

Dreams Control or Dream Actualization?

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I was dreaming again my nightmare in which I was swimming far out from shore and losing strength. I was going to drown when I remembered Strephon's words, 'Just go with it and see where the dream takes you.' I then let go to the waves and they carried me to shore where I walked up the beach to the amazement of my friends."--Dream of a student of Strephon Kaplan Williams's Dream Actualization approach as described in his JUNGIAN-SENOI DREAMWORK MANUAL.

The above dream takes us into the drama of experiencing the dream world fully. This student of mine was already practicing lucid dreaming, or dream control. She could recognize in a dream that she was dreaming and change unpleasant scenes into something different by recognizing that she was dreaming, and had that power. However, she did not like the results she was getting. The changes she created averted her dream disasters, but they led to scenes which were often disgusting to her. I suggested a different way, a way based more on Senoi and Jungian principles than on the ones practiced by modern dream control adherents.

Is Lucid Dreaming a Good Thing?

What some modern lucid dreamers who also chose to practice dream controllers try to do, and succeed somewhat, is alter their dream states consciously. They can report when they are having a dream in which they know they are dreaming. They can also train themselves and others to alter dream experiences at will, such as flying away from adversaries instead of staying put and encountering them. This marks a fundamental difference between the Dream Actualization approach and the Control Dream approach.

What my students most commonly say on the question is, "Who wants to change their dreams, anyway? I like mine the way they are. I want my dreams to speak to me without distortion by my ego." Or, "Yes, I learned to train myself to know that I am dreaming by looking at my hands, as was suggested in the Don Juan books by Carlos Castaneda. But so what? What then?"

Exactly! What then? As a way of explaining the issues and the differences in the two approaches we can think of the dream process somewhat as follows.

How the Dreaming Process May Work

First we have the original dream experience. We don't really know what it is or where it

comes from. But we do know that most dreams are a rich and feeling experience in imagery in which we, our image of ourselves, our dream ego, often play a significant part. What seems to be happening in sleep is that the conscious waking ego gives up control while still maintaining awareness and perhaps remembering the experience afterward.

But where is the imagery coming from? That is the sixty-four thousand dollar question. Let us postulate that within the mental realm of the individual is an image producing function, and let us postulate further that in dream sleep another center within the mental realm, the psyche, uses this image producing function to send messages to us about ourselves, the dream ego, into the midst of these image situations so that we feel related and involved with what is going on.

To sum it up, a self-regulating center within the psyche uses the image producing function of the psyche to convey experiential messages to the waking ego, choice-making function of the psyche, or what we normally think of as ourselves.

Intervening in the Natural Dreaming Process

What some lucid dreamers who practice dream control try to do is intervene in this natural process. They train the waking ego function to take over the image producing function, to take it away from the self-regulating function of the psyche. This position is exemplified in Stephen LaBerge's statement in the November 1985 issue of New Age Journal "Full lucidity is knowing 'Every part of this dream is my own mind and that I take full responsibility for it.'" In other words, the "I" part of the personality takes over the dream. There is no such thing as a dream source, or other center in the psyche which knows and heals us better than we know ourselves, as I understand LaBerge's statement.

What is Dream Actualization?

Dream Actualization means relating to dreams by re-experiencing them and bringing them to resolution. We do not seek to change our dreams, but to experience them more fully. We do not trust the ego's point of view to be in control of the dream either through lucid dreaming or interpreting the dream afterward.

In the dream ego, the image of ourselves, is only one of the characters. The dreamego represents one point of view and there may be as many points of view as there are other characters. We seek to experience fully whatever comes up in dreams and not to change it. If someone wants to kill us, or befriend us, we may let the character kill us rather than wake ourselves up. This takes courage and a realization that the dream is real. The reason so few people report dying or having been killed in a dream is that they wake themselves up before the act can happen and call the result a nightmare. The lucid dreamers who practice dream control, on the other hand, do not wake themselves up. Their defense is to

say it is only a dream and not real, and therefore they can change it. They can make unpleasant dreams into pleasant dreams by flying or all sorts of other tricks. Great if you can do it, but you may be severing yourself from the center within which wants you to face things as they are and not as you would want them to be.

Encounter Your Dream Adversary--Don't Fly From It!

I have had some tremendous adventures encountering all sorts of adversaries and dealing with them. Some I let attack me. Others I have fought to the death. In each circumstance the dream resolved its issues because I stayed present to the situation as it was, not as I might have wanted it to be. I learned courage and not fear. I learned to stay present and not escape. I learned to become really active in the dream state, as a state to be in just as real as the external world state.

Dream Actualization accepts the dreamworld as just as real as the outer world. What we experience there is real at an experiential and feeling level. It is not just a dream. It may have different laws from outer reality, but I do not call a dream only a dream and therefore I can do anything with it since it is a product of my own imagination.

In the Jungian-Senoi Dream Actualization process we commit ourselves to doing dreamwork tasks as ways of actualizing the dream. A new way of relating in a dream state may be taken to an outer life relationship. Expressing feelings of anger may first come up in the dream state and need actualization in the outer. We may contact spiritual beings in the dream state and make a gift in art or write a poem symbolizing the encounter. We train ourselves to become more active and relational in the dream sleep state by doing Dream Reentry, one of our chief techniques.

Reentering Your Dream From the Waking State

A student of mine did not like the way she was being terrified in her dreams by a witch-like female figure. She felt helpless and afraid to even fall asleep because of what she would encounter there. We did not train her to recognize that she was only having a dream and so did not have to be afraid. We trained her in Waking Dream Reentry to go back into her nightmares to become more active with the adversary and see what happens. She found that by visualizing the dream and practicing relating to adversaries instead of running from them in this meditative dream reentry state she could stand up for herself and the adversary would also change in response. She learned to experience the fear even more fully, in other words to have and express feelings, and then to go on and cope courageously with those feelings. The final result was that in one of her dream sleep nightmares she was running and running from a witch figure and growing exhausted, then she turned and asked her adversary for help, and help came. Crescendo! She did not change her dream. She learned from it, and learned better how to deal with life by re-experiencing her dream fully, both in the waking state and in the dream state. Her dream

adversary helped her. We have had many other successes of this nature, including dreams dealing with war and rape trauma.

Yes, let us expand our dream consciousness. There may even be some point to knowing from time to time you are dreaming. But let us never neglect the potency of the dream reality by calling it only a dream or seeking to control what happens there. If we seek to do this, we may be fooled anyway. Many reported lucid dreams can be seen as the dreamer thinking she is in control in the dream when in fact the dream source may want her to think she is in control. Who is in control here, and how can you tell? What we suggest instead is accepting dream reality as just as real and intense as waking reality, and therefore dealing with the dream on its own terms. When we accept the dream as it is we will be accepting ourselves as we are, and from that mystery actualize what is wanted from us by the dream source.

We learn to serve the process rather than control it.

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