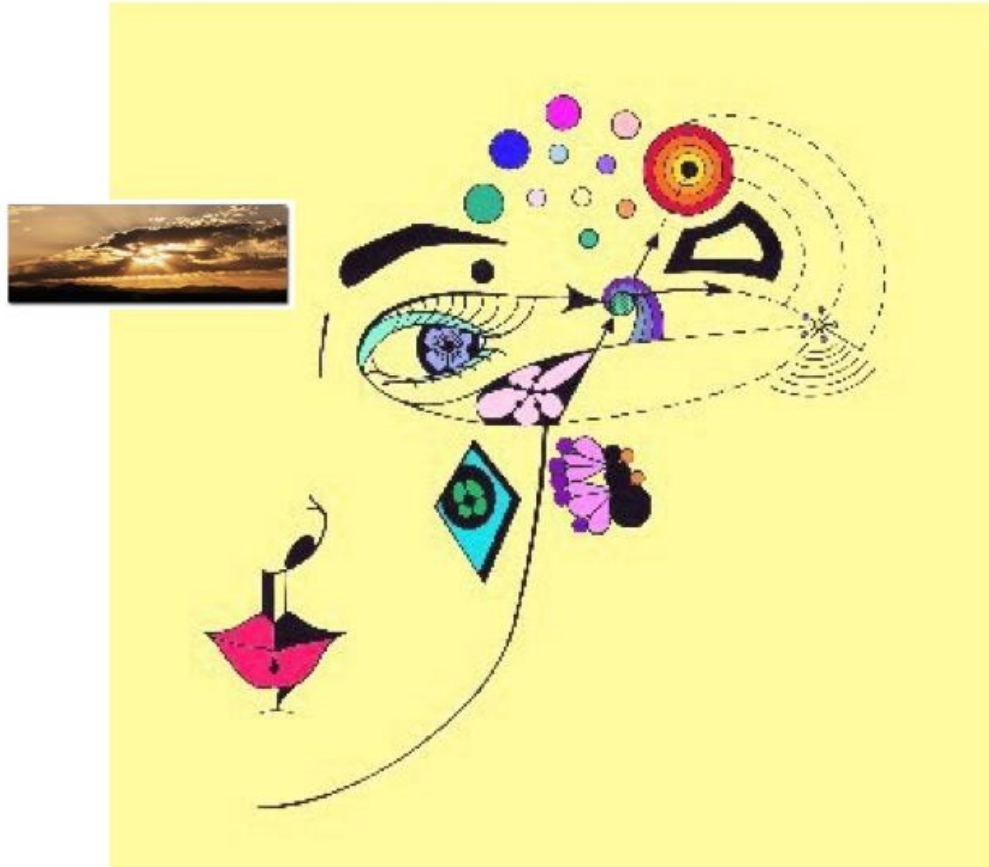


Consciousness and Hypnagogia



*Dream imageries, reveries, and the development of
a relationship with the “unconscious” mind*

By Sirley Marques Bonham, Ph.D.

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Abstract

I propose in this paper what I believe to be a natural way to communicate with the “unconscious mind.” I present my many reasons for this belief, some of them stemming from my personal experience with out-of-body experiences (OBEs) and lucid-dreaming. I discuss the scientific developments that support this proposal, beginning with the methods of remote-viewing, to the findings of neurofeedback, to case-histories of “hypnagogia” described by meditators, lucid-dreamers, and OBEers, to the “visions” experienced by the ingestion of certain hallucinogenic drugs, to natural “awakenings” that tend to transform the human mind in radical ways. I propose that our everyday dealings with learning, with problem solving, and with creativity in general, also stimulate these “internal automatic-perceptions” – hypnagogia – which so frequently surprise the unaware. I also briefly assess situations that are or appear to be pathological, like nightmarish situations and the energetic phenomena of the Kundalini, which may frighten the explorer of these new worlds of the mind, and suggest ways to cope with them. I firmly believe that the best medicine for difficult situations is to understand them! As a closure to this paper, I warn the reader that there is nothing really new to what is presented, and that a “unified approach” to the mind is a natural conclusion from this assessment, as are the simple ways to establish a “relationship” with the unconscious part of the mind.

Introduction

When I was around 25 years old I had this sudden dream imagery of a warm red sun low in the sky while falling asleep late one evening. It was so surprising! I had never had that before. This amazing and beautiful imagery awoke me, as I was just falling asleep. So, I tried to remember what I was thinking about right before falling asleep.

The former afternoon and evening I had spent working at the ‘Vale do Amanhecer’ (Valley of Dawn), a spiritist community near Brasilia, Brazil, and as a result I was feeling light and at peace. So, before falling asleep, for no special reason, I began remembering the long bus drives I had to undergo between the satellite city where my parents lived in Brazil, called Taguatinga, and the university I attended at the main city of Brasilia, the Brazilian capital. Right before reaching Taguatinga from Brasilia, there was a long and somewhat steep hill the bus had to overcome. Usually it meant a slow and boring drive uphill. So, while the bus drove uphill, I used to entertain myself by staring at the sun blinking through the eucalyptus trees planted near the road. Somehow this blinking-sun view felt peaceful and relaxed me. That was the awake-imagery that I had been thinking about right before falling asleep, and unexpectedly my subconscious mind responded to this by producing the red-sun dream-image. It was quite different from the memory I had recalled, where the sun was bright, as in the dream the sun was as if filtered through a haze, making it look red.

This experience left me puzzled for many years, as none of what I knew about the mind then would explain the phenomenon. It would take about twenty years more, and many more varied “sun-type dreamlets” for me to understand it.



The knowledge that I accumulated from my lifelong curiosity with the mind and spiritual phenomena, started first in my family’s influences on this subject, mainly due to my father’s affiliation with an eclectic Rosicrucian group. Later I also had influences from the cultural ‘spiritistic’ knowledge and practices ever present in Brazil. On the scientific side, I developed analytic and logical abilities from my scientific education as a physicist, and later as a neuroscientist. This cultural and educational influence, plus my efforts toward the practice of a specific method to develop awareness in dreams (lucid-dreams) and to achieve out-of-body experiences, have resulted in my somewhat comprehensive understanding of the many facets of the human experience through the mind.

The goal of this article is to review several phenomena that point to a form of communication between the two aspects of the human mind, the ‘conscious’ and the ‘unconscious’ parts. I demonstrate to the reader that, in fact, there are simple means of communication to and from the unconscious part of the mind. With the practice of certain methods and self-observation it is possible to build a relationship with our unconscious in both, the subconscious mind and the ‘super-conscious’ mind, or what I like to call the ‘wise part’ of the unconscious. But first let’s review briefly a few important definitions and get acquainted with hypnagogia.

Consciousness and the Mind

Consciousness has been a term frequently used in present times. In short, consciousness is related to the functions of the mind. *Mind*, on the other hand, can be considered to be the result of the workings of the brain, and I believe the central nervous system (CNS), as well. The mind then, is composed of the *systemic* interconnections between the brain’s neurons, as well as the various parts of the brain and nervous system, which results in our personality with all that entails in terms of behavior. In this context, the mind could be understood as a ‘virtual human being.’

The mind is usually divided into two parts: the *conscious mind* and the *unconscious mind*. Historically, the concept of the unconscious was put forth by Freud in the nineteenth century, and who is considered the father of psychiatry. The conscious mind is presently understood as that part of the mind that directs the human being's actions, the part that defines the 'I'. At the same time, the conscious mind is typically not aware of the workings of the unconscious mind. Therefore, the unconscious mind is that part of the mind that is frequently not freely accessible to the conscious mind. We will see later that it is necessary to enter certain special states of attention to be aware of the unconscious mind's workings. Also, the unconscious is frequently divided into two main parts, the sub-conscious mind and the super-conscious mind, though this division is quite arbitrary.

What is Hypnagogia?

Hypnagogia is a generic label given to the sensorial perceptions that happens 'automatically' – meaning, without conscious control, while we are falling asleep, or while awakening from sleep. Hypnagogia may happen while a person is meditating, or anytime when conscious focused attention is relaxed. There are two types hypnagogia:

'*Hypnagogic*' – (or hypnagogic) the reverie or dream imagery that happens *while falling asleep*,

'*Hypnopompic*' – the reverie or dream imagery that happens *while awakening from sleep*.

The term hypnagogia was first suggested by Andreas Mavromatis in his PhD thesis in Psychology at Brunel University (UK), later published in book form with the title: *Hypnagogia: The unique state of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep*, first published by Routledge in 1987. (It is now out of print since its last edition – 1991.) In a note at the front page of this book, the publisher remarks that '*...This is the only work in English dealing with hypnagogia, ...*' a statement that I believe remains true. It is worth repeating here the remainder of this statement:

'Dr. Mavromatis argues that this common, naturally occurring state may not only be distinct from wakefulness and sleep but [is] unique in its nature and function, possibly carrying important evolutionary implications. He analyses the relationship between hypnagogia and others states, processes and experiences – such as sleep-dreams, meditation, psi, schizophrenia, creativity, hypnosis, hallucinogenic drug-induced states, eidetic phenomena and epileptic states – and shows that, functioning in hypnagogia, a person may gain knowledge of aspects of his or her mental nature which constitute fundamental underpinnings to all adult thought. In addition, functioning in hypnagogia is known to play a significant part in mental and physical health.'

It is noteworthy that I only became aware of the subject in such a wide context by the late nineties, while Mavromatis had already surveyed and catalogued all the phenomena related to hypnagogia in the eighties. That's why I consider his work as fundamental and groundbreaking toward a unified understanding of the mind, even today.

The concept of *reverie* revisited

The word *reverie* comes from the French word 'rever' (to dream), and here it refers to the set of perceptual imageries we become involved with in the process of dreaming, and of hypnagogia. The

perceptual imagery so formed tends to be ‘*automatic*,’ stemming from the unconscious processes of the mind.

Sometimes reverie may also be applied to mean the fantasies or imaginations a person experiences while awake. Even though waking fantasies are not the same as reveries as just defined, they may attract or induce hypnagogia, as the experience I described in the introduction demonstrates.

The importance of the role of imagination in visualization cannot be over emphasized. For example, in the healing therapies visualization takes an important role in both, the sick person and the healer.

Patricia Norris, in her book with Garret Porter: *Why me? – Harnessing the Healing Power of the Human Spirit*, explains:

Gradually, through a process of visualizations and imagery, a bridge is built between conscious and unconscious processes, which include cortical and subcortical processes, the conscious and “unconscious” portions of the brain. Evidence is mounting as to neurohumoral and biochemical mechanisms whereby this can take place.

With relation to terminology, she explains that ... *no uniform terminology exists ... to distinguish between visualization and imagery ... Visualization is the consciously chosen, intentional instruction to the body. Imagery is the spontaneously occurring “answer,” qualifier and modifier from the unconscious. Thus, a two-way communication is set up by the interplay of visualization and imagery.*

... The relationship between visualization and imagery can be thought of as a metaphor, as the relationship between a transmitter and a receiver. The visualization acts as a message to the unconscious, including the subcortical parts of the brain and particularly the limbic system, hypothalamus, and pituitary. The images are messages from the unconscious to consciousness, much as dreams are.

Patricia Norris emphasizes the use of visualization and imagery in a person’s own process of healing. However, a gifted healer also uses the same process of visualization and imagery to heal, as for example in the case of the Daskalus, a healer from Cyprus wonderfully described by Kyriacos Markides in his book – *The Magus of Strovolos: The extraordinary world of a spiritual healer*. Visualization was one of Daskalos’ exceptional skills, one that he also emphasized in the training of his apprentices. In his practice, visualization played a very important role in both, the diagnostics and the determination of the location of the disease, as well as in the healing process.

A comment on the term *hallucination*

In the literature the term *hallucination* is frequently linked to the visions seen by the mentally ill. It is also linked to the hypnagogia we perceive while falling asleep or while awakening, which is then called *hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations*. However, I consider that the term *hallucination* is more aptly linked only to the (supposedly) pathological imagery a person may see – *visions* of non-existing events or persons.

It is important to note that, in spite of present conventional wisdom, *visions* may be just a healthy phenomenon of perception, a form of communication from the unconscious, or possibly a real extra-sensorial-perception of an event happening beyond the physical world. However, many times if people who have visions visit a psychologist or psychiatrist, they may be diagnosed as mentally disturbed. This is an issue that needs to be seriously investigated starting with the visions mentally ill people tend to develop. An example of this type of investigation is Wilson Van Dusen's informal research with his mentally ill patients. Van Dusen's research, together with his studies on Emmanuel Swedenborg's work, changed his understanding of the many forms of mental disease.

While treating mentally ill patients who hallucinated, and with the collaboration of the patients, Van Dusen could talk with their hallucinated persons. He notes that the hallucinated person he communicated with through a patient usually had a completely different personality than the patient's. Also, he observed that these hallucinated persons had levels of psychological development that varied from the patient's. The more advanced hallucinated persons frequently showed wisdom, while the low level ones were frequently of an irrational type. See also the work by Adam Crabtree, *Multiple Man: Explorations in possession and multiple personality*, for a thorough review of the similarities and differences between possession and the psychological phenomenon of multiple personality.

In Brazil the spiritist practitioners have unofficially treated many forms of mental disturbances on the premise that they occur due to the influence of discarnate beings. This is also known as possession. However, I also have personally known of at least one case where treatment through the spiritist methods did not work, while medical methods did. Therefore, this indicates that studies on the issue of mental problems should be addressed with both, scientific and spiritual methods.

The Yoga's methods of spiritual development where there is the opening of the 'third eye' – or the Ajna chakra – are also a worthy consideration on the subject of visions. In fact, the whole subject of Yoga that deals with chackras may relate to different supposedly aberrant perceptions.

Objectives of the Present Article

Having reviewed some relevant definition, what I intend to establish for the remainder for the paper is:

1. I suggest that hypnagogia is the shortest path for communication *from* our unconscious.
2. I will review the several facts and examples that show the way we receive *messages* from the unconscious.
3. I will then *suggest* possible two-way means of communication with the unconscious.

Let's begin with a list of facts or situations that support these propositions:

- Meditation may bring up reveries or perceptions that appear naturally.
- 'Energetic' (Kundalini) phenomena are notorious in producing visions.
- Remote-Viewing sessions may take us to hypnagogia.
- Alpha-Theta training, from neurofeedback or biofeedback technologies, produce hypnagogia.

- Hallucinogenic drugs, an ancient shamanic ‘technology,’ produce visions, or hypnagogia.
- Hypnotic trances, through ‘magnetic somnambulism,’ may cause hypnotic reveries or hallucinations.
- Dreams are our natural way to have automatic imagery.
- Hypnogogic and hypnopompic reveries, by themselves, while falling asleep and awakening, are used by lucid-dreamers and who practice out-of-body experiences.

In the following I will review these situations, in short. I am leaving dreams and the two types of hypnagogia for the last, simply because they are the ones I have the most experience with, and because they are the most accessible means of obtaining messages from the unconscious.

Meditation

Irrespective of the source, *meditation* in general, when consistently and judiciously practiced, it tends to produce hypnagogia. Meditation techniques most frequently practiced presently come from Yoga in its many forms. However, from western culture, religious meditations also follow appropriate prescriptions with similar results. [Note: A more academic label for meditation could be ‘*introspection*’ – something that is unfortunately not too clearly defined in psychology. Ref.: A book on the subject of introspection is *Trusting the Subject*, in two volumes, which is the book version of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* devoted to introspection; the title is a game on words, where ‘subject’ refers both to the subjects used in research and to the subject of introspection. The editors of this book are Anthony Jack and Andreas Roepstorff. Exter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2003 (Vol. 1), 2004 (Vol. 2).]

Remote-Viewing

Personal histories of Remote-Viewers are published in their many books, which have multiplied since this *protocol* was un-classified by the government toward the end of 1995. Remote-Viewers describe many instances of radical experiences of *being in the target*, or of going to the target even after the session has been over for a while, demonstrating a residual rapport with the location of, and events at, the target.

It is important to note that remote-viewing uses a system – *a protocol* – to access information at the remote location, the target. This is a key example of a modern systematic approach of accessing information that is subconscious. Remote-viewing arrived at this protocol or method after consistent research and development initiated by Harold Puthoff and Russel Targ in the seventies, and the creative contribution of Ingo Swann. They were fortunate that government sources of funding have allowed for such a research and experimentation, even though initially classified. In the American military, mainly the Army, this protocol was specifically developed for a two-person operation: the *receiver*, who is the *remote-viewer* by definition, as the one who receives the information, and the *operator*, who observes the receiver’s behavior and directs or re-directs events toward the goal of the remote-viewing session.

From the description of their activities, it is notable that remote-viewers used, and still use, a variety of methods to access information about the target. They include not only the conscious exchanges

between receiver and operator, a constant within the protocol, but many also use methods taught by Robert Monroe at The Monroe Institute. In this sense, remote-viewers have also used methods applied to achieve what is known as out-of-body experiences (OBE). In any case, the choice of method was left to personal preference. Therefore, a few of the Army's remote-viewers clearly accessed the threshold of sleep where the messages from the unconscious could be received with less interference from the conscious mind. *The avoidance of interference of the conscious mind is one key element of their protocol.* The Army's retired remote-viewers teach this protocol relatively unchanged, to this day. It is a small step to assume some of the remote-viewers were and are accessing hypnagogic and hypnopompic imagery.

Biofeedback, neuro-feedback, and alpha-theta training

This is a technology developed in the sixties, with its peak in the late seventies. One of its brightest stars was Elmer Green and his wife Alice, with the support of the Meninger Foundation, from Topeka, Kansas. Biofeedback, a term for this whole field of study, is concerned in general with the perception of the person's biological functioning not usually perceived by the conscious mind. Through the help of electronic feedback, which detect signals of physiological activities, the patient is taught to perceive and to control these physiological activities, as needed.

Neurofeedback, the specific part of biofeedback that is concerned with the brain's functioning, detects the brain's workings through electro-encephalograms (EEGs) obtained from specific areas of the brain, which is determined depending on the needs of the patient. It has been successfully used for re-training of brain-waves in people with ADD/ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactive disorder), as well as other problems like epilepsy, even drug-addiction and alcoholism.

The part of neurofeedback called '*alpha-theta training*' was specifically developed for training in awareness of reveries, or hypnagogia, at the threshold of sleep. The main purpose of alpha-theta training is the development of creativity, as communicated by the subconscious mind through reveries from the threshold of sleep.

The effects of hallucinogenic substances

The so-called 'hippie-era' of the 1960's left us with loads of personal anecdotes of 'wild' hallucinatory experiences due to ingestion of certain hallucinogenic substances, principally through the use of LSD, though unfortunately these experiences have been scientifically investigated by very few. It is well known that the use of hallucinogenic substances for the purpose of attracting 'visions' is nothing new. For example, the ayahuasca used by South-American Indians is a traditional shamanic tool, and is still used in the present in religious (shamanic) ceremonies in South America, mainly by societies who have contact with the Amazonian Indians. Peyote has similar origins, as well as similar uses in what is now Central America.

In 1990 Rick Strassman started research with DMT, which is the same molecule that produce visions present in the ayahuasca. N,N-dimethyltryptamine, abbreviated DMT or N,N-DMT, is a molecule with powerful psychedelic properties. It is the simplest of known psychedelics, and is very common in the plant and animal kingdoms. DMT formation takes place in human brain, lung, and red blood cells. According to Dr. Strassmann,

'DMT fairly reliably induced in our volunteers a profoundly altered state of consciousness in which took place a seeming separation of mind from body. Volunteers also reported experiences that share features with mystical and near-death states. Many described the sense of contact with beings variously described as sentient, with whom they communicated. A few described scenes from what they believed was the future; in other words, prophetic visions.'

Unfortunately, his research stopped in 1995; he describes the conditions, complications, and results in his book *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*.

The important point to be considered about the effects of hallucinogenic substances is that ALL bring *mystical experiences* or *visions* that may be interpreted as the further development of hypnagogia. It is also important to note that shamans do not always use hallucinogenic substances to produce visions, but have alternatively made use of methods such as the North American Indians' sweat-lodges, the dances performed by African shamans, as well as the Middle Eastern whirling dervishes. Modern techniques have included breathing techniques (something Yoga also suggests), and sensorial deprivation. (See also, the work of Christina and Stanislav Grof.)

Hypnotic reveries

Historically, the methods of healing developed by Mesmer, called mesmerism, has caused in some people a phenomenon that was called a *crisis*. In the use of Mesmerism for healing, it was believed that this crisis was necessary for healing to ensue. However, in the late 1700's Armand Marie Jacques de Chastenet, marquis de Puysegur, discovered through the use of Mesmer's techniques on one of his employees, Victor, to treat fever and congestion in the lungs, that he had fallen asleep peacefully in his arms. However, he soon discovered that Victor's sleep was different from the natural sleep, and that it appeared more like the type of sleep commonly observed in somnambulism. Due to this similarity, he then called it a *magnetic somnambulism* or *magnetic sleep*, among other variations, because it was produced by the so-called *magnetic passes* of mesmerism. The development of both – the techniques of mesmerism and the state that came to be known as hypnotic sleep – later formed the theories and practices of what is known as *hypnotism*. The term hypnotism is attributed to James Braid, in the first half of the nineteenth century. The state of magnetic-somnambulism is undistinguishable from what is now called *hypnotic trance*. (See Adam Crabtree for more on the history of hypnotism.)

Milton Erickson during the 20th century discovered what could be called lighter states of trances, or of common everyday hypnotic states, or trances, usually not recognized by a person in normal waking life. These are subjective states of the mind that apparently parallel our everyday conscious states. Erickson developed techniques to tap into and to influence these parts of the person's behavior, so that he could effectively reduce certain problematic behaviors or control pain. In comparison to the long and involved treatment practiced by psychoanalysis, Erickson's methods came to be known as the fast-therapy. It took just a few sessions to achieve the therapy goal, as opposed to the long-term treatment required by traditional psychiatry.

My point in introducing the subject of hypnotism here is the fact that a person in a hypnotic trance, may be suggested to experience imagery or visions that are generated on the spot. So, in this sense, the person hallucinates. Or the person may be influenced to not see something that is there, which is a negative type of hallucination. Also, during the hypnotic trance, it is possible to access what I would

call, *the wise part of the mind* – which could be the super-conscious mind, as it has been introduced above. The well known American medium Edgar Cayce, accessed this part of the unconscious to become aware of cures for diseases, as well as other information not related to health. My other objective in talking about hypnotism, is the opportunity to also introduce what is commonly defined as a trance.

More about *trance*

A trance is a state of the mind in which a hypnotized person is focused in the imagery suggested by the operator. However, as Erickson discovered, there are many situations in our everyday awake-life, where we enter a trance. Here is the surprise – during our activities, we may enter lighter (or even deeper) states of trance, exemplified by our mind being intensely focused in one activity, while the rest of the world goes unnoticed. Driving a car to work, while thinking about something that worries us, then realizing we didn't notice the trip is a common event. When we get so involved in the story of a book in such a way that we completely forget the distractions of the world, or don't notice the passage of time, is another common example of a trance.

Spiritist mediums use trance to allow for spiritual communication, the so-called 'incorporation of spirit,' and other activities. However, the spiritist medium induces a form of self-trance, as opposed to the way hypnotic trance is induced, through the use of a hypnotist or an operator. It is interesting that some of the behavior of spirit-incorporated mediums is quite similar to the description of the mesmeric crisis as described in the time of the mesmeric healings of the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century, and during the early times of the European (and to some extent the American) spiritism. This form of spiritism is still widely used in Brazil, where I have observed these crisis, in which the medium would sometimes enter as a result of the incorporation of a spirit. The spiritism brand of trance state is mainly used as a tool to allow for the incorporation of a spirit. Also, spiritism uses magnetic passes quite in the same way as in mesmerism, which is understandable if we recall that Alan Kardec, whose ideas are strongly reflected in the 'white spiritism' practiced in Brazil, as opposed to the African brands of spiritism, was a contemporary (nineteenth century) of the hey-days of hypnotism. We should also not forget that there are religious (Christian) groups that practice entering a crisis (frequently understood as demonic possession), and the so-called 'talking in tongues.'

As related to the state of trance and to the spirit incorporation of the spiritism, when a person is in an alternate personality in the condition of multiple personality disorder, the new personality may be quite different from the every day personality of that person, something quite analogous to when a person is *incorporated with spirit* in spiritistic practices.

Finally, I should mention here that some modern explorers of lucid-dreaming and out-of-body experiences suggest that the process used to enter the sleep onset so as to produce an out-of-body experience, or a wake-initialed lucid-dream, is also a type of trance. Robert Bruce is the principal defender of this idea.

The issue of Awareness

Here is an example of an instance of heightened awareness: ***‘Look around and remember you are here!’*** Then ask yourself: ***‘Am I dreaming?’*** This causes our level of awareness to increase, as it was suggested by Stephen LaBerge for the purpose of lucid-dreaming *reality testing*. I consider this test to be the best practical training technique to increase awareness within the restrictive ‘awareness-condition’ that we usually have during dreaming. The higher the level of awareness of our mind during a dream, or during the sleep onset, the better do we remember the events that happen during these situations. If we can’t remember what happens during a dream or during hypnagogia, then it is the same as if it never happened!

The concept of different *levels of awareness*, as applied to the functioning of the mind, may be the same thing as the concept of different *levels of attention*. Higher levels awareness, or of attention, tend to result in good memory of the events at the moment in time they happened, while low-levels of awareness, like the ones we usually have in dreams, tend to be forgotten.

Next I will talk about both, dreams and out-of-body experiences, as they are both related to the state of sleep, and to the possibility of developing awareness during the sleep state. The first one we are all acquainted with is the dream state, as it is a natural state that we all enter several times during sleep.

Dreams:

Following is a list of the types of experiences during sleep that are usually related to dreams:

Dreams without awareness

Common dreams – without awareness

Special dreams – without awareness, but which produce strong impressions, as with the case of dreams of the future, or of dream with problem solutions

Dreams with awareness

Lucid-dreaming – the person recognize he/she is dreaming (awareness becomes present)

Out-of-body experiences & astral-projections – the person enters a dream with awareness from the awake state – also called ‘wake-initiated lucid-dreams’

Hypnagogia – At the threshold of sleep and awakening

The following is a list of situations during which the individual may become aware of the two types of hypnagogia:

Hypnagogic reveries:

Falling asleep while keeping awareness

Wake-initiated lucid-dreams or out-of-body experiences

Exceptional remote-viewing event where the “viewer” feels himself or herself to be entering the targeted environment

Alpha-Theta session when imagery begins

Meditation session when imagery begins

[Visions?]

Hypnopompic reveries:

Continuation of dream imagery while awakening

Awakening from a lucid-dream, or returning from an out-of-body experience or astral projection

Residuals from a remote-viewing session

Alpha-theta session - residuals

Meditation session - residuals

[Visions?]

Visions are included in the list, due to the possibility of having the same characteristic as hypnagogia, only happening while the person is fully awake, or perhaps in a lighter state of trance.

Let's now review what I have learned with relation to the skill of out-of-body experiences and lucid-dreaming. It is important to remember that if we carefully compare experiences of lucid-dreaming and out-of-body experiences, they frequently are very similar, though sometimes the nomenclature and the philosophy are slightly different.

Learning to have out-of-body experiences

After many years experimenting with out-of-body experiences, I came to believe that there is the need of a method, a procedure, or a protocol, to help individuals to detect and to understand situations that are conducive to out-of-body experiences, or of wake-initiated lucid-dreams. A record of the experiences is a must, as it is a good tool to help memory. So, keep a diary! Memories of dreams and out-of-body experiences tend to be slippery or short-lived, and if not rehearsed and taken note of, they tend to be soon forgotten.

While in a pre-sleep situation, levels of awareness or of attention are quite unstable, or precarious. That's why it is so important to practice 'reality testing' throughout the day, not only for the purpose of remembering to do it while dreaming, but also as a means of automatically increasing the mind's level of awareness, or level of attention, while falling asleep. This is very important when we reach the point where we have lost normal wake-like awareness. In these situations the subconscious mind – if there is a habit of doing so – will 'kick-in' a higher level of awareness after the person has lost it in the process of falling asleep. The process followed by the subconscious mind at this point is exactly the same as it does during the common dream state: the increase of the level of awareness during the threshold of sleep will help you to produce an out-of-body experience, while if it happens during a dream it will transform it into a lucid-dream.

Next comes an important activity we should practice while falling asleep: *continuous self-observation*. While falling asleep, self-observation will help you to observe what comes along when you are reaching that optimal situation where your physical body is asleep but your mind is awake, even if awareness becomes precarious. It is a tricky situation, and many times we will slip into unawareness and the hypnagogia, or dream imagery, and the opportunity will be missed in the resulting un-conscious sleep.

What to observe?

We should note all perceptual anomalies, such as kinesthetic sensations of floating, or of falling through the bed; we should note auditory and visual imagery or perceptions of any kind; also, there may happen perceptions of touch, which can be unnerving to some, as it may presuppose a foreign presence in the bedroom.

An example of a radical experience of hypnagogia with the perception of touch, from my own memories, happened while I attended graduate school in Sao Paulo (Brazil). I was sleeping on my tummy, when I felt as if the blanket moved by itself upward on my back. That sensation awoke me, and I touched the blanket on my back and verified it was in the same position as before. Then, once again as I approached sleep, the same sensation happened again, but this time I decided to allow it to continue, just to see what would happen. The sensation continued, quite like a warm, fluffy, and slowly vibrating sensation that I had perceived as the blanket, and it finally stopped after covering both my ears. Soon after covering my ears, I heard a man's voice, but I couldn't make out what he was saying. It sounded garbled! So, I said 'Repeat!' Then, the most amazing thing happened: I clearly heard this man say to me: 'Believe in Jesus, I wish you peace.' I once again said – 'Repeat!' and the same was repeated once again. I asked a third time to repeat, and again the same phrase was said, followed by the withdrawing of that perception of a fluffy warm 'thing' that moved away from my ears and down to about the middle of my back and off. I made myself to come out from the threshold of sleep and marveled at what had just happened. The curtains of my bedroom window were open, and I could see the full moon in the sky, and I remained there with a peaceful feeling.

The most amazing thing about the man's voice that was noticeable, principally for the fact of my being in Sao Paulo, was that he somehow resembled the voice of my mother's youngest brother, and the Portuguese accent was noticeably different from the Portuguese spoken in Sao Paulo. The accent was actually similar to how my uncle would have sounded, as he lives in the Minas Gerais state, about 600 kilometers north of Sao Paulo! I could not help but to think that man may have been my mother's deceased father, who I have never met in life, as he died before my mother had even met my father.

We are able to attract Hypnagogia!

We may attract hypnagogia by, for example, the act of remembering the sunset or the sunrise at dawn, or how it feels to be floating in a swimming pool, the annoying headlights during a night drive, or an event of fireworks! Remember now my experience as told in the beginning of this article. That was an example of attracting hypnagogia that worked, though unexpectedly.

More remembering...

The overwhelming sound of an orchestra during a concert, the lightning and the sound of thunder, the sound of rain falling on the roof, and that of a careless walk at a beach with the waves crashing on our feet, are memories that bring along emotion and are therefore good memories to recall while falling asleep for the purpose of attracting hypnagogia. The vibrations you feel while riding on a motorcycle, or that bumpy ride while driving on a not well-maintained dirt road are also good memories to recall, because they may cause 'falling-dreams,' which are very common examples of kinesthetic types of

hypnagogia! Vibrations are another very common perception that we may feel while falling asleep, and that, depending on their intensity, may be frightening.

Another interesting sensation that sometimes happens during the threshold of sleep, and that some people use as a 'jump-start' for OBEs, is the sensation of dizziness. That sensation may appear along with the imagery of a tunnel – quite like the ones described by people in near-death experiences.

Distorted or changing perceived imagery of hypnagogia



I have frequently observed geometrical figures that are colorful, mostly while awakening. Also, I have many times observed perceptions that appear to be moving blobs on the field of view of my closed eyes that my mind transforms into images of a landscape or a person. I have observed that when these blobs disappear, it means I am fully awake, and therefore distant from the ideal condition for hypnagogia. While in the ideal condition for the formation of hypnagogia, but with open eyes and usually right after awakening, the mind may modify the view of physical objects to something else, a form of subconscious interpretation of the object, changing its perception into images of hypnagogia. One example I know of is from Lon Milo Duquette in his book 'Living with the spirits', where as a child he saw Jesus right after awakening, which later he verified to be just a dress. Also, Momir Maksimovic, an accomplished OBEer from Yugoslavia, told me of awakening from an OBE, and seeing a woman next to him. After a while, the image of the woman changed to the cloth that was hanging on the back of the couch where he was sleeping.

One of the most striking hypnagogia I have experienced was the sound of an explosion, which was accompanied with the visual of lightning or flashing. Fortunately, the sound of explosions is rare for me. However, it is common that we sometimes hear our names being called while approaching sleep. Also, as already mentioned above, it may feel as if somebody touched us, or there is a sudden source of light, or a double light moving from one side to the other of our field of view, just like a car's head-lights. But also, there may be peaceful visions of the sun or the moon, like the one I talked about before.

Are these perceptions Hallucinations? – We don't know!



Robert Bruce talks about the possibility of entering the imaginary world of a picture hanging on the wall. After being confused with the environment he entered after he left his body in one of his experiments with astral projection, he realized that the environment where he was resembled the picture on the wall of his bedroom. Astral projection is the traditional expression for the modern out-of-body experience. (Even though claims abound that astral projection is different from out-of-body experiences and lucid-dreams, in fact, they are indistinguishable.)

...You enter a dream! How?

While at the sleep onset, an image of a door or landscape may appear and you go to it, or enter it. Or you just feel yourself already there, as if by magic. This is a traditional visualization technique designed to attract this 'door' image, which may be used to enter some dream (or could it be astral?) world. For example, during the one workshop I attended specifically intended to teach out-of-body experiences, organized by the Institute of Projectiology and Consciousness (IPC), founded by Waldo Vieira, in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), one of the visual imaginations we were suggested to do was *to imagine a door and then attempt to enter it*.

...Or you don't!

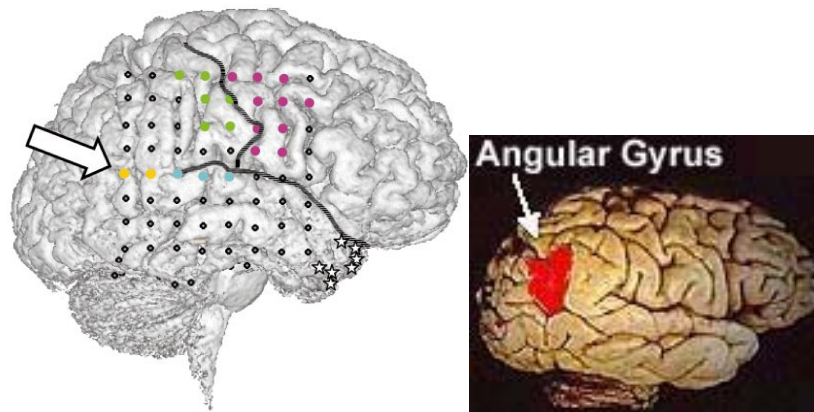
We may perceive ourselves as if floating. We can then 'catch' the moment and move out of our body, much like getting up from bed, only our physical body will not move. Then, already out of our body, we wander about our room, or we can go outside by going through doors or walls and attempt to fly and go elsewhere... and so on.

Brain Correlates

We have seen that all our perceptions may be reproduced within hypnagogia. Each sense - sight, hearing, touch, kinesthetic perceptions, as well as emotions, may be present within a perception of hypnagogia and beyond, within the dream state. The brain areas where these perceptions are represented will 'light up' if a person is under observation in a sleep lab, just as they would if experienced during waking life.

Example: Brain-correlate in OBEs

Researchers from the University Hospitals of Geneva and Lausanne (Switzerland) have found that OBEs can be produced by direct electrical stimulation of a specific part of the brain. [Blanke, O., Ortigue, S., Landis, T. and Seeck, M., Stimulating illusory own-body perceptions. *Nature*, 419:269-270, 2002.] [Below, Figure 1.]



According to Blanke et al.,

... we describe the repeated induction of this [out-of-body] experience by focal electrical stimulation of the brain's right angular gyrus in a patient who was undergoing evaluation for epilepsy treatment.

Figure 1 [above] shows the results of stimulation mapping and the electrode site on the right angular gyrus where stimulation repeatedly induced OBEs, as well as vestibular and complex somatosensory responses. Mapping of motor, somatosensory and auditory functions revealed no deviant brain pathology in this patient with respect to anatomical representations of cortical functions. The epileptic focus was located more than 5 cm anterior to the stimulation site, in the medial temporal lobe; electrical stimulation of this site did not induce OBEs, and these experiences were not part of the patient's habitual seizures.

This communicate has been frequently used to discredit out-of-body experiences and near-death-experiences. Yet, in my opinion this article only demonstrates a possible site in the brain that correlates with the perceptions we have when we achieve an OBE. Again, it is important to understand that everything we experience in the physical body ought to have a correlate within the brain. Obviously, this needs to be true, even if we in fact move away from our physical body in some form of 'astral body.'

Possible problems - *Difficulties with hypnagogia and what to do about them*



Fig. [Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare*]

Fuseli's nightmare painting is one of the most frequently seen representations of nightmares involving the perception of a negative or evil presence, like the incubus or succubus, similar to the one represented in the painting. Among the characteristics of this problematic hypnagogia is the so-called sleep-paralysis. However, we do not always perceive any beings in these instances. For example, I have frequently had annoying vibrations along with the paralysis, yet I had no other perception. My mother, on the other hand, used to tell about her problems with a big fat lady sitting on her chest, while she was unable to move and rid herself of this uncomfortable dream. Difficulty with breathing and paralysis are common characteristics of hypnagogia that includes sleep paralysis. (A more detailed description of this condition can be found in the article by Terrillon and Marques-Bonham.)

Hypnagogia & Sleep-Paralysis

The following is a list of some of the characteristics of this problematic hypnagogia.

Sleep Paralysis & Recurrent Sleep Paralysis characteristics:

- Unable to move with or without breathing difficulties
- There may be visions of monstrous creatures (incubus and succubus, for example);
- There may be the perception of evil nearby, and its consequent intense fear
- Sleep paralysis may happen at the same time as intense "vibrations" throughout the body

The perception of *vibrations* has been argued to be a key perception that indicates the onset of OBE. However, in many of my self-experiments the disconnection of the ‘astral-body’ (if that is what that separates from the physical body) happens so smoothly that I don’t notice it, which for me indicates the fallacy of this modern belief. I suspect that hypnagogia where there is the sensation of vibrations may be more related to energetic-like (Kundalini) phenomenon, as it will be discussed below, than a necessary condition for the achievement of an OBE.

What to do to get out of a problematic hypnagogia?

One common suggestion made to break the sleep paralysis state, is to attempt to move one finger, which when successful will break the state and the person awakens. Eyes may open during the sleep paralysis, or the person may believe they are open. However, the ability to see in this state may be only an illusion. On the other hand there may be a real possibility to see with the eyes closed, if the ‘third eye’ opens in such a way that we see the environment we are in, or perhaps a similar environment. This has happened to me, and I could see the environment of my bedroom without any movement of my head.

It is important to *get informed!* For example read the article on “*Recurrent Isolated Sleep paralysis*” – or the book by David J. Hufford, *The Terror that comes in the night*. Also, the difficulty of breathing may be a real symptom of sleep apnea, where the natural breathing during sleep stops. This is a dangerous condition and it requires the attention of a sleep specialist to confirm its presence during sleep.

From my article with Terrillon, here is what we suggest:

[Note: RISP means ‘recurrent isolated sleep paralysis’, which is an academic term used for the more severe case where this phenomenon happens with a high frequency.]

When feeling a presence at the beginning or during a RISP episode, try to face it. Stephen LaBerge (1985) has suggested that, upon encountering an evil presence during a lucid dream, one should face it and try to transform it, or the unpleasant situation, into something good. There is a “forgiving attitude” in this suggestion, which might result in a transformation of the “evil presence” into something either neutral or outright friendly. Equivalently, a similar course of action can be used when having hypnogogic or hypnopompic hallucinations at the beginning of an episode involving the feeling of an evil presence. Other tactics might be to shout at the presence in order to conquer the fear, or prayers for religiously inclined individuals, which can help build a positive attitude. Finally, when hearing an increasingly loud buzzing sound, and/or feeling increasing pressure on the chest or inside the head, one might state repeatedly to oneself that RISP is not dangerous, so that one may proceed to the (generally more pleasant) next phase of the episode. An interesting approach to cope with RISP that is often used in Japan, where sleep paralysis is prevalent and is named “kanashibari” in Japanese, meaning “still-bound,” is humor: RISP has been discussed repeatedly on various Japanese television programs, and jokes about RISP are often added to the serious discussions, just as jokes about RISP are also included sometimes in television “durama” (dramas) in Japan.

I would like to remind the reader here that more frequently than not, hypnagogia involve peaceful and beautiful images. Fear should not stop us from enjoying these special moments.



Next, let's review phenomena that may appear during hypnagogia.

Phenomena - *There may be overwhelming surprises! What are they?*

- The sun (or the moon) is coming up in my reveries. Why?!
- Why in the world am I dreaming these annoying car-head-lights moving by?
- Why do I feel itchy when I am trying to relax?
- VIBRATIONS!!!! What in the world is THIS?!
- Thunder?! - From where? There is no storm coming by...
- Strange... I thought I heard a bell, a glass being broken, a weird sound...
- Weird... A window opened on my forehead!!

Do phenomena equal energy-like events?

The perceptual phenomena observed in hypnagogia may be related to what is known as the *Kundalini phenomenon*, or at least its 'stirrings.' Robert Bruce calls the lights we see suddenly during hypnagogia as 'strobing' of the third-eye (the Ajna chakra). Vibrations and itchy or current-like sensations are also supposed to be related to Kundalini-stirrings, as is the sometimes sudden dizzy feeling while falling asleep. Of course, there will be brain and CNS correlates to these perceptions - and these might span the whole brain and the nervous system throughout the body! However, the event known as 'Kundalini awakening' is a powerful event for our brain and CNS. It has been assumed to be very rare...

Gopi Krishna describes how he felt during his several powerful Kundalini episodes, as told in his book – *Living with Kundalini*. Irina Tweedee's personal story on her Yogic/Sufi training describes many of the phenomena present in the Kundalini stirrings. Also, there are stories told by people who attained Kundalini-like 'awakenings' through the ingestion of hallucinogenic substances. Much of what is traditionally known as shamanic experiences, may be related, if not the same as what happens during Kundalini events. See for example the books by Stanilav Grof, and the one by Darrel Irving,

about LSD intoxication leading to Kundalini events. Also see the book by St. John of the Cross, as well as others related to the experience of no-self, for the types of western (religious) meditation practices that produced exceptional experiences. And again, let's not forget our mentally ill people in our mental hospitals, as perhaps many of them may be just victims of our ignorance of this phenomenon.

Problems with 'energetic' events

The perception of energetic types of phenomena is quite natural during the persistent practice of methods that are similar to meditation, or that use trance-like mind situations. However, sometimes 'energetic-phenomena' become stormy! Or, Kundalini 'stirrings' may be confusing or overwhelming! It is important to understand that, due to the radical event in the brain and CNS, a Kundalini awakening is a serious business!

There are also cases where there is 'awakening' of this energetic phenomenon naturally, without any practices of meditation or similar techniques, perhaps simply due to a genetic predisposition. In this regard, see for example, the book edited by Gilles Farcet on dialogues with Stephen Jourdan. In these cases, there may be little recognizable warnings that something radical is about to happen, though by reading the stories told by a few people who have 'natural peak experiences' – or enlightenment, something that is also related to Kundalini, we can see a pattern clearly outlined throughout their lives that frequently points to unusual psychological events, not common to the population in general.

Also, the stormy Kundalini-like events may be present through emotional upheavals, and therefore again not recognized per se. Again, it is a problem arisen from ignorance on this extreme type of phenomenon of the CNS, unfortunately often not taken seriously by our academics or health professionals.

What to do?

Once again, I suggest you get informed! The Internet has loads of information and personal stories from people who have suffered Kundalini awakening in situations frequently involving meditation practices, though there are also cases where no meditation practices were involved. Reading case-histories and books on Kundalini awakening helps us to understand the variety in both, the characteristic phenomena and the various intensities that the energetic phenomena can take. If possible, find an expert! There are some health professionals who are informed about Kundalini troubles. The understanding of Kundalini phenomena may in the near future break the present cultural conditioning that prevails about the mentally ill, which may lead us to view the mental and neurological phenomena present in the abnormal behavior of the mentally ill in a new light. A friend of mine who has undergone many events of Kundalini-like awakenings, which are events where there is expansion of consciousness, argues that the phenomenon seems to be quite akin to epileptic events, however in an organized way, as opposed to epilepsy per se, where the 'electrical storm' in the brain is disorganized. But we will have to wait for serious research in this area to test the veracity of this conjecture.

Here is an example, again from my personal history, of an experience with the energies of Kundalini. In February of 1991 I had been for more than a year systematically practicing a method I learned in

Brazil, to develop the ability to have out-of-body experiences. (See reference by Bianca.) This method has characteristics of both, the meditation and the energetic like practices as the ones suggested by Robert Bruce. So, one evening while I was practicing, I suddenly had this intensely bright light shining on my forehead, which instantly took me from the attention to the exercise, putting me into an intense effort to not break my relaxed state. However, soon it went off, and I managed to continue my exercises, only to again be surprised by the same type of intense light on my forehead. After the second time I could not maintain my state, and fully came out of it, puzzled by the phenomenon. Unlike the sun-imagery of the hypnagogia described at the beginning of this article, this was almost physical. I pondered if I could be seeing the reflection on the wall from car head-lights driving by the window. My bed was facing the wall opposite to the window. I decided to check, but at every instance in which a car happened to drive by, the effect was not even close to what happened before. At that time, and principally during the past year of systematic practice, I had many instances of strange dream imagery of a bright sun, as if intruding in a dream, which I thought of as being odd, but that didn't especially worry me. However now, I had something that I could not ignore any longer. Yet, I was unable to obtain any explanation for it, until a few years later when I found an article in an OMNI magazine that described experiences of seeing lights similar to the one I had, and more. At that time I was also not acquainted with the modern explorations by users of hallucinogenic substances, or about the Kundalini phenomenon.

Next, let's review one last issue related to the mind, which is about its development through learning, and which I believe is also intimately related to our everyday dealings with the 'unconscious' mind.

Developing the Mind

In the process of developing the mind, and because it involves learning, we need to consider the issues of training, the issue of centers of instruction (schools), and the issue of how to develop expertise. These are important considerations, as learning follows different phases, and frequently structured learning works better than disorganized learning. Training should happen through the help of an expert, which may be found in schools. When schools are not available, the person should preferably join a study-group, because the mind thrives better when it has the opportunity to benefit from different points of view. The acquisition of *expertise* is the extreme goal of learning, and may take years to develop.

In the process of developing the mind so that the conscious mind is able to communicate with the unconscious mind both ways, 'to and from', it is necessary to ask a tough question: *How do we communicate our intentions to the unconscious mind?* The following is a list that would justify the need for such a communication from our conscious mind:

- To be conscious during a dream, or while falling asleep (for OBEs and lucid-dreams)
 - The need for an answer to a difficult problem
 - The capture of a 'creative vein'
 - The development of a useful new skill
 - To obtain information from a distant location or person
 - How to heal a disease in ourselves, or in someone else
 - To know the future, given the present situation
- ...And so on

Learning ‘how’ is implicit in this list for whatever reason that we want to bring into the mind and to include in our long-term memory system, then to bring out of the mind answers to our needs or questions, or to learn about practical means to access our memories or to learn or perfect needed skills.

Is the knowledge accumulated about the brain and nervous system, as well as the mind, enough to obtain or develop a good methodology, other than what is already known? - I believe it is! Have we developed methodologies to achieve an effective way to communicate with the unconscious? – I believe we have!

Mechanisms

There are at present several methodologies - depending on what we want to do, to learn, to memorize, or to input into the subconscious mind with the goal of obtaining something in return. We have accumulated already considerable knowledge on the physical part of the brain and its resulting mind. However, we may have only facts on certain properties of the mind not clearly explainable (at present) by neuroscience. Telekinesis, telepathy, and remote-viewing, or any other extra-sensorial faculties are examples of phenomena that are not yet explained. Remote-viewing techniques on how to bypass the conscious mind are modern psychologically based techniques to obtain remote information.

Mechanisms or methodologies: A list

- ***The ‘Meditation’ know-how.*** A good example is that of the dream-Yoga practiced by some Tibetan monks – who are able to ‘lucid-dream’ throughout their sleep-period! (See ref. by Tenzin Wangyal Riponche (1998))
- ***Lucid-dream mechanism of ‘seeding the unconscious’*** – will bring about ‘awareness’ during the dreaming state.
- ***Alpha-theta training*** to learn to recognize, and change, brain-wave frequency (beta, alpha, theta, delta).
- ***Remote-viewing protocol(s)*** to reach for remote-information.
- ***Modern Learning-technologies*** – the use of technologies of learning to input a request or problem to the subconscious mind.
- ***The practice of self-awareness of the subconscious parts of the mind*** – or simply the building of a habit of purposeful self-awareness.
- ***Practice of Visualization*** – This is an important ability available, which when done with a purpose and persistence, can achieve results that appear miraculous.
- ***Self-Experimentation!*** I believe a good example is that of Momir Maksimovic, who was able to develop his own method where he would ‘astral-travel’ throughout his sleep period. There are others like for example, Robert Bruce and other modern writers on lucid-dreaming and OBEs, who in the last fifteen years or so have developed creative techniques through self-experimentation.

The problem of ‘seeding’ of the unconscious

Every time we are learning something new we are doing a process quite similar to the ‘seeding’ of the unconscious. The idea of ‘seeding’ the unconscious was offered by Stephen LaBerge, along with other modern lucid-dreamers, as a means to produce lucidity within dreams. In general, the process of ‘seeding’ the unconscious with an idea or goal can be useful in problem solving, as it grows with input of knowledge or information; it is free-wheeling in creativity, except by the use of developed skills; it is tricky with lucid-dream and out-of-body experiences, as we need to become conscious while sleeping; and it is also tricky with remote-viewing, as information comes up ‘fuzzy’ when the person is awake or at the borderland of sleep. Research and experimentation with lucid-dreaming has led to the development of practical techniques for ‘seeding’ unconscious; the literature contains many examples of attempts, failures, and successes.

Unusual outcomes of intense learning

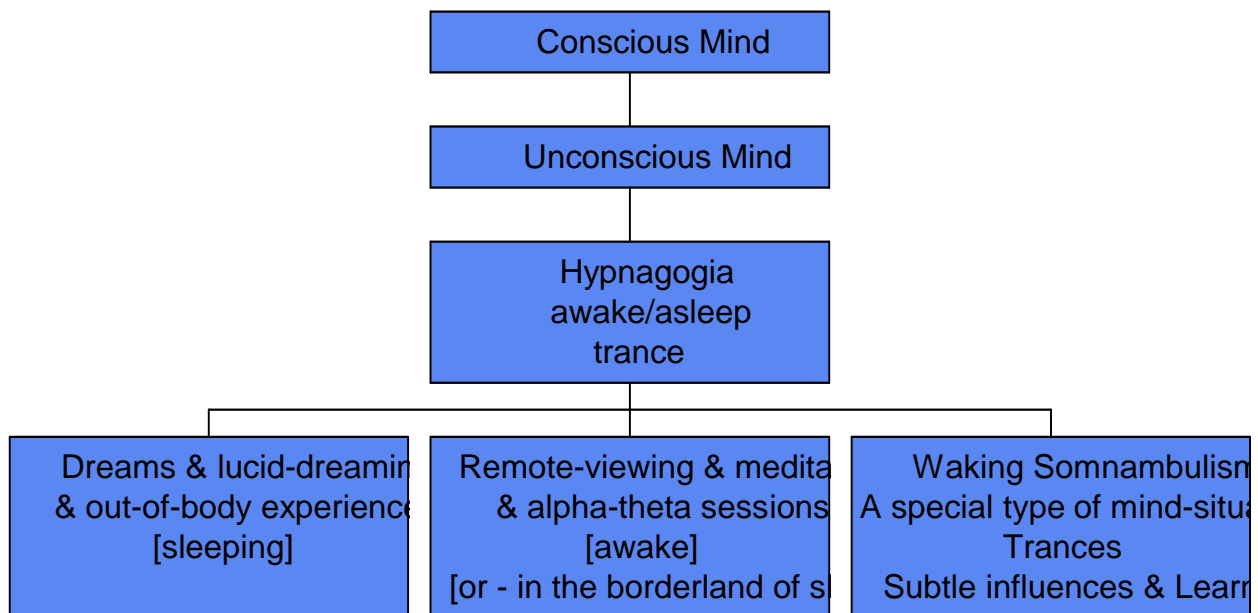
The results of learning in general may excite the brain and central nervous system to such an extent that will cause the upsurge of hypnagogia, or may produce energetic-like events. Examples can be suspected in cases like John Nash’s problems with schizophrenia, and in less extreme situations, in the many cases of a person’s development of stress-related mental and emotional instabilities. Examples of stress situations are plenty from soldiers fighting a war, students overloaded with academic work, stress at work, or family or life changes. As an example, one of my family members developed a severe case of visions due to extreme stress at work, and they only disappeared when these stressful situations ended. Also, there are cases where instead of mental instability, there happen ‘enlightenment’ types of phenomena. I suggest that both types may be related to Kundalini syndromes, of the bad (mental and emotional instabilities) and good (enlightenment or Kundalini awakening) types.

Learning and the state of trance

Entering what we could call a ‘learning trance’ is a natural event in all methods of learning, traditional and modern (academic) methods, because the focus necessary for obtaining information will naturally lead to a trance-like situation. There are also the methods of neurolinguistic-programming, which uses Ericksonian techniques of hypnotism, and neurofeedback for (re)-training of the brain-waves (alpha-theta training). The trances induced during a learning situation are mostly of the light types of trance, just like, as mentioned above, the driving of a car while busy with our thoughts is a form of trance. In learning, quite deep trances may be induced when the person is deeply into the subject, even if not fully recognized as such. The more focused the mind is during the process of learning, the deeper in the state of trance a person is.

Putting it all together: Mind Situations

In the above diagram I have put together the situations we have been discussing up to now. Note that the position of the conscious and unconscious mind in the diagram is artificial, as the division is arbitrary and normally there is no clear delimitation between the two parts. In this respect, the part of the mind we call the conscious mind is just the tip of the iceberg. The conscious mind appears to



direct the whole ‘play’ of behavior, but which is (or can be) frequently deceived, as it is demonstrated by the many histories of the phenomenon of hypnotism.

Also, in this sketch I have not clearly separated the sleep and wakefulness in the lower row, as ‘trance’ may be related to the meditative state, which by its turn is related to the states reached at the borderland of sleep, while at the same time present in wakefulness.

Reviewing the basic information on the unconscious

The **unconscious** is therefore understood as:

Subconscious mind: includes our memories, our habits, and the physiological processes necessary for the living organism

The super-conscious mind: includes our ‘wisdom’ – the part that knows the past and the future, what the organism needs to be healed, and when to jump-start the next step of evolution, by upgrading the Kundalini process.

More on the ‘super-conscious’ part of the unconscious mind – reaching for the source of wisdom

Here is a list of examples of situations where I believe the super-conscious mind is in action:

- Surprises in 19th-century explorations of Mesmerism - The somnambulist brought out ‘*the healer within*’. Again, Edgar Cayce provided many instances of this ‘wisdom’ that came while he entered a profound state of trance.

- Everyday intuition and creativity springs from the wisdom of the super-conscious mind.
- Difficult problem-solving: Remember Kekule's famous dream!
- Dreams of events in the future! Perhaps the influence of a common human wisdom, which would pervade and influence each human mind, in a process quite like Jung envisioned.

Wisdom and Synchronicity

So, we understand that the super-conscious mind is *wise*. I propose that the super-conscious part of the unconscious may also bring about events of *synchronicities*. Synchronicities involves situations or events that bring up opportunities for the resolution of problems, or to learn knowledge pertinent to a question or search by the conscious mind.

An example of synchronicity is related to my own experience with 'the light on my forehead' as told above. The synchronicity is how I found an explanation for this oddity. In 1993, I acquired a copy of OMNI magazine (see Patrick Huyghe (1993)) because it contained an article about lucid-dreaming. However, there was also another article that I decided to read, which was about difficult experiences people could have due to the practice of meditation. While reading this article I was immensely surprised that among other phenomena there described, due to the Kundalini phenomena, was the perception of lights during meditation. I immediately connected with my problem, and soon understood that the method I was practicing, supposedly for the development of out-of-body experiences, was in fact quite related to the practice of meditation.

A two-way interaction with our unconscious

I propose that a two-way communication means with our unconscious is possible:

- By reaching to the unconscious (sub & super parts of it) through the continuous practice of any protocol or method that includes techniques similar to meditation.
- By posing questions, requests, or intentions, then 'by listening' - preferably while in a meditative state, or in a state of trance. The 'listening' is an attitude of relaxed expectation, or of trust that we will receive an answer from our unconscious.
- By the choice of a special timing in going to sleep and/or getting up, so as to favor periods of rapid-eye-movement (REM), when dreaming is more likely, and also by taking purposeful naps. By repeating the process of meditation before falling asleep.
- By practicing exercises to increase awareness, through 'reality testing' (also from lucid-dreaming techniques), as suggested by La Berge.
- By practicing 'energy-type' exercises, as for example, the ones proposed by Robert Bruce, or any other technique that produce the development of this 'energetic,' or Kundalini related property of the nervous system.
- By practicing purposeful visualizations of the desired outcome.

Reviewing the process

Therefore, the suggested process includes the regular practice of any method similar to meditation, and I have stressed the importance of this practice, due to its ideal condition for the appearance of hypnagogia. It includes what is known as ‘seeding’ of the subconscious mind (from lucid-dreaming techniques). It is important to remember here that *this ‘seeding’ is similar to the learning process followed by our brain-mind to learn a new skill*. The process also includes a ‘listening’ or ‘expecting’ attitude: *the relaxed posture within the right condition* (meditation, sleep threshold, alpha-theta session, remote-viewing session), which should be taken as an attitude of *trust* on the wise part of the unconscious we call the super-conscious mind. Another important contribution by Wilson Van Dusen, came in the form of his book, *The Natural Depth in Man*, first published in 1972. In short, Van Dusen’s suggestion is that we are in constant contact with our unconscious, and that therefore, we can practice this interaction while fully awake in our everyday dealings. The practice of meditation, or of purposefully entering a ‘trance’, or other technique of focusing our attention inward, will help bring out visuals not easily obtainable while awake (except for a few who see ‘visions’). The ‘seeding of the unconscious’ and the practice of ‘reality testing’ will increase awareness in situations where it is too low, as when in a too deep state of trance or sleep onset, or when in dreaming situations within sleep.

It is important to make it a habit!

It is critical to make a habit of the listening or expecting attitude, which should follow our everyday activities. When the habit is established, it means the mind has incorporated this new skill. The problem-posing is already naturally done during our everyday activities. More awareness (or purposefulness) of this process means better results. This is what I have referred to above as the purposeful ‘seeding of the unconscious’. As suggested by Van Dusen, we are constantly in contact with our subconscious mind while awake, even if not aware of it. Then, it will be to our advantage to increase awareness of this contact, which is done by ‘reality testing’ during our waking period.

The format of the messages from unconscious

It is well known that frequently the unconscious will send us a message through symbolic imagery in dreams, or through synchronous events. This is of utmost importance, because if we do not understand the message, it will be lost. Remote viewing uses the method of imagery, and records the messages from the unconscious through the use of drawing and other artistic methods to translate the information, taking advantage of the use of various channels. In this case, the images sought are information from a remote location or person; what was important to know was the details from the target, not its symbolic meanings. However, frequently our hypnagogia or dream imagery that are messages from the unconscious will be symbolic, though with a flavor that helps us relate the imagery to the related event. It is implicit here that the person must have some mechanism to interpret these symbolic imageries, or should be an accomplished intuitive to get to the point of the message.

I myself have many times failed in the intuition part of understanding the meaning of the imagery sent to me by my unconscious; later, when the event happens, I realize that I missed the point

altogether. That is one issue that comes up frequently, and is one main reason for a person not taking the subconscious message too seriously, or abandoning listening to the messages altogether. The understanding of the meaning of the message included in the hypnagogia is important, but there is no sure way to develop this intuition, as the logical mind is always interfering with the interpretation. However, I trust that with practice the intuition necessary to understand the message eventually bypasses the logical mind to get to the heart of it, bringing in the full content of the message. I have not explored too many ways to overcome this problem, as I have not fully dedicated myself to that goal. The remote-viewing experience has brought to light many of these problems and how to deal with them. I consider their protocol a prime example of how to solve the problem of reception of 'fuzzy' information. Otherwise, we must find our own way in this path. Eventually, we will all arrive at a consensus.

After reviewing the facts, situations, and experiences that support the claim that hypnagogia is important in our interaction with the unconscious mind, what is new?

What I have attempted to convey in this article is the unified *UNDERSTANDING* of the process involved in the messages from the unconscious, and the need for a rational and persistent use of a *method, a protocol, or a schedule* for contacting the unconscious. I have also attempted to communicate that a *learning process* is implicit within these methods. I have attempted to convey *the understanding of the global and far-reaching aspects of the meditative techniques, or the state of trance, as well as its 'energetic' consequences, which are implicit within the brain and nervous system within our physiological mechanism.* Our participation in the process is dual, conscious and unconscious at the same time. However, there's nothing really new. There is only a panorama presented here that may help us to be more efficient in our dealings with the conscious and unconscious parts of our mind.

Conclusions

By understanding the processes of the mind, by exploring new avenues, by understanding and being open to phenomena, and by persistently posing as a listener to the inner wisdom, we will certainly reach the searched for *relationship* with our unconscious that is progressive, productive, and evolutionary. *The Kundalini phenomenon has given us a hint of what is to come!*

From the religious practices of meditation, to the intense efforts in studies or problem solving, to the search for inspiration in creative challenges, to remote-viewers, to the lucid-dreamers and OBE explorers, HYPNAGOGIA – seems to be an important form of communication from the 'unconscious' mind. We need to reach the unconscious mind through a specific method and its persistent practice, so as to develop a reliable two-way communication with the unconscious.

Do we know everything needed for a final picture of the process? I doubt we do. So, we need to keep exploring. We need to strive for what the ancient Greeks have been inviting: **[Human Mind] know thyself!** – Our persistent search for knowledge and related experiences will build the needed wisdom.

References

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Following are suggestions of references, mostly related to what I have mentioned throughout the text. It is not my intention to be thorough, but to offer the reader a significant list of references on the subjects mentioned in the article.

The author's website – *The Conscious Dreamer*: <http://www.TheConsciousDreamer.org/> , where you will find the “protocol” or method I use, and which I have thoroughly tested. There you will also find articles of my own authorship, as well as articles by other authors that I consider relevant. One of them is the article titled – *Kundalini phenomena, lucid-dreams and out-of-body experiences*, and the article with Jean Christophe Terrillon on sleep paralysis. [Cover-page drawing by Sirley Marques Bonham, 2007.]

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About the Author:

Sirley Marques Bonham is a Ph.D. physicist by education, but due to her long time involvement with the subject of consciousness, she also considers herself somewhat of a neuroscientist. She was born in Brazil and first came to the US in 1986 to follow post-doctoral research with the Astrophysics Group at the University of Chicago and the NASA-financed Theoretical Astrophysics Group at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab), located in Batavia (IL), near Chicago. Her main scientific work was done in an extension of Einstein's unified field theory, but she has also worked in neuroscience research at the University of Texas at Austin, and in biophysics for the US Air Force in San Antonio, Texas. She has also taught at universities in Brazil, South Africa, and the US.

Dr. Bonham's involvement with the phenomenon of Consciousness, as viewed by neuroscience, started in 1992 through a group of scientists at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, followed by a brief work with a group for research in neuroscience, specifically in the processes of memory and learning, at the University of Texas at Austin. Though she has learned about the paranormal through her father's interest in this area, it has been her practice to approach this science strongly rooted in a scientific perspective, which has influenced her personal self-experimentation with the phenomenon of awareness during sleep, represented by the modern approach to the so-called out-of-body experiences, and the recently developed techniques of lucid-dreaming.

Dr. Bonham came to live in Austin, Texas, in 1993. She presently is a visiting scholar at the Center for Relativity at the University of Texas at Austin, and is a member and scientist of the Institute for Neurosciences and Consciousness Studies (INACS). Her writings can be accessed at her website: <http://www.TheConsciousDreamer.org>