

bernhard schlage

bodypsychotherapist, author



Foreword

Dreamer of dreaming

Two motives are running through Bernhard Schlage's book "Life in the Dream Lodge": the dream lodge, of course, and the wheel of directions. The order of chapters follows the eight directions of the native American medicine wheel. The dream lodge, that is the inner space of dreaming where he meets his grandfathers and dream elders. And at the same time it is the place in everyday reality where darkroom retreats and the research of Bernhard's dream groups take place. The dream lodge is a treasure house of healing rituals filled with the power and wisdom of dreams and dreaming.

And, it is the space where Bernhard's book leads us: into our own inner space of dreaming. He wants to give us the chance to realize: there is someone living within each of us willing to offer us orientation, aid and challenge, and who allows us to open a door to something "completely unknown".

We met in the Black Forest in 2004. For some years now, I have offered seminars, "Dream Paths", for the shamanic-spiritual exploration of dreaming. Bernhard attended four of these. Since then, both of us have continued our explorations in our own individual way. Once in a while I hear from participants of his dream groups visiting one of my seminars how much they gain by his work in the dream lodge for their growth and healing. Especially in the darkroom retreats lasting several days they find their inner light, basic trust and creativity as well as access to the secrets of the soul.

Bernhard's path as a dreamer grows from his own dreaming. In this way, he finds healing for himself. And therefore he can give to us so many creative hints for taking our dreaming and our dreams as helpers to cope with everyday life. From a spiritual perspective one could say: the wisdom of dreaming and wise beings appearing in dreams and even the dreamers of other spheres did send Bernhard to us as a messenger of a new way of dreaming: experimental dreaming.

Dreaming to him is but one form of our variedly malleable consciousness and has itself many different appearances. He liberates us from the polarity of waking/dreaming. Dreaming to him ranges from simple, everyday dreaming in sleep, day dreaming, self- or outside-induced trance to shamanic drumming and lucid dreaming. Accordingly wide is the spectrum of traditions of dreaming mentioned in his book: it reaches from the Egyptian and Greek dreaming traditions to those of the Tibetans, from the shamans up to our psychology dominated understanding of dream.

In the dream lodge too, dreams are noted down and interpreted. Yet, unlike with traditional dream interpretation, these interpretations are not pressed upon the dreamer in form of a narrow diagnosis of a neglected inner life. Bernhard feels himself committed to taking the dream wisdom as a support to cope with everyday life. Hence it is the experience of everyday life of every single human being that provides the ground for the meaning of his dream symbols.

But life in the dream lodge offers a much greater variety than just dream interpretation. Here one learns to bring interrupted dreams to a good end or to dream up dream experiences as a group. There is dreambodywork, and, in the dream canoe, healing dream powers are found by several dreamers together.

Since our waking life influences our dream life and vice versa, we learn, before going to sleep, to dispose of the luggage filled with unfinished daily business by the so-called recapitulation and by taking our dreaming soul on a journey into the dream worlds.

And since each dream creates a reality and a dream body, Bernhard's broad understanding of dreaming allows us admission into many different spaces of reality: experiencing the waking world in the dream body, delving into the depths of our own

unconscious inner space, encountering extraterrestrial worlds with beings who spy in our dreams. With all this, Bernhard always remains with both feet firmly on the ground.

Bernhard is a creative explorer of dreams with a clear focus: dreaming is supposed to help us handle the challenges of our waking life. He calls the waking reality consistently consensus reality, because in the end it also is a dream: a common dream of many generations that we keep on dreaming.

Bernhard's book brings to my mind the memory of the most favored toy of my childhood: a kaleidoscope filled with colored glass fragments. I spent hours slowly turning the kaleidoscope until a soft noise told me that one of the fragments had slipped into a new position and suddenly a completely new mandala of colors appeared magically before my eyes, of greater beauty than the round glass windows in cathedrals. The strict order of the concentric beams and the ever new color universe of inexhaustible variety let me have a glimpse of the mysterious order of the dream worlds that wait to be discovered. Bernhard's book opens them to us, opens up many creative ways to cultivate our own abilities of dreaming and to make use of dreaming for our own healing and our own growth.

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Dr. phil. Carlo Zumstein, Founder and head of the TAOB -foundation

contact:

bernhard schlage
bodypsychotherapist, author

gemeinschaftspraxis kugel e.v.
in der steinriede 7, hofgebäude
30161 hannover - Germany

telefon & fax 0049 (0)511 / 161 42 11
e-mail: post@bernhardschlage.de
internet: www.bernhardschlage.de