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M A G A Z I N E

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Dream Bibliophile - Special Book Review

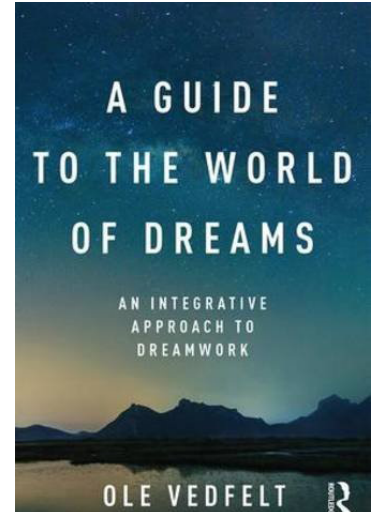
Torben Hansen



A Guide to the World of Dreams: An Integrative Approach to Dreamwork

Ole Vedfelt

New York, London: Routledge, 2017



About the Author of *A Guide to the World of Dreams*

To my knowledge, Ole Vedfelt is one of the people with the broadest experience and greatest knowledge of dreams and dreamwork. He has a M.S. in Health Sciences and education in Jungian psychoanalysis, Gestalt Therapy, psychodrama, and body psychotherapy - and he is a meditation teacher. He employs all these skills in varying combinations in self-development groups, individual sessions, counseling, and supervision of people with vastly different resources. In every instance, Ole's approach to dreamwork is adapted to the context at hand.

Ole Vedfelt has played a vital role in the development of psychotherapy and the proliferation of knowledge both in Denmark and abroad. In 1980, he participated in the founding of the Jung Institute in Denmark where he has been both instructor and director. From 1996 to the present, together with his wife Lene Vedfelt, Ole has been leading a certified psychotherapy education where dreams play a central role.

Ole Vedfelt's 45 years of experience with dreamwork is a composite of extensive, systematic study of the available knowledge about dream theory and methods of fruitful interaction. His work is reflected in a substantial authorship of books and articles published in a variety of European languages including a number in English. Most of these works can be viewed as important prerequisites for *A Guide to the World of Dreams*.

Vedfelt's first book, *The Female Qualities in Men*,¹ is an important Jungian study of the lives and dreams of young men. *The Dimensions of Dreams*, published 4 years later, is one of the most comprehensive studies of the significant psychological school formations in dream interpretation and dreamwork. After some delay, the book was published in English in 2002.² In this book, Vedfelt describes and exemplifies what he sees as the most usable aspects of the psychoanalytical, Jungian, existential, experiential and cognitive approaches to dreams.

Internationally, the book has been characterized as a major work in dream understanding and interpretation by Rita Dwyer, former chairperson of International Association for the Study of Dreams, among others.³ After *The Dimensions of Dreams* was published, Ole continued working on creating a "cybernetic psychology and network theory" in order to integrate the variety of methods he worked with. That resulted in the publication of two books, *Consciousness - The Levels of Consciousness*⁴, and *Unconscious Intelligence - An Introduction to Cybernetic Psychology*, which was published in English in the *International Journal of Biosynthesis - Somatic Psychotherapy* (2000)^{5,6}. An English edition of *Unconscious Intelligence* is under preparation. In *The Man and His Inner Women* (2003), Vedfelt continued to explore

female qualities in men's dreams extending his scope to include the entire life span of men's lives.⁷

Ole Vedfelt's development of dream theory and method can be followed in subsequent English language articles and conference contributions, for instance, at conferences for the International Association for the Study of Dreams: *The Practice of Multi-Dimensional Dream Interpretation* (1999)⁸, and *Dreams as Unconscious Intelligence - A Cybernetic Theory of Dreams*. (2004).⁹ In other recognized academic contexts, Ole has published *Dreams - Working Attitudes - Multidimensional Dream Understanding and Bodily Associations* (2001),¹⁰ *Dreams and Theory of Science* (2008),¹¹ *Cultivating Feelings through Working with Dreams* (2009),¹² and *Dreamwork with Psychosis* (2016).¹³ In 2012, Ole Vedfelt published an encyclopedia of symbols for dream interpretation which also contained his first sketch of the theory and method fully developed in his latest publication, *A Guide to the World of Dreams*.¹⁴

A Guide to the World of Dreams

In *A Guide to the World of Dreams*, Ole Vedfelt integrates many years of experience with dreamwork and fully up-to-date knowledge about dreams in a new, overriding theory and method. This book contains three parts:

Part 1 - Knowledge of Dreams

Chapter 1 provides a condensed and updated description of Jungian, psychoanalytic, existential, experiential and cognitive approaches to dreams.

Chapter 2 comprehensively deals with research from sleep laboratories, and theories of dream cognition and the dreaming brain.

Vedfelt concludes, "although much valuable knowledge about dreams has been established... there still exist significant variations in the understanding of the nature and function of dreams, as well as how to make them useful to human beings." (p. 33)

Chapter 1 and 2 are impressive, condensed tutorial treatments of the knowledge of dreams available today.

Chapter 3 presents Vedfelt's overall thesis and

metatheory. "We dream because we are complex beings who need to process information in multiple ways to match the complexities of life. In order to fully understand dreams, we need more flexible and differentiated theories of states, levels and modalities of consciousness, and we need to take into account the intelligence of unconscious self-organizing systems in the human mind." According to Ole Vedfelt, that can take place employing an overriding theory of information processing in a complex cybernetic network. Utilizing that point of departure, Part 2 of the book provides a new, elegant and manageable model for dream understanding and dreamwork.

Part 2 - The Ten Core Qualities of Dreams:

Part 2, the book's most extensive portion, delineates ten core qualities of dreams. Each core quality is described based on a cybernetic network theory for complex systems. The essential natures of these qualities are carefully underpinned by both existing clinical as well as scientific research - including neuropsychology. All the core qualities are exemplified with cases from Vedfelt's own practice, and through a broad spectrum of ordinary human issues at varying periods in life. Ole Vedfelt's empathy, overview and positive view of humanity brings his theory to life and makes it accessible to readers at all levels.

The Ten Core Qualities are:

1. Dreams Deal with Matters Important to Us
2. Dreams Symbolize
3. Dreams Personify
4. Dreams are Trial Runs in a Safe Place
5. Dreams are Online to Unconscious Intelligence
6. Dreams are Pattern Recognition
7. Dreams are High-Level Communication
8. Dreams are Condensed Information
9. Dreams are Experiences of Wholeness
10. Dreams are Psychological Energy Landscapes

Part 2 ends with a well-informed chapter on

dreams and trauma providing important guidelines and fine clinical examples for working with nightmares and traumatic dreams.

Part 3 - The Good Dream Work

Part 3 describes principles and methods for the practical work with each of the core qualities. The structure is a step-by-step manual with guidelines for work with both individuals and groups including instruction for counseling, analysis, experiential dreamwork, groups for personal development and even social functions. Various levels of expertise allow for including more and more complexity to the work.

Key to Vedfelt's book is that dreamwork can be included in many contexts and it could well be a fundamental textbook for courses at high schools, colleges, universities and even in adult-education classes.

Methods divided by levels, clearly formulated ethical principles and inspiring examples are all important knowledge for non-therapeutic groups and individuals who work with self-development and social dreaming. Well-delineated guidelines for working with trauma are also provided, as well as guidance for parents interested in the dreams of their children.

Conclusion

Ole Vedfelt's writing skills as well as the multitude of cases makes this complex material engaging and easy to read. The book's three parts are seamlessly woven together and carefully cross referenced. Vedfelt's knowledge of dreams is encyclopedic yet he never loses touch with practice. All chapters are carefully referenced. The wealth of examples, from people of all ages and a vast variety of life situations, are the flesh and blood of the book.

I am convinced that Ole Vedfelt's new book will give dream understanding a giant step forward and, as one writer points out in his epilogue, anyone who works with his/her own dreams employing Ole's suggestions will also be a more open and social person who can contribute to a better world.

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