

## FOREWORD

*While Psychiatry Slept*, by psychiatrist George Mecouch, is a provocative title and a most intriguing volume. While the author focuses on what psychiatry fell asleep *to*—the centrality of dreams, the importance of story, the necessity of imagination, and the quest for soul—it is useful to imagine this book *as* the dream book of a sleeping field. Some psychiatrists might experience these dreams as awakening a subtle call for things long forgotten, those yearnings for relating and working which were overplanted by the seductions and promises of chemical solutions. Others might open this volume and close it abruptly as if defending against something untoward and dangerous to one's foundation. These stories indeed might be nightmares to some practicing what has become an adjunctive field to the monetary dictates of the insurance industry. Others might shout out, "Irrelevant! Irrelevant!" Yet, I'm sure there are kin to the author's intentions here, not so much to reject and abandon psychiatry's genuine advances, but to remind and restore what psychiatry has lost, and itself abandoned and rejected. It is not too late, there is still time for the field to wake up, and to seek out and embrace the essence and the fruitfulness of what has gone missing.

To do this, one must go slow and listen. Psychiatry like most everything else has been bewitched by *accelerationism*, as if speed itself was the road to cure. But the *art* of healing requires time, taking time, slowing down. It requires, as Keats said, not grasping after fact and reason, but staying in the midst of unknowing, uncertainty, doubts and mystery. It is *this* ground out of which story emerges; it is *this* ground which activates the deep imagination; it is *this* ground that excites the deeper dream; it is *this* ground that serves as pathway to soul.

It may be too much to expect older practitioners to open themselves to change. Like the old church fathers, they will not look through the Galilean telescope that story mind makes

possible. Most everything animates against it. But for the new and younger practitioner, those not yet straight-jacketed in the certainties of dogma, those still open to *risk*, these stories of the *art* of healing may catch hold of the mind and heart, and open up possibilities for creating new and unexpected modes of working in the future.

Central to the author's argument is regaining respect and value for the dreaming mind, no matter what the pathology might be or its dimension. All practitioners should listen to the words of music legend David Bowie: "I suspect that dreams are an integral part of existence, with far more use for us than we've made of them, really. I'm quite Jungian about that. The dream state is a strong, active, potent force in our lives...the fine line between the dream state and reality is at times, for me, quite grey. Combining the two, the place where the two worlds come together, has been important in some of the things I've written, yes."

Artists know this fine grey line, but the value of it and the purpose for it has, it seems, been lost not only to psychiatry but to most all psychological practices. It must be recovered first by the practitioner. Only in this way will the field begin to value story again. This is the charm and extraordinary value of *When Psychiatry Slept*. Dr. Mecouch lets us in on his inside world, telling us, as Wallace Stevens would say, "not about the thing, but the thing itself."

To all practitioners of healing psychological ills of whatever nature, I encourage you to take time out, cozy up to a fire and take these stories in. Do not be like Alice's sister who would not "pretend." Be like Alice, and take the path of the looking glass, and see what begins to animate in your own psyche. If you let the seeds of story grow in you, you will know how to recruit the healing quality of story in those who seek healing from you.

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