

Dreams Are Real

(while we are dreaming)

By

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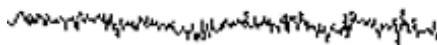
A new bumper sticker says: “Don’t believe everything you think.” That is very good advice and we are going to explore why.

Consider, among other things, that the human brain and nervous system is a dream machine pumping out a near constant flow of images that are so real that we think they are real!

Dr. Keith Buzzell suggests that one of the unique characteristics that defines a brain is its ability to generate ‘resonate representations,’ what we experience as inner images, of our external and internal world. And the display of these images provides the foundation for

what we experience as consciousness.

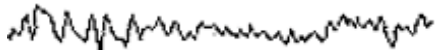
Each major brain system produces a unique type of image. The ancient sensory motor brain produces images that correspond to our external senses, sight, sound, etc. Our mid-mammalian-limbic brain creates resonate representations of the way we feel inside as we experience the sensory images outside, what we call emotions. And the new brain creates abstract symbolic images that represent our interpretation of both earlier brain centers and a great deal more. All are images and, at least for this exploration, images are dreams.



Beta - Awake, Alert



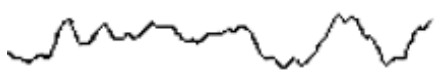
Alpha - Relaxed, Reflecting



Theta - Drowsy



Delta - Sleep/Dreaming



Delta - Deep Dreamless Sleep

The difference between waking consciousness and what we call dreaming is that we are more or less awake. Awake of course is relative. We can be really awake hearing a rattlesnake on the path next to us or we might be sort-of-awake slipping out of bed before that ritual shot of caffeine. Awake is relative and the relative states of awakens is represented as various brain wave frequencies, Beta, Alpha, Theta, Delta, etc.

The important point is this: the content of our conscious consciousness, being image based, is a dream, not just while sleeping and sleep walking, but while thinking, imagining, calculating, planning, remembering and acting on the feelings these fantasies and re-memberings of past experiences

produce. Simply stated - dreams are real – when we are dreaming.

Consider, just before waking up in the morning, being late for an important meeting, and this dream is so strong it literally wakes us up, heart pounding. The thoughts and feelings generated by the dream carry over into the new awake state. We jump out of

bed and rush, hoping it is not too late. Clearly the inner image we call a dream is there, just as real and powerful while we are awake.

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Or the opposite, we are anxious about tomorrow's IRS audit as we slip into the arms of Morpheus, the Greek god of sleep, and dream that shredded newspaper fills our tax receipt folders.

In one case you argue that the image is real, or at least closely represents so called real events, being late for a meeting. Shredded newspaper is clearly imagined, a fantasy. While we are dreaming, that is, in a relatively low state of attention, both images excite the same physical, emotional and physiological responses.

In low states of attention, which most of us are in most of the time, thousands of so called real and imagined images pop in and out of the system every day. At low levels of attention we simply don't have the capacity to discern the difference. The body, emotions and psyche respond reflexively, mechanically, to the near constant flood of percolating images assuming all to be more or less equally real. As we said, dreams are real while we are dreaming - even when we think we are awake.

Then the question arises – what are we dreaming while we are awake? I'm an American, a catholic, a carpenter, teacher, Ph.D., a mother, smart, not so smart, I'm old, retired, beautiful, too fat, a member of this club, gang, professional association, believe in equal rights, equal pay for men and women, pro life, pro choice, a Yale graduate, a high school dropout, the list goes on and on.

Looking closely we discover that all these categories, which shape our behavior, create the lens through which we look and very often the mirror we see ourselves reflected in. Like the tailor and the king's new clothes – these shared dreams are ever so real while we are dreaming. But are they really – real?

Am I really a Democrat, a Buddhist, a Republican or even conservative? Don't each of these categories, which I have accepted about myself and imposed on others, filter my perceptions, limit to a great degree, predetermine what I see and how I respond? When a right wing conservative looks at a Buddhist what does he or she see? When a Native American looks at a red-neck what does he or she see? When a woman, sexually abused as a child and raped as a teen looks at the male culture what does she see? When an adult male – placed in an orphanage by his mother at age two - looks at women – what does he see? Dreams are very real while we are dreaming and we are dreaming most of the time.

Most often we simply accept the dreams we dream, identify ourselves completely with this category or that and behave accordingly – hoping no one will notice or question our dream reality.

At another level we can, as Jung and other psychologists suggest, spend a great deal of time dreaming about the symbolic meaning of our dreams, interpreting them, placing each in its appropriate dream cubicle and dream category. We can join dream groups

and share our dreams with others – learning to express tremendous empathy for the dreams of others and of course our own.

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And we can hire a professional dream analyzer to offer their interpretations of our dreams based on their dreams and the dreams of other dreamers.

Suddenly, it becomes very clear that much, if not all of what we call reality is a dream, and relative at that. Interesting thing about dreams – no matter how we engage them – they occupy our consciousness, shape that consciousness and – as we said, predetermine, to a great degree, the content of that consciousness. Let's face it, most of us are completely enchanted and identified with the dreams we dream.

Thoughts are dreams. The entire field of imagination is a dream. These dreams resonate throughout the system, as knee jerk reflexes, whenever the system is in a low state of alert attention. Sit and listen to a mechanical lecture day-in and day-out and what happens – we start dreaming about the cute boy or girl hopefully in the row next to us. In a word – our attention starts drifting, we dream.

Of course, there may be some value in understanding why we dream, what we dream, the deep source and imprints that shape our lives. At a deeper level it is perhaps more important to understand the nature and consequences of our inattention.

Why do we spend so much of our life dreaming and so little time and attention looking, observing, listening, touching, feeling, being filled with awe and empathy for the magical world we inhabit and this amazing gift of being born a human being? We might, just as easily been organized into a slug or a rock? Do you have any idea what the odds are of a human incarnation in this vast and ever-changing universe? Neither do I.

If dreams are real while we are dreaming and we are dreaming most of our life – imagine (as a unique dream) that dreaming simply and naturally came to an end – stopped for a moment, which is something that happens every time our alert attention rises above the collective-mediocre norm. What then? Are you the same person that moment that believed themselves a moment before to be a progressive or a fundamentalist? Obviously not! Who we really are, moment by moment, is relative, dependent on the depth of our enchantment.

Imagine for a moment that our child, children in general, are not yet dreaming – what would they see – looking at us dreamers - sanity or madness? Taking this one step deeper – what would they need to do in order to relate and maintain their bond to a dreaming adult culture? Learn to dream – obviously. And there you have it – what Joseph Chilton Pearce calls the 'model imperative.'

Dreams are like viruses. Those who don't have them – catch them from those who do. Every time we talk to another we are sharing dreams. In no time at all we lose track of whose dream we are dreaming. Was that my dream or yours?

"Who are you," asked the caterpillar sitting on mushroom. "Well, I really don't know," said Alice. "I have changed so many times since this morning; I really don't know who I

am.” No need to worry, darling, another dream will soon catch our attention and off we go again.

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Coming full circle we are back to the future suggesting that two states are possible - dreaming and-or not. To dream or not to dream – that is the question. Alas, if all we know is a dream – by what standard or reference would we ‘know’ that we were not dreaming? Is it even possible? One nail drives out the other. That is, the dreamer, the knower disappears when the dream stops and returns again only when the state called dreaming begins again. The dreamer disappears all the time, naturally, when we give complete attention to this precious moment. In that moment, with complete attention, there is no knower or knowing, only attention, vast and sensitive.

The unique reality produced by the ancient sensory-motor and mid-mammalian brain centers isn’t really the problem. It is the new thinking, imagining, self centered brain that causes most of our trouble, constantly shouting ‘what about me, me, me.’ Remember in elementary school, phrases like: ‘Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, I’m going to eat worms.’ Is identifying ourselves as a Democrat, or a Christian, beautiful, highly intelligent or not, really any different?

Racism is a dream. Racial genocide, nearly every war, gang violence – are all caused by dreams. Wake up for just a moment and it is so obvious. We are all one species, deeper still ‘we are the world.’ But our dreams prevent this basic insight.

There is attention and attention occupied by a dream – two completely different states of being and relationship. Which do you suppose is more accurate, truthful, true being the measurement made by a carpenter, precise? Which state of heart, mind and body do you suppose children would prefer relating to – modeling their life and destiny after – the mad hatter lost in his or her dream or simple distilled clarity, responsible intelligence?

Being so deeply conditioned to and by the dream, self centered thought and action, not dreaming seems empty, dull, that nothing is happening. Not so, claim ancient and contemporary masters of emptiness – just the opposite. A mind that is silent is extraordinarily alert, sensitive. It is the dreaming mind that is dull, repetitive, mechanical.

J. Krishnamurti described such a heart and mind in his notebook:

Silence grew and became intense, wider and deeper. The brain which had listened to the silence of the hills, fields and groves was itself now silent. It had become quiet, naturally, without any enforcement.

It was still, deep within itself; like a bird that folds its wings, it had folded upon itself; it had entered into depths which were beyond itself. It was a dimension which the brain could not capture or understand. And there was no observer, witnessing this depth.

Every part of one's whole being was alert, sensitive but intensely still. This new, this depth was expanding, exploding, going away, developing in its own explosions; out of time and beyond space.

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Another eastern teacher, Yogananda, author of 'Autobiography of a Yogi,' began his talks with a simple question: 'awake and ready?' Isn't this how undomesticated children greet every day so full of wonder and curiosity? How often are you simply - awake and ready?

Again from Krishnamurti's notebook:

Meditation was pure delight, without a flutter of thought, with its endless subtleties; it was a movement that had no end and every movement of the brain was still, watching from emptiness. It was an emptiness that had known no knowing; it was emptiness that had known no space; it was empty of time. It was empty, past all seeing, knowing and being.

In this emptiness there was fury; the fury of a storm, the fury of an exploding universe, the fury of creation which could never have any expression. It was the fury of all life, death and love.

But yet, it was empty, a vast, boundless emptiness which nothing could ever fill, transform or cover up. Meditation was the ecstasy of this emptiness.

No, this is not too esoteric; rather it is basic, fundamental. Can you really listen when you are dreaming? Can you really observe, see actually what is in front of your nose while inattentive, enchanted by this worry or that? How can we possibly respond to our children, as they are, when mostly what we see only what is filtered by our dream? Dreams are real while we are dreaming and this relative reality is very dangerous - because we don't think it is a dream.

Paraphrasing the Christian Mystic St. John of the Cross...

If I have my hands over my eyes – I cannot see the sun.

If I have an image of my child, my wife or myself – I cannot see my child, my wife or myself.

I think it is time that we wake up. Don't you?

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