

Dream Appreciation

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There is much to be learned about fishes . . . and dreams.

On fishes and fishermen — A parable in two acts

By Montague Ullman, M.D. *

Prologue

Fishes and dreams have something in common. They each have their own unique environment in which they go about doing their own thing. When brought to the surface and properly “socialized” they are sources of nurturance, one for our body and one for our soul. Both are exquisitely sensitive, each in its own way, to environmental pollution.

Cast of Characters

A Fisherman
Dr. Flawed, The Great Fish Doctor
Dr. Young, Another Great Fish Doctor
The Fisherman’s Wife
Rachel Carson (as a young woman)

* With an assist by Nan Zimmerman.

Act One

Scene One: A fishing village nestled somewhere in a small European country

Time: The turn of the century

A fisherman is seen fishing in a lake. There have been many generations of fishermen at this same lake before him, all grateful for the harvest of fish the lake provides. There is a hidden but deeply sensed connection between the fisherman and the fish that swim about in the lake. He sees them as creatures remarkably suited to an environment so different from his own. He respects their way of life and the freedom they enjoy in their environment.

He is out to catch only the amount of fish to meet his and his family’s daily need. The scene opens with the fisherman meditating on the oneness that exists between the fish he is about to catch and himself. Suddenly he feels a tug on the line and begins to pull in a good-sized fish. As he witnesses the struggle of the fish to get off the hook and get back into the water, many thoughts go through his mind. He addresses the fish directly:

“We both know that once out of the water you can no longer survive as a live fish. You will, however, survive in the life you will give to my family and myself and for that we are grateful. You are part of a different world now — our world — and your survival will be part of our survival. Of course some preparation will be necessary. The cleaning and cooking will cause you no pain. You are dead to the world you came from but alive to our world as you replenish our bodily tissues and provide us with the energy we need to meet the new day. Without you our children could not grow nor could we remain as healthy as we are.”

The day’s catch is brought home for the family dinner.

Scene Two: The fisherman’s home

Time: One year later

The fisherman’s wife awakens in pain. She is obviously ill. The fisherman tries to comfort her. He says to her:

“Yesterday in the village I heard that many have taken

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On fishes and fishermen: A parable in two acts

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ill as you have and in each instance they had eaten fish caught the same day. I have also heard of Dr. Flawed, The Great Fish Doctor who lives in a city not far from us. Tomorrow we shall go to see him. I'm sure he can help you."

Scene Three: The office of Dr. Flawed, The Great Fish Doctor

Time: The next day

The fisherman had come with his wife to Dr. Flawed, The Great Fish Doctor and had brought along a fish he had caught the day before. The doctor spent most of the time in a very thorough examination of the fish, even studying specimens from each of its organs under a microscope. The Great Fish Doctor then spoke directly to the fisherman's anxious wife.

Dr. Flawed: "I have examined many fish like this and have recently published what I think will turn out to be a classic on the subject. I can tell that the fish contained the poison that made you sick. Your entire system has been contaminated. To rid you of this poison will take a long time and require many visits."

Fisherman: "Dear doctor did I hear you right? You said there was poison in the fish. If that is so, how did it get there?"

Dr. Flawed: "I had formerly thought that healthy fish had been contaminated by poisons that had somehow gotten into the water. After seeing

many patients like your wife, I realized that the poison did not come from an external source, but that the poison was internally generated as part of the natural development of the specimen of fish that you have brought me. In some way their sexual organs do not develop properly and generate toxins that spread through their system. A word of caution: If you're planning to go fishing again, you may be in some danger unless a properly trained person is there to dissect out the poison and prepare the fish for human consumption."

The fisherman was taken aback by this explanation. It didn't sound right to him. After all, his family and generations of his forebears had fished in the same water for many years and had never before encountered poisonous fish. There was no doubt the Great Fish Doctor was right and there was poison in the fish, but the question was how did it get there and why now? Nor did he want someone else in authority with him when he went fishing. That would interfere with the personal sense of communion that exists between the fish and himself. Disappointed at the prospect of a protracted and expensive treatment, the fisherman and his wife returned home.

Scene Four: The office of Dr. Young, The Second Great Fish Doctor

Time: One week later

The fisherman's wife was still ill but recovering.

The fisherman continued to be puzzled by the First Great Fish Doctor's explanation of the illness. He decided to seek another opinion. He heard that Dr. Young, a Second Great Fish Doctor, younger than the first, had just begun practicing in a nearby city and was becoming almost as well known as the First.

The scene opens with the fisherman and his wife in the office of Dr. Young, The Second Great Fish Doctor. This doctor was also very thorough in his examination of the fisherman's wife, but he seemed even more intrigued by the appearance of the fish the fisherman had brought with him. He approached the examination of the fish in quite a different way than Dr. Flawed had. He didn't biopsy or look at the fish under a microscope, but instead carefully noted all of the features of the fish's external appearance, its shape, size, color and texture. When he finished he came to a very different conclusion than his older colleague. He turned to the fisherman's wife and said:

"There is nothing wrong with the fish you have brought me but eating it did induce a severe allergic response, one that pointed to a certain imbalance in your various organ systems. When this is not properly attended to it can result in the kind of symptoms you have had. Treatment will be needed to explore and correct these imbalances. In the course of treatment, I may through incantation evoke the help of various mythical figures, including Pisce, the an-

cient Greek goddess of all that lives in the sea."

The fisherman liked this explanation better than the first, but he still remained puzzled. It didn't explain why, after all these years, these imbalances would suddenly occur. Besides, he didn't see how ancient mythical figures could be of help. His wife had no signs of any allergies before. They left the Second Great Fish Doctor's office still not certain the problem had been solved.

— Curtain —

Act Two

Scene One: The fisherman's cottage

Time: Three months later

Nearly everyone in the village had developed symptoms of greater or lesser severity. By chance a young woman named Rachel Carson had come to the village. She was on a mission to alert the world to the way the rivers, lakes and oceans of the world were being polluted by the waste that human beings and industrial plants were dumping into them. She shared with the fisherman and his wife the results of the investigation that had brought her to the lake in this village. She had discovered that the lake was polluted and that the source of the pollution was the way waste products were being poured into tributaries of the lake from new factories that had sprung up.

This made sense to the
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Up close and personal: An architect's dreams

By Shuli Tor

Body, Memory and Architecture, a book by two of my wonderful teachers from Yale, says that landmarks and monuments are usually found either at the center or the periphery of a place. This consoles me, because mine are definitely at the periphery. Dream work, meditation, dance, art, music, love, poetry, nature: all that is most vital to me is at the edge of my life. The center seems occupied by an unconscious fear obsessed with some all-consuming narrowly defined struggle for survival.

But the monuments at the periphery are often gates, so I assure myself that sooner or later I will walk through these gates into my real life.

I don't remember how I found myself in Claire Limmer's dream group so long ago. Claire is a gifted dream worker and student of Monte's. I fell in love with Claire and also with dream work. I do remember the first dream I presented at Monte's group, or rather my response to that dream — a sense of stimulation and the excitement of discovery. A whole new world opened up to me. As the Talmud says, a dream unattended is a letter unopened — a letter from me to myself.

In the ensuing years my life has usually left these letters unopened; a shame, because I've been blessed with an abundance of dreams. At the first session at Monte's, my dream inspired a fellow dream worker to say that it reminded him of the little boy in Gunther Grass' novel who re-

fused to grow up. I have often found myself identifying with Saint-Exupery's Little Prince who sees all adult activity as just that: activity. But nature has us grow from child to adult whether we like it or not, and like all life's peculiar changes, it's up to us to make the best of it. That initial dream invited me to find my own way to grow up.

Which brings me to my current central location. I've been teaching. I started out with a poor, illiterate black woman. I did not manage to teach her how to read, but gained a friend and learned some about life: there is still life without literacy; intelligence and humanity without formal education; and wealth without consumer goods. Next I taught — and still teach — children at Sunday school. Sometimes I teach them and sometimes I go with the flow and let their activities and imaginations unfold randomly, chaotically and noisily. . . . The most rewarding and least successful of my teaching experiences has been teaching yoga, where everyone feels better instantly.

And at the center of it all is my teaching of my own profession, namely design at some local universities. I am a generalist. Like the Little Prince I am a debunker of expertise in areas of normal human endeavor (i.e. in design, but not nuclear physics), a speculative thinker. All this seems to distress my students, who after 15 years of schooling are bent on gaining the authority they presume I have so

they may go forth into the world armed with all the answers. These, of course, must be objective. When I try to steer them to the subjective as a perfectly good source of knowledge — especially the subjective in themselves — they barely conceal their view of me as a flake.

Nevertheless, as a demonstration of the power of our interior worlds for a course entitled "Human Factors on Design," I decided to run a dream group for one session. The dream presented was perfect in terms of what I wanted to teach: how we position ourselves in place in a dream is a powerfully symbolic act and that we carry over this psychic

reading of place, albeit unconsciously, into our waking life. The students worked quite well with the dream but I still felt this kind of activity was not even at the periphery of their lives yet. They were too busy growing up, claiming some authority which they could not yet admit does not exist. My illiterate student and five-year-olds would have done better with dreamwork...

I don't know if it is just our culture or many cultures that push us away from the subjective. The subjective is usually where power is not: children, animals, crazy people, psychics, mystics. Of course, some artists have suc-

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On fishes and fishermen

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fisherman. He had never believed that the fish produced the poison or that his wife had allergies. Neither the fish nor his wife were to blame. Before leaving, Rachel Carson left with them an early draft of a book which was later published under the title of *Silent Spring*.

Scene Two: Lakeside

Time: One year later

Much had happened since Rachel Carson's visit. The manuscript she had left was an eye-opener for the fisherman. It was the answer to what had eluded him for so long. It spurred him to action. He arranged for Rachel Carson to address a meeting of the villagers. Armed with the facts

she had provided them and through their untiring efforts to call this to the attention of the authorities, new laws were put into effect prohibiting the pollution of the waterways and thus protecting the natural environment of the fish and the people whose lives were so closely involved with the fish.

The fisherman continued to fish at the lake and his family thrived on the healthy fish that nurtured them.

Epilogue

The dream has treasures for everyone — for ordinary mortals, for the experts and for those who need the care of experts.

Most people thrive on home-cooked meals. □

Up close and personal: An architect's dreams

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ceeded in exploiting it through celebrity and the notion that this route is perilous, full of hazards and pains, thus justifying it as part of our grim adult culture.

It is interesting to note that even the field that was meant to liberate us — psychoanalysis — has devolved into yet another area of obscure expertise and clannishness. So-called Freudians have so-called Freudian dreams; so-called Jungians have so-called Jungian dreams and the thirst for authority has patients putting their therapists on pedestals and their therapists are all too happy to play emperor. The “return of the repressed” is alive and well in the world of psychic expertise as I’m sure Freud foresaw. He was not paying lip service to the power of the unconscious.

So where am I in all this? Well, my own therapy more or less failed. As for dream work, I often found it fascinating and stimulating. My own psychic problems seemed to be more powerful than my ability to use my dreams for healing purposes. I tend to associate and even when my abundant dream imagery was clear to me I could still not feel it or integrate it emotionally. In fact, it is likely that one of the reasons for my abundant image making capacity is my preference for seeing my life rather than experiencing it.

Paradoxically, this may be because I am extremely sensitive to my own (and to some

extent others’) emotions, have little capacity for emotional pain, and am totally identified with my emotions. “I feel, therefore I am,” may be why I resisted the talk cure, where we are meant to identify with

(and g-d does not often make direct prolonged appearances in the Bible!) to say “where were you when I brought forth the world from the whirlwind?” It is as if he was saying, “Get a grip! Look at the

Our identities are in flux, forever becoming. Dreams may be our best and truest witnesses to this process if we are true to them.

reason, or its broader manifestation consciousness, and bring those emotions in line.

The first three commandments tell us not to worship idols, to love g-d with all our being, not to take g-d’s name in vain and that there is only one g-d. I suppose we need to be told this so emphatically because the fear that is central to our lives sends us into a naming frenzy. If we can name it, we can control it. But g-d loves us and knows that sooner or later this naming frenzy gets us into big trouble. G-d, as he tells Moses, “is what g-d will be.” Everything and nothing; everywhere and nowhere. G-d will not be named.

On a smaller scale, our identities are similarly in flux, forever becoming. Dreams may be our best and truest witnesses to this process if we are true to them.

G-d’s faithful servant Job ends up on the dung heap (a very fertile place, by the way. . .). G-d does not speak to Job’s obsequious, faith-rationalizing friends. He does speak at great length to Job

enormous power within and without you. The wonder of it all — terrible but sublime!”

Both Job and g-d teach us that a good question is worth many false answers! A dream re-experienced by the waking mind is more valuable than a facile dissection of that dream in search of its meaning.

And surely our inner world as manifested through dreams is one of g-d’s most wonderful creations, a personal gift to each and every one of us. For Monte, it is the place where we can afford to see ourselves and accept ourselves as we really are, that we may see others similarly and regenerate the flow of love that keeps the world going around. (Those are not quite his words. . .) I like this understanding of dreams because it is so life affirming.

I do know all the dreaming I did at Monte’s helped me relieve my inner emptiness — how can someone so full of dreams be empty? My friend and fellow dream worker, Frances, reminds me of all the ocean dreams I had. (Your dream cookbooks would call

this any number of things: the unconscious, pregnancy etc. but g-d is what g-d will be: always in flux, everything becoming everything else. . .) She thinks, perhaps correctly, that all my ocean dreams finally propelled me to move to the beach — which I did — and a whole new life is unfolding for me.

Dream work, “Monte style,” is one of the most fruitful ways of spending time with other people. It is a powerful aesthetic experience as well as an experience of deep camaraderie and self-affirmation. The fact that it and other similar activities are not more practiced is, perhaps, a proof of the “fear of the subjective,” a sad kind of tribute to the powerful gifts within us all which, for some reason, we choose to flee.

During High Holidays we read the story of Jonah, the reluctant, angry, vindictive, cowardly prophet. Why do we read about this tragicomic figure during the holiest days of the year? I like to think that in some way we are all Jonah; we all have within us powerful g-d given gifts, like dreams. And, like Jonah, we are reluctant to engage them. We would rather howl in the belly of a whale. We would rather judge and punish ourselves and others. We would rather be angry at g-d when g-d giveth and taketh away. And we are surely entitled to our preferences in this vale of tears but . . .

Why not dream a little?
Jacob, a great dreamer,
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Working with dreams: The universal language

By Wendy Pannier

This summer I had the opportunity to conduct an international dream seminar with Dr. Ingegerd Hansson at her summer home in Fortuna, in the south of Sweden.

Ingegerd is one of the organizers of the Dream Group Forum, an association in Sweden dedicated to spreading dream work and training leaders in Monte's group process. There were other members of the Dream Group Forum in attendance as well — and it was inspiring to realize what a commitment to dream work there is in that

country as a result of their efforts.

Most attendees were from Sweden, with a guest from Brazil and one psychiatrist who was a native of Transylvania, now residing in Sweden. I was the only American — and the only person who did not speak Swedish.

I have always said that dreams are a universal language we all share — but I have never experienced that as personally as I did during that three-day seminar. Most of the attendees were very famil-

iar with Monte's process, which made the group a delight to lead. The dreams were read slowly in English, and then reread in Swedish to make certain no distortions in meaning had occurred in the translation.

There were no language barriers when it came to working on the dreams. No matter how many years I have worked with dreams, I am still amazed and awed by the depth and richness they yield.

During the seminar we dealt with dreams about concerns over work situations,

emotionally cathartic crises and even one dream from childhood that yielded new meaning and opened communication about long-buried hurts.

Dreams are such healing agents in our lives if only we will allow them to be!

The last day everyone who wanted to share a dream had already shared one, and I had the rare opportunity to share one myself. Måns Linde, who studied with Monte in Sweden, capably led the group.

While I have led many
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Leadership Training Workshop

Are you interested in doing group dream work?
Are you leading or have you led a group in the past and want a "refresher course?"
Do you just want to learn more about Monte's group process?

Then the upcoming Leadership Training Workshop is for you! The workshop will consider in depth the underlying premises and key principles on which Monte's group dream work process is based, the techniques of leading a group, and the kinds of problems encountered.

Even if you have attended one of Monte's Leadership Workshops before, this can be of help in "fine tuning" your knowledge of the process.

DATE: October 24-26

For more information call Monte Ullman (914) 693-0156

Monte also conducts Supervisory Workshops for those who are leading dream groups. These provide an opportunity to learn how to deal with difficult situations that may arise in a dream group. Call Monte for dates.

Ardasley dream group has reopened

Monte has restarted his bi-weekly dream group in Ardsley. For more information call Monte at (914) 693-0156.

Up close and personal

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found his identity (as Israel) through dreams. Perhaps the angels ascending and descending a ladder to the sky are dreams which integrate the temporal and the eternal being. But as in another of Jacob's dreams, we must wrestle with these angels, "wrest something from them in our waking hours, that they may bless our lives."

Editor's note: Shuli Tor is an architect who was a longtime member of one of Monte's weekly dream groups before she moved to the Washington DC area. She is a very gifted and imaginative dream worker who is valiantly trying to establish a place for dreams in her professional activities as an architect. □

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Working with dreams: The universal language

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groups, it literally has been years since I have shared a dream using Monte's process. How affirming to re-experience first-hand how powerful his process is!

At first I was concerned that some of the symbols in my dream were too idiomatic to be easily understood, but after some explanation the group jumped right in and managed to work with them splendidly.

There is not enough room here to share the dream fully, but the setting was a store with a lot of beds displayed with various sheets and comforters, and strewn with other items to make them look luxurious. I was offered a job in the store to help market these different bed styles, but

turned it down even though I was offered a handsome salary. On more closely looking at the displays I realized that the quality of the materials were not as good as they appeared at first glance.

Ninety minutes into the work I was still getting new insights about the dream. With the group's help I confronted how I feel when people want me to do "quick and easy" dream workshops — as one woman did who asked me to do a series of 30-minute talks during lunch at a community college every week — and how I feel about the vast number of dream work methodologies on the market today.

I am not saying that Monte's process is the only way to do dream work. But I

do know that many of the methods I have seen are not the quality I want to stand for.

It was a very moving experience for me and helped me clarify my feelings and my position. I can't be bought. Self-worth is more important than monetary worth. I want to stand for quality — and Monte's process is quality.

Most of all I was deeply moved at how hard the group worked to help me in my discovery process. I am very grateful for old friendships renewed and new ones formed. It confirmed for me once again that dreams truly are a universal language — one we all share. □

Dream Appreciation is published quarterly for people interested in working with dreams and the group process developed by Dr. Montague Ullman.

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We encourage you to share this information with others, as long as proper credit is given.
