

**We Archipelago:**

**A Productive Reaction to the Collective Unconscious, in a Conscious State**

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**Abstract** - The topic of research explores the opportunity of tapping into the collective unconscious, in an attempt to make decisions more akin to one's personal values. The research explores intuition as a valid decision-making process by examining Carl Jung's Collective Unconscious theory, Australian Aboriginal dreamtime beliefs and art, and the relationship between her and her father. The underlying theme is that which attempts to inspire other creative people to reflect thoughtfully before creating and trust their insight as a universal reservoir, rather than using already-established ideas as a crutch, which ultimately paralyzes the growth of human evolution on a micro and macro scale.

## **I. Introduction**

My roommate and I suffer from a phenomenon called "Sleep Paralysis." It's a thing modern western medicine has described as a temporary sensation of paralysis either before falling asleep or upon waking. Ancient folklore will have you believe otherwise of the causes and who the sinister cause-ees are of the tormented state. But whatever the "real" cause of sleep paralysis is, it has become a common bond between my roommate and I. Since we've discovered our little sleep disorders, it's become part of our M.O. to discuss our dreams every morning before we go about our waking-state business. Furthermore, it has kindled our interests in other subconscious phenomena such as synchronicity and the collective unconscious. But what good is having an interest in something unless you act upon that interest? My father, a highly revered school psychologist of the past twenty years, recently retired, and has since found himself in an existential rut. With his terribly cerebral background, his interest in western medicine's prognosis and prescription for his depression are lacking. His intention, even his psychiatrist agrees, is the essential ingredient to any remedy.



Figure 1: *The Nightmare*, by Henry Fuseli (1781) is thought to be one of the classic depictions of sleep paralysis perceived as a demonic visitation.

Since Carl Jung coined the term “Collective Unconscious,” those who have been exposed to western psychology have been consciously aware of the theory. This theory, suggests that within each person exists, not only a personal reservoir of unique individual experiences, but also a collective universal system of inherited cognitive remnants, identical in all individuals. Much in the same way, and for thousands of years longer, Australian Aborigine dream beliefs are not far from Jung’s hypothesis of an ‘all-at-once’ unconscious world. Assuming that the hypothesis and beliefs about a collective unconscious warrant some truth, how then can we as human beings not only be aware of this potential reservoir, but also act upon these inherent inclinations as tools during the creative process when ideas manifest in a conscious space? I will acknowledge and compare the unconscious philosophies of the Australian Aborigines with those of the psychologist Carl Jung, and their methods of pursuing those philosophies in a consciously creative state. With these findings in mind, I hope to discover what makes these two tribes of thought so vulnerable to thrive on intuition, in an attempt to reassess the unconscious relationship I believe to have with my father. Although both Jung and

Australian Aboriginals come from contrasting origins in time and space from my father and I, our metaphysical-to-physical principles could, and should be one in the same. Unlike my father and I, the Aboriginals come from many generations of unfiltered ancestry; their culture remains so unprocessed, so raw, something seemingly foreign to overproduced Americans. Still, the cognitive roots my father and I have created between us in only our life times are sturdy and growing and effortlessly bonded, with the exception of his recent state of depression. It is my goal to help him mend this cognitive disconnect, not only to rekindle our connection, but to re-introduce the intuitive reservoirs ever-present inside himself, available to tap into at any beck and call.

## **II. Historical, Theoretical and Cultural Context**

To the Australian Aboriginals, dreaming is not something that happens only when you're sleeping. "Dreamtime" –as the white people so inaccurately named - is all around them, sleeping or awake, all the time, that is, if they had a word for "time". Their language's lack of the word "time" itself is indicative of their unique concept of reality, space, and creation. "What we draw on from our memories, and think, imagine and create in our daily lives is our Dreaming." (Mundine, Djon, [1]). Each Aboriginal person identifies with a specific Dreaming. It gives them identity, dictates how they express their spirituality, and tells them which other Aboriginal people are related to them in a close family, because those share the same Dreaming. Their spirituality is a oneness and an interconnectedness with all that lives and breathes, even with all that does not live or breathe. It seems the only barrier between them and everything else is their physical bodies, their skin, for which they "...see as a coat of armor, protecting [your] spirit and [your] Dreaming (Mudrooroo, Aboriginal writer [1]). Aboriginal spirituality is a feeling of belonging, a connectedness with deep innermost feelings. Everything else is secondary. An Aboriginal person's soul or spirit is believed to continue on after their physical form has passed through death. After an Aboriginal person dies, their spirit returns to the Dreamtime form where it will return through birth as a human, an animal, a plant, or a rock. The shape is not important because each form shares the same soul or spirit from Dreamtime [9].



Figure 2: *Wandjina*. The Australian Aboriginal dreamtime sacred creator.

The Dreamtime also explains the creation process. According to Aboriginal belief, ancestor beings rose and roamed the initially barren land, fought and loved, and created the land's features as we see them today. After creating the sacred world the spiritual beings turned into rocks or trees or the landscape. Not only does Dreamtime explain the creation process, but its principles also very obviously transcend into the Aboriginal's creative process. In the early 1970's Geoff Bardon, was originally assigned as an art teacher to the government settlement at Papunya in Australia's Western Desert. Bardon found more than 1000 Aboriginal people living in a state of dislocation, their culture being systematically wiped out through "assimilation." He encouraged the Aboriginal people to paint their traditional designs using western materials rather than copying European imagery. What he observed during their process was something quite different from the white man's approach to painting. From the first stroke to the last of a Papunya Tula (commonly known as "dot painting"), Bardon watched as an Aboriginal painter approached the canvas and began painting without hesitation. "There wasn't that initial uncertainty." (Bardon, Geoff [6]). They would sit on the ground looking only at

the canvas in front of them, and complete the painting, without breaking, until it was completed. It seemed that the Aboriginals didn't have any need to draw inspiration from anywhere other than what was already seemingly mapped out in their minds.



Figure 3: *Uta Uta Tjangala Pintupi*, (1972), Women's Dreaming.

Starting with children's classroom projects, Bardon became involved with tribal elders whose designs told stories of their ancestral Dreaming. In defiance of white authorities, Bardon also encouraged the artists to value their work commercially as well as spiritually, believing that by selling paintings the people could become independent of welfare as well as bring indigenous art to the attention of the wider community. For a short time, the white men did revere the Aboriginal dot paintings, which was reflected in the handsome sums many of the paintings were auctioned for. Unfortunately, the Aboriginal dot paintings' value among the white people declined to an insulting low; consequently, an ignorant reality dictated by men of monetary value. Though in spite of Papunya people's plight, the Aboriginal painters continue to paint, always with the stories of their Dreaming in spirit.



Figure 4: *Ungambikula*, Early Aboriginal painting depiction of Ancestral beings, two beings, self-created out of nothing.

In a land far from Aboriginal Australia, in a distinctly dedicated period of time (1875-1961), Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung toyed with the concept of the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious, he theorized, is the aspect of the unconscious mind, which manifests inherited, universal themes, which run through all human life. The contents of the collective unconscious are archetypes and primordial images that reflect basic patterns common to us all, and which have existed universally since the dawn of time.

The collective unconscious is a part of the psyche, which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition. While the personal unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious has never been in

consciousness, and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity. Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of complexes, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of archetypes. [19].

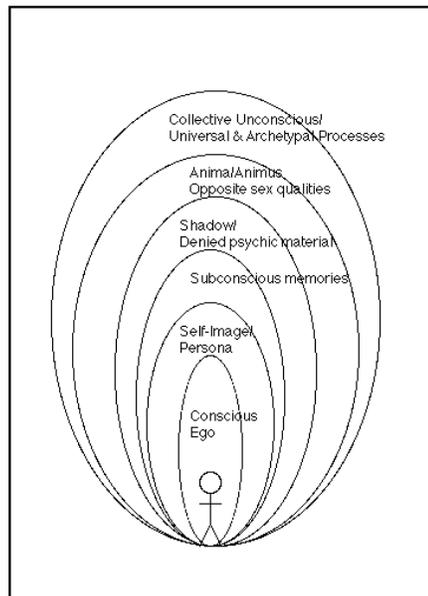


Figure 5: *A Primer of Jungian Psychology*, 1973, Jungian Diagram of the human psyche made up of different strata.

Minus a few slew of intellectual jargon, the archetypal and hereditary essence of Jung's collective unconscious sound alarmingly similar to the Australian Aboriginal's Dreamtime principles. Much in the same way that Jung hypothesizes about a state of the mind that cannot be represented by a single individual's experiences, the Aboriginal's everything-at-once interconnectedness philosophy implies a similar notion that one human mind "by itself" does not exist, because within the contents of one human's mind are ever-changing thoughts from every other human, and non human mind, starting from the beginning of time, weaving through it. In the same way, until his recent depressive state, I witnessed my father's ability to harness his collection of cognitive totems in the way he translates them into a conscious creative space. Although he was a psychologist by profession, his actions weren't limited to diagnosing patients. His creativity and tribal instincts stretched far from and within his 9-5, whether it be as simple as preparing huge pots of soups for the family and the entire neighborhood, offering out-of-the-box advice

to clients and friends alike, or building a playhouse with a drive-thru window for a 5-year-old me. And like the Aborigines, not only was there nothing contrived about his creative pursuits, but the final result always aimed to please or be shared by more than just himself. Without a written recipe or blueprint, he literally created my childhood soups, sandbox and home, much with his own two hands. Without scholarly training in construction or culinary arts, perhaps he would be labeled as a jack-of-all trades. Again, not different from the aborigines' misfortune, he fell victim to the constraints of his dominant socially constructed surroundings. Nonetheless, he was a master of uninhibited communication; consciously dormant for now, waiting to be released not far beneath the surface.

My father Tony grew up in a very Italian, very Catholic family in Cincinnati, Ohio, him being the fourth child of eight sisters and one brother. With ten children and two parents in a house with only one bathroom, privacy was not a word well associated with the DelVecchio family. Everybody's business was happening all at once, and hand-me-downs were a given. My father's mother Angela was a mother by all hours, a seamstress in the basement when time permitted, and nothing short of a saint, according to everyone I've ever had the pleasure of hearing an opinion from. My father's father (Tony Sr. [what else?]) was a night watchman. He had a conventional role as father and husband for the time: paid the bills, put food on the table, and slapped the kids around when it was "necessary." I only knew him for a short time before he died. According to my saintly grandmother, my grandfather was a "very mean man." From nine of the ten children in the DelVecchio family, including my father, they all agree, "I don't think, in our entire childhood experience, we ever had a single conversation with Dad." A conversation, that is, besides "Pass the meatballs," or "Did I say you could do that?" So he wasn't a man of many words, but when my dad dedicated his doctoral thesis to him at his graduation, rumor has it, Anthony Sr. choked back a few tears. This was one of the few times – if not the only one he remembers now - my father had shared an emotional connection with his dad, other than frequent violent reprimanding.

Before my dad graduated from Ball State University with a P.H.D. in Psychology at age 36, he took a leisurely nomadic approach before conforming to the American adulthood mainstream. He went to college on a football scholarship. He flunked out his first year. Shortly after he flunked out, his mother got tuberculosis. He prayed to the Catholic God one day in church, "Please God, if you make my mother well again I will go into the seminary, please send me a sign." Moments after his plea, one of the altar boys in church fainted in front of him; thus, convincing my father that his destiny remained with the Catholic Faith. Two years passed while my father lived with the monks in seminary in upstate New York, until he caught wind of more than a few incidences in which pastors allegedly molested children. The irony was sickening, so again my father found himself amidst a system unfitting with his nature. Thus began his lengthy trek as a wanderer. Somewhere along the way, he discovered himself, went back to school, asked for his football scholarship back, and graduated from college with a PhD in Psychology. He found a school psychologist position in Carson City, Nevada. He and my mother bought a small brick fixer-upper of a house, and so began their settlement, contrary to my dad's many years of wanderlust.

Between just my mom and I, my dad's sense of family contrasted severely with his upbringing. With only the three of us, our bond was tight knit. For the eighteen years I lived with my mom and dad, I only knew my dad to be the small town's biggest social butterfly. We'd go to the grocery store, and wouldn't be able to leave before at least five people approached him to small talk. Sometimes, after he'd finish talking with someone, we'd pass them with the grocery cart, and I'd ask who they were. Often he'd respond with "I can't even remember," but somehow he always managed to carry on with the person in a way that left them looking satisfied with their repartee. His descriptions of them were often just as sparse with material detail, but rich with character assessment. I realized as I grew up, he was a philosopher at heart. Talking about details and dates was lacking: he was fond of concepts on a macro scale. The same principles observed in my father's verbal communication are apparent in his visual communication as well. Between cooking, gardening, sailing, welding, scuba diving, and consistently puttering around in the garage with tools and wood to give the house its weekly facelift, my father

had many creative pursuits, all of which seemed to serve more as meditative activities, rather than endeavors which begged for acceptance within each one's guild. When I asked if I could have a pair of crutches for Christmas because I thought they would be fun to play with, he made me a pair. They were wobbly and chafed my armpits, but it was the loving gesture that made me forge through the pain. The point is, though he never went to school for creative arts, his will to create was adamant and ever present. And although his creations may lack industry standards, his quintessential Tony charm permeates from every piece of wobbly or crooked furniture he's ever made.



Figure 6: *Impersonating Moses*, 2009, Tony DelVecchio with mother, Angela.

I didn't notice many of the same quirks I inherited from my father until I left home to go to college at the University of Cincinnati, just minutes from where he grew up. I went to school for fashion design. It wasn't until my classmates dubbed me the fine artist of the department, that I noticed I was exhibiting the same behavioral patterns as my father. From safety-pinning my models into their garments minutes before a critique, to identifying fabrics with general textures, instead of technical jargon, the meditative

process, to me was much more important than the usability of the product. I noticed, even with verbal communication, my listening skills were not detail oriented: I sometimes found my listening skills to focus less on the actual words that a person is saying, and more on the gestures and mannerisms they are making.

Amidst my classes during the first year of college is when I first experienced a strange sense of longing. It wasn't until I moved 2,000 miles away from my family that I realized our special connection. For the first year, I called my parents everyday, three times a day, crying unabashedly like a four-year-old. My mom told me that my dad kept waking up in the middle of the night, sweating and panicked, insisting that he was going to fly to Cincinnati and take me back home to go to college closer to them. Of course, my mother (the mediator) assured him that this was a temporary feeling. I never sensed this gut-wrenching feeling coming on, and now, after reflecting with my father, I think the feeling of longing was unfamiliar to him too. I missed my mom, but in a different way than my dad. My relationship with my mom until recently was often about the details. As an artist herself, we could often analyze paintings and fashion in very articulated ways. Her art is very different than mine though: her attention to detail is flawless. With my dad, our bond is based on invisible things. That being said, the tragic agony we suffered from the initial separation may in part have something to do with the invisibility, the undefined nature of our bond. For the simple fact that we are both two people too interested in observing cognitive sciences, but often neglect to practice the importance of details, having never clearly defined ours, we are lost, searching for a reason, with only abstract feelings to latch onto.

In his book *The Family Unconscious, An Invisible Bond*, psychotherapist Edward Bruce Bynum quotes Carl Jung,

Perhaps we may call the dream a facade, but we must remember that the fronts of most houses by no means trick or deceive us, but, on the contrary, follow the plan of the building and often betray its inner arrangement.... We say that the dream has a false front only because we

fail to see into it. We would do better to say that we are dealing with something like a text that is unintelligible not because it has a facade, but simply because we cannot read it. – *Modern Man In Search of a Soul*

In this book, Bynum not only includes the family dynamic as a major component within the web of the collective unconscious, but he also relates family behavior to documented case histories of telepathy, clairvoyance and second-sight. His capacity to combine concepts of family therapy, the wisdom of the East, and the wisdom of higher mathematics and physics puts the author in a unique position to formulate conjecture. Members of the same family read each other in great detail, but most of that information never reaches consciousness. It has been the observation of clinicians and family therapists that a family's recurrent transactional patterns are reflected in their dream life and that these dreams, when reported and worked with, provide useful material for the family therapist and the family seeking a greater understanding of itself. The dreams and dynamics of family life reflect a host of dysfunctional patterns, like double-bind situations, projections, projected role distortions, and traditional attempts at conflict resolution. The reflection of the family's process through reflection of the shared dream's process opens the way to overcoming denial, scapegoating, and other resistances. In nonpathological families, the process can reflect healthy coping mechanisms and aspirations and serve to deepen the sense of family intimacy. A lower incidence of "mental illness" is found in families that observe this process and in cultures where dreams are normally shared.

The operation of these family dynamics through dream-work sharing reflects the various interactional patterns, family styles, and energy relationships that influence the personalities of family members. This level of shared imagery, idea and affect comprises the Family Unconscious. "It is like a hologram, in which each section of the hologram has implicated within it each other section or reference point." (Bynum, [20]).

My memory of sharing dreams with my father has been almost exclusively one sided, with my dreams and reoccurring brain chatter as the subject of interpretation and resolution. He always fought to resolve my nightmares or obsessive-compulsive patterns, but we never discussed the possible reason behind why I envisioned certain things to begin with. For instance: when I was younger, I used to have a reoccurring vision of a flying knife chasing and trying to stab me. My dad suggested that I should put a barrier around my body to protect myself from the knife. This was precisely the defense mechanism I used. Now, as an adult, I realize perhaps this wasn't the most affective solution to my angst, as my anxiety in my early years in college was on the fringe of clinical assessment. In hindsight, I can only conjecture that by placing myself mentally inside of a box, I was manifesting precisely the same cliché metaphor. By passive-aggressively defending myself from this knife, I was suppressing, instead of facing my fears. I believe this to be the same distorted coping mechanism my grandfather, and perhaps my father used to deal with anxiety. The few times my father shared his dreams with me, he said he dreamed he was flying. Shortly after he was diagnosed with depression, until now, I ask him daily what he has been dreaming about, and he responds, "Nothing. I don't really dream anymore." This could very well be the manifestation of repression, similarly represented in the box imagery he suggested to me. In order to liberate the negative, one must confront the source of their fear [3].

Carl Jung was the first Western psychologist to advance an operational concept of the collective unconscious. Jung held that the collective unconscious – in contrast to the Freudian unconscious – is an inherited faculty of the psyche and is not empirically developed. Jung often sighted his own "uncanny experiences" with the collective unconscious [20]. In his book "Synchronicity," Jung describes such an experience while a client of his was relating her dream of an ancient Egyptian scarab. At that very moment, an insect flew into Jung's window - one which looked exactly like the insect the woman was describing in her dream! The insect was not only very uncommon in that part of the world, but it was also the wrong season for it to appear. As the title of the book reveals, Jung called this particular kind of event *synchronicity* [8].

I have only been familiar with the term for the last few years of my life, consequently, my occurrences – and thus, awareness - with “meaningful coincidences” has only recently been witnessed. In contrast to Jung’s scarab situation, synchronicity for me scarcely rears its playfulness in the form of a blatantly iconic archetype. In the midst of a billboard and brand riddled New York City, the symbolism is subtle, and often presents itself in language rather than physical things.

My twenty-year-old father’s destiny validation according to a fainting alter boy, can easily make Jung’s theory be misinterpreted as irrational decision making based on subjective emotions. So what then? Whatever is considered to be irrational today, will surely evolve into the future Western world’s school of thought tomorrow. “It is possible that there exist human emanations which are still unknown to us. Do you remember how electrical currents and ‘unseen waves’ were laughed at? The knowledge about man is still in its infancy” (Albert Einstein [20]). As for the Australian Aboriginals, their all-intuitive consciousness has, is now, and will remain ever-present. “Our spirituality is a oneness and an interconnectedness with all that lives and breathes, even with that does not live or breathe.” –Mudrooroo. [1]. Whether my father was connecting spiritually with the fainting alter boy, or not, the “primitive” laws of the Aboriginal tribes share the same sentiment of using intuition as a valid decision making device.

In my father’s case, we can deduce that he exhibited a connection with the collective unconscious in his youth. Whether the cause of his recent disconnect with our family tribe and the collective unconscious was the result of some inherited repression, the collective unconscious still thrives around him, just outside the barrier he’s created around himself. In order to rekindle his connection, he must first face not only his personal unconscious, but the heredity of eons of generations. To leaf through such complexity and “accurately” analyze inherited behaviors would take eons in itself, thus the immediacy of intuitively analyzing the archetypes that reappear in his subconscious is a solution he can attain and apply during this lifetime. Four weeks ago, I proposed catalyzing this process. With the aboriginal dot painting methods in mind, I instructed both my mother and father to close their eyes and draw the first image that came to their

minds. We still have yet to discuss the symbols within their drawings, so my analysis of them remains to be only conjecture. Nonetheless, the simple act of creating something from his mind, without any preconceived filter, my father admitted, was liberating.

Just as the aboriginals seem to draw inspiration for their paintings from a source rooted inside themselves, by drawing the first thing that came to his head, my dad was able to explore an area of his mind that wasn't as far beneath the surface as perhaps he expected. "One so freed from the bondage of senses transcends all material relation, and becoming all supreme light, regains his own Self. This indeed is Self. Its is beyond morality, beyond fear. It is Truth; Truth is only another name of The Absolute." (Chandogya Upanishad, [20]). Truth in this respect to the self, unfortunately, is an absolute very difficult to attain in a culture that is so weighted upon competitive hierarchy. Perhaps my father is just like me inside of the box, and the flying knife is the pressure of a dominant Capitalist society. In contrast to the small Aborigine tribes, America and it's social infrastructure have grown to be so complex, that the task of rising and progressing is a daunting one. Still, somehow in Australia, there seems to exist both the "modern" and the "primitive" lifestyles. Though, in the aboriginals' case, the dynamic between the modern world and theirs is insultingly imbalanced. In America, our material production and consumption has snowballed into a convoluted fast-food-brand-based-money-hungry monster. It's no wonder my father and other philosophically inclined individuals alike have lost their true purpose and principles in the midst of philosophizing, instead of rapidly creating for the sake of assimilation. As for America as its own huge organism, with its melting pot nature, perhaps our heritage has been so melted together, that it's difficult to know where to dip the ladle in and find the connection with our true inherited selves, while also connecting our true selves with others. For the Aborigines, the task has been mastered: simply close your eyes to the material world, and create, without hesitation, according to your gut instincts.

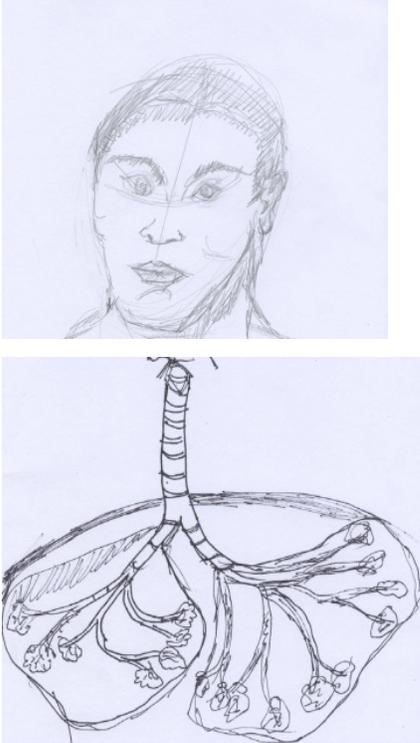


Figure 7: *Apophenia*, 2012, Tony DeVecchio, drawing experiment, tapping into intuition.

My father often spoke and encouraged me to read one of his most cherished books: Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*. And like Siddhartha, the son of a Brahmin, my father,

...[has] lost his Self a thousand times and for days on end [has] dwelt in non-being. But although the paths took him away from Self, in the end they always led back to it. Although Siddhartha fled from the Self a thousand times, dwelt in nothing.... the hour was inevitable when he would again find himself in sunshine or in moonlight, in shadow or in rain, and was again Self and Siddhartha, again felt the torment of the onerous life cycle (21).

The quote is drenched in solace, though the content is taken far from the last pages of the novel. If this is the same place in mind where my father is toiling, then amidst the wallowing burden, I still foresee a place veiled with light. To hope he returns to the person he used to be when I was a child, is obsolete. What I imagine for him is a reawakening: to find a new Self amidst the stream of selves. For whatever invisible

collection of forces are dwelling inside him now, I can only offer to replace that force with love. Dwelling: both verb and noun. If life is a house, and each living thing has their own room, I can invisibly hope, and actively communicate that all creatures would be akin to replace thick doors with transparent curtains. “Your soul is the whole world.” (Hesse, Hermann – Siddhartha).

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