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A DREAM OF INITIATION

Elizabeth Sina-Smith MSW

Introduction

In this essay I honor Ted Silverhand, the Tuscarora Seer who chose to share his boyhood experience of a dream with me, the dream vision where he was first introduced to his spirit guides and directed on his path in life. I am honored by his decision. My goal is to explore this dream in several contexts. My first approach will be to (a) view the dream through the lens of Jung's theories on the collective unconscious (1959) and synchronicity (Storm, 1999), and, (b) determine how this event might be framed within the concepts of specific transpersonal theorists such as those of Grof (1998), Tart (1975), Wilber (2000), Vaughan (1995) and Walsh (2001).

My second approach will be to place the dream in the greater context of historical shamanic practices as presented by Mircea Eliade (1964), a Romanian scholar and expert on the history of religions, and Holger Kalweit (1987), a German ethnologist and psychologist who studied shamanism throughout the world. Finally, I will address modern day sacred ways and the dream vision as practiced by tribal peoples described through the writings of Medicine Gizzlybear Lake (1991), and through a brief discussion of cultural and historical information set forth in *The Sacred* (1977), a comprehensive book on native traditions published by the Navajo Community College Press.

This topic is relevant to the study of transpersonal psychology owing to the nature of the dream with its ascent into the transpersonal realms. Furthermore, I have found the earth-based traditions, in which include concepts of the interconnectedness of all things, neglected in the mainstream of transpersonal psychology, which principally studies Eastern and Western traditions and technologies directed at accessing altered states of consciousness. This dream is an interesting example of an opening, a two-way door to the transpersonal realm. It is my hope that this essay may help to affirm the traditions surrounding aboriginal spirituality and the profound spiritual connection these medicine people have – not only to their spiritual guides but to the earth and all people who request their help.

Spiritual vision

Seeing with spiritual vision means looking past appearances and perceiving what is ordinarily assumed to be invisible.

– Frances Vaughan, (1995, p. 83).

For Ted Silverhand, the boy, this dream was not just any dream, but a calling to the path of the healer. On the whole, examples of visions or experiences of the transpersonal realm are thought to be created through a 'practice' such as meditation, a ritual of vision quest, sweat lodge, drumming or the ingestion of a plant helper (Grof, 2000). However, in this case the vision occurred spontaneously through a dream state, and the visions as well as Ted Silverhand's access to these spirit guides continue in both the dream state and waking states to this day. Once the door was opened to the realm where his guides lived, it remained open. I will begin with a detailed description of his dream.

The dream

Ted was about 12 years old when he had his first 'dream state' contact with the spirit realm. I refer to this dream as an 'initiatory dream.' While he lay asleep in his bed, he saw an older woman with a long braid flowing down her back walk through the wall of his bedroom and come to him. Ted slept as she approached him. The woman got him up, took him by the hand and walked him back through the wall. At first he was frightened, thinking she had come to take him to his death since Ted had been a sickly child. Instead, they walked through the wall and arrived on a dirt road in the forest. The woman's name was Bedobin, meaning 'first light' in the native language of the Ojibwa.

Once in the forest, they began to walk down the dirt road as Bedobin pulled Ted by his hand. Saying, "Make haste! Make haste!" Ted noticed the earth was soft and brown, and the grass was very green. The birds were singing loudly, and he could hear the sound of a babbling brook. Everything was beautiful. When he looked up at the sky, it was so blue it seem to him everything was in 'super technicolor.' The experience of the sounds and the colors were intense.

Together they approached a grassy hill, which they climbed. Bedobin walked him up to and under an archway on top of the hill. To the side, as they passed through the arch, was a small bench where she told him to sit. It seemed to only take a moment, but when he looked up he saw 14 Indian Elders in full ceremonial dress standing in front of him. Bedobin was holding a jug full of water and standing by their side. She was the only woman among them. Tall Pine, one of the elders, was the first of the group to speak, communicating with his eyes. They each spoke through their eyes. As Ted looked at them, he saw a giant man, 7 or 8 feet tall, and his name was White Eagle. White Eagle, it turned out, was in charge of all guides in the spirit world. He wore all white buckskins and he carried a long white lance with white eagle feathers hanging from it. White Eagle was a Lakota Sioux. As the boy Ted understood it, if Jesus stood at the right hand of God the Creator, White Eagle would stand at his left. Bedobin and the Elders told Ted they were his Grand Council and would guide him on his path and in his life's work as a healer (Silverhand, 2/24/2004).

When the council talks to me it's their eyes that speak. I thought this happens to all people. As a child I was told this would be my life's work, I asked them why am I so sickly and I was told I would have to experience sickness in order to understand it. But in time I would be very healthy. Why did I look different from everyone else? They said because I am different from all the rest. Each person is to see me in a different light. This was my first reading. I have had many

consultations since then and they always give me wisdom that is needed at the time.

– Ted Silverhand (4/26/2004)

The physical

Ted explained to me that each time a visit would begin in his sleep, it felt like water was being forced up his nose, and his spirit was pulled out through his nostrils with his breath. Each time he would brace himself and his body would stiffen up because part of him didn't want it to happen because of the physical discomfort. During the dream he would be unaware of his body, and time would pass in the spirit world, just as time passed in his sleep. When he awoke from the vision, he was usually in a cold sweat and his body was in spasm. This would take a while to wear off. He felt paralyzed, yet with time the pain wore off and afterwards Ted would feel exhilarated.

The frame, a Jungian view

I begin this section of the essay by examining Ted's experience through Jungian and transpersonal perspectives. According to Jung (1959) dreams arise from the 'all uniting depths' and in each individual there lives a personal unconscious and a collective unconscious. The collective unconscious, according to the Jungian view, is not an expression of personal consciousness but is a neutral entity that extends beyond the individual, to include transpersonal awareness that transcend space and time. Jung finds the collective unconscious a part of the conscious that does not owe in any part its existence to the personal experiences of the individual or his or her life experience, and is made up essentially of archetypes. In Jungian conceptualization, Bedobin and the 14 Native Elders may be considered archetypes. Jungian thought emphasizes the importance of the archetype coming from the collective unconscious, through the mind of the client.

Jung believed that personal development and individuation are facilitated by our experiences of synchronicity. Synchronicity is classically viewed as a meaningful coincidence. A synchronistic event is defined by the meaningfulness of the connection or association it makes for the individual. It is only synchronistic when meaningfulness is present with no causal factors. The symbolic experience for Ted is vital since it is the individual who determines the interpretation of the symbolism (Storm, 1999). Jungian thought emphasizes the importance of the archetype coming from the collective unconscious through the mind of the client.

In another perspective of Ted's spiritual awakening, the synchronicity would also be the coming together of two psychic states, a combining of soul and matter (Mansfield, Rhine-Feather and Hall, 1998). Synchronicity is said to be sporadic and irregular, so how can we show in this example of Ted's dream that synchronicity is present? This dream was not directly caused by the dreamer and the causal effect of the experience were dramatic and meaningful for Ted. Hence, for Jung the question would be, what is this boy's psyche trying to express? What is the purpose of the dream? Within Jung's theory of synchronicity, the emphasis changes from the cause of the psychological phenomenon to its final effect. Where is it leading? For Jung, there is a final effect where the symbolic experience becomes 'vital and purposeful' (Storm, 1999, p 5). Alternatively the woman Bedobin and the elders in this dream may represent answers to the boy's need to create meaning for his soul and spirituality. In this light, the purpose of the dream is to bring more meaning to the individual's struggles in life. For example, Ted's childhood of illness seems more meaningful in the context of a life story which includes archetypes such as the

Council of Elders and the woman Bedobin who walks through walls. The archetypes become real life role models to the dreamer, as they have for Ted Silverhand.

For Jung, the proof of the collective unconscious comes in dreams, which he considers involuntary, spontaneous products of the unconscious psyche and pure products of nature, not falsified by the psyche. Aspects of those motifs that could not possibly be known by the dreamer, and yet behave functionally in his dream, can be considered archetypes. If this very particular definition must be met, I can see how the images in Ted's dream can have archetypal value. For Jung, in order to draw a parallel between the meaning of the archetypal image and the psychic process of the individual one must know the functional meaning of each symbol. In this case, we must fathom the meaning for Ted of the guides individually or as a group, and then be able to determine if there is a mythological symbol with relevant context and functional meaning that contribute to the explanation and understanding of these personal images. Ted could attach certain archetypal connections to each of the individuals in his dream, however for Ted they operate more as spirits than archetypes (Jung, 1959).

For Jung, everything psychic is pre-formed, as are the functions that come from unconscious predisposition, including creative fantasy. The possibility that Ted indeed had contact with his spiritual guides in the unseen world in classical Jungian views is not an accepted explanation. Jung does not suggest that any experience could originate exclusively in the outside world and he believes the psyche, as part of the innermost mystery of life, has its own form and function. Jung views the explanations of how the archetypes originated as an unanswerable question. While the value of discerning the greater mythological significance of the figures in Ted's dream may be great, causality for Jung precludes the full applicability of his theories to Ted's dream, since for both the boy and the man, contact has always been initiated in the spirit realm. Jungian explanations fall short, therefore, in explaining Ted's experience as Ted would understand and explain it. For Ted, while the dream is a product of his psyche, it is also a place where two realms meet: the personal consciousness and the transpersonal spirit world.

Transpersonal views

Stanislav Grof (1998) defines the non-ordinary state of consciousness where persons such as Ted might meet their guides as 'holotropic,' meaning 'oriented towards wholeness.' For Grof, consciousness is profoundly changed in this state of awareness, which can be entered through various mind-altering procedures – such as rapid breathing or the use of psychedelic substances. In this state, we can experience a distinctive awareness of other dimensions of existence that can be very intense. This theory is closely aligned conceptually to my own perceptions of Ted's dream, where two worlds met. These are not simply realms of the psyche meeting, where the dream is a product of various parts of Ted's unconscious, or a path leading to the collective unconscious, but rather a path to another dimension of existence which is inhabited by spiritual beings and entities.

For Grof, these states precipitate a dramatic perceptual change. This would confirm Ted's explanation of his visual and auditory experience of the woods he entered with Bedobin as appearing to him as 'super technicolor.' The content of experience in this holotropic space is often said by Grof to be of a spiritual or mystical nature. In this realm there is a possibility of encountering powerful archetypal figures with whom we can communicate. This conceptual framework would be a good container in which Ted's dream becomes theoretically real. Grof has studied and comments on the ancient cultures that have cultivated mind-altering techniques, particularly technologies combining chanting, breathing, drumming, dancing, fasting, sensory deprivation, and pain (Grof, 2000). Though he states systematic spiritual practices, such as meditation, are generally the path to the holotropic states, he accepts that experiences of the holotropic state can occur spontaneously and against the will of the individual. This would be the

case in Ted's dream vision, as we consider the resistance to the physical discomfort that Ted reported as a precursor to contact with his spirit guides. There is no identifiable trigger that can be said to come from the dreamer. This description allows for the 'initiatory dream' as experienced by Ted, to exist in its 'wholeness,' consistent with Grof's definition of 'holotropic.' It is my observation that in the Native American Culture, these states are recognized and embraced as a natural part of their society, culture, and existence in the universe, and these states have been the main vehicle of their ritual and spiritual life.

By accepting this state where Ted met Bedobin and his Grand Council as a part of a reality, and part of the cartography of the human psyche (Grof, 2000), we can begin to view this experience as part of the potential of all beings and not just those indigenous cultures who practice shamanism. Nor, as perceived within conventional Western views of psychopathology, is it the private domain of those with a diagnosed mental illness, where the experiences are considered pathological hallucinations. While the individual elders, Tall Pine and Bedobin, are personally related to Ted in their significance as guardian spirits and guides, they exist as part of a realm that does not rely upon Ted to create its reality and power. Grof states these realms are best defined by what they are not. We do not experience them in the same manner that we experience life in the environment called 'normal.'

In Grof's cartography model of the psyche there are three domains, a personal biographical level; a perinatal level, referring to a pre-birth experience; and the transpersonal domain. It is in the transpersonal domain where the experience of contact with other entities and mythological beings and realms occurs. It is through the addition of the transpersonal system, which extends beyond the personal and perinatal realms, that we reach a model that gives life and offers validation to the spirit guides in Ted's dream. There are also three categories of the transpersonal, according to Grof's model. The first involves identifying with another individual, referred to as dual unity. The second is accomplished by overcoming linear time through a historical regression or connecting with the racial or collective unconscious. The third category is where consciousness extends into realms and dimensions that Western society does not consider 'real.' This is where archetypal beings, mythological landscapes, spirit guides, and entities exist .. In this realm, contact with the Universal Mind, the Cosmic Christ, and the Great Spirit are all possible (Grof, 2000). It is in this third category that Ted's 'dream event' might have taken place, where Tall Pine and Bedobin are real, *i.e.*, and not imaginary beings.

The study of experiences in this domain represents a challenge for all of Western science. The sources for the experiences are typically far beyond the conventional reach of the individual; in this case a child connecting with spirit guides in the 'dream state.' The opportunity to obtain information from the universe in this manner, which is beyond sensory perception, analysis, and synthesis, but is rather a direct communication, violates Western basic assumptions about reality. According to Grof, this last area of the transpersonal gives a contextual model in which the spirit guide contact that spontaneously occurred in Ted's dream can occur. Grof's (1988) theory of this realm proposes that in some way we can all have contact with and an experience of all parts of existence. We are, oddly enough, minute and as big as the cosmos at the same time (Grof, 1998).

For Grof, spirituality is based on the direct experience of ordinarily hidden dimensions of reality. These observations of the transpersonal experience have the quality of 'numinosity' as defined by Jung (Mansfield, Feather, & Hall, 1998), which means a feeling that the experience was sacred, holy, and radically different from everyday life, otherwise referred to as a personal mystical experience. This is a valid description and definition of Ted's experience. Yet for this to be true, matter cannot be the only source of reality with our consciousness as its byproduct. Simply put, if we conceive of an unseen reality, the origin of consciousness in matter becomes an assumption (Grof, 2000).

Another transpersonal psychologist, Charles Tart (1975), considers a transpersonal paradigm with definitions of altered states of consciousness that are achieved only through meditation. While I enjoy his scientific approach towards the study of altered states and out-of-body experiences, it does not go unnoticed that the spiritual traditions that he mentions in his cosmology represent Eastern and Western approaches to spirituality, ignoring the earth-based cultures. There is a great need to study the altered state, yet for the purposes of this essay, Ted's initiatory dream is of a truly mystical nature that partakes of direct contact with an alternate reality, which has a validity of its own. It was not a state we can achieve through work and practice, but a state that exists at all times.

A third transpersonal theorist, Ken Wilber (2000), states that the development of spirituality does not depend on or correlate with psychological or - intellectual development or maturity. Wilber details specific meditative stages of development in a progression towards spiritual awakenings, yet he does not state that peak experiences, altered states of consciousness, and spiritual experiences follow the development of the psyche. The psychological and spiritual developmental lines for Wilber are separate and so can unfold independently. An individual, as in Ted's case, can be at a very high spiritual level on one line of development as Ted was when called by spirit in childhood, and at a low personal, psychological, or cognitive stage on the others. While the development of spirituality for Wilber involves meditative practice, he additionally states that authentic spirituality can also involve the direct experience of a living reality, disclosed in the heart and mind (Wilber, 2000). From this position, Ted's youth does not preclude him from the transpersonal experience his dream would lead us to believe he achieved. So at a very early age, he was able to experience what we might refer to as his call to becoming a healer or shaman, as detailed in the following section.

Shamanism

A shaman, as defined by Roger Walsh (2001), is a specialist who enters into an altered state of consciousness on behalf of his or her community. In the initiatory event of Ted's dream we cannot state that by this standard he was already a shaman, but it appears he was being called to become one. Walsh's definition involves the invitation of spirits into the shaman's altered state, yet in Ted's case it appears it is the spirits who did the inviting. According to Walsh, it is the concept of the spirit as entity that is integral to the experience of the shamanic journey. This is the defining concept and experience of shamanism.

The shaman enters an altered state and encounters other worlds and its spiritual inhabitants. Walsh states that the shamanic state differs from other states in that they are defined as access to the subtle realm, which he describes as a very primitive level of awareness. Other researchers, for example Mircea Eliade (1964) view the states achieved through shamanic practice to be equivalent to the developed states reached by contemplative practitioners, who are honored by theorists like Wilber. Scholars who have studied ancient shamanic ways such as Eliade more commonly argue this position, which gives equal status to the shamanic state.

Walsh (2001) asserts the transpersonal states reached by shamans, yogis, and Buddhist practitioners are all quite different. Walsh's theory includes the concept of time as moving forward, which underlies a linear sequence for the subtle, causal, and nondual states that Wilber submits emerge sequentially and are in turn more elevated. According to Wilber, shamans may have occasionally broken through to the causal void but by definition these are higher states of development and realization than the subtle realm reached by your everyday shaman. Yet, none of the higher realm states, according to Wilber include the reality of another dimension in which spirit lives and spirit travel or soul travel exist.

Walsh's (2001) article appears biased by a belief that the states achieved by the Buddhist and yogic traditions surpass the states of discovery achieved by shamanic travel. The assumption supporting this conclusion is that contemplative technologies that allow access to the states achieved by the masters in China and Tibet simply did not exist at the time of early shamanism. It is my sense that Walsh and Wilber find shamanism to be a primitive form of transformational training, and that today's sages have a more refined shamanic meditative technology allowing access to higher states. This hypothesis would then minimize the importance of the sacred nature of shamanic experiences and the healing nature of the tradition.

Walsh reports statistics from Michael Harner, a shamanic trainer that indicate 90% of people trained are able to undertake shamanic journeying. Additionally he reports only 1 in 1,000,000 Buddhist meditators are able to achieve advanced concentration practices. Furthermore he states, very few Taoists, Indian yogis, and Christian contemplatives ever experience self-realization. According to Wilber and Walsh, it appears the value of the shamanic experience is somewhat correlated with the difficulty the practitioner experiences in achieving the states considered most valuable to Walsh and Wilber. This would place Ted's dream state experience of the transpersonal realm at a low value, since the experience spontaneously occurred for him. However, this type of primitive shamanic tradition endures, as is shown by the very example we have of Ted's dream.

The spiritual realm

Frances Vaughan (1995) states that contemporary global culture has become predominantly egocentric and materialistic. This sense of futility or emptiness in the modern worldviews as expressed by Vaughan gives scant support to a living spirituality. Therefore, people are being drawn more towards the ancient spiritual traditions of shamanism. Authentic spirituality for Vaughan creates a context of awareness that allows a sense of who we are as whole human beings existing in a web of interdependent relationships with the earth and the universe. It contributes to a sense of inner peace and a sense of love, service, and responsibility in the world (Vaughan, 1995). This perspective of the subjective experience of the sacred helps to further define Ted's dream and life path as a healer and a guide as being truly sacred.

The 'path' as a metaphor for spiritual growth provides a sense of purpose (Vaughan, 1995). Vaughan states symbolic perception appears to mediate spiritual experiences for people in all cultures. The evolution of consciousness and the human relationship to nature and other humans means shifting to an identity that is less egocentric and more consistent with the consciousness of interconnectedness represented by the spiritual traditions of the Native Americans and indigenous peoples, emphasizing interdependence. With this in mind, for Vaughan, there are two paths: one of attainment, whereby one attains spiritual development by working through stages, and the other path of surrender, where the path and enlightenment are already there inside and one simply needs to wake up to it. For Ted, the attainment came in a dream state that caused him to awaken to his higher path in life. In this framework, detailed by Frances Vaughan, we can describe Ted's dream experience as one of sudden enlightenment or one of surrender to the guardian spirits. In either case, surrender and patience are required to let go of old self-concepts and to integrate the awakening to spiritual reality. We have been told how resistant Ted was to the experience due to the physical discomfort, yet he has surrendered to it and has taken on his life's work as his Council instructed him. Initiation designates a new beginning on the spiritual path (Vaughan, 1995), which may be formal, or informal as in the case of this spontaneous dream. Ecstatic experiences, where one feels transported, can have profoundly healing effects and provide new perspectives on the self in the world. This would certainly apply to the story told by Ted. There are many types of initiation, such as death and rebirth, or on a vision quest, where nature is perceived as a mirror to the psyche and correspondences are seen that were

not noticed before. The call to a spiritual awakening can be heard at any time. Often answering that call requires a redefining one's life priorities.

This brief description by Vaughan helps to frame my own experience on a Vision Quest I embarked on many years ago after a Sweat Lodge ceremony and deep prayer. I walked out into the fields past the perimeter of the Native sacred land.. I wandered through the woods and found a riverbank. There was a bend in the river, and I sat high up on the bank and peacefully watched the water, the sky, and the world move by as I witnessed the scene. I noticed hundreds of little birds of many colors fly down the path of the river, swooping in the air performing aerial acrobatics and playing. It certainly looked like a lot of fun to me. The most likely explanation of their presence is that there were some kinds of insects hatching off the surface of the river and the tiny little barn swallows, in many brilliant colors, were dancing through the air to catch their feast. I sat enjoying the display of flying skills and insect hunting. As I merged with my experience of the riverbank and the water and the beautiful display, I looked over my right shoulder toward the mountain and noticed an eagle soaring, circling high above me riding the winds and surveying the area below. I sat in silence taking in the vision of the barn swallows enjoying their work and their feast, as I considered the flight of the eagle overhead, surveying the territory.

The message for me, as it spoke to my heart, was to accept my higher self, represented by the eagle and to always be present and aware of where I am and where I am going by surveying the territory, and maintaining my truth. Yet, at the same time I felt the lesson was to enjoy the small things in life, such as my work here as a human, which can look and feel like play, though still be our life's work. For me, at that time, as a single mother without living family, this was an important realization. I had forgotten how to play.

Of course there are an infinite number of more dramatic initiations, involving altered states of consciousness, for example shamanic quests, intensive meditation, or psychoactive drug induced journeys, which may be productive or not depending on how the experience is integrated. For Ted, the experience was always exhausting, yet he found after the negative physical effects wore off he was exhilarated. Initiations such as Ted's, which offer a view of a different reality, loosen the bonds to this reality, and are honored and integrated becoming a blessing, as it has for Ted. He made a powerful spiritual connection in his dream, and it set him firmly on the path of his own traditions and beliefs. His spiritual path requires that the individual walk between two worlds, that of the ego and the individual's needs to survive, and that of the soul and its need to serve.

Shamanic tradition

Mircea Eliade (1964) states that the shaman is described as a sick man who has already been cured. Eliade observes that it is through sickness, dreams, and ecstasies that many reach the state called shaman. Often times for this historian, the experience is a choice from above that prepares a candidate for new revelations (p.33). When the initiation is part of a dream, the individual is called a pre-choice individual who then becomes a technician of the sacred. It is the ecstatic experience that radically changes the religious status of the chosen person in Eliade's view. (This was the case with Ted.) From this perspective, there is suffering, death, and resurrection. Any sickness, as in the experience that Ted describes of his sickly childhood, or even being sucked out through his nose, may well qualify as the 'initiatory torture,' for which Ted admittedly braces himself (Eliade, 1964).

The content of the first experience, according to Eliade, almost always includes dismemberment, ascent, and conversations with gods or spirits - as it was with Ted and Bedobin, Tall Pines and White Eagle. It can also include a descent to the underworld and dialogue with dead spirits and

shamans. These ecstatic initiations constitute the 'initiation proper,' which begins a complex system of spiritual instruction by an elder. This particular example, in which Eliade finds a central theme of the initiation as dismemberment or ritual death, is consistent on several levels with what Ted believed was about to happen when the old woman Bedobin came to him in his sleep. It is also possible to put into a context through Ted's dream, another motif that Eliade describes of a giant bird that hatches shamans in the branches of the world tree. White Eagle, the giant man in Ted's initiatory dream, appears to be this giant bird that appears consistently in shamanic legend.

Eliade describes a format for shamanic dreams, and in following this format we can say that Ted Silverhand, as a 'candidate' was journeying with the spirit of Bedobin to visit his Grand Council. Bedobin whose name means 'first light' in Ojibwa, was also the water bearer in his dream and in the mythology and history of shamanic dreams, she may represent the Lady of Water for Eliade. In other initiatory examples of Siberian shamans, there continue to be consistencies. The novice encounters divine figures, Bedobin and the ceremonial Elders, including White Eagle.

According to Eliade, the similarities between differing shamanic traditions -- for example, the Siberian and Australian, -- present a commonality that suggests authenticity and a common origin for diverse shamanic initiatory rites. The shaman's symbolic death is found globally. In Ted's experience, with his sense of physical paralysis and stiffness, there is a symbolic death followed by a resurrection. In the Inuit tradition, the shaman extracts the soul of the initiate from his body, through his eyes. Ted, in his dream visions, feels extracted by his breath through his nostrils. After this extraction, the future shaman is able to draw his soul from his body voluntarily and to undertake long mystical journeys. The candidate then sees a mysterious light, which may correspond to Ted's experience of the world he enters, led by Bedobin, that he perceived in 'super Technicolor.' Throughout Eliade's accounts, there is always a feeling of ascent, and Ted was led up a grassy hill to an archway to meet tribal Elders from beyond the veil, or 'above.'

Eliade further states that the commonest forms of a future shaman's selection by spirit is the encounter with a divine or semi-divine being who appears through a dream, sickness, or other circumstance. This tells the initiate he has been chosen and inspires him to follow new rules in life. In Siberian myths, initially there were only gods and the gods decided to give mankind a shaman to combat disease and death, so they sent the eagle. Since the eagle had no speech, he went to earth and had intercourse with the first woman he came upon. Her son became the first shaman. In other myths she became the first shamanness. The eagle in general shamanic myth bears the name of the creator, 'Creator of light.' The woman in Ted's dream is named 'first light.' We see many correlations and connections that may be drawn between the historical accounts through antiquity and Ted's experiences.

Seeing a spirit, either in dream or an awake state, is a sign suggesting that one has attained some kind of spiritual opening that has allowed a transcendence of the condition of matter and physical human existence. Historically, in aboriginal religions, a shaman is a man who has immediate contact with spirits and can talk to them face to face, requesting their help. For many tribes in North America, shamans are initiated in a dream. During the dream, the pure sacred life is entered, and a direct relationship with the god, spirits, and ancestors is re-established. Eliade sees the consistencies of these initiatory experiences in tribal and earth-based peoples worldwide as support to the context and content of the shamanic initiatory experience as part of the transpersonal realm where all things are created. It is also these consistencies that support my hypothesis that Ted's dream was a true 'initiatory dream.' Eliade notes that whatever the truth is, in historical relations between North Asia, North America, and Europe, the cultural continuity of shamanism is evident, and the shaman assumes the same leadership role in each culture. Eliade observes that in North America, the power the shaman acquires is the result of direct personal experience, but the power is manipulated in such a way as to be of concern and healing for all others in the society. This is the path Ted Silverhand has chosen.

Holger Kalweit (1987), a German ethnologist, psychologist and author, brings to the discussion of shamanism and initiatory experiences a broad and scientific contribution, which was translated into English in 1992. He studied shamanism in Hawaii, the American Southwest, Mexico, and Tibet. Kalweit states that, unfortunately today there is a tendency to either mythologize or pathologize and discredit altered states of consciousness. Both tendencies, to him, are harmful. Kalweit observes that altered states of consciousness of the kind shamans experience in Eliade's descriptions are part of the natural history of mankind and have little to do with religion or faith. In his opinion, the words spirituality and religion should not be used to describe this natural condition. For Kalweit, to correctly investigate altered states of consciousness, all dogma and tradition must be set aside. The yogi strives for formlessness, and the Buddhist strives for enlightenment. The reason, in his view, that shamans of tribal cultures represent formless enlightenment in an outward fashion, is the necessary requirement to survive by maintaining a concrete relationship to their environment.

When a visionary encounters holiness, his life changes abruptly. Now that he has drunk from life's profound wellsprings, has been bathed in life force, he is suddenly endowed with extrasensory perception, precognition, the ability to leave his body, to see spirits, and the like. He has received attributes of sacred existence, and has himself become a messenger, an epiphany of holiness. Through his supramundane powers, he manifests a higher world.

– Holger Kalweit (1987, p.112)

As Kalweit introduces the concept of visions, he explains that the purpose of the initiate is not to return to naked existence or formlessness but rather to take in the forces surrounding us, entirely without the various filtering systems and cultural lenses that we normally use. He describes the vision of Vinson Brown, a writer on Native American subjects, who was under the guidance of a medicine man called Fools Crow of the Ogallala Sioux. In the vision, Brown encountered a huge man standing beside him, who reached down and picked him up. The man carried him down the mountain and into a cave away from the elements on the cold mountain where he sat for his vision quest. In the cave was sagebrush, and he was warm and protected, and Vinson Brown was safe. Then the huge man said to him 'here you will be alright.' Since most anthropologists and psychologists, according to Kalweit, have never tried to perform a vision quest, he suggests that the Western denial of the existence of a more all-embracing spiritual reality is as old as the field of psychology itself.

There is one example of dream initiation in Kalweit's book (p. 167)) that I feel is important to cite because of the similarity to Ted's dream. This example is also recounted in Beck, Francisco, & Walters (2001). Flora Jones was the very last shaman of the California Wintu tribe, and she was called Easter Flora Jones. Flora Jones went to school in San Francisco, and at the age of 17 she fell into a trance. She was playing cards with a friend and it happened without any warning. She experienced a ringing and burning in her ears. She said it was like a hot bullet was shot through her ear. The pain flashed through her body, and she was asleep for four days. That was her first encounter with star spirit. When she awoke, four older shamans were sitting around her singing and giving her medicine. Her protective spirit taught her healing chants, and introduced her to the heart of healing.

All tribal cultures live in unity with nature and in unity with universal laws. And as Ted has said to me, 'all native tribes have one thing in common, they live by ceremony.' For Kalweit, tribal cultures have a sense of the world's symbiosis with God. Thus, their worldview is one for which our Western culture is not ready, for our culture does not hold as sacred all of life and existence. "If the symbiotic, synchronistic, synergistic universe is the acme of the natural-mystical worlds view of shamanism, another high point in the natural philosophy of natural societies is their belief that a power permeates all being" (Kalweit, 1987, p. 228). Each tribe may have a different concept or name for the energy, but all these concepts refer to God the being, and equally to the

helping spirits who aid shamans in their penetration into other zones of consciousness or in their healing work. This perception of energy is a power principle that goes beyond mechanical and material laws (Kalweit, 1987).

The initiatory dream

A shaman may be selected in many ways, however I will underscore the most common methods as reported by Eliade (1964,p.13). First, it can be through hereditary transmission of the shamanic profession. Ted Silverhand was a member of the Sagrissa family of the Tuscarora people, which had been acclaimed as seers for many generations. Secondly, according to Eliade, it can occur through a spontaneous call or election by spirit, as in the dream at the center of this essay. Whatever the case, Eliade (p.13) states, a shaman is not recognized until he receives two kinds of teaching: (a) ecstatic dreams and trances and (b) traditional training in shamanic techniques, names of the spirits, clan knowledge and secret knowledge. This is a two-fold instruction given by the spirits and the older master shamans. Yet as Eliade has stated, more often than not the shamans' instructions take place in dreams. This is further indication of the authenticity and power of the dreams experienced by Silverhand.

It is in dreams that the pure sacred life is entered and direct relations with the gods and spirits, and ancestral souls are re-established. It is in dreams that historical time is abolished, and the mythical time regained... Sometimes the initiatory dreams are involuntary and begin even in childhood. It is stated that always in a dream the initiate is given the regulations, and learns what he will need to perform shamanic healings.

– Mircea Eliade (1964, p.13)

Initiatory dreams

A medicine man who was taught by Silverhand's father-in-law, Rolling Thunder, an inter-tribal medicine man, observed, "Power comes in dreams, not everyday dreams, fantasies or even creative imagination, but from the part of the mind that allows us to see realities beyond the physical world. Not dreams created by our minds, but the dreams we get from spirits." (Medicine Grizzlybear Lake, 1991, p. 30)

According to Grizzlybear Lake, modern psychologists state there are two parts of the brain and mind, but to the shaman there are three: the last is the seat of the spirit. In a simplified explanation, we may say there are two complementary modes of functioning in the brain. The left-brain is connected to the senses and is rational, logical, and linear in its function. The right side of the brain is the unconscious, primitive part, which is influenced by natural symbols, imagination and is also considered the source of ESP, soul travel, dreams, and visions. Shamans, according to Grizzlybear Lake, use both parts of the brain, beginning in the right part where dreams originate. To Grizzlybear Lake, the conscious brain is limited by the physical world and its realities, yet the subconscious mind is infinite. This would correspond to the transpersonal theorist's perception of the holotropic or spiritual realm.

Native Americans consider spirits to be real entities and a source of power. They live around us in the physical world, and in the spirit world. It is difficult for them to communicate with us when we are awake, because the conscious mind, while rationalizing, dominates the thinking pattern and organizes reality for us. Shamans, according to Grizzlybear Lake, are taught how to make the switch from the conscious to the unconscious, the logical to the intuitive, the physical to the spiritual. The unconscious forms of reality are the sources of true human mental power.

Dream spirits, unconscious archaic symbols, and the intuitive/psychic forms of reality do not fit in the spectrum of logical intellect. The conscious mind is limited by the physical world; the subconscious mind is infinite. For the Native American, dreams are different from visions. While dreams can be vague and fleeting, visions are clear, colorful, dynamic, and longer lasting. A person may forget a dream but never a vision. Dreams are the doorway to the spirit world, and the vision is the spirit world (Lake, p. 44).

“Anyone who is meant to be a medicine man or woman will know it sooner or later. He or she will be shown in dreams, instructed in dreams, then guided to an older medicine person who will intuitively know and that person will be a mentor. It has already been arranged somewhere, probably in the dream or spirit world” (Lake, p. 60). It is always in a dream that the candidate receives the initiatory regulations, and learns what objects he will need in a shamanic cure. “One does not receive the initiation until after seeing the spirits in dream” (Eliade, p.104).

Shamanism today

Today, many shamans say that not only were the first shamans more powerful than their contemporaries, but their fathers and great grandfathers possessed more comprehensive powers (Kalweit, p.13). From all sides, according to Kalweit, shamanism is in a state of decline. With the disappearance of the first shaman, the prototype of the hero, and the enlightened one who transcends material attachment, the decline of the magical traditions continue. Today knowledge is bound up with rationality, and the primitive has been “vivisected by the civilized mythos which has appropriated it” (Kalweit, p. 257). There is a worldview that neglects the higher dimensions, and the very foundation of its own cultural consciousness has become distant from science. For ethnologist Kalweit, the greatest revolution of our time is the consciousness revolution, yet “our own nature remains completely veiled to us, and the idea of a cultural self analysis remains unknown” (p. 258).

Though consciousness researchers have not ignored the magical realm, primitive thinking is still placed in the category of false thinking. On one hand, research sees the myth in primitive thinking as a method for the ‘primitive’ to gain control of his environment. On the other hand, the magical realm gets dismissed as an understandable illusion. It is through the field of transpersonal anthropology that Kalweit sees the creation of a new relationship with the supra-personal realm. It is not simply a symbolic world to him. It is a trans-psychic realm that is as real and as relevant to our sense of reality as our ordinary, everyday life. Medicine people use a broader realm of consciousness than the normal Westerner can acknowledge, so it is necessary to broaden our ideas and range to embrace the footsteps of the shamans (Kalweit, p. 260).

For the transpersonal theorists such as Stanislav Grof, these holotropic states of consciousness can provide deep insights into the worldview of cultures who believe the cosmos is populated by mythological beings (Grof, 2000, p. 271). In these states we can gain experiential access to the archetypal world of the heroes, gods, supra-human entities, and spirit guides. This reach towards the holotropic states has brought forth evidence of the trans-phenomenal, trans-psychic dimensions of existence that are real and stand the test of consensual validation. Though some Jungians refer to them as ‘imaginal,’ a description which does not necessarily imply unreal, proof of their existence is supported by the fact that transpersonal phenomena can bring us new and accurate information about the figures and realms involved.

Jose Stevens, a current student of shamanism, presented on Shamanic practice at an ITP Cultural Landscapes Seminar in Santa Fe, New Mexico. When asked about the purpose of shamanism, his response was, “to attain power and freedom.” When further queried on the subject of the ‘initiatory dream,’ Stevens responded he felt “the concept of initiatory dream is part

of a political discussion which I do not want to get into.” He continued, “The concept of being chosen by spirit in the dream state is something that simply gives some individuals a sense that they have more authority than others” (Stevens, 2004). I would gather from this response that Stevens never had an initiatory dream. Stevens also stated that the first thing you ‘do not’ look for in a shaman is ‘ethnicity.’ Again, “the core objective of shamanism” according to Stevens “is to become free.”

My research and my personal experience has taught me that shamans are universally dedicated to their people, and not their own freedom. They study to be able to guide their people, and tend to their fellow man’s physical, spiritual, and psychological needs. For Stevens, the medicine man, seer, shaman, and healer are all one and he is one of them. My personal conclusion is that Stevens is a non-indigenous man, rationalizing the appropriation of a native, earth-based sacred tradition and taking it for his own while working as a corporate trainer

Native tradition

North American sacred traditions have several similar beliefs. First, everything, though having its own individual and special place, is dependent on and shares in the growth and work of everything else. The second belief lies in their faith in the existence of unseen powers. These powers may take the form of deities or these powers may be more of a ‘feeling’ that something exists and is sacred and mysterious (Beck, Francisco, & Walters, 1977) Through this belief in the interdependency and awareness of relationships, the universe is balanced.

The shaman is the individual most often responsible for maintaining a balanced relationship between the people, the natural world, and the world of the sacred powers. It is a vocation, a calling to be a spiritual and medicine healer, for the individual members of the community and for the tribe. The shaman personally seeks the sources of the sacred, to be of service to his or her people (Beck, Francisco, & Walters, 1977).

Conclusion

Through the theories of Jung and the transpersonal psychologists, we can recognize the tremendous value of the mystical realm we have now come to define as the transpersonal. The transpersonal theorists’ definition of this realm (Jung, 1959, 1998; Grof, 1998; 2000; Walsh, 2001; Wilber, 2000; and Vaughan, 1995), accompanied by the detailed accounts of historians and ethnologists on shamanism (Eliade, 1964; Kalweit, 1987) and the initiatory dreams, including current-day sources (Lake, 1991) illuminate for us the tremendous benefit of having access to a clear, modern-day initiatory dream. Ted Silverhand paints for us a picture which correlates not only with the archaic traditions of initiation, but the modern-day beliefs and values of our tribal brothers with whom we share this planet. There is much to be added to this field of shamanic research and I am confident that with diligence and search we can document our Native Elders’ dreams, visions, and beliefs. In this way we might save this rich body of spirituality for future students, so that those who come after us may be provided with a guide to living in connection with the earth, with other humans, and with all other life on our planet. The views and theories of modern transpersonal psychology point clearly to the authenticity of Silverhand’s dream and his path.

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Elizabeth Sina-Smith MSW

My background is in Social Work. Currently I work as a Child and Adolescent therapist and my heart is passionate about my work. My best friend was a Cherokee Medicine Woman, Diana Soaring Hawk Boycheck. It was at her deathbed that I first had the opportunity to observe Ted Silverhand perform 'healing ceremony.' Diana's gifts were many and powerful, but at that moment she was dying. What I experienced as Ted healed my beloved Diana into her death was breathtaking. It was and will be one of the most beautiful and memorable moments of my life.



It has been my honor and blessing to have had Diana Soaring Hawk as my dearest friend for many years, and an honor as well to have Ted as a part of my life. It was as a friend that he shared this dream with me, and he has encouraged my continued study in this area. I am eternally grateful for the role Diana played as 'Spiritual Grand-Mother' to my strong, brave and patient sons Lee and David Smith.

My interest in Native American culture and spirituality began when I was 10 years old. Some have said I was a member of the Bear Clan in a past life. This I do not know, yet I do know my

heart's desire is to acknowledge the true compassionate healers living today who have carried their traditions with courage, heart and integrity through many millennia.

I am presently writing my doctoral dissertation at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology under the guidance of Nancy Rowe, Ph.D.

Contact:

SmithTribe55@aol.com

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