



The Two Most Misunderstood Facts of Life on Earth

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Opinion

The Two most misunderstood facts of Life Consciousness and Dreams are the two facts of life that are least understood. Consciousness is thought to be produced by the brain instead of seen as the sine qua non of existence. Consciousness is not confined to a specific area like the body for instance, but is everywhere. Consciousness knows no death. It is the matrix of existence. It persists when the body dies. It is regularly confused with awareness. We can be conscious, yet not aware. It has been thought by certain scientist to be manufactured by the brain. The brain does no such thing. It merely directs it to various parts of the body.

The dream is thought by some to be merely a guardian of the functions of the organs of the body. While dreams may help in regulating the function of the organs of the body, they do far more than that. Nightmares are seen to be mere warning and exercises; they are far more than that. In fact dreams are the source of intuition and inventions; they direct our life in every respect. The closer we observe them the clearer it becomes that they are the blueprint of our waking life.

They are, in order of importance, consciousness and dreams. So let me begin with the sine qua non of existence. Consciousness because it is the sine qua non, it is also the fundament of existence. Everything that exists owes its presence here on Earth to consciousness. Who can deny that? Yet our scientists who follow Darwin's theory of evolution surmised that consciousness was something that developed gradually.

Developed from what? From matter? From darkness? From chemistry? It was speculated by our leading lights of science that matter came to exist first. From what? From nothing? Then, in some mysterious manner miniscule parts of matter

coagulated into living creatures. Creatures, which then, in some unexplained way managed to adapt themselves to their surroundings that were thought to be the sea. All this was, of course, speculation. A kind of mythology. Certainly not science as we understand it today. It doesn't take much thought to guess what this modern mythology was founded on. The present of course. The life cycle as it can be observed now. Thus the sea was thought to be a kind of womb with the necessary ingredients for prenatal life. The saltwater became a kind of amniotic fluid in which the foetuses of all living creatures swam and gradually evolved into the ancestors of the creatures we are familiar with today.

And all this without a flicker of consciousness. The life and light of these ancestral beings was only in the imagination of our early scientists. But then came Hameroff and associate who were enlightened enough to realise that consciousness was a vital ingredient in the evolution from dead matter to a living creature. He speculated that certain tubules were able to help the development of consciousness along. Today, he and his colleague have abandoned this early attempt to explain the mystery of consciousness. He is now of the opinion that consciousness is not manufactured in any way at all, but that it is an entity that has always existed.

This means he is now in agreement with the Vedic view that consciousness not only pre-existed evolution, that the brain or any other organ does not manufacture it, but is the vital energy that existed forever and enlivens all substance. Indeed, consciousness is the 'God-particle' as it were, which Lederman attributed to the Big Bang, thus setting the first phase of evolution in motion. As I see it, it will be a long time yet before consciousness is properly understood and dealt with accordingly.

Where the worst misunderstanding in the realm of consciousness occurs is in the distinction between consciousness and awareness. I am often asked if we were unconscious during deep sleep because at that time we had no dreams or any other imagery disturbing us. My answer is invariably that we are always conscious, even in death, but we are not aware of anything. Speaking about dreams, reminds me that even Jung was in a quandary about continuity of consciousness in the realm of dreams. But in the end he came to the right conclusion, indicating that it must be continuous. Where he, on the other hand, helped the confounding of consciousness, did in his use of the Unconscious as the foundation of life in general, believe it was the psychological wellspring of vitality, creativity and growth. The confounding consists, of course, in the fact that 'unconscious' can easily be understood as 'devoid of consciousness' when in reality it actually means 'devoid of awareness'.

We can't really blame Jung for this since the difficulty arose out of the translation from German to English. So we should perhaps blame the translator of the text who might have chosen Unawareness instead of Unconscious. But of course after so many years of usage the term 'unconscious' is too engrained to make any changes. A more serious matter is the question of what the function of the dream is. If we ask what exactly the function of dreams is, we get a mixed bag of answers. The main one is that science still has not come to any kind of consensus. In the main the most common explanation is that the dream is engaged in the consolidation of memories.

Aside from that the dream is also seen by some as a kind of stabiliser of the various organs in the body. Neuroscience believes now that during sleep the various vital organs of the body reduce their output, resting, as it were, from the arduous labor in the course of the day. When we, for instance, over-reduce our breathing in our deep sleep, we might be woken up by a dream, which has us drowning in a pool. This will naturally bring our breath back to the level that is common in our waking time. Others maintain that dreams functioned as evolutionary aids by inducing dreams of conflict, thus preparing the dreamers for conflict in waking life. It certainly has been found that dreaming of certain sport activities enhances the corresponding performance in the subsequent waking period. From this followed the idea that the practice of going through the motions required in waking for a certain activity just mentally, would raise the level of subsequent waking performances.

So it is not surprising that in light of such experiences, nightmares were beginning to be thought of more positively. While such observations and practical experiences helped to see the dream as an agent of security and an enhancement to daily life, it has not been given the full credit, or to put it

another way, its true function has not yet been understood. In my essay, "To what extent does the dream influence creativity", published on line by the University of Heidelberg, Germany, I have described the nightmare of Michael Barnsley, inventor and designer of the image compression software.

This nightmare came to him while he was a student of mathematics and it lasted for twenty (20) years! It set him the task of connecting the wires of a matrix that were in a higgledy-piggledy state correctly. But there was no description of this matrix in a way to be useful to the completion of the task, so the nightmare dragged on and on over the years. And this is interesting: It continued until he met Benoit Mandelbrot who had discovered the fractal math formula of infinite iterations $Z = Z^2 + c$. It was then that Barnsley speculated that the application of this formula would allow him to design the software that allowed the compression of fuzzy imagery with the result that it would be crystal clear.

It was at this point that the scene of his old nightmare reappeared, but no longer in its former, terrifying shape, but as an Eureka experience. Here is what he said about the crucial time: "The discovery of how to automatically calculate the collage of an arbitrary picture came to me in a dream. (In it) I saw how you could straighten out the switchboard, how all the wires would come untangled and be nicely connected and how you would join all the wires from big blocks to little blocks in the grid. I woke up in the morning and I knew I had discovered the total secret to fractal image compression. How to automatically look at a digital picture and

- How to turn it into a formula, and
- An entity of infinite resolution. So the goal is now to be able to capture this fire of Prometheus, this fractal wonder, put it in a box and being able to make this available to everyone." (From a documentary film, 'Colours of Infinity', hosted by Arthur C. Clark).

We can easily see from this that Barnsley's nightmare was clearly 'aware' that Barnsley would at last know how to sort out the wire after he met Benoit Mandelbrot who, by then be in possession of the crucial formula that would allow Barnsley to build that software to which he obviously was DESTINED. Clearly, the nightmare knew when Barnsley would meet Benoit, it also knew that Barnsley would receive a dream with the design if the wiring that Barnsley could not sort out by himself. Obviously, nightmares are not just wakeup calls, to save us from suffocating in deep sleep, but masters of our fate, our guardians and helpers quite generally.

There is no better example I know that demonstrates the long arm and guiding intelligence of the gifts of scientific discoveries and inventions. As the recurring nightmares, yet still meaningless to the dreamer, reveal, ideas for inventions or inklings of discoveries may be present in the secret realms

of the carrier's 'hard disk' long before they will show up on his 'monitor' or 'desk top'. The incredibly long gestation of the matrix with its secret processes not understood by the dreamer, suggest quite irrefutably, that the task of creating

the ultimate image compression software was not really Michael Barnsley's choice, but the choice of his nightmares and illuminating final dream. There is only one word for such a happening: predetermination.