

Letters to the Editor

Response to Gillespie

I have some comments in response to George Gillespie, University of Pennsylvania (Lucidity Letter, Vol. 1, No. 4). I have always assumed that all of the terms used in discussion of lucidity are relative——i.e., they vary through a wide range of degree. ‘Lucidity’ I take to mean ANY degree of awareness of fact of your dreaming. ‘Waking consciousness’ is a further clarification of lucidity and can occur in a dream from the simplest knowledge that you ARE dreaming, right up to the rational carrying out of experiments. The fact that it may be a limited degree of awareness doesn’t nullify it as waking consciousness.’ ‘Out—of—the—body’; I think George is taking too limited a view of what this means. To me, there is no contradiction between being aware of the physical body in its sleeping location and having your consciousness busy elsewhere. This is merely an expansion of consciousness so that you are aware of being in two places at once--bi-location. It isn’t necessary to experience a separation process or a traveling process to get out of the body. Consciousness can be instantaneously wherever it desires to be--even on the moon or some other planet. As long as you’re not tied into the physical body in the customary waking condition, you’re ‘out—of—the—body’ to some degree.

What is reality after all? — A mental creation; even waking, physical reality is a creation of the mind. So why quibble about whether you are in or out of the body when you’re dreaming? I think most dreams can be thought of as OBEs. Even in so-called ‘ordinary dreams’ it is possible to think as rationally as in the full, waking state. Many of my dream group members and I myself have frequently experienced the process of rationally analyzing dreams while they are proceeding—apparently an awareness, although not specifically stated, that one is in fact dreaming. When you think of your waking con-sciousness, by and large, how often do you in fact function ‘absent—mindedly’?--strictly speaking, you are truly ‘out—of—the—body’ quite frequently even in the waking state!

I find it limiting to try to set hard and fine definitions for various dreaming states. There is a point where measuring and observ-ing physiological phenomena connected with dreaming becomes hampering rather than help-ing. It seems clear to me that hard and fast proofs will never satisfy the determined skeptic. Only direct personal experience will convince in the long run.

——Peggy Specht, Toronto, Canada

Response to Gackenbach

I have an experience that may be of interest in relation to Gackenbach’s research

“Balance and Lucid Dreaming Ability: A Suggested Re-relationship” (Lucidity Letter, Vol. 1, No. 2). A few years ago while I was doing graduate work in philosophy (I have a B.A. in both philosophy and psychology) at Ohio University, I became very interested in increasing the level of my continuous waking awareness. I was trying to be able to be very aware of all that was going on around me, as well as trying to develop narrowly concentrated “one—pointedness.” I found Castenada’s paradigm of being a “hunter” most encouraging and to this end I practiced variations of his “right way of waking” in order to quiet my mind so that I could be more outwardly perceptive. As I traveled to class each day, I walked several hundred yards along a railroad track. Just for fun I often tried to walk along the top of one of the rails and it soon became apparent to me that to successfully walk a distance along the rail required that I quiet my internal thoughts and increase my bodily and external awareness. I began to practice walking on the rail for that reason. Any activity which demands continuous concentration can develop mental quietness and perceptual awareness, but I think balancing on the rail was especially useful for several reasons. It is at once physically difficult enough to require perceptual/kinesthetic concentration and also mentally simple enough (as there is not much to understand) to allow mental quieting. Also, I got immediate feedback as to how I was doing because almost every time my thoughts shifted (however unconsciously) I fell off and was reminded of where I was. Sitting meditation lacks this advantage.

Now then, in those dreams where I was able to maintain lucidity for more than a fraction of a minute before drifting back to regular dreaming, I found that the mental quietness/perceptual awareness ability I had been trying to cultivate by balancing on the rail was most useful in maintaining lucidity while witnessing the dream unfold. What I am saying is, the ability to balance may be related to the ability to dream lucidly in some people because there is an underlying ability common to both skills; the ability to be mentally quiet and yet perceptually aware. I am, however, not in a position to make any comments regarding any physiological correlation between those skills.

—— W. Mark Peth, Allison Park, PA

Response to Worsley

Keith Hearne has advised me that he is in disagreement with Alan Worsley’s account of Worsley’s contribution to Hearne’s dissertation research and I am currently looking into the matter.

—— Jayne Gackenbach, Editor, *Lucidity Letter*

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