

## A Tribute to Dr. Pillow

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We have all seen him on our television sets by now, that handsome, dapper fellow with the moustache and the pillow. He has a given name, but it does not do him justice because he is a figure of mythic proportions, a real hero in an age of shallow celebrities. Thus, to show him the respect and honor he deserves, I have dubbed him Dr. Pillow. His message is the most exciting, empowering news ever to come from Madison Avenue, and he is clearly the descendant of Hypnos and Morpheus, the Greek gods of sleep and dreaming.

Dr. Pillow is the latest and possibly the finest in the stories of sleep that have come down to us through the ages. There is Frederick Barbarossa, the famous leader who slept in the cave until the time was propitious for him to come forth and lead the people. Perhaps the most famous sleeper in America is Rip Van Winkle, who enjoyed a 20-year sleep in the magic mountains. Then there's Sleeping Beauty from the fairy tales and Prince Valium from the Mel Brooks movie *Space Balls*. In present-day comics we have Garfield the cat, Dagwood Bumstead, and Beetle Bailey. From Harry Potter we have Remus Lupin. Then the delightful Wynken, Blynken, and Nod from the poetry of Eugene Field, not to mention the Tooth Fairy in dental folklore. All of these figures connect with the ancient Greeks, who believed in deities who were responsible for sleep.

What sets Dr. Pillow apart from the characters and gods mentioned above is that he has discovered the secret of sleep and wants to share it with all humanity. While Rip Van Winkle, Sleeping Beauty, Prince Valium, and others benefited from a lengthy and sound sleep, they did not reveal the secret that produced the sleep. Yes, Rip does claim that it came from a libation in a flagon, and in Harry Potter's world it comes in the form of a potion, but in both cases the secret is not revealed. More important, the sleep enjoyed by the characters is exclusive, benefiting only each of them and not mankind. Dr. Pillow's muse has inspired his creativity and generosity, and he wants to share his sleep secret with everyone. In a word, his appeal is inclusive, and that is one reason why he is a real hero.

At last Madison Avenue has given us a product that is completely beneficial. In the past I have been suspicious of several fads and products that have been hyped, and I would ask myself: Is this product really necessary? What good does it serve? For example, did people really need Mr. Microphone? Do men really need Enzyte? Do fishermen really need Popeil's Pocket Fisherman? And what about the Swiss Army Shovel? Yes, there is an invention called the Swiss Army Shovel. But what about Diet Water? Air-Conditioned Shoes? When we live in a consumer culture, we are bound to be bombarded with useless gadgets and weird products. But My Pillow is truly a miracle product that can ease suffering and give people that bright eyed and bushy-tailed gusto to face each new day and live their lives to full measure.

What convinces me about the superiority of My Pillow is the inventor and spokesman himself. He speaks from the heart as he proudly embraces his pillow on the commercials. Such affection and enthusiasm cannot be gainsaid. His commercials have one distinctive feature that is missing in all of the other products we are urged to purchase: the genuine and sincere gratitude of Dr. Pillow himself. He thanks the people who have supported him in buying My Pillow, and he announces proudly that the pillow is made in his home state. I wish elected officials in Illinois would learn from this pride in one's state and its workers so we ordinary citizens in Illinois would not have to apologize for Illinois. Dr. Pillow is proud of Minnesota and not ashamed to proclaim that feeling. I wish he would move to Illinois and run for our state legislature. His personal example might empower Illinois voters to break

the tyranny of electing the same people decade after decade.

Furthermore, Dr. Pillow always impresses me as being trustworthy. He means what he says, and he doesn't promise us the moon and then leave us stranded in Chicago. He does not trick us into believing that My Pillow will give us romantic dreams or ideas leading to greatness or grandiose prophetic visions. No, his promise is modest: a good night's sleep for ordinary people. There are no beautiful women or handsome men to trick us in the My Pillow commercials. No phony doctors in lab coats telling us that studies at a leading Midwestern university have shown that cheese is the best bait to catch mice. No testimonials by stars of the entertainment world to rim-jiggle us into buying My Pillow. No ancient professional football stars to remind us that we need health insurance. Although Dr. Pillow is enthusiastic and confident in addressing us, he does not rant and rave like the Menards Man, the Title Max Man, or other loud bugbears who try to sell us snake oil products on the TV screen.

Years ago, Daniel Boorstin wrote an excellent book, *The Image*, in which his main point was to make readers aware that in a world dominated by the graphic revolution, especially television, image becomes most important—all important, actually. He explained rather cogently that in the graphic revolution real heroes are replaced by celebrities, substance is lacking and appearance or image is what counts. Boorstin defines a celebrity as “a person who is known for being well known.” The most pressing problem in advertising and politics is to become well known, which is a matter of selecting and projecting the most effective image. Even James Earl Carter, who tried his best to be a decent leader when he was president, asked Gerald Rafshoon to work on his image.

The My Pillow commercial has the perfect image to convince me. I look at Dr. Pillow, and I tell my wife that he could easily be the dean of students at some Midwestern liberal arts college. He has the presence, the flair, the smooth eloquence, the welcoming attitude, and the charm of a kindly college professor. In fact, if I were a high-level administrator at Heliotrope University, I would invite Dr. Pillow to speak at the mid-year graduation ceremony. And I would ask the trustees to award him an honorary degree. Thus, he could legitimately be called Dr. Pillow.

I am proud to say that Dr. Pillow is my hero. In this “fancy-frilly-you-gotta-have-a-gimmick world” of celebrities and gurus who gladly tell us what to think and how to live, manipulate us, and take our money, there is one person who has discovered a secret of mythic dimensions and is enthusiastic in sharing that secret in the form of My Pillow.

More recently Dr. Pillow has discovered the secret of making the perfect sheets and mattress pad. He tells us that he found the formula for these magic sleep devices in a remote valley near the Nile River. I suspect that he will discover other devices to help people get the perfect sleep. Dr. Pillow is to sleep what Colonel Sanders is to chicken.

Speaking of sleep, I need to tell you that recently I dreamed of Dr. Pillow. In the dream, I asked him, in his wisdom, to tell me the secret of human life. “What is the purpose of human life? Why are we here?”

Dr. Pillow smiled reassuringly, stroked his moustache, hugged his pillow, smiled, and said, “The purpose of life for Homo sapiens is to improve one's character.”

It's got to be more complicated and profound than that,” I responded, somewhat disappointed in the great man's answer.

“No, actually that is the fundamental purpose of human life. I wouldn't lie to you. Most people will tell

you that fame, wealth, and power are the most important, but actually it is one's character that is far more valuable than those three distractions. Character is what you take with you when you die. God wants each human being to be the best person he or she can become through transcendence, which means to improve one's character; and, by the way, one size doesn't fit all. Indeed, there are many ways to the top of the mountain, but people become confused and misled by what's popular, what's in—the fads and fashions of popularity, the celebrities and false messiahs of the world. That's why I am crusading to provide people with a good night's sleep. “

“Can you be of more help? I am not a philosopher, and I couldn't even play one on TV,” I pleaded.

Here Dr. Pillow surprised me. He said, “Read Plato and study what he says about the Good. As much as I would like to discuss Plato with you, I must not, as Henry David Thoreau cautioned, spend so much time in explanation. I'm busy working to develop the perfect footwarmer, the perfect heating pad, the perfect ice bag, and the perfect sleep station, complete with Mother Nature's ambient sounds.” Then he handed me a My Pillow, a set of sheets, and a mattress pad, smiled, and went off to sail the seven seas, travel to the four corners of the earth, and market My Pillow for the entire world, going all-out global, as college students say these days.

I must emphasize that I stand nothing to gain by this endorsement of My Pillow and its wonderful inventor. I fully realize that some who read this will accuse me of exaggerating. I would remind them of Cyrano de Bergerac's suggestion that there are some things a man would do well to exaggerate. But in all honesty, I do not need the empowerment which My Pillow promises. All my life I have been blessed with the ability to fall into a deep sleep. My wife will tell you I can sleep through a tornado or a rock band next door rehearsing all night, or the loud, persistent barking of a neighbor's dog. In fact, the only thing that awakens me is the summons to visit the bathroom in the wee hours of the morning. But that is no problem because I am asleep the moment I return to my bed. I don't need My Pillow, the sheets or the mattress pad, or the other perfect sleep devices Dr. Pillow plans to introduce in the future. Even though I do not need the benefits of My Pillow, I am convinced that Dr. Pillow and I could be the best of friends.