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The Opening Focus – The Widening Spectrum

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During the day, the way we perceive and interpret our mind's activity is more or less a result of our cultural conditioning. Logic is one aspect of our cultural framework – logic, and rational and linear thinking. This framework arose out of oral and later written language, and the subsequent development of logic. Since language and logic are so foundational to our thinking, most of our daytime perceptions are streamlined to fit into that framework. But this framework, which has been labeled by Freud as a secondary process¹, is not our natural state! It has developed during the course of human evolution, especially in the extraverted western world with its focus on physical sciences and its basis in scriptures and other books. Although our western culture dominates much of today's world in its own fascinating and mesmerizing way, it is geographically and historically unique. Other cultures did not develop an extroverted framework and linear thinking to such an extent; because of this they valued dreams to a much higher degree.

But when we observe our daily activities, we realize that we do not always follow this framework. Often, when the mind is not fully engaged in perceiving the present, it begins to wander into daydreaming. Daydreams consist of self-talk, memories and images. The more we drop the connection to our outer senses at night, the more the mental framework associated with dreaming takes over. Freud called this the primary process, because it is the basic and natural state of our mind. It is not logical; it is not linear; it follows other basic mental rules. One of these rules is “association.” Another one might be some kind of associative cluster building around certain themes with similar emotional content. Jung² called this a “complex.” Grof³ calls it a “COEX system.” It is considerably less concentrated than the logical mind, less ruled by physical conditions, social conditioning and focused intention. The mind is freed to wander to wherever it is attracted. It might be likened to a leaf drifting on the psychic winds, which can carry it quite far away from its origin. In this nighttime mental freedom, we may encounter the new and the unknown.

I would like to recount some of my dreams which bear witness to such nightly encounters with the unknown other. The dreams are still linked to my human existence, but they point in a direction that is beyond my daily concern. So I have to consider that I am restricted by my mind set and am compelled to translate the unknown into pictures of the known. We all dream of houses, streets and cars, of humans and of emotions, because they are the building blocks of our conditioned mind. What is beyond is not imaginable and cannot be perceived by it. The mind automatically translates the unknown into the known. This might mislead some, who claim that dreams are only endless repetitions and variations of the same content, with nothing creative or new in them.

The Anthroposophists⁴ compare the dreaming process to the creation of a play. In that creation the director and the prop man have different functions. The latter provides the play with props which he finds in the store, but the director creates something new with it. Although he might use a script of a famous playwright, he will vary and adapt it to some degree to emphasize one or another theme. In the dream creation the same thing happens; it is composed of props found in the memory, but the creation is new and unique. Someone who goes to the theater and complains

that it is boring and meaningless because he always sees actors, chairs, tables and backdrops on the stage, misses somewhat the point of a play.

But now to my dreams. The first one, which I dreamt in 1990, was an epic. The dream protocol in my journal was abridged because of my poor memory.

I was an android, a living humanoid creature, built in a factory. We were some kind of a race on a planet. I lived and worked as a dancer in a theater for a very long time – I think hundreds if not thousands of years.

One day a superior race of humans visited us, who may have been our constructors beyond the times we remember. One of those superiors, a woman, was searching for me. I was frightened and hid in a large pile of clothes and blankets in the equipment cellar. But she found me there and commanded me to stand up. She was generally quite imperious and commanding, but she was interested in my



life, which I showed her little by little. My world was filled with movement and dance. I danced with her and showed her all my skills. And I showed her my clothes from former times; they were all servants' clothes. The oldest was some kind of a jacket made of goatskin.

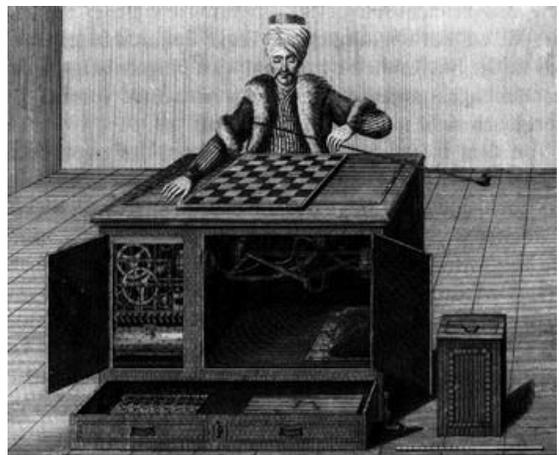


After some time I fell in love with her and asked to kiss her, which she did not allow. But she stayed with us for quite some time. One day I was performing our light dances on stage with my machine comrades as usual, when I felt that my limbs grew slowly stiff and realized that I had grown old and was approaching the end of my huge life

span. I left the theater to face my end alone and sat on a big stone. My mistress, who sat as usual in the audience, noticed my disappearance and found me there. She came and sat beside me. I asked her if she would allow me to kiss her, in the face of my death. She only allowed me to kiss her shoulder. As I did, I felt that her arm had grown stiff too and I realized that because of her interest in my life and in in our species she had approached us in such a way that she herself had become a living machine puppet. She confirmed this, and expressed her wish that we should die together. So we sat there side by side awaiting our death. We ossified slowly and dissolved into the unifying void of nothingness.”

Slowly I woke up with a feeling of incredible beauty and sweetness that I never tasted before or after in my life. This feeling was so consuming that now, nearly 25 years later, the tears of joy still begin to roll down my cheeks.

This dream was one of those which has towered above the others and has stayed with me most of my waking life; it was some kind of a “science fiction” or “fantasy” dream. At the time of the dream, I had not seen many science fiction movies – maybe “ET” and others by Steven Spielberg, and I had read some books of Stanislaw Lem. When I look for a model of that living machine-puppet, a picture of a mechanical



chess player at his table pops into my mind. This was one of the first machines that tried to reproduce human movement and intelligence and already as a boy I had marveled at that picture in old illustrated books. But on the other hand I must confess that kinky erotic was not alien to me. Which was first? Those fantasies during daytime, or such dreams during night times? They mirror each other and it is not possible to determine which one is the cause and which the effect. Psychoanalysts may find some roots of that theme in my early life, but the dream itself transcends my personal history completely. Even my identity was changed, as I described in my presentation at the 2013 PsiberDreaming Conference⁵.

Now for the next dream, which I had in 2009: *“I was travelling with my family. We were sightseeing in a foreign city. Again I had an altered identity, and was an adolescent boy in the dream. My family was black. We visited several old buildings and finally came to a church or cathedral. I walked ahead through the ancient vault and came to a heavy door which led to a gothic side chamber.*



There I saw a big mirror which leaned at an angle of 45 degrees against the wall. To my astonishment some churchgoers went through the mirror and disappeared. I approached curiously and looked into the mirror. I saw not a reflection of the chamber and me, but into a different world, which was arranged at an angle of 90 degrees to my world. That gave me an eerie and somewhat dizzy feeling and I recoiled. I waited for my family and showed them the portal, but I warned them not to go through. We sat down in some upholstered chairs nearby and waited for the churchgoers to return. After some time others came back, all young men. They laughed and chatted while entering the chamber, finally they noticed and gathered around us. To our surprise they knew all our names. They asked us why we had read their faces. We did not understand, but finally I had the idea that they meant mind reading. I denied it and told them that we did not know they would come but suspected only that

there were people behind the mirror, but we hesitated to pass the portal because it was unknown and too eerie for us. One of the boys replied firmly that we did not pass because we had read their faces. I admitted that something might have happened, but completely unconsciously. Consciously we did not have any clue what they had in their mind. There is no unconscious, replied some of them in a chorus.

Finally the priest came and gave us information. He told us that it was wise not to pass through the mirror, because some who did could not return. Some of the other world had to remain and live thereafter in the cathedral. Once the police had arrested him, he continued, because they thought he was in charge and would lead people through the portal. He concluded his speech, saying that we were justified to listen to our fear because it sprang from a healthy precaution. The fear of those who wanted to arrest him was exaggerated and produced facts without considering and understanding the situation. We asked the priest why only young men from the other world passed through the portal. The priest replied that the church was some kind of a fountain of youth. They need to pass through the mirror from time to time to stay alive. But some would also die here. They are all buried in the crypt of the cathedral.



Then I asked the boys if they were extraterrestrials, but they denied it and insisted that they were always here and therefore belong to this world. Were they another human species, I continued. Yes somewhat, was their answer, they simply are other beings, living among the humans. But they did not work and did not have a home in this world. Isn't that boring, I asked. They said no, they liked to observe us, how we deal with life. I continued asking why they had no women in their world and if they did not have sex? Oh yes, they had, was their reply. But the women would live in another dimension and they would meet only here in the cathedral. This necessary place of rejuvenation, meeting and reproduction had always existed. At first it was only a clearing in the woods, then later a chapel and finally a cathedral was erected. The understanding of the humans and their religions change, but the fundamental facts remain.

The theme of this dream is a portal into other dimensions. Such mirror portals are known from fairytales and magic stories. But tales like Alice in Wonderland are not embedded in the German culture, of which I am part. Before that dream I must have read Michael Ende's "The Neverending Story," in which a mirror is a portal between the dimensions, between the waking and material world and the world of phantasy. So the mirror is typically a symbolic entrance to the mind's world. Therefore we can conclude that remembering dreams might function as such a mirror and door to the imaginal world, which also reflects our mental state.

In both dreams, I was confronted with the unknown, with another world, and again in both dreams I did not have the identity of my waking consciousness. However, in the second dream, it seemed to be some kind of parallel world, strangely arranged at a right angle, something I had never heard of in my waking life. Although the other beings in the dream were humanoid, their lives were differently framed. It caused me to question, and to broaden, my basic understanding of (social) life, aging, dying, and rejuvenation. In contrast to the first dream, in this second dream I only encountered the other, but was not part of it. Partly I saw the dream in pictures, but also, part of the dream storyline unfolded in a manner that I call "dream thoughts,"⁶ some kind of a dream that unfolds autonomously like ordinary dreams, but without sensory experience.

From time to time I had such epic dreams. They occurred infrequently, maybe once a year, and usually they were not lucid. I had them during my time with a Sufi order⁷ and the Sufis are known to be storytellers. I left that order after 25 years and gave up my belief in god, but I still believe in the soul, in my soul, in my dreaming soul, which creates my waking and my dreaming world. But I never had such epic dream stories again.

In all these dreams, I was confronted with the "other," although it is pictured in symbols and metaphors which are not unknown and which I could understand. To approach such dreams with a too rational or restricted mental approach is not helpful. Dream theories that define a dream's relevance to one single factor or cause such as "wish fulfillment" or "threat simulation" are too restrictive, although such factors may be detected at times. On the contrary, my mental

framework has expanded. Because of such dreams, the ideas of parallel worlds and other worlds, of other intelligent living creatures and living machines, are existentially experienced mental realities for me.

After all, the dream world is, in our culture, an alien mental world in which we have nevertheless our nightly second life. To declare that world as “only” mental, denies the fact that those dream experiences have the same psychological impact as experiences in the waking world, sometimes even more so. Forgetting them does not diminish their impact on us, we are simply more unconscious of ourselves and the driving forces behind our emotions, desires and deeds. So opening to the world of dreams is expanding the mental horizon beyond our waking world. Our spectrum of consciousness becomes wider and it transcends our waking life.

Notes

¹ Freud, Sigmund (1953): *The Interpretation of Dreams*, New York.

² Jung, Carl Gustav (1970): *Collected Works Vol. 8; Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, Princeton.

³ Grof, Stanislav (1975): *Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research*, New York.

⁴ Gassmann, Christoph (2004): *Anthroposophy and the Dream*. Dreamers United.
<http://annex.dreamunit.net/text-en/04/gassmann2.shtml>

⁵ Gassmann, Christoph (2013): *The Identity of the dreaming “I,”* PsiberDreaming Conference.
<http://www.traumring.info/english/identity.pdf>

⁶ Gassmann, Christoph (2009): *Dream Thoughts; DreamTime* (Spring).
<http://www.traumring.info/english/dreamthoughts.pdf>

⁷ Gassmann, Christoph (2005): *Sufi Dreaming; DreamTime* (Winter).
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