

THE CASE OF THE YELLOW WHEAT FIELD:
A DREAM-STATE EXPLANATION
OF A BROADCAST TELEPATHIC DREAM

Charles T. Tart and James Fadiman

The purpose of this paper is to report an unusual case of telepathic dreaming and to explore possible reasons for its occurrence. The case was unusual in several respects: (1) it was apparently a *broadcast* telepathic dream in the sense that the agent was semiconsciously attempting to influence several friends simultaneously; (2) the broadcast dream was relatively lucid, in the sense that the dreamer was conscious of dreaming; and (3) the telepathic information, contained almost wholly in this dream, was followed by an explanatory dream telling how the telepathic influence in the original dream came about.

The principal characters involved, designated as Mr. Able and Mr. Baker, have both been known to the authors for some years. A previous telepathic dream of Mr. Able's has been described elsewhere.³ In the eight years since that earlier dream, Mr. Able has had a number of telepathic dream experiences, many of which involved him as agent, rather than receiver. Most were instances in which his wife had an impressive dream which made no sense at all to her until Mr. Able found that it explained a number of elements of his previous day's experience about which he had not told her, although he had intended to.

The other five persons in this case have an intellectual acquaintance with parapsychological literature but little or no personal paranormal experiences of their own. All those in the case are aerospace scientists and engineers who were attending a small conference on aerospace problems held in an isolated agricultural area. The participants shared dormitorylike accommodations adjoining the lecture hall.

This report is based upon Mr. Able's notes, dictated a few days

after the occasion, which included certain background events leading up to the dreams. The authors interviewed all persons involved in order to check the consistency of details and probe into some possible dynamics behind the dream.

MR. ABLE'S WALK AND LECTURE

On Thursday of the conference, I was scheduled to present a paper on my new theory. I had been ambivalent about asking for program time to give this because there was a heavy ego trip involved, but I went ahead with it anyway.

After lunch but before the session, I took a walk out over the fields. As the wind was blowing, I had a *tremendous* sense of wanting to fly—a compelling urge I had many times during the week of the conference. Thinking of how I simply changed my mental attitude in a certain way in order to fly during dreams, I wanted to try it then and there. But I was in sight of the dining hall and embarrassed to make the attempt—especially the jump into the air to start flying—knowing my colleagues might see me. So I made one tiny abortive little jump and let it go at that.

I continued my walk and sat down by the shore of the lake in the yellow stubble of the wheat fields. As I tossed pebbles idly for a while, I suddenly realized that, contrary to what I had always thought about farm country, the ground was practically all pebbles and stones with only a little dirt between rather than being mostly dirt with occasional stones in it.

I then went back and began my talk, particularly hoping to get comments on my theory from Messrs. Baker, Cook, Deer, and Evans. About midway through the lecture, which lasted approximately forty-five minutes to an hour, I suddenly noticed how few people were in the room: about half the twenty-five attending seemed to be missing. Yet, preoccupied as I had been with presenting and explaining my slides, I had not noticed any of them leaving. I was particularly disturbed by the absence of the four I especially wanted to impress. Confused, I continued my presentation, but with part of my mind occupied in wondering where they could possibly have gone and whether I could reach them somehow. I was half-consciously worked up by it all, disappointed and angered by their absence.

There was some general discussion after the talk, and just before our coffee break Mr. Baker returned and told me of a mind-blowing dream of his which he wanted to discuss with me. I promised to join him during the break in a few minutes and told him how much I wanted to be able to communicate with him fully and how frustrated I was by feeling unable to do so. Al-

though I was concerned by his having missed the paper, that was not so much on my mind as a general feeling of wanting a more intimate relationship.

O.K. Now it turns out that all four persons I have mentioned, as well as some of the others, had gone to their common bunk-room for naps, having become very sleepy during my talk—possibly, it developed later, because of a storm front blowing in. I gathered from my later conversation with Mr. Baker that naps and dreaming while napping were highly unusual for him. Immediately upon arising, before returning to the lecture hall, he told Mr. Cook about his dream. He told me now.

MR. BAKER'S DREAM

Mr. Baker dreamed that he was attending some sort of conference and, becoming sleepy, went off with some of the others to lie down in the dormitory. Climbing into his bunk, he found a strange blond girl there, who made mild sexual overtures toward him. Being bent upon a nap, he merely kissed her and caressed her for a moment, then fell asleep.

Mr. Baker then experienced a dream-within-a-dream, during which he was walking down a road, observing how many stones lay on the ground comprising it. This eventually turned into a yellow brick road. During the inner dream, Mr. Baker took a strong step, leaped up into the air, and began to fly—an action which made him lucid, i.e., conscious of dreaming.

Actually the inner dream was unusual in being lucid only in relation to the first dream, not with respect to true reality. An ordinary lucid dream⁴ is one in which there is awareness that one is dreaming while the dream is going on. Instead of the uncritical, rather stupid state of consciousness common to ordinary dreaming, the dreamer has the experience of possessing his normal reasoning abilities. Implicit in van Eeden's definition is the dreamer's consciousness that he is dreaming with respect to everyday reality. In the present case, the feeling of lucidity is false in an absolute sense, for the dreamer, Mr. Baker, accepts his main dream, not actual reality, as reality. Thus we might call this dream relatively lucid.

As Mr. Baker was flying along, he became aware that he was flying toward a house which he somehow knew was supposed to be his home, but he realized that it did not look like any home he had ever had. He flew into this home and there was a middle-aged,

graying woman in the living room who was supposed to be his mother, but again did not look anything at all like his mother.

Then Mr. Baker became confused for a moment; he was not sure whether he was a man or a woman. He was flying feet first toward the mother figure with his legs spread out directly toward her; he realized that he had an erection and was flying toward her. He thought to himself, "Oh, my God, a psychoanalytic dream! What am I doing having a psychoanalytic dream?" He flew directly to the woman, she took his penis in her mouth, and he experienced an orgasm.

Mr. Baker "woke up" from this lucid dream back into dream reality number one, where he was lying in his bunk at this place where there was a conference. Within the dream, he immediately checked to see whether he had actually had a wet dream and was gratified to find he had not, knowing how embarrassing it would have been for everyone to notice stains on his trousers. The girl was no longer in his bunk, though he was not conscious of her absence.

In the continuation of the first dream, which Mr. Baker still mistook for reality, a stranger entered the room where he and the others were napping. Introducing himself as a kind of design student or architect, he explained that he had been driving for over an hour to get there and had somehow caused all the nappers to have the same dream. For this reason neither the house nor the mother figure of the inner dream matched those of any particular person, being merely generalized symbols common to the dreams of all.

At this point, Mr. Baker actually woke up. Fully awake now, he checked to see whether this had been a wet dream; it had not. Then he arose and proceeded to relate his dream to Mr. Cook.

MR. ABLE'S REACTION TO THE DREAM

The thing that particularly intrigued me about Mr. Baker's dream, when he told me about it during the coffee break, was its lucidity with respect to another dream, though not in relation to reality. As we talked and I began thinking about various elements of his dreams, it struck me that they must have been telepathically induced by my half-conscious searching for Mr. Baker and the others. The yellow stony road arose from my realization that the ground around the conference center was made mostly of stones, its color corresponding with the yellow of the wheat field. His flying represented my own recent intense desire to fly—particularly the experience, immediately before the lecture, of wanting to so much more intensely than at any previous time. Although I had spoken

to Mr. Baker of my strong desire to fly during the past few days, he knew nothing about the specific instance in the fields. He and the others were napping at the approximate time of my acute disappointment over missing them at my lecture—losing the hoped-for opportunity to gain their understanding and feedback—and my semiconscious probing as to where they might be.

It became apparent as we talked that the principal dream contained an explanation of the mechanism of the whole experience. The design student seemed to symbolize me perfectly: the slides with which I had illustrated my presentation, featuring numerous boxes with connecting arrows, were, in fact, designs, and in organizing the subject matter to explain my theory, I was building a structure or two by design.

The implication in the dream was clear that I had sent it to *several* persons, a feature which Mr. Baker found exceedingly impressive. It occurred to us to investigate whether any of the others who had particularly concerned me had experienced relevant dreams.

THE DREAMS OF OTHERS IN THE GROUP

Although Mr. Evans had taken a nap, he could not recollect having dreamed, when the question was raised. Mr. Fox had been one of those napping in Mr. Baker's dream, but he did not recall dreaming. He had not, incidentally, been one of those from whom Mr. Able particularly desired feedback on his lecture.

Mr. Cook's recollection of his dream was not entirely clear, the details having been blurred by Mr. Baker's sharing his dream so soon after waking. He did remember having been up in the clouds in his dream—not in an airplane, although he was not directly aware of flying by himself. There seemed to be some girl involved in his dream, possibly Mrs. Goodbody, a conference participant.

Mr. Deer had no clear recollection of dreaming, so Mr. Baker asked him several questions about topics about which he *might* have been dreaming, including several totally irrelevant to our interests. One of these was whether he had any recollection of flying. Mr. Deer thought he might well have dreamed of flying but was not altogether certain of it.

PARANORMAL PARALLELS

We shall discuss the major parallels between occurrences in consensus reality and in Mr. Baker's dreams, which are evidence of Mr. Able's apparent telepathic influence. The parallels associated with the dreams of the two less significant individuals, Cook and Deer, are minor ones

which would not constitute sufficient evidence for paranormality in themselves. Our focus here is thus on the parallelism of Baker's dreams with Able's reality, the dreams of Cook and Deer mildly supporting the overall paranormality of the series.

Mr. Baker's first dream was a convincing simulation of reality. His dream of attending a conference, at which a number of the delegates became sleepy and retired for naps, was in keeping with the actual occurrence. There is no apparent connection, however, between reality and the young woman he found in his bunk in that dream. Any clear-cut telepathic parallel began with his dreaming of "going to sleep." Indeed, as Mr. Baker later remarked to the investigators, it was as if he began, at that instant, to dream a dream which was appropriate, not to himself but to Mr. Able.

This point marked the formal transition from a dream occurring in ordinary dream consciousness to one designated here as "relatively lucid." As explained above, the "reality base" was not everyday consensus reality, but the first dream. It is unknown whether this relative lucidity is a general phenomenon or is likely to occur only when the principal dream is close to reality.

At the beginning of Dream 2, a strong parallel immediately appears between the stony roadway/yellow brick road and two "insights" of Mr. Able's during his walk—the yellow wheat stubble and the surprising number of stones. Mr. Baker's dream-flying began with a strong step or leap upward, as did Mr. Able's desires during his walk: Mr. Baker took the leap that Mr. Able could not but wanted to intensely. Mr. Baker's realization that he was dreaming resembled Mr. Able's acknowledgment—in making his abortive jump during the walk—that dream roles were suitable only for dreams. These parallels constitute the major body of evidence for the paranormality of the dream.

Mr. Baker's relatively lucid dream continued with a strongly sexual theme, but no more highly specific parallels to Mr. Able's earlier experiences—unless this was considered a further expression of a suppressed homosexual arousal experienced by both some days earlier. Although this is not an obviously telepathic parallel, an insistent need for sexual expression and repression was apparent, both in Mr. Baker's being too "sleepy" to respond to the girl* in his bunk

* The attractive girl in Dream 1 might be seen as a heterosexual defense against homosexual impulses.

in his first dream, and in the more forceful sexual action of the second.

The flying dream of Mr. Cook and a possible flying dream of Mr. Deer may be a function of the cloudy sky preceding the rain storm or possibly a paranormal parallel with either Mr. Baker's dream content or the "broadcasting" of Mr. Able's intense desire to fly. There is simply too little detail in Cook's and Deer's dreams alone for adequate evaluation.

Upon reaching orgasm in his relatively lucid dream, Mr. Baker resumed his first dream, showing the same sort of continuity ordinarily associated with a return to reality. The inner dream had so disturbed him that, still dreaming, he feared the possible embarrassment of having his peers discover stains on his trousers. Still puzzling over its strangeness and still in a dream state, he was interrupted by a person designated as a design student or architect. In retrospect, this person clearly seems to be a representation of Mr. Able, who was at that moment lecturing in the conference room.

The architect revealed in the dream that he had been "driving for over an hour" (a pun on Mr. Able's working or striving for about an hour?) in order to make everyone in that particular sleeping room have a common dream including the elements of home and mother. This explanation served, toward the end of Dream 1, to lessen Mr. Baker's perplexity as to the inappropriateness of these elements in his own relatively lucid dream. The close of the dream contained no clear-cut transmission of events associated with Mr. Able which could not be conservatively explained by normal association.

DYNAMICS

We believe that the *immediate* cause of the telepathic influence of Mr. Able upon the dreams of Mr. Baker and the others was his conscious desire to have these particular individuals listen to his lecture on his new theory and give him both approval and critical feedback. This was an intensely potent event for Mr. Able, as indicated by his own notes on his emotional ambivalence in presenting the theory while still in a relatively unpolished form. When he discovered, toward the middle of his lecture, that the individuals from whom he most wanted approval and feedback were not present, he was unable to give the discovery anything near full conscious attention, since it was his habit to lecture from very minimal notes, requiring complete conscious attention to phrase his remarks. In spite of this preoccupa-

tion with the presentation of his theory, some partially dissociated part of his mind continued to wonder where his friends were, feeling disappointment and anger that they were not present, and trying in some fashion to reach out to them. Mr. Able was directly aware, while he continued his lecture, that some part of his mind was carrying on this process, even though he could not give it direct attention.

It is extremely interesting that while this dissociated part of his mind seems to have been able to reach at least one of his friends telepathically, it didn't transmit the details of his theory—the information which Mr. Able consciously wanted to impart. Instead, it transmitted emotionally potent events which had occurred immediately before his speech, the excitement he had deliberately *suppressed* in order to give his lecture.

Those emotions seem to have operated in two ways here. First the emotional potency and ambivalence surrounding the giving of his lecture, combined with the disappointment when he saw his friends were not there, served to activate some sort of telepathic sending mechanism in Mr. Able's mind. The temporarily suppressed, highly emotional earlier events then took over the telepathic channel, so the insight about the nature of the ground and the tremendously strong feelings connected with flying were transmitted rather than any details of the theory. This "sending" seems to have disrupted Mr. Baker's ordinary dreaming. Once this transmission had been accomplished, Mr. Baker's original dream reasserted itself and then dealt with his concern with explaining the interruption to his normal dream process.

Further probing into the immediate instigating dynamics revealed that the intensity of Able's desire to communicate with each of the persons involved correlated with the amount of information received by each of the dreamers. For various reasons discussed below, he was most eager to communicate with Baker, next most with Cook, and least with Deer and Evans. It is tempting to hypothesize that his "telepathic broadcast" was directed to each person in proportion to his need to communicate. An important additional consideration, however, relates to certain other dynamics concerning Able's relationship with Baker. These were of two sorts.

First, these two had known each other considerably longer than any of the others (over 6 years), their friendship having been both satisfying and, at times, frustrating. Although they shared many intellectual interests and their families visited each other, Mr. Able al

ways wanted an emotionally deeper relationship, whereas Mr. Baker tended to avoid becoming emotionally involved. Baker had been unresponsive to Able's very strong attempts to push through Baker's emotional reserve at a similar conference at the same location the preceding year. All this was very much in Able's mind during the present conference, the proximity of his friend having increased his awareness of the communication gap. For this reason, he expressed a desire for deep communication between them, immediately before Baker told him of his dream. This exceedingly strong urge for deeper, more meaningful communication undoubtedly affected the interaction between these two in Mr. Baker's dream.

A further influence upon the dynamics of the dream was the incident of suppressed homosexual arousal earlier in the conference. Mr. Able's notes read as follows:

Now the one other important positive factor here concerns the sexuality in Mr. Baker's dream. He and I had shared a hotel room Monday night, the first of the conference. We sat up and talked for a while after the regular meeting and I had definite homosexual feelings toward him, which I did not consciously communicate in any way. It seemed to me that Mr. Baker had been somewhat sexually provocative and had a similar feeling toward me. Again, it was nothing very direct—just something in the way he held his body as he sat there. After we discussed the dream communications, I asked whether he, too, had experienced homosexual feelings that night and he indicated that he had, but clearly did not want to elaborate on the subject. I suspect that these unexpressed homosexual feelings may have provided the raw motive power for the whole dream sequence, initiated by my half-conscious probing for where the friends might be whom I particularly hoped to reach and whose feedback and approval I especially wanted.

Both Able and Baker are happily married and have highly gratifying heterosexual relationships. Neither would accept overt homosexuality as a desirable life style for himself, although both have enough psychological sophistication to realize that all males have homosexual feelings at one time or another. Thus each man's feeling, the previous Monday evening, that the other was acting in a homosexually provocative way aroused a great deal of emotion, though neither made an overt reference to it at the time. Again we have the conscious suppression of intense feelings, strong sexual feelings, which may actually

have acted as a carrier for the telepathic transmission. The many sexual references in Mr. Baker's dream are indicative of this unresolved homosexual arousal. His confusion over whether he was male or female at one point in his inner dream would clearly seem to represent a homosexual component of sexuality. So too does the sexual arousal in that dream, ending with fellatio with a figure who was inappropriate, even though designated as female or "mother" in the dream.

SIGNS AND EXPLANATIONS

In the telepathic dream of Able's reported on earlier,⁸ some elements of the dream served as signs to call attention to the need for analyzing the dream further. Similar signs appear in the present case. Mr. Baker's dream sequence is unusual in containing both a partial explanation of why the telepathic dream occurred and a number of features which clearly act as signs or markers calling for further interpretation.

To begin with the signs, the *exact* parallel of Mr. Baker's main dream to everyday reality could be interpreted as having the function of calling special attention to the dream, practically guaranteeing that it would be communicated to Mr. Able and discussed with him, since both shared an interest in dreams. The relative lucidity of the second dream would further serve this function.

The unusualness of Mr. Baker's dreams was pointed up further by the incongruity of the home and mother. Mr. Baker's exclamation in Dream 2—"Oh, my God, a psychoanalytic dream! What am I doing having a psychoanalytic dream?"—can be seen as a thinly disguised command to analyze it and apply a psychoanalytic interpretation. We helped Mr. Baker associate more generally to the dream than he had originally. The relatively coherent set of associations thus produced indicated that he had been disturbed by the homosexual arousal of Monday night; the dream served the simultaneous functions of expressing his resistance to that sort of sexuality while simultaneously responding to Mr. Able's need for deeper communication. Further associations, while suggesting further telepathic transmission in the dream, are more inferential than evidential and will not be considered here.

The built-in explanation of how Mr. Baker's Dream 2 came about is remarkable. In the dream explanation, the architect's pro-

nounced effort to communicate telepathically with several persons—making all of them have a dream containing the elements of home and mother and flying—accounted for the inconsistency of the dreams of each with his own individuality. In actual fact, Mr. Able (the “architect”), while lecturing about his designs and plans, had presumably been working hard mentally to locate his several friends and effect their common dream.

Atmospheric Conditions

The conference consisted of an exceedingly active and energetic group of aerospace scientists, dedicated to their work. Most were looking forward to hearing the presentation of Mr. Able’s theory. It is curious, therefore, that as he talked, about half the delegates quietly slipped out to take naps.

It appears that at least a partial explanation lies in the prevailing atmospheric conditions. Approximately half an hour before Mr. Able began to speak, a heavy storm front blew in rapidly; it actually began to rain about two-thirds of the way through his lecture. One of the phenomena accompanying such rapidly changing atmospheric conditions can be marked change in the sign and/or the concentration of atmospheric ions.

Considerable research¹ has now shown that atmospheric ions have strong psychological and physiological effects upon human beings. Negative ions tend to stimulate and produce positive emotions and efficiency. Positive ions, especially in high concentrations, tend to have a more variable effect, generally of a negative nature. With a storm front moving in, the ion content of the atmosphere might be subject to violent fluctuations over the course of a few minutes.

Puharich² has reported that negative ions can enhance telepathic performance in subjects already having some telepathic ability. The effect of ions on ESP might be a profitable line of research.

Suppression of Emotion: A Possible Instigator of Telepathy

The telepathic dream reported here is classical in having intense emotion as a prime instigating factor. The present case, along with other indications scattered throughout the literature and the authors’ personal experience, suggests an additional factor which may be at least as important as strong emotions per se. This is the *suppression of emotion*. In other words, if an intense feeling which might produce

a real need to communicate between two persons is denied adequate expression, the conditions may be more favorable for telepathic communication than simple emotional arousal alone. This may be particularly true if the emotion must be *intentionally* suppressed: then the sender's conscious mind is preoccupied and may not be able to inhibit a more primitive transmission process. In the case under study, strong emotions aroused by the initial homosexual attractiveness were not expressed in any fashion; indeed, they were suppressed. Similarly, the immediate instigating cause—Mr. Able's disappointment and anger at the absence of his friends and desire to reach out to them—could not be dealt with consciously because of his need to devote almost his entire attention to his lecture.

On the basis of the reasoning, considerable success can be predicted for an experiment conducted along the following lines: Hypnosis would be used as a tool for conveniently arousing strong emotions and then dissociating them. The design would require (1) subjects with a high susceptibility to hypnosis, probably as determined by group tests; (2) training them to function comfortably in hypnosis; (3) inducing a strong emotion in a subject acting as agent, preferably an emotion relevant to his particular personality dynamics and directed toward an emotionally important receiver; and (4) using hypnotic suggestion to absorb the subject completely in some task unrelated to the emotion, thus suppressing its expression. The subject or subjects acting as receivers might or might not be hypnotized. Such a procedure allowing convenient manipulation of emotional arousal and suppression, might well lead to a high degree of telepathic success.

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*Dept. of Psychology
University of California
Davis, Cal. 95616*

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