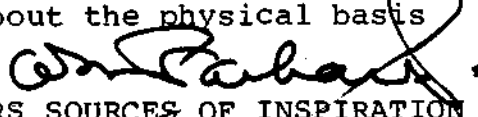


As we enter into our modern world we notice a curious thing begin to happen: especially in the work of Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche and Kafka, there is the sense of a relentless anti-Deism and an impatience with our old ways of seeing God and world. The modern spirit feels it has been betrayed, and it is no longer able to draw inspiration from the same foundations as the ancient and medieval worlds. In our 20th century those foundations seem to be hopelessly contaminated with our awareness of the Holocaust and our apprehension of an imminent nuclear catastrophe. We cannot go along with Robert Browning's sanguine "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." After Auschwitz and Dachau and Treblinka and Buchenwald, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Korea and Vietnam, we know that God is not in his heaven and all is not right with our world. And we know now that we must somehow locate radically new sources of inspiration, if we are to bear the agony of going forward into an unknowing and an unknown future.

I can feel such a radically new source of inspiration in the citation Sigmund Freud uses for THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS which was published in 1900. Freud quotes from Virgil in the AENEID, the following lines: "Flectere sine quo superos, Acheronta movebo." ("If I cannot bend the gods above, then I will move the infernal region.") I believe this is one of the most profound events in modern thought, once we realize what Freud is saying through Virgil: that if he cannot draw his inspiration from the heavens overhead, then he will have to see if he cannot unlock new gods from the demonic regions that lie sleeping in the unconscious. And Freud offers us a technique for this descent that modern man has to go on: by analyzing our dreams as vessels of our secret wishes, Freud shows how these dreams are the royal road to our unconscious mind. W. H. Auden called this radical new pilgrimage a "technique of unsettlement" because if it is pursued honestly, it will unsettle all our own well-meaning ideas and self-images, to reveal what is really going on behind our masks, behind all our social roles and poses, far in the darkness of the heart. And we may not like what we see down there, because after all it is in this book that Freud presents us with the dreaded Oedipal complex which he insists is the sine qua non of human sexuality: that every man secretly wants to murder his father and mate with his mother, and every woman wants to murder her mother and mate with her father. This formula is so far-reaching in its implication that it rivals Einstein's ($e=mc^2$) as a universal equation which sums up everything we may ever hope to know about the physical basis of our human experience here on the planet earth.


William Packard: THE WRITERS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION
NYU Writers Conference, July 1967

After Freud, we are aware that unwittingly we achieve our form. ... The magnificence of Freud is that he never seeks to cure an individual of being himself. He seeks only that the individual may come to know himself, to be aware. It is an underlying faith in Freud that every "patient" is Man himself, and that every "disease" is his revelation.

Robert Duncan

Freud is the man who moves me most ... Freud seems the only religious teacher ... what I find out Freud is that he provides the conditions that one must think in.

Robert Lowell