

Lucid Dreaming  
*Dawning of the Clear Light*

by Dr. G. Scott Sparrow

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## **Dr. G. Scott Sparrow**

I have been working with dreams since I was a teenager. When I was 19, I had the first of countless lucid dreams, many of which have culminated in the experience of white light. A couple of years later, I did my master's thesis on lucid dreaming as an evolutionary process, which compares Jungian principals on the development of consciousness in the primitive world to the arousal of lucidity in the dream state.

Shortly thereafter, I wrote *Lucid Dreaming: Dawning of the Clear Light* (A.R.E., 1976), which was the first book on lucid dreaming in North America. In 1983, I completed a doctoral dissertation at William and Mary on using “dream reliving” as a lucid dream induction strategy. I have also explored middle-of-the-night meditation as a lucid dream induction strategy, and believe it's one of the best ways to enhance the overall quality and depth of our dreams.

After becoming licensed as a psychotherapist in 1982, I began to apply the principles of cocreative dream theory—or the idea that dreams need to be seen as an interactive encounter between dreamer and dream imagery—to the analysis of nonlucid dreams, and subsequently developed the FiveStar Method. I have just coauthored a paper on this method (*J. of Creativity in Mental Health*, in press), and I'm currently working on a book on the FSM and co-creative dream theory.

As a professor, I incorporate dream work training into my graduate counseling courses, and as a therapist, I work with the dreams of virtually every client of mine. I have recently founded DreamStar Institute, which offers certification in dream analysis. Also, I am currently involved in conducting a PTSD study that that will explore dream reliving and middle-of-the-night meditation as a treatment for distressing nightmares. I have written several books on religious experiences, and recently published a memoir titled, *Healing the Fisher King: A Fly Fisher's Grail Quest*, which is an account of how dreams ushered me through a life-threatening midlife ordeal.

For more information:

<http://www.spiritualmentoring.com/> and <http://www.dreamanalysisistraining.com>

## Chapter One: A Personal Account

“...Its light gleams like oil tonight when I am alone  
On the last night, also will it shine.”

--Octavio Paz

Lucid dreaming, or the experience of becoming conscious while in the dream state, first came to my attention in a dream early in 1972. Like many persons who have had such an experience, I was deeply impressed with its significance. The dream had such an effect that it seemed to change the direction of my life at the time. It continues to be a source of strength even now. It is as follows:

“It seems that I have come home from school. I become aware that I’m dreaming as I stand outside a small building which has large black double-doors on its eastern side. I approach them to enter. As soon as I open them, a brilliant white light hits me in the face. Immediately I am filled with intense feelings of love.

“I say several times, ‘This can’t be a dream!’ The interior resembles a small chapel or meeting room. It has large windows overlooking barren land like the Great Plains. I think to myself that this is somehow real in a three-dimensional sense. Everything is amazingly clear and the colors brilliant.

“No one is with me, yet I feel that someone needs to be there to explain the sense of purpose that seems to permeate the atmosphere.

“At one point I walk holding a crystal rod (or wand) upon which a spinning crystal circlet is poised. The light passes through it and is beautiful.” (Sparrow, 1972)

Upon awakening, I lay quietly in my bed and felt bewildered. Why had this experience been given to me? What I had done to deserve it? Although these questions proved to be unanswerable, I did recall a significant experience the previous day that seemed at the time to relate directly to the dream.

I had embarked on a two-hundred-mile trip to attend my brother’s graduation from Air Force flight school. I planned to stay the night and return home the next day. As I drove through the rocky plains of central west Texas towards Del Rio and the distant Mexican mountains, I suddenly realized that what I was doing was for the love of my brother. I was humbled by the realization that such pure acts of love had been rare in my life. For a long while afterward, I dwelt in this feeling and watched the sun gently sink behind the

mountains over Mexico. The play of light upon the stark landscape kept awake the feeling of love within me.

Since this first lucid dream, I have noticed on several occasions that lucidity has arisen following an experience of love or deep rapport with another person. Sometimes when I experience this kind of contact during the day, I am able to sense that a lucid dream is imminent. On these days, I try to retire earlier than usual to allow the experience time to unfold.



After my first lucid dream it was months before consciousness again emerged in my dreams. I had not begun to cultivate the faculty or to attribute any particular significance to it, in and of itself. Yet the memory of the Light and the luminous feelings associated with it left me with an intense desire to re-experience its transforming effects.

Meditation and dreamwork became a part of my daily regimen soon after this first lucid dream. About six months later, after meditating one night with a girl friend, I had a strong feeling that an important experience was awaiting me in sleep. After sharing the impression with her, I said good night earlier than usual and went

home. Before going to sleep I moved my bed so that I would be able to see the stars through my bedroom window. This ritual seemed to enhance the feeling of expectancy. I went to sleep and had the following experience in the early morning:

“I feel that I am waking up. I realize that I’ve been hashing through many ideas and problems. As I lie in my bed with my eyes closed, I suddenly realize that there is no reason why I shouldn’t experience the Light! I feel a complete lack of the usual feelings of unworthiness. It’s as if a problem has been solved by the long period of self-reflection. “As I wait expectantly, a warmth begins to fill my body. Although my eyes are closed, I sense that a white light is shining through the window and entering my solar plexus. It rushes upward until a warm brightness fills my vision. I feel deep love and surrender, and wish that some of my friends could experience this also.

“After the Light subsides, I bound out of bed and go searching about the house for the Master who made the experience possible. I see no one. Then I awaken.” (Sparrow, 1972)



Since I was not aware at the time that I was dreaming, this experience cannot be considered by definition a lucid dream. Yet because the relationship between the Light and the awakening of lucidity has been so pronounced in subsequent dreams, I feel that this experience should be included to provide a comprehensive picture of the development of lucid dreaming.

Also, the dream reveals a common characteristic of many “prelucid” dreams -- a “false” awakening. This is when the dreamer thinks he is awakening from sleep only to discover later upon actual awakening that he was still dreaming. Sometimes lucidity occurs after the false awakening -- when the dreamer finds himself in another place or in unfamiliar surroundings. Thus, although the false awakening does not necessarily result in the arousal of lucidity, it seems to represent a growth in that direction.

When lucidity began to arise with increasing regularity in the following months, I soon noticed that it emerged predictably after a deep or fulfilling meditation. It became clear that when my devotional life was intense, lucid dreams would arise as a concomitant. This relationship became more pronounced when I began meditating for fifteen or twenty minutes during the early morning hours (from 2:00 to 5:00 a.m.). As I would return to sleep, dreams of amazing clarity as well as brief periods of lucidity would occasionally ensue. I have often thought that if a person would diligently practice meditation in the early morning hours for the purpose of attunement, lucid dreams would be the natural result. Except for rare occasions when I have passed into a lucid dream without a break in consciousness, most of my lucid experiences have begun with a “normal” dream. As the dream progresses, something unusual happens to convince me that I am dreaming. The situations in the dream that have provoked lucidity with the greatest frequency are of two basic interrelated types. The first and perhaps most common stimulus is when I am confronted with a threatening person, animal or situation. In this type of dream the desire to escape usually results in aborting the stressful dream. On some occasions, the stress is alleviated through the arousal of lucidity. In this case, the dreamer catapults into greater awareness out of apparent necessity. The fear itself seems to encourage the development of lucidity as a coping mechanism which enables a creative interaction between the dreamer and the frightening situation. Undoubtedly, the resolution of such dreams can have a profound healing effect in the dreamer’s waking life, as well.

An example of this type of lucid dream is as follows:

“I am being pursued in the area of my freshman residence by a group of men. As I run fearfully through the neighborhood, dodging in between houses, I become aware that I am dreaming and that the fear is unnecessary. I realize that I have a choice to go to meet my pursuers or to meditate. I feel a need to return and work through the conflict. So I try to fly

to the area where they are located. I will myself upward until I am high above the earth. But before I get to the place, a pleasant vibration courses through my body, and I awaken.”  
(Sparrow, 1974)

This dream and others of a similar nature reveal a very important principle of lucid dreaming, especially as it relates to the confrontation of fear or problems. The principle is: Once lucidity arises the dreamer may actually release himself from confronting a problem on its own level. In the above dream I chose rather to return to confront my attackers to reconcile the conflict. This, of course, may be valuable and necessary at times, and leaves the dreamer with an exhilarating sense of having overcome a fearful situation. Lucidity seems to be a fragile faculty, however, particularly during the beginning stages. It can be quickly submerged by feelings of overconfidence, as is suggested in the above dream. A strong case can be made for the need to regard lucidity as an opportunity to cooperate with or forgive the dream elements rather than an opportunity to exercise control over them. The importance of this approach is evident when we regard the dream as having two discrete parts -- the symbolic content, and the dreamer's response to it.

Since we possess a limited understanding of the workings of the unconscious, we might do well to approach it with an attitude of healthy respect. Whenever we speak of changing the dream content according to our momentary desires, we are opening the possibility of violating the organic integrity of our unconscious, inner natures. Yet this risk does not render lucid dreaming necessarily destructive. On the contrary, the lucid dream presents a unique opportunity to alter and improve one's responses in the dream that can thereby facilitate a creative and growing relationship to the dream content.

As lucid dreaming is becoming more widely known in popular literature, it is unfortunate there is such an emphasis upon the manipulative capacity of the dreamer. Such an approach to this potentially powerful experience is likely to replicate man's regrettable "master-slave" relationship to nature and the physical world, and only lead to a false sense of triumph.

Another situation that has apparently stimulated lucidity in my case has been the presentation of a novel or incongruous element within the dream. These anomalies can be observed in normal dreams as well, but are overlooked with regularity. For example, such incongruous events like a familiar person who looks different; a familiar scene that reveals an obvious flaw, or an event that violates known physical laws.

The following two dreams illustrate this type of lucid dream:

"I go to visit Ann whom I haven't seen for months. When I enter her office, she seems very aloof which is unlike her. Also, her face looks different. I realize that it isn't she at all and

that I am dreaming. Immediately I drop to the floor and begin meditating. I awaken soon afterward.”

“I am on a high hill above a lake, searching for Indian artifacts. It seems that I am being told about the culture which existed in the area during primitive times. I am told that the Indians were very advanced in the art of stone flaking (i.e., tool making). I go on top of the hill and find three beautifully crafted stone trowels or knives. I realize that they are too fine to be real, and I must be dreaming. “Taking the stone trowels, I sit down to meditate facing east and stick the trowels in the ground, one at a time. I repeat, ‘The Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost.’

“At this point Alta walks by. I ask ‘Do you know that we are dreaming?’ She laughs. So I point out the three stone objects on the ground. In their midst items of silverware begin spontaneously to appear—first a fork, then a cup. I look at her face. She is puzzled, seemingly on the verge of ‘waking up.’ I take the items away and other objects appear. We begin to laugh as the process speeds up. We are inundated with beautiful silver objects. Then I awaken.” (Sparrow, 1974)

This type of lucid dream resembles the first except that the anomaly or inconsistent event in the dream lacks a threatening quality. The dream is merely at variance to what the dreamer knows to be true or possible. Oliver Fox calls this distinguishing awareness, which begins to arise with greater frequency once it occurs, the “critical faculty.” This awareness is essentially the recognition of inconsistency. The development of such a faculty has constructive but painful implications for the waking state. If through the development of this “critical faculty” we are able to attune ourselves to every inconsistency in our attitudes and actions, we have surely begun to traverse the difficult path to self-understanding. It may even be possible that lucidity occurs to the degree one is able to recognize inconsistency during the waking state. It is probable that as we work with lucid dreaming we will also begin to meet daily problematical opportunities that encourage and even require the extension of the qualities of lucidity into our waking life. We can expect to become more objective and unattached, as well as more cognizant of the purpose behind our immediate experiences.

The following quotation is from Carl Jung in his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*:

“The way is not without danger. Everything good is costly, and the development of the personality is one of the most costly of all things. It is a question of yea-saying to oneself, of taking oneself to the most serious of tasks, of being conscious of everything one does, and keeping it constantly before one’s eyes in all dubious aspects -- truly a task that taxes us to



the utmost.” (Wilhelm, pp. 95)

Since the inception of lucidity into my dream life, the lucid dream has clearly evolved in a specific direction -- toward a closer relationship to the inner Light. Many times has it presented itself, but rarely have I received it fully. I have begun to regard lucidity as a platform within the dream upon which I can become receptive to this Light.

During the first lucid dreams, I was not aware of this opportunity. But gradually, a light began to appear in my dreams which at first I mistook for a bright star, the moon or the sun. Usually bright white in color, it would suddenly appear hovering above me and increasing in intensity. One of the first such dreams is as follows:

“I am thinking or reading something about earthquakes. A friend calls me to a window (in an unfamiliar house) and excitedly says, ‘the sun has a blue flake on it!’

“I look out the window. A white sun is about 30\_ above the northern horizon. I notice that it has a bluish tint to it, but think that’s probably due to a retinal afterimage. I think, ‘If I am dreaming, then that is the Light, not the sun!’ In order to test this, I try to enter into a meditative state. But then I decide that I’m not dreaming, though the sun has increased in size.” (Sparrow 1974)

As a result of such dreams, I soon decided that whenever I became lucid in a dream, I would pray for the Light and seek to enter a meditative state. I have since found that failure to do so usually results in premature awakening or in being eventually distracted by the dream environment to the extent of being reabsorbed in the normal dream consciousness.

The practice of prayer and meditation in the dream has allowed me to focus attention on what I truly desire to encounter without being distracted by the unlimited possibilities which may arise in the lucid dream. Prayer and meditation have seemed to consolidate what can be a fleeting experience. Yet more important, the attitude of receptivity engendered by this practice has invited -- in the case of many dreams -- an immediate presentation of the Light.

I was amazed to discover the practice of seeking the Light through the lucid dream is described in ancient Tibetan manuscripts, particularly in the writings that were translated by Evans-Wentz and published as *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (Evans-Wentz, 1958). In the chapter entitled “The Doctrine of the Dream State,” the adept is admonished to become aware of the illusory nature of the dream images while in the dream! There are various physical and mental exercises given to enable the adept to achieve lucidity. One of the goals of this process is to carry the waking consciousness into the dream and vice versa without a break in consciousness.

The primary purpose for establishing this continuity of consciousness is to allow the dreamer to begin to realize that the environment of the waking state is a self-created dream as well. This recognition leads the adept to the second and most important phase of the lucid dream which is meditating on the Reality behind the dream images. This stage of the lucid dream during which the dreamer may enter an illuminated state is referred to in the Tibetan text as the “Dawning of the Clear Light.” It is a stage in which the dreamer turns his attention to the Source motivating the dream images.

For some reason an individual seems to become more accessible to illuminatory experience when actually meditating in the dream state than in the waking state. It is as if the barrier between the person and the Divine becomes transparent, revealing the Luminosity which has been so effectively obscured by unfulfilled experiences, guilt, and reprehensible thoughts. As the desires and fears inherent in this subconscious barrier are forgiven or accepted, the dreamer then may come face- to-face with the Divine.

I have found that when the Light makes its appearance in the lucid dream, the preceding events usually fall to the wayside. Whereas the initial dream may have been an important preliminary experience, the presentation of the Light seems to represent the essential culmination of the dream process. The dreamer has thus far accrued a great deal of independence and response capability which has accompanied the emergence of lucidity. Yet as the Light becomes visible, the dreamer realizes that the independence and the interests of self must be relinquished if the Light is to approach and become an inner experience. The preeminent demand placed upon the dreamer as he stands at this threshold is to surrender.

I have found this to be an extremely difficult thing to do. The difficulty is illustrated in the following dream:

“I am outdoors and see a light in the sky. I am told that I must turn my head away if the light is to descend upon me. I am aware that I am dreaming. I bow my head. The ground around me becomes illuminated by the brilliant orb. I begin to be afraid as it nears me. I look up, and it withdraws into the sky. The process is repeated, but I fail to overcome my fear. I awaken.” (Sparrow, 1974)

Usually when I desire the illuminatory experience, I fail to realize that I am asking for a supremely humbling experience. This is easy to forget when my thoughts turn to the beauty and joy



offered in the experience. But as I stand at threshold, all of my reservations rise up to argue against going any further. This problem, and its solution, is illustrated in the following dream:

"I enter a church and know that I am expected to speak. The congregation is singing hymn #33 from a red hymnal. While they go through the usual preliminary exercises, I decide to go outside to gather myself. I am worried and afraid because I don't know what I will say. I sit down in the grass and suddenly come up with a topic that feels right -- 'The Way of Surrender.'

"At this point I look up in the eastern sky and see a large orb of white light many times the size of the moon. I realize that I am dreaming. I yell out in joy knowing it is coming for me. As soon as I do, the Light withdraws into the sky as if it is awaiting a more appropriate response on my part. I know that I must turn my eyes away and trust. As I do, the Light descends. As it approaches, I hear a woman's voice say, "You've done well reflecting this Light within yourself. But now it must be turned outward.

"The air becomes charged and the ground is brilliantly lit. The top of my head begins to prickle and be warmed by the Light. I awaken." (Sparrow, 1974)

The message in the dream seems to be two-fold: Surrender becomes the key to inner illumination and creative expression in the world. The following excerpt from the Edgar Cayce readings reiterates this message:

... though chosen as a channel, thou of thyself may do nothing. The Spirit of the Christ working in and through thee will bring the fruits of the Spirit in the experience of those that thou would lead to the light. (#281-19)

I have found it difficult to surrender to something that seems so overwhelming and totally "other." In affirming a spiritual ideal, however, I have been able to choose a "mediator" between this overwhelming experience and myself; a mediator who does not minimize the experience but who lends human and tangible qualities to it. As I have invoked this mediator in my waking prayer and meditation, He has become the strength through which I have been able to surrender to a powerful and transforming inner experience. This is represented by the following dream:

"I am with Mark, and we are both aware that we are dreaming. We begin flying crisscross patterns through a large new auditorium as if we are preparing it, and consecrating it. We actually interpenetrate each other as we simultaneously pass through the center of the room.

“At one point I see him standing in a doorway at the back of the auditorium, talking to someone standing behind the door. I know that it is Jesus! Anxiously, I walk through the door and look toward Him. At first I am only able to see a bright white light. But then the light abruptly changes into the clear form of the Master . . . ” (Sparrow, 1975)

The clarification of the Mediator is a major step toward creative lucid dreaming. It brings with it protection, companionship and personal guidance. Without it, communion with the Light lacks the essential ingredient of humanness; it provides no clear bridge to lucid living.

I hope that this introduction has conveyed to you how accessible the lucid dream can be. In my opinion, it is very close to all of us - and the Light it promises, only a step further. The obstacles which prevent its coming are our own beliefs and constricting self-concepts. Yet perhaps all that is needed is for us to show the least amount of willingness in order for the gift to be bestowed - and for the dawn to come.

Now let's go into lucid dreaming a little more deeply to explore the conditions that give rise to it, and the challenges that accompany greater awareness in the dream.

## Chapter Two: Lucid Dreaming as an Evolutionary Process

“In the face of this enormity of Forces and challenges, what is man tending to do? He seems to be trying to keep himself as unconscious as possible and succeeds with remarkable versatility.”

Dorothy Berkeley Phillips from *The Choice is Always Ours*

### The Normal Dream State

One way to describe an individual's experience of dreaming is that it is a state in which he finds himself subject to a script he does not seem to have written. Strange and unfamiliar symbols and scenes intermingle with the commonplace. All the control that the dreamer might have mustered during the day is usually conspicuously absent. The dreamer possesses what seems to be a conscious identity, but rarely does it dawn upon the dreamer that things in the dream could be other than they are. The dreamer does not question the necessity of the experience or what could be done to alter the circumstances.

Self-reflection is rarely present in the normal dream state. When situations arise which would be recognized as absurd by the awake person, they are consistently accepted without question by the dreamer.

Carl Jung describes the consciousness of primitive humanity similarly:

“Before man learned to produce thoughts, thoughts came to him. He did not think—he perceived his mind functioning.” (Jung, Vol. XI, p. 46)

Similarly, in the normal state of dreaming, an individual does not dream in the sense of it being a willed or chosen activity. Instead, it is an experience that comes to him, which happens to him.

Another characteristic of this level of consciousness is a lack of fine distinction between the dreamer and the images of the dream. It is quite common for the dreamer to be observing a person in his dream at one moment and then to be identifying with that person in the next moment. This process of merging with the dream symbols relates against resembles the psyche at the earliest stages of its emergence, in which an individual is unable to maintain a clear distinction between himself and the world. According to Jung, this state of consciousness is a predominant characteristic the early stages of childhood as well as the primitive psyche. The individual is an open system, merged with the surrounding environment, having no sense of boundary between himself and the world. Even though

there may be a sense of primitive union between the individual and the world, it is a confused, unconscious state, in which the individual remains dependent upon, and overly susceptible to, the environment.

This state of confusion manifests in the dream as a susceptibility to the influence of the dream images. The dreamer's capacity to respond as an individual is minimal. To put it another way, his response-ability decreases as the boundaries between himself and the dream dissolve. In Gestalt psychology, this state of primitive union is called confluence. Until the individual emerges from this confusion, he "cannot tell what other people are. He does not know where he leaves off and others begin." (Perls, p. 38).

The concept of boundary is very important to our understanding of lucid dreaming. As we begin to consider the first stages of consciousness and self-reflection in dreams, we will observe the beginning of a well-defined "contact boundary," or a distinction between the individual and the dream environment.

Many psychologists would question the value of moving out of the normal dream state into a state of lucidity. After all, the normal dream has proved to be a storehouse of information about the inner workings of the personality, as well as being a therapeutic experience in and of itself. Admittedly, the dream is of obvious value. The aspect that is of questionable value, however, is how the individual responds to the dream while in it.

Most of us make a major error when seeking to understand our dreams. This error consists of failing to separate the symbolic message, or the dream, from the subjective response in the dream. Again we encounter the importance of establishing a boundary between the dreamer and the dream world. When we fail to do this we usually end up interpreting the symbolic message in according to our subjective response to it. This error is identical to what Freud called projection, that is, the tendency to impose the attributes of self upon the environment. So, as we place importance upon the awakening of consciousness in dreams, we are not undermining the importance of the symbolic content. Instead, we are concerned with withdrawing the projection of ourselves upon the dream encounter, and thus improving the relationship between ourselves and the dream content so that there will not be a confusion between the two. To understand the dream content, we must understand what we bring to the encounter first. As we engage in this disciplined self scrutiny, we gradually develop a sense of who we are that is strong enough to set ourselves apart from the influence of the dream images, and then to enter into a constructive engagement, or a dialogue with the dream figures.

Before early humans could learn to understand the events in nature, they first had to evolve a mechanism for self-reflection, or the ego. This process gradually set them apart



from the outer world. Humanity was in a sense born again in consciousness -- effectively expelled from a once protective unconscious into a state of growing independence and volition. It was a fall, but "upward" into consciousness.

Similarly, in order for us to understand fully the dream content during the dream experience, we must move out of a state of confluence, or unconscious identification with the dream, into a self-reflecting, independent state. There is, of course, much resistance to this movement in all of us, as Carl Jung points out:

“The Biblical fall of man presents the dawn of consciousness as a curse. As a matter of fact it is in this light that we look upon every problem that forces us to greater consciousness and separates us even further from the paradise of unconscious childhood.” (Jung, Vol. VIII, p. 389)

The normal dream state can be seen as an indicator of man’s childlike subjection to images in his psyche which he himself has created and subsequently rejected, as well as preconscious elements that lie within him and are unable to emerge because of his lack of understanding. In both cases he fails to assume the responsibility of consciously owning these elements by refusing to first set himself apart from them.

It may seem paradoxical that in order for us to integrate a rejected aspect of ourselves, we must first see ourselves apart from it. But as long as the distinction between an individual and a rejected aspect of himself remains ill-defined, reconciliation can never occur. Awareness must illuminate the problem until it is starkly defined; otherwise, the problem will continue to be nurtured unwittingly by the individual. We must move out of an unconscious relationship with it into a conscious engagement.

As consciousness emerges in the dream, the dreamer is accomplishing an objectification of the dream image. The image gradually loses its autonomy and becomes more subject to the will of the dreamer. Perls makes this comment about dreams:

“You prevent yourself from achieving what you want to achieve. But you don’t experience this as you’re doing it...but some other power that is preventing you.” (Perls, p. 178)

As we emerge as conscious individuals in the dream state, we begin to learn how we prevent ourselves from achieving what we want, and that the “other power” that has been thwarting us is ourselves in a multiplicity of guises.

## **The Initiation of the Lucid Dream State**

As lucid dreams begin to occur within the life of an individual, they are likely to be rare and short-lived. Erich Neumann describes the infantile ego similarly:

“Just as the infantile ego...feebly developed, easily tired, emerges like an island out of the ocean of the unconscious for occasional moments only, and then sinks back again, so early man experiences the world.” (Neumann, p. 15)

Since conscious desire for such experiences plays a small role at this early stage, the apparent causative factor in the dream is usually a tearful, highly absurd, or incongruous situation. We must be careful, however, in assuming that a particular factor is causing lucidity to arise. The most we can really say is that certain factors such as emotional stress or the awareness of incongruity in the dream only accompany the emergence of lucidity. But because the dreamer experiences these factors as causing lucidity to arise, however, we will discuss them as if this were true.

A common example of what provokes the initial lucid dream state is a stressful dream in which the dreamer is fleeing from an animal or person who seeks to do harm to the dreamer. When the dreamer confronts this stressful situation, it seems to force him out of a confluent relationship with the dream, and encourage self-reflection. He can no longer afford a lack of distinction between himself and the influence of the feared object. An example of this, that I've already cited earlier, is shown below:

“I am being pursued in the area of my freshman residence by a group of men. As I run through the neighborhood, dodging in between houses, I become aware that I am dreaming and that the fear is unnecessary . . .”  
(Sparrow, 1974)

Here we find that the desires of the dreamer and the situation at hand have become so radically different as to erect a psychological differential or boundary between the dreamer and the dream world.

The primitive ego could have been stimulated into being under similarly stressful circumstances. For example, the rhythms in nature repeat themselves in predictable ways. The sun rises each day, and the seasons follow a recurrent, cyclic pattern. Anything that becomes predictable essentially lulls consciousness into a kind of unexamined expectancy. Certainly, there are thousands of ways that we experience this kind of habituation every day.

However, for better or worse, nature did not afford primitive humans the luxury of a perfectly predictable world. Beyond the day to day surprises in weather changes, and food supply alterations, there were dramatic, unforgettable anomalies that surely shook the primitive psyche to its roots. For instance, a solar eclipse radically alters an otherwise unchanging year-to-year pattern of the sun's behavior. When this happened to the primitive mind, which had no way of dismissing the phenomenal, there surely arose the conditions that favored a further differentiation between man's inner expectations and the outer phenomenon of darkness.

During irregular events, such as solar eclipses and natural cataclysms, confluence with the world could very well have been difficult to maintain. During such crises, primitive humanity may have perceived brief moments of separation from the outer world. Indeed, some thinkers believe that it was one such incident -- a supernova -- around 5000 B.C., that stimulated the Babylonians to invent writing. When the star Vela X exploded, and created a moon-size light in the sky for months, the Babylonians inscribed the first written word -- the word for star.

We must remember, however, that such creative moments are by no means pleasant. In support of this, Carl Jung says, "There is no birth of consciousness without pain" (Jung, Vol. XVII, p. 193). This pain could be described as the irritation that arises when man's expectations of the world and of others prove to be inadequate, at which time his inevitable separateness from the world becomes evident. Typically, we resist such awakenings as long as we possibly can.

Similarly, we typically resist moving out of the unconsciousness of the normal dream state. We do this on a regular basis by simply denying the presence of indications that we are, indeed, dreaming. Rather than realizing the existence of odd, or incongruous elements in the dream -- which regularly abound in our dreams -- the dreamer usually rationalizes these oddities as being somehow ordinary. An example of this is as follows:

"I am with two friends outdoors, looking at the night sky. I notice that there seem to be two moons, each not full, but about one-half or three-fourths full. I decide I must be dreaming, but I think that it's too real to be a dream. I don't want to say anything about there being two moons because, if I am mistaken, it would be a laughable mistake. . ."  
(Sparrow, 1974)

Incipient consciousness does not appear to be easily accepted by the dreamer. There is the greatest resistance to its full expression in the dream, especially during the early stages of lucid dreaming. Similarly, Erich Neumann -- a student of Jung -- describes a period in the

evolution of the primitive ego in which the desire to remain unconscious and merged with nature is the predominant urge:

“So long as the infantile ego consciousness is weak and feels the strain of its own existence as heavy and oppressive...it has not discovered its own reality and differentness...

“Man is not yet thrown back upon himself, against nature, nor the ego against the unconscious; being oneself is still a wearisome and painful experience, still the exception that has to be overcome.” (Neumann, p. 16)

One might argue that the development of consciousness is a natural process, and that in time everyone will begin to experience greater consciousness in dreams as well as in the waking life. While the ascent to consciousness may be inevitable, it may derive more from an "unnatural," uniquely human effort.

“Nature cares nothing whatsoever about a higher state of consciousness; quite the contrary.” (Jung, Vol. VIII, p. 394)

Likewise, Neumann says:

“The ascent toward consciousness is the ‘unnatural’ thing in nature; it is specific of the species man.” (Neumann, p. 16)

Thus, when lucidity initially arises in a dream, it seems contrary to the “natural” dictates of the dreamer. This impasse can be overcome when a stressful situation arises in which the dreamer no longer finds it advantageous to believe in, and identify with, the dream content. The willingness to grow in consciousness in this case seems to be preceded by the imperative to grow.

One woman told me a dream that seemed to illustrate that the dream's "agenda," if we may personalize the dream intent, is to create the conditions in which we can no longer resist awakening to the truth. Her dream suggests that once we merely acknowledge our own capacity for higher consciousness, we move into congruency with the deeper self.

"I am in an open field, alone at first. Then I see a knight on a horse at the other end of the clearing. He is in armor, and his visor covers his face. There's something I'm supposed to know, but I can't figure it out at first.

Then he turns his horse toward me and lowers his lance. The horse begins to gallop toward me. Meanwhile, I become more and more afraid. Suddenly, I realize that I must be dreaming! At that very moment, the knight slows the horse to a trot, raises his lance, and then salutes me as he passes by."

In such dreams as this one, we can see that the dream has an obvious agenda or intent. It is not so much to communicate a message, as we've been led to believe by conventional dream theorists, but to awaken us to our greater capabilities as fully conscious beings.

Although emotional stress seems to be the predominant stimulus in the emergence of lucidity during the early phases, another factor begins to emerge, especially after a conscious desire has been in effect to have such experiences. Oliver Fox, author of the early classic *Astral Projection*, refers to this process as the arousal of the "critical faculty," and believes that it is fundamental to the attainment of lucid dreams and out of body experiences (Fox, p. 35). An example of this critical faculty is illustrated in the following dream:

"I am looking at the Eastern sky, and see the full moon. Then I see another orb of light near the moon. I am first puzzled by this, and think that the second light could be the sun. But the sky is dark, so it doesn't make sense. Then I wonder if it might be a UFO. As I'm considering this possibility, the truth suddenly dawns. I laugh and realize that I am dreaming."

The critical faculty that begins to emerge in the dream state is a faculty which becomes more and more attuned to the occurrence of novelty and incongruity. As it begins to function, it begins to question the apparent reality of incongruous elements in the dream. A single, inconspicuous item may be the key which is grasped by this critical awareness. Indeed, it appears that the more experiences an individual has had, the more subtle the awareness of incongruity becomes. For example, the dream below occurred years after I began to have such experiences:

"... walking through the woods toward our cabin, I look down at my feet and see that I have on a pair of new boots. I laugh because I have no new boots. I realize that I am dreaming..." (Sparrow, 1974)

These unexpected anomalies in the dream which stimulate the faculty for self-reflection are analogous to the unusual events in nature which stimulates the ego's development. At this point it is possible to speculate that the very inconsistency of nature which primitive man must have lamented was really his ally in assisting him to awaken. The inconsistency of nature effectively resists the identification that man seeks to maintain with the world, and throws him back upon his own resources. It was and is a frustrating marriage that, ultimately, is impossible to sustain. In response, consciousness appears to emerge both as a defense and as an ascent -- as a means of insulating the organism from the

unpredictability of nature, and then as a way of developing a creative way of responding to it.

Likewise, the growth of the critical faculty in dreams enables the dreamer to move out of the unpredictability of the inner nature into a conscious relationship to it.

“Thus infantile consciousness, constantly aware of its . . . dependence upon the matrix from which it sprang, gradually becomes an independent system.” (Neumann, p. 46)

### **Lucid Dreaming and Out-of-Body Experiences**

Once the state of lucidity has been initiated, either through emotional stress or the activation of the critical faculty, the dreamer usually experiences a qualitative change in the dream. There is usually a tremendous sense of personal freedom and independence.

“. . . I become aware that I am dreaming. I fly up through the roof. The neighborhood is incredibly beautiful. The sun is just coming up and it gives the trees a luminous glow. I ‘take off’ and fly through the trees and above the neighborhood houses.” (Sparrow, 1974)

At this stage of lucidity, the dreamer becomes acutely aware of having a body other than the sleeping body. This awareness gives rise to the obvious conclusion that one has left the body. Even though this conclusion changes the way the dreamer looks at the experience, nothing really has changed. That is why some researchers assert that the out-of-body experiences should be regarded "as philosophically indistinguishable from lucid dreams" (Green, p. 20). After all, if lucidity is the singular state of self-consciousness in which both lucid dreams and out-of-body experiences occur, it can be discussed without the necessity of breaking it into its different manifestations. Two examples of lucidity in which "out of body" awareness arises are as follows:

“. . . I become aware that I am dreaming, or rather my body is sleeping somewhere else. I examine the body I am in and find it to be very real and solid. I realize that the experience must be somehow real in a three-dimensional sense . . . “ (Sparrow, 1971)

During a period of sustained lucidity, the dreamer begins to experience a relatively unvarying sense of identity. The boundary between the dreamer and the dream world becomes so well defined psychologically that the dreamer begins to realize the existence of a physical boundary as well. If the resulting body is real in any physical sense, as parapsychologists have tried to establish, it points out an apparent need that arises in the dreamer to give a physical form to his identity apart from the body. We spend our entire



lives identifying with a physical body; thus, it is probable that we enter into lucidity with preconceived “sets” which determine our perception of a body rather than an amorphous mass of energy.

This idea is supported by the experience of John Lilly as reported in *The Center of the Cyclone* (1972). He relates an experience of meeting two entities while “out of his body.”

“They stop at a critical distance and say to me that at this time I have developed only to the point where I can stand their presence at this particular distance. If they came any closer, they would overwhelm me, and I would lose myself as a cognitive entity, merging with them. They further say that I separated them into two, because that is my way of perceiving them, but that in reality they are one in the space in which I found myself. They say that I insist on still being an individual, forcing a projection onto them, as if they were two . . . “ (Lilly, pp. 26-27)

This experience suggests that our need for a body in the lucid state is a convenient, but ultimately unnecessary fiction that is based on our past identity with a physical body, and our hesitancy to relinquish this identity. But at one stage in our evolution as conscious beings, bodily identity probably represents a pinnacle achievement.

Indeed, it is doubtful whether there can be a well-defined sense of bodily identity when an individual is in an unconscious, confluent relationship with the world. Primitive man, like the dreamer, was probably not aware of a separate bodily self until he was able to move out of confluence with the outer world. At that point, the skin became the most obvious and definitive boundary between the individual and the outer world, and adequately insulated the new sense of separateness from the world and from others.

Even when an individual begins to have lucid dream or out-of-body experiences with regularity, normal dreams continue to outnumber by far dreams of the lucid type. Yet, that which transpires during a single lucid dream may be of immeasurably greater value to the dreamer than a normal dream. The most important quality of the lucid dream appears to be the capacity to consciously accept responsibility for what one has neglected -- given the reasonable assumption that the dream is largely a picture of what we have disowned or neglected. This entire process of becoming lucid and “owning” the dream is illustrated in the different portions of the following dream:

“I am walking on a street near my house when I spot a man who I know is antagonistic toward me. I run to the north and hear the man calling to his companions to join him in the pursuit.

“I take refuge in a large multistoried house. A couple of people who live there accompany me to the top floor, hoping that the band of pursuers will not find us . . . “

Up to this point, the dreamer has met an aspect of himself that he cannot accept, but in whose autonomous reality he believes. The lack of self-reflection and self-distinction in the “normal” dream prevents the possibility of the dreamer rising above the apparent reality of the dream world. The dream images remain impervious to modification and dissolution as long as we cannot face them with full awareness.

Reconciliation between the dreamer and the stressful situation can and does occur in normal dreams, but the presence of lucidity -- and, more specifically, the awareness that the dream has no ultimate power over the dreamer -- can greatly facilitate the healing process. The dream continues:

“We enter the upper level, and fearfully await their coming.

“Suddenly I realize that we are dreaming. I seem to be standing on a chair because my perspective is from the ceiling. I look down on the girl and say, ‘We’re dreaming!’ She scoffs at this and refuses to believe me. I tell her that I will prove it to her by temporarily withdrawing from the dream. As I do this, I hear her gasp in surprise, so I return. She is elated when she realizes that she has nothing to fear...”

At this point the dreamer has been stimulated into lucidity through emotional stress. The immediate consideration is not so much what he is going to do about the approaching threat, but rather with experimenting with the newfound freedom and independence. We continue with the dream:

“We hear the gang storming up the stairs. I see a man going to meet them with a gun. I grow afraid even though I realize I can confront them without any danger. I decide to withdraw. As I awaken, I feel as if I have avoided a necessary confrontation.”

Here the dreamer apparently fails to use his newfound awareness to respond creatively to the dream. He does what most of us would do: He escapes into the waking state.

Yet, once consciousness of the conflict has arisen, the problem seems to pursue the dreamer relentlessly as if a commitment has been made to deal with it. We find this to be true in this case. As the dreamer goes back to sleep, there is an immediate confrontation with the unfinished situation:

“From a distance I see the same group of men who were in the previous dream. As they

approach, I decide not to escape. They come up to me like a group of dogs, just waiting for a wrong move. But as I laugh nervously, they begin to slap me on the back, and smile in a playful manner. “ (Sparrow, 1974)

This completes the process. The dreamer has come to grips with a part of himself which probably would have remained a threat to him had not consciousness arisen in the dream. The process of owning the dream through becoming lucid closely parallels the goals of Gestalt Therapy. Great importance is attributed to the development of awareness. Enright says:

“In human beings, awareness develops where novelty and complexity of transaction are greatest and the most possibilities (for good or ill) exist. Awareness seems to facilitate maximum efficiency by concentrating all the organism’s abilities on the most complex, possibility-loaded situation.” (Enright, p. 107)

Enright goes on to say that the goal of Gestalt Therapy “consists of the reintegration of attention and awareness” (Enright, p. 108). One way to define a dream is to regard it as a reflection of what the organism is attending to, but of which the conscious self is largely unaware. Within this framework, the conflicts in dreams become representative of areas in a person’s life in which there is a lack of awareness.

Gestalt Therapy operates under the assumption that once awareness reunites with the split-off aspect, the individual can deal with it successfully without further help from the therapist. This is based upon the idea that most of us have the necessary resources to deal with our problems once we are conscious of them. Impasses arise because blockages exist of which we are unaware. When awareness (lucidity) extends into the area of blockage (the dream conflict), we are able to mobilize our resources to deal with it.

If lucid dreaming has a purpose, it is to enable an individual to have a greater awareness of underlying aspects of the personality. Not all of these aspects are disowned conflicts. Surely, many prove to be quite beautiful and profound. In any case, the lucid dream reveals a breakthrough into response-ability upon a level where man is still a child. It is perhaps an indicator of the beginning of consciousness of our inner selves, similar to the process which began in relation to the outer world ages ago and still remains incomplete.

## Chapter Three: The Dynamics of Lucid Dreaming

"If the doors of perception were cleansed  
every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite."  
--William Blake

### The Qualities Which Promote Lucid Dreaming

One of the first questions to arise in the study of lucid dreaming is: Why is the state of lucidity so rare? The answer to this question not only provides a way of approach to lucid dreaming but to other transformative experiences as well.

Our first concern is to decide whether lucidity is an inherent potential, that is, a "given," or learned or acquired faculty. If it is learned, then we would expect to find lucidity occurring only in the dreams of individuals who have actively and consciously pursued the faculty. However, many people upon familiarization with the term are able to recall spontaneous instances of lucidity from their previous dreams. This leads to the conclusion that lucid dreaming is primarily an inherent, unconscious potential, which we shall call "capacity." However, it has also been shown that once an individual is convinced of the importance of lucid dreaming, its frequency can be increased through desire. The following dream from a young woman's letter illustrates how the desire to experience lucidity may result in a deeply transforming dream.

"After reading the article ['Lucid Dreaming as an Evolutionary Process,' The A.R.E. Journal, May, 1975] I went to bed with a strong desire to test it. I slept restlessly until dawn with no recall. Then the most beautiful experience followed.

"I seemed to be responsible for a baby which was very messy and sitting on a pot. My concern was to find a bathroom and clean it up without others noticing it. As I held the baby, I distinctly felt that it should be older and better trained. I looked closely into its face which was full of wisdom and suddenly I knew I was dreaming.

"Excitedly, I tried to remember the advice in the article and the only thought I had was 'Ultimate Experience.' A blissful sensation took over - of blending and melting with colors and light -- opening up into a total 'orgasm.' I gently floated into waking consciousness. A feeling of bubbling joy has stayed with me now for six days." (P.L., 1975)

If desire always caused such immediate results, many of us would be experiencing lucid

dreaming quite regularly. But one is liable to find that although desire may initially exert a powerful catalyzing effect, it may soon fail to stimulate further lucidity.

When our desire is intense yet ineffectual, the first thing we doubt is our own capacity for such an experience.

However, if our assumption is true that individuals innately possess the capacity for lucid dreaming, then the problem must lie elsewhere.

One way to account for the apparent ineffectiveness of the capacity and desire is to postulate a third variable that influences the frequency of lucid dreaming and other transformative experiences. This quality, which may be called “openness,” acts as a mediating variable between desire, which is a conscious catalyst -- and capacity, which is an unconscious potential.

It is not uncommon for many of us who are diligently practicing meditation as well as intensely longing for transformation to feel at a standstill. We may sense that much is happening unconsciously, but for some reason it fails to reach our conscious awareness. Somewhere, we conclude, there must be barriers that stand between our aspiration and the source of our transformation.

In an attempt to understand the nature of the barriers that inhibit this awareness of our indwelling capacity, Carl Jung postulated a “personal unconscious,” or a level of the psyche composed of the often-unresolved memories of our personal experiences.

“...the personal unconscious contains all psychic contents that are incompatible with the conscious attitude. This comprises a whole group of contents, chiefly those which appear morally, esthetically, or intellectually inadmissible and are repressed on account of their incompatibility. A man cannot always think and feel the good, the true, and the beautiful, and in trying to keep up an ideal attitude everything that does not fit in with it is automatically repressed.” (Jung, Vol. VIII, p. 310)

Resting on a deeper “collective unconscious” (which contains the innate collective patterns for the spiritual unfoldment of humankind), the personal unconscious contains the memory of guilt, unacceptable impulses and unresolved interpersonal conflicts. Jung observed that when an individual was able to work through these conflicts, the personal unconscious became more permeable to the deeper, integrating patterns in the psyche. Thus permeability -- or openness -- is the ideal state of this mediating level between conscious awareness and inherent unconscious capacity.

Thus far, three qualities have been presented which may lead to the experience of lucid dreaming. The first quality is the unconscious capacity latently existent within every individual. Although capacity is potentially available it becomes accessible only to the degree that an individual is truly open and permeable, or relatively free of unreconciled conflicts which form unconscious barriers. When a person is permeable, desire can then stimulate or invite the influx of our deep capacity into conscious awareness. This process may culminate in a healing dream or a deep meditative experience in which a union takes place, if only briefly, between the conscious, aspiring individual and the deeper, transforming self.

Lucid dreams may apparently arise under varying combinations of these three qualities. Let's look at several possible conditions for the arousal of lucidity and other transformative experiences.

### **The Frustrated Seeker.**

Such an individual is likely to feel frustrated, sensing a discrepancy between where he is, and where he wants to be. When this condition prevails, the dream life assumes a special significance in illuminating the nature of the unconscious obstacles.

Indeed, the dream can be regarded as one of the safest and clearest indicators of one's permeability or lack thereof. For within the dream, memories that have been previously rejected rise again into awareness. Like orphans hungry for our love, these elements pressure us until we acknowledge them. Furthermore, the desires and attitudes of the dreamer again interact with these memory patterns; and the lack of harmony between them erects a barrier to growth that is apparent in the dream.

For example, the following dream reflects one aspect of the dreamer's lack of true openness to his deeper nature:

"I'm on one side of a short fence with a very small dog. On the other side is a larger, more aggressive dog. Somehow, my dog lures the other (black) dog through the fence. It growls at me; I try to be cool. But then he bites my hand and will not let go.

"I grab him by the neck and begin to strangle him. I do enough damage to get him to let go. But he continues to weaken. I feel sorry for the dog..." (Sparrow, 1975)

We should note the reaction of the dreamer to this dream. His inability to integrate and



accept the aspect of himself, which the dog symbolizes, arrests his movement toward greater wholeness and fulfillment.

Yet in the midst of the frustration and tension which may arise in the dream, the dreamer may also experience the deeper self coming to his aid to reconcile the differences. It is as if the dreamer's desire and his unconscious capacity converge in the dream to overcome the mediating barriers that inhibit his openness. As a result, dreams that occur in this condition often reveal the appearance of a savior figure, or one who represents the inherent spiritual capacity of the dreamer. The following nonlucid dream dramatically illustrates this convergence:

"...I am with a girl. We are both worried as to how we can escape from the devil. She says, 'We'll call Hugh Lynn -- a sage-like older man.' I experience great relief.

"That night she and I go to call. As we begin to dial, the devil comes into the building. He looks about 30 years old, has fairly long black hair and speaks gruffly. I act childish and innocent so as not to arouse his suspicion. We walk back toward the building that he occupies. He hits me twice with a rolled-up newspaper for acting stupidly.

"Later we are all outdoors on the lawn in front of the building. As he is talking with other people, the girl and I plan to escape. We make our plans while feigning a romantic attraction.

"We plan to escape by running across the yard toward the shadows of the nearby buildings. The dangerous part is that an area of lighted lawn has to be crossed while he is talking to someone. We take off, or at least, I do. Before I reach the shadows, someone tells me that there is a well which I may fall into if I proceed. So I hesitate, trying to decide what to do. "As I am facing my desired direction, light comes from behind me. I see his shadow creep past me as if the light were behind him. As I turn in fear, I say, 'Lord, have mercy!' But instead of the devil, a beautiful woman clothed in white is here. Light surrounds her. She walks up to me, reaches down and touches my forehead.

"The dream is over. I am aware that light is building within me. A bright warmth fills my vision. Then I awaken." (Sparrow, 1973)

In this experience the dreamer becomes aware of the barriers within himself personified in the dream by the devil. He exhibits a desire to overcome his imprisonment by escaping, which proves to be insufficient. Yet in the midst of his despair, the deeper self (which we can equate with "capacity") comes to his aid and completes the process of liberation. When desire and capacity converge upon the unreconciled memories or patterns of

thought that inhibit one's permeability, dreams begin to reflect the extremes of the human condition, as in the above dream. On one hand the dreams hold more challenges and pain for the dreamer; yet the ability to face these challenges seems to emerge as a result of the emergence of the deeper self. The dreamer and his deeper self then cooperate to come to grips with previously unacceptable or unrecognized aspects of the dreamer.

This special type of convergence is also significant to a consideration of lucidity. It is important to note that lucidity often emerges in the dream at the same time a symbol of the savior or the higher self makes its appearance. For example, in the "light in the sky" dreams quoted in Chapter One, the appearance of the light preceded the onset of lucidity. On one level we might conclude that this strange sight acts as a cue to "awaken" the dreamer. However, another equally valid interpretation of the relationship between these events is that lucidity and the appearance of a higher self symbol are subjective and objective -- inner and outer -- manifestations of the deeper self, or capacity for transformative experience.

Thus the perception of light or a symbol of the higher self in the dream environment tends to correlate with the arousal of lucidity. The dreamer's latent capacity may manifest itself in the dream in the externalized form of a higher self figure (for example, a spiritual teacher), and/or the internalized awareness of lucidity. The reasons supporting such a theory are evidenced by the fruits, or the outcomes due to both. Indeed, it is clear that the arousal of lucidity and the emergence of a higher self symbol have similar effects on the outcome of the dream.

In the experience with the devil the dreamer reaches a depth of despair to which there seems no solution. He is bound by the circumstances in the dream which he unknowingly has created. When the illuminated woman appears, however, the situation which previously entrapped the dreamer no longer threatens him. She, in effect, introduces an alternative to an inescapable dilemma. The transformative capacity that she represents has a direct influence on a memory pattern that blocks the dreamer's progress toward the light.

Since the dream state is a period during which an individual rarely contemplates alternatives, the course of dreams typically reflects an unquestioned inevitability. That is, in the dream we rarely think that things could have turned out differently. Yet when a savior or higher self symbol appears, as in the aforementioned dream, it often transcends the so-called inevitability of the dream by offering the dreamer novel alternatives.

Lucidity affects the course of a dream in a similar manner. The following dream of a young woman is one of a long series of dreams in which she continually fled from an aggressive,

mentally unbalanced man. This dream was the first in which she became lucid; and, as we might suspect, it was the last dream in this lengthy series.

“I’m in a dark, poor section of a city. A young man starts chasing me down an alley. I’m running for what seems to be a long time in the dream. Then I become aware that I am dreaming and that much of my dream life is spent running from male pursuers. I say to myself, ‘I’m tired of this never-ending chase.’ I stop running, turn around and walk up to the man. I touch him and say, ‘Is there anything I can do to help you?’ He becomes very gentle and open to me and replies, ‘Yes. My friend and I need help.’ I go to the apartment they share and talk with them both about their problem, feeling compassion for them both.”(C.Y., 1975)

The question that naturally arises at this point is: If lucidity and the appearance of a higher self symbol are manifestations of the same quality, why does only one of them usually occur in a deep or transforming dream?”

Although the two phenomena may represent the same underlying quality and affect the course of the dream in similar ways, their effects upon the dreamer usually differ radically. In the dream in which the illuminated woman appears, she bestows a gift of healing upon the dreamer. As a humble recipient he sees the source of his healing as originating apart from himself. Thus the dreamer is left with a sense of being protected and guided by a transcendent “other.”

In the dream of the aggressive man, the dreamer assumes quite a different role. As lucidity emerges, she experiences herself as being the healing or reconciling agent. The recipient of healing is seen in this case as a subordinate “other.” The experience thus leaves the dreamer with a new sense of competence and inner strength.

We might theorize that the underlying spiritual capacity manifests in the dream in the way that best conforms to the needs of the dreamer. Undoubtedly, there are periods when we need to have healing bestowed upon us; for such experiences humble us and engender reverential attitudes. At other times, it becomes necessary for us to discover our own capacity to instigate creative change; for this imbues a sense of self-worth and gradually permits us to experience what it might mean to become “co-creators with God.” It is important for us to realize that lucidity and the personalized appearance of the higher self not only complement each other, but "need" one another.

On one hand, if a person has numerous dreams that reflect the dramatic appearance of a higher self symbol, he may begin to dissociate himself from the dream figure until it is regarded as an autonomous force originating from outside himself. Although the dream

may instill a feeling of “presence” within the dreamer, he may never realize that the dream symbol intimates his own deeper self.

On the other hand, if a person experiences numerous lucid dreams without ever gaining a sense of the divine Person, then the danger of self-inflation arises. This might take the form of wanting to manipulate the dream according to one’s own dictates, as well as an overestimation of one’s ability to handle difficult situations.

Hence lucidity and the external portrayal of the higher self make possible a creative balance between dynamic self-initiative and reverent receptivity.

### **The Impatient Seeker.**

An overestimation of our ability to tackle the barriers inhibiting our openness may lead to a precarious situation. This relationship between desire, permeability and capacity is shown in the diagram below.

In this situation, an individual tends to encourage a premature confrontation with subconscious barriers through impatience or extreme desire. The attitude which this represents can perhaps be best described as “storming the gates of heaven.”

Although the underlying supportive capacity does not diminish, it is in effect overshadowed by the zealous impatience of the conscious self. This situation is likely to come about when a person has received a glimpse of what lies beyond his self-created enclosure, and then longs impatiently to be free. An example of how harmless such an attitude can appear on the surface is an excerpt from my own journal on September 9, 1974.

“Something aches within me for change, for transformation. If I only knew what to give up, what to do. I feel that I too easily grow satisfied with my world and myself. The world of Light recedes in the light of my indifference. I want to meet my obstacles; and I pray for the strength to meet them...”

The following dream occurred that night as if in answer to an unwise request.

“I am standing in the hallway outside my room. It is night and hence dark where I stand. Dad comes in the front door. I tell him that I am there so as not to frighten him or provoke an attack. I am afraid for no apparent reason.

“I look outside through the door and see a dark figure which appears to be a large animal. I point at it in fear. The animal, which is a huge black panther, comes through the doorway. I reach out to it with both hands, extremely afraid. Placing my hands on its head, I say, ‘You’re only a dream.’ But I am half pleading in my statement and cannot dispel my fear. “I pray for Jesus’ presence and protection. But the fear is still with me as I awaken.”  
(Sparrow, 1975)

This dream reveals that when a dreamer’s desire to confront the subconscious barriers is excessive, even lucidity can prove inadequate to cope with the encounter. If the dreamer wishes to avoid such upsetting and possibly dangerous experiences, he must realize that his conscious desires can set in motion a deep, inner process, but they must then await rather than force the natural unfoldment of his inherent capacity. The deeper self seems to operate on the principle that true growth occurs only over a long period of time and cannot be rushed.

### **The Recipient of Grace**

A third configuration emerges when an individual lacks the desire for transformative experiences as well as the permeability to receive them. Yet even though an individual may exhibit no desire whatsoever for transformation or for exploring his self-created barriers to wholeness, he may still receive the gift of healing and transformation.

How do these experiences filter through the impermeable, subconscious barriers without the enlistment of conscious cooperation? To understand this, we must examine the relationship between the conscious self and the subconscious barriers.

One of the greatest preservers of the status-quo conscious entity is consistent identification. We define ourselves by what we identify with -- a body, a name, and a unique set of talents and predispositions. As long as identification serves the purpose of convenience -- that is, to give us a sense of distinctness from the outer world and other individuals -- it enhances our ability to interact without becoming bewildered or disoriented.

Yet when fear enters, the individual begins to define himself in contrast to whatever he fears. If, for example, he is afraid of strong emotions, he may insist on thinking of himself as a calm, collected person. Through his defensiveness he casts out feared or undesirable elements in his life. Even though he seem to rid himself of these feelings, they remain within his unconscious. Such memories continue to threaten his self-concept by resurfacing

during sleep and moments of low vigilance, such as during times of fatigue and stress. Until these issues are dealt with, they comprise a relatively impermeable subconscious barrier between the individual's consciously stated desire for wholeness and his underlying real self.

The principle is this: Subconscious barriers are maintained by a rigid and inappropriate identification on the part of the conscious self. Thus, when the conscious identity changes, or is shaken, the personal unconscious may, too, become less rigidly defined, and thus open to the deeper self.

In the above diagram which depicts an individual who lacks desire and permeability, the capacity for transformation is inaccessible to the conscious self as long as its identity remains static and unyielding. But there are times in our lives when we confront crises which undermine or temporarily shake up any well-defined self-image. In addition there are other periods during which we have difficulty consolidating our self-image because of rapid changes in our lives and in the environment. Though painful and unstable, these periods may provide the only opportunities for the life-giving source within us to penetrate the barriers that we have erected. This infusion, which has been called grace in the Christian tradition, is a gift which is bestowed when the conscious self has been shaken, or to some degree is less fortified.

The concept of grace implies that the divine capacity within each individual is never dormant, but exerts itself in spite of the lack of conscious cooperation. The following dream occurred near the beginning of my spiritual search when stubbornness still overshadowed my desire for God. However, the instability of my life as a college freshman counteracted a clear self-definition; hence the subconscious barriers were ill-defined as well. As a result, I discovered that something beautiful within me wanted my cooperation.

"I'm in bed at home. I feel someone talking to me telepathically and realize that it's the 'space people.' I look out of the window and see a dark sphere. Fearfully, I run out of my room because I don't want to see them. A dark object flies out of the craft and lands in front of me. A beautiful blonde woman dressed in blue suddenly appears before me I'm not afraid any more.

"We go into the kitchen to talk. She says that they have been watching me and have finally decided to contact me. I feel a lump in my wrist and ask her what it is. She says that it is a mechanism with which they can keep in touch with me.

"They have come to take Chip (my older brother) with them. It seems that I am not ready to go yet.

I go into Dad's room and see Chip kneeling by the bed, wearing a blue robe. His head is shaved. He seems to be crying or half asleep. I tell him that they have come for him. "Later, from my window, I watch Chip being placed in a the craft in a horizontal position. I notice that the woman is standing beside me, and that she is my mother. As the craft prepares to leave, it sends a flood of bright light towards us which makes viewing difficult." (Sparrow, 1972)

Dreams of this type usually awaken a desire for further contact with the deeper self. When this desire comes into play, the dreamer assumes, perhaps for the first time, a conscious, active role in his spiritual unfoldment. He may then set about for the first time to question the ways that he has previously defined himself in the world.

## **The Transparent Self**

When permeability is achieved through successive dreams of confronting and working through the unresolved subconscious barriers, a new relationship emerges between conscious desire, unconscious permeability and spiritual capacity.

The convergence of desire and capacity upon the mediating barriers leads gradually to a state of unification which may manifest in the dream as a profound mystical experience. However, the value of desire lessens abruptly as permeability is achieved. It appears that the desire which motivates the dreamer to overcome his self-created barriers must ultimately be surrendered in order to allow the Spirit to have its way.

Desire is built upon expectation, and in its extreme form can be an undisguised demand. Although desire for future change may sustain individual through difficult experiences, it seems to have no place once the seeker has "arrived"; in fact desire itself may form the final obstacle to inner union.

In the following two dream excerpts we can see how desire can inhibit a culminating experience once sufficient openness has been achieved.

"A man who I know is Jesus is materializing in front of me. I become excited and run to embrace Him. The figure abruptly disappears..." (Sparrow, 1975)

"...I look up in the eastern sky and see a large orb of white light many times the size of the moon. I realize that I am dreaming. I yell out in joy knowing it is coming for me. As soon as I do the light withdraws into the sky as if it is awaiting a more appropriate response on my



part. I know that I must turn my eyes away and trust. As I do, the light descends....”  
(Sparrow, 1974)

Perhaps it is inaccurate to say that the seeker must totally relinquish his desire. Instead it appears from the evidence of the above dreams that the culmination of the dream depends upon the dreamer being able to hold in abeyance the desire for mere acquisition (e.g., running to embrace Jesus).

Acquisitive desire tends to be self-oriented, originating out of a sense of lack or a need to bolster one’s lagging self-image. Obviously this desire stands in opposition to the humbleness required to receive the Spirit in its fullness. Yet a positive element of longing remains even after the dreamer overcomes merely acquisitive desire.

This remnant of yearning persists and even facilitates the mystical union, because now it focuses upon the attainment of an end rather than a temporary acquisition. Instead of desiring to incorporate or grasp the in flowing Spirit into a limited understanding, the dreamer aspires to become more than he is. He in effect offers himself as a sacrifice to a greater vision, a deeper love.

However, this end to which the dreamer aspires usually does not merely avail itself at the critical moment of surrender, but apparently must already be in place as an “ideal” within the dreamer’s mind prior to the mystical dream. Without an ideal to serve as a pattern, the experience lacks direction and can perhaps be confusing or harmful. Many experiences are aborted at this point because of the lack of a prevailing ideal to which the dreamer can fearlessly surrender himself. The above dream of the light in the sky is a good example of how the need for surrender raises the question, To whom or what? The Edgar Cayce readings reiterate the importance of this principle in the following passage.

To allow self in a universal state to be controlled, or to be dominated, may become harmful.

But to know, to feel, to comprehend as to who or as to what is the directing influence when the self-consciousness has been released and the real ego allowed to rise to expression, is to be in that state of the universal consciousness...

Then, who and what would the entity have to direct self in such experiences? (#2475-1)

Rather than forming a rigid and definitive system of personality types, each of the four conditions outlined in this chapter pertains to perhaps every individual from time to time. Further, all of these conditions may arise in the course of a single dream. Hence it is not

especially helpful for us to rigidly categorize our present dream-life. Instead, we are charged with the task of continually refining our desires, reconciling our inner conflicts and clarifying our ideals until we can openly accept the luminous culmination of the lucid dream.

## Chapter Four: The Delicate Balance

"And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."  
--Romans 12:2

### The Value of Sustained Lucidity

During the beginning stages of lucid dreaming the experience rarely lasts for more than a few moments. The dreamer usually awakens immediately, or is quickly reabsorbed into the normal dream-state. The question which arises at this point is: How can the experience be prolonged?

Before we consider specific techniques for sustaining lucidity once it emerges, we must first decide whether there is any value in prolonging a lucid dream at all. After all, it might be argued that lucidity represents an end in itself, and need not be sustained once it initiates a new and better relationship between the dreamer and the dream. However, we have already examined several dreams in which prolonged lucidity enabled the dreamer to contact a profound level of his being as represented by the experience of inner light. This experience alone confirms the value of sustaining lucidity.

Another reason for seeking to maintain and exercise lucid awareness in the dream-state has to do with the theory of reincarnation. Some metaphysical and religious teachings have held that the dream state and the after-death state are similar. The Edgar Cayce readings represent one of the few Western sources that have made such a comparison.

First, we would say, sleep is a shadow of, that intermission in earth's experiences of, that state called death; for the physical consciousness becomes unaware of existent conditions, save as are determined by the attributes of the physical that partake of the attributes of the imaginative or the subconscious and unconscious forces... (#5754-1)

From an entirely different tradition, Sir John Woodruffe, in his foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, draws a similar comparison between the Bardo state (period between death and rebirth) and the dream state:

"Rationally considered, each person's after-death experiences... are entirely dependent

upon his or her own mental content. In other words...the after-death state is very much like a dream state, and its dreams are the children of the mentality of the dreamer.” (Evans-Wentz, 1970; p. 34)

The ancient Tibetan teachings regard the after-death state as a period during which the deceased is confronted with dreamlike images and various lights from which he must discern the true path of emancipation from the karmic urge to be reincarnated (Evans-Wentz, 1960). If he is able to make the correct choices, then the need for rebirth is overcome; and the liberated soul becomes one with the “Clear Light,” which is his true nature. If this description is accurate then lucidity may not only lead to transcending the illusory aspects of the dream state but may also help to overcome the illusory images in the after-death state which compel the deceased to be drawn karmically back into the earth plane. In his commentary on the Buddhist text, Woodruffe confirms this idea:

“.....if he [the disciple] has the power to die consciously, and at the supreme moment of quitting the body can recognize the Clear Light which will dawn upon him then, and can become one with it, all...bonds of illusion are broken asunder immediately: the Dreamer is awakened into Reality simultaneously with the mighty achievement of recognition. “ (Evans-Wentz, 1970; p. 34)

Hence, whether we are dreaming or dying, lucidity enables us to rise above the semiconscious involvement which normally characterizes the dream state, and seek for the Light. The following dream shows how the Light may present itself in its fullness and yet go unseen without the discerning power of lucidity:

“I go into a bedroom and see a pretty young woman sitting on the edge of a bed. I ask her if she would like a back rub and she says yes. I notice bright light coming in through the window. As I give her the rub I begin to be sexually aroused. However, the light coming in through the window (which is brilliant and brighter than the sun) is bothering me. I want to find some sunglasses or pull the shade but she doesn’t want me to do that. Finally I just turn my back to it.” (M.A.T., 1975)

### **Prolonging the Lucid Dream**

When lucidity arises in the dream, consciousness can be said to be moving “away” from total absorption in the normal dream state toward waking awareness. Thus the lucid dream represents an “in-between” awareness in which the dreamer partakes of qualities from both the waking state and the dream state. In other words, the dreamer maintains the awareness characteristic of the waking state and the environment of the dream state. The

duration of a lucid dream thus becomes dependent upon the ability of the dreamer to maintain a balance between waking and dream consciousness. If this balance is to be achieved with any regularity the dreamer must learn to recognize and hold in abeyance the forces impinging upon him from both the waking state and dream state which tend to upset the delicate balance of lucidity.

The Influences of the Dream Environment. In the first case the dreamer must overcome the distracting qualities of the dream environment itself; otherwise the dream will soon reabsorb him into its drama. Indeed, during the first few moments of lucidity, the dreamer may have only partially “awakened” and thus may still be vulnerable to the bewildering effects of the rapidly changing dream environment. At this time, the dreamer may commit the “fatal error” of turning his attention outward. If he does, the instability or the emotional impact of the images may cause him to lapse back into the semi-consciousness of the dream. Hence the immediate need upon the awakening of lucidity is to direct one’s awareness to ideals and objects which will remain unchanging throughout the course of the dream. In other words, the dreamer needs to discover “fixed” symbols and mind tools onto which he can project his feeble dream identity.

One method of establishing a firm internal identity is to concentrate on an affirmation which serves as a continual reminder of the illusory nature of the experience. An example of such an affirmation is “Everything I see is a dream.” Perhaps even more creative and just as effective is an affirmation which states the consistent purpose or ideal response of the dreamer, such as “Let me be a channel of blessings,” or “Create in me a pure heart.” It is important that the dreamer cultivate the affirmation in the waking state if he expects it to be an effective aid in the dream.

The following dream from a young man who has worked with lucid dreaming for several years illustrates the fragility of lucid awareness and the effectiveness of an affirmation:

“A long dream in which I become lucid at the end. I am on my way in to see a doctor with some other people. I realize that I am dreaming as I approach the doctor from the rear; I cannot yet see his face. I remember that before I went to sleep I would use the affirmation ‘Everything that I see is the past; all that matters is the way that I respond’ if I should become lucid - I had made this suggestion to myself. I move my awareness to that affirmation. I have to look at one spot to keep my attention upon it. I am afraid that one of the characters in the dream (especially the doctor) will see me staring this way and will get angry at me, thus diverting my attention from the affirmation and causing me to lose my lucidity.” (M.A.T., 1974)

In this experience the dreamer does two things to sustain his lucid awareness. First of all,

he focuses his inner attention upon an affirmation. By choosing a phrase which continually reminds him that he is dreaming, the dreamer effectively insulates himself from any distracting thoughts which might arise to convince him otherwise. Secondly, the dreamer narrows his vision to one spot in the dreamscape. This gradually helps to extend his one-pointedness into the dream environment, and thus weaken its distracting influence. Although the above dream ends at this point, ideally it would go on to assume a more stable appearance as a result of the consolidation of the dreamer's own identity. At this point, the dreamer would become more able to interact creatively with the dream.

In Carlos Castaneda's third book about his apprenticeship to Don Juan, a Yaqui Indian sorcerer, his teacher introduces Carlos to the practice of "dreaming," or lucid dreaming (Castaneda, 1972, p. 126). The first technique that he teaches Castaneda is to become lucid by gazing at his hands or some other portion of the body while in the dream. At first glance, the dreamer's hands possess no special significance; instead it seems that Don Juan has made an arbitrary and meaningless selection from a number of possible choices. Yet when we examine the unique role that the body plays in the lucid dream, it will become clear why focusing upon the hands or another part of the body supplies a valuable technique for stimulating and maintaining the lucid dream. Of all the possible objects which may appear in the dream, the dreamer's body manifests with the greatest frequency. Although this is an obvious truth, it assumes a special importance when the dreamer's problem lies in stabilizing a feeble identity in the rapidly changing dream environment.

Since the body is perhaps the most unchanging element in the dreamscape, it provides the best external focus for a struggling internal identity. If attention prematurely extends beyond the body, then the dreamer risks re-involvement with less stable elements in the dream which are more likely to submerge his feeble conscious identity. Hence the body becomes a fixed, external symbol of the dreamer's identity apart from the dream environment.

However, the body is not the only stable reference point in the dreamscape. Another element which remains relatively unchanging is the ground beneath the dreamer's feet. By simply turning his attention to the ground, the dreamer may strengthen his internal identity, and as a result clarify and stabilize the dream image. The following experience illustrates how concentration upon relatively "fixed" or unchanging elements can sustain the lucid dream:

"...I walk on down the street. It is night; and as I look up at the sky I am astounded by the clarity of the stars. They seem so close. At this point I become lucid. The dream 'shakes' momentarily. Immediately I look down at the ground and concentrate on solidifying the

image and remaining in the dreamscape. Then I realize that if I turn my attention to the pole star above my head, the dream image will further stabilize itself. I do this, until gradually the clarity of the stars returns in its fullness.” (Sparrow, 1975)

**The Influences of the Physical Body.** Although the dreamer must on one hand maintain a sense of identity apart from the dream environment if lucidity is to be sustained, he must also keep from immediately awakening. If this is to be achieved, the dreamer must recognize the aspects of his waking self which threaten to withdraw him prematurely from the dream. These aspects can be grouped under the general heading of sensory or physical body awareness.

When we are awake and self-reflecting we continually expect sensory feedback from the body. It is the way in which we typically confirm our perceptions and establish our associations with the surrounding world. This continual expectation forms a strong bond in which we associate self-reflection with our bodies. It follows that whenever self-reflection (lucidity) arises in the dream state there is the immediate tendency to re-identify with our normal vehicle of awareness, the physical body.

One of the misconceptions which arises out of such a strong bond to the body, and which causes the dreamer to terminate a lucid dream, is that the body will die if consciousness ever “leaves” the body. Although the dreamer may affirm otherwise, this belief is deeply ingrained within most of us, and is likely to resist change. Instead of negating this belief -- which probably has important survival value in our day-to-day existence -- the dreamer can counteract its effect during the dream by creatively affirming the potential for healing and transformation in the lucid dream. This constant affirmation will diminish the tendency immediately to become afraid and to abort the lucid dream. Though the change will perhaps take place gradually, the dreamer will eventually experience less apprehension at finding himself “awake” in a dream.

Another belief which typically shortens the lucid dream is the geocentric notion that the waking state is real in contrast to the unreality of the dream. This stimulates the dreamer to test the dream by waking standards, which quickly leads to a re-identification with the flesh body and the senses. This tendency is illustrated in the following lucid dream of a middle-aged woman:

“As I completely relaxed and had lids closed but eyes looking straight ahead, this dream scene of a building wall came into view.

“It is as though I am walking along toward the left of the scene. Like a camera eye I am looking up at an old stone building at my right. I keep looking and walk along, then reverse



direction, looking up at the building continuously with great curiosity.

“The scene is dark, rather, like a cloudy day, or perhaps this is on an old street with something nearby blocking off the light from this building. I am not especially on a street. It may be in a park or forest. I see nothing but the building which I am very close to. The light is very poor, dim, perhaps it is almost nighttime, when you can’t see colors . . .

“I think: I am awake - I have just closed my eyes - I know I am awake. I have been awake so long, and this must have been wanting to come through. It started as I barely got my eyes relaxed and straight-ahead. This is important to me - I must take a good look at it. What can this be?

“This really bothers me and to test if I am really awake, I crack one eye open to look at my bedroom. That’s it! Now the building has vanished. I do not see it again. Oh, heck!” (M.H., 1975) (author’s italics)

The way in which we “test” the lucid dream has something to say about our underlying assumptions about the physical world and the waking state. Normally we feel that if we can experience the transition from what we call a dream to what we call reality, we can conclude we have been dreaming. This conclusion tends to diminish the “dream” experience and furthermore to avoid the question, “Are we still dreaming?” When we fail to ask this question we are implicitly equating reality with sensory awareness and thus making the physical senses the sole criteria for the evaluation of our experience. According to the Edgar Cayce readings, this is a mistake:

Be sure that . . . there is not the attempt to measure spiritual things by material standards . . . (#254-60)

For . . . that we see manifested in the material plane is but a shadow of that in the spiritual plane. (#5749-3)

In addition to working with his deep-set beliefs, the dreamer can attempt to improve the condition of his flesh body. If the body is uncomfortable or suffering any internal pressures, it will withdraw consciousness more quickly from the lucid dream. Since there is already a strong psychological predisposition to re-identify with the body upon the arousal of lucidity, an inharmonious bodily state only adds to the problem.

In Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, directions regarding diet and exercise are given to diminish the tendency of the body to awaken the dreamer:

“The Spreading-out into the Waking-State occurreth when one is about to comprehend the

dream, in virtue of thinking that it must be comprehended, and then waketh up.” [Evans-Wentz’s footnoted explanation: “In other words, the waking from sleep while one is trying to grasp the character of the dream-state is called the spreading-out of dream content into the waking state.”]

“The antidote for this is to eat nutritious food and to perform bodily work [or exercise] until fatigued. Thereby sleep becometh deeper; and that cureth it.” (Evans-Wentz, 1958, p. 218)

Both proper eating and exercise tend to diminish the level of tension within the body until the lucid dreamer becomes relatively free from the demands of the sleeping body. Even though the dreamer may accomplish a balancing of his body energies through diet and exercise, the tendency to awaken can still be strong. An additional practice which helps to overcome this tendency is to try to move about in the dream body once lucidity arises. This practice is reflected in the following dream:

“I move into the dream without a break in consciousness. As the dream world scene begins to emerge I (1) try to move (be active) in it in order to solidify my association with it, (2) keep my eyes looking down where there will be the most constant stimulus. I run into what seems to be a gym. I jump up and grab the basketball rim. I know that I need to do one thing which is supernatural in order to solidify my perceptions of the lucid dream. So I push off from the rim, float in the air briefly, and then drop to the ground...” (M.A.T., 1975)

One possible reason why movement in the lucid dream tends to stabilize the dreamer’s involvement is that it allows his mind to associate self-reflection with the lucid dream body instead of the flesh body. If the dreamer remains stationary, then there is a greater tendency to associate his self-reflective capacity with the sleeping, inert flesh body, and thus awaken.

In the above dream the dreamer also solidifies his involvement by performing a feat that defies physical laws. In doing so he affirms a new set of laws. Since our experiences usually function under the laws of the physical world, awareness is usually attracted to the vehicle that realm, the body. However, with the introduction of a new set of laws into the dream experience, awareness is less likely to be drawn prematurely back to the flesh body. At this point the dreamer’s identity can shift to his dream body which operates according to the more flexible rules of the malleable dream world.

In summary, this chapter has presented several principles and techniques for sustaining lucidity for the purpose of seeking and becoming one with the Light. They are:

- 1) Use an affirmation which constantly reminds the dreamer that he is dreaming, and/or which states an ideal response to the dream environment.
- 2) Focus attention upon a fixed symbol in the dream environment (i.e., body or the ground).
- 3) Affirm the healing potential of the lucid dream during the day in order to counteract the fear that the body will die if consciousness “leaves” it.
- 4) Affirm that the waking state is also a dream, a “shadow of that in the spiritual plane.” Try not to test the lucid dream by waking standards, or by tuning in to the flesh body to verify that the experience is a “mere dream.”
- 5) Exercise during the day so that the body will sleep more deeply.
- 6) Eat nutritious foods to avoid indigestion or other inharmonious bodily conditions.
- 7) Move about in the dream body to avoid premature reidentification with the flesh body.
- 8) Try to do something which defies physical laws so as to affirm laws other than those of the physical world.

## Chapter Five: The Dawning of the Clear Light

“For what can be the value of something that does not engender humility, love, mortification, silence and holy simplicity?”  
--St. John of the Cross

### Lucid Dreaming as a Doorway to Spiritual Experience

In Chapter Two, the transition from the normal dream state into lucidity was compared to the emergence of the ego from the primitive psyche. Emphasis was placed upon the independence and responsibility which arise when the dreamer is able to experience himself as a self-reflecting entity apart from the dream world.

If we were to stop there, much would remain neglected, for whenever there is the attainment of greater independence, a possible danger arises that the individual will deny all links with his former sense of dependence. We can see evidence of this denial in Western culture where the ego has soared to new heights of rational independence without a corresponding recognition of the vast unconscious from which it emerged. Jung says:

“It is even probable ...that our modern consciousness is still on a relatively low level. Nevertheless, its development so far has made it emancipated enough to forget its dependence on the unconscious psyche.” (Jung, Vol. II, p. 289)

If through our newfound sense of independence we develop a contempt or a manipulative attitude toward the images that are presented to us in the dream, we are likely to suffer in the long run. When we begin to experience our capacity to shape the dream environment, it becomes easy to forget that the goal consists of reconciliation with the dream elements, not a mastery over them. We have to go beyond a rigid sense of independence. As we are able to do this we can move beyond the lucid dream into another level of experience.

“Just as the transition from the first stage to the second demands the sacrifice of childish dependence, so, at the transition to the third stage, an exclusive independence has to be relinquished.” (Jung, Vol. XI, p.183)

This third stage to which Jung refers seems to entail an act of surrender in spite of the strengths which may have been accumulated in the process of upward development. The culmination of this act of surrender appears to be identical to what the great mystics have described for centuries. It is perhaps the common element in all of the religions - a level of

consciousness at which the individual is unified with a force of such overwhelming proportions that he feels melted by it and lifted immeasurably beyond his normal state of consciousness.

The lucid dream seems to bring the dreamer much closer to this state, but as we can see in the following dream, there is a tendency to be so absorbed in the new sense of freedom that the dreamer fails to move any further along.

"I am flying around, enjoying myself. At one point, I begin to doubt my weightlessness. As I do, I plummet to the ground. But I get up in good spirits and make ready to take off again. "Then, 'X' comes out of the house, so I walk up to talk with him. I am elated and want to share my experience with him. He smiles patiently and says, 'I had hoped you would get over your bent for these kinds of experiences. He (the Master) has been here twice already.' I am so shocked that I 'awaken' immediately." (Sparrow, 1974)

This dream suggests to the dreamer that he is fixated at a particular stage in a process which eventually leads to communion with a deeper experience. If this is true (and it appears to be from the examples which will follow), the dream experience can be regarded as a pathway which leads through various obstacles of our own creation. As we respond inappropriately to a threatening image or an attractive situation along the way, we are fixated there until we can change our response. The capacity to respond in an unattached manner seems to be greatly enhanced by the emergence of lucidity. If we are able to realize that the dream images are of our own creation, the capacity for unattachment greatly increases, and the compulsion to involve ourselves with them diminishes.

### **The Importance of an Ideal.**

Even when the dreamer emerges into a fully lucid state, the temptation remains in a different, more subtle form. Whereas in the normal dream the dreamer is drawn into an emotional involvement with the dream images, now the dreamer feels a desire to exercise his freedom in relation to the image. This can take the form of overcoming the image by force, dismissing it from the dream, or by mentally changing it into something more desirable. In the case of the previous example of the flying dream, the dreamer is simply engrossed in the aesthetic beauty of the dream images as well as in his freedom of movement. In the dream that follows, we can see how a dreamer's lucidity confers the power to eliminate the unwanted images from the dream.

"I am alone in a cabin out in a desert. The front door opens and three figures from my childhood nightmares enter -- Frankenstein, Werewolf and Dracula. At first I am terrified,

but then I realize that this cannot possibly be true, and that I must be dreaming. So I decide to banish them. "Get out," I said. And immediately, they were gone...

The fact that this level of experience offers a great deal of power cannot be disputed. If we have no conception of anything beyond this, it is quite understandable to be satisfied with the virtually unlimited possibilities available in the lucid state. It is only when we have glimpsed intuitively that something may lie beyond the exercise of our limited desires, that the lucid dream loses some of its attractiveness as a playground, or as an arena for proving ourselves. It is probably true that the closer we get to where we want to be, the easier it is to be drawn away by the increasing multiplicity of distractions and lesser opportunities. Hence, the lucid dream is not only a breakthrough, but also a potential distraction if we are seeking the very best. But what is the "very best" to which we can aspire? This is apparently open to individual interpretation. As the dreamer experiences the lucid state with increasing regularity, it is likely that they will gain intimations as to what this might be for them.

An example of this realization is as follows:

"I am sitting in front of a small altar which has figurines upon it. At first, I see an ox. I look away momentarily, then look back, only to find that there is the figure of a dragon in its place. I begin to realize that I am dreaming. I turn my head away, and this time affirm that when I look back I will see the highest form possible. I slowly turn back and open my eyes. On the altar is the figure of a man in meditation. A tremendous wave of emotion and energy overwhelms me. I jump up and run outdoors in exhilaration."

(Sparrow, 1974)

In this dream, the dreamer gains an understanding of what the highest is to him. Once this has been comprehended and consciously established as the ideal to the dreamer, it becomes a veritable measuring device by which the inner experiences can be evaluated. The question changes from "How beautiful was the experience?" to "Where does this experience stand in relation to my ideal?" In this way, the lucid dream can be entered into with a sense of purpose which will aid the dreamer in remaining unattached to the diverse opportunities which may arise, and to take the dream further by considering new possibilities.

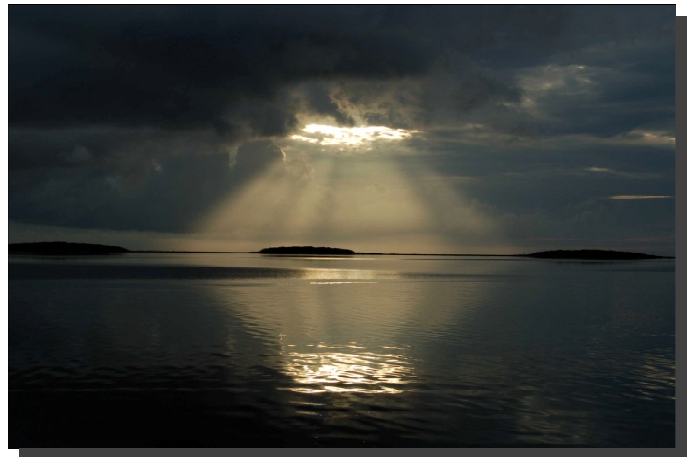
The lucid dreamer who banished the three demons from his childhood nightmares apparently held to an ideal that made him reconsider his initial reaction. Instead of merely getting rid of the monsters, he knew somehow that he had to learn to accept them. We can see how this deeper ideal allowed the dream to continue.

"I suddenly felt I'd been wrong to banish the three figures. I realized that I could protect myself in another way -- by surrounding myself with light. So I mentally affirmed that I would be surrounded with light, and a pinkish glow immediately appeared all around me. I said to Frankenstein, Werewolf and Dracula, "Please come back." And suddenly, they were there! But I could only barely see them beyond the cloud of light..."

The culmination of this process is dramatic and life changing. The above dreamer had the courage and the governing ideal of radical acceptance and love to allow the experience to go even further. And he was amply rewarded by his willingness to do so!

"Then I thought, Maybe I should invite them into the light. So I said, "Please come forward." They moved closer, and as they did, the light came into me as an interior experience of intense ecstasy and love. As I floated into waking consciousness, I was completely happy, and felt that way for days."

In this astounding dream, the dreamer succeeds in moving beyond this sense of independence, and surrendering to a higher experience. It is, perhaps, always waiting for us in every dream. And the only thing that stands in the way is our fear of letting go. Another dreamer allows the dream to culminate fully in the following encounter with light.



"It is a clear night, and the sky is filled with stars. I am walking in my front yard, looking at the stars and hearing music -- the Beatles' song "Yesterday" -- coming from the house across the street.

"Suddenly, what appears to be a meteorite drops out of the eastern sky. At this point, I become lucid. The light falls all the way to the horizon. As it hits the earth, there is a flash of bright light.

"I drop to the ground and prepare to meditate, yet I know that I cannot move out of the form of the dream or the experience will not be complete. Two lights begin to approach me from the area of the impact. They are moving directly toward me in a parallel fashion. I wait until the lights are directly overhead. Then I know it is time to close my eyes and meditate. "Immediately a tremendous energy wells up within my body. I try to surrender to it. As I do, light begins to fill my vision. There is a tremendous sense of warmth and love, which



continues for a good while.” (Sparrow, 1974)

This experience of light and energy seems to be universally recognized in the literature on meditation and contemplative prayer as actual communion between the individual and the Divine. Whether or not this is an objective truth, its ubiquitous occurrence lends credence to its essential importance.

Carl Jung concurs with this:

“The phenomenon itself, that is, the vision of light, is an experience common to many mystics, and one that is undoubtedly of the greatest significance, because in all times and places it appears as the unconditional thing, which unites in itself the greatest energy and the profoundest meaning.” (Wilhelm, p. 106)

Lucid Dreaming and the Meditation Process. Since the lucid dream appears to bring an individual within reach of a level of consciousness which has been associated in the past with deep meditative experiences, it is quite probable that the process of lucid dreaming is closely related to the meditative process. In fact, it is likely that we can regard lucid dreaming as a visual representation of the meditative process.

The problem which confronts the meditating individual can perhaps best be described as separation from himself. The practice of meditation has as its ultimate goal the reunion of the conscious self with those aspects which lie unrecognized in the recesses of the unconscious, and which offer completion to the individual. Yet, before this can happen, the meditator must confront his preconceptions and fears which act as a barrier between himself and the elements of completion. Often these obstacles are very subtle, manifesting only as confusion or an incomprehensible emotional state which arises in the meditation process. The lack of concreteness in these awakening patterns makes a successful reconciliation a vague and difficult endeavor. The dream provides us, however, with a vivid pictorial representation of the encounter which we face. In addition, the dream allows the individual to view the results of his responses toward the obstacle. Thus, the dream facilitates an objectification of the obstacle which to the meditator is often vague and subjective.

If full conscious awareness and the objectification of unconscious obstacles are the two prerequisites for the movement toward inner completion, then the lucid dream can be regarded as a state in which the two qualities occur simultaneously. The self-reflecting consciousness usually available only to the awake person intersects with the dream. Thus, for the first time, interaction can occur between the dream and the waking self. This appears to result in an acceleration of the meditative process which culminates in the breakthrough experience of light and fulfillment.

When one examines the literature on meditation, it becomes evident that surrender is one of the most important prerequisites to this breakthrough experience. Likewise, the culmination of the lucid dream does not depend so much upon the acquisition of new powers as it does upon the receptive capacity of the individual, and the willingness to accept previously unacceptable aspects of himself. The adventure of the lucid dream, like the outward appearances of other inner pathways, lures us with a promise of greater freedom, only to demand our total surrender in the end. As such it bears the earmarks of all genuine approaches the wholeness.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Lucid Dreaming and Ideals**

The purpose of this section is to present several exercises through which one may healthily encourage lucidity in the dream state, as well as stimulate greater objectivity in the waking state. These exercises have served to encourage lucidity in the lives of the whose dreams appear in this booklet. It must be emphasized, however, that these exercises are not merely techniques but have sufficient value in their own right to warrant our attention.

The Importance of an Ideal in the Dream State Perhaps the most important exercise one can perform in order to insure a consistent and creative response in the lucid dream is to decide initially upon a spiritual ideal. Edgar Cayce says this;

Then, the more important, the most important experience of this or any entity is to first know what is the ideal - spiritually. (#357-13)

Recommended by the Cayce readings as the fundamental prerequisite for any successful pursuit, this practice establishes a criterion by which to evaluate and direct our responses in the dream.

In a way, lucid dreaming marks the birth of conscious will in the dream state. For the first time, the dreamer has the ability to conceive consciously of alternate paths of action, as well as a variety of possible attitudes. Hence in order to insure an appropriate response or course of action in the dream we need to conceive of an ideal to act as a motivational standard against which we can compare and guide future responses. By holding this ideal in mind upon the awakening of lucidity we may bypass alluring distractions as well as preempt the confusing effects of fears and doubts. The spiritual ideal then becomes a veritable ordering principle which enhances the quality of our responses in the dream.

For the ideal held as the activative force in the experience becomes then as the leading force in all of its relationships, all of its dealings with its fellow man. (#1211-1)

Not only does the ideal improve our responses to the thought-form world of the dream, but as a thought creation itself it shapes to some extent the dream environment as well. So as we work with ideals, we may observe an improvement in the quality and clarity of the dream as well as in our responses to it.

Often it is difficult for us to understand just exactly what a spiritual ideal is and should be.

The readings define this concept in the following excerpt:

The ideal ever is that each entity fulfill that purpose for which it has entered any given experience. (#816-10)

In order to fulfill the purpose of the dream experience we must first determine what it is. Many psychologists have observed that the dream is largely a reflection of thoughts and memories which have been suppressed or overlooked, and which seek integration into the conscious self. This assumption appears to be a valid one when we observe that dream experiences which are fulfilling often reflect a reconciliation of previously unacceptable or obscured qualities of the inner self with the waking personality. We can describe this fulfillment in many ways: as oneness, as the Christ Consciousness, as wholeness, as the mystical marriage. However, the specific way in which we personally conceive of this fulfillment becomes our spiritual ideal in the dream state.

Cayce recommends choosing one word to represent our spiritual ideal. This single word signifies the stabilizing force in our dreams and waking experiences.

...thy spiritual concept of the ideal, whether it be Jesus, Buddha, mind, material, God or whatever is the word which indicates to self the ideals spiritual.  
(#816-10)

### **A Model for Setting Ideals.**

The first step is to choose a word which represents to us the spiritual ideal or the fulfillment of the purpose of the dream experience. As mentioned before, this may vary greatly in form from person to person. To some it may be Jesus; to others it may be love. Once a word has been selected it might be written in the center of three concentric circles.

The next step is for us to determine four recurrent situations or areas of our dream life in which we seek to express our spiritual ideal. (Of course we may wish to work with more areas but for now we will concentrate upon four.) These areas can be determined by studying our recent dreams. What situations show up with regularity? Whom do we dream about? These areas may or may not have clear parallels in our present waking life. For example, we may dream regularly about a deceased friend or about fighting in World War II. Once we have determined the four recurrent dream areas we can divide the circles into pie-shaped segments and write them down as shown below.

Once we have chosen a spiritual ideal we can then turn our attention to the specific attitudes and behaviors we wish to manifest in the dream. By choosing mental and physical

responses which are consistent with and serve the purpose of the spiritual ideal we in effect establish mental and physical ideals.

In selecting mental ideals for ourselves we need to determine ideal attitudes with which we hope to awaken the spiritual ideal in each chosen area of the dream life.

...Write the ideal mental attitude, as may arise from the concepts of the spiritual, [in the] relationship to self, to home, to friends, to neighbors, to thy enemies, to things, to conditions. (#5091-3)

In addition we need to choose ideal activities in the dream, or physical ideals, which will allow the spiritual and mental ideals to manifest in each area of the dream. In essence we are deciding how we would like to act in relation to each area. . . the ideal material . . . Not of conditions, but what has brought, what does bring into manifestation the spiritual and mental ideals. What relationships does such bring to things, to individuals, to situations? (#5091-3)

The mental and physical ideals can be regarded as outgrowths or extensions of the spiritual ideal into our mental attitudes and physical activities. For example, we may have been dreaming regularly of our deceased father and wish to extend our spiritual ideal into this dream relationship. It is possible that the image of our father appears frequently because of some unreconciled conflicts we had with him but were unable to work out before he died. We may also realize that we were never able to tell him how we felt about certain things that he did or didn't do. As a result of this we may decide that the attitude of honesty in the dream would allow us to express the spiritual ideal of love in relation to our father. Hence this attitude would become our mental ideal in this area of our dream life.

Next we need to decide how we can exhibit or enact this attitudes of honesty. We may decide that we need simply to talk with our father in the dream and tell him about feelings that we kept from him. This overt activity becomes our physical ideal in relation to this area of the dream.

As we work creatively with an area of the dream, it may cease to appear with its previous regularity; instead, other recurring situations may appear. At this point it may become necessary to establish new ideals in order to remain abreast of our progress. [For an in-depth analysis of ideals, see *Meditation and the Mind of Man*, by Mark Thurston and Herbert Puryear, available from the A.R.E. Press, Box 595, Virginia Beach, VA 23451.]

## **The Catalyzing Effect of Early Morning Meditations**

As mentioned in Chapter One, an important prerequisite to lucid dreaming in the author's experience has been the practice of early morning meditations. The time for the meditation does not seem important, except that it should take place after the body has rested long enough to permit the mind to be sufficiently alert. Also, adequate time should remain afterwards in order to allow the person to sleep for an hour or more. The author has found that a 10-15 minute meditation period during the early morning hours from 2-5 a.m. has provided an effective catalyst to lucid dreaming during the ensuing hours of sleep. It is essential however, that the meditator regard the meditation experience primarily as an attunement experience. Otherwise they will be reducing a potentially sacred experience to the status of a mere technique.

### **Applying Principles of Lucidity in the Waking State**

Another way that lucidity can be encouraged is by applying principles of lucidity to the waking "dream." Once an individual has begun to examine critically the postulates and laws under which he operates during the waking hours, it stands to reason that this will begin to characterize the dream life and eventually result in the initiation of lucidity. The following two awareness exercises are based upon this approach:

- 1) When confronted with a tense or difficult situation, affirm to yourself that the experience is a dream and the important thing to do is to respond creatively. Then perform a simple creative act based upon this realization. Example: I am upset because Bob has criticized my term paper. Realizing that the experience is a dream, I ask him for suggestions as to how I may improve it.
  
- 2) Spend five minutes a day simply looking at the environment around you as a dream. Observe the details and colors of the objects around you. Notice any incongruities or oddities in their appearance. Describe what you see out loud to yourself.

Although these exercises usually enable only an increased unattachment in the waking state, they often result in radical transformations of the dream experience once they begin to be utilized by the dreaming individual.

### **Reliving Past Dreams**

Another method of encouraging lucidity as well as experiencing a more creative resolution to what might be frightening or depressing dreams is to relive past dreams and to imagine yourself becoming lucid in the process.

The first step is to choose a recent dream and to relive the experience step-by-step up to the point where there is an obvious incongruity or irrational element in the dream. Then imagine yourself becoming lucid at this point. Continue the reverie and attempt to respond in a more creative manner than you did previously. Remember, the aim is not to change the dream or what is being presented; instead you are trying to respond more creatively to the dream.

A good time to practice this exercise is before going to sleep at night. In this way, a more creative attitude (if not lucidity) can be carried over into the dream state.

### **Choosing a Recurring Symbol as a Cue to Awaken**

Another exercise which seems to increase the frequency of lucid dreaming is the selection of a recurring symbol or a particular event which the individual adopts as a cue with which he becomes aware that he is dreaming. It is soon apparent that this choice cannot be an arbitrary one. The symbol obviously must occur with sufficient regularity to enable the dreamer to make continued efforts at achieving lucidity. It also must be of sufficient importance to the dreamer to stand out in the dream environment. Some possible cue symbols are: a deceased person; a recurring dilemma, such as being arrested; or a recurring symbol of a religious nature.

Undoubtedly there are many factors which contribute to the occurrence of lucid dreaming. However, it is likely that most any exercise which enables a gradual broadening of awareness can be utilized as a method for experiencing greater awareness in the dream.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Lucid Dreaming and Out-of-Body Experiences**

Lucid dreaming has generally been regarded as an inferior version of the out-of-body experience. (5;7) The purpose of this appendix is to explore the possibility that these two experiences are the result of two different and divergent internalized models entering and molding a singular altered state of consciousness. A position which integrates these divergent models is then suggested.

During the '20s and '30s, lucid dreaming, under other names, drew the attention of a few metaphysical writers whose primary interest was "out-of-body experience" or "astral projection." (2;5) These two terms are synonyms for the phenomenon in which an



individual presumably escapes the confines of the flesh body and inhabits a finer physical, or “astral,” body. The first writer to discuss the relationship between lucid dreaming and astral projection was Oliver Fox, an Englishman who referred to these curious dream experiences as “Dreams of Knowledge.” In the tradition of other out-of-body researchers, Fox regarded the Dream of Knowledge as a lower level astral projection; that is, an actual displacement of a finer physical body that lacked the stability and realism of a full out-of-body experience. His initiation into the out-of-body experience was through one such Dream of Knowledge.

“I dreamed that I was standing on the pavement outside my home...I was about to enter the house when, on glancing casually at these stones (cobblestones), my attention became riveted by a passing strange phenomenon, so extraordinary that I could not believe my eyes - they had seemingly all changed their position in the night, and the long sides were now parallel to the curb [curb]! The solution flashed upon me: though this glorious summer morning seemed as real as real could be, I was dreaming!

“With the realization of this fact, the quality of the dream changed in a manner very difficult to convey to one who has not had this experience. Never had I felt so absolutely well, so clear-brained, so divinely powerful, so inexpressibly free! The sensation was exquisite beyond words; but it lasted for only a few moments, and I awoke. As I was to learn later, my mental control had been overwhelmed by my emotions; so the tiresome body asserted its claim and pulled me back. For though I did not realize it at the time, I think this first experience was a true projection and that I was actually functioning outside my physical vehicle.” (5, pp. 32-33)

It is significant to note that Fox was inclined to classify this Dream of Knowledge as an actual out-of-body experience, as this fitted his conceptual framework. On later occasions, Fox became more adept at entering out-of-body state without a break in consciousness, thus apparently bypassing the dream state. As a result, he began to consider the Dream of Knowledge as an inferior avenue into astral projection. However, he continued to regard it as a level of consciousness far different from that found in an ordinary dream:

“I have found to my surprise that some people are quite unable to grasp this idea of the Dream of Knowledge, that it is really a new level of consciousness and different from the states experienced in ordinary dreams and in waking life. They object, ‘But after all, it’s only a dream. How can a dream be anything else?’ And their expression is eloquent of the doubt they are too polite to voice.” (5, p. 36)

In the reports of experienced out-of-body projectors, we usually find a qualitative distinction made between lucid dreaming and out-of-body experience, the latter being

regarded as the “higher” of the two. (5;7) Although the criteria used to distinguish the out-of-body experience from lucid or normal dreams vary from person to person (7, p. 20), the two essential questions are: (1) To what degree is the person’s level of awareness continuous with, and identical to, waking consciousness? and (2) To what degree is the perceived phenomenal realm congruent with the reality of the waking state? If an experience rates highly on both of these it has traditionally been designated an out-of-body experience.

Shapiro (13) has attempted to provide a classification scheme for out-of-body experiences based primarily on the first question; that is, he attributes more weight to the level of the dreamer's awareness than he does to the perceived qualities of the visual field. This emphasis results in more “lucid dreams,” whose visual field may be completely different from that of waking reality, receiving a strong out-of-body designation. The criteria for the first two categories of his seven classes (Classes A-G) are summarized below:

### **Class A. Out-of-Body Experiences to Absolute Certainty**

1. Complete and continuous awareness and consciousness equal to or greater than that of an awakened state from moment of exteriorization to moment of return to physical body.
  
2. The above alone or with any, none, or all of the following clues:
  - a. Instantaneous teleportation from place to place without interruption of consciousness and at will: selection of destination possible.
  - b. Realization of physical body being elsewhere during exteriorization.
  - c. Visualization by sight of a silver or other cord connecting the point of consciousness to the evacuated physical body.
  - d. Ability to move through physical matter without hindrance.
  - e. Ability to communicate telepathically with other human-appearing entities coming into view.
  - f. Meeting of discarnate beings known to be deceased.
  - g. Lack of incongruity between real world physically known, with the exception of slight special misplacements of objects of the physical world.
  - h. Accurate cognizance of time spent exteriorized.
  - i. 360-degree visualization of the environment.
  - j. Vibrations of an electrical nature in the body.

## **Class B. Out-of-Body Experiences to a Reasonable Certainty**

1. Complete awareness and consciousness equal to or greater than that of the awakened state, with a break in consciousness between the last moment of recall prior to exteriorization to the first moment of realization of out-of-body status after exteriorization, such lapse in consciousness being of an unknown duration.
  
2. The above alone or with any, none, or all of the following clues:
  - a. Same as Class A above.
  - b. Movement through a tunnel leading to full exteriorization.

It is significant to note that Shapiro regards the perceptions listed under #2 in both of the above classes as “clues” rather than evidence. His decision to base the out-of-body classification system almost entirely on the percipient’s level of self-reflecting awareness and continuity of consciousness during transition from one state to the other represents a departure from the approach of many early writers on the topic. For example, Green (7, pp. 20-21) summarizes five subjective criteria commonly used by experienced projectors (most of whom lived during the early part of this century) to distinguish between their out-of-body experiences and lucid dreams. Three out of five of these criteria focus entirely on the observed qualities of the visual field during the experience, implying that such perceptions were to be considered evidential. By underplaying the significance of these perceptions, Shapiro sets a trend toward studying the level of consciousness in which such phenomena occur, rather than the often inconsistent characteristics of the perceptual field. Two questions arise at this point: (1) Is the out-of-body conclusion necessarily called for? and (2) Is this assumption ever really derived from the observed qualities of the phenomenal realm?

In addressing the first question, if the out-of-body label were the only one that could account for the level of awareness and perceptions which normally accompany such experiences, then we might expect a person to conclude that he was out of his body whenever he encountered such phenomena. But in the following accounts, the percipient never makes this assumption; instead, he merely concludes that he is dreaming. Even so, the first experience (cited earlier) meets the criteria for a Class A out-of-body experience according to Shapiro’s system. For it demonstrates a movement into and out of the experience without a break in consciousness:

“I move into the dream without a break in consciousness. As the dream world unfolds, I try

to move (be active) in it in order to solidify my association with it, and also try to keep my eyes looking down where there will be the most constant stimulus. I run into a gym. I jump up and grab the basketball rim. I know that I need to do one thing which is supernatural in order to solidify my perceptions of the dream. So I push off from the rim, float in the air briefly, and drop to the ground... Then I awaken.” (M.A.T., 1975)

In the next experience, also cited earlier, the percipient experiences a break between his awakened state and the subsequent arousal of self-reflection in the dream. Therefore, it does not satisfy the criteria of a Class A out-of-body experience. However, since there is a subsequent continuity of awareness which persists until the percipient reenters the waking state, the experience satisfies the criteria of a Class B out-of-body experience:

“I am being pursued in the area around my residence by a group of men. As I run fearfully through the neighborhood, dodging in between houses, I become aware that I am dreaming and that the fear is unnecessary. I realize that I have a choice either to go to meet my pursuers or to meditate. I feel that I need to return and work through the conflict. So I begin to fly to the area where they are located. I will myself upward until I am high above the earth. But before I get to the place, a pleasant vibration courses through my body, and I awaken.” (G.S., 1974)

These examples might lead us to speculate that the “dreamers” simply failed to conclude the obvious: that they were out of their bodies. But it is just as reasonable to assume that the dreaming conclusion arrived at in the above experiences represents an equally valid hypothesis, one that also attempts to explain how consciousness can operate unmediated by the body’s senses in a phenomenal realm with time and space dimensions. Thus one might conclude that the out-of-body hypothesis is only one possible way to account for this phenomenon.

This leads one to consider the second question: Is the out-of-body conclusion ever really derived from the “projector’s” perceptions? Let us consider that a paradigm, as an internalized model of reality, determines one’s perception of the world, not vice versa. A paradigm may be regarded as a model, or an organizing principle, that governs the overall pursuit in a given field of research. But in a more profound sense, as articulated by Kuhn, it governs the process of perception itself.

Ultimately, “a paradigm is prerequisite to perception” (9, p. 112), such that “when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them.” (9 p. 110) Kuhn, of course, speaks figuratively here. But although he does not mean to say that the physical world materially conforms to the paradigm held by the observer, he does suggest that for all practical

purposes, when a paradigm changes, “the scientist afterward works in a different world.” (9, p. 120)

In the case of lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences, the individual encounters a relatively malleable perceptual field that may change with a simultaneous change in thought. Not only is perception determined by one’s state of mind, but the texture of reality itself appears to change according to one’s mental set. The lucid dreaming and out-of-body conclusions may simply reflect the paradigm with which one enters the experience - a paradigm which is immediately substantiated when the phenomenal realm adapts to the paradigm’s expectations. These conclusions become, then, an interesting case in the way that paradigms can be perpetuated through apparently empirical

observations. An analogous error would be for a short, blond person to conclude that one can know when he is looking in a mirror when he sees a short, blond person staring back at him.

Without endorsing either the lucid dream assumption or the out-of-body assumption, we might refer to the singular state of consciousness in which both occur as the “lucid state,” a state characterized by the arousal of self-reflection apparently unmediated by the body’s senses, and the perception of a time-space phenomenal realm. By adopting such a position, we can see that the assumptions of objectivity - the assumption that one is out of his body, the assumption that the environment is physical, etc. - do not so much provide evidence for the objective nature of the astral body or the phenomenal realm as they reflect the percipient’s preferred orientation to this state. The terms “out-of-body experience” and “astral projection” become, then, reflections of one possible subjective orientation to the lucid state, just as the term “lucid dreaming” reflects a different subjective orientation.

### **Parapsychological Implications**

But one might ask, if such bodies and dreamscapes truly are the constructs of the percipient, how is it that some “projectors” return with verifiable details of a distant place or event? This “evidence” might lead us to believe that the percipients were physically present at the scene; but there is reason to think that this explanation is too simplistic. First of all, out-of-body percipients sometimes report significant physical variations in the environment, such as seeing a chimney-stack that was not there (7, p. 76) or seeing a familiar person with altered physical features:

“After a short trip stopped in room. There was a man sitting at the table, writing on paper. He resembled Dr. Puharich, but he was more light or blond-haired. . .” (10, p. 67)

This error could be attributed to a mistake in physical perception, much as would happen if the projector were physically present and viewing the scene under less-than-optimum viewing conditions. For example, Monroe suggested after the fact that his perception of the blond hair was perhaps due to the strong overhead light which might have reflected off Dr. Puharich's hair. This kind of explanation may account for slight perceptual distortions. But because it is rare for out-of-body percipients to report a lack of visual clarity (7, p. 71) in their experiences, gross irregularities pose a significant challenge to this explanation. The following experience, which is described as vivid by the percipient, contains a glaring incongruity:

"After meditating in the early morning hours, I laid down to go back to sleep. But almost immediately, my body began to vibrate. Then my eyes popped open and I surveyed the room. However, I was aware that my physical eyes were actually closed. I propped 'myself' up to look around. The surroundings were vividly clear. To my left I noticed a large green vase on the bedside table. . . Upon returning to my body, I realized that there wasn't a vase on the table."(G.S., 1974)

According to Green's research, this experience is by no means unusual in that projectors sometimes report an enhancement rather than a diminution of visual and other sensory modalities. (7, p. 72) But if sensory acuity is heightened in a given out-of-body experience, we must then account for the gross distortions occurring in what is believed to be a direct perception of a physical event. How can both be true? It may be reasonable to postulate that the perceived physical event is actually an internal reconstruction which only approximates the physical event. On the other hand, we must also account for the high degree of correspondence between this internal reconstruction and physical, concurrent events. We might then postulate that the information itself may be conveyed to the projector "outside" of time and space (i.e., telepathically or clairvoyantly), which the projector then translates imperfectly into its recognizable time-space context.

In *Journeys Out of the Body*, Robert Monroe reports that on more than one occasion he traveled to another place while out of his body, conversed with a friend, and then returned to his body. Upon attempting to verify the encounter, he found that the friend was oblivious to the meeting, but that his perception of the setting and the person's actions were in many ways accurate.

". . . I greeted him, and he looked up and smiled, then stated that he would spend more time on our project, apologizing for being neglectful. I said that I understood, then felt uneasiness to return to the physical... Comment: In checking with Dr. Puharich, the locale was right, and actions correct, but he has no memory of the visit." (10, p. 67)

This once again suggests that the out-of-body experience may be a convenient time-space translation of a non-spatial information exchange. Parapsychologists, such as John Palmer, who have investigated the out-of-body phenomenon (12, pp.193-217), caution against constructing a physical model to account for the transmission between the projector and the event. Palmer points out that clairvoyance occurs in many ways that do not involve the reported exteriorization of a second vehicle of consciousness:

“If people having out-of-body experiences are able to acquire information about distant events, does this mean that some vehicle of consciousness leaves their physical bodies and travels to the distant location to ‘see’ the event? Maybe so, but an equally plausible interpretation is that the out-of-body experience is simply a psi-conducive state of consciousness that predisposes one to receiving psi impressions.

“...it is my opinion that psychological sets, far from being mere biasing artifacts, are an integral part of the formation of out-of-body experiences...”  
(12, pp. 210, 213)

### **Elements of the Two Paradigms**

We can trace the out-of-body and lucid dream conclusions to the same origins: Both occur within the “lucid state,” which is characterized by (1) the arousal of self-reflection apparently unmediated by the physical senses, and (2) the perception of a phenomenal realm with time and space qualities. But although these different hypotheses arise out of the same need - to make sense out of the lucid experience - they represent fundamentally different orientations or paradigms.

The lucid dreaming paradigm (represented by the conclusion, “I am dreaming”) implies a realization that the dreamscape is an outgrowth of one’s own mental content, and that the dream which may have led up to lucidity can now be viewed as an opportunity to interact with a subjective reality. This realization tends to carry with it a sense of responsibility toward the phenomenal realm, and also an awareness of its relative nature. The separation between the dreamer and the dream is more easily regarded as a convenient division, which permits a dialogue to arise between intrapsychic realities ultimately not separated in time and space. Hence this paradigm ultimately regards any subject-object division as a convenient fiction.

On the other hand, the out-of-body paradigm tends to endorse the objective, if not physical, nature of the phenomenal realm. The obvious psychological danger in this is that it severs



the content of the experience from the percipient, making it more independent of him. The percipient is thus likely to consider the phenomenal realm as autonomous as material reality and thus assume a passive, less responsible role in the experience. There is less chance, therefore that a sense of responsibility for the components of the phenomenal realm will arise. So in the event that the experience is unpleasant, the content will likely be seen as an objective force or being over which the dreamer has no influence. In contrast, the lucid dreamer, by maintaining an awareness of the inner origins of the landscape, can more easily discover his creative influence on the phenomenal realm, as in the following dream:

“I am sitting in front of a small altar which has figurines upon it. At first, I see an ox. I look away momentarily, then look back only to find that there is the figure of a dragon in its place. I begin to realize that I’m dreaming. I turn my head away, and this time affirm that when I look back I will see the highest form possible. I slowly turn back and open my eyes. On the altar is the figure of a man in meditation. A wave of emotion and energy overwhelms me. I jump up and run outdoors in exhilaration. . .” (G.S., 1974)

Taken to the extreme, the out-of-body paradigm may lead to a naive preoccupation with externalized astral beings and planes. At the other extreme, however, the lucid dreaming paradigm is insufficient also, for it may prompt one to overlook the sobering fact that intrapsychic forces (as depicted by the dream images) often act in a way that can only be called autonomous, a fact recognized and expressed by Jung in his theory concerning “autonomous complexes.”

“This image [the complex] has a powerful inner coherence, it has its own wholeness and, in addition, a relatively high degree of autonomy, so that it is subject to the control of the conscious mind to only a limited extent, and therefore behaves like an animated foreign body in the sphere of consciousness. The complex can usually be suppressed with an effort of will, but not argued out of existence, and at the first opportunity it reappears in all its original strength.” (8, Vol. 8, p. 89)

In an attempt to exercise his newfound control over such images in the lucid state, the percipient who adopts the lucid dreaming paradigm may thus be unpleasantly surprised to discover that he is relatively powerless to manipulate the denizens of his phenomenal realm:

“I am standing in the doorway outside my room. It is night time and hence dark where I stand. Dad comes in the front door. I tell him that I am there so as not to frighten him or provoke an attack. I am afraid for no apparent reason.

“I look outside through the door and see a dark figure which appears to be a large animal. I point to it in fear. The animal, which is a huge black panther, comes through the doorway. I reach out to it with both hands, extremely afraid, even though I begin to realize that this is a dream. Placing my hands on its head, I say, ‘You’re only a dream.’ But I am half pleading in my statement and cannot dispel the fear. The panther begins to dissolve, only to rematerialize again and again. . .” (G.S., 1975)

This dream illustrates the need to develop an orientation to the lucid state that combines the best features of the lucid dream and out-of-body paradigms. Instead of beginning to develop concepts of objective astral entities and planes, or adopting the view that the dream can be made to conform to the dreamer’s whimsical desires, one might learn to walk the middle path, maintaining a sense of one’s responsibility for the phenomenal realm, while at the same time acknowledging one’s incapacity to control or even comprehend all that inhabits it.

## **Summary**

The lucid dream and the out-of-body experiences can be seen as the respective offspring of two different paradigms encountering the lucid state. This state is defined simply as the arousal of self-reflection apparently unmediated by the physical senses, and the simultaneous perception of a time-space phenomenal realm. It is suggested that the lucid dreaming and out-of-body approaches need to be synthesized in order for percipients and researchers to appreciate the subjective and objective aspects of this complex phenomenon.

As a final thought on the matter, this special case of competing paradigms can be seen as a vignette of a much broader crisis between the classical scientific method and emerging transpersonal studies. The out-of-body conclusion represents an attempt to extend rather than revise the traditional concepts of physical identity and subject-object division into a state of consciousness which, although superficially accommodating them, reveals anomalies which seriously threaten to undermine them as well. The lucid dreaming conclusion, on the other hand, parallels the position of the increasingly popular transpersonal approach to psychology and reality. By implying that the perceived reality is a dream, the lucid dreamer affirms the connectedness of the percipient and the phenomenal realm. But such a position may err by overlooking the autonomy and separateness of intrapsychic realities.

Thus a study into the lucid state clarifies the strengths and weaknesses of two views of

reality which are presently competing in the waking state as well. If this study reveals anything about the nature of the future paradigm, it is that it must somehow incorporate these two competing positions into a single worldview.

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