

# Behind the Curtain: My Favorite Dream Figure

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In the *Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her troupe finally make it to the Emerald City after battling numerous natural and supernatural challenges, as well as their own native or self-adopted limitations. As they enter the Emerald City to seek the Wizard's assistance, they seem confronted by a towering image of a giant head with a fierce voice, the Wizard they presume. With an authoritative tone flanked by flames, the Wizard fiercely questions their arrival. Trembling, but determined, Dorothy responds to the giant head as best she can. Simultaneously, little Toto with an animal's instincts oblivious to the frightful conversation notices something odd and runs up to a flapping curtain. Pulling at the curtain, Toto reveals something almost too incredible - the real Wizard of Oz exists not as a giant with a booming voice commanding flames all around, but a normal size man with a microphone.

As the real Wizard shouts, "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!", everyone realizes that the apparent Wizard (the giant head) only appears frightful and domineering. In actuality, the Wizard, when pulled out from behind the curtain and properly introduced, seems quite friendly and helpful. Experienced as a projection and unknown, he looks overwhelming indeed. Lucid dreamers occupy a type of Land of Oz, when lucid dreaming. A realm of incredible potential and amazing scenes, yet also a land that challenges the lucid dreamer, and exposes his or her limitations, whether native or self-adopted. A realm which confronts each lucid dreamer with his or her level of fearlessness or fearfulness; a land that engages each of us to grow and trust, or turn back in fright.

In lucid dreaming, we may experience our own 'Good witches' or 'Bad witches' and along the way our own flying monkeys, lollipop guild or dark forests, but once in a while in a lucid dream, we thoughtfully realize our opportunity to go beyond symbols of apparent good and bad, and with penetrating insight, make our way to the heart of things, the Emerald City of Lucid Dreaming, where someone or some thing more powerful lies. I first stumbled upon the 'wizard' of lucid dreaming as I sought to lucidly meet my goal to "Determine what the figures in your dream represent" (one month's goal during the three year existence of The Lucidity Project in the mid 1980's). Lucidly aware, I experienced this unexpected event on March 14, 1985:

Going into an office building, I put my hand out to open the door, and realize, "My hands! I'm dreaming!" I open the door and thought, "Now what am I suppose to do?" Then I remembered that I was to find out what the people in my dream represent.

I walk down the hallway, feeling energetic, because I have recalled my lucid dream task, and I go into the office setting. There are four people there; some young woman that I didn't pay attention to, a fashionably dressed young woman, a receptionist behind the counter and an older gentleman in a three piece suit.

I ultimately decided to talk to the gentleman (though a part of me wanted to talk to the fashionable woman). I think he was looking at a picture on the wall, when I approached him and asked, "What do you represent?" Suddenly, this odd voice spoke out of the air around him - a very energetic voice. It boomed, "The acquired characteristics!"

I thought about that strange response for a moment. Then I questioned, "The acquired characteristics of what?" It hesitated for a moment and then it boomed out again, "The acquired

characteristics of the Happy Giver!" I repeated that to myself and then I wondered if I should stay in the dream or come out. I worried that I'd forget it if I didn't come out, so I told myself to wake up.

Then I had the odd experience of being in the dream and in the bed at the same time - it seemed to last a few seconds.

As I recalled the dream, the old man was medium height, a little overweight, kind of balding, but a very avuncular, happy serene person with a gold pocket watch chain. I think he smiled when I turned towards him. Later in the day, I realized that the 'Happy Giver' had to do with an event from the day before, where I interacted with the head of a philanthropic organization that seemed so unhappy with those who gave to her organization. Like some 'big' dreams, this lucid dream shook me on many levels. I noticed that in other lucid dreams, when I talked to a dream figure, they either spoke to me or shrugged and turned away. In this lucid dream, no 'figure' spoke - but yet, the 'dream' responded!!

I noticed too that the response seemed unexpectedly hesitant, or a bit delayed. Moreover, I had to question it, asking for clarification, "The acquired characteristics of what?" How could that be? If the lucid dream represents me, responds to my expectations, and simply 'mirrors' my mind, then why do I need to question a response of my apparent own making? Why do I not simply receive a reasonable response and be done with it?

For the first time in my lucid dreaming, I felt something or someone exists 'behind the curtain.' Though the dream figures may be nothing but symbolic imaginings or thought-forms, this unexpected response booming out from above suggested something or someone observed my awareness and responded to my query.

My favorite dream figure lies behind the lucid dreaming. In later years, this experience of something or someone 'behind the curtain' of lucid dreaming changed many of my dream actions. With that awareness, it opened up new opportunities - for if someone or something was there behind the lucid dream, and was responsive, then 'why' deal with dream figures or dream symbols and other intermediaries? Why not go to the source? Why not ask the Wizard of lucid dreaming?

Lucid, I began to ignore the dream figures and ignore the dream activity and simply shout, "Hey show me... (whatever came to mind)!" or "Hey, I want to hear...." Or if lucidly looking at the night sky, "Hey! Pull me up stars!" and await the response. Incredibly, "Hey" always responded, sometimes in mind-blowing, perspective altering ways.

Others have discovered the same thing. When they address the dreaming, they receive from the dreaming.

Though any of you lucid dreamers can do the same, and shout out, "Hey I want to go to the next level" or "Hey show me something that I should see!", you too will be left to wonder, "Who responds?" Who creates that next, completely unexpected portion of the dream? Who whips a new realm into being that relates to your query in ways beyond your own knowing? If not you, then who? My favorite dream figure lies behind the dreaming, behind the curtain of appearances.

My favorite dream figure - whether it be considered the creative system of dreaming or an actual Creator or Dreamer of the Dream - shows itself in its response.

From its responding, I know that behind the good witches, bad witches, flying monkeys, lollipop kids, behind my squeaky joints, weak heart and lack of stuffing - behind all these appearances lies unfathomable creativity and potentiality responding to me, caring for me.

When you experience the 'man behind the curtain' of lucid dreams, you may finally discover something more real, more complete, and seemingly unassailable than any ephemera of dreaming. Though you may leave the Emerald City of lucid dreams and return waking to Kansas and Auntie Em, you will finally sense that behind the curtain of waking appearances, and behind the curtain of dream and imaginings lies something more.

Time to pay attention to the 'man behind the curtain.'