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On Behaviour: Confidence & Personhood

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**“EACH GLIMMER, an OFFER of COMFORT
& Shelter in Gentleness”**



**„JEDER SCHIMMER, eine QUELLE
des WOHLBEFINDENS
& Geborgenheit in Sanftmut“**

On Confidence & Personhood, with an Element of Support

First of all, let me say that the following words describe my thoughts and ideas and thus are not necessarily universally or specifically representative. So, what you make of them is at your good liberty and discretion!

Let me tell you of an elusive ghost which feels like walking through a beautiful evening, passing by trees, glimmering with fading sunlight: a beautiful fantasy, and incidentally also a slightly embellished memory or perhaps, as Bohm might say, quite true to itself (2004, pp.39-40). I can go back quite far nowadays and realise how often I've been upon that path yet never really gave it proper thought. So, I wish to render in words a treatise on the very things of which, inwardly, I have so far felt I had a lot, while outwardly perhaps I have lacked them? As I move through the spaces of this world, I have so far understood them and their fabric retrospectively, after processing the situational and environmental information: it is what I have termed for myself *retrospective coherence*. The trouble with this is that not every situation in life allows you to go away, figure it out, and then come back again with the newly gained insight. Here, *isn't that obvious* might spring to mind as a good and descriptive term for it. *Obvious* is from Latin, meaning in front of the way (2022) and the more I ponder it, the more it appears the most critical element to be remembered, of all. Understanding this world is an element of Asperger's and ADHD (in other words: "*variable attention stimulus trait* or VAST" (2021)), which is difficult. It is sometimes a little difficult, sometimes immensely difficult. How do you move through the grandest theatre of them all without the script to partake of the dialogue, without anyone explaining it to you? How so can I begin to see the path ahead, not only in *retrospective coherence*, but with *foresight* and in *prudential coherence* as well? Not only is this about being able to realise mentally what is approaching, but how I can fit it into my own threads, form my own understanding of it and appreciate it. Confidence & personhood thus remain to me fascinating themes to study. Because these themes are profound and complex, I want to take a personal and a broader glance at them.

[07.10.2022]: it currently feels, and no doubt will feel so in future, like I have to overtake my own mind to work my way back into being a person. Going back to the point of figuring things out, you see this thought is meaningful for the following reason: the possibility unfolds to form a relationship, of whichever kind, or an opportunity arises e.g., in, or for work. If I act in retrospective coherence, I need to go away, process it and thereby risk that the moment, the so-called, will have passed by the time I return, if at all I have the chance to return. Whichever way I render it, my conditions are an aspect of all things in my life, and they touch upon all things I do. And even though it feels like I'm repeating myself to everyone's annoyance, I hold this to be an immensely critical thought and point. So, I often find myself reflecting on this. Yet, I also feel that this shouldn't have to

have any foundations in my neurodivergence, necessarily. It should be a question of personhood, of learning life. No matter who might partake of my life, in whichever way, they will have to partake of my conditions. This pervasive radiance leaves me in a complex place. I so seek a breath of liberty. While you could argue as I have above and perhaps justly so that I shouldn't uphold my conditions as a confining boundary or hurdle, I cannot detach or relinquish them. Whoever or whatever thus enters my life, will be touched by their resonance, perceivably or not. Thus, I must navigate this.

This rings to me like what I'm trying to say is that I wish to transcend my conditions in order to become a (proper) person. For, the interplay of my conditions and however confident as a person I feel is subtle yet tangibly physical as well. I realise how dangerous and controversial this might sound. It does not mean that I wish to rid myself of my conditions. The word is of the Latin language and conveys the thought of climbing beyond something (2022), which I do not necessarily interpret as an act of elimination. Nonetheless I do feel a ghost of transcendence, a necessity to transcend my understanding of what it means to live with these conditions and be a person. I also wonder whether there is a conflict here with Neuroharmony? Transcendence is not only critical to my own posterity and growth. It nourishes the fabric of potential and possible attainment in my future. Confidence and personhood thus require it. Yes, perhaps there is a feeling there that I wish to attain such a degree of transcendence so as to be able to fit into my life. Thus I struggle within myself to be a proper person for which reason moving beyond holds some elusive, subtle truth for me. To fulfil those highly held values and ideals, externally expected and those which are self-imposed or upon which I wish to touch; to attain exceptional skill and excellence, or to feel and hold the immense weight of courage and knowledge inherent in the ghost of experience?

[05.17.2022]: at this point in time, the irony of writing about confidence & personhood, one might say, lies in the stage of life I have now reached, which is a most difficult one. My mind, it so feels, seems to have run out of the code which tells you how to do things. It is a bit like a blank space, only without it really being blank. For, I know what I want, I know what I wish to attain, yet, and as absurd as this might sound, it feels like my engine is spinning without grip. It's all right there, in front of my inner eye, though to reach it feels so elusive and vague, a dream it could perfectly well be. This also has to do with having spent more than two years in a COVID-19 lockdown. I wish deeply to connect, even if interactions might go awkwardly, leave me feeling embarrassed or anxious. "Thus, this life calls" (Hill, 2021, p.17). I wish to be with people, to experience the dignity and poetry of being in touch, of living. For without this, how can I learn again to be in good touch with others? *Good* is a purposeful usage here. I like the word *good* and think it is underused, perhaps underappreciated or set aside in favour of the excellent. This brings me to this point: am I honouring those who have and who still privilege me with their support and guidance? As much as this is about where I wish to go and what I wish to do, a major constituent aspect of confidence for me is the ability to return favours; to rebalance support with support and with attainment and delivery. That of course also inspires confidence and a sense of personhood: not only should I be happy at the end, but those

who render to me the dignity of their support. So, to pick up on that little phrase, *in front of my inner eye*: I know that embodying things and implementing them is required to move. All things nevertheless still begin and originate in that most intimate place of the mind and soul. To translate them, that is where my threads begin to twist and branch out. This is where confidence & personhood begin to suffer. Safety and an elusive feeling of being clothed in confidence lies (now) in things I know, such as poetry, prose, *The Neurodialogues*, photography, writing scripts or these newly inaugurated essays. For, the mere idea of autonomy beyond support, of life, of living is subtly terrifying and mortifying. None of this offers reason not to indulge and enjoy. Observing this from the perspective of struggle & strife, I feel immense beauty in living, in the breath of a moment of subtle, silent gentleness and ease. It is almost, if not even, cosmic.

For me a good question is how differently or similarly our perspective might be. This is a genuine question which must be asked and pondered, vice versa by either side, I venture to say. For, I hold that to understand and appreciate the realms of non-neurodivergence we must understand and appreciate neurodivergence as well and vice versa. How else are we going to attain mutual, reciprocal understanding, value and appreciation? And thus this beautiful thought of confidence offers and holds a profundity to it, the depths of which I have not yet attained. All of this is a real question to be asked of myself and what I hope to do and realise as a person. Far more than an account of struggle & strife, I wish this to be a dialogue of a philosophy of neurodiversity, of mental health and not only for practitioners but everyone, for every person. It should be a dialogue engaged by those neurodivergent and those who are non-neurodivergent. We have to understand and appreciate the mathematics (I love the irony of writing this as a dyscalculic person), the workings of neurodivergence and how we can relate it to those who are neurotypical. It is the only way forward.

[07.10.2022]: for, at this point, I think we do not understand or appreciate enough of the realms of neurodivergence. This beautiful word called *confidence* (cf., Glauben, Zutrauen, Vertrauen, Selbstvertrauen or Selbstbewusstsein, Zuversicht) is a tricky one therefore. It means with trust or trust together (2022), and is again of Latin in origin. It is an etymology which doesn't necessarily help in understanding how to apply it as a concept to oneself, or how to embody it. That is the most challenging aspect, I feel. How do you grasp hold of, and uphold confidence, in yourself or your work? Confidence & personhood are intrinsically linked and interwoven, for when I'm not sure of myself or I doubt myself, so I feel less like a person. If things darken and the shadows crawl in, then that beautiful feeling of movement diminishes to all but a gloom. It writhes and wreathes into a spectre of wish and dream, projecting into the future a phantom figure or condition which in such a state of mind appears lesser and lesser likely ever (again) to be attained. Then those glimmers grow in their significance as offers of a comfort distant yet elusively tangible. It is a thread by which I can guide myself through the twilight into a place of shelter in gentleness once more (cf., Geborgenheit in Sanftmut). It is a confidence, a steadiness to reflect upon, and react calmly and in good poise to the world around me and those who live in it. Of profound significance are also mood and memory, my

inner world and perception of thought, all of which nourishes my constitution and my condition (cf., *Verfassung & Befinden*). To be in sync with myself and memory, to reconcile that with my outer world is critical. For without that awareness, that knowledge, I feel lost and essentially almost empty. Recollection and reflection (endodialogue) not only aids memory, it also allows me to build a foundation upon which to move. If you have no foundations, upon what do you build your confidence? If you don't have access to why you're meant to be confident, you're less likely to be confident. It is not about dreaming. It is about having a place wherein I can reflect, process and, through the help of some gentle humility, learn to appreciate what I have experienced. To the neurotypical person this kind of mental movement and pondering may mean other things. Receiving support from family and friends, from a mentor, from a support worker or careers councillor, these inspire confidence and it builds a feeling of being a person. *Inspire* is a wonderful word from Latin again, meaning "breathe into" (2022).

Another peculiar thing I have realised: I have this feeling that I need permission from someone to be a person, to be allowed to live, to be reassured and recognised. Thus, a more profound dignity, to me, in dreaming, is held by fantasy. It was always that framework of epic high fantasy fiction (not only in my prose but also in *Of Echoes & Dialogues*) which allowed me to craft and curate meaning & sense from my innermost, uninhibited by the good boundaries of reality. It allowed me to wonder about how things worked and what signified the heart and soul of relationships. The term "secondary world" thus takes on a very different value. This is what it has always been about in my work, in my languages, in the characters and places I create. Fantasy does not have to make sense; it does not have to be realistic (another word I find is overused or used too often to reference limitation). It offers immense potential and possibility for the impossible, universally speaking, and on deeply personal, intimate grounds. So I feel a deep echo and whisper of intimacy in confidence & personhood, nowadays far more than I used to perceive of this fascinating phenomenon. It enfolds both of these concepts in a cloth of gentle vulnerability. It is one which glimmers and plays tacitly and tangibly in the background of my mind or which interweaves distinctly in my foregrounded thought. Either way, they converge with my capacity to attain a stable dialogue. This challenges me in my strength to touch upon, and partake of the wholeness & coherence I so dearly wish to feel. It renders the gates to life and living thus ajar that it becomes tantalisingly close yet difficult to observe the other side, or see into that wondrous, alien place. Even, so I feel, it makes life and living itself appear like something secret, private and hidden. Going back to the code, it is like language: a beautiful set of governing ideas without which partaking of its dialogues and beauties is rendered effortful. This is why I so dearly love language though! It's like a relationship, of whichever kind. For it to succeed, you have to take the time to observe and appreciate its subtleties and its complexities. Time, which often is not available, unfortunately, or so it would seem, in our modern world. Whereas I recognise in the act of supporting a profound soul of honour and privilege (Hill, 2022, p.3), I do so feel the same about such intimacy. Confidence and to feel like a person, or to be aware of what it is that makes me a person, what

constitutes my personhood, is an act, an intimate embodiment of qualities and essence. For me, this requires not only trust and faith in myself, to receive it in turn from those with whom I share my confidence or who I am, that is also critical. I do, however, feel, paradoxically perhaps, that this sense of self I have sometimes gets in the way of who I am and what I wish to achieve. I have attained my mittlere Reife (O-levels), Fachhochschulreife (university of applied sciences entrance qualification), an HND, BA (Hons) and an MA in Creative Media Practice. Still it now feels like a gentle voice, neither malicious nor benign, is whispering to me, deep within my fabric. It seems present like a silent companion, a shadow at my side. Yet it speaks with a profound resonance: so what do you know of life, of living, of relationship formation? So, it pours into me a sense of complex doubt, self-critical chastisement and brightly flaming, glimmering self-pity. In my last essay, *On Behaviour: Support* (2022) I wrote you need to get out of that place! The thing about inner struggle & strife is that it is so layered that it is never straightforward to know exactly your place in it. I move through it, crawl through it and it feels tangible, physical, a reality of thought and dream, wish and doubt, darkness and glimmering threads. It feels to me like hands guiding me to places where I seem to have been, which I know, yet within which I feel foreign. It's a sea whose waters look mesmerising, enticing, lovely and hauntingly, viscerally beautiful. Whereas they equally invite you to drown and get lost in their heart all the same, and that means confusion. We should not forget or too easily let slip, the factor that confidence, personhood, that commitment to a cause, purpose, commitment to responsibility, that dignity are challenging to uphold through adverse mental health. You can be committed to a thing as much and as profoundly as you will, if your mind temporarily or otherwise finds it effortful to uphold, you may struggle to accomplish and attain whichever task or goal you set yourself. This, we must not forget! For this reason I often tell myself to "learn to ...". Learning allows a sense and feeling of flexibility and gentleness in that it does not demand constant or instant excellence. The latter, excellence, outstanding or exceptional achievement, attainment or delivery, performance or embodiment, these are truly beautiful and wonderful ideas. If, however, in the context of being human and living through struggle & strife, we find ourselves faced by, or imbued with a relentless need for grandeur and greatness: not everyone might have the capacity to endure and tolerate such pressure. It isn't in my mind necessary either, for that matter. If your mental health decides to stall you, or the mental hurricane begins to rage and race, sometimes I find, even tremendous willpower can only add to a grinding of the gears because it may create tension which intensifies the hurricane. It diminishes my sense and my feeling of worth and halts movement. It defibres and frays out my linkage to personhood more than it allows purposeful, focused, and deliberate embodiment. I'm sure I am not the only one who feels this way. I am committed to my projects, to deliver for myself and those who follow my work; to build my creative estate; and deeply, viscerally I wish that I could be "excellent" (if ever I was), all of the time, and always. Sometimes, that wish is more a well of anguish and frustration than a nourishing fuel to fire my engines. To learn, thus, allows me to take a step back, breathe, and find a way back into a condition of movement. It alleviates an essence of the pressure. So,

I also feel that we, as a society, place too much weight on the golden scales of the ideals of the excellence we wish ourselves or others to attain. This, by the way, is a paraphrasing of a good German saying which I like. Here I'm using it slightly outside its conventional usage: ie., *man muss nicht alles auf die Goldwaage legen*. In English: one needn't place everything onto gold scales or in other words, don't take everything literally. It fits, however, in this context as we often push so hard for every nuance to be exceptional and of excellence that we overlook its significance. We overlook the factor of ease, give and take; we overlook the factor of humanity. We often don't recognise that the stringent need to fulfil expectation often resides far more in the mind of the expecting than it does in the mind of those from whom we expect. In other words, we expect without regard towards those upon whom we place the burden and weight of our expectation. Often we render little help or assistance to achieve the expected. Later we blame those who fail to meet that standard instead of reflecting on how we can support them to attain what we believe is fitting and proper. In other words, we don't communicate properly. Under that crushing weight of life, it is natural that confidence may ebb and require immense courage for us to move.

And thus I end in good remembrance of, and by paraphrasing the undying words of 16th U.S. President Abraham Lincoln: without malice, and with charity for all (1865), so do we have to learn, without pressure on the other, to understand that confidence & personhood is complex. It is not as simple as commanding my readership though. Inhabited by immense profundity this beautiful thought of confidence & personhood still offers me and holds a mystery and weight, the depths of which I yet aspire to. And while each is at their own liberty to hold their own thoughts about this, in the spirit of support, we should likewise (not equally, for it is not the same thing) hold that each in that liberty can also yield their right of way in essence, temporarily, for the other. This is no simple task, I understand that, thus I try to learn or teach myself to give way; I wish to elect the gentler way, a dialogue, for these matters are not as simple and require a more continuous study.

All in good time and in its good place we might find good judgement and attain movement.

3,576 words.

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