

AMPLIFICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS  
ON A DREAM:  
THE TALKING HEAD ON THE BRICKS OF EROS

RUNNING HEAD: Talking Head, Eros

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I amplify and reflect on an archetypal dream that symbolizes a marriage of Eros and Logos. The dream indicates the need to meaningfully assimilate aspects of the elemental anima into consciousness. In practice this means that the symbolic dream experience needs to be realized in daily life.

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Introduction

In this brief paper I amplify and reflect on a short dream of a man in his early fifties who has been involved in an inner life for many years. Essentially the dream presents the dreamer with a question that seems to involve integrating values of the elemental anima into his conscious values and conduct. I discuss the dream and implications for his life in the following section.

Amplifications and Reflections on a Dream: The Talking Head

The dream, along with amplifications and reflections, follows:

I open a glass door and go inside a well-lit square shaped room. To my astonishment, there is a head stuck on a red brick wall on the left-hand side that is a couple of feet higher than my head. The bricks are arranged horizontally in the normal fashion. In an evenly toned manner, the head says: "What are you looking for (Exhibit)?" I am alarmed and wake up with a pounding heart.

A spiritualization process allows one to see through glass while gaining the advantage of distancing. However it also has the effect of separating experience from emotions and feeling. Now that the dream ego enters the room, there is direct emotional and feeling engagement in the dream itself and potentially for ego consciousness in daily reality, symbolically alluded to in the dream. Going inside also represents introversion. Although the dream ego is not the waking ego, it represents either attitudes or values that can be relatively easily assimilated to consciousness or "an aspect of habitual consciousness" (Bosnak, 1986, p. 23). As August Civik (1990, p. 213) observes, "Our

waking sense of I-ness in actuality depends on underlying assumptions and connections that can more clearly be revealed by the activities of the dream ego.”

As the “talking head” is higher than the dream ego, it represents a relatively superior point of view. It formulates a question that can be taken paradoxically in two different ways. Firstly, the question can be interpreted as “What are you looking for?” with emphasis on the what. Secondly, with an inflection at the end of the sentence, it can be understood as “why are you looking?” The first interpretation suggests that the dreamer is confronted with the ethical obligation to reflect on the significance of matters that presently concern him in his actual daily life. I will only note here that they have to do with his work as a therapist, his setting up a private practice and woman with a borderline personality disorder. The second way of interpreting the question implies that there is no need to actively search but that the answer is already there, although it requires full conscious acceptance and understanding.

The shape of the room, the red bricks and the “talking head” all symbolically point to the answer. The square shape of the room indicates intensity and fixity in life, and karmic limits (Johnston, 1990). It can also be taken to represent the Self and core of being (Johnston, 1974). As the bricks are red, this colour is significant. Jung (1975) chooses red to represent the physical pole of the archetypal spectrum, including instinctual dynamism and the readiness for action. It also relates to the alchemical *rubedo* (Jung, 1975), symbolizing the dawn and suggesting life and Eros, the binding and loosening of relationships.

The head, a favorite symbol of the alchemists, represents the principle of Logos, that is to say meaning and discernment (Jung, 1975). The separation of the head from the body emphasizes detachment and understanding (Jung, 1974). As the head is now “married” to the red brick wall, it represents discernment, meaning and understanding in Eros. As the wall and the head are on the left as the dream ego enters the room, the message symbolized here still resides in the unconscious (Jung, 1974). Altogether, then, the scene seems to suggest that, with an introverted attitude, full engagement with Eros, along with the suffering entailed, will potentially yield discernment, meaning and understanding.

Given the archetypal nature of the dream, one can expect related synchronistic events, both inner and outer (Jung, 1974). As I suggested earlier, the dream probably has to do with the dreamer’s therapy practice and an actual woman, as both dominate his conscious concerns. Regarding the woman, he has experienced her in the way that he depicted in the following poem, that is to say like a Salome figure, both seductive and life destroying:

A Love Song

You came, like  
A mountainous wave  
Of Power  
That swept me  
Passionately  
To your embrace.  
You spoke sweetly,  
Endearing me  
To your sensuous lips.  
You enticed me  
Black Salome.

As you danced wantonly  
To the moon!

I drown in  
Your limped eyes,  
Dark orbs  
Of liquid honey.  
I drink.  
I see fire  
Dear heart, fire!

And you dance wantonly  
To the moon!

I see death.  
Your eyes  
Turn vague  
Your tongue  
Speaks false  
Your heart  
Turns cold.

And you dance.

All that remains  
Is love.  
All that  
Remains

For the dance.

The poem not only reflects the dreamer's lived experience with this woman but several related dreams as well.

In fact there is a meaningful legend about Salome and John the Baptist that is relevant to these reflections. As synchronicity had it the dreamer was recently unexpectedly invited out to an acquaintance's place to watch a rather camp rendition of a video on Oscar Wilde's play, The Last Dance of Salome, which reminded him of the legendary

story. More importantly, it also allowed him to “see” more clearly what was happening in his life. He subsequently listened to Richard Strauss’ recording of Salome, an operatic rendition of Wilde’s play.

According to the legend, Salome, Herod’s stepdaughter, finds herself attracted to John the Baptist, who repudiates her advances due to his one-sided ascetic spiritual leanings. Salome, who represents the elemental anima, behind which stands such goddesses of Eros as Ishtar and Innana (Jung, 1963), is not amused. She consequently has Herod decapitate him, at which time she kisses the lips of the severed head presented to her on a platter, suggesting a kind of death-marriage.

John the Baptist’s repudiation of Salome is, to say the least, an inadequate response to her enticements and he received his just desserts. But Salome is also killed by Herod, as he cannot appreciate her brutal vengefulness and presumably, from the point of view of the legend, so that the death-marriage can be realized. From a psychological perspective, these events transpire essentially because of a lack of conscious relationship between the principles represented by John the Baptist and Salome, that is to say between Logos and the elemental anima, each of which is perverted.

The requirement today is for reconciliation of these two principles, where one discovers meaning by assimilating qualities of the elemental anima, a particularly difficult undertaking for the contemporary man. Jung (1963) himself had a vision of Salome and

Elijah and writes that there are several legends worldwide of wise old men, exponents of Logos, who leave the world accompanied with a young woman representing Eros, for example, Lao-Tzu and a young dancer, and Simon Magus and Helen of Troy. In comparison, John the Baptist's ascetic solution is wanting despite his spiritual relationship to the Logos principle. There is a need for full engagement with Eros in its aspect as an elemental anima as well as Logos albeit, in this case, in a primarily introverted way, along with detachment from extroverted values. As the bricks in the dream are placed horizontally, leaving life itself in the way of Lao-Tzu and Simon Magus is not indicated (Jung, 1965). Rather, intense introverted involvement with the natural anima, along with full engagement in the horizontal dimension of life is.

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The dream comes as a forceful compensation to the dreamer's conscious attitude. As the dreamer's dream ego was alarmed at the scene and since he woke up with a pounding heart, confrontation comes from the non-ego, the Self. The ethical task now is for the realization of this symbolic reality into daily life. As I indicated above, it no doubt has to do with the practice of therapy, where realization of the unconventional symbolic reality symbolized here, that is to say values of Eros and the elemental anima, would be of great value. Inasmuch as it involves internalization of these values, archetypal projections onto a real Salome type woman need to be withdrawn. That encourages a more positive relationship with these qualities.

This is the answer to the question put to the dreamer by the “talking head.” What he is looking for is a conscious assimilation of qualities of the elemental anima. This will allow him to withdraw projections from a real woman and to bring these qualities into the way he conducts his life, specifically his practice of therapy. As alluded to in the second way of understanding the question, coming to this realization does not involve actively searching but becoming more conscious of synchronistic events presently being played out in his life and their meaning.

EXHIBIT



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