



„Herbert“, 27-Year-Old Male

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The patient was seen in the New York University clinic on a three-times-a-week basis for about four years. He came to the clinic because he felt that he was hardly functioning.

Presenting problem

He stated, „For a long time I have been hamstrung by compulsive habits. No matter how silly I tell myself they are, I can't stop. These things keep me from doing what I want to do, constructive things. I have to arrange everything perfectly. I have to look behind me to see if I've dropped something. When I put on my shoes I have to wash my hands. When I shut the door in my closet, I have to open it again to check that no dust has been unsettled because of closing the door of the closet and therefore got on my clothes. I have to do this several times. It takes me anywhere from two to four hours to get out of my apartment. At the same time, the disorder is tremendous. I have the neatest dirty laundry that anybody ever saw. Dirty handkerchiefs are there, but they're folded. The top of my dresser has things there from months and years. It's a mess. And I cover those with plastic wrap so that no dirt gets on them.“

The patient was a good-looking, articulate man, who spoke quite quickly. It was difficult to get all of his words because he mumbled. He was well dressed, but his posture was stiff and rigid, and he looked like a mannequin. He was very careful when he sat down; he brushed off the chair. He looked very uncomfortable, although he tried to present a picture of being calm and collected and as if he had everything

under control.

There were many cancellations. There were many no-shows without even informing me that he wasn't coming. He was continuously late. There were many occasions when he would show up five or 10 minutes before the end of the hour, looking sheepish.

History

The patient's father was in his 40s and the mother was in her middle 30s when they got married. The patient was the younger of two children. His older sister is married and has two children. The mother died when the patient was 17, after a long illness. An unmarried aunt, the mother's sister who was 10 years younger than her, came to live in the house when the mother was sick.

The patient described his father as a wealthy man who made his money because of the intelligence and skill of his older brother. The father was reported to have worked 18 hours a day. He never took the patient out. He himself was afraid to go out. The patient felt the father was weak-willed. The father wanted to be babied; when the patient went on vacations with him, the patient would have to make all the arrangements and the aunt did all the packing. He could not be buddies with his father because of the wide separation in their ages and in their thinking. The patient often fought with his father and the father then begged him not to be angry. He stated that he wanted his father to approve of him even though he had no respect for his father.



Of his mother, the patient said: „My mother believed in peace. She resented any time I talked to her about my aunt. I never saw my mother angry, although I guess I did see her angry but it was hidden. She felt frustrated because my father came home so late. They never went out. There was a lot of bickering between them. My father would say to her, ‘You should have married someone else.’ But my mother seemed to accept it. She knew life was not perfect and she did have a lot of material things.

„My mother cooked and did my father's books. She was most of the time removed from me, although I remember talking to her about my wet dreams and she told me that little boys growing up had these. Once, toward the end of her life when she was very sick, she threw the covers off herself and I saw her yellow skin, her swollen stomach and her pubic hair. I was revulsed. My father covered her. Also, my father scolded me for disturbing my mother by playing ball against the house while she slept. I don't know how pivotal her death was in my death.“

When asked about this last statement, the patient said, „Part of me died with her, but I can't remember who she is. She was anonymous.“

The patient said:

„I felt overprotected all my life. I remember when I had a fight with a boy, my mother would help me. A boy threw sand in my face and I went to her. She appeased him by saying to him and his mother that we had been friends and that the boy didn't mean to throw sand at me.“

The patient's aunt took over managing everything and everybody in the house when she joined the household. „My aunt was critical of my mother and the role she played in her marriage to my father. She urged my mother to assert herself. She also felt my mother was not firm enough with me and my sister.“ The aunt did not like the patient's sister's husband and tried to break up that marriage. She was described as a bossy, authoritarian person who acted like a martyr. Nevertheless, the patient used her as an image during masturbation, which he reported he did not engage in until after the mother died. When he did masturbate,

he masturbated in the shower because then he would not have to wash himself. He also said, „Sometimes I masturbate into the toilet paper and then I take a shower.“

The patient reported that he felt concerned about money early in life. As a little boy, when he fell into the basement through a window his major anxiety was how much it would cost to replace the window. His excellent grades were rewarded with dollars.

The patient didn't recall ever having had a chum. He had no real male friends even now. In high school he followed the athletes. They were the heroes. He acted as the treasurer for team trips to play at different schools. He avoided being chosen as any kind of leader because he was always afraid that his peers would think him a brown-noser.

Both in high school and later in college, the only companions he had were those who were of very different backgrounds than he. None of them was Jewish. Most of them did not value intellectual competence, but rather athletic prowess. And it was very embarrassing to him that, with very little difficulty, he did very well in school in terms of grades. He began to drink during college and continued afterward in order to get along these boys he worshipped. In graduate school he began to cut classes, feeling continuously embarrassed about his educational achievements.

His girlfriends were uneducated Gentiles. Descriptions of his relationships with these various women seemed lifeless and bore no hint of any loving feelings. One woman became pregnant. His only concern was whether she was going to make any demands on him. She decided to have the child. He stated that every once in a while he wonders where his offspring might be. He once had a homosexual experience and he felt that he was very filthy for having engaged in that.

The following daydreams were reported in the third session

The patient had a daydream in which I appear, and my husband appeared.

„Your husband has no face; there's a



shadow. Neither do your children. I don't know if you have children. Children would make you a domestic figure. Nothing about you is maternal in your relationship with me. I don't see you with little ones running around. In the daydream, I was trying to impress you. There was a fire, and I rescued you and the two children. I came to visit you in the hospital afterwards. There was a fire in an apartment building, a semi-slum on the West Side, which did occur a few years ago."

The patient then reported that the next part of his daydream was with a writer who had just stabbed his wife. And the reason the writer had given for stabbing his wife was because he wanted to experience everything. At any rate, the patient daydreamed that he was finger-wrestling with this writer, who had claimed to be a champion at it, and the patient beat him three times in a row. "He insisted on trying it twice more, even though he had lost the first time. I'm not exactly sure, but I was cool and calm and he was upset. Punches were thrown, and I knocked him out. I asked him, 'why do you do these stupid things?' I wanted to be cool and calm and not let his anger or mine get out of hand."

The daydream about me and the fire continued. "The sixyear-old is almost overcome by smoke, a boy there, and a ninemonth-old in the crib. The boy was on his back and I held the baby with his legs around. Only you suffered any injury. You were in the hospital. The children were alright. I was aware of being a hero. Your gratitude was effusive. Your children weren't there, but your husband was. He was cool like a mannequin. You suffered burns."

Earliest dream remembered from childhood

In one of the first five or six sessions he reported the earliest dream he remembered from childhood. There was an owl and a bear near the crib. His father was there at the same time. "I was frightened by them being there and by not knowing what they were going to do to me, even though my father was there. The bear was

as tall as my father, about five foot ten. The owl was brown, with grayish-brown hair. It was looking at me. I was lying there, not making any motion. The bear was looking at me. I guess my father must have said, 'There's nothing here. Can't you see they are gone?' The owl is predatory, with a sharp beak."

First dream, reported in the 10th session

This dream followed a session the patient had missed without calling to let me know. "It was like a political contest, groups involved, party in power and opposition. I can't remember which I belong to. There is a shift in power, something changing."

Following the dream, the patient said, "When the alarm went off, I said Jesus Christ, I'm late again. But I wasn't. I can't remember if I was in power. Normally, I would be the underdog. But I think I was in power. I'm not sure. I felt afraid to come here. I'm not sure if it was because I had missed the last two sessions. I feel as if it's the same thing, this fear of coming here, that kept me from coming Thursday and Friday. I'm afraid telling about myself is going to destroy me. I haven't told anyone I am coming here. I haven't told my father or my aunt. They wouldn't understand. There's no room for individuality. I feel I am not making it in a man's world. I am afraid I will become like my father and not make it in a man's world. He is always leaning on somebody. I'll always be leaning on someone. My father leans on my aunt. He has no idea of what a man is. Most patients fall in love with their analyst. They turn them into a god. I asked myself, 'Do I want a god to manipulate me?' I don't believe in a god who pulls strings. Do I want someone to have power over me? I need to have respect for you."

Second dream, reported in the 15th session:

"I was standing on a patio in my home (place of birth). I could see a tower, a radar mesh in my neighbor's house. It looked like a bowl. The bowl was red on the inside. Someone said there were papers inside the bowl, which cost



\$13,300. The Voice of America was going out to the world. It symbolized a message. There was a girl who lived in that house next door. I think my present girlfriend (Rosemarie) was there, but I'm not clear. Something else happened. Someone touched my nose, and it was running, and picked up something from my face. I was embarrassed. It was a girl, not a man, and I don't know why I was embarrassed, because she looked like a girl in high school who I had no respect for."

His associations were that the radar tower was like one he saw in Stuttgart, and the papers were newspapers.

„I also had another dream, and that dream was that Rosemarie had made out a list and said to me that I wasn't doing enough of my job. She wanted me to give the list to the cleaning woman. The list included washing, cleaning, waxing, and she should make a report about what she had done. I felt that she had no time to do all these things. The paper the list was written on looked like a printed page of the New York Times, the words very, very large. It looked

to me like it was too much for her. How could she possibly understand this kind of a note? She's only a cleaning lady. The scene shifts to Rosemarie, and she is saying, 'Herbert, come in here.' The room is like a living room. There are 12 or 15 people, all sitting around drinking. It was a mess. A lot of liquor around. Rosemarie said, 'Get these people out of here. I've got to go someplace.' I said, 'Let's get out of here.' The first one was a man; I grabbed him and said, 'Let's go.' I remembered he had been in the tower. His friends followed. Some were in pajamas. Debauchery was there. Not debauchery, but wasted time and wasted ability was there. There was decadence. It was not an orgy. Someone flopped on the floor on her face. She was on the floor, and I kind of think it was Rosemarie. The last thing is that there's a shower, sort of putting things in order, not really cleaning. Everyone is gone in the room. There's a man's luggage rack, briefcases, belts, small suitcases like in the store."