



Free Will

Forrer K*

Retired school principle, Australia

*Corresponding author: Kurt Forrer, Retired school principle, 26 Parkins Reef Road Maldon 3563 Vic, Australia, Email: dnaofdreams@gmail.com

Perspective

Volume 6 Issue 2

Received Date: April 16, 2021

Published Date: June 01, 2021

DOI: 10.23880/pprij-16000278

Abstract

In view of the fact that dreams are still the Cinderella of science, it is not surprising that they seldom figure in philosophical arguments. It is even less surprising that they are never presented as evidence that free will is nothing but wishful thinking. The reason for this is, of course, the widespread perception that dreams are either a kind of waste product of waking or at best a mechanism that reinforces memory.

A case is made here that the dream is in fact the ideal ground upon which to build a thesis demonstrating that free will is but a glittering, ego boosting deception. It is even superior to Professor Libet's electronic device because the dream's oracular character can be tested by anyone who is prepared to follow my test procedures outlined in my essay, "To Test or not to Test that is the Question". (Heidelberg University, Germany, IJoDR Vol. 7 No. 2 2017), while experimental procedures, like those of Professor Libet are only available to a few professionals. As well as that, Libet's procedure is as susceptible to criticism as dream interpretation. Indeed, it has been taken apart from every critical quarter with some of the critics denying the validity of the experiment and some of them adopting it as irrefutable proof that free will is an illusion.

Free Will

The *sense of I*, of ME, of MINE is the foundation of the world experience. We cannot view the outside world without being aware of its presence either fully or subliminally. As the sense of MINE it is most possessive when it comes to the body that it inhabits. There, its notion of attachment is so complete that we can truly speak of utter identification. The sense of 'I' becomes the conviction that 'I am the body'.

Yet such body identification dissipates more often than not in our dream world. It is as if the flesh and blood had been distilled away to function as an ethereal self. It prompts us to think that we are not the body after all. But, of course, we can only draw such conclusions in the waking state. In the dream we have no such sentiments. We are simply being swept along with the tide of the dream's events. Although no less anchored in the sense of 'I', our fears and delights are not so much centred in a body than in that distilled ego.

With regard to the question of 'free will', the most pertinent distinction between the dream self and the self of waking experience is not in its sense of material consistency, but in the feeling of empowerment, of autonomy. While in waking we are endowed with a distinct sense of choice, in the usual dream world we are bound hand and foot. We are condemned to suffer all it has in store for us like impotent puppets in a play of shadows.

Wondering what the reason for this might be, the situation of the sleepwalker comes at once to mind. We see without difficulty that these chemical fetters are a form of protection against serious mishaps. Without it we could, for instance, sleepwalk onto the highway without regard to the oncoming traffic. Or we might climb the roof and step over the edge. Such scenarios are not purely speculative, for there are many cases where a dreamer acted out his unfolding dream to his detriment. In short, we recognise the wisdom of being physically bound as we endure the drama of our

dreams.

But this also alerts us to the fact that our dreams might well be a program, or indeed, a program for the day's events to be stored in the dream memory in order to be called upon at the appointed times. If that were truly so, our nocturnal fetters would not only act as a protection against serious accidents, but they would also intimate that we were actors on life's stage whose scenarios and actions were scripted by the dream, in which case the sense of choice that is given to us in the waking state could well be deceptive.

Indeed, if the dream were actually a *complete program* as I propose, then the waking scenario would be an occurrence devoid of our input despite the superimposed sense that it was our ego that directed the plot to one degree or another. One thing is certain: since the drama of the dream proceeds without the slightest sense of autonomy, the notion that our waking ego has any choice in what to do or leave undone is clearly something that is introduced by the brain upon waking up from the dream.

The best evidence that it is the PFC that gives us the notion of being in charge comes from the state of *lucid dreaming* where consciousness features both waking and non-lucid dreaming [1]. Under those conditions the dreamer knows that he is dreaming and feels totally in control unlike when he is in a phase of ordinary REM dreaming. When we look for a reason for this, we find that the frontal area of the brain is involved in recognising structure and order in a given situation. In other words, impairment in that field will make it impossible for a patient to analyse the essence of a problem and grasp the crucial connections within it [2]. This could be seen as evidence that the subject in the waking state is called upon to make decisions that are in his power, thus suggesting autonomy to some degree. But of course, it could also be said that a preceding dream had determined how to act in such tasks. In short, this situation allows for an each way bet and cannot be solved by logic. An experiment needs to be devised that offers a more promising outcome of one kind or another.

Such an experiment already exists. Benjamin Libet devised it. In an article in 'The New Scientist' from 14 September 2002 the following paragraph penned by John Gray demands that we seriously consider this suggestion: *"If cognitive science is right, the picture of humans that philosophers conjure up when defending ideals of personal autonomy is at least partly a chimera. Other research supports this conclusion. Work by Benjamin Libet at the University of California showed that the electrical impulse in the brain that initiates action occurs up to half a second before we take the decision to act. Our actions are initiated unconsciously."*

The paragraph then continues: *"True, Libet allowed that we can veto what the brain has initiated, but it is unclear how we can even know that we have deliberately exercised this capacity. For all practical purposes, it might as well not exist."* Thus, despite scientific machinery of precision the results of the experiment are at best unclear.

No wonder, a skeptic who had studied the free will argument commented: "We humans are a comical bunch. We use our free will to create studies/theories/experiments that show we have no free will, and then some of us actually come to believe it" [3]. Certainly such consequence is what resulted from Libet's experiment. It has been taken apart from every critical quarter with some of the critics denying the validity of the experiment and some of them adopting it as irrefutable proof that free will is an illusion.

In the course of studying the arguments ignited by this subject I have been astonished that none of the investigators of this vexing theme has ever referred to the dream as a possible means to resolve this age-old conundrum. All pursuits of a solution have always relied on arguments of logic, certainly from Cicero's "Lazy Argument" onwards the logic of which results in the same absurd conclusion as that popular misconception of FATE, which maintains that if everything were fated we would never do anything. I always wondered at this conclusion even as a child, for as I saw it in my childish ways was that "what's fated must needs occur" whether it is action filled or action free.

Because of the notorious absence of dreams in such discussions I came to the conclusion that the participants in such one-sided quests must be utterly left-brained. In other words, their thoughts might well be iron clad, but since they only relied on functions of the waking brain, their ultimate conclusions could only be incomplete. Indeed, such one-sidedness can only result in one-sided results. Certainly, excluding dreams from investigations of the realm of thought, of the workings of the mind, of the psyche is much like ignoring the fact that there are two differing sides to the brain, that we not only breathe in, but also out, that our blood circulation is intimately tied to breathing in and out, that its oxygenised red blood and its oxygen depleted 'blue' blood are not independent aspects of the round of blood, but two vitally interdependent aspects of it.

Disregarding all this is ignoring the fact that our body, as well as the mind operate along the lines of an *interactive dualism* just as it has now been found in the character of *Quantum Mechanics' energy principle where photons and particles are an 'hermaphroditic emulsion' of potentialities* [4]. In other words, we have a body and a mind that work together as one. Forgetting this is like playing all melodies forever

in the major key, treating the minor modes as if they didn't exist. In short, those who argue the case of free will without the input of dreams are like musicians who always play tunes set in a major key. It might sound impressive to start with, but in the long run it becomes tiring and ultimately remains circular and decidedly inconclusive.

This situation is actually very much the same when it comes to the question of where ideas, inspiration and innovation quite generally come from. If we question the inventors, for instance, where they got their inspiration from, most will say, "it just popped into my head". Some will say, "I woke up in the middle of the night and there it was"! Is such an answer not a hint that the idea might have come from a dream of the night? I have noted thousands of times that when we wake up with a dream its central theme manifests soon after. A friend of mine told me once in confirmation of this that he dreamt that he was too hot in bed and so went to the fridge to get some ice to fill his hot water bottle with it in order to return to bed with it. Laughing he confessed that he followed the dream script to the letter.

Thomas Edison was certainly aware of the dream as problem solver. He discovered that the hypnagogic visions that occur at the instant before falling asleep contained the solution of a particular issue that he was mulling over. In order to catch and exploit this boon, he devised a way of being woken at the crucial hypnagogic moment. In other words, he would take a catnap in his inventor's chair holding steel balls in his hands and, as he drifted off to sleep, the balls would drop and wake him at the Eureka Moment [5]. This draws our attention to a parallel function, but this time to a completely physical one. It is the round of blood circulation.

Indeed, the phase of awaiting resolution of a problem or waiting for inspiration is in step with oxygenising the blood by breathing in. And 'breathing' is precisely the root of 'inspiration' derived from Latin 'spirare'. Since the 13th century the French derivative 'inspiracion' meant 'breathing in', while in Middle English it also meant 'breath or put life or spirit into the human body, or indeed impart reason to a human soul'. And this, of course, goes ultimately back to Genesis where God breathed into clay to enliven it, thus leading 'inspiration' back to the first creative act.

For the fundamentalist believer this will, of course, be a literal and historical occasion, while for thinkers of a broader ilk it will simply mean that ideas come from a storehouse over which they have no control. And that storehouse is the dream. *Thus, the dream in the round of creativity is the phase of 'breathing in' while the act of creation is the subsequent phase of 'breathing out', or the transformation of the dream into its waking counterpart.*

There is one author who is above all others when it comes to a complete comprehension of the transmutation of the dream into a corresponding waking edifice. It is not Sigmund Freud or Carl Jung, but Robert Louis Stevenson. He not only knew that the supplier of ideas for his work was the dream, but he also had learnt to prepare his receptivity for a new dream when he was in financial strife, one that would lay the foundation for a salable story that would haul him out of trouble. Not only that. He was the only author that I know of who said that his dreams, which he lovingly called his Brownies, "do one-half my work for me while I am fast asleep, and in all human likelihood, do the rest for me as well, when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself" [6].

While this confirms my contention that the dream is the blueprint of waking experience, it also alerts us to the fact that being aware of this is not widespread since it seems to be founded on a special mental disposition just like musicality or mathematical proficiency, for example. Indeed, the range of receptivity towards dreams ranges from zero to one hundred. There are actually persons who maintain that they never dream while others can report a dream from every night. The view whether or not dreams are meaningful also varies to the same degree. One correspondent made it once quite clear to me that he was convinced that dreams were the waste paper basket of the day's events. When we know, however, that countless inventions and discoveries in all fields of life were due to one dream or another, such a comment obviously bespeaks dire ignorance or willful dismissal.

The most famous one of the latter class is surely Freud's insistence that dreams were incapable of perceiving the future. Indeed, on page 783n of his seminal work, "The Interpretation of Dreams" [7] he notes, "And the value of dreams for giving us knowledge of the future? There is, of course, no question of that", and yet he blithely proceeds to relate a dream of Alexander the Great that came true there and then, holding it up *"as the nicest instance of a dream-interpretation"*. Moreover, his conclusion he drew from his studies of Psychopathology implied, as he put it, 'a determinism that rules both the conscious and unconscious waking life absolutely', where 'the Unconscious, for example, evidences a somnambulistic certainty in the realm of calculations, which it executes without the help of conscious life' [8].

As if this was not sufficient contradiction, he also said that 'dreams were the Royal Road to the Unconscious', in other words, the access to the storehouse of the past, present and future, of the realm that determined all of our actions, which can only mean that the dream was privy to

the determining aspect of the Unconscious. Clearly Freud, who hauled the dream out of its deep sleep, was still largely locked into the major key of 'music' despite the fact that he was preoccupied with the interpretation of dreams, the unearthing of the 'minor' key as it were. This naturally caused a distinct dissonance in his 'symphonic' work, one that is akin to the arguments of the disputants of free will who bypass, or rather, are being bypassed by the hidden influences of the dream.

It is the latter, of course, if the Unconscious is as invincible as Freud insists. There are two crucial matters in which I have found Freud to be absolutely correct: the determining characteristics of the Unconscious and his sexual interpretation of the dream. With regard to the first item, Jung agreed only insofar as the Unconscious was the receptacle of all possibilities while regards the second item he found that Freud's realistic interpretation of the sexual aspect of the dream was an obstruction to a more lofty interpretation. In short, Jung failed to see that a fleshly interpretation could also serve as a more 'lofty' view of the erotic circumstance the dream pictured, just as the mystics who are beyond sex frequently and effectively use erotic love as a simile for divine love, where the venereal aspect of Venus transmutes to the venerable. It seems that his puritan upbringing overruled his reason. At any rate it was the different interpretation of the dream's erotic aspect that engendered the well-known split between the two fathers of modern dream lore.

It is truly tragic for Freud that his point-blank dismissal of the dream's futuristic aspect prevented him from devising a perfectly scientific manner of verifying the dream's sexual meaning. Obviously, his Unconscious directed him away from such a task that would have converted Jung to Freud's view of the matter, so forestalling a grievous disagreement between the two interpreters. While this demonstrates that Freud was not meant to have discovered definitive proof that dreams are indeed as deterministic as he said of the Unconscious, it also serves as a reminder that the free will argument has been equally determined to be beyond a satisfactory settlement.

And, of course, this will remain so for all those who either will refuse to test Freud's sexual interpretation of the dream or prove unable to do so. This is not to say that those who are capable of interpreting the erotic aspect of the dream and will test it by means of prediction and verification will at once adopt the view that dreams are indeed the blueprint of waking, for as we have seen, Freud himself was unable to recognise this characteristic of the dream even though he firmly believed in the absolute power of the Unconscious and *highlighted, to boot, the futuristic interpretation of Alexander's dream as 'the nicest instant of a dream interpretation'*. Also, for those who are not expert dream diviners, it may be difficult to recognise the erotic aspect of the dream since

it is largely buried in 'innocent' language, as Freud would have put it. It is actually this fact that puzzled Freud most and forced him, somewhat prematurely, to conclude that the dream 'disguised' the erotic content to shield us from 'rude nature'.

Curiously enough, it is precisely this apparently 'disguised' facet of the dream's story that proved in the course of my research to be the most revealing. Certainly, once it is understood that the dream uses exactly the same metaphors to reveal its erotic content, as does waking language either in 'polite' company, in humorous mode or indeed in poetry, its sexual plot becomes not only clear as daylight, but also will reveal features that indicate the *location* of the impending sexual activity. In other words it makes quite clear *'the what and where'* of the dream's corresponding manifestation.

But it also makes known *'the when'*. This is absolutely crucial in a scientific verification. Under regular circumstances the sexual manifestation takes place on the dream day. In other words, it happens in the waking phase immediately subsequent to the dream, i.e. between waking up from the dream and going to sleep again. Curiously enough, it is actually right at this point that we encounter the first variation of the rule of timing, for it may happen that a 'wet dream' may intervene just before full awakening. While this may slightly 'blemish' the manifestational rule of time, it compensates this 'flaw' by alerting us to the fact that here is the first chance of seeing my proposal verified, which maintains that dreams are the precursor and determinant of our sex life. Wet dreams occur in a state of dreaming that is, like the lucid dream, admixed with a waking component. *Thus, the wet dream, since it is instantly followed by its manifestation is the classic witness to the dream's prefiguration of our sex life.* It even literally impersonates Freud's somnambulist certainty of the Unconscious.

A further verification of this is the fact that the last dream is the climax of the night's dreaming, just as is the last act of a play on stage. There are physical symptoms of this, which again serve to show that the dream has corresponding CONCRETE CONSEQUENCES, symptoms that cannot possibly be mistaken. They are, of course, penile and or clitoral erections, or at least increased vaginal wetness. In other words, at such moments the dream and its sexual consequences are *one unified phenomenon* that will split into two separate halves at its appointed time. This is the dream and its inevitable manifestation in a nutshell, but it also furnishes yet another demonstration of the principle of creative manifestation that underlies all of existence.

There is yet another variation of the timing principle. While in a regular sexual relationship the manifestation of the erotic component tends to occur on the dream day,

in casual relationships it may be delayed for some days. It seems that irregular sexual intercourse disrupts 'the order of the day'. But this irregularity of the manifestational rule does not apply to masturbation. Its implementation occurs, not unlike the wet dream, on the dream day. Other variants must be found out through experience.

Fortunately, for scientific precision, there is a factor to this variant that is able to establish certainty where otherwise there would be inconclusiveness. This factor is the *marker*. Put simply, it is an item in the dream's plot that corresponds with the correlative item in the dream's manifestation. If the central item of an erotic plot was an apple, for instance, then an apple will be in the vicinity of the sexual activity of the dreamers. Such a manifestation of the dream will therefore clearly distinguish itself from any other manifestation and vouch for being the direct correspondent of the tested dream.

Of course, things are never quite as simple as we expect, which necessitates extensive study of various marker cases. I have explained the intricacies of the marker in both of my books [9] and in my essay "To test or not to test, that is the question – is there a way of verifying the validity of the interpretation of our dreams? [10]".

To recapitulate: *the sexual interpretation is the safest way to test the dream's function as the blueprint of waking experience because its manifestation span is, in the main, on the dream day and is endowed with a marker that assists us in determining whether or not we are looking at the most direct manifestational correspondence of a given sexual interpretation*. Put another way, it is the fact that the manifestation span of the sexual content of a dream is, in contrast with the nonsexual manifestation span reliably short, which makes it the most suitable candidate for a verification test. This obviously implies that one and the same dream offers both a sexual and non-sexual interpretation.

On the surface, most dreams look non-sexual and curiously enough, those that feature overt sexual content are meant to be read asexually. For example, it often happens that a teenage girl dreams of having intercourse with her father. Since dreams that will manifest *sexually* are portrayed in non-sexual ways, it is pretty safe to assume that this girl's dream is an expression of passionate *non-sexual love*. If on the other hand, the dream speaks of sex in non-sexual terms, it has to be read as a reference to sexual activity. Of course, the plot will determine whether or not the dream means to signal sexual abstention, frustration, inhibition or outright activity.

By now it should be obvious that I contend that one and the same dream story is a '*hermaphroditic emulsion of potentialities*' just as QM has discovered of basic energy that

can either manifest as photons or particles. With regard to the dream there are however always two manifestations: one distinctly non-sexual and the other sexual. As I have already indicated, the sexual manifestation can either be repressed sex or outright sexual activity. Thus, if a woman dreams that her *handbag was stolen*, the sexual manifestation might well end up in a case of rape, for '*stolen*' will readily translate to 'robbed' which suggests at once 'raped' since the handbag also stands for the vagina. The non-sexual story could in this case be intimately involved in the same scene. It might be literally stolen. Of course not all dreams are as neatly coherent. To give another example, a man might dream that he has mislaid his keys to the front door and so was unable to enter his house. It intimates that this man won't have sex on that day because the house stands for house-wife.

All this indicates that our life is determined by the ordinary nocturnal dream, *which makes us no more autonomous than puppets on strings*. And although we have, in waking, the distinct impression that we have choices, that we are in charge, we must concede that such impression is illusive. The lucid dream alone explains this, for while it allows us to create a dream state that empowers us beyond ordinary waking limits, the fact that the lucid dream does not translate into fantastic correspondences in waking 'reality', supports the notion that choice, that autonomy, that free will is as illusive as the lucid dream itself.

From what I have said so far, it is clear that the sexual version of a dream story is most suited to the verification procedure because the manifestation span is short even when it is not on the dream day. In other words, I have avoided the non-sexual manifestation for testing purposes because its manifestation span is in many respects longer and certainly more complicated than the sexual one. Indeed, while one section may materialize on the dream day, another will on the second or third. In fact there are dreams, the central part of which will manifest weeks, months and even years later like Sikorsky's *déjà vu* that occurred to him thirty (30) years after his dream that featured his eventual invention of the S-wing plane as a young boy.

Certainly, the non-sexual manifestation of a dream can be so elusive that even Carl Jung could fail to recognise its realisation, as in the case, for instance, of the scarab dream that gave birth to the myth of "Synchronicity" [11]. In that instance, the manifestation was nothing more than a *déjà vu* from the point of view of the patient who had the dream, but it was so surprising and startling to Jung that he sought to explain the appearance of the manifestation in terms of the machination of an causal creative principle.

In view of the difficulties the nonsexual interpretation presents, it is not surprising that such a test has so far not

been applied to settle the free will argument. Fortunately, however, the disposition of the sexual aspect of the dream more than compensates for the shortcomings of the nonsexual interpretation as verifying agent, thus serving as the ideal instrument for the annihilation of the notion of free will.

References

1. Macmillan Magazine Ltd. Coherence and relevance in complex behaviour.
2. 4 year old comment below this youtube video.
3. Forrer CF, Kurt, IJoDR, "Vita Somnium Breve".
4. David Charles (2018) Hypnagogia: "How to dream like Thomas Edison".
5. Grant John (1986) Dreamers, Geography of Dreamland. Grafton Books 94.
6. Freud (2015) The Interpretation of Dreams. page 173n, The Pelican Freud Library, Volume 4, translated by James Starkey.
7. Sigmund Freud (1975) presented by Octave Mannoni, Rowohlt.
8. Forrer Kurt (1991) Dreams, Pre-grams of Tomorrow as Pathway to a new World Perspective. Midorus House.
9. Forrer Kurt (2012) Tomorrow inn your Dreams. Midorus House.
10. Forrer Kurt (2014) International Journal of Dream Research 7(2).
11. Kurt Forrer (2015) Synchronicity, did Jung have it right? International Journal of Dream Research, Heidelberg University, Germany 8(2): 152-163.

