

Homework: Dream & Renewing Commitment [Lojong]

- Gaya Ethaniel: Life as dream or as Zen suggested all dharms are dream.
- Gaya Ethaniel: Or any reports related to dreams :)
- Gaya Ethaniel: We could go back to 'dream' in Lojong or a variation of it?
- Mitsu Ishii: we do dreams, and talk about dreams, but also perhaps we can think about the lojong phrase "Renew your commitment when you get up and before you go to sleep."

I felt like I didn't have much to say about this homework.

Hmmm. Commitments... For now I'll leave it as a placeholder for some kind of spiritual intention or vow. It's a good topic for future discussion...

Hmmm. Dharmas... little teachings then? The small-T taos of the lawful behavior of reality, resisting abstraction and grand unifying schemes, wanting to be appreciated for what they are. Little "lessons" presenting themselves to an alert student...

Hmmm. Dreams... dreaming... a state of consciousness; a source of "messages" from outside the self? Or a world completely "constructed"? Who then is the "constructor"? An "illusion" perhaps? That seems to be the dismissive and pejorative view held by western realism. Safe to just ignore, because "not real". Or is the dream world a world of pure "imagination"? Again, "imaginary" as a pejorative synonym for "not real". I recently saw a car bumper sticker proclaiming:

Imagination: Gateway to Reality

Or are dreams a gateway to greater knowledge; an "in between" kind of bardo realm? The dreaming mind, not a diminished form of the waking mind, but a larger awareness encompassing more possibilities and not hypnotized by the seeming solidities and this-and-nothing-but "facts" of waking life?

Dreams as koan, then. Dreams as an invitation to notice the power of imagination, and my state of presence with respect to it. Different kinds of dreams. Dreams that "flow", that follow different "logics". Jumbled dreams. Dreams that feel mechanical and driven. Dreams in which I'm "hardly there at all, alas". Confusing dreams. Dreams that seem like "messages". Dreams that draw things over the "horizon" of my limited self. Dreams where I make decisions. Dreams which carry emotional insights or resolutions. Dreams where I have free will (or a good simulation of it). Lucid dreams, creative dreams, ecstatic dreams. Dreams as a mirror for what is going on outside my circle of consciousness, whether it be subconscious, super-conscious, transpersonal. Dreams as a reflection of parts of myself I can't see. Dreams as a test of my psychic states, both immediate and in a developmental sense. It makes sense to me that as I dream, some other process is dreaming *me*.

Dreams are connected. They come in series. They indicate slow learning processes. When I have a dream with emotional energy - confusing or troubling - I try to take extra time to do more dreaming, to give the dreaming mind its opportunity to progress with whatever it is up to. I carry the assumption that the dreaming mind is intelligent, that it is "up to something big". And it has often rewarded me for this sponsorship. The troubled dream slowly transforms into one with a lighter tone - creative, grateful, resolved, or whatever was missing before. Then I assume I have learned something. I try to validate that

by noticing whether that "theme" seems different in the future.

Hmmm. Present or not-present? Creative constructor, or passive along-for-the-ride witness? The Dream-as-Koan would like to know. Contrast this with the dream as an invitation. The dream would like me to *do* as well as to *know*.

Dreams as an invitation... To what? Among other things, to renew and clarify commitments.

Dreams and commitments are closely related in my practice. (I didn't just make that up because of the juxtaposition of topics in the homework :)

For a long time I've had a habit to contemplate my commitments before going to sleep and when waking up. I try to do this in the in-between states between waking and dreaming. It is a kind of bridge or bardo state. Making this bridge unifies the mind between these different compartments, or maybe, stirs the larger mind that encompasses both. When going to sleep, I try to throw out the unimportant residue of the day, to give the dreaming mind something better to work with, and have that be related to my commitments. This is reminiscent of bedtime prayers, although I'm not practicing a religion and don't label it as such.

When waking up, I attempt to make a mental place - again in the in-between state of consciousness - very relaxed - not yet with the daily program and all its automatisms - where I can view the dream and my commitments at once. And do some sorting. If the dream presented a message or some thing useful energetically or emotionally, I'll see if it can link up to waking life and my conscious commitments. If it presented something troubled, I'll see if I can "drop" it so the day is not encumbered. If it doesn't easily drop, I'll send it back to the dream-world with a blessing.