

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Dream as Posthypnotic Command

Kurt Forrer^{1*}

¹26 Parkins Reef Road Maldon, Vic. Australia

ABSTRACT

The posthypnotic command is issued in deep hypnosis when a subject's brainwaves are in theta mode of 4-7 cycles per second. This is the same frequency that the dream state features. It suggests that dreaming and deep hypnosis are equivalent states. The word hypnosis, meaning a condition of sleep, suggests that the ancients understood this equivalence.

When a subject in deep hypnosis is commanded to execute a certain task at a given time after 'waking up', the subject will do so at exactly the designated time. When asked for a reason for his action, the answer will never be correct, for while under hypnosis he was asked by the hypnotist to forget the command. But the subject will certainly have a perfectly rational explanation no matter how absurd the order may have been.

This is precisely the case when we are asked to give an explanation for any action we have executed. If my hypothesis is right, our answer to the same question is equally wrong, yet perfectly rational. Indeed, while we have no idea where our motivation arises and where our ideas come from, we are in the same position of darkness as the hypnotised subject.

My research in dreams has convinced me that dreams are the source of our inspiration and motivation. Evidence for this comes from creative people who have received ideas from their dreams or have been presented with solutions by them to their problems. Famous scientific discoveries have been made with the help of dreams by Thomas Edison, Kekulé, Otto Loewi and Elijah Howe, for instance. Among the men of creative writing Robert Louis Stevenson stands out, for he deliberately invoked his dreams to provide him with new plots for stories. But he also suspected that the honing and reworking of his dream plots was also done for him by his "Brownies and Little People" of the night.

Like the posthypnotic suggestion, the dream has a *timing device* determining when a dream or part of it should manifest in waking time. Perhaps the most convincing evidence for this is Michael Barnsley's twenty-year nightmare that taunted him to put the wires of a matrix in order. Since he had no idea of what the matrix was supposed to do, he was naturally unable to solve the problem posed to him. The nightmare only ceased after he met Benoit Mandelbrot who had by then invented a computer program for fractal math, a program that provided all the necessary information for Barnsley to understand the dream that ended the nightmares by providing him with the solution of the confused wires of the dream matrix. This dream gave him the circuitry that led to the invention of image compression software.

The *wet dream*, which occurs at the end of the night of dreams and is a heightened sexual state, indicated by morning erections, shows that the sexual content of the dream forces the dreamer, who by then is free of the nightly muscle inhibitors, to act it out. This leads us to surmise that the sexual aspect of the dream tends to manifest on the dream day. A thorough investigation of this circumstance proved the inference right. This led me to devise a test of the dream's power to compel us to execute its content. It entails the interpretation of the sexual meaning of the dream and making a prediction on account of it. The corresponding manifestations verify my theory.

I found support in my view that dreams were *posthypnotic commands* in the experimentations of Professor Libet, who found that our decisions were made unconsciously up to half a second before we became conscious of them. They demonstrate that our decisions are made unconsciously. There is no better explanation of this process than the dream. In short, the subjects tested by Libet would have dreamt the experiments ahead of time, thus providing them with the appropriate *dream memory*. It was this that determined the unconscious choices of the experimentees, registering half a second before becoming conscious fact.

The *somnambulist* provides another factor that supports the hypothesis that dreams are *posthypnotic commands*. He, like the *wet dreamer*, is in a state of reduced muscle inhibition and is consequently free to act out his dreams. I realise that there is considerable controversy with regard to the causes of sleepwalking. But the difference between the *wet dreamer* and the *somnambulist* is minimal. Indeed, why would the dream state be constrained by muscle inhibition if it were not for the prevention of acting out what the dreamer experiences? Clearly somnambulism is a most illustrative case of dreams being *posthypnotic commands*. There can be little doubt that the dream is very much a *posthypnotic command*, signalling that our life is in the hands of a Master Hypnotist of infinite capacity.

Keywords: Autonomous, Condition of sleep, Cortical region, Cryptomnesic, Dream day, Dream memory, Deep hypnosis, Ego-transference, Equivalent states, Hypnagogic vision, Ideas, Impulse, Image compression software, Inspiration, Libet's experiments, Manifestation, Marker, Metaphors, Motivation, Muscle inhibitor, Nightmares, Paranormal, Posthypnotic command/suggestions, Precursor, Pre-emptive literature, Recall rule, Residue, Scientific discoveries, Serial manifestation, Somnambulist, Subcortical, Synchronised command, Theta waves, Timing device, Wet dreams, Zip-program

*Correspondence: dnaofdreams@gmail.com
26 Parkins Reef Road Maldon, Vic. Australia,
Phone (03) 54751064



We've espied the fountainhead of Egypt's Nile
And telescoped the depths of space,
Yet have we probed the source of thoughts
Where Nile and space arise? (K.F.)

One of the most fascinating and at the same time mysterious manipulations of the mind is *hypnosis*. As any student of the subject would know, this is a Greek word denoting a *condition of sleep*. While this might do for a general description of the hypnotic state, science, of course, requires a more specific depiction of it. Perhaps the best way of defining it is to regard it as a particular phase of the sleeping cycle, one that in terms of electromagnetic energy is characterised by *theta waves* oscillating between 4 to 7 Hertz.

With regard to the study of human action and interaction, the most useful application of hypnosis is the posthypnotic suggestion. An example of this is a hypnotist telling his subject to pick up the vase of flowers on the table, for instance, and tip it, exactly five minutes after 'waking up', over the head of the hypnotist. At the same time he will also ask the subject to 'forget' this command altogether. Yet exactly five minutes after 'waking up' the subject will execute the command given by the hypnotist. When asked for a reason for his action, the subject will have no idea where his or her motivation for the deed came from and so will justify the act by means of perfect rationalisation.

This is precisely what we all do in everyday life when giving an explanation for our actions or inactions. Generally we believe that we have no need to question the source of our motivation. We are satisfied that it was an idea, a feeling, an impulse that came into our awareness, which impelled us to act in a certain way or refrain from it. Outside philosophical discussions we never ask where such ideas, feelings and impulses come from. Yet the answer to such a question is indispensable when it comes to a proper understanding of our existence, of what motivates us, and whether or not we have any choice in the way we conduct ourselves.

In the context of the posthypnotic suggestion it is quite obvious that we will own our motivation and actions

even though we have been *commanded* to behave in a certain way. We do this without hesitation; in fact we readily accept responsibility for our deeds even though the ultimate reasons for executing them may be a mystery to us. Indeed, we will invariably find good grounds for the most absurd of actions.

Clearly, this exposes a gaping hole in our understanding of what motivates us, of where notions of all descriptions come from, what impels us to keep living and where ideas generally come from. True, there are some creative people who freely admit that their ideas came from a dream they had. Kekulé's Benzene Ring, for instance, came to him while napping in front of his fireplace (Grant, 1986). Edison made copious use of such moments for which he prepared himself with deliberation by sitting in his 'inspiration chair' and placing a silver dollar on his scalp, which then would fall clanging into a metal bucket placed at his feet as his head dropped forward at the onslaught of sleep. In this way he was able to wake and catch the problem solving hypnagogic visions before they vanished in deep sleep. Clearly Edison had discovered for himself that ideas were born from dreams.

Particularly fascinating evidence in support of the fact that we are *inspired and indeed driven by our dreams* comes from what I call *pre-emptive literature*. Perhaps the most illuminating case is that of W.T. Stead's short story '*From the Old World to the New*'. It anticipates several features that paralleled the misfortunes of the *Titanic* such as the sinking of an ocean liner that carried an insufficient number of lifeboats resulting in the loss of many lives. Like the *Titanic*, it sank as a result of striking an iceberg in the North Atlantic. Stead wrote it in 1886, which is twenty-six years before the *Titanic* disaster (Spencer, 1992).

There is a feature in Stead's plot that rules out coincidence. It is *ego-transference*, a typical and common characteristic of our dreams. I have reported this phenomenon as far back as 1991 in "Pre-grams of Tomorrow" (Forrer, 1991) and again in "Tomorrow in your Dreams" (Forrer, 2012). There I have described it in this way:

"We may often find that the role we played on the nocturnal stage will on the waking stage belong to someone else. We may, for instance, dream that we had a

car crash. Then, on the dream day, which is *after* we have dreamt the accident, we will hear that a friend of ours had that very crash, or we will see a similar crash on TV suffered by someone quite unknown to us. Or we might read of it in the paper accompanied by a startlingly accurate photo of the scene of the crash, or we might hear of it on the radio, or just receive the news from our neighbour. *I call this shift from the dreamer to someone else ego-transference. It is so typical of dreams and occurs so frequently that ego-transference must be seen as a grammatical peculiarity of the dream*" (Forrer, 2012).

Now there is precisely such transference in W.T. Stead's short story, for there we find that the name of the captain of the *Majestic*, the short story's counterpart of the *Carpathia* that had come to the rescue of the *Titanic*, was E.J. Smith. Amazingly, this was precisely the name of the stricken *Titanic's* captain. Clearly, this crossover from the captain of the fictitious rescue ship to the captain of the actual *Titanic* is a classic *ego-transference* that is so typical of dreams. This supports the view that Stead's "*From the Old World to the New*" was inspired by a dream. In other words, the plot of his story was not really anything paranormal, as some would have it, but either the reworking or honing of a remembered dream in the manner of Robert Louis Stevenson, or the recording of a *cryptomnesically* recalled dream. By this I mean an incognisant intrusion from the *subcortical dream memory* into the *cortical region of waking consciousness*.

There is another circumstance that underpins this inference. It comes to light when we learn that W.T. Stead actually sailed on the *Titanic* in 1912 and drowned with the sinking ship. One cannot help but surmise that the dream, which supplied the raw materials for his short story, was also a dream of his future demise. If we balk at the fact that this dream waited for twenty-four years before it materialised, we only need to recall Sikorsky's *déjà vu* that took thirty years before it manifested (Inglis, 1987).

Of course, all this leaves us wondering if all dreams are the root of ideas and quite generally of our stream of thoughts and the world they project. There is at least one creative person who had no difficulties in accepting that the dream not only inspired the plots of his stories, but

also transformed the raw material into the finished product.

Indeed, it is well known among readers of Robert Louis Stevenson's work that what he endearingly called his 'Brownies' or the 'Little People' were exclusively responsible for conjuring up his story-engendering dreams. But what is even rarer among creative men and women is that he also cast doubt on his ability to do the honing and structuring of the stories all on his own. Indeed, he noted that the 'Little People' of the night "*do one-half my work for me while I am fast asleep, and in all human likelihood, do the rest for me as well, when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself.*" (Grant, 1986).

Perhaps the best evidence that supports the notion that the dream functions as a *hypnotic command* is the history of Michael Barnsley's invention of image compression software (Forrer, 2014b). As a student of mathematics he was regularly visited by a recurrent nightmare that taunted him with the challenge to get all the wires of a matrix in order. This was, of course, impossible for him to do since he wasn't given any indication of what the function of the matrix was. So the nightmare only ended when he finally received a dream that presented him with the solution to the problem, which his nocturnal torment had posed to him. This dream came twenty years after the first nightmare and it only made sense because by then he had met with Benoit Mandelbrot who had engineered a computer program for fractal mathematics.

This demonstrates that while Barnsley had no idea what the nightmare was telling him, the dream had always known exactly what it was about and that it was crucial for Barnsley to become first familiar with Mandelbrot's fractal math before the final dream could be understood and exploited practically by means of a design for the circuitry of his image compression software. This scenario not only shows that the dream knew right from the start what Barnsley would eventually construct, but it also shows that it also must have known that Mandelbrot would invent a computer program for fractal mathematics at a time that would splice with Barnsley's task.

In view of all this it is impossible to deny that the dream not only knows what one man will invent, but also

what another will contribute to his work. The logical extension of this suggests that *the dream is a synchronised command across of all humanity and its experiences*. Clearly, it not only delivers the ideas, or quite generally the thoughts we will have, but it is also in charge of the timing of their manifestations. *In short, we are no more autonomous than a puppet on strings*.

That this is more likely than not, is underpinned by the experiments undertaken by Benjamin Libet. In an article in 'The New Scientist' from 14 September 2002 the following paragraph by John Gray demands that we seriously consider this suggestion: *"If cognitive science is right, the picture of humans that philosophers conjure up when defending ideals of personal autonomy is at least partly a chimera. Other research supports this conclusion. Work by Benjamin Libet at the University of California showed that the electrical impulse in the brain that initiates action occurs up to half a second before we take the decision to act. Our actions are initiated unconsciously"*.

The paragraph then continues: *"True, Libet allowed that we can veto what the brain has initiated, but it is unclear how we can even know that we have deliberately exercised this capacity. For all practical purposes, it might as well not exist"*.

There is no better explanation of this process than the dream. In short, the subjects tested by Libet would have dreamt the experiments ahead of time, thus providing them with the appropriate *dream memory*. It was this that determined the unconscious choices of the experimentees, registering half a second before becoming conscious fact.

A rather uncomfortable conclusion for all those who are unable to share Stevenson's suspicion that our 'Brownies' might well do our work even while we are awake and fondly suppose to be sovereign creative individuals.

I would invite those who are not convinced of this to read my paper "To test or not to Test; that is the Question", which was published in the *International Journal of Dream Research*, Vol. 7 No 2, October 2014 (Forrer, 2014a). There I propose a way of verifying the manifestation of a dream by prediction and verification or falsification. Since the overall plot of a dream manifests at

various times, from the dream day to the second day, stretching out for years at times as Barnsley's nightmare demonstrates, I was looking for an element of the dream that would invariably manifest on the dream day, which is the waking phase that follows the dream. While studying Freud's sexual interpretation of the dream, I looked at the situation of the so-called *wet dreams*. This is a scenario where the last dream of the night, which is generally the most sexually charged (recognisable by means of morning erections) manifests while the dreamer is neither completely awake nor still totally captive of the dream stage. He may then manipulate the sexual organ, which by that stage becomes possible since the muscle inhibitors that constrain the dreamer during full-on dreaming have been weakened by then.

This brings me to a related case that confirms that the *dream is a posthypnotic command*. This case is the somnambulist's practice of acting out his dreams. I am aware that there is much controversy around the cause of *somnambulism*. Yet I propose that the circumstance of the wet dream scenario leads us directly to the circumstance of the sleepwalker. Indeed, the difference between the unconscious actions in the wet dream scenario is little different from the unconscious actions of the sleepwalker. There can be no doubt that both cases feature reduced muscle inhibition. Indeed, when we ask ourselves why the dream state is flooded with muscle inhibitors, we can only conclude that its purpose is the prevention of a response to the commands of the dream; or more precisely, the prevention of a full response to the dream's command.

This implies, of course, that our dreams constantly impinge on our body while dreaming. The wet dream scenario makes this quite clear. But this also becomes evident in the sleep laboratory when electrodes are attached to the body, equipment that keeps track of the dreamer's experiences and of the dream's impact on his body. A dream, for instance, in which the dreamer is involved in a tennis match, will generate a higher charge of electrical activity in the racket hand than in the free hand (Faraday, 1972).

The wet dream hints at the fact that the other sexual manifestations of a dream may also have a tendency to

manifest on the dream day. A closer examination of this makes it apparent that *in the main the sexual story of the dream manifests mostly on the dream day*. But even in very rare cases when it does not, it becomes evident that there is a feature endowing the dream, which I call the *marker*. This is a distinctive configuration of the dream scenario that corresponds unmistakably with its waking counterpart. *It is a clear indicator of where and when a sexual activity would take place*, confirming once again, that dreams are the precursor of corresponding waking events (Forrer, 2014a).

The *residue* too of a dream is a feature that plays an important part in interpretation and prediction. Most people think that the residue is a sign that our dreams are about the past instead of about the future. As everyone knows, the past is indispensable when it comes to making sense of anything, not just of dreams. Without a memory of the past, life would be a stream of meaningless experiences. With regard to dreams it is as indispensable for the communication of the future as it is for ordinary language. So when we examine the residue of a dream closely, we soon discover that it plays an important part in forming configurations that not only reach out to the immediate and extended past but also to the future. And by reflecting on the past, certain clues to the meaning of the dream become evident.

Before moving on, it is worth dwelling on the fact for a moment, that one and *the same plot of the dream is susceptible to two congruent interpretations*: while one will describe the sexual state of the dreamer, the other will focus on the nonsexual concerns of the dreamer. If, for example, a married man dreams that he has lost the key to the front door of his house, so preventing him from entering the house, he will be unable to have sex with his wife on that day. But there will also be a problem with the lock of the front door or its keys. In short, the dream is a coin with two sides, one of which outlines the everyday concerns while the other delineates the sexual state and consequent erotic behaviour of the dreamer.

We might reflect here on what Freud said in this respect: *"The more one is concerned with the solution of dreams, the more one is driven to recognize that the majority of dreams of adults deal with sexual material and*

give expression to erotic wishes." (Freud, 1977). In fact, Freud did not go far enough, for dreams are consistent in every respect. All dreams of all people, including those of children, reveal their daily sexual state. Included in this are, of course, sexual activity or its frustration, restraint, impotence or immaturity to express sex in terms of corresponding physical activity.

This twin characteristic of the dream is an ingenious space and time saving device. When we know that we dream at 90-minute intervals for a limited time only and consider at the same time that the condensed scenarios of the dream will have to foreshadow all of what eventuates during the waking hours, such concision is absolutely indispensable. In this respect the dream resembles a computer *zip-program*. This same situation also helps us understand why the dream resorts to the *multi-levelled language of metaphors*. In this context it is worth highlighting that since the dream is the precursor of waking thought, the metaphors of our waking language are derived from the metaphors of the dream.

With such evidence that *dreams are the blueprint of waking*, we can now examine the circuitry of dreaming and waking. The first thing we notice is that the dream impacts waking behaviour very much like a *posthypnotic command*. The brainwave frequencies alone point to this. In other words, dreams operate in *theta* mode, which is precisely what deep hypnosis does. Part of the dream's command is a timing element, as we have seen in connection with Barnsley and Mandelbrot. Put another way, every dream is endowed with a timing component, just as it is the case in our posthypnotic example.

With respect to our dreams this timing device is a particularly complex mechanism. It becomes apparent when we know that various parts of the dream manifest at various times, as we may gather from the fact that the non-sexual aspects of a dream may begin to manifest at the moment of waking, while a sexual act portrayed by the same dream may not materialise till later in the day. Also some non-sexual aspects of the dream will manifest well after the dream day, as in Sikorsky's childhood dream, where he travelled in a flying boat. In fact it took thirty years before it was revealed to him in a *déjà vu* that this strange 'boat', which turned out to be the famous S-wing

plane, would be his own brainchild and materialisation of his childhood dream (Inglis, 1987). In other words, every dream has a built-in timing command that parallels the 'five-minute command' of our posthypnotic example. This becomes unimaginably complex when we know that several components of a single dream may all have different manifestation times, or that one component of a dream may have multiple manifestations, each of which is a variation of the one before.

I have dubbed the latter mechanism the *serial manifestation*. In such a case the central image of a dream may manifest at various intervals during the day. A dream, for example, with two lines of huskies pulling a sledge through the polar snow might form a great V. This V motif may first manifest as a V formed by the outstretched arms of the dreamer upon waking. Later in the day the V-formation of swans in flight may be seen. Later still children may hold burning spears together at the tips forming a V and so on. The essential mood of the dream will be attached to all those variations of the theme. Such a serial manifestation may have seven manifestations at different times. Beginning, for instance, at 6:50 a.m. and ending at 11:45 on the dream day (Forrer, 1991). *This*

would be the equivalent of a posthypnotic command that required us to act in a different way at seven different times in the day. When we recall the fact that we have numerous dreams during the night, all of which manifest at different times, often stretching out over weeks, months and years, the complexity of the dream's timing mechanism becomes unfathomable. This alone explains why so many dreams appear to be so bizarre.

But it also suggests that *during waking we must be in constant touch with our dream memory*. Of course, we are generally unaware of this. Yet there are occasional moments when this becomes apparent. One such moment we know by the phrase, "You have just broken my dream"! It demonstrates that the dream and its waking manifestations move in tandem. From this occurrence I have derived the *recall rule*, which says: When we spontaneously recall a dream during the day it is a sign that the corresponding dream is manifesting (Forrer, 2012). Moments like these are particularly precious since they provide parts of a live dream dictionary. But they also furnish further proof that the dream is very much a *posthypnotic command* and that our life is in the hands of a Master Hypnotist of infinite capacity.

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