

Oneiric Health and Oneiric Lucidity

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Oneiric Lucidity as a Means of Finding an Evaluation Criterion of Mental "Health", Highlighting the Notion of Oneiric Health

The study of the relation between mental health and oneiric lucidity is an important part of the research on lucid dreaming. Perhaps because most of the researchers in this area are psychologists, and that the possibility of using a new and efficient tool for psychotherapeutic practices is important to them.

We know the evidence for a relation between lucid dreaming and psychic equilibrium is circumstantial. Some subjects, with strong psychological problems, dream lucidly, regularly and spontaneously, while apparently well balanced subjects do not succeed in their attempts to induce lucidity. The contrary is also true. This leads us to the following remark: lucid dreaming is not in itself an indicator of mental health. Nevertheless, we know that it can contribute to the recovering of one's psychic equilibrium, by following an appropriate method.

Garfield's, LaBerge's and Tholey's works have demonstrated the usefulness of such methods which suggests that an indicator of mental health can be found with the help of a specific method. I will suggest the following hypothesis: since oneiric lucidity allows us to observe dream phenomena directly, it should be possible to discover from within the dream, in the course of the dream itself, an indicator of mental health. Such an indicator must be able to be found in any lucid dream, whatever its contents. We know indeed that this hypothesis is proved correct regarding unpleasant dreams, which show clearly that the dreamer has a psychic conflict. During a nightmare, for instance, a dreamer might recover lucidity to compel himself to wake up or to confront his dream. These are "extreme" cases and do not represent the common type of lucid dream in which conflicts are rather unusual. The content of the common type of lucid dreams does not allow evaluation at first sight of the dreamer's degree of psychical equilibrium.

Hereafter I shall analyze the "harmless" lucid dreams. I do not wish to consider mental health in terms of pathology. My aim is more modest. It concerns, above all, "health". (I would like to insist on the word "health" because curiously we refer to it only when we are sick.) Therefore, I shall not describe the way to use oneiric lucidity to overcome any serious psychical problems. But I shall use some examples to illustrate how to determine the degree of mental health. In other words, I am looking for an evaluation criterion for mental health with the help of oneiric lucidity.

The Origin of the Notion of an Evaluation Criterion Mental Health in Lucid Dreaming

To explain what I mean, I must first explain how I came to this idea. I shall rely on a

lucid dream of Patricia Garfield's related in *Pathway to Ecstasy*, entitled "The Great Steering Wheel":

The day is bright and beautiful. I'm driving my car down a street in San Francisco, where I live. It's an ordinary city scene on an ordinary sunny, windy day, and I'm thinking ordinary thoughts about some arrangements I must make for a contractor to inspect a house we want to buy (all current events). I whiz along the street, feeling the wind blowing hard.

At that moment, for some unknown reason, I realize that it's not an ordinary day, place, or feeling: I am in a dream. Still driving, I command: "Up!" and my body lifts from the ground. The car is gone. I now whiz through the air as I lie on my stomach about ten or fifteen feet above the earth. I'm no longer driving but I still grasp the upper part or the steering wheel, which has become huge, a great circle. I hold the top rim, and the lower part rests on my thighs, above the knees. I feel the sun and the wind. I see the pavement clearly as I sail along. Everything is sharp, bright. It's a glorious sensation. I ask myself, "Are you happy?" and I know that I am. "And you know you're dreaming?" and I know that I am. I start to wonder what to do with this lovely lucidity as I zip through the air with the sun and wind in my face. However, the scene fades, like a light dimming, and suddenly I'm awake in bed.

This lucid dream is "typical" as it shows several characteristics that are common to most lucid dreams and that have not been well examined.

1. The "I don't know what to do" in lucid dreaming. The first surprising detail in Garfield's dream, if we think about it, is the following remark: "I start to wonder what to do with this lovely lucidity". There are two different ways of understanding this question in the dream: 1) with respect to the dream itself and 2) with respect to the dreamer's consciousness. Garfield's dream can be understood in both ways.

In the first case, the dream can be included in the dreamer's everyday life through interpretation, as underlined by Garfield:

True, in symbolic terms, "The Great Steering Wheel" dream was ordinary enough, and understandable. At the time I had this dream, I was (as I am now) living with my beloved husband in a splendid city. My days were full and mostly happy: I felt able to resolve whatever problems confronted me. Furthermore, my career was advancing. I had just finished writing my first book and was busy with plans for its forthcoming publication. As a symbolic expression of satisfaction with the way I was "steering" myself through life, this dream is straightforward indeed.

Garfield's dream is first of all a reflection of her existence in waking life: emergence of lucidity demonstrates an access to a new dimension of her existence. Nonetheless, the dream must also be understood in relation to the dreamer's consciousness (which is

manifested here in oneiric lucidity). As any typical “situation dream”, it shows a new situation, to the dreamer. Commonly, a dreamer does not ask himself what to do. He is completely taken in by his dream, like a man awake busy with his daily life (for example going to work, answering mail, the telephone. etc.. all kinds of activities that do not make us think of what we are doing, but how we are doing it). On the other hand a lucid dreamer is confused by his freedom, like a poor man would be on suddenly receiving a huge amount of money. This new situation needs adaptation.

This question, asked by Garfield, is often repeated by persons who have obtained oneiric lucidity through a method of induction. They tell themselves: “When I dream, now I know that it is a dream. But what do I do now?”

Thus, Garfield’s question should not surprise us. Reaching lucid dreaming is like penetrating into an unexplored area. At some time, a need for a map of the new territory is felt by the dreamer.

Nevertheless, although these two explanations are correct in their context, they do not take into account another element: the difference between a natural lucid dreamer and one who becomes a lucid dreamer by learning. Let’s take the example of someone who used to have lucid dreams without knowing it and examine what it teaches us about the freedom of action in his dreams.

I was myself a lucid dreamer without knowing it, until I read Garfield’s first book, *Creative Dreaming*. When I had lucid dreams, I merely noted the fact. I assumed sometimes that I was in “the astral world” but this was, for me, a vague term, without any precise meaning. Like the literature itself concerned with this term, I did not ask myself: “What am I going to do now?” Instead I saw myself acting with great determination. I was, in fact, the conscious witness, but not the actor of my own deeds. This state of things changed after reading Garfield’s book.

Having completed the book, I said to myself: “I know how to do that”. And I laid down to obtain a lucid dream and got one immediately. However something had changed! To be able to appreciate this change, let us view this lucid dream that had been “provoked”.

(The distorted room, lucid dream, 1981). (I am lying on my back on the bed in my room). Images floating in front of my eyes. I fall asleep and from time to time I am half-awake...

I attempt to go out of my body by sliding towards my feet but something holds me back and wants me to come back. I feel I have an elastic body, and I can stretch my feet farther than possible, like rubber, and now I try to go out of my body from my feet. I hold on. But the minute I let myself go, it starts again. Still like rubber I feel myself being brought back. Well. I let this happen because I tell myself that my subconscious knows better than me what I need. I get back into my body and turn suddenly on my side and go out again. This time I touch the ground next to the bed, I know that I am conscious in a dream, more than ever because everything around me is totally deformed. The objects and the window are very curiously distorted. I am caught between the

table and the cupboard. The disposition of my room is very strange, like a labyrinth. I know that it is a dream and start by getting my view into harmony because I sense that my arms are distorted. I don't see my hands in their usual place. The accommodation of my eyes is done as if I was focusing on a projector, then everything falls into place except for the labyrinth which is still there. Then I try to make someone come from the labyrinth, to make an oneirical character appear. (A call from outside wakes me at this moment).

In my dream diary, following this narration, there is a series of remarks, of which two of these explain the change in the "quality" of my oneiric lucidity.

- 1) My initial intention was to have a lucid dream. Just before lying down, I had finished the book by Patricia Garfield, *Creative Dreaming*, and desired to have these sort of dreams more regularly. But, once asleep, I spontaneously tried in a state of semi-consciousness to "go out" (of my body). For me, these two things are related. Very often, to induce a lucid dream I strive to go out of my body, which means that I start this dream in a state of semi-lucidity which becomes totally lucid once I have "gone out."
- 2) In my view one sentence should be given particular attention: "Well, I let this happen because I tell myself that my subconscious knows better than me what I need. I get back into my body and turn suddenly on my side and go out again." Almost instinctively I outsmarted myself. Something inside me refused this experience. I did as if I had given up and almost immediately I turned on my side to "go out", taking myself by surprise.

This second point is remarkable in this respect: it was as if I was two, as if the old spectator wanted to become the actor, and was obliged to fight against the one he wanted to take the place of. This point of view is confirmed by the first remark which specifies that I wanted to apply my usual method of "going out of my body", in spite of the fact that I was totally conscious that I was in a lucid dream, and not out of my body. Here there is a confusion between the types of action (i.e., between that of the spectator and that of the actor).

Which leads to the following idea: The state of "not knowing what to do" in a lucid dream is not quite normal. It is the result of a substitution of a mode of action (active consciousness) into a mode of being (observing consciousness). This difference (between mode of action vs. mode of being) is not noticed until the change begins. But once the change has taken place, a sort of disarray could overcome the consciousness which does not know how to use itself. This process is in itself the consequence of a retroactivity with waking life, especially when lucid dreaming is the result of learning. No doubt I would not have taken a nap to have a lucid dream (oneiric life) that day, if I had not read Garfield (in my waking life). The more important the retroactivity becomes, the more problems arise to the lucid dreamer, problems which do not concern the dream itself nor waking life but the passage from one to the other. This passage takes place in a

conscious state and requires the dreamer to adapt himself to a totally new situation, 2. Bright colors and shades of grey. Another point strikes me in Garfield's dream as it does with most other dreams described by oneironauts. "Everything is sharp, bright" she says. "It's a glorious sensation". Stephen LaBerge, in his *Lucid Dreaming*, described it in the same way: In general the lucid dream seems to be more perceptually vivid than the non-lucid dream.

LaBerge's choice of wording "in general" is apt, because in fact we can have lucid dreams of different types: bright colors or very dull colors or even faded, for instance: total absence of images coupled with paralysis. In fact LaBerge gives an example of a dream of this type in *Lucid Dreaming*. "I slept very well indeed, and after seven and a half hours in bed had my first lucid dream in the lab. A moment before, I had been dreaming--but then I suddenly realized that I must be asleep because I couldn't see, feel or hear anything. I recalled with delight that I was sleeping in the laboratory..."

As indicated in the passage, the lucid dream is not necessarily colored and the perceptions are not always felt strongly. Therefore the quality of perceptions cannot be taken into consideration as a typical characteristic of lucid dreaming.

On the other hand the question of the relation between the degree of vividness and color of a dream and the problem of "not knowing what to do" or how to act" are not asked in dull lucid dreams but appear more and more as the dreams get brighter and brighter. I will analyze this phenomenon later. For the moment I would like to give a few examples.

(To escape from my body, lucid dream, 1981). I am lying on my bed turned to my right, curled up, but my inner body goes back into a lying position. I strive to release myself from the side to go out of my body and fall into the darkness. I start crawling away from my body and avoid being taken back by it. I cross a place near the door of my room where there are electric wires. I hope to get far away from the room by crossing the next room.

("Be Good", lucid dream, 1981). (I am lying on my bed). I try to get out of my body. I feel that I am being held back by a rubber band. I reach the balcony. (It's night outside). Everything is solid, except for the window, when I want to pass through it. I remind myself that I should look at my body. I throw a passing glance (behind me in my room), clinging to the rails of the balcony, and I see a form under the blanket. A funny sensation.

I continue to move down the balcony towards the Palais de Chaillot. Near the kitchen I can see a brightly lit apartment, and men who appear to be businessmen standing in it. My physical body tries to get me back...(Pieces of semi-lucid dreams follow).

When I find myself in my body and try to get out, a voice inside me tells me not to do this. I ask with an anxious voice: "Why, is it dangerous?" The voice replies: "Be good".

(Opening towards the unknown, lucid dream, 1981). My room (seen from my bed)

is open to mysteries more than in the ordinary world. (On the left, the window side, things are as usual, but to the right, towards the door, plunged in total obscurity there is an opening towards the unknown which I feel, is intensely deep). To go out of my body I don't force myself but just repeat that I can do it.

All these dreams have one thing in common: they are "initial" dreams. They start in the room, in the bed. In these cases it is quite frequent that the dream starts by a total paralysis which gives a feeling of "going out of body experience". Here we are dealing with falling asleep consciously, either in the beginning of the night or just after waking up in the night. In this type of dream, it is either night or dark, and the colors are not particularly outstanding. They appear only once the dreamer has left his room. As long as he stays near his bed, everything is greyish. As soon as he goes out of his house the colors appear. The following is a dream which shows this type of transition from a world without colors to a world full of colors.

(Side-track, lucid dream, 1982). I ask to go out of my body. I leave my bed and go through the window of my room which has disappeared just as I passed through it. This takes place during the night in my room, but it is different outside, it is bright daylight. It is a beautiful day. I am flying over the avenue, and the buildings take on a magnificent aspect that I did not know before. In fact I do not really recognize what is in front of my eyes, the neighborhood has changed. I want to fly down a road (or a boulevard), but am carried away by my own momentum I take another direction towards another boulevard. My flying speed is such that I cannot avoid a building which is in my way. I rush into a garage, without wanting to, the opening of which looks like an obscure big rectangle. I continue my flight up in the building and from time to time I see lights flickering through the windows which make me feel that I am in a courtyard. Then everything becomes black. Finally I see a staircase...

In this dream, like in many others, the passage from the room to the outside is the passage from obscurity towards light: "This takes place during the night in my room, but it is different outside, it is bright daylight. It is a beautiful day." On the contrary the way from outside to inside is the one from the lightness to the darkness: "I rush into a garage, without wanting to, the opening of which looks like a big dark rectangle...Everything becomes black." Is this characteristic of "initial dreams" unique to me? What makes me think that these are not the secondary characteristics that I share with other lucid dreamers who have these "initial dreams".

One of these secondary characteristics is the feeling that my oneiric body is stuck to my physical body as if with a big rubber band. This tension remains strong in a certain area (my room and a part of the apartment) and is sometimes associated with complete or partial blindness. The tension which pulls me back stops when I have crossed the limit of the area, and then I get my (oneiric) sight back. (Or more precisely it's only at this moment that I realize that I see although I was already seeing, but not consciously.

This phenomenon is difficult to explain, slightly similar to the sudden awakening which follows the becoming aware of the hypnagogic imagery which nevertheless lasted for quite some time). It's also beyond this area that colors begin to appear.

This point seems to me particularly important because it emphasizes an opposition between a dull oneiric world, where one feels impeded, and a colorful oneiric world, where one feels free to move (especially to fly), such that one does not know what to do with one's freedom. The difference between impediment and freedom is the same as between grey and color. This freedom manifests itself by holding (or not holding) some oneiric elements which give way to the freedom of moving. There is no freedom in emptiness, but it increases with the amount of information in a given situation.

For example in an "initial dream" where I was going out of my body, I found myself in darkness. I was more or less feeling without seeing it, the room around me, and I crossed the door to be in the corridor. But I had the feeling that I was moving into thick syrup, as if I was an insect caught in glue and desperately fighting to escape, and I was thinking that if this was the condition after death, to die would not be something very pleasant. This dream illustrates the secondary characteristics already mentioned but to an extreme stage: complete darkness, and almost total impediment.

The difference between this lucid dream and Garfield's, is obvious here: I did not have the opportunity to wonder "what to do". What was most urgent was to get out of there!

Here the question "what to do" is not to be asked, in spite of the presence of lucidity, because there is an urgent problem to solve. In other words the question of "what to do" indicates freedom of action, and, most of the time, takes place in a colorful world.

3. The problem of the "prior condition". But things are not always so simple thus it is necessary to make some distinctions. In some lucid dreams we know there is something to be done. In other lucid dreams we have all the liberty to do what we want. But in some of them we have to do something but we don't realize it due to the retroactivity previously mentioned (which introduces into consciousness irrelevant choices). In my opinion this is the case of lucid dreams followed by false awakenings. Especially when the false awakening is of the type in which the individual dreams they have awakened and proceed to think about the just finished lucid dream.

A possible objection to my above argument is that my conception of liberty is in fact a property of the situation and not the state of consciousness, which is such that the dreamer can take whichever decision he wants. Thus it could be argued that even in the "grey stage", the lucid dreamer being lucid can make a decision--which implies freedom. But in fact quantity of available information seriously limits the decision(s) the dreamer can make (and therefore the freedom of the dreamer).

For a long time, during some "out-of-body" dreams, I could not leave my room. (Afterwards I read that Robert Monroe had gone through the same difficulty; he imputed it to a psychological problem). Being a lucid dreamer, why could my decisions not change? I tried many things: to smash a window, to go through the wall. Sometimes it worked, but I frequently had the same problem when the lucid dream was an "initial

dream” (and was experienced as an “out-of-body experience”).

Why was I going through this difficulty? No doubt something could be done to get over it. But I did not have the information which would have helped me to take the right decision as I realized soon afterwards,

To be clearer, I will make a comparison. Before being able to go down a skiing-track, first we have to take the lift to go up. A lucid dreamer can be in a situation where, to get a result, he has, first, to go through an intermediate stage. For example, to get out of my room in a dream, I needed a prior condition. But I had no problem to do other things which did not require a prior condition: for instance, to move into my room or to get into another dream.

Let's go back to our skiing. A skier in his chalet decides to go down a skiing-track. Let's imagine that he is a beginner and that his chalet is down the skiing track but higher than the city. If, by ignorance, he does not fulfill a prior condition, which is to take the lift he will never succeed even if he has made a firm decision. On the other hand he can always do something else which does not require such a prior condition: for example to talk around the city. But if the door of his house is blocked by snow, then the prior condition will be the same as that of the ski or the outing in the city. If he is not aware of the problem, he is stuck for both activities.

In the same way, in lucid dreaming, we can consider that there are either more and more specific prior conditions, or more and more general prior conditions.

This idea of a prior condition became obvious for me during an out-of-the-body dream. In this dream the prior condition was the quality of the oneiric surroundings and was discovered by chance, I was floating outside in front of a building like a flying kite. I was called back by my body, or my room, struck by the idea that I lacked certain energy to make my “journey” last. At the same time I was getting in my oneiric mind the Castaneda's notion of “power”. Garfield talks about the energy which is circulating inside her oneiric body during lucid dreaming. This energy is most probably a necessary condition, a “prior” condition which must be fulfilled to go out of a room in a dream.

So the question became: when a lucid dream does not progress satisfactorily (apart from an impossibility which would be peculiar to lucid dreaming) how does one know what is wrong and which condition must be fulfilled first to improve future dreams?

This prior condition seemed to be of internal character, but not discernable in waking life, just as we cannot distinguish a lucid dreamer from a non-lucid dreamer on an electroencephalographic printout (except of course in the case of voluntary ocular signals). But this question was transformed in its turn because the existence of these unresolved prior conditions seemed to indicate what could be called “psychic and energetic blockages” due to lack of information. In combining the three factors, 1.) freedom of action, 2.) colors, and 3.) prior conditions, it appeared that we have arrived at criteria for evaluating mental health.

Determination of the Level of Oneiric Mental Health Health

We now have to specify how oneiric lucidity can help us to appraise the various elements which have been identified above as criteria for mental health: 1) liberty of action, 2) quality of the surrounding light and colors, 3) previously obstructed situations. Is it enough to record the presence of these elements and, should the occasion arise, test their “resistance”? To do so, we must have a standard, a norm for mental health. We must know what is mental health.

1. Direct and indirect appreciation of mental and physiological health. It would probably be more exact to say that we do not know what is mental health, even if we have an intuitive idea of it for ourselves, We have no criteria to define mental health satisfactorily. Its definition is often shown by negation in the shape of the description of one’s behavior. That is, in waking life, some kinds of behavior show that mental health is impaired but there is not behavior that definitively indicates good mental health. In general, we know when we are not well, but we are never sure that everything goes right!

It is not the same for physiological health that is defined as a good physiological state when the human body works regularly and harmoniously for a long period. In this case, the organs may be observed medically by technical means. The observation is thus objective.

During waking life, then, we have an objective appreciation of physiological health, and a subjective appreciation of mental health through the observations of behavior,

Now the state of lucid dreaming, the schema is reversed. We have a “subjective” appreciation of physiological health and an “objective” appreciation of mental health. This assertion has a meaning if we call “objective” what is directly observable, and “subjective” what needs an interpretation.

Several instances in literature on lucid dreaming show that the appreciation of physiological health is not “direct”. We must remember that in dreams physiological illness is more often not seen as it is, but represented or acted out. In spite of this, taking some dream action with regard to the representation can allow a change in the physiological problem itself, which is rather surprising. It is rather like in waking life: directly modifying neurotic behavior allows one to act on the underlying neurosis. In both cases, we act on the sign of the thing to reach the thing itself.

On the contrary, in oneirical psychic life, it is not necessary to act on the signs of a lucid dream for the elements of a lucid dream are those of mental health. The freedom of acting during a dream is an obvious criterion of mental health. But as it is not easily appraised, it would be easier to seek a corollary in lucid dreaming: the absence or the presence of colors. One can even, afterwards, go further and make a parallel between the degrees of colors and those of mental health.

2. Waking Mental Health and Oneiric Mental Health. We must notice another point: even if the appreciation of freedom and colors gives an evaluation of mental health in dreams, we can’t use this fact in waking life. This criterion is effectively concerned with mental health during a dream that is to say dreaming mental life (oneiric mental life).

It would appear to be impossible to contest the fact that dreaming mental health and waking mental health are connected. But are the criteria of evaluation the same? The

comparison can be done at another level: If we try to compare mental health and physiological health without taking into account their connections, can we put them in parallel? Do mental organs and organism exist? And if yes, are they observable? By what means?

We can already answer the first question: these mental “organs” exist, or more exactly we have their trace in the shape of symbols, rather like the physicist who observes the trace (or finds the equation) of an elementary particle without ever watching the particle itself. As for the interconnections that would constitute a mental structure (organism), the events represent their impulse.

	Physiological Health	Mental Health
Elements	organs	symbols
System	structure (organism)	events

The system of comparison between physiological health and mental health of waking life applies in turn to the connections between mental waking life and mental dreaming life. It is indeed striking, if one works on waking dreaming, to find out the differences of process between the two types of mental life. We are thus compelled to consider them as belonging to separate fields. However, analogical structures remain.

	Waking Mental Health	Dreaming Mental Health
Elements	symbols	symbols and/or images
System	events	events and/or sequences

Notice the following phenomenon: in some cases it seems possible to solve problems of physiological health by acting on mental life. The opposite is more delicate, to change mental life itself, as it needs a wider view. It implies the necessity to remain outside mental life. This kind of wider view is what the lucid dreamer takes when he is able to realize that his dream is a lucid one, From that point of view, it seems logical that a psychological change gained through lucid dreaming may have effects on waking mental life, as mental transformations in waking life may have effects on the body.

It seems that the main process is the transformation of dream contents by a kind of turning over: Images become symbols and sequences become events.

3. The Observer's Position. To make this turning over work, keeping a distance is necessary. Marquis Hervey de Saint Denys's *Les Rêves et les Moyens les diriger* gives us the example of the same problem viewed in dreams from two different aspects. In one case, the problem is incorporated by the dreamer while, in the other case, it is kept at a distance (refer to the narration of these two dreams in the appendix). In "the dream of the gargoyle", Hervey de Saint-Denys is facing a devil which has a wound in its shoulder, while in "the dream of the shoulder" his shoulder is painful and he is suffering during the dream from different kinds of shocks. If we adopt the position in which each element of the dream is the dreamer itself we will have to admit that the devil is part of Hervey de Saint-Denys. In this case the image of the devil, and consequently of its wounded shoulder, is kept at a distance: it turns into a symbol, without of course losing its image quality. On the contrary in the second dream this image (which becomes a synaesthetic sensation) is experienced and therefore incorporated. In both dreams there is a fairly high degree of displacement but their outcome is very different.

Conclusion

The appraisal of mental health during lucid dreaming looks like the test of lucidity during a pre-lucid dream (that is to say a dream where one does not succeed in stating if it is a dream or not). To be able to decide if a dream is lucid, the dreamer goes through a set of tests like switching on lights, jumping from a chair, etc. In the present case, we are no longer testing lucidity. For us, its principle is acquired. We have only to set into motion the elements mentioned above. A systematic study is yet to be done and one can only suggest ideas of what can be done:

1. Setting a value on surrounding light and colors, evaluating their change with regard to the distance from the starting point, being able or not to make them more or less bright.
2. Appraising the freedom of action and its evolution from the starting point.
3. Seeking the previous condition that allows one to get out from a situation, which may demand several lucid dreams. For instance, from what distance or starting point does, a lamp, that does not want to light up, end up by lighting up?

This data must be modified by taking into account the observer's position. Will it be judicious for example to incorporate a symbol or, by contrast keep a distance from an image? The methodical study of the psychical changes obtained by lucid dreamers as they attempt the above (and other related exercises) will teach us a lot about the process of changing psychic life.

Will we succeed in understanding the nature of the process itself? To be lucid in dreaming does not at all mean that we understand how a dream is made. On the contrary, the dreamer is rather astonished by what he lives in his dream and by what he is able to do in it. Maybe the methodical changes obtained by lucid dreamers will help us to understand partly the nature of this process of transformation.

Appendix

In this appendix, are given two dreams of Hervey de Saint-Denys that illustrate two possible points of view for a same oneiric phenomenon. In “the dream of the Gargoyle” the Marquis is confronted with an oneiric image which shows a wounded shoulder -- this image is thus kept aloof -- , while in “the dream of the shoulder”, he has a direct perception of this path. The difference of point of view does not require a relation between these two dreams; however it is difficult not to briefly examine the given correlation.

One of the most dramatic lucid dreams of Hervey de Saint-Denys - and also one of the most famous could be titled “The Dream of the Gargoyle”. In this recurring nightmare, the marquis is “pursued by horrible monsters” worthy of Lovecraft. He gets rid of them as he returns to oneiric lucidity. This dream is fascinating for more than one reason, especially because it is a typical use of lucidity working on an aggressive dream, and because it illustrates the use of lucidity that two opposite schools make to fight against nightmares. I would like to quote this dream extensively because, like most famous texts, it is unfortunately ill-known through having been so often quoted. But as we will see, it shows surprising characteristics which could interest the researcher more than the historian.

The Dream of the Gargoyle

(I) I did not realize I was dreaming, and I thought I was being chased by abominable monsters. I was running away from them through a series of rooms, having each time difficulty opening the doors between the rooms, and when I managed to close one, I heard it being opened behind me by these horrible creatures who were trying to catch me, and were making dreadful noises, I felt that they were catching up with me; I woke up with a start, breathless and wet with sweat.

(II) I do not know what the origin and starting point of this dream was; it is probably that some pathological cause was behind it the first time, but after that, and several times over a six week period, it obviously came back because of the strong impression it had made on me, and because of the instinctive fear I had of seeing it come back. If I found myself alone in a room in a dream, the memory of this dreadful scene was immediately awakened; I would glance at the door, and the thought of that which I so feared to see appear had the precise effect of making it appear, the same spectacle and the same terrors came back. I was all the more affected when I awakened by the fact that, as if by a sort of fatality, this awareness of my situation I had during my dreams, was lacking in the case of this particular dream.

(III) One night, however, the fourth time it reappeared, and just when my persecutors were about to begin their chase, all of a sudden a feeling of truth came into my mind, a desire to fight these images gave me enough strength to overcome my instinctive fear. Instead of running away, and by an effort of will

obviously very characteristic in this situation, I leaned against the wall and resolved to take a good look at the phantoms I had previously only glimpsed, rather than actually seen. The initial shock was quite violent, I admit, such difficulty the mind has, even if forewarned, to fight off such a fearful image. I looked directly at the first aggressor who looked like one of those prickly grimacing demons one sees sculptured on cathedral, and my desire to understanding won out over emotions, I was able to observe the following: the terrible monster stopped a few steps ahead of me, whistling and leaping, in a way which became ridiculous as soon as it was no longer terrifying. I noticed that there were seven clearly defined claws on one of its hands or paws, whichever they should be called. His eyebrows, a wound he appeared to have on its shoulder, and a number of other details were perfectly clear and made this one, one of the clearest visions I had. Was it a recollection of some gothic bas-relief? In any case my imagination had added movement and color to it. I had paid so much attention to this central figure that the others appeared to have vanished into thin air. The monster itself appeared to slow down, become less clear, appear woolly, and change gradually into a sort of floppy corpse, like those faded costumes you see on stalls which sell disguises at carnival time. There were a few more insignificant images, and I woke up.¹

The text has been divided into three parts;

- (I) A description of the causes of ordinary dream process: chase-escape-awakening.
- (II) Observations of the causes of the dream: pathological causes and fear.
- (III) Lucid dreaming and use of lucidity; facing the aggressor.

The most striking fact in this dream is its “classical” character which signifies inner conflict for modern psychologists, whereas Hervey de Saint-Denys only attributes it to circumstances, probably of physiological origin like those in the nightmares discussed by Winsor McCay²: “It is likely that a pathological cause was at the origin initially” (II). By “pathological cause” one should understand “organic disorder”. Hervey de Saint-Denys gives the example of an orientalist who dreamed that he was walking on water each time that his cook put oil in his food without his knowing it.³

¹ (1867) Hervey de Saint-Denys. *Les rêves et les moyens les diriger*. Paris: Tchou. 1964. pp. 245-7. (Editor’s Note: For the material referenced in this note and also in some of the subsequent notes, copies of the original French versions and a first English translation are available to scholars from the senior editor.)

² Winsor McCay is the author of Little Nemo in Slumberland.

³ (1867) Hervey de Saint-Denys. *Les rêves et les moyens les diriger*. Paris: Tchou. 1964. p. 300. (Against fat! I can finally quote a very curious communication which was

Hervey de Saint-Denys even goes as far as distinguishing between various types of correlations between dreams and physical sensations in formulating the two following

hypotheses:

...what connection can one imagine there to be between a rocky shore and a migraine, between morphine and visions of wild beasts, between the introduction of a bit of grease into a stomach and the idea of walking in water? Could it be a coincidence that having established a connection between a morbid sensation one night, and a dream one happens to have that same night, that a reappearance of that same dream would bring back the same sensation? Or are there strange analogies amongst internal sensations, which might account for certain nerve reactions, certain internal movements in our bodies corresponding to impressions which seem so different?

In the first case, the correlation between a given dream and a given physical disorder would be fortuitous and different for each individual.

In the second hypothesis, on the contrary, experience could reveal unchanging and mysterious affinities the knowledge of which would become a real science.¹

The “real science” which would result from the knowledge of these constant and “mysterious affinities” should be worked out in relation with work on hallucinations as this type of correlation appears with acuteness in the “dream of the shoulder” (quoted below).

The following text specifies the way he faces this study:

There are some dreams that are common to all men. Physiologists generally agree to place the causes in the sensations produced by the more or less natural effect of the functions of heart and stomach. This being due to an erroneous appreciation by the mind of these sensations. Typical of such dreams are those in which one feels one is flying, jumping with great ease, going down flights of stairs in a few steps, or, on the contrary, those in which we feel we are held back by an invisible force and cannot accomplish the simplest tasks.

reported to me very recently by one of our most famous orientalist, a scholarly professor and first class philologist. He does not like food prepared with fat. He thinks it is bad for health, and strongly forbids the use of fat in his home. However, his cook did not share the same idea. She was in the main less strict, and thought that from time to time small quantity of the prohibited substance could be subtly introduced into the food without Sir realizing it. Here was her big mistake. It was true that he could not realize it on the same day; but a mysterious message was inevitably given to him during the following night. The next morning the cook was called; she vainly tried to deny the facts to her master. Her master stopped her short with these words: “Rosalie, I dreamt last night that I was walking on the water.”

The smallest quantity of fat had the inevitable result of making the scientist dream that he was forced to go on foot across flooded grounds, marshes or rice fields. He had noticed that he never had this dream without his cook admitting that it had been motivated. She admitted as well that this stubborn dream had never failed to betray her when she was in a situation deserving reprimand.)

¹ (1867) Hervey de Saint-Denys. *Les rêves et les moyens les diriger*. Paris; Tchou. 1964. p. 301.

I feel that experience would not only enable us to prove psycho-organic correlations in each of this type of dream, but also that serious interpretations of many others would provide us with a key to dreams, if we could assemble and study a sufficient number of examples.

We feel at times in life nervous annoyances accompanied by a physical sensation which is much like what we feel when we try to do some precise small bit of work and our fingers cannot manage it, or when we see people clumsily undertaking some delicate job. If we have dreams where we do or see such things, might not the cause very likely be some morbid agitation of our nervous system? I give this example as a specimen amongst numerous others, which it would be worth exploring.¹

For Hervey de Saint-Denys “the dream of the gargoyle” fits perfectly into this pattern. In the text which follows the one we quoted and which deals explicitly with the correlation between dreams and physiological problems, it is stated: “The simple fact of a dream or a type of dream being repeated persistently. is the indication of a state of suffering for which it is worth seeking the cause”. This suffering can be physical or “moral”, In (II) Hervey de Saint-Denys states, concerning the “dream of the gargoyle”: “But after that, and several times over a period of six weeks, it was obviously brought back by the simple fact of the impression it had left on me, and by the fear I instinctively had to see it come back”. In spite of the fact that he does not take the organic hypothesis into account concerning the repetition of the dream, he does not suppose that this fear can have an origin other than the impression the dream made on him. But is this necessarily the case?

It would be too easy to criticize Hervey de Saint-Denys’ understanding of his own dream in the light of what we know today about the way the subconscious functions. Such criticism would only be valid if we found in Hervey de Saint-Denys elements which permit a different interpretation. We seem to find such an element in a dream described by this author and which involves interesting correlations with “the dream of the gargoyle”, but when we examine it more closely, we see that if it introduces questions concerning a possible pathological cause, this is not sufficient.

If we apply a gestalt approach which maintains that each element of the dream is the dreamer, we can suggest the hypothesis that the prickly, grimacing monster is Hervey de Saint-Denys. Let us turn back to the passage in question (III): “I looked at the

main aggressor ... I noted ... a wound which he appeared to have on the shoulder, and a multitude of other details which make this vision among the most lucid.” The monster has a wound on his shoulder, as indicated in the phrase in italics. Another dream presented by the author speaks specifically, in a clearer manner, of a wound he had on his own shoulder.

The Dream of the Shoulder

A piece of wood having fallen on my shoulder, I had applied some medicine which contained belladonna to calm the pain of the deep bruise. At first I had several short dreams in which I thought I was carrying a heavy gun on my shoulder, Lifting the corner of a heavy painting someone was trying to hand, etc. Towards the morning, I had the following dream:

I was traveling and had arrived wherever I was going. I looked for a place to stay, walking around with a suitcase on my shoulder, and found no one

¹ (1867) Hervey de Saint-Denys. *Les rêves et les moyens les diriger*. Paris: Tchou. 1964. pp. 301-302.

to carry it or to indicate an inn. I spotted a sign indicating a white horse on a nice looking building, but the door was so low that I had to bend down considerably to go in through a long corridor; in this uncomfortable position I hit my shoulder against the wall several times. Once inside the inn, I am greeted by a young maid who explains that there are many guests and that I will have to stay in one of the rooms upstairs. I accept to take whatever they have and putting my suitcase back on my shoulder, I follow the girl along never ending corridors and stairways. We finally come to a room with a high ceiling like a church with walls from which metal bars protrude horizontally one above the other, serving as handles and steps. “Don’t you trust me and want to follow me?” asks the girl as she begins to climb this ladder, “I will follow you to the end of the world”, I answered. Already I had forgotten about my suitcase, the inn, the room I was to rent. I was overcome by a growing exaltation. This was no longer a maid who was showing me my way, it was a type of heroine, I climbed up easily. As we reached the ledge, my guide rested her hand heavily on my shoulder slipped through a narrow window and invited me to follow her, and showed me at a distance, at the other end of the platform we were crossing, a second climb we would have to undertake. This time it was a mountain which seemed to climb to the sky. There were places where one could grasp onto handles, as there had been in the wall we had already climbed. But this time they were covered over by bushes, roots and irregularities in the rock. My guide gave me her hand to kiss before showing me this new path. I was electrified and set out behind her, unconcerned by the vertiginous heights we were attaining, unimpressed by the tremendous precipice below. I only saw my guide’s slim foot as it gracefully moved ahead, brushing my cheek from time to time; we continued to climb and it seemed to me that my mind, my strength and

my exaltation continued to grow. Just before we reached our goal, there was a ledge we had to cross: my guide told me to stay put and she placed her foot on my shoulder in order to climb and then gave me her hand...¹

We therefore have two dreams of Hervey de Saint-Denys in which the matter is about a shoulder. Each of these dreams involves extremely intense emotional states, “The dream of the gargoyle” reaches an extreme of horror, and “the dream of the shoulder” involves a height of ecstasy, as illustrated at the end:

I bent over so she could lean completely on me; I was shaking with fear that she might fall into the abyss, where I would not have hesitated to follow her. I felt terrible anguish. Finally, I felt her lift her foot and I helped her: I stood up and observed her unspeakable beauty. The ledge had leveled out, ahead of us lay a beautiful garden, full of light and just for us. I put my arm around the one who had brought me there. My lips met hers. I was overcome by such intense joy that I seemed I would lose my reason. I had no regrets, I sincerely thought I had lost my mind. I said to myself “Madness is happiness”. The intensity of this pleasure woke me up.

The emotional intensity of this dream evokes the reverse of “the dream of the gargoyle”. A lucid dream in which one victoriously confronts an adversary is often associated with what I call a “dream of conclusion” which is not necessarily lucid but

¹(1867) Hervey de Saint-Denys. *Les rêves et les moyens les diriger*. Paris: Tchou. 1964. pp. 303-305.

which reflects a victory in another intense dream, and in which various elements of the psyche attain harmony. This harmonization can take place in the dream of aggression; the first lucid dream described by Stephen LaBerge in *Lucid Dreaming* is a typical example. I relate to LaBerge’s dream here separately from the conclusion he draws concerning it.

1. Setting of the dream. “As I wandered through a high-vaulted corridor deep within a mighty citadel...I was dreaming!...”

2. Meeting the adversary. “Several hundred years below I could see what appeared to be a fountain surrounded by marble statuary ... Towering above the fountain stood a huge and intimidating genie, the Guardian of the Spring, as I somehow immediately knew.”

3. Implied encounter and use of the lucidity. “All my instincts cried out “Flee!”. But I remembered that this terrifying sight was only a dream. Emboldened by the thought, I cast aside fear and flew not away, but straight up to the apparition.”

4. Direct encounter. “As is the way of dreams, no sooner was I within reach than we had somehow become of equal size and I was able to look him in the eyes, face to face. Realizing that my fear had created this terrible appearance, I resolved to embrace what I

had been eager to reject, and with open arms and heart I took both his hands in mine,”

5. Conclusion. “As the dream slowly faded, the genie’s power seemed to flow into me, and I awoke filled with vibrant energy. I felt like I was ready for anything.

Notice the similarity between the conclusion of Hervey de Saint-Denys’ and LaBerge’s dreams: “I resolved to embrace what I had been eager to reject, and with open arms and heart I took both his hands in mine” corresponds to “I put my arm around the fairy princess who had brought me there. My lips touched hers”; and “As the dream slowly faded, the genie’s power seemed to flow into me, and I awoke filled with vibrant energy. I felt like I was ready of anything” corresponds to “I was overcome by such intense joy that I seemed I would lose my reason, I had no regrets. I sincerely thought I had lost my mind. I said to myself “Madness is happiness”. The intensity of this pleasure woke me up.”

The presence or the absence of this type of conclusion often indicates whether the lucid dream has fulfilled its role in re-establishing psychic balance after the disturbance indicated by the unpleasant dream. It must be noted that in the case of Hervey de Saint-Denys’ dream, we do not know the order in which he had those dreams. If “the dream of the shoulder” precedes “the dream of the gargoyle” the wound on the monster’s shoulder can be clearly understood, but either the conclusion contained in the shoulder dream would be premature, or it does not refer to “the dream of the gargoyle”. If, as in the book, “the dream of the gargoyle” precedes “the dream of the shoulder”, then the monster’s wound can be considered as anticipatory, not in that it predicts the future, but rather in that it indicates an “element” in the psychic life of Hervey de Saint-Denys which can manifest itself either in a dream, or in waking life. The conclusion of the “dream of the shoulder” would then be in its proper place. But, in the absence of other elements confirming this hypothesis, we cannot defend this point of view.

It would certainly be possible to find other elements which would give Hervey de Saint-Denys’ dream a larger interpretation than that of a pathological cause (organic disorder), without evoking the hypothesis or a correlation between the two dreams. But even without pursuing the analysis any further, it is clear that Hervey de Saint-Denys was able to resolve a psychological problem by lucid dreaming without knowing the nature of his problem and in fact without even suspecting its existence.