The background of the slide is a reproduction of Salvador Dalí's painting 'The Persistence of Memory'. It depicts a desolate, brown landscape under a pale sky. In the foreground, a pocket watch is draped over a melting, human-like face. To the left, another pocket watch is draped over a melting pocket watch on a wooden ledge. A small, red, oval-shaped object with dark spots is also on the ledge. In the background, a large, melting pocket watch is draped over a melting pocket watch on a wooden ledge. The overall scene is surreal and dreamlike, illustrating the concept of time being distorted in a dream state.

Looking for the minimal phenomenal experience

The case of lucid dreamless sleep

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THE QUESTION /
PROBLEM

Can we have an experience of **pure phenomenality**? If so, what it is?

INTRODUCTION

Pure conscious events

- ▶ **Mysticism** (Stace, 1960; Forman, 1990).
Experiences of pure phenomenality.

Pure conscious events

- ▶ **Transcendental Meditation (TM).**
 - ▶ absence of space, time, or body-sense (Travis, F. 2000)

The **Minimal Phenomenal Experience (MPE)**

- ▶ Awareness **lacking any intentional object**
- ▶ Experience of **pure phenomenality**
- ▶ **Simplest** form of conscious experience

The case of **lucid dreamless sleep (LDS)**

- ▶ Awareness during sleep in **absence of dreams**.
- ▶ Related with **deep sleep phases** (Stages 3 and 4)
- ▶ Subjects report episodes of pure phenomenality during sleep.

THE QUESTION / PROBLEM

Can we have an experience of **pure phenomenality**? If so, what it is?



THE RESEARCH

Lucid dreamless sleep as a targeted phenomenon for examining the MPE



THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS



OUTLINE OF THE TALK

1. Lucid Dreamless Sleep and Indian philosophical traditions



2. Contemporary approaches to Lucid Dreamless Sleep



3. Types of awareness during Lucid Dreamless Sleep



4. Directions of future research

1.

Lucid Dreamless
Sleep and **Indian
philosophical
traditions**

AWARENESS DURING DEEP SLEEP

- ▶ The Upanishads describe examples of **awareness during sleep** but in the absence of dreams.
- ▶ Consciousness is **never lost**, not even during deep sleep (*susupti*)
- ▶ Training: **Sleep yoga practice** → State of lucidity

AWARENESS DURING DEEP SLEEP

- ▶ Aim: reach **pure-awareness**
 - ▷ The Upanishads talk of *Turiya*, a state of pure consciousness.
 - ▷ State where there is **no intentional content, only phenomenality** (Maitri Upanishad, 6:19)
- ▶ Also called **Witness-Consciousness**
 - ▷ We are aware of our own nature
 - ▷ Not a different ‘substance’ self, but consciousness itself
 - ▷ It’s subject and object at the same time

Possible readings

1. Lucid dreamless sleep as a state of awareness of our own consciousness

- ▷ A state where we reach enlightenment / Clear light.

Awareness of our the **nature of consciousness.**

- ▷ Advaita Vedanta: we find the nature of the self
- ▷ Buddhism: we find the essence of consciousness.



**Awareness of
awareness itself**

Possible readings

2. Lucid dreamless sleep as a state of pure awareness

- ▷ Deep sleep as state in which we reach pure phenomenality
- ▷ Just awareness, no propositional content



Awareness devoid of
content



2.

**Contemporary
approaches to Lucid
Dreamless Sleep**

LDS IN ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY

- ▶ A contentless state

“peace, silence, and **absence** of visual stimuli”

(Magallón, 1987:4)

“[...]that time during sleep when one **desires no desire, sees no dream, and knows nothing**”

(Gillespie, 2000:199)

“we are **phenomenally conscious** but we don't experience any particular thoughts or images”

(Windt, 2015:3)

LDS IN ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY

- ▶ A state of pure phenomenality
 - ▶ Only sense of ‘nowness or ‘*pure subjective temporality*’
 - ▶ a **phenomenal ‘now’** and **perhaps some sense of duration**
(Windt et al, 2016:878)
 - ▶ Only sense of ‘**being alive**’
 - ▶ “dreamless sleep experience might be describable as a **minimal mode of sentience** consisting in the feeling of being alive.”
(Thompson, 2015: 3)

LDS IN ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY

- ▶ Lucid dreamless sleep as a awareness of something
 - ▷ ‘now’
 - ▷ ‘being alive’ ‘presence’ ‘existence’
 - ▷ ‘darkness’
 - ▷ ‘emptiness’



**Awareness of
minimal content**

LDS IN ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY

- ▶ Lucid dreamless sleep as an **example of the minimal phenomenal experience**
 - ▷ (Windt, 2015; 2017, Metzinger, forthcoming)
- ▶ MPE described as the most minimal form of consciousness.
 - ▷ No minimal self
 - ▷ No intentionality
 - ▷ No content

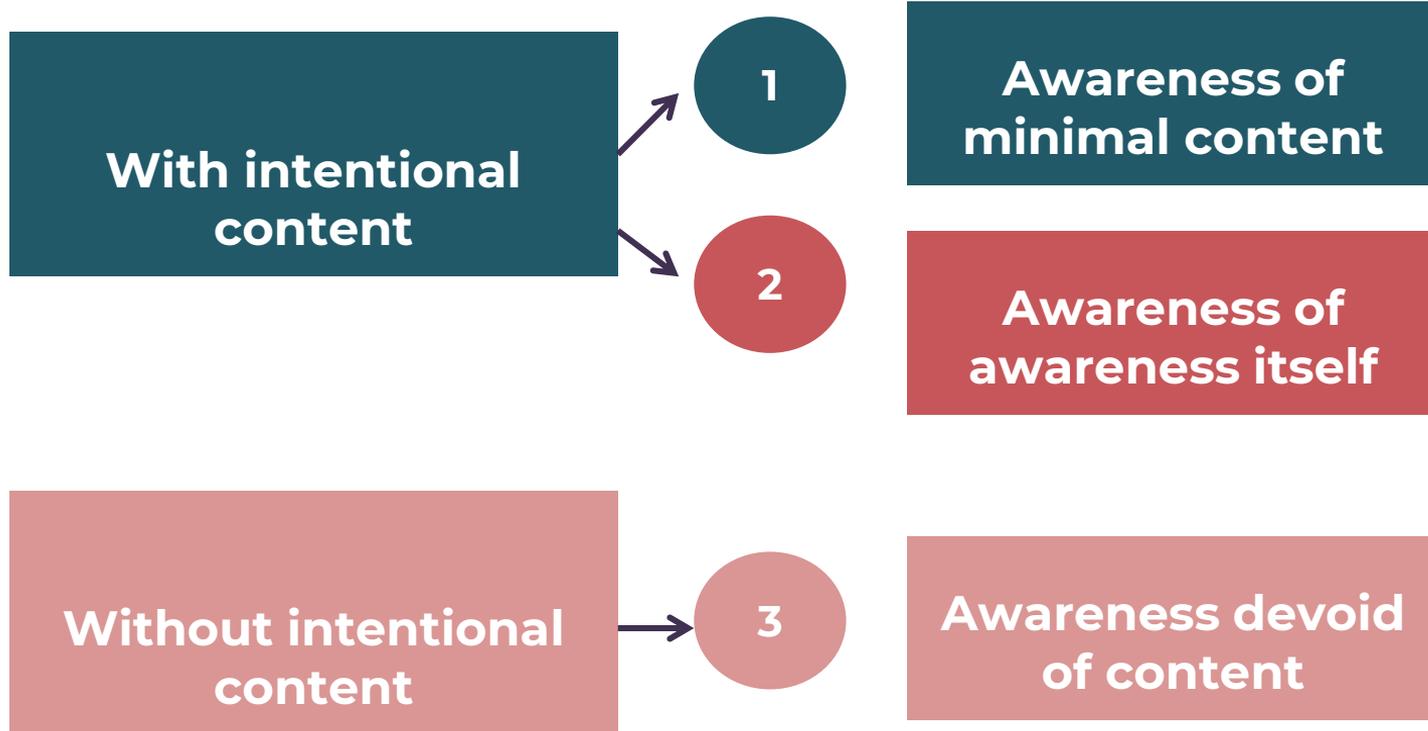


**Awareness devoid of
content**

3.

**Types of awareness
during lucid
dreamless sleep**

TYPES OF AWARENESS DURING LDS



TYPES OF AWARENESS DURING LDS

Awareness of minimal content

1

Object: Nowness / Presence

“One candidate might be temporal experience in the form of a **phenomenal ‘now’** and perhaps **some sense of duration**

(Windt et al, 2016:878)

“dreamless sleep experience might be describable as **a minimal mode of sentience** consisting in the feeling of being alive.”

(Thompson, 2015:3)

TYPES OF AWARENESS DURING LDS

2

**Awareness of
awareness itself**

Object: Awareness

“because the self, devoid of any knowledge and object to cognise, **can only see itself**”
(Prasad, 2000:65)

“Just as a light cannot illuminate itself by shedding beams upon itself, **witness-consciousness cannot know itself as it would an object**”
(Albahari, 2009:66)

TYPES OF AWARENESS DURING LDS

3

Awareness devoid
of content

No object:

“sleep state in which there are **no sensory or mental objects of awareness**, that is, **no images and no thoughts**”

(Thompson, 2015a:14)

“[...]dreamless **sleep to consist of pure objectless consciousness**”

(Guillemie, 2000:200)



4.

Directions of **future**
research

QUALITATIVE STUDY (In progress)

- ▶ 1:1 **Micro-phenomenological** interviews
 - ▷ Qualitative research method (Versmersch, 1994; Petitmengin, 2004).
 - ▷ Used recently in neurophenomenology (Valenzuela et al. 2013; (Ataria, Dor-Ziderman and Berkovich-Ohana, 2015)
 - ▷ **Aim:** gathering fine-grained descriptions of the subjects' experience.
 - ▷ Move from the what to the how of the experience

QUALITATIVE STUDY (In progress)

4.

- ▶ Recruiting process
 - ▷ Call for individuals that report **any experience of awareness during sleep in absence of dreams**



HOME

-Call for Participants-

We are currently looking for individuals that would like to participate in the study. Our targeted audience are individuals that recall episodes of awareness during sleep in the absence of dreams and that are willing to share their experiences in a 1:1 interview (Interviews can be in either English or Spanish).

What would the study involve?

The study will consist in a two-hour interview with the main researcher, either in person or online. Prior to the study, a preliminary questionnaire will be sent to prospective participants, accessing sleep and lifestyle habits. If shortlisted, the participant will arrange an interview session which will consist on a micro-phenomenological interview about a particular experience of awareness during sleep.

The study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Glasgow and is consistent with BPS guidelines. Participation is totally

QUALITATIVE STUDY (In progress)

- ▶ Preliminary results
 - ▷ N= 4 (3 women, 1 men)
 - ▷ Age: 30-63
 - ▷ No current mental/psychological condition
 - ▷ Excellent/Good sleep quality and high dream reportability

PRESENT IN AN EMPTY SPACE / VOID

▶ **#01:**

“This turn into the scenery fading away and **the whole space disappears and turns into darkness**”

“The **empty space** it was more similar to a lucid dream, echoic thoughts and body.

“**Lucid dream without environment**”

▶ **#02:**

“Few moments after of falling sleep I wake up in the **'dream matrix'**. I feel my mind ruminating, and that I want to be conscious. “I open up to a **lucid space**, the dream matrix.”

PRESENT IN AN EMPTY SPACE / VOID

▶ **#03:**

“When I'm falling out I drop **into the nothing**, nowhere. I'm **aware of the energy, no body and lack of physicality.**” “I fall down into this '**void**'. Scenery folded very quickly, as you unplug a sink. All dissolved very quickly, faster than flying.”

▶ **#04:**

“**space without constructs. Isn't dark but empty.** You can probably construct in that space but you needn't. It's a **mental plane**” “There's no necessary to create anything to look at”

PLEASANT FEELINGS

- ▶ **#01:**
“**Peaceful**. Wondering what is going to happen. No negative feelings, don't see the need. No nervous anymore, just curious. I'm just here.”
- ▶ **#02:**
“Sense of **pleasure** associated with that space”
- ▶ **#03:**
“I **love** it” “Like when you sigh with relief”
- ▶ **#04:**
“Sense of **gratitude** and assistance”

CLARITY, PURE AWARENESS

▶ **#02:**

“**sense of clarity**, things are very clear. Sense of refreshment. The burden of the ruminating mind stops. Very simple, very clear”

“**Awareness of being aware**. It's just awareness without spatial orientation. Clarity like '**just clarity**', without anything being reflected”

▶ **#03:**

“I'm **aware of my consciousness**” “Deeper understanding”

Which **sort of awareness** do we have?
All of them? Only one of them?

1

**Awareness of
minimal content**

2

**Awareness of
awareness itself**

3

**Awareness devoid
of content**

3.

**THE QUESTION /
PROBLEM**

Can we have an experience of **pure phenomenality**? If so, what it is?



THE RESEARCH

Lucid dreamless sleep as a targeted phenomenon for examining the MPE



**THE POSSIBLE
SOLUTIONS**

Awareness of minimal content
Awareness of awareness itself
Awareness lacking an object

SUMMARY OF THE TALK

- ▶ Examined a **possible case of MPE**: LDS
- ▶ Examined **definitions of LDS**. Indian and Analytical Philosophy
- ▶ Offered an alternative diagnosis of **what LDS is**
- ▶ Suggested a taxonomy of **three types of awareness** during LDS
- ▶ Shown **preliminary results** of a X-Phi project