



Non-Local Consciousness and the Anthropology of Dreams

| Stephan A. Schwartz |

Fascination and concern about experiences in dreams is one of humanity's oldest and most universal cultural traits, tracing back unrecorded millennia into deep time. Psychologists Frederick L. Cullidge and Thomas Wynn, authors of *How to Think Like a Neanderthal*, writing in *Psychology Today*, argued that more meat in the diet of Australopithecines, allowed for larger brain development. This made Australopithecines more perceptive, and that allowed them to better assess risks, and led to them feeling safe enough to sleep on the ground, instead of in trees. This resulted in better more restful sleep and dreaming, which changes in turn led to the emergence of the genus *Homo*.¹

As far back as we have records, one of the most important things culturally about dreams is that they have always been recognized as a distinct state of consciousness, and that some but not all of the information that came from them had a source outside of space-time. What today we would call the nonlocal domain.

Oneiromancy is the term science uses to include all the various rituals, read protocols because that is what rituals are, that humanity has come up with to seek insight into the future through the study of dreams. It traces back at least as far as the civilization of

Mesopotamia (c. 5000-3500 BCE), in the land that lies between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in what is now Iraq. The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, who reigned between 668 and ca. 627 BCE, ordered his kingdom to be searched and a great library created from all the books, scrolls, and tablets that could be located. Approximately 2,000 tablets and 300 writing-boards, wood framed scribing tablets have survived, a collection that has come to be known as the Ninveh Tablets.^{2,3} It constitutes the oldest repository of learning known today, some of it dating to roughly 5,000 BCE and the dawn of civilization. One of the major themes in the tablets is oneiromancy. It is almost always practiced in a religious context, but essentially divination is a series of ritualized protocols developed empirically over generations to separate out the sublime from the mundane and understand its meaning.

One can see this wherever one looks. Persian Magi as well as Indian yogis and fakirs developed elaborate rituals to permit themselves to experience non-local awareness within their dreams. History is not clear whether it was the Sumerians or the Egyptians who first formalized dream interpretation by creating social institutions, "Sleep Temples," dedicated to that purpose. These were shrine sites where people would go to have dreams. Because that was the explicit intention of the ritual and place and it was all formalized, history records that many dreamers often experienced dreams containing what today we would call nonlocal precognitive perception.

By the fourth Century BCE this linkage of dreams and nonlocal

awareness had become formalized and was a central part of Greek religious life. At the temple of the god of healing, Asclepius, whose principal shrine was at Epidaurus on the eastern coast of the Argolid in the Mediterranean's north-eastern Peloponnese, men and women would come in search of healing, both mental and physical. They would sleep in a special area, known as the *Abaton*, asking for a dream. This process was called incubation. I think it is notable that this same process is mirrored in the problem solving techniques taught today in mindfulness workshops throughout the corporate world.

The next morning a member of the specially trained cadre of temple attendants known as the *Therapeutae* (from the Greek verb *therapeuo* "to heal" or "to serve"—from whence the modern word therapeutics) would help the dreamer interpret their dream, and a healing program would be developed from the directions the dream contained.

Hippocrates, the Greek physician whose oath of service still guides physicians to this day, described this linkage saying, "the affliction suffered by the body, the soul sees quite well with the eyes shut."⁴

As with so much else that was Greek, the Romans first absorbed and then put their own stamp on these dream techniques for prophetic or diagnostic uses. Men known to possess the ability to interpret such dreams were brought to Rome as slaves by the rich and powerful. If their predictions were validated by events, the seer's reputation would be made, and it became a matter of great status amongst the elite to own such a person. At the social level the Roman senate kept alive an Etruscan

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school of clairvoyance, even after they had conquered the Etruscan city states.

In the Biblical history that runs as a kind of parallel universe to formal Roman history, dreams, particularly prophetic dreams, also play a notable role. Not all dreams relate to the future in the Bible, but most do, like Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.⁵

Across the centuries working with dreams has been a manifestation of culture couched in a religious context. For most people and most cultures throughout history the important issue was the information in a dream which was believed to come from a god, a goddess, or a spirit, depending on the culture. Different cultures had different conceptions, but always the source was conceived of as other than the dreamer through a connection in the dream to a greater wholeness.

The notable exception in the ancient world was Aristotle who, in 350 BCE, wrote *On Dreams*, an attempt, as he said to "obtain a scientific view of the nature of the dream."⁶

The rituals to invoke the dream and do the interpretation varied and it is clear from the Ashurbanipal tablets that much of it was ritualized nonsense, "if a man flies repeatedly in his dreams, whatever he owns will be lost." But it was also possible to get objectively verifiable information about the present and the future, and it happened often enough that people kept practicing oneiromancy. That is why it shows up in cultures everywhere over millennia.

It is only in the very recent past that we have moved beyond this, less than a century to the late 1930s. As many things in science do, it started with a man capable of open-minded insight. Nathaniel Kleitman was a professor of physiology at the University of Chicago, and one of the very few people in the world actually doing well-grounded scientific research concerning sleep and dreams. As he describes it he began to understand the role of dreaming in sleep by becoming aware that infants move their eyes while asleep. "We literally stumbled on an objective method of studying dreaming."⁷

By the early 1950s Kleitman had extended his research to adults as well as infants and was being assisted by two

of his graduate students, William C. Dement, a medical student, and Eugene Aserinsky, doing his doctoral research in physiology. Working out of a "dingy three room suite" in south Chicago, this three man team fundamentally changed our understanding of both sleep and dreaming.

While monitoring sleeping infants Aserinsky realized there were electrical signals coming off of their brains associated with the eye movements he observed. These could be monitored by the same electroencephalograph (EEG) techniques used to follow brain waves that had been pioneered by Johannes Berger two decades earlier. They called these rapid eye movements, REM sleep, but were unclear what they meant in infants and did not yet know whether similar activity occurred in adults. A year later, they had confirmed this was the case. But were REM events just random muscular activity, or were they connected to a particular state of consciousness?

Dement, in particular, was interested in exploring whether there was a connection between these eye movements and dreams. In 1953, during a series of all-night recording sessions, as the volunteers slept he observed that the sleepers' eye movements were not just random muscular activity; their eyes seemed to move as if they were actually watching something. This activity came in cycles throughout the night, and was associated with consistent predictable brain activity. When they awakened people during these REM periods, they discovered they almost always reported dreaming. These findings helped to establish that there are two distinct states of sleep—REM and non-REM (NREM)—and that there are four stages of NREM sleep in addition to the REM periods.

Dement concluded that everybody, without exception, had the same pattern of sleep, a major discovery. In some cases, "the eight-hour pattern from one night's recording could be superimposed almost perfectly on the pattern of another night."⁸ Further, he says he realized that "during REM the brain acts as if it were awake, even though the rest of the body lies still."⁹

As Allen Rechtschaffen, a later sleep researcher at the University of Chicago, explains, the fruits of this research would result in a transformation in medicine, a "grand scientific revolution which started with the discovery of REM sleep."¹⁰ Today thousands of physicians and other scientists are actively adding to the original insights of Kleitman, Dement, and Aserinsky, and a Pub Med search on "dreams" will yield over 8,000 citations, most of which have to do with the physiology of sleep and dreams.

Two of the many researchers stimulated by this work, however, saw deeper. Psychiatrist Montague Ullman and psychologist Stanley Krippner, who together headed the dream laboratory at Maimonides Medical Center in New York City, asked the question every pre-scientific culture had taken as a given: was it possible in the dream state to acquire nonlocal information? In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, Ullman and Krippner, assisted by Alan Vaughan and Charles Honorton, took the findings of Kleitman, Dement, and Aserinsky and carried out a pioneering series of experiments exploring the connection between nonlocal awareness—they called it telepathy—and dreaming.

Recognizing that the linkage worked best when there was a sense of personal connection, the individual who would hold the image and the dreamer who would attempt to open to it would spend some time together becoming acquainted. Then the dreamer would be wired up and go to sleep in a special sound attenuated room, so that nothing external would startle them and create false readings.

When the sleeper's brain pattern indicated they were dreaming and their eyes were moving behind their closed lids, the wakeful partner would open an envelope, which contained a picture, and attempt to link with the dreamer while looking at this image. After a few minutes, or when REM stopped, the dreamer would be awakened and asked to describe their dream.

The results produced a significant correspondence between the image held by the wakeful partner and the imagery in the

dream.¹¹ The researchers also discovered dreams often contained the kind of precognitive information that has so fascinated every culture since antiquity. This work established that a form of Remote Viewing, really nonlocal linkage, is possible even when one is asleep. Much of these findings were confirmed by Charles Tart at The University of California - Davis, who also showed that many activities, including doing scientific research, involved specific states of consciousness.¹²

A few years later this dream research moved to a new plateau when Stanford researcher Stephen LaBerge began to study the often reported but virtually unstudied state he called lucid dreaming. You may have had such a dream. Typically, you “wake up” in your dream

and can take control of what happens. For a long time it was not recognized that lucid dreaming was a distinct state, but LaBerge, through a series of very ingenious experiments, proved it was.¹³

Physicist Edwin May, Director of the SRI remote viewing research program funded by the U.S. government, got to know LaBerge and correctly saw that if he was right in his conclusions, then it ought to be possible to actually do a formal Remote Viewing from a dream state just as if the viewer were conventionally awake

LaBerge and May devised an experiment in which a person would “awaken” into what LaBerge called “lucidity” and perform a standard Remote Viewing of a randomly selected target. The

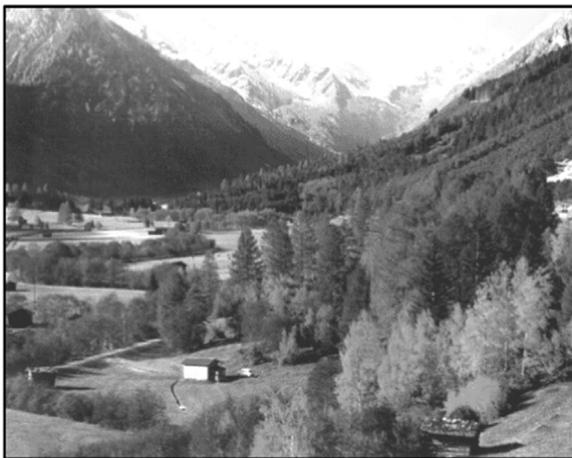
viewer would then be awakened in the usual sense, and asked to describe their viewing. The results surprised May, who thought he had a handle on most aspects of Remote Viewing. People were clearly able to “wake up” in their dreams, take control, and carry out a specific nonlocal task—Remote Viewing—producing session data that looked just as it would if they were awake.

Most recently psychologist Lance Storm of the University of Adelaide in Australia led an international team of researchers in doing an exhaustive meta-analytic study “on experimental dream-ESP studies for the period 1966–2016.”¹⁴ They found “40 dream-ESP studies (totalling 52 datasets) conducted by 51 experimenters,” that they felt were sufficiently rigorous in both design and execution to include. Using the most sophisticated frequentist and Bayesian statistics for their analysis they concluded, “that dream content can be used to identify target materials correctly and more often than would be expected by chance.”

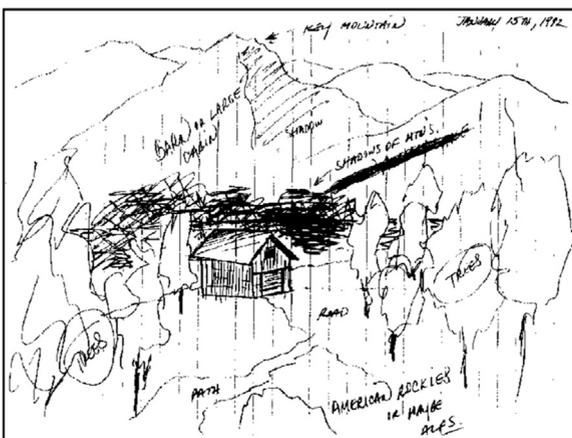
In the literature of science the ability to access nonlocal information in dreams is still dismissed by some as magical thinking. It reminds me of the early 1970s when a young anthropologist Carlos Castaneda challenged anthropology to consider Shamans, not as power hungry individuals who used ritual and “magic” to gain influence, but as individuals who had developed ritual protocols to attain and sustain intentioned focused awareness, allowing them to open their consciousness just as remote viewers and therapeutic intention healers do.

In thinking about dream research in which nonlocal consciousness is in evidence it is important to remember that this line of inquiry does not exist in isolation. There are a spectrum of nonlocal consciousness standardized protocols that make the case. They are currently being used in research studies at universities and institutions around the world, and each now has odds in excess of one in a billion that the observed effect is occurring by chance.

Castaneda? argued one could not know the shamans path, without



The target for one of Ed May's lucid dream Remote Viewing sessions on 15 January 1992.



The drawing made by lucid dreamer/Remote Viewer Joe McMoneagle during a session on 15 January 1992.

walking it. The debate over this caused fist-fights in the hallways, but today it has changed anthropology. I think the same is happening with dream research, and science itself.

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