

Phenomenology: Personal and Theoretical Considerations The Dream Lucidity Continuum

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Dream lucidity occurs along a continuum of subjectively experienced lucidity. Lucidity can fluctuate in a dream and this can be in response to the intentions of the dreamer. The continuum runs from varying degrees of partial lucidity to full lucidity and to possible advanced states.

Lucidity is defined as being suffused with light and luminous. This has been applied to subjective mental experience to imply the quality or state of having a clear mind. One general usage of the term is in the medical mental status examination (MSE). A patient is commonly reported as being "lucid and orientated to person, place and time." While the definitions and common usage of the term seem absolute there are some considerations that challenge this impression. Lucidity is actually a bracket of variations. People that experience certain "altered states" often feel that they are now lucid and that their previous lucidity was in fact clouded. The MSE type of lucidity makes no reference to this. It refers only to the conventional range. However, it does define a general state along a continuum that leads to a feeling of full lucidity.

The lucid dream may resemble waking consciousness but may have its own characteristics. Comparisons should be done cautiously but may identify parallel situations. Lucidity in waking consciousness can usually be identified by markers such as the orientation to person, place and time. In dreams the marker of lucidity is usually the awareness that one is dreaming. The level and content of consciousness are related. Deficiencies in cognitive functioning do not necessarily disqualify one from being lucid but may indicate a level for the particular individual. Differences among individuals are also important.

Many investigators have referred to degrees of lucidity and possibility of a continuum (Gillespie, 1984; Hillman, 1984; & Tart, 1985). Worsley (1984) has reported fluctuations in lucidity due to selective attention during task performance. Moffitt, Purcell, Hoffman, Wells, and Pigeau (1985) have described a self-reflectiveness scale.

The Continuum

The range of the dream lucidity continuum is hypothetically infinite. Usual experience occurs within a conventional range which leads to an experience of full lucidity. At the bottom of this range is non-lucidity. Even generally considered non-lucid dreams may have some minor awareness and this is the beginning of partial lucidity. At these low levels it may be weakly appreciated and the dream is essentially non-lucid. This is experienced as a non-lucid dream phase. As these changes become more noticeable lucidity is increased. Within the context of an ongoing dream sequence this level of partial lucidity is experienced by the dreamer as a sublucid dream phase. A

prelucid dream phase is a sublucid phase that is being developed. What the dreamer experiences as lucidagogic induction is attainment of the lucid dream threshold. The dreamer's state is advanced along the continuum and is definitely consolidated, clearer and has a strong tendency to lead to the awareness that one is dreaming. The dreamer may still feel deficient. This level leads to a functionally lucid dream phase. Although, there may be deficiencies the dreamer can usually function in a standard manner. This would often include Tart's (1984) definition of "dream-awareness dreaming" and Gillespie's (1985) description of an "ordinary lucid dream." Towards the upper level of partial lucidity is essentially full lucidity in which the deficits are minor. Above this level is conventionally full lucidity in which the dreamer feels complete. These last two levels lead to a fully lucid dream phase. This roughly corresponds with Tart's (1985) definition of "absolute-but-conventionally-limited lucidity." The dreamer may also experience a transformation of lucidity beyond its conventional parameters. This beyond conventionally full lucidity leads to a metalucid dream phase. Tart's (1985) description of "absolute lucidity" may be an example of this. A given lucid dream could enter at any stage along this continuum that is above the threshold. It can then fluctuate up or down the continuum. One can shift to a certain level without apparently experiencing the interceding phases. An accented lucid dream phase is a state that is being developed. The lucid dreamer can effect the level of lucidity through direct or indirect methods.

Applications

Lucidity of the self-awareness sphere is derived from the process of reflectiveness. The dreamer becomes differentiated in the dream. Significant associations are the perception of imagery information, cognitive and memory processing, volitional mentation and insight. Lucidity precedes the knowledge of dreaming (Gillespie, 1982; Hillman, 1984). The knowledge is a manifestation of this mental state. It also has additional consolidating, functioning and accenting effects. Hence, it serves both as a lucid marker and as a lucid organizer.

Dreams that do not have this marker but do have a developed mentality are lucid variants. In a questioned variant the dream is questioned on a basis other than it being a dream. For instance, one dream I questioned its reality but concluded it was a film and even began to edit it. In a reflective variant the dreamer seems to have reflective self-awareness but it does not lead to the knowledge of dreaming. This is similar to dreams in which one has the knowledge of dreaming but feels it is unimportant and pursues a different line of investigation. The focused attention to this knowledge naturally fluctuates and it may be forgotten without losing the process. Also in accented lucidity simple orientation may become a minor consideration. These explanations may also apply to the clarity variant in which the dreamer emphasizes a clearness of mentation. Since clarity may precede knowledge there would be a transitional stage which would lead to the marker unless it was arrested or interrupted (such as by an alarm that awakens the dreamer). This is a broken variant and could also explain many of these

variants. These variants may actually be sub lucid phases in some cases.

Paradoxical variants are those that have the marker but not the apparently required mental state. In a baseline variant the dreamer has the marker but feels no change from the ongoing dream. This could be a sub lucid phase. It could also be due to an accompanying small increment. In a clouded variant the dreamer has the marker but the consciousness still appears to be clouded. This could also be a sub lucid phase. Uncertainty in a sphere outside of self-awareness could result in perplexity. In similar situations I have been able to attempt a developmental technique which can readily shift to full lucidity. Hence, these variants may sometimes be a low-level functional lucidity.

Reference

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