

Objective Vs. Subjective Approaches to Investigating Dream Lucidity: A Case for the Subjective

Alan Worsley, EEG Department
St. Thomas's Hospital, London

In lucid dreams we are dealing very much with images and ideas, feelings and imagination, desire and will. Although, obviously, statistics can be applied there is much scope for discussion on a literary rather than a mathematical level though it is harder to appear scientific in some contexts unless figures can be quoted. I do realize that the phenomenon of lucid dreams is one which is particularly susceptible to suggestion and that objective verification is even more important than usual but at the same time we are at the beginning of the exploration of the subject and provided reported observations are suitably qualified the stimulating effect of exciting discoveries can be retained without embedding a whole collection of misguided preconceptions into the lore of lucid dreams as seems to be the case with astral projection and ritual magic.

In this connection I would mention 2 articles, one by Roger Sperry in the 24th September edition of *SCIENCE* (1982) about the split brain work (Some Effects of Disconnecting the Cerebral Hemispheres) in which on the last page (1226) under the heading 'Progress on the Mind—Brain Problem' he has several paragraphs about the new role of inner experience as a now increasingly accepted valid causal factor in brain function, i.e., that as he says, 'The events of inner experience, as emergent properties of brain processes, become themselves explanatory causal constructs in their own right, interacting at their own level with their own laws and dynamics.' This seems to lend support to the view that in many cases the events in dreams can on]>>' be treated verbally and cannot be adequately dealt with by measurement and that co re-strict investigation to those aspects that can be measured would stifle valuable exploration.

The other article appeared in *NEW SOCIETY* in 1974 (May 23, p. 438) 'Psychology: Towards a Science of Fiction' by Richard Gregory. Sub-titled "People live by their internal 'fictions' at least as much as by 'fact.' Should psychology focus on this rather than on direct imitation of natural science.", it puts forward much the same new paradigm as Sperry though he admits that, at the time, it is 'an issue too hot to be handled safely.' He says that to move towards this new approach requires 'an act of faith that adequate scientific methods can be devised for discovering and describing the fiction that controls organisms — and is their perception of the world.' I do think that the study of lucid dreams may be able to contribute significantly to this new but fundamental branch of psychology. The events in LDs seem to depend very much on what is expected and on the variations of expectations which happen either 'spontaneously' in accordance with moods and feelings or can be deliberately controlled with greater or lesser degrees of success depending on how skilled the dreamer is at modifying his beliefs at a moment's notice. This is clearly a matter of 'internal fictions' as referred to by Gregory

and the 'mental forces/explanatory causal constructs' which Sperry puts forward. Gregory goes on to say, "If, indeed, much of behaviour is given from internal, largely inaccessible "brain fiction," then the hope of finding simple re-lations (transfer functions) between inputs and outputs, or stimuli and responses is destroyed." There is much room and need for basic philosophical analysis in connection with LDs.

Original source: *Lucidity Letter Back Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 2, April, 1983, page 55.