

Lucid Creativity – in your dreams

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I would now like to turn to one of my favorite topics: creativity and dream, or can the dream or dreaming inspire creativity? That creative people often have exceptional access to dreams does not surprise us, as these kinds of processes are their daily bread. But what came out during the interviews I had for this chapter with creative people of fine art, music, and movie, stunned even me.

The accuracy and diligence with which creative people have explored their dreams and how they know about the processes involved are simply fascinating! Since a study by Montague Ullman, we have known artistic, creative people have much better access to their dreams than others. The state of creativity seems, in any case, to need similar conditions to that of dreaming – in most cases, it is the world of images!

First of all, it has to be clarified whether there is or can be, a demonstrable connection between dreaming and creativity. Allan Hobson assumes that the dream or the process of dreaming comes by the firing of neurons in the brain, i.e., random discharges, and may have nothing to do with us and our experiences. A story is shaped out of these images while we wake up, just randomly, as it comes into our minds.

People have an existential need for context and meaning. Out of the casual, the dreamer can make more or less meaningful stories and images.

This idea is interesting, and for me, it is not a contradiction to the dreamwork. When we deal with our dreams, psychotherapeutically, creatively, or only for ourselves, we deal with topics coming from within. Just because the dream happens during the night, and (presumably) during REM sleep, it does not have any greater or lesser claim to truth than other states of concentration or meditation. In this chapter, I would like to elaborate on some thoughts on the subject of creativity and describe dreams and dreamers in more detail, some of whom are not famous, but who have entrusted their dreams to me.

Above all, they have entrusted me with how they create from their dreams and have permitted me to share this process. For me, it is exciting to try to show the gifts of the dream, be it on paper or film. If you ask filmmakers, you always hear that movies are dreams. Again and again, the idea is that our need for dreams is so strong that we have made a vast industry, namely the film industry, and that we have invented square boxes to bring every night the dreams of others to everyone's living rooms. There is nothing we'd rather do than lounge on a sofa and enjoy these dreams of others. For this, I also have a possible explanation derived from psychoanalysis, and which I have already briefly pointed out in the chapter on Freud, Jung, and other dreamers. Namely, it is the fascination in immersing oneself in the world of images, into the unconscious, the plane of primary processes, the situation of being one with the self, the others, and the world, which consoles, nourishes and gives a certain comfort.

In the German dictionary Duden, under the term of creativity, the following definition (among others) is given: "The origin of the term creativity has not been clarified. There are several similar words related to the word stem, which refer to the Latin term "creare," which means "to recreate something, to invent something, to make something, to produce." In the 20th century, the word "creation" (model, fashion creation) emerged from the French influence, from which the concept of creativity in the sense of "creative force" derives. However, the term "creativity" also refers to the Latin "crescere" that means "growing." This rather passive aspect of creativity is more strongly observed in the Eastern creations, where, for example, in Buddhism and Hinduism, creativity takes place in the sense of let-it happen and is implemented into a larger whole.

At school, I learned the following definition of creativity: "creativity is interlinking something already existing with something new being created."

The famous examples of creativity in the dream are again controversial nowadays. But whether these solutions have been dreamed or somewhat inspired by dream images, growing together while awakening, shall not be our concern. These solutions must be simply "there" after awakening. Again and again, the example of August Kekulé is quoted. In

thinking about a possible structure of benzene, he recognized it as a ring in a dream. He writes in his speech in Berlin on the 25th anniversary of the benzene ring 1890 (in Mitscherlich, 1972):

“During my stay in Ghent in Belgium, I lived in an elegant, bachelor apartment in the main street. My study, however, was on the side of a narrow side street and had no light during the day. This was not a disadvantage for a chemist who spent the daylight hours in the laboratory. There I sat and wrote in my textbook, but it didn’t work well; my mind was on other things. I turned the chair to the fireplace and sank into half-sleep. Again the atoms rocked in front of my eyes. Smaller groups stayed discreetly in the background. My mental eye, sharpened by repeated visions of a similar kind, now distinguished larger structures of manifold arrangement. There were long rows, often set together more densely, everything in motion, snake-like twisting, and twirling. And see, what was that? One of the snakes captured its own tail and mocking; the structure twirled before my eyes. In a flash, I woke up, and I spent the rest of the night working out the consequences of the hypothesis.”

Whether this description was a dream or an inspiration, Kekulé recognized from these pictures that the structure of benzene is ring-shaped!

Other, often cited examples are, and I mention only a few of them:

- Henri Poincaré, (1854 - 1912): a particular mathematical function (Poincaré, 1970);
- Hermann Hilprecht (1859-1925): Professor of Assyriology, dreamed that a priest would tell him the correct translation of the stone of Nebuchadnezzar, which should prove to be correct (Dement, 1972);
- Otto Loewi (1873-1961): The experimental arrangement of frog hearts, which confirmed the transmission of neurotransmitter impulses (Dement, 1972).

Creativity has countless facets and faces. Not only an engineer who is looking for a solution to a technical problem must be creative, but also a top chef or a designer. Besides, we “normal human beings” are demanded every day to be creative. Creativity is attributed to artists, painters, sculptors, writers, filmmakers, musicians, etc. These are people who have exceptional talent and who have developed and nurtured them by their interest and may also live from them. However, everyone can be creative, and to a certain extent, everyone is.

Creativity, creating something new, having a good idea, is a fulfilling feeling – for the artist and audience alike. Many creatives get inspiration from their dreams, let themselves be inspired by this half-repressed, half-unconscious dark time of the night. Sleeping overnight on a problem, and waking up the next day with an idea for a solution, is something many people have experienced.

I wanted to look more closely at how exactly sleep and dream inspire, and I asked artists. For those I asked, dreams are essential to coming up with ideas and conquering the demons of the night. Stephen King is said to have suffered from nightmares until he took elements from one of his nightmares to form a story. Naomi Epel describes in her book “Writers Dreaming” [1994] details about Stephen King's dreams and his writing world. I present to you here her contribution on Stephen King – for more details, please check out her book. Stephen King remembers the following nightmare, which he dreamed when he was nine or ten years old:

”In this dream, I have climbed a hill. High up on this hill, was a gallows, around which birds were circling. On this, gallows hung a corpse. He had not died by breaking his neck, but by the rope strangling him. This could be seen as his face was puffy and blue. As I approached him, he suddenly opened his eyes, stretched out his hands, and grabbed me. I woke up screaming, I felt hot and cold at the same time, and also had goosebumps everywhere. For hours I could not fall asleep again, and in the next few weeks, the light in the bedroom had to stay on. I still remember this dream as if I had dreamed it yesterday. Many years later, I began to work on “Salem's Lot.” I already knew that the story would be about a vampire from a foreign country and that he would live in a haunted house. I knew not more than that until this nightmare, which I had a long time ago, came back to my mind - that fitted perfectly! I baptized this corpse Hubie Marsten and simply repeated the dream as the way he was to die. Hubie Marsten hanged himself. He was a kind of black magician who died and lived in misery. In my stories, I use dreams on the one hand as mirrors of what otherwise stays hidden, and on the other hand, as a kind of story accelerator. Part of my work as a writer is to dream while awake. When I sit down to write in the morning, I know at the beginning and at the end of my writing session that I am writing; it is the same with going to sleep, you are aware of doing so before and after you sleep.. Just in between, the world has disappeared; this is when I can see better. The creative imagination and the dream are so similar that they must be related and connected!

I realize how valuable this state is. I think I dream less during the night because I “dream” during the day, and by that, I reduce the “dream pressure.” I remember that when I discovered this state for the first time, I was delighted; it was as if I had found a secret door. I prepare myself for it the same way that I prepare myself to go to sleep as if to say to myself: Time to dream! I get ready for this with some small daily rituals: I sit down at the same place, at the same time, take the same vitamin pills, turn my music on...” (Epel, 1994)

When I was in New York in 1994, my new lucid-dream- CD in the baggage, looking for a music studio that would mix my different tracks, I got to know some musicians, especially jazz musicians. You talk about what you're working on. Everyone wanted to know more about the dream topic, and in the course of these conversations, I often heard comments like: “But I do that every night! This is how I'm composing! Yes, when I work on a piece, it often lasts until late at night. I then go to bed with the piece of music, and most of the time, I dream of it. What I then hear in my dreams, I can use as an idea to a piece of music, transpose it to a theme or a specific arrangement during the day. I am not spared the work of actually composing, but the ideas are great! I cannot get a whole arrangement out of the dream, but some single ideas! To listen to music during a dream is, by the way, a wonderful experience: more touching than most other dreams!”

Blixa Bargeld reports in an article in the “Zeit” how he makes music from his dreams – coincidences can be wonderful! Blixa Bargeld was known as a singer of the “Einstürzende Neubauten” at the beginning of the eighties. He begins with:

“Dreams have always been important to me, as a human being and as an artist... In my laptop, I have collected all my dream logs of recent years and all the notes that came out of dreams ... This is how pieces and texts are created... The song “Ich komme davon” is based on a dream which I've had very often in my life. In this dream, there is always a corpse hidden in my cellar or the trunk of my car. I'm always innocent – and still in a panic, because I know I'm the main suspect, I'm going to be accused of murder, and there's hardly any chance for me to get out of it. With the body in my trunk, I get into a traffic jam, or my house is searched. My heart pounds, I reckon that they will find the corpse any moment, but somehow I end up getting away. In the dream on which our current song Magyar Energia is

based, I belong to a commission that has to review Hungary's power plants for safety risks and decide to close them because they are too old and too insecure. Strangely enough, I correctly dreamt the name of the energy company; it is called Magyar Energia. I was not aware of ever having heard the name before.”

Actors and people who develop computer programs talk about dreams that have helped them solve a difficult task. What is common to all of them is that they have intensively dealt with this problem during the day. A programmer who participated in one of my workshops told me that he had been working on a challenging task that took his undivided attention. During this work, he had dreamed one night of shoe boxes. The shoeboxes were arranged differently and, at the same time, stuck one into the other. He then applied this idea of ‘sticking’ to his program the next day, and the difficult problem was solved!

Of course, the topic of the dream has not left the movie world untouched. Richard Linklater has dedicated a whole film to dreaming: *Waking Life*.

Andrea Maria Dusl, author, director and columnist, has intensively dealt with this topic. Her own lucid dreams are the basis of one of her screenplays. The protagonist dreams of a woman whom he will later meet while awake. There, the world of dreams and the awoken state wonderfully blend. She says about her new project:

”Channel 8 is about dream and reality. The film is about a person who lives on the edge of lucid dreams and actual experiences, though lucid dreams are also actual experiences. Because reality has the quality of a projection, we can also regard reality as a dream. Reality and dream, how they deal with each other, and what they trigger in a person. That is what the film is about and also about whether pictures can wander. I believe they can. We do know that sometimes thoughts are wandering, I do not know how this works, but some people think at the same time about each other, or say the same at the same time. I think that pictures might also be wandering, so this is how dream contents, and thus dreams go from one person to another.”

Andrea Maria Dusl tells us many exciting things about her movie dream world. Here are some of her thoughts: “When I make films, I realize that films are actually dreams. The

movies you see in the theatres have something dreamlike, you are kind of out of your body, sitting in a dark room, and the only thing you see is a plot that, even if it is quite realistic, is like a dream taking place in front of you and happens to you. In it are emotions that evoke the whole catalog of personal feelings. Cinema very strongly corresponds to the dream; television is more distracted. I believe that in film and dream, similar mechanisms are triggered. I even think that films only work because people dream. If people did not dream, the film would not exist. In both film and dream, things have a different quality. Time-jumps are possible, location-jumps... Everything the dream can do can also be done in the movie. Currently, all living people were born during the age of film-making, and perhaps the one depends on the other. To prove this theory, we would have to study people who had never come into contact with films and try to find out if they dream differently. When I write a screenplay myself, there are always visualized dream contents in them. This also happens when I plan and arrange and work with dramaturgy.

Nevertheless, the screenplay fills up with dream images. The images are so strong that I can neither control nor prevent them. They just happen! I have learned from myself that imagining is no imagining, but the recall of what has been seen. However, not all these pictures go into the movie, some, even though they might have been strong too, are simply not intended for the slide show (meaning my inner slide show for a particular movie). This seems like dreamwork – the characters begin to live. Our brain is like a video recorder that records everything – I just wonder where the filter is, when recording or playing back - it must be somewhere. I cannot say how the selection takes place! Maybe dreaming is putting images together, images that represent something important. When I have a commissioned work, the best way for me is not to sit down with paper and pen, but rather to put myself on the so-called “Freudian couch,” and think about nothing at all. There, images appear, come together and become more and more concrete, as if becoming sharper. Suddenly, they all shift, and then there it is: they become a picture. This is already so precise and is an already finished thought. I just have to paint it. I cannot change the image; it's like a photo in the brain that has manifested itself. It is like a dream process.”

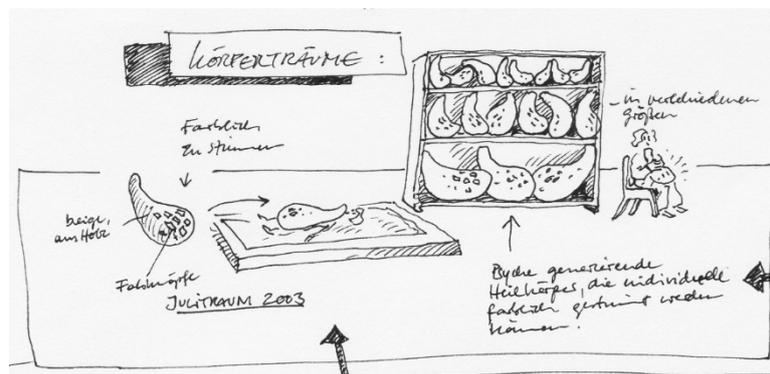
Karina Ressler, one of the best female editors in the German-speaking movie world, told me to my great astonishment, because I know Karina as a very inspired, but rational-logical-oriented filmmaker:

”When you're busy with something, it's good to lie down and also to dream. There comes a sort of optimization of understanding of all we have read, seen, or with which we have been busy. When you wake up, you're ready to go on a different level. You are simply closer to the subject, to the movie, to the material with which you are dealing with. When you come out of a movie, you continue it by dreaming of it. The point is that you continue dreaming it and enrich it with your own experience while being in this unconscious state, and then you come out of it as if you had been dealing with that subject for years. This is how it is for me in an afternoon nap in a short sleep. The material comes together with my unconscious, and so I end up with another form after awakening, I know more about everything, about myself, about the material. I often do that when I have the opportunity.

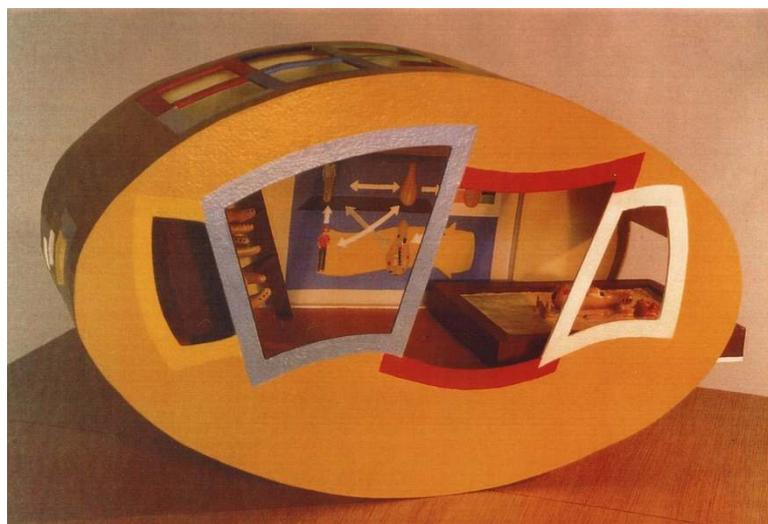
When I am going through a lot, I need my sleep to get back in balance with myself. For example, I read screenplays or have seen a rough cut, to which I should refer to: when I sleep on it, then I know that this purely rational, everyday context is eliminated, and the whole becomes more mellow. You dive into another dimension, and when you wake up again, you have added value from the short dreams that have further developed this substance. When I want to dream, I lie down for a nap and am already enjoying the pictures while I fall asleep. Or I set up the alarm clock several times. Fortunately, I sleep blissfully; usually, I lie down and sleep, sleeping through until the morning, but I can also make sure that I have dreams. If I do not turn on the alarm, that does not happen, but if I want it, I know how to do it. For me, sleep is the regeneration phase, where everything happens, where my body and my soul are cleaned, where both are replenished, fed with vitamins. For example, when I'm shooting, I can be without food for days, but if I sleep too little, and so I dream too little, I become obnoxious. For me, sleep is more important than food.”

Fine art, painting, and drawings are probably the most direct way to represent dreams. Jeanette Schulz, whom I already mentioned shortly at the end of chapter eight, contacted me a couple of years ago because she wanted some tips for lucid dreaming.

Jeanette Schulz was an artist who also studied painting and neurosciences. Among other things, she drew illustrations for science publishers and cartoons. She was particularly interested in memo techniques and humor research, at the border between the tangible and the absurd. All her life, she had very dense dreams in which her unconscious manifested itself very clearly. Dreams can be said to have carried her through life and also played a significant role in her Art. She used to start drawing right after waking up, still in bed, where she had scribbling blocks, pens, and a voice recorder at her side.



Jeanette Schulz: Psyche App Traum (psyche app dream), 2003



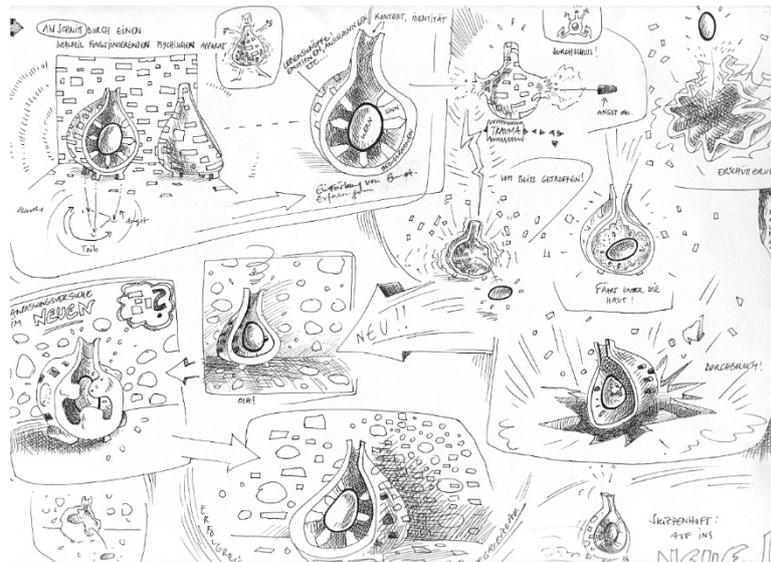
Jeanette Schulz: Psyche App Objekt (psyche app object)

Jeanette had a rare growth disorder, the Klippel-Trénaunay-Weber syndrome, which sadly led to her premature death at the age of 48 in 2015. Dreams had played a significant role in her life since childhood:

"I can remember dreams I had as a child," she says. "Once, I had an odd dream, a parallel dream with my grandma. I dreamed that my grandmother's sister had suddenly died, and I was hiding behind a pile of stones. The next morning I retold the dream, and my

grandmother said she had dreamed the exact same dream but from her point of view. Then the phone rang, and we learned that her sister had died. We both anticipated this in the dream! Back then, I was five years old. Later, I also had a crazy parallel dream with my best friend. After this, I began to pay attention to what I dreamt about. During art studies, I got into the habit of using dreams as sources of inspiration. I have dreamed of many stories and art pieces before beginning their creation. They just configured themselves together this way. I do not know how this works, but it is a wonderful process to observe.

“In any case... how can I explain this? I think about something and draw sketches, but I am unsatisfied. In the dream, it all unravels. I then find in the dream an absolute clarity. Then I see it right in front of me and know how it goes on. What I see in the dream also fits the theory I am dealing with. What I draw is not much different: it is what I saw in the dream. It is about objects, drawings, painting and projects, large tableaux, model objects. These are theoretical objects that I build. Often those are commissioned by the scientific community, also for exhibitions. At the moment, I am classifying architectural dreams, animal dreams, physical dreams, and object dreams. A Swiss psychiatrist wanted a work of mine about Freud's Psychic Apparatus. Then again, a dream inspired me. I dreamed that the shape of the psyche as a drop-shaped piece of wood - this can be seen quite well in the artwork. Dreams are my second life; I create out of them. Sometimes, when I hear something, I have physical sensations, for example, in my hand. Sometimes I can turn it down, and sometimes when I'm in a funny mood, I let it happen big time. As a child, I was often teased because I was just standing around and smiling. I was in a condition where outside experiences just continued inside of me. I then always had to smile. These are automatisms, which I cannot turn off. For me, the awakening phase is the most creative: this is when the dreams are absurd and extremely colorful. The awakening is the best phase, it is the ideal intermediate world, the absurd is still fully in the head, and I can then totally manipulate that, I can use it further.”



Jeanette Schulz: Traum von der Psyche als tropfenförmiger Holzleib (Dream of the psyche as drop shaped wooden body)

Margaret Schwarz, also an artist in Vienna, says:

”If I am dealing intensively with a topic and am not able to find a solution by only logical-linear thinking, I “throw it as a question” quasi into my inner resource pool or implicit knowledge. I also consistently collect information from entirely different fields and hand it over to my 'Internal Network.' The elaborate process, which is thereby initiated, 'then runs practically by itself': ideas, answers, and results arise. When, where, and in what form, I don't know in advance. Dream images are then captured in a drawing or through other media: written, computer, or photo. 'It' works day and night and cannot be switched on and off like a computer, and it can prevent me from falling asleep. I once experienced this as a slideshow. It was evening, and I wanted to sleep, but pictures were appearing one after another, they kept on going like a light image performance. I simply then copied these pictures.”