

## **Letter to the Editor** **[The Importance of Lightheartedness]**

**PAUL THOLEY**  
*Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, Germany*

I would now like to comment briefly on "Proceedings from Lucid Dreaming Symposium" (Lucidity Letter, June 1986). . . . I come to an important statement by Bouchet, that for "those who see life as a movie, a drama or game, something to be played," the question "Am I dreaming or not?" is not a problem. "It seems that one of the characteristics of the psychological field is a kind of serenity in the face of the diversity of life" (p. 218). I agree with this notion and would so formulate the idea: "a composed and lighthearted attitude towards reality and one's own self is conducive to the learning of lucid dreaming." Such an attitude is also an important condition for the solution of problems we encounter in our lives. . . . Allow me to illustrate the argument by means of a crucial experience I myself had. At the beginning of my first semester in psychology (November of 1958) one of our professors asked the following question: "Why is it that we do not see objects in our heads, although physiologists claim that our perception of things is due to brain processes?" We were to give the question some thought and had to deliver a written answer by the end of the semester. Shortly before the appointed time, I was out walking and was thinking about this question. I stopped to take a closer look at a tree. First of all it occurred to me that this tree could not possibly fit inside my head. Immediately afterwards, an enormous head appeared in my imagination which encompassed the entire perceptual world, including my perceptual body. I then also realized that my own body was represented in my brain through sensory processes. After this it was no longer a problem for me that perceptual objects are outside the perceptual body, in the same way that physical objects are outside the physical body. . . . Once I had grasped the fact that the world we see is simply a phenomenal (mental) world, I developed a completely new attitude to it. For the first time, the idea occurred to me of comparing the experienced real world with the dream world. . . .

As I was able to acquire a different attitude toward reality through the sketched epistemological model, I have tried in all my lectures on lucid dreaming to convey the model to my students. . . . I believe that my combined [induction] technique has been successful with my students because:

1. I have tried to convey to them—in the manner described—a lighthearted attitude towards reality;
2. My lectures on lucid dreaming were not compulsory, so that only motivated students attended them; and

3. In telling of their lucid dreams, the students were able to motivate each other.

. . . In our book (Tholey, P. & Utecht, K. (1987). *Schöpferisch Träumen: der Klartraum als Lebenshilfe*. Niedernhausen: Falken-Verlag) we have also attempted to convey to the readers a lighthearted attitude towards reality, so that lucid dream-ing may be learned without anxiety. Naturally, our techniques should be varied according to the persons involved.

Since in our opinion, many mental disorders stem from an egocenteredness which limits our perception, our thoughts, our emotions, our motivation and our behavior, being able to convey to someone a flexible and lighthearted attitude to the world and one's own person can be regarded as an important therapeutic step. When the person then uses an induction technique, which can be varied according to the nature of the disorder, a further therapeutic effect is usually observed before the patient has his/her first lucid dream. Once the patient has mastered the art of lucid dreaming and behaves in the appropriate manner during dreaming, then an important step toward self-healing has been made. Lucid dreaming should finally lead to "creative freedom" as it is referred to in Gestalt psychology (psychologie de la forme). I believe that there is an interdependence between the ability to have lucid dreams and "creative freedom"—in the sense of a positive feedback. In other words, a person in possession of a certain amount of creative freedom, will have less difficulty learning lucid dreaming and someone who has mastered the technique of lucid dreaming and behaves appropriately during lucid dreaming will be able to attain greater creative freedom. . . .

Paul Tholey