



Developing Lucid Dreaming in the Netherlands: A Personal Account

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***Edited by Elinor Gebremedhin
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Intro



Some time ago, when Mr. Roger Ripert invited me to give a presentation at a meeting of the European Association for the Study of Dreams (EASD), I hesitated to accept this invitation.

I felt honored, of course, but despite a number of invitations throughout the years, I had always kept myself aloof from seminars and congresses. Hopefully, the variety of reasons I had will become clear during this presentation.

The primary reason, however, I want to disclose at the outset.

I had always wondered what new perspectives I could bring to the lucid dream field. I am just a simple lucid dreamer, like so many of you, and I do not have the opportunity to do scientific research. The fact that I have published some articles and a book regarding lucid dreaming seemed insufficient reasons for a presentation today. Suddenly however I realized that by addressing you I would have an opportunity to express some feelings I have carried around with me for a long time. By voicing the situations that I have experienced in the Netherlands, I could not only clarify my own position, but also be a spokesman for all those anonymous people in other countries that have no dreamer networks or scientific research on lucid dreaming. I would guess that there are a lot of individuals like myself, who have been carrying the lucid dream vehicle in their country completely through own efforts, without mental or financial backup. I will say more about this later. In addition, I thought I would now have the opportunity to express my ambivalent feelings towards lucid dream research. So you see, I am warning you that the title of this lecture is somewhat misleading. Enough clarifying, the story.

Preliminary Peak Experiences



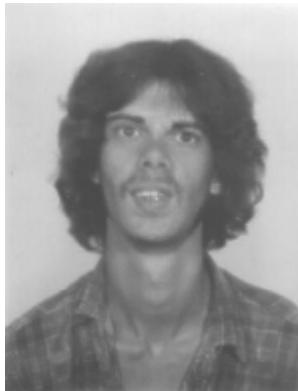
It was more than twenty years ago that I, like so many other college-student hippies, was desperately seeking for another reality, for the simple reason that the dull fifties had become too dull for the sixties. I started smoking hashish and one year later LSD. I remember my first experiment with it very well. Just like my first lucid dream years later, it was a peak experience.

My friends and I had gone to the country in search of natural surroundings as the setting for our experiment. Half an hour after we had taken the wonder pills, most of my friends began to behave peculiarly. I however, still felt very normal. After an hour had gone by, it was obvious that all of my companions were under the influence, but still nothing had happened to me. Very annoyed, I stood apart on a little hill. Suddenly I became angry. I said to myself, "I want to enter the LSD-mood!" and closed my eyes, repeating my intention. When I opened them, the surroundings had changed completely. It was

very dreamlike. I don't want to describe this experience in detail because it is of no importance within this framework. What is of interest is how it ended. Most of the day had been very nice, but by the end of the afternoon, it had started raining. Meanwhile, my companions had discovered a motorway which seemed built only for us; not a single car passed by. Some of my friends were dancing on it when suddenly I realized that the highway must be for motor traffic and my gaze wandered to the left I noticed a bend in the road and I was startled by the thought, "That road is real and of course cars can pass by. If at this very moment someone is driving on the road, we can't see him because of the bend. He won't be able to brake in time if he sees us at the last moment, and of course we will be crushed." This confusion startled me out of my thoughts. I had had enough of that trip; I wanted to be normal again. I closed my eyes and opened them: the situation instantly became "real"; I felt very rational and normal. I started to take charge and protect my friends from possible danger by guiding them away from the road.

The most intriguing aspect of that experience was that both the onset and the culmination of the shift in consciousness did not appear to be the result of the influence of LSD but rather of my own efforts. This feeling of being self-initiated was also characteristic of my later dreaming experiments. However, on another occasion during a time period when I had been experimenting with LSD, I was completely surprised by an unwilling shift in consciousness. It was at the end of a trip; I was tired and decided to lay down in my bed. As I relaxed my body suddenly separated and "I" (or however you define it) was up near the ceiling, looking back at a person who was down below. I realized the person down there was me! But at that very moment of realization I immediately felt myself to be in my body again. The latter experience was the reason that I dropped my experiments with LSD. It was a situation which provoked fears, questions and doubts. At that time I only want to have fun!

Dream Power



Years went by. I had banished the above experiences from my life and dedicated myself to studying both child psychology and the sociology of organizations. During the same time period, I started karate and experimented with meditation. I read Castaneda's books, but his experiments with "a separate reality" did not attract me at all.

In 1976, Ann Faraday's book, *Dream Power*, crossed my path. After reading this book, I started my dreamlike studies. Before that time, I had paid hardly attention to my dreams, although those in which Buddha appeared did stick in my mind. After following Faraday's advice for improving dream recall, I noticed within a very short time an increase in dream memory. And suddenly one night, I realized I was dreaming! I was not afraid; it was an exciting experience. Afterward, I told everyone in my surroundings about what had happened. I was so excited that some friends told me years later that they felt annoyed by my enthusiasm. I suppose that the psychological impact makes no sense to anyone who has not had the experience. Although I talked a lot about it, I could not share my feelings with anyone and I felt lonely, especially as I had more and more experience with lucidity. I was always happy when I found myself in that type of dream state: in most cases I ran after fun experiences, doing the thing I most liked to do in waking life, and that was having sex. Meanwhile, I read books on lucid dreaming by Patricia Garfield and Celia Green. Throughout this period, I still did not personally know any other lucid dreamers. Nor did I use specific methods to induce the awareness that I was dreaming. It was just spontaneous. The Garfield and Green books were both excellent descriptions of the phenomenon, but they did not clarify many of the questions I had. I asked myself, "What state is it exactly? What can you achieve with it?" I was convinced that scientific research had come to a dead end on these subjects.

The Nonimpact of Research

Suddenly LaBerge's book on his research was available. The fact that there was now a scientific basis for the phenomenon excited me very much. In my naiveté I thought that the Dutch scientific world could be excited about this great discovery,

as well. I approached some psychologists I knew, referring to LaBerge's experiments. What a great disappointment it turned out to be! Everyone seemed to have not heard about it, or not believed it, or at least were very skeptical. I discovered that there were some Dutch research centers where sleep processes were being investigated. I telephoned several prominent researchers, but they did not seem interested at all in lucid dreaming. One of them added that lucid dreaming seemed like nonsense to him. I doubted whether they knew of the latest findings, but who was I? After finishing my academic studies I had not been able to find work in my field and I had moved away from it by attending management training courses and working as a counselor and educator myself, although I had not lost my interest in psychology.. At any rate, I continued both my reading of books on (lucid) dreams and my efforts to interest both scientific circles and the Dutch public in them. I started writing articles, which I distributed at my own cost, and made a compendium with reprints of international scientific articles on the subject.

Discovering Saint-Denys

In the midst of these activities, I discovered that a Mr. Marquis Saint-Denys had already published a book on lucid dreaming in 1867, and I wanted to read it. Therefore, I contacted Dr. Eli Meijer from Rijksuniversity Utrecht, who, as a result of his position, had direct access to university libraries. In the meantime, I kept searching, and found by my own efforts the 1964 reprint edited by Claude Tchou.

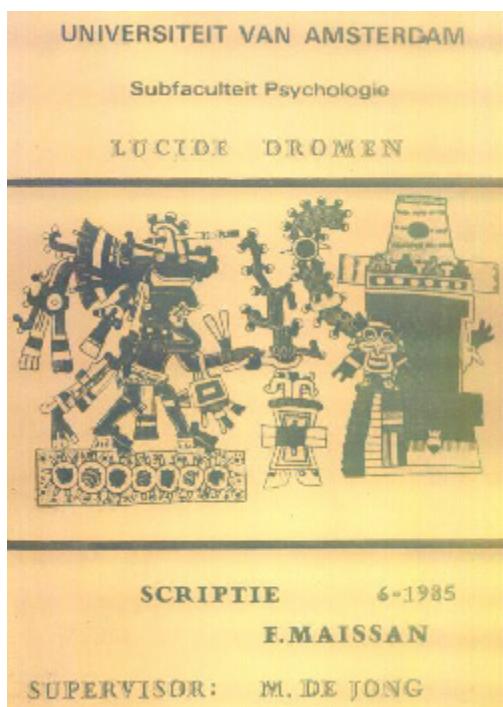
To my surprise, some weeks after I found the Tchou reprint, Mr. Meijer handed me the original 1867 edition of the book.

Utrecht University had it in its possession and neither the library nor Mr. Meijer were aware of the value of it. So they lent it to me. In Utrecht University had it in its possession and neither the library nor Mr. Meijer were aware of the value of it. So they lent it to me. Once at home I compared the original version with the reprint and discovered an appendix in the original edition which was not included in the reprint. Since almost every researcher of lucid dreaming referred to the 1964 version, without indicating it was not a complete version, I realized that I had made a discovery. I telephoned Dr. Morton Schatzman, who had published an abbreviated English version of the book. He was astonished too. After that, you can probably guess how the mechanism worked. If you make a discovery like the one I had, every researcher wants to contact you. I was bold enough to take advantage of the situation. Suddenly, I was in a position to have a lot of information come my way. Not self promotion, but information was what I wanted. It had always been, and still is, very hard to lay hands on it. I heard from *Lucidity Letter*, from Mr. Paul

Tholey, from Oniros, and so on. Through these contacts, Dutch lucid dreamers would be able to benefit. You can imagine that by that time I had become a good customer of the telephone company. Anyway, with the findings of the appendix, my research on Saint-Denys only started. It took another year before I was able to publish my findings in *Lucidity Letter*, with *honoris causa* Mr. Meijer as co-author.

Impact on the Netherlands

My efforts to interest the Dutch scientific world have never had any result at all, and up until now (December, 1992) the situation has not changed. Hopefully some change will occur when the Association for the Study of Dreams (ASD) and Lucidity Association (LA) hold their annual conferences in the Netherlands in the summer of 1994. Most of you consider Frederik van Eeden as a great lucid dream pioneer. In the Netherlands, however, Mr. Van Eeden has been an obstacle. His efforts to prove the existence of an afterlife have linked the lucid dream up with esoteric studies, and most scientists don't want to be associated with that. After Van Eeden died, the topic of lucid dreaming was stored away in a locked room.



It was not until 1985 that the psychology student Mr. Franz Maissan, produced a doctoral thesis on the subject. In a personal communication, Mr. Maissan, informed me that his tutors were not very happy with his choice "because the topic was not scientific enough." It did not prevent one of his tutors from publishing a book on dream research in 1991, and devoting one chapter to lucid dreaming, quoting Mr. Maissan's work. You see how opportunism has a long life in this world...

To give another example of the status of lucid dreaming in the Netherlands, in 1987, there appeared a newspaper article on Mr. Maissan,

but it appeared on the children's page! The authors, two psychologists, used pen names, afraid as they were to damage their scientific reputation.

Furthermore, shortly after the first European meeting on lucid dreaming, held in 1987 in Frankfurt, a Dutch physician, operating as a columnist, wrote very negatively about that conference in a Dutch newspaper. He referred to the experiments of Van Eeden and ridiculed the whole topic, suggesting that there was nothing new under the sun. However, I continued with my own efforts and put an advertisement in a national paper, in which I asked for people with lucid dream experiences. The response was overwhelming, but unfortunately only five persons could be qualified as people who had really had lucid dreams. After exchanging information, it turned out that they were not very experienced.

New Directions

By this time, the information and techniques which I had gathered had changed my whole attitude toward lucid dreaming. I experienced several levels within it, had started self-therapeutically interventions and had also moved away from However, I myself did get a lot of letters from average Dutch readers, mostly very inexperienced lucid dreamers or people who wanted to begin with it. In most cases they approached me with questions regarding information or with a desire to share their experiences. It is probably clear by now that my activities are not backed by an institute, nor have I any financial backing. I wonder how many persons who draw the lucid dream vehicle are in similar or worse conditions. How many of them can afford to pay memberships, subscriptions, fees for seminars, travel costs and telephone bills?

I spoke about the minimal response to the publication of my book. Strangely enough, I have had no response at all from new age movements, esoteric societies etc.. Perhaps a scientific approach is too threatening to their beliefs. In my book I present lucid dreams as traveling through a mental subjective world. Not that I exclude the possibility that there may be more dimensions to life than we can now imagine, but I like to take the way of doubt and research. Esoteric beliefs about traveling in some objective mental world seems to me a negative approach. In such a concept, you are passive; the "demons" in such models are from another world, parallel to the world of the dead. What can you as a individual do in such a model in which you seem to have only a passive role?

Criticism of Lucid Dream Research

LUCIDITY



Commemorative Issue
10th Anniversary of
Lucidity Letter

I feel sad that the Netherlands is making no scientific experimental contribution to the understanding of lucid dreaming. As long as the leading Dutch scientists do not spread information about the field, the average Dutch citizen will not benefit from the advantages of lucid dreaming, simply because he or she is unlikely to have heard of it. Those who have heard soon find that it is not backed up by scientific institutes, so they do not end up believing in it. I regret this situation for more than one reason. I believe that spreading lucid dreaming research to research centers in different countries would benefit the lucid dream field as a whole. Research

centers at this very moment are too limited to France, The United States, The United Kingdom and Germany. I never read reports about lucid dreamers or dream research coming from e.g. Hungary, Russia, Morocco or South Africa. I come to the conclusion that the so-called international network is not so international. LaBerge writes in his book that we should encourage psychologist, neurologists and psycho physiologists to search for similarities between objective measured physiology and behavior and subjective experience. Nevertheless, despite the above-mentioned criticisms, I hope you will continue to dream lucidly when you dream, and, please, never stop!

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Editor's Note: The following References list has been rearranged to conform to the North American practices that are the standard in this publication.

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