

Differences Between Lucid and Nonlucid Ecstatic Dreaming

ELINOR GEBREMEDHIN

Berwyn, Pennsylvania

In 1976, after a few years of occasionally dreaming lucid dreams which I did not differentiate from other dreams, there came a lengthy dream that announced itself as distinctive while I was dreaming it. Not only did I appear to myself to be distinctly "conscious" but the character of this consciousness was permeated with an ecstatic feeling of balance which changed my conception of what I could be in waking life, as well as in dreaming. Even though this dream was not the first one in which I made comments that made me appear to be aware that I was dreaming, it was the first one in which my dreaming "I" was initiated into a sharp awareness of a new state, and new possibilities for conscious development.

It was the distinctive balanced quality of the ecstatic element which particularly marked this dream as different than all its predecessors. The lucid ecstatic experience had a holistic clear-minded joy that was unlike the vibrant but mindless joy of nonlucid "high" dreams. Since it was new, I had no vocabulary to distinguish this kind of joy from all the other kinds I had thought were the sum total of what was possible. The following excerpts from the original write-up shows what a challenge it was to explain this experience to myself.

Four Judges In A Ball Court (August 8, 1976)

Dreamed I was walking down a corridor into a "basketball court" with tiled walls. There was a narrow walkway above the walls, and no bleachers for an audience, so later, when I woke, I realized it really looked more like a swimming pool. In the dream I as-sumed it was a basketball court.

Abruptly, with a feeling like the pop of a bubble breaking, the nature of my aware-ness changed from the usual dreaming kind to something like the normal everyday type of awareness, except that I was still asleep and dreaming. For some reason, this was de-lightful. There was a certain unmixed clarity of mind, as if all my thoughts and feelings were in their proper places, and I was conscious in the way I really ought to be in the daytime, all the time.

"I'm awake," I said out loud (in the dream) and just the clarity of the sensation of being conscious made me ecstatic. I went and ran my hands over the tiles on the wall; they were very hard, very smooth, and exquisitely cool. I was very interested to see how REAL they seemed. There was absolutely no confusion in

my mind that I was dreaming, and yet somehow I was awake without having departed from the dream state. So it was fascinating to me how my mind had conjured up this wall that felt so real to my dream fingers.

Then I turned and saw four men sitting around a card table, dressed in black robes like judges. [There were a few interchanges, and then the chief judge asked,] "How is she doing?" to one with a book.

"She must be doing all right, because she is still here," was the reply. Whereupon the chief judge disappeared, leaving his empty clothes sitting there in the chair. . . .

"What's that supposed to mean—that you're full of hot air?" I said, very exasperated. Then the whole group disappeared, card table and all. This startled me, and I felt as though my consciousness was slipping back into ordinary dreaming, even though I felt I had "passed the test" and would be allowed to stay this way (i.e., lucid). I went unsteadily over to the side of the court and felt the tile wall, still cool and hard. This steadied me, and I said, "I guess this dream is still holding up." After running my hand over the wall a little longer to make sure, and waiting for something to happen, I got bored and decided to explore.

[Several lucid episodes followed. . . .]

This excerpt from the "Four Judges" dream contained many features characteristic of lucid dreams that were to follow over the next fourteen years. Among them was a distinct sense of "shift" (like a bubble popping) or an image of delineation (door closing, window opening, stepping down a stair) that divides the previous sleeping or dreaming state from the lucid state; a leap of joy followed by an intense sense of enjoyment of quite ordinary objects and situations; much conjecturing about everything "without" and "within"; much curiosity and desire to experiment; the exercising of choosing and judging abilities usually associated with waking consciousness; vivid tactile sensations, especially cool sensations; lulls in the plot which required me to take the initiative in order for the dream to get moving again; a strong, relatively effortless grip on my sense of identity, and especially, a struggle to maintain "balance" (sometimes on bicycles or motorcycles) and move with the flow, instead of getting "upset."

The most distinctive element, however, was that these dreams often included an ecstatic experience of a new type. Up to that point, I had always associated ecstatic experience with an opening of the "heart" and a thoughtless kind of merging with

something "out there" that was felt to be intensely beautiful. The focus was on the wonderful or beautiful thing that was "out there." The ecstatic experience that was distinctly lucid combined a similarly heartfelt but somewhat less intense emotion with very clear mental activity and no loss of identity or ability to act in a variety of situations. Though less intense emotionally, it felt more exquisite, "higher," and less likely to burn out, and there was a substrata or background of self awareness. Both nonlucid dreaming and waking ecstatic experiences up to that point had always been associated with a passive attitude of taking it all in—to the point where "it" filled me—so plot, action, reasoning, identity, or anything else that required even a partial self awareness tended to destroy the ecstatic state. Perhaps this is the reason that most of my experiences have occurred while intensely absorbed playing complex music, or during childhood, or while dreaming; at other times, my waking ego has had enough energy to unbalance the merger.

In nonlucid dreams something out there seems to be beautiful in itself and I disappear into it, participating in the beauty which "it" has. It does not occur to me to recognize that "it" is something which I have created in every sense of the word, since it is an image in a dream. In lucid dreams, "I" am ecstatic and all of that "out there" is a dream which I can enjoy no matter what it is, because I have come together in the right way. I know what I am really doing (i.e., dreaming), and it is my dream. It is not because "it is beautiful" but because "I can experience things (almost any-thing) as beautiful."

After the ecstatic experience of the "Four Judges" initiated me into a sense of the lucid dream state as being important, without explaining exactly why it was, I began to notice these dreams—whether I liked it or not! After a few years passed, I had discovered that lucidity and ecstasy came in several related guises. First, lucid-ity itself felt like some type of laid-back ecstatic state so that even if the dream was frustrating, boring, anxious, or even nightmarish, there tended to be a leftover feeling of elation the next day simply because of having functioned in a lucid manner, however briefly. Some dreams just had a wonderfully "clear" feeling to them; only a few rose to the level of being really "high," or ecstatic as the Four Judges dream had been.

Most of the dreams that had distinctly "high" episodes fit a pattern. The "high" most commonly flared up at recognizing that I was lucid, although in the beginning I used other labels for this recognition, like "conscious" and "aware." Since many of my lucid dreams start out with simply realizing my state of mind, rather than deduc-ing it from some anomaly, many lucid dreams started out with the ecstatic peak right at the beginning, or close to the beginning. The intensity might fade after a bit, but, unlike waking life experience, it tended not to completely disappear . . . that is, as long as I

remained lucid. Furthermore, I did not stand around just being ecstatic, but usually ecstatically participated in the plot which means the write-ups don't adequately portray the ecstasy as a background.

As it turned out, most of the lucid dreams I had over the fourteen years that followed the initiation dream of the Four Judges, were much shorter. During this earlier period of naive spontaneity, before I had heard about lucid dreaming research, more than half of the lucid dreams started out with or included at least a few moments of the unified ecstatic state of the first dream. It was clear that a lift of the heart combined with a sense of balanced, clarified mental activity was triggered by the recognition that I was lucid, not by something beautiful "out there."

Hanging In There

What makes me able to remain lucid and ecstatic over a long time in a dream, once it has started? The answer to this question is still not clear to me, although the dream-making component of my mind often sets the stage for what will happen at the beginning by means of images of balance. Intentional review and practice in waking life appears to help induce the type of lucidity with low-level background-ecstatic characteristics, but what calls up and maintains the really high highs is a mystery to me. Saying that a heartfelt response combined with clear thinking and steady balance are characteristic ingredients does not help me call up the heartfelt response, or steady me when I feel uncertain. Compare, for instance, the following three dreams, which are arranged in order of how "high" they went. The first dream collapsed as soon as I encountered my sister in the second scene, whereas the other two continued over a number of apparently unrelated but continuously lucid episodes.

My Sister Has Holes In Her Socks (October 28, 1976)

Dreamed I was walking up the walk toward a big Victorian house, with my young-est daughter, age four, following me. I opened the front door and pop! I was suddenly aware—feeling fully conscious again like in the daytime, but still without leaving the dream. I felt a tremendous lift in spirits, but stepped forward very cautiously, because for some reason my grip on this state of mind seemed fragile. I felt that if I didn't walk very carefully . . . I would fall back into regular dreaming. . . . I put one foot in front of another in a line so as "not to jiggle the dream . . ." [but shortly I awoke in the next scene].

Honored By An Iris (July 15, 1984)

. . . [After several nonlucid episodes] I stood still and looked down this path [a

short-cut through a swamp], listening to the wind in the reeds, and reflected. Then I backed off and turned around with a sense of patience, so as to take a longer way home where I was less likely to get mired in mud.

Immediately, I was riding a bicycle down the upper hall of a school. I approached a wide staircase, and heard beautiful music coming up. I parked the bicycle, and went to hear it. As soon as I set foot on the stairs, I became fully lucid, simultaneously pervaded with a large, solid happiness. Everything was so real-seeming and clear, and there was such a sense of immediate contact with my environment, that for a moment I doubted I was dreaming, and in the next moment wondered if I might be on the verge of physically waking up. I went down the wide staircase, happily drinking in my surroundings, but at the same time being very very careful not to stumble and fall [because I didn't want to do anything that would wake me up].

I sat down in the audience and heard an unfamiliar piece of string music. "I wonder, does this mean I made this piece of music up myself, or have I just heard it once before, so it is in my unconscious memory even though I can't remember it?" I asked myself . . . [and went on to several more lucid episodes].

Jumping High On the Pier (May 15, 1984)

Dreamed that I was riding a two-wheeled vehicle like a motorcycle or bicycle, toward a pier, and I had to navigate very very carefully and attentively over a pile of dirt and debris in the way. I did so, feeling very clear-headed. I came to a halt, took a deep breath of the lovely clear air, and knew with a deep steady joy that I was dreaming. I looked around and saw a deep blue sky with a few white clouds, and sparkling water, like a bay at the edge of an ocean, and a quaint waterfront scene, like a cozy New England resort. Everything was very clear; my seeing was completely without effort, and I looked around for a few moments just savoring the sparkling clarity and my own sense of being whole and solidly there.

I felt so good to be having this kind of dream that I jumped high, high into the air several times, and landed perfectly balanced, like a dancer. I felt very sure of my footing, and full of a solid confidence, the way I feel when doing something I have had a lot of practice in. Then I was walked into the quaint town . . . [and several more lucid episodes followed].

Obviously, the sense of certainty in the second and third dreams was a key in-gredient to maintaining length, but this is not saying much. The initiation dream of the Four

Judges had this sense of certainty even though I had never been fully aware in my dreams before, so why would the feeling of steadiness disappear and reappear from one dream to another over the years? I have no answer to this, other than to conjecture that there may be a physical rather than a psychological factor to the issue of "balance" [Editor's Note: this was originally published before the writer had read Jayne Gackenbach's research on the relation of balance and lucidity].

Nonlucid Ecstatic Dreams

For a period of a little more than a year before the initiating lucid dream of the "Four Judges," I had periodically had ecstatic nonlucid dreams which were different from lucid highs, and ordinary "happy" dreams. They were not only intense, but they also included a distinctive "vibrant" sensation, and a sense of merging and resonating with whatever it was that had suddenly seemed so beautiful. These features made me feel they were mystical in some sense.

Regardless, there were only a few of them. For the most part, they disappeared as a separate type after the onset of lucid dreaming. They probably fit the conventional conception of an ecstatic state better than lucid dreams do. As Table 1 shows, there are a surprising number of differences between lucid and nonlucid types.

Sparrows Dancing On The Water (May 25, 1975)

Dreamed I was walking through a hilly wooded green area, and came to a beautiful lake in a clearing. The day was lovely. The sky was blue, the sun was shining and the air was comfortably cool.

I looked into the clear waters of the lake and saw a dozen or so sparrows sleeping in the bottom of the lake. As I watched, one woke up, floated to the surface, and began dancing on its toes. Instead of there being spread-out bird-like feet, each of the sparrow's feet came down to a single toe, in a shape like that of a dancer's toe slipper. Although sparrows are pretty drab, and this kind of a foot on a sparrow sounds grotesque, the bird's dance immediately became absolutely exquisite to me. I was totally caught up in it, so there seemed to be nobody or nothing left that wasn't part of the beauty that vibrated out of the dancing bird. The dance was stately, graceful, very composed; my feelings danced with every movement of the bird. The luminous sense of dancing seemed to go on for a long time. It wasn't that I thought of dancing, or knew the bird was dancing, or saw the bird dancing in the dream . . . it was as if the dancing happened completely everywhere. Every element of the dream turned into the dance, the trees, the clear lake, and my own feelings. It's hard to

convey this.

When it finished the dance, the bird sank down and went back to sleep. Immediately, another one woke up and did the same thing. As soon as it broke the surface and began to dance, I was totally charmed again, and my attention, feelings, vision, every-thing, vibrated in a slow, cool, lovely dance—a kind of steady ecstasy, except "ecstasy" gives the wrong impression of rising to a peak and then crashing afterwards. The dance of the birds was so quiet and unhurried. . . .

Sparrows are not usually thought of as images of power, but this is one of the most memorable nonlucid dreams I have ever had. Like the "Eyes In The River" quoted later, the sparrows themselves were like the movement of individual thoughts rising up and falling back into unconscious levels of the mind. However, I don't really care what they might represent. Like most of the ecstatic dreams, it was not the meaning of the dream that remained with me, but the seductive nature of the experience itself. I wanted to relive it, or at least remember its ecstatic flavor, not decode it and dig out a message. The message felt glued to the envelope.

Two more examples of the nonlucid type follow, both of which have a more deistically-oriented content, but not much difference in flavor. In the second dream, the usual sense of "vibrant" natural imagery was translated into experiences of re-verberating sounds.

Into The Boiling Sun (May 17, 1976)

Dreamed that . . . [a transparent] door let me out into a beautiful green countryside in the early evening. There were rolling hills, lush greenery, farmland, trees all with a kind of shimmering beauty that took hold of me and seemed to flow in and around me. I walked down a straight road with all this beauty to the right and to the left. Straight ahead was an even more gripping sight: the evening sun had grown huge and red, hang-ing just above the horizon. It seemed to shimmer and shift and boil in the sky with great intensity, sending a beautiful but fierce shimmering light down on the landscape, which in turn sent up its own beautiful shimmering waves of beauty. I walked with unaverted eyes straight down into the sun.

Glory Song (June 20, 1988)

Dreamed I bought school land as an investment, and then thought maybe I should sell it and invest in something else. It had a day care center on it . . .

[after several changes of mind], I came into the day care center and saw that one of the children was the Christ child. He was surrounded by a number of other children.

[Then there was a big sound, not like an imagined dream-sound, but like an actually heard sound from the waking world reverberating through the dream, of a HUGE choir of men's voices, singing that chorus that starts "Glory, glory, resounds on high, voices of love, echo above; Choirs of angels their adoration show . . ." and so on (I forget the com-poser). The sound, a huge marvelous sound actually heard in the dream, filled up my mind, my body, my bones, until it became what I was thinking and feeling, shifting me away from all that think-think-think that had been going on in the beginning of the dream. I was completely ecstatic.

Mixed Mode Problem Dreams

There have been a number of times where dreams appeared that appeared to give the lie to the tidy differentiations I've been establishing here between lucid ecstatic dreams and nonlucid ecstatic dreams. It is interesting that so far, either specific patterns or some probable explanations have emerged for these deviants.

The first example is a dream which clearly has the nonlucid type of ecstatic episode imbedded in a dream which appears to be lucid. The only problem with this description is that the dream may look that way from the write-up, but there was no felt-sense of a lucid dream. It preceded the initiation dream in which my dreaming "I" recognized those types of dreams as being something unique. The ecstatic portion of this very long dream is as follows.

Eyes In The River (August 10, 1975)

[After several scenes], I was in a room in the upper story of a house. . . . With my arms held over my head, I looked out the window and there I saw something very beautiful. As soon as I saw it, the nature of the dream changed in such a way that the whole dream seemed luminous and full of a wide eerie atmosphere of beauty. The image of the outside scene seemed to fill my consciousness, so that the sense of myself diminished to nearly nothing—as if I were the outside scene as well as the inside watcher (which is strictly speaking true since this was a dream). The way this shift felt is difficult to describe. In a way I was ecstatic, but without the sense of being individually emotional. Rather, everything expanded so that the beauty seemed to beat, or vibrate, through the whole dream and the dreamer.

What I saw was a river, misting upwards, much like the Cooper River does on a cool morning, steaming like an elongated cup of coffee or tea. Hippopotamuses swam underwater, great shadows moving to and fro. One by one, here and there, they would rise slowly to the surface, and their great luminous eyes would rise up and serenely peer through the mist from underneath protective ridges of bone. Only the eye-ridges and their eyes would break above the surface of the water. After a few moments of gazing about, the eyes and head would tip slowly sideways, and slide back under. I was en-tranced. The misty surface of the river shifted back and forth with the movement of the luminous eyes rising up above the dark shadows of their bodies and then sliding back under the water again. But, as I stood looking at them, my forgotten arms still over my head, danger came into the house. People began to panic. They ran past me, out onto the porch roof and jumped to the ground as if fire had blocked the usual exits. It didn't occur to me that what-ever the danger was, it would also be a danger to me; I just kept on looking at the eyes in the water, forgetting about all else. They were so very, very beautiful, with a gentle, feminine aspect. Soon I was musing there, alone. I said to myself, I must remember this when I wake up.

Then abruptly, the scene changed. . . .

The second example is clearly a lucid dream, but in addition to the usual steady-state background of joy, there is a section that looks like it is moving toward the type of passive ecstatic merging that goes on once in a while in my nonlucid dreams. There have been several dreams like this, and they share three characteristics. First, the sense of identity is not lost. Second, a sensation of cold, or chill is present. Third, there is an atmosphere of quiet that may include a whispering sound, as well as visual imagery of snow. An example of this follows.

Dancer With a Changing Face (January 12, 1982)

. . . I woke up in a daze and reached over into my pocketbook, which was next to my bed as usual, and found my bottle of pills. I sat up with the pill bottle in hand, took off the top, took out the wad of cotton, and started to reach for one of the red and grey pills. But, before I gripped the pill, I stopped, and looked at the piece of cotton in my hand and said, "Hey, wait a minute, I didn't have any cotton in the top of this pill bottle."

Then, with a leap of joy I realized that I hadn't woken up at all. I was dreaming and I was having one of these "fully aware" dreams for the first time in several

years.

'I must be getting better; maybe this medicine is doing me good,' I thought. I experimentally threw the cotton away, and instead of falling to the floor, it went sailing slowly in a straight line outwards, defying the laws of gravity. I was overjoyed to see this, because I knew for sure that I must be in the land of dreams.

I looked around at my new world to see what there was to see. It was very very interesting to me. The corner I was in was an exact replica of my bedroom. . . . The most interesting feature of the room was the bank of windows opposite the door. These ran the entire length of the room and were covered by a wooden latticework that was very attractive. I got up and walked across a distinctly cold cement floor in my bare feet and looked out.

I was gripped by the sight of a beautiful, luminous, quiet scene: snow falling in the whisper-quiet fashion it assumes when the flakes are fat and there is no wind. Neat houses sat across the way, with a little dip of the land in between. Evergreens here and there were all edged with snow. The snow whispered to me. I quietly enjoyed this for a while, drinking it in and drinking it in, and then finally let it go to turn to the door. . . .

The third type of dream that does not tidily fit the lucid pattern belongs to a group that has only arisen in the last six years. This pattern emerged when I started to read more about lucid dreaming per se in the 1983–1984 time frame, and participated in some studies by Scott Sparrow that encouraged more lucid dreaming. As the numbers of my lucid dreams rose, my dreaming mind wanted to refine its opinion of what state was going on. (It seemed to do this by itself before I made up my daytime mind that this might be interesting to think about.) When it would re-cognize that I was asleep, and must therefore be dreaming, it would sometime object to the "lucid dream" label, because the felt-sense was different. The lucid "dream" that didn't feel like a dream often seemed to slide into and out of other types of dreaming. The following example is an experience which probably is a mixture of dream and hypnopompic image as far as the research world is concerned, but since my bedroom lacks a sleep lab, there is no way of my knowing how much of which is what. By this time in my dreaming career, many of my ordinary middle-of-the-night lucid and nonlucid dreams have passages with a lot of reflective verbiage like this one does, so that is definitely no criterion.

In the past, I could have had more of an opinion as to the type of dream this is, because hypnagogic/hypnopompic images would wink on in full color, and, like a snapshot, would lack the plot or the sense of inherent symbolism that is characteris-tic

of most of my dreams. They could easily be distinguished from dreams. However, over the years, hypnagogic possibilities have developed to include dream-like "movies" which feel more like hypnagogic images than dreams, lucid-like experiences in which I know I'm not awake but feel like I'm in an altered state that is somehow different than lucid dreaming OR hypnagogic/hypnopompic imaging, sliding scale experiences which move from static images to "movies" to full-blown dreams or vice versa, and so on.

Whatever this experience should be called, it was certainly ecstatic.

Light And The Ivory City (February 22, 1988)

Shifting abruptly out of dreamless sleep into lucid dreaming, I found myself viewing a static pattern of dusty white lines and rectangles as if looking across the roofs and streets of a deserted Middle-Eastern city. Everything was a soft, clean, white color . . . even the "dust" in the "streets." Although I knew without a doubt that I was in my bed in the dark night, a soft ivory "daylight," filled the image from end to end.

As I strained with my eyes, trying to get this picture in better focus, something distinctly in my throat and upper chest region was also breathing in the sense of how beautiful the ivory city was. This steady taking-in was like a low-keyed ecstasy that just went on and on regardless of what I thought.

Nothing much happened "out there" at first, yet my mind became very busy-busy, trying to figure out how "I" was related to what I was "looking at." I knew I was not awake in any normal sense of the word, and therefore ought to assume I was dreaming a lucid dream, but this experience didn't feel like a dream. Something seemed to be really "out there" in front of my open eyes . . . yet I was absolutely convinced I was asleep, lying on my back in bed with my real eyes closed.

My busy-busy mind then saw matters as even more complex. A faint conflicting feeling in the background said "I" was "really" somewhere else altogether. According to this faint felt-sense, whatever there was in me that was seeing, was hovering over a real city, but the whatever wasn't focusing it quite right.

Regardless, I couldn't quite focus. My busy-busy mind struggled quite a bit to focus better, to see whether this was really an unfocused vision of a real city, or just an abstract pattern that reminded me of a city.

Suddenly I felt a kind of clenching movement of the upper spine, around shoulder-blade level, a distinctly physical nerve/muscle sensation accompanied by a sense of certainty that at least THIS event took place "out there" in my real physical spine, not "in here" in a mental world. The bodily sensation rose once, then subsided, followed by a wonderful clearing and spreading of my mind space, as if my inner space had suddenly grown much larger and all the mental "dust" and "humidity" had dropped out of the air.

This change in the sense of mind "size" was a new (and short-lived) experience. Everything grew marvelously wide and "unclouded" all by itself, but the extra capacity didn't help. I still didn't "get it," grasp it, focus, or feel sure about how the pattern/city related to me.

Suddenly I just gave up grappling with this trying-to-perceive and decided arbitrarily that whatever the lovely thing was, all of ME was still in bed, reacting to an image before my inner vision. In spite of the way it felt, it was NOT "out there." I asserted to myself that I was NOT wandering about the earth in a second body viewing a real city; the OBE "remote location" idea was just a tiresome idea from a book somewhere.

In other words, I discarded these multiple conflicting idea patterns because of some kind of mental tiring, not because of a satisfying resolution.

While all this busy-busy mental activity was going on, the delicately lit ivory city/ pattern still sat before my eyes, and a wonderful, low-keyed feeling-response kept going on and on, not peaking, but just steady, with no burnout. After a time, however, the steady glow of the city image itself began to bother me. Its pattern felt like it was burning through the back of my "dream eyes" into real nerves in the real eyes in my real head.

Then I was seized with curiosity, just FILLED with it, wondering if this so-steady image would remain before my vision even if I opened my real physical eyes. I decided to try it out, reasoning that this would be all right because eyelids are not paralyzed in the dream state.

When I carefully opened my eyes, the image did stay there clearly for just a moment, then slowly began to fade, until I could see the dim outline of the bedroom window near the foot of my bed. Quickly I closed my eyes and the image instantly came back, just as strong and glowing as it was before. The soft, spreading light and the utterly pure white-ness of everything was so beautiful; I was so glad I hadn't lost it.

With a feeling of great interest, I concluded that part of my mind could project an image "that wasn't really there," with such vividness that the image could block out seeing the real window, even if it lasted only briefly. I thought this faculty could be strengthened (it didn't occur to me to wonder if I might be dreaming the eye opening, or to wonder why anyone would want to develop such an hallucinatory capacity!).

As I continued to inwardly "look at" and "take in" the image of the city in the ivory light, I remembered reading a long time ago about a woman with blood sugar problems. This woman had gone into her bathroom, and hallucinated four tiny men playing poker while seated around a tiny card table floating in her toilet bowl. She shut her eyes, think-ing that this would cause the illusion to vanish, and then grew hysterical when she opened her eyes and saw the tiny men still there playing cards. A feeling of warmth and compas-sion toward her rose up and filled my chest. My dream-mind thought to itself how sad it was that she had experienced all that agony because she didn't know how images worked, and especially how they could be retained for a while after you opened your eyes.

As this thought faded away, there appeared to the right of my "visual" field a ball of pure light, purest, purest light, so intense that part of the ivory city was overpowered and blurred. The ball of light, unlike the ivory pattern, had the atmosphere of being a person; it gave out a healing kind of warmth that seemed both emotional and physical. My right cheek was distinctly heated by it. Later, this feeling of heat in my right cheek would return when I remembered the dream, but faded after a week or so.

There was an immediate sense of recognition for this ball of light. It didn't have to do with names identifying who or what it was. It was an overall bodily kind of recog-nition like meeting a very good friend unexpectedly in a crowd of strangers. My whole mind-sense ceased its busy-busy activity and turned itself slowly toward the ball of light in a composed, formal movement, as if all of me were participating in a Japanese tea ceremony.

I calmly thought that I was epileptic, so it might be better to do such things in small doses. [This is true.] Without haste or regret for this brevity, I bent my mind as if it were bowing, and briefly touched the light with my mind. Then I slowly climbed up through layers of sleep into full waking, still ecstatic.

This write-up is particularly apt for pointing out the problems of trying to express multifaceted dreams that place their emphasis on an element other than the dream's plot. Language does not work very well, because it doesn't convey the strongest

element, which was not the linear stream of ideas and events, but rather the aura of beauty and ecstasy that remained a steady substrata all the way through. Since this dominating element did not change much and is hard to convey anyway, there's not much to be said after a sentence or two in the beginning. How many times should I have repeated "By the way, that was still going on while this other thing was happening"? The preponderance of the description is spent explaining the shifts in visual imagery and ideation, which were the less dominant elements, but are more amenable to expression in verbal language, especially English. Reading this write-up is like watching a film where somebody turned off the sound.

This problem is probably experienced by anyone trying to convey how an ecstatic state felt.