

DREAMING INTEGRAL

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ABSTRACT This article applies Integral Theory to psychotherapeutic work with dreams and provides a unique method for dream tending. Select psychotherapeutic and cultural approaches to dreams are presented in an all-zone matrix and thus explored theoretically from an AQAL vantage point. Regarding dreams through the apprehension of host, guest, and “visit,” dreaming is tended through the injunctions of seeing, singing, and resting. Specifically, the practitioner is exhorted to first *see into and through the dream*, then to *sing the dream that wakes you up*, and finally to *rest inside the dream, as the dream*. A dream of the mystical vertex is presented as an illustration of AQAL dream tending.

KEY WORDS dreaming, mystical vertex, dream tending

With an eye from each....[I] can hardly see the world at all through two orbs that refuse to cooperate; cross-eyed I stare at that which is before me, a Picasso universe where things don't quite line up. Or perhaps I see more clearly precisely because of that?

– Ken Wilber (2003)

Dreams are like that, like a Picasso universe where things don't quite seem to line up—at least not at first glance. Dreaming is as if we see through more than one eye: our dreams are profoundly cross-eyed, and there is always more than one “I” present, intersecting with an infinite number of others. Quite paradoxically, and even maddeningly, our clarity is born within that very recognition. From one perspective, to see, to be, is to dream.

Dreaming Eight Zones

The language of dreams is the language of divinity, encrypted. Oddly, we understand our dreams much better that way over time. There are, in truth, an infinite number of ways to regard, to learn from, sometimes to share, and so to live a dream. This is the first point to be made regarding an eight-zone window to dream tending.¹ Dreams can be read from the perspective of an infinite number of combinations of dream elements and dream environments within and beyond the frame of the occurring dream.²

It must also be said that an integral approach to dreams has infinite space for all manner of dream content—from healing dreams, to absolute nightmares, to their essential nature. Too often, we begin dreamtime explorations from an already culturally constrained convention that excludes many otherwise fruitful paths of seeing into, and through, a dream. While we are never beyond culture, the limitless space afforded through an AQAL opening into dream tending helps us to go beyond prescribed meanings, in order to encounter the mystery of the dream directly, nakedly, openly. Thus an integral approach aims to bring together the combined wisdom of a myriad of approaches to dream tending, in order to most helpfully discern the dream's encrypted offering.

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To bring together a few leading Western technologies for dreaming, in Jungian theory the dream is most readily deciphered as the self (i.e., customarily from Upper-Left and Lower-Left quadrant points of view), whereas in Freudian theory, the dream is typically read as inner conflict (customarily from Upper-Left and Upper-Right quadrant points of view). By contrast, in Kleinian theory the dream is most often read as pertaining to the client's view of the therapist—that is to say the client's projective identification with the therapist and so with the analytic function (i.e., from zone 1 and zone 3).

An integral appreciation makes space for all eight zones and the infinite number of perspectives they invoke in awareness, including all of the psychotherapeutic approaches above. An integral approach is to *see* the dream in its AQAL context, as clearly as possible, keeping in mind that the limits of our view allow us to rest inside of the dream and to become it more fully; then, to *see through* the dream, unveiling it (through interpretation); and finally to *see through* the dream (embody it).

By opening into all eight zones of consideration, the phenomena of all types of dreams, including but not limited to shared dreams, prophetic dreams, dreams of spiritual accomplishment, and recurrent gender differences in the dreaming lives of women and men (Young, 1999), can be appreciated and researched not only for their cultural and social contexts, but also for their altitude. Putting the elements together, an integral regard for dreaming opens into a field of helpful questions about parallels and differences among specific approaches to dreams, thus broadening and deepening the field of inquiry.

Serenity Young (1999), for example, piques our curiosity about the implications of the following dream about the same event that occurs on the same night for renown Tibetan yogi-saints Dakmema and Marpa: "It is Dakmema who dreams of two females (the dakinis) carrying a stupa, while Marpa dreams of his male guru, who gives him a vajra" (p. 157). The event is disciple Milarepa's coming to study with them. Perhaps by asking more specifically, what are the zone, level, type, and state distinctions to be made about this shared dream, we can be more attuned dream-tending researchers. Here the integral call is to both explore and also to rest inside the dream, just as it is.

Dreaming All Levels

As a tour of first- through fifth-person perspectives elucidates (Fuhs, In press), the Kosmos is a full-spectrum dreamscape. Dreams are, from the perspective of deep dreamless sleep, not split into daytime and nighttime (Young, 1999). Roger Walsh (2007) directs our attention to the import of such an expansion of our awareness of the levels of dreaming, through to the clear light altitude of fifth-person perspective-taking:

More common today is the imaginal perspective that interprets shamanic journey experiences [such as dreams] as mind-created images. These images may be interpreted as either pathological or beneficial. Pathological interpretations of such images label them as hallucinations, whereas positive interpretations see them as helpful, healing products of the imagination.

A more radical perspective is that of Tibetan Buddhism. Here the realms to which yogis travel in dreams or meditation are regarded as mind creations, but so too is everything in ordinary waking consciousness or mind. As Ramana Maharshi summarized: "There is no difference between the dream and waking states except that the former is short and the latter long. Both are the products of the mind." Waking from all dreams, both sleeping and waking, is said to occur only with enlightenment. When asked for proof for this position, the yogi might give either a philosophical argument or the centuries old-advice: "To see if this be true, look within your own mind." Of course, none of these perspectives deny that the journey may yield significant benefits. (p. 174)

This depth of revelation (from a cognitive view) is not to obscure the equally meaningful, if perhaps not equally vivid, sense (from an experiential point of view) contained within each and every level of dreaming. What's more, from the perspective of thinking mind, such a reverence and/or aspiration for enlightened clarity of the deepest order itself discloses the beauty of a full-spectrum path of dream tending that embraces the kaleidoscopic nature of each and every dream. In this spirit, we see that all levels of dreaming are contained within each specific level of dream discernment. Even so, *the dream that sings you is the dream that wakes you up*. To illustrate just this spirit, Rodger Kamenetz (2008) makes the point that the direct experience of sacred dream images, the aesthetic beauty of their specific forms, can be nourished and should be cherished; the feminine lineage within Kabbalah, in particular, Kamenetz references is known to honor such direct seeing (pp. 40-41).

Tying these themes of transcendent and immanent wisdom, one dream catcher knot of sinew at a time, in parallel with Tibetan Buddhist cosmology, First Nations people—here through Cree legend linking conscious and unconscious worlds as spoken to by Doreen Manes Davis and recorded by Mark Brett (2013) of the Free Press—put it this way:

For most people only memories transcend those hazy boundaries of the surreal and the waking world. But to native Indian bands the link to that other world [comes]... in the form of the dream catcher. Traditionally, a dream catcher is....one of the tools that will allow us to pass through the barriers of time and space, said Doreen (Dino) Manes David, who creates these [dream catcher] works of art in her Cedar trailer. "Today we are so busy with modern life that the visions of dream time must come during sleep time to get our attention," she said.

An aspiration of using the Integral model to analyze dream tending is that we might come to recognize dream time throughout the day and night, by tending (i.e., living, interpreting, dispelling, or embodying as the dream calls for) one dream image at a time.

Dreaming Host, Guest, and Visit

The integral art and practice of dream tending presented in this article should not be considered exhaustive. Rather, having opened oneself to the broadest conceptual and relational field of experience possible, the idea is to be selective—to find out where the dream “sings” you awake and alive. Through the kaleidoscope of infinite associations, and the full spectrum of first- through fifth-person perspectives across the eight zones in which those associations arise, which dream connections are most vital? In what context of reflecting on or telling the dream (to yourself, your therapist, your lover, your colleagues, etc.) does the dream resound in your consciousness and come alive?

By opening your mind fully to the eight zones, across the full spectrum of levels, you have more room to engage all facets of potential meaning, without prematurely ruling anything out by being reduced to but one or just a few possible perspectives of the dream. Particularly in light of the fact that interpretations are infinite, you are invited to listen for that perspective that opens your soul to gnosis, that quickens your awareness as host to the dream visitation, in order to receive the as-yet unknown guest. What's more, you are invited to continue to tend the dreams that resound, the dreams that are not yet finished with you, the dreams that recur, the dreams that return across time and across context.

In terms of our approach, what if we beheld our dreams as sacred roses, to be tended with care, as offerings from the true heart of divine communion? Would we not want to offer them the fresh water of our emotional body together with the fresh air of our mind? Psychotherapist and psychoanalyst Michael Eigen notes that the *Talmud* regards dreams as unopened letters from God (Eigen & Phillips, 2004). Indigenous shaman

Martín Prechtel (2012) regards dreams as the “deeper speech of the many-dimensional motion of any one of a myriad of Divine beings.” Esteemed psychoanalyst James Grotstein (2009a) notes that, among the Assyrians, dreams are considered to be a secret language between the gods; he refers to them as “divine conversations,” “the ambiguous, oracular, language of Truth, of O, of Infinity” (p. 29).

To offer a direct sense of such reverence for dreaming, here is Prechtel (2012):

Dreams have a skin that camouflages with simple, more rememberable forms a much bigger dream beneath. In order to appear more familiar to the waking mind, dreams hide behind things we might see every day but so conspicuously reorganized as to cause us to lift our heads and notice. But the shine of this grand Holy thing of a dream when scratched and dented by the sharp prows of the meandering ships of our hard sleeping heads as they crash into deeper water of those bigger dreams that cruise the oceanic subinfinity of life’s primal soup, reveals through these openings, through these minor woundings, that primordial subskin brilliance of another world’s organic prism, whose uncontrollable light leaks out into us with some small particle beam of life’s too-big-to-humanly-comprehend immensity. By daylight this greatness usually wriggles free and is lost to the waking mind. For if the waking mind of a regular human could know this bigness it would either go mad, or have to begin living a spiritual life in order to be able to love the vision without being destroyed by the force of what it loved. (p. 19)

To expand on this sustained reverence, oneirologist Serinity Young (1999) points out that dream images need to be understood in ongoing relationship to one another, across time; this is a particular contribution of feminist scholarship—to be attuned to the connections (p. xiii). Dreams, to my mind, are divine encryption. Entering into the dream itself and the dreamscape that it emerges from—as host, as guest, and as visit—is the threefold practice of integral relational access to that divine encryption. To illustrate this, here is a description of a dream:

I am touring a house that is showing how spacious it is, for being of another era. There are racks of meat—leg of lamb?—that are being cured/served around the square configuration of the house. It is the home of a working artist. Two, actually. The principle artist says to me, “The mystical vertex”; did you say that?” (by which this artist means, in part, “Did you think that up on your own?”). I say, “I don’t know,” thinking that I did not, but not knowing that for certain, “but it is most helpful.” I tour his artwork with this phrase in mind. I then read the title of two of his works, both of which have the word mystical in the title, employed in other ways: Mystical That (the title of one painting) and Mystical This (the title of another painting). Somehow I then come to “the mystical vertex” being his phrase, which I did not realize until now, and I appreciate the trickster kindness he has bestowed on me in letting me imagine that the phrase originated with me...which, on reflection, I appreciate that it also did.

The first image seen is that of a mandala, a sacred, square-shaped house that is from another time. There is an invitation in the dream to play with the sense of time—there is a suggestion of an earlier era, or a later era, and is time even divided as such? Exploring the dream from an integral vantage, the image seems to quicken the seer to the interdependence of the gross, subtle, and causal bodies at once, through the play on

mandala as sacred image (evoking the causal and subtle realms) combined with the house as a sacred dwelling (evoking the gross realm). Seeing through this living image, as the witness, the seer can variously imagine the mandala/house as a marketplace (i.e. a town square) and as a sacred geometric form. In this spirit, there is a play with no inherent difference between the mandala/sacred square and the home. In terms of cultural context, there is an allusion to Western psychotherapy and specifically to Freud's "talking cure" with the statement about curation, as well as a statement about service, implying some kind of volunteering—an act of volition that occurs within sacrifice, as figured by the lamb.

Listening to the dream as a whole, a fundamental note in its singing is the ironic humor in the play of transcendent immanence, of the "mystical vertex" as *Mystical This* and *Mystical That*. There is an enlivenment to be sourced in this play on the term "mystical vertex," a phrase coined by Wilfred Bion (1959, 1984), in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychology in the 1950s. There is an enlivenment to be sourced in this play. An essential point of the dream is the sacred nature of the I-thou relationship: the two artists came to see that the mystical vertex occurs between people, but both people are home to it (not exiled). In other words, no one is dispossessed. And it takes two minds together to reveal the idea of the mystical vertex.

Exactly one month after receiving this dream, I consider including it as the heart of this article for the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*. Recalling the dream, I consider (pre-consciously) that the lamb is the most important symbol in the dream, and I know that I do not (consciously) know a great deal about it. I am embarrassed to publish something that shows my ignorance of a vibrant, sacred tradition that I am super-consciously/unconsciously steeped in through so many meaningful connections, and yet that I do not have a great deal of conscious knowledge of. I tentatively decide, as I write this article, that this very point illustrates how dreaming transcends the ego and so consider betraying my ignorance.

There is a bow to absolute subjectivity, a willingness to rest within the dream unaware—to be lived by the dream. This is how the waterline of the conscious and unconscious dimensions of mind work, ebbing and flowing, inextricably linked, and always creating, preserving, and negating one another. There is an edge here in allowing the admission of what psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas (1987) aptly terms the "unthought known." The wake up of the dream is the recognition that divinity enters the field of mind encrypted. While the dream tender is largely ignorant of the significance of the lamb at the Seder table, this is where the resonance of the dream directs her, quite clearly and insistently.

Putting these elements together, through my integral relational language of host, guest, and visit, I am viewing the dream, at this moment, through the lens of the integral mandala as host, Kabbalah as guest, and your reading this article with me as the "visit." Yet, "at the same time, and on another level" (Grotstein, 2009a, 2009b), I am also viewing the dream through the lens of mysticism as host, psychoanalysis as guest, and integral relational practice as visit (organizing space, or dream environment). The dream sings both of these chords.

I let the dream continue to resound, through spontaneous associations. Contemplating this dream, I associate to Marc Gafni's (2003, 2012) teaching at the third Integral Spiritual Center gathering in Denver, Colorado, and I recall how important that exchange was, in linking Integral Theory and Kabbalah. I also associate to many culturally Jewish spiritual adepts, of many traditions, in my life, including my present mentors within the psychoanalytic mystical lineage.³ I am also keenly aware of Gafni's teaching at the second Integral Spiritual Center gathering in Boulder, Colorado, on Shekinah, the feminine, also inhabited by and co-presented by Sally Kempton (2013), and how that drop-in serves as a reference point for me now (i.e., I realize I am in the presence of the feminine lineage of the Kabbalah in particular, precisely through my unmediated, direct associations).

In this light, there is but one zone-8 (social ritual) and zone-4 (cultural meaning) description of the lamb at Seder and Passover from a Kabbalist vantage, one connection to the lamb in this dream. (A connection that, while giving way to an infinite number of associations, asks each reader as you engage the dream,

through the integral mandala, what epiphany sings you? Through this reading, it is your dream now as well, should you choose to tend it here.) Here is what one Kabbalistic Rabbi had to say about the significance of the lamb:

The shank bone is not eaten at the Seder. Rather, it is a reminder of the Passover lamb offering brought during the times of the Temple. The underlying message of this offering can be inferred by its laws: The Pascal Lamb was to be one year old, with no broken bones, eaten whole and in one house—all representing the theme of unity and oneness. Thus the Kabbalists explain the Pascal Lamb to be an expression of the unity between God and the Jewish people. Additionally, the offering was specifically a lamb, since according to the Sages, a lamb's entire body feels the pain of each limb, alluding to the shared destiny of each and every Jew. (Eretz Cultural Center, 2013)

In this light, I will offer a zone-4 rendering of the lamb of the mystical vertex in a trans-lineage, integral context. This lamb is every person who has ever been exiled, all people who have experienced being displaced (e.g., the Jewish people, the Tibetan people, First Nations people) from their home or socio/cultural/spiritual locations. In this dream, there is a dark, most difficult cosmic pun: the sacrifice is, quite paradoxically, being “cured”; the sacrifice, in serving, is being “served”—even while the lamb is a part. How is this possible? The possibility for curation and for service is, I would venture, through the dream itself, and now the telling of the dream here, which has the possibility of being shared (as in, of being tended together) within the collective.

What sings me, to share here, is this: it is possible to catch the Integral dream. If it arises within you as a genuine lineage, then it is within you to make it so. This dream reminds me, and possibly us, that there is a covenant between Spirit and evolution through the involution of integral, as each of us—to the extent that we choose it—has a place in the shared destiny of the integral mandala, where everybody counts and the collective body of pain and of bliss, inseparable, is touched by every person who has ever been involved.

Dreaming, Seeing, Singing, Resting

To summarize this integral approach to dream tending, it comes down to seeing, singing, and resting. First, *see into and through the dream*. Second, *sing the dream that wakes you up*. Third, *rest inside the dream, as the dream*. May these points serve as a guide with you as the dream tender.

By “see into and through the dream,” I mean three things. One, apply an AQAL lens to explore the dream, with an awareness of the lens (i.e., zone and level) you are selecting to investigate the dreamscape. Two, see through the dream by dispelling the otherwise compelling dream. In other words, apply the Witness to the dream in order to unembed yourself from the dream and create more space around the visit. Three, see *through* the dream by *becoming* the dream, in order to join with the host, the subjectivity of the dream, and its elements.

By “sing the dream that wakes you up,” I mean source that edge within you where the dream truly enlivens you. Extend the dream by resonating with it. Joining with the dream elements, let yourself extend just a little bit outside the integral space as you initially defined it, to take the dream to its edge. Specifically, play with time, space and—perhaps most importantly—make new connections in the dream, to source that edge. What happens when you change the frame of time, the sense of space, the meaningful connections among dream elements?

Finally, having explored and extended the dream, permit yourself simply to let go and rest inside the dream, as the dream. Allow yourself to hold whatever curiosities you now have about the dream that you have tended thus far as questions that need not be answered, as ways to release the dream back to the divine realm of mystery from which it emerged, infinitely encrypted even still.

NOTES

¹ See Stephen Aizenstat's work (2011), where I first encountered the term *dream tending*.

² See Clint Fuhs' (In press) piece on integral perspective taking for a tour of locating/mapping these multiple windows of the spirit.

³ Here, by "mystical" I simply mean she who ordinarily "sees the ordinary in the extraordinary and the extraordinary in the ordinary" (J.S. Grotstein, personal communication, August 3, 2013).

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