

The Continuity of Life And the Nature of Sleep

SLEEP IS A MINIATURE cosmic night. It is the period between two days, whether it be measured by plant, animal, time, or by zodiacal periods. As all the dimensions of space are concentric, and as the superphysical planes of existence are in our immediate presence, “sleep” conveys to us the condition of the dense body after the soul has withdrawn while leaving some form of connection with it unsevered.

On divination Cicero observes: “When the soul of man is disengaged from corporeal impediments and set at freedom—in sleep—it beholds wonders which, when entangled beneath the veil of flesh it is unable to see.”

Sleep is the temporary withdrawal of the ego from the physical body, which then rests and recuperates. Its depleted energy is then restored for the morrow’s activity.

Based on the results of numerous tests and experiments theosophical writers maintain that the ego leaves the body and hovers near during sleep, be it natural or produced by anaesthetic agents.

The Rosicrucian teaching on sleep states that the ego, clothed with the mind and desire body, draws outside the dense body and remains close while the vital body and dense (physical) body are resting upon the bed, all being connected by a silver-like thread; and that in disturbed sleep the ego is not wholly withdrawn. This description is not theory or speculation but is demonstrated to the initiate step by step as the mind and sympathetic ganglia of his organism are made to unfold under the practice of well-tried acts and formulae.



Attached by the silver cord extending from the head, the desire body and ego hover above the sleeper's dense and vital bodies.

Stoddart, of the Bethlehem Royal Hospital of London, says in one of his valuable editions that “Sleep is the condition of partial or complete unconsciousness which normally recurs once in twenty-four hours and typically endures for one-third of that time. Sleep abolishes fatigue; in other words, it helps to rid the organism of fatigue products.”

We all sleep, and most of us dream and travel in the desire world whether it is remembered or not. Digestion can and does take place without your knowledge, and your failure to take cognizance of the event is no argument against it. Huntington of the National Academy is indebted to the desire world for the arrangement of his famous picture, “Mercy’s Dream.” Giovanni Dupré, the French sculptor, confessed that the ideas of his beautiful “Piétà” came to him in a dream. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell published two poems he composed while asleep. Professor Hilprecht, of the University of

Pennsylvania, deciphered certain characters by the aid of a prehistoric “helper” in the dream state. Daniel and Ezekiel knew life as it is, and Joseph, the great oneiroscopist of historical times, thoroughly understood the physiological act of sleep and the relationship of the human ego to the desire world or the next plane above the dense, and thus saved Egypt. Dreams and dreamers have saved and ruled the world.

Brain wave analysis and limbic system studies indicate that sleep is deepest about one and a half hours after its onset and from that time it drops to its lightest point between the seventh and eighth hour. By that time the dense body has been repaired and the vibrations of its revitalized molecular structures are at their maximum point, thus often enabling the waiting ego to stamp the brain with the impressions of higher planes. The heavier the food the lower the vibration of the dense body’s atoms. Indeed, the vibratory action of ingested food may be so low that it actually has a toxic effect, not only from the excessive excretion of urea, carbon dioxide, and other catabolic products of digestion and cellular metabolism, but due to the very torpid action of the elemental substance itself. Highly vibrating atoms brought suddenly in contact with those of a significantly lower rate have a centrifugal or explosive effect.

Going to sleep is normally a physiological process brought on by auto-suggestion. While a lack of oxygen, an excessive amount of carbon dioxide, and the absence of various other stimuli may predispose to or invite sleep, the process of falling asleep is not pathological. Hallucinations, absurdities, and distorted dreams, manifestations of a condition known as the hypnagogic state, take place in shallow sleep when the ego is partly in the dense body and partly out. The dream under such conditions contains a mixture of elements or stimuli from the mental, desire, and dense worlds.

I will here state as a positive fact capable of personal demonstration that in the process of going to sleep the ego with the desire body actually withdraws from the dense (physical) body and this separation is accomplished by three distinct movements: First, a subtle but gradual withdrawal from the lower extremities; second, a slight hesitation

with a continued withdrawal to the shoulders and head; and last, with the final leap from the shoulders and head into the realm of the next plane. I would venture to estimate that not more than two persons out of a million are normally able to perceive this natural everyday process, although any intelligent person can be trained step by step until he is able to observe this natural phenomena. I knew one highly educated common-sense person who was so startled when he first beheld the act that he cried out in substance, “Oh, Lord, my God, is there no help for the widow’s son?”

For the reader’s rapid perusal I will omit as much as possible technical psychological terms in describing the onset of the sleep state. Two words familiar to most readers of medical and current literature are the subliminal and the supraliminal consciousness, One refers to the ego clothed with all its vehicles in wide-awake consciousness; the other designates the ego denuded of its dense body. In the act of going to sleep the ordinary person first hits a dark point or node when he leaves consciousness for unconsciousness. Between the vivid dream state and wakefulness this node or dark spot is so brief that it becomes a mere line or only a point. As predisposing factors such as muscular fatigue force themselves on the attention of the presiding soul or ego, it then commences the anabolic or restorative processes. To thoroughly repair a residence the owner must temporarily move out; so it is with the human dense body—the ego proceeds to move out with the higher vehicles first by an auto-suggestion to the harmonic whole that the body be placed in a comfortable position. Eyes are then closed and a few thoughts of going to sleep take place; then, as the process continues, the heart beat becomes slower, with a tendency to become periodic, the expirations are more audible and shorter, the excretions and the secretions of the mucous membrane diminish, the eyeballs roll upward and inward, the pupils contract, the knee-flex is lost, blood vessels dilate, the cerebrum is anemic and there is complete inactivation of the frontal brain as the ego makes its exit.

It is well to be thoroughly acquainted with these natural changes when administering an anesthetic in parturition or for a capital operation. To drive



From the painting by H. J. Stock (1853-1930), © Joseph Bibby, *Bibby's Annual*, 1921

He Giveth His Beloved Sleep

More correctly, He giveth to His beloved while he sleeps—physically and spiritually.

the ego completely out during labor may cause death from postpartum hemorrhage, and not to drive it out during a major operation may produce a fatality from fright, or what we choose to call surgical shock. In sleep induced by drug anesthesia or from natural causes the ego re-enters by the same pathway that it exited, ordinarily with great gentleness, as the vibrations of the desire body are an octave higher than those of the dense body. But if the ego, in response to some alarm or electric shock, re-enters with the force of a catapult, the very impact of the desire body's higher vibrations might wreck the anatomical mechanism of the dense body and become the main etiological factor in producing functional and organic changes, such as chorea, catalepsy, epilepsy, and a long list of phobias, most of which are due to a disharmony between the various vehicles of the ego.

The ego and the desire body are subject to the laws of levitation, and often in sleep the dense body will by force of habit attempt to follow them after they have withdrawn to travel in foreign countries, giving rise to that state bordering on the pathological called somnambulism or sleep-walking.

Thus the dense body may incidentally be following the ego across a roof and suffer from an accident when the correlated relationship is interfered with by an outside influence. The accident takes place simultaneously with the node or dark spot of the ego as it enters the dense body.

It is a self-demonstrable truth that the dense body can be brought to such a high state of atomic vibration by a system of right living, coupled with proper diet and certain physical and beneficial mental exercises, that the ego can remain in a state of unbroken conscious even while the dense body sleeps. Furthermore, as the ego reenters the dense body, it can impress on the brain memory

of its out-of body experiences occurring during the preceding eight hours of slumber. To those who have not given the subject thought these observations may seem mere twaddle and preposterous; but do you think an economical nature is going to permit the human spirit, the ego, to waste one out of every three hours? Can you find anything in nature at a dead standstill? The higher the quality of a thing the greater its radio-activity or vibratory profile.

The attainment of this condition of continuous self-consciousness is within the reach of all healthy persons and is directly in opposition to its dangerous counterfeit, hypnosis. Sleep can no longer be considered a dissolution of the continuity of consciousness, for real life is continuous. Here is the portal of sublimity, and how quickly the counterfeiter and the quacks in their "absent treatment" seize the idea; but there are physicians with intrepid courage in every part of this land who have silently entered the gateway of the desire world and have added to their therapeutics a method of healing heretofore undreamed of by our forefathers. □

—W. Stuart Leech, M.D.