its signifying interrelatedness of law and desire, this exhaustion - which is *ours* after having exhausted the “over-all discursive fact” of sex put into dream-interpretation narrative - is at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end,

“for to end yet again” *alongside* insomnia: an insomniac Spinozism? And *it* reads now, the title of Deleuze’s book reads, chaotically carried by *my* exhausting sentence and *his* sovereign freedom, a pure necessity and *violent grace* **To have [had] done with the System of Judgment** (and I mean the grace of violence and the violence of grace, both involved in *this* in-between life and death): *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Or better, in French: *Critique et Clinique*.

In short, if I could wake up for a second from my dreamless *intoxication* to welcome you and to hold it, this could be a kind of first statement: an insomniac, or a Dream of Insomnia Workshop *is*, or could not be other than a critical and a clinical workshop. A Clinique subverting the limits and boundaries of both dream and life, drifting to the edges of sleep, between paradoxical waking and hyperesthetic sleeping (I do mean: paradoxical waking rather than paradoxical sleeping, or better: paradoxical waking hyperesthetically contaminating, intoxicating sleeping), where natural and artificial sleepwalking, hypnosis and other mediumnités or mediumships take us into the night’s intermediary zones of an Impure Reason: a Clinic of Impure Reason undoing the very principle of the Kantian Critique, based on a hierarchical-regulated exercise of the faculties of the mind: a “fantastic subjective tribunal” says Deleuze. But somehow, perhaps, and in the same stroke, this Clinic may involve a Critique radicalizing in a post-romantic way the Kantian ungrounding of the doctrine of faculties in the 3rd Critique, in this Critique of Aesthetic Judgment which would then *sleepwalk* towards a Dionysiac threshold identified with that “schizophrenia in principle” which characterizes the highest power of thought of a dissolved Self — and which asks us to *look at art through the prism of life* (Nietzsche). After this Kant beyond Kant, ie. with and *after* Nietzsche, Deleuze will follow this path, and our text, “**To Have Done with Judgment**”, is empowered by the Lightning of this insomniac Reason as it develops from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *The Genealogy of Moral*. And back again from the latter to the former, with this “Attempt at Self-Criticism” where Nietzsche “finds it [*The Birth of Tragedy*] an impossible book today” because it has been written by a Wagnerian disciple of Schopenhauer (a *romantic* artiste’s metaphysics) and because “it smells offensively Hegelian” in its will to understand tragedy as the redemptive reconciliation of Dionysus beneath an Apollonian form and in an Apollonian dream world. And this final reconciliation was acted, enacted from the very perspective of the ruthless Nietzschean deconstruction of Apollo’s world, of this world where the *principium individuationis*, the *maintenance of the limits* of the individual, the distribution of affects into *lots* which are then related to higher organic *forms*

from which they are *judged*, was triumphing over a hidden ground of suffering and knowledge exposed to Apollo's gaze by the Dionysiac. But is this supposedly *structural* reconciliation with *ourselves* not the Birth of our Modern Tragedy? Let me clarify that I am not proposing / imposing here any kind of (embarrassing) "History of Philosophy" exercise. I am just trying to say that the extreme radicality of Deleuze's Critique of (the) Dream encapsulates Nietzsche's Self-Criticism concerning the very possibility of a *re-interpretation of dreams* as developed in the exclusive perspective of this (reconciled bi-faced) aesthetic world-unconscious at work in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The point is absolutely fundamental since, when Nietzsche denounces his "improper sentences" stating (in *The Birth of Tragedy*) that "the existence of the world is *justified (gerechtfertigt)* only as an aesthetic phenomenon", he does not criticize his own Schopenhauerism without necessarily engaging with the latter in a Critique of a purely Dionysian aesthetics that would save it from being a Critique of *Morals and Science*. This is the definitive Idea of the "Attempt at Self-Criticism", as Deleuze himself puts it in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: "The true opposition is not the wholly dialectical one between Dionysus and Apollo but the deeper one between Dionysus and Socrates" (p. 13) — a deeper opposition without which the Dionysian Critique of Dream[s] remains a prisoner of dialectics, and of this superior dialectics located in the territory of art by the romantic and postmodern lovers of a Kantian Sublime *cut from its moral background*.

Why do I insist so much on this question? Because the very consistency of Deleuze's text, "**To Have Done with Judgment**", depends on this very question in its proclaimed insomniac radicalism. In fact, without this deeper opposition critically involving the *scientific Morals* of the *Interpretation of Dreams* — of Dream and its (Psychoanalytical) Interpretation, of *Dreams qua Interpretation* —, the final rediscovery of dream in Insomnia, an insomniac dream, would dialectically return to the aporetic regime of an aesthetic unconscious (as such denounced by Nietzsche) and would forbid the (new) dream from taking *the real movement and the movement of the real upon itself*. En bon français: *tout ça pour ça* — let's come back to sleep, sweet dreams, etc.

Now, what is this insomniac movement of the real that is fully ours and fully folded into Deleuze's demonstration when he denounces Apollo for being "both the God of judgment and the God of dreams: it is Apollo who judges, who imposes limits and imprisons us in an organic form, *it is the dream that imprisons life within these forms in whose name life is judged*"? What is it, if not the multitude of forces that crystallised in the critique of dreams

as *via regia* of an Oedipal unconscious *deeply* related to the most normative formations of waking life. Codename: *Anti-Odipus*, in an inevitable post-68 effect self-determining itself in the constitutive relationship between schizophrenia and capitalism. And it reads now, for example:

“Yes, dreams are Œdipal, and this come as no surprise, since dreams are a perverse reterritorialization in relation to the deterritorialization of sleep and nightmares. But *why return to dreams*, why turn them into the royal road of desire and the unconscious, when they are in fact the manifestation of a superego, a superpowerful and superchaized ego (the Urszene of the Urstaat)?” (347-348) — since the Primal Father of *Totem and Taboo* inhabits the primal scene as the “latent content” of the dream (Myth as Mankind’s *dream*).

For those who would think that this critique of psychoanalysis, far from returning to Freud’s texts and the “Copernican Revolution” of the *Traumdeutung* (the foundational text), would construct a customised caricature of *psychoanalytic ideology*, remember, on the one hand, that it is Freud himself who – I quote – “claims that the dream itself has a signification and that there exists a *scientific* method for interpreting it”: according to which [quote] “any dream appears as a psychic production *the meaning of which is very clear* and which we can perfectly well insert into the mental activities of wakefulness” [unquote]; on the other hand, as a *professionnel de la profession* (Godard’s joke) recently put it, “today there is hardly any real *deep* analysis which does not aim [...] for the phantasm of the primal scene” as “*organising schema* (as he himself stresses) of the psyche which in the confusion of [the dream’s] sensible components takes hold of that which reactivates an experience of intelligibility which it was ready to forget [...]. Thus the interpretation will determine the organising dynamism of the fundamental schema which the defences seek to erase”: “guardian of sleep”, the dream is supposed to interpretate itself as the “guardian of our mental health” (both expressions from the *Traumdeutung*). More interesting than the (terribly normative) place where desire *can be read* and to which it *can be bound* here, and more interesting than the “hallucinatory satisfaction of a desire” *in dreams*, in other words the *phallus* which reduces desire to the metamorphosis of lack (castration), more interesting, thus, than this absurdly modernist axiomatics since *the critique of Desire qua Lack engages our very existence for us who deny that the “major motive for subversion” can be found in the castration complexe* (the structural bone of the subject”, as Lacan puts it), we’ll observe the echo of this organising schema in Deleuze’s text, immediately after the passage on the dream. It states: « the judgment of God is nothing other than the power to organize to infinity ». And

this infinite and *interminable* 'curatorial' organization works from Inside, *immanently*, starting with the organisation of organs called organism (put to work and aimed at *work*), to which Deleuze opposes the Body without Organs that God (and Psychoanalysis, with its *drives* organized through the *monumental* opposition of Eros and Thanatos, the two "celestial powers" of universe) has stolen from us: « The body without organs is an affective, intensive, anarchist body that consists solely of poles, zones, thresholds, and gradients. It is traversed by a powerful, nonorganic vitality" — a Dionisiac vitality which can't be found without being made for yourself in the confrontation between forces and powers, *puissances et pouvoirs*, and in the construction of the most singular assemblages following *and* anticipating the imperceptible indices of new becomings. It reads in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "There are not other drives than the assemblages themselves": a constructivism of the unconscious since "becoming does not produce anything else than itself": Deleuze's Spinozism, Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozism of the unconscious.

This clinical constructivism of the unconscious develops in a doubly critical position in view of the dream considered as "royal road to the unconscious". On the one hand, as a road is a passage and not a *production site*, it occludes (or *represses*) the constitutive hermeneutic function of (analytical) interpretation in relation to the dream and its "work", since it is Freud himself who says that "the dream-work (*Traumarbeit*) does not think" (but Freud, or his place-holder, *does*). Or to put it in other words: the primal scene *precedes, in every sense*, both the dream and the "free" associations which *reveal* it. But on the other hand, the dream *itself* is a *surface of inscription* of "primary processes" in so far as the "dream-work" is nothing else than the "taking into consideration of the figurability" (*Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*): the "components" of the dream can only be present in the dream by transforming themselves into visual images; since to be *inscribed/registered* on the screen of the dream, the "representatives" of desire must be visually representable to make/ to form an *image (pour faire image)*. Consequently, if there is no requirement that the unconscious be figured in and by images, *it is a demand to which it is subjected by the dream*, without which the unconscious could not be an object of interpretation according to the very method of analysis. And this first reduction of the unconscious by visualisation is, if we can say it, further aggravated by verbalisation, with the being *put-into-words* by which the "dream-work" prepares *from the inside* "the work of analysis" and *of interpretation* by free association, which are supposed to bring us back to the oneiric game of words-images, by transforming metaphors into signifying metonymies freed by the transferential imprint. In

such a way that we do not know any more whether we associate or whether we dream in order to interpret in an interminable interpretation of oneself. Until we reach this “kernel of the dream” which remains buried in the night but which projects its shadows (Deleuze was saying: « shadows of all things and of the world, shadows of ourselves »), these shadows where the irrepressible complicity of interpretation and transcendence is *self-evident*. Interpretation as the supreme stage of transcendence: the immanent transcendence *of/to the Self and of/to the Ego*. Interpretation of Dreams, or Dream of Interpretation — since the former would not introduce *us* to the unconscious, to the *production of the unconscious*, to the *unconscious qua production*, but to... psychoanalysis. Freud: “It has been my experience — and to this I have found no exception — that every dream treats of one’s own person”. Lacan: “*Here, in the field of the dream, you are at home*”. *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*.

But at this point everything changes, and we enter into another world, with Artaud insisting: “it is not thought that collides with the kernel of a dream, but rather dreams that bounce off a kernel of thought that escapes them”. This kernel of dream-thought with which the Freudian interpretation ends and *from which everything starts for Kafka* — “around 5 am, having consumed up to the last trace of sleep, dreaming only, which is more *exhausting* than waking” (as it reads in his *Journal*) — because of the very special vigilance (*neither sleep, nor waking*) it requires to make proliferate the points of non-sense and the traits of singularity into these machinic “mutations of universe” proper to the Kafkaian insomniac *pragmatics of dreams* as the breaking-down of the signifying texture through an a-signifying process. When the only question is to reach “zones of liberated intensities where contents free themselves from their forms as well as from their expressions, from the signifier that formalized them” — “and, as such, plugged all the more into a social field with multiple connections”. *Experimentation, not interpretation*, Deleuze and Guattari conclude in *Kafka. Towards a Minor Literature*. They add: this is “a machinic definition, and not an aesthetic one”. Kafka, or the *insomniac breaking-through the dream*.

We may return now, *in fine*, to *Anti-Œdipus*, to this *Art of the Non-Fascist Life* (Foucault), exactly where we left it, with the best possible reasons *to prefer not to* — “*return to dreams*, to the supposedly royal road of desire and the unconscious, when they are in fact the manifestation of a superego, a superpowerful and supercharged ego (the Urszene of the Urstaat)”. It follows: “Yet at the kernel of dreams themselves ... of the real as such”.

[READING *Anti-Œdipus*, 348]

