

# The Global Dream Initiative

## Dreaming of the world's suffering

As depth psychologists, we recognize the suffering of the anima mundi, the ensouled world, and serve as witnesses to the many ways in which it is becoming conscious of itself through that suffering. We adopt this idea from archetypal psychologist James Hillman, who, in a profound 1982 essay wrote “the world, because of its breakdown, is entering a new moment of consciousness: by drawing attention to itself by means of its symptoms, it is becoming aware of itself as a psychic reality.”<sup>1</sup>

The Global Dream Initiative (GDI) calls for a recognition of the trauma in the world and the need to participate in its healing. We assert that the world's suffering appears in dreams and that we can creatively respond via the dream. As Russell Lockhart says in his essay, *Whispers and Murmurs*, dreams are “gifts given to an audience of one (the dreamer) arriving unbidden, seemingly from some dimension beyond the personal, “ yet they also are meant to be “gifted again to a larger audience”<sup>2</sup> This is particularly true of “big dreams” which Lockhart describes as having “strikingly numinous intensity.” With such a dream, “the dreamer [is] impelled to share the dream with another, as if following some ancient imperative (perhaps even of evolutionary significance).”



## Dream and the anima mundi: an approach to healing?

The idea of an ensouled or animated world is a natural part of many indigenous traditions, but it is foreign to much of contemporary culture. Instead, we have acted as though soul exists inside ourselves, inside our moods and feelings, inside our dreams and relationships<sup>3</sup> and that soul sickness has nothing whatsoever to do with the landscapes in which we live and work and play. “The archetypal source of our world's continuing peril,” Hillman says, is “the fateful neglect, the repression, of the *anima mundi*.”<sup>4</sup> But we have another choice, one that speaks to the heart of the Global Dream Initiative and its attention to the world's dream:

*Let us imagine the anima mundi as that particular soul-spark, that seminal image, which offers itself through each thing in its visible form. Then anima mundi indicates the animated possibilities presented by each event as it is, its sensuous presentation as a face bespeaking its interior image—in short, its availability to imagination, its presence as a psychic reality. Not only animals and plants ensouled as in the Romantic vision, but soul is given with each thing. God-given things of nature and man-made things of the street.*<sup>5</sup>

Sensing the animated possibilities present in each and every thing requires original human abilities, renewed and refreshed. To notice the world and its soul, “we need the nose of common animal sense” so that we are “animated by the world’s anima, like an animal.”<sup>6</sup> We also need to recall the ancient notion of the heart as the organ of sensation and imagination, not merely “a physical pump or a personal chamber of feelings.”<sup>7</sup>



### **Dream Tending: a way of responding to the suffering world**

Dream Tending, a practice developed over 30 years by Stephen Aizenstat, recognizes the dream image as alive and profoundly able to influence every aspect of the dreamer’s life. In one of the more radical moves of Dream Tending, participants are invited to “experiment with a worldview that playfully and soulfully sees the world as alive and always dreaming.”<sup>8</sup> To go to the very depths of experience, to the level of the soul of the world, dreamers imagine that the images that come “are the expression of Nature herself, effortlessly arising in our dreams.”<sup>9</sup> The world’s dreams will speak on their own behalf. The dream tender’s task is to listen with the nose of animal sense and the imagination of the heart

and then cultivate the practice of maintaining an enduring dynamic relationship with these images based on mutual responsiveness.

In Dream Tending, the quality and depth of how we respond to images, and how we notice the subtle response of images to our attention provides a critical paradigm shift in the conventional notions of healing and activism. The linguistic roots of the word *respond* also lead to the words *spouse*, *sponsor*, and *responsibility*. The original Latin word referred to a sacred pledge or promise. Dream Tending invites a return to this deeper network of meaning contained in the gesture of responding, a network that involves intimate understanding, guidance and learning through growing familiar with dream images as living entities, and acting on behalf of those relationships as a form of archetypal activism in the world.

Jung gave particular emphasis to the aspect of responsibility as the culmination of a dreamer’s work with images when he said, “The images of the unconscious place a great responsibility upon a man. Failure to understand them or a shirking of ethical responsibility deprives him of his wholeness and imposes a painful fragmentariness on his life.”<sup>10</sup>

The Global Dream Initiative regards the present suffering of the planet as a consequence of this shirking of responsibility and neglect for the connection of the human psyche with the world soul. Dream Tending imagines this sense of responsibility emerges from a process of relationship and learning, an embodiment of one’s fate as it is revealed through a sustained relationship with the images of dreams. From this perspective, new paradigms for healing occur in the context of a relationship with dreams based on an attitude of caring and responsiveness. The ways in which we respond leads to new ways of being active on behalf of the planet and its dreams.

## Objectives of the Global Dream Initiative

1. Host Dreamers and Dream Groups, both online and in person to come together and share dreams and most importantly to share stories of our being called and responding to the dream. Through paying attention to the dreams that call us and how we respond we will develop greater awareness of the ways our dreams support transformation at the personal, community and global levels
2. Offer some level of web based education in an imaginal approach to world suffering and in dream tending as a key part of that.
3. Set up a list of group leaders consisting of dream tenders and others who will become a worldwide network of folks who can support these processes locally and who can also serve in an advisory way to the GDI
4. Develop research models so that we can begin to understand how our responses to dreams can help address personal, local, and global suffering

## Contact Us

Info@GlobalDreamInitiative.com

---

<sup>1</sup> James Hillman, 1982, 75

<sup>2</sup> Russell Lockhart, 2012, "Whispers and Murmurs", Section II, para. 1

<sup>2</sup> Russell Lockhart, 2012, "Whispers and Murmurs", Section II, para 2

<sup>3</sup> Hillman 1994, 129

<sup>4</sup> Hillman, 1982, 91

<sup>5</sup> Hillman, 1982, 77

<sup>6</sup> Hillman 1982, 79

<sup>7</sup> Hillman 1982, 81

<sup>8</sup> Steven Aizenstat, 2011, *Dream Tending: Awakening to the Healing Power of Dreams*, 144

<sup>9</sup> Steven Aizenstat, 2011, 151

<sup>10</sup> Jung, 1989, p. 193