

Premonitions

Study & discussion group at The United Lodge of Theosophists, UK, 31st May 2020

Initial reading “WAKING AND DREAM” from

THE DRAMA OF THE MYSTERIES in the *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*

What is the Soul?

It is the Consciousness in the life-powers. It is the Light within the heart. This Spirit of man wanders through both worlds, yet remains unchanged. He seems only to be wrapped in imaginings. He seems only to revel in delights.

When he enters into rest, the Spirit of man rises above this world and all things subject to death. For when the Spirit of man comes to birth and enters a body, he goes forth entangled in evils. But rising up at death, he puts all evils away.

The Spirit of man has two dwelling-places: both this world, and the other world. The borderland between them is the third, the land of dreams. While he lingers in the borderland, the Spirit of man holds both his dwellings: both this world and the other world. And according as his advance is in the other world, gaining that advance the Spirit of man sees evils or delights.

When the Spirit of man enters into rest, drawing his material from this all-containing world, felling the wood himself and himself building the dwelling, the Spirit of man enters into dream, through his own shining, through his own light. Thus does the Spirit of man become his own light.

There are no chariots there, nor steeds for chariots, nor roadways. The Spirit of man makes himself chariots, steeds for chariots and roadways. Nor are any delights there, nor joys and rejoicings. The Spirit of man makes for himself delights and joys and rejoicings. There are no lotus ponds there, nor lakes and rivers. The Spirit of man makes for himself lotus ponds, lakes and rivers. For the Spirit of man is Creator.

from [Selections from The Upanishads and The Tao Te King](#), pages 11-12

Forms of Premonitions and their Evidence

Dreams and Visions. Premonitions of many types have been recorded through-out history and remain today intriguing and largely misunderstood, notwithstanding the attempts by sceptics who seek to dismiss or explain them away them as inconvenient.

When asked what a dream is and where they come from H. P. Blavatsky gave this:

A. There are many kinds of dreams, as we all know. Leaving the "digestion dream" aside, there are brain dreams and memory dreams, mechanical and conscious visions. Dreams of warning and premonition require the active cooperation of the inner Ego. They are also often due to the conscious or unconscious co-operation of the brains of two living persons, or of their two Egos.

Q. What is it that dreams, then?

A. Generally the physical brain of the personal Ego, the seat of memory, radiating and throwing off sparks like the dying embers of a fire. The memory of the Sleeper is like an Æolian seven-stringed harp; and his state of mind may be compared to the wind that sweeps over the chords. The corresponding string of the harp will respond to that one of the seven states of mental activity in which the sleeper was before falling asleep. [...]

If the personal Ego is in touch with its higher principles and the veils of the higher planes are drawn aside, all is well; if on the contrary it is of a materialistic animal nature, there will be probably no dreams; or ... the memory by chance catch the breath of a "wind" from a higher plane... Therefore, there is no simple answer to the question "What is it that dreams?" for it depends entirely on each individual what principle will be the chief motor in dreams, and whether they will be remembered or forgotten.

From Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge, p 71-2, HPB; emphasis added

When asked if it is a good thing to cultivate dreaming, HPB replied that "it is by cultivating the power of what is called "dreaming" that clairvoyance is developed."

Now we will try to show that the old teaching of the Inner Senses is the most logical explanation for the many well-documented premonitions and foreknown events which otherwise would be inexplicable and unaccounted for by coincidence or chance etc.

But to start with let us have descriptions and explanations of the terms we need to use:

Clairvoyance, clairaudience and second-sight are all related very closely. Every exercise of any one of them draws in at the same time both of the others. They are but variations of one power. Sound is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Astral sphere, and as light goes with sound, sight obtains simultaneously with hearing. To see an image with the Astral senses means that at the same time there is a sound, and to hear the latter infers the presence of a related image in Astral substance. [...]

In clairvoyance the pictures in the Astral Light pass before the inner vision and are reflected into the physical eye from within. They then appear objectively to the seer. If they are of past events or those to come, the picture only is seen; if of events actually then

occurring, the scene is perceived through the Astral Light by the inner sense. The distinguishing difference between ordinary and clairvoyant vision is, then, that in clairvoyance with waking sight the vibration is communicated to the brain first, from which it is transmitted to the physical eye, where it sets up an image upon the retina, just as the revolving cylinder of the phonograph causes the mouthpiece to vibrate exactly as the voice had vibrated when thrown into the receiver. In ordinary eye vision the vibrations are given to the eye first and then transmitted to the brain. Images and sounds are both caused by vibrations, and hence any sound once made is preserved in the Astral Light from whence the inner sense can take it and from within transmit it to the brain, from which it reaches the physical ear. So in clairaudience at a distance the hearer does not hear with the ear, but with the centre of hearing in the Astral body. Second-sight is a combination of clairaudience and clairvoyance, or not, just as the particular case is, and the frequency with which future events are seen by the second-sight seer adds an element of prophecy.

The highest order of clairvoyance—that of spiritual vision—is very rare. The usual clairvoyant deals only with the ordinary aspects and strata of the Astral matter. Spiritual sight comes only to those who are pure, devoted, and firm. It may be attained by special development of the particular organ in the body through which alone such sight is possible, and only after discipline, long training, and the highest altruism. All other clairvoyance is transitory, inadequate and fragmentary, dealing, as it does, only with matter and illusion. Its fragmentary and inadequate character results from the fact that hardly any clairvoyant has the power to see into more than one of the lower grades of Astral substance at any one time. The pure-minded and the brave can deal with the future and the present far better than any clairvoyant. But as the existence of these two powers proves the presence in us of the inner senses and of the necessary medium—the Astral light, they have, as such human faculties, an important bearing upon the claims made by the so-called “spirits” of the *séance* room. [...]

The karma of the person also determines the meaning of a dream, for a king may dream that which relates to his kingdom, while the same thing dreamed by a citizen relates to nothing of temporal consequence. But, as said by Job: “In dreams and visions of the night man is instructed.”

From *The Ocean of Theosophy*, p 141-4, by William Judge; *emphasis* added.

This is the well-known story of General Yermoloff’s prevision of his life which he had as a young man. A friend of the General’s wrote:

Once, when leaving Moscow, I called on Yermoloff to say good-bye, and found myself unable to conceal my emotion at parting.

“Fear not,” he said to me, “we will yet meet; I shall not die before your return.”

This was eighteen months before his death.

“In life and death God alone is the Master!” I observed.

“And I am telling you most positively that my death will not occur in a year, but somewhat later”—he answered. With these words he led me into his study, where, getting out of a locked chest a written sheet of paper, he placed it before me and asked—“Whose handwriting is this?” “Yours,” I said. “Read it then!” I complied.



Aleksey Yermolov 1777–1861 [Wiki](#)

It was a kind of memorandum, a record of dates, since the year when Yermoloff was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, showing, as in a programme, every significant event that was to happen in his life, so full of such events.

He followed me in my reading, and when I came to the last paragraph, he covered the last lines with his hand. "This you need not read," he said. "On this line, the year, the month, and the day of my death are given. All that you have read here was written by me before-hand, and has come to pass to the smallest details, and this is how I came to write it.

"When I was yet a young Lieutenant Colonel, I was sent on business to a small district town of T____. My lodging consisted of two rooms—one for the servants, the other for my personal use. There was no access into the latter but through the former. Once, late at night, I sat writing at my desk. Having finished, I lighted my pipe, leaned back in my chair, and fell into a reverie, when, suddenly lifting my eyes, I saw standing before me across the desk a stranger, a man, judging by his dress, belonging to the lower classes of society. Before I had time to ask him who he was or what he wanted, the stranger said: 'Take your pen and write.' Feeling myself under the influence of an irresistible power, I obeyed in silence. Then *he* dictated to me all that was to happen to me during my whole life, concluding with the date and hour of my death. With the last word he vanished from the spot."

After the General died it was found that last date on the letter was correct to the day and hour, as recorded in his own handwriting. HPB wrote that "A Theosophist-Occultist would explain the vision in accordance with esoteric philosophy" thus:

He would premise by reminding the reader that the Higher Consciousness in us, with its *sui generis* laws and conditions of manifestation, is still almost entirely *terra incognita* for all (Spiritualists included) and the men of Science preeminently. Then he would remind the reader of one of the fundamental teachings of Occultism. He would say that besides the attribute of divine omniscience in its own nature and sphere of action, there exists in Eternity for the *individual* immortal Ego neither *Past* nor *Future*, but only one everlasting PRESENT.

NOW, once this doctrine is admitted, or simply postulated, it becomes only natural that the whole life, from birth to death, of the Personality which that Ego informs, should be as plainly visible to the Higher Ego as it is invisible to, and concealed from, the limited vision of its temporary and mortal Form. Hence, this is what must have happened according to the Occult Philosophy.

The friend is told by General Yermoloff that while writing *late in the night* he had suddenly fallen into a *reverie*, when he suddenly perceived upon lifting the eyes a stranger standing before him. Now that *reverie* was most likely a sudden doze, brought on by fatigue and overwork, during which a mechanical action of purely somnambulist character took place. The *Personality* becoming suddenly alive to the Presence of its Higher SELF, the human sleeping automaton fell under the sway of the Individuality, and forthwith the hand that had been occupied with writing for several hours before resumed mechanically its task.

Upon awakening the *Personality* thought that the document before him had been written at the dictation of a visitor whose voice he had heard, whereas, in truth, he had been simply recording the innermost thoughts—or shall we say knowledge—of his own divine "Ego," a prophetic, because all-knowing Spirit. The "voice" of the latter was simply the translation by the physical memory, at the instant of awakening, of the mental knowledge concerning the life of the mortal man reflected on the lower by the Higher consciousness.

Extracts from "An Astral Prophet," *Lucifer*, June 1890, p. 297-301, by H. P. Blavatsky *emphasis* added.

Types of Dreams: “Conscious Visions”; Voices heard; Warnings from others etc

‘Dreams’ have been classified into seven types, of which numbers 1, 3, and 5 are relevant to the subject of premonitions:

No. 1. **Prophetic dreams.** These are impressed on our memory by the Higher Self, and are generally plain and clear: either a voice heard or the coming event foreseen.

No. 2. Allegorical dreams, or hazy glimpses of realities caught by the brain and distorted by our fancy. These are generally only half true.

No. 3. **Dreams sent by adepts, good or bad,** by mesmerisers, or by the thoughts of very powerful minds bent on making us do their will.

No. 4. Retrospective; dreams of events belonging to past incarnations.

No. 5. **Warning dreams** for others who are unable to be impressed themselves.

No. 6. Confused dreams, the causes of which have been discussed above.

No. 7. Dreams which are mere fancies and chaotic pictures, owing to digestion, some mental trouble, or such-like external cause.

Q: Which one of these categories would the Russian General’s dream fit into?

Now let us take some of the countless examples of verified warning dreams, these are some from the Theosophical Correspondence Course, Topic 7A on “Sleep & Dreams”:

The *Saturday Evening Post* of May 26, 1951 tells the story of a warning dream told by Air Marshall Sir Victor Goddard. The dream came to a total stranger who "saw" Goddard involved in a drastic plane crash. The Air Marshall had no warning of the disaster, and since he did not give the dream entire credence, he neither cancelled the flight nor altered any circumstance of the trip. Nevertheless, as the fantastic situation predicted in the dream began to materialize Goddard prepared the passengers carefully for the unavoidable crash landing. The crash occurred, but without serious injury, and subsequently a movie "[The Night My Number Came Up](#)" was made of the event.



Another case of a warning dream coming for one who was unable to be impressed himself was that experienced by Dr. William Harvey, the modern discoverer of the circulation of the blood. The story is told that as a young man he set out for the University in Padua, Italy. When he got to Dover the Governor refused to let him enter the packet to cross the channel, but declined to give any reason. The next day the news arrived that the packet had been lost with every soul on board. Then the Governor explained. He said he had a dream of overwhelming force, in which he was forbidden to allow a young man, whose face appeared to him, to enter the boat. When Harvey presented himself the Governor recognized the face seen in his dream.

In the same Course Topic we have a case of a dream that saved a young lady’s life:

Rescuer's "vision" attracts attention by [Natalie Singer](#) Tuesday, October 12, 2004

She confided in the minister at her old church, telling him that once in a while, she felt the presence of a deceased loved one or heard a message whispered to her from some unexplained source. Nohr said the minister told her it was the devil. [...]

A vision that Nohr said came to her in a dream led her Sunday morning to Laura Hatch, the 17-year-old Redmond girl who was alive in her crashed car after being missing eight days.

From her hillside home overlooking the Sammamish River Valley yesterday, Nohr described how she dreamed Saturday night that her teenage daughter's friend was stuck in a ravine off Northeast Union Hill Road.

The next morning, Nohr and her daughter, Beth Ann Brooks, took a drive and stopped where Nohr said she felt Hatch's presence. The mother of three scrambled down a 150-foot embankment and found Hatch inside her crumpled Camry.

"I don't know how to describe it," Nohr said. "It was like the feeling I had when my children were born."

"I think it's a miracle," added Brooks, 17, who showed her mother a picture of Hatch on Saturday, when she was distraught over her missing friend. "It's God."

In the selection we read from William Judge's *Ocean* we saw that for a clairvoyant "pictures in the Astral Light pass before their inner vision and are reflected *into the physical eye from within*. They then appear objectively to the seer... if of events actually then occurring, the scene is perceived through the Astral Light by the inner sense."

Q: Which type of dream could Nohr's be classed as?

How is the faculty of dreaming – and higher clairvoyance – developed?

HPB writes:

Our physical senses are the agents by means of which the astral spirit or "conscious something" within, is brought by contact with the external world to a knowledge of actual existence; while the spiritual senses of the astral man are the media, the telegraphic wires by means of which he communicates with his higher principles, and obtains therefrom the faculties of clear perception of, and vision into, the realms of the invisible world. The Buddhist philosopher holds that by the practice of the *dhyanas* one may reach "the enlightened condition of mind which exhibits itself by *immediate recognition of sacred truth, so that on opening the Scriptures* (or any books whatsoever?) *their true meaning at once flashes into the heart.*" [...]



When one is suddenly startled in his sleep without becoming fully awake, he does not begin and terminate his dream with the simple noise which partially awoke him, but often experiences in his dream, a long train of events concentrated within the brief space of time the sound occupies, and to be attributed solely to that sound.

Generally dreams are induced by the waking associations which precede them. Some of them produce such an impression that the slightest idea in the direction of any subject associated with a particular dream may bring its recurrence years after.

Tartini,¹ the famous Italian violinist, composed his "Devil's Sonata" under the inspiration of a dream. During his sleep he thought the Devil appeared to him and challenged him to a trial of skill upon his own private violin, brought by him from the infernal regions, which challenge Tartini accepted. When he awoke, the melody of the "Devil's Sonata" was so vividly impressed upon his mind that he there and then noted it down; but when arriving towards the *finale* all further recollection of it was suddenly obliterated, and he lay aside the incomplete piece of music. Two years later, he dreamt the very same thing and tried in his dream to make himself recollect the *finale* upon awakening. The dream was repeated owing to a blind street-musician fiddling on his instrument under the artist's window.

Q: Which form of dream could this be?

Coleridge composed in a like manner his poem "Kublai Khan," in a dream, which, on awakening, he found so vividly impressed upon his mind that he wrote down the famous lines which are still preserved. The dream was due to the poet falling asleep in his chair while reading in Purcha's² "Pilgrimage" the following words: "Here, the Khan Kublai commanded a palace to be built . . . enclosed within a wall."

"The Universe In A Nut-Shell," article H. P. Blavatsky

"According to Coleridge's preface to *Kubla Khan* the poem was composed one night after he experienced an opium-influenced dream after reading a work describing Xanadu, the summer palace of the Mongol ruler and Emperor of China Kublai Khan. Upon waking, he set about writing lines of poetry that came to him from the dream until he was interrupted by "a person from Porlock". The poem could not be completed according to its original 200–300 line plan as the interruption caused him to forget the lines.

"Some of Coleridge's contemporaries denounced the poem and questioned his story of its origin. It was not until years later that critics began to openly admire the poem. Most modern critics now view *Kubla Khan* as one of Coleridge's three great poems, along with *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*."

"Kubla Khan" or A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

¹ Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770), an Italian Baroque composer and violinist. Today, Tartini's most famous work is the "Devil's Trill Sonata", a solo violin sonata that requires a number of technically demanding double stop trills and is difficult even by modern standards. According to a legend embroidered upon by Madame Blavatsky, Tartini was inspired to write the sonata by a dream in which the Devil appeared at the foot of his bed playing the violin." ([Wiki](#))

² Samuel Purcha (1577?-1626), English cleric who lived near Leigh-on-Sea, Essex that was a once "prosperous shipping centre and a congregational place of seafaring men." He was a great recorder of other men's travel stories.

So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round:
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
 And here were forests ancient as the hills,
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

(the first 11 lines)

The poem according to Coleridge's account, is a fragment of what it should have been, amounting to what he was able to jot down from memory: 54 lines. Originally, his dream included between 200 and 300 lines, but he was only able to compose the first 30 before he was interrupted. The second stanza is not necessarily part of the original dream and refers to the dream in the past tense. The rhythm of the poem, like its themes and images, is different from other poems Coleridge wrote during the time, and it is organised in a structure similar to 18th-century odes. ([Wikipedia](#) emphasis added)

Q: Which form of dream could this be? ... and should we take notice of our dreams?

Has modern research come beyond the denials HPB was met with in her time?

And, it is the policy of materialistic, matter-of-fact science to superbly ignore such exceptions... we rather think, to avoid the embarrassing task of explaining such exceptions. Indeed, if one single instance stubbornly refuses classification with "strange coincidences"—so much in favor with sceptics—then, prophetic, or verified dreams would demand an entire remodelling of physiology. As in regard to phrenology, the recognition and acceptance by science of prophetic dreams—(hence the recognition of the claims of Theosophy and Spiritualism)—would, it is contended, "carry with it a new educational, social, political, and theological science." Result: Science will never recognise either dreams, spiritualism, or occultism.

... Never are the high censors of the Royal Society more perplexed than when brought face to face with that insolvable mystery—man's inner nature. The key to it is—man's dual being. It is that key that they refuse to use, well aware that if once the door of the adytum be flung open, they will be forced to drop one by one their cherished theories and final conclusions—more than once proved to have been no better than hobbies, false as everything built upon, and starting from false or incomplete premises.

If we must remain satisfied with the half explanations of physiology as regards meaningless dreams, *how account, in such case* for the numerous facts of verified dreams? To say that man is a dual being; that in man—to use the words of Paul—"There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body"—and that, therefore, he must, of necessity, have a double set of senses—is tantamount in the opinion of the educated sceptic, to uttering an unpardonable, most unscientific fallacy. Yet it has to be uttered—science notwithstanding.

20% of Britons have recurring dreams; **19%** say they have felt upset the next day with someone who was mean to them in their dreams; more than a third have made a life-changing decision based on a dream; **72%** of women claim their dreams affect their decisions in everyday life, compared with just **28%** of men. **19%** of adults have renewed contact with an old friend after dreaming about them.
 John Lewis/Daily Express

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