

This paper is divided in two parts, the first being theoretical and the second, a clinical case.

“Doctors in all ages have made fortunes by killing their patients by means of their cures. The difference in psychiatry is that it is the death of the soul”. R. D. Laing 1967 ‘The Obvious’

What I will present here is the connection between spirit and imagination and how it is related to the “I”. I will use the term ‘I’ as Freud used: ‘Ich’. I am not saying an ego, but an ‘I’ that can dream, and pursue their dreams. I am not using ego because it has a negative connotation. The “I” is a fantasy, something that was constructed, created, and can be sometimes recreated. Nobody is born with an ‘I’.

What I understand is that someone must dream about you so you can have a fantasy of an “I” when you are a baby or even before that before you are born. An ‘I’ is born during the stage of a baby between the ages of 6 and 18 months, which Lacan called the ‘mirror stage’. Before this, the baby is a pulsating body that does not have a unite but is felt in different erogenous parts. So, the caregiver, the person who loves and cares about the baby is the one who unites the parts and sees an image of an “I” even before the baby could sense an integration. From the baby’s point of view, when the baby senses an integration of an I, it produces great joy. ‘I’ must be desired and dreamed about by someone to feel alive.

I believe that the look of love is what makes my spirit alive. And, not only living creatures have spirit but also inanimate objects when we look at it with love and see spirit in them. A stone has a spirit, a chest, a chair... I see spirit in my brushes when I paint, and I talk to them. I say: “Hey, today you going to help me paint a cloud, or a sky,” or something... I say: “I count on you”. Sometimes I must tell them: “Oh, you don’t look too good, you have to go to hospital, I’m sorry,”! Hospital is a bath terebinthinate and linseed oil for some days. There is a well-known poet in Brazil who says that all we have in our lives is our day by day and that we must for example talk to the sponge when we are doing the dishes. Once I mentioned that to a psychiatrist who works with me at the psychiatric hospital the idea of talking to brushes and sponges and she said to me: “Astrea, are you ok? Don’t you need any medicine”? She was laughing together with another colleague of ours.

<https://www.vidapastoral.com.br/artigos/temas-teologicos/o-misterio-e-o-cotidiano-na-poesia-de-adelia-prado/>

There is reality and there is imagination and dreams. For a boy for example who has paralysis in his legs and cannot walk his mother or a loved person could easily say: “You know that if you could run you would be a good runner as anyone else.” While she shows reality, she presents a fantasy, an imagination, a dream where he is a good runner as anybody else. She then produces in him a feeling of power that can serve for his entire life.

She dreams for him. She gives him a living spirit where reality is not denied and not predominant either.

My work in psychosis has the aim of presenting fantasy in the patient's world. The fantasy of an I. What is difficult to see in psychosis is fantasy, which is different from delusion. Neurotics are easily fooled by fantasy; they live in fantasy. They believe they are this or that and live out their lives according to that belief. If the world is not too contrary to this fantasy, they may get along fine, working and having loving relationships.

Fantasy is fundamental to life. It makes us feel secure. For example. To fantasize what is going to happen... The truth is that anything can happen. It is impossible to predict the next second or hours, or days but I need to fantasize a stability, so I feel secure to act. We cannot live a calm life when we cannot fantasize that the things will be as I imagined. To live according to pure and simple reality, causes fear and it gets extremely hard to get in touch with the events around you. Looking at reality as it is without fantasy is what Lacan called the Real. And it is scary.

I believe it is the role of the therapist to show our patients how to dream. And I am not talking about fixed fantasies but moveable ones. One day is this fantasy another day is another fantasy. A moveable imagination that creates expanding joy. A patient of mine diagnosed schizophrenic, she was telling me about a movie where an innocent girl was humiliated by a mean woman who made this innocent girl go for a necklace with her mouth in the mud. I told my patient that mud is also used as face treatment in esthetic clinics. I also told her about a moment in my own childhood that I was covered with mud because a friend of my mother said it was wonderful for the skin. My idea is to migrate a feeling of disgust with the word mud to a feeling of pleasure. Because the same word may cause us various assorted feelings. It all depends on the context.

In psychosis the word 'or' is prevalent, and I guess it is the role of the therapist to migrate the word 'or' to the word 'and'. Mud is not bad 'or' good it is good 'and' bad. We are not beautiful or ugly, we are beautiful and ugly, we are not good or evil, we are good and evil...

What I believe in is that the creation of an I (self) is needed on a first stage of life and then later, in life we could partially dismiss it and live our lives with a moveable I (self). But, for that to happen, I believe the world we live in should be different from what it is now. The world we live in is mostly dictated by egos. A world that I dream of is one that we can trust others and ourselves and we can play and fight and dream without fear of being exterminated. We should follow the example of Greek Gods. They were always fighting against each other, but they had no desire of annihilating anyone. In **Open dialogue** we

understand this. That there is an interaction of forces. Therapists and patients are together and there is an intercommunication.

Now I will present a clinical case

“I don’t talk about this much, because it embarrasses me and it sounds pompous, but I still see stories as a great thing, something which not only enhances lives but actually saves them.” Stephen King in “Nightmares and Dreamscapes”

Besides working in a private office and at a psychiatric hospital as a volunteer, I am also a T.C., a Therapeutic Companion. T.C.s can walk around the city with their patients.

Here I will talk about my relationship with Anni, where I was her T.C. A colleague of mine who works in a social clinic asked me to see Anni regularly, in view of her need to wander about the city.

Anni. was accompanied by me for six years and we met once a week in various parts of the city, such as museums, public libraries and parks. Sometimes, we would go see a movie and every semester, we would have a picnic. She is diagnosed with schizophrenia and takes haloperidol every day. She is also accompanied weekly by a psychotherapist and a monthly by a psychiatrist in a social clinic inside a private institution.

Anni was 46 when I started seeing her. She is now 53. Her first crisis was when she was 14. She tripped on the stairway of the school because a hand from nowhere, grabbed her foot and made her fall, and she hit her head. She then fell into a process of amnesia that lasted until she was 21.

Anni’s childhood was imbued with aggressiveness. Her mother was 40 years old when Anni was born, but she knows virtually nothing about her father. She lives only with her mother.

Anni began Law School the same year that I started seeing her, and she graduated at the end of last year. Since she was a child, she dreamed of being a lawyer, in fact, a promoter of accusations. She wanted to accuse famous people in Brazil who according to her practiced pedophilia on her when she was just a child.

Anni knows almost nothing about me. She knows I have a degree in philosophy, that I’m a psychoanalyst, and that I speak English. It is extremely hard for her to see me as someone beyond her own needs. When I asked her once to make questions about me, she answered saying she had too many problems of her own.

In July 2014, after almost one year seeing Anni. I went on vacations outside Brazil, and I had an accident. I broke my ankle and had to be operated. I had to stay longer than I expected abroad, so I could not be there for our next meeting. After the operation I talked to her on the telephone to cancel our meeting and said that as soon as I got back to Brazil, I would call her.

When I got back to São Paulo, we met at a snack bar. But I was different. I could not get around well. I had to lean on crutches, while one leg was in a cast. The Astrea she knew was no longer there, now I was fragile and slow. Although I was the psychotherapist there, I was not only a therapist I was someone who needed help from others to move around. I was a person as anyone else. It was important that she saw me this way because in **Open Dialogue** we understand that we are all human beings facing challenges in life. It is not a vertical relationship where there is a therapist on the top and a patient on the bottom. It is a horizontal relationship. We both sat at the table where our bodies would be at the same level, and we talked.

Anni usually would tell me about her mother and how she had always looked down on her calling her stupid when she was just a child and calling her a prostitute, especially when Anni put on lipstick and earrings. Maybe this was why Anni. had never used makeup.

She had always seemed an intelligent, discreet, and a serious person to me. When we set our meetings, she never left me waiting and if she were going to be late, she would tell me by a message on her cell phone. How could that person be the same, as the one her mother saw?

Our conversations were often about the attitudes of her mother toward her. Once she told me of an episode in which she fainted when she was only nine years old. Her mother was working in her sewing room and another woman went in and, with scissors in hand, threatened to kill her mother. It seems that this woman was being cheated on and that Anni's mother was going out with her husband. To protect herself, Anni's mother put Anni. in front of her like a shield, and Anni. fainted. When she told me this, I remember saying that it was a good thing to have fainted rather than to see a horrible scene like that. I told her that the mother's role would have been to put Anni. behind her to protect her, but her mother had done exactly the opposite. She had exposed her to death.

I told her that her mother did not fulfill her role to care about her and pay attention to her.

As her therapist, I constructed a view of her mother where her mother was unfit to be a mother. Her mother had the obligation to take good care of her, but I said she did not. On the contrary, her mother often put her in situations of complete helplessness. I don't know what Anni's mother was like, and I never met her but what was important in this case is the

psychic reality. I constructed for her a mother that failed. Construction as Freud points out is based on data that the patient brings, together with transference. Not only do I construct. I also occupy a place in the transference.

In **Open dialogue** we value what someone is saying. Everyone has their own voice, and it must be listened. I do not dismiss a sentence as being not valuable only because I can't understand it. I am always willing to understand what they are saying and if I don't understand it, at least they must know and feel in their hearts that I am trying to understand and connect with them. That builds transference. We as therapists sustain a position of believing in them and looking at them on the bet that someone says things beyond our conceptions.

One Christmas I bought her some lipstick, and she began using it. She put it on right in front of me, using a mirror that her mother had given her. Then, later I bought some earrings for her on her birthday, and she began wearing them. This only seemed possible to me because she could see, based on transference, that I was not a prostitute because I used make-up and wore jewelry. Together we constructed that her mother's prophetic words did not come true. I was a reference for reality.

Once she told me about some of her achievements, I don't remember what it was, but I remember congratulating her and she replied saying: Astrea you are my number one fan, you are always by my side, whatever I do you are supporting me.

The time I spent with Anni. has always had the aim of spending pleasant moments with her. This was because I wanted these moments to leave an imprint in her memory that would have their own light. We could always turn on the light of the spirit again as we remembered the pleasurable moments we had spent together. She could carry this light inside of her wherever she would go, so in moments of darkness, she could then turn on the light of her spirit connecting to the memories of our moments together. That was my task.

Back to my first meeting after my vacation when I was still on crutches I purposely talked about my accident and what had happened to me. I also had been a failing 'mother' that did not come to our meeting set up a month earlier. But now I was there. I had not disappeared. I described her what had happened: my accident, my surgery and about my recuperation. I said that for some months our meetings would have to be different from the ones before as I could not walk around. But in any case, we would see each other once a week.

A few weeks after this meeting Anni called me on a Sunday afternoon. I answered the phone wondering what it might be about. She said she could not wait until our next meeting because it was urgent. And, she said: "Astrea, I dreamed about you, that you

were walking. I called u because I dreamed of you walking again.” I looked at my leg, still in a cast, and I held back the tears and thanked her very much for her call. What had surprised me the most and moved me, was the gesture of urgency in telling me the dream. The same urgency that a mother has in seeing her child walking and developing beyond her and dreaming about the child. It was Anni who dreamed about me and who needed to tell me so urgently. Her prophetic soul saw me walking again. She was the one who anticipated putting the living spirit in my legs where there was only plaster. She predicted my future, and it came true.

I will end by saying that:

Soul is beauty, it is easy to make this link when we remember the myth of Eros and Psyche. Psyche was as beautiful or even more beautiful than the goddess Aphrodite. Soul and beauty have a deep connection. Beauty is esthetic and it is what wakes our senses up, the opposite is anesthetic that is what numbs our senses. Psyche in the myth is human and therefore mortal, she attempts suicide, but Eros does not let her die. In the end of the myth, she achieves immortality only because Eros’ love was bigger than anything and Eros woke her up forever.



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