

# HOW DO DREAMS VIEW OUR “REALITY”?

Paco Mitchell

*The eternal truths cannot be transmitted mechanically;  
in every epoch they must be born anew from the human psyche.*

—C. G. Jung<sup>1</sup>

*Eternal truth needs a human language that alters with the spirit of the times. The primordial images [the archetypes themselves] undergo ceaseless transformation and yet remain ever the same, but only in new form can they be understood anew.*

—C. G. Jung<sup>2</sup>

*“No one seems to notice that the veneration of the word, which was necessary for a certain phase of historical development, has a perilous shadow side. That is to say, the moment the word, as a result of centuries of education, attains universal validity, it severs its original link with the divine person. There is then a personified Church, a personified State; belief in the word becomes credulity, and the word itself a universal slogan capable of any deception. With credulity comes propaganda and advertising to dupe the citizen with political jobbery and compromises, and the lie reaches proportions never known before in the history of the world.*

—C. G. Jung<sup>3</sup>

The path we’ve been blazing into the jungle of ONTSO #4 (PM-RL), has suddenly broken through to a bank of rushing waters plunging over a cliff, thanks in great measure to the recent voice-dream you had, Russ. And the comments from John, Merrilee, Estela, and Daniela, to this point, are certainly rich fare and welcome, especially when added to your comments. To this stew, I would like to add three

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<sup>1</sup> C. G. Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, CW 10, par. 443.

<sup>2</sup> C. G. Jung (1966). *“The Practice of Psychotherapy”*, Bollingen [Finish this footnote.]

<sup>3</sup> Jung, “The Undiscovered Self.” pp. 87-88.

dreams, like ingredients, that I had some time ago, keeping in mind our general topic: differing views between metaphor and reality.

Jung said many different times, in different ways, that the deeper one goes away from consciousness, the more relativized the psyche becomes. Things start behaving oddly. We've all seen that in synchronistic events, which are not even supposed to happen, according to some very bright people. Perhaps we could coin a proverb: "In the psyche, time and space are relative." Even at cosmic levels, what we have come to think of "evolution" as constituting, in general, a movement from *darkness* to *light*.

So, there's a reality problem. We could call it the "conundrum of metaphor and reality, dream and fiction." A newcomer to this ONTSO project might wonder why we are giving so much attention to what must seem like mere fragments of a greater Whole. Why not just offer up our own "Theory of Everything"? Why not indeed? I could go whole hog by referring to the "Holographic Universe"<sup>4</sup>—an intellectual peculiarity that appeals to me a lot, and has come a bit more into focus, even as "things" — the old ways of understanding — are "falling apart."

Since the parts can only be recovered or perceived piecemeal, nor can they exactly comprehend the Wholeness of the Whole, what I find intriguing about the "holographic hypothesis" is that parts are already in play, in themselves, as reflections of the Whole. Every part belongs. Thus, a "reconstruction" of whole-from-part is theoretically possible. The implications of that idea are vast, and if it is not a theory yet, maybe it ought to be—and sooner than rational-materialistic reductionism might allow?

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.amazon.com/Holographic-Universe-Revolutionary-Theory-Reality/dp/0062014102/ref=asc\\_df\\_0062014102?tag=bingshoppinga-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=80607997996060&hvnetw=o&hvqmt=e&hvbmt=be&hvdev=c&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=&hvtargid=pla-4584207577438093&pvc=1](https://www.amazon.com/Holographic-Universe-Revolutionary-Theory-Reality/dp/0062014102/ref=asc_df_0062014102?tag=bingshoppinga-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=80607997996060&hvnetw=o&hvqmt=e&hvbmt=be&hvdev=c&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=&hvtargid=pla-4584207577438093&pvc=1)

Times of massive, accelerated change must be a commonly repeated experience throughout history: When old ways and habits of value, when old forms of order and perceptions — in a word, old *vessels* — no longer serve to contain the precious substance of the sacred images, the supreme values, then, like cracked pots, what was once held up as sacred becomes profaned.<sup>5</sup> A series of crisis points will follow, but sooner or later the *kairos* — the transition from one age to the next — must be endured, undergone, suffered. That’s where we are now. There is no telling how long this will take.

Another dream, “The Time Remaining,” stated bluntly: “It will take until 2030 to put together a viable new system of living on the planet.” The clear implication of that dream was that, if we didn’t accomplish the task by 2030, we would most likely *run out of time*. This points to a common failure in how people relate to the Global Climate Crisis: *a consistent inability to read the seriousness of our actual situation adequately*.

I have spent a lot of time with my “ear to the ground,” as it were, listening to the rumbling and tumbling, trying to discern what is on its way. I still find that *dreams* are the best way I know of to see through the contemporary confusion, past the bluster, and through to the other side of what everybody already knows, fears, and expects will be coming, in some form, but which few people quite know how to envision, let alone to handle, or to approach. At bottom, the work will involve a lot of capacities, like depth, courage, and honesty — maybe some luck or destiny? We will have to take account of what had been inconceivable to us before — accepting the Other, making friends with the Shadow, getting to know what is alien or foreign or strange to us, and

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<sup>5</sup> It doesn’t take long to see that what right-wing politicians hold up as political or even religious probity today, and therefore worthy of sky-high political donations, is actually a death-knell for a once proud religious dispensation.

so forth. It may even present terrifying aspects, like a form of madness — if only for a moment. It certainly will sometimes look like staring oneself in the face and not liking or recognizing what one sees. Anyone can have dreams or experiences like what I'm describing. Not all who can, will; and not all who should, would. As Jung said repeatedly, "Many are called, few are chosen."

As I ponder the "reality conundrum," then, *three dreams leap to mind*. They touch on *Nostrum Conundrum* in different ways, opening up different dimensions. All three dreams occurred during an early phase of my 50-year, intensive dream study. From the outset, they each had an impact on my feelings and intuitions about "dream and reality," and they still do.

I began studying dreams, reading Jung, and building an art bronze foundry to cast bronze sculpture — all at about the same time. It was a very intense learning period, ten years after losing my right-eye in Mexico at age 20. I had already experienced a series of passions that carried me far from the world of my childhood. I was passionate about black-and-white photography and the darkroom, about ceramics — spinning clay on potter's wheels, building kilns, working with clay and glazes. Then came the flamenco guitar, the dreams, the Jung, the bronze-foundry practice, study and techniques, the sculpture, Great Blue Herons, and, all along, reading, reading, and reading. Dream psychology; Egyptian and Egyptian mythology, and so forth.

The first dream was apparently simple, though the implications of it are profound:

## 1. “I am the casting.”

I have just poured a crucible of molten bronze into a still-hot plaster mold, after the wax has been “burned out” at red heat for a day or two. The metal has crystallized into its solid form, (i.e., it is “frozen”), and though far below its melting point, is still very hot. I set about breaking open the mold with a sledge-hammer, a geologist’s hammer, a wire-brush, and a bucket of water, in order to expose the rough casting, or the “fonte brute,” as they call it in French foundries. As I break the hot plaster material loose, near the bottom of the mold, I wire-brush the surface of the sizzling bronze to expose the freshly-solidified metal. I want to get a sense of how the casting turned out. I am dumbfounded to realize that *I myself am inside the mold. I am what I just poured, both the producer and the product. The fact is that I am the freshly poured bronze sculpture, still hot, but alive.*

What is real? What is fiction? With one stroke, this dream knocked me back a few steps from where I thought I was and what I was doing in my life with respect to “reality.” I could not look at the creative process in the same way, not after recording this dream, or realizing what it was saying to me. How can one’s creative activities — music, flamenco guitar, clay, bronze, wax, poetry, writing, and so on — be both *separate from oneself*, and yet *be integral with oneself* at the same time? This must be the Great Conundrum: How do we do both?

## 2. “The plaster piece-mold dream.”

Another foundry dream took place about the same period. I was drifting through sleeping and waking, toggling back and forth. The experience was interesting. While asleep, I was working on a plaster piece-mold which I had filled with *molten wax* (ca. 190 F. = more than hot enough to burn the skin), in order to coat the “negative space”

on the interior of the hollow mold with molten wax, thus making a wax duplicate. I noticed, however, that when I began to wake up, the plaster piece-mold came apart, and the molten wax ran out onto the floor. Yet every time I dropped back into sleep, the mold would *cohere* again, and the wax was once again *contained*. Sleeping and dreaming, in other words, meant coherence, intactness, integrity; but waking meant fragmentation into parts, and leaking, the hot wax running out *uncontained*. That dream occurred perhaps forty years ago, but I have never lost the sense it gave to me—that we are more coherent in our dream-states than we are when we wake up to resume our splintered selves. Ironically, when we are awake, we are *most relativized*—but we think we are the most opposite.

### 3. “The Room of Skulls Dream.”

In the third dream, I am exploring a large, underground chamber—long and rectangular—with recessed niches along both side-walls toward the end of the room. The niches have what seem like the ancient, ceremonial skulls of human ancestors placed in them. At the end of the room, a *doorway*<sup>6</sup> has been built in the middle of the end-wall. As I approached the door, it opened by itself, swinging away from me. On the other side of the door, a large man is standing still, his back to me. He wears a brown suit. I do *not* want to enter that space. What’s more, the dream-space *itself* seems to be designating, explaining, or demonstrating three different degrees of

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<sup>6</sup> NOTE: Twenty years after recording this dream I wrote an essay about the experience of going back into the dream, and walking through that doorway. It adds something to our discussion here. You can find it online at Academia.edu/The Doorway:  
[https://www.academia.edu/104925713/THE\\_DOORWAY\\_Some\\_Dreams\\_Never\\_Die](https://www.academia.edu/104925713/THE_DOORWAY_Some_Dreams_Never_Die)

“reality” to me: (1) On the other side of the underground door is *the most real space*, utterly real, perhaps even approaching something Absolute. (2) As I back away from the “*absolute*” reality beyond the doors, however, and walk back across the (*real*) reality of the underground dream-chamber itself, (3) to mount the stairs and walk back out into the waking world, I realize that it is precisely *our waking world that is the most “fragmented space of all,”* the most relative state of consciousness. Of course, most of us take it for granted that “consciousness” defines the beginning and end of the psyche per se, and that’s all there is to it. How wrong we are.<sup>7</sup> But it’s also interesting to consider: “What if I am right? Then what?”

These three dreams, among others, offer us a few morsels to chew on. I might as well point out while I’m here, that, like most of us, Jung’s whole psychological perspective, in the end, sees life growing out of darkness. Most forms of life grow out of darkness toward light. Construct a human outline with thin cedar slats inside a Pharaoh’s tomb; fill it with rich Nile silt and barley seeds; water it; seal the tomb; and as the barley seeds begin to sprout in the darkness of the tomb, the sprouts will strain toward the light; and the “germinated Osiris” thus created, will provide an “eternal body” in which to surf the star-waves.

Every morning we rise out of darkness to meet the light. But perhaps we do not consider — not carefully enough at least — what happens when we do not bring our own *light* to our own inner darkness — and our own dark impulses end by spilling into the world, where they can roll on for generations. That “inner light” was

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<sup>7</sup> Anyone who wants to see a dream’s perspective on “climate denial,” could do worse than to read my essay, “Speaking of the Devil,” on Academia.edu:

supposed to result, in part, from a *healthy conscience*. It takes great care to develop a truly *healthy conscience*, and in this present social and political climate and civilization of ours, it gets harder to achieve by the day. Advertising manipulations are incessant and “through the roof.” People are wound up tight, too close to their limits (although we’ll see if those same limits still hold true a few years from now). We can all see the consequences of this, for ourselves and for one another in the world today, as things accelerate ever faster, complexities grow ever more devilish, and consequences more portentous — even barely imaginable — and so we deal with unfortunate situations on massive scales, because we simply will not look at ourselves in clear enough mirrors.

[Or not. Just a thought.]

## **WHO IS THE DIVINE PERSON?**

Russell Lockhart

You begin, Paco, with some impressive quotes from Jung. These express the idea of the eternal but ever-changing nature of the archetypes which becomes expressed in the language of the spirit of the times, but as soon as such language attains universal validity, it degenerates into lies and deception, and loses its connection with the “divine person.”

This is such an apt characterization of the times we are living in now. What caught my attention though was the reference to the “divine person.” Jung notes that everything becomes personified but disconnected from the divine person.

*Who is the divine person?*

Every religion, of course, has a ready answer. But I doubt Jung was referring to any of these ready answers, or to religion as such. I think he was referring to the



*incarnation of the divine person in each individual psyche*, much like he referred to “the coming guest” in that late letter to Sir Herbert Read. As I reflect more on these quotes, I discern that at bottom, Jung is speaking to the unparalleled importance of *dreams*. It is only in dreams that the degradation of the word (logos) and spirit of the times can be countered by the revivifying function of the spirit of the depths.

Jung indicates that this monumental degradation and overwhelm by the shadow side of the word happens while *no one is noticing*. How exact a description of the evil that seems to be the result of this inevitability and that is loose in the world today.

So, it is with these thoughts and feelings that I approach what you have written, Paco.

To begin, you reference the “conundrum of metaphor and reality, dream and fiction,” and you bring to bear on this mystery three dreams you had long ago.<sup>i</sup> The first dream illustrates the conundrum beautifully, I would say, by picturing Paco as the sculpture he has submitted to the bronzing process. Paco asks, “What is real, what is fiction.”

I am prompted to say that “real is real” and “fiction is real.” These are two states of reality, something like quantum duality where one state is also another state (e.g., Schrödinger’s cats). Dreams have that same eerie quality as does the quantum world.

The dream/reality conundrum is a focus of the second dream, where the two states are emphasized and in a peculiar reversal, it is the dream state that is coherent and reality that is relativized. There is a sense here that the dream is “insisting” on its meaningfulness. I have experienced this same sense many times so I believe that dreams can be getting at something that in a reality sense are more often ignored. The

dream as a reality insisting on itself, I believe is an important idea, an idea that is typically ignored.

As if to illuminate this idea, your third dream enlarges “reality” to multiple dimensions...at least three, as your dream points out. The dream, too, suggests that we are closer to *absolute* reality in the dream than in waking consciousness. I think this may be a hint as to the depth and otherness that the psychoid aspect of dreams may point to that consciousness does not.

After focusing on the implications of the three dreams, you circle back to the question of who the divine person is, when you quote Jung again to the effect that deep exploration of dreams may bring one to realize “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living god.”

Perhaps there is an existential fear that inhibits most everyone from willingly falling into the hands of the living god. The result is impenetrable barriers on a mass level to having and seeking such life-changing experiences. But without this on a larger scale than now exists, only the factors that are heading toward extinction on a mass scale are supported.

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<sup>i</sup> “Long ago” does not mean the dream no longer applies. All dreams may be considered current even if only because they cannot ever be mined fully. This is one reason I have concluded that all dreams are ultimately about the *future*. This is evident in bringing these “old” dreams into the current discussion.