In our last issue we discussed lucid dreams, dreams in which the quality of your consciousness is much more like waking than dreaming, dreams where you know you are dreaming while you are dreaming. In lucid dreams you can exercise much more conscious control over events than ordinarily. Paul Tholey, a German psychologist, has developed a number of techniques for inducing and controlling lucid dreams. He worked with more than 200 normal subjects, many of whom had never experienced lucid dreaming before.

The Reflection Technique was Tholey's most general technique for inducing lucidity. The essence of it was asking yourself during waking, "Am I dreaming? Why or why not?" The repeated examination of the qualities of ongoing experience can lead to a sensitivity to your state of consciousness and a carrying over of the habit of questioning into the dream state. Eventually the answer will be "Yes!", and lucidity will result.

This article will describe other techniques devised by Tholey and his colleagues. These techniques have just been published in the American psychological literature (Tholey, 1983). They fall into two broad categories. First are techniques used during the waking state, like the Reflection Technique, designed to have a later effect during dreaming. Second are techniques that retain the lucidity of our ordinary waking state while we are falling asleep, so there is continuous lucidity from waking into the dreaming state.

The Intention Technique

With this technique you resolve that you will become aware that you are dreaming when you find yourself in a particular dream situation. Suppose you frequently dream, e.g., of being in your car, trying to start the engine but being unable to succeed. Resolve that from now on when you dream this you will realize that you are dreaming.

Although Tholey does not emphasize it, this is a good place to note that these techniques could be dangerous to people who already have poor contact with reality. They require you to "make believe" in an intense way, but your mind should be strong and balanced enough that part of you knows that your only imagining.

Now, how do we make that resolution work in your dream? Practice visualizing that situation as if you were dreaming it, but after visualizing it a while add the new factor, your recognition that you are dreaming. Do this several times a day, week after week, to establish a strong habit that in this situation you realize you are dreaming.

A variation of the Intention Technique, which can also be combined with the above, is to establish an intention that you will actively carry out some specified action in your dreams. The technique don Juan recommended to Carlos Castaneda (see, e.g., Castaneda, 1974, pages 18-20, 51, 67, 233, 235, 244 and 245) of trying to look at his hands during his dreams is an excellent example of this. Although Tholey doesn't mention it, visualizing yourself carrying out your intention in typical dream situations is probably good.
The Intention Technique, like the Reflection Technique, involves a shift of interest and desires from one state of consciousness (waking) to another (dreaming). Some may find this easy, some may find it difficult: thus the emphasis on practice, practice, practice, until the desired shift results from strong habit.

The Autosuggestion Technique

Another waking state technique is based on using self- or auto-suggestion to implant the idea of achieving lucidity into the subconscious part of your mind. Auto-suggestion techniques are different from the Intention Technique in that they do not involve conscious willing. You simply suggest over and over to yourself, in a passive way, that you will become lucid in your dreams. A verbal formula should be used, something clear and simple. For example, one I devised is:

Tonight I shall know
that I am dreaming,
And I shall awaken
in the dream world.

Suggesting it to yourself involves mentally repeating it over and over again, say for 3 or 4 minutes at a time. Don't vary the wording, and don't "grit your teeth" or clench your muscles or other ordinary "willpower" type things. Just calmly and clearly repeat and repeat. It's just true and you're saying it over and over, you don't have to make it true.

You can do this sort of autosuggestion in your ordinary waking state, closing your eyes and taking a few minutes to do it, several times per day. Techniques which increase suggestibility, such as hypnosis, self-hypnosis, or autogenic training, should make this procedure even more effective. I am partial to autogenic training, as it is a graded system of self-hypnosis that most people are successful with because they don't try to accomplish too much too fast. Schultz and Luthe's Autogenic Training (1959) is the complete reference here, and there is a comprehensive chapter on it in my Altered States of Consciousness. You need to filter out their medical bias that only a physician can teach you to relax, however.

The Combined Technique

Tholey and his colleagues have combined the elements of the Reflection, Intention, and Autosuggestion techniques into a series of waking practices. With their combined technique, people who have never experienced lucid dreaming before have had a lucid dream within 4 or 5 weeks, on the average. There is great individual variation, though, with some people dreaming lucidly the first night they try the techniques, others taking several months.

Here are the elements of the combined technique.

(a) Practice reflecting "Am I dreaming? Why or why not?" at least 5 to 10 times each day.

(b) After answering the above question with a "No" during waking reflections, then imagine as intensely as possible that you are actually dreaming, that everything you perceive, including yourself, is actually dream stuff. This should further sensitize you to the qualities that distinguish dreaming and strengthen your interest in understanding the nature of your dreams.

(c) Remember to consider what has led up to your ongoing experience when you reflect "Am I dreaming?" A single bit of dream experience may be perfectly ordinary, but are there inexplicable gaps in your experiences leading up to the moment? Were there bizarre experiences just a bit back?

(d) Try to always ask yourself the reflection question in waking situations which are also typical dream situations for you. Ask it whenever you are experiencing strong emotions of any kind. If you have any sorts of recurrent dreams, it is especially useful to ask the reflection question during similar waking situations.

(e) If frequent dream situations in your dream life have no waking counterparts, such as teleporting, e.g., practice imagining being in the dream situation and then realizing it's a dream.

(f) Anything that increase your dream recall in general will be helpful. The simple act of putting a notebook beside your bed with the intention to record your dreams can sometimes dramatically increase dream recall.

(g) Create the intention to carry out some simple action, like looking at your hands in your dreams. Keep it up until you succeed. Don't change your intention.
until you have succeeded at it.

(h) As you go to sleep, calmly think that you will eventually succeed in becoming lucid in your dreams. Don't will it, just let it be one of your last thoughts as you go to sleep.

Incidentally, I have been reading the new Life Extension by Pearson and Shaw. On page 195 they report a curious finding: for about half the people who try it, a 1000 microgram dose of vitamin B-12, taken just before bedtime, may greatly increase the intensity of colors in dreams. By just, they mean exactly that: taking it even 30 minutes before sleep may negate the effect. I think this would probably increase dream recall also: it did for me when I tried it. Tolerance develops rapidly, so you can only do this once in a while. I don't know if there are any medical problems that can result from B-12.

Continuous Lucidity: Through the Gate of Sleep

How do we go to sleep? Ordinarily we pick a quiet, comfortable place where we will be safe and undisturbed. We lie down, relax our muscles, and close our eyes. If we are not lying properly and there is too much pressure on some part of our body we shift until we are comfortable. "Comfortable" means being able to forget our body.

We also perform a mental act which, unless we are very tired, is essential: we forget our selves. You can't continue to think about all those things which seem so important to your waking self, or review your plans, or sort out your priorities. Your self, that overarching system of priorities is let go. Whatever comes, comes. Nothing is more or less important than another.

Your self is also a review and control system. It inspects, as it were, each item of mental content. Sometimes it accepts it as it is, often it rejects it or changes it to fit with your system of values and priorities. Except for things which are clearly disturbing to sleep, you can't exercise that kind of active control if you want to go to sleep.

For most of us, this dropping of priorities means that our ordinary waking self effectively disappears at some point in the process. Consciousness goes from being organized by the self to a period where the self fades and imagery and thought come in seemingly random ways. This period is called the hypnagogic state. We forget most of the imagery and thought of the hypnagogic state. It's as if our minds don't bother to record it in memory. Then there is a period of so-called stage 2 sleep (measured by brain wave criteria), which is a blank in memory the vast majority of the time, and after that you find yourself in your dream.

(Detailed descriptions of the hypnagogic state can be found in chapters 5 and 7 of my States of Consciousness, as well as in chapters 4 and 5 of my Altered States of Consciousness.)

Some people, though, have naturally had or have developed an ability to maintain the continuity of their consciousness as they fall asleep, as they pass through the hypnagogic "gate of sleep." Tholey and his colleagues at the Goethe-Universitat have studied several techniques for maintaining lucid awareness as you pass through this gate of sleep. These techniques have the advantage of allowing more precise timing of lucid dreaming, of getting a lucid dream the particular night you want one.

The Image Technique

In this method you focus awareness exclusively on the visual images that occur as you move into and through the hypnagogic state. It requires a lot of practice to follow the images while retaining awareness that you are "awake", lucid, and watching the imagery.

Tholey notes that there is considerable variation from person to person in the nature of the imagery seen. A typical sequence, though, is to start with flashes of light and geometrical forms which can change rapidly. These can change into images of objects and faces, and finally into complete scenes.

(This geometrical imagery, incidentally, may represent something about the way our nervous systems are constructed. The originators of geometry probably got a lot of their inspiration from these forms, and these forms may be a basis for the idea of archetypical forms, primal forms existing in a mental space beyond the physical world.)

Now you need to stop being a lucid but passive observer outside the dream scene and move into it. Tholey and his col-
leagues found it is not desirable to ac-
tively try to enter the dream scene, but
to let yourself be passively carried into
it.

Sometimes you will lose lucidity as you are carried into the dream scene. If you have previously set up an intention to
carry out some particular action when you
are dreaming, recalling this intention and
doing it out may create your lucidity.

The Dual Body Technique

If you focus on your body sensations
while falling asleep, it often happens
that you find your body seems immobile.
Overcoming this immobility in either of
two ways leads to what Tholey terms
the One Body and Dual Body techniques# for
retaining lucidity as you go into the
dream world.

To overcome immobility in the Dual Body
Technique, you visualize a second, non-
physical body detaching itself from your
physical body and moving away. You, your
consciousness, go with the second body,
and you can now move into a dream scene
with lucidity. The movement of the second
body out of the physical can be one of
floating out, falling through, twisting,
etc. You vividly imagine that this is
happening so that the imagination (which
is far more potent in the dream state)
makes it real.

Some readers will recognize that Tho-
ley's Dual Body Technique for inducing
lucid dreaming sounds exactly like some
occult techniques for "astral projection." Tholey
recognizes this, but strongly
points out in his article that the idea of
an "astral body" is unscientific and he is
not espousing it! Since Tholey is writing
for a scientific audience, trying to get
them to consider an idea already "far out"
by conventional psychological norms, lucid
dreaming, it is good strategy for him to
disavow the idea that there is any reality
to astral projection. As he puts it, "In
our opinion the experience of a second
body is an unnecessary assumption based on
a naive epistemology." I believe there is
some definite reality to it though (see my
"Out-of-the-body experiences" chapter in
Mitchell and Whites' book, chapter 9 in my
Psí: Scientific Studies of the Psychic
Realm, or Robert Monroe's Journeys Out of
the Body). For now we will simply accept
the Dual Body Technique as a way of induc-
ing lucid dreaming.

The One Body Technique

Tholey considers the One Body Technique
to be simpler than the Dual Body one.
When you experience your physical body as
immobile, then vividly imagine that you
(still embodied in your physical body) are
someplace else than in your bed. This can
put you in a dream scene with a mobile
body again. As long as you think of your-
self in bed, the obvious immobility of
your body is a problem.

A variation when you sense your physi-
cal body as immobile is visualize your
physical body dissolving into an "airy"
form, and then resolidifying it into a
moveable, more solid form.

It is not necessary to experience the
state of immobility, and experienced lucid
dreamers can apply the above techniques
just before the stage of immobility is
reached.

I suspect that the immobility is the
experience of an actual neurological
change occurring, namely the active parali-
ysis of our muscles that normally occurs
whenever we start dreaming. If you dream
of running, for example, impulses go to
the muscles of your legs to make you run,
just as in waking. Suppose you actually
ran while asleep? The world would be a
dangerous place at night! So an active
paralysis system keeps our muscles from
responding. Ordinarily this paralysis
system does not turn on until we start
dreaming, and turns off the instant we
stop dreaming, so we don't notice it.
Occasionally we wake up from a dream be-
fore the paralysis mechanism has turned
off and experience it. This can be
frightening and lead to much struggling
(which increases your fear), but it is not
harmful (except for narcoleptics, who
suffer from "falling sickness," an un-
desired eruption of stage 1 dreaming sleep
during ordinary waking activities.

The Image-Body Technique

Here you concentrate equally on your
own body and on the visual imagery you
experience as you fall asleep. Passively
hold the thought (suggest to yourself)
that your body is moving about in the
imaged scenes as you experience them, as
well as holding the awareness that you are
dreaming. You can then glide or otherwise
move into dream scenes with lucidity.
The Ego-Point Technique

Why bother having a body in a dream? Yes, we are in the habit of experiencing ourselves as embodied in both waking and dreaming, but do we need to continue this in dreaming? Tholey reports that we don't.

In the Ego-Point Technique, you imagine, as you retain consciousness while falling asleep, that you are only a point of consciousness, a point of perception and thought. Passively hold the thought that the physical body will soon fade from perception: you may find yourself a point of consciousness, floating in your bedroom.

The Image-Ego-Point Technique

If you combine the above technique with focusing on the imagery that occurs as you fall asleep, you can then travel into a developed dream scene. Tholey does not indicate whether active willing to travel is detrimental here, as it was in the Image Technique, so you should experiment to what is most effective for you.

An unusual application of this technique that Tholey reports is to move your ego point of consciousness into the body of some dream figure and take it over! Now you have a body in the dream world. I think this would be a most unusual experience, and a good one for the philosophically minded to puzzle over!

All of these techniques are generalizations from Tholey's extensive work. You may have to vary them somewhat to make them effective for you. Some techniques may work better than others for you. Try what appeals to you and see what happens. Keep good notes so you can refine your techniques.

In the next issue we will review techniques Tholey presents for controlling the content of lucid dreams. If you are having good luck inducing lucidity and can't wait until November, you can find Tholey's article in the references and look for it at any major library.

References


Suggestions for Further Reading:

See the article on Dream Network Publicatons in the next issue.

Letters to the Editor

Subscribers may submit questions about mind, being, psychological and spiritual growth, and related areas to the Editor. A selection of letters and responses of general interest to subscribers will be published as space permits, although individual mail responses will not be possible. The Editor reserves the right to edit and shorten letters when space considerations require it.

Letters should be addressed to The Open Mind, PO Box 371, El Cerrito, CA 94530. Put “Letters” in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope.

NOTE ON PRINTING STYLE

Readers may note that while the first issue of The Open Mind was typeset, this and future issues are printed directly from the edited output of a Daisywriter letter quality printer. This removes a major time burden in typesetting and copy proofing, allowing increased focus on the quality of the content.
WHO HAS THE TRUTH?
SELECTING A SPIRITUAL PATH

The following letter was prompted by the mention in the prospectus for The Open Mind that I was writing a book on the teachings of Gurdjieff.

"Why continue to focus on Gurdjieff when it is clear that most of his system derives from Sufism? Why not, instead, go to the source?"

-D.J., Buffalo, NY

When people become concerned with searching for psychological and spiritual truths beyond the ordinary, it is natural to assume there are paths to knowledge or teachers and exemplars of such knowledge that may have the answers to many of our questions. We presume we can get useful assistance from those who've taken the path before us.

As we begin searching, we find that there are multitudes of teachers and paths around, yet many of them seem to contradict one another. Who has the truth? Do they all have all the truth we need to know? Do some paths have some of the truth, but lack important parts of it? Do some teachers have dangerous errors mixed in with what they know of truth? What is the minimally acceptable ratio of truth to error that makes a path or teacher worth following? Which path is best?

In ordinary life we can often get fairly reliable answers to similar, ordinary questions. If I need the services of an electrician, e.g., I can hire any electrician who is state licensed and be reasonably sure that he or she possesses a certain minimal level of competence, probably enough to handle my job. If I want to learn computer programming, I can take a course at a state university and be reasonably certain that whoever the university hires to teach the course knows what they're talking about. I may not get the best, but I'll get basic competence. If I want to buy a new washer, I can read Consumer Reports and get an objective appraisal of the faults and virtues of various models, balance these against my needs, and make an intelligent decision as to which model to purchase.

If only it were like this in the "spiritual marketplace!" Where is the "Spiritual Consumer Reports" that, after objective testing, might make statements like:

"For seekers of extroverted temperament and personality traits A, B, Q, and T, Zen meditation produces rapid progress toward enlightenment. It is definitely Not Acceptable if you have traits C or R, however. Seekers with trait C should investigate the new Gestalt Sufism. Unfortunately no satisfactory spiritual path has yet been discovered for those with trait R, who are better off in this lifetime in artistic vocations."

Selecting the best from among the many is a real problem, even if you're only reading about spiritual matters. It is even more important when you are ready for serious practice. We have conflicting claims, many paths implicitly or explicitly consider others inferior, and there is no objective authority to turn to for guidance. What can an intelligent person do?

First, we must realize that selecting a spiritual path is not just a matter of verbal, intellectual intelligence, it is also a matter of our feelings and our instincts. In our culture our intellectual intelligence has been highly developed, but our instincts and our feelings have been grossly neglected and often suppressed and distorted in their functioning. This distorted functioning of our instincts and feelings in turn can distort our intellectual functioning, so that much "rationality" is actually rationalization. Part of our approach to choosing spiritual paths, then, should be based on a continual effort to understand and mature our emotional and instinctual nature. For example, one of the reasons I was attracted to several spiritual paths in my past was that I had an immature need to feel superior to other people, in order to mask feeling of inferiority in myself. That was my problem, not one of those various paths, yet there are teachers and systems around that have probably lost touch with their original spiritual impetus and now cater to those sorts of immature emotions. Continual increase in our self knowledge is essential.

Second, intelligence requires us to recognize our current limitations and
practice humility. While I would like to believe that I can assess the real quality of various spiritual paths and teachers, I know that's too grandiose to be true. I, and you, can certainly recognize, at one extreme, some of the charlatans, and we can sometimes recognize (intellectually and/or emotionally and/or instinctually) higher ideas and actions. So we can do our best to choose, but sometimes we will be wrong. If we learn from our mistakes, we have little objective cause for regret.

I am a scientist and a pragmatist, as well as someone interested in spiritual growth. When I encounter a spiritual system or teacher, I try to "listen" and evaluate with my mind, my heart, and my instincts, drawing on what I think I know, and remembering that I've made mistakes before and will probably make more in the future. If I decide I can learn from a system or teacher, or do something useful for myself or others by getting involved, I get involved.

G. I. Gurdjieff was one of the first people who made a systematic attempt to translate knowledge and wisdom he acquired from Eastern and Near Eastern teachers into a form that would be suitable for Westerners of his time. He realized that what may be an efficient formulation of psychological and spiritual knowledge for one culture may not work properly in another, so he experimented with forms of teaching that would effectively transmit his knowledge.

I am familiar with a variety of claims about what path is superior. These include the Sufi claim (via Idries Shah) that Gurdjieff's ideas were useful but now outdated, the feeling among some followers of Gurdjieff that Shah's Sufi stories are useful but limited, and Oscar Ichazo's claim that his Arica training comes from the secret school that is behind both Gurdjieff and Sufism, and supersedes both of them. I have immense respect for the teachings of Gurdjieff, Shah, and Ichazo; all of these systems have been of great value to me and friends of mine. Since I don't know the address of the "spiritual licensing bureau," though, I can't check on who really has legitimate credentials and who doesn't. Nor have I been able to locate the issue of "Spiritual Consumer Reports" that gives the "objective" evaluation of these systems, or rates one or more as a Best Buy! As a limited being, I can only conclude that all (and many other systems) have something to give to at least some people, and I hope that the right people will get involved with the right path for them.

I think one of the things a more enlightened science could do for spiritual paths would be to develop something like a "Spiritual Consumer Reports." That is a huge project for several generations of researchers, but it would be possible to assess the characteristics of many people, let them become involved with various spiritual paths, and then see what kinds of outcomes occurred for what kinds of people. It is only a part of the answer, but it would help.

To return to the question: "Why Gurdjieff?" Because he was a genius at putting Eastern spiritual ideas and practices into useful forms. His influence on Western culture, although largely behind the scenes, has been great, helping to open the way for current spiritual interests. His basic formulations of psychological and spiritual ideas are still some of the best around today, and cover important areas often untouched in other traditions.

My goal in writing a book centered around Gurdjieff's psychological and spiritual teachings is to make them more accessible. To do this I will update some of his terminology and integrate his ideas and practices with findings from modern psychology and, when appropriate, with what I understand of other spiritual paths. I shall not be reproducing Gurdjieff's ideas wholesale, but selectively, on the basis of what I think I understand well enough to usefully communicate. Insofar as this contributes to our understanding of ourselves and our possibilities, I will be satisfied.

NEW ADDRESS?

If you will be moving to a different mailing address before the next issue of The Open Mind is mailed (in about two months), please send us your new address as soon as possible to minimize delay. Since we mail third class, the post office will not forward your next issue. Mail it to PPI, PO Box 371, El Cerrito, CA 94530.
SCHEDULED LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS
BY CHARLES T. TART

Nov. 4-6, 1983: Weekend workshop on a scientific overview of psychic phenomena, Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California. Contact Esalen Institute, Big Sur, CA 93920 (408 667-2335) for details on fees ($230) and registration.


Jan. 27-29, 1984: Weekend seminar, Science and the Psychospiritual: Knowing Who We Really Are. Mount Madonna Center, PO Box 51, Watsonville, CA 95077 (408 847-0406), $115 tuition.


Mar. 31, 1984: One-day seminar, "The Psychic and the Scientific: What do we Know?" University Extension, University of California, Davis, California. $40 fee.

May 5-6, 1984: Weekend seminar, "The Psychic and the Scientific: What do We Know?" University Extension, University of California Santa Cruz, to be held in the Palo Alto area.