

PLEASE ————— CONSIDER ME A DREAM

私を夢だと思ってください

WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE OR NOT

What happens to us when dreams come true, or when, over time, they disintegrate? If dreams are wishes in the form of images, they can be read as images of a mainstream narrative, or as their prohibitions, the visualization of secret and suppressed desires. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari created the notion of the dream machine, which for them embodies the subconscious in a technologically informed world driven by libido energies. For the two authors, the subconscious is a factory where wishes produce reality in the form of dream machines. Wishes are the longings we have in our interactions with the world; not only do they keep the machine running, they are the apparatus itself. Dreams, in turn, provide the connected images. On one hand, wishes produce reality; on the other hand, wishes are dictated by ideologies and culture industries as rules, ideals and lifestyles.

How can we free ourselves from predefined wishes? Are there dreams and wishful thinking that are not culturally already shaped? Desires and lifelong dreams consist in the juxtaposition of self-images and (pop)-cultural ideals generated from the outside, be it via Hollywood blockbusters, YouTube videos, cartoons, literature, music, fashion, etc., or that have been internalized through tradition and socialization. The relationship between reality and ideal states of affairs is defined by desires, wishes, dreams, how something ideally should be but is not. The effectiveness of desires and dreams develops especially due to their contrast to what actually is.

Hopes for a better life or visions for society are often related to developments in technology. In particular, the expectations and fears regarding

developments in artificial intelligence are great. However, when social utopias are formulated primarily by technology and produced by technological corporations, very few utopias remain that are not part of technology. Utopian models distinguish between technology development and areas of application, those areas in life that should be optimized technically, such as work done by robots, biogenetics or the digitalization of relationships. Related consequences are usually unpredictable, especially because technology utopias are not anchored in socio-political concepts. Images of an algorithmic future are omnipresent, not only in terms of sociopolitical changes, but also in terms of social relationships. On one hand, detaching subjectivity from human beings, from the person and the subject, promotes their marginalization; on the other, this opens up new possibilities of equality as well as new forms of oppression or hierarchical displacement. What dreams, what new dreams take place in the zone between the real and the virtual? For example, transhumanism dreams of algorithms as the center of the world, of people being able to adapt to algorithms, or the possibility of brains being downloaded. Linked to this is the dream of immortality. The price for this is giving up or losing the body, the algorithmization of human beings. In the 1960s Günther Anders talked about Promethean shame, people feeling inferior to machines. So we have a technology nightmare, if one thinks of the unforeseeable consequences of machine learning, but also a technology dream when thinking of technology usage in the sense of the common good, detached from commercial applications and digital surveillance – social models that do not see technology as an economic ideology in and of itself, but as a shared realm of possibilities.

What are we still dreaming of – and what dreams are over? Wish dreams and hopes act as a driving force behind developing oneself in a certain direction, bringing about changes, not letting oneself be discouraged by setbacks, etc. At least to a certain point, the point when it is impossible for the dreams to go any further. There is always a certain tragedy when dreams fail, when reality does not correspond to a fantastical image. It is just this relationship between the world of the imagination and reality, between wishful thinking and real life, that is quite interesting. Are our imagination realms and dreams increasingly dominated by virtual worlds and so are they becoming ever less distinguishable from reality? Or is it possible to observe an escape into idyllic virtual worlds where there are no problems, where all is well? Dream worlds are increasingly shifting to simulated worlds, not only in terms of competitions and hero narratives, but also at an emotional level.

The more difficult the actual circumstances, the greater the yearning for utopias and belief in the economy. The American dream of a dishwasher becoming a millionaire, that with hard work and personal commitment anyone can rise to a higher social class, is over. It was always the exception, but in recent years that has become more obvious. In turn, over the past three decades the socialist dream of tolerable working conditions, rights and equality has been crushed by neoliberal exploitation and whitewashing.

When dreams come true, they become commonplace; when dreams fail, they can become traumas. On the other hand, dreams that have become real can have traumatic consequences, and if a dream remains unrealized it can turn out to be lucky. In addition to the libido, the driving

force behind wish dreams is the yearning through which certain images and ideas are to be realized. How do these mental images arise, how are they spread and transmitted? Are we dreaming of an individual realization of mainstream narratives or of forbidden things, crossing over limits, liberation from norms, or fantasies of power? If dreams reflect our subconscious, are they then, since they are uncensored, an authentic visualization of our desires and fears? This is where inside and outside, socialization and ideology, get mixed together, where media images are connected to ideal images.

Dreams, however, are also places for recuperating; they present a refuge from reality, offer imaginary alternative worlds that can make reality bearable, simulate speculative imaginative worlds as possible models. When dreaming, the cards are reshuffled; roles, positions, identities, conditions and living environments are repositioned or formed anew.

As Annie Lennox from the Eurythmics sang in the 1980s, «Sweet dreams are made of this, everybody is looking for something.» Love and fear are the emotional stuff of dreams and nightmares. Love as a motif of longing and dreams is a central element in the entertainment industry, which fabricates desires and supplies the needed images and songs to serve both longing and desire. Love as an object of longing or the stuff of dreams reflects our yearning for romantic feelings. But the image of an ideal partner has been fabricated, as has been the image of an ideal relationship. Among other things, who you fall in love with also depends on collective ideal images or their opposites. Experiences can be seen as a corrective for dreams; here reality intervenes with the dream world, in both a positive and negative way. Don Quixote fights windmills, everything is

possible and nothing is real; it is a fiction in which reality and fantasy are connected and doomed to failure in an adventurous, fragile and wonderfully dignified way. In Wim Wenders' film *Until the End of the World*, dreams are (visibly) recorded and watching one's own dreams becomes a new drug. In the film adaptation of Philip K. Dick's short story *The Minority Report*, mutant humans, so-called «precogs,» anticipate future crimes in a kind of sleep-like twilight state in which they see more than when they are awake. Is the exploitation, instrumentalization and control of our dreams imminent, or are we already well into this process?

Dreaming of the possibility of what seems impossible is both a comfort and an illusion, it is a prospect for the future or a self-deception. In these many possibilities lies its appeal.

Sabine Winkler

Translation from the original German:

Cynthia Peck

«PLEASE CONSIDER ME A DREAM.»
(KAFKA)

«NOTHING IS MORE YOUR OWN THAN YOUR DREAMS! NOTHING MORE YOUR WORK.»
(NIETZSCHE)

«I STILL OWE LIFE TO MY DREAMS.»
(ANONYMOUS GRAFFITI)

In Japanese you see dreams; in German and English you have them; in French and Italian you make them. What is most apt? For Goethe it was clear: «I believe men only dream that they may not cease to see.»

Martin L. King's political vision of equality (1963) – «I have a dream...» – the founding of institutions like the UN or the EU (dreams of peace), the ancient dream of being able to fly or travel in space, the invention of the sewing machine (1845), of new medicines such as insulin (1921), the model of the atom, or bold architecture (Frank Gehry), in art (Goya's painting *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* of 1799), in literature (Kafka, for example), or in philosophical thought ... dreams and their powerful effect are always at stake. Dreams are not only an integral part of history, but of humankind itself.

The history of the dream goes back around 4,000 years, to literary accounts and interpretation theories. The dream – an anthropological constant that connects people of all times and across all their differences. The 2,500-year-old statement of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus is famous:

«The waking have one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own.»

So does everyone dance their own dream!?

The dream was especially feted during German Romanticism in the early 19th century (keyword: «blue flower»!). The most important feature of the dream in Romanticism lay in its potential of revealing the world, since «penetration into one's own self is also the key to cognizing the world» (Binswanger). The dream represents the subject's integrity, involves its free actions and moments of happiness; it is an undertaking and part of a learning process. Novalis went as far as to say: «Without dreams, we would surely grow sooner old.» For the Romantics, dreams did not have the character of a deficiency, as later with Freud, who saw dreams as «wish fulfillment»: in dreams we live out what we are denied or even forbidden in reality.

Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900, established the classic modern theory of dreams and psychoanalysis. Despite opponents (such as C.G. Jung), it proved very influential. The dream is the «keeper of sleep» and the purpose of every dream is to fulfill a wish. Repressed desires, including childhood desires, are manifested in dreams, often in a coded form like secret messages or a rebus puzzle. This is because certain contents in the psyche do not reach our consciousness, but are blocked by a mechanism of repression («censorship»); indeed, what we desire is very often incompatible with rules and morals. But dreams enable one to perceive unconscious experiences that are disabled when in a waking state. The contents of the unconscious arise from basic needs such as pleasure, thirst, hunger ... these mixing with «day residues»: memories and outside stimuli (such as sounds). We see video-clip-like sequences of scenes, scenes in which laws of nature such as time, space, gravity and even causality do not exist.

In short, what exists is a dream logic whose images sometimes seem absurd, grotesque-funny, or even preposterous. Upon waking we can usually only remember fragments of what we have dreamed. (A one-to-one reconstruction is impossible, since seeing images and talking about images is never the same.) According to Freud, this manifest dream (we often cry out, «Oh, what nonsense!») has hidden, dormant dream contents that he wanted to draw out of the unconscious with the help of free association in order to recognize what was repressed (the problem, the conflict, the neurosis ...). The dormant dream thoughts are distorted and condensed in dreamwork to make them unrecognizable, to cover them up and «dress» them so they are acceptable for the manifest dream. The meaning is disguised. The condensation manifests itself in phenomena such as «collectives» (one person representing several) or «mixed people» (one person having traits or characteristics of several people), «mixed» (Tokyo-Berlin-Salzburg merging into one place), «mixed objects» or completely heterogeneous mixtures of objects and persons. Often words are also corrupted into portmanteau words, a linguistic word blend (such as Joyce's «sinduced»... sin + seduced; this kind of condensation occurs in dreams). Displacement often works on the principle of essentials being reversed or turned into a detail. For example, being followed in a dream means in reality that I am following something myself. Or the hatred of a person is displaced to his hobby, such as playing chess. In particular, however, it is sexual contents that are symbolized. (Stairs, ladders, flies, pistols ... anyone can figure out what they might mean!!) – Freudian analysis involves the reverse process of searching for the hidden meaning behind the manifest dream content, that is, decoding

everything that is disguised to reach the core of a disorder or neurosis and to heal the person – if they are lucky. (Freud has also been reproached for seeing only the sexual and death drive as part of this and, from today's perspective, for having systematized many dream images with often banal symbolism.)

Today, in neurobiological theories dreaming is described matter-of-factly as information technology: the processes of the brain are comparable to the digital data processing of a computer. Stimulus impulses, chaotically combined perception signals and remnants of memory in the neuronal «network» in the cerebral cortex – this is where our dreams come from. (And there are a number of researchers who reject that a psyche exists.) We see videos of people's heads covered with cables connected to EEGs, next to their computer screens with the transmitted results: Strange diagrams full of «scribbles,» like notes on scrap paper, tracking dreams... And someday the «dream scanner» will be able to «read» better... Yes, what is really going on when we dream??

Machines still cannot directly decipher the contents of our dreams. Even we, the dreamers, can never remember everything we dream.

In any case, it is certain that we always dream when we are sleeping and thus, that our brain is always active, even when our body seems paralyzed in the REM sleep phase. In other dream-sleep phases it moves a lot. This is something that athletes use to optimize their motor skills – with the help of lucid dreaming techniques that enable conscious and partially controlled dreams. The dream as a workout room...

The act of dreaming includes many types of dreams and borderline phenomena: daydreaming, into which we slide about every hour and a half

according to researchers, erotic dreams, nightmares, «prophecy» dreams, tricks of the imagination and phantasmagoria, illusions, night visions, hallucinations, fantasies, lucid dreaming ... And: even people who have been born blind have dreams.

Dreams are capable of a vast number of things. They can «repair», foretell, warn, frighten, soothe, disclose, liberate, enable us to forget...

They help us create a unique form of the present: Lost or dead people speak to us through dreams, as do animals, objects, spaces... they reach back to archaic times and have the power of visions.

The question is whether we can approach the «conundrum of the world» by permitting what dreams prompt us to do – namely, to transform. This means awakening or being enlightened into another form of consciousness: a transformation from one state to another, an appeal for a metamorphosis. They not only refer to a past that is re-lived in the present, but also open up possibilities for the future. A dream can connect events a thousand years apart. (Baudelaire often dreamed of being a thousand years old.)

Dreams are thus a sort of sign for things that are just emerging. They point to something that is about to reach the surface, something the dreamer does not know, that frightens him or he is hoping for. Its prophetic quality often motivates one to act. The goal of the dream is the notion behind the future perfect tense: I will have been. I will have done. Dreams ensure that we are able to conceive of a future. And when we re-understand the past in a dream, we can perceive the present differently. Dreaming does not remove us from the world, but brings us closer to it. (Or maybe just nightmares do that?) It frees one's ability to see an expanded reality. «Dreaming means: looking through the horizon.» (African proverb)

The point is: everything in reality that is not accessible to the mind is saturated with dream images, fantasies and slivers of perception. While they follow a dramaturgy inherent in reality, at the same time, they are the antithesis of dramaturgy, since dreams are part of reality. We don't leave reality; on the contrary, we finally enter it, since reality is actually full of enigmas. There is no human life without dreaming. I am the actor, director and stage designer in one and the same person.

There are days when you don't remember your dreams, and there are daydreams in which you constant slide back and forth between wakefulness and dreaming. Only the ringing of a mobile phone, a train announcement or a question interrupts us, as the Portuguese author Pessoa (who earned his living by working in an office) described it in *The Book of Disquiet* (published posthumously): «Such an interruption of my dreams does not jar; so gentle are they that I continue to dream them even while I speak, write, answer, carry on a conversation. At last the lost tea time draws to an end [note: he is dreaming about the old aunts of his childhood] and it's time for the office to close....» The motto of Christopher Nolan's film *Inception* is «the dream is real». And for Calderon de la Barca, *Life Is a Dream*.

The following is possible:

- We think we are dreaming, but we are actually awake.
- We think we are awake, but we are dreaming.
- Life is so strange that, to us, it seems like a dream.
- A dream is part of reality.

One thing is certain: if we didn't dream we would

finally go crazy in this world! Kafka would undoubtedly agree with us. We have sixty printed pages of his dream notes, and all his works resist being deciphered completely – they remain «dream-interwoven».

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