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William R. Stimson

Taiwan's National Chi Nan University

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Montague Ullman’s Dream Appreciation

William R. Stimson

Taiwan’s National Chi Nan University

American psychiatrist Montague Ullman viewed dreams as spontaneous creative expressions of one’s current life situation and developed a method of working with them the outcome of which he felt to be superior to interpretation. He called this outcome dream appreciation. It (a) was arrived at by the dreamer, not some professional; (b) didn’t attempt to understand the dream in terms of any established body of theory, but tried to make sense of it in terms of the dreamer’s life; and (c) reunited the dreamer with what was felt to be deepest and most true in herself and brought this out into her life. Examples exist in the literature of the first two aspects. Although the third aspect characterizes every well-run Ullman group, the literature contains not a single convincing example of it. This article provides one.

Since C. G. Jung, perhaps no one changed the way we view dreams as much as the late Montague Ullman. When this quiet and unpresuming psychiatrist came upon the scene as a young man, dreams belonged in the consulting room and many a stolid psychotherapist deemed it dangerous for the layman to work with them outside that context. As the most brilliant minds in the field busied themselves reducing dreams and dream interpretation to a science, Ullman perceived that dreams had more in common with art than with science (Ullman, 1979a, 1980, 1999a, 1999c, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2002) and needed to be approached with this in mind. What they yield of most value are creative intuitions that arise from just beyond the outer limits of what can be ascertained by the scientific rational intellect. These can be as real, as factual, and as accurate as anything dealt with by plodding rationality—but are of an entirely different order. Over the centuries, for instance, laborious researchers have provided detailed interpretations of every aspect of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Yet, season after season, centuries after Shakespeare penned that tragedy, it is the theatrical production itself that tens of thousands still flock to and find meaning in—not the dusty tomes that go to such great lengths to explain what it means. The meaning of the play is the play itself. It expresses nuances of human depth that simply don’t come across in any

1In this article, I cite extensively from the informal newsletter Dream Appreciation that, in his later years, Montague Ullman distributed to those of us most closely affiliated with him. On its pages, Ullman came forth with much of his more mature thinking about his dream group process and its relationship to creativity and the creative arts. It’s unlikely the series can be found in any library, but Wendy Pannier, who managed the newsletter for Ullman, has allowed Markku Siivola to post the entire series on his Montague Ullman Web site.

Correspondence should be addressed to William R. Stimson, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Taiwan’s National Chi Nan University, University Road Puli, Nantou Hsien 545, Taiwan. E-mail: bstimson@gmail.com
interpretation—and presents these to our subliminal intuition with a force that renders them potentially life-changing. Dreams do the same. Ullman felt that dream interpretation misses the point. Each dream, like each great work of art, he recognized, was its own truth. Every dreamer, in giving rise to a dream, like every artist with her creative work, births new human life and potential. The challenge in working with a dream, Ullman saw, was to bypass interpretation long enough to midwife that new potential directly into the dreamer’s waking life (Ullman, 1998a).

With ideas like these, Ullman didn’t quite fit psychotherapy, community medicine, or laboratory research—and moved from one to the other until, unexpectedly and late in life, he was offered a position in Gothenberg, Sweden teaching young psychoanalysts about dreams (Ullman, 1997). He walked into a classroom of Swedish doctors who expected him to teach dreams the way they were then taught in medical schools. Ullman quickly came to feel the young doctors could better learn about dreams by working with their own. He asked if one of them might volunteer a dream to try this out. A hand was raised, a dream was told and, at long last, Montague Ullman found himself in a group working with a dream—an environment conducive to his singular genius and talent.

It was thus that Ullman’s experiential dream group process originated. It evolved over time and by degrees—and in a way that surprised him as much as everybody else by turning into what he came to see as a deprofessionalization of dream work (Ullman, 1981, 1982). Ullman had discovered a way of working with dreams that was not therapy and not counseling—and that could be used by ordinary people with no professional training (Ullman, 1979b). It was safe because the dreamer, herself, controlled the process and could stop it the moment she felt threatened. It was powerful because the authority it relied on was the dream. And it was real because it enabled the dreamer to connect with her dream in a deeper way than mere interpretation (Ullman, 1979a).

Dream appreciation, first coined by Marianne Horney Eckhardt, is the term that resonated with Ullman and that he used to describe what he saw happening in the groups he led (Ullman, 1998b). He described it by analogy to art appreciation (Ullman, 1998b). Dream appreciation was so central to the way Ullman viewed and worked with dreams that he increasingly came to use the phrase for his ideas generally and for his dream group method specifically (Ullman, 1996).

At the same time, he never stopped using the term in its original, narrower, sense, to denote the specific outcome of his way of working with dreams, which differed from dream interpretation in that: (a) It is the dreamer’s own doing, not the work of some outside professional who supposedly can see the meaning of her dream better than she herself can, (Ullman viewed the dreamer as the highest authority on her own dream); (b) it doesn’t come about by imposing any established body of theory on the dream or the dreamer’s life, but emerges directly from the imagery of the dream itself, when held up against the dreamer’s recent life (Ullman viewed the dream as the dreamer’s own theory of her life); and (c) it reunites a dreamer in a powerful and remarkable way with what Ullman once called her “desirable core” (Ullman, 1999b, p. 4), and later took in all his writing to calling her “incorruptible core of being;” and so unlike dream interpretation, which so often shows a dreamer what has gone wrong with her, dream

I use the feminine pronoun throughout this article because the dreamer is a woman and the large majority of those who come to Ullman dream groups are women.
appreciation reveals to a dreamer what she feels is most deeply and surprisingly right about herself and, in so doing, brings this out into play in her life.

Ample examples exist in the literature of the first two aspects of dream appreciation (Siivola, 2011; Stimson, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Stimson & Wang, 2004; Ullman, 1996; Ullman & Zimmerman, 1979). But not a single convincing illustration is to be found anywhere in the literature of the third aspect. Yet, it is the end product of every masterfully led Ullman group and the quintessential feature of the Ullman process. The problem is that it is nothing less than a mystical encounter (Siivola, 2011) and, as such, is all but inexpressible (Ullman, 1980). Ullman, arguably the greatest dream worker of our age, and certainly among the greatest of all time, spent a lifetime writing passionately and insightfully about the new way he developed of working with dreams; and yet failed to graphically depict a single convincing example of what most strikingly and uniquely characterizes it. Neither have any of his followers come forward with one since.

This article provides a detailed account of a dream twice worked on in the same Ullman dream group class in Taiwan. The first group session only resulted in aspects (a) and (b) of dream appreciation; the second, some weeks later, resulted in a deeper manifestation of these two aspects and an astonishingly clear-cut instance of aspect (c) that uncharacteristically lends itself to description and illustration. Some 40 years after Ullman developed his revolutionary ideas and methods, and several years after his death, this lucky case enables his most important claim to be strikingly illustrated for the first time in the literature.

METHOD, RESULTS, AND DISCUSSION

In the Spring of 2007, I taught a graduate course on dreams in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at Taiwan’s Chi Nan University. I chose to teach about dreams the way Ullman himself had, by conducting the class as a dream group and letting the students learn about dreams by working on their own dreams. I opened the first class of the semester by asking if one of the students might care to volunteer a dream, not for us to actually work on but just to familiarize ourselves with the stages of the Ullman experiential dream group method we’d be using all semester. A hand went up and a woman in her late 20s, who for purposes of confidentiality I will call Kai Su, told us a dream she’d had a year and a half ago [The dreamer is a native Chinese speaker. This and the main dream are exact quotes. Elsewhere, I have edited her English for clarity]:

There are no colors. Only black and white. I am cutting my ears with knife. One ear already on the desk. I am cutting another one.

One of the students suggested cutting off one’s own ears might be a metaphor for, “I don’t want to hear it anymore.” Kai Su subsequently revealed that at the time she had the dream she was working from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at a social work institution under a boss who kept coming up with more and more for her to do when she already felt overworked and exploited. She quit the job soon after the dream and enrolled in the graduate program of the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at Chi Nan University.
I figured that, soon enough, we’d be hearing again from Kai Su. In fact, she became increasingly quiet. Now and then a troubled look on her face stood out so strong that it caught my attention. I was at a loss to decipher it. Not until mid-semester did she volunteer a dream of her own for the class to work on. We begin the Ullman Process with Stage IA: She tells us her dream:

In the night I am going to a party and I wear a black dress.
Then I met a man I don’t know him, and we talk.
After a while, then I leave the party and when I go downstairs I feel scared because somebody follow me and that’s the man.
So I starting to run to another building and the building is a hotel and when I go to, I run to the elevator.
And I want to take elevator but number of elevator shows 45 and that’s too slow, too far, I worried the man will come to me, so I start to go up stairs and very strange there is nobody in the hotel.
When I run about three or four levels, one door opens and a woman go outside.
When I saw the woman I turn back and the man wears red clothes like fireman (the same man).
And he is very close to me. So I go into the open door and into the room.
Then I closed the door and locked.
But I’m still very scared because the man knocked the door very hard, so I look around the room.
Then I saw the window.
So I go to the window and look outside.
The question is the window is iron so I cannot jump outside. But I still...
The window has little bit of space, like to put plants so I get out and hide there.
Suddenly when I hide the door is open and the man is come in.
And he come to the window but very strange. He just look forward so he don’t see me. And he leave. And I just feel very strange why he leaves why he just look forward. Then I wake up.

Stage IB (Clarifying Questions): In response to questions from her classmates, she elaborated that the party was a formal affair—dancing and drinking. The man she talked with was her same age. His face was not clear. When he pursued her she was scared and felt threatened. Back at the party, he’d had on a black suit, but in the hotel he wore a red fireman’s uniform. At the end, when he didn’t see her huddled up in the window cage she felt relief.

In Stages IIA and IIB (Feelings and Metaphors), members of the group pretended the dream was their own and brainstormed about feelings and metaphors, then in Stage IIIA (Dreamer’s Response), Kai Su came forward with her response:

The weekend before the dream I went on a trip with friends to a beautiful village in Hsinchu County. All the while I kept asking myself, “Why am I staying at Chi Nan University? Will the Masters degree be of use?” The classes in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work are boring and devoid of passion.

In the dream, when I ran into the hotel and couldn’t find anybody to help me, it felt like my life now. I’m so doubtful about where I’m going and nobody can help me. It’s my life and I have to take responsibility and make the decisions myself. I feel there’s nowhere to go. I don’t know what’s going to happen to me. I don’t like my life now and don’t know how to change it.
In the dream, the hotel elevator is on too high a floor, and can’t come down soon enough. The woman doesn’t even notice me. The man is in hot pursuit. I’m helpless—just like I am here at Chi Nan University. I labor over my homework. None of it is fun anymore.

The stairway in the dream connects with the feeling I’ve always had that I should go somewhere in life and become someone outstanding. Now I am not so sure anymore. I feel lost. I don’t know where I should go.

In my life I feel just like I did when I ran to the window in the dream and found it covered with iron bars. I am stuck. In the dream, I stood at the window looking at the sky but couldn’t get away.

Kai Su fell silent and said she’d finished.

I asked her if she’d like to go forward with the next stage of the process, Stage IIIB.1 (Search for Context), where we look into what was going on in her life just prior to the dream. (In the Ullman process the dreamer is in control, can stop the process at any point, and needs to be asked at each stage if she wishes to continue on to the next stage.)

“Yes,” she said.

“Is there anything you’d care to say about what was going through your mind as you dozed off to sleep the night of the dream?” I asked. In searching for the emotional context out of which the dream arose, we start right at the moment just before the dreamer went to sleep and then work backwards through the evening, the day, the week, and maybe even the whole life if necessary.

“Just before I fell asleep I was looking through the pictures I took with my friends in Hsinchu County,” she said.

“Do you want to share the feelings you had as you were going through those pictures?” I asked. (The skill is to ask questions that invite the dreamer to go further in the direction she herself suggests. The mistake beginners often make is to ignore the direction the dreamer is discovering and instead try to redirect her in a direction they think she should pursue.)

“It felt so comfortable being with all my friends,” she said. There was a moment of silence. She’d answered my question. I wasn’t sure what to ask next. (Because we are following the dreamer, not leading her, when she becomes silent like this we follow her into the silence and wait there with her to see what direction she takes when she emerges. It’s seldom the one we might suspect.)

“I keep asking myself why I ever enrolled in this graduate program,” she said. “When I left my job I thought that to continue my education would stimulate me and expose me to new ideas. But that’s not what’s happened here. I can find no passion for this Master’s degree program.”

She grew silent again.

We waited.

“When I was a child I always thought that when I grow up I want to be a Ph.D. and teach at a university. But getting the Masters here in Puli has turned out to be so uninteresting that I don’t think I’m going on to get my Ph.D. I’m left without a clear idea of what I really want to do. When I was in Hsinchu County with my friends it felt like I was escaping from all this. Ever since I first came here to Puli I never liked it.”

She was quiet.

We waited.

“I feel so useless. I read a lot of books, study many things, go to many classes—but I still don’t know who I am and have no hint as to what kind of ‘me’ I want to be. I want to find peace of heart like I felt in the beautiful village where I was surrounded by friends.”
“Do you want to say any more about ‘the kind of ‘me’ I want to be’?” I asked.

“Since I was a child, what I wanted most in life was to comfort my mother so she could be proud that even though she was a single mother she did a fine job of raising her son and daughters. I felt I had to be the pride of the family—work and study hard and be a good daughter.

“As an undergraduate at Tunghai University I came to realize I’d always tried to be the standard-bearer of the family for my mother’s sake; but I never felt sure of myself and my own identity. I want to transfer my attention from my mother to myself.”

“Is there anything more you want to say about your mother?” I asked. (We don’t ask about anything or anyone the dreamer herself doesn’t introduce; but once she introduces a person we’re free to invite her to tell us more.)

“My father died when I was five. Our relatives blamed my mother’s bad karma. My mother was very strong and labored on as a single parent. She did everything for us all by herself. None of the relatives helped. She suffered from this and didn’t understand. So I always took it upon myself to perform very well in everything to prove to our relatives that what they always said about my mother was wrong.”

After a pause, she continued, “At home my mother was very lax with her children and didn’t blame us when we did something bad. I functioned as the ‘bad guy,’ blaming my sister and brother. I performed the role my mother should have performed.”

She fell silent again, and this time stayed silent.

“Is there anything else you want to say?” I asked eventually. (This particular information-eliciting question is the single most useful question in the dream group process. Information-demanding questions are strictly prohibited.)

“When I came to Chi Nan University I anticipated classes that would be directly applicable to my experience and that would enable me to reflect and learn from my years as a social worker. I was disappointed to find most of the classes here are not like this and so I find them difficult and dry.”

She was quiet again, and then continued, “Now I’m disappointed to see that that’s what I came to graduate school looking for; because even the classes that have met my expectation in that respect turned out to be very boring when compared to this dream class. Only in this class have I been able to explore who I really am. So now it occurs to me that what really motivates me to continue my education is not my desire to enhance my professional ability but my craving to know more clearly who I am.”

As I understood it, the emotional situation out of which the dream arose is that Kai Su had sat through half a semester of the dream course and seen the kinds of things the other students were discovering about themselves from their dreams. Her own life was, in some way, off-course. She was lost in some kind of tangle and needed to find her way out and get her life back on track. To do this, she needed to discover who she really was so she could know in what direction she should be going. It was in this context that the dream made sense. It seemed to me the dreamer was now ready to make sense of it. “Would you like to go forward to Stage III.B.2 (The Playback), in which we present you with the scenes, one by one, and, in light of all the material that’s surfaced so far, you look at them anew to see what they mean to you?”

“Yes,” she said.
I read the first scene of the dream to her, in which she was at the party and I invited her to look at this scene again now in light of everything she’d told us was going on in her life just before she had the dream.

I am wearing a black dress and the man at the party is dressed in black. To me this formal attire means rational. There are a lot of people at the party in the dream and they don’t talk to me. It’s just how I feel at Chi Nan University. There is no connection for me here, I don’t have courage to leave this Master’s degree program. My rational mind knows I shouldn’t quit, at least not this early. But my real feeling is that I want to go.

That was all she had to say. I read the second scene of the dream, where she runs to the hotel.

I like hotels. They are comfortable. Every city has a hotel. They always have to do with traveling. In-Jing [another student in the dream class] asked me if I ever thought about what I was going to do when I got older, when I was 45 or so. In fact, back when I worked at the CCF I wrote myself a letter from the 40-year-old me. The 40-year-old me said she lived in England, taught at a beautiful university, and was very happy with her life in England. She had a husband and two beautiful dogs. She said she was happy that mother could take care of herself so well now.

I read the third scene of the dream, where the man comes after her in the hotel.

The fireman in the dream means my passion. I don’t want my passion to show. Or I don’t think I have passion. The only thing I have any passion for now is traveling with my friends. That’s the only thing I want to do now. But I can’t spend all my time doing that. I still have the idea that I should do what other people think is the right and decent thing to do. But it bores me.

I feel strange about my life. Work should be fun, interesting. It should make me happy. But in my real life it’s not like that.

Most of us are constrained by reality and so can’t have our real dreams come true.

I have nowhere to go.

A hotel shouldn’t have iron bars on the window.

When I woke up from the dream I felt strange because I had such a beautiful weekend. Why would I have such a scary dream?

After this dream I have gone on to have other dreams filled with nervous and scary emotions. I felt maybe something was going wrong or some real me was coming out now. I’m not sure I’m ready to face that.

Kai-Su had done her best with the dream. I asked her if she’d like to go to Stage IIIB.3 (Orchestrating Projections) and hear what the others thought.

“Yes,” she said.

The idea that emerged was how much Kai Su had talked about her mother, who wasn’t even in the dream. It seemed that, at this point in her life, she was beginning to glimpse an identity for herself separate from that of her mother. And so she struggled with an idea of herself different than the one she’d held all her life. Previously, she’d merged her identity overly much with that of her mother. The self that resulted could not grow because it was not real. It was afraid to grow because that would destroy its world. The new self that was now emerging, in which she is not
so closely merged with her mother, can grow because it is real; and it is eager to grow because growing will free it to discover its own world.

I told Kai Su that, as the dreamer, she always had the last word. She said:

I’m very surprised that the dream is so much about my connection with my mother.

For these three years now, I’ve been working to resolve this issue of my relationship with my mother. After everybody shared their opinions I realized I am rediscovering my own power and shouldn’t concern myself too much about my power over my family or over the way our relatives view my family.

In the following week’s class, Kai Su had a chance to share any further thoughts about her dream. She said:

I feel the man in red clothes is my love/passion for my family. It is difficult for me to face that I love them, so I run away.

I always thought my issue was how to shoulder my mom’s responsibility. After the dream, I think my issue is that I can’t admit my love for my family.

Now I recognize I love them. Because I love them I share a part of my mother’s responsibility.

The man in the dream came to the window and didn’t find me. I felt relief and relaxed. That makes me think that in my heart I hope they [my family members] need me.

For a long time, I’ve taken upon myself my mother’s responsibility. Now I feel I can do it and at the same time show my love for my family.

When the fireman in the dream didn’t try hard enough to find me I felt relief, but at the same time it felt strange that he didn’t try harder.

I’m afraid to face my love for my family. Instead, I always blame them, which makes me feel I’m better than them. When I have to face I love them, it may make me realize I am the same as them.

An important new piece of information emerges here, “It felt strange that he didn’t try harder,” which significantly changes our view of the dream’s last image and suggests a dimension to the dream that Kai Su fails to address. She’d told us merely that she felt relieved when the fireman didn’t find her. Now we get the first faint hint that she was also disappointed.

I felt Kai Su fell short of grasping some essential level to her dream, but it is not for me or for anyone in the group to tell her she should go further or get deeper. When the dreamer is done with the dream, the group’s work is done.

(At this juncture, the Ullman process does not allow us to suggest to the dreamer that she may have fallen short of an adequate self-understanding. The rationale is that because of the work she did with the dream in the group, additional insight will surely surface from within herself in the days that follow. To give this a chance to happen empowers her more than to tell her what we think.)

But it turned out that Kai Su was not done with this dream. Some weeks later, during a period where I invited student’s questions, she raised her hand and sheepishly admitted, “I still don’t understand the man in my dream.”

“Instead of us all just talking about it,” I suggested, “Let’s do the dream again from scratch in the dream group. The dream will tell you what you want to know.”
"I don’t think it’s fair for me to take a second class period for myself when everybody else has only had one," Kai Su objected, looking around guiltily at her fellow students.

"It’s O.K.,” several of them assured her.

"You have to be the one to say you want to do it,” I told Kai Su. “You’re the dreamer. You’re in control.”

“All right,” she said, obviously glad for the opportunity.

"Tell us the whole dream again,” I said.

Like the first time, she told it from memory:

I am in a party. Everyone dress well. A lot of people here. I am standing in the corner.

There is a man in black suit come to talk to me. We talk a short time. Then I leave.

When I downstairs I feel someone’s chase me. That’s the man, who talk with me in the party.

So I run to another building. It’s a hotel. I want to take elevator. But it stay in the 45 floors so I keep running upstairs.

About three or four floors, there is a door open. And I look back. The man wear the red clothes just like a fireman.

So I run into the room and lock the door. But the man still knock the door very hard. I look around the room and there is a window there. But the window has iron bars so I can’t go away.

Then I climb up to the window and hide in the corner.

And suddenly the door’s open. The man’s coming. He go to the window. And, but just look forward. Then he leave. And I feel release and strange.

Interestingly, a new piece of information emerges already just in the telling of the dream—the dreamer is “in the corner.” At the beginning of dream she is “in the corner” at the party talking with the man, and at the end of the dream she is “in the corner” when she’s huddled up hiding from him in the window cage. Cornered suggests in an inescapable position. Backed into a corner suggests trapped. And so we approach this dream for a second time now with two questions in our mind, “In what way is this dreamer cornered?” and “What is the meaning of the man?” We suspect these might be two ways of framing some larger underlying question critical to Kai Su at this juncture—and that we can look to her dream to find this question.

In the Stage IB (Clarifying Questions), I asked, “What were your feelings in the dream?”

“I was frightened by the man chasing me and felt a sense of release when he gave up and turned away,” she said. “And I also felt sad that he wasn’t more serious about finding me.”

“Is there anything more you care to say about that feeling?” I asked.

“I felt I didn’t get enough attention,” she said. “It’s a contradiction: I was afraid that he would find me but then when he gave up looking and went away I wondered why he hadn’t tried harder.” She hadn’t divulged this information the first time we worked with the dream. Of course, the question that jumps out at us is, “If she wants to be caught, why is she so terrified of it?”

In Stages IIA and IIB (“the ‘If it were my dream’ game”), group members were able to do much more with the dream than before because this time the dreamer had revealed more.

In Stage IIIA (“dreamer’s response”) the one new thing Kai Su said was, “I still don’t understand about the man. Something exciting. But how can I be scared of that?”

Many come to dream groups thinking that dreams will answer their questions. My own experience has been increasingly that what dreams do is more profound: They ignore the kinds of questions we waste our time on and suggest instead those crying out to be asked. Kai Su had
arrived at a question of pivotal importance to this stage of life—“Why be afraid of involvement with a man?”

I asked her if she’d like to carry her inquiry into the dream to a deeper level by moving forward to Stage IIIIB.1 (Search for Context).

“Yes,” she said.

She went over the same material as before but added new information about her family:

“I am really worried about my family. My sister and brother both graduated from the university three or four years ago, but neither has gotten a job. Instead they’ve moved back in with my mother. Each claims they’ve tried to find work but couldn’t. So my mother is still feeding and taking care of them. I don’t think it’s right.

Maybe they can live off my mother now. But someday she will become too old to care for them anymore. Is the responsibility then going to fall to me? That’s what I’m afraid of. It makes me very angry.

I’ve achieved the position I have in life, but not to turn around and take care of my brother and sister. My mother and I have talked over the situation and she’s worried and saddened by it too. She feels there’s nothing she can do. She’s asked me to talk to them.

I’m afraid of anything out of control—just like my family, the situation with my brother and sister—anything that’s unpredictable.

“Would you like to say anything more about ‘out of control’?” I asked.

I’m wondering if I should be spending so much time and passion to become a social worker when I’m not sure now I really want to be one.

I just don’t know what I’m going to be or what I really want to be. I’m afraid I’m not sure what I really want to be. I’ve just heard that social work is maybe good and I pretend to myself that I like that.

I’m trying to figure out whether I should continue being a social worker or maybe become a counselor.

I’ve spent so much time and passion these past 5 to 6 years to be a social worker. If I choose now to be a counselor, have I wasted all that time?

And if I did switch fields now and begin studying counseling, I’d have to go back to being supported by my mother. I’d be no different than my brother and sister.

I’ve been trained to believe everyone’s good and to respect the value of home. But when I’m with my brother and sister, I can’t see any value to them. I just get angry and judge them. We’re family; but I can’t love them.

My mother could support me while I’m becoming a counselor but I’d feel guilty. I’m getting very old, but I still have to rely on my mother for support.

I’m 28, but I’m still studying. I have no achievement: no husband, no house, no money.

Those all around me are moving on into another stage of life. I’m staying where I am. I still have nothing.

My fear is: Am I getting older alone? No man.

To have a special connection to somebody. I have many good friends but the boyfriend connection is different.

I want to get the opportunity to get the boyfriend connection.

She had brought forth the information needed to figure out for herself what the man in the dream might represent. “Would you like to go forward to the playback?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said.
Stage IIIB.2 (The Playback)

Kai Su’s playback was disappointing. The man in red she interpreted as her emotional part. She said to face her graduate studies, she had to run away from her emotions. She said she felt nothing was happening in graduate school and that it was boring. It only allowed the rational part of herself to come out. She said she came to graduate school for a higher achievement. Now she wonders, “To achieve more than others, is that really what I want? Will it make me happy?” She started to say something about “My heart situation,” and “Getting an opportunity for more heart connection,” but stopped and looked up like someone cornered in the same old trap. That was as far as she could get with her own dream.

Here was the rare dreamer who couldn’t, herself, arrive at the deeper meaning of her dream. She really did need help from the group. “Would you like to hear what the others in the group think about your dream?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said.

Stage IIIB.3 (Orchestrating Projections)

Since childhood, Kai Su has been very sensitive to how the world sees her family. The first time she shared her dream, she played it safe by withholding embarrassing information about them. Then she was disappointed the group wasn’t able to help her discover what she wanted from the dream. The second time the group took on her dream what seemed foremost in her mind was that it might very possibly fail her again. The chances were near zero that in Taiwan she would ever come across another dream group. This was likely the last opportunity she would ever have to find out something she seemed to need to find out about herself. She risked opening up more and divulging information about her family that perhaps she was ashamed of. Her grown brother and sister, after graduating from college, never got jobs but moved back in, instead, to mooch off their mother. Kai Su alone had emerged from what begins to look like a dysfunctional family, or at least a family in which she feels she no longer has a place. She’s the one that escaped the nest. In her initial response, the first time the group worked with her dream, she told us, “I don’t know what’s going to happen to me. I don’t like my life now and don’t know how to change it.”

That was the question she put to the dream the first time around, but she didn’t bring forth the details necessary for the dream to do its work. In the Ullman group, the dream functions like an enzyme, a catalyst. To work, it needs sufficient substrate. The contextual information the dreamer brings forth functions as the substrate.

When the new information she brings out the second time she works with the dream is considered, she is seen to dangle away from her family like a low-hanging fruit on a tree, waiting to be plucked. Plucked by whom? Well, in the dream it’s a man who’s after her; and we all know that in fairy tales it’s a handsome prince who pursues the pretty maiden. This second time we work with her dream, Kai Su tells us she wants the “boyfriend connection,” and that at 28 she has “no husband, no house, no money.” In the end, she interprets the man in the dream as her emotional part and persists in looking at the dream in terms of her disappointment with the graduate program she’s enrolled in. How strange that she never considers that the man in the dream might represent an actual man, not a specific man but any man who takes an interest in
her—and that the dream’s main work might be to reveal her dysfunctional way of reacting—leaving her with the question, “Why do I do this?” Back when she’d given her initial reaction this second time the group worked with her dream, Kai Su had been close to the mark, “I still don’t understand about the man. Something exciting. But how can I be scared of that?”

The question she put to the dream when she said that is, “What prevents me from forming a new nest of my own?”

What is the dream’s response?

Quite clearly, the dream seems to suggest that in escaping from a dysfunctional family, one doesn’t leave the dysfunctionality behind. In one’s flight into freedom, one carries within oneself seeds of that same dysfunctionality. These take root and confront one again and again in every new life situation. Kai Su currently is seen to occupy a nest of her own, off apart from her mother, sister, and brother. What’s not working about this picture is that there is no man there with her.

“Why?”

This is Kai Su’s question.

This is the dream’s question.

This is the question that faces us in our orchestrating projections.

Where is the answer? How do we get the answer?

Is it in the dream? Is it in the dreamer? Is it only in our own minds, and not something real at all? How can we know?

The first time we worked with the dream, we didn’t get it. Kai Su hid from us. We didn’t find her and walked away. She felt disappointed. To be afraid of being discovered is not just her pattern with a man. It’s her pattern with everything. Why?

This is our same question again and it is the question arising from this dream.

The group didn’t seem to be too much better at addressing this question than the dreamer herself. Neither did I have any idea what to make of it all. When the others had all spoken and my turn came, I looked up at Kai Su with a blank feeling in my heart. What I met was that troubled look on her face—the same look I’d noticed all semester, and especially all through the two sessions where the group had worked with her dream; only now it was heightened and aggravated. I suddenly understood from the terror in her eyes that she imputed to me some expertise or ability in deciphering her dream, which I did not, in fact, possess. She sat there terror-stricken I was going to openly reveal the truth about her. I’d never seen such a look in the three decades I’d worked with dreams. Yet, what made the expression even more singular was that the terror struggled with a yearning. Her eyes, her face, her whole body posture pleaded me to tell her what she so desperately needed to know to escape the bind she was in and make her life begin to work.

In a flash, I saw written on her face the way in which she had approached her dream in the two dream groups—and I saw the meaning of her dream. I arose and turned quickly to the blackboard to diagram the intuitions shooting through my brain before they vanished away just as quickly as they had come. I depicted each as a closed loop in which the dreamer is caught, and in which she goes around and around helplessly trapped by a conflict from which she cannot escape. “By the way you approached the work with your dream in the dream group, you revealed to us the central conflict that has you in its grips,” I said as I stood there with my back to her and wrote on the board the two opposite positions, connected them with arrows to make the loop, and then jotted in a conjunction beside each arrow: (“I’m afraid to know what my
dream will reveal” but “I need to know what my dream will reveal” but “I’m afraid to know what my dream will reveal,” etc.)

“In its own language, your dream revealed the same,” I went on. I drew another closed loop: (“I’m afraid to be found” but “I need to be found” but “I’m afraid to be found,” etc.).

“The underlying question you brought to the dream group and to the work with the dream was ‘Who am I?’ or ‘What is the seed of dysfunction at the root of who I am?’ Your dream and your work with the dream both answered this on their own levels—both in terms of your relationship to yourself,” I said, diagramming. (“I’m afraid to know and be who I am” but “I need to know and be who I am” but “I’m afraid to know and be who I am,” etc.) “And in terms of your existential predicament,” I added, as I quickly sketched out: “If I am who I am I lose everything” but “If I’m not who I am I don’t have anything” but “If I am who I am I lose everything,” etc.

As I hurriedly finished diagramming these intuitions on the board, with my back to the group, I went on,

You’re asking us and you’re asking the dream “What’s wrong with me?” From working with this dream we see, and the dream clearly shows, that the only thing wrong with you is that you’re afraid something is wrong with you. This way of working with dreams we’re using is based on the premise that dreams arise from a place deep down within us where there resides an awareness so true, so beautifully whole, and so very wise, that it can see everything about us that we ourselves cannot see. It can do this because it’s innocently honest like the child in Hans Christian Anderson’s story ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes,’ who cries out loud for everyone to hear, “Look mommy! The Emperor has no clothes!” Montague Ullman calls this our incorruptible core of being. The various religions and philosophical systems have other names for it. Your dream shows that you have within you what everyone has—its so true that you can’t know it, so beautiful that you can’t see it, and so wise that you can’t understand it. This dream arises from that part of you that is more you than you yourself are. It tells you that you need to have faith, you need to believe, in who you really are.

With those words, I finished the last sketch on the board, set the chalk down, and turned around to face the dreamer again.

Kai Su had broken down and was silently sobbing. The tears streamed down her face.

In the Ullman group, the leader is supposed to keep his eye at all times on the dreamer to assure her safety; but the group sat in a circle on the floor behind me as I stood with my back to them sketching out these figures on the board and suggesting the ideas they conveyed. I’d gotten so engrossed in capturing and depicting the ideas presenting themselves to me in rapid succession that I’d neglected to monitor the effect they were having on the dreamer. It seemed I’d devastated her, and so failed in my primary role as dream group leader, which is to protect the dreamer.

“These are all just my projections,” I was quick to emphasize, as I hurriedly erased the offending diagrams. “They tell much more about who I am than about who you are.” When I’d finished erasing the last of the closed loops I turned around again to face Kai Su.

Her eyes looked up and met mine. A grateful smile shone through the tears and a soft glow illuminated her countenance. I suddenly realized they were tears of joy she was shedding.

Looking into her, eyes I could see she was somehow transformed—a light came out of them—and I could also know that it was not the ideas I’d sketched out on the board or any insight I’d come up with that had produced this transformation. What made such a big difference
to her was clearly, from the language of her eyes, her surprise that another person could look deeply into her and find something of such captivating interest and worth. Later, she revealed that since childhood she’d thought herself so fundamentally unworthy of another’s attention that she was afraid to let any man get really close, lest he find this out about her. This is why not understanding, or analysis, or interpretation—but appreciation mattered so much to her. What showed in her eyes, in her tears, in her face, and in her gestures for the next few moments was that which is met with not at all infrequently in the Ullman dream group, but that usually manifests itself in a way that is almost impossible to describe or depict. This is a clear-cut case of aspect (c) of Montague Ullman’s dream appreciation. I would have been as unable as anyone before to document it were it not that, at the end of the semester, Kai Su conveyed to me in writing an early childhood experience of hers (described in the following) that afforded a possibility of illustrating what this third aspect of dream appreciation might specifically be in her particular case and suggested, in retrospect, what had happened to her in the group when her dream broke through to her in the fullness of its impact and flooded her with tears. At the time though, as she sat there smiling so sweetly through her tears, I only knew our work with the dream was done. She’d gotten what she needed from her dream.

I went back to my seat in the circle. “The dreamer has the last word,” I said “I feel so thankful,” she said. “And such a sense of release.” She declined to say more as the happy tears continued to flow.

In the following week’s dream group, she told us more:

As a social worker, I demanded things of clients but forgot to look into them and ask who they are. Working with my dream has been a very tender process for me. Afterwards, I feel dreams can fix some hurt and bring new power to a human being. I feel very nurtured by this process. No matter what I do from now on, I want to make people who come work with me feel more nurtured like this.

Kai Su came to the first dream group concerned with what she could get for herself. She went away from the second dream group concerned with how she might nurture others.

At the end of the semester, Kai Su turned in a short piece of writing in which she opened up even more fully and revealed a closely guarded secret she’d kept hidden since childhood:

I Have Not Been Living in the Present

Always it has been my “dream” that in the future I might meet a good man, have a lovely family, and that my mother might really see me and love me. Towards this end I have always tried to make myself into the best I can possibly be and reach the highest standard of excellence.

In addition, I live with so many regrets—for words that I was too late to say, and for someone special I miss so badly.

In the dream my escape, the elevator, is up on a floor in the 40s. But I am down on the ground floor. The dream tells me I must forget daydreams of the future and face my situation in the present, or I will lose my chance at life.

Working with this dream makes me finally realize the extent to which I am stuck in the future and the past—and have abandoned the “now,” and so can garner no positive feelings from it.

What I Most Fear

I finally know that all the while I was growing up, I reached out to my mom for more of her attention. The truth is that I’ve never felt loved enough by her.
This has surfaced as a basic pattern for me in all relationships. I know I’m a good person. But I don’t feel I’m good enough. I don’t feel worthy of what’s most special. And my deepest fear is that I’m not.

When I look at the man in my dream as a metaphor for a man in real life taking an interest in me, I realize that I’m afraid that I am not good enough to get a man, just as I was never good enough to get my mom’s love. What I am running away from in my life is the fear that if a man falls in love with me, he is bound to discover how unworthy I am to love. It would destroy me if this happened and so I have always run away from the feeling side of life. I regret to say the pattern in the dream is also true of my life.

To Know My True Self

I always assumed that who I really am is a set thing, fixed in its essence, and I need only seek and discover it. Only I, myself, could do this. And yet, how could I possibly face, and do justice to, what might be wrong with me? How could I not fall short of this task?

Something you said released me from this snag—and I see now, if I never try to be and live out who I am in all my fullness, how can I ever possibly find out what my real self is? This realization gives me reason and hope to be brave—and faith that to the extent I face my own thoughts and feelings I can indeed release the real me completely out into life.

Now that the semester has come to a close, I really do thank the beautiful dream group. The process of working with my dream has nourished me and mended something in me. These words have sprung up and keep returning to my mind of late, “No one who lightens the burdens of another is useless in this world.” I use this sentence in my prayers for myself and my family.

It is apparent now why, in the first dream group, Kai Su talked so much about her mother, who wasn’t even in the dream. Since she was a child, she always hoped her mother might see who she was and love her for that; but it never happened. Too young to be developed enough to perceive or understand the real reason for this, she found herself trapped in an impossible situation with her mom that tossed her around and around again in some complicated and hopelessly twisted closed loop such as: “I can only be who I am” but “If I am who I am she can’t love me” because “Who I am is someone she can’t love” so “I have to be someone she can love” so “I have to be who she wants me to be”—and then that braided its way right back up again in a different route through all the same twists and turns until it landed her right where she started in the first place—“I have to be who she wants me to be” because “I have to be someone she can love” because “Who I am is someone she can’t love” and “If I am who I am she can’t love me” but “I can only be who I am,” etc. And then, there she is, stuck again with that awful fact of what she must feel to be her utter worthlessness. Each time she gets back to the beginning position, she goes swinging around again on the roller coaster of the closed loop, getting no closer to any resolution or understanding of her situation.

The child trapped in a catastrophic situation (“My mother can’t love me.”) inevitably arrives at the obvious conclusion: “I am not lovable.” As she reaches the age when some boy starts being attracted to her, her feeling of being unlovable translates into a certainty that if she ever let him close enough, he would discover this. She can’t risk that because then she will lose the only thing she has. But because she can’t take the risk, she is left with nothing anyway.

She’s still trapped in the same knot she was as a little girl, only now it looks something like this: “I need to let him close to me” but “I can’t do that because if I do I’m afraid he will stop loving me” but “I need to let him close to me,” etc. Endlessly, this closed loop can go around and around with no resolution. She has become wary of the feeling side of life and flees relationships.
To get a graphic sense of how the dream work Kai Su did in the second group illustrates aspect (c) of Montague Ullman’s dream appreciation, envision a big circle. That circle is Kai Su, the whole of her. Label the circle Self. Then envision a much smaller circle of a darker hue, whose diameter is only, say, 1/10 that of the large one. This smaller circle sits on circumference of the larger circle. Part of it is inside the larger circle, part of it is not. Label the smaller circle “I am Kai Su;” this is her self-concept. The part of it within the circumference truly is who she is, but the part of it outside is not. It might be who she’s been made to think she is, or who others have told her that she is, etc. Finally, envision at the very center of the large circle some depth or domain that we are not qualified to say exactly what it is or what shape it takes. Label this the Incorruptible Core of Being. This entire composite construct represents Kai Su as a little child.

In the near distance, we place an identical construct, only larger, to represent her mother. The little child loves her mother. A powerful outpouring streams from the child’s incorruptible core of being to the mother.

The mother is blocked, in that she has gotten estranged from her own incorruptible core of being and come to reside exclusively in her self-concept. She is a stranger to her deeper self, cut off from it. Consequently, what streams from her to the child is inadequate to the child’s needs.

The streaming from the little child’s deepest center, though, continues out to the inadequate parent. The child experiences the parent through the wonderful mist of what streams out from within herself. Thus, she experiences what streams out so freely from her own deepest nature not as a characteristic of herself, but as a characteristic of the parent—and she situates in the parent, not in herself, what is most special about herself. Not for a moment does she suspect that what she experiences as coming from the parent actually emanates from within herself and is her own greatest inner worth.

As the child matures, she becomes more discerning and begins to perceive the parent’s defect, only she perceives it as a defect in herself, a lack that she herself has, some deep and innate inadequacy in her being that makes her unlovable to the parent. It never occurs to her that the parent might be damaged in a way that has wrenched her out of contact with her own depths, from which the unconditional springs up so bountifully and wholesomely, and that she might be imprisoned in her self-concept, from which she can only toss out surfacy conditional substitutes.

The child reaches adulthood perceiving herself as a deprived, needy, or unworthy individual. She’s never had her deepest worth confirmed by, or reflected in, the mother, and so has no way to herself discover that what she thinks her mother can’t give her is actually something in herself, not in her mother. The child’s condition, though, is that through this huge misunderstanding she has herself been wrenched out of contact with that in herself. Thus, we see replicated in her the deficiency of the parent. Now she is rendered functionally incapable of the fullness of connection with another. She is eaten up instead with a concern with her own huge lack, her enormous need, her vast inner emptiness—her concern is with herself. This self is tied up in all kinds of knots, as we’ve seen. There’s no room for someone else to get in. There’s no way for her to get out.

By working with her dream to completion in the Ullman dream group, a simple and basic perception arises for the first time, which for her occasions a developmental transformation. She is suddenly shunted into recognizing that the great nourishing stream of truth, wisdom, genius, adequacy, and love that emerges from the dream—her dream, her own dream—is her.
It is who she most essentially is, right down in her bottommost core. It doesn’t come from someone else. It doesn’t issue from some other place. And so she suddenly and unexpectedly experiences, and has this experience validated by the others present, that there is that within her that is of great worth. At this moment of shock and awe, she is suddenly overwhelmed from within with all that for all these years she has been looking to get from an outside Other. It was there in her all along. All the knots and tangles suddenly come undone and fall apart. A light emerges from within her. The others in the group can see it in her eyes. This is the experiential in the Ullman experiential dream group. She radiates from within herself what she yearned for, feared she was lacking, and sought from others.

The moment she stops short-circuiting her energy trying to get what can’t be gotten from outside, and trying to hide what she perceives to be her lack, she is without lack. She so obviously generates the authentic outpouring to others, and in the process is, herself, so obviously bathed by it. She who was never given the prerequisites for healthy development has, with the help of her dream, effected the important ontogenetic transition and herself becomes the healthy specimen.

Envision this, in the graphic constructed previously, as an outpouring from the incorruptible core of being that washes out from the center of the large circle, the self, and completely envelops the smaller circle sitting on its circumference, the self-concept, as it flows out into relationship and work. The individual now radiates out into the world that which has the power to really make a healing difference in everything she touches. This is a healthy person.

The group’s various interpretations of the dream, including the ones illustrated in this article, were powerless to accomplish this transition because they operate merely on the level of the self-concept. Aspect (c) of Ullman’s dream appreciation is nothing less than a mystical encounter with self-knowledge and functions not unlike what William James (1902) would call a “conversion”—only in the Ullman dream group, there is not some intermediary religious dogma or doctrine standing in the way to explain away the great mystery and take credit for it. Instead, Kai Su is given new life by means of a dream that puts her in direct contact with the knowledge—not conceptual or dogmatic but experiential—that who she is deep down is wiser than she will ever know, more lovable than she or anyone will ever discover, and more inherently fulfilled from within herself with everything she needs than anyone or anything else can ever fulfill her. She’s transformed by that new connection with the unknowable in herself from an empty cup to an overflowing one. Client, family, friend, or enemy—anybody and everybody around her now—benefits immeasurably from her changed dynamic, just as she herself does.

CONCLUSION

Mere interpretation is a dry and impotent response to a great work of art, compared to the much deeper power of appreciation the artwork evokes from somewhere deep inside us, which has the power to transform our relationship with ourselves and reality. Kai Su’s case confirms Ullman’s contention that a dream functions like an artistic masterpiece in its power to do the same. Not the interpretation emerging from the group’s work with her dream, but the uprush of a sudden appreciation of herself that arose from out of her most hidden depths set her life suddenly right.
It was the almost incomprehensible metaphorical images of her dream that occasioned this. They opened, and then opened further, and then opened still further, until finally—it wasn’t that they were understood, but rather that they were sufficiently appreciated to be allowed to remain as incomprehensible as they needed to be to function as a conduit—out from the depths of her being they gushed forth with the unknown and unknowable beauty, truth, love, and acceptance that constitute the very foundational core of her essence, and her own great worth, as a human being. This is Montague Ullman’s dream appreciation, illustrated here in all its aspects for the first time in the literature.

Ullman was an atheist and often confessed during his dream group leadership training programs in Ardsley, NY that he had never been able to understand what people meant when they talked about spiritual or spirituality until he began working with dreams and discovered that every single dreamer has buried deep within her an incorruptibly pure core. The great power of the Ullman dream group method is that it doesn’t look to the dream to find what’s wrong with the dreamer on the surface, but goes so much deeper to reconnect her with what’s most right about herself. Once that happens, assuming she’s relatively healthy of mind to begin with, as most people somehow manage to be, everything in her surface life tends to fall naturally into place of its own accord.

As to what this incorruptible core of being might be, I myself never needed to look that far to get an idea—because during the decades I attended Ullman’s dream group leadership trainings, I alternated them with Zen meditation retreats. Buddhism, of course, posits a similar purity and enlightenment buried under the surface tangle of the deluded mind. In a seven-day meditation retreat, this once revealed itself to me directly for a brief instant. Only in degree was it different from what happened to me the first time I worked on a dream of my own in one of Ullman’s groups. Kai Su came to the dream group occupied with herself. She went away from the work with her dream concerned with what she might do for others. This is not different in kind from the shift Zen aims to produce.

What is delivered by Zen meditation is much stronger, much deeper, and much more transcendent of conceptual explanation. Yet with Zen meditation it took me some 15 years or more. In the Ullman group it happened the first time I worked with one of my dreams, although in a much smaller way. Each method has its advantage. They complement each other perfectly. The advantage of Zen is that it goes deeper. The advantage of the Ullman dream group is that, if ever it were to be implemented in public education, it could offer an unparalleled educational advantage to the vast majority of the population—for they would walk away with their diploma not just knowing about this area of study or that, but also having discovered who they are, which, of course, is the most important first step in any education that’s real.

**DISCUSSION**

That so many modern-day research scientists, at Harvard and other great institutions of learning, could develop such elaborate theories to explain how dreams have no meaning only shows how far from ourselves our thinking has gotten, and how very much of what is most important about ourselves we don’t remember. Is there a way that Ullman’s incorruptible core of being, evidenced by the example in this article and understood, at least by this author, in terms of the spiritual, and even mystic traditions of the Eastern religions, might make sense to such scientists?
Yes, today there is and it lies, appropriately enough, in the field of restorative medicine and in the emerging paradigm of neuroplasticity (Doidge, 2007).

Quite simply, Ullman’s idea, put in the language of this new field, is that our culture, unfair and dishonest to so many—harming the environment, the community, and our own bodies in so many manifold ways—damages each and every one of us much in the way a stroke or serious accident might; and cuts us off from some of our basic capabilities as human beings. Until recently, it was believed the brain was hard-wired and if a part was damaged, the function performed by that part could never be revived. Recent work by pioneers in the field has shown otherwise. No matter how extensive the damage, there often remains some healthy tissue. The noise from the damaged tissue tends to block any signals arising from that healthy tissue. Researchers have invented machines and procedures to reinforce the signals from the healthy tissue. The brain then learns to make the healthy tissue, not the damaged tissue, the portal of entry—so that the brain, as a whole, can again get the clean data it needs to align itself again in a much more fully functioning way.

In the same way as those researchers invented their machines or procedures to do this, Ullman came up with his experiential dream group process that similarly functions to silence the psychological, social, and spiritual equivalent of that damaged tissue (i.e., constructs arising from wrong conditioning, mistaken learning, fundamentalist dogma, political indoctrination, other people’s ideas, wrong notions arrived at during an earlier stage of development, etc.) long enough and in enough ways that it enables the dreamer and the group to hear that small still voice (i.e., the equivalent of the still healthy tissue) that had gotten all but completely blocked out from the dreamer’s waking life, but that from her dream cries out loud and clear. (It’s the dream’s organizing principle, its reason for being.) The dream is then seen not just as an engine of creativity, a source of what’s been lost and forgotten, but as an automatic healing or correction mechanism, built into the system because it’s needed and because it works.

Not so much to solve any particular problem, or answer any specific question, but to reconnect with this stream of profound inner authenticity and truthful self-assessment that in the dream, alone, arises loud and clear from the still healthy perceptive tissue is why we work with dreams in the Ullman group—in order that this then, the healthy tissue in us, and not the damaged part, becomes the portal of entry through which we take in our picture of reality. We are constructed in such a way that if only we begin to see what really is, then we spontaneously reorganize in ways that allow our behavior and choices in life, and our creative activities, to do it justice.

The power of the smallest shred of healthy tissue, no matter how deeply buried, is that in dreams it can present information to the brain that is true and that makes real sense in terms of the kinds of things a person needs to know to become creative and healthy, to escape those pernicious influences that distort and stunt human life and devastate this beautiful planet, and to move forward into the next day and towards whatever she sets out to accomplish, as part of the solution, not part of the problem.

REFERENCES


**AUTHOR NOTE**

William R. Stimson, Ph.D., trained for many years under Montague Ullman, M.D., who originated the Ullman experiential dream group process. At Ullman’s instigation he began leading dream groups himself in New York City. When he followed his wife, Dr. Shuyuan Wang, to Taiwan, together with her, he introduced the Ullman dream group as a course at Taiwan’s National Chi Nan University. Besides his ongoing work with the dream group at the university, he leads monthly all-day dream groups in Taichung and Taipei that are open to anyone and free of charge.