

LDE Quarterly Lucid Dreaming Challenge

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(This feature provides an unusual lucid dreaming task for LDE readers with each new issue. Participants agree to accept personal responsibility for any risks should they choose to undertake them, which may possibly bring about mental, emotional, and even physical changes. We invite those of you who accomplish these tasks to send your dream reports to LDE.)

Exploring the Bizarre Physics of Dreamspace Part 4: "The Dream Matrix and the Phenomenological Epoché"

"The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window. Or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work. When you go to church. When you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth."

Morpheus in **The Matrix** (1999)

Some theorists believe that we actually live in an information universe, that at the deepest level, we input the universe primarily as code, an information pattern that we learn to habitually translate and then experience in terms of sight, sound, touch, etc. A computer does this in a simple way when it translates a stream of binary code information - a pattern of 0 and 1's - into a visual display. We as humans do something very similar when we read an engaging story, where the text presents us with an arrangement of arbitrary shapes (letters and numbers) arranged in a meaningful pattern that we ignore as such while reading, experiencing people, places and situations instead. The movie **The Matrix** (1999) illustrates this idea in an entertaining way, where characters live in a virtual reality experienced and perceived as physical, but which at its root consists of a mathematical code.

However, as Goethe said, sometimes the "most difficult thing of all is to see what is before your eyes." In dreams, even more than in waking life, we identify what we see in terms of objects and processes familiar to us, even if the match seems very poor after we've awakened. For the dreaming mind, often oblivious to all but superficial appearances, "similar to" can become "identical to." And even fully lucid dreamers can find it difficult to accurately perceive the surface level of dreams, never mind deeper levels of structure that may lie below. (For more information on this topic, see Part 1 of this series, in which I discuss the topic of dream perception in greater depth.)

Fortunately, phenomenologist Edmund Husserl developed a tool, the phenomenological reduction or epoché, that gives those who have mastered it a way to more effectively focus on pure experience, minimizing distortions by "bringing to a halt" the process through which both overt and covert assumptions influence perception. Throughout his life Husserl worked to create a presuppositionless philosophy that goes to the bedrock of experience, and which sets aside assumptions (especially hidden assumptions) to the greatest extent possible. Phenomenologists use this tool to achieve a kind of "non-attachment", to distance themselves from the assumptions inherent in consensus trance. The method of accomplishment of the epoché takes more than a paragraph to describe (Husserl spent a lifetime describing pathways to its accomplishment), but as a crude approximation one can look at the method of Descartes, where he tested the certitude of a fact by seeing if one can doubt it. (For more information go to "The Phenomenological Method" section in my paper Mapping Territories: A Phenomenology of Lucid Dream Reality at: [http://www.spiritwatch.ca/LL%20\(2\)%20dec%2089/KELOG082.W50.htm](http://www.spiritwatch.ca/LL%20(2)%20dec%2089/KELOG082.W50.htm))

For those who enjoy Castaneda, you can find a fair amount of phenomenology in his Don Juan books - although presented in a far more entertaining way, and using different, and rather more charismatic, terminology than Husserl's. In this instance, Castaneda's "Stopping the World" bears a marked similarity to Husserl's phenomenological reduction.

However, if you want to get an idea of what the epoché potentially involves in a fun way, rent a copy of **The Matrix** and watch it a few times. What happens after Neo takes the "red pill" dramatically illustrates, in a Hollywood version, one potential result of an "in depth" phenomenological reduction. <g>

Does an underlying "Dream Matrix" exist? Succeed at this quarter's challenge, and you may find out for yourself!

The Challenge: Finding "The Dream Matrix"

When you next gain lucidity in a lucid dream (where you know that you dream while you dream), try to look at the dream environment without preconceptions. Pay attention to the dreamscape in a neutral, nonattached way, performing the epoché if you can. (To get a better idea of what this might mean, see Appendix 1.) Focus your intent on perceiving "The Dream Matrix" and begin chanting: "See the Matrix!" (Feel free to use another phrase, for example, "Show Me the Matrix!", "Reveal the Matrix!", or "Let the Matrix Appear!", etc. if you think another phrase will work better for you.) As you chant, look for anomalies, distortions, or unexpected regularities in the fabric of the dreamscape. Pay less attention to the overall appearance of things, and more attention to the dreamscape texture and background. Record your experiences and interactions with any possible appearances of "the Dream Matrix" in your dream journal in as much detail as possible - including drawings and diagrams.

Appendix 1

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(An account of a fully lucid dream sequence in which the dreamer performs the epoché while also attempting to suspend the autonomous operation of "Functioning Intentionality".)

EWK 2/28/99 Fully Lucid "Flying along through a bizarre dreamscape. I remember my task to try to focus on what I directly experience, without preconceptions. I perform the phenomenological epoché (even saying epoché, eh-poe-kay, out loud to help focus my intent) to suspend judgment and become fully lucid, marveling at the strange shapes and geometries. I fly down a sort of flat smooth valley between massive strange layered structures looming on either side of me, towering twice my flying height, like oddly shaped cliffs. After 10 seconds of this at most, the dreamscape snaps into focus as a gigantic office storage room space, with a smooth flat floor with shelves and racks of supplies to either side of me. In relation to the room, I seem about 6 inches in height. I now perceive and mentally note racks of paper office supplies, an old safe. I feel I have become more lucid.

(Comment: However, at this point my Functioning Intentionality has become activated, automatically 'making sense' of the dreamscape. I do not even consider the possibility that I might now incorrectly impose this giant 'office space template' on a different and unfamiliar environment.)

I feel that I have solved a puzzle, and I wonder how many other bizarre dreamscapes that I have experienced in the past really just corresponded to familiar environments experienced on a greatly augmented scale. I still intend the phenomenological epoché and continue to suspend judgment as to what I see. I still realize in a vague, but mostly intellectual, way that my identifications do not seem absolute, but only assumptions on my part. I fly along, noting details, papers on shelves, a large safe with a combination lock.

(Comment: However, in my excitement at now seeing the dreamscape resolved into something identifiable, I have forgotten the primary task that I wanted to accomplish - of directing my attention at the structural level of the dreamscape, and to try not to impose my preconceptions. The 'office space' identification has hooked me.)

I still suspend judgment to some extent, and even notice some details that do not fit, but I now assume that I explore an office storage space in relation to which I have become very small. The other possibility, that I explore an office space for giants seems far less likely to me for some reason. (At this point I briefly "wake up" / return to experiencing waking physical reality) ... I continue through a series of lucid dreams, in which I regain my intent to observe the dream environment as much as possible without imposing preconceptions on it. Each time I attempt to formulate my task in words, so as to rededicate myself to this task, I RWPR.

Although in some ways no longer as fully lucid as before in the ordinary way, my LDR ego almost identical to my WPR ego, I continue to perform the epoché and my task

automatically, but thoroughly and in greater depth. I fly along 'water' channels, observing dreamscapes as patterns and structures, I make many observations without labeling.

(Comment: I find that later after RWPR, when I want to write down descriptions of these scenes that I toured (for what felt like hours), that I have only vague memories of what I observed, perhaps exactly because I did not identify the scenes and objects at the time, while dreaming, in terms of best fit WPR equivalents.)

Appendix 2

The Matrix Code

EWK 5/04/04, Fully Lucid. "Inside a school environment, I leave a classroom and walk down a corridor. I realize that I dream and remember my task to try to see "the matrix code" possibly embedded behind the surface appearance of dreams. I try to use a memorized incantation: "By the power of Alkahest / Let the Matrix Code visibly manifest!" I find the chant hard to remember the first time through, and verbally sort of stumble through it. On my second attempt I remember it clearly and chant it fairly smoothly, with better Kavanah (focused intent and alignment). Afterwards I notice that the dream environment and objects look different, but still not code like shapes. The dream scene dissolves into a sort of gray void, and I feel myself waking up. I hold onto the kinesthetics to stay in the dream, and the dream scene reappears. I encounter a short fit man who looks in his thirties. He identifies himself as "Bruce Lee", and tells me had not really died. I doubt his claim, as he looks Caucasian not Asian, but for fun I challenge him to spar, shouting "Matrix moves!" as we begin, remembering the martial arts scene from the movie. I block his attack easily, and retaliate with a side kick. (I briefly wake up in physical reality, having physically kicked the covers. But I don't move, and almost immediately fall asleep and back into the lucid dream.)

I follow [Bruce Lee] down a corridor. I decide to try a simpler approach to accomplishing this task, and simply chant "See the Matrix!" again and again. The dream scene begins to fade to gray again, but I stay in the dream by focusing on the kinesthetic sensation of an object I hold in my hand. My vision clears, and now I see myself in what looks like a small town movie set, false front houses, pastel colors, a simpler less detailed simulation. It comes more into focus and resolves into a small rural town set. I see a few houses, a trailer, and a small general store style post office, missing the street side wall. On the gray post office box wall inside the post office I see a "just married" sign, black letters on white. Across the street I see a large star sign on a white background. It looks strange, chaotic, hard to resolve or focus on. The star has eight, or perhaps ten points. The octagonal(?) star has multiple lines, three or more, slightly offset, and in different colors for different sections, dark green, dark blue, dark red, perhaps some brown. A "man" dressed in white comes out of the "post office" carrying a tool box. He has on a white cap - I really only see man shaped clothes, moving without a body. On the white clothes in stark contrast I see lines of small black letters and numbers, covering about 5% of the surface. Dream matrix code? I try to ask the "man" for information, but when I do so "he"

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falls apart, leaving only a pile of clothing. I look in the white canvas tool bag, and remove a "white washcloth" with a line of black code on it. I get the impression of small black numbers and letters, but do not, or can not, look at them closely enough to recognize them or identify them. RWPR".

(Comment: I created a "Matrix Code" graphic and did my best to reproduce the "chaotic star" symbol that showed up towards the end of this dream, as it certainly seemed the most significant and strange thing that showed up after I did my chant. I feel I succeeded fairly well. (To see the graphic image go to:

<http://dreamsounds.hypermart.net/psigallery/psi2004gallery/edk.htm>)

In the dream, I felt that it symbolized the matrix code as a whole - it belonged to a different order of existence than did anything else that I experienced in the dreamscape. Just looking at the graphic gives me a weird unsettled feeling, as if I look at something "not right", that does not properly belong in either the waking or the dreaming world.)