

1 - Introduction

“... *becoming aware is infinitely fertile.*”

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1842).

Where other books on lucid dreaming focus on the dreaming, this book focuses on becoming lucid in both the sleeping and waking state. Dreams can offer an easier path to lucidity because of the contrast between dreaming and lucidity: you think you're not lucid in normal dreams, so you understand what you're trying to accomplish. In truth, we don't know what lucid means, we don't really know the final goal. That doesn't matter as it still gives us a path to follow. The process of learning to lucid dream is a heuristic, like this book is a heuristic: it's a means to an end, a means for exploring consciousness.

State

Lucidity is a state of mind, and states of mind are poorly understood. Spend time with me now to consider the notion of state, and the feeling of being in a state. We'll use some ideas from science, though this is somewhat self-defeating. Science is objective, and states are not. You can only go so far when applying the wrong tool for the job. States of mind are the result of dynamic interaction between many systems; states emerge to float above the systems of which they're composed, like the “intelligence” of a computer, which cannot be found anywhere in its parts.

Think of the force that causes water to climb the walls of a spinning bucket. The force is not in the water, it's not in the bucket, and it's not in the action of turning itself. Examine each separately and you'll never understand why the water rises out of the spinning bucket, which only happens when all the elements are combined and set in motion. To explain this, we use terms like inertia and momentum, but we don't know where they come from. So it is with states of mind: they do not reside in the parts, the forces, or the mixtures of them, but rather in them all combined and interacting.

We want to appreciate the range and depth of states. You are not a spinning bucket of water, nor are you a complicated biological machine, because neither concept contains the emergent qualities we're looking for. Consider the biological model so often taken for granted.

It is said your brain is the domicile of your mind, so as to imply your state of mind lies within it. Your brain is made of nerves of special types and properties, sustained by known chemical and metabolic processes: nutrition, synaptic communication, membranes, chemical production, and cellular growth. Our description of these processes are based on opposites, as boundaries are the basis of measurement: sizes, concentrations, thresholds, and components. From this derives the notion of the brain as a computer, and the mind as software.

But the brain's behavior is only weakly described in these terms. For the most part, the brain's activity is collective, and what the ensemble displays is suspiciously unseen in the behavior of its parts. Yes, nerves charge, and synapses fire, but most nerves, most of the time, in the aware, awake, and active brain, are measurably silent. Yes, it is true that low level, collective, electrical

excitation ruffles through the brain, like the wind through the trees, but we cannot pinpoint where this “wind” is coming from.

If you go inside of a brain cell and listen to what’s coming and going through its cytoplasm, then you’ll hear all sorts of “things” that are not evident, or audible outside each cell, or between them. None of this is digital, only a small portion of it involves chemical reactions, as most of it involves the electrical transport of chemicals, the rotation of molecules, and the rearrangement of parts... like water climbing up the side of a bucket.

It has become possible to see smaller structures, and sub-microscopic processes. Within each cell exist other cell-like things. Components that have their own membrane, metabolism, autonomy, and control. It seems that each cell — and not just nerve cells but all cells — have microtubule structures within which are smaller structures that change state, store information, and control the processes of the cell.

The amount of information stored in the microtubules of each cell approximates the amount of information that the brain was expected to store through the interaction of cells within it. Now it seems the “ghost” of the mind within the brain, has an equally large number of ghosts of potentially equally large minds within them.

A number of these structures, genes in particular but not exclusively, do not die with the cell, or even with the organism. Rather, they are passed roughly intact from parent cell to child cell and from human parents to their children. If elements of mind exist in these structures — and it’s clear that some attitudes and behaviors are inherited — then not only can’t we locate the mind in space, but we can’t locate it in time, either. That is to say, the organism may die, but some parts of what we consider “mind” do not.

Finding where the mind resides is an aspect of what’s called “the hard problem.” It’s fair to argue that we know next to nothing about it. I believe some of the predictions we hear about finally understanding the mind — such as the idea of “the singularity,” whereupon the brain will finally and faithfully be recreated in silicon — are the last, dying gasps of the naïve idea that we’ll be able to understand our minds by breaking them down into their smallest component pieces.

I mention this only to enlarge your notion of state. Just as we do not know where the mind is, we do not know where the state is. There are some things we’re aware of, and some things we can measure, and there are some things which you will become aware of, and by that way understand better. Which brings us to the issue of perception.

Perception

To say that our state of mind is what we perceive it to be, may seem to be stating the obvious, but it’s not obvious, and it’s not true. The problem lies in the words “perceive” and “to be,” and the problem is that you can’t have one without the other. They are two aspects of the same thing, so one can’t define the other. It is a tautology, like saying “I am me;” a tautology explains nothing.

If the Cartesian mindset says, “I think therefore I am,” then what about our feelings and perceptions? And if your state of mind changes, where has the “thinking” gone that previously defined you? These are old arguments that track mud into the house. Let’s return to the spinning bucket.

The water is at rest in the unmoving bucket, so we call that “the resting state.” It takes effort to get the bucket spinning, and once spinning it will keep spinning, and we call that “the excited state.” These states look and behave differently, and you can do different things with them. You can form a bucket brigade with buckets at rest and thereby move water. You can contrive machines with spinning buckets that will send the spinning energy elsewhere. From different states, different relationships emerge.

When you’re depressed you see, sense, and act one way; when angry another. Focus on American Politics over coffee, but not during orgasm. And within these various states of mind different world views take form, and different understandings emerge. Depending on what state you have been in, you will be in a different state when you return to “normal.”

Once set spinning you will stay spinning, like the bucket; because we’re talking about mind, the “spinning” takes place in your imagination. Our state of mind is not what we perceive, rather, it is the sum total of what we have, are now, and will perceive. Which is to say, your state is determines the thoughts and feelings you remember, experience, and imagine. And from that state, new states emerge that were otherwise inaccessible.

Moving from despair to elation requires something in between. The states of mind you aspire to, require other states as steps to getting there. As you change your state, you engage the feedback between being and perceiving. In this, you take an active role in what you perceive. You do this even in what we call “the waking world.”

Changes in state of mind are rarely the result of changes in what you perceive, as what you perceive is generated from the state. That is to say, normal events do not change your state of mind. Give money to a homeless person and they become a homeless person with money. An angry person remains angry, a happy person happy, depending on the stability of their state. If you strive to make a lot of money because you need more money, then even when you succeed you *still* need more money. Tunnel vision affects where you look and determines what you see.

Changes of state are usually changed by feelings in the normal course of events. Feeling so much define our state that I assert we feel, therefore we are. When feeling secure nothing shakes you; when feeling scared everything shakes you. Your feelings more determine what you perceive, than the other way around. Perception is not a passive act, even when you think it is, which is most of the time. Thinking doesn’t have much to do with being.

Awareness

This brings us to awareness. How aware are you of the world around you? How aware are you of your perception? Awareness is the responsibility you take for your perception.

If you do not take responsibility for what you perceive in the waking world, then you will not do so in the non-waking world. This is why both worlds seem so real. We typically take both of them as absolutes, in and of themselves, from the start. In short, we exert little awareness in either. The first lesson of lucid dreaming, perhaps ironically, is that you're not controlling your reality anywhere!

And so, we return to state. You control your state by being aware, which means examining and actively engaging in your perception. It is not, as you might think, a process of lifting yourself up by your bootstraps. It is simply and carefully examining your bootstraps, and whatever is attached to them. It involves looking into, and looking out of alternatives.

You have the potential to become more aware and involved in your perceptions. It is normal to think of perception and reception as identical, as befits the assumption that you perceive what is there. This is untrue at four levels to start with.

First, recognize perceptions are composed of engagement, reception, processing, and interpretation. Engagement is orienting; being aware of your situation. Reception is receiving sensation; being aware of your focus. Processing is recognizing that you're recognizing; being aware of how you're filtering information. Interpretation is a conscious, unconscious, or subconscious process that leads to taking action. The four components of perception occur in sequence and in themselves, form one of the legs on which lucidity stands.

Throughout this book we distinguish unconscious actions of habit from subconscious actions of judgement. You do unconsciously what you once were, and are still programmed to do. You're acting out of reflex. You act subconsciously when you base your actions on intuition, emotion, or instinct. Some analysis may occur, but this analysis is just a glue connecting feelings with action.

Second, and simultaneously, we receive sensation. Not all of our senses are developed, oriented, engaged, or their results recognized. Their list consists of the physical and subtle senses.

The physical senses are the familiar five: taste, smell, touch, sight, and hearing, plus the less familiar four: proprioception (sense of movement), balance (orientation in space), temperature, and pain. To this we may add seven subtle senses: telepathic, clairsentient (visual, auditory, sensory), mystic, contemplative, intuitive, psychic, and energetic.

You may say the subtle senses are not real, or that you don't have them, but you don't know. If they exist, you have them. You may object, and say you only signed up to wake up in your dreams. That's a limitation, get over it! We're here to make real what is now potential. Through the practices in this book, you will become more aware of your senses.

Who You Are

Fear and need keep us limited to what we have. Fear and need also motivate us to reach for what we don't. And when that happens, fear turns into a kind of lust, and the burning sense of need becomes sweet with opportunity.

This is a change you can make, and it will happen more often, and more quickly, if you see your fear as tempter or temptress. See your need as a need to grow into your power. Turn and focus on the scent of power. Do not take who you are for granted.

Hypnotic Session

Remember Dreams

In this exercise, deeply immerse yourself in the image of what you're doing. You need to see yourself as if you were looking at yourself, and feel as if you were remembering, and sense – as much as you can – in your body and in your mind, that you are present in the experience that you are re-creating. So that when you finish this, and you think back on it, you can't remember if you were imagining that you were thinking these things, or if you were thinking them and you're remembering it. This is the essential aspect of hypnosis, in this case self-hypnosis: you must really put yourself in the place you want to go.

This session starts like all sessions, with relaxation, because relaxation means release, and what you want to release is your sense of difference, presence, separateness, and ultimately time. Begin by relaxing in your position, be it a chair, a bed, a couch – it can really be anywhere. It pays to be able to release even the tension that holds you up, but you don't have to. As long as you're comfortable, you can sit erect and still.

Put your hands on your lap, on the table, or on the arms of the chair. Anywhere you can forget about them. And forget about your feet, and be supported as much as you can, without moving or straining a muscle, and move down through your body as if you were a scanner, passing through your body like a cross section, releasing and dissolving, and unfastening your connection with each sense, muscle, and tissue, as you go.

Start at the top of your head. Take a breath, hold it for a moment, and as you let it out feel relaxation spread over the top of your scalp, so when your breath is exhaled your scalp is relaxed. And with each breath, move down your body; starting with your head and your face. With the exhale relax, like a wave moving down your cheeks, neck, ears, over your nose, past your chin, inhaling again, and exhaling all the sensation out of your shoulders, arms, into the center of your chest. Imaging yourself as thinner, and less substantial. Imagine the inhale coming in through all your skin, and the exhale pouring out through holes all over your body. Inhale... hold it... exhale.

With each breath, and each scan, imagine becoming more relaxed, imagine yourself dissolving, becoming lighter. Images like ballast being dropped from a balloon, or warm water, or thoughts floating away, issues being forgotten, voices becoming distant. Let yourself flow with your body's rhythms and sensations, the natural rhythmic ones. Be more present. You might feel the pulse in your hands, and you might let your breath go down, deep into your stomach, and you might feel energy running over the surface of your skin. And if you don't feel it, then imagine you do, because nothing happens in your mind without the help of your imagination.

Maybe you are a musical person, or a sensory person – call those senses in. Listen, feel, see, smell. Be where you want yourself to be: relax and dissolve. Breathe in and hold it, as it fills down through your pelvis, your gut, your seat. Exhale and relax more deeply. Inhale, hold it, and exhale down through your thighs and your knees and your shins. Inhale ... and exhale.

Feel the warmth in your joints, and the warmth in your hands, and in your feet. That's called progressive relaxation, and in addition to releasing tensions it releases irritable sensations and disconnects you from the annoying present process of thinking. You follow my words and think as slowly as I speak, and you hang on each syllable, so that they resound in your head. Your own thoughts pop like bubbles, like popcorn, or a breeze rustling, flocks of birds that come and go, leaving thoughts unfinished in your head.

Now imagine, and sense, that you're lying in your bed about the time you're about to fall asleep. Some people take longer and some people take shorter, but no one is really present at the moment they fall asleep. You know that feeling that happens when you start to get groggy, that feeling when you've started to stop thinking about going to sleep? Sort of like waiting for a movie to start, and it starts, and for a few brief moments you're not thinking about anything.

Put yourself back in that place. Imagine it's dark, imagine it's warm. You're comfortable, and for the moment you've stopped thinking. Not that you tried to, but it just seems that you forgot, you forgot what you were going to think about.

It seems that someone is coming up from behind you, in your mind, and you know who it is, it's your deeper self, relieved that you are finally stepping out, so that like the janitor after the building closes, in your subconscious mind, you can get to work, and start putting things back together.

And in this moment of pause and emptiness, imagine you have one last phrase to speak to yourself, and you're not sure whether it comes from your intention, or from the deeper part of yourself that seems to be rising. And that one last phrase is this: "I will remember my dreams... I will remember my dreams." And you know what you're talking about.

You're talking about the distant morning, when things will be very different. You will be coming up, and you will be feeling different, and the temperature will be different. The rustle of your clothes and sheets will be different. Your sensations will be different, as if there was a kind of internal alarm alerting you to the coming day. It will be different.

In that different moment of the morning time, as you see it now as you're slipping into sleep, you will remember what you dreamt. It might be a little bit... it might not be a long narrative, just a few images and feelings – the things that were tailing away as you woke up.

And it's important to let yourself walk up gently, to give yourself enough sleep, because dreams don't come if you're deprived of sleep – not well, anyway – and the process needs to be gentle, because there are things that go and things that come, and you will watch them.

Sort of like changing the set on a stage: you want to be present enough in the new act to remember what was on the stage in the old act. And you will remember your dreams. This is the phrase that you can see in your mind, hear in your ears, and feel resounding in your body. I will remember my dreams.

What I'd like you to do is to play this tape as you're going to sleep and employ a few other reminders as well. Say to yourself, quite artificially and without any particular suggestion, that you will remember your dreams. Just remind yourself of that. You need to do it at several different levels: the somnambulistic level, the hypnagogic level, the conscious level, the dreamy level, the analytical level.

These levels are like layers of dough. They collectively gain strength, and if they all remind each other that you will remember your dreams, then no one – when you're coming out of sleep and putting yourself back together in the morning – will forget to pick up the thread that will be left upon waking. "You will remember your dreams," is the start of everything here. And it's the start of waking up in more ways than one.

Come back now. Let's walk you back. Let's rise up as if we were filling you up – as if you were an empty glass vessel – and you pour in awakeness as if it was water. It collects in your feet and rises up bubbling, cool, and refreshing, and revitalized, up past your shins, filling your knees, through your legs, into your thighs, into your pelvis, into your seat, up to the small of your back. Up into your stomach, filling you with awareness. Up to your ribs, up to your breast, up to your collar bones, up to your shoulders. Filling up your arms with awareness, presence, crisp, and clear, and clean.

Cleaner than it was before, clearer and more pointed, focused, feeling good, feeling clean, feeling crisp, up through your neck, into your skull, through your jaw, face, ears. Filling the sockets of your eyes, up to the top of your head. And just like it is when you overfill a bottle: it flows out over the top, cascading down like an aura around your body. And you're back, and you're here, and you're awake, and you're present.

"They say we only use a fraction of our brain's true potential. Now that's when we're awake. When we're asleep, we can do almost anything."

- Cobb, from the movie "Inception."

