

# Dream Appreciation

Vol. 3 No. 2  
Spring 1998

**When a natural process comes to completion with help but not interference, there is always something to be gained.**

## MIDWIFE TO THE DREAM

By Montague Ullman, M.D.

Socrates had it right! Listen to what he said about midwifery. After informing Theaetetus that he (Socrates) is the son of a midwife and informing him of the importance and function of the midwife, he has this to say about his own role as a midwife:

*Socrates: Well, my art of midwifery is in most respects like theirs; but differs in that I attend men and not women, and I look after their souls when they are in labor, and not after their bodies; and the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of the young man is bringing to the birth is a false idol or*

*a noble and true birth. And like the midwives, I am barren, and the reproach which is often made against me, that I ask questions of others and have not the wit to answer them myself is very just! The reason is, that the god compels me to be a midwife, but forbids me to bring forth. And therefore I am not myself at all wise, nor have I anything to show which is the invention or birth of my own soul, but those who converse with me profit. Some of them appear dull enough at first, but afterwards, as our acquaintance ripens, if the god is gracious to them, they all make astonishing progress; and this is the opinion of others as well as their own. It is quite clear they have never learned anything from me; and the many fine discoveries to which they cling are of their own making. But to me and the god they owe their delivery.*

Socrates went about Athens putting questions to people that helped them think through issues that either in their complexity or

nature were not easy to think about. Now, if you were an itinerant dream helper, how much of what he has to say above would be applicable to your effort to bring the dreamer in touch with the dream? Let's develop the analogy.

*"I look after their souls when they are in labor."*

Neither babies nor dreams see the light of day without some labor involved. When dream work exposes the deep, honest core of ourselves, aren't we talking about our souls?

*"... the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the young man is bringing to the birth is a false idol or a noble and true birth."*

Aren't we, as helpers, concerned with a true resonance between the dreamer and his dream, and don't we do our best to avoid the birthing of any spurious in-

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## GROUP WORK : MIDWIFE TO THE DREAM

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tellectualizing?*

*"And like the midwives I am barren, and the reproach which is often made against me, that I ask questions of others and have not the wit to answer them myself, is very just."*

As helpers we are barren. We are helping to bring forth a baby that is not our own. We put questions to the dreamer that we ourselves don't have the answer to.

*"And therefore I am not myself at all wise."*

The biggest mistake dream helpers can make is to think they know more about someone else's dream than the dreamer does.

*"But those who converse with me profit."*

When a natural process comes to completion with help but not interference, there is always something to be gained.

*"Some of them appear dull enough at first, but afterwards, as our acquaintance ripens . . . they all make astonishing progress."*

It does take time to catch on to dream work. Trust has to be developed. Skills have to be learned. We are not taught from childhood the metaphorical

using the Socratic Method. This is not the usual way of learning. It is not a way of imparting knowledge but a way of learning from the dreamer. If the helpers are

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***The biggest mistake dream helpers can make is to think they know more about someone else's dream than the dreamer does.***

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language of the dream and how the imagery we create at night offers a level of honesty about ourselves that often eludes us awake. There are those who are really at a loss when it come to dreams. They seem to be suffering from what my friend and colleague Jon Tolaas calls "metaphor blindness." They seem to be trapped in a linear, literal way of relating to their dreams. In most instances, however, those with a serious interest in their dreams do make "astonishing progress."

*"It is quite clear that they had never learned anything from me; the many fine discoveries to which they cling are of their own making."*

This says it all about dream work. We are all, group and leader together,

successful, all they have done is help dreamers get to know something about themselves they knew all the time but didn't know they knew.

*"But to me and the god they owe their delivery."*

In the dream group everyone involved is a midwife, bringing to life the natural healing power of the dream. I don't know if God is in the room when that happens, but a very rare sense of communion comes into being as the soul of the dreamer makes its presence felt.

Of course, analogies are only analogies. Socrates attends men and not women. Times have changed. I "attend" women with an occasional venturesome male taking the plunge. The analogy fails in another way. When

a mother is faced with a difficult or complicated delivery there is a need for more than what a midwife can do: It calls for the skills of an obstetrician and, if necessary, the availability of an operating room. The same is true with regard to dream work. More specialized help may be needed in some instances.

The dream group is not everyone's cup of tea.

There are times when a dreamer needs more help than a dream group can provide. Like the midwife, the dream workers have to know their own limitations and when professional help is needed. While dream group work is usually complementary to therapy, that judgment has to be made on an individual basis.

One last reminder. Once the cord is cut it is the mother's responsibility to take over the subsequent raising of the child. Just as the midwife doesn't superimpose her own child-rearing practices on the mother, dream helpers don't go beyond the safe delivery of the dream to interject their own ideas of where the dreamer should now go with the dream. It is the task of the dreamer to further integrate the reality conveyed by the dream into the reality of waking life. □

## THE BETTER DREAM . . .

By William R. Stimson

*Bill Stimson, whom I have known for over two decades, has always been a gifted dream worker. He has the capacity to dig deeply and honestly into himself and to come up with insights that are unconstrained and uncontaminated by waking projections and biases. Bill is also an idealist struggling against the level of self-deception so prevalent in our society with regard to both personal and social issues, as the following articles demonstrate.*

—Monte Ullman

Again last night I dreamed the sweet satisfactions I knew in the arms of a certain woman long ago were never again to be mine. But this time the dream went forward from that pain, which always before caused me to awake in the night with a wrenching heart. This time there was a sequel. This new dream was long in coming—hard won. It is the better dream.

In this dream I discovered the life I left behind was not mine. It was the life of somebody who did not know he was me. I never did have the root into that life, that love. I never had grown forward from it. No . . . it was the pain . . . it was all those lost years with-

out love or solace that gave me true foundation.

I never betrayed the old love. But straying so far afield all these long years, I

Oh yes! She was sweet.

There is no denying. The way I felt lying there in the sheets with her afterwards. How can I forget! But it

up so to speak by life, then it can work its immediate and catalytic magic.

We don't hear a lot about this sort of thing because it can't be packaged and marketed. Hence dream workers whose interest in dreams is what is salable about them pay it scant attention. What is lesser predominates because it can be promoted, it can be bought and it can be sold. But the truth is, our dreams and our dream work get more real when we get them out of the marketplace. Both have a chance then to realign according to deeper and truer principles. Both begin to change in a way that is wondrous and amazing the moment we quit allowing them to be exploited or trying to exploit them ourselves.

We have to submit ourselves to a higher kind of work that it is the dream's function to do on us. In the end this happens beyond anything we know or can know to do with dreams.

It is a blessing when life's afflictions manage to chip away at us, whittling down the barrier of illusions between what we are and what our dream is. What emerges is a better dreamer and it is to him or her that there comes, in its own time, the better dream. □

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***We sit around working on dreams thinking it is all such deep stuff. But there is a kind of work that is greater—a job that life itself has to do on the dreamer before he or she is capable of receiving, sustaining and realizing “the better dream.”***

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am finally stumbling into its greater source. I am only now coming upon my true root. It never had belonged where I sought so foolishly to dig it in. No, the life that is mine I am only now beginning to discover.

The absence of sweetness is itself a greater, more subtle sweetness that can't be taken away, that isn't dependent upon the approval or continuing love of any woman, that doesn't require me to have position in the world, or to be rich or intelligent. Now isn't that amazing! I don't even have to be smart—only receptive.

There is an intelligence in the way things unfold that more than suffices.

To rely on a love that is lesser like I did all those years was blindness when there is one so much greater, like the ocean to the drop.

never led anywhere in the end. It was a barren love. Whereas being without her, after these many painful and dark and lost years, is finally leading me faithfully into that which is fruitful, ubiquitous and overflowing.

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We sit around working on dreams thinking it is all such deep stuff. But there is a kind of work that is greater—a job that life itself has to do on the dreamer before he or she is capable of receiving, sustaining and realizing “the better dream.” And that kind of dream doesn't need to be tampered with, gone presumptuously into, to have its various strands teased intelligently out into meaning. It doesn't need anything. It is complete by itself and the moment the dreamer is softened

## DREAMS AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY

By **BILL STIMSON**

*Editor's note: The following is an article Bill Stimson wrote for the first issue of The Dream Network Bulletin, a publication he started in 1982 that has evolved and grown over the years. We are reprinting a major portion of it with the author's permission because it is as valid today as 16 years ago.*

What we're dealing with in dream work, in short, is counter-conditioning. Constantly we're blasted by what's all around us with what we should think and feel. It's so easy to let a lot of our decisions be made by all that noise. Meanwhile,

we're being just as consistently informed from within by a different source. Our dreams tell us what we do think and what we do feel and what we do perceive.

Dreams, like little children, can't help but be truthful. They are an accurate map to our reality. The one we're being spoon-fed day and night from external sources isn't so much wrong as it is outdated, like an ancient map with inaccurately depicted shorelines.

Why, then, is it so assiduously propounded by everything and everyone around us? Because it serves to maintain things as

they are and we all profit more than we care to realize by keeping things just as they are. Not just those in economic or political who are profiting at our expense. Not just those who grow rich as others starve. Not just those who get powerful when we stay poor, or who get even richer when we try to get rich.

But we ourselves benefit from keeping everything the same. It is safe. Just look at where change is breaking through to the surface in the world. Change always involves turmoil, a return to chaos before the new more inclusive order emerges. It's nothing other than the creative process that is at work.

Anyone who has embarked on the path of creative personal transformation knows what I mean. True work with dreams often brings disruption and indecision and chaos before it heralds in the higher level of awareness that alone enables a deeper, truer life. It's not nice to be miserable, but it's a little more bearable if we don't know it. So we read the newspapers and forget our dreams. If they persist in forcing themselves upon our awareness, then we manage to not understand them. It's easier. It allows us to stay as we are.

The movement toward freedom tries to continue in various parts of the world but meets powerful resis-

tance. The chaos it entails is too disruptive. It's easier to remain fixated somewhere along the way where we can congratulate ourselves on our progress while doing everything in our power to defeat the ongoing process. But the process won't stop. It will merely find someone else in whom it can carry itself forward. Most of society is composed of dead souls, washed up on the shore of their fixation to a stagnant life. History moves through the rare in individuals. "I have a dream," Martin Luther King said.

Domination from any one superstrong component of our total soul is intolerable. Total freedom is the only aim. Freedom from within. For each part of us to be free to be what it is. Not for some other part of us, however strong and valid and important, to tell it what it should be.

The repressed part will always merely go underground, into our dreams, to wage its guerilla warfare. If the smallest segment of the whole circle is rejected, we don't have a circle anymore. The tiniest excluded part of us can easily sabotage the whole and cause all our good aims to go awry. An age-old axiom goes, "As without, so also within." What are our souls like? Look at our world, our society, our environment, our bodies. Need I say more?

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*By invitation only*

### **Chelsea Sunday Mornings**

— if writing is your religion, this is your group —

A small group is forming. We will meet at 11 a.m. Sunday mornings to work on our dreams using Dr. Montague Ullman's Group Method. Then we will give each other feedback on the week's writing. For those who wish to arrive early, we will begin with an hour's silent meditation.

10 a.m. - 11 a.m.	Zen meditation (optional)
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Group Dreamwork
1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	Feedback on writing

There will be no charge, no therapy and no instruction. This is a "creative cluster."

To apply, please send a sample of your writing and a brief statement about yourself and your experience with dreamwork to:

William R. Stimson, Ph.D.  
333 W. 21st St., Apt. 2FW  
New York, NY 10011  
(212) 675-1213

*An ongoing writer's group in the heart of Chelsea,  
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*DREAMWORKERS' CORNER*

## WHICH RULES ARE MADE TO BE BROKEN?

BY MONTAGUE ULLMAN, M.D.

I am frequently asked if it is ever all right to deviate from the process. The process offers a structure within which safe dream work can be carried out. A structure is not a rigid container. There can be some "give" to it.

Clearly stated, the purpose of a dream group is to provide the dreamer with the help s/he needs to the extent that help is wanted. Within the structure and with this goal in mind, there is the freedom for all to say whatever they wish to say but at the proper time and in the proper way.

The only truly unbreakable rule is: "Thou shalt not do harm to the dreamer." That harm can come about whenever the dreamer's authority and control is threatened as it is when leading questions are put to the dreamer. These run the risk of touching on areas the dreamer is not ready to go into or does not wish to go into. Any attempt to push a dreamer beyond the limits s/he has set will have the same effect. This is also true for orchestrating projections based on speculations or theoretical knowledge not justified by anything forthcoming from the dreamer.

Here are a few creative ways to be flexible with the process without harming the dreamer.

There is enough flexibility in the process to adapt to the constraints of time when the dream is very long. For instance, combining the two substages of Stage 2 (feelings and metaphors) can save time. Even when one engages with both of these substages separately, they can be limited in the interest of time.

Combining these substages is also more expedient when a dream is offered that consists of a single image. In this situation, it generally proves easier to develop feelings about the image as one develops its metaphorical possibilities.

Another technique when time is short comes during the playback. One need not play the entire dream back scene by scene, but simply call images to the dreamer's attention that have not yet been sufficiently developed.

Sometimes a dreamer may feel in good contact with the dream except for a single image. At any point in Stage 3 (the dreamer's response, search for context, playback and orchestration)

the dreamer can ask the group to go back into the game mode (Stage 2) and offer further metaphorical projections around that image. Having had the dreamer's response and perhaps part of the dialogue, these ensuing projections may strike closer to home. Should this be the case, there would be no necessity to go further with the dialogue.

On occasion, a dreamer may have two dreams from the same night that feel pressing to present. If time is available, this wish should be respected. By the same token, a dreamer may feel that dreams from two different nights are related and wish to share them. That, too, is acceptable if they are reasonably short and time is available. □

### Leadership Training Workshop

A Leadership Training Workshop in group dream work will take place at Monte's home May 1-3. This is an intensive three-day workshop which will cover the underlying premises and key principles on which Monte's group dream work is based. It will explore in depth the kinds of problems that occur at each stage of the process as well as the technique of leading a group.

Even if you have attended one of Monte's Leadership Workshops before, this can be a helpful way to "fine tune" the process.

DATE: May 1, 2, 3  
PLACE: 55 Orlando Ave.  
Ardley, New York

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

In the past, Monte has also conducted 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 if you are interested in future workshops.

*Dream Appreciation*  
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## **DREAMS AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY**

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So we are polluted, we are dominated, we are ravaged, we are unreal; and hence, we are ineffectual in achieving what can really make our lives work. These ideas aren't new. Everybody knows these things. Read any psychology book or New Age manifesto. But such knowledge hasn't helped us. Knowing with a mind is of little import when we know in the real sense, the only sense that signifies, we become, we transform.

There is a way out, though. You don't even have to work with your dreams, but dream work makes it easier, much easier for people like us.

Krishnamurti maintains

that when we become enlightened, we cease dreaming. Reality itself becomes the dream that we write. Nothing is forced into the underground to wage its guerrilla fight towards our awareness. Everything that we are is admitted into our being. The battle is over. Freedom is won. Life itself becomes deeper and fuller and more beautiful than we could ever dream. I haven't reached that ultimate state. I have only tasted little glimpses. But these have shown me that it is the only thing worth pursuing.

My work with dreams has shown me that our society is a lie. Our lives our lies. The things I have wanted aren't the things I

want. The things I have needed aren't the things I need. What I was and am isn't what it is to be a human being. Working with dreams and with creativity has carried me to the portal of a new way of being.

Armed with our dreams, we have a weapon that can turn this society upside down by turning our

lives around. The greatest battles waged throughout history have been within the souls of a few brave men and women. All the rest has been noise, an externalized reverberation from these great happenings. To work with dreams in the deepest sense is to be a leader in the revolution of human consciousness. □

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

Comments, suggestions, questions and letters are welcome. Contact the Editor, Wendy Pannier, by phone at (610) 925-0758, by fax at (610) 925-0759, or by writing 105 Taylor Lane, Kennett Square, PA 19348. Our e-mail address is <dreams@kennettwire.com>.

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

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