

I.

Trembling Spirits: Sleep, Dreams and Human Nature

But the sleepe is the reste of the spyrites, and the wakinge, the vehemente motione of theym, and the wayne dreame is a certayne tremblinge and vnperfit motion of theym.

—Thomas Hill, *The moste pleasuante arte of the interpretacion of dreames*, di. 29

And I do not a little marvell at that man who sayes he can sleep without a Dream: for the Mind of man is a restlesse thing: and though it give the Body leave to repose it self, as knowing it is a mortal and earthly piece; yet it self being a Spirit, and therefore active and indefatigable, is ever in motion.

—Joseph Hall, *The Contemplations upon the History of the New Testament*, p. 488

There were many different theories about the nature of dreams in seventeenth-century England. Dreams were just one kind of mental phenomenon produced by the interaction of the material body with the spiritual powers that resided in the soul. There was more than one model for how these material and immaterial parts interacted, and these could dictate whether dreams should be seen simply as hallucinations of the senses, whether they were actively shaped and formed by the mental powers of the imagination, or whether they reflected the higher thinking of the intellect. It was possible to believe that only some, or indeed all of these explanations were plausible, depending upon the particular properties of the mind or the conditions in which it operated. The boundaries between different types of dream, more natural or supernatural, were hazy and porous, as supernatural forces mingled with and animated the whole universe. To speak of 'natural' and 'supernatural' kinds of dream had less to do with whether spiritual forces were involved in their creation and more to do with whether they emerged from common laws of nature or were instigated by a higher power. There also existed a category of the 'preternatural', which could denote the corruption and disorder of natural things, the operation of hidden and unknown forces beyond human understanding, or their manipulation by magicians, witches or demonic spirits.

Historians have observed several ways in which dreams and other visionary experiences were implicated in the contested intellectual terrain from 1640 to 1700. Popkin and Clark both argue that dreams were a critical point of reference in debates inspired by Pyrrhonist scepticism, appearing not only in Descartes' *Meditations* but in demonological treatises dealing with witchcraft and the powers of the devil.

¹ For the orthodox and the sceptics, dreams came to represent the ultimate fallibility of the senses, the mind, and sometimes the heart. This naturally aligns with Michael Heyd's work on enthusiasm, where dreams were associated with the false religious experiences of enthusiasts.² Erica Fudge shows how attempts to elevate the significance of man's natural dreams with Platonist arguments were driven in part by a need to distinguish his mind from those of animals which apparently also experienced some kind of dreaming, in a world where scepticism seriously questioned whether man possessed truly spiritual intuitions.³ Cocking, Faivre and Harrison show how dreams affirmed the sanctity of the imagination as the site for divine inspiration, salvation and renewal in occult and theosophical beliefs.⁴ Paul Monod identifies dreams as a point of interest for those who mingled occult and empiricist ideals in the mid-century, including alchemists who believed the philosopher's stone would permit communication with angels, and those who sought to combine experimental religion with new methods that promoted experimental observation of nature.⁵

I seek to build upon these observations by establishing in greater depth the connection of dreams with cognition, the implications this posed for man's nature and identity, and his agency in their production. This chapter will track the changing discourses on the nature and functions of dreams in human physiology and cognition over the course of the century, from the traditional scholastic and medical discourses that dominated the early century and still served as a reference for the understanding of later thinkers, to Platonic

¹ Pyrrhonian scepticism was a school of ancient thought known to the early modern period through the writings of the 2nd-3rd century philosopher Sextus Empiricus. It questioned man's ability to achieve any kind of certainty based on the testimony of the senses or the innate power of the mind, instead championing a position of radical uncertainty in philosophical and religious matters. The spreading influence of his writings on intellectuals and religious thinkers is documented by Richard Popkin. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*, pp. 3–15, 17–79; 'The Religious Background', pp. 396–400. See also Simpson, *Burning to Read*, pp. 106–140.

² Michael Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable*.

³ Erica Fudge, "'Onely Proper Unto Man': Dreaming and Being Human' in Sue Wiseman, Katherine Hodgekin, Michelle O'Callaghan (eds), *Reading the Early Modern Dream: The Terrors of the Night* (Routledge, 2008), pp. 31–43.

⁴ Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, pp. 99–136; Cocking, *Imagination: A Study*, pp. 69–232; Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, pp. 125–138.

⁵ Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts*, pp. 95–105.

arguments employed to defend the spiritual sanctity of the mind, and the later opposition between mechanical and Platonic accounts of cognition. Together, these themes formed part of a religious and philosophical discourse on essences, in which the production of knowledge was a process that occurred through the interactive operations of natural and supernatural substances. Man's identity as God's creation was finessed by this philosophical understanding of the world he interacted with. His flaws and his weaknesses were described by comparison to the minds and instincts of animals, while his dignity and perfections were described either in reference to angels or as reflections of God himself. The ends of religious life were to maximise these spiritual dignities while avoiding the snares of 'creaturely' passions and appetites. Christian philosophy founded a theory of cognition and voluntaristic action on this principle, and mapped the relationship of dreams to these dignities and weaknesses.

I argue that different positions on the natural causes of dreams are characterised by tension between the conflicting ideas about whether human knowledge was limited to the direct perception of nature, or whether the soul possessed a spiritual power to transcend material reality and apprehend the divine. This was visible in the opposition between Aristotelian and Platonic theories at the beginning of the century. Generally, a belief in man's incapacity to naturally perceive the divine was supported by orthodox religionists who believed that election was a gift and the Word the only means to know God in this world. Aristotelianism and Galenic medicine supported a belief that common dreams were not spiritual but accidents of nature. Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas lay at the root of radical philosophies which offered alternative, sometimes apparently more egalitarian routes to spiritual enlightenment based on moral renewal of the individual rather than institutional authority. For devotees of these philosophies, dreams were part of a continuum of reflective and contemplative knowledge in which the soul ascended from material to supernatural perception of self, universe and deity.

The epistemological theories of the materialists and Cartesians that emerged from the 1640s onward tended to reproduce this tension in different contexts. This was especially visible in an influential school of 'Christian Platonism' which emerged amongst a group of Cambridge theologians in reaction against 'athiestic' elements of the Cartesian vision. The mechanical turn threatened the traditional image of nature as directly and immediately infused by the active presence of God, and a symbolic and interpretive order in which the material world and the social order were moulded to reflect God's own image. As we shall see in chapter four, understandings of the origins, morphology and meaning of dreams were intimately related to this understanding of existence, which dictated a relationship between lower material objects and higher

spiritual forms which expressed spiritual and moral meanings. It was at the heart of the 'mimetic' account of human perception, imagination and cognition, and suggested that under the right conditions, the phenomena and forms of dreams were intelligible as signs or signatures that expressed some aspect of God's nature and purpose, whether this related simply to the moral character of the Christian mind, or to deeper providential meanings derived from nature. The Cambridge Platonists John Smith, Henry More and Ralph Cudworth insisted on the soul's direct intuition of the divine, but also on the animating presence of the divine in nature. I argue that their response to a wholly mechanical vision of nature was to theorise more intensively the vivific character of spiritual essences, to enhance their explanatory power in the realms of natural physics. In the process they tended to 'materialize' cognitive powers and processes, and place more emphasis on dreams as empirical proofs which were effective for demonstrating the distinctions between higher and lower forms of cognitive activity. If dreams were not to retain all of their symbolic value as effects or phenomena in a natural order that mirrored God, they would retain an instrumental value and purpose dictated by their place in Scripture, and ordained by a holy design.

Physics and Psyche in the Early Modern Period

Nowhere was the attack of mechanical philosophy on the religious understanding of nature more pronounced than in its criticism of *hylomorphism*. Hylomorphism was the Aristotelian theory which explained how spiritual entities or substances actively shaped the physical world and functioned within it. It argued that all material things were created by an 'active' spiritual form which inhered within their material essence, gave them structure, imbued them with organic vitality, and a purpose or *telos* that conferred on them functional powers.⁶ The body and its organs were animated by a singular, unitary soul which could nonetheless be formally divided into three different aspects or 'faculties'. These faculties described potential powers of the soul that functioned with different intentions toward and purposes within the body. Vegetative powers were the animistic and autonomic powers of the body, those related to its nutrition, growth and health. The sensible powers mediated perception, movement, and emotional instincts and volitions. The powers of these faculties were 'actualised' only when they inhered within the physical organs they animated. The intellectual faculties were wholly spiritual powers related to abstract perception, understanding, reasoning and willpower, which had no physical seat in the body. Human psychology arose through the

⁶ James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 30-35, 49-52; Christopher Shields, 'Aristotle' on *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ver. 25/09/08, [<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/#Hyl>], accessed 03 March 2013]; Copenhaver, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', pp. 456-459.

interaction between these three faculties, which were often in conflict.⁷ The realm of 'mind' was constituted by the latter two faculties of sense and intellect. In the seventeenth century, 'imagination' was usually the psychological cognate of the sensible nature.⁸

Traditionally hylomorphism had been a foundational concept in Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Augustinian psychologies for describing the nature of reality, and how knowledge itself was possible. Thought was possible because of the plastic and mimetic nature of material and spiritual substances. In normal perception, physical matter cloaked spiritual forms, and physical objects emitted forms or motions that impressed themselves on the bodies' senses, and then transmitted them through the body's liquid spirits to inner senses. In the body, a spiritual power of the soul (the *active intellect*) scanned these impressions or 'phantasms', perceived the spiritual forms that were latent within them, and inscribed them in the spiritual mind. The soul thus became conscious of the outside world through these imprinted phantasms, and conscious of abstract spiritual truths by perceiving and thinking with the spiritual forms derived from them.⁹ The part of the mind which received the spiritual form was the intellect, a wholly spiritual capacity of the soul. That which received the physical forms was the imagination, or the internal senses, which mediated the impressions flowing from the body's sense organs for the intellect.¹⁰ Imagination could simply describe the realm where the material echoes of the senses existed within the body, but some philosophers claimed that the 'vital spirits' which carried these phantasms had unique properties. These spirits were also the medium through which the soul communicated its power and energy to the body. It was sometimes identified as a more perfect

⁷ Contemporary descriptions of the body, the soul and the mind can be found in Bartholomew of England, *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (London, 1582), pp. 12-16 and Richard Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), pp. 29—45. For historiographical analysis of the core concepts from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, see Katherine Park and Eckhard Kessler, 'The Concept of Psychology' in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, pp. 455—463; Park, and 'The Organic Soul', pp. 464—484; Eckhard Kessler, 'The Intellective Soul' in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, pp.485—534; Richard Cross, 'Philosophy of Mind', pp. 263-284; Hatfield, 'The Cognitive Faculties', pp. 954—959.

⁸ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp. 43—45.

⁹ In Greek psychology, the spiritual form was a 'universal' and eternal archetype, which represented an ultimate and abstract value. It was the singular source of the many 'particular' physical manifestations or copies in the world, whose impressions communicated only physical properties and attributes to the mind. See Christopher Shields, 'Aristotle's Psychology' on *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ver. 23/08/2010, [<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-psychology/>, accessed 03 March 2013]; Hatfield, 'The Cognitive Faculties', pp. 953-1002.; Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp. 16—25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; see also Cocking, *Imagination: A Study*, pp. 1—26.

and subtle form of material substance, a perfect element which was closer to the spiritual world and composed the heavens in Ptolemaic cosmology.¹¹

The mind required the imagination to perceive the world and the spiritual forms that lay beneath it. The imagination, meanwhile, was a sub-conscious faculty incapable of rational thought, unstable and easily corrupted without the governing power of the intellect. The powers of the imagination, though subconscious, were thought capable of producing pre-rational knowledge through the 'particular intellect' or 'speculative fantasy', a power by which the soul gauged and compared the physical attributes of phantasms.¹² The spiritual intellect, however, inscribed the spiritual forms perceived by the soul onto the spiritual understanding as 'ideas', which the soul then reflected upon and formulated into rational thought by the power of its own spiritual movements. The power of the intellect allowed the mind to possess knowledge of spiritual truths.¹³ But the imagination produced subjective knowledge based upon physical needs and emotional passions, and was vulnerable to profound errors when the body was compromised by the miscarriages and corruptions of material nature. The consequences of this were cognitive errors, in which the mind was misled by illusions and hallucinations, and moral falsity, motivating personal and social vanities if its perceptions were allowed to rule over the spiritual mind.¹⁴

The division between sensitive and intellectual natures functioned to divide not just emotional and rational knowledge, but emotional and rational desires in man. Imagination received, perceived, and desired according to the physical properties of phantasms, the intellect according to the spiritual and abstract

¹¹ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, pp. 21–22: 'Spirit, is a most subtle vapor, which is expressed from the Blood, and the Instrument of the Soule, to performe all his Actions, a common tye or medium, betwixt the Body and the Soule, as some will haue it, or as Paracelsus, a fourth Soul of it selfe.' Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy differed in seeing the intellectual, sensible and vegetative powers as different aspects of a single soul in the former case, or as multiple 'souls' or 'spirits' in the second. Copenhaver, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', pp. 455–459. See also Lyn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science, Vol. VI: The Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1952), pp. 227–237. For discussions concerning spirituous bodies in human physiology and angelic beings, see Anja Hallacker, 'On Angelic Bodies: Some Philosophical Discussions in the Seventeenth Century' in Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (eds) *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Role and Significance* (Ashgate, 2008), pp. 201–142.

¹² For discussion of the practical intellect see Susan James, *Passion and Action*, p. 54, pp. 53–61, Hasse, 'Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on the Latin West'; See also Gail Kern Paster, 'Melancholy Cats, Lugged Bears, and Early Modern Cosmology: Reading Shakespeare's Psychological Materialism Across the Species Barrier' in Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (eds), *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia, 2004), pp. 123–129.

¹³ Hatfield, 'The Cognitive Faculties', pp. 958.

¹⁴ John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning and Education, 1560–1640* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 43; Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, pp. 52–88; James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 160–183.

forms they enveloped. The imagination's power of appetite, stimulated by sensual perceptions, drove powerful changes of physical motion and temperature in the body which gave rise to the emotional passions, giving rise in turn to carnal volitions. The spiritual thoughts of the understanding, meanwhile, stimulated spiritual sensations and appetites in the higher soul, to which the intellectual will was sensitive. However, the spiritual will could be governed by the imagination, usually in the absence of true spiritual understanding. According to philosophical Christianity, the crippling of human understanding and intellectual will at the Fall had left man's will captive to the imagination, explaining his spiritual ignorance and propensity for evil.

Since the Renaissance theoretical discussion of the imagination, as the realm in which these ambiguous exchanges took place, had enjoyed powerful currency in theology and philosophy.¹⁵ As a malleable power, imagination was a conduit through which body and spirit could affect or shape one another. Since it reflected both bodily and spiritual movements, its composition offered a window into whether material or spiritual powers were dominant in the mind. This made it central to moral psychology, both secular and religious.¹⁶ Theories about imagination probed the limits of human perception and knowledge in art, medicine, divination and magic, while its psychosomatic effects were used to explain freak physical anomalies, sensory hallucinations, the rationality of occult physiognomy, and even how the soul could exert miraculous spiritual powers on nature.¹⁷ In scholastic theology, Aristotelian physics were used to describe a soul and body which was created by God as a unique entity with the ability to comprehend the world and his place within it. The soul's imaginative powers, though sometimes dramatic, unpredictable, and capable of changing matter, were limited to the body. This vision of the world as a symbiosis between invisible spiritual forms and a passive material nature was rejected by the new philosophers on the basis that it lacked concrete explanatory power in the realms of logic, and that the 'knowledge' it produced about nature amounted to little more than a linguistic exercise in assigning definitions to things. Mechanical philosophers would reject all spiritual powers in the nature as a form of obscure and ignorant occultism, and in their place, attempt to quantify natural phenomenon mechanically and mathematically.¹⁸

¹⁵ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp. 3—5, 39—45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 45—48; James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 2—26, 160—183; 'The Passions in Metaphysics and Theories of Action', pp. 913—948; Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, pp. 52—88.

¹⁷ Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, pp. 99—136; Cocking, *Imagination: A Study*, pp. 69-232; Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp. 39—76; Armando Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric: A Study of Renaissance Demonology* (London, 2001) pp. 180—224.

¹⁸ James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 66—69; Menn, 'The Intellectual Setting', pp. 73, Copenhagen, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', pp. 475—483.

The emergence of mechanical philosophy has been credited in part to the failing intellectual credibility of traditional Aristotelian philosophy, but also the failure of its rivals to gain acceptance. Renaissance philosophers who revived Neoplatonic theories about the soul and its relationship to occult forces of nature made more extravagant claims for the imagination's powers. They saw its vivific spirits not just as a component of human beings, but a substance that infused the whole of the universe, linking heaven, earth and all things in them together as part of a single entity or 'World Soul'.¹⁹ Etherial spirit formed a universal medium in which all things that shared similar attributes or natures were attracted to each other, and through which souls and spirits could exert special powers. The logic of occult metaphysics invited comparisons to pantheistic pagan beliefs, the perception that the spiritual world could be subjected to the physical, and in its profession to technical mastery of spiritual power, confused the boundaries between the sacred and profane, between religion and magic.²⁰ All of these elements ensured that Renaissance Platonism, and interest in natural magic was vociferously denounced by a large majority of religious scholars,, and provided abundant targets for the anti-occult sensibilities of the mechanical philosophers.²¹ However, in the seventeenth-century, the idea of this universal 'mid-essence' would be adopted and increasingly deployed as a riposte to the mechanical philosophy's vision of a cosmos wholly divested of spiritual energies. Causal relationships between spiritual and material substances were increasingly emphasized over the occult properties of hylomorphic forms. 'Mid-essence' would be more sharply defined as a rarefied substance and substrate that blended the organic and the spiritual, structuring and vitalising matter through its ability to convey directed kinetic energies rather than occult sympathies. In the non-mechanical philosophies of the period, this mid-essence acted as a supple linkage between the soul and the body, and perhaps between the soul and other spirits—and especially God himself.²² As we shall see, the popularity of Platonist arguments about the vitalising properties of the soul and of these mid-essences is essential for explaining changing philosophical approaches to dreams in this period.

¹⁹ Copenhaver, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', pp. 455—459; Hallacker, 'On Angelic Bodies', pp.202—205; Thorndike, *Vol. IV: The Sixteenth Century*, pp. 227—237.

²⁰ Menn, 'The Intellectual Setting', pp. 58—67.

²¹ Brian Vickers, 'Analogy Versus Identity: The Rejection of Occult Symbolism, 1580—1680' in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities*, pp. 95—176, 273—296; Copenhaver, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', pp. 455—459; Rossi, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, pp. 36—72.

²² Copenhaver, 'The Occult Philosophy and its Critics', pp. 460—475, 484—503; Hallacker, 'On Angelic Bodies', pp. 201—142.

The Phenomenology of Dreams

How were dreams produced from the various operations and interactions of the psychic faculties? According to Aristotle and his early modern interpreters, the origins of dreams were tied directly to the physiological circumstances of sleep. The interaction of the different faculties, and the transfer of sensible phantasms from the body into the imagination and intellect, relied upon a continuous synergy of motion between body, vivific spirits and the soul. In sleep, the synergy between soul and body was broken either by the depletion or pollution of this substance, and consequently the synergy between the senses and the mind. In this separated state, the mind was understood to be withdrawn ('abstracted') from physical sense. Instead of seeing immediately with the senses, the mind perceived fantasies that arose inside the body. There was disagreement as to how the mind worked during this time, whether it was conscious and thinking or unconscious and barely perceiving. Similar states of 'suspension' or 'abstraction' could be caused by bodily illness, mental distraction and supernatural trances, so that they were often compared to states of sleeping and dreaming.

Beyond this opinions on the precise causes of dreams were varied and sometimes contentious. The Spanish humanist Juan Lius Vives (1493-1540) reported that in an academic debate on the matter at Louvain, a whole day 'dragged out in opinions and quarrels, and many more will be eaten up over the question [of] what faculty is it to which dreams belong.'²³ The following analysis identifies several accounts of the origins of dreams over the course of the seventeenth century, which can be identified to differing degrees with Aristotelian, Galenic, Platonic, Neoplatonic and Mechanical philosophies. The first account was derived from Aristotle's writings, and judged that dreams were a physiological anomaly of the perceptive faculties experienced during sleep. This had been the most widely accepted theory about the origins of man's common dreams since the later middle ages.²⁴ At the start of the seventeenth century, it was usually supplemented by theories, derived from the medical philosophy of Galenism, which described how imagination (and its dreams) was conditioned by the humours, the elemental substances which were produced by digestion and nourished the body, and how they were in turn conditioned by factors of diet, climate and health. A second kind of account appeared to attribute dreams to a function of the imagination, aligning them with the 'speculative' cognitive power or a kind of 'intellectual fantasy', and this appeared to become more prominent by the mid-century. The third kind

²³ Juan Luis Vives, *Somnium et Vigilia in Somnium Scipionis* (ed.) Edward V. George (Greenwood, 1989), p. xxxviii. For a selection of international texts on the origins of dreams and dream divination, see Thorndike, *Vol. IV: The Sixteenth Century*, pp. 475—486.

²⁴ Steven Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 83—122.

aligned dreams with the Platonic theory that while the body slept, the soul never did: dreams were therefore directed like waking fantasies by the power of reason. The fourth kind was in fact nearly identical to the first—that dreams were primarily physiological anomalies—but was articulated in the context not of Aristotelian but ‘mechanical’ models of anatomy. In the evolving debate on metaphysics, the first and fourth accounts appealed to those who believed that all knowledge derived first from sensory experience of the world. The third account appealed jointly to those who subscribed to occult and magical accounts of nature—Neoplatonism, Hermeticism and their offshoots—and those who believed that epistemology was grounded on innate spiritual knowledge, resisting what they saw as the dangerously ‘athiestic’ implications of mechanical philosophy, namely the scepticism it directed at contemporary accounts of encounters with supernatural spirits and its denial of the role of any spiritual or vitalistic force in nature. As a result, innatist accounts of dreaming played a special role in criticism of the mechanical philosophy in the late century.²⁵

²⁵ A simple distinction between perception and thought cannot always be simply derived from descriptions in seventeenth-century philosophy. The first reason for this is a difference in linguistic concepts and their usage. While we may instinctively separate the idea of perception and cognition, in the seventeenth-century mind the two were so closely linked that their terms are sometimes indistinguishable. In the early modern notion of ‘mind’ there was continuity between the perceptual phantasms transmitted by the senses, and the ideas and concepts that constituted thought. Terms like ‘cognition’, ‘idea’ and even ‘thought’ could be applied to phantasms and movements originating not from the mental powers of the soul, but from the inner motions of the senses, organs, and vivific spirits. This was because spiritual forms or ‘ideas’ were discerned within the nature of objects and percepts themselves. The second reason is the dyadic nature of the mind, in which two parallel systems of sensitive and intellectual cognition could be either parallel or contiguous. This continuity of linguistic terms, and the symbiotic nature of the mind, means that many pronouncements on the exact nature and origins of dreams can be more ambiguous than they first appear, and gives rise, especially in accounts of a Platonic colour, to hybridized terms like ‘intellectual fantasy’ and ‘intellectual vision’. For examples of the visual nature of ideas in early modern discourse see Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture* (London, 1993), pp. 48–51 and Michael Ayers, *Locke: Epistemology and Ontology* (London, 1993), pp. 44–48.

A related issue stems from whether dreams can be considered to be products of ‘active’ or ‘passive’ powers of the soul. I began this study with the assumption that dreams could be classified as ‘active’ or ‘passive’ according to whether they were seen as purely perceptual phenomena with accidental causes, or whether they were actively produced by a form of cognition. This assumption is undermined by the fact that the terms ‘active’ and ‘passive’ could be applied to the psychic faculties with very different meanings. In the overall architecture of the soul, all imaginative powers could be classified as passive, because none of them possessed an intrinsic ability for volitional movement like that possessed by the intellectual soul – they were ‘reactive’, and needed to be moved by some other energy. On another definition, both vegetative and sensible powers could be classified as ‘active’, because they moved from a state of potentiality to actualisation when exerting their functions. This makes it difficult to discern exactly how the imagination is working in instances where it is declared to function with a degree of autonomy from the intellect: does this ‘freedom’ consist in an ability to shape dreams according to some intention, or are its products defined entirely by accidental motions produced by the body? Are the inclinations of the appetites involved, and should appetitive motions be considered accidental or voluntaristic? This means that relating particular modes of dreaming to an active or passive function of the soul is problematic. See James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 37–45, 49–50, 54–55.

Natural Dreams in Scholastic Philosophy and Galenic Medicine

Aristotle had conceived of dreams as an anomaly in the sensitive imagination. He claimed that the internal senses, in the absence of immediate perceptions from the sensory organs, became aware of old impressions which were still present in the body, decayed echoes of the forms as they were originally perceived.²⁶ He compared them to the 'after-image' of the sun that remained in the eye even after it was closed. Such after-images were weaker than the immediate impressions of the senses, and it was only in the absence of direct sensation that such phantasms became visible to the soul. This explained why these phantasms did not interfere with waking perception. No longer part of a direct visual stream, they were confused, mixed and compounded, giving rise to nonsensical visions and fantastical objects that were really composites of different phantasms. These phantasms were further transformed by changes in the motion and temperature of the bodily fluids in which they were suspended. In sleep, these phantasms confused and misled the soul in the same manner as deceptive illusions or the hallucinations of illness.²⁷

Aristotle's explanation of dreams was adopted and further refined by medieval scholastic thinkers like Thomas Aquinas. The Thomist-Aristotelian theory of consciousness was founded upon an ideal of congruence, of continuity between the order of reality and the ordering of thought in the mind. It tended to draw equivalence between consciousness and thought, and dictated that thought was dependent upon a dialogue with the senses.²⁸ Aquinas explained that since thought was dependent upon the operation of the external and interior senses, the intellect was able to operate imperfectly according to the degrees by which the internal organs were 'suspended' by the 'evaporations and the escape of certain exhalations'. When the amount was 'considerable' due to digestion of copious food, the imagination as well as the senses were suspended, so that there were no phantasms. If the evaporations were less severe, 'phantasms appear, but distorted and without sequence', as 'happens in a case of fever'. If the body was clearer the phantasms would 'have a certain sequence', occurring especially 'towards the end of sleep in sober men and those who are gifted with a strong imagination'. Finally, with evaporations at their most slight, the internal senses began to function again, so that 'not only [does] the imagination retain its freedom, but also the common sense is partly freed'. This operation of the

²⁶ Aristotle, 'On Dreams', (trans.) J.I. Beare, [<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/dreams.html>], accessed 23 Aug 2010].

²⁷ Aristotle, 'On Dreams'.

²⁸ Hatfield, 'The Cognitive Faculties', pp. 954-957; Ayers, *Locke: Epistemology and Ontology*, pp. 254—255.

imagination and the common sense restored a chain of cognition to the intellect, so that 'sometimes while asleep a man may judge that what he sees is a dream, discerning as it were, between things, and their images'. Nevertheless, the common sense remained 'partly suspended', so that it was often 'deceived in some particular'. Aquinas stated definitively that this judgement involved intellectual and not merely imaginative 'cogitation', so that 'according as sense and imagination are free, so is the judgment of [the] intellect unfettered, though not entirely'. One could thus syllogize while asleep, but upon waking 'invariably recognizes a flaw in some respect'.²⁹ Dreams therefore represented a particular stage in the reassertion of consciousness, when the material pollutants in the body cleared sufficiently to allow the internal organs to perceive. The quality and clarity of the residual species were affected by the internal motions inside the body during sleep: the calmer the motions of the humours and spirits, the clearer would be the dream image.

Numerous examples echoing the Aristotelian model can be found in texts from England in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Levinus Lemnius (1505-1568) was a Dutch physician whose medical text *The Touchstone of Complexions* was published in London in 1575. Lemnius explained:

the Imaginations and phantasies which in Sleepe be offered, and seene apparatly in Dreames by night when a man is at rest to occurre & busye his mynde, are caused and styrred by vapours & fumes proceeding out of the humours & agitation of the Spyrite Animall.³⁰

A medical advice book by Sir William Vaughan (c.1575-1641) claimed that in dreams corrupted humours 'darken the light of the vnderstanding (which is seated in the braine, and there-hence as a candle imparts light vnto the whole body) and there they imprint troublesome dreames'.³¹ Thomas Nashe was a writer and satirist, whose *Terrors of the Night* (1594) used sober Aristotelian theory to poke fun at those who attributed divinatory and prophetic power to dreams, but was also filled with warnings about the role of malign spirits in bringing them about. He echoed Aristotle's central points. Dreams were like to the 'glimmering and dazeling of a mans eyes when hee comes newly out of the bright Sunne', their movements in the body comparable to how '[t]he clearest spring a little tutcht is creased wyth a thousand circles'. Nashe spoke of dream 'thoughts', but clearly thought of them as catalysts of *images* whose self-renewing energy derived from their collisions and the chemical eruptions of the

²⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica (Complete & Unabridged)* ((trans.)) Fathers of the Dominican Province, Electronic Edition (Coyote Canyon Press, 2010), II.II, Q. 84, Art. 8.

³⁰ Levinus Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions* (London, 1576), p. 113.

³¹ Vaughan, *Approved Directions for Health* (London, 1612), p. 63.

humours in the brain: 'Our cogitations runne on heapes like men to part a fray, where euerie one strikes his next fellow', and 'confound in one gallimafrie'.

In Western Europe, Aristotelian theory was typically filtered through centuries of learned medical theory founded on the Roman works of Galen of Pergamum (C.E. 169-c.216). Both Galenic and earlier Hippocratic texts, as well as multiple accretions over the centuries, had added to the complexity of dream theory. They claimed that dream phantasms were naturally conditioned by the occult properties of the humours, so that they could be used to interpret its composition and condition.³² They also increased their psychological complexity, by suggesting that the phantasms seen in dreams did not just echo perceptual images, but waking thoughts, passions and the contents of the memory. David Person (fl.1635) called most of the images which charged the nocturnal imagination 'accidental dreams', caused 'either by dyet, by feare or joy conceaved in the day time'.³³ Physicians therefore diagnosed a great variety of influences on the quality of dream phantasms and the mediums in which they persisted. Some of these influences on dreams were within the range of good health, while others were signs of discomfort, agitation or illness. Galenic medicine approached the body through an analytical view that described the interaction between its 'naturals', its constituent tissues, organs and substances, and a selection of external factors that conditioned the body and were under the control of the patient and physician, the 'non-naturals'. There were six categories of 'non-natural'. Five of these were physical—climate, sleep, diet, defecation—and the sixth was psychological, the passions or tempers of the mind.³⁴

The five physical kinds of non-natural were all capable of effecting the accidental generation of dreams by producing changes in the quality, temperature or motion of the humours and vital spirits. Dreams were most obviously caused by sleep and diet, because the three were normally linked, but variations in the conditions of either had the potential to influence their

³² M. Andrew Holowchak, 'Interpreting Dreams for Corrective Regimen: Diagnostic Dreams in Greco-Roman Medicine' in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. 56 No. 4 (Nov, 2001), pp. 382—99; Steven M. Oberhelman, 'The Diagnostic Dream in Ancient Medical Theory and Practice', in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 61 No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 47—60; 'Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams' in *The Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. 83 (1983), pp. 36—47.

³³ David Person, *Varieties: or, A surveigh of rare and excellent matters necessary and delectable for all sorts of persons* (London, 1635), p. 252.

³⁴ Chester R. Burns, 'The Non-Naturals: A Paradox in the Western Concept of Health', in *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 1976, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 202—211. The clergyman Thomas Adams on ill-health as a mode of preternatural or 'contranatural' disorder: 'The position of their opposite perfections, was the expulsion of those foule contraries. Sinne comes like bleake and squalid Winter, and driues out these faire beauties: turnes the Sunne-shine to blacknesse; calmenesse to tempests; ripenesse to corruption; health to sicknesse; *sweetnesse* to bitternesse.'—Thomas Adams, *The Devills Banket* (London, 1614), p. 96.

regularity or their quality. Sleep was promoted by fatigue brought on by the exhaustion of the humours and vital spirits, which had to be replenished by digestion.³⁵ According to Person the 'greatest wasters' of the spirits were the mental functions of the brain in their 'Pensing, Projecting, consulting, reasoning, hearing, seeing and so forth'.³⁶ Sometimes digestive motion itself was said to be responsible for bringing on sleep.³⁷ The process of digestion dictated a regular cycle between 'heavy' and 'light' sleep over the course of the night, and corresponding kinds of dream. The body was weighed down with food at the beginning of the night, and digestion produced by-products which could block the pathways that carried the vital spirits, or agitate the bodily organs. Dreams were sometimes explained to be a side-effect of the thick humours and vapours of digestion exciting the imaginative organs. After food had been digested, the body settled down. Dreams stopped being oppressive and became light and pleasant due to the blood's natural 'ebulliance', or the clarity of the vital spirits.³⁸ For those who believed in supernatural influences on dreams, this stage of sleep was the most propitious for them, because of the strength and tranquility of these 'subtle' spirits.

The balance between these different motions under the conditions of sleep was delicate, and could be easily disturbed. Physicians managed the health of patients by advising them down to the finest details on therapeutic methods for controlling these conditions. There were beneficial and harmful times to sleep and digest food, optimal places and positions in which to sleep, and most of all, foods which were safe and unsafe for ones' constitution. Physicians produced extensive lists of victuals that were hard on digestion and detrimental to restful sleep. Digestion would produce acerbic vapours which agitated the organs of the imagination.³⁹ The French aristocrat Scipion Dupleix (1569-1661) explained that dreams were more turbulent in autumn than any other season because the new fruit consumed at this time of year was humid and produced great quantities of fumes, which mingled with the spirits and produced 'strange and confused illusions'.⁴⁰ Most of these foods contributed to the production of excess melancholy, the most corruptible and noxious of the humours.

³⁵ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 36; Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, pp. 7-9; Person, *Varieties*, pp. 245-251; Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 11-15.

³⁶ Person, *Varieties*, p. 246.

³⁷ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 36; Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, pp. 7-9; Person, *Varieties* (London, 1635), pp. 245-251; Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions* (London, 1689), pp. 11-15.

³⁸ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, p. 14.

³⁹ Janine Rivière, 'Demons of Desire or Symptoms of Disease?: Medical Theories and Popular Experiences of the "Nightmare" in Premodern England' in Ann Marie Plane and Leslie Tuttle (eds), *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions: The Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2013), pp. 58-59; Nashe, *The Terrors of the Night*, di. 33; James Hart, *Klinike, or The diet of the diseased* (London, 1633), p. 40; Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁰ Dupleix, *Resolver*, p. 182-3.

'Melancholy meats' were particularly to be avoided, and tended to cause 'dark and troublesome dreams'.⁴¹ Corrupt humours were generally responsible for illnesses which produced bad dreams. Thomas Nashe wrote that when the blood was 'chafed, disquieted and troubled' it disturbed 'moyst braynes', and stirred up phantasms from the memory.⁴² Dupleix stated that 'evill and corrupt humours' excited 'corrupt vapours and fumes to the braine' which 'mingled with the animal spirits' and led the imagination to produce fantasies of 'irregular kinds, and apparitions so deformed, as sometimes most fearefull.'⁴³ Thomas Tryon, as an author of popular advice books and a mystical treatise on dreams, warned that 'unsound' or 'troublesome' sleep was caused when the vapours that ascended through the body were not by-products of the stomach but corrupted humours.⁴⁴ An infamous phenomenon in early modern cultures of sleep was the 'night mare', a heavy sensation of choking or weight on the chest associated in folk-lore with being sat upon or 'ridden' by a hag, succubus or demon, but which was explained medically as a concentration of humours in the chest that caused paralysis, and vapours which caused hallucinations in the brain.⁴⁵ Sometimes the nightmare was compared with or seen as a prelude to more serious diseases, such as apoplexy, epilepsy, and rheumatism, or arose from a serious corruption of the liver.⁴⁶

The effects of 'airs' or climate on dreams are symptomatic of beliefs about the highly permeable and impressionable nature of the body and the mind in early modern thought. The bodily humours, and consequently the emotional passions they gave rise to, were thought to be deeply influenced by the properties of climate, which influenced native constitution and character, a phenomenon referred to by critics as geo-humoralism.⁴⁷ Climactic concerns

⁴¹ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 85–103, 91–2; Joannes de Mediolano, *Regimen Sanitatis Salerni* (London, 1528), p. 33, 34, 77, 88; Hart, *The diet of the diseased*, pp. 46–47; Thomas Sir Elyot, *The castel of helthe* (London, 1539), pp. 27, 29–30; Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (London, 1636), pp. 31–32, 53–54, 63–64, 65–66. For melancholy meats see: Nash, *The Terrors of the Night*, di. 12; William Vaughan, *Approved directions for health, both naturall and artificial deriued from the best physitians as well moderne as auncient* (London, 1612), pp. 37, 63–64; Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 88; Della Porta, *Natural Magicke* (London, 1658), pp. 220–221.

⁴² Nash, *The Terrors of the Night*, di. 12.

⁴³ Scipion Dupleix, *The Resoluer* (London, 1635), p. 182. This is essentially the same process described for diet-induced dreams.

⁴⁴ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 13–14.

⁴⁵ Dupleix, *The Resolver*, p. 178, 179; see an alternative account of the disease in Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 24–26.

⁴⁶ Philip Barrough, *The method of phisick containing the causes, signes, and cures of inward diseases in mans body, from the head to the foote* (London, 1583), p. 31 for epilepsy, pp. 35–36 for melancholy, p.118 for troubles of the liver. Diagnosis of humoural difficulties leading to disease from dreams is recounted in Lemnius, *Touchstone of Complexions*, pp. 112–113.

⁴⁷ The term geo-humoralism was proposed by Mary Floyd-Wilson in her *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2003), and is also discussed in her essay 'English Mettle' in *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, pp. 130–146.

were also believed to impact the process of sleep, the quality of dreams, and even dispositions toward dreaming itself. In 1180, Peter of Celle had sent a letter to Nicholas of St Albans in which he joked that ‘the English are dreamers, more so than the French’, because:

England is an island surrounded by water, for which reason its inhabitants are, not without cause, influenced by the particular quality of this element and are frequently carried away by excessive movement to the most tenuous and slender fancies, comparing, or should I say preferring, their dreams to visions.⁴⁸

In early modern Europe, night was often understood to be a time in which maleficent forces, both natural and supernatural, grew to particular power, while the body and soul were in a state of weakness.⁴⁹ Natural daylight was thought to vivify the organs of perception and the vital spirits. According to Bartholomew of England (c.1203-1272), the feeble light of night made the humours of the eye ‘heavy moving’, yet if they were pure enough to retain any of the virtue of sunlight, the eye’s ability to see in the dark would be enhanced, as was the case with cats.⁵⁰ Thomas Tryon explained that the inward motion of all the vital spirits was reinforced by the ‘active and actuating’ light of the sun, which heated and vivified the body. Its absence produced a ‘certain occult and dolesom[e] sense of sadness on the spirits of all animated Creatures, by reason of the defect of his exhilarating beams’.⁵¹ Night, attended by the descent of thick and noxious vapours of a damp and rheumatic quality, by contrast, had a naturally depressing effect on the body—the harmful airs threatened it with corruption and disease.⁵² These baleful airs also threatened to infect the imagination with unwholesome phantasms. Bartholomew of England wrote that night ‘of it selfe bringeth in horriblenesse and feare’. It was known to ‘conteineth fantasies and deceits: for mo[r]e fantasies bée seene by night then by day. And also men that sléepe by night, see more fantasies, tha[n] men that wake by day, as it is sayde there.’⁵³

The range of forces that worked on the imagination through the medium of air were not just those of local temperature and humidity, but might include

⁴⁸ Peter of Celle, ‘Letter 158. To Nicholas of St Albans, c. 1180’ in Julian Haseldine (ed.), *The Letters of Peter of Celle* (Oxford, 2001) p. 579–581.

⁴⁹ Koslofsky, *Evening’s Empire*, pp. 19–45; Ekirch, *At Day’s Close*, pp. 12–15.

⁵⁰ Bartholomew of England, *De proprietatibus Rerum*, p. 39.

⁵¹ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 12-13. These accounts of the vivifying effects of sunlight are probably owe something in part to Plato’s extramissive account of vision. For the role of natural light in supporting vision and vital motion, see Plato, ‘Timaeus’, (trans.) Benjamin Jowett, [<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>, accessed 29/08/2011].

⁵² Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, pp. 107–112; Ekirch, *At Day’s Close: Night in Times Past*, pp. 12–15; Thomas Adams, *Diseases of the soule a discourse diuine, morall, and physical* (London, 1616), di. 42.

⁵³ Bartholomew of England, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, p. 149.

numerous forms of astrological or occult forces. Aristotle had theorised that the cool and tranquil air of the night could be capable of carrying motions which presaged changes in nature, and Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* claimed that air sometimes retained impressions of violent actions and motions, leading to clairvoyant dreams.⁵⁴ The occult rays of astrological bodies were transmitted through the medium of the atmosphere. The astrologer Richard Saunders listed the kinds of dreams that occurred on the days of the lunar cycles and in the houses of the planets.⁵⁵ Thomas Tryon detailed the effects of astral influences on dreams:

1. If the *Saturnine Propert[y]* carries the upper dominion in [their] Signs, then the *Dr[ea]ms* are sad, [?] heavy and [?]ightfull fill'd with fear and [?].
 2. If the *Martial*, or fierce Fire have the chief Government, then the *Dreams* are Fierce, filled with Wrath, Passion, Fear and Trembling, Amazing and Affrighting the outward Body, insomuch, that not unfrequently, such *Dreams* do, by their Horror, awaken the person from his Sleep, and cause all his Limbs to tremble for fear.
 3. If the *Iovial* nature do predominate in the Centre of Life, then the *Dreams* are more mild, grave and moderate.
 4. If *Venus* carries the dominion in the Complection, then the *Dreams* are pleasant, delightful and amorous.
 5. If *Mercury* have rule, then your *Dreams* are mixt, various, and oft-times confused.
 6. If *Sol* bear sway, then your *Dreams* are apt to be of great Light, Honours and Dignities, or of Splendid and Magnificent things.
- Lastly, If the *Moon* predominate, the *Dreams* are confused, unconstant, mixt with Truth and Falshood.⁵⁶

The most powerful causes of dreams were psychological. Dreaming of one's profession and daily duties was recognised as common and natural as far back as ancient medical theory.⁵⁷ Phantasms retained their power in the imagination if they had been the focus of intent cognitive activity during the day, or if they were disturbed by motions of the humours, which were sometimes themselves the after-effects of excessive passions before sleep. Bartholomew of England wrote that dreams were caused 'sometime of great imagination and thought,

⁵⁴ Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy*, p. 14.

⁵⁵ Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie and Chiromancie, Metoscopie* (London, 1653), pp. 201–236.

⁵⁶ Tryon, *A Treatise of Visions & Dreams*, pp. 55–57.

⁵⁷ Oberhelman, 'The Diagnostic Dream in Ancient Medical Theory and Practice', pp. 58–59.

that is before in waking'.⁵⁸ Lemnius stated that in many dreams 'the mynde renueth the memorie and thinketh vpon some busynesse and actions that fall for the daye'.⁵⁹ In most 'naturall & animal dreames', Thomas Browne (1605-1682), English physician and philosopher, observed that 'the thoughts or actions of the day are acted over and echoed in the night'.⁶⁰ Tryon believed many dreams showed 'those things which [the dreamer] is most earnestly intent upon, or concern'd about in the day time'.⁶¹ Dreams were also commonly caused by the passions, the heated motions of the humours understood to define the emotional life of the mind, carrying over into the night. Ordinary dreams reflected the fact that the bodily humours habituated the passionate towards certain states of emotion and desire, so that different individuals possessed a natural temper or complexion that was dominated by the sanguine, choleric, melancholic or phlegmatic humour. By an occult law of sympathy, dreams would display this disposition through images that shared the properties of this humour. In a formula reiterated in numerous medical books, the sanguine character dreamt of 'love-sports and all joviall things', the choleric of 'fire, debates, skirmishes and the like', the phlegmatic of 'Waters, Seas, drowning and the rest', and the melancholic of 'death, dangers, solitudes, &c'.⁶² Gender and age, was also a fundamental determinant of one's passionate constitution, and women, children and the old were thought to be more subject to hallucinations and illusions in dreams.⁶³

David Person claimed that dreams did not simply display one's habitual desires, but on any night might betray the soul's 'predominant affections' of 'love, jealousie, feare, avarice, envy, &c'.⁶⁴ Vives wrote that the function of dreams consisted 'specifically in introducing in the spirit of man false joys, false sadness, those same things which are desires or fears during wakefulness, imagining that they are fulfilled at the time of sleep'.⁶⁵ Physicians frequently addressed the role of the imagination in promoting 'venus dreams', seductive fantasies preceding

⁵⁸ Bartholomew of England, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, p. 83. See also Gonzalo, *The divine dreamer, or A short treatise discovering the true effect and power of dreames confirmed by the most learned and best approved authors* (1641), di. 4–5.

⁵⁹ Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, p. 113–114.

⁶⁰ Thomas Browne, 'On Dreams' in Geoffrey Keynes (ed.) *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, Vol. III (London, 1893), pp. 230–231.

⁶¹ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, p. 48.

⁶² Person, *Varieties*, pp. 251-2. The complexional dream typology is cited in numerous medical advice books. For a typical example see James Manning, *A new booke, intituled, I am for you all, complexions castle* (London, 1604) pp. 28–29.

⁶³ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 19–35; Reginald Scot, *Scot's discovery of vwitchcraft* (London, 1651), pp. 36–38, 46–47, 112–113.

⁶⁴ Person, *Varieties*, p. 252.

⁶⁵ Juan Luis Vives, 'Somnium et vigilia in Somnium Scipionis', quoted in Holland, 'The Interpretation of Dreams in the Renaissance' in *Reading Dreams*, pp.134-137.

involuntary ejaculation, a sinful impropriety to be avoided by regular *coitus*.⁶⁶ A French physician by the name of Jacques Ferrand nevertheless suggested that an erotic dream might have the welcome therapeutic effect of abating love sickness or 'erotomania'.⁶⁷ Frequently, the passions that provoked dreams were discomforting. In the daytime, wrote Thomas Nashe, 'wee torment our thoughts and imaginations with sundry cares and deuices' and as a result 'all the night time they quake and tremble after the terror of their late suffering, and still continue thinking of the perplexities they haue endured'.⁶⁸ If the conscience was disturbed, Edmund Gregory (b. 1615/16) wrote, 'whilst we sleep we dream out, and we are interrupted with tumbings and tossings even all the night long'.⁶⁹ Other symptoms of disturbed minds might include nocturnal fits and sleep-walking. Sleep- or night-walking was thought to be propelled by errant passions caused by misfiring memory, imagination, or the half-waking of the intellect.⁷⁰ According to Tryon, night-fits were a less vigorous instance of this, and the purging of hot blood a potential remedy.⁷¹

Together the scholastic and medical literature portray a dynamic and varied life to the nocturnal dreams, and suggested that they could disclose quite profound insights about the psychological life of a dreamer. Their connections to the properties and movements of the passions was assumed to be so close, moreover, that Galen and those who followed his methods considered them to be a powerful diagnostic tool. Lemnius said that from dreams 'maye bee neerely coniectured and founde oute, of what disposition the body is, and what Humours therein chiefly reigned', and that from these physicians could detect imbalances and corruptions, and predict disease.⁷² The Scottish physician James Hart (*d.* 1639) promised that by such dreams 'may often be discerned or presaged some present or future infirmity'.⁷³ This was generally accepted, even by theologians traditionally opposed to divination, because the medical use of

⁶⁶ 'Thus lykewise, they whose Genitoryes and priue partes be swelled with stoare of excrementall Seede and spermatike Humour, or in the daye tyme did earnestly fixe their eyes and mynde vppon anye beautifull and fayre yonge Woman, do in their Sleepe thinck themselues to enioy their desyred purpose, and throughe imaginatiue dealinge wyth her, defyle themselues wyth nightlye pollutions.' Levinus Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, p. 121. See also Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, p. 280.

⁶⁷ Jacques Ferrand, *Erotomania or A treatise discoursing of the essence, causes, symptomes, prognosticks, and cure of love, or erotique melancholy* (Oxford, 1640), p. 273–276.

⁶⁸ Thomas Nash, *The Terrors of the Night*, di. 12. Juan Luis Vives defined dreams as emotional alterations, 'whose functions consists specifically in introducing in the spirit of man false joys, false sadness, those same thing which one desires or fears during wakefulness, imagining that they are fulfilled at the time of sleep', quoted in Holland, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', p. 135.

⁶⁹ Edmund Gregory, *An historical anatomy of Christian melancholy* (London, 1646), p. 89.

⁷⁰ Iohannes Benedictus, *Of Visions and Revelations Natural and Divine* (Mainz, 1550) in Thorndike, *Vol. IV: The Sixteenth Century*, pp. 480–481.

⁷¹ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 21–26.

⁷² Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, p. 120.

⁷³ Hart, *The diet of the diseased*, pp. 339–340; a similar claim can be found in Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, p. 120.

dreams was practised only relative to the immediate body, and restricted to the observation of natural cause and effect.⁷⁴ Galen had explained how the soul was affected by the condition of the body in sleep, describing it properly as a shift in the soul's awareness from the external to the inner world of the body.

For it is likely that in sleep the soul, having gone into the depths of the body and retreated from the external perceptions, perceives the dispositions throughout the body and forms an impression of all that it reaches out to, as though these things were already present.⁷⁵

This suggested that although accidental, the contents of dreams were frequently meaningful, and by their presence stimulated the soul's intellect to thought. Lemnius went so far as to say that by dreams, the soul 'perceyeth, vnderstandeth, & beholdeth those actions which the body is to do by day, and loke what things the body desyreth and longeth after'.⁷⁶ Most believed that the judgment of the intellect was impaired in sleep, and Aristotle and Plato implied that dream interpretation required an outside observer. Despite their apparently meaningful nature, the divinatory logic of dreams was not in itself the product of a cognitive act: it could be interpreted as an emergent phenomenon based on passionate motions initiated when the soul was awake, and an occultic law of attraction that existed between bodily substances and phantasms of the same property. The English physician Richard Haydock (1569/70—c.1642) stated that the vapours arising in sleep 'forme images answerable to their owne nature wthout ye helpe of inherent forms & ideas of ye matters last thought of, or earnestly intreated of.'⁷⁷ The blood and humour of a choleric, for example, was full of fiery images because his humours attracted and rarefied phantasms of that nature. This principle is also demonstrated by various methods for controlling dreams recommended by the Italian scholar Giambattista della Porta (c.1535—1615), who claimed that special unguents could impregnate vapours in the body with material that would attract phantasms of dark and tumultuous quality, and prescribed diets suitable for producing pleasant dreams.⁷⁸ Scholastic and Galenic interpretations located dreams in the imagination, and portrayed this as a combustible region of sensitive and rarely tranquil passions, but they did not attribute their images to a cognitive power of this faculty. This interpretation of dreams was, however, increasingly hinted at in sources of the early to mid-seventeenth century.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Summa*, II.II, Q. 171, Art. 1; Edward Peters, *The Magician, The Witch and the Law* (Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 96—98.

⁷⁵ Galen, *On Diagnosis in Dreams*, (trans.) Lee Percy, [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucgajpd/medicina%20antiqua/tr_GalDreams.html, accessed 23 Aug 2010].

⁷⁶ Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, p. 113.

⁷⁷ From an extract from Richard Haydock's *Oneirologia* in British Library, MS Landsdowne 489, fol. 131, quoted in Rivière, 'Demons of Desire or Symptoms of Disease?', p. 58.

⁷⁸ Della Porta, *Natural Magicke*, p. 220.

Dreams and the Cognitive Powers

The fact that dreams were remembered at all was believed to be proof that the soul at times enjoyed some kind of consciousness in sleep. Aristotelian science tended to suggest that thoughts in sleep were confused and compromised, because the mind was dependent upon stable and coherent references on which to frame reasoned judgments. The confusion of dreams proved that this was not generally the case in sleep, whether the images were perceptual echoes or flushed out of the imagination and memory. Nevertheless, it was believed that dreams were meaningful, insofar as they revealed the soul's passionate movements. It was even suggested that these movements, by showing states of desire, were also a form of wish fulfilment. It was Plato who originally made this claim, believing dreams expressed the soul's lower nature. In his *Republic* they acted as a theatre for its bestial impulses—'not excepting incest or any other unnatural union, or parricide, or the eating of forbidden food'.⁷⁹ In accordance with this, there was a common belief that dreams could be a form of 'bestial' or 'animal'-like thought, expressing the passionate and often spiritually ignoble appetites of the sensitive nature.⁸⁰

A number of authors seem to suggest that passionate disturbances were not simply the mediums for the transformation and agitation of dream phantasms, but provoked the cogitative powers of the fantasy. An early example of this can be found in a treatise penned by Pierre Le Loyer (1550-1634), a royal councillor in France, which defended the real manifestations of spirits in the natural world against sceptical denials, and distinguished these outward appearances from hallucinations. Accordingly, he paid particular attention to the different species of images or phantasms as perceived by the senses and generated by the imagination—including those of dreams. He gave an account of three different kinds of 'fantasy' generated by the soul, drawing upon the writings of Augustine. There were imaginations 'of forms and shapes already known', those 'imagined without sight of them', or those 'received to be such from others, by reasons and arguments'. Imaginations of things already known occurred when the imagination summoned forms from the memory and recreated them: this was a form of recall, which sufficed whenever the mind made use of 'known' ideas and objects. Imaginations of things 'not known or seen', Le Loyer explained, amounted to the analogical use of images to describe spiritual ideas. This was a reliable method because it was based on recognition of 'similitude' between physical forms and spiritual ideas. These similitudes could be detected or

⁷⁹ Plato, *The Republic*, X.IX, (trans.) Benjamin Jowett, [<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.10.ix.html>, accessed 13 Sep 2010].

⁸⁰ For further observations on the potential of dreams to express the connections between human and animal nature, see Fudge, "'Onely Proper Unto Man'", pp. 31–43.

brought out by the various practical operations of the imagination: by translation, moving them into new contexts; by composing different species together into new forms; by displaying their contrary properties; and by the process of encoding and interpreting metaphors. These fantasies were 'partly' intellectual, and demonstrated spiritual truths through imaginative conceptions.⁸¹ As imaginative visions they were not perceptions of external realities by the power of the common sense, but selective products of the particular judgment and the fantasy.

Le Loyer attributed dreams to these kinds of fantasy, 'a thinking, or imagination' that was 'for the most part spiritual'. The synergy that existed between the intellect and imagination in these visions he called *intellectual fantasies*, 'that discourse [between reason and imagination] which is proper only vnto man: by which he ballanceth and weigheth the[m] things present, by those which are past, & forseeth by things past, those which are to come after.'⁸² Whereas 'vnreasonable creatures' sometimes appeared to have 'a kinde of discourse, or dreaming in them', this was 'meerely bestial and brutish', which did not 'accommodate nor apply it self, but onely to things present'. Le Loyer saw dreams as partly intellectual because they were not random, but showed evidence of the cogitative powers of imagination, which included the power to represent by similitudes, to make comparisons in the act of relating things by proportions, composing images together, making analogies, and describing contraries. This power allowed men to speak of what was spiritual and universal through particular and material examples.⁸³

Opinions on the role of intellectual powers in dreams appear to have been divided into two kinds. Some commentators appear to have attributed dreams to the particular cogitative powers of imagination, without necessarily involving the reasonable power of the intellect. Henry Lawrence (1600–1664), in *An History of Angells*, stated that extrinsic forces 'may move the fancy, and provoke it to represent and conceive more things and divers', or it was 'stirred up to the making of various apprehensions and representations of things' by passionate movement, so that fancy could be multiplied 'in infinitum' with or without an act of will. The temperatures and motions of the body's humours and spirits are described as causing dreams, but rather than acting as the principal mediums for the phantasms, they are responsible for activating the cogitative functions of the imagination. Perhaps the clearest statement of the difference between the

⁸¹ Pierre Le Loyer, *A treatise of specters or straunge sights, visions and apparitions appearing sensibly vnto men Wherein is delivered, the nature of spirites, angells, and diuels* (London 1605). For the definition of the fantasy see pp. 3–6; for the terms of intellectual fantasy, p. 3.

⁸² Le Loyer, *A Treatise of Specters*, p. 3.

⁸³ Le Loyer, *A Treatise of Specters*. For the definition of the fantasy see pp. 3–6; for the terms of intellectual fantasy, p. 3.

idea that dreams were perceptual errors and that they were created by a power of fantasy is provided by the French Arminian theologian Moïse Amyraldus, who claimed in his treatise on dreams in Scripture that their phantasms could not manifest themselves in the common sense, because the faculty:

doth not act, but when the external senses are awake: nor to speak properly, are they made in the *memory*, because the *Idea's* of things there are only in *Potentiâ*, and when they are reduc'd into *Act*, do then pass into the imagination or phansie. But the images whereof dreams are form'd, are in *Act*, as we say, and therefore must necessarily be in that part which we call the *Phansie*.⁸⁴

Since the common sense was not stimulated to action in sleep, the images of dreams must be called to mind by the imaginative power. Amyraldus was not the only one to describe the dreams as products of the fancy. James Hart said that dreams belonged to the faculty of the 'Fancy', which 'together with the [imaginative] cogitation and memory, often set a worke', and 'composeth together in many vaine visions, and as we commonly for hence call them, Fancies'.⁸⁵ These visions were typically responsible for confusing the powers of human understanding. In *Paradise Lost* (1667), Milton has Adam recite a dialogue in which he describes how fancy is a power which 'forms imaginations, airy shapes,/Which reason joining or disjoining, frames/All what we affirm or what deny', and the nocturnal sleep of reason as a time when 'mimic fancy wakes/To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,/Wild work produces oft'. Joad Raymond reads from this that 'fancy supplies conjectures based these [sensory] data, [and] reason affirms or denies these conjectures', and that in sleep, such conjecture runs out of control.⁸⁶

Over the course of the seventeenth century, there was a tendency to see dreams as occurring in the fantasy rather than the 'common sense', the perceptual organ of the imagination. There were distinctions, however, between those which identified dreams with the fantasy, and those which attributed them to a synergy between reason and fantasy. Significantly, Adam's disquisition on the nature of dreams is framed as a response to Eve's account of a disturbing dream which Satan has infiltrated into her mind, in which she imagines herself taking the forbidden fruit against God's command. Increased concern with cognitive agency in dreams was probably a result of growing concern over the role of 'speculative' fantasy in human sin, a claim which we will explore in more depth in chapter three. At least two major treatises on the imagination in the 1630s would claim that dreams were closely associated with mankind's capacity for 'speculative wickedness'. The prominence of Augustinian doctrine in English

⁸⁴ Amyrault, *Divine Dreams Mention'd in Scripture*, pp. 4–5.

⁸⁵ Hart, *The diet of the diseased*, p. 338.

⁸⁶ Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, p. 328. Quoted lines are from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Bk. V, l. 100–16.

Protestant thought is a probable cause for this preoccupation. Not only did it prompt intensive reflection on the relationship between thought and human culpability for sin, but Augustine had probed the nature of dreams as well. Perhaps one of the most powerful indicators of the moral anxiety surrounding dreams is John Milton's suggestion that dreams played a role in the Fall. Eve's body is distempered by the dream, suggesting that sin has entered the human condition through the medium of a Satanic dream that naturally provokes sinful conjectures and speculations. Amyraut made it clear that while dreams take place in the fantasy, they were still caused by the same kinds of bodily and spiritual disruptions favoured by the perceptual account. There were instances, he said, in which these motions were primarily those of the humours, which drew phantasms of a similar property from the memory into the organs of fancy, which put them into act. There were movements caused primarily by digestive motions, and in the course of mild agitations by the body's natural heat, phantasms related to 'those employments of our life, to which we apply our selves with great intention of mind', fell more readily out of 'this store-house of sensible ideas'. When the imagination acted to represent the objects of its desires, this was because it was aroused by passionate motions that proceeded from the irascible and concupiscible passions. They were thus *accidentally* and *passively* stimulated (in one of the accepted senses of the term).⁸⁷

Other texts acknowledged the dual nature of intellect and imagination, and appear to have identified dreams with the synergy of their cogitative powers. A textbook source on psychology until the end of the seventeenth century was *A Treatise of the Passions* (1640) by Edward Reynolds (1599–1676).⁸⁸ Reynolds praised the imagination's ability to actualise thought as an expansive quality. Though 'the Act of Apprehending be the proper worke of the Vnderstanding,' Reynolds explained, it was imagination in its 'continually interchanges and successions' and 'grounded on the sudden representation of sundry different objects' which created 'Thought in that strict sense, wherein here I take it'.⁸⁹ Not only this, but its special quality was displayed in 'the continually varietie of Dreames and other Fancies, wherein the Facultie is the principall worker'.⁹⁰ Dupleix compared dream images to the phantasms summoned to attend upon waking thoughts and conceptions. This aligned the soul's capacity for dreams with the second and third kinds of 'fantasy' that Le Loyer and Augustine said were created by the soul:

⁸⁷ Amyraut, *Divine Dreams Mention'd in Scripture*, pp. 3–19.

⁸⁸ Edward Reynolds, Presbyterian clergyman, moderate parliamentary supporter from 1640–1660, and Bishop of Norwich after the Restoration. He authored more than thirty books, of which *The Treatise of the Passions* was one of the most popular and recognized. See Ian Atherton, 'Reynolds, Edward (1599–1676)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23408>, accessed 28 Oct 2013].

⁸⁹ Edward Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions* (London, 1640), pp. 22–23.

⁹⁰ Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions*, p. 24.

the soule represents the Images of things then dreamed, as truths nor more not lesse, then when [someone will] describe us a Towne, a Province, or they report us a battaile, wee doe then imagine in ourselves, that which we have not seen.⁹¹

Opinions appear to have varied on the role of reason or the intellectual power in dreams. It was common to claim, as Aquinas had done, that in dreams the intellect acted only imperfectly and indistinctly, and many associated the loss of consciousness in sleep as the sleep of reason as well as the body. Even Tryon, who believed that the soul could return to God in dreams, covered the common opinion that in most of them it was the imagination that was 'ever busie, and (as far as I can perceive) never Sleeps; the Iudgement or Reason for the most part, is impeded from acting... when a man sleeps.'⁹²

Appeals to the possible role of the reasonable intellect in sleep appear to have become more prominent in theological works around the mid to late century, however. The celebrated theologian James Ussher confirmed that men could commit sins in dreams because 'the soule is never idle, but when it thinketh not of good, it thinketh of evill'.⁹³ Though purely accidental dreams could conceivably be termed a kind of activity of the soul, involving the 'passive' stimulation of its powers, these statements appear to least imply that a soul could be in a state other than sinful cognition, implying the presence or activity of the intellect. The Scottish Presbyterian minister James Durham (1622–1658) judged the question of whether the Ten Commandments might be broken 'in our sleep, by Dreams, Imaginations, Actions, &c.' to be a 'Grave Case' for the conscientious. As we have said, attention to this question may have been due to the popularity of Augustine, who, as Durham noted, had affirmed there sometimes appeared to be 'reason and debate in sleep'.⁹⁴ Another reason for the popularity for such arguments may have been the philosophical and religious appeal of nocturnal vitalism as an idea which turned dreams into a powerful argument or proof for the immortal and divine nature of the soul itself. Not only were Protestants likely to favour the opinion of Augustine over the pro-Aristotelian scholastics, but this was also an era in which English philosophers found themselves enjoying a freedom, authorised by the cultural authority of Bacon and a growing diversity in philosophical opinion, to re-evaluate the intellectual inheritance of classical thought and make their own informed judgments about whether their compatibility with Scripture and the most

⁹¹ Dupleix, *The Resoluer*, p. 283.

⁹² Tryon, *A treatise of dreams & visions*, pp. 15-21.

⁹³ James Ussher, *A body of divinitie, or, The summe and substance of Christian religion* (London, 1645), p. 150.

⁹⁴ James Durham, *The law unsealed: or, A practical exposition of the Ten Commandments* (Glasgow, 1676), p. 12.

crucial points of their religion. The physician Thomas Browne is often cited as an example of this mentality. In his writings on dreams, Browne claimed:

in one dreame I can compose a whole Comedy, behold the action in one dreame, apprehend the jests, and laugh my selfe awake at the conceits thereof; were my memory as faithfull as my reason is there fruitfull, I would never study but in my dreames.⁹⁵

Sleepwalking was another phenomenon that demonstrated ‘that there is something in us that is not in the jurisdiction of Morpheus’.⁹⁶ Intimations that the soul was awake in sleep also proved popular with divines. Joseph Hall believed that all men dreamed, even those who forgot their dreams, because the soul must always be thinking: ‘Give me a Sea that moves not, a Sun that shines not, an open Eye that sees not; and I shall yield there may be a Reasonable Soul that works not’.⁹⁷ The minister Philip Goodwin (d. 1667), took the soul’s ‘dreaming discourse’ as evidence that the imagination was the lightning rod of the intellectual power. It was not in the passions of the body that we should look for the origins of man’s dreams, claimed Goodwin. Instead it was ‘[b]y Mans having the *Principle of Reason*, [that] he becomes capable of, and is Disposeable to Dreaming’, and revealed the spiritual soul ‘in its reall Being’.⁹⁸ Natural dreams were ‘such thoughts in sleep as the mind emits or sends out by its intrinsecall power, the proper Product of mans own head and heart’.⁹⁹

Goodwin and the mystical author Tryon both concluded that the consciousness of dreams was ‘one of the clearest natural Arguments of the *Immortality* of our *Souls*’.¹⁰⁰ Philip Goodwin and Thomas Tryon could not come from more different philosophical perspectives, the first a Presbyterian minister who wrote in order to bring the mental world of dreams into the practice of repentance and conscience-keeping, the second a mystical theosophist who embraced divine dreams as a path to personal salvation and revelation. Both approaches, however, were made in the context of profound disruptions to traditional views of nature and metaphysics. An examination of their positions shows that they were themselves diametrically opposed: however, both were writing at a moment when the animating power of spiritual forces in nature was denied by the new mechanical philosophy. The popularity of the argument from nocturnal vitalism thus received support not simply from the theological prominence of Augustine and questions of casuistry associated with dreams,

⁹⁵ Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (London, 1642), p. 150.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150–1.

⁹⁷ Hall, *The Contemplations upon the History of the New Testament*, p. 488.

⁹⁸ Goodwin, *The Mystery of Dreames*, p. 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted from Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, p. 7; Goodwin, *The Mystery of Dreames*, p. 184.

but on-going challenges to the theological view of the soul and of creation, from both religious and philosophical radicals.

Occult Dreams and Divine Union

The belief that dreams could be the result of rationally ordered imagination, practised in the absence of bodily sensation, was usually closely allied with a belief that the soul's ability to grasp truths about God and nature derived from an innatist principle of knowledge. While Aristotelianism suggested that knowledge, including knowledge of God, was achieved by perceiving and grasping the order of nature, 'occult' or 'mystical' thinkers saw profound intellectual achievements as the passive reception of spiritual powers and passions. This gave these metaphysical systems a more essentially religious character than Aristotelianism, making it attractive to some Christian intellectuals. Their psychology was based on the idea that the soul did not learn all of its knowledge from experience of the world, but instead possessed an intrinsic memory of the divine forms, which could be matched to its sensory experiences, or experienced through pure contemplation. Dreams of the soul were hence capable of expressing intrinsic spiritual truths and intuitions. This was in direct contradiction to both the old Aristotelian interpretation of dreams, and the new mechanistic views of nature, which denied the rational nature of dreams in their drive to impose causal order on the operations of the mind and of nature.¹⁰¹ These models of cognition privileged the spiritual powers and were more likely to emphasise various forms of transcendent thought – the ideal that the soul, by contemplating intrinsic truths independent of the body, could achieve union with higher powers of the cosmos. This idea had its provenance in a passage on nocturnal dream divination in Plato's *Timaeus*, but was developed by later Neo-platonic writers like Plotinus, who supposed that imaginative visions could be reliable hermeneutic subjects for the intellectual soul, and Synesius, who rationalized the concept through Stoic and Neoplatonic divinatory theory.¹⁰²

A new Christianized Neoplatonic philosophy had been promoted in Renaissance Europe by the work and fame of Marsilio Ficino, which elevated the status of inspired knowledge but also broadened its meaning by invoking it as the source of intellectual and artistic creativity, blending the achievements of secular figures with the ideals of religious prophecy. It was this blending of the sacred and the secular that made Neo-Platonism controversial. It tended to contradict Christian dogma by suggesting such inspiration could be attracted and

¹⁰¹ Hatfield, 'The Cognitive Faculties', pp. 954–960.

¹⁰² Cocking, *Imagination: A Study*, pp. 10–11, Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, pp. 35–38, 51–73; Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, pp. 25–37.

cultivated through moral and intellectual effort, including forms of meditation, asceticism and sometimes ritual magic. Ficino advocated for the reality and lawfulness of natural magic, defining it against popular sorcery and demonic forms of magic. His work laid the ground for many other scholars to embrace natural magic and occult beliefs. Figures like Mirandola, Trithemius and Agrippa accessed, synthesized and promulgated the lore and theory of ancient cultures which had blended Greek philosophy with mysticism and sorcery, which were expressed together as a complete system of religious and scientific knowledge. This significantly added to and enriched a wider stock of ideas which was used broadly to categorize thinkers within the realms of 'occult' and 'magical' thought. Dreams were frequently a vehicle for inspiration in these traditions.¹⁰³ The availability of these alternative cosmological visions substantially informed the range of alternative dream theories that were publically available in seventeenth-century England. The 1640s and 50s witnessed a massive proliferation of texts translated from ancient sources (the Hermetic corpus), Renaissance magicians, and intellectual off-shoots like Paracelsian medicine and Behmenist theosophy, which fuelled the thought of religious non-conformists, popular prophets and mystics. Cultural belief in dreams followed naturally from the embracing of these texts, in which dreams promised sensuous experience and connection not with the body but the spiritual essences of spirits, angels and the Godhead.

Occultism and mysticism offered a different way of understanding the world through the soul's innate spirituality and its ability to connect and communicate with other spirits, intelligences and powers in the universe. It emphasized the synergy between intellect and the imagination, so that imagination could potentially express the activity and content of the mind as much as the sensual body. In one of the foundational texts of the Hermetic corpus, the *Pymander*, the philosopher-sage Trismegistus discourses on the relationship between sense and understanding. He claimed that 'it is possible (for the time being) that the Understanding may understand without Sense, as they that fantasie Visions in their Dreams', but that at the same time 'both the operations are in the Visions of Dreams', and that through them, 'the Sense is stirred up out of sleep, unto awaking'.¹⁰⁴ This was a reverse of the normal Aristotelian order of cognition, in which sense stimulated imagination and imagination stimulated intellect. Instead the intellectual thoughts of the soul formed imaginative fantasies, and this in turn affected the soul's sense perceptions.

Another important element of mystical and contemplative epistemology was that it elevated the realm of phantasms or mental images, suggesting that they

¹⁰³ Cocking, *Imagination*, pp. 10–11, 49–68; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, pp. 35–38, 51–73.

¹⁰⁴ 'Trismegistus', *The Divine Pymander*, p.196.

were not merely echoes or impressions of things in the physical world, but in fact took on a higher order of reality than the physical. This was their medium, the vital spirits, were attributed greater powers. Rather than simply existing as a medium or link between soul and body, they became another kind of 'body' in themselves, which outlasted the physical body and was even capable of separating itself from it temporarily during sleep. This 'celestial vehicle', 'aerial body' or 'astral soul' was changeable and malleable in the same manner as the bodies that angels and spirits composed for themselves out of the elements of the air. It was created when the soul first departed from God and descended to the earth, attracting celestial matter on its descent through the heavens before entering its physical body. This surrogate body was also a higher order of sensible organ, capable of perceiving, interacting with and feeling the presence of spiritual forces and essences which also exerted themselves in super-subtle bodies. In a world of 'astral' or 'aerial' interactions, imaginary experiences were thought to be another order of existence with as much reality as the physical world. Dreams were not always seen as perceptual anomalies or physical echoes, but could instead represent substantive and real experiences of the soul in this realm above the visible world.

That such ideas had wide currency is demonstrated by their central presence in the mystical theosophy of the German theosophist Jacob Boehme which was influenced by but also distinct from the various forms of Neoplatonism. Boehme read biblical narrative and mythology as an allegory out of which one could learn about the creation of the world and of man through the transformation of spirit into celestial and then terrestrial matter, and its differentiation into many striving energies and principles, which defined the laws of nature, and also the psychological forces which struggled for dominance in man.¹⁰⁵ The close equivalence between spiritual and physical principles of development was reflected in Boehme's elevation of desire into a positive generative force, and his adoption of much alchemical language and imagery. Boehme identified the beginning of man's fall not with the eating of the fruit from the tree of knowledge, but Adam's first sleep. The need for sleep signified that his soul was no longer self-sustaining and divine, and had become subject to the natural law of fatigue. The creation of Eve from Adam signified the corruption and division of Adam's soul, so that the masculine and feminine principles became distinct. Prior to the eating of the fruit Adam and Eve's bodies had been celestial, but afterwards they generated material bodies and organs for procreation, which caused them shame. Man's dreams thereafter arose from the inner movements of man's vital spirits (or *tincture*—an allusion

¹⁰⁵ Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 1–114; Boehme, *Jacob Boehme*, pp. 25–31, 32–38.

to alchemical substance conditioned by qualities of other objects).¹⁰⁶ Boehme's writings gained a significant readership in England, and included established philosophical thinkers like the Cambridge Platonists, as well as inspiring marginal religious groups and radicals.¹⁰⁷ John Pordage and later the Philadelphian Circle were inspired by his writings, and its members expressed their own spiritual experiences through accounts of dreams and interpretation of visions.¹⁰⁸ Thomas Tryon published *A Treatise of Visions & Dreams* in 1689, but the origins of its genesis lay in the author's exposure to the mystical works of Jacob Boehme in 1657, providing him with the fundamentals a theosophic theory of dreaming.

The form of the imaginative substance, the 'astral soul' or 'imaginal body' as we might term it, reflected either the dominance of the spiritual intellect or the bodily passions in the mind of the dreamer. Instead of phantasms being agitated, attracted or disturbed by the humours, the imagination became a power which modelled the soul's spiritual character and 'generated' its imaginary image. Boehme termed this the soul's magic image' or 'signature'. In fact, it was more accurate to say that the imagination generated an image or signature which. The images that were generated were once again determined by the law of an intrinsic meaning or sympathy with the spiritual or carnal properties that held sway on the dreaming mind. In Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*, if the mind achieved union with God then it was said to diffuse celestial light through the soul into the imagination. In these experiences the imagination was said to 'transcend' or be transfigured. In this process, even the physical body could be changed, so that it took on luminous qualities or might cross great distances by trans-location, both occurrences with biblical precedents. It was in this mid-essence of the astral soul that the imagination substantiated and pictured things within itself, and it was also 'that which shews us future things by dreams: whence the Fancy is sometimes named the Phantasticall Intellect'.¹⁰⁹ Agrippa also discussed signature forms in relation to the soul's existence after death, when it adopted an ethereal body (a ghost) in the same manner as angels and demons. If a soul was wicked then the aerial bodies which they adopted reflected the monstrous forms and phantasms which they carried within themselves, so that these dead souls became those:

which therefore *Orpheus* calls the people of dreams, saying, the gates of Pluto cannot be unlocked; within is a people of dreams; such wicked souls therefore

¹⁰⁶ Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 114; Jacob Boehme, *The Way to Christ discovered* (London, 1647), pp. 17–20.

¹⁰⁷ Jacob Boehme, *Jacob Boehme* (ed.) Robin Waterfield (Berkeley, Calif., 2001), pp. 39–50, Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, p. 124–138.

¹⁰⁸ Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts*, pp. 85–87, 146–149, 207–210; Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, pp. 125–161.

¹⁰⁹ Agrippa, *Occult Philosophy*, pp. 492–496.

enjoying no good places, when wandring in an Aeriall body, they represent any form to our sight, are called hags, and goblins, inoffensive to them that are good, but hurtfull to the wicked, appearing one while in thinner bodies another time in grosser, in the shape of divers animals, and monsters, whose conditions they had in their life time, as sings the Poet.¹¹⁰

Tryon claimed that this astral body was perceived in dreams, allowing one to know the character of one's own eternal form after death. He stated that:

the universal spirit or power of the Lord is always forming, shaping, and bringing to manifestation the hidden mysteries of Eternity and cloathing the various Spirits with Elemental Bodies, the like does the Soul and Spirit in M[a]n... the Soul and Spirit ceaseth not from its operation, but goeth on forming, figureing, and Representing of things as real, and substantial¹¹¹

The nature of these imaginary forms was determined by character and quality of the soul's spiritual will, which Tryon defined according to Boehme's system as proceeding from one of three 'principles'—a dark principle dominated by divine wrath, a light principle dominated by the holy spirit, and a carnal principle dominated by sensual concerns of the world.¹¹² Boehme emphasized that the intrinsic good or divinity of the soul was determined by the degree to which it was in harmony with the divine will. If it was in harmony with the body, it would 'Dreameth according to Phansie' and see itself as 'a Beastiall manner of figure', an 'earthly Creature'.¹¹³ A sanctified and regenerated soul would reflect the divine order of nature, so that he termed it's the soul's 'figure', 'Constellation' or 'Magic Image'—the astral spirit moving in harmony with the divine motions of the heavens.¹¹⁴ As we will see in the next chapter, Boehme associated the assumption of one's true spiritual form with a prophetic transformation of consciousness.

Ideas about mystical contemplation, astral mediums and other occult powers of the soul provided a vehicle for isolated thinkers to expound their own idiosyncratic interpretations of nature and metaphysics, was a breeding ground for creeds and beliefs thoroughly unacceptable to the majority of the English theological community. Nevertheless, when stripped back to some of the central claims and insights of ancient thinkers like Plato and Plotinus, some Christian theologians were able to adapt their ideas where they were deemed

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 479—480.

¹¹¹ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 28—32.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 51—53.

¹¹³ Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, p. 416, 502.

¹¹⁴ Jacob Boehme, *A Description of the Three Principles of the Divine Essence* (London, 1648), pp. 104—105. Boehme also affirmed the occult mechanisms of abstraction and soul transports in dreams in *Forty Questions Concerning the Soul* (London, 1665), pp. 313—324.

useful. Element which remained relevant and attractive included the belief in innate spiritual instincts, which provided a potentially strong ground for Christian moral doctrine, the importance it accorded to divine revelation and love as the highest form or expression of knowledge, and the idea that God acted on nature through the intermediary of vitalising forces and spirits. The idea that the soul's vital force and motion was an attribute of its divine nature, and a reflection of the divine image, was a common theme, shared between radical and conformist thinkers alike. Though opinions on more dramatic abilities like astral transports and ecstatic union may have differed, it was possible for both to embrace ideas about dreams as imaginative reflections of the intellectual power.

Le Loyer, Joseph Hall, Phillip Goodwin and Thomas Tryon took the soul's 'dreaming discourse' as evidence that the imagination was the lightning rod of the intellectual power. Dreams were 'the egressions or Sallyings out of the Soul in thoughts of the mind' said Goodwin, their images an 'Apparition' to and 'a Dilation' of the thoughts, signifying not only 'Intension' but 'Extension'. Here he made agreement with Reynold's earlier assessment of the imagination's flexible and creative powers. Imaginations were 'not only set on, but drawn out, doubling them over and over' and producing a 'multiplication of the Thoughts'. These manifestations enabled the soul to 'turn *backward* and look over its own motions and imaginations, so as to think what it does think'.¹¹⁵ The liminal state of the dreaming mind in the Platonic psychology did not signify progressive stages on the road back toward consciousness, but consisted instead in a unique ability to practise self-reflection and meditation without the distractions and impositions of carnal sense.

Hall, Goodwin and Tryon also agreed in arguing that the soul was never dreamless but usually forgetful of its dreams. Its amnesia stemmed from the subtle nature of dreams themselves, or the negative influence of the body on the faculty of memory. '[S]ome *men* may not *animadvert*, discern or retaine in their *memories* such movings of their *mindes*, yet that does not evidence that they are not' said Goodwin. Dreaming's '*celerity* and sudden passage' meant it was not always perceived, or else that the mind was too '*slow*, dull and heavy' in its reflective action.¹¹⁶ Tryon placed the blame not on the deficiencies of the intellect, but the physical corruptions of the body:

The *Memory* sometimes is more, and sometimes less clouded and obstructed, according to the nature of the fumes sent up [in the body]; and hence it comes to pass, that we have sometimes a clearer, sometimes a more confused, and

¹¹⁵ Goodwin, *The Mystery of Dreames*, p. 18.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8, 7 .

sometimes scarce any Apprehension or Remembrance of our *Dreams* when we awake.¹¹⁷

However, the presence of innate spiritual knowledge also allowed the soul to rise above a dependency upon mere memory. While Aristotelian psychologists averred that the Intellect, and by it the Fancy, was capable only of recalling and variously recomposing the similitudes stored within its memory, Goodwin denied that the rational soul was so limited. 'How can the *intellect* or understanding transcend, if it can proceed no further than as set forward by *sense*?' he asked. 'Yet that which yet further raises mans *Soul* in its *Rational* part is, that even in *Dreames* it can imagin[e] those matters that upon the *sensitive* part never made impressions.'¹¹⁸ Goodwin believed that dreams were demonstrations of soul's sacred nature, which set it above the physical necessities of sense, and their failure in sleep.

Innatist and contemplative accounts of dreaming were significant because they argued for the vital force of the soul during sleep. The phenomenology evoked an internal world of self-directed motion that proceeded outward from the intellect in the absence of disruptive influences from the body. Filled with the apparitions of its own thoughts, which in turn became the objects of further thoughts, the soul's cognitive circuit was always complete. In contrast to the disturbed or dreamless sleep of the Aristotelian soul, Goodwin believed the intellect was either distracted by the intemperance of the body or engaged in introspective meditation, emphasized the divinity of the soul, and by extension the sovereignty of the spiritual power and the will as a force which was above nature, and ultimately responsible for the moral character of the mind and the imagination. This vitalism and its effects on the imagination were also important because they re-asserted the place of spiritual powers in animating the natural body, and in explaining physiological and cognitive features of human beings. The importance of this aspect will become even clearer when we turn to look at the claims made about dreams by the mechanical philosophy, and how Platonism was employed to answer these claims in the later part of the century.

Dreams and the Mechanical Philosophy

The new visibility of spiritual interpretations of dreams owed something to the underground culture of illuminist and antinomian beliefs which existed prior to 1640, and which subsequently found public expression. The more limited uses it provided for the Protestant orthodox may have stemmed from careful

¹¹⁷ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions*, pp. 20–21.

¹¹⁸ Goodwin, *The Mystery of Dreames*, p. 19.

readings of Augustine's works. In chapter three I will suggest that Philip Goodwin's attraction to cognitive vitalism is based at least in part on a desire to reclaim supernatural dreams from enthusiasts and nonconformists. We have also seen that Platonic ideas were deployed by some, like Le Loyer, who feared the atheistic implications of sceptical attacks on supernatural visions.¹¹⁹ After 1640 however, the importance of nocturnal vitalism to contemporary debates about metaphysics and the nature of the soul would be increasingly defined by their use in refuting the claims of the mechanical philosophers. Thinkers like Descartes and Thomas Hobbes challenged traditional ideas about the relationship between order in the human mind and the divine order in the universe. At the centre of the debate was the role of the vitalising power of the spirit in the cosmos, and the consequent views about the spiritual significance of different modes of human thought, in the context of a mind-body organism that had been radically reconceptualised.

The mechanists took their inspiration from the classical philosophies of Epicureanism, Atomism, and Neo-Stoicism, which explained all natural activities and operations not according to intrinsic spiritual virtues which tied material essences together, but as the motion and collision of physical bodies according to mechanical laws. This expunged hylomorphism from explanatory physics, denying the existence of occultic sympathy, and demanding the reconceptualisation of human minds and the means by which they perceived and thought.¹²⁰ These new epistemological techniques elevated natural laws as singularly dependent mechanisms which functioned without reference to an ontological purpose or end. Sensory powers were no longer explained by teleological virtue, but instead by the arrangement and action of bodily organs in the manner of a biological mechanism.¹²¹ The mechanical philosophy gave birth to several distinct positions on mind. Of those, we examine here Cartesian dualism, which embraced a mechanistic biology as the basis of passion, memory and imagination but denied that the 'mind' proper could be described purely by mechanism, and the material reductionism of Thomas Hobbes, which denied that mind possessed a nature distinct from physical mechanism.

The Cartesian model of nature sharpened the distinction between the physical and spiritual realms to such a degree that it defined a new kind of soul-body dualism, in which soul was not an integral constituent of the body, but merely casually connected. The functions of the body proceeded not from infused spiritual powers of different 'natures', but according to mechanical, hydraulic

¹¹⁹ Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason and Religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford, 2010), p. 233; Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp. 204-235; Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*, p.78.

¹²⁰ Copenhaver, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', pp. 475—480.

¹²¹ James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 75—81, 97—107.

principles.¹²² Descartes collapsed the old distinctions between intellectual and sensitive thought by claiming that all conscious sensations were spiritual. Imagination and the sensations of the passions were all a kind of 'thinking', which arose whenever physical and material motions were transferred from the body to the soul. The soul perceived through a singular bodily organ, the pineal gland.¹²³ Susan James notes that while the Cartesian divide tended to reduce all sensations into the realm of spiritual consciousness, echoes of the old Aristotelian hierarchy are visible in Descartes' tendency to attribute certain powers to the soul and others to the interplay between soul and body. For Descartes, imagination was a product of the union between body and soul, and could not exist without it.¹²⁴ Descartes maintained the distinction between thoughts which were 'passionate', those imaginations which were caused primarily or secondarily by sensation, and those which were volitional, willed by the judgment of the soul. 'Passionate' or perceptive thoughts, which only arose by the action of external agents on the soul. External objects were perceived when physical motions caused motions on the surface of the brain, which excited motion in the animal spirits and travelled along the taught surfaces of the nerves to the pineal gland, whose movements caused a sensory perception in the soul rather than the body.¹²⁵ Memories and dreams were both examples of 'secondary passions' caused by the transfer of motions from the phantasy to the pineal gland.¹²⁶ Although there were no perceptive species in the body, movements in the organ of the common sense were transferred by the spirits and stamped on part of the brain which was the phantasy, a plastic organ whose shape changed to receive the impressions of these movements. Descartes contrasted nocturnal dreams against daydreams, seeing the ascent to wakefulness and consciousness as a process of asserting control of the imagination, transiting between dreams which arose involuntarily by the reception of motions from the phantasy through the pineal gland, and those excited from the same organs by the conscious direction of the soul.¹²⁷

Though his philosophical project is founded on the principle of establishing scientific certainty through mechanical and empirical sense, Descartes' belief that the mind itself was wholly spiritual may have left space for inspired and revelatory dreams in his psychology. Copenhaver points out that his theory of particulate matter included vapours and spirits, which bore great resemblance to many of the pneumatic and vitalistic substances which suffused many Neoplatonic and magical accounts of the cosmos.¹²⁸ He also described how the

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 87—90.

¹²³ James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 89—92.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.91—107.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 90-95; 'Letter to Balzac, 15 Apr. 1631' quoted from p. 93.

¹²⁸ Copenhaver, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', p. 476.

soul could be distracted 'by an ecstasy or deep contemplation', in which the soul was taken up with sensations that left it insensible to the body, but were nonetheless triggered by sensory movements.¹²⁹ Descartes himself described the origins of his philosophy in an 'enthusiastic' dream, in an autobiographical counterpoint to his methodological deconstruction of his dreams in the *Meditations*. This method culminated in the assertion of the thinking soul as the absolute ground of ontological being and epistemological deduction. The principle of *cogito ergo sum* hearkened back to the Augustinian idea that the soul knew itself through its own self-reflective actions.¹³⁰ This analytical method based on the belief that reflexive thought was the basis of attaining to certain knowledge may have owed substantially to Descartes' philosophical training at the hands of the Jesuits, and the practise of making elections through the spiritual exercises developed by Ignatius Loyola. It has been suggested that a probable relationship therefore exists between the 'clear and distinct perception' upon which Descartes' based his rationalist system, and the hermeneutic processes by which the mind was supposed to grasp meaning in an illuminated dream vision.¹³¹

Thomas Hobbes took his theory of nature and mind a radical further step and abolished the concept of the incorporeal altogether. God, the soul, and all the functions of the mind could be described as material bodies. Life was explicable purely by material causes. Hobbes excluded the spiritual and mental principles that drove the material body in all contemporary philosophy, calling them all 'metaphorical motion; which is but an absurd speech'.¹³² All of the perceptions of the body and mind were singularly caused by the dynamics of physical motion, so that all perceptive imagination was caused by 'apparition[s] unto us of that motion, agitation, or alternation, which the object worketh in the brain or spirits, or some internal substance of the head'.¹³³ Hobbes' corporeal psychology eliminated many of the distinctions between passionate and intellectual thought which existed in Greek philosophy. The body's own thoughts or rational discourse were caused by the resistance of the body's 'own internal motion' to those motions received by the senses, and from this resistance arose phantasms or ideas. These motions proceeded from the head to the heart, where they altered the vital motions of the body and caused

¹²⁹ James, *Passion and Action*, p. 92.

¹³⁰ Menn, 'The Intellectual Setting', p. 69.

¹³¹ Anthony Grafton, 'Traditions of Conversion: Descartes and his Demon' in *Doreen B. Townsend Centre Occasional Papers*, No. 22 (eds) Christina Gillis and Jill Stauffer (2000), pp. 1–32, esp. 15–20.

¹³² Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed.) R. Tuck (Cambridge, 1991), p. 38, quoted in James, *Passion and Action*, p. 127.

¹³³ Thomas Hobbes, *De corpore politico* (London, 1652), p. 8, quoted in James, *Passion and Action*, p. 128.

sensations of pleasure, pain and emotion.¹³⁴ In Hobbes' estimation, memory, imagination and dreams were 'but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names', and could arise either by voluntary or involuntary motions. Dreams were like all imaginations, 'nothing but decaying sense; and is found in men and many other living creatures, as well sleeping as waking.'¹³⁵

Hobbes' account of dreams took its direction from the Aristotelian tradition despite his rejection the mediating forms of species and all spiritual faculties of perception. Dreams arose because man's internal motions could not be instantly extinguished, like water that continued to ripple although the wind had ceased, a metaphor not dissimilar to that employed by Nashe in *Terrors of the Night*. These internal motions continued to carry the images of the things seen, 'though more obscure than when we see it'.¹³⁶ As in Aristotle, waking perception obscured decayed motions 'as the light of the sun obscureth the light of the stars'.¹³⁷ Dream images existed 'either totally, or by parcells, in the sense', and were stirred up by 'the agitation of the inward parts of mans body'.¹³⁸ These motions created the illusion of waking life to sensory organs. Bodily passions were responsible for the apparitions which appeared in dreams, as different qualities of distemper raised up motions which collided between the organs and the brain. Images did not stir up corresponding emotions, but rather according to the motions in the bodily parts, the passions of fear, anger or kindness were excited, and raised up an appropriate imagination. 'In sum,' said Hobbes, 'our dreams are the reverse of our waking imaginations; the motion when we are awake beginning at one end, and when we dream, at another'.¹³⁹

Mechanical and anti-Aristotelian models of the body did not trigger dramatic departures from old ways of seeing the nocturnal activities of imagination. Instead there is visible continuity in the medical and philosophical discourse on dreams. They were still interpreted largely as rogue impressions, motions and heated agitations in the bodily imagination, isolated from the process of vision when the senses slept. A late commentary on Milton's *Paradise Lost* shows how little the linguistic repertoire for describing dreams had shifted. It defined them as 'those Apparitions that busie Fancy forges (when secluded from the external execution of Sense) out of the humid Mists that in sleep surround the Brain'. The animal spirits were 'in continual activity... moving incessantly about the Centre of the Brain', 'coining over again our most swift and fugitive thoughts',

¹³⁴ James, *Passion and Action*, pp. 125—129; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London 1651), pp. 4—12.

¹³⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4—5.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4—12, quoted from p. 6.

‘representing anew our Fears, Hopes; Desires and Disturbances’ and sometimes ‘affording the judicious Physicians Indications of the Bodies Distempers, and conjectures of their Cure’.¹⁴⁰ Malebranche’s Cartesian psychology continued to describe dreams as aggravations of animal spirits in the material body. In sleep, men dreamed of objects seen in the day time, ‘which have form’d very great Traces in the Brain: because the Soul is ever representing those things, whereof she has the greatest and deepest Traces’ and experienced ‘the *Sensation* of what they should only have the *Imagination*’.¹⁴¹ It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that conceptions began to shift decisively away from humouralism and its late modifications toward new models of the circulatory and nervous system, which moved attention from digestion as the primary source of aggravation in distempered dreams.¹⁴²

Dreams and Animal Cognition in the New English Platonism

To its critics, the mechanical paradigm was ‘atheistic’ in the sense that it contradicted the spirit of Christian beliefs about God’s role in actively animating the natural world and guiding it by the power of providence. In principle, many theologians who understood or agreed with the critiques of Aristotelian philosophy were ready to adopt certain materialist and mechanical ideas. However, the spectre of a world radically disengaged from God was threatening because it seemed to invite visions of the divine as a disengaged and disinterested presence in the universe, notions which were found in Epicureanism and Lucretian atomism. It dismantled the assumption that the attributes of creation, and indeed of human nature, were capable of demonstrating the attributes of God. To a way of thinking that saw the power of God reflected in nature, its reduction to mere mechanical principles jointly denigrated creation, human nature, and God himself. Against these disengaged visions of divinity, defenders of orthodox theology typically advanced the position that natural philosophy should demonstrate God’s existence and aspects of his identity. Where rational explanation and demonstration failed, the inscrutable—one might say ‘occult’—power of God prevailed.¹⁴³

It was in direct response to the perceived threat of a de-spiritualized universe that the group of Cambridge scholars formulated a new brand of Christian Platonism that modified the concepts not just of the immortal and ever-waking soul, but also the vitalism of the mid-spirits, in line with what they saw as the

¹⁴⁰ Patrick Hume, *Annotations on Milton’s Paradise Lost* (London, 1695), p. 163.

¹⁴¹ Nicolas Malebranche, *Treatise Concerning the Search After Truth* (London, 1700), pp. 45–46, 61–64, 67.

¹⁴² Rivière, ‘Demons of Desire or Symptoms of Disease?’, pp. 58–71.

¹⁴³ Dahm, ‘Science and Apologetics in the Early Boyle Lectures’, pp. 177–185.

central articles of Protestant faith.¹⁴⁴ They argued for the cogency and coherence of concepts which could not be explained as purely mechanical, such as the vitalist principles of life, the existence of incorporeal spirits attested in Scripture, and unseen forces that appeared to govern nature, such as magnetism, and later gravity.¹⁴⁵ A new Platonist metaphysics preserved the role of spiritual vitalism in nature, while seeking to satisfy the demand for more sophisticated and complex explanations of physical laws in nature. This inspired the use of dreams, in the later works of Ralph Cudworth, as cases that proved certain cognitive functions were sustained by spiritual and not merely mechanical principles.

More and Cudworth posited a 'universal spirit' or 'plastic nature', suspended mid-way between the corporeal and incorporeal in essence. Their descriptions of the 'plastic' nature, placed a new focus on the ability of divine and spiritual power to impress form and motion upon matter.¹⁴⁶ In his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), Cudworth extolled the virtues of the 'plastick nature', for providing a solution to the problem of how corporeal and incorporeal essences could be inter-participatory, and inform each other at every level of creation. The plastic nature was incorporeal and hence receptive to intelligible essence, but it was passive and devoid of intelligence itself, and hence close in nature to matter. He criticised the Cartesian position that there was no action distinct from local motion 'besides Expresly Conscious Cogitation' (i.e incorporeal substance).¹⁴⁷

*For the Plastick Reason or Form Acts or Works in Matter, and that which acts Naturally is not Intellection nor Vision, but a certain Power of moving Matter, which doth not Know, but only Do, and makes as it were a Stamp or Figure in Water.*¹⁴⁸

To illustrate the severe limitations of Cartesian dualism in describing mental phenomena, he relied upon comparisons between the minds of men and animals. If beasts lacked spiritual souls, and hence intellectual cogitation, and nature was entirely mechanistic, then it was impossible to explain why the

¹⁴⁴ For introductory background on the context of the Cambridge Platonists, see Hutton, 'The Cambridge Platonists' in *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, pp. 308–318; Mark Goldie, 'Cambridge Platonists (act. 1630s–1680s)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/94274>, accessed 28 Jan 2012], as well the related entries on John Smith and Henry More. See also Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought*, pp. 90–119.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel Garber, 'Soul and Mind: Life and Thought in the Seventeenth Century' in Daniel Garber, Michael Ayers (eds), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, Vol. II (Cambridge, 2003), p. 776.

¹⁴⁶ Copenhaver, 'The Occult Tradition and its Critics', pp. 484–503, Garber, 'Soul and Mind: Life and Thought in the Seventeenth Century', pp. 776–778.

¹⁴⁷ Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678), p. 159.

¹⁴⁸ Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, pp. 156–157.

minds of animals were inclined toward natural ends, since the Cartesian creature possessed no self-actuating principle of their own. For this reason, the sensitive minds of animals had to possess a 'lower' kind of consciousness, capable of driving forward vital action in nature, while possessing none of its own intrinsic principles of intellectual action.¹⁴⁹

Nature is such a Thing, as though it act *Artificially* and for the *sake of Ends*, yet it doth but *Ape* and *Mimick* the *Divine Art* and *Wisdom*, it self not Understanding those Ends which it Acts for, nor the Reason of what it doth in order to them; for which Cause also it is not Capable of *Consultation* or *Deliberation*, nor can it Act *Selectively* or with *Discretion*.¹⁵⁰

To demonstrate that the plastic nature was both necessary to animals, and also present in man, Cudworth asked how those who thought the whole essence of the soul to consist in pure cogitation explained how 'the Souls of Men in all profound Sleeps, Lethargies and Apoplexies, as also of Embryo's in the Womb, from their very first arrival thither, are never so much as one moment without Expresly Conscious Cogitations'. Sleep itself was evidence that the Cartesian cogito could not be the sole foundation of life, since they would '*ipso facto*, cease to have any Being.' Plastic nature explained this incongruity, by acting as a principle which bore the energy of higher cogitation to matter, even in organisms which did not possess their own intellectual principle: 'if the Souls of Men and Animals be at any time without *Consciousness* and *Self-perception*, then it must needs be granted, that Clear and Express *Consciousness* is not Essential to *Life*.'¹⁵¹

This energy subsisted within independent entities, as habits or instincts which drove animals entirely, and which was part of the human nature as well. The imaginative and plastic powers of the soul existed through a variety of different principles. The first was the power by which the soul impressed itself on the corporeal body in order to create habitual actions in nature. By the vital sympathy between the soul and the body, the 'Phantastick Thoughts' did 'impress Variety of Motions and Figurations upon the Animal Spirits of our Brain', from which afterward they were 'as from a Glass... reflected to him'. By impressing 'cogitative energy' onto nature, the life, being and knowledge of the soul was sustained by the presence of his 'animal consciousness' even when he slept. It explained how 'Nocturnal Volutations in Sleep' such as respiration were 'performed with very little or no Consciousness', and the properties of memory:

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 178–179 . pp. 178–181.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 160–161.

It is certain, that our Humane Souls themselves are not always *Conscious*, of whatever they have in them; for even the Sleeping Geometrician, hath at that time, all his Geometrical Theorems and Knowledges some way in him; as also the Sleeping Musician, all his Musical Skill and Songs: and therefore why may it not be possible for the Soul to have likewise some *Actual Energie* in it, which it is not Expresly Conscious of?¹⁵²

The presence of this cogitative energy of the plastic nature explained the presence of 'cogitative' phenomena in sleep. 'If you jogg a sleeping Musician, and sing but the first Words of a Song to him... he will presently take it from you, and that perhaps before he is thoroughly awake,' Cudworth observed.¹⁵³ This attention to the distinctions between passionate motions and cognitions, and their ability to overlap with conscious ones, echoed Descartes' own attention to liminal phases between sleep and waking in his works.

Similar anti-Cartesian arguments on the distinctions between humane and animal cognition are also found in a work of anatomy by Ysbrand van Diemerbroeck (1609-1674), one time professor of medicine and anatomy at Utrecht, as he pondered the causes of nocturnal lactation in cows. Brutes, he said 'are not mov'd, nor do they act like Engines mov'd by Clock-work, as most of our modern Philosophers endeavour'd to inculcat' because they were clearly aware, experienced pain and responded intelligently to their environment and fellow creatures.¹⁵⁴ 'Thus a Dog knows his Master and the Servants from Strangers, fawns upon his Friends, barks at his Enemies, and after his manner understands and executes the Commands of his Master', said Diemerbroeck; 'He dreams in his Sleep, and barks in his Dream.'¹⁵⁵ Something unknown, but nevertheless '*something Analogous to the Rational Soul*' was necessary to operate 'a kind of Understanding, Memory, Knowledg, with something of obscure Judgment after their manner'.¹⁵⁶ What this analogous entity was, 'no man could hitherto sufficiently unfold', but that it was 'the more excellent Spirit instructed by Nature, produc'd out of corporeal Matter, far exceeding the Condition of other Spirits' which '*Aristotle* affirm'd to participate of the Nature of the Element of the Stars' and was called the 'Vivific Spirit'.¹⁵⁷ Diemerbroeck concluded that their life 'proceeded not either from the Engine it self, or from the Concoction, Blowing or Motion of the Air, Fire or other Matter, but from the Hand of some Artificer', which directed the 'Operations of the Fancy in Brutes, as in Mankind' and from which automatically proceeded 'that more copious

¹⁵² Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, pp. 160–161.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁵⁴ Ysbrand van Diemerbroeck, *The Anatomy of Human Bodies* ((trans.)) William Salmon (London, 1694), p. 295.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 299. Here he looked back to the Aristotelian identification of the middle essence with the physical properties of the vital spirits, rather than an incorporeal vehicle or 'substance' that transcended the physical.

Influx of the Animal Spirits in Brutes, and consequently their continu'd Generation of Milk'.¹⁵⁸

As Le Loyer had done earlier in the century, Cudworth and Diemerbroeck used dreams to demonstrate the continuities between human and animal cognition, but also the essential difference between them that was conferred by man's intellectual powers. Cudworth's use of dreams to illustrate 'animal consciousness' did not mean that he had rejected the Platonic soul's ability to form 'intellectual' or cogitative fantasies of the conjectural kind which we explored earlier. Besides the imagination's ability to inscribe the energy of thoughts onto the corporeal nature, it also possessed

another more Interiour kind of Plastick Power in the soul... whereby it is formative of its own Cogitations, which it self is not always Conscious of; as when in Sleep or Dreams, it frames Interlocutory Discourses between itself and other Persons, in a long Series, with Coherent Sence and Apt Connexions, in which oftentimes it seems to be surprized with unexpected Answers and Reparties; though it self were all the while the Poet and Inventor of the whole Fable.¹⁵⁹

There was something special about human imagination which conferred an ability to articulate patterns and form a discourse that was in some sense 'pre-rational', which dignified his place both within nature and above it. This was part of a carefully crafted argument by which Christian Platonism responded to the apparent deprivations of a materialist philosophy of mind, which reduced spirit to the role of a puppeteer that held the strings of a mechanical construct. Such a view threatened traditional methods of explicating man's identity as a creature at once divine and animal, and the ideal that his that spiritual and rational powers were an inward deposit of the divine which enabled him to intuitively judge and discern sanctity in the world.

The debate on dreams and what evidence they provided about consciousness and its relationship with incorporeal substances came round again toward the end of the seventeenth century with Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).¹⁶⁰ Locke did not eschew the spiritual soul as Hobbes had done, but he did apply vigorous scepticism to the various claims that Platonist thinkers made for the incorporeal mind using dreams as their proof. He identified with the originally Aristotelian position on sleep, that the senses provided the material for active consciousness, that in sleep man was normally unconscious and dreamless, and that in dreams man's consciousness was only irrational and incoherent. His own debunking of innatist accounts of dreaming was inspired by a thought originally from the *Theaetetus*, in which Plato

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁵⁹ Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, pp. 160–161.

¹⁶⁰ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (London, 1690).

suggested that a man awake and a man sleeping must necessarily be different men.¹⁶¹ He dealt first with dreamless sleeping. If the soul was always thinking, but the man had no consciousness of it when he awoke, then they must necessarily be two different instances of consciousness. Locke drove this example to its logical extremes. Since incorporeal substance did not exist in any particular place, but only according to where it acted, a soul that thought separately from its body might do its thinking anywhere, even inside another sleeping man: again, producing two different instances of consciousness.¹⁶² The common claim that man simply failed to retain his memory of his sleeping cogitations was dismissed. It was first of all impossible to prove other than by mere assertion. If it was claimed that memory was merely bodily, and that the soul thinking separately did not create bodily memories, then it followed that the soul itself did not possess any intrinsic memory. This entity, Locke said, would have no purpose in its thinking, and '[t]hey who make the Soul a thinking Thing, at this rate will not make it a much more noble Being, than those do, whom they condemn for allowing it to be nothing but the subtlest parts of Matter'.¹⁶³ Such paradoxes were further based only in some assumption, which arose not from experience but trying to mould beliefs to their definitions. Locke wrote 'I would be glad also to learn from these men... *how they come to know that they themselves think, when they themselves do not perceive it.*'¹⁶⁴

Platonists usually claimed that dreams were evidence that the soul did think at night. Locke, however, did not see any testimony in dreams to the presence of a thinking intellect: 'how little conformable to the Perfection and Order of a rational Being, those who are acquainted with Dreams, need not be told.'¹⁶⁵ The Platonist would be forced to admit that the soul 'separate from the Body, acts less rationally then, when conjointly with it', and that 'the Soul owes the perfection of rational thinking to the Body'.¹⁶⁶ Locke further observed that '[t]he *Dreams* of sleeping Men, are, as I take it, all *made up of the waking Man's Ideas*, though, for the most part, oddly put together'.¹⁶⁷ If the Platonic soul contemplated original and intrinsic ideas within himself, he asked, why did man never 'recal over any of its pure, native Thoughts, and those *Ideas* it had before it borrowed any thing from the Body'? He concluded that he found 'no Reason therefore to believe, that the *Soul thinks before the Senses have furnished it with Ideas* to think on'.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 39-44.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Locke's dissection of consciousness relied upon the principle that the only source of knowledge was the senses and the mind's ability to reflect upon, manipulate and multiply those impressions, and affirmed the Cartesian idea that this reflective awareness gave us our intuitive perception of our existence, which was the foundation of truth. Despite affirming the existence of a realm of spirit, however, in which the reflective power of the mind was grounded, Locke claimed that questions about the relationship between material and immaterial substance were beyond human knowledge, and that the powers and natures of spirits could not be interrogated. Nevertheless, the modes and contents of human consciousness were open to philosophical enquiry. If some philosophers claimed that a sleeping soul was a contradiction, Locke believed the real contradiction lay in the claim that 'a Man think, and not be conscious of it' since 'Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a man's own mind'.¹⁶⁹ To resolve the contradiction with past definitions of the soul's incorporeal substance he asked 'whether it be not probable, that *thinking is the Action, and not the Essence of the Soul?*'¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

Chapter one has argued that from the beginning of the century, arguments about which powers or faculties of the soul were responsible for dreams meant that their exact nature and function was not generally agreed upon. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, an eclectic mix of dream theory combined Aristotelian, Galenic and occasionally Neoplatonic attitudes toward dreams. It emphasized the dominance of humoral and 'geo-humoral' explanations of dreams in mainstream medical discourse, which emphasized the autonomous and sensitive power of bodily elements on the equilibrium of the imagination. It suggested that over the course of the seventeenth century, more emphasis was gradually placed on the role of cogitative power in dreams. Attention to the 'speculative' power of fantasy may have been motivated by the intensive concerns about the imagination's role in corrupting the conscience and as a gateway by which Satan could exert influence over the soul, as demonstrated by John Milton's attribution of Eve's corruption to the infiltration of a Satanic dream. Chapter three will deal in greater detail with the growing concern over speculative wickedness in Protestant conscience literature of the period. In addition to this, the influence of Platonic philosophy on theories about dreams was increasingly visible in both orthodox and radical religious contexts, where attributions of dreams to nocturnal cogitation and the vitalistic power of the soul appear to have accorded with a need to affirm the divine nature of the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.43

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 112.

human mind, to assert its sovereignty over the material body, and to identify the soul's nature with God.

We can discern at least four different theories of dream generation in use by the late seventeenth century. There was the perceptual account, in which dreams were primarily anomalous perceptual phenomena, transformations of phantasms in the spirits caused by changes in the humours and bodily organs, or by terrestrial and celestial forces penetrating the body, and could include echoes of thoughts and memories 'activated' by these motions. Then there was the account of dreams as instances of 'fancy', in a sense which was mostly passive. In these cases, the humoural and geo-humoural factors described as effecting the common-sense in sleep could be said instead to condition and arouse the organs of fantasy: however, this account was also more commonly associated with sins of 'speculative wickedness, in which the powers of the imagination or 'fancy' were stimulated by agitated passions and desires in sleep. The third account of dreams was that they were embodiments or visualisations of intellectual thoughts, the same 'particulars' or virtualisations of the reasoning mind that occurred during the day. This both raised the possibility of 'pious' kinds of dreaming, but also increased responsibility for sinful cogitations. There were the accounts of the mechanical philosophy, many of which bore a close relationship to the Aristotelian theory of perceptual anomalies, but re-cast these in the forms of 'mechanical' or 'hydraulic' motions and collisions, producing phantasms without any relations to 'forms' or sympathies. Of these theories, the first three could be cumulative: it was possible to believe that dreams could be produced from all three of these sources, though the Peripatetics would have denied the third, intellectual account of dreams. The difference between accounts centred on perceptual anomalies in the common sense, and the arousal of the fancy, did not necessarily differ greatly, as the latter could be attributed similarly to the essential causes of natural motion and heat, though these might have their origins in natural digestion, distemperment or a 'passion' arising from the irascible or concupiscible appetite.

The growing importance of vitalism and innatist cognitive theory in dreams was intimately related to the explosion of religious and philosophical speculation in the 1640s, and to the emergence of Cartesian and corpuscular philosophies as a challenge to traditional physics and epistemology. Elevation of the human imagination had earlier been associated with resistance to sceptical attitudes toward claims about the supernatural in the work of Le Loyer. Cartesianism itself embraced Platonic notions of mind, was notionally founded upon an instance of 'enthusiastic' religious inspiration, and may have even have innovatively re-deployed Jesuit meditation techniques to combat scepticism by asserting the self-reflective power of the soul. However, by banishing the animating power of spirit from nature, Cartesianism came to be counted with

Hobbesian materialism as a threat to the orthodox view of a divinely imbued and providentially ordered creation. Malebranche, a later Cartesian, adopted similar views to Hobbes about the origins of false and superstitious beliefs in dreams and hallucinations. As part of their riposte to the materialist vision of nature, the Cambridge Platonists More and Cudworth both proposed vitalist and animistic forces in nature which were demonstrated, in one instance, by Cudworth's insistence on the shared capacity of animals and humans for 'plastic' cogitation in dreams, and in the case of the latter, a special ability to frame 'speculative' thoughts and judgments in dreams.