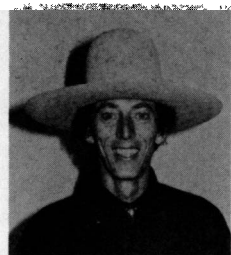


# DREAM INCUBATION: A RECONSTRUCTION OF A RITUAL IN CONTEMPORARY FORM



HENRY REED finds his adventure in experimental psychology. He developed research-oriented courses in humanistic psychology while serving as a psychology professor at Princeton University and designed dream research for the C. G. Jung Dream Laboratory in Zurich where he served as a sabbatical consultant. The writing of the present article brought his ambivalent affair with academia to its inevitable conclusion, and Henry embraced the open wilderness of freelance experimental psychology. Sparked by his dream of a research dance, he finds an occasional oasis where he can conduct his experimental delight, "Dream Quest Theater," a festive overnight ceremony for incubating and enacting a community's unitive mythology. For daily bread, Henry serves as a consultant to research enterprises, as a tutor to students at large, and as editor of the experimental publication, *Sundance Community Dream Journal*, a participant-subscriber circle of dreamers. A flying cyclist and tentmaker, Henry follows the path of the turtle, waits upon the bear, and learns healing songs from stones. At home in America with family and friends, he thoroughly enjoys television, playing with watercolors, and making up stories about himself.

Dream incubation is the ritual of going to sleep in a sacred place in anticipation of receiving a helpful dream from a divine benefactor. Drawing upon a variety of contemporary psychotherapeutic principles and procedures, I constructed an experimental ritual of incubation. The ritual consists of selection and preparation procedures and a special presleep ceremony using the dreamer's own personal symbols of a sacred place and a revered benefactor. Examples of some incubated dreams are reported to illustrate the viability of the ritual for seeking guidance and conflict resolution from dreams. Further research applications of dream incubation are proposed, and the methodological implications of a ritualistic approach to research are discussed.

Dream incubation is the ritual of going to sleep in a sacred place in anticipation of receiving a divinely inspired dream. Incubation rituals have existed in most older cultures and, having been employed for both guidance and healing, may be one source of the therapeutic arts (deBecker, 1968).

The classic example is that of the dream temples of the Greek god, Asklepios. A person with an illness—it may have been organic, psychosomatic, or strictly functional—would go to sleep in the temple, where Asklepios would appear in a visionary dream to perform a symbolic operation. The person would awaken healed. Alternatively, Asklepios would diagnose and prescribe treatment in the dream, which the *therapeutes*, the designated temple attendant, would subsequently administer. Numerous testimonies exist concerning the healings and prescriptions which oc-

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curred in the dreams of those who incubated in the sanctuaries of Asklepios, and the origin of some therapeutic methods has been attributed to these incubations (Edelstein & Edelstein, 1945; Kerényi, 1959; Meier, 1967).

Closer to home is the practice of incubation among the various tribes of native American Indians. Their use of incubation has not been restricted to healing, and they have attributed significant cultural treasures to dream incubations. Indian dream quests have often been discussed in connection with a rite of passage into manhood. Among the Ojibwa of the Great Lakes, for example, the young boy would go out into the wilderness and prepare himself a ritual nest, where he would remain, fasting, until he received the anticipated dream. In his dream, some representative of the spirit world would appear and bless the boy by revealing to him the boy's particular gifts or abilities. The spirit representative would then instruct him in the use of supernatural aids which might be available to the boy in the future. Having been blessed by the dream, the boy also would incur the responsibility of applying his gifts in a prescribed manner for the benefit of his community, on penalty of contracting an untreatable illness (Kiev, 1972; Steiger, 1974; von Grunebaum & Caillois, 1966).

The phenomenon of dream incubation raises many fascinating questions and possibilities. Hoping to first observe this phenomenon and to then investigate its implications and potential usefulness, I have been working to reconstruct a ritual of dream incubation in contemporary form. In this initial article, I will primarily describe in some detail the procedure I have developed and briefly report some general aspects of the results observed.

This work developed out of my interest in the creative possibilities in remembering dreams (Reed, 1973) and was initially conducted as an experimental ritual in a dream laboratory. The procedure was then expanded to be consistent with healing rituals in general (Fish, 1973; Frank, 1961; Guggenbühl-Craig, 1971; Torrey, 1972) and taken literally out in the field to a summer camp. Here a tent (Thermos Pop Tent #8102/28) was erected to serve, in lieu of the laboratory, as the dream sanctuary. Finally, the tent was erected in a small intentional community where the incubation ritual found its natural setting.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It was Gayle Delaney, Princeton '72, who provided me the initial inspiration that dream incubation was a human possibility. I am indebted to Richard Carroll, Princeton '73, for his creative efforts in conducting the preliminary laboratory incubations. I would also like to acknowledge and express my appreciation to the friends and participants of the Atlantic University Dream Seminar, Association for Research and Enlightenment, Virginia Beach, for inviting me to share in their unique community project and allowing me to pursue this research with them.

## THE INCUBATION RITUAL

As an initial guiding rationale in the reconstruction, I assumed that an incubation ritual is an externalization of a psychological fact—a projection mirroring a natural inner process of self-regulation, healing, or transformation. In other words, it is as if the incubant were able, by aligning him or herself with the symbolic structure of the ritual, to allow a certain inner condition to arise which cannot be produced directly. I found as a motif common to many incubation rituals that the incubant went to sleep in a sacred place and expected a helpful dream from a revered, divine benefactor. I therefore assumed these two focal symbols, the sacred place and the revered benefactor, to be projections of the incubant's own human potentiality (Samuels & Bennett, 1973; Wallace, 1973). As such, these symbols are operative today in some of our feelings and expectations concerning our personal spaces or vacation retreats, if not churches and shrines, and concerning our doctors, psychotherapists, clergy, or gurus. The essence of my reconstruction is the bootstrap operation of enlisting these current symbols of sanctity and power to constellate in the contemporary dreamer approximately the same psychodynamic configuration which must have existed in the psyche of the indigenous incubant upon falling asleep in the sanctuary.

The procedure I have developed is composed of four segments: (*a*) the selection of the dreamer for incubation, (*b*) the preparation of the incubant, (*c*) the incubation ceremony, and (*d*) the incubant's testimony.

### *Selection*

An incubation could not be sought in a temple of Asklepios, according to the proscriptions, without the person first being advised to do so in a prior dream. The incubants in my work taught me the importance of such timing, and I came to use almost as stringent a selection criterion, not only to maximize the chances for the incubation of a meaningful dream, but also to protect the incubant from any feelings of failure. To introduce a strong factor of self-selection, there purposely was no solicitation for volunteers for this experimental incubation ritual; but since many people nevertheless inquired about participation, it became necessary to provide them with a means of still further self-selection on the basis of genuine readiness. The use of prior dreams as the basis of this selection suggested itself after I discovered that the most distinguishing characteristic of those incubants in the early stages of the work who had no dream recall the morning after the incubation ceremony was that they all had been unable to recall before the ceremony a recent dream related to the consciously

stated problem. In subsequent incubations, therefore, I asked potential incubants to rely on their dreams to provide the final basis of self-selection, giving an explanation such as this:

It's important that there exists the same readiness in the unconscious to work on the problem you've presented, as well as a genuine feeling of comfortableness about working with me and this incubation ritual. Since incubation involves the cooperation of your dreams, at least, I've found that it's safest and wisest to allow them to take the initiative at this point. Spend some time thinking about your purpose for incubation, and see if your dreams concur by portraying in some form the problem you state for yourself. Should you decide that you would like to participate in the incubation ritual, bring me the dreams you remember.

Allowing the person's dreams an opportunity to respond to the prospect of incubation served well as a final source of self-selection. Many people who otherwise might have inappropriately participated in the ritual simply had no subsequent dream recall. The others returned with dreams portraying conflicts suggestive of the consciously stated problem. With a bolstered desire to experience the meaning of the suffering which now had been both consciously and unconsciously expressed, all these people subsequently incubated meaningful dreams.

### *Preparation*

After the dreamer had decided to participate, a date was picked, from one to three days in the future, for the incubation ceremony. The preparation, which we proceeded to discuss, was perhaps the most important aspect of the ritual. It involved the incubant's contemplating the purpose of the incubation; choosing the personal symbols of the sacred place and the revered benefactor; rendering these symbols, and the dream upon which the decision to incubate had been based, into pictures; and finally, spending a period of time, usually the 24 hours preceding the incubation ceremony, in symbolic purification. In more detail, here is how I instructed the incubant in these matters.

I stressed the primary importance of mulling over the purpose of the incubation until as clear an image as possible was formed of the essential quest. I encouraged the incubant to devote sufficient time to activate and bring toward awareness all the feelings associated with this theme. I was especially concerned that the incubant give serious consideration to the secondary gains of his or her current predicament, as well as to the various sources of positive incentive to a resolution of the situation:

As you contemplate your purpose, it is crucial that you examine all the ways in which you may be possibly benefiting from your current situation of conflict. Search hard for such paradoxical benefits, and honestly consider your readiness to let go of those that may be incompatible with your purpose. If you can humbly accept your susceptibility to these sources of resistance, but you find yourself nevertheless willing to let go of their benefits, you may open yourself to other resources which may offer genuine possibilities for change.

Such is the general tenor of what I tried to communicate to the incubant about the problem of the secondary gains of the presenting difficulty. I also encouraged the incubant to consider the sources of positive incentive for change:

Summon all the reasons you can about the desirability of fulfilling your purpose. Savor what you wish to accomplish. Consider how accomplishing your purpose will place you in greater harmony with life and your highest ideals. How have others been missing out on you and your special gifts because of your problem, and how will they be better served as you fulfill your purpose? But be sure to realistically evaluate your readiness to make use of the fruits of your incubation so that you won't be hoping to profit by new possibilities that you can't actually implement. Perhaps the humble acceptance of your limitations may again be helpful in opening yourself to other resources.

These were issues that the incubant was primarily to ponder alone later during the preparation period, but I would provide some hints how the person might apply these general suggestions to the particular problem being presented. For instance, to a person wanting to overcome a lack of self-confidence in creative self-expression, I would propose that the person not only review all the facts and intuitions which affirmed the value of the person's creative gifts, but also search for possible fears of letting go of perfectionistic standards, and consider the readiness to assume nevertheless the discipline and labor that all creative work requires.

I would also review with the incubant the symbolic scenario of the incubation ritual, how it might be approached as a reflection of an inner process of self-guidance or healing, and how the incubant might best enter into the spirit of the ritual. Here I guided my coaching according to the metaphors the incubant provided, and I explained about the selection of the personal symbols of the sacred place and the revered benefactor:

Your symbol of the place of sanctity should evoke a sense of reverence along with the feelings of safety, comfort, and nurturance that this place provides. Search for such a place where you might go to think over an

important problem, a place in which you feel you might be able to achieve significant perspectives on your life, a place where you would feel centered and at peace. If you could imagine, for example, coming to a realization of the meaning of your life, what would be the setting in which this blessing would most likely occur?

Your symbol of the revered benefactor should inspire you by the feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism which this esteemed person evokes. Survey the people you have most respected and admired—people you have actually known, or only dreamed or fantasied about—and look for that trusted person who could best provide you with what you need to accomplish your purpose. Considering your own particular problem, find a person who you feel would have specially appropriate powers of healing, or a special quality of wisdom. Perhaps it would be someone loving and understanding, with a depth of perception which would enable that person to see into your heart and help you see yourself.

I advised the incubant to devote ample time to the contemplation of the chosen symbols. I requested additionally that pictures be made of these symbols, to provide an external focus of contemplation to help the incubant develop a feeling of resonance with the sources of the projected images. For similar reasons, I asked that a picture also be made of that dream, discussed previously, which concerned the topic of conflict.

Finally we discussed the significance of symbolic acts of purification and how such aspects of ritual may provide meaningful expressions of sincerity and receptivity. If the incubant was inclined to fasting, I counselled that it be approached not with an attitude of deprivation, but rather as an affirmation that one thing could be willingly sacrificed in order to allow sustenance from something else (Bro, 1970). Rather than necessarily fasting from food, I suggested that the incubant consider fasting from an emotional attitude or habit pattern that would have to be relinquished anyway if the purpose of the incubation were fulfilled. I stressed that an effective fast need not be a perfect one, for if the incubant learned from the difficulties of the fast how ubiquitous and unyielding to sacrifice the fasted-from emotional pattern could be, the resultant humility might create more receptivity to the grace of the incubation. I also prompted the incubant to give special thought to the details of the physical preparation for the ceremony, such as bathing, grooming, and clothing. These were all personal matters left to the discretion of the incubant. I did request, however, that the incubant arrange the environment of the dream tent in a personally pleasing manner, and place the pictures within the tent, in order to transform that space into the incubant's own symbolic sanctuary.

Instructing the dreamer in the details of the preparation typically required about an hour. I would then have little contact with the incubant until the evening of the ceremony. The day of the ceremony, the incubant set aside as a quiet day of introspection.

### *Incubation Ceremony*

In the early evening, the incubant and I met in the dream tent, spending a few minutes in silence together before beginning. To begin, I asked the incubant to explain his or her purpose. I would simply listen to the ensuing story, asking an occasional question to clear the way for the expression of more subtle levels of meaning. I specifically asked about the sources of incentives and inhibitions to achieving the purpose of the incubation. We would discuss the incubant's preparation for dealing with these matters, as well as with the possibility that the incubant might not remember any dreams. I would often counsel about the danger of expecting any particular dream experience. This initial period of the ceremony (lasting from two to four hours) functioned as an opportunity for cathartic confession, prompting the activation prior to sleep of many of the ideas and feelings associated with the incubant's purpose.

I then asked the incubant to tell me the dream that had been brought to the ceremony, while we looked at the picture that had been made of this dream. As we began to work with the dream, I engaged in no dream interpretation, but rather coached the incubant to provide the meaning, while we alternated between empathic role-playing dialogues and analytic discussion.

I would ask the incubant initially to tell me the possible meanings of the dream, to provide a basis for later comparison. I then encouraged the incubant to play the role of each and every character or element in the dream (Perls, 1969), while I diplomatically interviewed each one to elicit the expression of its own feelings and ideas (Rogers, 1965) as the entire dream was repeated from that particular point of view. Then when the incubant and I discussed again the possible meanings of the dream, the incubant commonly would emerge with an expression of a more deeply felt meaning than was initially conveyed. Additionally, the incubant would usually express some insight about the relationship between the dream and the consciously expressed problem, often viewing the problem from a fresh perspective.

The incubant would next resume role-playing the characters in the dream, this time engaging in switch-back dialogue between the conflicting elements, while I acted as mediator, until some constructive resolution was



achieved. By entering the dream empathically and attempting to establish harmony, the incubant would experience how his or her variously conflicting motives, notions, habits, and values resisted yielding to compromise. The struggle to carry the dream forward into harmony served as an affirmation of the incubant's willingness nevertheless to explore new patterns. A key assumption underlying this part of the ceremony is that the incubant's symptoms respond sympathetically to the constructive efforts applied in the domain of the dream symbols (Assagioli, 1965; Rossi, 1973).

I then asked the incubant to assume the role of the person chosen as the symbol of the revered benefactor, using the picture made of the benefactor as a point of focus, or as a mask. I would interview this person, eliciting enthusiastic expressions of the benefactor's self-confidence in such areas as healing, power, and wisdom. When I asked the benefactor to speak about the incubant's predicament, the benefactor would often speak with remarkable compassion and authority, offering surprising insights and suggestions. I then prompted the incubant to comment on the benefactor's remarks, and a fruitful dialogue frequently ensued. The incubant would be encouraged by the discovery of such a helpful resource.

Finally I asked the incubant to describe the setting chosen as the personal symbol of the sacred place, while we looked at its picture. The incubant would assume the role of this sacred place, giving expression to those feelings that this symbol evoked.

The incubation ceremony at this point would have lasted from four to six hours. There had been a progression of emotional themes, from the frustration, sadness, or longing of the period of confession; through the conflictual turmoil and its resolution in the dream enactment; and finally, to the optimism and serenity evoked by the personal symbols. I would inform the incubant that our work was essentially finished, and we would take a needed break while the incubant prepared for bed.

We concluded the ceremony with a presleep reverie. While the incubant lay in bed, I began coaching in relaxation, giving instructions in experiencing heaviness and warmth in the limbs, and in experiencing the breath as transpiring of its own accord and without personal effort (a modification of Autogenic Training, Schultz & Luthe, 1969). I included symbolic meanings with the instructions, and provided a symbolic context for the reverie, to place this practice in meaningful relation to the incubation process. "Letting go, trusting in inspiration," was the essential theme. I assured the incubant that having worked hard on the present problem, he or she could now relax, temporarily releasing the problem to the unconscious, and that just as one could trust one's breath, so could one trust to



be inspired. Here is a partial rendition, giving the general sense of the instructional incantation:

Hold your arm up slightly from the ground . . . experience the effort required to resist the pull of gravity . . . gradually yield to gravity, allowing your arm to sink slowly back to earth . . . experience the pleasure of letting go, of giving in to gravity, of letting the earth support you . . . you have done all you can to work on your problem, and you are now entitled to relax . . . you relax as you allow yourself to experience your arms and legs as heavy . . . experience the pleasure of the sensation of heaviness as you let go of your problem and let the earth support you . . . as you focus on the experience of warmth in your arms and legs you feel at peace . . . focus gently, gently on your breathing, following it in and out . . . as you exhale, let the breath go, and release yourself from the control of your breathing . . . give in to expiration with a peaceful sign of relief, and then allow your next breath to come to you on its own . . . trust in your breath, and as you inhale, think, "it breathes me" . . . let go of your breath and trust in inspiration . . .

I then suggested that the incubant imagine being in the chosen place of sanctity, with the revered benefactor. The structure of meanings in the relaxation procedure and this suggested symbolic motif of the incubation process are mutually supportive:

Imagine that you are in your sacred place. Allow the special protective and comforting atmosphere of your place of healing to create within you a mood of serenity . . . your arms and legs are heavy and warm, you have let go of your problem, yielding yourself to the support of the earth, giving in to your expirations with peaceful sighs, as you are safe within your sacred place of healing . . . imagine that your revered benefactor is approaching . . . feel the special vibrations of your benefactor's presence, and experience the confidence and optimism that is inspired in you . . . letting go with a peaceful sigh, trusting in inspiration . . .

This final combination of images, contemplated within the context of all the preceding preparation, is assumed to constellate the receptivity appropriate for incubating a helpful and meaningful dream (cf., Masters & Houston, 1972). To help the incubant maintain this receptivity upon falling asleep, I would then terminate the ceremony with a sleep-inducing reverie accompanied by music. I now encouraged the incubant to relinquish control of even the stream of consciousness, and while not trying to produce any particular result, fall asleep prepared and willing for whatever might be given.

You are in the presence of your revered benefactor, safe within your sacred

place, and have relinquished all further attempts to deal with your problem yourself. Give yourself over to anything that you might now experience, and assume that whatever you might experience is part of the healing that is beginning to transpire as you fall asleep. As the music plays, report to me whatever you experience, whether it be bodily sensations, thoughts, feelings, or images. Let go of control over what happens from this moment on. Let go, and trust in inspiration.

I then turned on a cassette recording presenting a series of selections of classical music designed to be played during a reverie to enhance the emotional component of the reverie experience. This particular program, "Positive Affect" (Bonny & Savary, 1973), has a sequence of emotional themes quite consistent with the symbolic situation being imaginatively assumed by the incubant. As the music played, I would simply coach the incubant to relay any experiences ("tell me what's happening now"), and as the incubant provided intermittent reports, I would simply reply with simple affirmative or supportive remarks ("fine," "go on," and such).

This final presleep reverie was not intended to be an induced dream or guided fantasy, nor was it an attempt to employ suggestion to program a particular dream experience. These alternatives may be workable approaches to inducing potent dreams of particular content (e.g., Tart, 1970; Witkin, 1969), but are contrary to the spirit of this particular dream incubation ritual, whose theme progresses from preparation, through hard work, to surrender. The suggested imagery was not intended as a thematic starting point for a dream, but rather its purpose was to coalesce the incubant's preceding activity into a particular state of being upon falling asleep—an attitude of surrender, trusting to subsequent autonomous processes—and to provide an opportunity for the dreamlike processing and discharging of surface material related to the incubant's work in order to free the subsequent sleep and dream activity to deal with deeper levels of significance.

The music lasted for about 40 minutes. By the time it finished, the incubant's reports would have become almost inaudible. I would then quietly leave the tent, while the incubant would have typically already fallen asleep.

### *Testimony*

The morning after the ceremony, I returned to the dream tent and listened to the incubant relate the dreams from that night. I would ask to hear the dreams at least twice, and then I asked about their possible meanings. In a manner similar to that employed the night before, I would coach the

incubant in assuming the role of each dream element, and afterward we would discuss again the possible meanings of the dreams and their relationship to the purpose of the incubation.

I cautioned the incubant not to rest content with any particular interpretation, but tentatively to apply into practice a hypothesized interpretation and to allow the meaning of the dream to develop over time. I also expressed my belief that the ultimate value of the dream might not in fact lie in its interpretation, but more in its direct experiential impact upon the dreamer. I would therefore prescribe that the incubant mentally rehearse the dream frequently in the future to cultivate a resonance with its images. I specifically requested the incubant to make a picture of the dream to serve as a reminder and a focus of contemplation.

The incubant would then prepare a written testimony of the experience of the incubation ritual, beginning the account with our first contact. The testimony included a record of all the dreams recalled, from this first contact up until the time that the written testimony was completed. The testimony also included a description of the purpose of the incubation, the work that went into the preparation, and as detailed an account as possible of what transpired during the incubation ceremony.

The incubant was required to make a present for me. The presentation of this symbolic gift forgave the incubant of any obligation to me, appeared any desire of mine for compensation, and brought our ritual relationship as incubant and *therapeutes* to a close.

## SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

In this initial article, I will attempt only to describe briefly some general patterns of results so far observed. The observations I will present may be sufficient to suggest the viability of the dream incubation ritual. A more comprehensive presentation must await long-term, follow-up testimonies from the incubants and a theoretical analysis of the function of dreams and of the process of dream incubation. I suspect that the value of the dreams obtained from incubation to come from some synthetic mixture of the experience of the dream itself, elaborations given to the dream images, meanings perceived through the medium of the dream, and the test piloting of these meanings into daily life. I will provide three examples of dream incubations to illustrate how these complementary processes have operated to apparently help fulfill the incubant's purpose.

In many incubations, the dream provided an intense emotional catharsis. For example, one man (age 29) was frustrated by a work inhibi-

tion which was related to extreme self-criticism. This incubant had a prior dream which graphically portrayed the volcanic intensity of his creative energy, but which also portrayed his father as inhibiting the dreamer with his cynicism about the dreamer's efforts to make use of this creativity. In his incubated dream, he had cathartic exchanges with several important people from his past, including especially his father, from whom he received in the dream the kind of positive emotional support which he claimed had been painfully absent in their relationship. The incubant awoke from the dream crying, but relieved and renewed, feeling a fresh capacity for work. Reliving the emotional exchanges in the dream at various times later encouraged him and supported his work efforts. He also had some subsequent meaningful dialogues with his father, made possible, he felt, because the dream had relieved him from continuing his inappropriate emotional demands upon his father.

In some incubations, the dreams were of value in providing other forms of compensatory experience. For example, one young boy (age 14), concerned with his involvement with psychedelic drugs, brought to the incubation ceremony an epic seafaring dream portraying the plight of some pitifully adrift, water-logged creatures who longed desperately for dry land. The young incubant empathized with these creatures, and recognized in their desire for dry land his own longing for a sure-footed alternative to his psychedelic voyages. Yet he resented the pressures of socialization he encountered in the "straight" environment of home and school. His incubated dream gave him the needed experience of navigating satisfactorily on dry land: He was walking down a hot dry road, the dust choking him, when he came to a dead end. He climbed up a tree to survey the surrounding forest, and spotted an axe a short distance away. He climbed down, picked up the axe, and began making his own trail through the forest. In contrast to the dry dusty road, the path he cut for himself was cool and refreshing. Encouraged by this image of blazing his own trail, when he returned to school he successfully initiated his own study projects. His use of drugs declined significantly, and his subsequent dreams provided him with additional images of special implements, such as a jewel-studded sword, which he could add to the resources needed to pursue his individual path.

Sometimes the apparent value of the incubated dream has been primarily in providing just such inspiring symbols. For example, one young woman with asthma (age 22) wished to improve her overly restricting relationship with her mother, a situation which she felt contributed to her asthmatic condition. The dream she brought to the ceremony portrayed a

little girl held captive within a suffocating house belonging to an old woman who had recently died. When she enacted this dream, engaging in dialogue between the little girl and the house, she not only experienced the guilt feelings aroused by her inclination to leave her mother, but she also contacted her feelings of self-doubt about being independent, feelings echoed by her mother. In her incubated dream, an inspiring elderly lady presented her with a fantastically beautiful dress, and sent her away on an important mission. The incubant did sew dresses, and dresses were frequent dream images, but they were usually either too sexy and revealing for her taste or were shabby or overly modest. She said that the dress presented to her in her dream was perfect beyond her imagination. I encouraged her to paint a picture of this dress, and perhaps to sew a facsimile. Sometime later I encountered her, working away from home, and she said she was taking less medication for her asthma. She showed me some beautiful paintings of her dream dress. She was hesitant to actually sew the dress just yet, but she described to me instances in which she would have previously been lacking in self-confidence. Now she handled these instances more easily, simply by imagining that she was wearing her dream dress and acting accordingly.

There have been incubations more ambiguous than the three examples given, as well as some more dramatic. In addition to their incubated dreams, certain incubants experienced something during the night which had the quality of a vision. In contrast to their incubated dreams, the content of these experiences did not seem to fit in with the themes being worked on and were not the typical dreamlike dramas set in distant locales. Instead, the setting of the vision was within the tent itself, where the incubant was visited by a strange presence. The vision would end when the incubant awakened, but leaving the person confused whether the event really happened or was a dream. In one instance, an incubant experienced a beam of light emanating from the presence of someone standing outside the tent. This light passed through the incubant's body, seemingly near his heart. In another instance, an incubant awoke hearing a voice say, "roll over onto your right side and I will give you your number." When the incubant rolled over, the voice spoke the number. The incubant reported that he accepted the number, then fell back asleep, and had a dream in which he took his number to a special friend for interpretation. These vision-like experiences were quite reminiscent of the written accounts of the dream visions experienced by indigenous incubants of other cultures. A final incubation convinced me of the importance of these experiences and led me to suspend conducting further incuba-

tions until I had ample opportunity to evaluate the implications of such experiences for the pursuit of this research.

This particular incubation was conducted with an extremely intelligent and creative woman (age 26) and was distinguished by the responsiveness of her dreams to the prospect of incubation. During the period of preparation, she had dreams in which her personal symbols were portrayed for her and in which she received guidance in other aspects of her preparation. The morning after the incubation ceremony she reported to me some meaningful dreams which have since seemed to fulfill the purpose of her incubation. But also she hesitatingly revealed that something else had happened that night as well: She awoke, startled to find that a strong wind was blowing, and that the tent had blown away. A small, old woman appeared, calling out the incubant's name, and commanded her to awaken and pay attention to what was about to happen. The woman said that she was preparing the incubant's body for death and that the winds were spirits which would pass through her body to check the seven glands. The incubant was at first afraid, then took comfort in the old woman's aura of confidence and authority, and finally yielded her body to the experience, almost pleased with the prospect of death. During this time, the incubant saw before her a large luminous tablet, containing many columns of fine print which detailed her experiences in her past and future lives. The vision ended abruptly, and the incubant found herself lying within the tent as if she had awakened from a dream. She reported that this experience was qualitatively different, however, from any of her other dreams or psychedelic experiences. In her most recent letter, written several months after her incubation, she said that her visionary experience effectively revealed to her how her existence is not dependent upon her physical body. She also reported that her dreams were just beginning to deal with the contents of this vision, after having finally terminated a long series of commentaries on the dreams she had incubated concerning her initial problem.

It is in this last respect that this particular incubation, as profound as it may prove to be, has been similar to the results of the others. Whatever potential benefits were provided by the incubated dream, they seemed to require patient cultivation before they began to manifest in actuality. The incubants have typically presented stories of gradual change, in which participation in the incubation ritual is given a timely and meaningful role, but certainly not an exclusive or necessarily causal one. Most significantly, the incubants have frequently reported a subtle yet quite encouraging change in their relationship to their dreams. Their dreams appear more responsive, and there is a greater feeling of dialogue and

cooperation, as subsequent dreams have guided the endeavor to apply the fruits of the incubated dream. The incubation ritual was designed to reflect back the incubant's own inner resources and to help the incubant become more self-sufficient in growth. As one incubant phrased it, the incubation "gave me a unique touch with myself."

I will conclude these observations by briefly noting that the dream tent also seemed to provide the community as a whole with a means of self-reflection and growth. One incubant had a dream about the community which, when enacted by its members, provided a meaningful symbolic psychodrama revealing existent patterns of interpersonal conflict and providing means of reconciliation. This dream served to creatively reintegrate the individual incubant into the community. I also observed instances of apparently telepathic dreams, but particularly provocative were dreams of community members on the night of an incubation ceremony which went beyond telepathy to suggest that an individual incubant's healing dream involved a transformation for the entire community of dreamers.

## COMMENTS

I believe that the contemporary ritual I have described permits the many facets of the phenomenon of dream incubation to be revealed and should prove to be a fruitful paradigm for further research. I have some comments about such research possibilities.

Concerning the mechanism of transformation provided by the dream, Rossi (1973a, 1973b) has suggested that it is through the creation of new phenomenological programs involving actual biochemical restructuring. In the context of the body psychotherapies (Brown, 1973), for example, an incubated dream might thus provide an important source of integration and consolidation of the induced physical changes and create an inspiring symbolic orientation for the newly gestalted body. For any psychotherapeutic application, however, further research is required to discover the conditions and limits of the incubant's ability to assimilate and apply the potential transformative value of the incubated dream. Hopefully such research will lead to the discovery of even more valid and potent means of dream realization.

Beyond individual psychotherapy, the cultural value of the incubated dream presents an exciting prospect for research. As we search for vital contemporary myths, we are reminded that incubated dreams and visions have traditionally been a vehicle of entry for such revitalizations (de-



Becker, 1968; Campbell, 1972; Kelsey, 1973). Already there has been preliminary experimentation with the social value of the shared dream (Latner & Sabini, 1972). I suspect that a dream incubation ritual has the potential of providing contemporary intentional communities a means of evolving their own unifying symbolic culture of myths, rituals, songs, and dances. I believe that in such an application there also lies a unique opportunity for exploring the parapsychological and transpersonal phenomena so often attributed to dreams (Krippner & Ferish, 1971; Ullman, Krippner, & Vaughn, 1973).

But beyond even any particular application of dream incubation are the important implications of ritual for the research process itself. What happens to the philosophical foundation of scientific methodology if exploration of certain phenomena requires substituting a symbolic ritual for a technical method? What becomes of our traditional reliance on the ideal of the unbiased, controlled replicability of scientific knowledge if participating in such an experimental ritual further presupposes surrendering as if in faith to the operation of factors necessarily beyond our individual control? Other researchers have already meaningfully investigated phenomena in a manner which stretches the credibility of this traditional ideal (LeShan, 1974; Lilly, 1972; Tart, 1971). As we continue to explore altered states of consciousness and parapsychology, maintaining our idealization of a causal research paradigm, requiring the manipulation and control of the experimental variables by an impartial and detached observer, may lead us into the moral ambiguities of the practice of magic. The use of symbolic ritual may provide us with an acausal but meaningful paradigm through which we can attune ourselves to the self-realization of the realities we wish to explore (Siu, 1957). Toward this endeavor, I have a dream to share:

We are gathered together for research and enlightenment. We have not yet found the appropriate paradigm for our research, and we are standing around in the dark. Suddenly, we begin to dance together in a circle, and we discover that the paradigm we long for is contained and expressed in our dancing. As we greet and celebrate one another in turn, each of us displaying our personal dream emblem, our dance generates a central fountain of sparks which fly off to illuminate our space.

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