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The Art of Remembering Dreams

HENRY REED

TO DESCRIBE the remembering of dreams as an art is partially a confession of the mystery of the process. Yet, in many respects, learning to recall dreams is similar to learning any other skill: it requires motivation, an especially adapted vigilant strategy, an overcoming of possible resistance, and, above all, an attitude of confident patience. It is only when we practice these skills on a high level that the remembering of dreams becomes an art.

At first, natural curiosity about our dreams should supply enough motivation to make us try to remember them. We are disposed to wonder, for instance, what our dreams mean and what role they may play in our lives. By becoming aware of dreams and recognizing their importance we can expand the domain of our conscious existence. Still, once we turn our attention to dreams, they may disappoint us by appearing mundane or trivial and hardly worth the effort required to recall them. Moreover, if we compare ourselves with people who seem to have a natural ease in remembering dreams often far more intriguing and imaginative than our own, we may find that mere curiosity is not enough to sustain our efforts to acquire a proficient memory for dreams.

When casual interest fails, we may find a more compelling motive operative in the case of those people engaged in self-analysis or psychotherapy who have found their dreams to be a source of useful insights. They look to dreams to find solutions to difficulties, to answer their desire to gain greater self-understanding, and to spark the hope for growth and development. These people have an intense interest in dreams and this sustains their attempt to remember them. Their example suggests to us that when dreams are seen as a means to some highly desired goal, there naturally develops sufficient motivation for recall. The time and effort required to develop a fairly reliable memory for dreams is more willingly given when we hold our dreams in high regard, and when we are firmly convinced that dreams are valuable and worth remembering.

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Unfortunately, it is as difficult to prove scientifically that dreams can be meaningful or valuable as it is to prove that life itself has any meaning or value. Even though there is growing evidence that the biological aspect of dreaming has vital regulative functions in all mammalian life, for our purposes dreaming must be approached on a different level. Just as an appreciation of life's potential worth and meaning can be gained by examining how people have used it, so too, we may gain an appreciation of the potential value of dreams by considering how people have seen them as contributing to creative work.

As we look back through history we find that many creative persons—far from taking full conscious responsibility and credit for their achievements—have attributed the fertile germ of their work to a source of intelligence other than their own consciousness, and they pay respectful tribute to this inspiration. Dreams, often the medium of such inspiration, have enlightened scientists, artists, and philosophers. Mozart, Schumann, and Wagner all had dreams which explicitly provided some portion of their work. The same can be said of Dante, Voltaire, and Goethe; of Tolstoy, Poe, Scott, and Stevenson. We know from Goethe that *Faust*, and from Stevenson that *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* originated in dreams. But it is not only to literary works that dreams contribute: the essence of his philosophy came to Descartes in a dream; and dreams, too, were the well-spring of certain important discoveries in the sciences: in physiology, that of the chemical basis of nerve conductivity; in organic chemistry, that of the formula for benzene ring; and in physics, the common model of the atom. And Einstein, who himself kept notepaper by his bed to record his dreams, maintained that such intuitions were indispensable for fundamental insights into nature.

We may well ask ourselves: what is the source for the evident creative potential of dreams? Perhaps it is that the dreams have access to long-forgotten memories and to perceptions which one had only vaguely noted. Perhaps it is that dreams combine elements of experience in novel fashions using bizarre imagery or powerful symbols. It is not only the especially gifted few, the creative geniuses, who find that they can sometimes be outdone by their dreams; we all have had dreams which seem to surpass our daytime powers. Our experience tells us, then, that dreams bear a creative potential for everyone.

Although the existence of dreams is a psychological reality, they typically defy direct observation. It should come as no surprise that because their realm is characteristically alien to our waking life, our memory for them is particularly fragile. The frequent elusiveness of dreams presents a formidable challenge to the memory.

Dreams seem to elude direct observation because when we are dreaming it is unusual for us to realize that we are doing so. When we do realize, we often respond to these unusual and particularly lucid dreams by an almost reverential appreciation; for it is generally believed that by "awakening" to

the dream, the dreamer is allowed to explore the mysteries of the dream realm and perhaps attain an enlightening experience of the paradoxical complementarity of reality and illusion. For most of us, however, the occasional realization that "this is only a dream" is quickly followed by awakening. Thus, since we usually find dreaming incompatible with consciousness of dreaming, we generally have access to our dreams only after they have left us. Consequently, our knowledge of dreams usually comes to us second-hand—from our recollection after awakening.

Awakening from a dream can itself be a rather puzzling experience, for the compelling reality of a vivid dream experience stands in bewildering contrast to the subsequent discovery that we have been actually lying in bed. The psychological reality of our dream experience can oppose the apparent reality of our daytime existence in such a way as to arouse our curiosity. The following fable expresses a metaphysical appreciation of this ambiguity: Chuang Tzu dreamed that he was a butterfly. Since in his dream he did not know that he was anything else but a butterfly, he was happy and content to flutter from flower to flower. Later, he awoke to discover that he was not a butterfly but, rather, Chuang Tzu. But he was perplexed. "Am I really Chuang Tzu who dreamed he was a butterfly, or am I a butterfly who is now dreaming that he is Chuang Tzu?" The moral is that there is a natural barrier between the man and the butterfly: the transition between the two is what is meant by metempsychosis, i.e., transmigration of souls. An adept in the art of yoga is said to be able to consciously experience this transition. He attempts to maintain continuous consciousness while progressing from the state of wakefulness to falling asleep, then to dreaming, and finally to re-awakening. Most of us, however, do not experience this underlying unity; we are accustomed to having our conscious existence interrupted by sleep, and when we awaken, we immediately reconnect quite naturally with our daily reality.

As we arise to confront the duties of the day, we can usually easily dismiss any lingering dream fragments as if they were the meaningless fancies of a sleeping mind. Dreams invite such neglect for they characteristically appear discontinuous with each other and alien to our waking life. No wonder, then, that the dream is often rejected as incoherent nonsense and that it slips from our memory as we engage ourselves in the day's activities. Our memory system is not designed to retain nonsense. Being already overworked, it has little time to digest the strange forms of dreams, especially when they seem irrelevant to the needs and purposes of the day.

A more technical explanation of how dreams are forgotten is provided by experimental laboratory techniques which have been devised to observe the potential dreamer while he sleeps. Through the use of electronic instruments which monitor the bodily processes of the sleeper, it has been discovered that sleep passes through cyclical stages. About every ninety minutes the sleeper's brain-wave activity approaches that of wakefulness.

The irregularity of his pulse and respiration suggest emotional arousal, and behind closed lids his eyes move rapidly as if observing some on-going action. Once the dreamer has been awakened, he reports that he has been asleep and *dreaming*.

The discovery that dreaming occurs periodically through the night and that it is associated with a particular stage of sleep has significantly intensified the investigation of dreams. It is now generally acknowledged that if the sleeper is awakened immediately following the active state, he can usually recall a dream. This ability declines rapidly as the awakening is delayed; consequently, in the morning the dreamer will have some difficulty in recalling the dreams he reported during the previous night. This indicates that we forget dreams not only after we awaken but also while we sleep. It is clear, then, that when we awaken in the morning without a dream it is because we have forgotten.

People who complain that they never dream have been invited to sleep in dream laboratories; there, the dreams are extracted during the night, and in the morning the dreamers are presented with their recorded reports. Dreams have been used as the content of memory tests, and those who were tested have found that it is more difficult to remember the dreams of people who themselves have difficulty in recalling their dreams, whereas, it is easier to remember the dreams of those whose own dream recall is easy.

Apparently the mind never sleeps, for when sleepers are awakened from other than the dream state, they will usually report that something was going on in their minds. Sometimes they will report that they were dreaming—but not so frequently as when they were awakened from the dream state, but more often they will say that they were “thinking.” This reported thinking activity resembles normal thought and typically relates directly to the sleeper’s daytime concerns.

Why is it, then, that although we have been mentally active throughout the night we experience our awakening as the emergence from unconscious sleep and that—except when we may recall a dream—that our mind has been a blank? Why should we be able to occasionally recall some of our dreaming, but typically, none of our thinking? This discrepancy is puzzling since during the night we spend much more time thinking than we do dreaming. Moreover, the quality of our nocturnal thinking is perfectly compatible with that of our waking thought, whereas the quality of our dreaming is quite the contrary.

When we look for the factor which favors dreams and affords them some privilege to our memory, we recall that the dream stage is simultaneous with activity in the dreamer’s brain waves, pulse, respiration and eye movements. The dream state has been called activated or paradoxical sleep because of its resemblance to a waking state, and is, in some sense, a partial awakening. It is a psychological principle that a certain degree of arousal is necessary if we are to register something into memory. The arousal

which occurs during the dream state—but which is absent during the other stages of sleep—is the probable basis for our ability to remember dreams and our inability to recall nocturnal thinking.

If we hope to remember our dreams, we must push to its logical conclusion the two-fold realization that dreams are well worth remembering and easy to forget; what follows is the adoption of the basic strategy of vigilance.

If we wish to remember our dreams, we need more than a conviction of their value and an awareness of the ease with which they escape us. Vigilance is the basic strategy—a vigilance adapted to the peculiar elusiveness of dreams. In such a planned watchfulness, no time of day is unimportant, but let us turn first to the time when we actually dream.

Nocturnal vigilance means more than waiting until morning to try to recall our dreams. We have seen that laboratory investigations indicate that dreams are forgotten while we sleep. Thus, the morning recollection of dreams has inherent limitations. But the dream laboratory has something else to teach us. Experimental subjects have been trained with some success to wake themselves up after each dream. Such training depends both on hypnotic suggestion and also on the experimental conditioning methods in the laboratory, and the results attained by these means provide an encouraging example of what it is possible to achieve in a short amount of time but with highly expert personal guidance. Relying on our own resources, we will be able to achieve as much, but for us it will take longer.

Because we have seen that dreaming itself is a partial awakening, it comes as no surprise that we are capable of learning to wake up after a dream. As far as waking up several times during the night is concerned, we often do so, but we fall back to sleep so quickly that we have forgotten it by morning. Once we have seriously undertaken the challenge to remember our dreams, we are full of expectancy as we fall asleep at night. Our intention to be on the lookout for dreams and to remember them brings auto-suggestion into play, and this expectancy creates the basis for nocturnal vigilance. Our task, then, is to develop it and use it to our advantage.

Upon falling asleep we may experiment with a meditation from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. If we focus our desire for dreams into a concentrated “glow” in the back of the throat, we may then find that sleep will not erase our intention to notice our dreaming. The yogic phenomenology has an interesting psychophysiological parallel, for it is in the stem of the brain that the arousal during the dream state is controlled. Thus, by establishing mental contact with this center before falling asleep, its activation during dreaming may also awaken our intended vigilance.

But in any case, there may be a temporary difficulty. Occasionally we find that the intention to recall our dreams ruins our sleep. During the night we fidget and fuss: anxious about our dreams, afraid that we

may fail, but also perhaps afraid that we may succeed only to have terrible dreams. Given certain popular misconceptions about the nature of dreams, it is natural to experience some anxiety when we begin to try to remember them. More typically, however, it is simply the fact of our heightened expectancy which is to blame for a poor night's sleep. Any form of expectancy—some exciting or distressing event which will take place on the following day—can interfere with our sleep. But this should be no cause for concern, for we quickly become accustomed to the anticipation of our dreams.

The effects of vigilance during the night will probably be evident to us in the morning when we wake. We may recall a dream and find that in the dream we reminded ourselves to "remember this dream." Here we have, in fact, taken advantage of the semi-wakefulness which accompanies the dream state to alert ourselves to remember the dream. At first it may appear that our vigilance is operating within the dream itself. What may have happened, however, is that we awakened to give ourselves this reminder, but since we awakened only slightly and returned to sleep very quickly, our reminder subsequently appears to be a part of the dream we recall in the morning.

The next stage in the development begins the night that we discover ourselves lying in bed awake only to realize that moments ago we were dreaming. How can we take advantage of this awakening? Ideally, after each dream we would waken just enough to allow us to remember the dream in the morning, but without inhibiting our immediate return to sleep. This ideal state is best approached by gradual experimentation until we find the most efficient use of our vigilance, until, as it were, we can have our dreams and sleep too.

Begin by using the nocturnal awakenings to rehearse the dream and so fix it in memory. A good method is to lie quietly with closed eyes and redream the dream in an attempt to memorize it. Then, having reviewed the dream with a confident reminder to recall it in the morning, it is easy to go back to sleep. This procedure can be perfected until we are able to recall dreams in the morning almost as completely as they were rehearsed during the night. But there are typical failings.

Sometimes we will experience an annoying feeling that the dream we recall in the morning does not compare either in clarity or completeness to the dream we remember having during the night. In fact, there may remain only a disappointing fragment which refuses to yield to even our most patient efforts to expand it. And sometimes in the morning we will waken to the frustrating discovery that we have a vague but certain memory of having dreamed, but that dream is beyond recall. Then we realize that while we were rehearsing the dream we drifted back to sleep. The nocturnal rehearsal method can fail us, then, either because of the difficulty with which the dream submits to memorization or because of an insufficient degree of wakefulness when we reviewed the dream. If this is the case, we can take

another lesson from the laboratory approach and during the night make a written record of the dreams which awaken us.

For a few nights it might be a useful experiment to record in detail whatever dreams awaken us. But in general, the degree of arousal and effort required to initiate and accomplish this task would leave us wide awake. So rather than abandoning our vigilance, we might do better to make brief notes that we can rely upon to deliver up our dreams in the morning. To do this successfully is probably the most efficient use of our vigilance. As we rehearse a dream that has awakened us, its most vivid aspects will suggest themselves as cues for recalling the entire dream. Notepaper, of course, should be kept conveniently close at hand. To arise, even slightly, from the relatively pleasant experience of rehearsing a dream to pick up a pen and paper to make notes will seem to require heroic moral effort; therefore, the physical effort to do so must be minimized. Even a light is not necessary, for it is possible to write in the dark without much trouble. The slight fatigue from making these notes and the confident feeling of having secured the dream make it easy to drop back off to sleep without further concern.

This is the most economical use of nocturnal vigilance. As we perfect the notation method, we will probably awake in the morning to discover two or three nocturnal records, but with only a dim recollection of having awakened during the night to make them. Quiet contemplation in the morning, supplemented by notes from the night, can, with practice, deliver on many mornings as many as six dreams.

Once we have embarked on a strategy of planned watchfulness, we must look carefully at the fragile transition between sleep and wakefulness in the morning. Even though we have made notes during the night, the moment of wakening in the morning is the most crucial opportunity to detect dreams; it is also true that at this moment they may easily be lost. Dream images from the night seem very faint in the strong light of day, and the awakening thought, "What do I have to do today?" is their most dangerous enemy. Our first task, then, is to condition ourselves so that when we waken in the morning our first thought is for our dreams. Sometimes it may be helpful to verbalize our intention before falling asleep, but in general, most of us can rely upon our desire to remember our dreams to be a sufficient reminder. Being so prepared, we will often find that our vigilance is rewarded by the discovery that we were dreaming just before we woke. Often it is the last part of the dream which lingers in our mind, and with careful attention to this fragment, the entire dream may be retrieved.

There is both a technique and an art to allowing a dream fragment to expand into an entire dream. It is of primary importance to avoid distractions which may interfere with detecting the dream—such as disturbing the context in which the dream occurred. Therefore, one should remain motionless in the same position as upon awakening and keep the eyes closed. Get back in

touch with the dream by re-experiencing the part that is recalled, and mull over the feelings evoked by the special mood of the dream as you examine each character and event. As we review a dream in this way, forgotten elements emerge. How this happens is unclear; it can be said only that one element of a dream must somehow remind us of another. But dreams cannot be hurried; we learn that we have to wait for remaining material to come of its own accord. So it is that how we wait becomes a part of the art of remembering dreams.

When we try to recount the events of the previous day, our daily routine provides some structure to aid our efforts at reconstruction; but there seems to be no such routine in a dream. We may question the gaps in our memory of the dream, but the only way we can fill these gaps is to patiently review the dream—and wait.

On some mornings we shall awaken without a clear feeling of a dream. Though we will probably be tempted to get up, we should, nevertheless, remain quietly in bed and wait, for we might discover something to help us to remember a dream. We may ask ourselves, “What does it feel like to wake up this morning?” If there is a mood, get in touch with it savoring its special quality without trying to pin it down with words. Often a flickering fragment will appear which can then serve as a hook to retrieve the whole dream. Or perhaps there is an image or thought which catches our attention because of its unlikely character. This may be a clue to a dream.

But often there is nothing special until the moment comes when we suspect the presence of a hidden dream. It is as if we accidentally stumble upon the right combination in the static of the mind that places us in momentary empathy with the feeling of the dream. Sometimes, too, there appears to be nothing at all, and then a dream suddenly unfolds before us. Such is the mystery of dreams. And that special quality of contemplation which crystalizes dreams dissolved in the hazy fog of the awakening mind also becomes part of the art.

After gleaning whatever dream images arise from our initial efforts, we should not yet give up the hunt. Memory for dreams is to some extent dependent on recreating the physical context in which the dream occurred. Try moving gently into each of the other positions in which you sleep and await additional dreams. It would seem as if the dream were stored in a code which is most intelligible when we are in the original posture of the dream. Doubters can experiment for themselves by comparing their ability to re-experience a dream in different positions. Trying to recall a dream while in an inappropriate posture feels something like trying to write left-handed; therefore, it is useful to explore our sleeping positions. Dreams of the same night are often linked in subtle ways so that dream images gained in previous positions can be reviewed as lures for other dreams. Still waiting is of the essence.

Developing the habit of patient, quiet contemplation in the morning is vitally important to our learning to recall dreams. Our experience will show

that if we spend some time lying in bed waiting, a hasty assumption that we have remembered no dreams will prove to be incorrect. It is, in fact, during such quiet, meditative efforts that we gradually realize our creative potential for retrieving dreams. It is important, too, to turn to whatever notes we made during the night and to try to get in touch with the dream they represent. Generally, each of the clues provides an easy recollection of a small aspect of the dream, and as each of these is reviewed, the remaining parts of the dream gradually appear. We should carry the dream images obtained from the notes through each of the postures, for they may attract further dreams.

Even after we rise we should continue to be on the lookout for dreams, for it is not unusual for a dream memory to flash into mind later in the day. Although the reason for such a sudden appearance is not always clear, it seems that an object or an event similar in some way to an element of the dream, or which evokes a reaction in us similar to a reaction we had in the dream stimulates our memory. More often, the dream itself does not appear, but instead we encounter a vague feeling of being reminded of something. It is as if a dream were delicately balanced on the edge of the mind, almost about to roll into view. We need utmost care to tease it into consciousness, for it is as if the slightest jerking movement might jar it and send it back to oblivion. Here again we find a use for the art of retrieving such fleeting images, for the phenomenon is so subtle that it is likely that we overlook many interesting instances because of our lack of attention. We need to see with the inner eye of an artist or they will escape us.

Our desire to encourage such spontaneous dream memories is one of the reasons that during the day we should not forget or ignore our dreams. An often neglected aspect of developing a memory for them is the attitude that we have toward our dreams during the day. The motivation that is necessary to our remembering dreams depends upon our respect for their potential value. If we do not properly value our dreams, our motivation for recalling them will slowly fade away; therefore, we must conscientiously maintain an attentive, devoted, curious admiration for our dreams. This particularly fruitful attitude toward our dreams is difficult to express either in theory or action. Perhaps we might say that it is as if our dreams were the appearance of an elusive would-be lover. We cannot demand that she do our bidding or conform to our expectations. Even though she may frustrate or disappoint us, we dare not criticize her mysterious ways; therefore, we allow her to come in any manner that she will, and we are grateful when she visits us. Similarly, we should not turn away from our dreams or disparage them if, for example, those which we recall at first do not meet our expectations. Rather, we should always be pleased that we were able to remember a dream and appreciate what we were given. What other way is there to win such a lover?

Another analogy may be helpful here. Suppose that dreams were utterances of an infant learning to speak. We are delighted with a baby's first words.

Even though we can only guess at what he may be saying, we do not scorn or ignore him—nor do we doubt his potential for future eloquence. Instead, we applaud his efforts, and by our attention, encourage him to continue speaking. We even take special note of his remarks and are all too eager to tell our friends about his speech. Thus we should not ignore even the least dream fragment as seemingly insignificant, nor should we disregard our dreams as meaningless even though they may puzzle us. Rather, we should give each one careful attention and with each develop an appreciative familiarity. How else can we expect the child to say even greater things?

Not only do these two metaphors—the elusive lover and the speech of an infant—illustrate an attitude which will support our attempts to learn to remember dreams, they also suggest ways to actualize this attitude and warn us of some common resistances which we may encounter. The basic resistance, and one which can take many forms, is the tendency to reject our dreams. Although our reason for rejecting our dream is usually perfectly valid when considered on its own terms; nevertheless, through such rejection, our dream recall is inhibited. Therefore, we must periodically come to terms with the source of this resistance.

We may, for instance, reject a dream outright. Upon awakening in the morning, we may say to ourselves, “Oh, that was nothing!” and carelessly toss aside a lingering dream image which otherwise might have provided a memory for a dream. When we are seriously trying to recall our dreams, such judgments are ill-advised. Later in the day a rejected fragment may seem to be quite interesting after all, but then we will be disappointed to discover that we can no longer recall the dream.

We may also disregard a dream on the basis that our memory of it is too incomplete or confused. We may fall prey to philosophical doubt concerning the basis for trusting memory itself, and we will confuse ourselves with doubts as to whether we dreamed at all. The subjective certainty which typically accompanied the initial spontaneous recollection of our dream will fade with time and as the dream is scrutinized. Thus, it is better to record the first memory of the dream and let it go at that. There will always be time for later editorial revision—and the original evidence will have been preserved.

Another reason for rejecting our dream is that it seems to be disappointingly short and apparently trivial. We may conclude that the dream does not contain much of value. In another instance, a dream may repel us because of its seeming incoherence or absurdity, or perhaps because its contents offend us. But we should set aside our judgments and remember the dream. Even though our reasons may be valid, our developing ability to recall dreams is jeopardized each time we devalue one of them. Each time we ignore a dream, we re-enforce the auto-suggestion that our dreams are not worth remembering. This is, in effect, an instruction to ourselves to forget our dreams.

Still another source of our resistance may be fear, a fear of what we might discover in our dreams. As amateur psychoanalysts we often assume that dreams can reveal only our negative qualities and serve only to destroy the convenient illusions we have about ourselves. But we should not allow this preconception from considering the positive possibilities as well.

A more typical source of resistance arises from the demands of our daily existence. Our dreams may seem to have little relevance to our immediate concerns, and we may feel that the time it takes in the morning to pay proper respect to our dreams interferes with our desire to get a quick start on the day. Therefore, it is important for us to re-affirm the importance of dreams so that they can effectively compete for our attention.

Nevertheless, in spite of our best intentions, there will be periods when we have no dreams. These times are usually periods of intense preoccupation with some external pressure. True, we may experience some grief at the loss of our dreams, but if we can't effectively convince ourselves that our dreams may be of some use, the loss is unavoidable. Yet when we return to our dreams, we will be rewarded by the discovery that our previous practice in recalling them now provides a speedy recovery.

There are two main methods of giving patient attention to our dreams. First, maintaining a dream diary is essential. Having a special book for recording and preserving our dreams is a powerfully symbolic gesture of respect for them, and the bedtime ritual of placing the diary close by for our nocturnal notes and morning recollections gives tangible form to our intention to remember our dreams. This dream diary has the double advantage of sparing our memory the impossible task of storing our dreams, and providing a permanent sequential record of what we have dreamed. As the book grows, it becomes more and more of a reference work if the question of prophetic dreams, for example, should arise. And even when there is no question of precognitive dreams, we will often be surprised at dreams we recorded weeks or months earlier and find it hard to believe that they are ours. When we have before us in our dream diary long sequences of dreams, we notice too, that patterns emerge which were not evident in the individual dreams themselves, but which often provide us with astonishing interpretative insights.

If the dream diary is to serve us well, it must be religiously maintained. Dreams are best recorded in the morning when we are still in a contemplative state of mind and our memory for the dreams is still vivid. But if there is not sufficient time in the morning to record the dream completely, at least make an outline of the dream and fill it in as soon as possible. Each moment of delay contains distractions that threaten our accurate memory of dreams. We may wish to further honor our dreams by giving them artistic expression. It is often a good idea when we record our dreams in the diary to include illustrations and diagrams. Certain dream images may stimulate the production of a satisfying painting; and in any case, even the smallest sketch may yield surprising results. It is possible, too, to create poetry or stories of fantasy from our dreams.

The second important way of giving attention to our dreams is to think about them during the day. As we ponder what we dreamed during the night, we will often find that it stimulates further dream memories and sometimes even new ideas emerge. Thinking about dreams is often a good way to test and develop our memory for them, and we will gradually find it easier to retrieve and remember even the most loosely connected dreams. Furthermore, by keeping our dreams in mind, we invite our daytime experiences to remind us of our dream images. In this way we gradually discover the natural associative context of our dreams, and we find that our past dreams provide us with frequent metaphors for our ongoing experiences. These spontaneous and synchronistic juxtapositions often lead us along a natural path of dream realization.

Another aspect of daytime attention to dreams is the habit of occasionally talking them over with friends. Discussing our dreams helps us to overcome any shyness we may have about them, and it also serves to give them an added importance. Moreover, if we have a dream about one of our friends, we may find that discussing the dream with him has given us an opportunity to add a further dimension to our friendship. It is true, however, that we dream mostly of ourselves, and that the friend in our dream may represent some aspect of ourselves—an aspect that we are reminded of by our relations with our friend during the day.

The care we take to retrieve and reflect upon dreams pays us rich rewards, for our dream life will develop its creative potential only to the extent that we take our dreams seriously enough to act on them. As we gain appreciation for our dreams, they will cease to merely entertain us; they will begin to provide us with a source of unexpected hypotheses about ourselves and our environment. Yet, only when we test these hypotheses by daily experimentation, can they be expected to produce that vitality which our dreams will require in order to help us most. It is here that we see the cohesion of our dream retrieval skills as an art. The use of the term “art” might seem inappropriate until we consider the nature of creativity. Creativity is sometimes described as the ability to combine common elements into novel relationships. It is the ability to suspend for the moment our usual working assumptions so that new thought patterns can form that constitute the essence of creative ability. Even though these new patterns appear vague and remote, entering into an empathetic relationship with such a potential source of inspiration until it can clearly manifest itself is a creative art.

Creativity is also the process of bringing to light those invisible, autonomous promptings, the daimons of the dark, which normally hold us in their secret sway. Dreams are the daimons’ playground and our days are subsequently affected by their nocturnal activity. Remembering our dreams, then, becomes a creative process which offers us the opportunity to participate with increasing consciousness in the drama of life.

Each dream is a creative act. Dreams habitually disregard our everyday logic and typically surprise us with their juxtapositions. It is not only their

tendency to dissolve rapidly, but also their alien quality that makes them elude retrieval. The recalling of dreams, then, is a creative art in which we can all become more or less proficient. It is well worth the practice. At the very least, it offers us a way to develop our potential for creative functioning, and it may offer us more than that; it has been said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

...The dream, that most frequent and most important manifestation of the symbol-forming dynamic of the psyche, plays...a central role in Jung's psychology. Along with inspirations and involuntary fantasies, it is the real manifestation of the spirit. Even at the time he entered the university, when he pondered the significance of his dream of the storm-lantern, Jung was struck by the superior intelligence of the dream, which suggested a meaningful new attitude toward life. In the course of his later development he continued to find out more and more about the lumen naturae which revealed itself in dreams. So he worked out certain angles of approach for coming closer to this inner source of light.

Marie Louise von Franz, *C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time*, C. G. Jung Foundation