

MORNING GENERAL DISCUSSION DAY TWO

GROSSO: I have a question for Dr. Hearne. I would like a little clarification on the notion of consciousness and on the notion of lucidity. First of all, I heard you say consciousness is *in* the brain, an idea I find logically difficult. If you have an image of two trees, you can say that one tree is to the left of the other; but it does not make sense to me to talk about that spatial reflection being in any sense located in the brain itself. So there is a logical difficulty with talking about consciousness being *in* the brain. Obviously there are correlations, but identity is something else. In other words, I am puzzled about how this research is really going to illuminate the nature of consciousness itself. I personally feel that consciousness is not something that can be explained. It is just there. It is given. It is one of the ultimates. We can talk about how it appears through different brain events, but I do not think you can reduce consciousness to any brain event itself.

You seem to equate consciousness with lucidity. That, it seems to me, is a mistake; lucidity is something else. I am not quite sure what it is. You said that many dreams become lucid as the result of dreaming that you are taking a walk down a road. Now, while you are dreaming that you are taking a walk down the road you are conscious of the road. What happens when you become lucid in that dream? It seems to me that something else is happening, there is a second order operation of consciousness if you are conscious of the fact that you are dreaming. Perhaps you are conscious of yourself, but prior to becoming conscious of yourself dreaming, you are still conscious. You are conscious of the road. That was a point that I thought needed to be commented on.

Another comment I wanted to make was, does it make sense to you to talk about being lucid while you are awake? In other words, let us say while I am awake I am experiencing a state of anxiety. It makes sense to me to talk about becoming aware that I am anxious and so in that sense I am no longer immersed in my anxiety or lost in my anxiety, but I have become lucid about my anxiety. Does that concept make any sense to you, being lucid while you are awake as well as being lucid while you are dreaming? Lucidity itself seems to be a concept that needs to be clarified in this context.

HEARNE: On the first point about consciousness being associated with the brain, this is not a scientific matter really. In a way it may turn

out to be a Michelson-Morley type of experiment. The Michelson-Morley experiment occurred at the beginning of the century. It was trying to find out the ether drift. It gave negative results and people could not understand this at all. There must surely be an ether. It gave rise to Einstein's ideas. We have got to start off here, looking at something happening. If there is nothing happening there, then we can look at other concepts. But it seems to be a logical scientific way to go about it to look for some sort of physiological index of consciousness in the brain.

On the second point, equating consciousness and lucidity—have you ever explained lucidity?

GROSSO: Yes.

HEARNE: It is a tremendous transformation. Suddenly you have a tremendous insight, awareness and so on. It is a massive change. In some way you can say it is conscious because it brings in long term memories of your self-identity. Something is suddenly switched on about the whole of yourself, because otherwise you do not know who you are in dreams. You could imagine you are anyone.

GROSSO: But you are still conscious because you are imagining.

HEARNE: There is a perceptual awareness, but there is no intellectual awareness. I think that can be said. But it is interesting to consider from this point of view that the process is one step back. There must be the dream-producing process which is trying to fool this observing person all the time, like over the light switch phenomenon.

On the third comment: yes, I think in a sense you can become lucid when you are awake. We are doing this all the time. At moments of insight and creativity and so on. Yes, it is an analogous situation. It is sudden, it switches on and all sorts of thoughts arise.

ALVARADO: I would like to ask about lucid dreaming. Did you mention something about studies of psychological correlates, such as personality variables and imagery skills, especially imagery control?

HEARNE: I did not mention any personality correlates with lucidity, but there have been some studies done by Gachenbach. Generally this approach is peripheral really and, as you know, you can get contradictory findings. There is not enough evidence available yet to make any definite statements.

GIESLER: I would like to address my questions to Michael Grosso, please. Michael, these questions have to do with two cases you mentioned, that I found most interesting—of spontaneous remission or reversal of schizophrenia and meningitis at the "moment of a near death experience." I wonder, what constitutes the "moment of near death experience" where you could actually get some diagnosis or measure by a *clinical* assessment (as opposed to a reliable laboratory verification) of a reversal of something like meningitis or schizophrenia?

GROSSO: These are just observations made by doctors of behavior change that indicated a return of normal capacity. Then the patients died. I did say there is no real clinical evidence for this.

GIESLER: So a brief observation of a change in behavior could not be definitely associated with a reversal of meningitis or schizophrenia, and thus the observations cannot constitute strong evidence, although it certainly is very interesting!

GROSSO: It is suggestive.

GIESLER: Okay, and if we take it *prima facie* as a reversal, what are the implications for consciousness? You were getting at it in your paper, but I wonder if you could say a little bit more about consciousness and disease and then these reversals when you suspend consciousness in the experience of near death.

GROSSO: I got this material from Osis' study. His suggestion was that somehow at the moment of death the consciousness is disengaging from the brain, from the physical organism. But he does not make it clear how that process of disengaging from the organism could in itself affect the organism in such a way that it ceases to display symptoms of meningitis. I really do not have an answer to that question. It is just one of the anomalies that seem to cluster around the phenomenon of death itself. I think a lot more has to be done to understand what actually is happening.

SCHOUTEN: Keith, this is not a question, just two small points. First, I have to admit that you have created a bit of confusion in me with your answer to Michael Grosso, because I always understood that "lucid dreams" means dreams where the dreamer is aware that he is dreaming. Then suddenly you put another element into it, probably connected with the word lucidity, which I do not understand. I think you should explain that lucid dreaming means just dreams you are aware that you are dreaming. I mean is there any reason to attach more to the term?

HEARNE: No, basically that is the definition of a lucid dream, where you know that you are dreaming. But another thing which I did not mention, which is a very important aspect, is that you can then control the dream. This is a very important aspect. You can make virtually anything happen, but there are techniques to use. This device, for instance, produces the hardware, but the software, so to speak, is knowing how to maneuver the dream. And there are ways and means.

SCHOUTEN: So there are no experiential differences apart from the fact that you are aware that you are dreaming?

HEARNE: Well, in practice that is an incredible difference, because you are aware, you have got your full awareness and your memories about you. Consider if you were in a dream and you became lucid now. You would know that this was just a dream setting and you would say

that you were really trying to communicate with someone you know in an ESP experiment. You could then do that, knowing full well that you are in a dream, whereas otherwise you might just be going on with anything. The insight is not there.

SCHOUTEN: Another small point is concerned with the light switch phenomenon. You stated yourself that probably the same imagining system is involved in making imagery and dreaming, which to me sounds very probable. But given that that is the fact, you can say, mentioning a sort of quasi-perceptual input, would it not be true that for all quasi-perceptual input there are limitations and that you can apply Verne's law to all perceptual inputs? I mean, I can imagine an airplane, but I think I cannot imagine an explosion which is ear deafening, to the extent that it is ear deafening. Or I cannot imagine looking into the sun to the extent that I do when I really look into the sun.

HEARNE: It depends on the amount of limitation, does it not, because often you see a situation like this in a dream, trying to switch on another light. There is Weber's law in psychobiology about this and probably there is some relationship there. To just reasonably increase the imagery is very difficult.

SCHOUTEN: Yes, but that is exactly the point. I think that if you ask somebody in his dream, when he is sleeping, to look into a light, bright room, it is very difficult to do.

HEARNE: It does, I am sure, depend on just the amount, the relative increase.

BENOR: Following the observation of Patrick Giesler, there are some reports, as I mentioned, of healers who view illness as the effect of the person's visualization of himself as ill. The near death period may be a time of releasing that imagery of illness at a point of leaving life, so that the illness in the body may be released and the person may return to normal for a period. It is fascinating to put in the same category the visualization of a person's self as invincible in doing fire walking, for instance, or other feats where it appears that a person's perception of himself alters his body's ability to function. At the same time as there are reports of people seeing themselves as invincible in doing fire walking, there are just the opposite reports of seeing themselves as one with the fire and therefore not affected by it. I do not know how this can work in seemingly opposite directions, but it is clear that a person's image of himself, his belief about himself, his anxiety about his state and other aspects which we probably have yet to clarify, can influence the physical state even in cases where there appears to be a physical illness, such as meningitis, which ought not to remit suddenly and be related to a state of consciousness, but in some cases apparently does.