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Hyperspace Lucidity and Creative Consciousness

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From an epistemological perspective, lucid dreaming could be considered a way of knowing. Exploring lucid dreaming, then, becomes a form of inquiry into vast spaces of the mind. While lucid dreaming has broad applications, it has also been used as a contemplative, spiritual, and creative practice.¹ The practice of lucid dreaming ultimately leads to the practice of lucid waking, creating a recursive relationship between waking and dreaming awareness.

This chapter focuses on particular creative methods to explore lucid dreaming and specific transpersonal experiences within lucid dreaming that I call *hyperspace lucidity*.² Hyperspace lucidity refers to experiences within lucid dreams that are beyond time and space, transpersonal in nature, nonrepresentational, and impersonal, yet extraordinary and impactful. In choosing this term, I decided to rely on literature outside of psychology, theology, or metaphysics, mainly to avoid assumptions carried by words already laden with meaning. For example, the word *numina* can have relation to light; *God* is interpreted differently in different religious systems; *emptiness* has a Buddhist reference and is a particular experience within this tradition. I adopted instead a word from physics and mathematics, *hyperspace*, and I imply that the phenomenon is both beyond space and an umbrella under which many transpersonal experiences can take place.

When confronted with the transpersonal aspects of lucid dreaming from the standpoint of research, we need to rely on multiple forms of knowing to best inquire, describe, and communicate these extraordinary experiences. Since the nature of hyperspace lucidity is multidimensional, the methodology employed likewise has to be multifaceted. Any single method would be limiting, but the combination of methods may provide the epistemological richness necessary to approach the complexity of the phenomenon.

In this chapter, I discuss five creative methods I have devised in the past 30 years to explore the transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming, and in particular hyperspace lucidity. I give a summary of each method and explain how

the process informed the next method, as I creatively engaged with each inquiry. The topic remained the same, but the methods evolved as I allowed a spontaneous unfolding of the phenomena.

My background in science, in art, and in Eastern philosophy and practice has been essential to the development of these methods. My lifelong research began with a series of personal experiences of lucid dreams in childhood. Through time, I pursued understanding of the experiences scientifically, and later I engaged in art-based research to continue these explorations. Before these inquiries, several mystical texts by realized Eastern philosophers and prophets were of great interest to me. I studied them academically and became deeply engaged in their hermeneutic. Among the systems I studied were Buddhist views, Taoist philosophy, Baha'i perspectives, and shamanic epistemology. These approaches helped me to have a larger view while engaging in research on transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. For the purpose of this chapter, and from among several texts, I chose two texts that enabled me to move toward multi-epistemology, which in turn led me toward a *hermeneutic of creation*.³

EPISTEMIC UNCERTAINTY

To explore the unknown or the unknowable, one has to be comfortable with not knowing. Thus, *epistemic uncertainty* is acknowledging that inside not knowing there is a knowing and that knowing is not necessarily expressed in words. It is almost presumptuous to think that the only way we can express the knowing is through words.⁴

Many different ways of knowing are possible, including intuitive knowing, creative knowing, performative knowing, and so on. Quantitative scientific methods, in particular, are useful and even elegant when we are exploring the observable. However, the method of approaching the invisible are not as easily measurable, and other methodological paradigms might be more suitable.

Beyond concepts and thoughts, beyond desires and ambitions, beyond perception and psychological complexes lies timeless awareness. Lucid dreaming can dwell within that timeless awareness as a form of reflective practice that calls into question habitual behavior, fixed perceptions, and core beliefs or presuppositions. Not only is self-inquiry an integral aspect of this practice, but exploring lucid dreaming is also a vehicle to observe the mind's multidimensional nature and an occasion for a complex range of possible experiences.

Perhaps one of the most well-known and widely translated Eastern philosophical texts on the nature of timeless awareness is *Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing)*, written sometime in the sixth century BCE by Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu (Laozi). Translated, its title means *Tao* (The Way), *Te* (Virtue), *Ching* (Classic, Canon, Great Book). Lao Tzu offers his major philosophical presupposition very clearly in the first verse of this classic text. One of the numerous translations

offers the first verse in this way: "The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao."⁵ In many translations, "talked about" replaces the word "expressed." From the beginning, then, Lao Tzu reminds us that if we try to express and talk about the unknowable, we might be missing something. As the brief series of verses proceeds, using philosophical and poetic expression and employing nature metaphors, Lao Tzu hints at how *Tao* might be experienced. In so doing, he reminds us that there are ways of knowing other than through words or usual means of expression.

Another mystical text I explored in relation to this topic is by the prophet of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'lla, which lays the groundwork for the spiritual seeker and the levels of advancement toward the Beloved (in mystical texts, God is often referred to as the Beloved). Baha'u'lla's *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, written in 1863, was inspired by a question of a Sufi student directly connected to the work of the 12th-century Persian Sufi Farida's-Din Attar and his significant text, *Mantiq'u't-Tayr*, or *Language of the Birds*. Attar poetically used the metaphorical language of birds that are traveling on a journey to meet the greatest bird, *Simurgh* (the Phoenix). Each bird represented different aspects, such as the lover, immortality, and so on. The birds had to pass through the Seven Valleys to reach *Simurgh*, metaphorically the Beloved—demonstrating the different journeys of the seeker toward attaining Divine nature. Within the Baha'u'lla text, I focused on the sixth valley, the *Valley of Wonderment*. The verse I continue to be enchanted by is this: "One of the created phenomena is the dream. Behold how many secrets are deposited therein, how many wisdoms treasured up, how many worlds concealed."⁶

I used these two texts, the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Seven Valleys*, and in particular the two passages quoted here, as guideposts for my research and as sources of inspiration to launch into the unknown through the practice of lucid dreaming. Each of these verses holds a key to explore hyperspace lucidity. One text implies that there are worlds concealed in dreaming that we are able to explore when we are ready and prepared; the other reminds us that we might not necessarily be able to communicate what we find with known or regular instruments. The combination of these two teachings offers, first, that there are worlds within worlds that we can explore, and second, that perhaps we need to find innovative and creative ways of expressing the experience of these worlds and communicating the knowledge that is gained.

CREATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND DREAM LOGIC

The common initial experience of becoming aware during a dream often takes place in a particular dream narrative that usually involves one or more of the following elements: dream ego (the dreamer in the dream), dream characters (those we encounter in the dream), and dream objects or dream settings

(the environment of the dream). These elements are collectively referred to as potential *dream signs*. Paying attention to these dream signs, together with recording and reflecting on them, can provide significant clues to dreamers that they are dreaming and also assists with achieving awareness of our own dream ecology.⁷ Each of these dream signs contains its own sets of complexity. For example, a dream object such as a teapot might look like a teapot but might not function as expected. In pouring tea, noodle-like strings, in the form of undulating lines, might flow out of it. Looking inside the pot, one might find a golden egg as the source of these strings! Even though the objects—teapot, noodles, strings, and eggs—are all recognizable and familiar, they are out of their normal context, collaged into a new narrative. Within the creative dreaming mind, such intersections, combinations, and fusions of objects, events, environment, and dream characters are normal occurrences. To use a musical metaphor, the dreaming mind is more akin to improvisational jazz than to classical structure.

Dreamers may choose to engage in lucid dreaming for multiple reasons. Often the dreamer's intention intersects with a particular application or activity, such as healing, meeting the deceased, resolving nightmares, and creative problem solving, among others. These activities (incubated or spontaneous) may arise within the confines of a particular narrative based on known scenarios, or they may be created as a surreal collage of events with new twists. If we understand the nature of the dreaming mind as creative in essence, the dream narrative thus has its own epistemological reality. From the perspective of waking perception, the dreaming mind may follow a nonrational path; yet from the mind's view of the dreaming itself, dreams follow a logic of their own. Dreams are not consistent in subscribing to the rules of the physical or social worlds, or even to their own rules. For example, in the same dream gravity may exist and then cease to exist. Dreams' malleable, spontaneous, and organic nature follows the principles of creativity. When we dream, we are inside creative consciousness.

Engaging creative consciousness, we begin to think beyond the constraints of perception or structure. Creative innovation brings unlike events or skills together, perchance to experience a new synthesis and birth a new idea.⁸ Dreams employ the self's innovative capacities to construct new personal narratives, solve problems, connect events, and create new scenarios.⁹ For all these reasons, the creative nature of dreams is one of the best examples of creative consciousness.¹⁰ Even if dreams are not remembered or lucid, creativity in dreams continues without awareness.

Remembering lucid dreams enhances the understanding of the nature of creativity. Not only might we be pouring noodle-like strings out of the teapot, but we might also hold the source of the strings—the golden egg—in our hands. We might even have the urge to crack it open to see what is inside this

golden egg. What we experience might be a world within a world in which, by awareness of *being-with*, we participate in its creation.

Not only does the dream follow the principle of creative thinking, but the dream source may also have its own ingenious direction. By paying attention to our dreams and by exploring lucid dreaming, our creative abilities are enhanced. For example, on a personal level, had I not been aware of my dreaming life and been receiving inspiration from my dreams (and lucid dreams), I would not have been able to engage with my inquiry in arts and science. Lucid dreaming enhanced my perception and enabled me to be the co-creator with my dreaming mind, bridging those inspirations in waking, not only in scientific and creative activities but also in major decision-making processes in my life.

INEFFABILITY AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

A fundamental challenge arises when reporting dreams: the multidimensionality of dreams cannot be fully captured by words and narrative. This situation is even more problematic in the case of Big Dreams, involving transpersonal and other extraordinary dream experiences.¹¹ Much of the detail is lost in trying to translate one's experience. Recalling a dream becomes an act of selective perception. While we focus on the central image, it could be that certain spatial depth (perspectives?), images, and situations fade from memory because they are unknown or incomprehensible to us. It could be that we unknowingly "bracket" or leave out what is unknown to us.

What happens when the known perception and the familiar landscape disappear and the dreamer is confronted by the unknown? What I am referring to here is not a bizarre construct or surreal image, such as a table with a tail and the head of a beast, as in the surrealist paintings of Victor Brauner, or the melting clock of Salvador Dali. Both Brauner and Dali used familiar elements and objects either from dreams or creative thoughts to construct "dreamlike" images. In paintings of this type, classic surreal images were often laid within a dream landscape, with one horizontal line on the horizon implying time.¹² Rather, what I am alluding to is a particular experience in which the dreamer does not have visual, kinesthetic, or auditory references from waking life. The construct in this case is not a collage of unrelated known images or narrative, such as the earlier teapot example, but a construct of unknown and never-before-exposed experiences. These dreams—of the phenomena of light, void and emptiness, unity consciousness, and other nonrepresentational transpersonal experiences; that is, of hyperspace lucidity—are often referred to as *ineffable*. Because of their numinous quality, they are also referred to as *spiritual*, a term I refrain from using too often because it can have different implications for different people. The word "ineffable" is defined as "too sacred or too great to be expressed or described in words."

Stanford art scholar Elliot Eisner explores different types of knowledge and offers an argument for different ways of knowing: "Not only does knowledge come in different forms, the forms of its creation differ. The idea of ineffable knowledge is not an oxymoron."¹³

Within the experience of hyperspace lucidity, dream images, known environment, and dream ego and actions can disappear and at times dissolve. The dream may become devoid of content or concepts, yet consciousness remains. Because these experiences are often referred to as ineffable, it is challenging to communicate about or even research them. There is a knowing within ineffability that perhaps cannot be communicated through words.

Extraordinary dreams such as those of hyperspace lucidity challenge researchers in regard to methodology. What is the best method to research complex, infinitely open, and potentially unknown phenomena? How can we best gain access to them or communicate them? Quantitative methods engage phenomena horizontally (with quantitative description); qualitative methods explore the depth of themes related to the experiences vertically. What happens when words fail? If the phenomena are incomprehensible, or too complex to be narrowed down to the sequential framework of language, inquiry begs for the researcher to invent new methods to explore them.

Research into the unknown territories of consciousness, then, poses many methodological concerns. Charles Tart launched *state-specific science* to train researchers to enter specific altered states of consciousness from which they might be able to develop observations—and theories based on those observations—so as to apply a scientific method to evaluating whether experiences have an inherent logic of their own.¹⁴ His attempts to develop methods from the transpersonal experiences of experts in the field show the challenges of using known scientific instruments to deal with the unknown, invisible realms of the psyche. In contrast, using creativity as a different way of knowing might complement and offer new perspectives to spark new ways of inquiry within hard science.

To best address these methodological issues, over time I have used five cross-disciplinary and complementary modes of inquiry to research and to communicate the transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. These methods began with the (traditional) quantitative method (1987–1989) and qualitative method, in particular phenomenology (1991–1994), and then moved on to three forms of art-based research: using still images (1996–1997), using new media and video (2004–2008), and using art installation (2013). Each method addresses a different pathway of exploration and communication—some using linguistic means, others visual artistic means. Some of these methods could be deemed traditional, whereas others might be considered innovative and avant-garde.

In the following section, I focus on my methodological attempts to explore and communicate transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. I give a summary

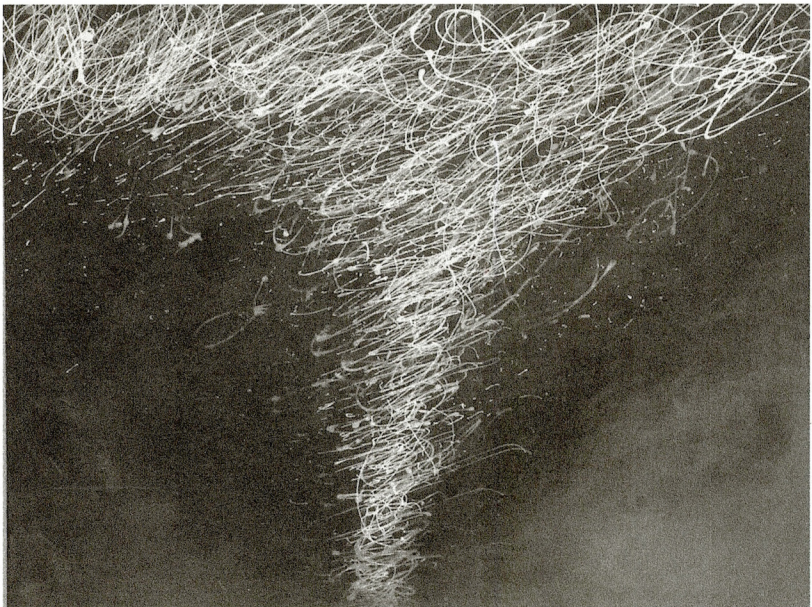
of each of these inquiry methods and show the process of how each method informed the next.

EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE IN A LUCID DREAM STATE: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY, 1984–1989

The first method I used for exploring lucid dreaming was meditation. The skill of self-reflectiveness allows the mind to lucidly enter into the hypnagogic state—that is, the state between wakefulness and sleep.¹⁵ *Hypnagogia* consists of two Greek works: *Hypnos* (“god of sleep”) and *agogia* (“leading to”). In this short juncture, which is often viewed as the transition between waking and sleep, the world of inner activities rapidly displays itself. The experience is not akin to a typical rapid eye movement (REM) dream or other state of consciousness in sleep, but dreaming-type experiences do occur in this state. The quality of this experience differs from other sleep states in that the imagery is more erratic, vivid, and often colorful in nature. (Figure 11.1) *Hypnagogia* is also auditory: hearing music, voices, choirs, and other sounds is common. *Hypnagogia* is a

Figure 11.1.

Fariba Bogzaran, *Hypnagogic Spin*, 2007, Third Script #12, 46" × 46", acrylic on canvas.



fertile ground for practicing lucid dreaming. Although traditionally the focus of lucid dreaming has been on the REM state in sleep, the hypnagogic state is an accessible state of consciousness to practice the method of lucidity.

In 1984, before I knew that I could use meditative methods for hypnagogic practices, I relied on scientific instruments such as various biofeedback devices including Mind Mirror to sustain lucidity in hypnagogia.¹⁶ It was then that I decided that lucid dreaming was to become the topic of my scientific inquiry. Later, in the early 1990s, I discovered that by experimentation, exploration, and observation I had arrived at a practice similar to Tibetan Buddhist teachings relating to practices of *shamatha*.¹⁷

Even after Stephen LaBerge's classic 1985 book, *Lucid Dreaming*, was released, skepticism around this topic was high within scientific and academic circles.¹⁸ LaBerge systematically proved the validity of lucid dreaming through his laboratory research and was creating a sophisticated induction biofeedback device, *DreamLight*, to explore the phenomenon. At that time, besides a few anecdotal reports, there had not been a scientific study of dream incubation relating to transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. Between 1986 and 1989, as part of the Lucidity Project team with LaBerge at the Stanford Sleep Laboratory, I focused my research on transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. Various experiments took place, including incubation methods with the *DreamLight* device.

Exploring divinity in lucid dreaming without scientific instrumentation had not yet been done. Since the realm of experimentation was new, I had to create a method to explore this topic. The method evolved organically. First, I reflected on the history of how this practice had been important throughout time, even involving, in some cultures, dream incubation temples such as existed in ancient Greece. Second, I explored how intention could clearly be carried over to lucid dreaming. Third, I examined how existential questions, when posed sincerely, can invoke impactful experiences. In Tibetan Buddhism, this method is referred to as *pure motivation* and *pure intention*.

In the laboratory, LaBerge gave clear tasks to the dreamers—in particular, memory tests two hours before the participants went to sleep. One of the important tasks was to remember to perform deliberate eye signals indicating that the dreamer knew he was dreaming. This signaling often was remembered in the last two REM periods when the dreamer spent longer periods of time dreaming; the memory was also triggered and aided by the flashing light of the *DreamLight* biofeedback device. After signaling, there were other tasks the lucid dreamer had to remember. Having watched many lucid dream activities via signaling in the laboratory while hovering over the polygraph paper, I realized it might be possible for an advanced lucid dreamer to remember to ask an existential question and to be able to sustain lucidity, perchance to witness the outcome. I knew this was possible, as I had done it myself and I had read a few accounts of it,

but I wondered if it were possible that such experiences could be induced within a specific incubation time period.

LaBerge was supportive of this idea and provided me with an archive of countless letters related to lucid dreams that he had received from people across the country. From that pool of about 2,000 letters, I was able to choose 250 experienced lucid dreamers to invite for the research; 77 joined the study, of whom 35 were able to carry their intention in the lucid dream. I proposed the incubation period be two weeks, which seemed the right amount of time to sustain the participants' interest and intention without too much distraction.¹⁹

I was well aware that creating a scientific method to seek God in dreams is presumptuous. In particular, using quantitative research techniques seemed paradoxical. It became apparent that the key is to work with and be aware of the limitation of the method, rather than limiting the phenomena. The quantitative method is one way of knowing. Instead of thinking that this method would bring an ultimate answer regarding the magnitude of the phenomena, I viewed it as an initial step for gathering information about the varied experiences. Is there a monopoly on the experience of divinity in dreams, I asked, or are the phenomena experienced differently by different individuals depending on their historicity and religious belief?

Before embarking on this research, and during it, I followed an intuitive knowing; to have a deeper engagement with this experience, it was essential for me not to rely solely on my few previous spontaneous lucid dreams on this topic, but to dive deeply into it with the same method myself. Like an astronaut who takes the risk of launching into the great unknown of space, I, as an *oneiro-naut*, launched deeper into the space of the lucid mind. Although the study was quantitative, objective, and scientific, and there was no requirement that the researcher even have the experience, I realized that if I partook in the research, I would be able to view the findings with a much larger lens. Therefore, I assumed a personal semi-retreat for almost two years to incubate transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. First, I did the two-week incubation method that I had assigned to the other study subjects, but then I continued to incubate while I was conducting and writing about the research.

I had a variety of intense, numinous experiences while on this semi-retreat. These experiences ranged from the known narrative in hypnagogia, morphing from surreal imagery to phenomena of inner light and the numinous, to experiences of massive funnel-like movements transforming all content to another space-time. They also ranged from abstraction of the content to experiences of no content. Often the non-dual nature of the experience became also nonlocal. They seemed to correspond with the opening of the energetic systems in the body. These energetic systems are well recognized in ancient wisdom traditions, such as in the meridian channels in Chinese medicine, the circulation of qi in Qigong practices, and the activation of *uma* in the spine within the Tibetan

Buddhist tradition and other systems of yoga. These “streamings” of life energy, as Wilhelm Reich referred to them, are also an essential occurrence in Kundalini experiences, something that researcher Ted Esser currently explores deeply in his qualitative and quantitative research on lucid incubation (as described in his chapter in this volume).²⁰

The research with participants across the country with different backgrounds and religious beliefs clearly demonstrated that it is possible to have transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming via the incubation method. Findings showed a strong correlation between core spiritual beliefs and the experiences in the incubated dreams. This relationship indicated that our experiences can be limited or expanded based on our belief system. The power of core belief, in turn, can affect our perception of reality. In addition, setting intention can invoke and influence experiences. The study revealed that in light of flexible core beliefs, unexpected experiences might arise. Further, it showed that setting an intention and choosing a particular vocabulary can direct behavior inside the dream. Therefore, the way we construct language and set intention plays an important role in the direction of our thoughts and behavior.

It is expected that presuppositions about a phenomena might bring a certain result. But what happens when there is no expectation? The study showed that if the mind is presented with a big question within lucid dreaming and there is no attachment to the result, then within the unexpected the complex workings of the phenomena can be displayed. Cultivating the open mind as prescribed in Zen Buddhism means accessing a state of mind where there is no presupposition and the mind is open to not knowing. In that state, the experience seems to unfold from *creative consciousness*. Attempts to capture the experience with terms such as *emptiness*, *void*, *state of awe*, and *grace* are used, but each of these terms often carries presuppositions with previously attached meanings associated with them.

The study, and various synchronicities and extraordinary experiences of my own during and following the research, clearly showed me that there is “knowing inside not knowing.” This *epistemic uncertainty* requires keen listening, intuitive knowing, and then a creative act. The study organically led me to examine core beliefs and explore a qualitative research method addressing this particular philosophical and practical quandary.

Moving from quantitative research to a qualitative approach is challenging. How does one shift from the paradigm of cause and effect and controlling variables to a method with different sets of roles wherein the researcher can also be part of the research? How does one account for reliability and the integrity of the research? Adopting a new method does not happen by just learning the skill, but rather by deconstructing an entire paradigm so as to fully incorporate the new one. Once the new praxis is integrated, then it is easy to move from one to the other. In mixed methods, the combination of methods can often bring

the most desired outcome. The next phase of my research in transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming was to apply the lens of qualitative research methods—in particular, phenomenology—to study hyperspace lucidity.

IMAGES OF THE LUCID MIND: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY, 1991–1994

Soon after finishing the quantitative research, I met Gordon Onslow Ford, the last member of the Parisian surrealists. We lived in the same rural Northern California area, separated only by a canyon. Unbeknownst to one another, each of us engaged in studies of the ineffable; I was exploring transpersonal lucid dreaming on one side of the hill and Onslow Ford was painting what he called the “inner worlds” on the other side. On my daily walks on the ridge during my two-year semi-retreat, I could see two dwellings in the middle of the forest below the canyon that I later learned were Onslow Ford’s home and studio; being on retreat, however, I never inquired who lived there. Through a series of synchronistic events, however, I happened to see one of Onslow Ford’s paintings and recognized in it elements of hyperspace lucidity. Events eventually enabled our meeting.

Ironically, Onslow Ford was not aware of lucid dreaming, but he explained that his intention since 1939 had been to explore the dimensions of the inner worlds through painting. It was clear that he was using painting as an inquiry into consciousness and a way of knowing about the nature of the mind. His theory of “line, circle, and dot” pointed to the possibility of moving into different states of consciousness, which aligned experientially with some of the transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming.²¹ The similarities between what he and a circle of his painter friends had discovered through visual imagery and my lucid dream experiences launched the next research process.

After reviewing several qualitative methods, I chose the most liberal phenomenological approach, developed by Sunny and James Kidd, called the *experiential method*.²² I worked closely with James Kidd for three years to learn and apply this method. Kidd was a “pure” phenomenologist. He could detect quantitative thinking within a couple of sentences. Before he agreed to work with me, he asked to read my thesis, *Experiencing the Divine in Lucid Dream State*. In our pursuant initial meeting, he handed me the text and suggested very seriously, “I highly recommend that you submit this piece of work to the Neptune Society [for cremation]—you have killed the phenomena!” In those years of working closely with Kidd, and through our regular dialogue, finally I began deconstructing and shifting my paradigm from the quantitative approach to embody the spirit of phenomenology.

In this study, I chose four highly experienced lucid dreamers, including two from my previous research, who had had hyperspace-like experiences. I then