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THREE LEARNINGS SINCE THE DREAMBOOK

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Here I would like to present three points I have learned since my book on dreams [1] was published.

WHERE DREAM AND DREAMER DISAGREE:

The part of the method which consists of asking questions is elegant. Eventually something opens for the dreamer. Meanwhile, one is only asking questions, and showing the person how to get a felt sense in relation to each question, and how to take the question down inside so as to ask it to the felt sense.

The part of the method I called "**bias control**" goes beyond asking questions. It consists in expecting a step from the side opposite to one's usual attitude. If in the dream a mugger is chasing me, and after a while I know what problem in my life that refers to, I ought not to settle for an interpretation that that thing is dangerous and I ought to protect myself. I might do that, too, but then I should continue and see if I don't get a step from the opposite side, that is to say, from the mugger (perhaps from "being" him so I can see what new energy comes in me).

Neither dreamer nor helper knows how a step could possibly come from the opposite side. Yet the helper needs to keep the question in play for a while so that a step from the opposite side can become considered, and can then come in the body. Compared to just asking questions, the **bias control** part of the method is not so elegant. One has to struggle. This remains true. But in the book **bias control** was formulated in a rather complex way. I have developed a simpler way to say it. Sometimes it also provides a short-cut in practice:

Now I just look for where there is a disagreement between the dreamer and the dream. Usually (not always) there is. The disagreement might be between the dreamer and some other figure in the dream. Or it might be between the dreamer and how the dream makes the story go. For example:

She dreams that three large black women stand on the path and bar her way. She means to go on as before; they say no, rather deal with us.

Or, another example:

The dreamer is on a train and realizes he forgot his baggage at the station. He gets off and struggles to go back to get it. But on the way back there is a "distraction": he climbs a wall and there is a whole new space. He keeps saying, "It's a distraction; I've got to get

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my baggage." But the dream says in effect: "Sorry, you're going this way, over this wall, into

a new space."

A large meeting room. In front people are debating some problem. It's smoky and foggy up there and the debating figures are fuzzy. Then there are chairs where an audience is sitting. But behind them from the back door some twenty or so people have arrived. They are all sharply outlined and smiling. They have the answer and they are just waiting for the fuzzy people up front to pause so they can announce themselves and tell the solution. The dreamer says he knows what problem they're debating—he has been sunk in it for several weeks. But he doesn't know of even a hint of a solution, he says.

In these and similar examples, one would not wish to stop working on the dream with a conclusion that didn't take account of the other side, the dream's side as against the dreamer's.

In the first example we would surely invite her to "be" the three women (if they are different, one after the other). If we couldn't get that we would ask why that's hard to bodily be, what the women are like, and where in the dreamer some of that is.

In the second we would suggest, "Of course that's you saying it's a distraction; of course we don't know but we could try out saying that you want to go back, but the dream is trying to take you some new way, perhaps? What does it feel like there, on the other side of the wall? What do you see there? Where have you ever seen a wall like that? What could be good about that? What might be something you need out of that?"

Could you be that wall?

Hmm I'm holding something, holding something off. Uuhm, Oh, there is a whole space there on the other side!

Later he said: "I've had this problem as a sort of point or clump. I didn't know there was a whole space there to go into."

I find that it helps me to ask this question: "Where do dreamer and dream disagree?" Then I may wait a while to go there, but after a while I want to struggle a little for a possible step at that point.

HOW SHOULD IT GO?

This point is closely related to the first. What the dream presents is often just the present state of a situation. Since we want a step of movement, one way to find it is to ask: How *should* the situation be? This is an internally arising "should," and we won't know until a step comes. But I can ask in the direction of a universal human sort of "should."

There was a dead man lying on top of this thing that was a cross between a bed and an altar (part of a longer dream).

What feeling goes with that dead man? Who is he?

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Oh, that's my creative part. It's dead. (sigh) I know about that.

Well, we don't want to leave your creative part dead. See if he can move or do something. Just wait to see what he does.

He sat right up!

With many dreams I ask what should happen. Should one's creative part be dead? Surely not.

I use this, as I do the above, to generate possibilities. I am aware that this one can contradict the other one, but I don't insist on either. Either one can suggest avenues which, once thought of, enable us to try things.

Like the first point above, this one has been implicit in the method all along. In the book there is a dream about a mother pig that acts very unlike how the real animal would act. So I asked the dreamer what a real mother pig would do. That gave us the step.

What is new here is to apply this more broadly. In any dream I can ask: What should happen instead? What would be a totally sound way it could be? Of course I don't know, but it leads to ways of working.

THE CRUCIAL BITS OF HELP A DREAM BRINGS:

Even when it is evident where in the dream the main issue lies, usually I do not ask into it immediately. I ask some of the questions, usually about the setting, the plot, the characters.

Now I have a new addition: If we haven't already found some help, I go looking in the odd places and also among the ordinary objects in the dream until I find some help.

What I mean by "help" is something positive that we want to take with us when we come to work on the main issue. It is something which will let us do better than we would if we went to the issue directly.

In the book I pointed out that any living thing is positive in some way. Any green thing, any animal, a child.

If there is a dog or a whale, we want to feel or be it, and have its new energy already with us before we tackle the tough part.

Now I add: If something helpful, something with positive life energy doesn't already stand out, let's look for something like that.

I think that if a dream brings an issue to work on, it also brings some help, some change in the usual set, something extra with positive energy—something, so that we don't just tackle a stuck issue in the way the person always does, and get stuck once more. I find it's worth looking for something like that so that we can process the issue in a new way that the dream helps us to have.

Of course we would expect such help from any novel, odd and very noticeable things that some dreams bring. For example, if there are two sculptured bowls, or some odd box with sticks coming out of it—or anything of that sort—of course we would attend to

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anything like that before we tackled the main issue. After all, these are things the dream brought, things the dream made up, so we surely expect help from those.

Tell me more about those bowls.

They were sculpted with animals and plants that stuck out, the rest of the bowl was set back, and (more detail follows).

Please now feel those bowls (perhaps be those bowls), let your body feel (be) them. Take some time for that.

(breath)

Let's take that body-feeling with us, so it's with us now, as we go on.

Another example:

On the bridge an old man was standing.

(Various questions about him; nothing much came out of those.)

Let's have that old man stay with us as we go on. Does that seem possible, to have his company with us as we go on?

One would surely attend to those bowls and that old man on the bridge. My point here has concerned less noticeable things, things that seem to be nothing, for example, the door, the bed, the wall. ("Where did you ever encounter a door like that?" "What is the feel-quality of this door?" "Be that door.")

Where did you ever see a bed like that?

I don't know, uhm....Oh, that was the bed where I used to go and sit while my parents were fighting. It was safe to sit there.

Oh. Now please go and sit on that bed, feel yourself sitting on that bed from here on in. Let's make that our base of operations and from now on we'll do every thing from there. OK?

Another example:

Can I tell you only just a part of my dream?

Sure, but have the rest of it with you so that inside you the whole dream is what you work with.

It's about something painful.

Then she told only the brief part she wanted to tell. She already knew what issue the dream was about. She didn't say what it was, but evidently it was very sore. Without knowing what it was, I had the feeling of it.

I didn't want to ask into that issue before finding some help from the dream, but I didn't find anything more in the small part she told. So I said:

In the rest of the dream is there perhaps an animal or a plant, or a baby, or some living thing or some beautiful thing?

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(Silence.) There was a child.

Yes, that's what I mean. A child is always a good thing.

I think there were more children.

Can we have those children with us as we go on? Maybe could we have them all around us? Would that be all right?

(Sigh.)

Her whole body changed. It eased a little from that extreme sore tension she had had till now. I could see that those children brought some safety—or at least the possibility of safety.

Then she said:

I could use a whole army of children around me!

[1] Gendlin, E.T., *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams*, Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications. 1986.

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