

American Academy of Religion
Studies in Religion

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BOUNDARIES IN MIND

A Study of Immediate Awareness
Based on Psychotherapy

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(1982)

For Dreams Class

THE CROSSROAD PUBLISHING COMPANY
&
SCHOLARS PRESS

necessary before meaningful relation can be established between the "Unconscious," or other forms of primordial awareness, and the person. In such ways of thinking, history has to do only with the mediating symbols—that is, different images have symbolic power at different times for traceable reasons—and with appropriating personal consciousness, for example how people have heard and come to terms with the non-symbolic through the symbolic. Re-presentations form the center of this attention, and the cultivation of immediacies seems foreign and counter-intuitive.

In the course of this chapter, we shall pay particular attention to those occurrences which point out the development and self-awareness of immediate states of mind. The growth of immediate self-awareness is an aspect of the emergence of human well-being.

2. An Instance of the Growth of-Immediate Self-Awareness in a Series of Dreams

A man had a series of dreams over a seven year period in which, first, an older therapist appeared. This older man was in waking life a therapist in another country known to the dreamer, but the dreamer has not been in therapy with him. In those dreams, the therapist appeared as a guide who showed the dreamer helpful things, as a comforter who brought solace, and as a presence who was unambiguously supportive in a way that felt healing to the dreamer. These dreams brought with them a vague sense of growth and development in ways the dreamer could not describe.

After four years, involving half a dozen dreams of the older therapist, the therapist in the dreams changed. He was now younger than the first one, but older than the dreamer. He lived in the same country as the first therapist, but was a citizen of the dreamer's country. He was a less comforting figure and more active. He was aggressive, though supportive. He appeared creative and dynamic, somewhat skeptical, a little distant. The dreamer knew him in waking life primarily in working situations in which the two men were often in disagreement. He was also a therapist in waking life, and the dreamer felt "younger and behind" the older man. In the dreams the therapist was nonetheless a healer, one who showed ways and lent a most nurturing presence.

In three years, this therapist appeared in eight dreams. Then the dreamer dreamt himself giving solace to a huge, clumsy, weeping younger man. In another dream he guided a confused young man. In a third dream he supported the mother of a young child. In other dreams, coming in a short period of time, he allowed a tiny, ant-sized infant to die and withstood its mother's displeasure with a sense that the infant's death was appropriate. He befriended a suffering man, listened to another man's troubles, and stood quietly firm in the presence of a troubled woman's rage.

The therapist in this man had become self-aware over a period of time. One could say that the dreamer had become more autonomous and independent, but that is a misleading way to describe the development. If "autonomous and independent" refer to his waking consciousness. He was indeed stronger and more autonomous in his waking life. But the development in his dreams expressed a non-voluntary process of growth in which the healing, guiding, and nurturing abilities in his awareness came slowly to a sense of themselves as they fancied themselves first as an old, foreign man (with whom the dreamer sometimes spoke the therapist's native language in the dreams), then as a bridging man, and finally as the dreamer himself. All this is in the fancy of dreaming, over which the dreamer exercised no conscious control. In waking life, the dreamer experienced the last awareness of the dreams as a quiet sense, a stillness, he said, that was the opposite of anxiety. He was more open to affection. He did not look away, he reported, when feelings became intense at times when he did not choose to feel intense. He said that he had a sense of openness to whatever came to him in deeply communicative ways. The immediate awarenesses of both those mental aspects, viz., the aspects that needed help and the given capacities for response to those needs, developed into senses of themselves which could relate to each other as they were in a region of alertness that was not the same as the dreamer's personal, waking consciousness.¹

3. An Instance of Self-Awareness as a World-Event

We begin with an excerpt from a therapy situation, about two minutes into the session. A forty year-old woman, who is in a professional training program, and who has been in therapy for one and a half years, comes to a break-through:

A: I am late because I . . . because I am not worthy to take your time.

T: You do not feel worthy to take my time?

A: (crying) No. I have to give you something to deserve this. I have nothing to give. I'm not changing fast enough. I'm letting you down . . . I defend myself by feeling responsible for you. . . .

Pause

T: And if you did not defend yourself?

A: I would feel so unguarded. I would be unguarded. I would receive and not be worthy. . . .

If I did not follow my commitments I would be so open to hurt. If I am unguarded here, I will want this kind of relation all the time, and I won't have it. I've never had it before. If I am unguarded with you, I will want to receive like I receive here and. . . .

¹ For examples of similar developments of immediate self-awareness in waking dreams, see Gerald Epstein, *Waking Dream Therapy*.