Dreaming and Wakefulness: 
On the Possibility of Crossing between Worlds

JORGE GARCÍA-GÓMEZ

No doubt a basic constitutive-phenomenological principle could be advanced by saying that the everyday, commonsensical world and its contents give themselves immediately and spontaneously to embodied consciousness. And yet such a formulation would be highly misleading, inasmuch as it could hardly do justice to the core sense, let alone the wealth of implications which primordial worldly experience would already harbor within itself.

For one thing, the "axiom" in question would leave out of its compass any consideration of the existence and actuality of the everyday world, including the prerequisites thereof. For another, it would keep silent concerning the specific nature which such a world would pre-predicatively exhibit, both as to form and content. Furthermore, and this is most important for our purposes, it would leave out of focus any number of suggestions, which are delivered unto our conscious grasp as originarily as the sense of a transcendent world qua immediate context of our lives of action. Among other things, I am referring to those intimations which serve to conform the lifeworld itself as given, by framing it already as we gear spontaneously into action by way of one worldly project or another. This world, in which you and I act, resist, enjoy, and suffer, presents itself as a totality which, however fundamental, is not self-contained, for it seems to point beyond itself in more than one way and often enough, and to do so by itself or without benefit of any required prodding or cajoling. It is in its own make-up and in the "history" of its making that the world of everydayness seems to reveal the objective otherworldly. It is as if the lifeworld—by way of its own structure and contents—continually offered us clues and indications that there is still more which could be experi-


For reprints: Jorge García-Gómez, Philosophy Dept.
Humanities Division, Long Island University, Southampton, NY 11968-4198

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enced, and yet in such a way that the "more" in question would present itself as qualitatively other than the "stuff" of this world, and as becoming accessible to consciousness by means of the motivated exercise of personal freedom.¹

What I propose to do is simply this: to examine the facts of consciousness according to which the immanence of this-worldliness already contains seeds of transmundaneity. I will at the outset, however, identify the very limits that such an inquiry would be affected by, in view of the manner in which I intend to bring it about in the present context.

In the first place, I will take for granted the grounding role that phenomenologically belongs to the lifeworld and the experiences thereof. This assumption signifies, at least, that the actuality and the foundational character of the lifeworld are to be neither contested nor explicated in these pages. But this also implies that the structure and the essential "content" of everydayness are of a sort that is left to other, more primary analyses.

Secondly, the examination of transmundaneity itself will have to be seriously curtailed in this article, for a completely satisfactory account of it would necessarily encompass questions such as: determining the nature of the world as such, the number of possible worlds and their sense, the character of each essential sort of world and its rootedness in and "derivability" from the lifeworld, and the architecture and hierarchy of possible worlds in connection with the lifeworld (as well as the corresponding ways of living them). Such important tasks are beyond the reach of this article and, in any case, could only be discharged by way of an ampler and more ambitious investigation. I will content myself with probing only one such relationship between worlds and their attendant experiences, namely, those found in connection with the world of dreams and the lifeworld. Even here the analysis will be circumscribed to one question, namely, that of the possibility of "knowing" and recounting our dreams in the context of our lives in this world. I shall try to clarify how it is we dream and recount or interpret our dreams by performing the pertinent phenomenologico-psychological reflections, but as well to suggest ways in which the findings may prove fruitful in guiding the universal examination of the questions regarding nature and existence as they arise in the experienced relationships between any transcendent domain and the lifeworld itself.

Let me begin by asking the decisive question: What is it we do when we dream? In other words, whatever the origin of our dreams may be, what is it we do when we dream? As opposed to the imaginer, the dreamer is confronted with contents about which he has no "freedom of discretion."²