

**THE PEARL WITHIN**  
**DISCOVERING THE RICHES**  
**OF THE UNDERWORLD**

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# Chapter Five

## Provisions for the Journey

**L**EAVING FOR WHAT MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT TRIP OF YOUR LIFE, knowing so little about the itinerary, what should you bring with you? How can you be prepared? The ancient Egyptians used to put a little ladder in the tomb for the dead to climb into heaven.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” is a much-quoted observation from the *Tao-Te-Ching*. “It is precisely at the beginning that serious concentration is important, because the beginning holds the seed of all that is to follow” says the *I Ching*, which also says elsewhere, “Exceptional enterprises cannot succeed unless utmost caution is observed in their beginnings and in the laying of their foundations.”

With your first step, consider carefully your attitude towards the Mystery, your life, and your passage.



### Fate, Destiny and Sacrifice

*Sometimes it seemed the days would never end; and when night came, I would lie watching the stars, to count the hours till morning. I thought of my life, the good and evil days; of the gods, and fate; how much of a man's life and of his soul they make for him, how much he makes for himself. What if...? What man would I have become? What if...? Fate and will, will and fate, like earth and sky bringing forth the grain together; and which the bread tastes of, no man knows.<sup>1</sup>*

*Free will is the ability to do gladly that which I must do.<sup>2</sup>*

If there is something precious inside you—inside your body or inside your mind—which you have lost (forgotten) and yet which is a vital core of yourself, imagine how different life could be for you if it returned.

Like a lost orphan, the Mystery we may refer to as “Self,” “Buddha-nature,” “Christ within,” “Krishna,” or by any other name, awaits us, having been cast out from the center by intellectual repudiation of religion. Now our minds identify someone by their sectarian beliefs: “Oh he’s a buddhist; she’s a Christian; they’re psychologists.” In doing so, we have lost sight of the fact that all of these names and belief systems are just that: labels and conceptual systems which people either choose to believe or inherit from their parents.

Like the zen “finger pointing at the moon,” these “Masks of God”<sup>3</sup> have become literalized because we have lost our sense of connection with the real Mystery they only “point at” or cover. We take everything literally now, rather than as a façade or symbol for a hidden Mystery. Is this book about religion or psychology, spirituality or survival? Someone will have to make that decision in order to know which shelf to place it on, which subject keywords to put on its cover. But it is about the Mystery of existence and who we really are. The Mystery is contained—but not confined—in *every* field of thought and each one of us.

To espouse one belief system as better or more true than another is to miss the point of the Mystery altogether. As long as we continue to break things down and label them we may be able to organize, but we will never see the Mystery that we are. And it is this loss of this sense of Mystery that is costing us so much.

You are Something more than your habits, dreams, physique or belief systems. You are all those and yet something greater which contains and infuses all these. You narrow your identity too much if you only identify with any partial aspect of yourself and are unable to see the central Mystery from which they all arise. Each comes directly from the Mystery we truly are, and points back to It. Therefore each partial aspect of yourself is a doorway into the Mystery if only you are able to keep that door open with curiosity and uncertainty, wondering what else is there, rather than being closed by taking any one part as the whole.

We have a fantasy of what kind of body we have, habits that are part of our nature and difficult to change, and beliefs that give us a certain sense of how things really are—hard and pragmatic, rosy and full of promise, cynical and mistrusting, alive and full of joy. Any of these beliefs is only one of the infinite facets of the Mystery. No one of them is necessarily more right than any other, none are wrong, and each is incorrect in its partialness if mistaken for the totality.

Teachers throughout history have always struggled to articulate the Mystery because any attempt to name It or describe It always leads to opposites and contradictions. We’re talking about Something that is *everything*—young AND old, clean AND dirty, wealthy AND impoverished—and nothing. You can see how this could pose a problem for rational communication. If you leave something out, that’s not the Mystery.

If in fact we are, at our core, Something other than our personality and personal will, then we have to take into account that this Mystery may be Something we need to organize our lives around. It may contain our unique life purpose and deepest potential. To live a life in which we believe, on faith, that there is Something mysterious inside of us that contains our purpose is very different than believing we are in charge, can do whatever we set our mind to, and that “the sky’s the limit.”

It is understandable if the human ego in its exuberance from breaking free from superstitious taboos and obedience to the tribal norm has become filled with a “can do” attitude. The Rolling Stones said it: “I’m free, to do what I want, any old time.” But how realistic is it to believe we are free of limits and obligations when our entire life is bound by the inevitable limit of our death?

The prayer of AA:

*God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.*

acknowledges the truth that anyone can see. There are some things we just cannot change. The limits within which we must live were sometimes called "fate." When we attempt to live a life that is in opposition to our core Self and Its purpose, we find that we either fail or pay too high a price for succeeding. Isn't this what the literary theme of "selling your soul" means? Some psychologists believe that a good deal of depression, guilt, and other mental illness is the consequence of refusing to live within the boundaries of the life that is ours, which we could call the "purpose of the true Self."

When we set our minds on a goal and invest it with great emotional value, we stake our identity upon it. Say I want to be a great artist, or ballplayer, or so-and-so's lover. Ego in me says I can do this if I just try hard enough. But what if, no matter how hard I try, I fail? What if I do not reach the goal, achieve my desire? If I respect that at the core of my being there truly is a mysterious purposeful Something, then I can see my failure may be caused by my heedlessly running into a limit built into who I am, contrary to my True Nature. The result will be a refinement of how I see myself, a humility which embraces the fact that I am not the only one in charge of who I am.

But lacking this respect for, and awareness of, a Mystery at my center, as most of us do now, I am more likely to react either with bitterness, anger, loss of self-esteem or self-confidence, leading perhaps to cruelty to myself or others, increasing drug or alcohol abuse, and/or depression. Such is the portrait of life in our times.

Fate is such a distasteful concept today. At one time, it brought a sense of security and reassurance to know that our lives were in fact bounded by limits that both held us back but also gave us a sense of being held in, of being contained. It helped us to feel that our lives were in fact on a meaningful path going somewhere, even if we had no idea where. At least there *was* a path, and this was called our destiny or fate.

Now the closest most of us come to experiencing this feeling is in falling in love. So often when we meet someone and fall into romantic love we cannot escape the feeling that it was fated, meant to be, *bashert*.<sup>4</sup> It is quite likely though that the same feeling can be found in many other life circumstances if we are open to it. For example, I discovered my "calling" to be an astrologer when I walked into a public library many years ago and felt that a book over on the shelf "yelled" at me. Something happened to make me stop in my tracks and walk over and examine this book, which was about astrology. From that moment came a rapid education in the subject, in which it largely felt like I was "remembering" how to do it, rather than learning something new. Was that fate or destiny? It certainly felt like it, though I did not believe in fate at the time.

In losing our connection with, and awareness of, the Mystery at our core, we have lost the humility and reverence which allows us to accept the limits in our lives that earlier times would have labeled "fate." This term offends us today because of its implication that we do not have free will, and therefore are not in control. And this is anathema ("one that is cursed by ecclesiastical authority; someone or something intensely disliked or loathed") to the ego.

At times of failure or compulsion, addiction or catastrophe, we are brought face to face with our lack of control. This is our opportunity to surrender, to yield to Something greater than our personality and to say as Jesus did: "Not my will, but thy Will be done." The same thought is at the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done." Nowadays politicians talk about God's will, but often this seems to be nothing but a code word for their own agenda.

We are not talking here only about the Christian Jesus, but about the Mystery by any name that resides in us and contains the blueprint or DNA code for our soul. When we reach the limits of

our personal power and control and hit the wall of the limits of fate, the crucial determination will be what this does to us, how we assimilate the experience and what our attitude will be as a result. Here is the opportunity for a *metanoia*, or turning-around, repentance or reversal (See **Chapter 8** on Cycles). The Greeks portrayed such reversals as the result of the turning of the Wheel of Fortune, or fate.

Suddenly up or suddenly down—who is really in charge?

At such a time, perhaps the appropriate response is one of consent, which to the ego sounds like giving up (which it is) and weakness (which it is not). Surrender is only abdicating responsibility when there is no higher Power to surrender to. But if there is truly a Mystery which we serve and which we are, then surrendering to It only makes sense. To do otherwise seems both prideful and foolish, as well as destructive. Yet all you have to do is watch drivers today at a Yield sign. Yielding and surrendering are almost obsolete.

We are in awe of the heroic person who sacrifices his or her life for the good of another or for the greater whole. This has long been considered the most noble of acts, worthy of remembrance into eternity. Jesus is remembered by the Christian world for his sacrifice in which he is believed to have given his life for the sake of humanity, to redeem it from the original sin of Adam and the suffering that was incurred as punishment. Sacrifice means “to make whole or sacred,” an act of offering something precious to a deity or the greater whole.

When the ancient Greeks celebrated their victories or good fortune with a feast, they would toss the juiciest meat into the fire, as a sacrifice in grateful acknowledgment of the supremacy of the gods. They knew that they depended on uncontrolled and mysterious higher Powers for their good fortune. Where is that attitude now?

When something precious is taken from us—a dream, our health, or possessions or a loved one—then we have the opportunity to align our attitude with the Mystery by voluntarily accepting it as a sacrifice we are being asked to make, a price to pay. What can teach us this today? We are willing to give up nothing, and resent when we are asked to pay. Why wouldn't we feel this way when the only greater whole we usually are asked to sacrifice for is our government? There are no gods anymore to make our sacrifice—even if it is painful—meaningful and worthwhile.

In our inner life, when we are faced with the need to give something up—a belief, a cherished value or security, as well as a pleasure—we can choose to offer it willingly as a sacrifice. In doing so we still sustain the loss, but we also affirm our allegiance to and respect for the Mystery which we serve.

So sacrifice and consent are common attitudes in someone who respects the Mystery. It is also a way to begin to build a relationship with that Mystery, acting *as if* there is Something other than you that deserves your respect. Such a spirit acknowledges the fated aspect of life (the things I cannot change) and bears witness to the Presence of the Companion or True Self in our lives. In such a life, hardship is borne with patience and goodwill. Complaining is ok. Our lot is not only to get what's ours but also to pay the debt that keeps things in balance (*karma*). And we may often have no idea of what caused the debt to begin with.

*Much of your pain is self-chosen.  
It is the bitter potion by which the  
physician within you heals your sick self.  
Therefore trust the physician, and drink*

*his remedy in silence and tranquility:  
For his hand, though heavy and hard, is  
guided by the tender hand of the Unseen.<sup>5</sup>*

Karma, which we brought up earlier, is a well-known Sanskrit term popularized in the 60's, which means balance. The belief that bad things happen because of karma, meaning one did something equally bad in a past life, is a somewhat trivial expression of the idea. But in karma yoga all actions are undertaken with the attitude that they are to balance previous actions and their results. Thus when we hit the wall of our fate and experience loss or failure, we undertake to do that as well as we would do our successes and accomplishments, because in doing so we are balancing the universe which gives and takes, rewards us and also asks for sacrifice. And in addition, it centers the "I" in a more authentic place, aligned with the True Self or Mystery.

The family curse is another example of the presence of some greater Power in our lives that was once called fate. How do we account for the problems and challenges that are the result of being born into our particular family? The family curse is the stuff of Shakespeare and the Greek playwrights, of a time when fate was acceptable. Though we want to believe we are more "enlightened" now, the very same dynamics continue to be played out through the wounding of incest, alcoholism, drug abuse, or misdeeds committed by ancestors that are still carried in the souls of descendants. And without self-examination and the willingness to pay the debt, we can see ourselves and others passing on the same "curse" to our children, until someone can finally undergo the necessary healing/suffering (paying the "debt") to put a stop to it.

## Imagination, Dreams and Fantasy

*Then I fall asleep  
To dream my dreams of you  
In dreams. . . I walk with you  
In dreams. . . I talk to you  
In dreams. . . You're mine  
All of the time  
We're together  
In dreams. . .<sup>6</sup>*

Try sometime to listen to the lyrics of love songs and to consider them as poems from the soul expressing our yearning for the deeper Self, for our original Home.

If we can acknowledge, or even just entertain the possibility that there IS in fact a Mystery underlying our universe, and that we do not know everything and may never do so, AND that what we don't know may very well be valuable, then our eyes are opened, not to a sudden understanding and solution of life, but opened to imagining and considering without having to be confined by the limits of literalism.

If someone is depressed or obsessed with guns or sex, then besides the literal explanations of biochemistry and childhood trauma, we will be open to other causes, causes that once were called "gods," but which now need new names since we no longer believe in such things. As an interim solution those open to non-literal causes have coined terms like "complexes" and "archetypes."

These are not literal “things,” not even clearly defined causes, but at least they are not restricted to the material and concrete.

In this intermediate step we have at least freed ourselves for now from the need to track down all dysfunction with the microscope. Even so, we still often believe the only treatment, even for a “complex,” is the prescription of a substance to eliminate or lessen the symptom. It is rarely considered that a subtle and non-material cause may best be treated by a subtle and non-material therapy, perhaps using imagination in visualization.

If there is a Mystery, an inner Companion which we have attempted in our times to locate in “the unconscious,” then we need to accord It the proper respect by finding ways to hear this Mystery on Its own terms before leaping to materialistic conclusions. To do so requires a special trust, which is so lacking today. Freud may have popularized the unconscious by referring symptomatic behavior of hysterical women to causes buried there, but his early description of the unconscious resembled that of an internal combustion engine, a concrete system of levers and pulleys, based on equations of force and attraction, and motivated only by animal instinct.

This mechanical level of functioning can be observed in the dynamics attributed to the unconscious, but that does not mean we have understood the unconscious. We can measure and predict the effects of gravity, but that has not given us any kind of definitive understanding of what gravity truly is. It is a Mystery. So is the unconscious. And since the unconscious is by definition shrouded in enigmatic mystery, it is there we must look if we wish to re-establish a relationship with the Mystery which stands at the core of our being, and which is truly Who or What we are.

*Imagination is the Star in Man, the Celestial or Supercelestial Body.*<sup>7</sup>

How does one begin to commune with the unconscious? Does it want to communicate with us? It would appear so because of its endless pouring forth of dreams, symptoms and fantasies. But this is not so obvious today, because little attention is given to the imagination as anything but a way of avoiding reality. The imagination has become vestigial like the appendix, considered useless by most people, although admired by teachers of creativity and seekers of inspiration.

How often do we hear that imagining is a waste of time? “You were *only* imagining things.” What of any value can be found in the activity of imagining? In fact it is there that the treasure can be found. But how treacherous it can be. We can be so deluded, so misled by what we imagine. It is no wonder that people would rather rely on the authority of medical tests and diagnoses found in books. Even when dealing with the products of the imagination, people often rely on the kind of interpretation books that tell us a dream of a cow stands for the mother, a mountain for a goal, etc.

One can hardly hope to develop a meaningful relationship with the unconscious when its utterances are taken to mean only what they “stand for.” It would be like trying to understand someone speaking Italian when you know none, and looking up each word in a dictionary to see what is being said. The idioms, the nuances and the subtle aspects of language are all missing, and these may contain the essence of what is being communicated.

No, it is a much longer and trickier process to learn to establish communication with the unconscious. Proceeding humbly and with caution, expecting many dead ends and misunderstandings, it is more like a playful attempt to catch a fish with one’s hands, being happy to have one while a thousand get away. There can be great joy in the discovery of a single small meaningful hint contained in our world of dreams and fantasies and coincidences.



The unconscious works toward the expression of [your] potential the way a sculptor works toward releasing the statue held inside a rock. To ignore dreams is to hide the sculptor's tools, to tear out pages from our own stories, to drive with our tailpipes dragging on the ground. If we ignore dreams we cut ourselves off from the place from which calls emanate.

If you truly find you want to work at it, then you can begin by tracking your dreams and other imaginative moments. It takes a great leap for our 21st century minds to consider the possibility that there is something actually meaningful contained in the constant stream of imagery that flows beneath our waking attention (and inattention!). With the attitude of a Sherlock Holmes you can begin jotting down in a journal your dreams remembered on waking, fantasies caught passing through your mind at any time, and unexpected coincidences. Expecting nothing in particular, only closely observing in order to see what if anything you might find there, holding off on conclusions and quick interpretations, you can accumulate the stuff of your imagination and strengthen the ability to catch these subtle messages before they disappear.

Often people do not believe they dream, and so the challenge of recording and observing one's dreams becomes all the more difficult in their minds. But we all dream; we just don't all remember. Yet if you make a commitment that you do want to find out what the unconscious has to say to you, and you manifest that commitment in the acquisition of a journal or notepad which you keep beside your bed, and in the willingness to sit up at 3 AM and write down what you have dreamed, soon the floodgates may open. It is often quite amazing how much dreaming becomes available to us once we are determined to pay attention.

Once you've caught an interesting dream, even a small fragment or image (which may be easier to handle at first) or a momentary fantasy, the suggested approach is less like a direct attack and more what the alchemists called a *circumambulatio*, a walking around it patiently in order at first just to see how it looks from different angles. In fact, the motion of circumambulation is usually described as the most effective approach to exploring the unconscious. This is an unfamiliar attitude—to be indirect—in an environment characterized by impatience, immediate gratification and “go for it!”

We let our fantasy or dream imagery “cook” in the imagination. Holding back the impatient desire to “figure it out” and come to an interpretation, the imaginary fragment is sometimes better observed as if it were something we had never seen before, and as if we want to observe it in detail in order to report on it to someone who has never heard of such a thing. A table is a “flat square board made of dark wood, resting on four thin posts of the same wood and attached at the four corners, allowing the flat board to stand a few feet above the floor and parallel to it,” rather than just a “table.”

## DREAM WORK

### Working with Your Dreams and Fantasies

(The following suggestions are not meant to be complete or final in working with your dreams. You may find many other methods that work for you, either from other sources or from your own experimentation.)

*What are dreams?* Human beings have seen dreams in a variety of ways: as messages from a spirit world, as meaningless phenomena generated as side effects of brain activity, as foretelling the future, uncovering past and present motives hidden from our conscious view, or as a form of telepathic communication between the unconscious of two or more

people. Perhaps all of these and other definitions as well have truth in them in differing particular situations.

Or maybe dreams are one of the many mysteries that make up the evolutionary stage of being human. We do not know what dreams are, but we can know from our own experiences that dreams often convey meaningful messages by means of a fluid symbolic language. This language really defies attempts to capture it in dictionaries or rigid rules of dream interpretation.

Dream interpretation is an *art*, not a mechanical process of translation. There should always be enough open space in your attempts to “capture” your dreams and their meaning for you to be surprised. For example, how can we even assume that our dreams are meant to be “captured” or “revealed?” Dream work is typically based on these assumptions, but are they valid?

Perhaps it is best not to view our dreams as mental phenomena to be revealed, but to take them just as they are. Just as we meet our outer experiences in life and react to them as they present themselves to us, it is possible that the same approach is valid with regard to our dreams and fantasies. What if we take the green-colored horse in last night’s dream to be simply the green-colored horse that lives in our dreams, without attempting to penetrate, interpret or manipulate it? Then we wait for it to show or tell us what it’s all about within our dreams, rather than operating upon it with our conscious mind with its beliefs and assumptions.

Dream work is a *process*, an attempt to find a proper way to be with the dream while it works on you. We can think of it for example as “cooking” the dream, allowing it to ripen or carry on its impact upon us that began in our sleep. The following suggestions are ways of simply spending time with the dream—a *circumambulatio*, walking around it—and allowing it to work on us, without trying to force ourselves into its hidden meaning or to compel it to yield to our will.

### Guidelines for Dream Work

Part of the subtlety of working with your dreams is in being able to see dream images in two contexts. For example, consider that the dream is referring to an inner state. Look at the dream through that lens. Then consider that the dream is referring to your outer life. What do you see then? Also, try viewing a dream-content both objectively and subjectively. For example, if you dreamed about a horse, what do you know objectively about horses? They are graceful, strong, can work hard, can be wild or domesticated, etc. And what do you know subjectively about horses? Do they scare you? Inspire you? Awaken a particular memory?

Rather than trying to apply the following suggestions to each and every dream you may have, you may find it more useful to choose a particular dream that seems interesting or important for you and to focus on just that dream for the time being. You can use a fragment of a dream if you wish; it doesn’t have to be a long and detailed dream. Enjoy yourself. Try being a detective, patiently practicing objective observation, looking for clues, overlooking nothing.

In the dream you have chosen to work with, take the time to explore and write about each of the following areas:

**Setting:** Examine the location in physical space and the time in which the dream is happening. Imagine then that you are being called to such a physical space and time within you. For example, if you dream you are in the kitchen of your childhood home, you might consider that this dream refers to a “place” within your psyche, a place in memory perhaps, that was formed in, or refers to, that particular period of childhood, and in the place within you where food is prepared, where experiences are put together and mixed, cooked or transformed, and even eaten, or incorporated. The age of a person or object in the dream may also refer to something in your life that has been existent that long.

**Characters/Objects:** Who or what is portrayed by the dream? Do not try to figure out who they stand for or symbolize, but describe in detail what you can discern about their gender, appearance, characteristics, nature, demeanor, function. Do not pay attention yet as to what these things mean, just gather and write the information. This is helping you to be with the dream and to allow it to work on you.

**Action:** Create a brief synopsis or summary of the action within your dream. What is the central theme or story? What if any crisis, tension, conflict, drama, etc. occurred?

**Outcome:** What, if any, resolution occurs at the end of the dream? Resolved or not, what state does it leave you in?

**Feelings:** What can you remember of how you felt during the dream? At the end of the dream? Now, as you recall the dream?

**Associations:** Do the setting, any of the characters, the action, or especially any of the feelings from the dream bring to mind any memory, associated thought or feeling, anything (even a movie, book, story you heard, etc.)? These may be important. Add these to the material presented by the dream as you consider it. Also consider anything that seems to be a coincidence, connected to the dream even if not causally or rationally.

**History:** Is there a dream history here? Do you remember having dreamed of the setting, any of the characters, or a similar action or outcome previously? Repeating or evolving dream themes can be very important, often occurring over considerable lengths of time. Perhaps you may have dreamed about a particular childhood friend four times over the past 5 years. Consider that you are witnessing a single theme or progressive development having to do with whatever that friend represents in your psyche.

**Playing with the dream:** Feel free to play with any of the material from the above stages of consideration. “What if...?” “Could this be saying...?” Pay particular attention to any internal reactions you may be having that feel like an “aha!”—an insight, a shock of recognition. Also be open to any apparent coincidence that occurs during or after your consideration of the dream and that seems to you, however illogically, to be connected to the dream. Consider that this is somehow tied into the meaning of the dream for you. Another way of playing is to imagine yourself to be one or more of the characters within the dream and to write or speak about yourself as that character. Or perhaps you may carry on a written or spoken dialog in your imagination with a character from the dream to see if any more information is elicited.

All of this takes devotion and time. It is sometimes demanding enough just to be willing to record your dreams, without spending the additional time exploring them. Do what you can, without expecting to deeply explore every dream you have. Try to keep an open

mind, even when something seems “right” to you. And consider that the dream may have more to tell you than what you may already have discovered. Who can say when is the right time to put away a dream and to consider it either a dead-end or fully cooked?

The imagination is the fluid frontier between our waking attention and the mysterious and hidden world beneath it. Even in that statement I am imagining the position of the hidden world as “beneath” my waking consciousness. This idea of location is something to be observed and wondered about. It defines nothing and rests on no solid knowledge. It is just my fantasy of where the unconscious is located. In fact I believe the unconscious is everywhere, but in portraying it as underneath my everyday world, I am attributing to it an underworld quality, like that of Hades or the world of the dead, also the place where seeds sprout and roots drive downward. It is this kind of observation and thinking that we are trying to practice in our attempts to explore the hidden world of the unconscious, which reveals itself through the imagination.

The imagination communicates in fantasy.

What is a fantasy? Like the word “imagination” (“the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality”), it is another term that in our times is used to devalue, to label as wasteful and not-real. Yet if you think about it, EVERYTHING you see around you that is made by human beings originated as a fantasy in the imagination. Before something tangibly can exist, it must first appear in the mind of its creator, in the imagination as an image. Many theologians of various religions have imagined their God’s creation of the universe as proceeding in the same manner, first conceived in the imagination of God and only from there being manifested or built as the material world.

Of course, most fantasy remains disembodied, and whether or not it accurately reflects our outer reality, it is showing us something about our inner world. The imagery of fantasy is not, as the word “imagery” seems to imply, restricted to visual pictures. The fantasy of having a brain tumor is also an image, as is the sudden rush of anxiety for no apparent reason, or the imagined voice in one’s ear when no one is around. Our understanding of fantasy and its images needs to be expanded, consisting of *all* forms of imagined material, whether imaginary body sensations like pain or an erection, moods and feelings without pictures, smells, sounds or voices with no apparent literal source, as well as visuals.

**Fantasy** (“a creation of the imaginative faculty whether expressed or merely conceived: as a fanciful design or invention”) can be seen as an almost constant flow of imagery going on most of the time just outside of our perception. At first we may only be able to deduce a fantasy from our feelings or actions, seeing that our activity is based on assumptions we did not know we had. As an example, our civilization’s tendency to believe and to act as if progress is unlimited and growth will never end, even though we are faced with the obvious presence of limits and even death everywhere around us.

This, like all activity, rests on fantasy. Somewhere in the collective imagination bubbles a fantasy that creates the context and even the necessity for this behavior. What is that fantasy? If we cannot catch a glimpse of it in our own mind, then we can at least deduce backwards toward the source of the behavior. What fantasy is it that sees unlimited growth and expansion? Isn’t this the same fantasy that accompanied the rapid exploration and pioneering spirit which founded the USA? That original impulse has been tempered by the reality that land is not infinite and gold runs out.

But unconsciously we are still stuck in that fantasy, probably because we are so fearful of the death at the end of growth. What is it when growth stops? Stagnation and death. The belief that the stock market and western economy will always grow is no different than the gullible fantasy that participation in a chain letter will never leave anyone with a loss. No matter how many times we read that people lost their savings in such schemes, there are always people who think that this one will really work and benefit everyone at no one's expense.

If you think something is going to happen, but have no actual proof that it will, then you are in a fantasy. We all do it all the time. The belief in the apocalypse, the success of a chain letter, the ultimate golden age of wealth for us all from unlimited economic growth—these are all fantasies (any of which may *really* turn out to happen, or may not). The fantasy itself is *real*, as it is really a fantasy. This has nothing to do with whether or not what is fantasized turns out to manifest concretely. And if enough people are in the same fantasy, no one questions it and no one realizes it *is* a fantasy.

Until...

### The Emperor's New Clothes

by Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time there lived a vain emperor whose only worry in life was to dress in elegant clothes. He changed clothes almost every hour and loved to show them off to his people.

Word of the Emperor's refined habits spread over his kingdom and beyond. Two scoundrels who had heard of the Emperor's vanity decided to take advantage of it. They introduced themselves at the gates of the palace with a scheme in mind.

"We are two very good tailors and after many years of research we have invented an extraordinary method to weave a cloth so light and fine that it looks invisible. As a matter of fact it is invisible to anyone who is too stupid and incompetent to appreciate its quality."

The chief of the guards heard the scoundrel's strange story and sent for the court chamberlain. The chamberlain notified the prime minister, who ran to the Emperor and disclosed the incredible news. The Emperor's curiosity got the better of him and he decided to see the two scoundrels.

"Besides being invisible, your Highness, this cloth will be woven in colors and patterns created especially for you." The emperor gave the two men a bag of gold coins in exchange for their promise to begin working on the fabric immediately.

"Just tell us what you need to get started and we'll give it to you." The two scoundrels asked for a loom, silk, gold thread and then pretended to begin working. The Emperor thought he had spent his money quite well; in addition to getting a new extraordinary suit, he would discover which of his subjects were ignorant and incompetent. A few days later, he called the old and wise prime minister, who was considered by everyone as a man with common sense.

"Go and see how the work is proceeding," the Emperor told him, "and come back to let me know."

The prime minister was welcomed by the two scoundrels.

"We're almost finished, but we need a lot more gold thread. Here, Excellency! Admire the colors, feel the softness!" The old man bent over the loom and tried to see the fabric that was not there. He felt cold sweat on his forehead.

"I can't see anything," he thought. "If I see nothing, that means I'm stupid! Or, worse, incompetent!" If the prime minister admitted that he didn't see anything, he would be discharged from his office.

"What a marvelous fabric," he said then. "I'll certainly tell the Emperor." The two scoundrels rubbed their hands gleefully. They had almost made it. More thread was requested to finish the work.

Finally, the Emperor received the announcement that the two tailors had come to take all the measurements needed to sew his new suit.

"Come in," the Emperor ordered. Even as they bowed, the two scoundrels pretended to be holding a large roll of fabric.

"Here it is your Highness, the result of our labor," the scoundrels said. "We have worked night and day but, at last, the most beautiful fabric in the world is ready for you. Look at the colors and feel how fine it is." Of course the Emperor did not see any colors and could not feel any cloth between his fingers. He panicked and felt like fainting. But luckily the throne was right behind him and he sat down. But when he realized that no one could know that he did not see the fabric, he felt better. Nobody could find out he was stupid and incompetent. And the Emperor didn't know that everybody else around him thought and did the very same thing.

The farce continued as the two scoundrels had foreseen it. Once they had taken the measurements, the two began cutting the air with scissors while sewing with their needles an invisible cloth.

"Your Highness, you'll have to take off your clothes to try on your new ones." The two scoundrels draped the new clothes on him and then held up a mirror. The Emperor was embarrassed but since none of his bystanders were, he felt relieved.

"Yes, this is a beautiful suit and it looks very good on me," the Emperor said trying to look comfortable. "You've done a fine job."

"Your Majesty," the prime minister said, "we have a request for you. The people have found out about this extraordinary fabric and they are anxious to see you in your new suit." The Emperor was doubtful about showing himself naked to the people, but then he abandoned his fears. After all, no one would know about it except the ignorant and the incompetent.

"All right," he said. "I will grant the people this privilege." He summoned his carriage and the ceremonial parade was formed. A group of dignitaries walked at the very front of the procession and anxiously scrutinized the faces of the people in the street. All the people had gathered in the main square, pushing and shoving to get a better look. An applause welcomed the regal procession. Everyone wanted to know how stupid or

incompetent his or her neighbor was but, as the Emperor passed, a strange murmur rose from the crowd.

Everyone said, loud enough for the others to hear: "Look at the Emperor's new clothes. They're beautiful!"

"What a marvelous train!"

"And the colors! The colors of that beautiful fabric! I have never seen anything like it in my life." They all tried to conceal their disappointment at not being able to see the clothes, and since nobody was willing to admit his own stupidity and incompetence, they all behaved as the two scoundrels had predicted.

A child, however, who had no important job and could only see things as his eyes showed them to him, went up to the carriage.

"The Emperor is naked," he said.

"Fool!" his father reprimanded, running after him. "Don't talk nonsense!" He grabbed his child and took him away. But the boy's remark, which had been heard by the bystanders, was repeated over and over again until everyone cried:

"The boy is right! The Emperor is naked! It's true!"

The Emperor realized that the people were right but could not admit to that. He thought it better to continue the procession under the illusion that anyone who couldn't see his clothes was either stupid or incompetent. And he stood stiffly on his carriage, while behind him a page held his imaginary mantle.

We live now in the collectively held fantasies that science will solve all our problems, that we are nothing but matter, that growth never ends. But we are living also in the time when these fantasies are breaking down. Our problems are growing no matter what science does, and in fact we have new bigger problems being created *by* science. Being nothing but matter drains life of its possibilities and reduces us all to random atoms in the universal pinball game of life. Growth that never ends is just another form of cancer.

Answers will not be found in books—including this one—nor in science. Answers will only come from the Source of everything, the Mystery which we have abandoned and yet which has never abandoned us. But as our imaginations dry up and our world is medicated more and more, the day approaches when perhaps no one will remember the Mystery. This is a moment in time, a crucial moment in which we have the opportunity to turn back to the lost Source in each of us in the hopes that if we listen and are open, enough of us will not be misled and deluded, not be inflated by thinking we are God or the Messiah, but will be inspired to new ways of living, or at least to do a better job of overseeing the breakdown and destruction of western civilization for this cycle.

These are the signs of our times:

Obesity as a major health threat, expectations that fully one third of our children will be at risk for Type 2 Diabetes. Overweight adults driving overweight vehicles, guzzling gasoline and polluting the atmosphere. "Through the heaviness of their nourishment I sank into deep slumber," says the

“Hymn of the Pearl.” We’re all obese in some way, overdoing something to our detriment, to make up for...

Who cares? WHO CARES? ADD children, parents massively abdicating responsibility for their children, letting their role as parent slide as money making, career advancement and acquisition of toys takes precedent. Adults in general avoiding our social responsibilities for those who simply cannot make it on their own. Children at younger and younger ages shooting up schools and killing children. Road and air rage in which adults act like infants with no self-control. Corporations bilking investors and enriching the few clever enough to screw everyone else. WAKE UP! Do you think you are witnessing the crowning triumph of our civilization? What do you think you are watching happen in front of your eyes?

## Meditation and Divination: Astrology, Tarot, Runes, I Ching

If we are to recover the capacity to “see” the world around us and inside of us as the movement of the Mystery then we need to learn to break the life-long habit of seeing as we were taught to see. Our conditioning to overlook the obvious and to believe that a name or label gives us understanding cuts off curiosity and wonder and further exploration.

Children can teach us by their openness and wonder. They see objects and behaviors of others with fresh eyes, and their comments or reactions often can shock us into realizing how blind we become once education “teaches” us what things are.

The learning of concepts like “tree” and “season” insulates us from seeing a tree or the seasons as they are, naked in front of us. If we believe, as the ancients did, that all manifestations are the work of the gods (or God), then we would seek to divine the deeper hidden intent or meaning. But today we laugh at anyone who thinks an object “means” anything. An intuitive type of person may still seek hidden meaning, but they are in the small minority in a world of “sensates,” people who take only what their senses show them to be the whole of reality—“What you see is what you get.”

Once you have begun to question your habitual ways of perceiving and are learning to observe with fresh eyes, two things will help develop your insight into hidden meanings. First, learning to meditate—to still the mind, shut out distractions, and concentrate on the subject at hand—brings your mind to a focus. Much like the development of an atrophied muscle, holding the mind steady for a few moments each day, focussing on either your breath, or a word or sound, an image or idea, even a candle flame, will strengthen your ability to see and then to penetrate. After gaining skill in steadying and focussing the mind, receptivity to insight and inspiration can follow. Ideas will just appear, not through logical thought, but often as sudden “aha!” experiences.

Second, in order to open channels of communication between the mysterious unconscious and your conscious mind, you may wish to use some form of divination. In this practice, you would use a method such as tarot cards, runes, the I Ching, or astrology. Before briefly describing each one (and there are others), we can say that what they all have in common is that they have been devised (by whom or when is not certain) in order to provide a “reflection” of unconscious forces to the conscious mind. The wind cannot be seen, but swaying trees and ripples on the water can. Whether by cards, coins, yarrow stalks, tiles or horoscopes, the patterns of unconscious movement can be read or revealed by these and other divination techniques.



These are quite foreign to our western intellect, and their theoretical basis is completely contradictory to our rational cause-and-effect assumption of how the universe works. But if you've come this far, you have already had to suspend rational judgment, at least temporarily. We have been trained to believe that everything that appears or happens in our universe is caused by something else—is the effect of some material cause—and is perhaps the cause of some other effect.

While there is no doubt that cause-and-effect is a major element in our lives, it may not be the *only* way things work. If science derives its effectiveness and power from its assumption of cause-and-effect as the predominant law of the universe, divination rests upon another principle, one that Jung defined as “synchronicity.” Synchronicity implies that there are events in this world that are connected meaningfully but that neither one is cause or effect. We call these coincidences, but we do not attribute meaning to them. The fact that two things occur with enough similarity or with a timing that draws our attention makes us notice and label them a coincidence. But synchronicity means that *there is a meaning* to the connection, and therefore a good reason for us to try to penetrate the surface in order to divine that meaning.

So when you draw a tarot card, or a rune, or toss coins to arrive at an I Ching hexagram, or look at an astrological chart for yourself or a given moment, synchronicity provides the rationale for using these patterns and images to discover the hidden meaning or purpose of the moment. A belief in synchronicity is a quick ticket to the psych ward in many circles.

**Tarot:** Briefly, the tarot consists of a deck of 78 cards made up of 56 minor arcana cards of four suits (cups, wands, coins/pentacles, and swords), which include royalty (kings, queens, pages and knights) plus an additional 22 major arcana cards. It is believed that our 52-card playing cards originated from the tarot. Some believe the tarot originated in ancient Egypt. The symbolic pictures on the tarot cards feed the imagination and bring ideas to mind which can reveal underlying meaning. In cases where a “spread” is being used, a pattern or layout involving more than a single card, meaning is derived as well from the position of any particular card in the spread.

For example, if you choose to draw three cards in sequence representing the past, present and future, then the symbolic meaning of the first card has the additional significance of representing somehow the past, while the next card signifies the present, and so on.

**Runes:** Runes are tiles made of ceramic, stone, glass, or any other material on which there are simple linear symbols, each with a particular meaning. They are often considered to have originated from Norse culture. Usually there are 25 runes in a set. These often are sold in bags accompanied by an interpretation book. By drawing a rune from the bag while thinking of a problem or question, you receive an indication of its underlying significance.

**I Ching:** The I Ching is a method of divination originating from China, using either 3 coins (even pennies will work) or a bunch of 50 yarrow stalks. The coin method is simpler and easier, and the stalks are the more traditional method. With a question or situation in mind, the coins are tossed or the stalks are counted a total of six times, and each time translates into a “line,” which can be either broken (*yin*) or solid (*yang*), changing or not changing. Once the six lines are recorded as a *hexagram*, the result can be looked up in a book and the image it symbolizes can be considered as a meaningful statement on the question.

**Astrology:** Astrology probably originated before recorded history, as human beings sought to find order in the heavens that could reassure them in the midst of chaos on earth. Because astrology and the tarot have been known to Western culture for so long, they bear the additional burden of prej-

udice as being superstitious foolishness and the tools of fortune tellers. But serious consideration will usually reveal a deeper and more earnest aspect to these subjects.

Astrology is the attempt to artfully read meaning from the particular moment of origin of a person, a question or any entity, using the positions of celestial bodies. For our purposes, astrology can be very useful because it depends upon the symbolism of the planets, and since they bear the names of ancient deities, we can imagine their patterns as revealing the activities or intents of the gods. Like the other approaches we have been discussing, our literal cause-and-effect prejudices and narrowness of thought demand that astrology prove its validity on the basis of these assumptions, which it probably cannot do and should not try.

Astrology's strength is that it represents a long-standing system of thought that rests more on intuition and synchronicity, and any attempt to defend it on scientific grounds only tends to castrate its true power. By learning to interpret the symbolism of the planetary patterns present at the moment of your birth, you can find great insight into lifelong issues and traits. And by tracking the movements of the planets against the background of this original chart of your birth, cyclic ups and downs, challenges and opportunities can be understood in their deeper intent and meaning, and your timing can be much improved as you learn to cooperate with deeper rhythms operating in your life.

In all these divinatory methods, learning is facilitated by immersing yourself in the subject (astrology takes much longer to learn). For example, buying a deck of tarot cards or a set of runes and engaging in pretty constant dialog as an experiment will familiarize you with the symbolic meanings and the "voice" of the cards or runes will gradually become more well-known to you. It is not necessary to wait until you have a momentous question. A great way to learn is to ask your chosen method at the beginning of each day what this day is about, what matters most, and then at the end of the day to meditate upon the result as compared to your actual experience.

In all cases, the purpose of learning to use and to understand these methods is, once again, to open the door to the unconscious so that rather than being completely caught up in your daily activities and habits, you are made to pause and consider the deeper meaning of your life, the active presence of unseen "forces" or patterns, and in this reflection you create a space for unconscious insight to be recognized. All these methods foster greater openness, imagination, and fantasy, unless they are applied literally.

But as we said earlier, without the practice of some form of meditation, it is difficult to hold the mind steady and focussed long enough and with enough penetration for a dialog with the unconscious to happen. These techniques are not quick and easy games, but do demand an ongoing sense of commitment and discipline if they are really to prove their value. Through them you may find yourself realizing a deeper and more intentional background to your surface life, and with that comes a greater appreciation and respect for the Mystery that you truly are.

## Notes

- 1 Mary Renault, *The Bull From the Sea* (Vintage, 2001), p. 319.
- 2 C. G. Jung.
- 3 Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God, vols. 1-4*.
- 4 Yiddish, for “fated” or “destined”.
- 5 Kahlil Gibran, Excerpt from *The Prophet*.
- 6 Roy Orbison, “In Dreams”.
- 7 Ruland, *A Lexicon of Alchemy*(Montana: Kessinger Publishing Company, 1612), p. 182.