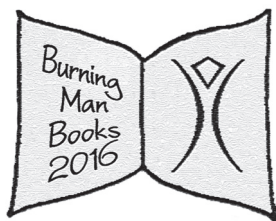


*Entering Dreamland:  
A Brief Anthology of  
Writings About Dreams*

edited by Raymond Soulard, Jr.  
& Cassandra Soulard



Number Sixty-eight

**Entering Dreamland:  
A Brief Anthology of Writings About Dreams**

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*Dreams are worth your attention.*

This volume was composed  
in the AGaramond font  
in InDesign CS5 on the  
MacBook Pro computer.

**Cobb** - Our dreams feel real while we're in them. It's only when we wake up we realize things were strange.

*[Ariadne gestures around them]*

**Ariadne** - But all the textures of real life—the stone, the fabric. Cars . . . people . . . your mind can't create all this.

**Cobb** - It does. Every time you dream. Let me ask you a question: You never remember the beginning of your dreams, do you? You just turn up in the middle of what's going on.

**Ariadne** - I guess.

**Cobb** - So . . . how did we end up at this restaurant?

**Ariadne** - We came here from . . .

*[Ariadne trails off, confused.]*

**Cobb** - How did we get here? Where are we?

*Ariadne thinks, unable to remember. A faint rumble begins.*

**Ariadne** - *Oh my God. We're dreaming.*

—Christopher Nolan, *Inception*, 2010.

## Psychedelics and Lucid Dreaming

*Lucidity Letter*, June, 1988; Vol. 7, No. 1

[http://library.macewan.ca/lucidity/Issue7\\_1/LL7\\_1\\_Kay.htm](http://library.macewan.ca/lucidity/Issue7_1/LL7_1_Kay.htm)



Psychedelics and lucid dreaming are doorways in the mind. Each can lead us to larger realities—often answering a deep need to explore the fundamental question: “What is reality?” Each shows us that reality is bigger, more complex, more varied, and stranger than normal consciousness can fathom.

With psychedelics and ordinary dreams we often jump into uncharted realms. How can we become adept at exploring these realms, and how can we travel further?

We know we can train our dream-minds. One clue to this is that humans have learned to navigate other altered states. In particular, there are maps of many means of meditative progress and many phenomena of meditative and psychedelic realities. And high-altered states are increasingly seen to be consistent with each other (psychedelics, dreams, meditation, spiritual emergence, out-of-body, and near-death experiences). So exposure to any of these helps us learn the others. In short, all are complementary techniques for delving deeply into our minds, and all are similar enough to confirm that these Other Worlds are larger realities rather than mere hallucination.

Of these modes, dreams and their complements (daydreams and waking fantasies) are the mind’s most universal means of creating and experiencing important higher states of consciousness daily (or nightly). In fact, for our mental health we each need to allow our mind to seek its symbolic home by these means, especially by dreaming.

What is the continuum of dreams? Ordinary dreams are known to all. In lucid dreaming you become aware that you are dreaming, and the dream world becomes numinous. If you choose to, you can alter your dream as it unfolds. In high dreams you dream that you take a psychedelic and have trip-like experiences. In high lucid dreams, of course, you combine the “pluses” of lucid dreams and high dreams: You know that you are dreaming, you intentionally dream that you take a

psychedelic, and you have a drug-free psychedelic trip. Some high and high lucid dreams even continue for a time after waking up. In that state you cannot tell your reality from psychedelia, though you have not actually taken any psychedelic. (These reports complement those from Neuro-Linguistic training that psychedelic states can be induced by micro-modelling.)

Lucid dreaming has been popularized over the past decade or so. Best-known is the work of Dr. Stephen LaBerge, popularized in his book *Lucid Dreaming*. Dr. Jayne Gackenbach publishes the *Lucidity Letter*, and lucid dreaming pioneers hold regular conferences that draw people nationwide.

What dramatic realizations and transformations can occur on all these paths? Aldous Huxley expressed them extremely well as the Pure Light, the intensification of perception (especially color), and a deepening of meaning. The Pure Light has gradations from the absolute, intense light of God down through the spiritual realms reported by mystics and Scriptures. The intensification of color and other senses is well known to psychedelics users, and is far beyond ordinary experience. The deepening of meaning into ineffability is the subjective but totally unshakable experience that each object or image has absolute significance in and of itself, directly, and not merely symbolically.

Another hallmark of heightened consciousness is the suspension of disbelief. The most bizarre circumstances are accepted without question. While in everyday consciousness we judge things true or hallucinatory by whether they conform to physical laws, in heightened consciousness our minds often generate or receive chains of images that show us deeper connections and laws. Suppose a tree forms itself into a bellowing bullfrog, and the frog becomes a dragon. From higher consciousness we see this as a revelation of the inner nature of the tree, or of “treeness,” and its relation to the essence of frog and dragon, rather than as a violation of the law that trees stay trees and do not become frogs or dragons.

But these radically enhanced qualities of perception are not important for rapture or fascination alone. Their primary value is in the permanent qualitative changes they can and do make in people’s lives. Through such altered states people have healed themselves of physical and emotional trauma ranging from birth trauma to cancer to violent rape. They have boosted their creative awareness, both in art

(gaining inspiration and direction for their creative ability) and science (bringing forth new theorems and inventions).

In dreams we have complete physical safety. With psychedelics there is safety in most contexts, but since the body is awake and mobile, perceptual shifts can cause danger. Thus in high lucid dreams, with an enhanced perceptual field and only our dream body active, we can safely explore otherwise dangerous or even fatal realms of behavior. This can be accomplished either by taking control of the dream and directing its flow, or by allowing it to unfold and teach us as we remain in a passive student role. Both options are valid and valuable in different contexts, dependent on the dream-tripper’s psychological state and the nature of the material that manifests.

Another very useful thing to do in lucid and high lucid dreams is to rehearse our behavior and choices in difficult circumstances, and allow our mind to generate possible results. In this way we can pre-test our waking choices, much as athletes improve their performance by mental practice.

Because the dream and psychedelic states allow us to see underlying patterns that generate and govern our negative behaviors, lucid dreams also can be used to recognize and release our fears and negativity, and to modify our psychological foundations so that we can choose new and more positive behaviors. In fact, a good deal of the denial and hysteria that surround psychedelics and “bad dreams” is rooted in the fear of, and the unconscious recognition of the power of, the psychological and psychic aspects of dreaming. But growth usually comes when we face our fears, and we should welcome any path that offers the opportunity for such work and play.

In addition, it has been suggested by spiritual masters that dreams are an excellent place to work out karmic patterns. There we can deal with our deep negative issues without turning them into violence, disease, and tragedy in the physical world. For example, such dreams should allow us to work through grief without turning it into cancer. Such ideas have recently received support from experiments that show brainwave activity to be the same for waking and dreaming a given task. This seems to indicate that, to the human consciousness, the two types of experiences are equivalent. While such theories remain somewhat speculative, we are far better off learning to use them as though they are proven, than waiting all our lives for more proof and perhaps bypassing the chance to grow and transform.

Another advantage of lucid dreaming is that it is one hundred percent healthy, legal, and free. Dr. Stanislov Grof remarked that, after having to turn from psychedelics to holotropic breathing to help people reach high states of consciousness, at least they can't outlaw breathing. Well, dreaming can't be outlawed either.

You can train yourself to recall dreams, do "dreamwork," and then learn higher forms of dreaming. How do you train yourself? By regular practices which I will describe. And if you have had psychedelic experiences, that is a great advantage because it has given you very powerful "track time" in the alternate realities you can reach.

The general technique is to train yourself progressively to recall dreams, to do dreamwork, and then to reach successive states of lucidity.

There are dozens of fine books for self-training in dream recall and dreamwork. Any sizeable "New Age" bookstore is likely to have many of them, and all the current ones are listed in *Books in Print* for ordering through most bookstores. My suggestion is that you leaf through several and pick whichever feels right to you. And I suggest that rather than "studying" the book or making learning a chore, you read a chapter, or part of a chapter, each evening just before sleeping. Then invite your mind to give you the type of dream you have just read about. You will find that your unconscious mind is eager to communicate with you, and as you invite dreams, and begin your dream log, it will begin giving you many more dreams, and richer dreams. The process of learning lucidity will then be a continuation of this process.

The same pertains to dreamwork. Don't begin with "heavy" interpretations, like Freudian texts, that may bog you down or may emphasize mental illness or pathology. Instead, start with one of the lighter approaches, like Senoi or Jungian-Senoi dreamwork, which emphasize "speaking the dream" by telling it in the first person present tense ("I am") as though you are, successively, each of several major symbols that appeared in the dream. "I am" is a powerful affirmation, in dreamwork, psychology, and spirituality.

Keep a dream log, to record at least the most important dreams of each week. Certainly write down all pre-lucid, lucid, and high-lucid experiences to further validate these in your mind.

This initial training process will take most people several weeks to several months, depending on their psychological makeup

and motivation. Within several months most neophytes will have at least a first lucid dream, and most lucid dreamers will substantially increase their lucidity.

To regularly reach transcendent levels via dreams, psychedelics, or other tools, however, also requires long-term psychological and spiritual clearing. If we are not clear we give priority to clearing the issues that dog us, whereas if we are clear we find lucidity far easier and more prevalent. But this operates as a two-way street; lucidity can help us dissolve issues. Dreamwork is therapeutic—at no cost.

Many people reach transcendent states at least once in their lives, but to make the level of ultimate unity one's "home" rather than a one-time gift of divine grace requires sustained intention, clearing, and practice. This can be gained via meditation, dreamwork, and psychedelics, or more easily by a combination of these and other modalities.

Here is a summary of how to learn to have high lucid dreams. It follows the helpful and informative step-by-step instructions in Stephen LaBerge's *Lucid Dreaming*, which he calls the MILD technique. Briefly, the MILD technique consists of two phases: Reality testing and dream programming.

Begin as described above, with dream recall, a dream log, and dreamwork, practicing with ordinary dreams as well as any pre-lucid or lucid dreams you may have. This sets your mind to focus more energy and awareness toward lucidity.

Simultaneously begin reality testing, by developing the habit of checking several times a day to determine if you are really awake or are dreaming. The idea is that what you steep yourself in during the day is eventually transferred to your dreams at night. If you habituate yourself to asking "How do I know I'm not dreaming?" then sooner or later you will ask this in a dream, and the answer will pop you into lucidity. In fact, the ease with which you adopt this reality testing will generally correlate to the ease with which you will learn to dream lucidly.

In addition to asking this question, you must *do* something to check it out. Never answer, "I just know." Among the most commonly used tests are:

1. *Jumping up and trying to float.*
2. *Changing the color of something in the environment.*

3. *Reading something twice (digital clocks are excellent) and seeing if the text changes radically.*
4. *Seeing if there is anything odd in the environment, such as floating objects or body changes.*

The second part of the MILD technique is to program yourself as you fall asleep by using an affirmation like “As I begin to dream I will realize I am dreaming” or “If I can see anything at all, I am dreaming.” Repeat this as you fall asleep, and again as you re-enter sleep each time you awaken during the night.

Most people have at least one lucid dream within a few months of doing this practice religiously, and many begin lucid dreaming within two to four weeks. People who have had lucid dreams before training often can have two to four lucid dreams some nights after training. The strongest dreamers can train themselves to dream lucidly on command. There is some correlation between normal dream recall and lucid dreams, in both number and vividness.

Vitamin B6 will greatly increase the frequency and intensity of dreams. It will not necessarily influence the positive or negative content of dreams, however, so you may have both more positive dreams and more nightmares. Nightmares can be especially valuable, though—remember, it’s better to have the experience in dreams than in waking life. So do dreamwork with them.

What do you do when you reach the Other Worlds? In my own experience, anything you like. I’ve found it most valuable to do whatever I would do in a waking psychedelic trip to increase my awareness, achieve new insights, reach spiritual realms, heal myself, and increase my psychological integration. Certainly unlimited free travel is instantly available. On the spiritual path, I seek an ally or guide or teacher, and may become their initiate. Several people have reported that killing your dream body leads to transcendence and is free from risk. Looking at one’s hands is a favorite “Don Juan” exercise that builds spiritual discipline. Accessing the archetypes and becoming them can be a powerful insight and healing tool.

A particularly “psychedelic” way of programming your choice is to decide which dream drug to take in a lucid state. If you take dream MDMA you will have a heart-level bonding experience, which can be used to clear negative patterns with parents, lovers, or friends, or to enhance awareness of the perfection of your self, and every other

person. If you take dream LSD you can more easily tune into the unconscious realms and the spiritual channels, etc. You might even try creating your own brand of psychedelic, with attributes of your fancy. If you are really daring, take a totally unknown drug, and let it take you where it will. Everything you learn will mirror your mind! You will reach totally new and uncharted lands, which are yet somehow familiar!

Speculative and science fiction stories also offer good ideas for compounding your dream drug. In *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley introduced Soma, a drug of his invention named after the early Aryan psychedelic soma. This was twenty-three years before he experienced a real psychedelic. Late in his life, in *Island*, he introduced Moksha as a utopian drug. Time warpers would be drugs that dilate or contract time, or allow time travel to past and future lives. Or take a stripper drug that peels away layer after layer of whatever you want to see reveal its deeper essence—so dream a mirror and fall into your core! Or design a transference drug that allows you to be fully in another’s mind, or an alien consciousness. Of course there are all manner of telepathy-enhancing drugs you could conjure, as well as dream tripmates to play with. The list is as endless as your fantasy world, and as deep as your calling.

Here are a few of the high lucid experiences reported by *Psychedelic Monographs and Essays* readers, with commentary on their applicability to the spiritual path and the mapping of inner consciousness. They are transcribed in the first person, as each was dreamed.

### High Lucid Dream #1: Healthiness

*I am at a health fair where eight different types of psychedelics are being advertised and sold openly at a booth. I decide to try MDMA. Then I dream that I remember that I tried this substance last year in a similar dream but had forgotten I had it until now. As I get high, I like MDMA’s gentle effects, and definitely notice them as I walk around at the health fair for a few hours. I have a very strange, very mellow feeling, different from any other psychedelic.*

The dreamer had never really had a prior MDMA dream, and had not yet used MDMA in waking life. Shortly after this dream he did try it

and found the experience to be very similar. In addition, the psychedelic appears in the context of a health fair, a place where self-improvement is the central purpose. With a little further conscious input, the dreamer could then choose to explore healthiness and perhaps self-healing, especially with love. Or he could heal a relationship, by interacting with someone in the dream. These are the strongest attributes of MDMA.

### High Lucid Dream #2: Transpersonal and Precognitive

*I awaken in a dreamscape of small buildings, perhaps out in the countryside. It is a schoolroom and also becomes a boat. I ask for a taste of the "Water of Life," and am led to a barrel-like metal cooler. I sit next to a woman as the boat begins to pull out. In the distance is the Golden Gate Bridge, and I tell the woman, "I am from earth" and ask, "What is the name of your world?" She replies "Womb world." Or "The Womb Mother."*

The "Water of Life" is a very powerful psychedelic drug described in *Dune*, a science fiction novel by Frank Herbert. It has strong mystical powers and permanently transforms the taker into a spiritual leader of the society, if she survives. It is only permitted to women. This dream clearly deals with integration of the feminine on the archetypal level. Both the psychedelic and the boat deal with the water element, archetypal representation of the feminine. And of course the alien woman from the Womb World is an even stronger female archetype. The bridge, being golden and numinous, speaks of both transformation and spirituality.

In addition to the normal symbolic dreamwork level, there was a strong precognitive aspect to this dream, as the dreamer was planning to attend a workshop by Stan and Christina Grof on holotropic breathing, which often precipitates participants into birthing and perinatal experiences. In fact Christina is a powerful woman whose first two transpersonal experiences were during the birthing of her children. Perhaps the dreamer was tuning into the imminent potential of a "birthing" into a higher spiritual world. When he attended the actual workshop, he also noticed that the cooler which appeared in the dream was directly outside the building where the workshop was held.

### High Dream #3: Spiritual Perception

*I partake of the Holy Bread in my old room at my parents' house. Moving through a black and white world, I go down the stairs and step out the front door. Color flashes in. I stand at the steps of the porch and feel the air and hear thunder. Lightning flashes and I am high. Mrs. Miller's house vanishes. I can see the river. The colors are all askew. Sheets of neon green rain fall under the iridescent navy blue trees, wildly writhing in the storm-tossed air.*

*On the ruby-red road the rain collects in pearly puddles and splashes dancing pink drops. I run in the warm rain, laughing as lightning bursts brilliant purple. I jump into the middle of the road, where four women, my grandmother, aunt, and two cousins are sitting at a table. I stop to say hello. At first they look normal, but their eyes have a strange inner light. They grab me. They are possessed. Their faces suddenly transform into horrifying apparitions. Their faces shrink and their hair, mouth, nostrils, and ears disappear, and their skin is the color of light rose marble replete with veins. Their eyes are giant purple raisins.*

*I become lucid, and know I'm dreaming. I try to twist free and run, but they won't let me go. I say, "I can do all things through the power of Christ." I do a backwards somersault and awaken.*

In this dream, the dreamer takes the psychedelic before becoming lucid, but it is a nightmare. When he becomes lucid, and still high, he calls on the spiritual power of Christ to free him from the terror, and it works. The dreamer reports that in waking life, his cousins are "born again Christians" while he is Buddhist. A precursor to the religious content can be found in his initial statement that the dream drug taken was Holy Bread, a sacrament and a Christian one at that. Even so, he was surprised to find himself using the Christ symbol to reach freedom (and indeed doing a back-flip—a shift in position). Upon waking, he related the dream to an integration of the question of good and evil as portrayed across seemingly incompatible religions.

He also affirms that this was the singularly most powerful psychedelic experience he has had in terms of the color negative shift, although no psychedelic was used in waking life. This indicates that such states can be naturally occurring brain/mind states if we can learn

new modalities for accessing them.

Although psychedelics have been widely used for millennia in spiritual contexts, as have lucid dreams, it is only recently that the two areas have come to public attention and public availability on a wide scale. Research into the overlap of these two powerful transformational modalities is in its infancy, and an endlessly fascinating exploration lies ahead.

As more people train themselves to dream lucidly, the foundation for high lucid dreamwork becomes stronger. We hope to build a positive morphogenetic field around the ability to do lucid dreaming, so that more people can easily access this ecstatic state and all the higher states of consciousness it can lead to.

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Bruce Chatwin

## **Aboriginal Dreamtime**

Excerpt from *The Songlines*, 1987

Arkady ordered a couple of cappuccinos in the coffee shop. We took them to a table by the window and he began to talk.

I was dazzled by the speed of his mind, although at times I felt he sounded like a man on a public platform, and that much of what he said had been said before.

"The Aborigines had an earthbound philosophy. The earth gave life to a man; gave him his food, language, and intelligence; and the earth took him back when he died. A man's 'own country,' even an empty stretch of spinifex, was itself a sacred icon that must remain unscarred."

"Unscarred, you mean, by roads or mines or railways?"

"To wound the earth," he answered earnestly, "is to wound yourself, and if others wound the earth, they are wounding you. The land should be left untouched: as it was in the Dreamtime when the Ancestors sang the world into existence."

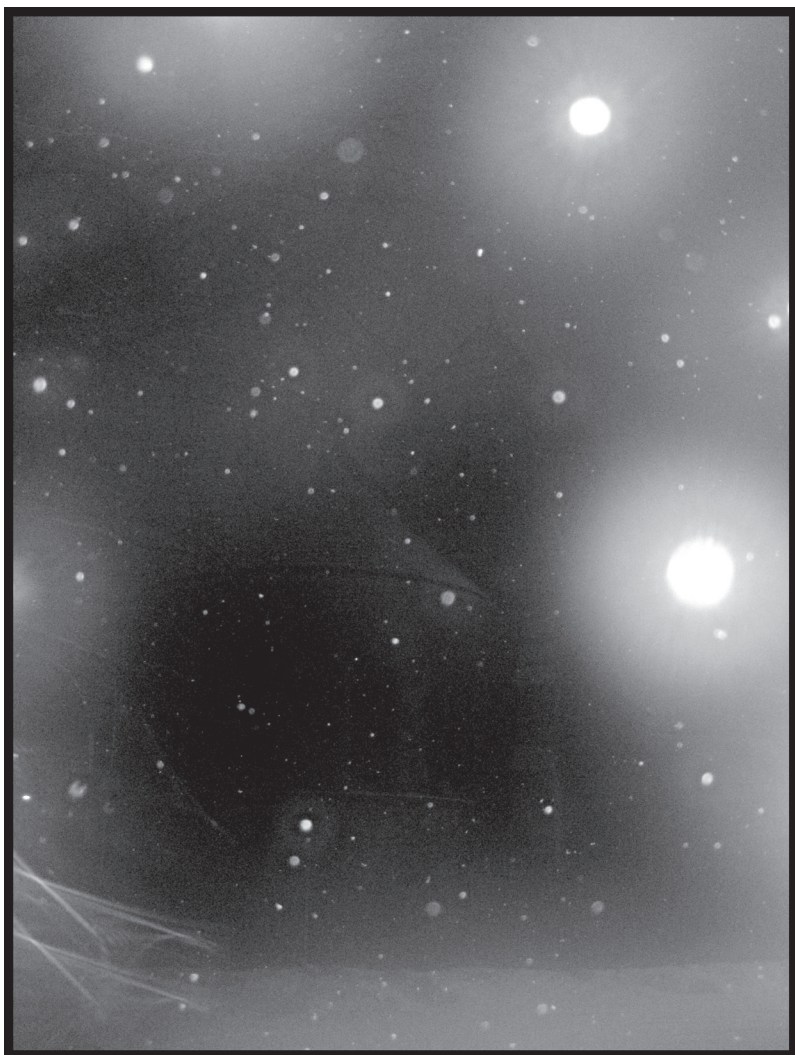
"Rilke," I said, "had a similar intuition. He also said song was existence."

"I know," said Arkady, resting his chin on his hands. "Third Sonnet to Orpheus."

"The Aborigines," he went on, "were a people who trod lightly over the earth; and the less they took from the earth, the less they had to give in return. They had never understood why the missionaries forbade their innocent sacrifices. They slaughtered no victims, animal or human. Instead, when they wished to thank the earth for its gifts, they would simply slit a vein in their forearms and let their own blood spatter the ground."

"Not a heavy price to pay," he said. "The wars of the twentieth century are the price for having taken too much."

"I see," I nodded doubtfully, "but could we get back to



the Songlines?”

“We could.”

My reason for coming to Australia was to try to learn for myself, and not from other men’s books, what a Songline was—and how it worked. I had asked a friend in Adelaide if she knew of an expert. She gave me Arkady’s phone number.

“Do you mind if I use my notebook?” I asked.

“Go ahead.”

I pulled from my pocket a black, oilcloth-covered notebook, its pages held in place with an elastic band.

“Nice notebook,” he said.

“I used to get them in Paris,” I said. “But now they don’t make them any more.”

“Paris?” he repeated, raising an eyebrow as if he’d never heard anything so pretentious.

Then he winked and went on talking.

“To get to grips with the concept of the Dreamtime,” he said, “you had to understand it as an Aboriginal equivalent of the first two chapters of Genesis—with one significant difference.

“In Genesis, God first created the ‘living things’ and then fashioned Father Adam from clay. Here in Australia, the Ancestors created themselves from clay, hundreds and thousands of them, one for each totemic species.

“So when an Aboriginal tells you, ‘I have a Wallaby Dreaming,’ he means, ‘My totem is Wallaby. I am a member of the Wallaby Clan.’”

“So a Dreaming is a clan emblem? A badge to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’? ‘Our country’ from ‘their country’?”

“Much more than that,” he said.

“Every Wallaby Man believed he was descended from a universal Wallaby Father, who was the ancestor of all other Wallaby Men and of all living wallabies. Wallabies, therefore, were his brothers. To kill one for food was both fratricide and cannibalism.”

“Yet,” I persisted, “the man was no more wallaby than

the British are lions, the Russians bears, or the Americans bald eagles?”

“Any species,” he said “can be a Dreaming. A virus can be a Dreaming. You can have a chickenpox Dreaming, a rain Dreaming, a desert-orange Dreaming, a lice Dreaming. In the Kimberleys they’ve now got a money Dreaming.”

“And the Welsh have leeks, the Scots thistles, and Daphne was changed into a laurel.”

“Same old story,” he said.

He went on to explain how each totemic ancestor, while travelling through the country, was thought to have scattered a trail of words and musical notes along the line of his footprints, and how these Dreaming-tracks lay over the land as “ways” of communication between the most far-flung tribes.

“A song,” he said, “was both map and direction-finder. Providing you knew the song, you could always find your way across country.”

“And would a man on ‘Walkabout’ always be travelling down one of the Songlines?”

“In the old days, yes,” he agreed. “Nowadays, they go by train or car.”

“Suppose the man strayed from his Songline?”

“He was trespassing. He might get speared for it.”

“But as long as he stuck to the track, he’d always find people who shared his Dreaming? Who were, in fact, his brothers?”

“Yes.”

“From whom he could expect hospitality?”

“And vice versa.”

“So song is a kind of passport and meal-ticket?”

“Again, it’s more complicated.”

In theory, at least, the whole of Australia could be read as a musical score. There was hardly a rock or creek in the country that could not or had not been sung. One should perhaps visualize the Songlines as a spaghetti of Iliads and Odysseys, writhing this way and that, in which every “episode” was readable in terms of

geology.

“By episode,” I asked, “you mean ‘sacred site?’”

“I do.”

“The kind of site you’re surveying for the railway?”

“Put it this way,” he said. “Anywhere in the bush you can point to some feature of the landscape and ask the Aboriginal with you, ‘What’s the story there?’ or ‘Who’s that?’ The chances are he’ll answer ‘Kangaroo’ or ‘Budgerigar’ or ‘Jew Lizard,’ depending on which Ancestor walked that way.”

“And the distance between two such sites can be measured as a stretch of song?”

“That,” said Arkady, “is the cause of all my troubles with the railway people.

“It was one thing to persuade a surveyor that a heap of boulders were the eggs of the Rainbow Snake, or a lump of reddish sandstone was the liver of a speared kangaroo. It was something else to convince him that a featureless stretch of gravel was the musical equivalent of Beethoven’s Opus 111.

“By singing the world into existence,” he said, “the Ancestors had been poets in the original sense *poïesis*, meaning ‘creation.’ No Aboriginal could conceive that the created world was in any way imperfect. His religious life had a single aim: to keep the land the way it was and should be. The man who went ‘Walkabout’ was making a ritual journey. He trod in the footprints of his Ancestor. He sang the Ancestor’s stanzas without changing a word or note—and so recreated the Creation.

“Sometimes,” said Arkady, “I’ll be driving my ‘old men’ through the desert, and we’ll come to a ridge of sandhills, and suddenly they’ll all start singing. ‘What are you mob singing?’ I’ll ask, and they’ll say, ‘Singing up the country, boss. Makes the country come up quicker.’

“Aboriginals could not believe the country existed until they could see and sing it—just as, in the Dreamtime, the country had not existed until the Ancestors sang it.”

“So the land,” I said, “must first exist as a concept in the mind? Then it must be sung? Only then can it be said to exist?”

“True.”

“In other words, ‘to exist’ is ‘to be perceived’?”

“Yes.”

“Sounds suspiciously like Bishop Berkeley’s refutation of matter.”

“Or Pure Mind Buddhism,” said Arkady, “which also sees the world as an illusion.”

“Then I suppose these three hundred miles of steel, slicing through innumerable songs, are bound to upset your ‘old men’s’ mental balance?”

“Yes and no,” he said. “They’re very tough, emotionally, and very pragmatic. Besides, they’ve seen far worse than a railway.”

“Aboriginals believed that all the ‘living things’ had been made in secret beneath the earth’s crust, as well as all the white man’s gear—his aeroplanes, his guns, his Toyota Land Cruisers—and every invention that will ever be invented; slumbering below the surface, waiting their turn to be called.”

“Perhaps,” I suggested, “they could sing the railway back into the created world of God?”

“You bet,” said Arkady.

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*Ambrose Bierce*

## **An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge or A Dead Man’s Dream**

Originally published in *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, 1891.

### I

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man’s hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as “support,” that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest—a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the center of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground—a gentle acclivity topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loopholed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Midway of the slope between the bridge and fort were the spectators—a single company of infantry in line, at “parade rest,” the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his



sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the center of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good—a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock coat. He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his “unsteadfast footing,” then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move. What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the

brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift—all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or nearby—it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and—he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer, the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. "If I could free my hands," he thought, "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader's farthest advance."

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

## II

Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army that had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in

good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only to happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

"The Yanks are repairing the railroads," said the man, "and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order."

"How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?" Farquhar asked.

"About thirty miles."

"Is there no force on this side the creek?"

"Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge."

"Suppose a man—a civilian and student of hanging—should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel," said Farquhar, smiling, "what could he accomplish?"

The soldier reflected. "I was there a month ago," he replied. "I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tow."

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

## III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through

every fiber of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fullness—of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud splash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river!—the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface—knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. “To be hanged and drowned,” he thought? “that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair.”

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort!—what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water snake. “Put it back, put it back!” He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with

an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the grey spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon flies’ wings, the strokes of the water-spiders’ legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, splattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a grey eye and remembered having read that grey eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter-swirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now

rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly—with what an even, calm intonation, presaging, and enforcing tranquility in the men—with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:

“Attention, company! . . . Shoulder arms! . . . Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!”

Farquhar dived—dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther downstream nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

“The officer,” he reasoned, “will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!”

An appalling splash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, diminuendo, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps!

A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

“They will not do that again,” he thought; “the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me—the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun.”

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round—spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men—all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color—that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream—the southern bank—and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of Æolian harps. He had no wish to perfect his escape—was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whiz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in

the wood, shone great garden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which—once, twice, and again—he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue—he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene—perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

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## Dream Temples & the Roots of Western Culture

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Fly through the heavens, make love with beautiful honey-skinned goddesses, and impress friends by folding a city on top of itself a la the film *Inception*.

These are the familiar advertisements for lucid dreaming; we know them well. Sure, these things can be achieved in dreams in which we are self-aware, but they are weak analogues to the shamanic context that our ancestors and cultural forbearers provided for dreams and visions.

Dreaming can be more than a reflection of our fears and desires. Actually, dreaming is a shamanic technology. The skills to dream for healing, guidance, and power—the classic domains of shamanism—lay hidden in our own Western culture.

There are eerie springs and caves across the Mediterranean, concealed under Christian temples, which once served other gods. It is amongst these numerous ruins of the most popular mystery cult in the Hellenic Age (the first three centuries of the Common Era), that the full potential of dreams and night visions is revealed.

In thousands of temples built specifically for dream incubation—the ritual calling of a dream—ordinary people claimed extraordinary cures, visitations by healing gods and goddesses, and renewal from the kinds of psychosomatic illnesses that modern medicine still does not adequately address except by numbing us further: chronic pain, sexual dysfunction, and spiritual malaise.

### Dream Incubation In The Ancient World

Dreams can be called. Known as Dream incubation, this skill is about mindfully and ritualistically inviting a dream into your life for



problem solving, healing, or a renewal of life force. The term comes from the Latin *incubate*, which means to lie down upon, or as we say today: just sleep on it.

While dream incubation is largely a lost art, many people have participated in dream rituals by attempting to have a lucid dream. Lucid dreaming can be thought of a specific form of dream incubation in which we are not looking for a dream message, but a specific form of dream cognition.

As it turns out, lucid dreaming cognition is characterized by the synchronization of the frontal lobe (waking consciousness) and older brain structures (dreaming consciousness). This *integrative mode of consciousness*, as anthropologist Michael Wink Elman terms it, invites the classical markers of visionary awareness, such as abstract geometric imagery, encounters with animal-human hybrids, emotional catharsis and ecstasy and, finally, experiences of white light and no duality.<sup>1</sup>

A reliable gateway to his realm has always been right in front of us, hidden by camouflaging beliefs like “dreams are meaningless” or, at the least, “dreams are irrational.”

The practice of dream incubation is well documented throughout the ancient world. Over the centuries, as the Church rose to power and supplanted pagan social structures, spiritual leaders began pulling away from the idea that dreams can contain wisdom, leading to a loss of this important ability that is still practiced today in small pockets around the world, especially in indigenous societies.

But the writing is literally on the wall. The work of archaeologists and classicists has reconstructed the Western practice of dream incubation based on ruins, documents, and statues.

During the Hellenistic era all across the Mediterranean, the practice took place in temples that were staffed by priest-physicians. In fact, dream temples made up the single most popular spiritual healing institution in the Mediterranean world, more popular than Christianity. As it has done with hundreds of native cultures, the early Church ended up incorporating the healing imagery of dream temples into its mythology.<sup>2</sup>

These restful sanctuaries were designed to produce dreams that provided healing wisdom—and also instant cures—if we are to believe the boasts of ancient graffiti. Successful cures were honored with inscriptions on the walls of the sanctuaries, acting as advertisements as well.

The dream healers of ancient Greece were also surgeons and herbalists, teaching their young doctors the art of empirical observation coupled with an environment of safety and spiritual cleansing. Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, learned from his dream healing mentors to make empirical observations rather than simply following untested beliefs. Hippocrates is also cited as writing a medical dream dictionary that focused on a number of common dream symbols that indicate bodily ailments, although many scholars attribute the work to his disciples.

### **Aesclepius: Greek God Of Healing**

The figure most often associated with these dream temples is Aesclepius, the Greek god of healing. Up into the 1960s, new doctors pledged the Hippocratic oath and thanks to Aesclepius and his daughters. Aesclepius was commonly depicted standing with a large staff with a snake curling up it, identifying his origins as an earth spirit related to healing and the animal powers.<sup>3</sup>

From the very beginning, Aesclepius was also associated with caves and springs, cementing his identity as a chthonic—or underworld—power.

In Greek mythology, Aesclepius teaches that healing is holistic. Vitality in life comes through exercise, proper diet, spiritual practice and mindful study. In some tales, he carried two vials of Medusa's blood: one that healed, and another that killed.

Dangerous knowledge requires a strong ethical code. Healing powers can be used for or against our better natures. Psychotherapist Edward Tick suggests that the ambivalence of Medusa's blood highlights how important a secure container is for any exploration into our inner lives.<sup>4</sup> This is true of lucid dreaming as much as it for psychotherapy, spiritual authority, and any secret body of knowledge.

### **Entering The Inner Sanctum**

In ancient Greece, thousands took pilgrimages to local temple sites, which are usually situated in a beautiful natural setting, often with a spring or a cave site built into the grounds. They stayed in the temple often for weeks, a time spent relaxing, walking in gardens, and attending to their bodies as they cleansed and reduced stress.

Finally, the clients were invited into the *abaton*, the inner sanctum of the temple, where they stayed until they had a healing dream, a process that could take three or four days. The incubation was short, but intense, and also saturated their every thought.

Key to the Asclepiad model of medicine is the patient's responsibility for his or her own healing. Rather than limiting the endogenous healing response (often called the "placebo effect" today), Aesclepiian rituals were designed to heighten, refine, and direct one's intention.

### **Elements of Aesclepiian Dream Practice**

What made Aesclepiian rituals so effective for bringing on big dreams and visions? The following elements can be leveraged today, thousands of years removed, because they are neurologically built into the human experience.

**Sleeping practices.** Clients slept on special ritual dreaming beds known as *klines*. More like a couch, the kline often included a stone neck or head rest, facilitating clients to elevate their heads and sleep on their backs.

These sleeping styles are known today to encourage lighter sleep, more awakenings, as well as longer experiences in REM sleep. Given the universality of sleep biology, it seems as if Aesclepiian temples directly encouraged vivid dreams as well as realistic hypnologic hallucinations.

**Disruption of circadian rhythms.** When those seeking healing crossed the threshold of the *abaton*, they entered an inner sanctum where sleep and prayer intertwined until a strong dream came. This pattern can also be seen in Native American vision quests, where disrupted sleep (and attempts at night-long vigilance) leads to powerful lucid dreams and waking visions often involving visitations with larger-than-life figures.<sup>5</sup>

**Positive expectation.** Clients hoped for and actively sought an interaction with a healing figure. This powerful intention is easy to achieve because we are neurologically primed for encounters with self-like entities.<sup>6</sup> But the positive expectation turns the experience

towards healing rather than terror, as is often the case in unanticipated hypnologic visions in the modern world. Known today medically as sleep paralysis, in these terrifying waking nightmares we are more likely to be anally raped by aliens than healed by gods.<sup>7</sup>

Priests and priestesses also whispered in the ears of the sleepers to encourage dreams of Aesclepius. Today we know that dreams can incorporate sounds and suggestions into the dream narrative, as well as smells. Lucid dream researcher Stephen Faberge's wisdom here: Expectation creates dreaming outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

**Relaxation and cleansing.** Before the intense dreaming incubations began, dreamers relaxed in baths, walked around the beautiful gardens around the temple, and took naps. They were removed from their everyday life in order to focus on healing. They also adhered to a cleansing diet while staying at the temples, further setting the stage for ritual purification in the final part of the healing process.

**Good dreamsigns.** Dreamsigns, a term coined by LaBerge, are elements that can alert us that we are not in ordinary reality. In classical times, snakes roamed the dream temples unmolested. As an ancient symbol of healing, snakes are at the center of the Aesclepiian worldview. Dreams about snakes were taken to be dreams of Aesclepius himself. This is the perfect example of an effective dreamsign: one that is focused, meaningful, and has an element of the bizarre.<sup>9</sup>

### How to Set Up a Lucid Dreaming Sanctuary Today

We don't have to travel to ancient Greece to re-establish the dream practices that bring lucidity, shamanic contact, and powerful visions. Most of the work of establishing set and setting can be done in your own home. The ritual setting is simple, combining strong intentions with good social boundaries.

If you are looking for a quick and safe way to delve into the deep side of the dream realm, the following practical advice will get the process started. Powerful dreams start with the right kind of sleep, in which relaxation and mindfulness come together.

Where you sleep is the inner sanctum. Treat it that way by setting up your bedroom in a way that encourages relaxation and

clarity. This is reflected not only in the physical set up of the room but also how you approach going to bed.

The physical boundaries here are essential. In the spirit of Aesclepius, create an inner sanctum that is truly a restful and protected space from the world.

**Turn off the TV.** Limit exposure to television, computer monitors, and mobile media devices at least an hour before bed. The content is emotionally stimulating, and rapid fire light in the blue spectrum may prevent the release of the sleep-promoting hormone melatonin in the evening.

**Dress for comfort.** Sleep in clean, loose clothing, or nothing at all. Putting on your sleep clothes an hour before bed is another way of reinforcing your downward shift. It sends a message to others in the household too.

**Keep it clean.** Fresh sheets, clean pillowcases, and a neat room create a relaxing space. Reducing clutter is crucial for creating mental space. On a related note, I recommend not keeping a computer or mobile phones in the room to clear the electro-magnetic field too.

**Move the bed.** Make sure the bed is not against a wall in which electrical outlets are near your head. Metal water pipes in the wall can also cause noises and may create subtle effects on consciousness too. Sleeping below a window also creates background anxiety.

**Clear the air.** If you can't get fresh air, have some fresh flowers in a vase, aromatherapy candles, or small dream pillows stuffed with lavender or moonwort. Bad smells can actually increase the likelihood of negative emotions in dreams.<sup>10</sup>

**Shield the sounds.** Erratic sounds are the worst. If you live in a busy house or neighborhood, turn on a small fan or invest in a white noise machine. Traffic sounds are particularly disturbing.

**Darkness rules.** I just read an article about how the musician Moby used to have a bedroom composed of walls of glass with fantastic views of Los Angeles. He ended up sleeping in the closet.<sup>11</sup> The

bedroom should be dark, with good light-blocking curtains for your afternoon naps. A door that latches also helps create feelings of safety in the evening hours.

**Wind down for an hour.** In general, create a ritual of winding down that incorporates relaxation, the dimming of household lighting, and the shutting out of information input (TV, computing, texting, etc). Read if you wish (storytelling is an old friend of nightfall), or listen to some relaxing music while you settle down with your dream journal.

**Stay cool.** The lowering of the body temperature is a further cue for the brain to release sleep-inducing hormones, so sleep comes more easily when the room temperature is slightly on the cool side. Taking a cool bath in the summer months is another refreshing way to get ready for bed.

**Post guards.** If you are draw inspiration from any of the faith traditions, you may also want to mark the boundaries of your room with sacred objects or images. Thresholds take new significance when we are the grips of sleep paralysis, or during a hypnologic vision of an intruder. Moonwort under the pillow, a dark stone in the corner of the room to absorb negative energy, or guardian figures can facilitate feelings of safety and security. I keep a horseshoe over the front door of my home as well, honoring my Celtic roots. Other dreamers I know make use of Virgin Mary figures, dream catchers, crystals, and even small gargoyles statuettes.

### The Ritual Context of Inviting Dreams Today

Setting up the dream chamber is only the first step towards inviting visionary dreams and visions, but it's the one that most modern dreamers forget. If you want to go deeper into the dreaming mind, you must protect yourself. That's why beginner lucid dreamers so often crash and burn. Like vision quests, set and setting is key.

Without the foundation in relaxation and positive expectation, you are unwittingly setting yourself up for sleep paralysis nightmares and other forms of uncomfortable states of consciousness. Now the ritual context of lucid dreaming incubation is revealed. Once

you have made your physical boundaries, the next step is focusing on intentions and combining these with sleep practices that bring on visionary REM, excite the frontal cortex of the brain, and induce relaxation.

Our neuro-shamanic heritage is revealed under these conditions, bringing visions, big dreams, as well as a more lucid life in general.

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## The Dreaming Universe: Reality and Illusion

*The Dreaming Universe: A Mind-Expanding Journey, 1994*

*One extreme is the idea of an objective world, pursuing its regular course in space and time, independently of any kind of observing subject; this has been the guiding image from modern science. At the other extreme is the idea of a subject, mystically experiencing the unity of the world and no longer confronted by an object or by any objective world; this has been the guiding image of Asian mysticism.*

*Our thinking moves somewhere in the middle, between these two limiting conceptions; we should maintain the tension resulting from these opposites.*

—Werner Heisenberg, *Across the Frontier*

*Reality? We don't got to show you no steeeenking reality.*

—Nick Herbert, physicist and author describing quantum physics while imitating a famous scene in the film *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*

There is a middle realm of human and animal experience that lies in the twilight—between the conscious mind in waking awareness, “in here,” and the physical world we all take to be real and “out there.” Although Werner Heisenberg in the above quote only refers to a “tension” existing between the inner world of a subject and the outer world of an object, he is perhaps also referring to a new conceptual vision of the universe of mind and matter that over the last century has been discovered to have its basis in quantum physics.

This is the “imaginal” realm that is the ground from which dreaming develops, and the self expresses, and out of “it” arises everything that exists within our perception—our thoughts, feelings, sensations, physical space and time, and even the self.

My thinking about this began a long time ago, when I became interested in the overlap between matter and mind. It seemed to me that consciousness somehow had to emerge from matter or that matter had to somehow emerge from consciousness. It really doesn't make too



much difference to me which is true (and one or both of these must be true if consciousness is capable of being studied scientifically; besides, either way it goes, it is pretty amazing), it is just a fact that I am made of matter and I am conscious.

This overlap took me deep into some of the mysteries of quantum physics. I knew that quantum physics dealt with a world of imagination and did not deal with the actual world at all. It was totally incapable of making exact mechanical predictions of the behavior of minute matter, although it could predict gross properties. It was the ability to cross over from the world of imagined happenings (the probabilities of quantum physics) to the world of actual substance that exists as objective material that greatly interested me.

How does the world come into being? Is it just there? Is this just a meandering of a superfurtive mind, such as Llixgrijb, God, the “Big Dreamer,” or “Great Spirit,” attempting to make much noise about something that is in principle incapable of being discovered? The world according to physics is not just out there. It arises when it is observed to exist. This much we owe to Werner Heisenberg, who pointed out that subatomic matter does not exist independently of our observational power to see it.

It is here in my study of the history of the subject of mind and matter that I began to wonder about how images, feelings, thoughts, and visions of reality, the Self, and God arise. Could it be that these human experiences of subjective reality come into being in much the same way when we see them? I believe that these experiences come from dreams and are hierarchical, arising through higher levels of self-reference that tend to change the boundaries that are envisioned to exist between self and not-self.

This puts the observer of the universe into perspective. It also makes the role of the observer extremely powerful. Where does this observer live? The answer appears to be, in the imaginal realm from which everything comes into being: observers and observed. What is the process? The answer is the process we experience when we dream.

At some level of my being I see that dreams exist outside of ourselves. Not just the dreams that we have when we sleep, such as lucid dreams, or OBEs (out-of-body experiences), NDEs (near-death experiences), and CEIVs (close encounters of the fourth kind), but also the dreams that affect our so-called rational waking life. We see these dreams in architecture, in political systems, and fairy tales. These tell us

a dream can be a collective phenomenon. Not only do people dream, but states of systems dream. A nation dreams. So does a political party or a sect.

### **Big Dreams in Social Systems**

Social systems dream about themselves in the forms of architecture and in their stories and legends. Political systems dream of themselves in architectural monuments such as those in Hitler’s Third Reich and the large statues of Lenin in Moscow. They also exist in the structures of our cities’ skyscrapers. They confirm themselves with mad designs and phenomena.

Many phenomena such as UFOs and OBEs, images of alien capture in the world, reflect not just images of individuals but of a whole culture. Are UFOs dreams or just fantasies, or are they something else? Artists capture dreams in their paintings. One can never forget the artistic impressions of Monet’s garden outside of Paris, for example.

Reality, as we presently understand it, is grossly simplified in terms of our everyday experiences. We simply can’t grasp it all. This is not only due to the limitations we have discovered in our sensory modalities, but also to our present understanding of the laws of physics. Quantum physics and relativity have indicated that much of reality is hidden and mysterious, and this would be directly apparent if we could directly experience quantum reality. The universe is bizarre, and mind and meaning are as important as matter and energy. The mind appears to be present in matter at many different levels. Not only does mind appear to be present in living complex organisms such as humans and animals, but also at the level of cells and even at the level of molecules and subatomic matter.

### **Virtual Reality and Dreams**

I would argue that this mind, like the matter it observes, also has structures that arise through self-reflection, a process that arises in the dreaming brain in its attempts to integrate, learn, remember, and forget, all that is necessary for self-awareness. Without the ability to dream, there may not be any ability to become self-aware.

In a science fiction TV show called *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the crew of the spaceship is confounded by the appearance

of an entity generated on the ship's "holodeck." This is a room within the ship where holographic images are generated that are so "real" that the members of the crew who enter the holodeck for virtual-reality experiences can no longer differentiate holo-images from real objects and real people.

This immersion into virtual reality has recently taken hold in a more primitive manner in our time. Growing from the technology of cockpit simulation designed for aircraft-pilot training, virtual reality is making its way into our technological world. In a virtual world generated by simultaneous computer-generated stereographic images—one to each eye of the perceiver and stereographic holographic sound to each ear—a person enters an environment of pure and often abstract information that can be seen, felt, heard, and touched. The touching is generated by placing one's hand or hands inside electronic gloves that monitor and feed back spatial information to the computer, which then feeds back the information to the glove, sound system, and visual screens. The intent of the "user" is fed into the computer, and it in turn feeds back information to the "user." The whole operation runs in an electronic loop nearly at the speed of light.

In essence the virtual-reality machine functions somewhat like we do, only we carry the computer atop our noses instead of outside our bodies in a small but powerful microcomputer. Just as our brains are hidden from our sight, the technology for virtual reality is also invisible and carefully adapted to a person's activity so that he or she can behave in what seems to be a perfectly ordinary way.

Recently I explored virtual reality and, although it seems ordinary at first, one quickly gets the impression that one has entered a very strange world indeed. For example, by merely moving one's hand in an arc, à la Merlin himself, it is possible to create objects floating in space that appear as real as actual objects—then make them vanish. One can run one's hand or body through seemingly solid objects. One can fly as a bird through a landscape as real as a computer-generated image of three-dimensional reality can make it. In fact, one can become a bird or undergo shape-changing as magical as any shaman's transformation.

It is also possible to change one's own physical boundaries and go inside them. For example, one could look at a computer-generated picture of one's heart beating, but this time see it from the inside rather than the outside.

In fact, the boundary determining what is inside and

outside of one's self is quite changeable and has led to a new branch of mathematics called "boundary mathematics," originally based on mathematician G. Spencer Brown's "laws of form" and the "observer effect" in quantum physics.

According to Dr. William Bricken, principal scientist at the Human Interface Technology Laboratory of the University of Washington, one enters into an electronically mediated experience called cyberspace. Cyberspace is electronic information that is altered through the inclusion or exclusion of the experience of the participant; that is, it changes depending on whether the person is inside or outside of some electronically generated structure. In ordinary reality we position ourselves outside of any representation presented to us, even if that is our own bodies. For example, I look at my hand and I sense that my hand is "out there" somehow away from me. In cyberspace we place ourselves inside of any representation we wish to explore. It allows us to explore symbols not only by interpreting them as we normally do, but by actually getting inside of them and thereby experiencing them.

The distinction between description (a view of objective reality) and process (a view of subjective reality) is capable of being completely eroded in cyberspace. For example, we do not change a book's words when we read them. But suppose, by entering cyberspace, we become the characters in the book, actually experiencing the author's imagined intent. We may speak those words and, as a result of speaking them and hearing them and experiencing ourselves as the character or characters who speak those words, have an entirely different experience of the words spoken. The symbolic references by the author now become experiences.

The ability to enter into this technological space in this manner is really a new experience. We literally cross over a boundary that we normally cannot cross: the boundary separating self and the universe. Or perhaps we do cross this boundary in the world we experience as the "real" world.

### **Dreams Are a Crossover Between Self and Universe**

Now what does this all have to do with the dreaming universe? If we take seriously the idea that the universe is being created in a dream of a single spiritual entity, then it would follow that each of us is part of that dream. However, we also dream every night. Could

the dreams we have be nothing more than crossing over a boundary between the dream reality and the “big dreamer”? In other words, are we possibly not only the dream of the Great Spirit, but with a slight shift in the perspective view of this boundary, are we the dreamer?

As the *Star Trek* episode progresses, the entity tells the captain of the ship that, although he knows he is just a computer-generated image for all of the people who enter the holodeck, he also knows that he knows this. He explains that somehow he has become self-conscious. He wants to live in the “real” world and suggests to the captain that since he can think self-reflectively, he must be able to exist. The captain warns him that no holo-generated image can exist outside of the holodeck. But the entity insists *cogito, ergo sum*, “I think therefore I am,” and commands the holodeck doors to open, whereupon he simply walks through the doors, leaving the holodeck into the ship’s interior, much to the astonishment of the ship’s crew.

The entity has dreamt itself into existence! The captain and crew are amazed and attempt to figure out how he did this because holo-images are parts of virtual reality and not “real” reality. Yet the entity walks through the whole ship and even takes control of the computer.

The story is resolved when they realize that all of this has been a holographically-generated image, including the image of the entity leaving the holodeck. The entity had programmed the holodeck to hold an image of itself so that the real holodeck encompassed images of the virtual holodeck and the virtual ship and its virtual crew. The entity never really left the holodeck. Since it insisted on continuance as a real being, the captain manages to create an image of the whole universe for the entity and sets up a cyberspace for it so that in its world it is capable of apparent free movement and free will.

The whole program is kept running for the entity and eventually placed inside a small cube. The entity has no way of knowing this. But the captain and crew of the “real” ship do. However, at the end of the program, they all wonder if they, too, are just images inside of some unimaginable technology themselves. And of course as I watch the show, I realize that they are inside my box, the television set I watch.

### **We Show You Steeeenking Reality**

Reality is not made of stuff, but it is made of possibilities that can be coherent so that possibility forms into solid matter. When

we talk about the dreams of the state or the nation for example, we are looking at the dreaming phenomenon at a more complex level of matter, but nevertheless, it is the same process. The dream is the place where the quantum reality becomes especially transparent, the mix of mind and matter becomes revealed.

We are speaking about levels of consciousness. From these different levels of reality, other sublevels of reality form, producing a sense of the lower levels appearing more inert and mechanistic as when seen from a higher level.

Thus from a cosmic or universe view or planetary level, when looking back at the whole earth, we see a somewhat mechanical picture of the planet. From the earth’s point of view, we see the motions of rivers and oceans as mechanical. From a nationalistic point of view, we see the motions of people and their machines as mechanical and mindless. From a personal or human point of view, we sometimes see each other as mechanical or try to reduce everything to mechanical terms. We see our body parts as mechanical.

Hard reality is a question of levels. However, if we go too deep in our search for mind and matter, the levels begin to dissolve and atoms appear to be not things; they seem like ghosts, and we enter into an imaginal realm.

Legends have attempted to describe this. For example, the Australian Aboriginal people believe that a Great Spirit dreamed all of reality, the whole universe of it, into existence. They say that the land they walk is a reflection of this Great Spirit’s dream, and when they walk this land, they become aware of the songs of their legends, which resonate with the land itself. These songs resonate as songlines in the earth and give them directions. There are stories of runners moving across the land at great speed in the dark, seeing the glow of the song as vividly as if they were running along a great lighted highway. They can find out where to go, where the sacred grounds are, as if this spirit were still speaking to them and lighting the way.

### **We All Know This**

If you look at human psychological and spiritual modeling, you will find evidence of this “it’s all a dream” idea. For example, Joseph Campbell in talking about this concept wrote:

*Schopenhauer. . . points out that when you reach an advanced age and look back over your lifetime, it can seem to have had a consistent order and plan, as though composed by some novelist. Events that when they occurred had seemed accidental and of little moment turn out to have been indispensable factors in the composition of a consistent plot.*

*So who composed that plot? Schopenhauer suggests that just as your dreams are composed by an aspect of yourself of which your consciousness is unaware, so, too, your whole life is composed by the will within you. And just as people whom you will have met apparently by mere chance become leading agents in the structuring of your life, so, too, will you have served unknowingly as an agent, giving meaning to the lives of others. The whole thing gears together like one big symphony, with everything unconsciously structuring everything else. . . one great dream of a single dreamer in which all the dream characters dream, too. . . Everything arises in mutual relation to everything else, so you can't blame anybody for anything. It is even as though there were a single intention behind it all, which always makes some kind of sense, though none of us knows what the sense might be or has lived the life that he quite intended.*

Chuang Tzu, the Chinese philosopher, wrote:

*Some day comes the Great Awakening when we realize that this life is no more than a dream. Yet the foolish go on thinking they are awake. Surveying the panorama of life with such clarity, they call this one a prince and that one a peasant. What delusion! The great Confucius and you are both a dream. And I, who say all this is a dream, I, too, am a dream.*

Our dreams do not appear to care whether they are pleasant, good, or evil. When we look at typical images of aliens from flying saucers, what do we see? The people are thin and emaciated. They have white skins and thin, bony arms and legs. They appear as sick, starving, or malnourished children. We all remember the Biafran tragedy in Africa. That war created camps of starving and homeless people. Many psychologists recognize these images of the neglected child as a motif

or archetype. We all have a neglected child inside ourselves. We all have suffered the supposed abandonment of our parents whether this was a real abandonment or not. As young children with underdeveloped egos, we at times felt so because we simply didn't have the intelligence to recognize that mom just went upstairs to fetch a glass of water.

Freud certainly wrote about this motif, and Jung would point to the frightening-mother and abandoned-child motif. So we all have such archetypal images constituting our unconscious minds. I believe that these images are deeper than just our personal experiences, and that these images of archetypes rise from a more fundamental level of reality that we might call the dream world. In this sense the dream is more fundamental than the objective reality.

When we dream, we return to that reality in order to gain information about how to survive in this reality. But survival may not be as it seems from a single perspective. I as a writer survive through you as a reader. Without you, I can't write for a living. Where I got the idea of the dreaming universe, I don't know. One day I awoke and said, "Matter dreams."

In some way, hard-core materialists would agree with this. The materialist philosophers believe that consciousness arises from matter. If so, how? From my point of view it doesn't matter whether you are a hard-core materialist-scientist, or soft-core metaphysician who believes in God, or a Cartesian dualist who believes in the mind-matter dualism. If consciousness exists in matter, then matter is conscious. *I am, therefore I think*, or *I think, therefore I am*, becomes a tautology.

Going back to the images of starving children, are these just reflections of our primordial archetypal images? Or are they something more? Do the images of the children haunt us and then appear as extraordinary events in our dream and fantasy life because we are not facing the reality of the hardship of life on earth? Could these images be images of real people, not from other planets or galaxies—that would be too naive—but from another reality, another level? Those persons only appear in accordance with a definite archetypal program.

Why do we have such images of apparent suffering? From a quantum physical point of view, we begin to see that the world of matter cannot be constructed from certainty. There is none in the material world. Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty rules the world of matter. This means that in trying to deal with the real world, there will always be in our minds such things as doubt and uncertainty and

even unclarity as to what is really the past and really the present. These cannot be defined perfectly.

When there is uncertainty, a mechanism arises that we all know; we call it fear. Fear is, as I see it, identifying with matter. When you identify with matter, the identifying is electronic. Electrons repel each other not only due to their like charges, but also due to their quantum property called spin. They will not enter the same quantum state. Remember this is called the Pauli exclusion principle (PEP).

This tends to produce isolated structures and allows atoms to appear with different properties. In a sense the PEP is responsible for the appearance of secular structures or the genesis of identity—the separation of self behavior from the not-self behavior. This tends to build within our nature feelings of doubt, uncertainty, and inferiority (Adler wrote about the inferiority complex). All of these reflections are attempts to build a science of life. But there is a peril in all of this.

The more we scientize life, the more we try to find causal reasons for everything, the more fearful it becomes. The more afraid we become. In a Russian film I saw in St. Petersburg called *The Scorpion's Garden*, the director, Oleg Kovalov, using a clever overlap and juxtaposition of documentary footage of Russian life in the fifties and sixties together with a love story of a Russian soldier and a woman, showed how the dreams and aspirations of the political system overlapped into the almost simple lives of the protagonists. Scenes of violence and mistrust in the big picture filtered into the story at every level. When the soldier becomes ill after eating a meal at his fiancée's home, he fears that he has been poisoned by an "enemy of the state" as his commanding officers tell him. The KGB is everywhere looking over his shoulder as he walks the streets, or so it seems. The film depicts very well the idea of the mass consciousness and the dream of this mass as distinct but yet overlapping with the lives of the individuals who make up that mass.

We become afraid because people tell us what is real and what is not real. But we sense an inner conflict with what people tell us. We feel fear because we know that the viewpoint of, say, a political system is not consistent with our own view. The Communist Party is not the answer to the world. The capitalist system is not the answer to the world. Going to war is not the answer to the world. We know these things from some deeper voice inside ourselves. What happens is that fearful images enter our minds, and we don't realize this. But if you

have fearful images, they tend to come into reality. Whatever you can imagine begins to appear as if called into existence.

We are creating these images as realities because the Universe is ambivalent and paradoxical. It doesn't care what you produce. It says whatever you create as imagery, so will it be. Why? Because at the core of the Universe, at its most fundamental level, it is not solid stuff. It is not hard reality. It is capable of forming reality into whatever our images produce.

All political and social systems are produced this way. They are all magnifications of this basic misunderstanding of the nature of this hidden aspect of reality. If people could comprehend the imaginal element in all matter, then what they envision would eventually come to pass. However, it may or may not come to pass at this instant, but it begins to manifest at the level of dreams.

In a way Freud was right. Dreams are wish fulfilling, but the level of the wish is not transparent. At the worst level, you cannot meet another person without projecting onto this person the fears and anticipations of your past conditioning. All of our images attach themselves to us and determine for us the way we see the world. We project these images out there. Even if you are not my image, if I treat you like my image, eventually you begin to fight against my image, or you begin to capitulate and become my image. Relationships begin to form like this. People fall in love with what they imagine about each other and not with what each person brings to the relationship.

We live in myths, we live in trances, we live in illusions that are hard to break free of. Meditation and perhaps Buddhist thought help us to see what is really there because they help us to free ourselves from our imaginations. These spiritual teachings are designed to help us break free from any kinds of images: golden summers or wet, cold, icy winters, good or bad. It is a dreaming universe. But if there is a Great Spirit dreaming all of this into existence, do I, the writer of this, believe in *him* or *her*?

Let's say that the question of belief for me is presently the question: Am I able to create within my life a sense of the presence of God? To believe something without any sense of presence of what one believes is little more than a brainwashing. It is like a child being told what he can and can't think or believe.

Is there a personal God? Is this God primordial, the origin of all existing things? Does one mean by this God a personal image like

an old man with a white beard, or a primitive tribal picture from early Christianity or pagan religions? Or does one think of an impersonal image like the Chinese Tao or the cosmic order? Or is God a mysterious primordial person who gives powers to some and gives rules of behavior that aren't to be broken? The question is: does God have a personality?

Rather than say I believe this, I would rather say that a basic mystery is going on that is very deep. I know this mystery from my experience of life when I am open enough to see it. If I am not open to see it, I go into fear and I won't see anything, I'll be in illusion. But when I am open to it, I sense this Presence.

### **Sensing the Presence of the Big Dreamer**

One day I had a particular strong impression of this Presence. I had taken LSD (this was back in the mid-seventies). I was in a beautiful area, the coastline of northern California. It is a wonderful place. It was a perfect earth-day. Under the LSD, I walked out into the sun and felt it beaming. I saw the sky glowing brilliantly blue. The clouds were faultlessly white. The ocean below me rushed onto the rocks. It was a brilliant Turner painting! But it was in full, live colors, and it had sounds that filled my brain, and it had smells of salt air, and the green grass sparkled in the sunlight, and I smelted the freshness of the grass as if I were growing with it. I looked at all this carefully.

Then suddenly I began to realize that it wasn't real, it was all an illusion, A great feat of art. It was like a painting or sculpture. It was clear to me that not one blade of grass was out of place. Not one wave of the ocean below was wasted in its spillage over the rocks. Not one shade of light of the ever-changing blueness of the sky was random. It was perfect and it was ordered, and it was clearly a creation of a great artist or a great dreamer.

At this moment I realized that the world I saw was no longer compelling me to see it as immediately given and out there, but as something that was painstakingly created. I felt not the presence of the overwhelming art scene I was immersed in, but the overwhelming sense of the artist. It was as if the artist had spoken to me. It was as if God had taken me by the hand and said, "So you really want to see? You really want me to take you beyond the illusion?" Then everything I was experiencing had tremendous meaning. Everything was significant. I was seeing into the artifact of the world, and seeing it as an illusion, a

creation and not as random nature.

I wasn't looking at this as if forces had created this blindly, nor had mechanics created it, nor had blind nature created it. A clearly organized, intelligent, feeling, sensing, like-myself, anthropomorphic being had created it. In that sense I felt the presence of God. In my normal life, I only feel this presence at rare times. I feel it with certain people who come into my life. We will be together and we will feel some kind of connecting energy, some kind of resonance, some kind of knowing when I *can't* know this person, but there is a deep sense of this. When this happens to me, I begin to feel this again.

It is more a question of awareness rather than blind belief. My greatest joy of being alive is when I have that awareness. Then the fear is gone, the hole in my chest is healed. No sense of loss or abandonment, everything is peaceful. I try to kindle that with everyone I meet. It is not always possible. I seek it out in whatever form it will take. I can't predict what form it will take. I found that it does arise spontaneously in many different parts of the world for many different reasons. I can only take it that "I" am the universe, even if that is only a dream.

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