

Letters to Adam K.

re: dreams, zero and zen

Dear Adam,

I promised you to write, as soon as I thought to have a glimpse of an insight into one of your many questions. Such an insight happens to occur sometimes during a dream. Last night I dreamt many dreams, varying in image, theme and depth. One dream had to do with a house that Colette and I would buy. The basement of the house was a bathroom, with an opening to the sea...one had only to walk through an opening to step upon the sand into the waves. The price of the basement was not included in the price of the house, and quite expensive: something as \$ 300.000 US. There was not far away another bathroom, also for sale which could be reached independently of the house that was for sale. I liked the bathroom under the house more than the other one. I proposed to buy the house, mentioning to C. that we did not have to buy the bathroom, because there was no entrance, except from the seaside. The sea lives in me, because of the huge lake in front of my house. With good weather I climb the dike, usually barefoot, to swim and to dance in the lake, with no one around, except some white swans and white sails. Only water and silence.

I tell you this dream, because the dream has been helpful, I guess, to realise something about dying in another dream last night. While dying, I saw that the dying person left the place, the body, the living matter that he was, without leaving a trace. Nothing was there anymore. Suddenly I understood that it is stupid to talk about death because it is nothing. Death is absence. Death is only present in the head of the survivors, not in the mind of the person who has passed away. The insight about the non-existence of death had the form of a bright flash. Something left the deceased person to go on an unknown journey.

The dream is in tune with the insights of the great traditions, such as Animism, Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. A few weeks ago, I read again the various contributions in *On Life and Death* that I published in the nineties. I read the articles again because I had to lecture in the International School of Philosophy in Leusden on the theme of dying and death. The ideas of the audience were moving between the poles, with on the one hand the modern classic materialistic view that death is death, meaning that absolute nothing survives or leaves the person that just died; and on the other hand the millennia-old notion that the dying person is going back into space, into the fields of energies, from where all life is coming. I replied to the remark of a physician who defended the materialistic view by pointing out how all the cells were dying, that this theory about death was not going to die with him. And that this theory was part of his mental outfit. I argued that his statement could bear the stamp of immortality, because its truth was not dependent on him. This raises the question, so I said, how it is possible that you utter a true and therefore immortal statement, while you are only mortal. While I spoke my sentences, trying to scatter the so-called evidence in his remarks, I saw him blinking. He did not know how to interpret my response. If Karl Popper had been among the audience, he would have smiled. His would have said that any theory, true or false, belongs to world three, while the dying person or at least what is dying, belongs to world one, and our emotions about the dying person to world two. Popper's distinction between the three worlds is helpful, but leaves us nevertheless with the remaining question, how the relationship between the three worlds might be understood. Or, as I wrote a

week ago in *The Creative Energy of Zero*, an introduction to an exhibition of Fré Ilgen in a New York Gallery:

"Zero stands for the creative nothingness, knowing that it does not belong to the world of phenomena but that it represents the emptiness, the transition of the phenomena. Zero facilitates the transition of a mathematical minus quantity to a mathematical plus; it allows us to think about death; about a deficit on our bank account; about the fragrance of the ephemeral; about the illusion of stability. Zero is the hidden source of the notion of infinity, because it destroys every countable number. Without Zero, the notion of truth could not come into existence, because truth as opposed to a lie depends on the human capacity to think in opposite terms. Only the concept of Zero allows us to make the transgression of one domain into another, to imagine another world than the one, in which we exist."

There were more dreams last night, but writing about one causes the other ones to fade away. This phenomenon raises some questions about the simultaneous existence of feelings, images and ideas, and about the relational essence of ideas and emotions. One leads inescapably to another one. There are no independent, autonomous worlds, separate from whatever exists.

All the best,

Fons

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