Dream Tending and Play: The Vital Dimension

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Abstract: Dream Tending is a system for working with dreams that draws from elements of Jungian psychology and archetypal psychology, focusing on encountering dream images as living entities. The element of play is a vital but unarticulated aspect of Dream Tending, which merits exploration. The concept of play has been a significant topic for psychologists such as D. W. Winnicott, as well as contributors to the fields of social history and philosophy such as J. Huizinga and H. G. Gadamer. This article reviews the theoretical basis of Dream Tending emerging from the ideas of Jung, Hillman, and H. Corbin, and then applies the idea of play as developed by Winnicott, Huizinga, and Gadamer to the Dream Tending skills set. It concludes with a discussion of the clinical implications of focusing on play as a mediator of what Corbin referred to as imaginal space.

Keywords: dreams, play, Jungian psychology, archetypal psychology, Aizenstat, Hillman, Corbin, Winnicott, Huizinga, Gadamer

Introduction

Dream Tending is a system for working with dreams based on principles of post-Jungian and archetypal psychology. Developed by S. Aizenstat (2011), it shifts the emphasis of therapeutic attention from dream interpretation on a personal developmental level to phenomenological animation on an archetypal level based on a multi-dimensional conceptualization of the psyche and its images. In presenting the skills sets that comprise the Dream Tending method, Aizenstat emphasizes the notion of tending the living image. The historical impetus behind this approach stems from an oft-repeated maxim of Jung's (1934/1966b, p. 149 [*CW* 16, para. 320]) that was carried forward by Hillman (1975/1979, p. 194) and the archetypal school, to stick with the image. A vital component of the Dream Tending method that is less explicit in Aizenstat's own description is the element of play, which facilitates the active participation and engagement of the dreamer in relationship with the image.

In the clinical setting, play is a therapeutic factor that frequently receives attention in work with children (Crenshaw & Stewart, 2015; Dodds, 1987; Halfon, 2017; Meany-Walen, Kottman, Bullis, & Taylor, 2015; Ray, Pursweel, Haas, & Aldrete, 2017; Turns & Kimmes, 2013). The work of Klein (1957/2011) and Winnicott (1971) in particular called attention to play in infant and childhood development as the facilitator of symbolic thought essential for a healthy maturational process. Although Winnicott was emphatic that play remains a vital part of psychotherapeutic work with adults, it is less common for clinicians to describe metaphorical and symbolic modes of expression as play. Despite Winnicott's articulating play as an enduring feature of human psychology, there persists a tendency to associate play with the world of the child. Even in Jung's (1961/1989) own description of

his confrontation with the unconscious, he recounted a sense of humiliation in the games of children as part of his personal experiment with the deep psyche:

> This moment was a turning point in my fate, but I gave in only after endless resistances and with a sense of resignation. For it was a painfully humiliating experience to realize that there was nothing to be done except play childish games. (p. 174)

From the inception of depth psychology, play in the life of the adult appears to be awkward and difficult to negotiate. One noteworthy exception to this bias is the development of sandplay therapy by D. M. Kalff (1991), which has proven to be an effective play-based therapy for both children and adults based on Jung's concepts (Doyle & Magor-Blatch, 2017).

There is evidence on a cultural and collective level that the psychic barrier between adult concerns and the impulse to play transcends the field of psychotherapy. Regardless of one's personal theology, the oft-quoted passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians sets a cultural standard: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, and thought as a child, and reasoned as a child; now that I am a man, I am through with childish things" (1 Cor. 13:1, Lattimore, Trans.). Even before adulthood children learn a similar lesson through the songs we teach them: "a dragon lives forever but not so little boys" (Yarrow & Lipton, 1963). Even the euphemism for that which is laughably simple, *child's play*, is a reminder that the world of the adult is too sophisticated, too complex, and too dignified to risk the humiliation of embracing play as psychologically valuable after the exodus from childhood.

Despite this apparent collective censure from professional and cultural spheres, play seems to have a mischievous capacity for working its way back into our adult lives. Cultural historian J. Huizinga (1938/2014) posited that play is an element that emerges throughout the human lifespan in the world of sports, the arts, commerce, finance, law, politics, and religion. Despite Jung's (1961/1989) ambivalence over his own return to childhood games, he also fondly quoted Schiller: "Man is completely human only when he is at play" (Jung, 1929/1966a, p. 46 [*CW* 16, para. 98]). Both Huizinga and hermeneutic philosopher H. G. Gadamer (2013) affirmed and elevated the importance of play as an indispensable factor in social progress, in the development of ethics, and in understanding the nature of our very being in the world.

In seeking a working definition of play, this article follows Bitan's (2012) suggestion: rather than attempting a reductive definition, he delineated characteristics of play, emphasizing its movement through time, and its paradoxical nature, which oscillates between dichotomies of "real and unreal, inside and outside, present and absent, etcetera" (p. 30). Building on the work of Winnicott and Derrida, he asserted that in play, dichotomies are allowed to peacefully co-exist without resolution. As will be seen, these play characteristics along with those identified by Huizinga (1938/2014) and Gadamer (2013) serve a vital role in the techniques of Dream Tending. This article will present the theoretical sources of these techniques from the depth psychology tradition, and will then discuss points of correspondence and complementarity between the work of Winnicott, Huizinga, and Gadamer to bring into focus the play element embedded in the Dream Tending skills set. The paper concludes with a discussion of clinical implications that

emerge from a clearer understanding of play in the Dream Tending model, and the therapeutic benefits of play as an adult activity in the context of tending dream images.

Theoretical Background and Postulates of Dream Tending

Although Jung (1917/1977 [*CW* 7]) emphasized the affective element in dreams as a key to understanding the personal complexes of the dreamer, he also made the more fundamental assertion that psyche is image:

> From what has been said, it should be clear that the psyche consists essentially of images. It is a series of images in the truest sense, not an accidental juxtaposition or sequence, but a structure that is throughout full of meaning and purpose; it is a "picturing" of vital activities. And just as the material of the body that is ready for life has need of the psyche in order to be capable of life, so the psyche presupposes the living body in order that its images may live. (Jung, 1926/1969b, p. 325 [*CW* 8, para. 618])

Hence, Jung's (1934/1966b) admonition to "stick with the image," emphasizes his ontological and epistemological commitment to stick with the autonomous psyche (p. 149 [*CW* 16, para. 320]). In this sense, an important dimension of Jungian psychology is image-centered. However, Jung's intention with the word "image" needs to be taken under some advisement. Jung (1926/1969b) clarified that "image" designates the apperception of all forms of sensory data including visual forms:

> We hear an indistinct sound the initial effect of which is not more than a stimulus to listen in order to find out what it means. In this case the auditory stimulus releases a whole series of images which associate themselves with the stimulus. They will be partly acoustic images, partly visual images, and partly images of feeling. Here I use the word "image" simply in the sense of a representation. A psychic entity can be a conscious content, that is, it can be *representable*. I therefore call all conscious contents images, since they are reflections of processes in the brain. (p. 322 [*CW* 8, para. 608])

In these two quotations, we see Jung making the case for a psychology of image, which interacts with and conditions our experience of the physical world.

Jung's assertion that image signifies the apperception of all forms of sensory experience relates to his later conceptualization of the archetype as a "psychoid factor" (1947/1969a, p. 213 [*CW* 8, para. 417]). The concept of the psychoid, what Addison (2009) described as "a deeply unconscious set of processes that are neither physiological nor psychological but that somehow partake of both" (p. 123), enabled Jung to posit that archetypal images exert an effect on our embodied physical experience. Hence, dream images are not only seen; they are also heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. The embodied experience of the dream image becomes a key element in Dream Tending (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 26).

The effect of the archetypal psyche on embodied experience became a central point of interest for J. Hillman (1992) as he asserted that aesthetic experience (the sensuous gasp of surprise at the beauty of an idea, a work of art, or a deeply felt moment) is fundamentally psychological (p. 39). For Hillman (1975), the aesthetic is psychological because it derives from what might be called conditions or expressions of *soul*, the term he privileged as the etymological equivalent to *psyche* from the ancient Greek (p. 2). The logos of psyche, then,

is the true task of psychology, learning how to talk about and how to elicit the language of soul in the world. Hillman's (1975) other preferred term for this activity was *soul-making*, a phrase inspired by the British Romantic poet Keats (p. 189).

Hillman (1975/1979) regarded dream images as soul images, which function independently from our personal developmental histories and the waking life associations we attach to them. This perspective was a departure from Jung's (1917/1977 [*CW* 7]) assertion that dreams are the affective expression of the dreamer's personal complexes. Hillman built instead on Jung's assertion that psyche is composed of images (1926/1969b [*CW* 8, para. 618]). Dream images arrive as visitors or emissaries from the underworld of the deep psyche. Our task as dreamers and devotees of psychology is not to analyze or interpret them, but rather to enter into a dynamic living relationship and thereby understand them by allowing them to speak in their own way, on their own behalf. This conceptualization informs Dream Tending's primary postulate: dream images are alive, presenting with their own perspectives and modes of knowing (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 24). Consequently, an orienting principle in Dream Tending is to replace the causal person-centered questions, "Why did I dream that?" and "What does it mean?" with the phenomenological questions, "Who's visiting now?" and "What's happening here?" (p. 33). An extension of this same principle is the core technique of phenomenological animation. It elicits a contemporaneous vivid description of the dreamer's lived experience encountering the dream image as an autonomous entity. A living image is animated; it is intrinsically imbued with *anima*, breath, or soul. To witness the animation of the dream figure is to experience its inherent vitality. The dreamer encounters the image's own sense of body, pulse, and intelligence. This fact does not negate the dreamer's affective response to the dream; rather, it affirms the dream image as having an autonomous existence independent of the dreamer's affect. Play is the element that allows both affective realities, that of the dream and that of the dreamer, to coexist peacefully as an unresolved paradox.

In addition to according the dream the ontological status of an autonomous embodied entity seeking relationship and understanding, the temporal aspect of the dream's phenomenology also contributes to the Dream Tending approach. Hillman (1975/1979) noted in *Dream and the Underworld* that dreams are always in a present-tense state of occurring in the atemporal space of the underworld. Based on this observation, Dream Tending makes two further postulates: dreams are now, and psyche is always dreaming (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 26). It is customary in Dream Tending to share the dream in the present tense and to acknowledge the presence of the dream figure as an animated encounter in the present moment. This practice supports the unfolding of a dynamic relationship with the image occurring in real time, which simultaneously evokes the dimension of the timeless. By positing that psyche is always dreaming, a concept that echoes the indigenous beliefs of Australian aboriginals, Dream Tending acknowledges the atemporal dimension of the dream. New possibilities open in an ensouled world where the animated imagination discovers a poetic basis of mind. Dream figures active in a timeless now occasion a new receptivity in the dreamer, an attitude of openness, engagement, and participation with a dynamic multi dimensional psyche. As we shall see, these are the qualities necessary to enter into play.

Winnicott: Potential Space, Play Space, Imaginal Space

A preeminent figure in the object relations school of psychoanalysis, D. W. Winnicott (1971) was unequivocal in his assessment of play as a critical factor in psychotherapy for adults as well as for children:

> The general principle seems to me to be valid that *psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist*. If the therapist cannot play, then he is not suitable for the work. If the patient cannot play, then something needs to be done to enable the patient to become able to play, after which psychotherapy may begin. The reason why playing is essential is that it is in playing that the patient is being creative. (emphasis in original, p. 72)

There follows an equally strong assertion: "only in playing is communication possible" (p. 73). For Winnicott, play is a universal given of the human condition, and a form of therapy in and of itself.

How does Winnicott define play in this bold formulation? To answer this question, it is necessary to briefly review his concepts of transitional phenomena and potential space (Winnicott, 1971). Throughout the life span we are subject to a particular psychological strain "relating inner and outer reality" (p. 18). This separation between the inner subjective and the external objective is a zone of critical importance in the object relations model. If a mother or caregiver can establish a holding environment to mitigate the stress of incongruence between inner and outer, then the child is able to play and develop symbolic thought. The division between inner and outer is not distinct and leads to Winnicott's formulation of an in-between region in which *transitional phenomena* occur (p. 2). In this region, where there is a transition from internal psychic reality to an external objectively real world, play occurs. Playing facilitates the relationship between the child and the maternal figure, and it allows for an unchallenged paradox: in *potential space* both inner and outer reality co-exist peacefully in the same dimension (p. 71). The term *potential* refers to the potency of playing in the zone between inner and outer to create multiple meanings and to hold the paradox of that which is and at the same time is not. According to Winnicott, this ludic paradox is the origin of symbolic representation and a poetic basis of mind.

Those familiar with Jung's (1958/1969c [*CW* 8]) concept of the facilitating third and the transcendent function of the psyche will likely recognize a point of correspondence here. Similar to potential space holding the paradox of inner and outer reality, active imagination in analytical psychology holds the tension of opposites between conscious and unconscious, generating the living symbol that facilitates psychological growth. However, the contrast with Winnicott and the object relations school is equally significant and becomes even clearer in Hillman's elaboration of an archetypal image-centered psychology.

Winnicott's (1971) model has provided invaluable insights into the vicissitudes and the delights of human relationships (including therapeutic relationships), and a recognition of playing as a vital intersubjective agent in psychological growth and well-being. A significant contrast appears in the conceptualization of the psyche between object relations and the Jungian and post Jungian schools, which leads to fundamental differences in how they imagine the location and the agency of the play element. This contrast concerns

differing values ascribed to the role of the person and Jung's conceptualization of an autonomous archetypal unconscious. Winnicott's model is person-centered: the primary contrast between inner and outer exists inside and outside the person of the infant. The transitional phenomena of an emerging relationship occurs in an interpersonal zone. Winnicott's child is born into a Cartesian cosmos in which a person is at the epicenter struggling between chaotic internal subjective states of omnipotent madness, and an external objectively real world that requires adaptation. In contrast, Jung imagined what might be called a gnostic cosmos, in which the objective psyche surrounds and subsumes subjective personal reality. In this model, psyche is not within us; it is we who are within psyche (Jung, 1946/1973b, p. 433). In Hillman's (1975) re-visioning of psychology, this displacement and relativizing of the personal ego became even more explicit. His concept of *de-humanizing*, which concludes his major opus, makes the radical assertion that the images of the soul are more enduring and ontologically more real than the fantasy of the person. Because we are unable to accept ourselves as "unreal," we mount a collective manic defense: "We cling to the naturalistic and humanistic fallacies—facts, materialism and developmental historicism, empiricism and positivism and personalism—anything to shore up and solidify our frailty" (p. 209). For Hillman, it is our inability to accept the objective reality of the psyche, and its superior position in a taxonomy of the ontologically real, that has led to the disappearance of soul from the field of psychology.

Given this contrast, what becomes of Winnicott's conceptualization of playing as a facilitator in the intermediate region of potential space? And how does Dream Tending with its theoretical orientation toward archetypal reality find a modification of playing as a primordial form of therapy? In responding to this question, it is helpful to revisit the work of French anthropologist H. Corbin and his importance to both Jung and Hillman (1992). Corbin was a pioneer in the Western study of ecstatic Islam and Sufism. He identified the need to craft a new term to accommodate a dimension of Islamic thought that describes a world of images (the *mundus imaginalis*) that is as ontologically real as the material world (Corbin, 1972). To this end, he introduced the term *imaginal* to designate such a dimension in distinction to the Western term imaginary, which connotes something unreal. In Corbin's world of the imaginal, we find an archetypal adaptation of Winnicott's potential space. Here, the intermediate zone is not between the internal psychic reality of the person and an objective external reality. Instead, the intermediate region occurs between the autonomous reality of the image (the *mundus imaginalis*) and the material reality of the physical world.

In Dream Tending, play occurs between these two dimensions: the reality of the dream image and the material reality of our daily lives. Dream images present themselves through animation as a reality of "subtle bodies" (Jung, 1944/1968, p. 278 [*CW* 12, para. 394]) that beckon to us to turn our consciousness away from the concretized reality of the material world. In this modification of potential space, the dream image speaks not as a fragment of developmental history from the interiority of the person's subjective psyche, but from the timeless archetypal world of the *mundus imaginalis*, a dimension that corresponds with the classical underworld of the soul. It bears repeating here: in this model, psyche is not inside us; it is we who are inside psyche, inside a world of images that are waiting to come into authentic relationship with us. It is through playing with the reality of the image that we discover its particular modes of experience and knowledge. Without the play element, the imaginal falls back into the unreal dis-ease of the imaginary and the potential space of new meaning collapses. Here is the therapeutic opportunity of play in

the context of Dream Tending: to liberate the dream image from the confines of personal associations and the painful details of a developmental history and to bring our imaginal sensitivity into relationship with the image's capacity to reveal the unexpected and the yet to be known. To paraphrase Jungian psychologist R. Lockhart (2013), when we greet the dream image and play with it in potential space as a messenger from the unknown, we are greeting and playing with an angel.

Huizinga and the Play Element in Society

In his influential work *Homo Ludens*, Dutch cultural historian J. Huizinga (1938/2014) developed the concept of play in the context of social evolution. For Huizinga, play serves an indispensable role promoting cultural progress. He found evidence of play in some of our most earnest and sacred activities, including law and politics, warfare, and religious rituals and festivals. Play for Huizinga is something that transcends its popular associations with frivolity and caprice, although play characteristics are undeniably present in our lighter moments. They are also present in the mythopoetic function of the psyche, that deep impulse to bring order and meaning to the rhythms of nature within us and around us through imaginative representation in story and metaphor.

Huizinga (1938/2014) offered a phenomenological reduction of play in its essential characteristics: it is voluntary and free; it occurs outside of so-called "ordinary" or "real" life; its locality and duration are secluded and limited; it creates order ("into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" [p. 10]); it involves tension; it has rules that are clear and binding; it enjoys an air of secrecy (pp. 8–12). The correspondence between these characteristics and the Dream Tending skills set may not be immediately apparent in all instances. Let us consider each characteristic more closely as it applies to Dream Tending.

Play is voluntary and free. The decision to develop a personal practice working with dream images is something one arrives at voluntarily and without coercion. In addition, the play element in Dream Tending asks for a voluntary suspension of disbelief, a departure from the materialist skepticism that posits dreams are unreal and of little meaning or consequence. It is the play element that encourages this agreement with the dream. Taking the dream and its autonomous images seriously as partners in play suggests the need for a legitimate invitation to join in the game: "Will you play with me?" If play is voluntary and free, then living images retain volition and freedom as part of their autonomy, and they too have a capacity to accept or decline the invitation.

Play occurs outside of so-called "ordinary" or "real" life. Dream Tending facilitates a reorientation away from familiar daytime consciousness toward a different dimension of psychic reality. It is customary to light a candle or create some other symbol to designate the move into this intermediate region between material reality and the reality of the image. The practice of tending the image as a living embodied presence involves a conscious slowing down and careful noticing of the image's details and capacities (Aizenstat, 2011). Play is the element that facilitates this transition away from the ordinary and so-called real.

Play's locality and duration are secluded and limited. In Dream Tending, as in many Jungian-based activities, the importance of the *temenos*, a contained space designated for hosting and tending the images of dream, receives special attention. Similar to the concept of the alchemical vessel or the therapeutic container, the notion of a special location for transformative work with dream images reflects the element of play as conceptualized by

Huizinga (1938/2014). The discussion of potential space from the preceding section is germane to this question of locality. Where exactly does playing take place? To reference only the physical space of material reality is to collapse the intermediate region of potential space. This concretizing negates the poetic dimension of the imaginal. In Dream Tending, the locality of playing occurs within a *temenos* of potential space that comes to life through the tension between the realities of matter and soul. Accordingly, like Jung's (1947/1969a) later conceptualization of the archetype, playing is a "psychoid factor" (p. 213 [*CW* 8, para. 417]). It is neither wholly an activity of material reality, nor entirely a phenomenon of imagination, but it somehow partakes of both. Play mediates the realities of matter and soul.

This particular characteristic of play also references the temporal dimension. The activity of Dream Tending is time bound. Aizenstat (2011) outlined a series of steps to create the *temenos*, deepen into the proper attitude of reverie, encounter and engage with figures from the depths of one's own nature, and allow a time for concluding the encounter and closing the space. Because the space of the encounter is a form of potential space mediated by playing as a psychoid factor, the activity is both time bound and timeless. Dream Tending posits that dreams live in a state of continual being and that psyche is always dreaming, yet the encounter with dream images paradoxically takes place in a time-bound sequence. It is the play element that is able to hold this temporal paradox without negating it.

Play creates order. Huizinga (1938/2014) contrasted the order created by play with the imperfection and confusion of the everyday world. The ancient Greek word for order was *kosmos*, and the sense of an ordered and harmonious whole remains part of its contemporary derivative *cosmos* (Pickett, 2011, p. 414). Perhaps this etymology is the deeper sense of what Huizinga sought to express, that play creates a temporary cosmos within itself, an ordered and harmonious whole. In discussing the classical notion of cosmos, Hillman (1988) offered a statement that relates to this sense of order:

> When cosmos is understood as the arrangement and expression of things, as the patterning order each event presents, embellishing each event with its own kind of time and fitting space, cosmos becomes the interiority things bring with them rather than the empty universal envelope into which they must be brought. (p. 299)

This characterization of cosmic order as aesthetic presentation emanating from the interior of events and things brings special significance to Hillman's (1977) remarks regarding the primacy of the image in dream work:

> The first assumption is that a dream is an image and that an image is complete just as it presents itself. (It can be elaborated and deepened by working on it, but to begin with it is all there; wholeness right in the image). Next, we assume that everything there is necessary, which further suggests that everything necessary is there. Hence the rule, 'stick to the image' in its precise presentation. (p. 68)

Here Hillman described a form of order based on necessity and completeness: "an image is complete just as it presents itself" (p. 68), and the ordering principle emerges from the interior of the image itself. Based on Huizinga's assertion that play creates order, one might

infer that play is the agent that releases and reveals the aesthetic order hidden in the image's interior.

Dream Tending affirms the multi-dimensionality of the psyche based on the theoretical postulates of Jung and Hillman (1975), which suggest that the impulse toward completion and order can occur on multiple levels: within the individual, throughout the world, and emerging from the underworld of the soul. Although Dream Tending has promoted the benefits of a dream-centered life for personal well-being, it is more accurate to acknowledge its deeper enterprise in service to the Hillmanian soul. When we recognize the integrity and autonomy of a dream image, we liberate it from the confines of our personal narrative. As an image that emanates from archetypal reality, our personal stories about it are forever fragmentary and incomplete. A personal interpretation of the dream, although egoically satisfying, does not allow the emergence of the cosmos that is intrinsic to the image. By tending the image and allowing it to speak on its own behalf, by inviting a revelation of its own particular ways of being and knowing, Dream Tending supports what Corbin (as cited in Hillman, 2004) referred to as the individuation of the image (p. 39). The image is free to reclaim what has been denied by our personal associations and interpretations about it. In tending the image, we are helping it to make itself complete. Play is the factor that facilitates these moments of imaginal order and completion.

Play involves tension. Tension is a concept familiar to Jungian psychology, as the transcendent function requires holding the tension between the opposites (Jung, 1958/1969c, [*CW* 8]). Historically, this form of tension has been imagined as bridging the gap between conscious and unconscious dimensions of the psyche. While not inappropriate to the work of Dream Tending, which bridges this same gap between the conscious dreamer and the hidden capacities of the autonomous dream figure, there is another less explicit relationship between Dream Tending and the tension characteristic of play. The word tension derives from the Latin word *tendere*, meaning to stretch (Pickett, 2011, p. 1794). The verb "to tend" shares the same root (p. 1793). So the image hidden within tension as a characteristic of play describes stretching, which is linguistically related to reaching and touching. Play within the method of Dream Tending encourages a stretching out from the sphere of personal material toward the world of image. It is a reaching and an invitation to touch and be touched, to be sensuously and aesthetically engaged with that which has come to us from beyond us.

Play has rules that are clear and binding. When playing occurs in Dream Tending, the skills set that facilitates the transition into the intermediate region between the material and the imaginal becomes metaphorically a set of rules that serves to maintain the potential space. There are a number of maneuvers the dreamer can make during play with the image, which serve to reinforce the position of the ego and disengage from the play space. These can include feeling self-conscious and skeptical about the validity of the experience, intellectualizing the encounter with the image, reinterpreting what occurs during imaginal play as a product of personal agency, or literalizing and negating that which lives as metaphor and poetic paradox. When these forms of egoic retreat occur the metaphorical rules of the skills set protect the integrity of the potential space by affirming the validity of the ego's concerns and at the same time encouraging an attitude of curiosity and reengagement with the image.

Play enjoys an air of secrecy. At the end of R. Lockhart's (1980) masterful essay "Psyche in Hiding," he introduced the Roman Goddess of silence, Angerona:

> Her mouth is bound so there are no words from her. Her uplifted finger points to her sealed lips as if to let us know there is some point to this silence. How do we learn from her if there are no words? (p. 99)

In Angerona's silence there is an air of secrecy. It is a stroke of psychological insight that Lockhart continued with a comment that affirms Huizinga's (1938/2014) association between secrecy and play:

> What can we learn of silence from the name of its Goddess? Every name carries with it a kind of secret. Angerona is a shell covering a hidden image that was once a living experience. When we speak now of Angerona, or any other God or Goddess, or even of ourselves, we do not know or remember that hidden image. We know only the shell of the name. The secret mystery hidden in every name—even in every word—requires a seeking after. We must search for the hidden image. It is looking for psyche. She hides, we seek. It is hide-and-seek. It is a game, a kind of play. (p. 100)

Here Lockhart uncovered the rather surprising relationship between secrecy, play, and psyche's dreaming.

A dream is more than a cipher waiting for us to decode it and reduce it to some personal story about ourselves. A dream is a game of hide-and-seek, a secret from psyche, inviting us to play with its enigma. Dream Tending endorses what is called purposeful not knowing (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 24). The task of a dreamer is not to solve the riddle of the dream as quickly as possible. Instead it is to rest in the paradox of our not knowing and to wait to see what the image will reveal. The value of the riddle is negated when we try to force a premature revelation of the secret. The value lies in our puzzling experience of psyche's secretive nature as we stretch and reach to gain some understanding. As R. M. Rilke (1934/2004) said in his advice to a young poet:

> Try to love the *questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. (emphasis in original, p. 27)

By allowing a dream image to retain its secrets, we find ourselves in Huizinga's final enigmatic characteristic of play, enjoying an air of secrecy with the figure. We enter into relationship as we would with a friend or a beloved, understanding that not all can be exposed at the beginning. Secrets will be revealed over time when the other is ready, when the play and our own fluency with the logos of psyche have matured.

Gadamer and Play as an Agent of Understanding

H. G. Gadamer was arguably the most important contributor to the field of philosophical hermeneutics in the generation after Heidegger. Historically hermeneutics addressed the problems of interpretation, but with Heidegger and then Gadamer interpretation became a greater question of how people exist as beings of understanding. Understanding becomes a primary activity of being in the world (Vilhauer, 2010). In his major work, *Truth and method*, Gadamer (2013) designated play as the mechanism that makes understanding

possible. It is through play that we come into existence as beings of understanding (Vilhauer, 2010).

In her authoritative analysis of Gadamer's treatise, M. Vilhauer (2010) identified play as a pivotal factor that makes understanding possible. *Truth and method* is in part a critique of the evolution of the classical scientific method and its pervasive influence on Western thought. For Gadamer, the human sciences have made erroneous assumptions about the nature of knowing, understanding, and truth, assumptions that are embedded in the methodological thinking of the natural sciences. This assessment bears a close correspondence to Hillman's (1975) critique of psychology as having lost its orientation toward soul by adopting the attitudes and practices of the natural sciences.

Gadamer (2013) posited that the process of understanding involves a dialogical encounter with a dynamic Other who has something to say. The Other may be a work of art, a text, or a human being. Understanding does not occur by treating the Other as a lifeless object possessing some hidden truth that is to be known through dispassionate observation, extraction, and analysis. For Gadamer, it is an ethical call to meet the Other as a Thou. The truth of understanding emerges between an engaged participatory subject or interlocutor and the Other as a Thou in the intermediate space of a back-and-forth exchange. Truth lies in the in-between. Understanding as an ontological event is an essentially relational process that requires one's full commitment, engagement, participation, and openness to what the Other has to say. The to-and-fro movement, the Other as it presents its claim on truth and one's recognition of what is presented, is what Gadamer formulated as play, the essential mechanism that makes understanding possible.

In engaging with the Other as a Thou, the presuppositions and prejudices of the interlocutor are placed at risk (Gadamer, 2013). The Other presents a claim that is recognized in part as true, based on one's personal history and tradition. Through a response based on this partial recognition, it is discovered that the Other is presenting something outside one's current claims on knowledge and truth. The Other, by its very nature, is presenting something unknown yet potentially knowable. An open and engaged response requires the interlocutor to risk the prejudices and presuppositions of previously held knowledge claims in order to understand what the Other is presenting. The scope and sophistication of one's identity and what one knows are refined and transformed by this to-and-fro exchange of presentation and recognition. What is gained is a claim upon the truth that was previously unknown, and now it becomes a part of one's being. For Gadamer, this process is what constitutes playing the game of understanding.

The importance of the game in relation to playing is one final element of Gadamer's (2013) philosophy that has particular relevance to the present discussion. Vilhauer (2010) summarized it this way:

> Gadamer emphasizes the "*primacy of play over the consciousness of the player*" [*Truth and Method*, p. 104]. He describes play as having an active life of its own, of absorbing the players into itself, of holding the players in its spell, and of drawing them into the game. As Gadamer describes it, play is less of a thing a person does, and more of a thing done to him—or, better, an event in which one becomes caught-up. Gadamer declares that "all playing is a being-played . . . the game masters the players" [*Truth and Method*, p. 106]. (emphasis in original, p. 35)

Notice here how Gadamer privileged the game as the true subject of play. Similar to the move in Hillman's (1975) psychology and in Dream Tending (Aizenstat, 2011), the ego of the interpreter (or dreamer) is relativized and displaced as an agent of understanding. Understanding is not something that is done to a dream, or a work of art, or a person. It is a process, an event, in whose game the players are subsumed. The dreamer and the image are caught up in the play of the game.

Now the full significance of the play element in Dream Tending becomes apparent. Following Gadamer's (2013) conceptualization of understanding as a game of presentation and recognition, Dream Tending recognizes the autonomy and integrity of the dream image as an Other, which the dreamer encounters as a Thou. Gadamer formulated playing with the Other as the way to understand a work of art, a text from another time, or a person. He did not suggest that the Other could be a dream or an image from the unconscious, but this is a reasonable extension of his thinking: the Other confronts one with that which is unknown and not understood. Jung (1946/1973a), in one of his more straightforward attempts to designate what he meant by the unconscious, wrote, "The concept of the unconscious *posits nothing*, it designates only my *unknowing*" (emphasis in original, p. 411). The experience of unknowingness that occurs in an encounter with Gadamer's Other bears a resemblance to Jung's formulation of the unconscious. Like a work of art, or a text from another time, the dream presents itself in the truth of its mystery, psyche offering an image with one hand while raising a finger coyly to her sealed lips with the other. Understanding does not occur as an act performed on the image by applying the habits of mind learned from positivism. Understanding is an experience, a game played back and forth between what the image presents phenomenologically, and what is recognized in its presentation. To the extent that some truth is to be found, it is there in what emerges in the playing, in the in-between of dreamer and image.

In Dream Tending, the dreamer does not restrict the otherness of the dream by treating it only as a historical event, as something that happened last night or at some remote time in the personal past. In encountering the dream, the dreamer brings a personal history along with acquired traditions, be they from the natural sciences, from psychoanalysis, or from analytical psychology. But none of these traditions tell what the dream brings in its alterity. The dream comes with its own history, its own tales from the underworld, its own baffling poetic traditions, foreign to the dreamer. In order to understand the dream in its otherness as a Thou, the dreamer has to risk knowledge claims gained through history and traditions. The presuppositions and prejudices that come into play with the first attempt to recognize what the dream is presenting have to be risked.

Through the practice of phenomenological animation, Dream Tending affirms that the encounter with the dream is occurring in the present moment. Dreams are in a constant state of present being, and psyche is always dreaming (Aizenstat, 2011). As Gadamer (2013) might have said, the encounter with the dream occurs at the horizon of understanding, where the dream's horizon contemporaneously meets that of the dreamer's. The animation of the image brings the historical and traditional dimensions of dreamer and dream together in the same spontaneous moment. The principle of variability that is at work as part of the play phenomenon means that it is not known what will happen in this encounter; playing is spontaneous and unpredictable regarding a specific course and outcome. It is not an encounter that is controlled or dispassionately observed. In Dream Tending, the dreamer is engaged, participatory, committed, and open in comportment

toward the image; the dreamer surrenders to the game, and is caught up and played out. The game of tending the image takes over, and the play in the imaginal field subsumes dream and dreamer. Two of the preferred questions from the Dream Tending lexicon, "Who's visiting now?" and "What's happening here?" (Aizenstat, p. 33) both express this open and engaged attitude of playing that generates understanding through dialogue with the autonomous Other of the image. The encounter is transforming because the image's capacities for being and knowing, its claims upon the truth, have refined and sophisticated those of the dreamer.

Vilhauer (2010) emphasized the relationship Gadamer saw between playing and ethics. According to this view, expanding the capacities to engage and participate openly in committed dialogue with that which dwells beyond the horizon of understanding improves a person and benefits the social dimension of his or her being. The value of play is both functional and ethical. Jung's (1961/1989) comment regarding his own confrontation with the unconscious comes to mind: "Insight into them [images] must be converted into an ethical obligation" (p. 193). The call to understand the otherness of psyche's dream images is an ethical call, and the ethical response is to surrender over to the game of presentation and recognition. We are open, engaged, participatory interlocutors, playing with the living dynamic presence of the unknown.

Clinical Considerations

In the course of this discussion, the concept of play has shifted in its significance and its scope between the object relations perspective of Winnicott (1971), the social science view of Huizinga (1938/2014), and the broader philosophical hermeneutical formulation of Gadamer (2013). How these three authors define play varies widely, which demonstrates the lack of consensus in the fields of psychology and philosophy over how to conceptualize play. Yet these twentieth-century thinkers have all concurred that play remains a vital element of psychological life at all ages. Winnicott's formulation of playing as a facilitator of psychological growth has provided a particularly valuable clinical model for work with both children and adults. For this discussion, the model's Cartesian foundation has important clinical implications.

As previously noted, Winnicott's (1971) conceptualization of playing in potential space is part of a person-centered model. Although he maintains that play occurs in the intermediate transitional space between inner and outer, the model is predicated on a Cartesian split between a person's inner subjective world of fantasy and an outer objective world where reality exists. The dream's value lies in its clinical application as an event of the patient's inner world. In this conceptualization, a large part of the therapist's job is to interpret artfully the client's projection of inner fantasy material and dreams on the external reality of the therapeutic relationship. The present discussion's focus on dreaming and the play element in Dream Tending suggests that there are different clinical opportunities available when the location of inner and outer and what constitutes the objective reality of the psyche shift from person-centric to image-centric, from the personal to the imaginal.

The Dream Tending method takes as its starting point the experience of dreaming itself. "In a dream," is an expression that immediately affirms the phenomenology of a new psychological orientation. The dreamer is inside the world of the dream and, as Hillman (2007) observed, often does not even have a leading role in the action. Dream Tending accepts the reality of the dream as ontologically valid, following the image-centered

commitments of Corbin (1972), Jung (1934/1966b [*CW* 16]), and Hillman (1975). This phenomenological orientation is a crucial shift in perspective from Winnicott's (1971) orientation toward inner, outer, and in-between to evaluate what is real, what is unreal, and what becomes the space of play. As dreamers, we inhabit the world of the dream, the *mundus imaginalis*, and play occurs in the space between the realities of that world and those of the material world of daytime concerns. The epistemology of Gadamer (2013) becomes a support for this shift in perspective, which affirms the validity of two realities, two horizons of meaning that meet through the game of understanding. What becomes of the interpretive role of the therapist given this shift?

Shifting the location of potential space from the intermediate zone between inner and outer to a zone between the world of images and the world of material things creates a new role for the therapist or dream tender. For the remainder of this discussion *dream tender* will be the preferred term for the therapeutic role, acknowledging that Aizenstat (2011) promoted the adaptability of his model to operate as a praxis for non-professionals as well as professional clinicians. The focus of clinical attention now becomes the horizon where the image and the dreamer meet, both retaining their integrity, each presenting a unique perspective. To interpret the image as a part of the dreamer's inner world is to deny the image its own reality, and the vitality of the image as an embodied presence is depleted. In this other paradigm, the role of the therapist or dream tender is to safeguard the play space between dreamer and image, ensuring the integrity of both, facilitating a dialogue between two unique perspectives. The therapeutic goal is no longer adaptation to an external reality but a cultivation and maintenance of a relationship in a game of understanding between two players, the dreamer and the image. This aspect is not dissimilar from Bitan's (2012) insights into the complementary ideas of Winnicott and Derrida, who both appreciated the paradoxical aspect of play, which holds oppositions in coexistence without resolution, although the focus on protecting the play space between dreamer and image is a significant difference.

Huizinga's (1938/2014) characteristics of play provide evaluative criteria for this new therapeutic role focused on facilitating play and ensuring the integrity of the players. The dream tender can help establish a play space in which the consent to join in the game of understanding is voluntary and free for both dreamer and image. The therapist as facilitator demonstrates respect for the integrity and reality of the image as one of two players entering the game. The dream tender helps designate the play space as a *temenos* outside ordinary material daily life. Similarly, the seclusion of the play space and the duration of play for a Dream Tending session are ensured. As a relationship emerges through play between dreamer and image, the dream tender can call attention to the inherent sense of order and completion that emerges for both players: the dreamer finds new perspectives and attitudes to integrate in waking life, and the image finds new capacities to exist outside and beyond the personal narratives that had been previously imposed upon it. The dream tender now becomes an expert in facilitating play by stimulating tension as dreamer and image stretch toward each other in imaginal space, stretching toward a shared horizon of meaning as Gadamer (2013) might have put it. By preserving a metaphorical or poetic basis of mind, the dream tender allows the guidelines for hosting and animating the image to become rules that preserve the game. Finally, what emerges through play in the imaginal space retains an air of mystery and unkowingness, which the dream tender supports even as the time designated for play concludes. Beyond

therapeutic rules to protect confidentiality and the privileged information of the client, the dream tender appreciates that the image withdraws from the space of the game retaining its own secrets.

The philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer (2013) introduce a few further implications regarding this question of how the clinical role shifts with a new perspective on play and its role in Dream Tending. One of the fundamental concepts in Gadamer's treatise is the ethical call to meet the Other as a Thou. The game of understanding is a relational game of transformation in which the dreamer risks her or his claims on truth in order to meet the dream in its alterity and allow the back-and-forth play of presentation and recognition to transform those claims. This focus on relationship implies that the otherness of the dream is an essential factor in order for there to be a game. As such, it is the role of the dream tender to safeguard the alterity of the image in order for the imaginal field to remain a ludic field. The therapeutic goal, then, is not to explain away the image, but to sustain the game in which there is always more to be experienced in relationship with the Other so long as the image preserves its otherness, which is to say its unknowness. Because the subject of Gadamer's play is not the players but the game, the role of the dream tender is not limited to serving the dreamer, but now shifts to serving the game of understanding as well. Finally, Gadamer posited that the transformative aspect of play improves the player as it expands the breadth and sophistication of one's claims on the truth. This suggestion introduces the ethical aspect of imaginal play. Vilhauer (2010) made explicit the full force of Gadamer's perspective in this regard:

> Because Gadamer encourages in us a recognition that our continued to-and-fro engaged "play" with the Other is crucial for our very way of living and flourishing as human beings, we can see that disengagement, the complete restriction of the Other's possibility for participating in play, the elimination of the Other—or any other "game-stopping" moves—are the worst kinds of violence against our human form of life. (p. xvii)

Here Dream Tending proposes that it is a form of violence against both human and imaginal forms of life; or, to be more precise still, it is violence against psychological life. Gadamer's assertion brings to mind a similar ethical call invoked by Jung (1961/1989) towards the end of his life. When we acknowledge the necessity to articulate and safeguard differentness as play's lifeblood, the deeper dimensions of alterity and diversity fall under the purview of ethics.

Conclusion

This article has featured three perspectives on the conceptualization and significance of play in order to elucidate the value of the play element in the system of Dream Tending. Contrary to popular beliefs that endorse abandoning play as part of childhood's aimless and carefree ways, play and playing are essential to psychological health and well-being for individuals, for society, and the broader understanding of what it means to exist in the pursuit of truth. Corbin (1972), Jung (1934/1966b), and Hillman (1975) have each made a contribution to recognizing the reality of the image, arguing that its provenance from a nonmaterial dimension makes it no less valid as a mode of existing and knowing. Their work has provided a theoretical basis for the Dream Tending skills set. By introducing the

perspectives on play to the theoretical postulates of Dream Tending, this essay views the transformative potential for working with images as a form of play.

Shifting clinical focus from a person-centered approach to one that is image-centered leads to a shift in the play paradigm from a game of adaptation to a game of understanding between interlocutor and Other. The Dream Tending method illustrates this shift and its implications. Acknowledging the reality of the image and its claims on truth leads to the potential for transformation through the back-and-forth play between image and dreamer. The role of the dream tender shifts in turn from being an interpreter of the dreamer's interiority to being a facilitator of the game within the established play space. A new ethical responsibility arises with this shift as the dream tender now has the charge to protect the image from violence by any "game-stopping moves" (Vilhauer, 2010, p. xvii) that deny or restrict the image's possibility to participate in play.

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