

FROM *VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE*¹ (1953)

DOLFI TROST

FROM PART TWO: “THE SENSE OF AN IMAGE”

I had a dream: a suite of scenes and familiar theater where, as always, fragments of known and unknown beings moved. A dream like all the others, one whose routine symbolizations of desire it is useless to detail, for the symbolic content of any interpretation that might be useful to the wide-awake is of little importance here.²

Toward the end, a few seconds before I woke, this dream took a tragic turn.

It is upon this final set of images, as common an occurrence for other dreamers as for myself, that I must turn our attention. At a certain point the dream lost its lively, anecdotic, and condensed character, and launched suddenly into a last, terrible scene, where it came to a halt.

It is after veering in this direction (for reasons unknown and not at all justified by the preceding dramatization) that it becomes disquieting to the highest degree and that, once it takes hold, it intimates the possibility that the dreamer might never emerge from that bottomless darkness from which the dream first arose.³

1 Dolfi Trost, *Visible et invisible* (Paris: Éditions Arcanes, 1953).

2 The dream is a “motor derangement”: the oneiric scene is continually in agitation, and any dream without hyperkinesia becomes a nightmare and interrupts itself. The transformation of movement into “oneiric catatonia,” usually heralded by a period of anguish, is thus experienced as a progressive petrification of the interior scene.

3 Thought becomes cinematographic, the sentiment of nature rises anew, the geometry of autumn lets loose a clamor.

When we dream in this way, this final scene, which in its intrinsic violence forces us back awake, also places us before an age-old problem. It is a problem directly addressed to us, one from which the only escape is to wake. And as we know, this waking is experienced as a consolation, but only because of the qualitative change in our situation and not at all because we have answered to the terrible interrogation posed during the night.

This final scene—the nightmare—cannot be reduced to the phenomenon of *déjà vu*, to the mechanism of unconscious compensation, or to any other rational explanation that is perhaps true in a sense but devoid of any interest for the *intrinsic* significance of the dream.⁴

Reaching the place where the dramatization had led me, by way of the adventures that weave the plot of all dreams, I inwardly saw myself in a street, at the point of heading home.

For those inclined to detect, in oneiric images, memories from diurnal life, I will add that the street, and the house that appeared there, quite resembled those in the world of wakeful perception. All the preceding adventures, likewise, had been a medley of persons and objects familiar to memory.

In front of the door, I stopped to ask myself whether, considering the late hour (I realized this in the dream), another destination was still possible. I posed this question to myself just as precisely as in wakeful thought: still reflecting, I lifted my head, the sky was serene, the stars sparkled.

If certain parts of the dream are easily recognized as having earlier belonged to various aspects of reality, we can infer that its other parts, which we cannot find in our memory, are still things we once perceived in times past.⁵

It would be hard to admit that one set of visual elements in our dreams can have a source completely different from the rest, and in any case we experience everything, at the moment of its unfolding, as a unified ensemble. There would be no reason to believe that what is strange and unknown in our dreams is pure invention; we may more probably suppose a progressive “decantation,” whereby the more recent data of memory cede their place to images that are equally real, but which have reached us from a far greater distance.

4 Here, a schizophrenic dialogue:—There is something, but say then what there is?—I don't know, but there is something.

5 Autoscopy (interior seeing), just like certain telepathies and monitions, leads victoriously to true vision, liberated from optical impositions.

Perhaps, as it proceeds, the dream liberates itself from immediate memory and comes close to revelation—and this is what is so disquieting in its development.

Still debating whether to return home, I lifted my eyes again and saw, right above me, the moon. It is then that a terrifying image struck me, transforming my dream into nightmare.

I saw our familiar moon in its splendor, but its position was *more distant* in the sky. At the same time, it was *bigger*. Beside it, two small *satellites* turned one around the other, like twin stars. It was the sight of these two celestial bodies that I knew, even then, to be foreign to the sky, which filled me with a strange anguish, and woke me.

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The image I describe in this dream figures, I believe, at a certain moment in all human dreams, and seems to belong, though the circumstances vary, to a collective unconscious—an idea that should not be pursued along positivist lines. It has therefore the value of a dream type, arising as it does from these staggering celestial visions that render null and void more than one grand principle of the moderns.

There exists a cosmological *given*.

The human being finds itself in a dream, alone, in the agonizing night of the universe.

It feels, then, a terrible incompatibility between living matter and the matter of the world.

And this world is huge, cold, empty, black.

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Now, the historical relation toward the world is thoroughly vital and social: its role is biological in the strict sense. Life within communities tends first and foremost to obliterate any consciousness of our participation in the cosmic course. The role of history, even in its most murderous epochs, is to reassure, to force us to live, to provide a counterbalance to the fear of the stars.

In dream, the *historical given* is progressively abolished along with the disappearance of symbols. As all diurnal residues disappear, as the oneiric current deepens, cosmic consciousness continues to rise with overpowering force. Upon waking, as we take up the ties that bind us to bright-lit day, the more we forget the truth that the dream managed to lay bare before us. . . . Lightened of its historical and parasitic elements, the dream recalls to us, obsessively, that before all we are the inhabitants of a *planet* and that we live literally in the sky.

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The true point that ties dream and madness is the sentiment of immediate and effective belonging to the world of stars and planets.

In our day to belong in a *conscious* manner to the cosmos can become, by various paths, a tyrannical idea: when thought takes itself for its own object—when it is constantly aware of itself as thought—this idea invades it and creates, depending on its presence or absence, an ontological difference between beings.

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In diurnal life, as in dream, the irruption of the cosmological given begins with a strange disquietude. This is nothing but a veiled and obscure form of the cosmic, whatever might be the explanation of this phenomenon provided by psychoanalysis (no doubt valid in its own sphere). . . . One would like to define this strange disquietude as the fortuitous meeting of a familiar object with the cosmic charge that it reflects.

Our consciousness of belonging to the celestial sphere should, in the future, be incorporated into revolutionary consciousness.

There is an error in believing that one must turn away from this awareness in order to serve an immediate cause, and in believing that any attempt to overturn the present conditions of the human world should put it out of mind.

FROM PART ONE: “SHADOW TACTICS”

The breath that moves us is absolutely other; the *unknown* that draws us cannot be mistaken for a secret; it must not be supposed to exist outside of us like an uncharted earth that awaits its explorers. It is ourselves, this unknown—not determined from above, but to be discovered in the atmospheric halo of our own lives, such as we *invent* it.

This is not necessarily a matter of devoting oneself to the discovery of an invisible world symmetrical to the visible one, as black magic proposes, or of setting out upon the traditional stairways of pure esotericism, but rather of the liberation of the unknown according to *exclusively* poetic methods and which, though involving an immense initiatory effort, would take place outside of any ritual understood as a mode of harnessing certain energies. And if within the framework of method, to dream is also to create an antinomy to resolve, in that of poetry, to dream is also to create the world. By this we see, moreover, that what the psychological, nocturnal dream has splendidly accomplished within the universe of determination, the *active reverie* can now do within the invisible universe, beyond

all antinomy, opening a passage from written automatism to automatism dialectically negated.

Once arrived at this point, and to make way for the *dreamers* who straddle the boundary between nocturnal dream and diurnal reverie through their negation of the binary—even if they are now engaged in another struggle—we must reconsider the basic composition of revolutionary collectives, for an organizational weakness persists across all the modern movements of emancipation and affects all efforts toward changing the present state of the world.

In addressing the conflict between knowing and doing, we can use the vocabulary of psychology to assert that, to varying degrees, two divergent types of revolutionaries compete for dominance over all poetic development. The first can be called “anarchic”—an attitude formed on the basis of schizophrenic correspondences—while the second, under the name of “hierarchic,” appears to conceal a more or less opposed attitude, formed on the basis of an invincible separation between subject and world. . . . Everything that supposes an acceptance of and final accommodation to life as defined by biology, however vehement its initial refusal; everything that, despite its initial refusal of integration, finally amounts to affirmation of the social; everything that appears as manifest content in the dialectic of facts; all this is the work of the hierarchics, around whom the anarchics come to gather, these latter marked first and foremost by their fundamental inadequacy before the very fact of living, though they draw their energy from the latent springs of the epoch. Thus is the case for all the great suicides whom we carry within us. . . . In order that this appalling rivalry find its end, it is indispensable that these two revolutionary types who, often with great purity and clarity, vie with each other for efficacy in all revolutionary action, be annulled as such. And just as, in the economic sphere, the value of declassment by far outstrips the problem of origins, it appears evident that the hierarchic type of organization, along with anarchic abandon, must be finally renounced in favor of a *spiritually* heightened schizophrenia—one that has finally vanquished its fundamental clumsiness and unfitness for living in a reversal—a turning back toward life—that corresponds exactly to that proposed in the dreamer’s case.

If in this way schizophrenia, within the spiritual order, is able to negate itself and take up its vital circuit *on a higher plane*, and is thus able to negate the stage of real or virtual suicide that in all circumstances characterizes it—in making life the equal of death and no longer finding

in the latter the only true solution, dilatory and useless as all earthly acts might seem—only then will the *revolutionary will* take a leap forward, without peril of abandonment to one side or the other, only then will the advent of a true poetic collective become a certainty. . . . With the massive advent of the *turning of thought upon itself*, mere psychological madness, changing its role, will be succeeded by a Sur-Madness, the only acceptable kind: pure clairvoyance of the mind and spirit, released from all psychopathological complications.

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Given that an integral part of the responsibility for the generally monstrous development of humanity, from deep history onward, falls to humanity itself—that it is humanity that elevates its tyrants and its traitors—it is not up to us to directly resolve this problem, in which we nonetheless participate. Insoluble in any case, it would place upon our shoulders the heavy and distressing burden of our entire evolutionary past, would oblige us to be its involuntary heir, would cast us into the redoubts of contradiction, would destroy our sustaining armature. We need not respond to this diversionist solicitation, nor make any effort, condemned in advance, to recover its evasive threads.

As our contract is above all with ourselves, we must, in fact, accept the present existence of a new spiritual race, and that it is the heir, in the secular order, of all that was insurgent in the past: of the negators, the enlightened dreamers and the magicians, of the great lovers, the true poets, and the rebels, and of all those who gratuitously refused life. It is only for this romantic, this young humanity that we are responsible, and only from it can we deduce the existence of a generalized humanity, of a generalized youth. . . . The beginnings of this new spiritual “race,” first brought about by a psychic mutation characterized first and foremost by this turning of thought upon itself—thus by the detachment of the function of thought from its primordially biological and social uses, in a moment of heretical and romantic awakening—have only today found their true resonance.

Thought’s gradual passage from creator of productive relations to creator of relations gratuitous from the biological point of view—in the past visible only in brief flashes and exceptions—can at any instant take a *massive* form. The poetic movement belongs before all to this passage and this mutation, but also guides it from afar. The new relationship that this mutation creates between being and thought—first set in motion, to use contemporary terms, with the acceptance of the unconscious by the conscious mind—leaves the rest of our technical, scientific, and critical

preoccupations in the stone age. The poet, whatever his domain, reveals himself by this alchemical annulment of the infrastructure, or more exactly its annulment by way of refusal to satisfy its demands, at the risk of his life.

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The reversal of schizophrenic suicide into a life-within-life, multicolored flame ushering the beyond into the present, depends on one essential condition: a revision of relations between the actors, of the matrix of attitudes and their associated rites, within the revolutionary constellation.

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Revolutionary action, in any future form of organization that it chooses, must yield to the dreamer, who has pursued the negation of life to the point that life itself becomes the terrain of his dreams. . . . A movement will flourish if it has managed to reconcile dream and action, but not only this: in the poetic sphere, or in any domain that does not seek to imitate other movements in their diurnal efficiency, dream itself is action. . . . An automatism of action, which can take the form only of a dream without memory, a diurnal dream, depends for its realization not only on keeping its proper distance from the obstacle, but on the formation of a collective within which liberty is experienced immediately as pleasure. . . . A true method of collective action allows the dreamers the possibility of outward effectiveness, but for this the method must be truly collective, and not take the form of a conglomerate in which agitators and utopians grapple for influence at its heart—for so far this is how, despite much resistance, the principles of action within the external world have been conveyed to us.

The real functioning of *free* thought depends first and foremost on the purification of internal relations within the collective superego of revolutionaries who have reached the point of fusion.

The *liberation* of poets, as described here, would be the equivalent of the unprecedented liberty attained, amid the dynamic equilibrium of psychic forces, by automatic writing. But first, an utterly new form of love-friendship must heal the poets' great emotional wound—a wound whose origin we cannot place, but which must all the same have arisen with the first emergence of a separation between self and nonself, with the struggle of the pleasure principle with the so-called reality principle—a wound that, before today, nothing could heal except death, supreme remedy of the dreamer.

TRANSLATION BY CATHERINE HANSEN