

Dreaming (& Waking) Lucidity and Healing Lucid Dreams or Resolution Dreams for Healing?

Strephon Kaplan Williams
The Jungian-Senoi Institute

Before we can delve into the nature of whether lucid dreaming can be healing or not we have to clarify some issues around lucid dreaming.

What is a Lucid Dream?

I would like to start my summary of the issues with a fundamental question: do you have to be lucid to have a lucid dream? Do you in fact have to wake up in the dream and know you are dreaming in order to have a dream which has been characterized by lucid dream researchers as a lucid dream? Some other characterizations of dream lucidity include greater vividness of imagery (Garfield, 1974), auditory phenomena, fewer dream characters and more cognition (Gackenbach, 1986), and potential facilitation of health (LaBerge, 1986).

In dealing with the question of the relation of dreams to healing we first have to clarify the issues around lucid dreaming per se. The Jungian-Senoi methodology (Williams, 1980) is a clinical approach rather than a research approach. As such we are limited in our ability to report scientific findings as in those coming from a sleep laboratory, but we do have thousands of hours of dreamwork using an organized approach to working with dreams and dreaming via our methodology. From this base we can address certain issues, if not results.

The lucid dreaming research is confusing to a clinician on a number of grounds. One, the definition of lucid dreaming itself is not yet clear. Is it self-defined as being awake while dreaming? If so, how do you measure wakefulness? Or are they dreams of greater intensity and different and greater physiological response? Or is the lucid dream defined as that dream in which you can consciously make a choice to change the dream's imagery? Do all three conditions have to be present to call the dream lucid?

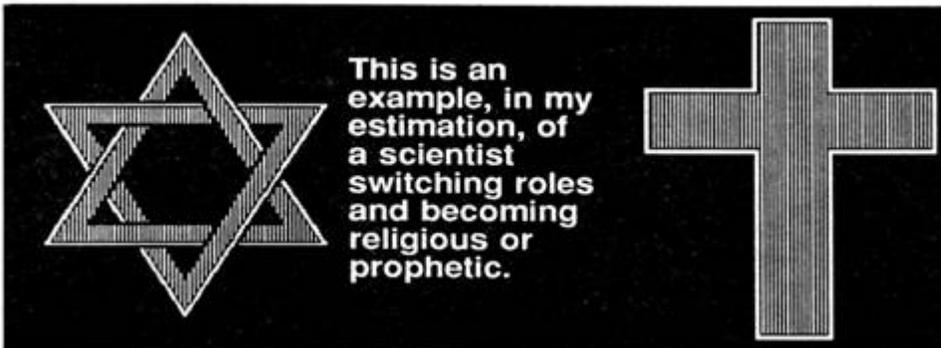
The Resolving Dream

I want to suggest from my own experience and others' that there is a kind of dream which differs from ordinary dreaming which is highly intense and within which issues are presented and resolved. I would call this the "resolving dream." Jung called it the great dream. This dream differs essentially from what has been characterized as a lucid dream in that the dreamer experiences an intense reality, great affect, spiritual wisdom of some sort, healing or resolution of the issue, but does not wake up in the dream.

Also, in this dream the dream ego may be quite active in a congruent way with the rest of the dream's action and imagery. People may have an intense and resolving

dream but not themselves be active in the dream. This later dream seems to characterize those with weak egos in waking life. However, a resolving dream in which the dream ego is active and congruent with the rest of the dream is more likely to come to a developed person; a dreamworker, someone who regularly records and works with their dreams. This is a clinical observation, not a laboratory one.

These questions are important because both Gackenbach (1986) and LaBerge (1986) have recently raised the issue of the relation of lucid dreaming to physical and psychological healing which raises some interesting questions.



A Major Issue

Can healing occur if the process is directed by the ego or conscious side of the personality? In lucid dreaming as reported in the literature I have read, the person not only realizes they are dreaming but exerts some control by changing either, the dream ego's intention and behavior, or changing the non-dream ego imagery and action in the dream, or both.

The lucid dreaming dream ego differs from other dream egos in non-lucid dreams in that the lucid dream ego in order to act must realize that the dream is only a dream, it must be "awake" in the dream. But what does being "awake" mean, and here we have a possible criticism of lucid dreaming practice and research?

Is the Lucid Dream Ego really Awake?

The lucid dream ego may dream it is awake and saying "this is only a dream," but maybe, in point of fact, dreaming what the dream source wants the dream ego to feel and think. How can we tell if the lucid dream ego (LDE) is really awake? By signaling with prearranged eye movements, as reported in the laboratory? Signaling what? Certainly a coincidence occurs between the eye movements and physiological states associated with dreaming, and further we receive dream reports when waking subjects up at this time. This indicates the possibility of a relationship but it does not prove it. I have yet to see research which has subjects reporting they are dreaming and then waking themselves up at definite time intervals, such as right away, one minute later, two minutes, five minutes, fifteen minutes, etc... For scientific validation we need

to see a number of different behaviors demonstrated, all converging in support of a common thesis.

A clinician might make another criticism of the present research. Researchers, such as LaBerge, while doing brilliant work and putting forth great speculations, do not make adequate distinctions between their "scientific" results and their speculations. For instance, in LaBerge's recent book (1985) he makes such over-extended statements as "The lucid dreamer seems to be able to exercise at least as much free choice while dreaming as while waking" (p. 115, 1985). He gives no hard evidence for this statement, but feels free to make it. This may lead the general public to think that, because his eye movement-lucid dream research is dramatic, that has evidence for other statements he makes in his book. When laboratory scientists leave their home base and venture into the field of clinicians they need to observe scientific limitations like anyone else. Furthermore, one might ask, are they trained to make clinical observations? LaBerge's most prophet-like statement, which has bearing on our issue of dreams and healing, is the following. He states that non-lucid dreamers "are sentenced to a virtual prison with walls no less impenetrable for the fact that they are made of delusion" (p. 11, 1985). This is an example, in my estimation, of a scientist switching roles and becoming religious or prophetic. Where is his research to back up such statements? I prefer to call for objectivity on the part of us all. If you are going to comment on non-lucid dreams or dreamers, you might also do research on them as well in order to back up your statements. At least clinicians have thousands of hours of working with people to back up their statements. If the clinician speculates, he or she has hands-on experience for which to do so. If the scientist speculates, he should have comparable laboratory experience.

Towards the end of his book LaBerge makes a number of philosophical or religious statements, going far afield from the laboratory, and speculating (or is it believing?) that lucid dreaming is the next great development in consciousness. Again, if it is, let us know, and give us your evidence as you make your new discoveries?

The Non-Lucid Healing Dream

My thesis here is that there is another kind of dream than the lucid dream which may be different from ordinary dreaming, and which may have healing properties greater than ordinary dreaming. Ordinary dreaming I define as recalled dreams full of dream issues and problems but with little or no resolution to them.

On the other hand, resolving dreams are dreams in which the dream problems are largely resolved and in which the dream ego is active and congruent but not determining or controlling. Also, the dream ego must not know that it is awake in the dream (i.e., defined as knowing that the dream is only a dream). The dream ego must feel and interact with the material as though it were real. The full affect of the dream imagery and action must be experienced. The reality factor must be a one-to-one correspondence with events. This maximizes the effectiveness of the dream source's ability to move the dream and waking egos to change. To see the difference between a

resolving dream and a lucid dream experience, let us look at a dream reported by LaBerge.

I am in the middle of a riot in the classroom. A furious mob is raging about throwing chairs and fighting. Most of them are Third World types and one of them has a hold on me - he is tough with a pock marked face and repulsive. I realize that I'm dreaming and stop struggling. I find love in my heart and look him in the eyes, and, while holding his hands, speak to him in a loving way, trusting my intuition to supply the beautiful words of acceptance that flow out of me. As I do so, he melts into me; the riot has vanished, the dream fades, and I awaken feeling wonderfully calm and 'together' (p. 10, 1986).

The lucid dreaming way to approach healing or resolving this dream is to 1) realize in the dream that you are dreaming and therefore to get unidentifed from the force of the dream's actions and imagery. ("I realize that I'm dreaming and stop struggling.") The participating ego goes into the observing ego role. Then 2) the waking dream ego takes control and intervenes in the dream situation ("I find love in my heart...speak to him in a loving way..."). Now 3) the dream source, or non-ego part responds ("As I do so, he melts into me; the riot has vanished, the dream fades..."). Finally, 4) the dream ego awakens and the waking ego feels "wonderfully calm and 'together'." Clinically, we would speculate that the ego is inflated by the "success" of the experience. It has not really resolved the problem of violence but has inflated itself by taking the problem over on its own terms. To take another view, the waking ego may have a genuine experience of resolution in which when it, the ego choice-making function, responds differently, the dream source responds differently.

What Is a Genuine Experience of Healing?

How can we tell what a genuine experience of healing is? How can we know if lucid dreaming leads to real healing of the personality or to inflation and one-sidedness? There are a number of criteria, but no absolutes, which can help to define healing.

1. The ability to realize different options in the same situation indicates a developed and conscious being rather than a sick or partial one.

In the above lucid dreaming example, if the dream ego could also let go to the dream violence and let it overwhelm the ego and see what happens, then healing or resolving results might also occur. Or, if the dream ego could somehow fight the adversaries and see what happens. Resolving situations may come through a great battle, or through non-resistance, or through applying a new and different principle to the situation.

2. Being able to cope with the full intensity of reality, whether a dream or a waking reality

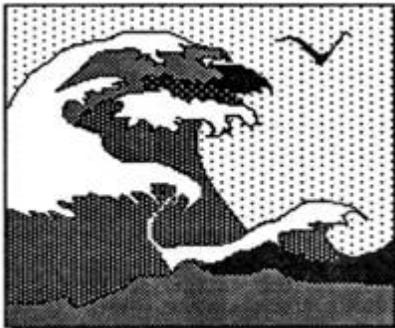
The dream ego could realize the full intensity of the dream without waking up in the sense of realizing it is dreaming. This "waking up" makes the situation somewhat less real and therefore less potent or overwhelming to the dream ego.

Clinically, the preferred way is to help people be fully involved in a situation without their disassociating, and yet also staying active and able to make choices no matter how overwhelming the circumstances seem. Thus, in the Jungian-Senoï approach we teach dream ego activity in dealing with and becoming more congruent with dream activity and contents. This works. We do not teach disassociation through training oneself to realize that the dream is only a dream or through changing the dream's contents.

To teach the dream ego to change the dream reality is inflationary and may cause the waking ego to feel that it can change waking reality in the same way. Our only evidence is based on clients we have worked with. This is also an issue for laboratory scientists if they, indeed, are now ready to enter into studying the field of healing.

3. The other function central to healing is bringing or allowing resolution. I have described this thoroughly in the Jungian-Senoï Dreamwork Manual. (Williams, 1980)

The Method of Dream Reentry



Our chief method for bringing resolution and for training dreamers to be more active in their dreams and in their waking lives is dream reentry. This is a variation on a form of Jungian active imagination. Dream reentry is entering the meditative state with eyes closed, seeing and experiencing the original dream again, and either reexperiencing the dream more fully until it seems to resolve itself or you can go no further with it, or intervening in the dream state by changing the behavior of the dream ego in the dream state and seeing what happens to the non-ego dream action and imagery. Often, the dream's problem goes to resolution, not by the dream ego creating a resolution, but rather by allowing resolution. The resolving function here is not a product of the imagination, but a genuine experience from the Self, the integrative center in the psyche, what Gackenbach may be calling "the dream generator." Is the dream generator also "the wholeness or resolving generator?"

Resolving dreams through allowing can also apply to the lucid dreaming

experience. For instance, one of my students dreamed:

I am swimming in the ocean and losing my strength. I realize I am going to drown, and instead of changing the imagery as I usually do, I remember that Strephon said, why not let go to the imagery and see what happens. I did this and instead of drowning, the waves carried me to shore and I walked up the beach.

This student regularly woke up in her dreams and changed scary situations through dream control. However, the dream scenes became sexual in ways she did not like. She could change a scene but could not completely control the results. How many lucid dreamers can? However, changing her own behavior in the dream may have been healing. To go along with things rather than seeking to control them is a clinical proposition which may lead to healing and adaptability to life. In this case, unlike dream experiences of this dreamer, she had a genuine experience of support and resolution when she let go of control rather than attempted it. It might be beneficial to develop awareness of choice in a dream. However, using that awareness with choices to change the dream is in question.

We question the helpfulness of lessening the dream's affect, or ability to move the dreamer, by calling the dream a dream and not a waking reality. Further, we question the dream ego changing the dream's imagery, which is still an ego point of view. The dream source may be seeking to challenge the ego's point of view, not reinforce its point of view or its power over the personality.

A Fundamental Difference

LaBerge indicates that it is important to resolve conflicts during dreaming. We take a more non-ego dominant position. The dream ego can resolve conflicts without becoming awake in the dream, and it can allow the options for resolution to come from the dream source and not from the ego. That is the fundamental difference between the Jungian-Senoï approach and the LaBerge lucid dream approach to healing. Another difference is that we believe that it is clinically beneficial to learn to experience the terror and fear which is sometimes in dreams. We do not recommend reality disassociation as a way of handling fear. We help our students get right in there and experience the situations "as is" fully. This is healing. The LaBerge method is to consciously change the scary imagery rather than experience it as scary. I don't think you solve problems by denying that you have a problem. Paradoxically, you experience the problem fully in order to resolve it.

I have been teaching people to resolve nightmares since 1977 using the method of dream reentry (Williams, 1980). At the institute we are able to have people go back into their dreams and experience the situation as it is without changing the imagery from the conscious side. We train the dream ego to become more active as in the following

dream of my own:

I awoke feeling frightened of what was behind the bathroom door in the dream. I noted the dream and then did a self-dream reentry. I was extremely frightened and it was all I could do to get myself to reenter this dream. I visualized the scene again and determined to enter the bathroom to experience what was behind the door. I decided not to go in fighting but just to be present and careful. By the time I was entering the room I was asleep again. In the dream I continued and stood in the tub observing a small, aura-encased gnome who did not harm me in any way. Then I woke myself up to write down the dream, realizing its importance immediately.

Note that I in no way consciously changed the situation in the dream. I did change the behavior of my dream ego. The imagery which came was not created consciously by me. What was behind the door was a complete surprise. I felt relief that I had kept myself in the nightmare.

I end with the following dream, perhaps the most intense and meaningful of the four thousand recorded dreams of my life. The record reads like a story, but this is exactly as I wrote it down upon awakening. The intensity, insight, and feeling was tremendous. The plot of the dream story, as well as its wisdom, was the dream itself. From my conscious side I invented nothing.

I dreamed that a few of us are in jail while our friends and relatives outside petition for our release. At first they wait, then they petition, then they beg. The years go by to no effect for them. They wait outside and we are not released.

Inside things have been taking a different course. At first the leader of our group was imprisoned. Then a few of us who were on his side were imprisoned with him. Within our small cell we walked and walked, waiting for the day when we could get out. But nothing happened. We were not released. Then as the days upon days mounted, an imperceptible change began to occur in us, just as a change was occurring in those outside.

At first we walked to while away the time until we would be free. Then each of us walked because it was the thing to do and we did it. As the subtle change occurred we lost track of our original purpose for walking. We only knew that now we walked for the walk itself. Gradually another change began happening with us. We now walked because we were happy. The first one to become happy was our leader, the original hero of the people. He had been jailed fighting for the freedom of his people. They lamented his being in jail, because now they had no one to fight for their own freedom. They even lamented because they were not in jail and he was.

Within the small cell wherein the hero and his three friends walked their eternal rounds the hero felt a change coming over him. He was no longer unhappy because he was indeed free. Now he walked to celebrate the freedom he had at least attained after all his years of labor. Finally, he walked because the walk itself was the freedom he sought. He was a free man being right where he was and it made him ecstatically happy.

Yes, he could hear the wails and shouts of those outside, and in the early years the sufferings of the friends who had been put in jail with him. Gradually nothing of what was happening out there affected him anymore as he continued to walk. Perhaps it was then that an inner radiance began to show in him and he became ecstatically happy, unaffected as he was by the moods and activities of those around him. Within himself he was free. It was as if this state of being was always this way but he had not known it until he had walked many a year. Indeed, now that he had radiance, you could see it on his face, there was no such thing as ordinary time. He was not trying to get out because he was not in anywhere. He just was, and when he realized this he was free. He did not realize he was free. He just was free and he felt it that way as he continued to walk and walk with a radiant smile on his face.



The people inside noticed it. They were with him. And gradually they changed, also. But those outside continued to lament his imprisonment. They did not know what they were doing. They only knew that he was confined inside and they were outside trying to be free. And what of those who sneaked away as the years went by, forgetting and rejecting their vigil? Were they the ones without hope who left the place of conflict in secret despair and sought to merge themselves again into the daily activities of the world. What of them? They shall be without name. For gradually they too disappeared into the activities of the life they had become. They were the nameless, the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker. They were the ones who became, even unknown to themselves, the mother, father, and lovers of earthly life.

And what of the guards who put the leader and his friends in prison and kept them there? These believed in their prison and their walls and guarded the prisoners fiercely from those inside as well as those without. The purpose for their lives was to

guard the prison and never let anyone out, and so they never changed.

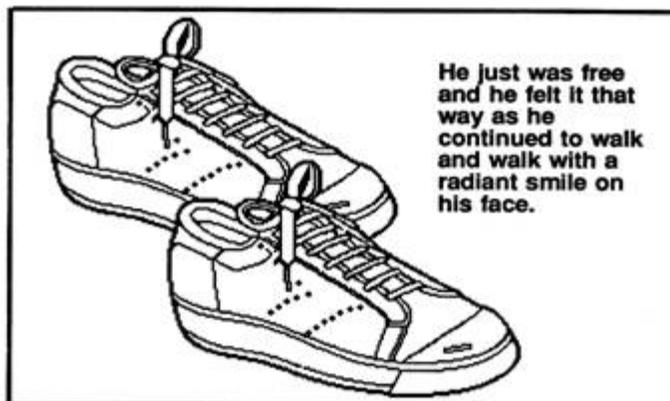
Who then was the prisoner and who the imprisoning?

Inside, one person became happy and free, and gradually those who were with him did likewise until they all felt free because they walked and walked. For him, the main focus of our attention, we saw and felt his inner radiance. He was in himself free. He was in himself and that had made him free.

This "dream parable" says much about accepting things as they are by being totally in the moment. This wisdom or life principle does itself seem to go against the practice of lucid dreaming in which the intention is "to change your reality by first calling what you are experiencing, unreal." It is only a dream, but is it? Are you so sure that your outer life is any more perceptually real, or is the "out there" a matter of subjective perception also?

That lucid dreaming researchers are wanting to move into the area of dreaming and healing I find exciting. I hope as I have indicated in this article, that they make clear distinctions between the actual evidence from their research and their speculations. I hope that other areas of dreaming beside lucid dreaming are equally explored so that lucid dreaming can be seen in context. At its present state the lucid dreaming "movement" has for some almost the aura of a religion. I have pointed also to excesses on this issue.

In terms of my own approach, the Jungian-Senoi approach, I would say the following; I have taken certain concepts and practices from Jung and Kilton Stewart's version of Senoi dreamwork and unified aspects of these two strains into a methodological approach. My Jungian-Senoi Dreamwork Manual reflects a fairly complete dreamwork methodology which I see clinically working both in changing the dream state and in changing lives, inner and outer. I have clinical case studies to back up my work, but no laboratory scientific studies, in applying our more potent methods to dreaming and healing. I hope, especially, that the method of dream reentry will be scientifically studied. I have produced dramatic results in dealing with war trauma and other trauma induced nightmares. In a couple of cases we may even have altered a pre-cancerous condition and been instrumental in curing, along with homeopathy, a case of life-threatening and acute colitis. This method needs further evaluation and use. Finally, I leave the reader with this question. Do you have to know you are dreaming while dreaming to have a really intense and resolving dream?



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