

[00:00:11.020]

Hello, Ricky, how's it going? Hey, good, how's it going? Yeah, good. So question. Yes. No, I'm ready.

[00:00:21.400]

I'm ready. Ready? Wait, wait. Let me make sure both feet are on the floor. I'm ready.

[00:00:26.020]

OK, what are dreams for? And I mean, do they provide a sort of medical or evolutionary advantage or are they just a byproduct of a living brain which would be boring? So what do they what are they for? Are they for anything?

[00:00:44.210]

I don't I don't even use the the I can't think of the correct terminology to ask you. That probably sounds like a dumb thing. But, you know, I mean, OK, I know what fingers are for our eyes or for what are dreams, for dreams or for the same thing as fingers.

[00:01:00.040]

You're just using them wrong. You hit it perfectly. The question, what are they for? Or are they just a byproduct? You know, the technical word people use in philosophy. There is an epiphenomenon. Yeah. They're they're not doing anything. They're just associated with something that's doing something right. I don't think we know really. I mean, we know that certain good and necessary things happen during REM sleep, which is generally associated with dreaming. That's not the only stage of sleep where we have dreams.

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But there seems to be a several things going on. You know, at least there's a process of memory consolidation that happens during REM. So we've REM sleep is disrupted a lot. Your memory certainly suffers. But that's not that is it.

[00:01:49.630]

Is it that so could you say that it's the brain getting work done that it can't do when you're conscious because it's you're using it for other things and it goes right is asleep. Let's do this stuff. Let's stocktake. Let's put this this is it.

[00:02:04.520]

Like in a kid's toys away when he's asleep is I can't grasp what you mean by how do they consolidate memories, where the memories go. Is it like putting it away in a drawer? You're have to use a lot of metaphor for me.

[00:02:21.270]

What I want to go back to the distinction you made quite naturally the beginning, whether they're the dream experience itself is doing something or whether it's just a byproduct of the thing that's doing something and that that I don't think we know it's either. There's a remaining question, why should there be any experiential component to this memory consolidation? It seems like the brain should be able to consolidate memories in the dark without there being any experience of it. It does most of what it does in the dark or certainly seems to away, which is to say that you're not conscious at any point of the maintenance it's doing or any of the other things it's doing.

[00:03:01.840]

So why we should have these bizarre experiences every night and whether whether that is necessary, you know, for memory consolidation or anything else, that's OK. I totally accept that.

[00:03:13.120]

I tell if someone said, listen, this is this is sign ups, jump in and pinging off and and there nations that don't mean anything because you're not you're not engaging sort of critical thinking because you're asleep. I could totally accept that. But I wonder why after, you know, millions of years of evolution, the they seem to be so important, no one doesn't know. There's no one it doesn't drain. We do it every

night. And also, isn't there isn't there a certain degree of why is why of OK.

[00:03:50.470]

Right. This is why I think it might be pseudoscience and nonsense and and anecdotal evidence has made me think there's a reason to them, because I remember when I was them, I was doing chemistry. And we were told that Cacchioli, when he was trying to work out the structure of benzene, how to dream of a snake, bite its own tail, and he woke up and said, it's a ring right now. I can I can both accept the it might be giving you cryptic clues because, you know, a lot of things happen in your brain, the subconscious.

[00:04:23.800]

You know, I could also accept that that's nonsense. It made up. It's a coincidence. He knew the answer. He went to sleep with the answer. And then, you know, I almost want to know. I saw I want to know the magic and the science, and I want them to be this. I want to be the same thing. Do you what I mean.

[00:04:43.630]

Well, most dreams are like a bad television show that just got greenlit two hundred and fifty thousand years ago, and no one has figured out how to get it off the air. I mean, there's they're not producing insights into science, right? It's just right. It's just noise. But I think one thing that dreams reveal about our minds is that it's possible for us to be pushed into new circumstances. You know, suddenly, I mean, you go to bed.

[00:05:11.110]

Having every right to expect to stay in your bed and the next thing you experience is something quite different, and you're not even remotely surprised by the transition of your conscious mind to suddenly put in relationship to people who aren't actually there. You know, some people might be dead, some people might be, you know, famous people you don't know. Yeah, so so, you know, I could have had a dream. I was talking to Ricky Gervais before I met Ricky Gervais.

[00:05:38.950]

And I wouldn't be surprised at all right. Unless it's a lucid dream, which is its own thing.

[00:05:45.120]

Well, we're getting Cartesian now because this obviously could be a dream. This this it could be.

[00:05:50.440]

You know, I've I've had I've had this dream. I've had a dream where I'm where I'm unaware that it's a dream. And I'm talking to dream characters. And I'm I'm lecturing them on this very point. You realize this could be a dream right now? Yeah.

[00:06:04.720]

And they're they're all looking at me like an idiot, self-aware.

[00:06:08.600]

And, yeah, I often have self-awareness and dreams, in fact. So if I have nightmares, I now I've got to the point where in my dream I can say, Jane, Jane, wake me up, wake me up. And I'm and sometimes I think she said I have said her name and obviously in the dream now I'm in the nightmare, but I'm in bed and I know Jane is trying to wake me up. And it takes I don't know how long it takes in reality.

[00:06:39.850]

It probably seems to me like half the night until her like three seconds. So. Well, that well, that's a lucid dream. That's the opposite of what I was just confessing. I've had a dream where I had no idea I was dreaming. And I'm I'm lecturing dream characters that this could be a dream. I'm having a conversation of the sort that we're having right now, and they're looking at me like I'm a total moron and then I wake up.

[00:07:03.730]

But this is one thing that reveals actually an example probably closer to your heart is have you ever had someone tell you a joke in a dream? Yeah. And the punch line actually works. Right?

[00:07:16.870]

So I think I think so. I think I've had dreams or I've invented jokes and I've woken up excited and I remember it and it's absolute bollocks. It doesn't mean it's not as funny. It's not it doesn't make any sense. And then but what I have had that's worked. I've dreamt tunes and I've gone down and I've worked them out and they're pretty good, right? So that's the so that's because I think the reason is the tune is one thing, but a joke is a misdirection.

[00:07:52.180]

It's a magic act and it plays with it plays with expectation and logic and surprise and and I think the dreams, if I've got this right, you they sort of they sort of take critical thinking out of it. They take out logic. So it's purely your emotions firing and practicing and just being spilt. So that would make sense that you wake up laughing, that you've just invented the funniest dream in the world. But the logic and the critical thinking part of it says, well, it was actually bollocks.

[00:08:24.010]

You just felt the fun. So I get that here. I have an embarrassing example of that, but I was going for the opposite of that. But my example of that, just to show you how insane one can be in the mere feeling without any anchor to logic or kind of reality testing, I once woke up. Beside my wife, laughing my head off from a joke told in a dream, and I turned her, I said I just dreamt the funniest joke and she, being wiser in the ways of science, said, it's not going to be funny.

[00:08:57.320]

I said, no, no, it and she said, it's not going to be funny. And I said, here's the joke. What sound does a monster make? And she said she says, I don't know, what sound does a monster make? And then I drum on the end table the sound in the dream. It was something like this.

[00:09:19.010]

And then I actually go one further round. I say, no, no, that's not it. It's. And then my psychosis left it right, I actually thought I thought I could deliver the punch line a second time and it would land and it was just coming on and close.

[00:09:35.240]

You were still close to your subconscious dream state where you were convinced that this was so your so your emotional side outweighed your logic, your logic to get back your logic had to get up and rub its eyes and put its clothes on and go, Sam, that's that doesn't work. And you go on it doesn't work. But I quite like that because that's like a child's dream. Yeah. That's that's sort of like a child's dream because they knit.

[00:09:59.720]

They've nearly got it right. They it nearly works. It's got the rhythm of the joke, but it doesn't quite work on a comedic level and that is the same as that. But yeah, that's interesting.

[00:10:12.020]

But I'm wondering, have you ever had the opposite experience where something actually quite rational and and logical and fit for export into waking life has been communicated to you in a dream like the punch line actually works?

[00:10:26.840]

I can't remember. I can't remember. And I know I, I can't remember. Which is disappointing, isn't it? I could imagine that dreams could almost be like a simulator where there were no distractions, you close, obviously your unconscious, your brain's doing its thing and it's taking you through scenarios almost that you could do when you're daydreaming and using logic. But obviously, it's only on an emotional level, which is still good if you know that you could be an argument or there might be

research done that the reason why logic's kept out of it is because it can be stifling in art that your imagination is bigger than your your your critical thinking.

[00:11:18.220]

So, you know, it's it's sort of like it's an infinite world emotion, isn't it? It can take you anywhere. It can take you anywhere. You can fly, you can you can shoot people. You can you can do anything that you know, you can't practice in real life. So maybe it's maybe it's only preparing you. It could be that it's only strengthen you up emotionally like does a kid dreams of their grandfather dying and then it's not quite as bad when it happens.

[00:11:52.900]

Could that could that could that have any sort of value there that it strengthens you emotionally in the sense that it takes it takes your mind where your body hasn't been yet? You know, I don't know. It is so discontinuous with what tends to happen in the waking state. I mean, that is if you're saying rainmaker's, insofar as the waking state begins to resemble what you experience in dreams, it becomes pretty dysfunctional, like, you know, thinking that this is the funniest joke you've ever heard.

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And it actually makes no sense.

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I mean, that is that is what's very interesting about that is, is that it shows that the comedy is an intellectual pursuit as opposed to an emotional one. And I've always thought that as soon as you start putting emotion into comedy, it fails on a certain level, even down to the point that if you're saying things that the audience don't agree with or don't like or it's a contentious thing or it's a dark subject, they they won't allow themselves to like the joke as much as if it's just syntax or, you know, a pun or something that works for everyone if they understand the language, whereas not Perm's not puns.

[00:13:06.850]

Spare me that.

[00:13:07.630]

I'm not I don't think puns are funny, but what I mean is it shows that you understand understand you have to understand the language and therefore you have to get the joke. So it's quite a good a pun is quite a good vehicle to to show that you've understood language. And also it shows the misdirection very clearly a pun. Again, not funny.

[00:13:28.900]

So let's linger there for a second. Why some people obviously think puns are funny. Why are some people allergic to puns? I mean, that difference of opinion comedically. What do you have any thoughts about that?

[00:13:40.300]

Yeah, because I think that once you've done one, you know, you've you've seen them all really. They're the same thing. It's it's it's almost like a nod of the head. I understand those two words have different meanings. I saw the misdirection. It was a surprise. It's a release. There's no way that you could be crying with laughter on the floor, a pun like you could do with something that you know.

[00:14:07.780]

That's fascinating, though. Is it too brief or it's just to its object being, I think, language.

[00:14:14.920]

I think it's superficial or what?

[00:14:16.390]

No, I think on a couple of levels. I think really one thing is that it's only discovered it was always there. A pun was always there because the dictionary was always there. So with a pun, it take someone to

suddenly stumble across those two words and put them into a sentence. And, you know, it's almost like you couldn't claim if one comedian did a pun and another comedian, it was a pun intended upon it couldn't claim you can say, oh, no, you heard me say that you'd go when I was in the dictionary, it was there.

[00:14:48.250]

It's almost like it's not so creative. It's more like a found object upon and you can be clever with it. And you know what? There were some amazing punsters, but I still think it's it's not like it's not as funny as someone falling over because it's not visceral.

[00:15:06.400]

You know, anthropologists say that the first bit of comedy was one caveman laughing. Another caveman hit his head. Why empathy. That man knew that that hurt because he's done it and he knew that the other cavemen didn't want to do it. And that's funny. That's actually funny, OK, because we feel it as well. I've almost contradicted myself saying it's an intellectual pursuit as opposed to an emotional one. That's interesting. Well, yeah, that was I mean, obviously, that's.

[00:15:35.040]

Other types of humor, I'm going to stick to my initial premise that comedy is an intellectual pursuit because I think my examples that are emotional aren't comedy, that they're hardwired, visceral, they're funny, but they couldn't be called comedy because I think comedy is some sort of great framework to tickle your funny bone, whereas having a sense of humor, you can look at the sky and smile that you wouldn't call it comedy.

[00:16:04.380]

But we have this phrase physical comedy. You got Charlie Chaplin and you know everyone on up from there. Yeah. Making us laugh or often making us laugh by falling in the right place.

[00:16:17.190]

But there are physical jokes. I think the difference if if you're walking along the street and someone slips and it's their head and says fuckin out, that's funny. That's funny. For the caveman reason. That's funny. We empathize. It's not us. Right? They didn't want to do it. I think with someone like Keaton and Chaplin, they were built in jokes. There are actual built in jokes like someone bending down, missing the plank, getting up, tipping at, seeing a lady getting hit in the plank.

[00:16:46.320]

That's a that's a constructed physical thing using physicality. They're like we'd use like words and sentences and surprises. And the joke. I still think that's different to just seeing someone falling over. You couldn't call comedy, but it can be the funniest thing.

[00:17:04.210]

Well, it's the mismatch between, you know, having a you know, a sick old person fall over. That's not funny unless you're in a sociopathic frame of mind. But having a person who's full of pretension about their own station in life all over it gets to the funny.

[00:17:24.270]

And that's and that's you know, when you create comedy and narrative, you know, you do you do allow that because you're almost pandering to the audience that in fiction we create our own heroes and villains as role play for the soul so that villains get their comeuppance, heroes are rewarded and you make the world perfect. And you're right, pretension is is the opposite of heroic. So when someone's smug and hits their head, that's funnier than the hero in his head.

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In fact, you could say the difference between comedy and drama is the drama doesn't show people's flaws at all, rather their inadequacies. Whereas comedy, we embrace them, we accommodate it best says we're all idiots, so it's fine. It's almost a celebration of being a loser comedy. And as soon as you lose that, you start getting into drama as soon as as soon as these people are perfect or heroic or

don't do anything wrong. That's not funny.

[00:18:27.990]

Same as standup. If someone comes out and tells you how they are in the world, how brilliant they are, how you know, what a great day they've had and, you know, they're unfeasibly handsome and you go, oh, this isn't funny. Just like someone showing you holiday snaps of the perfect holiday. You want to some you want someone to come out, slap bang his head, tell you what a terrible day is hard. And with your with his blessing, you're laughing more because you want to hear you don't want to hear perfectionism.

[00:18:59.790]

Funny, it's just not funny. Floors are funny. Mistakes are funny. There's this comedian, you might know him if you're a bit of an Anglophile called Les Dawson. It was around in the 60s, 70s, 80s, and now it was a great northern comedian.

[00:19:16.620]

He loved language. It was almost Alan Bennett like. And it's, you know, it's how these these these funny stories. But he used to do this thing where he'd play the piano and he'd get the wrong notes, but he was very arrogant about it. And he'd smile and he'd went like he was Liberace. And it was. It was. And it was hilarious. And I've I've thought of that for years. And and I almost used that as a metaphor for sort of dark humor.

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We're laughing, right? Because we're laughing at the blind spot that he thinks is brilliant and we know he's not right, but we can only laugh if we know that tune. If we don't know that tune, we don't know the mistakes. So I think people laugh at the wrong thing because they know what the right thing is. And I've tried to apply that to everything in comedy, politics, whatever. And I think that's a good feeling. Just like people when they laugh because they get the pun, it's almost a celebration of understanding and surprise.

[00:20:18.810]

And I think that's interesting. Laughing at the wrong thing, because you know what the right thing is? Those notes are the bits we laugh at when he hits the wrong note. We laugh at that wrong note because it sounds bad because we know what the right thing is. So and that might be also there might be an interpersonal understanding of what's right in music, because I'm sure there are some avant garde pieces of music that sound worse where they've explored in seconds.

[00:20:47.850]

And, you know, it sounds to the average person a monstrosity. But to you know, that people understand it, what they appreciate it more.

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I make it a point to laugh at those people. Well, of course, I'll tell you an anecdote here.

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I was a college with a guy and he he was studying languages and he went to see this foreign film. And apparently it was subtitled by the audience. They were all students watching this.

[00:21:16.770]

And there was one bit where a Russian guy was talking to one of the Russian guy and it wasn't subtitled.

[00:21:24.360]

And so he he told a joke in Russian and one guy who was studying Russian and the back went just to let you know, I don't think.

[00:21:37.080]

Right. That joke can't be that funny. You're just letting everyone know you understood the joke in Russian.

[00:21:42.600]

Right. So there's that celebration as well. And you're right about the retention of. But maybe not. Maybe, you know, because I can't get into jazz. I've tried.

[00:21:54.720]

But then there's gateway things. Oh, that's good. I get it. And slowly, you know, when I think all the things I love now were an acquired taste, they were challenging. You know, I didn't I didn't like Radiohead at first.

[00:22:06.520]

I mean, my favorite band, you know, you're now drinking Scotch for breakfast.

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Wow. That's that's another thing. You can't just pure, pure quiet. Probably not good for you. Yeah.

[00:22:17.370]

But, um, so I get it, I understand it, but I think you sometimes have to work at stuff to appreciate them more. Um yeah. And you know, I suppose I've been worried about potential but now if I believe someone. If someone, if someone. I'll give you another example. OK, so when I was on the dole do what do you say that I left college and I didn't have a job and I had no money, no welfare with welfare work, so.

[00:22:48.390]

Yeah, yeah. No money. So what I used to do all day is just run. I used to run around London, I thought I keep fit and I couldn't afford, you know, to use the subway or so and I say to all my money for a pint of beer. So and I used to go to art galleries because they were free. And I remember I went in a one art gallery and there was a a Dali exhibition on and I saw for the first time lobster telephone service, basically a telephone with a lobster on as the receiver.

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And I saw it and I looked down and it just said lobster telephone.

[00:23:28.470]

And I laughed because I just thought, that's so funny and so primitive to do it. Didn't give a highfalutin theory for and he called it lobster xylophone.

[00:23:39.780]

And I laughed and a couple of people were looking at it, gave me a dirty look as if to go, What are you doing here? You you scruffy, you sweaty bastard. Yeah. You don't know anything. And it really annoyed me. And it's not thinking that Woody Allen film. I wanted to get Dolly out and go, Were you joking? And you go, Yes, of course I was joking. I go say, fuck off.

[00:24:00.900]

So, you know, I said, I'm very aware of pretension, but do you, Dolly?

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They're selling out and they're selling out. At the end of his life, he would just sign blank canvases, really. They'd pay him, forget what it was, but something like twenty thousand dollars to just sign away and he would just sign endless numbers of blank canvas for that. People could do whatever they wanted with.

[00:24:25.860]

That's amazing. I heard an anecdote about Picasso, which is one of my favorite things ever about getting good at something. I guess towards the end he used to do the same for for charity and people

would queue up. And he a little squiggle, a little Picasso squiggle, four thousand dollars or something, and and cued up a these squiggly thing and you know, she went, you're going to charge me five hundred dollars. That took you a few seconds.

[00:24:55.240]

And he said, No, madam, it took me all my life. And I think that's so good people. People are great at something. It doesn't look like they're trying hard. It doesn't look like they're, you know. So I do like that. And I do appreciate, you know, that that ten thousand hours to be genius. But I am in awe of things that I can't do. Getting back to music, I it's like it's like downloading emotions that I don't understand.

[00:25:25.930]

Why do some pieces of music with no association, right? It's not you know, my grandma didn't used to play it a chord can make me feel sick like I want to cry and laugh at the same time because it's so beautiful. Now that must be that must be some sort of hard wiring mustn't it. But why we weren't there weren't orchestras when we were Australopithecus y I just thought. Yeah, wow.

[00:25:53.950]

Yeah. Well it's clearly a kind of super stimulus, you know, this concept of a super stimulus. Now, someone who was who was interacting with a a species of seagull, it was raising these seagull chicks and the mother seagull had, you know, has a kind of a red dot on her beak to which the chicks Oriente and bond. Yeah. And so they created a fake mother with it, you know, especially special little red dot.

[00:26:27.750]

Yes. Yeah. And it was even more effective than than the natural version. So there's something I think there are things in I actually think television and film is a kind of super stimulus for it. And it's one of the reasons why we find it so captivating, because I can't remember if we spoke about this when we did a project.

[00:26:50.320]

If it just makes I just think it makes you're there. You can see things you couldn't possibly see.

[00:26:55.690]

It's not like a you know, you can't in a documentary about Vikings, you don't see marauding Vikings with personality. Whereas when you watch, you know, a great production, it's like you're seeing real life, even though it's fiction, you're seeing things you shouldn't really have seen.

[00:27:15.220]

What I think the crucial thing is, yeah, you're seeing things you shouldn't or couldn't have seen in a condition where you're invisible. Like I mean, this is what you say. Like, I can look at your face, you know, when you're on screen and I'm on implicated. Yeah. There's nothing you're going to do with your eyes that's going to expose me to your glands. And so it's this experience of just transcendent voyeurism. Yeah. But I also think it's less to be good because there are things you cannot.

[00:27:43.660]

Otherwise there wouldn't be such a thing as a great film and a terrible film. You know, and I know that's subjective, but that's true of everyone. You turn things off.

[00:27:52.360]

This isn't this isn't doing it for me. Why am I watching this? You know, so. Yeah, is that it is that experience. And there's another one on that one. In the thirties when people saw a film, they were blown away. But when we watch it now, we go color those black and white.

[00:28:10.690]

It's a bit flickery there's no special effects.

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It's worse than what my dog I've got a I've got a twelve year old daughter who's not impressed by films I know blew me away when I was 15. Rewriter. It's like a bit like she looks at Star Wars. I mean, she she notices how bad the acting is in what. I'm sorry.

[00:28:31.380]

I think you've I think you've hit on some it with the participation because that's why video games are bigger than movies, because you are participating. I think the people want to be part of every cause, the web they can. They want a cause. They want to cause the commotion. They want to have an effect on the world. So I think the next level is a film that's as good as The Godfather where you're in it.

[00:28:55.270]

Yeah, I think that's the next that's the next level you do inside things and those characters react or we can all become as stupid as we are in dreams and just find everything just amazing.

[00:29:09.340]

Oh yeah. Well that got back to. Yeah. So, so basically you don't know the answer. All right. Thanks. Bye.