

Panel Discussion: Should You Control Your Dreams?

Walter Bonime, M.D.

Jayne Gackenbach, Ph.D.

Patricia Garfield, Ph.D.

Eugene Gendlin, Ph.D.

Johanna King, Ph.D.

Jane White Lewis, Ph.D.

This panel discussion took place at the June 1990 Association for the Study of Dreams (ASD) conference in Chicago. After the panelists presented their views, a lively interchange took place.

Jayne Gackenbach: As the "technology" of dreaming in the last decade has validated and made more widely accessible lucid dreaming (awareness of dreaming while in the dream), dream control has become a reality. When the dreamer knows he/she is dreaming numerous studies have shown that a significantly enhanced sense of control over the dream events, dream characters, dream plot, dream ego and dream setting is possible. The purpose of this panel is to address the question of "SHOULD one control one's dreams?"

Debate over the question of the advisability of dream control has been going on for several years in the pages of publications devoted to inquiries into dreaming. On the pro side is this excerpt from an unauthored article from the pages of Stephen LaBerge's newsletter, "NightLight":

Typically, three related assumptions underlie arguments against dream control... These are a) that all dreams can be meaningfully interpreted and should be left alone so that this interpretability is not damaged, b) that dreaming is normally an entirely unconscious process, and c) that controlling dreams interrupts their natural function... Becoming more conscious in dreams does not impair our ability to interpret them... Being conscious that you are dreaming does not prevent the appearance of symbolic phenomena in the dream. If you know you are dreaming, you can interpret the dream as it happens.

West German psychologist Paul Tholey has made a persuasive case for the control of dreams in the context of therapy. In conjunction with psychotherapist Norbert Sattler, Tholey has shown that awareness in dreams and the resultant control gives the dream ego a rare opportunity to fully experience and potentially resolve long-standing psychological problems.

On a purely pragmatic side is the potential of generalizing work from waking imagery into the dream, the most powerful image we have. Everything from sports training to bodily healing may be more enhanced in the state of dreaming if lucidity and thus control is

available. However, concern is arising from the ranks of clinicians with opposing views. As Walter Bonime (personal communication to Jayne Gackenbach, November 20, 1989) recently pointed out:

The phenomenon occurring spontaneously does intrigue me. The intensive pursuit and development of a capacity to dream lucidly is, however, in my view, an interference with, an interruption of the creative valuable revelatory quality of dreaming. Much, though not all the value of the dream, apart from the REM integration of new information, lies in one's activity of deriving from it and using its meaning. (Even without interpretive activity the dream can have value as human experience, which I wrote about in Milt Kramer's *Dream Psychology and the New Biology of Dreaming*.) Controlling dreams is for me, as a clinician, diminishing the value of the dream in terms of both product and process.

Bonime's comments point out the closely related concern of the pursuit of lucidity itself in dreams, apart from the issue of control. Even if lucidity occurs spontaneously as part of a holistic system of self work, i.e., dreamwork, therapy, meditation ... what then?

Eastern esoteric disciplines which speak of consciousness in sleep unfortunately offer contradictory advice. On the one hand some say one should remain removed from the dream and not get caught up in its illusionary system, any more than one should get caught up in the illusionary system of the waking "dream." On the other hand, some Eastern systems suggest that full scale manipulation of the dream while conscious in the dream offers another "path" for the spiritual seeker.

The middle ground is found in another quote from a "NightLight" article:

Controlling our dreams is not essentially different from controlling our lives. There is no easy answer to how much we should control the events of our lives, so why should we expect an easy answer in regard to dreams? When we speak of controlling our mental lives, our thought, impulses, and emotions, it is fairly clear that there are times when we should control, and time when we should not.

With these issues in mind, I approached Patti Garfield and Jane White Lewis, and said, "Hey, why don't we put a panel discussion together that represents a variety of opinions about controlling our dreams!" I think the members of this panel are very evenly balanced in this way, and I'm hoping that that will promote dialogue.

We'll each make a brief presentation stating our position. Then, after that we'll talk to each other and open it up as well to the audience in terms of your questions and concerns.

Walter Bonime: I am here on invitation because I believe the practice of lucidity can be destructive to the value of dreams. My inclusion on this panel springs from a criticism of certain aspects of this field, which I expressed in a letter to Jayne Gackenbach, after reading her recent co-authored book, *Control Your Dreams*. I responded as a psychoanalyst who, during nearly fifty years in practice, has found the use of dreams of profound, almost indispensable value.

My criticism was directed against two features:

- 1) encouraging development of the skill of lucid dreaming, and
- 2) basing this effort on the proposition that such a skill gives one a unique capacity to help solve personality difficulties.

I do not feel there is anything inherently negative in a study of lucid dreaming. The development of an increased capacity to dream lucidly can facilitate research into dream psychodynamics, into the physiology of the phenomenon, into its relationship to sleep, waking, and other states of consciousness. There has been productive investigation of sensory responsiveness during sleep. Certainly a study of cognitive and conative activity during REM is a valid area for exploitation. What is taking place when a person in REM sleep becomes aware of himself or herself dreaming, and in such a state of awareness modifies the course of a dream? This is a fascinating question.

I feel, however, that cultivating an extraordinary ability to become lucid during dreaming, and using that skill to control the course of dreams, seriously reduces the usefulness of the dream as a source for understanding one's feelings, motivations and behavior. Jayne Gackenbach says (p.20) dream control may be "an expression of our desire to understand what we are at heart." Understanding oneself gives one opportunities to change some of one's waking experience. Where one's own behavior is a significant factor in bringing about one's pain, self-understanding, insight, can present new behavioral options, opportunities for new, more comfortable, and rewarding kinds of experience.

The process of personality change is slow and labored but the use of dreams for understanding oneself can foster change which is incremental over time. From my clinical standpoint, lucid modification of uncomfortable dreams can obscure the clarifying possibilities of the dreams --- and can offer the dreamer little more than the joy of extraordinary control or reassurance.

To illustrate a contrast between a clinical and a lucid use of a dream, I will present a fragment from the psychoanalysis of a patient and her dream.

This patient was a young woman in the fourth year of her analysis. A beginning concert pianist, she had come to me because of feeling increasingly tense and threatened

during practice, auditions, and performances. She had been groomed for musical renown by a tyrannical mother who had pressed her toward fame and concurrently served and infantilized her. The patient had serious misgivings about her ability to succeed professionally, and had indulged in fantasies of abandoning her career and becoming a domestic servant.

After three years of work in analysis, which had involved first of all a struggle to emancipate herself from her mother, she had made substantial progress. She had achieved considerable self-determination and professional confidence. She had some recognition of her own manipulateness through helplessness, and had had some success in dealing with that.

Despite progress, she had ambivalently come to several recent therapy hours declaring she wanted to collapse, or, by some other destructive activities, prove to herself and to me that she was helpless. In the midst of this resistance, however, her predominating motivation for change made it possible for her to spontaneously recognize and communicate these unexercised pathological impulses. At this time -- so far the healthiest period of her life -- she reported a dream:

A young man's ship is sinking and he needs some help to save him. He goes to another ship, hoping for the Captain to come to his aid. He finds a very sexy woman lying on a couch and he impatiently asks for the Captain. "My ship is sinking and I need him right away." The woman says, "I'm the Captain -- I'll help you." He refuses to believe her and keeps demanding, "Where's the Captain?" until he is finally convinced.

Then they are swimming toward his ship. A strong undertow is dragging him under, and then they are covered by a big tidal wave. He is panicked, but she knows how to handle this. They seem to be staying in the same place, but, if they give up their direction or activity, they will be overcome. [End of dream].

The patient at once talked about the dream. "The young man is such a jerk. He's helpless, ineffectual, whining -- a weak nothing. The Captain-woman is wonderful, capable. I hate this man. He's a leech and a conceited ass besides. He thinks he's wonderful and strong, but he's weak and puny." Then she said, interpretively, "I feel I am both these characters, particularly the man. I doubt if I can achieve the dignity and status of this Captain-woman."

Yet, despite her diffidence, ineptness and unwillingness to mature, this "jerk" aspect of her personality was contradicted as she went on to discuss her enjoyment of her recent constructive and independent pursuits, which she collectively identified as the Captain-woman aspect of her personality. She said, "My activity is what I do really like about myself." That declaration was itself a clarification of her objective, and a statement to

resolve to struggle for maturity.

My reason for presenting this woman and her dream is to suggest the probable great loss to her if she had been skilled in lucidity. In the initial role in the dream, as the young man, the Captain of a sinking ship, she might have used oneiric magic to rescue him, (her "jerk" aspect) from the dangerous predicament. Or even if she had let the dream continue further, and was then swimming with the Captain-woman back to his own ship, the dreamer might have lucidly extracted the two of them from his panic situation of undertow and tidal wave.

If lucidity had been the agent this young woman called upon to free herself from her self-defeating activity, she would have substituted external, lucid (magic) forces, which might have obscured the problem, and she would have been robbed of recognition of the fierce conflict between her goal of being a helpless dependent jerk and her goal of being a mature and executive person in her own waking life.

Pat Garfield, in her book, *Creative Dreaming*, says (p.148): "Once lucidity is attained, you must be constantly alert to avoid falling back into ORDINARY dreaming..."

I have found all dreaming extraordinary and idiosyncratic in its night-to-night progression. With help, I believe people can find in the authenticity and expressiveness of unaltered dreams a rich source of insight into their personalities. They can find a clarity through which, with courage and persistence, they can develop more fulfilling personal and interpersonal functioning.

Whatever enhancements may be derived from the oneiric products of lucid control, these enhancements can not compensate for loss of the density of meaning to be found in the dream that arises spontaneously.

Patricia Garfield: Well! We'll discuss that later.

Should you control your dreams?

Yes, if you want to.

Controlling your dreams takes a lot of energy and effort and concentration, so you probably won't want to do it much of the time, even if you can do it. I personally and professionally find dream control useful in certain situations.

Here's a couple of brief examples.

I was trying to make a drawing of a dream-tiger for a text that I had written for a children's book, and I wanted it to be very special, unique. I was dissatisfied with my initial

efforts, so I decided I'd call on my dream-power next time I was lucid in a dream, and ask to see a dream tiger. The first opportunity I had, I called out "Dream-Tiger!" as I was flying through the air in a great lucid dream. I passed a couple of polar bears, but that wasn't what I wanted. I landed in a children's playground where there were children the age of the heroine of the story, but no dream-tiger. After a few more abortive attempts, I finally did meet a dream-tiger. He had wonderful arched eyebrows and a marvelous panache. I welcomed him; I drew him; I treasured this evoked dream-friend.

Also, in working with clients with nightmares, I have found that teaching dream control can be enormously helpful in conveying to the dreamer his or her lost sense of power. A woman who was having a recurrent nightmare about driving her car over the cliff and crashing, remembered in her dream, "But, Dr. Garfield said I didn't have to let the car crash." And she was able to steer it safely from the air, land safely for the first time. She was using, I believe, her own inner resource to provide a better ending.

Now, obviously if she could have been in long term therapy, she might have gotten many other benefits. But in a short-term way, these techniques can be enormously helpful to an anxious or helpless-feeling, powerless-feeling person. It offers hope that it is possible to bring control in one's life. And I think this is a very important demonstration to some dreamers.

Once the possibility of control is established, it has to be used judiciously. With certain clients with a tenuous hold on reality, for instance, it may very well be contraindicated.

Yet many of us, I believe, can benefit from controlling our dreams from time to time. We can confront and conquer our enemies, negotiate with them, befriend them. We can question dream characters. You know, we don't always have to tell them what to do. We can ask them, we can embrace them, we can love them, we can surround them with golden light; there's a great variety of options. We can encounter creative solutions, we can practice skills, we can direct healing energy. Lucid dreams, I believe, provide unique opportunities for the dreamer.

These days, for myself, I usually prefer occasional open-ended questions, requests in lucid dreams such as, "Take me where I need to go," or "Show me what I need to know," rather than specific assignments, in the same way that Fariba Bogzaran sometimes asks in lucid dreams to see the divine. Making a general request, and then stepping back and letting the dream energy roll can sometimes provide the greatest wonder.

Gordon Globus would perhaps call this receptive rather than deliberate control, and I suspect that Eugene Gendlin would speak of keeping the channels open by asking questions.

I believe lucid dreams with control still retain symbolic significance. They are coming

from the same mind. If you ask the dreamer awake to make up a story, you would still have the symbolic material to interpret. By changing the dream, we give the dreamer some power. We empower him or her, yet we can still interpret what happens. It doesn't cut it off, it doesn't end it. Controlled or not controlled, the psyche is always present.

Should we control our dreams?

Should we control our lives?

Yes! If and when we want to.

Gackenbach: The next speaker is Johanna King.

Johanna King: Before I begin trying to give you my version of the answer to the question, "Should we control our dreams?" I would like to focus on the antecedent question, "Can we control our dreams?" Despite the tremendous amount of enthusiasm about lucid dreaming, it nevertheless remains a naturally occurring, but rather rare phenomenon.

Some people have frequent lucid dreams, but most people have them rarely. Jayne says in her book, that one person out of five spontaneously has a lucid dream once or more a month. That's quite rare in terms of the total number of dreams and somewhat rare in terms of the total number of dreamers.

From dreaming, and listening to people, and listening to papers presented here at the conference, I have to conclude that the answer to that first question is that it's not very easy to become lucid. It's not that simple. We talk about controlling our dreams as though we can do it so readily. I'm not so sure we CAN do it.

Trying to influence dreams is much more common. As Patricia and so many others have informed us, there is an enormous history of trying to influence dreams. Usually we call it incubation. I wonder about this process, too, because I believe that this is also a naturally occurring phenomenon. What I mean is, we do without intervening dream about what we worry about, what we think about, what's on our mind, what we are trying to decide about, and so on.

I think the process of incubation, rather than actually influencing the dream, serves to call our attention to this fact that we dream about what we are thinking about, what we're worrying about what we are trying to decide about. The process of incubation is simply a mechanism for alerting us, for putting us in touch with the process that's already there, without us having to touch it or manipulate it or make it happen.

So now I'm going to give you my answer to the question: "IF individuals find it possible, with lucidity, to control their dreams, should they do it?"

My answer is, "No, I don't think so. I don't think so."

While I enjoy lucid dreams as much as the next person (I certainly don't want to take candy away from kids), I have a number of reasons for thinking that control of dreams is not such a good idea.

The first one has to do with what it is that we normally try to get away from and avoid through lucidity and dream control. While I do acknowledge that lucid dreaming can be a major therapeutic tool, I want to caution against using it to try to avoid threatening characters and negative situations in dreams.

However, as I reflect on the video we have seen on nightmares of Vietnam warvets, on a couple of the cases we have talked about, and on my own experiences with my clients it seems that most of us would like to, if we could, avoid negative affective material in our dreams. Perhaps it comes naturally. Perhaps we all try to avoid the negative if we can. The trouble is, I don't think that avoidance of the negative yields a very good model of the human psyche.

A lot of you know that tomorrow I'm going to Indonesia. I've come across a couple of interesting social rituals that occur in Indonesia, specifically in Bali, that I think, illustrate an alternative model that the negative.

Bali is our archetype of beauty, of meaning, of spirituality, of cooperativeness, of all the things that we envision as missing in our own culture. Whether it is true or not is another story. What IS true is that the spirit of cooperativeness is the ultimate virtue in Bali: cooperation in nature, cooperation with the gods, cooperation among people.

Yet there are two common social rituals in Bali illustrating that for this spirit of cooperation to manifest itself, some accommodation has to be made to the negative, the underside of the psyche, the dark voices.

The first of these two rituals is the cock fight. The cock fight in Bali is a very important part of the social fabric. It operates under a very orderly, very complex very systematic set of social rules. The people are rarely aggressive with each other. They allow the cocks to act out these negative impulses. The cock fight itself is ugly, violent, and bloody.

The second social ritual involves a sacred conflict between Rangda, who is a witch that kills her own children and eats entrails, and The Baronj, who is an Apollo-like character that embodies all Balinese virtues.

In this ritual Rangda and the Baronj, played by masked dancers start their dance. People in the audience, men, gradually fall into trances and take up large swords and start engaging in tremendously violent sword fights with one another. As they stab at each other, even though the swords press in very dramatic fashion against the flesh, they don't bruise the flesh. When Rangda periodically emerges as the more powerful, the entranced dancers try to stab themselves. Then when the Baronj becomes more powerful, the sword is directed toward the other dancers.

The thing that I found so interesting about this ritual, is that there's no resolution. There's a continual fight. There's a recognition of the relationship of the forces of evil and good, destruction and salvation, dark and light. Harvey Bellow, who narrates a terrific film about this ritual, sees it as a sacred psychodrama in which, in full public view, participants are acting out and exorcising the destructive forces that impair harmonious living within the social fabric.

I think to us, certainly to us Californians, this continuous drama is not an image of the psyche that we like. We like light, resolution completeness, a future of living happily ever after. We are devoted to this image, by and large. I do believe that this image from Bali is more realistic, more potent.

A second reason for speaking against controlling the dream, is that I think control somewhat violates the existential nature of the dream, the fundamental nature of dreaming. Dreaming occurs when you are asleep. It's characterized by reduced conscious control. By and large, it unfolds, and moves and changes and forms not because the dreamer wills it to do so. A dreamer doesn't dream a genre of dream, such as a tragedy or a nightmare. It just happens somehow. This is part of the essential nature of dreaming.

I LIKE that about the dream. I think it's a precious component, and I don't like the idea of violating that part of the nature of the dream.

My third point involves my resistance to control and perhaps over-control, I know I live in California, but I'm from an older generation. I'm a child of the sixties, when we learned to value experience over action. We learned to "go with the flow." We learned to watch, to experience, see what was there, to be receptive. We didn't live by the current motto in California, which is "get control of your life." I therefore have a personal, generational issue with control. That's not to say I always go with the flow, either, but I do feel the need to speak for relaxing control.

That's my point of view. I don't think we should control our dreams.

Gackenbach: The next speaker is Eugene Gendlin.

Eugene Gendlin: This is symbolic. I'm sitting in the middle--which side am I more on?

What I think is that control is a very unfortunate way to approach this whole problem. This question of control does, however, mirror one of our basic problems both in therapy and in this society at large. Quite apart from dreams or even therapy, in any process of trying to develop, there has to be a CONVERSATION, an INTERACTION between our conscious selves and whatever you call the rest of us.

Whatever you call that which we are not conscious of can be that which we are not yet, or could be, or the larger part of us, or the unconscious, or the universe that we're part of. As you notice from my rattling off this string of ways of talking about it, I am deeply committed to NOT having a single way to talk about it, for the very reason that that would be controlling. If you tell me one way of talking about the larger part of me, I'll deny it. I'll think you're wrong. The only way you can sense the larger part of me is by some string of contradictory concepts that we've back-channeled.

Now that's true of any attempt to develop oneself. One has to have a conversation. One has to take a stand consciously, and deliberately go to work. Once one has deliberately and consciously gone to work, then one has to relax right there at that edge there, right there at that uncomfortable spot, and let the rest of oneself come in, then. When something comes, one has to consciously absorb that, consciously respond to that, consciously ask further question.

Do you know what I mean?

That's the only way to work. It doesn't matter what it is. It might be a behavioral step that I have to train myself, but I have to be aware of my whole body again, and my larger way of responding so I can reprogram myself, and reevaluate. I have to be there at every step, but I have to let "it," whatever you call "it," respond to me, in between each step.

So suppose there is, let's say in Bali, since you just mentioned Bali, a very wise woman whose renown has spread all the way here. Let's say you have some desire to go there and partake in some way of her wisdom. Let's say you even hear (which would be really strange) that she has visions that have some relationship to you. So now you're really excited, and you get yourself together, and you get yourself all the way to Bali. She lives not in the city but out somewhere, so you have a struggle getting all the way to her.

But you finally get there . . . and you're going to tell her what to say to you??? (Laughter and applause from the audience).

On the other hand, you might very well want to ask her a question. So I can certainly agree with what Jayne and Patti said, except that they say it as an afterthought. It's like, "Yes, let's control your dreams, but be careful, don't close it all out."

I would say, "That's a terrible way to get into this territory." Well, we're already there, let's face it. We are in America, control is a big thing, O.K. But that's no way to deal with the unconscious, or whatever you call it. That's no way to deal with dreams, to first say, "I'll control," and then say as an afterthought, "I better not control too much."

The Senoi teach their people to ask questions. That's different. It's not, "Let's be in control, but watch out." It's a totally different thing. It's an interaction, it's a conversation, it's an interplay, it's a zig-zag. It's like, "Yes, I deliberately want to go there so that then I can hear. And then, yes, I want to deliberately react to what I hear so that I can develop as an "I", as a person. But then I want to hear back again. And then I want to be there again for it and do something."

Jung talks about this kind of interaction all the time. Be active in your dream, and let it be active to you and then be active again. It's clear that that's a model for Jung for this kind of question.

So we wouldn't want to close the either dream channel OR the lucidity channel. I wouldn't want to say, "Lucidity is dangerous; stay away from it," I wouldn't want to say that. Yet I'm clearly placed more on this side of the table than the other, since it seems to me wrong to start out in the process by talking about controlling the process. That's in fact the hardest to learn in an ordinary therapy process-- to deliberately work hard and yet not control. Back up if you can't stand it, but don't run away.

Another thing I want to talk about is to have some feel for processing the dream awake, as Walter was illustrating. Once you have the experience that a dream can give you a further step that involves bodily awareness, once you have the feeling of what it's like to get a piece of development from a dream, a physical sense of "Oh!" -- something opens. Some sense of energy or aliveness occurs. When you have an experience with that, then that's what you want from a dream.

You don't want to edit it to come out good or bad or whatnot according to your thinking. You want some sort of living "step."

A man dreams that this very sloppy person that he knows is in bed with his wife, and that he, the dreamer, has given his wife to this slob for a birthday present. So he hates the dream.

So I say to him, over a period of time of course--something like, "Well, what part of you is like this sloppy person?" and some smile comes and he says its a part of him that doesn't care, that couldn't care less. That part of him hardly ever gets to him, because he is a very considerate, very ethical, very careful-of-other-people kind of person. And I said, "What would it be like if you gave your wife to THAT part of you?"

And some energy comes. Right? Now that would be difficult to imagine if he had controlled this dream. Right! I'm making the same point you just made. [gestures toward Johanna King]

I do think that when a person has a series of experiences like that, of the bodily-experienced step forward, it is possible to tell the difference between controlling in the silly sense of just closing the channel, and controlling in the sense of looking for the step forward and finding it.

It's a very difficult question. [turns toward Garfield] You had it in that example of that car. To drive that car down without crashing it could very well have been an invented solution that avoids a real resolution, or it could have been looking for a step forward and finding it. You are clearly telling us, since you were there, that it was a step forward.

Garfield: It was just that that was her solution. I didn't suggest it. She chose it.

Gendlin: To you it's important because SHE chose it. To me, the same problem of genuineness arises, but inside of us. Did that solution REALLY come, from HER, or did she just stick it on there so she wouldn't have to be scared?

In conclusion, I think the nature of working with our larger self or whatever you call it, is some kind of interplay. I think it would be wrong to go for passivity or flow, and never deliberately do something or ask something, but I think it would be just as wrong to get stuck with your own conscious self and slop that underneath the first solution that presented itself.

Gackenbach: Jane White Lewis.

Jane White Lewis: "Should you control your dreams?" On this issue I would have to say I am "Pro-choice". Certainly the work and research on lucid dreaming is not only interesting, but valuable. In lucid dreaming studies, there is the potential of increasing our understanding of dreaming and how the mind works.

But from my perspective as a psychotherapist and Jungian analyst, controlling dreams doesn't make much sense. It seems to me that dreams are a readout from the unconscious; they tell us what is going on. That is, to me, dreams are an expression of Psyche speaking in images, playing, creating as well as reworking themes, struggling with conflicts and core issues stirred up by day-residues. In my experience, dreams always point to something, tell us something we do not know, something that is unconscious. Or in other words, Psyche (or the unconscious) has a broader perspective and knows a lot that the conscious mind does not know. If the unconscious is, as I think it is, a storehouse of valuable information about repressed memories of early wounds and desires, and if the

unconscious is also a source of creative expression, and carries the potential for psychological development and healing -- why should the conscious mind interfere with the unconscious/Psyche's capacity to reveal itself? The unconscious offers us the possibility of getting out of our stuckness, of getting beyond or removing the old complexes; whereas the conscious mind is limited by the limitations of a limited perspective.

One argument for controlling dreams that appears repeatedly in the literature is the potential in lucid dreaming of reaching a blissful state, of experiencing the excitement of flying high, of avoiding fears and difficult situations, of feeling good, but I wonder, after once experiencing this state, what one learns. If one feels ecstatic, there is little motivation for change, for soul work, for suffering through the painful process of self examination, for working through and dismantling the defenses that have been erected to distance us from our wounds and from our true selves. If we focus on the "good" and want to eliminate the "not-good", we lose half of ourselves, our shadow. By splitting or polarizing the opposites, by being unable to bear the tension of the opposites, by refusing to legitimately suffer the conflicts and paradoxes in our lives -- we miss the opportunity for a third way, transformation, for resolution and for healing. It is only by going into our fear that we can get through it. Otherwise it goes underground and undermines our sense of self.

To take flight is not the answer, and -- I must admit -- I am quite suspicious of the emphasis on flying in lucid dreaming reports. Humans can not fly, are not meant to fly. Metaphorically, to fly is to be ungrounded, to be high, to escape from the reality and complexity of life, to flee from others, the environment, and one's deepest self.

To sum up, in the arena of psychology -- the study of psyche or soul, it is not at all clear to me what the purpose of controlling dreams is. Why not trust the unconscious to reveal itself and accept, without conditions, psyche's invitation to engage in soul making.

Gackenbach: I'd like to present a third position, one I've been stuck with having to deal with for years from a group which highly regards consciousness in sleep. "Do not control our dreams or even be aware of them. Do not pay any attention to them. Do not remember them." Yet, this group shows on multiple psychological evaluations considerable well-being.

Gendlin: Do they say why?

Gackenbach: The idea is that dreams are simply processing the stress of daily activities. Do not reengage this process.

King: I got the impression, Gene, that you were saying that "not controlling your dreams" is "taking a step." How the additional perspective results in an achievement is not clear.

Gendlin: I think I wasn't clear about what a step is. In my example, where the man is giving his wife to the slob, the step comes out of working with the additional perspective when you are awake. Through the question of "What part of him is this?" which is a traditional question you can ask any dreamer, he got in touch with the repressed part of himself that wouldn't be so performance-oriented and so would be a more sexually free, more aggressive area. You got that?

Garfield: Oh yes.

Gendlin: The moment of feeling that part of him involved a movement of energy in him. It was a physical bodily shift. That's what I call a "step." He said, "Oh-h-h-h-h." The CONCEPT of this is not a step. He could read books, get an idea, and say, "Oh, I could take charge." But to have it physically come through your body, that is a step. On the other hand, to think it through and invent some kind of solution is not a step. Where's the difference? The difference is in your body. A new way of being comes.

Now a new way of being sounds fantastic, but what I'm talking about is a little bit, it can be very small, a moment of smelling what it would be like. It is often the case that a dream presents a picture of how things are, and it takes a bit of processing to get to a step.

A person dreams...let's take, for instance, a woman who lives on a farm and loves animals, and would get upset as a child when the animals were slaughtered and so forth. She dreams of this pig-mother who is doing behavior that pigs don't do but that she does. It often happens that some symbol of the cosmos or something very healthy is acting in an unhealthy manner in the dream. It naturally takes the question, "How would a real pig-mother act?"

"Oh-h-h," she said, "a real pig-mother would..." and out came a step. A real pig-mother would act naturally, and so on.

There is a step to be had with most dreams. When you have experienced this often enough, then if you are asking the dream questions, you have that experience with you. You are asking, "How do I get down from this mountain. How do I get control of this car?"

There is an open-ended sense, which the Senoi had very clearly. What have you come for? What is right here? How do I go on from here? Then the possibility of taking control would be a positive step for some people and letting go of control would be a step for others. Whatever the right step is is what we want. We may be using the wrong word here, control.

Garfield: I think what you just said is an important point, Gene. We may be using the wrong word here, "control." It may be good for some people and not for other people.

[Turns to Walter] Walter may I ask you a question?

Bonime: How could I refuse!?

Garfield: Would you object if your concert pianist, in one of her dreams, had become lucid, and she turned to the Captain-woman, and said "How can I be like you?" Would that bother you? I don't know what word to use instead of control, but an active putting of the personality of the dreamer into the dream.

Bonime: That was already there in the dream. After all, there were the two aspects of herself. She was this jerk who wanted someone to get her out of this predicament she was in. That is what people do when they are in lucid dreams. She was also the Captain-woman. There was an undertow which has a suggestion of depression, the down-pulling.

However, the two aspects of herself...

Garfield. I agree. They're there, and they came out in the after discussion. But what I'm really wondering is whether you would find it offensive if the dreamer just asked a question in the dream. Or take mine, where I said, "Show me a dream tiger. Dream-Tiger! That's what I want to see. " Does that aspect of what we are discussing trouble you? Do you find it inappropriate?

Bonime: I think it would have expressed one of the commonest problems people have, which is to want somebody else to do it. The whole direction of what I try to do is to help individuals discover and use their own resources. That's the way out. Depressives hate to find out that they can do things.

Garfield: So in this case you would feel asking this would definitely be inappropriate?

Bonime: I think it would be another manifestation of her difficulty.

Garfield: Even if she was taking action and doing something in the dream?

Gackebach. She's lucid, right?

Garfield. Yes. I was hypothesizing. Maybe its better to take my own case. "Show me a dream tiger." Is that wrong of me to do? To use my creative resource?

Bonime: Let me answer not directly, but appropriately. I try to bring to light the genuine resources of the person. They sometimes get sore as hell at me when I say, "You can do it."

Now, one of the things I like so much about the ASD is that I'm exposed to this very

broad varied field of working with dreams. I experienced something yesterday which connected me with this very topic. I sat in on some of the sessions on nightmares. There, a young man working towards his Ph.D., was doing some interesting research on nightmares. He spoke about using lucidity in order to help the person deal with the problem. He did help; however there was no discussion of psychodynamics. He simply discussed the effectiveness of using lucidity. I have nothing against getting this type of relief, but in most cases it doesn't deal with the basic problem.

Once in a while, if you have a headache because you're sore at somebody and you don't express or recognize the anger, it's O.K. to take an aspirin. I just wouldn't resort to it a great deal. I'm not saying don't use lucidity, Patti. I'm not saying that at all. I do think it is intriguing and enticing.

Gackenbach: Let's turn toward the audience now.

Robert Bosnak, from the floor: I have a question as to whether you think lucid dreams can be interpreted symbolically.

Garfield: They are all interpretable. There are definitely other things going on in the dream. People who are put in the position of having to defend dream control, often have to say, "Look guys, you're lucky if you can get what you started out asking for. It's not all that simple, in the first place. Don't worry. Not everyone is going to want to do this."

The dream is still of value. All of the side trips that I took on the way to the dream-tiger I would work with too. Why did I go there. Was it some kind of cold element? Was there a crushing bear-like thing involved? There's a lot that could be worked with in that dream. It's just that the dream mind has such tremendous resources, and in lucid dreams, we can sometimes contact things in better depth. Before the dream, I couldn't I couldn't draw that tiger when I was awake. I tried and I got drawings of cliché, stereotyped dumb-looking tigers. But when I drew him out of whatever depths he came from, he was something special. He had just the kind of looks I wanted. I just feel that it would be foolish to ignore that type of resource. But I don't for a moment devalue the rest of the dream.

From the Floor:--question about Gackenbach's book.

Gackenbach: That's what I'm saying. Becoming lucid became a defense. I've used lucidity to stop dreaming something that was happening.

From the Floor: You don't always advocate control?

Gackenbach: No. The title of the book is something that I was told the book had to have. If you read the book, you'll find that the book tries to advocate a moderate position. There are some circumstances where it may be appropriate and some where it's not.

From the Floor: Why do you ask questions during a dream?

Panelist: Because you are consciously trying to direct it.

Garfield: Why can't you ask within the dream?

Gackenbach: Why can't you ask within the dream?

Panelist: There are certainly dreams in which dream figures ask questions.

Garfield: Why can't the figure of the dream-ego ask a question?

King: Because the ego is involved and introspective. It's not separated.

Panelist: Because you are asking the question, you are in another state of consciousness, right? So it's not really the dream ego. It's something else. It's more conscious.

Gackenbach: In a sense your right. It's not really the dream ego. The 'self' while lucid feels like it's somehow more "me", more present, more aware.

Panelist: What's the difference between the dream ego IN a dream and a lucid ego? They are not the same, right? Are they?

Gendlin: I tend to think of control from a different point of view. I think rather, make a distinction between control of ourselves in situations and control over. So often we want control over somebody or something else. What is so attractive about control of dreams, is that you are constantly looking for control over something else. What we lose when we use lucidity this way is that we lose control of our own resources.