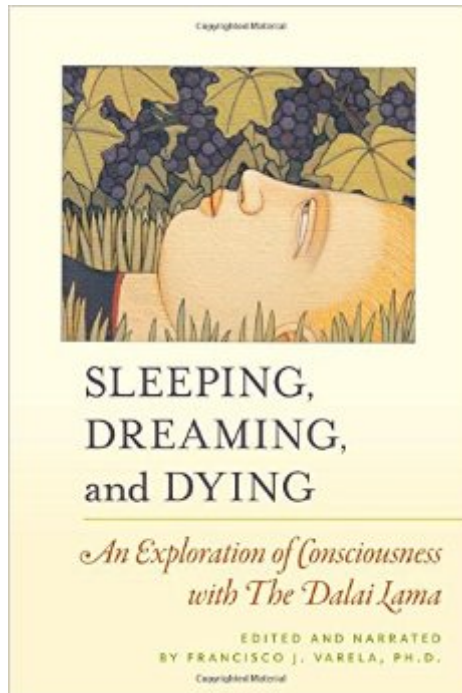


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Sleeping, Dreaming, And Dying: An Exploration Of Consciousness



Synopsis

This is an absorbing account of a dialogue between leading Western scientists and the foremost representative of Buddhism today, the Dalai Lama of Tibet. For modern science, the transitional states of consciousness lie at the forefront of research in many fields. For a Buddhist practitioner these same states present crucial opportunities to explore and transform consciousness itself. This book is the account of a historic dialogue between leading Western scientists and the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Revolving around three key moments of consciousness--sleep, dreams, and death--the conversations recorded here are both engrossing and highly readable. Whether the topic is lucid dreaming, near-death experiences, or the very structure of consciousness itself, the reader is continually surprised and delighted. Narrated by Francisco Varela, an internationally recognized neuroscientist, the book begins with insightful remarks on the notion of personal identity by noted philosopher Charles Taylor, author of the acclaimed *Sources of Self*. This sets the stage for Dr. Jerome Engel, Dr. Joyce MacDougal, and others to engage in extraordinary exchanges with the Dalai Lama on topics ranging from the neurology of sleep to the yoga of dreams. Remarkable convergences between the Western scientific tradition and the Buddhist contemplative sciences are revealed. Dr. Jayne Gackenbach's discussion of lucid dreaming, for example, prompts a detailed and fascinating response from the Dalai Lama on the manipulation of dreams by Buddhist meditators. The conversations also reveal provocative divergences of opinion, as when the Dalai Lama expresses skepticism about "Near-Death Experiences" as presented by Joan Halifax. The conversations are engrossing and highly readable. Any reader interested in psychology, neuroscience, Buddhism, or the alternative worlds of dreams will surely enjoy *Sleeping, Dreaming, and Dying*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Can you imagine a conversation about the essence of art taking place between, oh, say, Picasso and art therapists who treat mental patients, and some chemists who concoct formulae for oil paints? Something like that is taking place here. The title alone is enough to pique your interest, but the content is less than secret-divulging. If you're not a neurologist, or a specialist in a related area, then much of the material presented by the neurologist will be for all practical purposes useless. If you're not familiar with the basic assumptions of esoteric buddhist psychology, then much of what HH Dalai Lama has to say will sound like so much dogma or articles of faith. I know next to nothing about brain sciences, but am academically acquainted with the buddhist conception of reality, so I found what the Dalai Lama had to say both interesting and amusing. Interesting, because he speaks as plainly as he can about things that are usually wrapped in some hairy buddhist language. Amusing, because the Dalai Lama would show utmost courtesy in listening to all the dry academic presentations, which even I found somewhat tedious, and then offer his views about the matter at hand by often beginning with what sounds like a gentle correction rather than a positing of difference of perspective only. I paraphrase from memory: "Well, your numbers and theories are all very nice, but no, it's actually like this." Some of the discussions on REM, and animal responses to dream states are interesting, but just merely interesting. Better on the Discovery channel. Much of the philosopher Charles Taylor's presentations concerning the Western/Christian conception of the Self is reliable but elementary. And dealing with the subject matter at hand, even an eminent philosopher can do only so much with Ratio alone.

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