

# *Mysteries of Dreams and Sleep by Dane Rudhyar*

**If we were to select one astrological teaching** as the most fundamental, it would assuredly be the principle of polarity. Every factor used in astrology has its polar opposite. Every sign of the zodiac has as its polarity the opposite sign. The winter solstice balances the summer solstice — the spring equinox, the fall equinox. Every planet is paired with another planet (Sun and Moon, Mars and Venus, Jupiter and Saturn or Jupiter and Mercury). Each section of the natal chart (i.e., each house) above the horizon is the complement of the one facing it below the horizon. The eastern ascendant balances the western descendant, etc.

Astrology is primarily a method for gaining full understanding of living organisms; these may be bodies or personalities, even social organizations (like nations and business firms) which somehow operate as more or less permanent wholes organizing the productive activities of human beings. Life, in any form, operates according to a bi-polar rhythm — just as does electricity which, when active, always has a positive and a negative pole. So the understanding of polarity is essential to the study of astrology.

The most striking of these polar oppositions in man's life is that of waking consciousness and of sleep. In some civilizations and religions, this alternation of conscious activity and unconscious slumber has been extended to embrace the idea of a similar alternation of incarnated existence on Earth and "discarnated" absorption into a transcendent state of being beyond the portals of death.

This last-mentioned idea — the doctrine of reincarnation, as it is usually called — is rarely well understood; it can be significantly understood in a simple manner only when related to that which we call sleep. Unfortunately, we have only a most vague notion of what sleep means! We do not bother to ask why we sleep — though we pass a third of our existence sleeping — except for the fact that we know we must go to sleep when we are too tired. But why sleep rests us, why we must lose our usual consciousness (our day sense of identity, of being "I") and why we experience these peculiar phenomena called dreams — well, we simply do not ask. We take these things for granted, just as we take death and sickness as inevitable events which we must accept, even though we do not understand them.

Religions and philosophies are supposed to enlighten us on such basic matters. But their explanations often shed very little light and are cloaked in superstition, and fancy. As for science and modern psychology, they have many theories about sleep and dreams; but what they say explains very little, merely replacing one unknown by another.

Can there be no way of getting at a simple explanation which would present, at least in big outlines, a picture of the relation between the state of waking, conscious activity and the condition of unconscious sleep? Obviously, such a picture would have to include the phenomenon of dreams, for somehow dreams occur at the borderland between waking consciousness and sleep, partaking in some peculiar manner of both states.

I believe that the tools and symbols provided by astrology can serve to elucidate in a general way the problem I have just stated; and I shall suggest a simple key which, if we use it well, could bring much light upon matters usually shrouded in mystery.

## The modern view of the solar system

We know now that some of the Greek philosophers understood that the Earth revolves around the Sun, but it was only after Galileo, Kepler and Newton, some five hundred years ago, that the modern picture of the solar system became clearly outlined. It was only after Uranus and Neptune, then Pluto were discovered within the last two hundred years that astrologers could use in its true meaning this new "heliocentric" (i.e., Sun-centered) picture of the solar system.

I do not refer here to the heliocentric position of the planets in the zodiac; these positions can be studied with very valid results; but this requires a special ephemeris, as the tables astrologers ordinarily use today give the geocentric positions of the planets — that is, their movements as seen from our Earth. But even if we use the geocentric positions of the planets in erecting birth-charts, we can keep in mind the modern heliocentric picture of the solar-system and think of the planets as representing dynamic functions within the solar system as a whole.

The solar system, with the Sun at its core, is a cosmic unit and, in a symbolic sense at least, a "living organism." It is for this reason that, by studying the related cyclic motions of the planets, the astrologer can understand better, and to some extent foresee, the periodic ebbs and flows of life and consciousness within a human being — or the course which emotions, urges, trends of thoughts do take during the life span of an individual. The whole solar system, thus, is seen as representing the individual personality as a whole.

## Two kinds of planets

It has become clear to the psychologically informed astrologer that the complexities of a modern human personality require all the planets we now know to describe and represent them. The ancients stopped at Saturn when casting their charts; but the orbit of Saturn is actually only the dividing line between two types of planets. The planets between the central Sun and Saturn (included) refer to one aspect of the human personality as a whole; the planets beyond Saturn (Uranus, Neptune, Pluto — and there may be more!) represent another aspect, one which balances and complements the first. A definite polar relationship exists between these two groups (or series) of planets.

It is this relationship which we must try to understand. The majority of astrologers speak of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto as if they were planets in the same sense as the others. Others have conceived the idea that the three "trans-Saturnian" (i.e., beyond Saturn) planets are "higher octaves" of Mercury, Venus and Mars — though their opinions differ as to which of the latter series correspond to the former. In my opinion, the higher octave idea, even if partly valid, does not go to the root of the difference between the two groups of planets.

What is the real difference? What makes one series the polar opposite of the other?

Any organic system or cosmic unit is subjected to two contrary forces. There is the pull which draws every part of the system to the center (for instance, the pull of gravitation); but there is also the pull exerted by outer space, which actually means by a larger system within which the first system operates.

In the case of the solar system, this larger system is called the galaxy. Our Sun is but one of millions of stars composing this immense spiral nebula, the galaxy (or Milky Way); this in turn is part of a finite Universe composed of millions of nebulae of various types. Every planet of our solar system and every living being on Earth is to some degree affected by the pressures and pulls which reach us from the galaxy; we are also affected in an opposite direction by the gravitational power of the Sun, center of our system.

Saturn, however, represents a basic line of demarcation between these two opposite forces, galactic and solar. The planets inside of Saturn's orbit are mainly creatures and vassals of the Sun; while the planets beyond Saturn are what I have called, many years ago, "ambassadors of the galaxy." They focus upon the solar system the power of this vast community of stars, the galaxy. They do not completely belong to the solar system. They are within its sphere of influence to do a work, to link our small system (of which the Sun is the center and Saturn's orbit the circumference) with the larger system, the galaxy.

This may sound at first quite fanciful; but if we apply the idea to the facts of human existence, we will at once see what it actually means. An individual person — everyone will agree — does not live an isolated existence. He is part of a family group, a community. He is, thus, a small unit active within a larger whole. He is an individual having some part to play within a collectivity.

Here then is the polarity of which I spoke when I mentioned the solar system and the whole galaxy — the individual star and the vast galactic community of stars. Truly, the individual acts upon the collective life of the community within which he is born and he lives; but the collective thinking and behavior of the community — its traditions, religion, culture, ethics — have molded this individual and constantly exert a pressure, an influence (constructive or destructive) upon him. If he rebels against this influence, he still remains conditioned by what he rebels against.

There is an even deeper kind of polarity, in which the conscious and self-determined individual with a purpose of his own comes in contrast to the vast ocean of universal life — the life which animates his body and all human bodies, which gives power to, yet controls as

long as it can, the individual's basic urges, emotions and instinctive thinking. It is to this most basic polarity that we must refer primarily the alternation, of waking consciousness and sleep—and ultimately of individual bodily existence and death.

The principle of such an alternation is very simple. The life of a human personality is the result of a relationship between two polar forces: one seeks to make of this person a conscious, self-sufficient, self-determined, purposefully acting individual; the other tries to draw him back into the vast undifferentiated, unconscious, unindividualized ocean of life. When the individualizing force is positive and dominant, man is awake and busy with conscious endeavors and planned activities of some sort. But when the power of universal life gains control and the individualizing force in man turns negative (what we call fatigue and its psychic equivalent), then man falls asleep

This works out also, in a psychological sense, with the less basic polar opposition between individual and society. When the individual is strongly and positively self-determined, he is fully awake mentally and spiritually — he creates new values or rebels against obsolete ones; he stands out as a power in society. But whenever society ruthlessly compels its would-be individuals to conform to its norms and collective standards, then the human beings in that society go on living in a somewhat somnolent mental and spiritual, state — as happens in all totalitarian societies.

When we deal with the polar opposition, individual and society, we still find ourselves within the realm of the conscious, wakeful activity. The contrast, astrologically speaking, is one between such personal planets as Mars, Venus, Mercury and the social pairs of planets, Jupiter and Saturn. But when we come to the polar opposition between waking consciousness and sleep, between the conscious and the unconscious (to use modern psychological terms), then we deal astrologically with the contrast between all planets within and including the orbit of Saturn, and the trans-Saturnian planets (Uranus, Neptune, Pluto).

When we speak of the unconscious, we consider sleep and all manifestations of life which transcend consciousness as being simply the negation or absence of consciousness. Likewise, for a long period, scientists and philosophers thought of space beyond the limits of our solar system as completely empty — thus, in a negative sense. But now we begin to realize (as the ancients well knew!) that space outside of the solar system is not mere emptiness. Rather, it is the field of active existence of the vast cosmic organism of the galaxy. We "live, move and have our being" in the immense body of the galaxy. We cannot think of this galactic space in a negative sense; it is a fullness of forces, a *plenum*, a "field" of electromagnetic energies — and perhaps of many other kinds of transcendent energies unknown to us.

Likewise, what modern psychologists call (quite unfortunately) the unconscious is not a realm of emptiness. When we sleep, we do not go into nothingness. We change polarity. The conscious, individual pole of our total being turns negative, to the life-pole which now becomes strongly positive and active. Life takes over the controls.

A time comes, however, when man wakes up; the "waters" of all-powerful life partly withdraw from his mind, his nervous system and from the fringes of his cells' activities. Saturated for a period with this undifferentiated life flow, every cell and organ, his brains and his nerves respond now to the new surge of conscious self-directed activity, thinking and feeling. Individual problems are faced again in the sunlight of consciousness. And what of dreams?

## The stuff of dreams

Sometimes when the tide withdraws from the beach, small pools of water remain, especially where rocks jut out and contain the water. It may help the reader to think for a moment of the little shrimps, fishes or even small octopi often trapped in these pools of water as representing some of our dreams. At times, a huge whale may be left on the sand, dying or dead. All kinds of flotsam and jetsam are left on the beach by the receding tides — and often we can hardly recognize what they were. They are washed upon the shores of the conscious out of the depths and currents of the unconscious.

There are many kinds of dreams, and this illustration applies at best only to a few of them; thus, it must not be taken literally or as covering all instances of dreams. It would, indeed, be best to think of dreams generally as the reactions of the unconscious to what has happened during, and what results from, the individual person's conscious activity during waking time.

Just as society reacts to the productive or distinctive deeds of an individual by bestowing upon him wealth and fame, or by sending him to jail after harrowing experiences, so the unconscious pole of our total being reacts to our conscious feelings, thoughts and behavior as soon as the polarities reverse themselves. Life, being in control during sleep, has its say. It takes to task the conscious part of our total being, even as it tries somehow to repair the damages done by our willful, individualistic conscious ego.

If the ego is particularly determined and successful in challenging the traditional and moral ways of his collectivity, his culture and religion — or deeper still, in opposing or blocking the natural instincts and emotions of human nature (as in asceticism, for instance) — then at night, while the individual sleeps, the collective pole of his being raises strong protests, warns of danger, seeks to impress upon the ego polarity pictures of disastrous consequences or a sense of inevitable failure and futility — or simply to win it to its side.

When this happens, some impressions of the protests of the collective pole are left upon certain sensitized areas of the brain, even of some of the big nerve plexi in the body. When the polarities once more reverse themselves and the individual pole (the ego) comes back to conscious control (i.e., we wake up), these impressions are caught by the consciousness as dreams.

The reason dreams are so puzzling is a manifold one. First, the collective pole of our being (society and life or human nature) cannot communicate its upsets or protests in intellectual language; it can only capture fumblingly from the storehouse of past images

which the brain or memory contains a few which are linked analogically, or attuned to, what the unconscious tries to convey to the conscious. These images are, thus, significant mostly in terms of analogies, of symbols; and they are presented in a sequence which has little to do with — the principles of conscious logic.

The dream represents mostly a spatial sequence of pictures impressed upon the brain or other nerve centers. The sense of sequence in time arises only when the awakening ego, as yet barely recovered from its negative or passive sleep condition, tries to scan quickly these impressions made upon the portion's of the human organism with which this ego is most closely associated (i.e., the nerve centers). It is as if a busy executive rushing into his office in the morning would see a mass of papers spread over his desk; phone calls are already reaching him, and all he can do is to scan hurriedly the spread-out papers, doing so in most cases not in the order in which his several secretaries had placed them before his arrival.

Occasionally, some most important message stands out. The executive is roused while at home by someone who gives him a crucial message: the president is very ill; the stock market is likely to collapse early in the morning; there is a fire in the warehouse, etc. Yet, even though the message may reach the executive (the ego) with a bang, it may be all jumbled up; it may come to him through a servant or his wife, who may not have gotten it accurately over the phone, etc.

## A classification of dreams

All such illustrations are, of course, quite inadequate; they can only hint at the character of a process which cannot be accurately translated in terms of conscious experiences alone. Astrology may add another dimension to our analysis of the dream processes by making us differentiate dreams into three basic categories: Uranian, Neptunian and Plutonian.

**The Uranian type of dream** is a direct challenge to the narrowness, the self-satisfied inertia, the selfishness or ruthlessness of the Saturnian ego. The ego is essentially of a Saturnian character because Saturn represents the structure and boundaries of the individual pole of our being. When we become overindividualized in a separate, exclusive, narrow and rigid way, then this overemphasis upon the Saturn function calls forth a complementary, polar reaction from society, life or God within our total being. It is as if the galaxy were sending a stream of powerful rays into a solar system whose electromagnetic field had become over-insulated and might, thus, become a "cancerous system" in the galactic community.

The Galactic power reaches the solar system by way of Uranus. The Uranian type of dream is, in its highest sense, prophetic and illuminating. It may even be an apparition, a flash of inspiration or illumination, even during the wakeful phase of conscious ego activity — as, for instance, were Christ's image and words impressed violently upon Paul on the road to Damascus in answer to his blindly traditional and fanatic ego decision to destroy the believers in the new Divine Revelation.

Uranian dreams are usually highly disturbing. They come as a challenge, and not one that the ego readily accepts. Solemn words may be parts of the dream; often light, or one definite color, stands out as a strong element of the dream picture. What C. G. Jung calls "Archetypes of the Unconscious" usually appear in such dreams;" they refer to one of the deepest and most universal experiences of mankind; they are related to a basic aspect or function of universal life as it operates in human nature. Thus, they often have a religious character; and the dream may have the power to transform the dreamer quite basically (conversion) or to disturb thoroughly his or her self-sufficiency and egocentricity or pet ideas.

**Neptunian dreams** are the most frequent. They are reactions to anything that disturbs the normal, average balance of the individual's relationship to his society, his health, his digestion or the basic instincts of his body. Neptune, in this sense, answers by dreams to any disturbance in or danger to the complex functions performed by Jupiter, in both the body and the psyche. Any challenge to a social or moral principle of conduct, any encroachment upon a safe "diet" (of body or mind) tends to arouse Neptunian dreams, and they are usually very fanciful!

If the body becomes cold at night because of a sudden drop of temperature, one may awaken remembering a long and dramatic dream of walking in a snowstorm, falling into icy water, etc. If one is led by a powerful urge to break moral or social rules of conduct, it is likely that, sooner or later, one may dream of dramatic scenes in which the participants in the situation will appear in strange but symbolic surroundings, perhaps under disguises which will make the deep truth of the situation less unpalatable at first shock to the individual.

The Freudian system of dream analysis has accustomed the modern mind to think of what Freud called the "censor." This censor is said to represent, as it were, a kind of private guardian of the ego's personal safety protecting him against any unpleasant upsets or attempts at revolution in his realm. The disturbing impressions left by the collective pole of our being are, thus, censored, changed, garbled or obliterated altogether before the conscious individual can become aware of them.

Whether there is actually such a censor is very doubtful. What it refers to is simply a particular stage of the relationship between the two polarities of our being — individual and collective, conscious and unconscious, day activity and sleep — a stage at which the individual is particularly rebellious against the collective and the insecure ego feels constantly in need of protection from society.

**Plutonian dreams** are rarer. They can be quite destructive of the integration of the total personality — strange nightmares leaving a ghastly feeling of fear, foreboding, death. In more spiritual individuals, they may be the projections and symbols of profound experiences of self-renewal and of expansion of the very essence of the self.

Uranian dreams are heralds of what might be; they show the way ahead, they inspire to go on, they rouse the ego-bound soul to new possibilities. Plutonian dreams may be the

reflection upon the waking consciousness of real steps taken in inner unfoldment and soul growth — or, negatively, they reveal the pain or despair of the soul who has (at least temporarily) failed and perhaps the abyss ahead and the dark presences that fill those abysmal depths.

If, as is probable, there is at least one more planet beyond Pluto, such a planet should refer to even more real and definite inner experiences in the souls who have become, at least to some extent, integral parts of the vast community of godlike souls — of which the galaxy is the astrological symbol.

C. G. Jung, the psychologist, said that there are levels upon levels of collective unconscious. It is so inasmuch as there is a vast hierarchy of levels upon which individuals can act consciously and creatively. The galaxy, too, I repeat, is but one among the myriad of spiral nebulae which constitute a universe; and universes may be parts in a far vaster cosmos. There is no conceivable end to the possibility of becoming a conscious individual at ever more inclusive, more cosmic levels.

Yet any individual — unless he be the all-inclusive Godhead — is but an active center within a larger whole, a collectivity. Between this individual and this collectivity, there must always be a relationship operating in alternating phases. We human beings know such alternating phases as waking consciousness and sleep, embodied existence and death. But these terms have meaning only in terms of our human experience.

The Hindu philosophers spoke of the Days and Nights of Brahma, the Creator of universes in which consciousness unfolds and of conditions of absolute non-being in which nothing exists. Yet, to the sage, there is beyond those cosmic days and nights, beyond consciousness and unconsciousness, that which contains both. The Hindus named that symbolically the "Great Breath," exhaling the world into being, inhaling it into immense peace.

Thus, we experience our conscious ego being exhaled into the world of day activity as we wake up and inhaled into sleep as we lie down for rest. In a sense, we are both conditions, conscious and unconscious; we are also that which includes both. The planets from the Sun to Saturn drive us to conscious activity; but the planets beyond Saturn — when the day is over — lead us to the vast spaces of the galaxy, where we know our greater self, the stars that we are. When the alternative rhythm brings us back to day consciousness, then Uranus, Neptune and Pluto ever seek to make us remember that we are not only a Saturn-bound, Sun-centered individual self, but that we belong to the greater community of the stars as well.