

# ADVENTURES IN THE LANDSCAPE

## ~ DREAM ON

Recently I was walking in the country with a friend. We were exploring quiet country lanes and came across some imposing iron gates, clearly the entrance to a great estate. The day was warm and the sun was up, I could feel the breeze and smell the life all around. The estate was intriguing and mysterious; I wanted to go inside. A little further down the lane was a grill in the banking that went into a storeroom. I needed to explore it. You took some persuading and we stood in the lane debating the rights and wrongs. The dialogue and the emotional engagement between us was vibrant. You were won over and we eased ourselves through the grill. I felt the metal and your breath on me.

Inside it was well laid out; shelves and tables of stores. We were now on a mission of infiltration. The storeroom was large. Around the corner at the far end someone opened a door and entered. We were now very exposed as intruders and the tactics between us changed; we became hyper-alert and instantly collaborated on silent problem solving. This capacity between us was thrilling despite the danger. By moving stealthily we were able to reach the opposite corner. There was a ramp and we went up it. I could feel the pressure of my feet on the concrete floor and could smell the scents of the storeroom behind and the fresh air in front. The ramp came out into a courtyard. All around was the gothic architecture of the mansion house at the centre of the estate. It was huge. We were now trespassers, there was no denying it and I could feel your anxiety as you realised you were caught up in something with me that you didn't expect. The only way forward was to be bold.

So into the broad sunlight of the day we strode out across the courtyard. It was inevitable we would be seen and caught and I knew I would have to deal with it. I felt the anticipation. A workman appeared with some gardening tools. I strode confidently past him and nodded. This worked and we were not challenged. I led us through an archway into a second large quadrangle. In the centre was a bell tower with a turret and upon it a most striking and extraordinary piece of art. A great golden arc of bronze metal pierced the sky. It was immense pivoting on the bell tower; it reminded me of those medieval models of orbiting planets. It was like a sundial, beautiful and striking; we gazed at it in the sun and felt we had found an important artefact. The light glanced off it and reflected on the stone of the house. The properties of this light and shadow were intricate and I saw them all with very keen eyes. The summer air was still and the quadrangle felt peaceful and self-centred.

You may have realised by now that the above incident was a dream, a truthful account of a recent dream. It could have been replaced by hundreds of other examples. It is not the content or the drama that is interesting but the physics themselves. In the dream the properties of the experience were as full, detailed and engaging as any waking day and, indistinguishable from any waking day. There was a body, senses, perception, actions, an external

environment in full 3-D intensity, relationship, intrigue and a continuity of story. There was breeze, weather, smell, arousal, heartbeat, physical sensation, problem-solving, excitement, threat and awe. The engagement I had with that magnificent piece of art in the quadrangle was full of spiritual power and equivalent to experiences had in temples and other places here on earth. There was also memory. The nuances of relationship between me and the companion had history and familiarity. Actually, that was annoying, as I was looking for a greater spontaneity and freedom rather than repetition of old reactions. This itself is very human and realistic. In this dream there was conversation, dialogue, commitments were made and conclusions drawn. I was also in an environment that had consequences, where courses of action lead to an effect.

Now that I am awake (allegedly) and writing this article, I can reflect on the experiences and say "Oh, it was just a dream". But that's not doing it justice. If I look at it now as a memory; which of course it is, and compare it with a memory of a waking event, say a trip to a great estate such as Stourhead, I cannot realistically make a distinction between them. In one it was "just a dream" in another, I drove there in the car (allegedly). There may be some differences in the physics of the experiences; one is perhaps more abstract and the other more predictable but I cannot see there is any distinction at all in the validity of the two. They are both "real".

Another striking point is this: in the dream my body was lying inert in bed (allegedly) asleep, whereas in Stourhead my body is up and about walking around the lake. But in my dream I was up and about, climbing into the storeroom and exploring the estate with just the same dynamism. So where is the real? If it is possible to be asleep and inert, to be "switched off", if you like, and yet a whole intricate landscape appears through which I interact passionately then my question is this: From where does that arise? What is it that produces that experience with such authentic credibility including its own space and time? Similarly, I am living my waking life going to work and going to Stourhead. From where has that arisen? What is it that produces that?

Relativity tells us that nothing is fixed and all event is relative to the perception of the beholder. It is self-evident, as in dream, that the waking body as we understand it is not necessary for there to be world and experience. So where is the beholder located? Isn't the beholder that which is experiencing both states - both waking and dreaming? The answer can only be I am that in which the three states of waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep appear. I am that. I am not one of the states. Yet all your life you may have thought that you are the actor in the waking state. Do you still believe that now? Neither actor in the waking state nor the character in dream can be said to be I because both are events. That in which both arise and fall, that inexpressible wholeness, I am that.