

# Ghosts - The dream is the guardian of sleep

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I – To introduce, Robert Musil, in *The Man without Qualities*: “*And, indeed, mankind most important intellectual devices serve to maintain a stable state of mind, and all emotions, all world’s passions, are nothing in face of the gigantic but totally unconscious effort that mankind expends to maintain its superb serenity. Apparently, it is worthless to talk about this, so impeccable is its functioning... This intertwining is similar to the great Nature in which all the cosmos force fields influence the Earth without noticing because the result is exactly the earthly events: the spiritual relief thus obtained is so great that both the wisest man as ignorant little girls feel themselves very smart and kind in this condition of imperturbability*”<sup>[1]</sup> (my italics).

Alternatively, as Freud would say: “*the dream is the guardian of sleep*”.

How tenuous life is!

We must live dreaming in order to be able to sleep.

We must live of ghosts and exist thanks to them.

Where does Saint Christopher support his feet, asked Goethe also quoted by Freud. On what soil?

Are there solid, concrete foundations to sustain what is built?

My wife and I were in Istanbul. We decided to attend to a presentation of Dervishes, Sufi monks who find consonance with the world surrounding them through music and dance. With a long skirt, they turn around their own axis with one hand raised to the sky and the other pointed to the ground. They endlessly rotate. Any attempt to imitate them – and of course we tried to do it, as soon as we got back to our hotel, will result in dizziness and fall, at most soon after the third spin! And, nonetheless, they spend a long time in a kind of trance that allow them to spin, spin, and spin as if, from a certain point on, the inertia of the spin movement make them spin, thus keeping them in a perpetual movement.

The movement sustaining the movement, without a first engine to lend them the generating strength of movement. The movement sustained in and by the movement. We talked a lot that this experience can only be possible in a kind of trance and here I seek the assistance of those who better understand this matter to help me to make sense of something that left me dazed by incomprehension.

This was the memory that came to my mind as soon as I found myself faced up to reflect about “ghost”, this supernatural force; totally unconscious that go along with and sustain us.

The second association was Goethe’s poem already reminded and quoted by Freud in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*.

“Saint Christopher was carrying Jesus Christ  
Christ sustained the whole world  
Tell me the: where did Saint Christopher supported his feet?”

The discussion this poem proposes is very old. Is there a substrate, any foundation even if it resists to be known, but remains as collateral for what is known or is it pure plot, games, and artifice games? Platonic or sophists, will say Hellenic scholars?

As far as I am concerned, I remain with Freud’s indication in that work where we find Goethe’s quotation. We support ourselves on a web of identifications that sustain each other fostered by convictions always fated to misunderstanding. In place of origin, the emptiness of meaning that marks our helplessness. Yet, so perfect is the functioning of the imagination’s imaginative capacity that this

saving reference embodies visibly or invisibly everything we are and do. Either way, incarnations of this “pure other” from which our origin can neither be found nor even questioned.

Recovered from the shock with the dervishes and Goethe’s poem, I will use them as inspiration to what we need to reflect about, in order not to succumb to the unbearable of lacking the foundation that explain and serve us as guarantee to all we are and know. We can only imagine, the great and insistent imagining ability that save us from the fascination the Greeks so well knew how to represent, the inability of looking directly into Medusa’s eyes.

The power of image, or better, and following Jean-Claude Rolland in “*Les yeux de l’âme*”, “*the imaginative power of image*”, that carries in itself the living presence, the power of adherence, by which it calls the conviction and takes away from its course the judgement and discernment of its beholder.

He goes on: *The imagery, “l’imageant”, would be the first flow of thought inspired to the mortal by his “having become a man”, and makes him create his gods and orders him the establishment, increasingly convincing and heroic, of his reason of being.*

II – The experts say that inside our bodies we are inhabited for over three billion bugs: the most varied. Among them, there are those of us who know what they are, what they do and how they interact; there are those who know that we do not know what they are, what they do and how they interact. That is, there are also those who even do not know that we know, and yet, our health can or should be linked to forms of interaction between them.

Our body, the human body, is a structured unit: it is not an aggregate of pieces nor even a motion machine, but a dynamic body, where the internal balance is achieved by internal changes and by continuous external relations.

That is, this dynamic balance process may occur or not. It may fail. In addition, until we feel its effects, it fails in ways that we are entirely unaware of and we cannot even know or access them. Certainly, most of time, we ignore these fails. We know when they do not fail, since we were born; or at most the fail does not prevent us from being born and, we get sick.

In *Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning*, Freud tell us how from the inception we are disturbed in our psychic rest by “*overriding requirements arising from the organism internal needs*”. Therefore, analogously to what occurs today every night with our dream-thoughts, what we think simply presents itself in a hallucinatory manner”. He adds in a footnote, “*The state of sleep is capable of playing with similarity the psychic life as it was before the recognition of reality, because the sleep pre-requisite is the deliberate, purposeful denial of reality*”<sup>[2]</sup>

I would like to reflect on this “*simply in a hallucinatory manner*”, since hallucinating is the form of containing and transforming the “*overriding requirements arising from the organism internal needs*”, submitting them to a mode of functioning that organize them and make the sleep possible: the primary process.

In addition, this transformation process takes place automatically, without the interference and the agency of consciousness it will turn out to be so clear and evident.

Michel Fain, in his work *La Fonction Maternelle selon Pierre Marty (Maternal function according to Pierre Marty)*, refers to this process in the following terms, (maternal function) “... *is fully exercised while the mother remains unaware of it and, in such a repetitive way, that justifies Pierre Marty’s conception on automation, in that an specific end holds its functioning, the creation of a future subject. (...)*

Michel Fain notes that in this distinction Pierre Marty makes between mother and maternal function go also the physiological processes that make possible pregnancy, gestation and the existence of a baby without the mother having any awareness of them.

Maternal function defines the set of transactions involved in symbolization processes.

Liliane Abensour<sup>[3]</sup> in her work *The Shadow of the Maternal*, says that, “*Peculiarly, scattered and brief – but just as significant for its brevity – are Freud’s references to the maternal, or rather to its manifestations because to the fullest extent of his work the maternal thread unfolds in shade. And what if the maternal were really nothing more than a shade that steals from our senses their real body?*”

Because the maternal true nature remains eternally unknowable, except through the imaginary because it is so related to the mystery of the origins and therefore it can only be known when it draws back.

Abensour continues: *it is necessary to resort to a mythological, religious, literary or poetic foundation to say what is the inaccessible, inapprehensible of the maternal. Myths and narratives have a lavishness of tragic, afflicted or cruel characters obtaining consistency through a story. A fragmented, transfigured reality, gives access to parts more or less obscure of the maternal. An idealized face of a remote maternal, with another face that remains usually hidden, wild, combined with femininity, causing excitement, fear or dread.*

Both the maternal and the psychoanalyst role mean to be listening to what is said without words; to be listening to the unfinished that defines us in our birth; to be listening from the helplessness in face of endogenous excitations and corporal manifestations they provoke. Attention focuses on sensuousness and its particular modulations, marks of a feeling not yet organized in fantasies. The psychic elaboration is certainly an immediate response to the incompleteness and the infant’s state of helplessness and this development cannot originally come from elsewhere than from a similar, from a similar other, from another similarly foreign psyche. Freud called this “specific action”. The specificity of this experience is expressed by transformations that enable: from passivity to activity, from displeasure to pleasure; from appeasement that promote regarding the tensions that threatened overflowing the mental apparatus, presenting this draft that later on will be called an “I”. Appeasement is not only reduction of tension, but also, above, all evidence of a meeting where the outside is compatible to the inside promoting a pleasant and enjoyable meeting<sup>[4]</sup>.

Freud asserts in *Negation: Initially, for the I-Pleasure there is no difference between the evil, what is strange to the I and everything that is outside the I. The three categories are identical (p. 148).*

And because of this identity between the three categories, let us remember the footnote 21 in *Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning*, where Freud extends his understanding of the ways and processes by which the mental apparatus deals with internal displeasure stimuli: it deals with that is internal as if it comes from the outside, and thus represses and keeps it splitted. A note that anticipates his work of 1938: *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence*.

In this text we are working on, Freud show us how we can only access the primary process by the secondary process presentation. In temporal order of presentation, the secondary always comes first; the primary process is always a construction a posteriori. Fake, true or false, it does not matter, they are compromise formations, secondary production, from which the interpretation is made possible by putting us in touch with what we did not know yet. Thus, in the presentation order, the secondary precedes the primary, but they do not nullify each other in their constitution.

From the primary to the secondary process, the maternal function gains visibility, representation possibility, therefore consciousness, because it goes across vicissitudes of the Oedipus complex, that is, intervention of the paternal instance.

On the contrary, we only know mechanisms that are present in the primary processes by remission, by retraction from the secondary to the primary process.

What does this have to do with our aim, that is, discussing The two principles of mental functioning

from the technique point of view?

A proposition: where the primary processes prevail the most important is maintaining the incomprehension of what was not yet represented and, therefore, we work more with that we do not know (without, however, letting to be. We are more and less of what we know).

Any interpretation is hasty and naïve, because it speaks of what is not yet born. Realm of the “art of talking”. On the other hand, where the secondary processes prevail we deal more with our “absence” than with our presence. Realm of silence, from where the subject emerges produced by repression. The psychoanalyst task is constantly evaluating the territory he is passing through and it will be the particular nature of the emotional experience brought in to the session, which will help us to select the intervention form: silence, construction, interpretation.

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Tradução: Tânia Mara Zalcborg

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[1] Robert Musil, *O Homem sem Qualidades (The Man Without Qualities)*, Nova Fronteira, 1989, pg. 376.

[2] Sigmund Freud, *Formulações sobre os Dois Princípios do Acontecer Psíquico (Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning)*, em *Escritos sobre a Psicologia do Inconsciente*, Imago, 2004, pg.66

[3] Liliane Abensour, *L'ombre du Maternel (A Sombra do Materno)*, Relatório para o CPLF – Paris, junho de 2011

[4] Lina Balestrière, *Freud et La question des origines*, Ed. de Boeck, 2008.