

On Constructing Our Own Reality

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Between November 1928 and June 1930, at the Zurich Psychological Club, Jung gave a series of weekly seminars on dream analysis, covering thirty dreams during the course of the seminars. Over fifty of his patients and colleagues attended one or another of these seminars. Happily, a number of those attending transcribed the seminars; these have now been edited and are available as *Dream Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). As always, Jung's extemporaneous remarks are filled with insights not found in the more formal works. To give just a tiny sample, first on the shadow:

The collective unconscious is not a psychological function in your head, it is the shadow side of the object itself. As our conscious personality is a part of the visible world, so our shadow side is a body in the collective unconscious, it is the unknown in things. So everything that possibly can gets at you through the shadow.

In other words, the shadow, which would be seen by most as a product of the mind, is as real (or unreal) as anything we experience in the outer world. Throughout this review, we will return to this issue again and again, presented from many different viewpoints.

Stephan LaBerge's *Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine, 1986) examines the reality of psyche explicitly, from the viewpoint of an experimental psychologist specializing in the study of lucid dreams. For those unfamiliar with the term, lucid dreams are dreams in which the dreamer is aware that he/she is dreaming, and is able to exercise some degree of control over the dream process. One of the early breakthroughs in experimental dream research was the discovery that when we dream, we evidence REM (rapid eye movements). This discovery led dream researchers to awaken sleepers when they observed REM and ask what they were dreaming about.

La Berge was fascinated with the concept of lucid dreams and searched for some way, analogous to REM, to demonstrate their occurrence. He asked himself whether a "lucid dreamer" could perform some action in the dream which an experimental psychologist in the laboratory could observe. It had to be some action distinct enough to serve as a clear signal to an outside observer, yet within the actions available to the lucid dreamer lying asleep in bed. LaBerge finally decided on a distinctive side-to-side eye movement. He asked his subjects to move their eyes from side to side when they were asleep and knew they were having a lucid dream. It worked! The possibility of scientifically acceptable communication between someone in the dream world and someone in the outer world began at that point. (I say "scientifically acceptable" because, for thousands of years, shamans have signalled from the "spirit world" to ordinary mortals in the outer world).

What is most interesting and new about LaBerge's work is that his subjects can give a lucid dream signal when they are about to change their inner psychological and physiological experience. During lucid dreaming, for example, some subjects can signal

and then turn on a sexual orgasm, and laboratory instruments do record that they are undergoing the real body responses characteristic of an orgasm! Women, it seems, are better at this than men.

In a similar way, many subjects change their breathing patterns while in lucid dreaming, as well as a number of inner emotional and cognitive dimensions of experience. The question now is just how far this extension of voluntary control over psychophysiological responses can go. From this point of view, lucid dreaming seems to be a new avenue for facilitating a relationship between the conscious mind and the normally involuntary processes of the unconscious.

The whole topic of lucid dreaming needs to be addressed by analytic psychology. The experimental psychologists who have done most of the work on lucid dreams to date usually have little interest in even the explicit content of dreams, and even less interest in learning the symbolic language of the dream. On the other hand, many Jungians (I apologize for the term which Jung himself disliked, but some such shorthand seems necessary) are prone to dismiss lucid dream research out of hand. They argue that lucid dreams are an attempt to circumvent the dream's primary purpose of complementing our all too one-sided conscious thoughts and behavior.

But are lucid dreams really so different from Active Imagination (the active form of meditation pioneered by Jung)? In Active Imagination we also attempt to consciously engage in a dialogue with fragments of dreams and fantasies, thereby facilitating communication between the conscious and the unconscious. Perhaps lucid dreams, like Active Imagination, are a natural extension of the attempt by the psyche to restore a psychic balance through dreaming.

In the second edition of his book, *Dreams and the Growth of Personality* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1985) [full review of this work in the Fall 1986 Psychological Perspectives], Ernest Rossi takes an initial step toward integrating lucid dreaming research in analytical psychology by pointing out:

Dreams involving self-reflection - and, in particular, dreams wherein there are multiple images of one's self - can be a form of proto-lucid dreaming. The dreamer sees many aspects or images of the self that provide excellent insight after awakening, but the dreamer is not yet quite aware that she/he is dreaming while dreaming (the basic definition of lucid dreaming).