

## Religion as a Dream World and the Next Century of Unificationism

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According to Chinese tradition, a sage named Chuang-tzu (莊子) once had a dream of a butterfly. In it, he became a butterfly flying over a garden and enjoyed the beautiful scenery:

*Once upon a time, I, Chuang-tzu, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was Chou. Soon I awaked, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or*

*whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man.*

This story reminds me of the movie, “Inception,” where the people of reality become significantly confused from cyberspace. People need the “kick,” the only way to show whether the world one belongs to is physical reality or cyber reality. In particular, what impressed me was the scene full of the poor lying on beds in a dark room, connected to a device that enables them to “live” a happy cyber-life. Watching the movie in a dark theater, I was confused after it ended, wondering whether I held the kick in my pocket to return to reality.



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Sigmund Freud discussed in his book, *Dream Psychology*, the will to remain in a dream. When the desire to remain in a dream is so strong, the dream itself twists all the physical senses caught into a dreamer. Light, sound, smell, and touch are transformed into properties in a dreamy scene.

That’s why, for example, we often experience in our dream that a thirsty character that represents me, the dreamer, suddenly appears in a dream and desperately looks for a cup of water when we, with physical bodies, ate salty food the night before.

These stories and the interpretation show that there are oftentimes realistic dreams that have little difference between reality and dream. On such occasions, many people of faith tend to admit such realistic dreams as mysterious ones, and consider them a revelation, a message from Heaven. And the message becomes a fortune telling to the dreamer as something that needs to be relied on and so applied into practice. It surely affects the life of a dreamer, a person of faith.

Many times, I don’t really want to wake up from a dream not just because I’d rather not go to work but because I don’t want to face reality. We tend to try to escape the reality of the world. While confessing he was a dreamer, John Lennon adds in his famous song, “Imagine,” “I’m not the only one.” I think that a person of faith lives life as kind of a dreamer. We, the people of faith, today still dream of a wonderful world, a dreamland, as John did.

The Bible introduces many miraculous stories like the one of Joseph (Gen. 37-50), who became a high-ranking official in Egypt. He’s the very person who was sold into slavery in Egypt because of his strange dream where the sun, moon and eleven stars took a deep bow before him. I love Joseph’s story very much. I used to be consoled a lot by the story, especially in hard times. I listened to some lectures regarding it on a Christian website which had many stories of miracles. The climax of the story is the scene where Joseph appeared to his brothers.

Joseph, who was sold as a slave, would become prime minister of Egypt. This was already enough to be called a miracle, a dreamy scene, but he appeared to his brothers, who could be considered his enemies. In the end, his brothers bowed to him full of fear. It was kind of a moment of revenge and becomes a catharsis for me. The Christian pastor who preached the sermon about Joseph’s story stressed at the end, “Do you believe that will also happen to you?” I responded “Yes!” unconsciously while listening to it.

The basic logic of a miracle is a paradox as expressed in this saying: “The night is darkest just before the dawn.” A bit exaggeratedly put, the poor can be right around the corner from abundance in a world of faith. Jesus said so: those who have a poor and humble mindset are surely blessed in heaven, the ideal world. So, through reading the Bible, or observing faith in a religion, one gets a seed of hope to grow in a soil of suffering. And, it mysteriously and actually works in real life: it blossoms its flower and fruit. Hope feeds us all when in despair. That’s why Christianity could eventually thrive in history. So has the

Bible, the best-selling book of all time.

Our life is a sea full of suffering as Buddha described. History shows that the poor or oppressed facing their reality often become the dreamers who tend to leave matters of reality behind. That's why they submit to the ruler or religious leaders, who then easily come to hold a dictatorship. In Christian tradition, the world full of suffering is extended to a hypothetical space called hell. Those who fail to escape from suffering with good deeds end up with misery in hell unimaginably more severe than physical hell on earth.

We project those who successfully overcome the bitterness of suffering in reality into a superhero like Wonder Woman or Superman. Superman is also the main player in my dream of such kind, who can easily fly in the sky just like a butterfly. Though I am not successful every time, I try hard to jump up and desperately fly a bit higher as much as possible than I can normally do in the physical world. But, I eventually end up as the poor guy who is desperate to go to the bathroom. That superman appears in many aspects of our cultures and histories: an outstanding performer, hero or heroine. Kings used to be perceived as a kind of supermen in history.



*"Zhuangzi Dreaming of a Butterfly (or a Butterfly Dreaming of Zhuangzi)" by Ike no Taiga (c. 1700s).*

We in fact live in an era of a semi-cyber world. Typically, money in the bank is just numbers stored on computers, composed of a series of zeros (0) and ones (1), digital entities. Even several countries like Norway, Denmark and Sweden will soon stop issuing physical currency. In my own wallet, I usually don't carry paper bills but plastic money, credit cards. My salary never is put in my hands. I just play with all numbers. I feel I live in a cyber world. I mostly chat through messaging services. There's a joke in Korea that at a family gathering each family member chats to others within a commercial chat room, using all kinds of emoticons. Weird, isn't it?

I'm questioning myself, "Am I dreaming of a character in cyberspace or is the cyber-character dreaming of me?" Am I living in an already-realized dream world or is the dream-like world dreaming of me as another entity? Am I a subject for a kind of hypnosis? Put another way, am I actively trying to live life in a dream world, or simply escaping reality to feel ecstatic? Am I still a dreamer? Do I not just want to awake from a world of the ideal? I like the butterfly. It is beautiful and emerges from a caterpillar that was once stuck on the ground but never gives up one day to blossom as a flying butterfly.

Therefore, this passage from historian, E. H. Carr, is correct: "Remember the future and imagine the past." It may sound strange. It would seem the opposite is true. But, he said this in his book, *What is History?* What Carr argues is that history is a matter of interpretation which requires the property of imagination. So, the past needs to be imagined. Likewise, the future is an unprecedented realm that no one has ever traced but a projection of what has long been believed. What we believe is tradition we admit as our dream. And so, the future is a matter of what we need to remember. Sunday service or

reading the Bible therefore is an act of reminding ourselves of such a dream world.

Then the question is, “What is our dream world?” How do you engage in such a world? Is it by dreaming only at night? Or is it by daydreaming? How do my neighbors talk about me? Do they see me as a dreamer or a butterfly-like idealist? Is it a realistic Idealism or an idealistic Realism? Or, if it is called Unificationism as we uphold, what is Unificationism? From this series of questions I feel I’m entering an endless closed loop of which one goes first.

My question these days is on the matter of deeds. It started earlier this year at UTS in Barrytown, NY, where I observed a number of Unificationist scholars who were so serious about the future of our movement 100 years from now, when they will all be gone not to mention True Parents and the first disciples. Those members in this community 100 years later will see the pure teachings but with few material things. They will see such teachings and even our great teachers, True Parents, only through photos, books, videos, and some pilgrimage sites built of stone. We all die, but we all do not die because of our children. We pass on our skills through DNA, culture and tradition to our descendants. As long as they grow up based on such DNA, culture and tradition, they are entitled as our direct children and grandchildren.

I think we’ve spoken out enough to the world to describe what the ideal world we dream of looks like. We’ve voiced enough slogans that we promote to the world. Now, the world, in turn, wants to see substantial proofs from us. We need to show something, tangible and physical, not metaphysical things any longer. If we are really dreamers in this world, we’ve got to become those artists, politicians, scientists, etc., who put into practice and show clearly that what we’ve dreamed of is already realized in material form. Those proofs will then show our descendants 100 years from now physically what we in the first place conceived of as a dream and so became dreamers of the very dream. Otherwise, if we fail to show something concrete to the world, at least to our descendants, they will shout out to us, “Wake up, you butterflies!”

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