

## Comments on “Dream Lucidity and Near-Death Experiences -A Personal Report”, by John Wren-Lewis

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Wren-Lewis’s near-death experience (NDE), whose relationship to his later lucid dreaming he questions, was an experience of “no-thing-ness,” a darkness (Wren—Lewis, personal communication, May 31, 1984) which he describes as a void. His is one type of NDE. NDEs reported by others may include visions and light without an experience of voidness (Lundahi, 1982). So what is questioned here is the relationship, if any, of void-type NDEs, rather than NDEs in general, to lucid dreaming. And as the experience of a void is not exclusive to the context of dying, since, for example, it is to be achieved in Buddhist and other meditation, we may really be examining here the relationship of the void-experience, rather than just void-type NDEs, to subsequent lucid dreaming.

The dream that Wren-Lewis describes is in four parts:

1. Ordinary dreaming. When wine is mentioned, this develops into a lucid dream.
2. Ordinary lucid dreaming. The degree of lucidity at the beginning of the lucid dream is hard for me to know, but it is without awareness of himself in bed. When he remembers Tart’s comments in Lucidity Letter about full lucidity, he becomes fully aware of himself in bed (Wren-Lewis, personal communication, May 31, 1984).
3. Lucid dreaming with apparent full rational consciousness including awareness of lying in a particular bed. For the rest of the dream, he remains conscious of his bedroom and of the dream activity, in which he participates. The dream continues to be a process of self-therapy, an internal dialogue about drink and mystical consciousness. He then comes to an understanding about this concern of his. Following this breakthrough he becomes “flooded with mystical consciousness.”
4. “Mystical consciousness.” He is not dissolved again into “no-thing-ness” as in the original NDE. He experiences what he has experienced in waking life—the void as a kind of background to his consciousness. He does not transcend awareness of the dream environment, for he is aware of water and wind and has the sensation of flying. Nor, if he is still aware of his bedroom, has he transcended awareness of waking environment. He has religious feelings.

We can only guess whether the earlier void—type NDE or the resulting “new consciousness” may have brought about this more fully lucid dreaming, or whether the full lucidity reflected, as did the dream activity itself, unfinished waking thoughts about the “new consciousness.” It may be significant that Wren-Lewis had this, his first lucid dream with “full rational consciousness,” shortly after reading Tart’s and my own discussions about full lucidity in Lucidity Letter (Wren-Lewis, personal communication, May 31, 1984), and that he became fully lucid in the dream upon

remembering Tart's comments. This fuller lucidity was not in itself mystical, nor was it any more free than ordinary lucid dreaming from the preoccupations that obscure mystical consciousness. It is when a problem is solved that "mystical consciousness" came, and even then the dream did not become transpersonal in the sense that the original NDE did.

Wren-Lewis chooses to interpret his experience of the "void" largely in a Buddhist manner. Then he questions whether the experience of full lucidity implies a state of consciousness reached in Tibetan dream yoga. In Tibetan dream yoga, as indeed in traditional yoga initiated while awake, whether Buddhist or Hindu, the purpose of yoga is the suppression of all sensing and mental activity. Tibetans use yoga during lucid dreams for eliminating dreaming and producing the four experiences of the "void" that lead to nirvana. These experiences are described as being like visions of clear sky. In the third void experience there is a darkness with no sense activity or thought. This may be Wren-Lewis's original experience of voidness. The voids are experienced, they say, in dreamless sleep (sometimes called just "sleep"), which is the state beyond waking and dreaming. What "dreamless sleep" may mean in modern psychology, of course, must be considered apart from the various Hindu and Buddhist conceptions. These visions of voidness, the Tibetans say, are also experienced upon dying. Thus it is appropriate that Wren-Lewis's NDE include an experience of voidness. Naturally the void experiences are then brought about through dying and not through yoga.

The more fully lucid dream as described by Wren-Lewis or Tart, because of its greater awareness of the waking and dream world, its mental activity and memory, is very far from the experience of the void or dreamless sleep and the goals of yoga. Ordinary lucid dreaming, particularly when mental activity and memory are most limited, is much closer to the experience of dreamless sleep. It is awareness that one is dreaming and not the quantity of lucidity that enables the dreamer to meditate and use the dream to reach the state beyond waking and dreaming. An excess of environment-awareness, thinking, memory and activity only make more for the dream yogin to eliminate.

#### Reference

Lundahl, C. R. (Ed.) (1982). A Collection of Near-Death Research Readings, Chicago: Nelson Hall.

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