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LAL
OBSERVATIONS
ON A FIRST TRIP TO INDIA

In a recent issue of The Open Mind (Fall 1986) we discussed the Eastern idea that we live in an illusory world. More precisely, it is not that the world around us is necessarily unreal, but rather that our ordinary state of consensus consciousness functions so poorly: we live in a psychological state characterized by distorted perceptions and by both individual and shared illusions. Some of these distortions and illusions are matters of cultural conditioning and habit (consensus); some have strong emotional components and thus involve psychological defense mechanisms of the sort discussed in detail in the Fall 1985 issue of The Open Mind.

The idea that illusions can dominate significant parts of your consciousness is intellectually interesting, but of little practical value unless you have direct experience of it. Thus self-observation practices (such as those discussed in my Waking Up) are an important part of the growth process, setting the stage for deep change.

In this article I will concretely discuss the process of self-observation by sharing my own self-observations made as a result of my first trip to India. They illustrate the process and the defenses against self-observation, as well as being of some interest in their inherent content. They are not flattering to me, but sincere self-observation must always be a matter of putting the desire for truth about what is going on ahead of the desire to be happy or maintain one's self-image.

At the end of February of this year I flew to Madras, India, to attend the first international conference on Energy Medicine. We had two days before the conference to explore the city of Madras and surrounding areas. The conference was sponsored by the Madras Institute of Magnetobiology and the Fetzer Foundation of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Some very stimulating papers on the effects of magnetic fields on health and disease were given. The particulars of the conference need not concern us here.

Note that this was my first trip to a Third World country, so, in terms G. I. Gurdjieff would have used, my "diet of impressions" was richer and considerably different than my normal fare, with the resultant "indigestion" producing considerable opportunity for self-observation. Second, the fatigue produced by prolonged plane travel (San Francisco at midnight to Honolulu to Hong Kong to Singapore to Madras) and the approximately 12 hour shift in circadian rhythms produced a confusion of my psychological habits that allowed more new material to come to consciousness.

I will indent my notes taken in India from my later comments on them.

The primary problem I have to deal with in India is the enormous degree of human misery so clearly visible whenever I leave the sanctuary of the hotel. Our conference hotel was the Connamara, one of the finest hotels in India. Here wealth buffers us from contact with the realities that exist for the vast majority of the population.

My basic problem is how to maintain any degree of psychological openness when even partial openness entails the perception of so much suffering. When I perceive this suffering I have feelings of pain, of compassion, of frustration, and I alternate between depression and anger. The perception of suffering in others leads, at the deepest level, to unhappiness and suffering within me. At some deep level I believe (or at least I suspect and hope) that we are all one. Thus when I see others suffer, I suffer.
I believe that the perception of constant pain would be intolerable for me, or for anyone who wasn't a saint. Indeed, even brief perceptions of this kind of pain are (I believe) intolerable for me, so I must have defense mechanisms to tune it out. The pain is especially bad because of the enormous frustration that goes with it: there seems to be nothing that I or anyone can do to make any significant improvement.

Nobody likes pain, of course, whether it is physical or emotional pain, especially me. Intellectually I can accept the function of pain as a warning that something needs correction. But it is another story altogether when there is nothing you can do about pain.

When Automatic Defenses Don't Work

If I were to stay here for a long time I know I would adapt. I would at least be as kind as possible to everyone under the circumstances. But little acts of kindness are just a drop in the bucket in this India of such suffering, their futility in solving the real problems is so obvious. Therefore my automatic defense mechanisms try to make me oblivious to what goes on around me. After all, there is suffering in my own everyday world that I have learned to be oblivious to.

Yet the enormity of the suffering is so great that my automatic defenses cannot easily handle it. My emotional responses threaten to overwhelm me. So I observe that I frequently have a reaction of getting angry at the poor people around me! It makes me really mad that people around me are poor and suffering!

Logically, the idea of becoming angry at people who are suffering seems absurdly inappropriate. Yet it is "sensible" in terms of the way psychological defenses work. Depression is more negative than anger. Anger has components of power, of being alive, of potency. By becoming angry you can avoid the more negative feeling of depression, get "high" by comparison, even though the anger itself is a pathological reaction to this particular situation.

Thought Driven by Defenses

My intellectual mind becomes driven by these feelings of depression and anger, and launches into thoughts that are totally isolated from emotional reality. I think, e.g., that an enormous plague which would cut the impoverished population by a factor of ten or so might be a blessing. In reaction, part of me is absolutely horrified that my mind can even think such things, much less take them seriously! Another part of me congratulates me on my "realism", my "superiority", in being able to see what is practically needed even if it is horrible. I suppose this kind of disassociated intellectual thinking is the sort of thing that creates real monsters in life, even while it seems "necessary" in some sense.

Gurdjieff taught that we are three-brained beings, i.e. we have intellectual, emotional, and body/instinctive evaluation processes that are of equal importance. In a genuinely normal person each of these processes would be educated to function at its full potential, using the kind of "logic" appropriate to itself. A center of consciousness transcending each of these three processes would then consider the evaluation of each and reach a balanced decision. Sometimes this would favor the logic of one brain over the others, but it would always take account of all three, thus giving us a fuller and less distorted view of reality.

In what passes for "normal," consensus consciousness, a person usually has only one brain well developed, with the other two being undeveloped and often neurotic. This results not only in unbalanced perception and understanding, but often further pathology in that one brain inefficiently takes over the natural work of another. Intellectual consideration might be applied to a basically emotional problem, for example, but intellect can never fully comprehend the subtleties of an emotional problem.

I have always been unbalanced in being too intellectual, in spite of much personal growth work toward developing my emotional and body/instinctive sides. Here I at least recognized that my dominant intellectual functioning was presenting me with a distorted view of what was going on, and it was doing so in order to defend me against emotional feelings I thought were intolerable. This kind of recognition of distortion can be used to inhibit inappropriate action, even if it can't be
immediately changed to more appropriate three-brained functioning.

The Children

One of the most striking examples of this kind of psychological defensiveness occurred when our tour bus visited a temple site yesterday. In the bus I felt relieved; I was "in the world of India but not of it". I was passing through India but was not touched as directly by it as when I had been walking about in Madras. The sensation of moving through something is a marvelous isolator!

We got off the bus at some Hindu temples that had been carved out of the living rock at the ocean's edge. This was a very rich, beautiful diet of sensory impressions, but it became more and more difficult to maintain these desirable (by my ego's standards) impressions. We were surrounded by beggars, both children and adults, and by more and more children attempting to sell us things: postcards, statues, incense, food, anything and everything.

These children are beautiful! They are bright eyed, smiling, vital, very attractive. At the same time they are constantly forcing themselves on you, and it becomes more and more difficult not to succumb to them. I wanted to resist them, as there is such a feeling of manipulation from them. There is a feeling that if you buy something from one of them you will never be free of them. I speak not only here of my feelings, but of those widely shared by many of my fellow American conferees who were on this bus trip.

At first I found myself politely saying, "No, thank you." As I had to say this more and more often I became more curt, feeling that I was under attack when it was obvious I did not wish to interact. I went to the temple to look at the temples and sculptures, not to fend off a crowd of pushy salesmen! Eventually the "Thank you" disappeared from my speech and it was a stern and harsher, "No!" Within fifteen minutes after our arrival, I found myself regarding these children as vermin. I felt under attack by them. My mind produced fantasies of pushing them away, a fantasy greatly strengthened as I felt contaminated when one of them brushed against me. Yet I would have to touch the children to push them away, a most unpleasant prospect.

I was horrified by my fantasies and emotions, but powerless to stop them. Even though we had half an hour available, at the end of fifteen minutes I got back on the bus, as did several people in our party. Even on the bus they pursued us, trying to beg or sell us things through the open windows. We were glad when the bus began moving again and we escaped!

A Psychological Function of the Caste System

From a psychological point of view I understand an important reason why a caste system could develop and sustain itself in India. You would have an approved, ritualized, efficient, and psychologically automatic system to isolate yourself from a large proportion of the impoverished masses that were always around. I am, of course, in my fantasy, a high caste person myself!

I can see the "usefulness" of a caste system as a psychological defense mechanism on one level, while seeing the horror of it on another level.

When I can, even if just for minutes, think of needy children as vermin, I know more of the depths to which we can sink than I ever wanted to know. I have always thought of myself as a firm believer in democracy, yet I found attractiveness in a caste system. Many, many times in the course of my psychological work in the past I have had to recognize negative aspects of my own mind. Each time I have done this I hoped that I was somehow finished, that I had plumbed the bottom. I suspect it is a dangerous delusion to ever think you are finished. While I hope I never act on these negative impulses, I cannot deny their existence.

I note with interest the way my notes talk about the depths to which "we" can sink, even though I am speaking about my mind. This sort of automatic, intellectual depersonalization somehow seems to spread the responsibility, make it less mine. It doesn't in reality, of course.
The Illusion of Separation

Lately I have been quite interested in a teaching that is common in the world's great spiritual traditions, the teaching that there is one basic illusion that we all suffer from, and that this is the root of all other illusions. This is the illusion of separation, the belief that we are each an isolated, individual entity, an entity with clear boundaries that demarcate our limited and finite selves from the rest of the universe. The Course in Miracles talks about this as a forgetting that we are all sons of God. Buddhism, while generally not speculating on origins, has a tradition of an initial moment of forgetfulness from which all our troubles arose. Our Judeo-Christian tradition has the story of the Fall from grace in the Garden of Eden.

If it is true that we have forgotten or repressed our true Self, a Self unified with the rest of the universe and others, psychological problems can obviously follow. When you identify with a limited, separate self it becomes natural to be needy. The process of identification gives special importance to that fraction of our totality identified with as self, best expressed psychologically as "I!" How will "I!" get enough of this or enough of that? How can "I!" protect what "I!" have? "I!" am naturally in competition with other people for finite resources.

If we think about the conditions most of mankind lived under for most of human history, it is clear that in the West most of us, even many of the "poor," live like kings. It is easy while in the West to imagine that, with the proper political and economic distribution system, there would be enough for all to live well. But how is one to imagine this utopian idea while perceiving the reality of India? There is obviously not enough for all.

Intellectually I have known this for a long time. Seeing this actual hopeless poverty, feeling from this direct perception, makes it so much more real! The great spiritual systems teach us to try to transcend the illusion of separation. But if I try to transcend it, even to the limited extent of realizing that these poor masses around me are thinking, feeling, hoping people, just like me, then I (my ordinary self) believe I take a chance of tuning in to their misery, their frustration and their despair. Thus my motivation to transcend the illusion of separation is cut off.

As a life-long victim of the illusion of separation, I have tried to adapt to it by being as self-sufficient as possible. Seeing the misery of others is a reminder of my vulnerability, so I don't want to see.

Busyness as a Defense

Not wanting to see others' misery, not wanting to be aware of my own vulnerability, results in psychological defenses of various sorts. One of these is simply keeping busy. By being involved in my own goals, my own concerns, my personal worries, by keeping my mind busy with my future plans and daydreams about the future, I have less attention and
energy available to notice the present and the others in it who might disturb me. Thus I walk faster, I try to look purposeful as, from the corner of my eye, I see a beggar or a salesperson approaching.

To make this busyness defense even more effective, I identify with and get lost in my fantasies about goals and being in a hurry to get somewhere. This further distracts me from the present reality and reinforces my behavior: if I really believe I have a goal it's perfectly sensible to hurry toward it. The sensory feedback from my body that I'm hurrying further reinforces my illusion that I must be going somewhere!

In the culture that I am used to, this "I am in a purposeful hurry" behavior is sufficient to deter most people from approaching. This defense can work so automatically we don't notice it. What bothers me here in India is that the poor Indians' needs are so great that they won't respond to my behavioral cues about busyness. I can't rest secure in my illusions, for they force me to notice them. Then I fall back to another level of defense, separating them even further from myself by becoming angry. They are intruding on me and my purposes, the children become "vermin". It is a horrible process.

As I edit the above note I also observe that a part of me is still angry at Indians for pushing on me this way. This anger encourages me to think that it's not their needs so much as their general obnoxious, pushy character! That idea is to be watched carefully: maybe Indians as a whole are more manipulative of others, but maybe it's just my anger speaking. Certainly my cultural conditioning is showing!

India, a culture which has contributed so much to our understanding of the mind, yet it sounds as if Jung couldn't take it. I get a perverse kind of pleasure to think that a psychologist like Jung had a reaction similar to mine. I think this pleasure is another defense of mine against openness to the suffering around me.

Indeed, the writing of this article, the intellectualization and "psychologizing" of my reactions, could become another kind of psychological defense against my feelings, a way of distancing myself from them. Were it not for the fact that I think this article can be psychologically helpful to others, I would not write it.

The (Apparent) Safety of the Familiar

This kind of psychological distancing defense has come out in other ways. This morning, e.g., I found myself fantasizing that someone here would start talking about a word processing program like Wordstar, but not fully understand it. Then they could seek my advice and I could show them some useful technical tricks. This fantasy came from the defensive desire to anchor my mind in the familiar, better yet a part of the familiar world I have some mastery over, as a way of escaping from unpleasant realities.

The safety of the familiar is an illusion, of course. Reality is what it is, whether it's familiar or not. Trying to stay in the present whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, familiar or strange, what you want or not what you want, is an essential part of adaptive growth.

Identifying with the Archetypal Tourist

Our conversation at dinner Thursday night was another form of escape. Several of us who had been on the tour to the temple together were trying to cope with our negative feelings towards India. Even though intellectually I didn't want it to happen, I got emotionally and then intellectually caught up in conversations deriding the lack of progress here. I became an archetypal Tourist, huddling together with other Tourists talking about the Homeland and how much better it was than here. Another way of dulling sensitivity. "We are the special people, the real people, not like those around us who we fear to be open to," I understand.

Jung and India

While talking at dinner with Dennis Stillings (representing the Archæus Foundation) about Carl Jung, the great psychologist, he told me an interesting story. Jung visited India and he did not like it. After his initial exposure to India he got back on his ship and when it stopped in other Indian ports, he didn't bother to go ashore.

Jung was a man who had a tremendous intellectual interest in and understanding of the depths of the mind. He had a great interest in
more of what Gurdjieff meant by ordinary consciousness being a state of dreamy sleep.

Those who have read my Waking Up might think, from the length and detail with which I explained the idea of consensus consciousness being a state of waking dreaming, that I understand it fully. Yet self-observation is always showing me new things about the craziness of my ordinary life. I don't want to create the impression that self-observation is all negative, however. Much, much beauty that would otherwise be missed comes to light through self-observation and self-remembering.

The Spiritual as a Defense Mechanism

My main interest in coming to India was seeing a country that had developed such rich spiritual traditions. I still have (if not greater) respect for these traditions, but I am now also aware of how an interest in spirituality can be used as a defense mechanism against confronting the reality of suffering. It is tempting, e.g., to think that the poor people I see are not really impoverished because they have such a rich, inner spiritual life. There might be some truth in this, but I am quite suspicious of the idea because of its obvious psychological defensive function.

I am similarly suspicious now about ideas of reincarnation and karma. It might be true that we live many lives, that we are reborn after we die. If it is true the idea of karma, that we shall reap as we sow, makes sense. It certainly makes psychological sense in this life. If I push people around for my ends, it will be no surprise if they push me around when they get the chance. So the principle would probably apply across lives: the kind of psychological character that pushes people around and so causes predictable reactions would get its possessor into similar kinds of trouble in future lives, until he worked through the personality problems that cause the maladaptive behavior in the first place.

Yet ideas of reincarnation and karma can also be used as a psychological defense to cut myself off from others' suffering. "Yes, they are suffering, but it's their karma, they were wicked in a previous life, so naturally they are suffering. Indeed, it would be wrong for me to interfere with their suffering, then they couldn't work out their karma. Let me go about my business now." Rationalization. I'm special, I don't have to see or feel, let me alone in my illusion of separation.

And there is always the defense of time. A week has gone by now and I find myself forgetting the experience, watching time dull the emotional impact, watching my normal busy routine soothe the sting.

A dedication to self-observation, to knowing the truth regardless of what you would prefer to know or feel, must be a key to psychological and spiritual growth.

Suggestions for Further Reading:

For general information on the construction of perception, I recommend a good introductory psychology text, such as Hilgard, E., Atkinson, R. L., & Atkinson, R. C., Introduction to Psychology. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979.

For more specific information on defense mechanisms and emotional distortions of functioning, see any good abnormal psychology text.

For further detail on the way we live in illusions, I suggest my Waking Up: Overcoming the Obstacles to Human Potential. Boston: Shambhala/New Science Library, 1986, as well as The Open Mind articles mentioned in the text.

I am responsible for what I see.
I choose the feelings I experience,
and I decide upon the goal I would achieve.
And everything that seems to happen to me
I ask for and receive as I have asked.

From A Course in Miracles, by permission of the Foundation for Inner Peace, Tiburon, CA 94920.
THE SUN AND THE SHADOW:  
A NEW CLASSIC ON LUCID DREAMING


Many publishers send me galley proofs of books they are about to release in the hope that I will read them and say something about the book that they can use in promotion. This is one of the areas of regret in my life, because so many of these books look like they will be of great interest to me and I want to read the galleys: but I seldom have time. There is still a set of proofs on my desk of a forthcoming book by Robin Robertson, for example, that I know I will be fascinated by, yet I haven't been able to look at them at all. I miss too much.

Recently I received the proofs of The Sun and the Shadow, and regretfully thought once again, "This looks really fascinating, but I don't know when I can find time to read it in the next two months." I thought I should at least read a page or two at breakfast, though, before sending a letter of regret to the publisher. The first two pages led to more, and I ended up taking the galleys to work with me and reading them at every opportunity. This book will clearly be one of the classics of lucid dream literature - I'm glad I looked at it!

Kenneth Kelzer is a psychotherapist who decided to induce and explore lucid dreams as part of a personal and spiritual growth program in 1980. The book is an account of the dreams that followed and his struggle to integrate their insights into his everyday life. The lessons he learned will be helpful to all of us, even if we don't have lucid dreams.

Because Kelzer writes very clearly, I will mainly quote selected passages, not only to give you the flavor of the book but because they are useful to our growth even in isolation.

Commenting on one of his early and powerful lucid dreams, Kelzer notes that:

"There is a kind of magic in many lucid dreams. This one had the potential to become a nightmare, but in the moment that I became lucid I experienced total inner transformation. All my fear vanished in an instant, and inside of myself I felt full of courage. Complete clarity of vision, in this dream, yielded instant transformation. This became one of the important principles that I learned from this particular lucid dream. To see fully to have courage. To see fully is to have no fear. But, as is so evident when we examine our world, we human beings seldom see anything fully in our normal state of consciousness. More often than not, as the apostle Paul wrote: 'We see now through a glass, darkly, but then we shall see face to face.'"

Why do we have lucid dreams?

"One of the purposes of lucid dreaming, I am now convinced, is to give people the experience, however fleeting or temporary, of spiritual and psychological mastery. These tastes of mastery and moments of transformation spur us on to continue the inward journey."

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As a psychotherapist, Kelzer is very sensitive to underlying psychological dynamics in both lucid dreaming and ordinary life. Commenting on a lucid dream in which he met a primitive man riding on a huge beast like an African wildebeest, he notes that:

"Eventually, after some reflection, I realized that this lucid dream taught me a lot about fear. Fear is perhaps the most primitive human emotion of all, and we all have a great deal of it inside ourselves. We all need to learn how to confront the objects and sources of our fear in order to thrive and prosper in this world. I realized, too, that the dream was bearing a personal message, telling me that I still have a lot of powerful fears inside myself, which at times threaten to overwhelm my conscious mind. I did not associate the wildebeest to any particular fear, but more to fear in general. The dream reminded me of Franklin D. Roosevelt's statement, 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.' Now I am wondering if this lucid dream was suggesting that I might surrender one step further and give up the fear of fear. To be unafraid of fear itself implies a willingness to face all of my fears, whatever they are, regardless of what plateaus I may already have reached in my personal growth."

I personally find this quite interesting as there was a point in my own growth where I realized that the fear of being afraid was indeed a bigger fear of mine than any fear of anything in particular.

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Kelzer has to struggle with the shadow side of his nature in his quest, a side that seemed to strengthen as his sun side, his spiritual side grew. In such struggles it is all to easy to identify with the good and totally reject the bad, a strategy which is quite costly in terms of psychological growth.

"Spiritual work, when it is true and genuine, is expansive of awareness and not displaceive of awareness. It leads us to see and appreciate the whole of our humanity, and does not lead us to reflect upon our higher natures only. While we need to dwell upon our higher nature in order to grow in a positive direction, we must not do it by rejecting our dark and primitive side. A whole person, then, is someone who has walked with God and wrestled with the devil."

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Why do we have lucid dreams? Shouldn't they be analyzed like other dreams for hidden messages? As a psychotherapist Kelzer was expert and such analyses and knew their value, yet:

"I had no desire to analyze this lucid dream or do therapeutic work with it in any way. It had a sense of completion that is common to many lucid dreams, almost as if the dream were a work of art in itself. This sense of completeness and wholeness is one of the features that clearly distinguishes many lucid dreams from ordinary dreams. Most schools of psychotherapy generally follow or build upon Freud's basic idea that the dream expresses the content of the unconscious mind and usually presents the dreamer with some kind of problem to be solved. Many lucid dreams, however, are simply nonproblematic; they seem to emerge from a different category or realm of the mind. As such, they serve many important purposes other than assisting the dreamer toward the confrontation of personality problems, although such confrontations can certainly be one of their functions .... Speaking as a psychotherapist, I do not see any inherent contradictions between the works of Freud, Jung, Perls and other psychotherapists and the ramifications of lucid dreaming. I do believe, however, that one of the biggest challenges that psychotherapists may have in approaching the lucid dream will be to step aside from their traditional problem-oriented point of view in order to appreciate that the lucid dream is more likely to serve the dreamer on another level. A lucid dream is more likely to be instructional about the nature of consciousness per se than to reveal the dreamer's particular disturbances of consciousness. It is more likely to depict something about the general evolution of consciousness than reveal something about the individual dreamer's particular
'arrestment of development.' As its first function, the lucid dream is more likely to reveal the dreamer's inner joy and creativity, while addressing his or her emotional problems as a secondary function. In short, the lucid dream is more likely to be the bearer of good news than the bearer of bad news."

"Simply to appreciate and enjoy the lucid dream and to bask in its light, its vivid images and colors may well be the primary creative response that we can make to most lucid dreams. Not that lucid dreams do not offer us messages or insight. They often do, though these messages are often of a much higher or much more subtle nature than the meanings of ordinary dreams. The lucid dream is a subtle teacher. As my experiment progressed I began to grasp this concept in many ways."

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As a well-socialized male, Kelzer brought very masculine attitudes of control to his study of his lucid dreams, but the dreams had something to teach him about this.

"My own self-analysis was that for the present my approach to lucid dreaming still contained too much of my willing it to happen and not yet enough of my allowing it to happen. The 'masculine' attitudes of willpower, order, goal setting, intentionality and control are very strong in my personality and always have been since childhood. Correspondingly, the 'feminine' attitudes of trust, patience, relaxation about goals and allowing it all to happen have been my less-developed traits. These feminine mental qualities, I realized, would need to be increased within myself if the fullest psychic cross-fertilization was to take place."

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We all experience occasional (perhaps too occasional) "peak experiences," moments of joy and clarity when we transcend our ordinary false personality and experience the higher aspects of our Self. Some of Kelzer's lucid dreams were peak experiences. Because they are rare and fade, though, what good are they?

"These peak experiences, however, even if they are fleeting and fragile, are no small contribution to the spiritual evolution of the person who receives them. Without them life could easily become drab and dull. In reflecting on my experiment, I have come to see that the ultimate purpose of the peak experience is to provide us with a taste of ecstasy now, because a taste is better than nothing at all and because a taste is all that most of us can bear now. In addition, we need to understand that if we were to receive the full impact of ecstasy without adequate preparation, most of us would probably die, because we are simply not yet strong enough internally to bear the fullness of the Light."

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For those of us with no or few experiences of lucid dreaming, it is easy to think about them as a curiosity, a funny variation on ordinary dreaming, but yet:

"It seems mandatory to me now to rethink and expand upon our present paradigm for dream studies in which we customarily distinguish ordinary dreams from pre-lucid dreams and lucid dreams. I firmly believe that these three categories of distinction are incomplete and insufficient, since in this dream I experienced a lucidity that was so vastly different and beyond the range of anything I had previously encountered. At this point I prefer to apply the concept of the spectrum of consciousness to the lucid dream and assert that within the lucid state a person may have access to a spectrum or range of psychic energy that is so vast, so broad and so unique as to defy classification and to transcend what we ordinarily speak of as "consciousness" from the perspective of the waking state."

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I am particularly impressed with Kelzer's clear intent to deal with the whole of reality, not just the parts of it that we label "good." Pursuing the good is fine, but very tricky. We easily distort our perception in the pursuit of
security and pleasure and thus sow the seeds of useless suffering.

Following an especially powerful lucid dream that he titled "The Arrival of the Serpent Power," Kelzer noted that:

"The Arrival of the Serpent Power and the life context out of which it came has often led me to reflect upon one of Carl Jung's statements: 'I would much rather be a whole person than a good person.' His message was a criticism of the commonly misunderstood and truncated version of moral goodness that is so often held up for emulation in civilized society. Goodness has often been equated with qualities such as niceness, patience, kindness and tolerance, with the expectation that these qualities should be displayed at all times and in all circumstances. Such 'goodness' unfortunately often makes people into victims because it may unconsciously invite more aggressive individuals to abuse, attack or exploit. In this setting, I was relearning once again that a whole person is someone who feels his own anger and aggression on those appropriate occasions when someone else is exploiting him and can speak out or take effective action to prevent the attack from proceeding any further. In essence, it is not always appropriate nor spiritual to turn the other cheek. For me, Jung's basic idea is so vital because it implies that there is a dark side to love which actually turns out to be a positive human force in the long run. It throws out absolute behavioral guidelines for people to follow and encourages us to commit to the wholeness of the psyche as our overall guiding principle."

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There is a danger in any spiritual path, the danger of identifying with a specialness, of Me! as superior to the common hordes. Kelzer notes that:

"Ego inflation was the major two-edged sword that came out of my experiment with lucid dreaming. It was capable of cutting both ways: positively or negatively, creatively or destructively ... To inflate or not to inflate, that is not the question. How to respond to one's inflation, if it occurs, is the question. For as Rilke wrote to the young poet, we must give birth to our images, and we must give birth no matter what happens as a byproduct in our psychological development. To be human is to love, create and give birth in the real world and to wrestle courageously, if need be, with any negative byproducts that may emerge from one's choice to be fully alive."

I think you can see why I find this book excellent and fascinating. You can probably order it in advance of publication from the A.R.E. Press, Box 595, Virginia Beach, VA 23451.

SPIRITUAL EMERGENCE NETWORK

You may recall an article by Judy Tart in the Winter 1986 issue on the Spiritual Emergency Network. They have now changed their name to the Spiritual Emergence Network, reflecting a factual and fortunate shift in emphasis.

Originally the network's purpose was to deal with people having a crisis because of spiritual or psychic experiences happening to them. While this is still an important part of their functioning, a larger part is in networking people and providing information to facilitate a more general emergence of spiritual potentials. For many people, a little information to the effect that they are not alone, that there are some words that describe their experiences and books that can be read, is enough to help them on their spiritual journey.

SEN performs a unique and invaluable service. For more information, write or phone SEN at its headquarters at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology.

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In a Man's World: Father, Son, Brother, Friend and Other Roles Men Play, by Perry Garfinkel. New York: New American Library, 1985, $3.95 paperback, 208 pp., index. This is a very stimulating book about the emotional isolation of men in our culture and the forces that create and perpetuate this isolation. The author interviewed men about the nature of their relationships with other men. The shallowness of these relationships was depressing. In one interview a man's wife came in after an hour to express her disbelief that her husband had actually spent a whole hour talking about feelings: he had never spent five minutes on it in twenty years of marriage before! A very useful chapter contains questions to stimulate understanding of your own relationship with your father. Primarily aimed at men, but very useful for women also.

Sorcerers, by Jacob Needleman. San Francisco: Mercury House (300 Montgomery St., Suite 700, San Francisco CA 94104), cloth, $16.95. Sometimes we learn more about ourselves and our world from literature than from many "serious" works. This first novel by internationally known philosopher and author Jacob Needleman (author of The Heart of Philosophy, A Sense of the Cosmos, The New Religions, The Way of the Physician, etc.) is such a tale. A teenage boy on the threshold of maturity, Elliot Appleman, is already partly aware of the automated mechanicalness and flatness of ordinary life, so he seeks the "real magic" that makes life worthwhile, even as he learns the stage magic that resembles it. He finds the real magic, though, and must struggle against the temptations of power and the apparent happiness that comes from blinding yourself to your real feelings. A spellbinding tale - I couldn't put it down after the first few chapters - and an insightful one. Needleman is very talented at planting vital questions in your mind while simultaneously entertaining you in this novel.

The Secret House: 24 Hours in the Strange and Unexpected World in Which We Spend Our Nights and Days, by David Bodanis. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986, cloth, 224 pp., photos, no index, $19.95. Although there is not a word about consciousness in this book, I find it very effective in widening my view of reality, for it is a superb example of taking the ordinary, the habitual, and seeing it from an entirely different (and just as "true") perspective. I will give some excerpts for flavor, selected almost at random.

The first chapter of this book is Morning. "...It is, as usual, raining. Not water raindrops - that's only on stormy days. This is an electric rain uncovered first thing in the morning, a rain of charged air particles that started as simple decay products from radioactive gas nearby....The waker is now on his way to the bathroom. As he steps, the floor continues to shake, and the dust continues to dance from the invisibly rebounding furniture. But there's something else which moves under his feet, some things rather, roused out of their sleep as the waker strides over them...."

In the Later Afternoon chapter, "It's probably best the cook doesn't know. Into his masterpiece many things are falling. These include the usual items one can expect in a house, the perfume globules, hollow dust mite carcasses, stone asbestos fibers and other dust ingredients. A guest might be curious to find these in his first serving of the stew, and indeed a good peer with a microscope would show them all, but their presence is not very important. Perfume, mite mummies, asbestos, and the like do not grow......What will count are the living things.....the simplest to start with is the creature shaped like a tiny submarine, oblong and streamlined, with a shell not of metal but of a semi-rigid slime, and which has 15,000 or so wriggling hairs extending from its body....."

In Dinner Continues, we find that "......In every country where measurements have been made, death by falling is the leading cause of accidental home death. The only exceptions are Sri Lanka, where falling into home wells is more common, and Japan, where death by suffocation in the home just edges out falls......"

Bookstores don't seem to have gotten the idea that this book exists, in spite of much personal communication about it (many of my friends knew about it already), so you should ask them to order it for you.
LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

by Charles T. Tart


June 20-July 1, 1987: Workshop on Waking Up to Your Real Nature. Ten day Hawaii cruise, sponsored by the Institute of Noetic Sciences, 475 Gate Five Road, Sausalito, California 94965, 415-331-5650.

August 7, 1987: Faith, Doubt, Consensus Trance, and Waking Up, keynote address on truth and illusion on the spiritual path, beginning the annual weekend conference of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, Asilomar, California. Conference theme is Spirit in Action. Information from the Association, Box 3049, Stanford, CA 94305, 415-327-2066.


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