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Center Voice

The Newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

Dreams on the Spiritual Path

One of the most universal metaphors mystics use to describe Enlightenment, or Gnosis, is that it is like waking up from a dream. When asked just after Enlightenment if he was a human or a god, Sakyamuni Gautama simply replied that he was a *Buddha*, which means an *Awakened One*. The spiritual path helps us Awaken to, or Remember, the fact that all our experience is fundamentally an imaginary display and not ultimately real.

Whether or not we are Awake to it, our daytime waking experiences and our dreams at night both have the same fundamental nature as imaginative displays. Thus, the mystic makes no ultimate distinction between waking experiences and dream experiences. So it naturally follows that our dream experiences can be at least as important as our waking experiences within the dream of spiritual Awakening. In fact, every one of the mystical traditions acknowledges the high value and importance that dreams can have on the spiritual path.

Just as meditative states of consciousness provide access to spiritual experiences and insights normally inaccessible to ordinary states of consciousness, every night when we dream a secret window to the sacred opens up. As the articles in this issue show, mystics, saints, and sages from all traditions and times join the spiritual practitioners of today in testifying to the spiritual guidance that can be received in dreams. With some practice, we too can open up to this rich source of spiritual wisdom and learn to understand its secret symbolic language.

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The Center for Sacred Sciences is dedicated to the study, practice, and dissemination of the universal spiritual teachings of the mystics, saints, and sages of the world's great religious traditions. In addition, the Center endeavors to present these traditional teachings in forms appropriate to our contemporary scientific culture. The Center also works toward the creation and dissemination of a sacred worldview that expresses the compatibility between universal mystical truths and the evidence of modern science.

Among the Center's on-going events are Sunday public services with meditations and talks by the Center's spiritual director, monthly video presentations, and—for committed spiritual seekers—a weekly practitioners' group and regular meditation retreats. The Center also maintains an extensive lending library of books, audios, videos, and periodicals covering a broad spectrum of spiritual, psychological, and scientific subjects. In addition, the Center provides a website containing teachings, information, and other resources related to the teachings of the world's mystics, the universality of mystical truth, and the relationship between science and mysticism. Twice yearly, the Center publishes a newsletter containing spiritual teachings, interviews with practitioners, book reviews, information and resources pertaining to the Center's mission, and news of Center events.

The Center for Sacred Sciences is a non-profit, tax-exempt church based in Eugene, Oregon, USA. We rely chiefly on volunteer labor to support our programs, and on public donations and membership pledges to meet our operating expenses. Our spiritual director gives his teachings freely as a labor of love, and receives no financial compensation from the Center.

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CENTER NEWS

Holiday Party

The Center's annual holiday party took place in December 2002 at the Campbell Senior Center near downtown Eugene. Center members and their families brought a variety of delicious and nutritious dishes to share. In addition to the traditional singing of sacred songs and a mix of performances by several Center members, the music of special guests Vinnie and Lou graced the hall that evening.

Monthly Meditation Day

On selected Saturdays each month, various Center practitioners have been gathering for a monthly day of meditation. The events include independent morning and afternoon sessions, each with three hours of sitting and walking meditation. A silent bring-your-own lunch follows the morning session, and a social potluck dinner follows the afternoon session. The Center community is grateful to Shan Ambika for generously hosting these precious opportunities to deepen our spiritual practice.

Special Sunday Talk on War

On the first Sunday after the war started in Iraq this past March, Joel devoted a special Sunday program to a discussion of the war, with an emphasis on how we can respond to the situation in a spiritual manner. Difficult situations provide us with an especially rich opportunity for spiritual practice. In this case, Joel outlined how we can practice the seven virtues of courage, humility, justice, patience, gratitude, mercy, and joy.

Library Staff Changes

On behalf of the Center community, we thank Bob Carnes, Karen Fierman, Dawn Kurzka, and Carol Mizera for their volunteer time in the library and wish them the best on their new adventures. We also extend a warm welcome to the newest recruits Agnieszka Alboszta, Robin Bundy, Peggy Johnston, and Anita Jottrand.

Spring Retreat

The Center's five-day Spring 2003 retreat, entitled *Liberating Experience*, was led by Joel Morwood and Tom Kurzka. Joel and Tom gave instructions on how we can use choiceless awareness practice to see past misperceptions of thought, opening ourselves to the naked experience of each moment. The retreat was held 25–30 April 2003 at the Cloud Mountain Retreat Center near Castle Rock, Washington.



RETREATANTS: (Bottom row from left) Robin Bundy, Mary Moffat, Shan Ambika, Bill Hamann, Rich Marlatt, Mike Craven, (middle row) Megan Greiner, Sue Orbeton, Vip Short, Joel, Tom Kurzka, Emma Leyburn, Susan Colson, Sheila Craven, (top row) Cathy Jonas, Gene Gibbs, Fred Chambers, Judy Morgan, Bob Carnes, Gail Marshall, and Wesley Lachman. (Not Shown: Miriam Reinhart.)





The Mystical Interpretation of Dreams

by Joel

If you grew up in Western culture and someone asked you to list the ten most important events in your life, chances are you would not include anything that happened in a dream. Because Western society is dominated by a materialist worldview in which only ‘objective’ events are deemed to be real, we tend to dismiss dreams as being mere ‘subjective’ phenomena—figments of our imaginations with little or no relevance for the actual conduct of our lives. The one exception to this rule are those schools of psychotherapy which value dreams as a way to access unconscious contents of the psyche. But even here (except for the Jungians) the aim is usually restricted to improving a person’s ability to relate to the ‘real’ world of family, friends, work, and society. Any suggestion that dreams might serve as a conduit for spiritual guidance emanating from a Transcendent Source simply does not fit their limited paradigm.

This attitude toward dreams in the modern West contrasts sharply with that of virtually all other human societies which, having been based on sacred worldviews, regarded dreams as indispensable windows into invisible realms of the cosmos. This has been especially true of the world’s great mystics, most of whose biographies are peppered with accounts of significant dreams conveying various kinds of teachings, instructions, and advice. Before his Awakening, for example, the Buddha had a series of five dreams foretelling that he would attain full Enlightenment and become a renowned teacher, while Socrates insisted that dreams guided him throughout his whole teaching career:

I maintain that I have been commanded by the god to do this, through oracles and dreams and in every way in which some divine influence or other has ever commanded a man to do anything.¹

Here is what Maryam Abdun, the wife of Sufi master Ibn ‘Arabi, reported about a dream she had:

I have seen in my sleep someone whom I have never seen in the flesh, but who appears to me in my moments of ecstasy. He asked me whether I was aspiring to the Way [the Sufi Path], to which I replied that I was, but that I didn’t know by what means to arrive at it. He then told me that I would come to it through five things, trust, certainty, patience, resolution and veracity.²

So, too, the great Kabbalist Isaac of Acre wrote this of a dream in which the angel, Metatron, appeared:

While I was yet sleeping I, Isaac of Acre, saw Metatron, the Prince of the Face, and I sat before him, and he taught me and promised me many good things that would come to me.³

Of course, as the mystics themselves knew, not all dreams are spiritual. St. Augustine, for instance, divided dreams into two main categories, those that are *true* and those that are *false*, while Tibetan Buddhists distinguish between *clarity* dreams and dreams that are merely *karmic* or (as we might say) *egoic* in nature. So the first question for anyone wishing to tap into this ancient source of wisdom is: How can you tell spiritual from non-spiritual, or egoic, dreams?

The primary difference between spiritual and egoic dreams lies in their content. Egoic dreams are woven from the fabric of our personal histories and reflect the self-centered concerns that arise out of our worldly pursuits. Perhaps the clearest examples of such dreams are the ones we tend to have when our minds are preoccupied with some on-going crisis occurring in our waking state. For instance, if you are grappling with some difficult problem at work, your dreaming mind is apt to continue trying to figure it out while you sleep. Similarly, if you lose an important argument with someone during the day, chances are your mind will replay it in your dreams, hoping to arrive at a more satisfactory outcome. Because the situations we encounter in these kinds of dreams are simply continuations of our waking experiences, they rarely need any interpretation.

Most of our dreams, however, are considerably more jumbled, and their meanings are more difficult to discern. The reason for this difficulty is that, as we fall asleep under normal circumstances, our attention shifts from our work-a-day predicaments to those long-term dilemmas that haunt our lives but which, for one reason or another, we are afraid to fully acknowledge. This *repressed* material—as it is called in modern psychology—then re-surfaces in our dreams, but only in a disguised, or symbolic, form.

To give one over-simplified example, suppose that ever since childhood you have had a recurrent dream in which you

feel strangely gratified at the sight of a lumberjack lying in a coffin. Never having worked in the timber industry or known any lumberjacks, you have no idea what this dream means. Later, however, you might undergo some form of psychoanalysis which reveals the following: 1) You had an abusive father who made you so angry you often wished to see him dead. 2) At the same time, having this wish plunged you into emotional turmoil because you feared that, if it actually came true, you would be held responsible and severely punished. 3) Unable to resolve this dilemma, you banished all signs of it from your waking consciousness. 4) Finally, in the course of your therapy, you connect your father's name *Jack* with lumber-*jack* and suddenly realize that your dreams have been giving symbolic expression to your suppressed childhood wish to see your father dead.

Notice that, although dreams that express repressed wishes for a parent's death may be fairly common, they are by no means universal. Moreover, the choice of a lumberjack to represent your father depends entirely on a fact drawn from your own individual circumstances—i.e., that his name happens to be Jack. The father of someone else whose name was Art would have to be represented by a different symbol. Perhaps such a person would dream that they saw a work of art going up in flames. The point is that, because the dilemmas which form the thematic content of our egoic dreams arise out of our personal histories, the symbols in which they are expressed also tend to be personal. This is why interpreting them usually requires spending a lot of time sifting through old memories with the help of a skilled therapist.

Fortunately, far less effort is needed to interpret spiritual dreams. In fact, as a general rule we could say that the greater the amount of spiritual content in a dream, the easier it is to interpret. Why? Because the spiritual contents of dreams are not derived from our personal histories, nor do they express purely egoic dilemmas. They come from a transpersonal dimension of the psyche and are composed of *archetypal* elements having universal significance. To interpret spiritual dreams, then, we need to understand what an archetype is.

In its broadest definition, an archetype is the original model, or pattern, that gives a common form to objects that are instances, representations, or variations of the archetype. To give one concrete example, the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor serves as the model or archetype for all the miniature statue-of-liberty souvenirs sold to tourists. This kind of archetype is easy to spot because a physical object is serving as a model for other physical objects.

There are other kinds of non-physical archetypes, how-

ever, which are far more profound and mysterious. Consider for instance, the natural numbers. If you were asked to describe the contents of your living room you might begin by saying, "Well, there's one couch, one table, and three chairs." In this example, the one couch and the one table are both instances of the number one. Similarly, the three chairs are an instance of the number three. So what are the numbers, themselves? If you think they are the words *one, two, three*, consider that in Spanish these numbers are represented by the different words *uno, dos, tres*. The same applies to the arithmetic signs 1, 2, 3 that we use to indicate numbers. These numbers could just as easily be represented by different signs—say, for example, the Roman numerals I, II, III. Thus, while we may see many physical instances and representations of the natural numbers, the numbers, themselves, never manifest as physical objects in time and space. They are conceptual archetypes which, along with other primordial Ideas or Names, exist only in an unmanifest realm known variously in the great traditions as the "Mind of God" (Christian), the "Treasures of Allah" (Muslim), the "Granary of the ten thousand things" (Taoist), the "Para Vak" (Hindu), and the ground "Alaya" (Buddhist).

Even more mysterious (at least to us in the modern West) than conceptual archetypes are what we might call those psycho-spiritual archetypes which help shape the behavior and destinies of all human beings. These are manifested in the pantheons of gods and goddesses, heroes and ancestors, spirits and angels who—according to all spiritual traditions—inhabit incorporeal realms of the cosmos, and

whose deeds are recounted in the myths and legends of every culture. Now, at first glance, the manifestations of psycho-spiritual archetypes found in one culture may appear to be quite different from those found in another. But comparative studies by psychologists such as Carl Jung and Marie-Louise Von Franz, and by scholars like Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell, have demonstrated that, despite their local variations, these archetypal manifestations perform the same symbolic functions and their stories express the same dramatic themes in all cultures.

Especially relevant for our present discussion is a remarkable discovery made by Jung: These archetypes appear spontaneously in the dreams of all sorts of people—even those who have never been exposed to them in waking life. To account for these phenomena, Jung posited the existence of a *collective unconscious* shared by all human beings which can be accessed in certain visionary or dream states by any individual, irrespective of his or her cultural background. We can glean something of what Jung was

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talking about by making a brief cross-cultural comparison of our own. For instance, Igjugarjuk, a Caribou Eskimo, gives this account of what happened to him at the end of a vision quest:

Only towards the end of the thirty days did a helping spirit come to me, a lovely and beautiful helping spirit, whom I had never thought of; it was a white woman; she came to me whilst I had collapsed, exhausted, and was sleeping. But I still saw her lifelike, hovering over me. ... She came to me from Pinga [a goddess] and was a sign that Pinga had now noticed me and would give me powers that would make me a shaman.⁴

Similarly, during a dark retreat undertaken when he was still a young man, the famous Tibetan master Longchen-pa had a vision of a beautiful woman riding a horse who gave him a crown of precious jewels and told him:

From now on, I shall always bestow my blessings upon you and grant you powers.⁵

And here is the last part of a dream this author had long before he had ever heard of Igjugarjuk or Longchen-pa:

With great difficulty I struggle on towards the top [of the mountain] and, at last, I make it. I look out over a breath-taking landscape spread at my feet. The seven continents and seven seas extend before my eyes to a 360-degree horizon. Both the sun and moon are simultaneously visible in the sky, one half of which is night, the other, day, and a sacred hush envelops the world. Suddenly, I become aware of a woman standing at my side, wearing a helmet. She hands me a sword and says, "This sword is as bright as the moon and as sharp as the stars, and with it you can cut through the heart of truth."

I take the sword and hold it in the palm of my hand, and it feels powerful and good. Then I turn to the woman and ask, "Who are you?"

"Don't you know?" she laughs, gently. "I am Athena and I've been with you always."⁶

In the above examples we can see clearly that it is the same archetype—The Feminine Guide (to give her a generic title)—who manifests to empower and encourage these spiritual seekers living in very different times and places.

But while Jung's pioneering work has been key to our modern understanding of archetypes, it nevertheless falls short in one crucial respect—at least as far as mystics are concerned. Jung believed that becoming conscious of archetypal influences helps human beings evolve toward the highest goal of life which, in his view, was *individuation*—

becoming a whole and self-actualized individual. This process of psychic integration is driven by what he thought of as a greater Self—the total psyche including its unconscious dimensions. In the mystics' view, however, the highest goal in life is not any sort of individuation process. On the contrary, it is the attainment of a Realization, Gnosis, or Enlightenment of one's identity with that Ground of all Being which is called variously God, Brahman, Buddha-nature, the Tao, or—as we would say—Consciousness Itself.

In fact, for mystics, the struggle to attain this goal constitutes the Ultimate Archetypal Drama, which is re-enacted by every seeker who walks a spiritual path. Thus, understanding this Drama is essential not only for understanding the spiritual path as a whole but also for the spiritual interpretation of dreams, which consists precisely in seeing how the archetypal elements that appear in dreams fit into and further the action of this Archetypal Story. What follows, then, is an overview of this story, which we shall title "The Journey to Enlightenment," drawn from versions found in all the great traditions.

Because, from a mystical perspective, psychology and cosmology are ultimately indistinguishable, this Journey actually involves a double movement

which has its beginning in the eternal Now before creation. Here, in the limitless ocean of Pure Formless Consciousness, everything is Blissfully One. In order to realize Its potential for manifesting infinite forms, however, Consciousness starts to imagine, or dream, a world of forms in which It appears as a perceiving self.

At first, as It witnesses the dance of Its own creation, the self experiences nothing but delight. At some point, however, the self begins to hallucinate that this cosmos of swirling forms has a reality separate from itself. Now, instead of Oneness, the self experiences loneliness; instead of Bliss, fear; instead of delight, suffering. Having fallen into this delusion and forgotten that its true identity is Consciousness Itself, the self starts to weave a story within the Story—a dream within the Dream—in which it sees itself as an isolated ego moving farther and farther out into the world of forms searching for its lost happiness.

Because this world of forms is inherently ephemeral, sooner or later the self starts to realize that its quest for worldly happiness is futile, and so begins to lose interest. Now that its attention is somewhat freed from worldly pursuits, the self begins to remember—however dimly—the ocean of Consciousness from whence it came, and to which it increasingly longs to return. Thus, having reached the limit of its outer

journey, as it were, the self reverses course and begins the inner, spiritual journey that will eventually carry it back to its Source. Only then can the dream break and the self Awaken to its True Identity as Consciousness Itself.

Now, for most of us, accomplishing the second part of this journey is by no means easy. In order to realize our true Identity we must shed all the layers of egoic identity built up during our long sojourn in the land of delusion. Fortunately, however, we are not alone in this task. In fact, from the very beginning Consciousness has been calling us to awaken from our dream-turned-nightmare. The trouble is, we have been too absorbed in worldly pursuits and egoic dramas to hear it. This absorption persists whether we are awake or sleeping—which is why worldly people’s dreams are filled primarily with worldly contents. Once we embark on a spiritual path, however, everything begins to change. Now, we call out to Consciousness—usually in the form of some Divine Other—and the Divine Other responds by sending us various kinds of guidance. In our waking states, this guidance manifests in the form of teachers and teachings

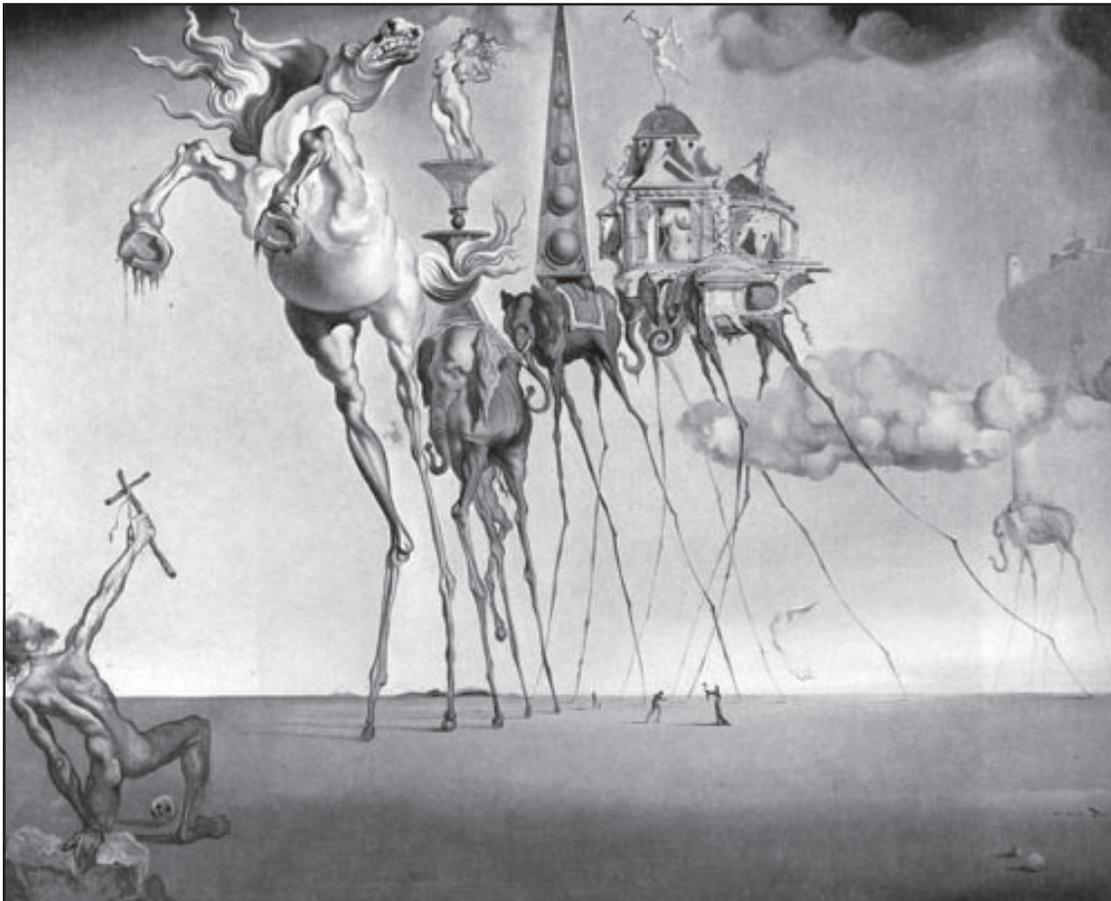
that we start to encounter. During sleep it manifests in the form of archetypal figures, motifs, and symbols that begin to appear in our dreams.

Sometimes, a dream with an exceptionally strong archetypal content can actually precipitate a shift from worldly to spiritual life. In most cases, however, this happens more gradually. Thus, even after we begin a spiritual path our dreams still tend to be dominated by egoic contents, with archetypal elements appearing only sporadically and in somewhat diluted form. This results in mixed dreams which still require a good deal of interpretation if we are to fully decipher their meanings.

But the more we progress on the path, the more archetypal contents start to emerge and the clearer our dreams become, until finally the ratio is inverted so that archetypal contents now dominate while egoic contents come to play only a secondary role.

Although dreams with predominantly archetypal contents need far less interpretation, to comprehend them we must still learn the language of the archetypes, which is a language of

No matter how malevolent they seem, in reality, all archetypes serve to help us on our journey in some way.



The Temptation of Saint Anthony
by Salvador Dalí (1946)

symbols. This requires familiarizing ourselves with the world's great myths, epics, legends, and folk tales, as well as exposing ourselves to various comparative studies of them. Here we have space to consider briefly only a few kinds of archetypes so the reader can at least have some idea of how this language functions.

First are archetypal beings. The loftiest of these beings, and easiest to identify, are those Gods and Goddesses, Avatars and Saviors, Prophets and Gurus who are most revered in the tradition to which the dreamer belongs—Christ for Christians, Buddha for Buddhists, Krishna for Hindus, etc. These exalted figures also tend to be the most important in terms of the messages they convey. This is why, for instance, Sufis insist that if Muhammad speaks to someone in a dream his words can be relied on as much as if he had spoken to them in the flesh.

Just below these supernal beings there are a host of lesser archetypes—angelic spirits, venerable ancestors, mythic animals—most of whom act as emissaries for the higher powers. The archetypal beings that show up most frequently in dreams, however, are human figures who serve archetypal functions—a high priest or priestess, a pious hermit, a magnanimous monarch, a noble knight, a pure virgin, a wise old man or woman. To give one example of how this works, you might dream you are whizzing along a highway when suddenly you see that the road ahead is blocked by an avalanche. Not knowing what to do, you get out of your car and start milling about with the rest of the travelers. Then you notice an elderly gentleman draped in a cape, beckoning you to approach. When you go over to see what he wants, he points to a little footpath you hadn't noticed before that leads into thick, primeval forest. The message of this dream is that you cannot get to Enlightenment by following the ways of the world. You must travel alone, on foot, and be willing to enter into totally unknown territory. As a practical matter, it might mean it is time for you to go on a vision quest or retreat.

Of course, not all archetypal beings appear to be so benevolent. One can also dream of what the Tibetans call wrathful deities. In the West, these are the devils and vampires, dark witches and warlocks—all of whom seem intent on doing us harm. But no matter how malevolent they seem, in reality, all archetypes serve to help us on our journey in some way. For instance, a demon who pops up in your dreams might represent (depending on the context) a shadow side of yourself that needs to be acknowledged and accepted or some deep-seated fear that you must face and overcome before you can move forward on your path.

In addition to archetypal beings, certain features of a dream's terrain can have archetypal significance—especially if they are unusually awesome, numinous, or pristine. A particularly majestic mountain, for instance, almost certainly symbolizes the Sacred Mountain known to all spiritual traditions, e.g., Mt. Meru in Hindu and Buddhist cosmologies, Mt. Olympus in Greek mythology, or Mt. Kenya among the Kikuyu of Africa. Wherever this mountain is said to be located, it always represents the *axis mundi*, the center of the world, that place where heaven and earth, God and man meet. Thus, Moses encountered God on Mt. Horeb; Muhammad first received the Qur'an in a cave on Mt. Hira (possibly in a dream); and in modern times the sage Ramana Maharshi took up residence near the holy mountain of Aranachula. If such a mountain appears in a mixed dream, it may indicate that what seems to be a mundane problem actually requires a spiritual solution. For example, suppose you dream you are searching through a city looking for your lost wallet. In the background looming over the rooftops there is a huge snow-capped mountain which seems somewhat out of place. Because wallets contain documents that indicate who we are (driver's licenses, social security cards, etc.), they usually symbolize our personal or egoic identity. A city—especially a modern one—often represents the arena of worldly affairs.

Thus, the dream is saying you will never find your true identity following a worldly path. Instead, you have to become a spiritual seeker and take the path of transcendence.

A desert appearing in a dream can also have archetypal significance, usually representing an intermediary region between the sacred and the profane. Thus, it is fairly common for spiritual seekers who are undergoing a desert experience in their waking lives (i.e., a period when worldly pleasures no longer satisfy but spiritual fruits have not yet been tasted) to dream they are wandering around lost in a physical desert. Such dreams often end with the dreamer catching sight of a lake or a stream just ahead, but waking up before he or she has had a chance to drink from it. Since water is an archetypal symbol for the regenerating power of the spirit (e.g., as in baptism, bathing in the Ganges, or Native American sweats), a dream like this may be taken as a sign of encouragement: Stay on the path, is its message, and eventually you will find spiritual refreshment.

Water can symbolize not only the Spirit's capacity to renew us, but also its power to destroy everything that stands between us and our goal. This is why it is not uncommon at a certain stage of the path for seekers to dream of a great tidal wave that threatens to sweep away everything in its way. The

It is possible—especially during more advanced stages of the path—to have dreams whose archetypal contents are so clear that they need little or no interpretation.

sight of this wave at first produces nothing but terror. But, once it has passed, the dreamer is relieved to discover that he or she has survived without a scratch. Dreams like this serve to reassure us that in the future, even though it may feel as if everything we have is being annihilated, this is necessary if we are ever to complete the journey.

Whether egoic or archetypal, most dreams tell a story. Usually the plot revolves around the dreamer attempting to achieve some objective, arrive at some destination, prepare for a test, communicate with a friend, care for a child, escape an assassin, etc. Archetypal dreams have archetypal plots which are variations of the plots of the world's great myths and legends. One of the most universal plots is the quest for some kind of supernatural treasure—the Golden Fleece, the Holy Grail, the Philosopher's Stone, the Elixir of Eternal Life—all of which, in the mystics' view, represent Realization, Gnosis, or Enlightenment. But, as in any good story, first there are obstacles to overcome, oceans to cross, mountains to climb, dragons to slay. And these, of course, represent those spiritual obstacles—all our self-centered desires and aversions, attachments and fear—which must be abandoned and surrendered. In most mixed dreams of this type, the object of the quest is represented by an archetypal symbol while the obstacles are represented by personal symbols. You might, for instance, dream you are walking up a mountain path in search of some precious jewel (e.g., the Christians' pearl beyond price, or the Buddhists' wish-fulfilling gem) when suddenly you come upon a lumberjack with tears streaming down his face, who bars your way. If, as in the previous example, you had an abusive father named Jack, this dream could well mean that, before you can make further progress, you need to forgive your father and completely let go of any resentment you are still harboring toward him.

Finally, it is possible—especially during more advanced stages of the path—to have dreams whose archetypal contents are so clear that they need little or no interpretation—provided, of course, that you are familiar with the traditional symbols and metaphors in which they have clothed themselves. The great Sufi Rabi'a, for example, had a dream in which she met a young girl who took her to a palace full of serving girls carrying trays of light. The serving girls told her that their light trays were funeral spice intended for someone who was “drowned in the seas and became a martyr.” The young girl told the serving girls to rub Rabi'a with the spices, then gave Rabi'a this advice:

*Your prayers are your light. Your devotion is your strength; Sleep is the enemy of both. Your life is the only opportunity that life can give you. If you ignore it, if you waste it, you will only turn into dust.*⁷

All that is needed to understand the meaning of this dream is to know that the phrase “drowned in the seas and became a martyr” is a common Sufi way of alluding to that spiritual

death which is a prerequisite for attaining union with the Ocean of Divine Consciousness. Similarly, anyone familiar with the archetypal figures found in the Christian tradition will recognize how the following dream, which the Franciscan monk Brother Leo had, illustrates the power of unconditional love to vanquish sin and guilt:

*Leo saw two ladders leading up to heaven, one as red as blood, the other as white as lilies. At the top of the red ladder there appeared Christ, his face full of wrath. St Francis beckoned to his brothers not to fear and to climb the ladder. They try, but fall. Francis prays, but Christ displays his wounds and thunders, “Your brothers have done this to me.” So St. Francis runs down and leads his brethren to the white ladder, which they scale effortlessly and without mishap, to find Mary at the top, all smiles, to welcome them.*⁸

The most transparent of spiritual dreams, however, are those in which the seeker receives direct instructions or teachings that need no interpretation whatsoever. If an archetype appears at all, it is not to add anything to the teaching, but only to underscore its importance. One of my own students, for example, dreamt that he was sitting on a cloud, listening to a Tibetan lama giving a talk on spiritual practice to a group of disciples. After a while, my student spoke up, saying: “Oh, I get it. The highest practice is to do nothing!”—to which the lama replied: “Even *that* is too much.”

Needless to say, this teaching pertains only to the last stages of the path. In the meantime, there is much to do, not the least of which is to pay attention to your dreams and the guidance you can receive from them. Peace.

Notes

1. Plato, *Great Dialogues of Plato*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, ed. Eric W. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse (New York: Mentor, New American Library, 1956), 439.
2. Ibn 'Arabi, *The Sufis of Andalusia*, trans. R.W.J. Austin, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1971), 22-23.
3. Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 118-119.
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5. Longchen Rabjam, *The Practice of Dzogchen*, 2nd ed., trans. Tulku Thondup, ed. Harold Talbott (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 149.
6. Joel, *Naked Through the Gate* (Eugene, OR: Center for Sacred Sciences, 1985), 35.
7. Rabi'a, *Doorkeeper of the Heart: Versions of Rabi'a*, trans. Charles Upton (Putney, Vermont: Threshold Books, 1988), 49.
8. Cited in David Kinsely, *The Goddesses' Mirror: Visions of the Divine from East and West* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 238.



Cultivating Your Dream Life

by Thomas J. McFarlane

Dreams, according to the 20th-century psychoanalyst Carl G. Jung, are “a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul, opening into that cosmic night which was psyche long before there was any ego-consciousness.”¹ Because they arise from these profound depths of our soul, they can be of great value in our lives. Indeed, the Tibetan Bön lama Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche tells us that our dreams are “a potential source of both the most profound spiritual knowledge and of guidance in everyday life.”² Many of us, however, find ourselves out of touch with our dreams and cut off from these vast inner resources of our dream life. Whatever dreams we do have often slip away the moment we wake up and are quickly forgotten as the concerns of our waking lives come to the forefront of our minds. This forgetfulness can be so complete that we might even come to believe that we usually do not dream at all. How, then, can we cultivate our dream life, and regain access to these rich depths of the soul? Just as the four principles of attention, commitment, detachment, and surrender govern the spiritual path, these same principles can also help us reconnect with our dreams.

1. Attention

Dreams, like most things, can not communicate anything to us if we do not listen to them. Fortunately, there are some very simple and concrete steps we can take to help us pay attention to our dreams. Start by setting aside some time for your dream life just before falling asleep and just after waking up. At night, use this time first to allow the thoughts of your waking life to settle down (e.g., by meditating for a few minutes). Then, make the firm intention to remember your dreams when you wake up. In the morning, take some time just after becoming conscious (even before opening your eyes) to remember whatever dreams you might have had that night. Without making too much effort, simply allow your mind to remain receptive to whatever memories might arise. If thoughts of your waking life start up, simply set them aside and return to the naked intention to remember your dreams. Once the dream memories are somewhat clear, open your eyes and write them down in a dream journal. When recording your dreams, be as accurate and complete as possible,

noting as many details of the dream as you can remember, no matter how insignificant they might at first appear. Also be sure to record any emotions, moods, or other feelings. At this stage, do not concern yourself with interpreting the dreams. Your task is simply to pay attention to them and record them as faithfully as possible. If you have time during the day, you can also reflect on your dreams, bringing the images and feelings to mind again. Often other parts of the dream will be remembered later in the day. When paying attention to your dreams, it may also be helpful to cultivate an attitude of getting to know a mysterious and intriguing new person who has something important to teach you. As Jung says, “To concern ourselves with dreams is a way of reflecting on ourselves—a way of self-reflection. It is not our ego-consciousness reflecting on itself; rather it turns its attention to the objective actuality of the dream as a communication or message from the unconscious, unitary soul of humanity.”³ Most likely, as you pay more attention to your dream life, it will communicate to you more frequently and more clearly.

2. Commitment

Any relationship requires commitment in order to deepen, and our relationship with the source of our dreams is no exception. While a few days of enthusiastic dream journaling can give us a taste of what dreams have to offer, only a sustained practice of paying attention to dreams over the course of months and years will yield the most valuable fruit. So, if you are serious about cultivating your dream life, make a commitment to spend time every morning remembering and recording your dreams. Set aside time every day or so to reflect on your dreams and explore their significance. Look at each dream with fresh eyes, asking it what it has to teach you. As Jung suggests, “One would do well to treat every dream as though it were a totally unknown object. Look at it from all sides, take it in your hand, carry it about with you, let your imagination play round it, and talk about it with other people.”⁴ In addition to reflecting on your dreams alone, consider joining a dream group, or meeting regularly with a friend to share your dreams. Not only will this support your commitment to pay attention to your dream life, but your friends can also help you interpret the messages of your

dreams by offering different perspectives and alternatives. Because dreams speak in a language of symbols that is foreign to many of us, an experienced interpreter who is familiar with the language of dreams can be especially helpful. We can also learn more about the language of dreams by familiarizing ourselves with the great myths and archetypal symbols of humanity. As our experience and knowledge deepen over time, we will become more fluent, and our understanding of their message will begin to grow. With attention we begin to listen to dreams. But only with commitment do we grow to understand them.

3. Detachment

Once we begin to understand the language of our dreams, their wisdom begins to enter our lives. And they can be especially beneficial to our spiritual lives. “The greatest value of dreams,” Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche tells us, “is in the context of the spiritual journey. ...They can be a means of determining whether or not practice is being done correctly, how much progress is being made, and what needs attention.”⁵ What often needs most attention, of course, are things about ourselves that we’d rather not acknowledge or admit. In psychological terms, the unconscious dream *compensates* for an overly rigid or limiting conscious attitude. As Jung explains, “The relation between conscious and unconscious is compensatory. This is one of the best-proven rules of dream interpretation. When we set out to interpret a dream, it is always helpful to ask: What conscious attitude does it compensate?”⁶ Thus, the interpretation of dreams is part of the cultivation of detachment because dreams often point us directly at our conscious attachments. For example, if we are overly attached to something, we may have a frightening dream about losing it. Or we might dream of being humiliated in public if we are very attached to how people think of us. To benefit from our dreams, then, we should cultivate a willingness to look openly and honestly at what they may be trying to tell us about ourselves, especially if it is something we’d rather not acknowledge. So, when recording or reporting dreams, refrain from any temptation to censor or embellish their content (and if you do catch yourself in the act, you can be sure that right there is an attachment to recognize). Consider your dreams as your most intimate teacher who knows you better than you know yourself and who is there to show you your attachments. Even though these dreams may be unpleasant to face at times, “it is a benefit,” Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche reminds us, “when different aspects of the mind manifest in dream and point out where we must work in order to progress.”⁷ We should also be careful not to rush to interpret our dreams immediately and not to have preconceptions of what our dreams should be about. The more we can free ourselves

from our expectations and attachments, the more clearly our dreams will reveal their meaning, helping us to recognize even subtler attachments and to progress on the path.

4. Surrender

Commitment to paying attention to our dreams and opening ourselves to their meaning can be of great benefit on the path. But there is a limit to viewing dreams as messages to be interpreted. At a certain point in the path, the distinction between dream and dreamer, unconscious and conscious, itself becomes a barrier. Thus, as Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche tells us, “Ultimately the meaning in the dream is not important. It is best not to regard the dream as correspondence from another entity to you, not even from another part of you that you do not know. ...Instead, penetrate to what is below the meaning, the pure base of experience. This is the higher dream practice — not psychological, but more spiritual.”⁸ Here the highest teaching of dreams reveals itself. This teaching is not an interpretation of any particular dream, but the very nature of dreams themselves. Dream phenomena, like all other phenomena, have the nature of being mere forms

in consciousness without anything real behind them. And the ultimate teaching of every dream is to point directly to this dreamlike nature of every form in consciousness. “There is nothing more real than dream,”

Consider your dreams as your most intimate teacher who is there to show you your attachments.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche tells us. “Normal waking life is as unreal as a dream, and in exactly the same way.”⁹ Finally, even the distinction between dreamer and dream, form and consciousness, is also dreamlike in nature. May we all surrender that distinction and wake up from that primordial Dream of separation.

Notes

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2. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*, ed. Mark Dahlby (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1988), 66.
3. Jung, 77.
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9. Wangyal, 23.

What is the Significance of Dreams in Your Life?

We recently interviewed three practitioners and asked them about their dream lives. They shared with us some of their more spiritually significant dreams and the impact that these dreams have had on their spiritual life.



Megan Greiner grew up in Oregon and returned here about three years ago from Arizona. This was a total life change for her, so when she heard about the Center from her trusted physical therapist, it seemed like the next natural step. Checking out Joel's teachings for herself, Megan easily found a spiritual home.

When not dreaming, Megan can often be found painting with watercolors.

Dreaming is very important in my spiritual path. I've had a number of meaningful dreams, healing dreams. One of my most recent dreams was of a beautiful garden stretching before me—a huge, beautiful garden—and it was walled. And as I drew closer, I saw that there were a number of gates every four or five feet. And beside each gate was a being. These men and women were all exuding a kind of warrior grace, a kind of a fierce welcoming. I walked up to this one woman, and I noticed there were people storming the gate on one side of me, and on the other side there were people with their heads together, calling out magical names—"abracadabra" and stuff—every now and then. I said, "So what's the deal here? Do we have to come up with this magic word in order for the gate to open?" And she looked at me and said, "There is no magic word. The only magic to remember is: the gate is not locked, and you just have to want to come in." To me, the spiritual message of this dream was obvious: it was telling me not to think that I'm locked out of paradise and to give up trying to figure out some magical formula or technique to get in. And it pointed me to look more closely at my own intention and longing. It also had the second meaning that there are many gates, and what is right for one person is not necessarily right for another. So it helps me to be more tolerant of other people's paths.

There are dreams that are just remnants of the day's events—stuff that you just haven't processed yet. And then there are dreams that come from the inner wisdom that we all

possess. And I believe that the more you value and trust your inner wisdom, the more it will speak to you. So I've trained myself over the years to listen to my dreams. I haven't worked at a job for over twenty years, so I've had the pleasure of waking up as slowly as I want to every morning. I've come to the place where I can remember almost entire dreams—what was said, and how I felt—and I believe that the more attention you pay, the more inner guidance becomes available.

I don't have a strict dreaming practice. It's pretty casual. It's something I do on my own as opposed to a set of rules about what I should do. But I try to empty my mind of the past day's activities, so I'm not caught up in those while I'm sleeping. I love sleeping. Sometimes I go to sleep just to wake up! And I have my best dreams around three in the morning. My practice is—before I even open my eyes—to just try to remember the dream, or at least how it made me feel. I place a lot more emphasis on how a dream made me feel, rather than the specifics of the dream. And I do keep a dream journal, where I write down the most important dreams. I feel that it's important, especially in the beginning, to write down every aspect of the dream that you can remember, even if it doesn't make any sense; because over a period of time, sometimes when you dream about the same thing in different ways over weeks or months, then it begins to make sense.

At the summer retreat last year at Cloud Mountain, I had a particularly significant dream. In the dream, Joel was conducting a crafts class. Before us on a table in the meditation hall supplies were laid out. We were told to melt wax into one half of a walnut shell, and put a birthday candle into it, and then bring it when we reconvened after dinner. "What now?" someone asked. "There is no 'what now,'" said Joel. "There is only 'now.' Any grasping of the future is the ego's attempt to make us forget to be here now." Magically, time passed; equally magically, a river appeared. It was dark. Joel had us light the candles and then let them float, one by one, on the river. Soon there was this string of flickering lights, bobbing along, swept along by the current. We watched them drift out of sight. "Ah," someone said, "sparks of Divine Light in the River of Love." Another commented, "Our egos set free on the River of Consciousness." "No," someone else said, "it's the light of our

awareness cutting through the darkness of Samsara.” “Actually,” Joel said, “they’re empty walnut shells with candles stuck in them.” Again, the spiritual teaching of this dream was clear to me. It was telling me not to get caught up so much in trying to find and grasp onto some real meaning or interpretation of things.

At one point after the retreat, and after sharing this dream with people from the Center, I was caught up in some manufactured thought of something or other. It seemed like a big deal. And I called a friend on the phone and said, “You know, it’s just—I don’t know what to think about this!” And he said, “Well, someone wise once said something, you know, about walnut shells and birthday candles...” It stopped me right in my tracks. It was like, “Yeah, I know this.” Talk about inner wisdom!



David Cunningham found Joel’s book, Naked Through the Gate, in 1988 at the Bodhi Tree bookstore in Los Angeles where Joel had been employed. It was exactly what he was looking for and needed at the time, and David was surprised when Joel replied to his letter of thanks. In 1993 David made the commitment to study with

Joel, and he has been attending retreats and making occasional visits to the Center ever since. David and his wife, Bailey, live in Anacortes, Washington, and have two sons.

I think dreams can be anything from a release of the normal, psychological tensions of the day to a profound communication from a part of our being we usually are oblivious of or ignore; that part could be called God, or spirit, or original nature, or many other things. Dreams can cover such a large spectrum that it’s hard to make a blanket statement about them. I think, however, that for spiritual practitioners dreams can be a significant part of one’s path. Dreams can supply guidance, be prophetic, point to inner territory yet to be traversed, and more.

I have at times done a dream practice. It consisted of following Joel’s instructions, which as I now recall consisted mainly of keeping writing material near the bed so that I could record dreams when I awoke. As I continued practicing this, I remembered my dreams better and was able to record significant detail. Later, I would try to understand these dreams. Sometimes I discussed noteworthy dreams with Joel to gain more clarity about them. I think he has an amazing facility with dream interpretation. When the meaning already

seemed relatively clear, discussion with Joel reinforced the confidence that I had some understanding of these things. Some of these dreams have guided—and continue to guide—my waking practice. My experience has been that when I give concerted attention to a dream practice over a sustained period, more dreams have spiritual significance—or perhaps I remember more such dreams. I have had dreams that I consider very spiritually significant.

I had the following dream in early January, 2000. It was the first of two dreams or dream fragments.

I am sitting in a backyard with Joel. Our backs are against a wall, butts on the ground or a platform, our knees drawn up. There is something protruding from the wall at about head height between us, but only barely—maybe a plant hanger. Joel’s mood is forcible, but not unhappy or joyless—he just wants me to get his intent. His intent is: Watch the scene in front of us, appreciate it for what it is, and don’t want or expect it to be more than that. No grasping or pushing away! Enjoy life for exactly what it is—it’s perfect that way.

In the dream we were simply watching a backyard scene in which there was nothing in particular happening: grass, trees, a building that looked like a garage, blue sky. Nothing special. But I had a real sense that this was an instruction from Joel to be taken seriously—not joylessly, but seriously. The point was: *watch!* Watch without judgment or expectation, without personal involvement. Just watch. As I recollected the dream afterwards, I had a sense that perhaps Joel was knowingly talking to me through the dream and expecting me to remember his instruction afterward, in the waking state.

I often have encountered this teaching, but receiving it in a dream like this had much more impact than reading it or even hearing Joel talk about it. The impression was strong and lasted for some time afterwards.

In our culture people often have a bias that waking life is what is important and “real,” but what happens while one is asleep is, at best, psychological in nature and of little import otherwise. I no longer share this view. Knowing that dreams played a significant role on Joel’s path, I became more attentive to my own dreams, which led to their important influence on my practice. I have experienced that dreams can communicate things of which we may otherwise be unaware, provide direction and instruction, and more. Dreams can do all this with a power and personal flavor that is hard to find otherwise. Dreams have also demonstrated to me that what I once believed to be a firm distinction between the waking state and other states is nowhere near as definite as I once thought. Dream practice has thus weakened my belief in borders in general. Overall, my experience leads me to believe that dream practice can definitely be worthwhile.



Judy Morgan is a twenty-five-year resident of Eugene. She and her husband—both teachers—have raised two daughters. She enjoys reading spiritual books, playing piano, and walking with friends.

I think there's a lot of rich content in dreams, but I approach it with extreme caution. I'm not sure I always know what it's about. There seems to be so much possibility for misinterpretation. So I have some caution and concern about it. Although I have looked at my dreams for a long time—I've worked with a Jungian therapist—I don't look at my dreams so much anymore. I'm not exactly sure why I've stopped taking them as seriously as I used to. And yet I help other people with their dreams. They know I've done a lot of it, and so I do work with them on others' behalf.

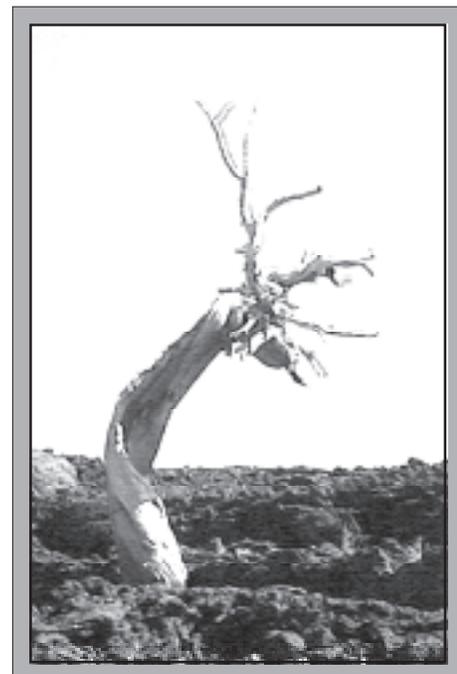
Dreams are symbolic messages, stories, metaphors that the unconscious presents to the dreamer. They can be prophetic, they can be descriptive, or they can be warnings. I approach these symbols from the Jungian perspective, and I'm certainly by no means an expert. But I just use some of the terms and some of the concepts that I've learned about: the inner masculine principle; the inner feminine; some of the different symbologies about different animals, and houses, and locales; different landscapes—those kinds of things. After the number of dreams that I've gone through, the number of books I've read, the number of times I've had dreams interpreted by the Jungian analyst, I just have a sense for myself about what those symbols might mean when they come up. And for someone else who might want me to do that for them, I do that too.

I've taken some classes where the focus was Jungian, but it wasn't just about describing the dream. It involved taking the dream and being active with it; in other words, having someone else in the workshop group perhaps play another character in the dream, or confronting a character in the dream myself so that there was a physical dramatization of the dream. Also Jung talks about active imagination, where you can do that very thing on your own: You talk to the dream character, you ask them what are they doing, what are they trying to show you. And that to me is probably the most accurate way to get the messages, to actually talk to the dream characters even though they may be fearful or scary to me. Especially if there's trust that your ego is not telling the story, then it is an incredibly powerful way to actually converse, and use your voice to say, "What are you doing here? Why have you come?" You put yourself back into the atmosphere, the landscape, the environment of the dream and actually ask the dream figure, "What's up? Why are you

here? What do you have to show me?" And then converse with it and learn from it, but also confront it if it's something that needs to be confronted. That prompting will happen as long as there's trust in this process of using the dream in that way. A basic trust in the drive of the Self, of a higher spiritual source, for expression.

When I was a devotee of Sai Baba some years ago, I had a vivid spiritual dream. In the dream I am walking down the beach, and Sai Baba is walking right in front of me. And then without any warning, I just walk right into his body. And there's like a oneness that occurs, and yet I maintain a certain sense of individuality. But it is within his being. And it wasn't sexual in any way, but it was like the recognition of some kind of merging with what I thought of—at the time—as a divine being. In my dream he represented a divine part of me, perhaps, or the absolute Divine that there is a connection or oneness with. And this beautiful symbology—walking along the beach next to the ocean, which is often a symbol for the unconscious, merging with this figure who represented at the time this absolute divine nature—was very powerful. It anchored and solidified my devotion to him at the time, which now I see was okay. But now I see it more as an image of my merging with the divine essence. It was pretty darned powerful!

The way the dream used a character to which I was attaching that kind of importance was necessary at the time. I see it now as somewhat naïve, to have put that much stock in this human being, but nonetheless the dream had to use that character because it was the most powerful image for me at the time. So the feeling sense of the dream remains, even though the devotion to Sai Baba is gone. The universal message for me is still very pleasing.



In the Words of the Mystics

To man alone among the living creatures does God speak—at night through dreams, by day through the intellect. And He uses every means to foretell and prefigure the future blessings that will be given to those worthy of Him.

—St. Anthony the Great (Christian)

Indeed, it is quite uncommon for a man [following a spiritual path] not to be given dreams which intimate certain things which he later finds to be true. Dreams, and the knowledge of the Unseen through sleep, are among the marvels of God's works (Exalted is He!)

—Al-Ghazzali (Muslim)

There were several elders and pious men who lived with us and knew the Names of God and fasted for several days, neither eating meat nor drinking wine, staying in a pure place and praying and reciting great and well-known verses and their letters by number, and they went to sleep and saw wondrous dreams similar to a prophetic vision.

—Rabbi Hai Gaon (Jewish)

Those who are empowered by the breath of the Holy Spirit sail along even when asleep.

—Brother Lawrence (Christian)

Dreams...show us the unvarnished, natural truth, and are therefore fitted, as nothing else is, to give us back an attitude that accords with our basic human nature when our consciousness has strayed too far from its foundations and run into an impasse.

—C. G. Jung (Modern)

Sometimes also, though very rarely, I saw my departed starets [spiritual teacher] in a dream, and he threw light upon many things, and, most of all, guided my ignorant soul more and more towards humility.

—Anonymous Pilgrim (Christian)

Many methods of practicing Dharma that are learned during waking can, upon development of dream awareness, be applied in the dream condition...if a person applies a practice within a dream, the practice is nine times more effective than when it is applied during waking hours.

—Namkhai Norbu (Buddhist)

God's Emissary (may God bless him and grant him peace) has said that 'The righteous dream is one forty-sixth part of Prophecy.'

—Al Ghazzali (Muslim)

When bad dreams are transformed into good dreams, it is a sign of the one-tasteness of one's merit because of the purification of bad karma.

—Longchen-pa (Buddhist)

The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul, opening into that cosmic night which was psyche long before there was any ego-consciousness.

—C. G. Jung (Modern)

Sleep is a state in which the servant passes from the witnessing of the world of sense perception to the world of the barzakh, which is the most perfect world. There is no world more perfect, since it is the root of the origin of the cosmos; it possesses true existence and controlling rule in all affairs.

—Ibn 'Arabi (Muslim)

In dreams we put on the likeness of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night. There he is still the whole, and the whole is in him, indistinguishable from nature and bare of all egohood. It is from these all-uniting depths that the dream arises.

—C. G. Jung (Modern)

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Book Reviews

Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture

by Patricia Cox Miller. Princeton University Press, 1994.

Up until modern times people all over the earth have valued dreams and dreaming for a variety of reasons. In *Dreams in Late Antiquity* Patricia Miller gives a sympathetic account of how dreams were viewed in the Greco-Roman world during the first centuries of the Christian era for healing, magic, and spiritual transformation. Of particular interest to spiritual seekers is the second half of the book in which she describes the dreams of Christians such as St. Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa, and Vibia Perpetua.

Miller's approach is highly academic and probably not for the casual reader. However, for anyone who is seriously interested in dreams, or how dreams were viewed in, and shaped, the worldviews of the past, this book will be very valuable.

JOEL MORWOOD

The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History

by Mircea Eliade. Princeton University Press, 1954.

It is impossible to understand the spiritual meaning of dreams without understanding archetypes—those transpersonal symbols that perennially pop up in the dreams and myths of people in all times and places. That is why Mircea Eliade's *The Myth of the Eternal Return* is so valuable for anyone learning how to interpret their dreams from a spiritual perspective. Although Eliade does not discuss dreams *per se*, this famous and succinct work provides an insightful introduction to the significance of a host of archetypes relating to themes of time and space, and destruction and renewal. This book is highly recommended.

JOEL MORWOOD

Healing Dreams: Exploring the Dreams That Can Transform Your Life

by Marc Ian Barasch. Parallax Press, 1998.

Although this book is not a dream interpretation manual, hundreds of dreams are presented, possible interpretations explored, and lives documented that changed irrevocably because of dreams and the willingness to listen to them. Using vivid examples from dreams the world over and across time, Barasch seems to ask more questions than he answers. Indeed, he writes, "Healing dreams often require us to live our questions rather than to furnish instant answers."

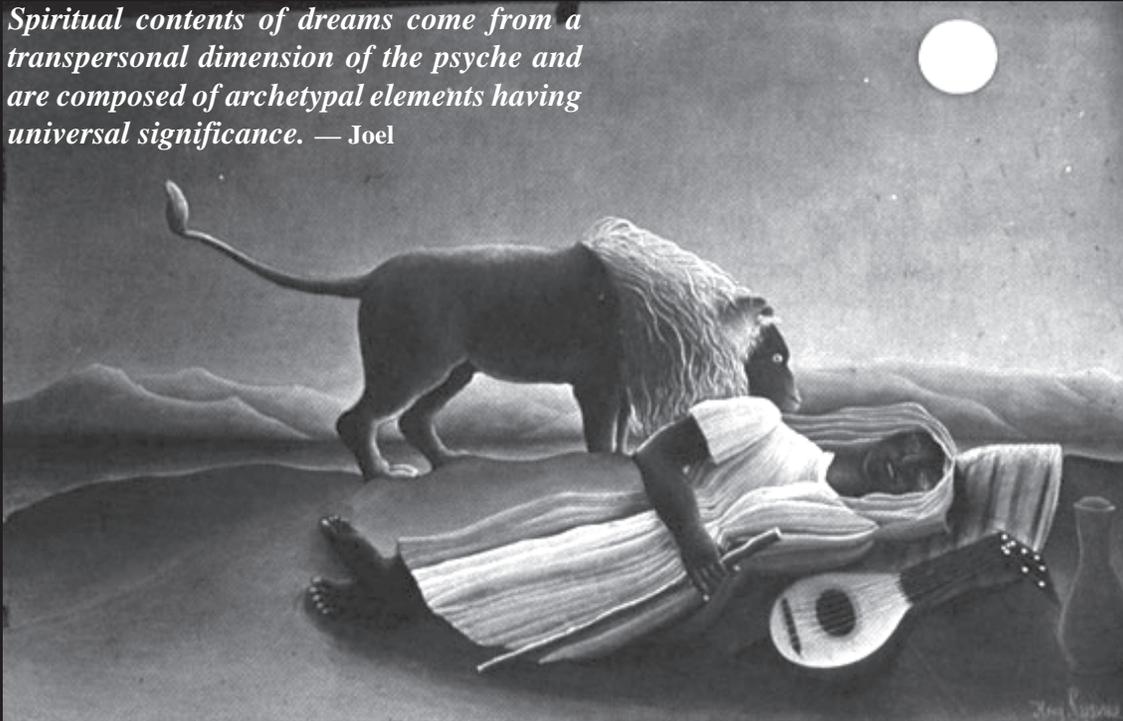
The author's dreams as well as those of other cancer survivors, Australian Aborigines, Hopi elders, and African shamans are revealed in an attempt to show their remarkable possibilities. Healing dreams, he contends, are "impactful, transformative, titanic and transcendent." Often they trigger deep emotions, contain unusually coherent narrative structure, involve the paranormal, or are other-worldly. They are persistent. They are realer than real.

He draws from the work of Jung and Freud, as expected, but also from the wisdom of the Buddha. Gandhi's dream that all warring religions in India gather together in prayer on a single day is recounted as is the dream of John Newton that transformed his life from slave trader to composer of the song "Amazing Grace." Examples abound of healing dreams and their challenges. Indeed, it is this challenge to listen to our own healing dreams, to be open to their power, their wisdom, their ability to heal, that just may show us the way to Awaken.

MEGAN GREINER



Spiritual contents of dreams come from a transpersonal dimension of the psyche and are composed of archetypal elements having universal significance. — Joel



"The Sleeping Gypsy Woman" by Henri Rousseau

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