

## Dreamwork for Everyone

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Received date: December 18, 2017; Accepted date: December 22, 2017; Published date: December 29, 2017

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**In Response to a Request from Renowned International, Scientific Publishing House Routledge which published the Collective Works of Jung CG Ole Vedfelt has written another book, A Guide to the World of Dreams – An Integrative Approach to Dreamwork. Ole's Book was released in May 2017. Psychotherapist Hanne Fogh Pedersen has contributed the following Interview with Ole Vedfelt about Dreaming and about his Book. The Book will be reviewed in the Next Edition of the Danish Psychotherapy Periodical (Tidsskrift for Psykoterapi)**

**Your book contains the most extensive and up-to-date knowledge, psychological and therapeutic, as well as scientific, about dreams and dreamwork. As you see it, what is the higher purpose of working with dreams?**

- The primary premise of my book is that we dream because we are enormously complex beings. We need multiple, yet mutually coordinated, mental states to process the thousands of impressions, impulses and streams of information, often following unconscious pathways, constantly flowing toward us. Dreams are one of these states.

In our dreams, we are liberated from the multitude of chores in our waking lives demanding energy and information. That provides us with the information capacity surplus needed to process the vital issues that we don't have time for in our everyday lives. All the most important schools of psychotherapy - Freud, Jung, existential psychology and others - agree that dreams deal with matters important to us. In recent years this has been confirmed by more systematic scientific methods.

**I find myself doubting about the reasons for working with dreams when I see what is happening in the world. I think that we may have a greater need for greater political involvement or direct social activism such as soup kitchens and shelters.**

- Some of the earliest scientific studies of dreams revealed that people became more socially inept if they were experimentally prevented from dreaming. We can deduce from this that dreams have a social function, a quality considerably intensified through dreamwork. The multitude of examples I've described in my book demonstrate that dreams are helpful to both dreamers and their surroundings.

Good dreamwork helps people of all ages to mature, to become more honest and empathetic, and to be better parents, partners and friends. Good dreamwork helps remold aggressive impulses into

constructive initiatives. It helps people to be more effective, creative and innovative, all of which are good for society. Contrarily, around the world we witness endless examples of conflicts, power struggles and scandals - even in well-intentioned democratic institutions - triggered by people lacking awareness of their own inner emotional motivations. Dreams can be employed in the cultivation of our feelings and, thereby, contribute to society.

**What triggered your original interest in dreamwork?**

- I was in my mid-twenties when my interest in dreams began. I'd just started a Jungian psychotherapy where dreams played a very central role. I experienced that my dreams contained a knowledge about my innermost motives and kept me on a path towards my positive potentials for development no matter how many sidetracks I took. Ever since, my dreams have been unfailing friends contributing to my inner balance in the most difficult of situations.

**Where did this need to develop and describe your overriding theory of dreamwork derive?**

- I've had many competent teachers and benefited from studying at many different schools. However, there has been a tendency within individual schools to shut themselves in, which has created problems for the integration of the collective knowledge of dreams, both theoretical and practical. Published in 2001 my book *The Dimensions of Dreams (Drømmenes Dimensioner)* describes all the most important dream schools from within, you might say. The book was received so well that I found the courage to continue. I wanted to create a theory and a method that was a synthesis of the most valid knowledge about dreams and which contained a comprehensive theory of personality and a cohesive theory of consciousness and the unconscious. You can read about this in my books *Consciousness (Bevidsthed)* and *Unconscious Intelligence (Ubevidst Intelligens)* where I formulate a cybernetic psychology. In *A Guide to the World of Dreams*, this theory is delineated fully when it comes to dreams.

**You talk about dreams being creative and that creativity is a central quality of our dreams. How can we use that creativity?**

- Yes, I do see that as a central quality of dreams - they are creative. Systematic studies show that people awoken by dreams are generally better at solving tasks that demand creative thinking, the ability to combine and problem solving than in other states. When we take an active interest in dreams we also find that dreams are far better and faster than normal waking consciousness at creating metaphors and narratives with dramaturgically based structures and that they always add meaning to our lives. Dream creativity can be utilized to form a more cohesive and mature personality. A more mature personality

makes it possible to act more altruistically and responsibly when it comes to the many shifting challenges and states in life. In my view, there is no disparity between individual maturity and social-mindedness.

### **Your model contains ten core qualities of dreams. How did you come to exactly ten qualities and what's your idea with this categorization?**

- No dream has a definitive interpretation, just like there is no definitive model for dreamwork. One of the core qualities is that dreams are pattern recognition. Dreamwork is about finding a pattern in a dream that fits the individual's life at that particular moment, which includes the patterns from the past that are influencing the person right now, plus the present life situation and future potentials. The pattern that fits all these most fully is called the 'goodness-of-fit' pattern.

I've tried to find a 'goodness-of-fit' model for all available knowledge about dreams. I've designed a number of criteria for that model. Every core quality should be explainable employing my overriding cybernetic theory of complex phenomena. Each core quality should be underpinned by the contemporary knowledge of dreams harvested through therapy and scientific research - including neuropsychology. I have found a 'goodness-of-fit' pattern for the ten core qualities that I believe live up to these criteria. All the core qualities are illustrated with dream-cases from my own practice. Practical dreamwork tools and exercises, which can be employed in increasingly complex combinations as your skills develop, are tied to each and every core quality.

I have been privileged to be able to continually test this overriding model and these exercises in therapy, teaching and supervision together with people with a broad range of skill levels.

### **What's the difference between working alone with your dreams as opposed to working together with someone else such as a therapist?**

- An important question, yet too complex to be answered in such a short interview. Great experience has been acquired in therapeutic

work with dreams in long and short-term therapy, through dreamwork that focuses on counseling, dreamwork in social groups and via self-help. In my book, I make strive to describe how dreams can be processed at these various levels of insight and expertise, and how this can be done in a defensible fashion.

### **What's your experience with the attitudes in society about the use of dreams in psychotherapy? Have they developed over the many years you have worked with dreams?**

- Since every human being dreams, we have an immediate and natural interest in the meaning of these nightly phenomena. Paradoxically, despite the fact that both therapeutic and scientific knowledge has increased and become significantly more precise for more than 100 years, within the established educations in psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy there is a remarkable lack of interest that derives from a lack of updated general knowledge about dreams. Complicit in this has been the standoffs between the various dream schools going all the way back to Freud and Jung. Even the premature releases of the earliest studies of the dreaming brain has contributed to a perception that dreams are meaningless mental refuse. That does not correlate with the latest brain research and our present knowledge about dreams. By presenting factual knowledge in an impartial fashion and describing its practical usefulness, I hope to break through the current biases and inspire readers - lay as well as professional - to experience just what a wonderfully creative opening into our minds dreams are, how precisely they portray our innermost personalities and how useful and invigorating they can be as a supplement to any kind of therapy.

### **Consent**

The interview was first printed in the Danish Psychotherapy Periodical nr. 3 - 2017 (Tidsskrift for Psykoterapi nr. 3 - 2017.)

**For more about Ole Vedfelts authorship:** [www.vedfelt.com](http://www.vedfelt.com)