

Lucidity Language: A Personnel Observation

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I appreciate having Lucidity Letter for sharing information on the study of lucid dreaming. I would like to comment on some of the language used in professional discussion of the subject. My own qualification for speaking is my experience of over 300 lucid dreams, all of which I have described in detail. I have masters level degrees in Divinity and Journalism and am at present in a doctoral program in Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania.

I have not seen sufficient discussion of the following terms that are used:

1. lucidity. When I was first having lucid dreams I was a missionary in northeast India and being a bit isolated, I did not know that the experience was shared by others. As I was keeping a journal of the dreams, I made up the term “known dream” for the experience. I have since become familiar with the term “lucid dream.” My early objection to this term was that the dream environment was no more lucid or bright after I knew I was dreaming than before. Nor could my mental condition be considered more lucid after I knew I was dreaming than before, the only difference between so—called lucidity and non—lucidity that I could detect being that I knew I was dreaming in the one state and not the other. It appears to me that I have to become lucid in some manner mentally in order to notice inconsistencies or to spot the dream—like quality of the dream before I realize I’m dreaming. I have to in this sense be lucid (during “pre—lucidity”) in order to become aware that I am dreaming. Never—the—less I have become reconciled to the use of the terms “lucid dreams” and “pre— lucidity.”

2. waking consciousness. I now see the ex-pression “waking consciousness during the dream,” which goes with the assumption that we can “reason clearly and remember freely” in a lucid dream (LaBerge article in Psychology Today, Jan., 1981). In none of my lucid dreams could I reason as clearly or remember as fully as when awake. From the beginning I have carried out experiments in my lucid dreams after planning them while awake. As soon as I realize I am dreaming, I try to recall the experiment I am to do. This consists of trying to bring to mind a catch phrase that would instruct me what to do. For instance, I remember “solidity” when I am -making experiments on the solidity of ob-jects. I remember the word “poetry” when I am to compose a two—line poem in a lucid dream. In August, 1981, I made a study of my lucid dreams till that time. I had by then had 277 lucid dreams for which I had planned an experiment. In only 44% of them was I able to remember correctly at least part of the planned experiment. This per-centage varied according to the type of dream. For instance, in 74% of dreams in which I found myself upstairs in a house I remembered, while in 39% of flying dreams I did. Nor does being able to remember one specific thing indicate a general ability to remember. I

generally could not remember my waking situation at all. In a series of experiments in which I tried to recall where I was sleeping, I never could remember very specifically. I usually thought of a place where I would have been sleeping some years back. Memory is not as when awake. I did, however, find that rote memory was good, as when I would count or recite the Lord's Prayer. I do not reason much better in lucid dreams than in ordinary dreams. When I can-not remember what experiment I am to do, I try to think of an alternative experiment. In only 54% of lucid dreams did I either think of the correct experiment or a reason-able alternative. Often my spontaneous experiments were rather silly. For example, I spontaneously studied the car that my mother went off in order to compare it when I awoke with the car that she really went off in. That was not rational. I also found that I could not judge the success of an experiment while still dreaming. I had to wake up to do that. I consistently cannot remember well or reason well while dreaming lucidly. So I question speaking of waking consciousness during dreaming.

3. dream control. Certainly while dreaming lucidly I can control certain elements of the dream. In fact, one of my best experiments was to plan a dream while awake that would involve my voluntary action, a specific dream environment, and action by another dream person. Eventually this experiment was successful. I did what I planned in a specific kind of place and dealt with another person playing her part, all as planned while awake. But although the generalities were carried through as planned, most objects and views, nuances of behavior, shapes and colors, in their great multiplicity could not be planned, and there were many unexpected elements. "Dream control" is perhaps too strong a word even to describe carrying out a planned dream. The concept of dream control also implies (wrongly, I believe) that we do not (unknowingly) manipulate or control ordinary dreams to some extent.

4. false awakening. Many "false awakenings" are just that. But there are varieties of the same phenomenon which are not strictly false awakenings. At times there is a sudden shift in the dream to another scene, after which I am not lucid. This is similar to a "false awakening" but I do not experience waking up. One time I was suddenly walking downstairs and telling people what had happened. At another time I was suddenly in new surroundings telling people what I had just dreamed, remembering that I had been lucid, but there was no transition at all to this, no waking up, but the shift had taken away my lucidity. Though no awakening was involved the experience was the same as a false awakening.

5. out-of-the-body-experience. I have certainly had varieties of experience which were completely as though I were out of my body including the feeling of rising out of the body, the "astral projection" sensation in which I seem to travel very far, and falling back into the body. Yet I have never been able to verify to myself that I have indeed been out of the body. I have, in fact, verified to myself in one experience of "projection," that I had not left in any manner the position that I found myself in when I woke up. So that if I am asked whether I have had an OBE, I must answer no in circumstances whereby

someone else may answer yes. Perhaps we could speak of a “Supposed OBE” or a “being—out—of—the—body—sensation.” The word “sensation” would imply that that certainly was the sense experience, even if not reality the

I hope that some will find these comments useful.

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