

As we say in French, these monuments are *désaffectés*, disused, deconsecrated: they are emptied of their responsibilities and, with them, emptied of the affects they once roused. The pyramids of Egypt or Mexico, imperial or royal palaces, temples and cathedrals keep being conquered by a sleep that can neither put them completely to sleep nor consign them to a free existence as ruins that could have another life, a metamorphosis, even a metamorphosis—as happens when the ruin is content to sink down and become part of its landscape or some other construction, without penetrating into monumental memory.

But sleep is not metamorphosis. At the very most it could be understood as an endomorphosis, as the internal formation or the formation of an interiority where the interior, sealed, seemed wholly projected into the intentions and extensions of wakeful existence. Internal formation, but without a transformation of being. Temporary endomorphosis forever suspended on the limits of form itself, formation of an amorphous, hard-to-identify substance whose most common and well-defined aspect is precisely none other than that of the fall, of sagging and unfastening: the prostrate posture of the god Morpheus.

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I'm Falling Asleep

By falling asleep, I fall inside myself: from my exhaustion, from my boredom, from my exhausted pleasure or from my exhausting pain. I fall inside my own satiety as well as my own vacuity: I myself become the abyss and the plunge, the density of deep water and the descent of the drowned body sinking backward. I fall to where I am no longer separated from the world by a demarcation that still belongs to me all through my waking state and that I myself am, just as I am my skin and all my sense organs. I pass that line of distinction, I slip entire into the innermost and outermost part of myself, erasing the division between these two putative regions.

I sleep and this I that sleeps can no more say it sleeps than it could say that it is dead. So it is another who sleeps in my place. But so exactly, so perfectly in this, my own place, that he occupies it wholly without overlooking or overflowing even the slightest portion. It is not a part of me, or an aspect, or a function that is sleeping. It is that

entire other who I am as soon as I am removed from all aspects of me and from all my functions except the function of sleeping, which perhaps is not a function, or else functions only to suspend all functioning.

Some will say it's a matter of a vegetative functioning. I vegetate, I become a vegetative self, almost vegetable: rooted in its place, only traversed by the slow processes of respiration and other metabolic processes with which organs that take their ease in the relaxation of sleep are occupied. I peacefully and very effectively digest, without any nervous perturbation. A surprising misinterpretation has taken the ancient saying "he who sleeps, eats" [*qui dort dine*] and drawn from it the maxim that he who sleeps nourishes himself in some way. Originally, it was meant to inform the traveler that if he wanted to sleep at the inn, he would also have to take and pay for his dinner there, instead of unpacking provisions he'd brought for the road.

But the diversion of meaning is not without wisdom: he who sleeps does in fact nourish himself in a way. He who sleeps does not feed on anything that comes to him from without. Like animals that practice hibernation, the sleeper feeds on his reserves. He digests himself, in a way. With its own substance, night also is part of his food. Not the night that surrounds him and that can at times be replaced by day, if the sleeper rests in the middle of the day, but that night he causes to descend from himself into himself, night of the lowered eyelids, even, in extreme circumstances, the night fallen on eyes wide open. Fallen "on" but coming from within, coming from a nightfall inside the sleeper.

I now belong only to myself, having fallen into myself and mingled with that night where everything becomes indistinct to me but more than anything myself. I mean: everything becomes more than anything myself, everything is reabsorbed into me without allowing me to distinguish me from anything. But I also mean: more than anything, I myself become indistinct. I no longer properly distinguish myself from the world or from others, from my own body or from my mind, either. For I can no longer hold anything as an object, as a perception or a thought, without this very thing making itself felt as being *at the same time* myself and something other than myself. A simultaneity of what is one's own and not one's own occurs as this distinction falls away.

There is simultaneity only in the realm of sleep. It is the great present, the co-presence of all possibilities, even incompatible ones. Removed from the bustle of time, from the obsessions of past and future, of arising and passing away,³ I coincide with the world. I am reduced to my own indistinctness, which, however, still experiences itself as an "I" that goes along with its visions without, however, distinguishing itself from them.

This other fall—the fall of distinctions—is added to the first one and gives it its real coherence: I fall asleep,⁴ that is to say, "I" fall, "I" no longer exist, or else "I" "exist" only in that effacement of my own distinction. In my own eyes, which no longer look at anything, which are turned toward themselves and toward the black spot inside them, "I" no longer distinguish "myself." If I dream of actions and words of which I am the subject, it is always in such a way that this subjectivity does not distinguish itself or

THE FALL OF SLEEP

distinguishes itself poorly, *at the same time*, from what it sees, hears, and perceives in general. Such is, in fact, the quite singular awareness of the dream that this awareness thinks itself, and does not think itself as awareness of a world contrasted with it as the waking world is. At every instant the dreamer thinks he is in the waking world and knows he is in the dream world, whose simultaneities, compossibilities, confusions do not escape him but also do not surprise him enough to make him emerge from the dream. We could say that the dream knows it is unaware and that through it, sleep itself knows itself as such and wants to be thus: its fall is not a loss of consciousness but the conscious plunge of consciousness into unconsciousness, which it allows to rise up in itself as it sinks down into it. The truth of this immersion overflows and carries away any sort of analysis.

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Among the thousand sons of Hypnos, Morpheus is identified as the one who is clever at donning the shape and features of mortals, unlike those who imitate animals, plants, or other species of things. Thus Morpheus can, setting aside his dark plumage, come down to Alcyone's bed and in a dream make her recognize Ceyx, her vanished husband. Alcyone moves her arms as she sleeps and wants to embrace Ceyx, but it's air she embraces. Awake, she runs to the shore and sees the body of her vanished beloved on the waves. She leaps toward him from the top of the jetty, for wings have sprouted on her and now she can fly. She wraps her wings around the frigid body and with her

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beak seeks out and strokes his mouth. The gods change Ceyx in turn into a bird and the pair of kingfishers find on the waves their first love and the floating nest of their marriage.

Such is Morpheus, such is the virtue of his kiss. Anamorphosis of the real form, metamorphosis of life into death and again into life, into life stolen, into life flown away and suspended on the waves, into wet life, into love streaming in the hollow of waves. Morpheus transforms the pure matter of sleep into form. He gives shape and flight to the shapeless and to the fall. His metamorphosis contains the very mystery of sleep: the outline of a fluidity, the look, sign, and gesture of evanescence with the charm and virtue of presence.