


# Dreaming about the body: Daniel 2:32–35 interpreted from a psychoanalytical perspective

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Just as the text is layered by redactional processes and its effects by reception processes, so different meanings of the statue of a human body in Nebuchadnezzar's dream can be psychoanalytically 'excavated'. Following a typical psychoanalytical dream interpretation, the possibility has therefore been explored of the body referring to the king as an individual before it was reinterpreted as a societal, collective body, the latter serving as a defence against the anxiety which the former would cause. Re-experiencing these common, human, unconscious anxieties and processing them could facilitate psychological healing and health, especially in the postmodern, pluralistic and eco-threatened context, which the dream seems to adumbrate.

## Introduction

Dreams and visions play an important role in the biblical book of Daniel. Daniel 2 is about a dream-body, a body in a nightmare and about this body's meaning. Daniel interprets an observation of a body, not his own, but of a 'client', even a desperate 'patient', who tries to untangle the riddle of his self (cf. how irrational his demand is and how sick he becomes in 4:29–32). Although Daniel is religiously and therefore professionally somehow bound by Deuteronomy 13:2–3 not to arrive at any interpretation that might undermine monotheism, the reader is not necessarily registered at the same 'professional' council and may privately experiment with alternative interpretations.<sup>1</sup> In that way, one will be somewhat like Daniel who interpreted the dream from a paradigm that was different from that used in his context. In the second half of the book, where the 'corporate' future is at stake, Daniel becomes the 'analysand' when angelic beings interpret his visions. Here he still has to compete with other interpreters, somewhat like modern psychoanalysts who have to compete with psychologists from other schools. The question before us is, therefore: how would a psychoanalyst have interpreted the king's dream if the king were lying on his couch today?

As in therapy, with reading, it takes two to tango: One is invited to dance with the text. The interpretations explored here are psychoanalytic ones, different from the one the character Daniel gives on a spiritual level. Both interpretations can be true, as they are non-exclusive perspectives.

This study will commence with the hermeneutics of regarding Daniel 2 only as a literary and not as a historical text, therefore without taking contextual details such as the sociopolitical situation, except the time of narration, into consideration. This will be followed by an overview of Daniel 2 within its textual context, as well as a consideration of bodies in general as 'analysands', before the statuary body in Nebuchadnezzar's dream will be interpreted from a psychoanalytic perspective.

This stance is here supported by the fact that the historical inaccuracies within the book of Daniel suggest that it is to be taken seriously on another level than the literal, just like with a dream. The 'memories' in a dream are about signification, not factuality. It is about the unconscious, not the conscious layer as a mask over the unconscious.

Surprisingly, Eugen Drewermann, of psychoanalytic fame amongst exegetes, completely ignores Daniel 2, despite it being about such a prominent psychoanalytic interest as the dream. Even in his three-volume work of more than 1700 pages about the anger of God (*Strukturen des Bösen* 1977–1978), which seems so relevant to this dream in Daniel, he only makes a one-line reference to Daniel 4:7–13 and 6.13–29, respectively, not mentioning Daniel 2.

1. This study is dedicated to the crucial role played by Proff. Pieter de Villiers and Celia Kourie who have changed the direction of religious interpretation in our profession in South Africa, from 'second-hand' text- to first-hand experience-based, and so established the foundation of spirituality studies and more specifically biblical spirituality. This has, amongst others, inspired more freedom in experimenting inter alia with psychological understanding of ancient testimonies of the Divine, such as is undertaken here.

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## Hermeneutics

All cultural and psychological phenomena can be psychoanalysed. Not only dreams but also texts can be objects, or rather dialogical partners, of this revealing process. Hence, the book of Daniel is all about hermeneutics, about different layers of meaning: the correct interpretation of another's dreams<sup>2</sup> in chapters 2<sup>3</sup> and 4, a mural text in chapter 5 and visions in chapters 6–12. In Daniel 2, one has a text, a dream and an image<sup>4</sup>, but even the interpreter in front of the dream, Daniel, can be psychoanalysed, just as the dreamer behind the dream, and, of course, also the interpretation's interpreter who stands in front of the text, and so on, *ad infinitum*<sup>5</sup>. Dream interpretation and dream divination are at the same time some kind of medical diagnosis, as they reveal the condition of the body (cf. also Oppenheim 1956:184).

Instead of foreclosing the meaning of the dream to that which Daniel gives, the nature of the text argues for an openness that has led to a diversity in its reception history. Willis (2010a:39n14) therefore responds to Seow's (2003:370) insistence that the stone and mountain in the dream must be a reference to Mount Zion: 'Certainly, however, the image was multivalent and could carry many different meanings'.

Perhaps there is yet another layer of meaning to this dream, not one behind that of Daniel as a character, but one much closer, one in front of him, which he has overlooked. Crediting him for his farsightedness, one might forget the price of his hyperopia. This is so because the future is embedded in the present, and the collective is always and in the first place viewed through an individual eye, or more precisely, an individual body (Alomía 2008:20). The past tense in Daniel 2:34–35 and 37–38 hence becomes the future tense in verses 39–45. The future of the body is latent in its past. This double meaning of a dream has therefore in modern psychotherapy also been clinically confirmed when a somatic states or stimuli gains an oneiric representation apart from the psychic content. In this way, the dream can have a diagnostic function, pointing towards a bodily development (Giordo 2016:259). Transference towards others during crisis times, which could include (even unknown) illness, may be coupled with dream imagery, which all betray a problematic physical state (Zabriskie 2000:103).

When one reads the dream, one somehow also becomes the dream, becomes part of it, and so one can dream with it. The one who can do so, resonates with the dream in an authentic

2. Oppenheim (1956:221) identifies three ways in which symbolic dreams used to be interpreted: intuitively, identifying omens in the dream or through the help of a deity. It is thanks to the latter, according to Daniel 2:19–23 and 28, that Daniel gets access by means of his own *קִסוּיָא דִּי-לִילְיָא* [nocturnal vision], as a response to a (perhaps collective) prayer, to the king's dream and its meaning.

3. Although in 2:28 it is more than just a dream: *תְּלִמְךָ וְסִנְיִי רְאִשְׁךָ* [your dream, and the visions of your head]. Likewise in 2:29: *רְצִינְךָ* [your thoughts].

4. The golden head of Nebuchadnezzar can be compared to the golden image of him in 3:1, 2, 3 (twice), 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 18, showing it as an idol, while the same word is used for his face in verse 9.

5. Psychological exegesis distinguishes between the author(s) 'behind' the text, the character 'in' the text and the recipient 'in front of' the text (Kille 2001; 2004; Rollins 1983).

way and such '*Fortschreibung*', or in this context, updating of the dream is, in fact, a true understanding of the dream, an experience that can relieve one's own anxieties, which had been prodded by the anxious dreamer. One is then not busy with distant and superficial science, and its endless analysis, but with intimate in-depth experience, the integration and synthesis of which resonates with the interpreter. There is something universal in this dream as in every dream, even when each dream is unique.

## An overview of Daniel 2 in its textual context

Just as the book of Daniel is compiled of different additions, of which this chapter 2 is one (Hartman & Di Lella 1978:142), the text is layered (2:13–23, 29f, 40–43 [with verse 42 itself being yet another, additional layer] and 49 are additions [Hartman & Di Lella 1978:139]), and so is the body in Daniel 2. All of this must be 'peeled' and unpacked.

This narrative about the dream belongs to the base of the book of Daniel<sup>6</sup>, contained in chapters 2:4–6:29, an Aramaic part, even though Murphy (2012:77) claims that this chapter was originally independent. If the latter is indeed the case, linking this chapter with later chapters about dreams becomes risky. The dream itself takes up a relatively short part of the text, 5 verses from 31–35, with verse 31 giving an overview before the parts are described in the remaining verses. More important seems to be the dream's interpretation in 11 verses, from 37–47, which is not just a repetition of the manifest dream-content with its explanation outlined before. This prominence is strengthened by derivatives of the word *פִּשְׁר* [interpretation], occurring 13 times in these 49 verses; that is on average in every third verse. The difference between the dream and its interpretation is because of the latter being the product of a certain background hermeneutic, a lens through which the dream is analysed, in this case a certain view of history.

Willis (2010a:37) remarks that the way that Daniel 2:31–45 describes history is problematic. In the first instance, it is presented as predetermined by God, as if God is not an active participator in history, which is the typical Israelite view of history. That is why she regards the redactional layers of the text because of changing intentions and their intended audiences as so important. The various strata of composition, therefore, indicated changing functions at different times of reception: Originally the last four Babylonian kings and the Jewish exiles as the stone in 2:34, 35 and 45, alluding to Isaiah 51:1–2, were meant. During the early Hellenistic period the explanation changed to the four empires and verses 36–45 were added, explaining why Nebuchadnezzar was by that time of anti-Hellenism already idealised. A third interpretational development occurred during the early Seleucid period, when the reference to the Diadochi representing the toes, and the political intermarriages by means of the mixed materials followed (Willis 2010a:38–39),

6. But not according to Hartman and Di Lella (1978:142).

which Collins (1993:174) regards as a gloss from the Hellenistic era.

Willis (2010a:240) finds the early Seleucid period also represented, and then more directly, by Jesus ben Sira, especially 36:10–19, which also promises the return of divine rule as in Daniel 2:31–45. Crenshaw (1975:60) understands this lament in Sira as being about the invisibility of God in the historical experiences of the public Hellenistic domain, and that God has been marginalised to the private, personal life of sleep, fantasy and moments of ‘the end’, which Crenshaw takes as personal death. He might therefore well have regarded the dream in Daniel 2 like that as well.

It is not the only time that the book of Daniel deals with a dream, a statue or, more specifically, a body: in the introductory chapter, setting the scene, Daniel and three other Judeans are selected for their perfect bodies and good looks, amongst other qualities. One wonders if it is their healthy lifestyle which rewards them with their exceptional wisdom, or if their wisdom leads them to manage their bodies so well. Daniel 4:30 and its parallel in 5:21 are quite descriptive about what happens to the body of the king during his insanity. Chapter 6, about Daniel in the lion’s den, in the middle of the book, has the least direct reference to the body, perhaps because of the gruesome possibilities. In the visions<sup>7</sup> in the second half of the book, based on the dream of the statue in Daniel 2 (DiTomasso 2005:310), there are four mixed animal bodies<sup>8</sup> in 7:3–8 (vide infra), a divine body in 7:9, more mixed animal bodies<sup>9</sup> in 8:3–8, the sometimes dream-like angelic bodies in 8:15, 9:21 and 10:5–6<sup>10</sup> and right at the end, the resurrection of the body in 12:1–3<sup>11</sup> and 13, when the wise will become like shining celestial bodies. It is as if the body of the book is therefore framed by images of the ideal body, healthy and cultivated in the first chapter and immortal in the last, with terrible alternatives in between.

More specifically, in chapter 7 there are four beasts with seven heads, iron teeth, stamping feet, 10 horns and a little horn with eyes and an arrogant mouth. The parallels between this chapter and chapter 2 have often been noted and investigated.

Both chapters 2 and 7 follow a four-kingdom scheme, a typical apocalyptic theme (Murphy 2012:154, 163, 181), already foreshadowed by the four professional bodies listed in 2:2 and the four wise Israelites, or ‘children of Judah’, according to 1:6–7. In all these cases one is dealing with bodies, in the first

7. DiTomasso (2005:245n54) argues that the difference between dreams and visions should remain relative.

8. They also represent rulers, as had been the interpretation of the body parts in chapter 2. They might be ‘perverse caricatures of the four cherubim of Ezek 1’ (Willis 2010b:27).

9. The horn of one even becomes a human body, who is also, like the body in chapter 2:34 and 45, וְכָאֵס יָד יִשָּׁבֵר ([but he shall be] broken without hand). Neither of these two bodies is therefore killed by another human being. Anthropomorphic language for God is avoided here, to contrast God’s presence with the human body (Willis 2010b:32).

10. See Ezekiel 1:7, 13, 16, 27, and 10:1.

11. Collins (1993:394) considers a belief in astral immortality here.

two chapters specifically with ideal bodies without any ‘blemish’, according to verse 4 in the case of chapter 1, reminding one of the perfect female body in Song of Songs 6:6, or an idealised body in the case of chapter 2, where it reminds one of the male body in the *wasyf* in Song of Songs 5:10–16. In the second half of the book, there are also four apocalyptic visions. The number 4 is regarded in Jungian psychology as the ideal number, as it suggests stability (Jung 1969:182), which is what this body in Daniel 2 pretends to be<sup>12</sup>.

The character of Daniel has a parallel in Joseph<sup>13</sup> as portrayed in Genesis 41, who also, as an outsider, gained access to the upper political echelons through his rare skills, or rather gifts. Both went beyond the science of their times to a kind of transpersonal level, where their personal access to a divine realm allowed them wisdom, which could only surprise. In addition, the theme of an enigmatic dream was a common motif in the ancient Near East (Hartman & Di Lella 1978:142), suggesting that it is not as unique as it sets out to be.

## Bodies as ‘analysands’

Daniel plays with body imagery because bodies conspicuously symbolise the social (dis)order. In that sense, he already anticipated Mary Douglas’ views (1970:78).

On the other hand, according to both Freud (1998:154; 2008a:89; 2008b:351) and Jung (1984:116), buildings in dreams represent the body and therefore the self (vide infra). So, for example, in 2:5 the king threatens to kill his advisors and their houses, that is, their extended bodies. This is the way the ageing body is also metaphorically depicted in parts of Ecclesiastes 12:3–4: וְסִגְרוּ דְלָתַיִם בְּשׁוּק וְחַשְׁכוּ הָרְאוֹת בְּאַרְבָּוֹת [...] בַּיּוֹם שֶׁיַּעֲזוּ שְׁמַרְי הַבַּיִת [In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble (...) and those that look out shall be darkened in the windows, and the doors shall be shut in the street].

Even if there is no architectural structure for the body in Daniel 2, the statue and its building material leave a sense of a building. The dream is therefore also about an individual’s sense of self through the body.

From these two perspectives, the body can elicit different interpretations. If, however, one accepts the Jungian and the Gestalt way of dream-interpretation, then all the parts and people in a dream always refer to the dreamer only.

To this can be added the notion of Gliserman (1996:3) that all symbolisation derives ultimately from the body (cf. also Barthes 1953:passim; Douglas 1970:passim; Warner 1989:445<sup>14</sup>). The body remains the first available (love-)object, the starting and the first reference point. This is corroborated

12. Although 2:32–33 actually enumerates five areas and five materials, the fourth and fifth body areas share iron as its material and so become merged thereafter in 2:40–43.

13. Solomon, despite all his wisdom, is not known as an interpreter of dreams (DiTomasso 2005:246).

14. *Nach immer ist der Körper das kartographische Bild, auf dem wir unsere Bedeutungen eintragen; von allen Metaphern, deren wir Menschen uns bedienen, um uns zu begreifen und darzustellen, ist der Körper die wichtigste* (Warner 1989:445).

by Johnson (1987:46) who recognised the body as the basis of all metaphors, by Gibbs, Lima and Francozo (2004:passim) who regard all metaphors as grounded in embodied experience as well as by Bowie (2006:34) who views the body as the primary classification system and as such the primary means of making meaning.

This means that the king saw his own weak parts, his pride and poverty as well as his own aggression self-subversively destroying his statue-like monument of memory. The king's intention to kill off his paid professionals in 2:5 if they do not deliver is set in motion in his dream where the body is divided, in inner conflict and crushed by a 'Fremdkörper', a foreign body. He is traumatised by the dream, and it is a dream about his body being traumatised. He, therefore, tries to externalise and project his own anxiety onto others by threatening their death instead, even when his culture believes telling the dream himself would heal him from it (Schmidt 2015:234n47).

What is ultimately important about the body in Daniel 2 is that it is a dreamt body and the dream is, therefore, a 'body-dream'. Giordo (2016:261) calls this a 'sueño ónix', an onyx dream, probably to approximate the word, 'oneiric', but also because Freud (2008b:245) used it when he referred to a relatively rare body-dream, which is formed like a precious stone, an onyx, brought to an artist who has to use the characteristics of the gem to shape it into a work of art. It would seem that such dreams occur especially where a precocious self has compensated for the insecure base of bodily weakness in infancy (Giordo 2016:274). This would tie in well symbolically with the golden head and the poor feet in Daniel 2. Several of the cases that Giordo discusses have some kind of building in their dreams, which for both Freud and Jung symbolised the body (e.g. *ibid.* 275, 277, 278, 284; *vide supra*). This oneiric knowledge of the body unknown to the dreamer has diagnostic and probably also prognostic value (Giordo 2016:passim). That is perhaps why the king has to consult the therapist, Daniel.

These bodily experiences in the dream occur before they are known in the wakeful state because in the dream they are amplified and appear hypochondric because of the withdrawal from the external to the internal reality of the dreamer (Freud 1991:413).

## The body in Daniel 2

The body is described in only four verses in Daniel 2. It is relatively simple as few body parts are mentioned: only the head, breast, arms, belly, thighs, legs and feet, with toes in verses 41 and 42 (but not in verses 33–34, and so probably a later addition). These body parts are grouped into four areas and only described in terms of the material of which they are made. The emphasis is clearly on the first and the fourth body area, with the second hardly mentioned in 2:39.

The statuary body solidifies an ideology of hierarchy, which is not only shown in the different parts of the body but also in what is not shown but known historically: that the king was

the only human being in the image of a god, which also meant that he alone made the god bodily visible (Willis 2010b:55). With this idol- and ideology-critique comes iconoclasm: this hierarchy is undermined by his death, after which he does not represent the god anymore. Death levels everyone. That is why Daniel interprets the dream both on a personal and a collective level (DiTomasso 2005:253). Even as the last psychological anchorage, the king's body and its image are not only transient but also violently destroyed. This should, however, not be generalised to all (as 12:1–3 teaches), just as the former privilege was not to be generalised to all. Yet in post-biblical Daniel-prognostica this dream is regarded in an egalitarian way so that no attention is given to its historical, personal or cultural specifics (DiTomasso 2005:236).

In this synchronic hierarchy, the feet are the problematic part, not because their material is less valuable, but because they are a hybrid undermining their stabilising function. The focus is therefore on the feet, and more specifically on the clay. At the same time that the feet are materially divided, they are also divided into toes, that is, in form, though that is from human experience a benefit. They only seem to grow out of the feet in verse 41 and in the next verse they almost replace or overtake the feet, which are then for the first time not mentioned as separate from them anymore. Yet they also seem to be anchored in the earth, as they are partially made of clay, even if it is potter's clay<sup>15</sup>, making one think of the earth from which humanity is made according to Genesis 2:7 and to which humans are also returning in death, according to Ecclesiastes 3:20 (*vide infra*): הכל הולך אל-מקום אחד הכל הנה מן-העפר: הכל יתפלל שם אל-הָעֵפֶר [All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all return to dust]. However, their mixed nature undermines their anchorage as well. To suggest the anxious confusion this raises, the sequence of the materials is shuffled in 2:45: פְּרֹזֶלֶת נְחָשָׁא חֲסִיפָא כְּסָפָא וְדַהֲבָא [iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold]. Clay (חֲסִיפָא), the weakest material, is the one that is out of place and put in the centre of this sequence, because that is where the problem is focussed: In the essence of the body, not only in the feet. Incidentally, the feet could also be a well-known euphemism for the genitals in the Semitic world of the time, and so, associating them with seed in 2:43 resonates well in the unconscious. This means that the king's seed comes to an end. The feet, the weakest body part, are the only part that is explicitly said to function. They are ironically mentioned for their power, and more specifically for their destructive violence. Like the king outside the dream, they break things to pieces (חֲסִיפָא and חֲסִיפָא in verse 40), even when they are themselves 'broken' through their division and ultimately are broken into pieces (חֲסִיפָא [and broke into pieces] in verse 34, חֲסִיפָא [they were broken into pieces] in verse 35, חֲסִיפָא [it shall break into pieces] in verse 44 and חֲסִיפָא [it broke into pieces]) by the rock, causing the rest of the body to break down as well.

A different slant on this view of the male body destroyed by what could have been a war weapon could be the memory from the past military experiences of the king, if he ever

15. Reminding the king of his Creator.

engaged in battle himself, reflecting on and internalising his experience of fallen victims or an attack on his own body, which he somehow survived, but in this dream fears could have been different, in other words, a trauma flashback (cf. Seidler 2015:630, 634 on German experiences).

Different from what Schmidt (2015:221) claims, the body and power are not two poles in Daniel 2 (although she also considers the overlap between them) but the very same thing. The different precious metals, especially those with more value, also remind us of the changing tax systems, somehow extensions of the body, becoming increasingly a burden for those who did not have them in their natural environment. On the other hand, the metals of lesser value served as material for weaponry, symbolising at the same time the violent power of the divine bodies (Schmidt 2015:229–230).

This is neither an Israelite body nor a Babylonian one, but a mixture actually from head to toe, a mixture between an apparently cultural but deep down a natural body. Nature eventually destroys man-made bodies, which are what bodies living in a culture are like. This is not because of any moral judgement that is conspicuously absent here (cf. Ginsberg 1948:10–11),<sup>16</sup> but rather seems to be predetermined. In verse 35 where there is a reversed listing of materials, but not mentioning any body parts, *רָחַץ* [clay] is curiously on a higher level than the iron, that strong element. Yet, it seems that the destruction is simultaneous for all four metals, just as the four body parts existed at the same time as well, which contradict a linear view of history in which the one empire would exist and then be destroyed after another. This synchronistic snap-shot in time is like a series of photos of someone all on the same page of an album. It is only when the stone starts moving that a diachronic view along history shows human life like a film. Viewing the time in terms of different metals with different durability can also be found with Hesiod around 700 BCE and in an Iranian tree (vide infra) divided in the same way from an unknown period (Albani 2010:82).

Even if one assumes that the king wants the dream to be told to him to check the veracity of interpretation thereafter, it is also possible that he simply cannot remember the dream despite feeling disturbed by it, showing that he has split it off and through oblivion (cf. also Alomía 2008:44, 45, although his translation is incorrect: The text does not explicitly state oblivion) repressed it in his unconscious and in his body where it gets stuck in speechlessness, eventually destroying him. Language is simply insufficient and inadequate to describe traumatic experiences, which are clinically always because of a bodily injury or threat. In the case where a dream can have both a psychic and somatic meaning, the latter may be repressed through scotomisation (Giordo 2016:280). Alternatively, the king can actually remember the body but is ashamed of it and does not have the courage to speak about it, and so pretends that he has other reasons for not telling it to his ‘therapists’.

16. Even though the punishment for idolatry is stoning according to Deuteronomy 13:6–10; cf. Leviticus 24:10ff.

Exaggerated in verse 31 as *קָאָם לְקַבְּלָךְ וְרוּחַ* [a great image; this image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was surpassing, stood before you; and its appearance was terrible] it might seem like a phallic-proud body. As *קָאָם* [standing] when the dreamer is probably lying would make it seem even more gigantic and even intimidating, like the parental figure seen during infancy. The words, *שָׂגִיא* [great] and *רַב* [great, influential] also have connotations of plurality, an adumbration of the composite nature of the statue, and yet *הָ* [one], even though it here probably serves as an indefinite article (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:2631). Koch (2005:184) likewise links this to the multiform nature of the image. Yet, despite its size suggesting its power it remains an ungendered, probably naked, body like the divine body in 7:9. However, the male dominance in the book makes one assume that it should be self-evidently male as well. It is also a static body, actually petrified.

However, it is perhaps a catatonic one reflecting the frozen immobility typical of trauma because of the feeling of powerlessness and helplessness, or worse: with no internal experiences because the traumatised body can no longer sense them. The body has become like a dead statue. This hunch is strengthened by the description of the body as separate dissociated parts. The highly energised stone may be another aspect of the self, trapped in a destructive rage, which can destroy not only emotionally but also bodily. Otherwise, the discrepancy between these two parts of the self would have caused anxiety-hyperarousal (Seidler 2015:730).

If it were a pleasurable dream about his body in ecstasy, the king would have remembered it very well and might perhaps even have boasted about it. However, the statue reminds us of the *wasf* in Song of Songs 5:10–16 about the male beloved and more specifically verses 11 and 14–15:

ראשו כְּתָמָם פִּזְּ קַנְצוֹתָיו, תְּלַתְלִים שְׁחֵרוֹת כְּעוֹרֵב

11 His head is as the finest gold, his locks are curled, and black as a raven.

יָדָיו גְּלִילֵי זָהָב בְּתַרְשִׁישׁ מְעִיּוֹ עֵשֶׂת שֵׁן מְעֻלְפֹת סַפִּירִים

14 His hands are as rods of gold set with beryl; his body is as polished ivory overlaid with sapphires.

שׁוֹקָיו עַמּוּדֵי יָשָׁם מְסֻדָּרִים עַל-אֲדָנִי-פִזְּ מְרֵאָהוּ בְּלִבְנוֹן--בְּחֹזֶר כְּאֲרָזִים

15 His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

Here the beloved is also seen as a statue of a deity made of precious metals and stones but eventually growing to be like the Lebanon and its trees. In both the Song and in the dream the head is of gold. In both the feet are an issue: in the Song, no mention is made of feet and it seems the legs are ‘rooted’ like a tree in sockets. The two images, however, differ radically in that the substitute feet in the Song are, like the head, also of gold. Not so in Daniel 2, where the feet are the weakest body parts amongst the seven mentioned and the target of the attack. In the Song, the statue represents the unique beloved body of an individual as if eternally static.

The statue in Daniel seems to represent the collective as it deteriorates over time, according to Daniel's interpretation. The male body in the Song hints at a divine body monumentalised for veneration, whereas the statue in Daniel just pretends to be divine. Just as the statue falls down, so the king falls down in humble prostration in verse 46. The statue in the Song remains standing, however.

Such unconscious traumatic experiences that remain unspoken about can sometimes be reached through dream analysis. In this case, it is not clear if there has been a concrete bodily experience before the dream which the dream tries to process and integrate, or whether it is a prophetic dream, however rare, according to Jung (1960:493). Though by the time the text was composed or finalised, its content was already history.

In Daniel 2, the body not only fills space but also represents time, and so one can speak of a history of the body, something which older people reflect upon more and more. The youthful head of gold often forgets that the feet are anchored in (baked) clay (Hartman & Di Lella 1978:141), qualified by *מִיֵּרֶק* [miry] in verse 41 probably to emphasise the fragility of the material, paralleled to and equalled with *תְּבִירָה* [broken] in verse 42<sup>17</sup> and in the earth represented by the grave. With time there is a downscaling of the body as its lower qualities are realised. Looking up (and so 'back' to a golden age) the perspective from the feet idealises the part furthest removed in time: The golden head.

The king is, so to say, trapped in, limited to and identified with his head (Schmidt 2015:234–235). The rest of the body does not seem to belong to him, because he is dissociated and alienated from it. However, just like the tree (*vide supra*) in chapter 4, it may be possible that the whole image actually signifies his own body<sup>18</sup>. Significantly, the overwhelming dream is in his head as the top and not in his heart as the centre as one would expect in the Hebrew Bible (cf. *רֵאשִׁית* [your head] in 2:28 [*vide infra*]). The head of the statue is also made of the most valuable metal and represents the most powerful empire. That is why he has no 'heart' (despite 2:30!; *vide infra*) to sense the meaning of the dream which is, however, more on an irrational level, using symbols<sup>19</sup> and disguises. It is a faceless statue (because the observer-dreamer is paradoxically inside the body, *vide infra*), as if generalising the body to all human beings, or as if hiding it, as this is ironically the only body part, apart from his head in 2:28 (*vide supra*), his heart in 2:30 (*vide supra*) and his hand in 2:38, which is mentioned of the king himself in 2:46 where he is trying to hide *אִפְּהוֹ* [his face] in worship, an adumbration of his own death where his self, manifested in his face, will be

17. This is different from the statue in Bel and the Dragon in Daniel 14:7 where it has clay on the inside and bronze on the outside (Hartman & Di Lella 1978:141).

18. When Moses models the tabernacle in a probably prophetic vision, when Ezekiel dreams of the future temple or when King Lagash likewise dreams of the temple he has to erect in Ningirsu, these architectural structures could have represented the body as well or at the same time (*vide supra*).

19. Oppenheim (1956:197–217) distinguishes 'symbolic' and 'message' dreams, the former needing interpretation of its images and being futuristic, while the latter contains an instruction.

dissolved. Earlier in verse 15b<sup>20</sup> *מִהָרָעָה* originally means 'bare- or hard-faced', which then becomes the metaphor, 'arrogant', in the context (Goldingay 1989:33). Incidentally, these four are amongst the top six body parts<sup>21</sup> most often mentioned about humans in the Hebrew Bible (Baumann 2003:246), perhaps a suggestion that represents humanity in general and therefore remains without individual characteristics, such as hair or skin colour.

Neither does the body have a belly, according to Schmidt (2015:225), even when the word, *מִעוֹהֵי* [its belly], occurs in 2:32, but this could be interpreted as the outer lower body, just as *בְּטִנְיָהּ* [your belly] in the Song of Songs 7:3 probably refers to the outer body. She is not clear on this issue and probably refers to the 'emptiness' implied by the lack of 'insides'. The statue is an empty body, just an outer image, nothing more. It is, after all, not the real thing, but just *צִלְמָה* [an image] in verse 32, reminding of Genesis 1:27 where a human is somewhat like a shadow of God. This stands in contrast to the stone which *וַיִּמְלֵא* ([and] fills) the whole earth in verse 35.

In the Hebrew Bible, the four most important body parts of God are, on the contrary, God's face (598 times), hand (218 times), nose (162 times) and eye (123 times), but 'insides', although it occurs only 25 times for God, constitutes the highest percentage, 64.17%, amongst all the other biblical figures for whom it is used and is associated with God's womb, leading to the word linked to that, *רַחֲמִים* ([intense] compassion or 'womblike-feeling'), according to Baumann (2003:246; cf. also Wagner 2010:137). This means that the insides dominate the image of God and so form the opposite of what his pretentious god-statue presents. It is this depth of God that penetrates the secret emptiness hinted at in verse 22.

Although the Aramaic *מִחֻדָּהּ* [its breast] in 2:32 refers in Hebrew in other contexts in the Bible only to the breast of sacrificial animals (Schmidt 2015:226), it could suggest the feminine over against the masculine in the next level of *מִחֻדָּהּ* [its thighs or loins] in the same verse, often used euphemistically in Hebrew for phallic power (Schorch 2000:135). Although it seems as if the body is described from the outside, it is actually described from the internal bodily experiences of the dreamer (*vide supra*).

Like the faceless statue, though recognised, the stone remains 'anonymous', and rather small compared to the huge body, only the feet of which it hits. But size does not count, as many a giant on his death-bed knows. The stone is as impersonal as death: it is cut out, according to verse 34, and more specifically, *מִטֹּרְחָהּ* [from the mountain] according to verse 45, but not by human hands, but by an invisible body in the background even more faceless than the statue in the foreground.

The body is dreamed about in a time of crisis or, at least, warns of crisis. One still has the television image in mind

20. See 3:22.

21. The eye and the throat are in the fourth and fifth positions, respectively.

when the statue of the fallen dictator of the same country as in the dream, now called Iraq, was pulled down under applause but, unknown at the time, also signalled the beginning of a period of utter chaos. It is significant that the king dreams of a body during this crisis and so reduces his being to the body.

According to verse 34, the stone only hits the feet, the statue's weakest and, which one would have thought, its least important body part (cf. also Ehrlich 1953:107). Even though it is not explicitly said, the rest of the body is not touched by the stone even though the next verse generalises it to the whole image and verse 45 explicitly claims that it broke the other body parts into pieces as well, perhaps indirectly by making it fall to pieces because of the lack of a body base. This is somewhat difficult to imagine as these metals usually do not break when they fall. Oneiric content is, however, not realistic or rational. It reminds one though of the greatest fear an infant has, greater than that of dying: the fear of falling and of falling apart. The divided body is typical of the pre-mirror stage (starting at around 6 months) of the infant whose body is experientially only held together by the loving arms and face of its mother. The dreamer therefore regressively experiences the greatest anxiety in this trauma.

The king can see his part of the body which, however, transcends him. He therefore has a kind of out-of-body typical of near-death experience which announces death, if not his own, then perhaps of his parental figure or of humanity in general, as human mortality. In many cultures, it is, in fact, believed that the soul leaves the body during sleep (Albani 2010:64). It is also possible that the imperative to return to the body could have been part of the king's disturbance, as this is often the case in visionary mystical experiences across the world (Scagnetti-Feurer 2004:100–101).

Alternatively, he identifies his body with all of history and the world in a regressive way, just as an infant would regard the world as its body. Interpreting one's own death as the death of the world is a narcissistic regression typical of much trauma.

The stone is in many ways the opposite to the body, which seems so stable and static but turns out to be actually so fragile, frail and eventually utterly fragmented that it becomes nothing. The stone is cut *לֹא בַיָּדָיו* [not by hands] like the statue which has been carved by arts- or craftsmen. The stone rolls towards the body and is quality-wise of less value than the previously mentioned materials. It was cut out from 'the' mountain (verse 45) and becomes again 'a' great mountain (verse 35) and then the whole earth, over which the first and the third, and by implication, the second part as well, used to rule in 2:38–39. Nothing is said that the fourth would have such universal power.

On the one hand, one can associate this unfolding with a foetus that develops into a child. On the other hand, this sounds like the door of the grave closing over the body after

death and the imagined experience that the corpse becomes the whole universe again, as the French philosopher, Georges Bataille (1957:16), saw it, and as a foetus experiences its surroundings when still in the womb. The dead body becomes integrated into the earth of which it gradually forms part (and from which it comes according to Gn 2:7), where it disintegrates, or wider even: carried away by the wind *כְּעוֹר* [like chaff] in 2:35, reminding one of the left-over ashes after a cremation, though no fire is mentioned in the text. Although not the same as the (Hebrew) word, *נְשָׁמָה* [breath] in Genesis 2:7, the Aramaic word, *רוּחָא* [the wind, breath or spirit] in 2:35, makes one think of the breath of life which leaves the body as it dies, a word also related to the Hebrew, *רוּחַ* [is wide or spacious], which opens the horizon of connoted meaning even further. Not even a grave is therefore left, just space and nothingness: *וְלֹא-מָצְאוּ לָהֶם מָקוֹם לְהוֹן* [so that no place was found for them, that is, for the body's fragments]. This is contrary to Ecclesiastes 3:20 where the same place is destined for all (vide supra). In the eternity of oblivion, there is no spatial limitation. The dream ends precisely with the body disintegrating, having been hit by the stone. This means that the body itself was the dreamer, situated in the unconscious which also 'is' the body, according to Anzieu (1995:28) and implicit in Freud's views.

It is possible that Daniel strategically protects himself by protecting the king from the harsh reality facing the king personally by diluting the dream into the history of the world<sup>22</sup>. This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that Daniel already complimented the king as the golden head superior to anyone else in history,<sup>23</sup> a head even with a hand according to verse 38. Incidentally, this is not only an active hand of grandiose omnipotence but a passive and receiving hand. That is perhaps why the king was so relieved that he *שָׁבַח* [worshipped[!]] Daniel, a displaced idealisation sometimes found in therapy, but here also an idealisation by the author of the text who finds Daniel's word a relief. This does not mean that Daniel falsifies the dream but that he merely presents the manifest rather than the latent dream. The former is the dreamer's usual distortion of the dream ('Traumentstellung'; Freud 1993:88).

## Conclusion

The book of Daniel is layered with meanings, one of which can be accessed through a psychoanalytic interpretation. The king dreams in chapter 2 only of one body but it is layered in meanings, as it is a dream-body, a secret body and, therefore, a symbolic body.

The initially proud, perhaps even narcissistic, body is divided, broken further into pieces and finally falls apart, in this way reflecting the infant's initial body experience, followed later by the ageing process and finally concluded by

22. This is not the view of Gnuse (1990): 'So it is possible to draw a general parallel that all three [i.e. Joseph, Mordecai and Daniel] dream interpreters provide a stern and honest message, unlike the usual flattery of the diviners' (p. 48). Yet Oppenheim (1956:204–205) regards Genesis 41:16 as the interpreter's typical desire that the dreams 'might portend something favorable' for the dreamer.

23. Echoing Jeremiah 27:5–6.

death, the fifth and final kingdom, eternal and not in human hands, never mind bodies. This is the existential anxiety of human existence. On the contrary, the stone suggests the durability of death. This is all because of the feet, that is, the doubtful groundedness of the body, and more specifically the clay, the reminder that one is ultimately from the earth, even the most powerful person who used to believe that his body will survive death by being incarnated in a memorial statue. Even for the king living in his golden head, the reality of the body humiliates any pretensions of the mind. This realisation is the cause of his body anxiety.

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