

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

From what I have read about spiritual development I have the impression that lucidity during dreaming maybe a by-product of spiritual development but we don't hear about it because those who are seriously engaged in spiritual development are not too concerned with the by-products or with relating accounts of them to others.

The frequency of my own lucid dreaming continues to decline. This is partly because I have had to attend to other things recently such as moving house which has interfered with my routine with the result that my dream diary keeping has been rather skimpy. I hope the real cause is not increasing age. I seem to recall the Hervey de St Denys gradually stopped having lucid dreams over a very few years at about the age of 50. Perhaps unless one has developed considerable lucid dreaming skills from an early age there is a tendency to slide back into non-lucid dreaming particularly if interesting developments do not maintain high interest.

In one way this lack of spontaneous LDs and even of MILD (i.e., Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreams) induced LDs is not without advantage since when I do finally try a reliable lucid dream induction machine I shall be working from a base line of near zero frequency of spontaneous LDs and low success rate with MILD which should make the findings more clear cut.

I think that partly in consequence of this vicious circle of decline the kind of concern I have had with lucid dreams recently has changed so that while dreaming I am not thinking so much about experiments and treating the dreamscape as a laboratory but rather doing something more like living in another world and treating it as an adventure playground. Thus for instance, though it is hard to be sure, I think I operate in some dreams (which might be conventionally be classified as non-lucid) rather more as if I know I am dreaming than I used to.

This has led me to wonder about how it is that people who for example fly in dreams but who are not lucid by the definitions we have been using - awareness of external world/signalling - actually manage to overcome the inhibition against launching themselves from high places if that is what they do. I wonder if in some sense they are lucid in that they intuitively appreciate that it is quite safe to take such liberties, perhaps having gradually learned this from years of dreaming with increasing ability to recognize the dream state, but, since the external waking world is not relevant at the time and signalling not a meaningful possibility then naturally such considerations are ignored.

I would compare this kind of 'skilled' dreaming to being on holiday and not thinking about work at the office at all but single mindedly pursuing some sport such as skiing or surfing which is largely nonverbal and in which the basic control has become automatic. In dreams the medium is not snow or waves but imagery. Depending on one's skill or lack of it one can use the medium, be part of it and have a wonderful time, or, be overwhelmed and frightened by it because one does not understand it or have confidence in one's ability to cope with it. The fact that one is thoroughly engrossed in the activity is not regarded, in the case of skiing or surfing, as somehow invalidating

it. The lack of integration of this nonverbal 'body' activity with verbal 'cerebral' type activity and with a quite different activity context and different value system, that of say work, might help to explain why even what we might call 'para-lucid' dreams, like dreams in general, are hard for the verbal dominant waking mind to recall unless a load of dream content has already been deliberately imported into the waking state to provide a familiar framework and neurological/conceptual pathway for further imports.

This idea relates to the work I did for my unfinished Ph.D. thesis which was on abstraction processes in thinking and concept formation. I did quite a bit of experimental work with the Vigotsky block test of concept formation. I came more and more to believe that the scoring system was too biased in favor of the articulate subjects and thus it dismissed too readily those who could sort the blocks perfectly correctly but could not explain how. To obtain a full score the standard test required that the subject should explain clearly the sorting principle used. Without the correct explanation only a low score was allowed. Many correct but unexplained performances which I observed reminded me of split brain subjects as if one part of the brain solved the problem and organized the performance but was unable to communicate it to the other verbal part. This meant that the evidence that the problem had been solved by the formation of the correct concept never reached the tester in a form acceptable to the verbal-dominant academic elite.

Para-lucid dreaming, as I am provisionally referring to it (as opposed, for the moment, to the perhaps less insightful pre-lucid dreaming) again raises the question of how the knowledge that one is dreaming relates to the external waking world, or more generally, to some absolute standard which is not biased in favor of one neurological/conceptual substrate for the existence of consciousness at the expense of another. Is there more than one way in which one can be said to truly know that one is dreaming? If there really is no reason, such as taking part in an experiment, for the dreamer to think about the waking world at all then it may be that skilled dreaming in which the dreamer is in control of the dream as a living fantasy and not being pushed around in bewilderment and fear in a sea of disjointed but convincing images, should be regarded as a genuine variety of lucid dreaming.

I suspect that there is a largely unrecognized wide variation in the degree to which people learn to exploit their dreams and even within the dreams of individuals as they go through different levels of consciousness/arousal. However, this fact is obscured by the deviation of dream life from waking life, its lack of presence-through-commonality which shared physical reality has, and by the consequent lack of regard for its importance. For instance, the 'property' you use in dreams just evaporates on waking so what possible security is there in that? I think that there is likely to be some carry over in Western culture of this kind of attitude from the survival demands of the hard physical world where it may be appropriate, for the evaluation of dreams (I have the impression that dreamers are generally regarded, outside such groups as ASD, as somehow a sissy subject). Those of us who are perhaps more enlightened see such a carry over as not appropriate or at least presumptuous. It devalues the activity of dreaming in the opinion of those who think of themselves as hard nosed realists before any serious evaluation can

begin. I suspect there is a parallel here with drugs, or religion or publishing or 'romance'. Some people are so obsessed with making money, material possessions, power and so on in the, by common consent, more important waking physical world that they regard these things as something you use to exploit others rather than to promote any kind of revealing experience, spiritual development, social benefit or mutual enrichment. I hope that by bringing to wide notice the insight into reality - that what we generally believe to be real is not so real and that what is generally believed to be not so real is more real than you might think - which I believe is to be derived from a study of lucid dreams, we can thereby achieve a more sane distribution of values and maybe save the planet from conflict between materialists.

What I am trying to explain about para-lucid dreaming seems to relate to Charles Tart's promotion of state specific science. Perhaps what led to Tart's idea was the feeling that somehow dreams can have a validity of their own, on their own terms which was not being recognized or taken seriously because of the equivalent of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Though I agree with LaBerge that theorizing in the lucid dream state is unsafe, the reason for this, I believe, is not that it is necessarily unsafe (and LaBerge does say he is 'rarely' rather than never tempted to do it) but that as yet adequate verbal-type logical ability is uncommonly combined with dreaming. However, I see no reason why the lucid dreaming skill should not be developed in the future so that more and more critical judgement can be applied to a rich repertoire of imagery control abilities. You never know, the practice in mental gymnastics, which this seems likely to involve, might lead to a reverse transfer back to waking thought. The instant adjustments of belief, habitually stepping back from the situation to take stock, and controlling inappropriate negative emotions, in which abilities the lucid dreamer may routinely become more proficient, could lead to genuine improvement in dealing with the physical social world. No doubt to the surprise of self-styled macho realists who spurned dreamland as any kind of training ground for the 'real' world!

Alan Worsley  
North Humberside, England

Dear Editor,

I would now like to comment briefly on 'Proceedings from Lucid Dreaming Symposium' (*Lucidity Letter*, June 1986). I found all the topics discussed very interesting and would first of all like to outline my views on the induction of lucid dreams, as both Roger Ripert and Christian Bouchet reported on my combined technique. I agree with most of what Ripert said but would like to add a few points of my own, based on my findings. In doing so I will touch upon several epistemological thoughts.

Regarding the problem of induction, it also emerged in our investigation that some of the people to whom the combined technique had been explained were able to have lucid dreams even though they had not practiced the method.

On questioning the participants, we discovered that some of these people had already, on other occasions, had the notion that they were dreaming, without this

awareness leading to their changing the action of the dream. If, for example, a person was pursued by a threatening dream figure, then the awareness that they were merely dreaming did not deter them from fleeing, though they were obviously less afraid than usual. The thought did not occur to them, however, of being able to act freely (e.g., to stop and speak to the dream figure or to start flying).

It is however this very clarity about one's own freedom of decision which first alters entirely the nature of the dream. As I see it, it is just one of the criteria necessary, if one is to speak of 'reve lucide', 'lucid dream' or 'Klartraum'. Because the subjects heard that it was impossible to act according to their own will, the thought 'Why, it's only a dream!' was later connected to the thought 'In that case I can do this, or that!' Interestingly, there is very often a delay between the first and second thought (a slow connection). Experienced lucid dreamers, on the other hand, had dreams in which they acted freely and exhibited forms of behavior which they had learned in lucid dreams, without them thinking that they were dreaming. I have cited examples of this in various of my German articles.

Now, however, I come to an important statement by Bouchet that for 'those who see life as a movie, a drama or game, something to be played' the question 'Am I dreaming or not?' is not a problem. 'It seems that one of the characteristics of the psychological field is a kind of serenity in the face of the diversity of life. (p. 218)' I agree with this notion and would so formulate the idea: 'a composed and lighthearted attitude towards reality and one's own self is conducive to the learning of lucid dreaming.' (Such an attitude is, however, also an important condition for the solution of problems we encounter in our lives). Allow me to illustrate the argument by means of a crucial experience I myself had. At the beginning of my first semester in psychology (November of 1958) one of our professors asked the following question: 'Why is it that we do not see objects in our heads, although physiologists claim that our perception of things is due to brain processes?' We were to give the question some thought and had to deliver a written answer by the end of the semester. Shortly before the appointed time, I was out walking and was thinking about this question. I stopped to take a closer look at a tree. First of all it occurred to me that this tree could not possibly fit inside my head. Immediately afterwards, an enormous head appeared in my imagination which encompassed the entire perceptual world, including my perceptual body. I then also realized that my own body was represented in my brain through sensory processes. After this it was no longer a problem for me that perceptual objects are outside the perceptual body, in the same way that physical objects are outside the physical body. I have attempted to represent these concepts in Figure 1. Once I had grasped the fact that the world we see is simply a phenomenal (mental) world, I developed a completely new attitude to it. For the first time, the idea occurred to me of comparing the experienced real world with the dream world. This included the possibility of being able to observe the dream world with the same clear consciousness as the perceptual world in waking state. I did not investigate this idea further, however, until August of 1959.

The illustration in Figure 1 is designed to show the difference between the phenomenal (mental) and physical process of seeing. Whereas in the physical world

the light reflected from objects falls on the retina of both eyes, in the phenomenal world, we look out of the whole forehead. We refer to this as the 'cyclopan eye'. The core or center of the phenomenal ego is usually experienced behind the cyclopan eye, the latter determining the origin of the egocentric spatial framework.

As I was able to acquire a different attitude toward reality through the sketched epistemological model, I have tried in all my lectures on lucid dreaming to convey the model to my students (see also Figure 2). In order to illustrate this, I used illusions and also recommended to my students that they go to a panorama cinema, so that they might further experience such. Incidentally, these cinemas usually show the kind of film in which it is possible to have a flight experience similar to those of dreams. I believe that my combined technique has been successful with my students because:

1. I have tried to convey to them - in the manner described - a lighthearted attitude towards reality:
2. that my lectures on lucid dreaming were not compulsory, so that only motivated students attended them: and
3. that in telling of their lucid dreams, the students were able to motivate each other.

In our book (Tholey, P. & Utecht, K. (early 1987). *Schopferisch Traumen – der Klartraum als Lebenshilfe*. Niedernhausen: Falken Verlag) we have also attempted to convey to the readers a lighthearted attitude towards reality, so that lucid dreaming may be learned without anxiety. Naturally, our techniques should be varied according to the persons involved.

Since in our opinion, many mental disorders stem from egocentredness which limits our perception, our thoughts, our emotions, our motivation and our behavior, being able to convey to someone a flexible and lighthearted attitude to the world and one's own person can be regarded as an important therapeutic step. When the person then uses an induction technique, which can be varied according to the nature of the disorder, a further therapeutic effect is usually observed before the patient has his/her first lucid dream. Once the patient has mastered the art of lucid dreaming and behaves in the appropriate manner during dreaming, then an important step toward self healing has been made. Lucid dreaming, should finally lead to 'creative freedom' as it is referred to in Gestalt psychology (psychologie de la forme). I believe that there is an interdependence between the ability to have lucid dreams and 'creative freedom' - in the sense of a positive feedback. In other words, a person in possession of a certain amount of creative freedom, will have less difficulty learning lucid dreaming and someone who has mastered the technique of lucid dreaming and behaves appropriately during lucid dreaming will be able to attain greater creative freedom.

Much more could be said about the induction of lucid dreams, especially concerning the criteria which have proven useful in identifying lucid dreams. I have already gone into this subject in several German articles and am planning to publish an account of our findings in English.

Paul Tholey  
West Germany

Dear Editor,

Having studied my own dreams for over twenty years, I have found that in my lucid dreams I don't seem to have any control over my dreams. Furthermore, I sometimes do childish things. For instance, in one dream, knowing I was dreaming, I was soaring through the air and swooped down upon an elderly woman drinking from a fountain in the park. Instead of the startled reaction I had expected from her, she frowned at me and came after me, and I ran from her because I was afraid. In another dream, knowing I was dreaming, I was soaring through the air and swooped down upon a guy going at a fast speed on his motorcycle. It scared him so badly that he flipped over on his cycle several times before a hard landing on the ground. I hurried to tell him that it was only my dream, but he got up and ran from me.

In yet another dream, I was walking with my young son on the school grounds. I was explaining to him that although he was in my dream, that he would still exist in reality when I woke up. I told him to go on into the school building, as I was going on to see what kind of dream world my subconscious had created.

Kitty Viceri  
Portland, Oregon

Dear Editor,

"...a tendency for lucid dreamers to show good physical balance that involve vestibular disruption.related falling and flying dreams to lucidity significant correlation between mystical experience and physical balance and coordination..."

I have taken those comments out of context in order to put forth a 'thought' I had while reading the results of the proceedings from the lucid dreaming symposium.

Firstly, I have experienced floating and/or falling especially as I "fall asleep", the period of time when my awareness changes from physical/mental. I may have a feeling/awareness of floating etc. during dreaming, but not at the same time being lucid to dreaming. But, as you know, I may be lucid. The fact that it occurs during both lucid and non-lucid times is important to the possibility I would like to present to you.

When "falling asleep" (why and where did that terminology come?) we pass from an awareness of our body weight on the bed, the mattress button being annoying, the cars passing, the tick of the clock, ad infinitum while at the same time we are aware of our thoughts. At some point, we complete the task of "falling asleep" wherein we no longer are aware of our physical surroundings. We then are aware of what is going on in our minds only, under normal circumstances. (If a person has a pain, this surely affects the dream itself). However, my contention is that...during this changing...what effect, if any, does the loss of awareness of the gravitational pull have on the flying, floating etc.? Is it possible that it could be the cause of that particular feeling rather than a "vestibular" relationship? Furthermore, what kinds of dreams did/do the astronauts

have? Are they the same as they have when under the physical influence of gravity?

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