

REALITY MAKES THE DREAM MORE BEAUTIFUL

Translation by Greta Bianchi

I find that the relationship between dream and reality is an ever-present and stimulating topic.

Already the fact of considering the letter “r” of the word reality as small or to represent it with uppercase places us immediately in different scenarios, even if combined and complemented by a single Origin.

The first scenario, the one of *reality* with a tiny “r”, invites us to the personal experience in its historical and material development, proportionate to what can be encountered in our ordinary daily life in terms of stimuli, resources, obstacles and opportunities. Therefore, a personal experience that is also commensurate to what we can achieve, between limits and potentialities, through the humanly variable action of our personal self. But we know - and sometimes we even “feel” - that the human will, at least the authentic one, originates from a spiritual, constantly creative and dynamic dimension, that its origin belongs to the second scenario, that of Reality with the capital “R”.

It is from this dimension that the Higher Self sends us its “dream”. A “dream” meant as a new perspective that we can embrace only if we can open ourselves, if we can rediscover our true essence within that cone of light that describes the inviting and including boundaries of a sacred space in which the wonder, the sense of righteousness, the knowledge and the clear vision of things, together with the sense of unity and new sociality, appear to us as standing out signals, essential and vivid.

Within each of these scenarios – the personal and the universal - we could identify the multiple meanings that the word *dream* can contain and inspire. From the Freudian conception that sees the dream as a “fulfillment of a removed desire” to the Jungian one, which reads in the dream “the development lines of psychic potentials”

not yet realized, up to the existential conception that understands the dream as, namely, the “being in the world”, just to briefly mention the most significant views.

In any case, both words - *dream* and *reality* - are linked together by a kind of rhythm, a pulse that highlights the reciprocal, necessary synchronicity. It seems to me that this is exactly the point: in a perspective of harmony that can describe the state of health and happiness of the human being, the space of one could only put its own embryo in the other one’s time ... and vice versa. I like to imagine the relationship between them as the symbol of the Tao, eternal cycle and complementary aspect, indeed, between opposing elements that are interconnected and that generate each other constantly, in a process of continuous transformation and change towards the only and indivisible reality of Being. A reality in which space and time are eternally combined as two faces of that same coin that, no matter how hard we try to make that coin thinner, it will always represent its value on both faces and, with them, in both of its dimensions.

Without the spark of desire, the will does not light up; without strong-willed realizations, dreams remain ghosts lost in the stars. The desire remains an idealized aspiration, a synthesis conceived only “in the mind of Zeus” but not inspired, not yet descended and embodied in the personal human experience and hence useless in the construction of life, of any life, especially when we understand it as a “work of art”.⁽¹⁾

And here comes an image, linked to a personal memory. It is the memory of what it feels like in front of a deteriorated wooden structure, altered in its shape and made anonymous by the corrosive and blurring appearance of time. First of all, you feel the desire to uncover the vital nucleus, the original note, the soul, in order at first to understand it, and then to plan the process of returning it to the present - and thus also to a possible future - with all its value and significance that gradually return to manifest in the most appropriate form, in the new equilibrium between form and essence, in its coming back to singing. Yes: an antique piece of furniture, a statue, a well-restored frame must “sing”.

However, before and during the realization of this, how much commitment, patience, tenacity, impotence, anger

and passion... just to proceed to the next step. What if this was „the soul of the song”? What if this is the flesh and blood of its words and its music? Judging by sensations, images and emotions that I came across during the long days of intervention in the laboratory, immersed in the relationship with those objects, with those “you” made *also* of wood, both common and precious, of chalk, grout and pure gold, hour after hour and until the end of the day, I’d say that the soul of that song was there, in that exact time suspended in an infinitely expanded space and consecrated by the gestures and movements of my body becoming increasingly easy, light, almost guided by an awareness that transcended the personal one. The walls and the ceiling disappeared to merge with a wider breath but also with a delicate tremor that moved at the center of my heart. And like that, gestures and movements simply “happened”, guided by a will that permeated all the sounds, odors, shapes and consistencies animating that time and space.

Even the images, the right proportions suitable for holding the meeting between my attention and the story, the life history of that object took shape little by little. The flesh and blood of that song were in that kind of walking dream that invited me to look beyond the threshold of change. And all this was made alive by the movement of my hands. In that moment, my happiness and my soul lived through my hands. I remember the words of a teacher of the time: “... *This is not about making prestige games, or doing tricks perhaps to turn a donkey into a racing horse. It is rather about helping a battered donkey, perhaps resigned to its aches and pains, to go back to live as a Mister Donkey.*”

I realize only today that at that time, more than thirty years ago, that metaphor was to me a genuine revelation about the meaning of the word *transformation*. First of all, a formidable remedy against my anxiety during my adolescence and, later on, in other critical moments, a bridge that was swinging but directed just enough to get me through abysses of darkness and loss of meaning in my life. I found again the same idea, so simple and yet so great, in the thought of Roberto Assagioli and, through him, in the heritage of wisdom borrowed by great masters of all times.

Thinking back to my experience as a craftsman, I realize that only years later I could recognize the authentic meaning of that cycle that was so important in my life. Today, the illuminating words that Mahatma Gandhi pronounced about the educational value of manual work contribute as well to the retrieval of that meaning:

“I firmly believe in the educational value of manual work. A useful manual work, intelligently executed, is the instrument par excellence of intellectual development (...). A balanced intellect reckons the harmonious growth of body, mind and soul. The intelligence that develops through socially useful manual work will be a ready-to-serve tool and it will not be easy to mislead it. The intelligence developed in a different way is a real plague.”

He also said: *“We must revolutionize our education. The brain needs to be polished through the hand. If I was a poet, I would write verses on the multiple capacities of the five fingers. But why thinking that the mind is everything and hands and feet are nothing? Those who do not exercise their hands, those who do only follow the ordinary path of education, do not feel in their soul the music of their life. Their faculties are not fully operational.”*⁽²⁾

Frankly, nothing to me seems more appropriate and provocatively stimulating in this age that imposes the supremacy of the liquid, fast, and video-centric virtuality over the virtuous, slow and solid processuality of relationships “with bare hands” in flesh, bones and soul.

Whenever I dedicate myself to the garden, when I bend to the ground, when I walk through the stumps or I stretch out to the upper branches, whenever I let my sweat and physical fatigue blend with that delicate tremor in my heart, it is as if the experience of all the manual work of my life converged to the present, becoming simple gratitude in the contemplation of what there is around me. It is as if, through my hands, I could reconnect with the universal nature of beauty and with the scenarios that it can open to the future. It is true: every season brings in itself, in its utmost brilliance and vital splendor, its own end as well and, together with it, the embryo of what will come afterwards.

What we, as human beings, can and really want to

experience, representing ourselves as living selves⁽³⁾, needs a gradual process to reveal itself in the light of consciousness and to get realized. Every partial and momentary synthesis carries within itself the reality and hence also the value of our conflicts, the fatigue and the pain as possible dynamic elements, pushing to make the next step. But it also carries the attractive energy of our center of consciousness that reflects a universal and stable Principle of Love, an absolute Reality instinctively projected into action and in the full manifestation of itself, in the process of becoming.

Nonetheless, in order to experience this reflection of the higher self in the center of consciousness and to “taste” it firmly enough, it is necessary to recognize the function of those external unifying centers that can help to keep alive the spark of desire and, together with it, the possibility that new actions can keep alive its meaning, purpose and project.

More specifically, as Roberto Assagioli argues⁽⁴⁾, this external unifying center is “*an indirect but true link, a point of connection between the personal man and his higher Self, which is reflected and symbolized in that object...*”.

Therefore, in addition to intelligent and creative manual work, to nature and to beauty, I try to reunify in a single image other *connection points* that support the relationship between dream and reality and the possible presence of the Self in each relationship. The image is that of a father and a teenage boy standing in front of each other, in the kitchen at home.

Sometime before I have had a dream to which I had not given too much importance. In that dream, there were my two teenage sons - or at least it seemed to me - and one of them grabbed my shoulders and shook me, yelling “*Do you understand how important it is? I really mean it! Did you understand well?*”.

What had happened before this sentence was not clear and did not emerge afterwards. Therefore I could not grasp the meaning and the importance of the dream, except from the fact that it could have come from the opposing and conflictual phase experienced then, more or less intensely, with my son. The interesting thing is that a while later, perhaps two or three months, while

I was standing in front of him - the real 16-year-old son - there was no trace of that incomplete sentence inside of me. Everything was forgotten. What was there between us was just my cumbersome disappointment: I felt helpless in front of his indifference for continuous failures at school.

To be able to put some distance from my feeling of powerlessness, I attempted a dialogue with him about his personal value and on how important it was to decide, sooner or later, to feel responsible for it. I also added, as if it was not enough, that my trust in him required being respected and honored certainly as a legitimate gift, but not an unconditioned one.

As I wait for his answer and in the meanwhile I wonder about how he has understood my words, something happens.

He turns his head a little, as if to hide his eyes filled with tears but also with indignation, and he tells me: “*In the end, it feels like I am not able to live in this world. I feel inadequate, empty, I do not understand myself. Even all that I see, all the dialogs, the gestures, the behaviors of the others often seem absurd to me, paradoxical, fake, they disgust me... And yet, when then I behave in the same way, like them, I’m fine and I’m content ... I even feel happy ... do you understand I am saying?*”.

The first thing I feel is fear. I’m suspended on a dark vortex that pulls me downwards. For an everlasting moment pictures, thoughts, even smells that I believed to be stratified and inert, they all come back. I was wrong. But then I forget about that old fear because I am focusing on his discomfort. I reply to him with a nod, I want to be part of his disappointment, with his disillusionment in discovering a new existential condition: to be alone, really alone in the world. The Innocent has abandoned the green paradise of unconditional love to experience the Orphan, exposed to all the difficulties and vicissitudes of life. His parents, far from being omnipotent, can no longer protect him.

“... *But do you truly understand?*”, he asks with a voice full of anger and disbelief, standing in front of me, without moving. So I move towards him, just by one step. And I wait, while telling him something about his solitude, about his being *atomos*, alone, unique, indivisible,

original, with all that space inside him that he can fill as he wants without rush, little by little, perhaps becoming like the Wanderer who undertakes his heroic journey, discovering that he can clear away the superfluous and fill his new space with what looks more beautiful, more useful, better for him, what he prefers.

He gets closer and rests his head on my shoulder: how heavy it is and full of curls, they are so black to almost look bluish. I caress his head telling him that at his age I was afraid to be strange too, even to be crazy and I used to think things I could not understand.

"I take care of you and like this I heal myself" ... I am repeating this to myself like a *mantra*, and in the meanwhile I regain control and intimacy with myself.

He hugs me and I hug him too. And there it comes, along with a long silence, that delicate tremor in my heart. His confidence is breathing a sigh of relief on my heart. I have opened myself to the authenticity and warmth of my humanity that blends with his, and it is as if I became better and happier in every cell of my body and in every aspect of my personality. Everything seems clearer, simpler and easier to read, more essential.

This is not the same son I used to hold in my arms or held my hand: he has now a thick beard and plays 70s music with the electric guitar, he wears a black t-shirt with "Bad Religion" written in a no sign, criticizes the school system because "inadequate and insufficient from the point of view of both content and methods", he is appreciated and esteemed by teachers and companions, while he gets lost in his non-involvement in the study and in the indolence that comes from having almost all the answers in Google and all "friendship requests" on Facebook.

But there is also another teenager, "my" one that I have mentioned and emerges now from the mists of memory: the Shadow of a boy who was afraid of madness and who did not understand the meaning of his thoughts, always so inadequate when comparing them to those of the others. Always so capable of creating poetic images for every name, for every gaze and every gesture denied or avoided. But these are things I already know, re-emerged and investigated in at least twenty years of personal work, "transfer and counter-transfer" with relative supervision, therapeutic groups and training... However, it feels as if

this embrace with my son, here and now, is the only act, the only event that can dissolve a nucleus of deeper fear. It is as if his trust, no longer absolute and unconditional as when he was an Innocent, but gradual and motivated, as an Orphan disappointed and outraged, could become a point of connection with that wider and more capable love that has also allowed me to find words, gestures, the right presence in this moment, for him and for me.

"I take care of you and like this I heal myself" ...

That mantra still echoes in the bright space of the soul where my son and I met, together with the memory of a boy like many others, who grew up as many others without the embrace and the encouragement of a father.

Now despair leaves space to hope, the shadow of abandonment becomes certainty that the day follows the night and that solitude is precisely the existential condition that witnesses this cyclical passage, this continuation of life between light and shadow, between fullness and emptiness, words and silence.

It is true that the task of the Hero is not to kill but to name the Dragon, namely, to restore a communication, a true relationship with the world - in particular with one's inner world - after returning to it an identity, after naming it.⁽⁵⁾

Now that adolescent can be fully understood and named, even illuminated by a dream that comes true. Actually, I prefer to say it like this: from a reality that makes the dream more beautiful.

Stefano Pelli

Essential References

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