

Common Ground Interview

The Dreaming Universe

How do you define dreaming?

Fred Alan Wolf: Dreaming is an action or a play or the consequence of an evolving awareness of the world environment in which the creature is growing. I believe that dreams are important on a number of different grounds and can be looked at from a number of different viewpoints. But if we looked at it from almost a purely routinely scientific point of view as possible, we would have to say that they're vital for evolution; that they are important for creatures to develop strategies for awareness or to reprogram, or to alter programming from day-to-day environmental changes that occur. There is no simple way of defining what they are, but the current evidence is that your dreams do play an evolutionary role. That is we dream in order to become aware that we exist as a self, as an entity, as a being. And that ability to exist or to sense oneself as an entity or as a being seems to be vital for survival, and if we don't have that ability we are not able to do as well as a species. The way that this processing goes on, may be very different from the models of processing in which we consider time to be flowing in a linear way. There may be some aspects of the way consciousness works in the dream-state which are very different from the normal ways in which time seems to apparently flow for us in our current world view.

CG: In "The Dreaming Universe" and elsewhere, you have talked about the theory that "matter dreams." Could you explain what you mean by that?

FAW: The basic reasoning is simply this: we know dreams exist. We know dreams occur and that things dream. We know that every mammal, with the exception of two, dreams. The mammalian species that don't dream are the spiny anteater, or echidna, and the whales and dolphins they don't dream, which is that they don't show Rapid Eye Movement, which is indicative of the existence of a dream stage in consciousness. So, when I say, "Matter dreams," it is following a logical chain based on materialistic philosophy. The argument goes like this:

The universe is made of matter, and matter interacting with matter creates all the different physical phenomena that can be observed. Life and consciousness are ultimately physical phenomena that can be observed. So anything that is associated with life has got to be associated with material objects banging together, interacting. Therefore, it must be that the dream state and all conscious awareness must be something arising from interacting matter. So therefore one draws the conclusion that matter dreams. That's the logical conclusion of the materialistic point-of-view.

It isn't necessarily the conclusion I've come to, because I think that materialism itself is subject to some flaws as a base for understanding science. It seems that it's overly reductionistic. And I don't mind the reductionism so much as I mind the base on which the reductionism stands: the base is matter. I no longer believe that matter can be the base for the world. Matter itself must be a secondary quality. There must be a more primal quality before matter. In the same sense that there must be an implicate order, as physicist David Bohm would say, out of which consciousness and awareness arises, one would also say that there has to be some order, which is not directly perceivable, out of which matter and space and time arise.

We know or let's say that we have experimental evidence that there was a Big Bang, that the universe was created from a point. The theory is based upon two or three bits of very strong evidence. It doesn't necessarily mean absolutely that this is what happened, but it is what we believe based upon the evidence. Therefore the universe came into being out of nothing.

And not only did it come into being, but all matter, space and time also came into being simultaneously. From the General Theory of Relativity, you can't have matter just arising in space and time. Matter didn't arise in space and time it couldn't. It came with space and time. So matter can't be fundamental, and our materialistic philosophy is flawed, simply because it doesn't take into consideration the elemental concept of the Big Bang. There has to be something more fundamental than matter itself.

CG: Do you have any clues, either from physics or from your explorations of Shamanism, what that other would be?

FAW: Whatever I would say about it would be more or less a distorted viewpoint. There are several clues. One of the clues is the existence of the vacuum of space. We know that space itself can explode into matter and energy. And it can also envelope, it can reabsorb what it engendered. So you might say that the vacuum of space is capable of creation and annihilation. So we have a continual dance of creation and annihilation which is taking place at a very rapid rate everywhere, all the time. When space is absolutely void, when there's nothing, the process seems to be unstable and there's a great tendency to produce things like universes. The space within a universe, when it's already been created, seems to be more stable, relatively speaking, in terms of time, and there seems to be less universe-making going on within a space-time universe. There seems to be some stability which comes about once one universe is formed. Once matter, space-time and energy occur, there seems to be less tendency to produce another one in the immediate vicinity. So there seems to be some rule as to how a universe should or should not be created.

From this same story which I just told, which is basically one of physics and speculation based on what the physics is telling me, there comes another story that comes from spirituality, which is the Dance of Shiva. Shiva and Shakti dance, and they do the dance of creation and annihilation. Shiva is the Creator-Destroyer. Sometimes Shiva is presented as Shakti, as the feminine consort of Shiva. He/she is the one who appears as Kali, the Goddess who kills and destroys in order for re-creation to occur. So the Dance of Annihilation and Creation, which is a part of modern physics, is also a part of ancient mythology.

And the Qabala, ancient Judeo-Christian mysticism, which goes back to before there were Jews or Christians, to people from the land of Ur, which is now Iraq, there was a vision of this process going on, that Spirit, that was symbolized by the letter Aleph, the [first] letter of the Hebrew alphabet, was capable of producing or emanating a vibrational movement in resistance to itself which was called Water, or Mem [the 13th letter of the Hebrew alphabet]. And then it was able to breathe life into that water. In breathing that life into the water, there was a movement from the spirit into the water and from the water back into the spirit again. And this double-flowing movement was reminiscent of both the annihilation and creation process.

The flow from the spirit to the water was creative; the flow from the water back to the spirit was destructive. And this was a continual dance of life. Also it can symbolize the Dance of Awareness or Consciousness, or even the movement of quantum waves of possibility from an event to a future event, and then backwards in time to the event again. So there are a number of analogies, or pictures, hints, visions that we get that tell us that there is a connection between these pictures. They are presenting themselves to us, perhaps from a deeper order, at different times, but nevertheless the same picture, and we are able to understand the picture as it keeps appearing from eon to eon, through our different levels of our perception. We're probably more intelligent now than we were then. By intelligent I don't mean anything high-fallutin'. I simply mean we have more data, we have more theory, we have more processing going on now than we did then. That allows us to do better model-making now than we did then. We have far more to

deal with now than we did then, in terms of knowledge and science. This may be the kind of clue that tells us about this hidden order.

CG: How do dreams relate to consciousness?

FAW: The whole question is, "What is consciousness?" Consciousness seems to be a process where an environment becomes defined, and where an observer of that environment becomes defined simultaneously. That action, which may not require thought, but which nonetheless seems to require some kind of awareness, seems to cause a split between the subject and object between the Out-there and the In-here, or between the Self and the Not-self. Consciousness seems to require this process of being able to refer oneself as an entity or something that is separate from the outside world. It seems that the dream is the place where one learns how to become aware and separate an Out-there from an In-here. The dream is a laboratory of the self. It's the way in which an entity becomes defined to itself. It's a self-referencing process, and the self-referencing process appears to be absolutely necessary for any kind of consciousness to occur.

CG: Yet there are some aspects of dreaming that seem to suggest a deeper connection less of a separation between individuals.

FAW: The question that comes to mind in regard to this is [in] the work of Montague Ullmann, in which he indicated that we don't dream, necessarily, for individual survival, but that we dream for species survival. I have no argument with this notion of a self as being an individual, as being part of a group or part of a nation or a pod, or part of a larger group of creatures. That seems to be another aspect of survival. In other words, what is my self? If I am a member of a tribe then my concept of self is different than if I am an individual. So it's a question of how one behaves or how one moves. How one becomes aware of the world around him or her is to a large extent dependent on how one thinks about their individuality. I still say that dreams are vital for the formation of a self, but the concept of the self itself is ever-changing. It's not fixed. The self isn't necessarily just a "skin-box." It may involve more than that. For example, Aboriginal dreaming may involve a concept of the self which is far different from our concept of self. This is something that is based on observation and some reading that I have done, and I can't say that my research is absolutely complete on this. But what appears to be the case is that the Aborigine people have an awareness of themselves that seems to border on telepathic. That is, they seem to be able to become aware of situations that we would normally not be aware of, such as another being in trouble at some great distance away. Somebody would have to call us on the telephone in order to make us aware of the situation. Whereas Aboriginal people seem to be knowing of it from intuition flashes of awareness, which they later check when they return to the tribal situation where the problem or trouble seems to be arising. They seem to have this built-in ability. Now Ullmann and [Stanley] Krippner and a number of other people back in the '70s or '80s (it's in my book, "The Dreaming Universe") did some research on telepathy and dream-states. They came to some conclusions, which have been substantiated, that it is possible to have telepathic states of awareness during dreams. In other words, an awake person and a dreaming person can have a telepathic communication from one to the other, which would not be possible through ordinary, classical thinking. This would indicate to me that the dream was the place where this ability was developed. For an Aboriginal tribe it was vital that they have this telepathic awareness develop, whereas for our culture it's not.

CG: The concepts of telepathic and precognitive dreaming are the most puzzling aspects from a Western Materialist's view. Since your training and background is in Quantum physics,

let me ask if there is anything in Quantum physical theories that would help to explain these phenomena?

FAW: Actually, there's too much. It's not a question of a paucity, it's now a question of a surplus. Quantum physics offers a lot of possibilities for explaining the paranormal. Physics in general offers a lot of possibilities for explaining telepathic phenomena. The question is not so much, "Oh, wow! Gee whiz, we didn't know this." It's a question of which possible mechanism is the one that you think we can test to find out what's going on. This is a very complex issue. This is much more complicated than was originally thought when people thought that there was nothing in physics to explain it. There are a lot of possible mechanisms which could be used. To say it in the simplest, or the most general way, they are all based upon the notion that Time and Space themselves are not primary, that they are somewhat secondary, that there is an Implicate Order in the universe, as [the late physicist] David Bohm would put it, which is primal to space and time itself. And at the level of the Implicate Order, separations of space and time that we normally take to be common in our everyday world view don't exist. So, if there is process or thinking or communication or some sort of level of forming of strategies at this primal level below space and time, then when it emerged into space and time, it would be simultaneously knowable in a number of different places or times, or both. So people who are communicating at the level of Unity, or Oneness, or the Implicate Order could then go there and find some form of communication where there is no separation. Then, when they separate it appears as if they communicated over a vast distance, where actually there was no distance involved in the space where they were when this communication occurred. You might say it was another dimension, if you will. It's hard to find the correct words to describe it. Bohm used the example of a fish in a fish tank, swimming back and forth. In the world that we're in, watching this fish swimming back and forth there's nothing unusual going on at all, it's one fish swimming back and forth. But if we make that to be the analogy of this primal, Implicate Order world that we normally don't see, then the Explicate Order world [our ordinary world view] would be the world we saw when two television cameras were focused on the fish. One [camera is] focused on the fish as it swims right to left, and the other as it swims on the adjacent side of the aquarium, so that you could see the fish approaching you and then receding from you. You'd see the head growing and the you'd see a flip, and suddenly the tail [would be] becoming very large, then diminishing. Then it would flip and you would see the head growing. Now, if the two television cameras are sending information out into space and time to two different receivers, the one receiver would be getting the information of Head-Tail, Head- Tail, and the other would be getting the information Right-Left, Right-Left. When the two people compared the data, they would say, "There must be some kind of psychic communication between Head-Tail and Right-Left." They wouldn't understand that there was only one object to begin with. They would think there were two objects, and somehow they were connected. So the whole notion is that psychic awareness or telepathic awareness could be a movement into the One, where there is no separation, and then a movement back out into the duality, where there is separation, with apparent telepathic communication.

CG: How does that relate to the Holographic Model of the Universe and of consciousness which has been described in the last several years?

FAW: The Holographic Model is useful in some circumstances. There is some connection between it and "Implicate Order" that is of some overlapping parallel here, but I don't think it helps [to understand] any better than what I just explained. The implication of the Holographic Order is that in a hologram (which is the analogy to the universe) there is information that is piled up so that a single area of the hologram contains information from different parts of the universe all piled together. When you make a hologram, every part of the

hologram has received waves of information from the objects that reflected the light onto this holographic film. Therefore, every piece of the hologram contains the whole instead of just a part. If you took an ordinary photograph, a square inch of that photograph contains only the light-waves it contains; it doesn't contain the light waves from any other [part of the] thing. It's more linear. But a hologram is made from light-waves that are reflected from an object, and when these waves are reflected, travel into and fill the whole space of the hologram. Every part of the hologram contains waves from every part of the object.

CG: In "The Dreaming Universe" you talk about what you call the "imaginal realm" as an intermediary state between the World of Ideas and the World of Things. Can you explain what that is?

FAW: The Imaginal Realm would be another way of saying what I just said about this implicate order of David Bohm's vision. It's a hidden order. It may be the world that we begin to tap into at a deeper level than we do normally in our waking consciousness, when we go into the dream world. It's the world from which we extract information to be made useful in our physical world. It's akin to Plato's Ideal World. It's akin to certain cultural views which might be related to shamanic world views that they go to that world view when they do healing or when they go for information, or something of that nature that's not immediately obvious. There is some possibility and in some people's thinking that, under certain meditative states, it's possible to tap that world and to alter what is happening in this world in such a way that, seemingly, miracles seem to occur. It is suggested, for example, that Sai Baba, the person who is considered to be an Avatar in India, is able to enter that world, because of training or great ability, or because of birth, and manifest objects, seemingly lifting them from one place in the world and bringing them through that world into this world. It's almost as if he has a window through which he can reach across time and space and pull objects out from where they are and bringing them into our world view by tapping into that realm, like the fish that I mentioned before. Whether that's true or not I do not know, but that's what people seem to report. It may just be he's just a very good conjurer. That's the least offensive explanation to most Western minds. With all the UFO phenomena going on, with all the tremendous number of sightings, and abduction phenomena, and all sorts of things happening to people far more than is even being reported one might say that this is a manifestation of the Imaginal Realm. Other philosophers, scientists and visionaries, also seem to think that maybe the Imaginal is being tapped collectively, and that what people are getting out of it, either in dreams or in altered states of consciousness, or in these abduction scenarios, which are very much like dreams, is an objective experience of that realm, in which there's a certain similarity, based upon some conditioning of the culture as a whole. There's evidence that over the centuries people are conditioned by their cultures to perceive things from the Imaginal which are suggestive of the culture. For example, Irish people saw leprechauns and fairies. And these were universally seen by many, many people because that was part of their cultural lore. Our culture has been inundated with science fiction in the last 80 years or so. Not only the science fiction that you can read about in books by people like Jules Verne and the old science fiction writers to the most modern, but also in movies. Movies and television have greatly influenced the culture. People have seen "The Day The Earth Stood Still" and have seen "Invasions From Mars" and have seen the weird-like creatures. So it's very possible that these images may have originated from the Imaginal realm in the first place when these film makers made them, and then emerged in their consciousness [when they said] "Let's make a film about these guys," and then emerged again in the dreaming brains, or the altered-consciousness-state brains of the people who have all these experiences. This doesn't belittle the experience or say that the experience is just a hallucination. It simply says there's another area of the way the brain operates which is collective.

This is something we may not have talked about before or been aware of before in our Western culture. But it certainly is a part of Aboriginal culture; it's a part of folklore culture, and may be something that needs to be studied. This may be what we're really seeing. It may be that we're not actually seeing creatures from another space dimension emerging in our world as physical objects, but that we are tapping into the Imaginal Realm, which is somewhere halfway between real and purely fantasy, but which has some elements of both.