

INFORMATION AND DREAMS

(DREAMING AND WHAT IT TELLS US)

A bridge into the unknown

Probing Nature's secrets

In Chapter 8, we discussed right and proper ways of using our memory. In the present chapter we will look at a puzzling use of memory, but one which, at the same time, is normal and natural. We are referring to memory that with very little prompting from ourselves finds its way into our dreams and daydreams. Dreaming is as near as most of us ever get to seeing ghosts, a topic that we will take up in Chapter 12. The possible connection of both dreams and ghosts with *particles* of memory is at least intriguing. However, since dreaming is a common experience, we may assume that it is both safe and sound. It should be no cause for unease. Possibly we may say the same about the less common experiences of déjà vue and precognition, which we will look at in the next chapter. They are all involuntary actions. What is less certain is whether by delving into and analysing our dreams we are going further in our study of the mind than we should. As any traveller into uncertain territory knows, new treasures and discoveries are often two edged. By deliberately probing and analysing our dreams we may be moving into dangerous territory. We may be investigating further or more quickly than nature intended. We may be going further than is wise. On the other hand, as we will see later, the act of remembering dreams is often strangely reassuring. In later chapters, we will look at uses and manipulations of human memory that are not so reassuring. These are practices that may be ill advised and dangerous, despite the fact that they may one day help us to uncover some of nature's secrets. The present chapter (and the first part of the next) therefore may be viewed as a kind of *bridge* between what is natural and proper on the one hand and what is not so proper and possibly even harmful on the other.

Cause and mechanisms

For the most part in the chapter we will be concerned with the causes and mechanisms of dreaming. We are interested in people's capacity for dreaming; the processes that produce our dreams, and the reason for the mix and muddle in our dreams. We want to know more about the subconscious

mind from which our dreams emerge. In one sense we are looking for meaning in dreams, but we will not be looking for personal directions or for messages from on High. We will not be attaching significance to objects in our dreams. We have no interest in whether it is lucky or unlucky to dream about, mountains, the sea, white horses, black cats, hats, shoes, hair, oranges, apples, flowers, vegetables, tall dark strangers, public figures, or whatever, that many books on dreams address. Such books will continue to be written, if only because human beings can never resist the temptation to know more about themselves and their future. It could be that we pay too much attention to dream content and not enough to the processes behind it. Dreams have been a cause of much wonder, of nations going to war, of people going berserk, and of optimists going off in search of illusory fortunes. The present text is not of this kind. Nor will it be of much help to people who want an explanation of their psyche; or to those who are hoping to find in dreams the secrets of worldly success. Still less does the chapter contain evidence of dreams foretelling the future. For readers who are interested in subtle meanings in dreams, there is a restrained account of many remarkable dreams (with possible explanations for them) in a 1997 publication called the Hidden Door by Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick³⁷. While there may be many instances in which dreams *seem* to contain a message, there is nearly always in each case at least one other equally possible explanation. It is an endless story. As for gleaning advice and guidance from dreams, the topic is better left to psychologists and others who specialise in subconscious human desires and behaviour.

***Theories
are to be
encouraged***

We are not saying that the reader should not *experiment* with dreams. On the contrary, we would encourage it. The more we can find out about our dreams, how they relate to reality, and how they may have come about, the better. The connection between dreams and real life is complex. It would become clearer if we could find answers to how our dreams are created. For us, they are a special kind of information. We want to know more about the *origin* and *make up* of dreams and how they relate to information we know is already in our memory. It is almost certain that dreaming is a continuation of the mind's capacity for making analogies, using its imagination, and making up stories out of its memory, as we described in Chapter 7. We will be looking for anything that supports our view that human memory consists of particles of matter or *microdots* as we have called them. If (as we speculated in Chapter 6) microdots of memory circulate in the body and are recalled for processing in the brain by signals, this could explain why our dreams are seldom as complete and sensible as we might wish. Brain signals when we sleep could be much weaker than they are when we are awake and hence less efficient. What is more, if fragments of our memory should sometimes get trapped and *damaged* in parts of the body (as we also speculated), this could go a long way to explaining the nonsense and confusion of our dreams. As for further support for microdots, it is not difficult to imagine *particles of memory* in dreams also being *particles of light or light waves*. These could enable us to *see* things in dreams in much same way (as we suggested in Chapter 7) we *see* them in the mind. Beyond this, we will wonder whether in our dreams we sometimes *see* things not only in the three dimensions with which we are familiar but also in other dimensions. If people (in their busy lives) can find time to practise remembering their

37 The Hidden Door. Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick

dreams; thinking of possible reasons for them; and, particularly, if they can do some of the post dream analysis that we will discuss later, their efforts could be very rewarding. They could help us to find out more about the nature of human memory, if not of information itself.

A clue to greater things

We begin the chapter by explaining why two apparently diverse subjects such as dreams and computing should come together in a study on information. From that, we move on to the possible purpose of dreaming and our belief that it is a continuation of the normal functions of the mind. We do not believe that dreaming is a cause for concern. We will look at possible structures in our dreaming machinery. We will note again the *duality* (of active and passive properties) in information that we addressed in Chapter 1. We will suggest that, when we dream, the active component (that gives information its meaning) is partly disabled. Hence, in addition to damaged microdots, disabled functions could be another reason why our dreams often contain mixed up nonsense. We will refer again to the probability of a layered mind and to languages of the subconscious. We will speculate on how dreams often relate to recent events, as well as to our changing personal moods, anxieties, and emotions. We will look at the apparent, random, unpredictable, and sometimes uncomfortable, content of dreams. We will look at the absurd relationships and nonsense that can arise from an endless substitution of one thing for another, which is a basic method of the mind's story making capability. We will note the absence in our dreams of many physical barriers that we face in the *real* world, and how usually there is a complete disregard of time. We will acknowledge the fascination that dreams have for people, the difficulty of remembering dreams, and the possibility that (if we could only unravel the language of the subconscious) dreams would tell us a great deal. Dreams may not contain what we normally say is a message, but there is a reason for them. There is for example good evidence that our dreams sometimes reflect the state of our health. They may not tell us what to do about it but a dream may be a warning for our conscious mind. Often the best way of detecting meaning is not to be *overawed* by the sometimes elaborate and ingenious stories in our dreams, brilliant though some of them may be. Such stories are usually the product of a fertile imagination which again is one of the mind's normal and proper functions. To arrive at any meaning in our dreams, we need to remove any of the outlandish tales and trivia in them. We need (as we stated in Chapter 3) to reduce information to its essentials. This is such a case. We need to isolate the relevant, succinct, and possibly urgent parts of our dreams. If somewhere there is a hidden roundabout "*message*" in them we need to find the crux of it.

And more possibilities

We will move on in the chapter to the fascinating practice of so called lucid dreaming. This is perhaps better described, paradoxically, as *conscious* dreaming. We will note how dreams can affect our well being. We will suggest that a study of the dreaming *process* could be a vital part of information philosophy. We will wonder about an information universe in which the only inhabitants are thoughts. This could even be in a fourth dimension in which information is both physical and *visible*. In sleep, our minds perhaps have special access to this dimension. We do not forget however that, when we sleep,

parts of our mind are inactive. As a result, it could be that in our dreams we *see* things in *fewer* dimensions, rather like the Flatlanders of our Chapter 2. At the end of our musings, we will admit that a full explanation of dreams still eludes us. It could be that in nature there are powerful forces that infiltrate our minds and which we have yet to discover. These forces could be associated with particle communication and our ideas on microdots. On the other hand, it seems more likely that our dreaming is entirely self created and self contained. Our dreams may come entirely from information already within us and (except for noises etc.) not from outside sources at all. Even the language of our dreams could be purely personal and meaningless to anyone else; recognisable only to our own mind. The situation could be similar to that in computing when we ask the computer to recognise different voices. We give the computer repeated samples of our voice which it then uses to recognise and understand us. In turn, it is able to *speak* back to us. So, in our dreams, we may over time develop our own personal dream language. As Hamlet³⁸ in a moment of wisdom once said to Horatio, so may it be parodied for all of us; “There are far more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are *dreamed of* in our philosophy.”

Dreams and computing

Information is the medium

Dreaming and computing may seem at first to have little in common. However, in both these activities, information is the medium. Dreaming is a function of the mind; and computing is a function of the computer, the nearest non-human equivalent to the mind that we know. From our knowledge of computers we know how computers work on information and, through studying dreams, we may get ideas on how the human mind works on our memory. Memory after all is information. In any study of information; we need to draw on all our experiences with memory, be it computer memory or human memory. Many of our ideas on information come from computing. Many of our ideas on memory come from thinking about dreams. Frequently we can make remarkable, at first unsuspected, connections between our dreams and events that occurred a long time ago. Sometimes we trace the origin of our dreams with great difficulty; but also, occasionally, with tantalising success. Trying to track the origin of dreams seems to support our belief that human memory has physical properties like data in a computer. In particular, the memory of a dream could be a substance of electro-chemical elements. These could be particles of matter, waveforms, or whatever, that (like computer data) are quite separate from the machinery and programs that work on it. This is in line with our ideas on the duality of information. Information always has two components. In dreams, one is some kind of memory. The other is the mind’s machinery that works on it. How else (but, as in a computer) could our memories be stored, recalled, changed, and manipulated? Only in this way would it be possible to form a conglomeration of thought and imagery such as occurs in our dreams; and then later to remember it.

38 William Shakespeare. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Converging strands of study

The present story therefore is a convergence of two originally separate strands of thought. One comes from marvelling at the way computers work on data, from our having worked on computers since their inception, and from realising the tremendous potential (for good and evil) that computers have. The other strand of thought comes from realising the wonder of the human mind at work, from the way in which it creates and influences our dreams, and from thinking about why and how it does so. Much of this chapter is derived from remembering dreams, piecing fragments of them together, analysing these fragments, and then relating them to real events. It is because of the amazing connections that we find between our dreams, our personal history and activities, as well as events in the outside world, that we wonder how such things can be. We wonder what precisely the information that forms our dreams may be. What is it made of, and where and how is it stored? From the minutiae of dreams we may perhaps build up an idea of what physically (and even metaphysically) our memory is made of. From the way dreams are formed and presented to us, we may speculate on how our minds are organised and how at times, uncannily like computers, they process information.

Can computers dream?

In Chapter 5, we asked whether computers could *think* and *feel*. Fervent proponents of evolution assert that it is only a matter of time before they do. The answer depends on what we mean by *thinking* and *feeling*. So it is with dreaming. For the moment, a good definition of dreaming eludes us. Logically, it is no more than an extension of thinking and feeling; and so, again, our answer depends on definition. We do not yet know enough about it. If however something akin to what we understand is dreaming could ever take place in a computer, then an appropriate time for it would surely be in a period of computer inactivity. This, as we described in Chapter 4, is known as "*idling*." When we dream, our minds too seem to be "*idling*." We do not forget however that, like feeling, *dreaming* is a biological experience. Fundamentally, dreaming and feeling are experiences alien to and totally incompatible with the insensitive metallic and plastic parts of a computer. Even if we accept that (with brilliant programming and subsequent *computer self development*) computers might eventually come near to what we call thinking, it is beyond reason to believe that metal and plastic parts could ever have dreams. We know that some evolutionists are trying to prove that life can evolve spontaneously, and independently, from almost any material on earth. However, until we have such proof, the only way anything like dreaming could ever happen in a computer is by having programs to emulate it. To put *true* feeling and dreaming into the physical parts of a computer is not possible. To *emulate* dreams by programming might give us an insight into human experience, but to write programs to *display* "dreaming" (like making a computer *cry* with tears) is pointless. The very thought of computers dreaming illustrates the inanity of believing that computers can ever be invested with human qualities at all. It is true that there are remarkable similarities between the mind's methods and the computer's, but this does not mean that the experiences are the same, any more than *simulations* such we described in Chapter 2 are *real*. By computer programming, we can learn more about ourselves and even about human dreaming and feeling. But,

perhaps even before we do this, we will need to know much more about the subconscious and where our dreams come from.

Purpose and function

Mixed up reflections

It is worth dispelling at the outset any belief that dreams are harmful or something to worry over, no matter how frightening they may sometimes be. Dreams are not dangerous, sinister, mystical, nor a part of the occult; although they may well *reflect* tensions and emotions that we have lived through. Dreams may be harmful if we brood over them, or wish that we hadn't had them. They may send us early warning messages of bodily ills that in our waking lives we are too busy to notice. They can also affect our mood. Their effects may become even more serious if at times our minds are not well, or if our dreams are mistaken for *reality*; but these are topics we will leave until the next chapter. We come now to the actual make up of dreams. It is possible, as we suggested earlier, that our dreams are formed of memory particles, and that some of these might even have a *metaphysical* element. This could account for some of the unusual content of our dreams. Some people even claim that they have received messages in their sleep and some of these have even come from on High. None of this seems likely, except of course (in the ultimate), everything may be said to come that way. Still less do we believe that dreams can be used to cast evil or misfortune upon us. For the most part, dreams are a reaction to and a reflection of our every day living. They are a continuation of the abstraction, analogy, imagination, and other remarkable functions of the mind we have mentioned. Dreams are caused by electro-chemical, and possibly other unidentified forces, that continue to operate within our bodies while we sleep. Sometimes our dreams reflect daytime moods, worries and wishes (like dog Fido's fabulous dream of a secreted favourite bone) although the links are not always so obvious. Mostly, dreams are a mixture of *transformed* and *deformed* playbacks of our thoughts. As to our speculations on particles, it could be that dreaming is a time when we *open up* our microdots (our memory particles), turn them into light waves and waveforms, let them spin and whirl in incongruous ways, and when we look at them again from crazy like angles. Sometimes it is as if we dream by looking through mirrors and that the mirrors are curved and as a result our dreams are warped. At such a time, our dreams alas might be nothing more than distorted, harmless, reflections of what we have previously experienced which we will look at again under Sense and nonsense, below.

Neither magical nor weird

Sometimes the content of our dreams amazes us. People may be forgiven for believing that through some supernatural force they have received a message from Outer Space. They may be excused for thinking that they have foreseen the future and that they are being told how to prepare for it. However, if we analyse our dreams in great detail, and if we are honest, we often find that they contain nothing that does not have its roots in something we have seen or experienced in our waking life. Much that

happens in our dreams can be related to something we have at some time experienced, thought about or imagined, or from which we can extrapolate. When we consider that dreams originate in our subconscious mind, which as we have seen is forever experimenting with analogies and substitutions, it is not surprising that our dreams have such amazing variety. Normal ordinary dreaming is neither magical nor weird. Nor should it be of much concern or relevance in our everyday living except of course in the case of people who have suffered terrible torture and mistreatment in captivity as prisoners of war, hostages, or slaves, and so on, at the hands of their captors. Such dreams are repetitive nightmares. This may be a way of reporting mental illness in the way that the physical body also sends messages into our dreams. We cannot speak with authority on the traumas caused by such tragedies. They are matters that are better left to professional psychologists and others who specialise in treating such horrifying cases. Hopefully, ameliorating measures can be prescribed to ease the effects on those who suffer in this way. For non specialists to try to detect deeply hidden connections and personal truths in dreams; and to recommend treatment, or try to alter a dreamer's lifestyle and habits, is unwise and probably dangerous.

*Assimilating,
tidying up,
and renewal*

Dreaming like sleep, may be part of the process of resting the body; and, no less, the mind and the brain. In varying degrees, sleep is a natural requirement that is laid down for all of us. All creatures must observe it³⁹. We disobey this edict at our peril. If we do disobey, nature has ways of making us comply. All living creatures at some time take a rest from their normal activities. They recharge their "batteries." Sleep could be a time when the subconscious enjoys relief (but alas not rest) from an *excess of thinking* during the day. As we noted in Chapter 6, everything that we do in life seems to leave behind a record in our subconscious. The subconscious may be temporarily overwhelmed by this activity and anxious to sort out its ideas. Precisely what body and mind do when we sleep is not clear. The body no doubt clears up waste from its exertions during the day. The mind too perhaps does much the same thing, just as an Operating system in a computer straightens out matters when we are not using the keyboard, during its idle periods as they are called. Dreaming could be a similar activity. It seems to be a purely mental activity disconnected from its usual physical movements; although in our sleep we do sometimes have the feeling that we are moving parts of the body. It is certainly possible that the mind, in common with the body, is refreshing itself; restoring stability and harmony between the two. One function of our subconscious during sleep may be to assimilate new information with the old. It may be putting information into a more reasonable shape. Judging by the long, lifetime, memories that people hold on to, however, there is little evidence to suggest that the mind is doing anything like cleaning a slate. On the contrary, it sometimes seems that parts of our memory last for ever; in which case sleep could be a time for renewal rather than rejection. Our subconscious mind could be renewing our memories, not reducing them; but, on the contrary, *increasing* them. Not only are our memories of long ago left intact; but sometimes we even remember our dreams and the thoughts that we had about them. It could be that, while we sleep, our subconscious mind (far from resting) does a lot of necessary work which is reflected in our dreams. It could be that, in order to allow our subconscious mind to

39 Paul Martin. Counting Sheep, the science and pleasures of sleep and dreams

do its work without interruption, our conscious mind simply has to take a rest. Seen in this light, the subconscious mind could even be considered the senior partner of the two. Ultimately, it could be the subconscious to which the conscious mind reports. Both our consciousness and our subconscious are however entirely dependent on our memory.

Continuation of normal functions

Sleep and rest have been decreed by nature for all of us. But, life is continuous. It cannot be stopped and restarted like a clock, a machine, or a computer. Some people believe that dreaming never stops. Dreaming they suggest goes on in the subconscious mind continuously but we only become aware of it when we sleep. While we are awake our conscious mind keeps our dreams at bay and refuses to let them surface. Only when we sleep, when we are tired and close our eyes, do we get a glimpse of our dreams that seem to be rolling on aimlessly and drifting haphazardly all the time. This is a time when our conscious mind is off its guard. It also happens when we daydream. As to which parts of our body and mind are allowed to rest and which to continue to function when we sleep is presumably a question for our “*two minds*” (conscious and subconscious) to decide. The decision, very likely, varies from time to time and from person to person. Perhaps the more parts of our mind that rest; the deeper is our sleep; the more opportunity we have for dreaming; and the more relaxed we are on waking. But, if we are to keep alive, our mind and body can never shut down completely. Some functions must continue to operate whether we are asleep or not. These include our primary DNA and RNA memories and many of our automatic and involuntary actions such as breathing that we discussed in the previous chapter. It would bode ill for us if any of these functions and their associated memories ever stopped working. Talking and walking in one’s sleep from which some people suffer is also proof that memory and some of our primary functions are still available, and can be called on, even while we sleep.

Structural aspects

A peep into the subconscious

It is possible that, by analysing our dreams, we may find support for some of our earlier ideas. By peeping into our subconscious, we may learn something about the logical structure of the mind and how it processes information. When we sleep, many of our *physical* functions appear to be switched into an “*off*” position. The electrical circuits are closed. They no longer respond to the body’s normal commands and stimulus. We may dream that we are doing something but we are fortunate only to imagine it. Relevant muscles and other moving parts in the body do not react to what we do in our dreams. There is no physical force behind our commands. No physical harm ensues. We merely go through the motions. On the other hand, certain vital bodily functions obviously continue to operate. They remain firmly in the “*on*” position. If necessary, they are always there; always able and willing to wake us up from our slumbers. If certain functions are not vital to our physical survival, it is possible that they

are just left ticking over. Borrowing from computer terminology, they may be kept in an *idling* position. Likewise, it seems that many of our mental functions are also switched off or disabled. Switching off the current to our mental functions would be like removing some of the active component of information that we have suggested gives information its meaning. When we dream, we use only a part of this active component. Certain functions of the mind such as applying common sense, reason, and high level logic, are not called on. Our dreams become jumbled. Coupled with this, emotional influences in our subconscious continue to have their say. Hence, emotion probably plays a much bigger part in our dreams than reason. Several other functions of the mind, particularly those used for making analogies and stretching the imagination, also continue to work while we sleep. Undoubtedly these contribute to the strange content of our dreams. There may be purpose in this continued strange activity of our subconscious. Alternatively, it may be merely a reflection of the state of the mind while it is resting. The mind could be reacting like the wheels of an inert machine which keep on turning even when the power behind them has gone.

Sense and nonsense

Common sense and logic are often missing in our dreams. The reason for this could be that, when we sleep, the first function of the mind that becomes inactive is the one that *validates* our thoughts. This could be a function that normally checks our memory labels, looking at dates, types, consistency, reasonable content, and so forth. Without consistency checks of this kind, many of our dreams would soon be absurd. Chance microdots, fragmented, and damaged microdots, might be accepted and wrongly interpreted. Nonsensical data might be turned into the strangest of images using the mind's picture forming functions. All of this could then be seen in our dreams. We experience what is called REM or Rapid Eye Movements. Pictures or waveforms that we "*see*" in this state may be sheer nonsense, but they can still be vivid. Sometimes by accident, or for other reasons, a few common sense filters and inhibiting factors might continue to work. The result could mean that parts of our dreams remain tolerably sensible. The subconscious mind could be trying to do what the conscious mind does for us when we are awake. Perhaps sometimes the conscious mind even leaves special "instructions" behind for the subconscious to follow while we sleep. We get an impression of this when we wake up and suddenly become aware of an error we had made the previous day. Perhaps out of thousands of words we wrote that day we are vividly reminded of a single word that we misspelled and we rush to correct it. Sometimes, on waking, we realise how something that we had written previously could have been better expressed. Gratuitously, our post dream analysis reveals our shortcomings. We wake with a clear head and with answers to yesterday's problems. The cobwebs and clutter of yesterday's thoughts are swept away, and the decks of the mind are cleared again for action. We are indeed fortunate when the subconscious mind helps us in this way. Later in the chapter, under *the language of analogy* and *the fascination of dreams*, we will look at "*messages*" that dreams sometimes leave behind. Perhaps some people's minds are more skilled than others at finding meanings in dreams. One wonders if a "*sleeping*" computer could ever do as much.

Dreaming in layers

Sometimes we have a feeling that our dreams are taking place deep down in the depths of the mind, as if the mind were an ocean in which our dreams are very deep down indeed. It is a feeling that lends support to our ideas in Chapter 7 that our minds and memory may have a layered structure. Just as in thinking we seem to have different levels of thought; so, in dreaming, our dreams often appear to be layered, sometimes deep, and sometimes shallow. Certainly there are dreams that occur in light sleep and dreams that emerge from a deep sleep. In light sleep we may be aware of on-going sounds, the ticking of a clock, the whirl of a fan, or maybe background music. We may even wake up when the sound stops, or is suddenly missing. Sometimes people complain of not having slept at all. They then remember their dreams and realise that they have been asleep all along. Perhaps one level of the mind refuses to sleep because it has been overactive, while another level has gone off to sleep regardless. People may “wake up” from one level of a dream only to find a little later that they are still dreaming. Some people claim that they have been through a series of awakenings until they wonder whether they are awake or still asleep, a topic that reminds us of *Douglas Hofstadter’s* musings to which we referred in Chapter 2. Indeed we may well ask how we know that we are awake even now. Is there not one more level to rise through? As with levels of consciousness and awareness, is it not possible that there will always be a higher and more meaningful state than the one we are in? All that one can say is,—the latest state always seems clearer than the previous one. “To be awake” is a much brighter experience than being in the half lit world of our dreams. But factually this is a poor answer. By unravelling more recursions, there could still be brighter worlds beyond those we are experiencing.

The onion skin model

The layers of the mind and memory to which we have referred do not have to be thought of as layers in a 1-dimensional array. The layers could perhaps be more accurately envisaged as being like the rings of an onion with the core of our thoughts at the centre, a concept that we used in Chapters 1 and 3 to illustrate a hierarchy of information. In our present terms, a microdot would be at the centre of the “onion.” Our expanded thoughts, our dreams, and other information would all be in the outer rings of particles or waveforms that surround it. The same sensations of descending or ascending through different levels of the mind could still be experienced. The model, being basically a sphere, is perhaps nature’s way. Dreams could take shape and lie in successive layers of memory, envelopes within envelopes, like the layered skins of an onion. Dreaming and subconscious thinking could be a way of moving in and out of these layers or, again, like the folding and unfolding of information in a seed to which we referred in earlier chapters. As we move from one dream state into another we could simply be moving from one layer of the “onion” to another. Such a model would fit in quite nicely with our speculations about memory particles and microdots, and indeed with the shape of our own universe. The microdot could be a tiny spot at its centre. The idea also fits in nicely with the concept of nested sets of information, which we described in Chapter 3; and which in computing is so useful when storing, refocusing, and recalling data. Some computer Operating Systems are even described as having an onion skin structure.

Duplicate parts

In Chapter 7, we conjectured that we might have not only multiple layers in the mind but also duplicate parts. We could even have two (or even more) minds. Each mind could use different functions and have its own individual memory. Microdots in different parts of our memory might then be interpreted in different ways. Such a variety of meanings in the structure of the mind could again partly explain why dreams are often contrary, why some dreams are totally absurd, and why others may at least have a modicum of sense about them. When we are *awake*, it could be that information is compared across different parts of our memory as well as upwards and downwards through the levels we have postulated. Checks for common sense and consistency, and to avoid congestion, could be made as we do in computing. It is perhaps these actions when we are awake that take so long. We have the feeling that our minds are searching our entire memory trying to find a common sense solution. When we *dream* however such thorough checking may not be done. With few checks, or maybe none at all, for accuracy, logic, and reasonableness, a dream could have many different interpretations. Meanings could also depend on the part or level of the mind in which the dream takes place. The language used in different parts of the mind could well differ in emphasis and nuance. Dreadful emotions evoked by memories in one part of our mind could well be absent in another. We remember the story of a reputable professor who once woke up in bed to tell his wife that, in his sleep, he had just driven off some burglars by charging and swearing at them. According to his wife, who had heard him talking in his dream, all he had said was “Hello”! One part of his mind had responded in a completely different way from another. Like the Planet IO that we mentioned in Chapter 2 the mind could be full of violent storms in one view; but, idyllic and serene in another. Such is what may happen when meaning is derived from changeable components of information or when different languages are used upon it. The situation is similar to that between people who form different views on what has happened say at a football match, on which we commented under Properties of Information, *Different backgrounds*, in Chapter 1. Different minds are always liable to see things in different ways.

The language of dreams

Whether or not there is any sensible meaning in our dreams, whether dreams are trying to tell us something, and whether or not they are able to help us in our ordinary lives, the language of dreams is very different from literal language. Dream language is a picture language, a language without words that is formed, indeed forged, from one’s own experience. It is the language of *analogy and metaphor* that we described in Chapter 7. It is a language that we are continuously building in our subconscious mind to describe situations and how we should respond to them. It could be the language of the microdot, a language of impressions, emotions, and abstraction. The real “*meaning*” of our dreams, if there is any, may be passed to us in the strangest of ways. One important way as we have said is by the use of pictures, analogy, and metaphor. People, places, things, and situations, seem to appear in a dream not so much for *whom* or what *they* are but for what *happens* to them. There are many ways of creating similar sensations; being late or held up; an inability to find a building or a car park; being lost or left to fend for oneself; taking the wrong bus or train; winning and losing at something; not being sociable, and so

on. All of them may relate to some quite different circumstance. The most important features are the feelings and impressions they leave behind. It is these impressions that appear to have *meaning*. It is as if a dream starts off with the usual parts of a sentence,—subject, verb, object, indirect object, etc., but then changes the parts at random into pictures. Quite often, if we are prepared to go backwards in our dreams undoing and unwinding all the merging and substituting of people, places, things, and actions, we can get back to some real event in our lives. As a result, the dream will be quite different from what actually happened but we will have an uncanny feeling that we have made the right connection. We have read for example of an airline passenger who soon after taking off fell fast asleep but who, when an announcement was made that it was safe for passengers to unfasten their *seat belts*, proceeded to unbuckle his *wrist watch*. The underlying “*do word*” of the sentence was obviously “*unfasten!*” It was this command that the passenger for some reason felt he had to obey. Possibly at the time he was thinking about time zones. The nearest object in his mind was his watch, so he proceeded to do *something* to it. The story illustrates not only how one part of a dream may be replaced by another but also how dreams may be influenced by nearby events and surroundings, a topic we will look at when we come to the origin of dreams in a moment. Clearly, when so many merging and substitutions may be made of things and so many different analogies can be formed from them, it is very easy for dreams to change their shape and content. It is for this reason that we cannot depend on dreams and why (if dreams have anything to say at all) we may seldom get their message. It would be dangerous to read too much into our dreams until we have mastered their language.

The language of analogy

Dream language may be ambiguous and baffling, but it may still give us a clue as to how our subconscious mind works and communicates. Perhaps any true meaning in our dreams will be found not in dreams themselves, but in the immediate post dream thoughts that slowly occur to us as we wake up. These thoughts may be entirely different from the content of a dream. First the language of analogy that we mentioned a few moments ago has to be translated into something that is more meaningful to us. The link back to our dreams is often a tenuous one. It may be a big jump to take; but the first thoughts that come to us in the night, or that occur to us very soon after waking, could be much nearer to what our dreams are referring to. Suddenly sometimes we know how to tackle a problem that has been troubling us. We know how to correct yesterday’s mistakes, and to see matters in a completely different light. The dream that helped us to arrive in this happy state however may have gone. We don’t remember it. We have a feeling almost as if we have received a *message*. The form of the message may escape us but in some remarkable way its meaning is conveyed to us. The message has been translated into a language we understand. Our subconscious has been developing the language or languages it uses from the moment we are born, but we have little idea how they translate into our native tongue. The analogies that the mind makes may be personal and known only to us, but the *method* of communicating by picture and analogy probably has no national boundary. It is similar to the method of communicating by gesture, sight, and facial expression that we referred to in Chapter 7. It is common to the human race.

Origin of dreams

Minds that will not rest

To try to fathom the origin of our dreaming we return to our theory that memory is a material substance. It is also changeable, whenever necessary perhaps, into wave forms. Memory is quite separate and distinguishable from the mind and brain that work on it. Conceivably, our memory may be made up of millions and millions of microdots that go back in time to our very beginnings. The vast area of memory that is available to our subconscious mind while we sleep is presumably the same as that which is available to both our subconscious and conscious minds when we are awake. When we sleep, it may be that the subconscious mind chooses a topic and then looks for relevant memory wherever it can find it. As we surmised above, and in Chapter 6, it is even possible that it finds isolated and fragmented memories that have been circulating in the body but are now trapped in our joints and muscles. These bits of memory would certainly contribute to the mixed up nonsense in our dreams that we have referred to. While the conscious mind continues to rest, the subconscious mind seemingly goes on with its relentless turning over of memory, abstracting, filling it in and making analogies, building mental pictures, and so forth, as it always does. Its principal task it appears is to make as much use as it can of all the information it can find. It is a job that is never complete. When we dream, our highest level common sense checking mechanisms may not be working; but other mechanisms go on working regardless,—automatically, and non stop. The seeds or abstract parts of our dreams are allowed to grow and be filled in with unrelated data. Different people, places, things, and deeds, which give rise to the strangest of situations, may all be accepted unvetted and unmodified as quite legitimate. In addition, unchecked by any semblance of logic, accuracy or caution, the emotional aspects of our dreams are likely to take preference over reason. It is not surprising that some dreams are utter nonsense.

Abstraction and Analogy

Sometimes our dreams are formed not only around people and physical things, but also around abstract thoughts. In Chapter 7, we said that the forming of analogies and metaphor was a never ending task. The mind was looking for similarity between situations at different times in our lives, no matter how vague these might be. The similarities found are usually between our *mental states* at the time of situations rather than the situations themselves. A particular situation may have a general theme like authority, work, politics, religion, anarchy, sport, leisure, and so forth. It could be concerned with our likes, dislikes, fears, worries, or hopes, or it may be personal thoughts about schooldays, the workplace, success, failure, one's self esteem, and so on. The mind from its memory then populates these thoughts with people, things, and fancies. Feelings of joy and gladness may show up as a spell of fine weather on an imaginary holiday. Anxiety may be shown by fear, a fear of being inadequate, of having to make a speech or recite a poem without having prepared it properly, and of the dire consequences likely to follow. We or someone else may be featured as the victim of the topic although "someone else" often also turns out to be very near oneself. Sometimes our dreams may be concerned with simple notions like being up early, being late, being busy, or being lazy. A computer programmer may dream of making

experimental changes to a computer program; but what he or she may really be thinking about is making other, very different, changes. These may be changes in his or her lifestyle, or an experiment with medication that is having adverse effects. Again, in some indefinite form, someone else rather than he or she may be playing the leading role; although the person concerned is still probably oneself. It could be that sometimes the subconscious is merely portraying notions in order to update, redefine, and check the language that it is using. The mind could be upgrading the classification rules that it has developed for *labelling* our memory, an activity that we postulated in Chapter 6. Once the basis of a dream has been set in train, other functions and analogies take over. Other information is always pushing hard to get a place in the picture. Sometimes, the starting theme of our dream is a world disaster that we have seen on TV before going to bed. Distressing scenes of rescue work after a dreadful earthquake somewhere may lead us into making analogies with events in our own lives. Our dreams may show us how we too might have coped with other extremely difficult, if much less harrowing, problems. The connections may be vague but, if we look for them, they are often there.

The microdot connection

In microdot terms what we are saying is that other microdots in our memory, and even those only vaguely related to the theme, could be trying hard for inclusion. Alternatively, it could be that the microdots themselves are inclined to be passive; but it is the mechanisms of our subconscious that are over active. It could be that in our sleep our subconscious goes on a kind of uncontrolled rummaging spree, waking up particles of our memory, seeking them out from where ever they are, and making up stories from whatever is found. If the notion behind a dream is say authority, microdots with this or a related label could somehow be brought together to produce the dream. The principal character in the dream may start out as a Government official, a figure in the local council, a judge, a policeman, the boss, someone else whom we know, or indeed anyone who constrains what we would like to do. The subconscious mind is simply trying to make as much use of *all* the information that it has. Any microdot (about anyone or any thing) in the dream may be instantly replaced by another. One minute we may be riding a bicycle. In the next we may be in a bus, driving a car, or even on foot. The main theme seems to depend on what has recently been uppermost in our daily thoughts but this is not always the case. Why some people, scenes, and things, but not others, get into dreams could be due to many reasons. It could be random choice, but it could depend on other factors too. If for most of the day we are engaged in repetitive work (more microdots of the same kind) this could be reflected in our dreams. The work might be represented in various ways and its connections might not always be obvious but it could be that by doing the same thing day after day we are likely to create large numbers of the same type. Dreams could depend not only on the quantity of microdots available and how strong they are; but, also on where and in what condition in our body they happen to be at that moment. The efficiency of their labelling, and (importantly) the intensity of any associated emotion would also be very important. Dreams, no less than all information, reflect the general "*human condition*" about which we will have more to say in our final chapter.

Forming and changing images

Once events in our dreams are fused, or are superimposed one on top of another, it may be difficult to decide to which of them the dream really relates. Like the bicycle, bus, and car example above, an image may change quickly or gradually into something quite different. Initially, an image may be of a person we know, then of someone else, and eventually of someone we cannot recognise. This manipulation and merging of people's features is not unusual even when we are awake. It is not difficult to mistake a person of short acquaintance for someone else. Sometimes we see someone's likeness in the flickering flames of a fire or we can see horses and chariots chasing across the clouds in the sky. If we stare into a fire or at the grains in a piece of wood long enough the imagined features grow stronger and stronger, until we blink for a moment and all are gone. The mind is simply seizing on particular bits of an image, ignoring or *filling in* the rest from its own information, and creating a likeness. This is the easy blending and transforming of information which the mind is doing all the time. How much more likely then are the irrational, nonsense, sometimes laughable pictures that we form in our minds when we sleep and when our common sense guards are down. This amazing substitution, merging, and fusing of people, places, and plants, and everything else that we know of suggests that the microdot fragments of our memory become inextricably mixed, that they continue to be processed by our subconscious, and that they are then turned into REM sleep pictures without being examined and vetted as they normally would be. When we think of pictures that we see in our dreams it is well to remember that the making of images may be only the last stage in a series of processes. Picture language may be the one that we understand best but other manipulations may also have taken place in microdot form long before it becomes a picture in our dream.

Moods and recent events

Our dreams may be related to our moods and events of the previous day although this is not always a guide to a dream's origin. Even if an event has been traumatic, it is by no means certain to be reflected in the next night's dream. A dream may occur long after the event to which it relates. If we are in a happy frame of mind we may have pleasant dreams although they are never guaranteed. If we are in difficulties or are afraid of something, or if our emotions have been scarred, our dreams may reflect our feelings; but the dream may have only little resemblance to the event itself. It is likely that the mind will come up instead with an ingenious analogy. If the dream has been triggered by a late night TV show, or by a visit to the theatre, it is likely that one's mood at the time will be recreated in the dream. The ensuing results may be quite absurd. Characters in the TV show may be replaced by ourselves or by people whom we know in real life could not be there. TV personalities, and even members of the Royal family, may become part of our own domestic scene. Often as we said earlier an unknown person in a dream turns out on closer inspection to be oneself. We feel that it is us because we know that this is just how we would have reacted in similar circumstances. The thread of the plot may change and other fabrications may be concocted but instinctively we know that this is what *we* would do. We are seeing a *ghost* of ourselves. Previous dreams may re-appear and be superimposed on the present one. The strangest of

pictures may emerge and yet somehow, if one tries hard enough, a convincing link to an earlier dream, an original mood, a recognised event, or one's previous actions can often be made.

***Outside
Influences and
persuasion***

While we sleep our dreams may be prompted or influenced by outside events. These could be for example a sudden noise, a pain in the body that does not hurt enough to wake us up, something falling on or touching us when we dream, the cry of a child, the bark of a dog, the smell of cooking, a person shouting, or even some nearby conversation. If we are already in a dream, the new sensation may be merged into it in some way. It is also likely to be transformed very quickly into something else, as we illustrated earlier by the sleeping airline passenger who unbuckled his wristwatch instead of his seat belt. Such incidents are examples of our ever industrious subconscious mind always trying to make use, if not always sense, of the information that it has. Without the support of the conscious mind, to check whether something is reasonable or not, the subconscious produces what are for us often ridiculous analogies and situations. Some investigators into dreaming have claimed that it is possible to share dreams with others. A group of like minded people may meet before they go to sleep and decide what to dream about. They persuade their minds to concentrate on some subject and then some of the group, but not necessarily all, may share the dream. If it is true, it would be an extraordinary example of influencing dreams. In microdot terms, it could mean that during the initial period of concentration members of the group would create, and even possibly physically exchange, *microdots of thought* that are later recalled in their dreams. Particles of memory, particularly as waveforms as we defined them in Chapter 6, would perhaps provide a suitable means of communication. Dream sharing seems to have close connections with "lucid dreaming," a topic we discuss later in the chapter. Lucid dreaming could even have connections with telepathic dreaming, telepathy, and telekinesis, that we will refer to again in Chapter 12.

***Originality is
not excluded***

It may be tempting from what we have discussed to assume that our dreams are never original, no matter how new and exotic they seem. We could easily dismiss all dreams perhaps as no more than a random movement of memory and the playback of snippets of unrelated information. Certainly this is possible if one allows, as in our speculations about the microdot that memory is made up of the tiniest fragments of information some of which may be damaged. The almost infinite number of mergings, substitutions, and transpositions that could be made from them would be staggering. There would be no limit to the variety and number of scenarios that could be formed. But even in this case much depends on our definition of originality; and on what our views are of non reality and randomness that we discussed in Chapter 2. We may argue that nothing is original, that everything has an explanation, and that by making endless simulations and experiments with information, we are merely producing old ideas in a new dress. Every single thing has a history. Everything can be linked back to something. If what we discover however is enormously different from anything that has gone before, and if we can

make sense of it and put it to a new use, we may well choose to describe the phenomenon as original. If some of the mind's functions are still working while we sleep, if the mind continues to draw analogies from the mass of information that it holds, and, if the mind does come up with something staggering, it would not be unreasonable to claim that in so far as anything can be original so can a dream. When our conscious mind examines the dream, later on, we might well consider the dream "*original*" and even perhaps a guide for the future.

The nature of dreams

A temporary surrender

Many people claim that they never dream. If however we question people closely we often find that they do. They simply don't remember their dreams. For those of us who know we dream, and do remember them, our going to sleep is to hand ourselves over to the care of our subconscious. We submit ourselves to a series of mental experiences from which we can escape only by waking. Except in the case of lucid dreaming, which we will discuss in a moment, we have no control whatsoever over what happens in our dreams. We surrender ourselves temporarily to fate. What we see in our dreams is largely due to chance. People who wish us *pleasant dreams* seem to know this. Often our dreaming may be like moving through the rooms of a large mansion, taking in and experiencing the scenes and images of one room before we are move on into the next. There is no escape and no going back. What we see is likely to be vastly different each time. We move into rooms without being asked and not knowing what things are in there or how to avoid seeing them. Sometimes the scene is a happy one but it may also be frightening. We may wish to linger in one room, or we may want to move on quickly into another, but our wishes go unheeded. We might hope that the next scene will be a pleasant one but we can only hope. We have no say in the matter. The scenes we experience switch imperceptibly from one to another like the scenes in a film, or in a play on Television. We are carried along with them. Normally we stay with them to the end but if they are too terrible or frightening we may force ourselves to wake up and end them. We feel we have had a nightmare.

Dreams are fleeting

The minds of people who claim not to dream are probably very little different from the minds of people who do. In many cases, dreams are not *easily* recalled. Possibly, if dream microdots are more strongly marked and labelled as dreams, they are kept more securely out of view. Those of us who do remember our dreams will often remember them soon after we wake. They may, however, come back to us at other times; of their own free will. They may come back prompted by some strangely similar event in our lives, or they may pop up without any apparent reason at all. On the whole however, if left completely to themselves and without any prying or meddling on our part, dreams are rather shy and not keen for us to examine them. It could be that nature never intended us to remember them. One reason that dreams fade so quickly could be that while we are sleeping the part of the mind that creates, stores, and reads microdots is partly inactive. It is possible that any microdots that are made and

stored in our memory while we sleep are weaker and fewer than normal. When we are awake, events are intense and animated and we are apt to use all our senses to the full. When we dream, however, many of the mind's normal inputs are missing. Microdots produced in our dreams may be like seeds that lack "sunlight." They may be sluggish and drowsy. They may have less opportunity to grow and mature and to form images and pictures; but, most importantly, they may go unchecked for common sense. If our dreams do re-appear while we are awake they are usually soon recognised as such, and are quickly despatched as unreal. Their existence, at least in our conscious mind, is fleeting. In our subconscious, it may be a different story.

Soon forgotten

If it is true that nature doesn't usually want us to remember our dreams, then those of us who do not remember them are perhaps a little nearer "normal" than those of us that do. It could be that "non dreamers" have a stronger dream blocking factor than other people and are able to keep their dreams confined to their subconscious where they originate and presumably belong. Possibly the microdot mechanisms of non dreamers are more fully asleep than those of the dreamer. Trying to "dig out" one's microdots from the subconscious, as we may do when we try to recall a dream, may be an aberration if only a small one. In any case most people are usually far too busy to track down and study their dreams especially in the early morning which, as any angler knows with fish, is the best time to catch them. People, who have a career to follow, seldom have time in the early morning to go chasing dreams; and, still less, do they have time to philosophise about them. There are more important things to do. Dreams are soon forgotten. If they come back of their own accord, all well and good. They are a mild source of amusement. Dreams are also an intensely personal affair and not everyone reacts to them in the same way. Yet we suspect that, for those of us who do think about our dreams, our experiences are much the same as those of other people's; even if our explanations may be different.

Repetition and continuation

For those of us who dream we may find that parts of previous dreams, or something very similar to them, will often reoccur. Sometimes situations continue to develop from where we left off on in a previous dream. We may find that we are in a once familiar place surrounded by the same people and things as we were many years before. These repetitions may be so vividly portrayed that they leave us almost with a conviction that somewhere "out there" we have a parallel life continuing at the same time as our own, a duplicate self that sometimes supports us but at other times is in conflict with us. It is as if this "other self" is the other "I" that we reason and *talk* with when we debate with ourselves. It could be that the replay of recent dreams is a reflection of our trying to make up our mind about something. The repetition could be a continuous reflection of our mind's mulling over options and consulting with our conscience. Or, the replay of our dreams could simply be like a record that has got stuck in one of its tracks. It could be like a computer register that has failed to get properly cleared and keeps returning to its starting point. The feeling, of having a second self, supports the possibility that we entertained in Chapter 7 that we may have not one mind but two. It also supports the view that the

mind may have several *processing stacks* that it uses in its work. Each stack produces a different dream. In microdot speculation, repeated dreams could come from duplicate microdots that are continually being reproduced; as they probably are for normal memory all the time. Microdots could be stored, recalled, and worked on in our sleep, just as they are when we are awake. If the usual abstraction, fill-in, and analogy functions of the mind, are still operating; then, the repetition and similarities that we meet in our dreams would be natural and understandable. By repeatedly remembering our dreams we would also be continually *adding* to our microdot store, and *not* reducing it as sleeping might at first suggest. Repetition of our dreams suggests that our dreams are stored away and can be recalled just like any other information in our memory. As we remarked in Chapter 1, there is no law on the conservation of information, as there is of energy and matter. Information does not shrink or evaporate. It proliferates. Even if, for a time, it disappears from our consciousness; it often has ways of coming back. Like the modern view of the Universe it can only expand.

The make up of dreams

The mind in an idling mode

In many ways when we dream, our mind is in a state of free play. Our subconscious has access to many disconnected functions. It also has an abundant supply of memory. It continues to look for analogies within our memory. It reflects on their significance. It makes up stories to kick start our imagination. This is all a continuation of the mind's normal role. However, in our dreams, many subconscious processes go unchecked. They distort information and *make up* silly, impossible, stories, sometimes happy ones and sometimes frightening ones. Our conscious mind is not active and so is unable to reject them. Our subconscious does what it does because its purpose (as we suggested in Chapter 7) is to stimulate our thinking. It is an involuntary action that the conscious mind encourages. The result is a rich, but crazy, patchwork *quilt* of information. We are reminded of the woven fabric type of memory that we discussed in Chapter 6. This is the nature of our dreams. If we consider again some of the computing functions that we described in Chapter 4, we may also see how easily a computer too could produce a similar mix of meaning and nonsense. In its so called idling mode, the computer may be thought of as wandering freely over lots of recorded data. Many strange and implausible scenarios could be produced if we looked for them. We have previously mentioned the unholy mix up in our dreams that could come from damaged and fragmented particles trapped in the body. It is of course only dreams that we are thinking of at the moment. We are not talking at this point of what could happen if damaged memory could "invade" our *waking* state. We will pick up this possibility in the next chapter. We are thinking here only of sleep, normally healthy sleep, during which *some* of the mind's functions are still available. These could include *cross referencing*, *textual footnotes*, and *indirect addressing* that we described for computers in Chapter 4. All these functions, if not controlled, could cause haphazard *jumps* to topics that are quite separate from mainstream thought. Another possibility is the use of *concordances* that a computer uses to look for information related by keywords. The sleeping mind could have a veritable field day, jumping from one connection to another, without any cool headed logic

behind it. There would be nothing to check the validity and soundness of what it is doing. The jumbled information that makes up our dreams might be easily explained.

Uncontrollable content

If thinking is a controlled operation, then dreaming is surely uncontrolled. Our dreams are produced without fear or favour of the consequences. If we appear heroic or distinguished in our dreams we may feel good. If we are shamed into seeing ourselves as less than we think we are, we may feel belittled. Fortunately, if we are well, we can separate dreams from reality. Our dreams retain their identity and remain a separate and distinguishable part of our memory. They are clearly *labelled* dreams. They do not make us what we are not. Most of what occurs in our dreams is a concoction or a hotchpotch of our own actions and thought. They are fragments of our own experience in the world around us, and an elaboration of the memory of anything that has ever passed through our minds. Dreams bring together similar strands of thought. Even words and expressions with totally unrelated meanings may find themselves conjoined, simply because they rhyme or sound the same. The “manufacturing” of stories that goes on in our dream factory is uninhibited and unprincipled. It could be that the *microdots* of our dreams are uncontrollably mixed, juxtaposed, and misinterpreted. Often, vitally significant elements of information are omitted. Sometimes, on the other hand, some information may have found its way into our memory (and hence into our dreams) without us being aware of the fact. This could include, as we indicated earlier, externally nearby noises, vibrations, and smells. There are also people, rather like the dream sharing group that we mentioned, who believe in dream telepathy. They believe that they can communicate in their dreams with other people. Possibly, if we are so inclined, we could imagine streams of microdots moving in waves from one sleeping head into another across vast distances (even possibly through what we have called the fourth dimension). The telepathy would be not only automatic but involuntary. Our minds would be like mobile telephones without any hardware. Some people even claim that information may have been “*planted*” in their minds by supernatural forces. For the most part, however, dreams are just mixed up extracts of our own personal thoughts. In later chapters, we will look at cases where memory is interfered with physically, in ways that could influence not only our dreams but also our thinking. We will also consider the possibility that, over large spans of time, human beings may develop new mind controls like telepathy. We might then be able to project our thoughts, and influence distant events. First there is the wish, then an attempt, and finally the achievement. Even the development of new physical powers may not be impossible. Such possibilities are in line with the views of the evolutionists to whom we referred in Chapter 5. In later chapters, we will note even more “outrageous” phenomena that seem to have memory connections. For the moment we will leave them aside.

Ceaseless merging and substitution

It is not only strong impressions in our daily lives that get reflected in our dreams. Often, a lot of trivia that we hardly notice in our daily life also finds its way into our dreams. Built around simple

themes like the home, the family, a hobby, or work, our dreams are soon filled up with endlessly merged and substituted information until it all becomes a total nonsense. Interesting analogies between different events may be utterly improbable. In any case, very rarely are our dreams an exact copy of real life. More often than not, they are silly irrational pictures with strange associations. Our subconscious sticks to its primary duty of using of every bit of information it can find, even if the results are senseless. We dream of people we know or know of. We invest them with impossible properties and qualities even to the extent of making them in the process grotesque and monstrous people. We find ourselves visiting places that are no longer there, travelling in trains that no longer run, brushing hair that we no longer have, doing things that we know are now beyond us, listening to songs that people no longer sing, and meeting people who have long since departed. People's ages including our own, if they are obvious at all, are invariably less than real ones. We dream of people as they were. The structure of a once familiar building becomes quite impossible; doors and windows open the wrong way; clocks and other things appear in ridiculous places; bowls replace balls on a billiard table; cars may be parked in a house instead of a garage; and situations, sometimes joyous and sometimes sad, are re-enacted in the strangest of circumstances. What is created is an imaginary illogical world filled with creatures of our imagination. If there is meaning to be found in dreams, then somehow we must first remove from them all the blown up trivia that our imagination adds to them. Of course, what appears to us to be unnatural and impossible in a world of three dimensions could look quite different in a world of more (or fewer) dimensions. This is still a topic we need to take account of.

Absence of barriers

In our dreams; friends and foes alike may have crazy features, qualities, and behaviour that in real life would be impossible. In our waking life, a tall neglected green plant in the home may have started to droop but recently we may have watered it and given it special care. In our dream, this could appear as a tall slim man with a stoop suddenly moving around in our home wearing wet green clothes. In this case, the connections are perhaps more obvious than usual. In films, we have a similar way of avoiding barriers. The rapid movement of frames in a film produces moving pictures, and quickly changes a scene. So in our dreams; scenes may change very quickly from one into another. It is noticeable that, in a dream, walls and locked doors are often no barrier to entry. In Chapter 1, we noted that radio waves have no difficulty in moving through objects. So it is with people in dreams, (and *ghosts* too if there be such things). Nothing bars their way. As we suggested, waves and/or ghosts could possibly get through barriers by moving through the space between the atoms. The phenomenon is almost as if they are moving through a fourth dimension. We will refer to this notion again when we look at ghosts and other strange happenings in Chapter 12. The way in which (in our dreams) strangers enter a well secured home, moving through locked gates and doors (disappearing just as easily afterwards), is reminiscent of *Edwin Abbott's Flatland* that we mentioned in Chapter 2. Someone living in three dimensions would certainly have no difficulty in seeing through into a securely *locked* 2-dimensional room. This is precisely the position described in *Edwin Abbott's* book. The barriers of a few dimensions simply disappear in the face of more dimensions. From a world of *four* dimensions, many more views would be visible of *3-dimensional* objects. The avoidance in dreams of physical obstacles has similarities with the different views of information that can be obtained from concordances of text we have referred to. In

these concordances, the fourth dimension is time. At the end of Chapter 7, we were so amazed at the power of the human mind to change situations rapidly that, here too, we wondered whether the mind possibly also works in a fourth dimension. However (rather against the idea) we have also noted that, when we sleep, some of the mind's functions are clearly not working. At such a time the mind may not be able to *see* in even three dimensions. Like the inhabitants of *Flatland*, we might *see* things only in two. People in our dreams might still move through walls and closed doors, and suddenly also turn up in far distant places, but the mind does not tell us how.

Absence of time

Despite the possibility mentioned in the previous paragraph that our dreams could develop out of a "concordance of memory based on time," there is not usually much sense of time in our dreams. If our dreams do come from a concordance of events, its keywords are clearly not in time order. In our dreams, time stands still. If only we too could stand so still! Dreams ignore the ageing process. Or, at least, our ageing lags behind reality. There is often a total disregard of the fact that people grow old and die. People in our dreams, rather like *Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray*⁴⁰, tend to remain for ever looking their best. Age doesn't weary them. In our dreams, we prefer it seems to remember others and indeed ourselves as we were. People who have died many years ago frequently appear in our dreams and exchange ideas with us as they did when they were alive. The basic memories on which our dreams are formed seem timeless. The fact that ageing and the passing of time has little prominence in our dreams, and the fact that people often appear as young as we like to remember them, is puzzling. This is especially so since, as we noted in Chapter 6, so much of our waking memory appears to be date stamped if only approximately. For some reason, when we sleep, our sense of time (like our logic, labelling, and common sense functions) seems to be temporarily shut down. It could be that to disregard the death of one's relatives and friends, and leave us with the impression that they are still alive, is a kind of wishful thinking. It could be a case of *shutting one's eyes* to the inevitable, a deliberate attempt to suppress unhappy information. With no high level consciousness to rein in our thoughts, the heart might have its way.

The fascination of dreams

Holding on and letting go

Often, we have only a vague idea of what we dream. This is because dreams are fleeting, and because usually we are preoccupied with more pressing business. The business of the day comes rushing in and, unless we make a serious effort to recall our dreams, most of them are soon forgotten. However, if on waking we can afford the time to pause and give our dreams a chance; they may come back shyly and gingerly into our minds. On occasions, we are reluctant to let our dreams escape. We hold on to them in a kind of semiconscious state. We delay our waking up, and we try to continue our dream even if it is unpleasant. By lying still in a dreamlike state, and remaining as far as we can in the position in which

40 Oscar Wilde. *The Picture of Dorian Grey*

we dreamed, we can sometimes get back into the dream. The dream we usually remember is our most recent one, but this is not always so. By lying still we delay the onrush of new ideas, and perhaps avoid activating parts of the mind that would soon have us doing other things. Since (in microdot terms) dreams might produce fewer microdots than normal thinking, the mind might have to try harder to recall them. We could be asking our mind to find and replicate as many relevant microdots as it can. Trying then to remember dreams could be like concentrating and learning that we looked at in the last chapter. It is not always easy. Microdots would need to be seized on, interpreted, copied, and re-copied, until they are plentiful enough to give us a stable picture as they do when we remember. Thankfully, for sanity's sake, our dreams seem to be labelled "dreams" and "not real." We are able, when we are awake (but apparently not when we dream), to recognise our dream labels and treat dreams for what they are. If we are *well and healthy*, we can recognise what is a dream and what is not. We will discuss in a later chapter what can happen when we are not so well.

Writing down dreams

Waking in the middle of the night, trying to hold on to one's dreams is not easy. It can be tedious but, if we are really serious about it, the best way to remember a dream is to write it down as soon as we can. Without fully waking, we may be able to scribble a few meaningful words and phrases that will later help us to recall the dream. Without such a record, the dream may be lost. After moving into a wakeful state, or into the post dream state that we referred to earlier, thinking about a dream may lead us quickly to a crop of other thoughts and revelations. These may appear at first to have nothing to do with the dream but eventually they seem to explain what the dream is about. Like the dream, on whose back they ride, these thoughts too should be written down if they are not to fade and be gone for ever. Having pencil and paper beside the bed is a useful spur to record what has happened. We will take a look at the possibilities of post dream analysis in the next paragraph. Writing down a dream is like writing up one's diary at the end of the day. It is a measure of something accomplished, something recorded. Having completed a diary entry for a day, our minds are at ease. We can go to bed, and sleep confidently knowing that we have a permanent record of the day's events. We can always look up the record later if we want. We no longer need to keep an account of it in the forefront of our minds. Once we have written down a dream (and our immediate post dream thoughts), we no longer need to ask our mind to keep tabs on them. The mind can rest. It is relieved of a job. It is not cluttered up with worrisome dreams. We can return to our sleep or move on to other things. The memory of our dream, and its after thoughts, may safely drop down a few layers in the mind. We may sleep soundly as a result.

Post dream analysis

There may, as we have said, sometimes be a closer connection between dreams and immediately post dream thoughts than we suspect. What we dream about may not be due just to the accidental position of our *microdots* but rather to the fact that our subconscious is saying something. A little deep thinking may reveal the connection. There may of course be more than *one* thing *on our mind*, and that could be another reason why we have mixed up dreams, and why it is difficult to disentangle them. It

is also not easy to translate the *language of analogy* used by our subconscious into the vocabulary of everyday living. It may not be a *message* in the ordinary sense of the word. There may be no “*hidden commands* from on high” bidding us to do something. However, any connections that we do find may clarify our mind and may even help us to solve a problem. It may not be a complete solution to a problem but we may see new ways of approaching it. On some important project we are working on we may have a feeling that a “*message*” is warning us that, we should devote more time to it. A little analysis may reveal that these are merely our own thoughts and no one else’s. The mind may be reluctant to let go of the issue. It refuses to let us sleep properly. It intrudes into our thoughts and dreams. There may be times when the mind sees problems that “*we*” are not aware of. As the subconscious is wont to do, it may be merely trying to bring matters to our attention. What is revealed to “*us*” by our post dream analysis may help us to see the way ahead more clearly. Possibly, we may also learn something about the way our subconscious communicates. In any case, any ideas and revelations that come to us in our half awakened state undeniably confirm that our subconscious is still working for us. It is still amassing, assimilating, abstracting, comparing, and making up stories; even while we sleep.

Lucid dreaming

A fascinating feature of dreaming is so called lucid dreaming. Anyone who dreams and is interested in the nature of dreaming may experience and take part in it. Lucid dreaming is the name given to a situation in which a dreamer knows that he or she is in a dream and is even able to influence it while it happens. If we don’t like the way the dream is moving we are able to go back a little way and change it. If we are moving through a building we can choose to go into one room rather than another, making it perhaps a more pleasant experience. The principal character in the dream is usually oneself. It may seem a contradiction in terms to say it but that what we experience is a kind of *conscious* sleep. It is conscious dreaming. It is likely to occur when we are deeply interested in the nature of dreams and after, say, a long period of recording and analysis. We can expect it to happen when we are concerned with how and why dreams occur rather than with their meaning. The line between lucid and ordinary dreaming may often be a faint one. Lucid dreamers, while still in a dream, are able to prove to themselves that they are dreaming. They may do this best by doing something that they know in real life is impossible; such as, rising or floating in the air, moving outside the body, or walking on the ceiling. Whatever device is chosen, it must be used gently and carefully so as not to end the dream abruptly and cause the dreamer to wake. The feeling of being separate from, or leaving one’s body, is not confined to lucid dreaming. It is also met in Out of Body Experience (or O.B.E.). This also occurs naturally. We will discuss it further in Chapter 12 when we discuss *near death* experiences. It is possible to see oneself doing things as if looking at oneself in a mirror. It is an experience that can happen even when we are awake. It seems to be further evidence that we may have not one mind but two (or more!), or at least different stacks of memory, as we suggested in Chapter 7. In lucid dreaming, having established that we are in a dream, we may then observe what is going on. We may converse with people in the dream and even *help* to determine what happens next. Gradually we find ways of talking to our subconscious. If it is a pleasant dream we may enjoy it, let it continue, and even direct it. If it turns nasty or frightening we may try to influence it for the better. If we are at an unpleasant impasse in our dream and don’t know what to do next in it we may simply be able to say “*end it*” and return to consciousness. Sometimes we

do this reluctantly, or only after some difficulty. After a tussle, we rise through different layers of the dream. On the other hand if we experiment too much, and push our personal wishes too far or too quickly, we may bring the dream to an abrupt end. Control of lucid dreaming seems to come from a higher level of the mind. As we leave the dream, we feel as if we are ascending through other levels of dreaming. It is a feeling that supports our views that the mind may be organised in layers. Sometimes when we “wake,” we find (as we noted earlier) that we are still dreaming and we go through the same process all over again rising to a yet higher level of the mind. Lucid dreaming is not always satisfying but with patience one’s ability to do it can be greatly improved. If lucid dreaming can be combined with group dreaming to which we also referred earlier it would be a significant development in our information study. It could mean that, by concentrating on an agreed topic before going to sleep, each member of the group might create *similar* microdots and so influence the dreams of the others. Lucid dreaming, in combination with group dreaming, might even give support to the possibility of telepathic dreaming. Whatever else it is, it is an *information* phenomenon.

Dreams and our well being

Moods and temper

An important aspect of dreams is the effect they have on our personal attitude and behaviour. Not only do prior events and previous feelings influence our dreams but the contents of our dreams may have a lasting effect on us. They may affect our everyday mood and temper, and even our personality. Despite what we have said about the fleeting nature of dreams, there are dreams which after waking will hang on. Sometimes we don’t want them to go. We find it hard to believe that what we have just experienced is only a dream. Even if it is, and even if it is depressing, we may still cling to it tenaciously to see if we can find out more. We do this instinctively, sometimes almost as if our body is clinging to life and consciousness. We hope perhaps to get back into the dream to improve on it or to do things differently. The dream may have put us into a disagreeable mood for what seems to be no apparent reason. We find ourselves in a sour temper all day. If this is how we react to a dream we remember, is it not likely that we could also be moody because of dreams we don’t remember? Could it not be that sometimes when we feel moody and liverish it is not because we have a bodily ailment; but because, instead, we have had an unpleasant dream which is lurking in our subconscious? Conversely, pleasant dreams that we are not aware of could be why (on some days) we feel extremely happy and optimistic; apparently for no reason at all. Such is the power of information over our lives. Even when we do not know why; or where our information comes from it can it may have an important effect on us. Apart from the psychological consequences of dreaming we might consider how we might be affected by physically by our dreams. By dreaming we could quite simply be adding to our microdot memory, creating yet more burdens for our mind and body to bear. On the other hand, suddenly remembering a dream (a topic that we will take up in the next paragraph), often seems to clear the mind. We seem relieved of bodily aches and pains and feel better. Possibly, remembering a dream *releases* microdots from their moorings. Possibly, it allows them then to disperse, to be discarded, or to take up a more comfortable place in our memory. The relief that we get from remembering dreams is sometimes remarkably pleasing. Mind and body are perhaps more closely connected than is supposed.

*Auspicious
and
therapeutic*

It is a curious fact that when a dream comes back into our minds we are often left with a feeling of well being and almost good fortune. We say gleefully that something reminds us of a dream. We say such things as; “oh, that has just broken my dream—that’s good luck!” Perhaps we are not just remembering a dream. Perhaps we are also wiping away from our minds (possibly even physically) something that has been worrying us and causing us to feel gloomy and sullen. We now know perhaps that the background to some recent worrying thoughts, that we had been experiencing, was a dream and not reality. We realise that we are no longer justified in feeling sad or depressed. Whatever Nature’s intention is in allowing us to dream, it would seem that remembering dreams is not such a bad thing after all. Possibly by remembering our dreams we remove some obstruction (though not necessarily the dreams themselves) from our minds. Possibly physical damage to the mind and even to the body is averted. The mind is cleared. All seems right with the world. Some part of our life is at ease again. It could be that we are confirming the labels of our microdots (that they are correctly marked as a dream) and that there is nothing in the dream that should worry us. It is even possible that this so called “breaking” of a dream removes or *dislodges* microdots that have become trapped in the body as we surmised in Chapter 6. More than getting just another glimpse of our dreams, it is possible that when we “break a dream” we round up offending microdots and remove them physically from undesirable parts of our mind and body where they have become stuck. In any case, the chance remembering of a dream remains a pleasant sensation. To this extent at least, the experience is often mentally and spiritually refreshing.

Vital part of the information story

*More study is
essential*

The present chapter has brought us further into the area of speculation and conjecture as we have tried to trace connections between external information, our personal memory, and our dreaming. Why we dream and why we remember some dreams but not others, even if only for a short time, is not clear. One reason that we dream is probably because our subconscious mind is forever assimilating information, making analogies, creating mental pictures of imaginary situations and bringing them to our attention, even when we sleep. It is an involuntary action. It cannot stop even if it wants to. All this helps us to survive and prosper in a competitive world. These purposeful functions, although they are not as controlled as when we are awake, continue while we sleep and show up in our dreams. Much more study is required however of information that finds its way into our dreams. We need to correlate what people dream with what they say in their sleep, with what they do when they sleep walk, and with what their immediate post dream thoughts are. Can we relate the nature of dreaming and the conversations that take place in our dreams with our ideas about us having memory “*stacks*,” and even having more than one mind? Can the techniques we use in computing give us clues as to why our minds dream? People should be encouraged to examine their dreams and to suggest how they came to have them. Even laymen may find it rewarding to identify and study the relationships between dreams

and real events, and between dreams and our immediate post dream thoughts. Experiments in lucid dreaming should be encouraged. Professional researchers should try to identify the basic physical substance of which our dreams are made. Can our dreams be related to physical matter which, for want of a better term, we call microdots? More correlation with REM (Rapid Eye Movement) in our sleep would no doubt be invaluable. Will it even ever be possible to “*photograph*” our dreams, and even our thoughts? That would indeed go a long way to finding the answers we seek

***In the lobby
of a new
dimension***

If our dreams show us anything, they illustrate convincingly how easily information can be manipulated and changed out of all recognition in no time at all. This is true whether the information is in the mind, in a computer, or, elsewhere Dreams are part of our personal information store and our make up. Individually this is important. But more than this, dreams are a vital part of the information puzzle. As we continue our story into the stranger fields of the next few chapters, our speculations and suppositions about information will increase. If we keep our mind on the basic principles, on which we started, that in one sense *everything* is information and in turn *everything* is memory, then what we postulate may *not* be totally unreasonable. The power of information in the world is indisputable. This is true in whatever form it is, in electronic form, in the mind, in memory, in dreams, in tablets of stone, in fact, or in fiction. Hopefully, what we uncover in dream analysis could go some way to unravelling a few of information’s mysteries. We could be on the verge of a new discovery. As we surmised at the end of Chapter 7, we could find that when we dream we go into the lobby of another dimension. We could be on the threshold of another universe, a universe where everything is information; information that is visible in some worlds but not in others. This dimension could be formed from the space between the atoms of matter that we first referred to in Chapters 1 and 2. By looking at our memory particles from the *inside* (that is from within the spaces between their parts) this could help to account for all the jumble, endless merging and substitution, rapid change of scenes, absence of barriers, and absence of time, in our dreams that we have mentioned. In just the three dimensions in which we exist, what we actually *see* would not make sense. Alternatively, what we experience in our dreams could be nothing more than a reflection of the reduced powers of our mind while we sleep. Only a few of its normal functions, as we know, are in action. Whatever the answer is, whatever it is that we *see* in our dreams, it is still information. As our theory on the duality of information tells us, merely *to see* information is to use only one of two necessary components. To do anything useful with information we also need the action of its second component. Without both components, i.e. data and a proper means of using it, information may always be (as often in our dreams it seems to be) just nonsense. Both components must also be in good condition if we are to get a proper understanding of our dreams. As Shakespeare declared so eloquently in Hamlet, to which we have already referred, there is much more in Heaven and Earth (Horatio) than we dream of in our philosophy.