

A very brief review of the life and work of neuroscientist, physician, psychoanalyst, inventor, animal rights activist and pioneer in dolphins, isolation tanks and psychedelics John C Lilly 1915-2001.

Michael Starks

Abstract

Lilly was one of the greatest scientists and pioneers on the limits of human possibility but after his death a collective amnesia has descended and he is now almost forgotten. His Wiki is good but inevitably incomplete so here are a few missing details and viewpoints. Lilly was a generation (or more) ahead of his time. He is almost single-handedly responsible for the great interest in dolphins (which led to the Marine Mammal Protection Act in the USA and helped to found the animal rights movement). In 1958 he noted that the brains of elephants and cetaceans were larger than ours, that we should not abuse them and that it was one our most important projects to communicate with them. He invented sensory isolation tanks (at NIMH in 1954) and used them extensively with and without powerful psychoactive drugs at a time when it was thought that either the brain would shut down or one would go insane if external stimuli were eliminated. He created methods for implanting electrodes in mammal brains and was planning to do it to himself. He was one of the first to make serious use of computers in bioscience research and created the hardware and software to make the first attempts to communicate with dolphins. He self experimented with dangerous physiological investigations in high altitude medicine for the military during WW2, took LSD with dolphins and movie stars, submitted himself to the rigors of various forms of yoga and of Arica training, and taught classes at Esalen. He was a computer pioneer who foresaw the rapid advances in A.I. and it's inevitable clash with humans. He was the first one to investigate the bizarre psychedelic ketamine (" vitamin K "), and his results (published in the two last chapters of his book 'The Scientist') are still the best data on the dose/effect relation of any psychedelic on one person. It cured his lifelong daily migraine headaches (see <http://www.conspiracyarchive.com/UFOs/Gorightly.htm>). And all this happened before most of us were born! He had courage, honesty and integrity that is rare anywhere and almost nonexistent in science. His goal was to find the ultimate truth about everything and he went about as far as anyone ever has. He had little patience with the stupid and hypocritical games one has to play to fit into monkey society. Of course the reaction of the establishment was predictable. He left the NIMH and was never given any government or academic support for the last 35 years of his life. His paper and comments at a conference on sensory deprivation were removed from the published version. He was not invited to government sponsored symposia on dolphins (he had refused to help develop them as weapons), though he clearly knew more about them than anyone in the world. He liked to live and work on the edge and few could keep up with him, as his books make clear. If you have read some of his other books it will be much easier going. He was a pioneer in consciousness research and pushed the boundaries of our understanding of who we are and what we might become. Among other things he catalogs the various states reached by drugs, meditation, and isolation, tries to determine their significance, and suggests how to use them. I very briefly review and comment on his life and work.

Those interested in all my writings in their most recent versions may download from this site my e-book 'Philosophy, Human Nature and the Collapse of Civilization Michael Starks (2016)- Articles and Reviews 2006-2016' by Michael Starks First Ed. 662p (2016).

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software to make the first attempts to communicate with dolphins. He self experimented with dangerous physiological investigations in high altitude medicine for the military during WW2, took LSD with dolphins and movie stars, submitted himself to the rigors of Arica training, and taught classes at Esalen. He was the first one to investigate the bizarre psychedelic ketamine, and his results (published in the two last chapters of his book `The Scientist`) are still the best data on the dose/effect relation of any psychedelic on one person. And all this happened before most of us were born!

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He liked to live and work on the edge and few could keep up with him, as this book makes clear. If you have read some of his other books it will be much easier going. He was a pioneer in consciousness research and pushed the boundaries of our understanding of who we are and what we might become. Among other things he catalogs here the various states reached by drugs, meditation, and isolation, tries to determine their significance, and suggests how to use them.

As a result of all his research, especially his months of continuous hourly injections of ketamine, he became convinced that our ordinary reality was not the only one. During his trips he was often in communication with members of a civilization 1000 years in the future. We all allow ourselves such experiences every time we watch a sci fi movie and sometimes it leaves

us more than just amused, but when anyone meditates or takes a drug to do it we tend to discount the results. Lilly however, took it all seriously, and parts of this book explain why. Whatever our mind produces -- by any means -- only happens because our brains are programmed by our genes to make it possible. So it's at least plausible that any of these routes inward reveal fundamental aspects of what's possible for us in the future, or even for some other species elsewhere in the universe. If you find his scientifically based viewpoints irrational, consider that most people believe without evidence (really with abundant evidence to the contrary) in good and bad luck, in super beings living in space who rule the earth, in a place in spacetime where dead people go, in stars millions of light years away influencing their lives, and in ghosts, angels, witches, and gods that come to earth to inhabit statues that read our thoughts and violate all the laws of physics, chemistry and biology in order to help us personally.

He describes his tank work (and lots more) in *The Dyadic Cyclone*, *The Center of the Cyclone*, and in *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer* (1967) and other books and papers.

His book *Simulations of God* is a plea to examine your beliefs with an open mind.

He defines metabeliefs as those about belief systems. He says that our simulations of reality (with meditation, isolation, drugs, computers) can provide access to other realities which may include the future, the past, or extraterrestrial. He refers to metaprograms as learning tools (symbols, programs, languages, ideas, models) which our central programs (mind or part of it) runs all the time. Cognitive psychology did not really exist at the time he was most active and now we would likely call the central programs cognitive templates, modules or inference engines.

He refers to self-metaprograms (or essences) as parts of the mind that program our experiences.

Though he carried out an exhausting and dangerous program of self experimentation with psychedelics (what many now call entheogens), he does not believe they are a final or complete path to higher consciousness. Yes as I reflect on this, I note that tens of millions have successfully explored their cognitive templates with psychedelics while meditation alone may have generated a few hundred thousand satoris and probably less than 100 living mystics. It is also clear that psychedelics have led millions to meditation. He mentions the very psychedelic Revelations of St. John and understands that Jesus taught revelation from within—i.e., the same sort of self transcendence as Taoism and Buddhism. He discusses how we use drugs, sex, money, groups, war etc. as substitutes for God. God as compassion, science, consciousness or superspace (the then current concepts of cosmology are explained and he imagines the universe collapsing and being reborn--very contemporary!). He discusses god in here vs god out there but notes that if it's out there then it's a puzzle where math comes from. His experiences make him doubt that death is the end.

He was very open to all ideas and his desire to consider all points of view makes some parts of his books rambling and a bit incoherent. He crams so many ideas on each page that there is easily enough in each to form the core of ten books or a lifetime of research and personal

exploration. Among the blizzard of mind boggling ideas are: war is the result of a future civilization using us for war games; we are god simulating himself, our interstellar rockets find intelligent machines that follow us back to earth and take over; government sponsored meditation classes, computers that control and monitor all communication and take control of civilization, our genes generate the illusion that we live in a certain and determinate universe; we are simulated by God or vice versa.

Though he must have crossed paths countless time with Indian mystics and Buddhists, strangely, he was most influenced by an obscure American mystic named Franklin Merrell- Wolff—another remarkable figure now almost totally lost in time.

Lilly was an extremely bright and highly rational person yet he became convinced of the reality of his extraterrestrial membership in a future civilization and he went into a 6 week depression after a ketamine trip in which they showed him the collapse of the universe.

It was clear to him that the phenomena of the mind were capable of scientific study but this was quite heretical 40 years ago. What a great pity that he never delved into Wittgenstein's philosophy nor became acquainted with Osho!

Some of his books like "The Scientist" end with reprints of some of his papers and poems. Someone should put all his writings plus photos and other memorabilia on a DVD!