

The Gap in Consciousness

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I would like to take you on a little imaginative journey that I originally published in my book¹. But I am not quite sure if it is completely imaginative or if it contains some truth. It is the story of how we humans divided our spectrum of consciousness into conscious and unconscious.

To relive this, imagine that you fancy a little adventure, to take a walk on the very wild side. You decide to sleep outside for some nights. But you won't do it in your garden, no; you do it in unspoiled nature, maybe at the edge of the woods or in a woodland clearing. I would recommend you choose a region that is unknown to you and far from your home, maybe even abroad. Of course you leave your cell phone at home. If you were a Boy or Girl Scout in your youth, you already have a basis for your little imagination. But this time, it is not allowed to sleep in a tent, never mind a group tent. No, it should be completely outside, without protection and alone. A sleeping bag is allowed, but nothing underneath it. Your nest should not be too comfortable.

Now you sit in the evening before your little fire and the twilight is fading. You lay down. A fresh wind springs up and strikes through the leaves and blades of dry grass. The fire may glow and crack for some more time but it will finally go out. Unfortunately, it turns out that your flashlight doesn't work. Finally you lay in your sleeping bag which gives you sufficient warmth, but is not comfortable. You hear all kinds of sounds. It creaks - there is a rustling noise - a bird is calling. Didn't you hear some soft and slow footsteps? I hope that snails don't come and slime over your body or you turn in the night on one - ugh! An uncanny feeling is creeping up; your fantasy begins to work. What if a badger or even worse a wolf or a bear is approaching your nest? It would be very difficult to defend yourself. - In short you crack up a bit; your senses are extremely sharp and your thoughts race through your mind. - How should you sleep in this state?

This continues for some hours and there is no end in sight. But finally you drop off without recognizing it. Maybe you wake up several times from your light sleep or from confused dreams. Maybe you sit up or even walk up and down for a while. But it is pointless because you need sleep and finally you continue to doze. But then you wake up again because you heard a loud crack. It shocks you deeply because it is so near. Your hair bristles - before you stands a fully grown demon, upright and looking quite clumsy and bulky. Because you know something about fairy tales and sagas you realize that this must be a troll, a species known for its maliciousness. He is grunting and approaching you heavily. Like greased lightning you are out of your bag! The troll is happy because he seizes your sleeping bag and examines it curiously. Maybe he wonders what it is good for. But satisfied with his trophy he pushes off silently growling and you stand there trembling. After a while your tension subsides and you wake up slowly, or you turn your

attention to your outer senses because you were already wide awake before, and you realize that it is already broad daylight. The birds are chirping and your sleeping bag is still here.

This must have been an out of body experience, a lucid or a true dream because this was not like a dream at all as you know them from your ordinary nights. It was very realistic, all senses were included and you were wide awake. What you experienced was real and true but you were in the world of dreams, which might be quite similar or even the same as the waking world, but usually there are some slight differences. In our case it was obvious – the troll! This kind of experience happens if the body is tired, but the mind is wide awake. The combination of sleep and wakefulness allows you to enter another world. In our example, the instincts and the interruption of your daily sleeping habits caused this state and our imaginative experience is suitable for developing certain trains of thought.

Activate again your fantasy and imagine how things went for our far ancestors in the early Stone Age. The fire was not tamed yet. You can easily comprehend that our ancestors didn't know fixed sleeping periods like nowadays. They had to be vigilant all the time. Surely they had longer or shorter naps during the night, but also during the day. Probably some of the tribe had to be on watch. It might never happen that the whole tribe was asleep at the same time. And the sleep was often not very deep. Experiences like the one I just described were probably the order of those days and nights. Our ancestors didn't know a sharp distinction between day and night, between sleeping, dreaming and waking. Often they moved on the border between waking and sleeping and had waking dreams accordingly. They did not merely live consciously in the physical world, but also in the mental world of dreams. They did not only get in fights with mammoths and saber-toothed tigers, but also with demons, trolls and dragons. Possibly they maintained friendly and helpful relations with creatures of the dream world. Probably they succeeded in living more in that world when there was a shortage of food because it is well known that a full belly leads to a heavier and deeper sleep.

But how could they tell their relatives what they experienced in their dreams? This problem might have been a trigger for developing language, which probably was more like some kind of mimic gestures, a dance or play acting with the accompaniment of various guttural sounds which, over time, crystallized into fixed combinations and finally into words and terms. Painting was probably also developed due to this problem of articulation. But all those arts, including language and writing, might have been developed when the continuum of consciousness was more and more distinguished into the conscious and the unconscious. In dreams the arts of communication were and are still not necessary because knowledge in that state is instantaneous and spontaneous. Only in the waking state, where consciousness is attracted and bound by the outer senses, access to inner information was more and more limited. This early stage of the continuum of consciousness might have lasted thousands of years but I cannot judge it as being primitive. It was simply different. Although those humans had fully developed and strong physical bodies, they still lived in the dreamy otherworld. Mentally they were somehow not fully incarnated. Their interest was not only in coping with the waking

world but also with the dream world. They didn't focus as exclusively on the physical world and its manipulation as we do nowadays. Out of that state fairytales, sagas and especially the big myths were born. Those were not meant to be entertainment and amusement, but a descriptive map for mental orientation.

But, in the course of time, a shift of consciousness occurred. Probably, the discovery of physical death with its burial ceremonies and the taming of fire were key factors in this development. The first could only be discovered when the focus was sufficiently targeted on physical reality and led to more activity in protecting personal and tribal life. The latter leads to a safer night, where most of the tribe could sleep more soundly because wild animals could be kept at a distance and the sleeping body was warmer. This surely was safer and more comfortable, but the price was the loss of a quality of consciousness which is extremely lacking in our western culture.

In the course of this development a certain specialization was taking place: One of the tribe was a good hunter, the other a skillful toolmaker or tailor. A third could still shift easily between the two worlds and the profession of the shaman was born. He still had access to the instant and spontaneous knowledge of the dream world and he was consulted when the tribe needed to decide the direction they should travel to find enough nourishment. He knew about hidden mental and natural powers and was able to heal. The others also had those capabilities to some extent but they lost them more and more by focusing on the manipulation of the physical world. The unconscious was born and divided from consciousness. Daily activities were increasingly separated from dreamy experiences. Dreamtime, as the Australian aborigines call it, ended and disappeared in slumber.

The development of script and numbers, which were essential for the installation of empires, the setup of trade and the introduction of duties and taxes deepened that trend considerably by establishing religions and dogmatism which were based on scriptures. The shamans evolved into priests who increasingly related to a canon of scriptures and less to their inner vision and they were more and more obliged to a ruler or to a religious hierarchy. The power of dreaming still remained to some extent, as it is known by Egyptian and Greek priests, but it was slowly forgotten. In the same time the numinous and spiritual powers in human consciousness disappeared and were projected on a transcendent god in the beyond, as is known in Christianity.

Now, we slowly approach modern western culture where priests rely exclusively on scriptures, institutional traditions and chief priests, who fix what is right and wrong. But this development debased religion and the power of priests because they lost the occult abilities to bridge the inner and outer worlds. This gave rise to the natural sciences which needed script as a prerequisite and which exclusively focused on the manipulation of matter to improve our lives, making them more comfortable. But sleep deepened and the gap between the waking and dreaming worlds became quite distinct. The development of philosophy and science brought forth the mental construct of objective reality, which is independent of subjective awareness, and the linear logical analysis which is quite different from the associative processes in dreaming consciousness. These

theories and mental approaches are firmly based on the described gap in consciousness.

The gap between conscious and unconscious is so deep that most people today are not able to remember dreams or to occupy themselves with that topic, because they seem meaningless and pointless. The exclusive focus on the highly structured life during the day exhausts them in such a way that modern people only want to sleep and to recover for the next day. It is not possible for them to organize their sleep time in anything but one period at night. Even naps after lunch have disappeared in the last decades. But with this mode of sleeping it is quite difficult to find the balance between waking and sleeping necessary for entering consciously the world of dreams. In short, today's consciousness is highly focused and concentrated and gave rise to enormous developments in the manipulation of matter. But the price was the loss of a larger spectrum of consciousness. Mentally and spiritually we evolved in some way to become disabled bunglers, amputated by at least one half of consciousness or more.

Now we have come to an end of our imaginative and speculative journey. It is up to you to find truth in it. And to bridge the gap between the conscious and unconscious it does not help to stare at MRI screens and EEG graphs but to journal one's own dreams and to discuss them at the morning table, because this gap is immaterial and within the subject, not outside it. The second step in this western kind of dream yoga is to train lucidity.

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¹ Gassmann, Christoph: Träume erinnern, eine Anleitung zu bewussterem Träumen; 3. überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage; Norderstedt 2011