



The World Mirrors The Soul And The Soul Mirrors The World, by Alan Watts

If you sit still for a while, completely relaxed, and let your thoughts run on, let your mind think of whatever it likes, without interfering, without making suggestions and without raising any kind of obstacle to the free flow of thought, you will soon discover that mental processes have a life of their own. They will call one another to the surface of consciousness by association, and if you raise no barriers, you will soon find yourself thinking all manner of things both fantastic and terrible which you ordinarily keep out of consciousness.

Over a period of time this exercise will show you that you have in yourself the potentiality of countless different beings—the animal, the demon, the satyr, the thief, the murderer—so that in time you will be able to feel that no aspect of human life is strange to you—_humani nihil a me alienum puto_—[I think nothing human is alien to me,] from the Roman playwright known as Terence.

In the ordinary way, consciousness is forever interfering with the waters of the mind, which are dark and turbulent, concealing the depths. But when, for a while, you let them take care of themselves, the mud settles and with growing clarity you see the foundations of life and all the denizens of the deep. You may see other things as well. “Two men looked into a pond. Said the one: ‘I see a quantity of mud, a shoe and an old can.’ Said the other: ‘I see all these, but I also see the glorious reflection of the sky.’”

For the unconscious is not, as some imagine, a mental refuse-pit; it is simply unfettered nature, demonic and divine, painful and pleasant, hideous and lovely, cruel and compassionate, destructive and creative. It is the source of heroism, love, and inspiration as well as of fear, hatred, and crime. Indeed, it is as if we carried inside of us an exact duplicate of the world we see around us, for the world is a mirror of the soul, and the soul a mirror of the world. Therefore when you learn to feel the unconscious you begin to understand not only yourself but others as well, and when you look upon human crime and stupidity, you can say with real feeling, “There but for the Grace of God go I.”