

# The Early Days

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I can remember laughing when I first heard the story of an old man, in the early part of the twentieth century, who used to get dressed in his Sunday-best outfit to sit and watch television, convinced that the characters on the screen could see into his living room.

Sounds silly doesn't it? With today's technology so commonplace to most people, we don't even give a thought to the reality of the characters we see on TV. Sure, some programs are made using "real people", in real time, but the images themselves, the images that flash on the screen as we channel surf, are simply that - images. Unlike our sharp-dressed viewer of the first TV transmissions, we understand that the characters we see are not "real", but are projections of something else.

What about the images we see when we dream? Are dream characters any different? Much like TV images, they appear out of seeming nothingness, and when we change dream scenes, (change channels) or wake up (turn off the TV), they disappear in an instant.

When we wake up and are "not watching" the screens of our dreaming psyches anymore, do they continue to live on, independent of our attention to them?

With TV, questions about a character's reality are easy to answer. We know that some images are not real, (i.e. cartoons), some are made from real people, but the "real people" (actors) are not the characters they portray, though in some cases the real people, are in fact portraying themselves, (yet remember, no matter their origin, we are seeing only images of them).

We can certainly distinguish between a live TV news broadcast and a cartoon - we know the cartoon is not real in the sense that its characters don't have lives of their own once the TV program has ended.

With dream characters it is not always so easy to discern their individual "realities". The entities we encounter in our dreams can come from a variety of sources. But whether we can learn to distinguish which are "real", (in that they have a reality separate from our dreaming minds), which are projections from real sources, which are nothing more than dream manifestations that will dissolve when we wake, which are coming to us from a greater part of our own being, or whether some are something else entirely, is another matter.

With dream lucidity we have a bit of an edge, when it comes to questions like those above. We don't have to wait to wake up to examine the ("completed") dream, we can interact, with some degree of conscious awareness, with the dream and its characters while the dream is still in play.

## Am I Dreaming? Are You?

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How will the scientists and dreamers of the future interact with other "entities" via the dream state?

Thanks to Keith Hearne's and Stephen LaBerge's breakthrough experiments in the 70s, lucid dreamers (under certain conditions) are able to "prove" to the waking world when they are lucid dreaming. But how do you prove to the dream world that you are dreaming - that you are a visitor "there"? How do you prove to a dream character that although you are standing there before them, you have left your "real" body in another dimension? For that matter, who is the "real" dreamer?

For now, the debate continues....

**April 24 1999**

... I am on roller blades, skating through an upper level of a dim and cluttered warehouse-like building. In one area there are many people, and the atmosphere is like that of a smoky, noisy bar. I keep checking clocks and asking people for the correct time. I can't get straight answers. Vaguely I wonder if I could be dreaming, but I continue for a while in a more non-lucid attitude.

Then, skating through the cluttered rooms, I see so many odd things that I let it sink in that I am dreaming. I knew I was dreaming earlier, but I wouldn't let it sink in then. "We're dreaming!" I say. I want the others to realize it too.

A train is about to go through the building. The people have left, because it is going to be very noisy. They don't think I'll be able to bear it. I stubbornly stay and clap my hands over my ears. I continue to skate around while the train screams through on a level of the building just below me. It is very loud and does hurt my ears a bit, but I can take it!

I skate around triumphantly once the train has gone, and when I don't hear applause for my endeavour, I skate back into the bar room until I do. Near the bar I talk with a young woman. We don't like each other very much. We debate whether my dream is her reality or her dream is my reality. I ask her "Is my dream and your reality the same thing? I hope not! Does that imply that your dream and my reality are the same?"

I want to wake myself to write all this down. She wants me to write it there. I tell her it won't be there (in my waking reality) for me when I awaken. I know I need to wake to write this down, but I walk around looking for a pencil, lucidity obviously fading. . .

## October 10 1994

. . . I am outside a workplace building in a parking lot. I try to find my parking space. I am going to push my bed into it. I see V near the parking spaces. Something doesn't feel right about this. Then the scene switches again and I am at the foot of some very wide stairs that lead up to a large old office in a government or academic building. I am there returning some big flat black square object.

I'm thinking of Sue Watkins' book *Dreaming Myself Dreaming a Town*. It is at this point that I realize I am dreaming. I watch people going into the building and I think about following them. But then I decide to turn around and go in the other direction instead. I see other people there. I sing that I'm dreaming in several different phrases.

I find a middle-aged couple. I want to take them flying with me. They seem eager. We are outside a structure of sorts that is near a cliff edge. I run back and forth along the edge of the cliff. For some reason, I feel that doing this will help them to get used to the idea of flying before we take off.

There is glistening dark blue water far below. I think about running off of the cliff and plunging head-long into the water. It would be such a rush! Instead, though, I run and fly out over the water, mildly surprised that I haven't fallen into the water due to my wish to dive in. I turn and hover over the water so the couple can see me. I tell them I am going to do a somersault.

As I do so I close my eyes. I then feel that I am waking. I pause in midair a little disappointed. I think they ask me what's wrong. I still feel that I may be waking. (I am in a grey space for a moment.) I want to stay in the dream or at least get back into it if I wake, so I imagine talking to the couple and almost instantly I am back on the cliff walking up to them.

I apologize to them, saying that I am waking up, and that soon I will disappear. We then discuss who is real; me or them. I tell them they are dream characters (therefore "not real"). Then I say something like, "But maybe I am not real, maybe I will disappear from here and you are real (in this reality). I hug them briefly and say something like, "Well you're breathing," as though that is some vague indication of being real.

We are all smiling and happy but each of us thinks the other is a non-real dream character.

Then I feel I am back in bed. I keep my eyes closed to see if I can get back into the dream. I do so very quickly, but it is not the same dream as before. I continue, lucid, in the new dream scene to have a different adventure. . . .

From that point of awareness we can ask many questions. But in doing so, we need to be aware of our own intents and expectations. If we make the blanket assumption that all dream characters are nothing more than mental imagery created by our own minds, and then make a request like "prove to me that you are real", our results will be dubious, since we are likely to get what we expect/believe.

If we try to maintain, with honesty, an open mind, when asking our questions, we may get more reliable results. We must be aware of the power of our own intent, the power of suggestion, the power of expectation, and allow ourselves to be as open as possible for surprises.

In an earlier issue of LDE, I talked about "willing dream hallucinations away" as one method of cutting through your own mental projections to see what (or who) remains. But if you want to try this technique, remember to be strong in your intent. If you doubt the validity of willing away your hallucinations you will sabotage your own experiments. If your attempt to banish dream characters is half-hearted your results will be questionable.

Another idea for an experiment is to try to meet one (or more) of your own probable selves. According to several theories of quantum physics, there are an infinite amount of universes, and therefore an infinite number of "yous" living on an infinite number of earths. If *consciousness* is what connects us all (again, another aspect of quantum physics) then it seems reasonable that lucid consciousness in the dream state may be a good place to experiment with contacting other selves.

Afterall, if you have the idea and the strong desire to do it, chances are great that at least one other you, in her own universe, has the same desire. Before sleeping, intend to meet her, be open to meeting her, and again, be sure about your beliefs and expectations in this endeavour.

These are just a few suggestions, only scratching the surface of personal experimentation with lucid consciousness in the dream state. Certainly, as dream, quantum physics, and consciousness research evolves, we will broaden our ideas of individuality and selfhood, and begin to realize, that on a deeper level, we really are much more than we have ever imagined.

Like the first TV watchers in the early part of the 20th century, when video technology was just starting to take off, mankind is in the early stages of learning what consciousness is, as the exploration of quantum physics and consciousness research is just starting to take off.

So I have to wonder, will dream or consciousness scientists of the distant future laugh as they read our dream books and journals? Will they giggle when they see how we currently perceive our dream characters, when for them it will be so easy to distinguish between "what is real, and what is projected"? Will they sit us beside that well-dressed old man in the early days of TV?