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Study of Human Consciousness -
Hillary S. Webb**

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A Conversation With Eugene
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Welcome to Vol. 3 No. 4, the last issue of *Paranthropology* for 2012. It has been a good year for the journal, having gone from strength to strength, expanding its scope and content, and getting more people involved in its production. The Second Anniversary Anthology has also be a great success, and I look forward to putting together more edited volumes in the future.

This issue features contributions from Hillary S. Webb, who takes a look at quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of consciousness through the lens of Karl Popper's distinction between 'clock systems' and 'cloud systems.' This is followed by a commentary on Webb's paper from our frequent contributor Mark A. Schroll, who asks the question of whether humanity is really ready to possess a 'technical of understanding of how consciousness works'?

In 'In Search of Higher Intelligence,' creative writer and essayist Matt Cardin gives an overview of the Daemonic cord that links Aleister Crowley, Timothy Leary and Robert Anton Wilson. Cardin's paper takes bold steps in considering the ontology of the Daemonic muse, and I'm sure the reader will find it fascinating.

In 'Magic, Science and Religion (Part 1)' master stage magician Eugene Burger and myself discuss stage magic as a means of connecting with existential Mysteries, as well as exploring the connections between consciousness, performance, belief and the body. This is the first part of an on-going dialogue.

Andy Letcher's paper 'Get thee enhurued!: Magic Mushrooms, Time and the End of the World' critically examines some of the psychedelic strands of the current 2012 end of the world phenomenon, and in so-doing presents an alternative way of thinking about psychedelics.

This issue is concluded with a ground-breaking letter, first published in 1953 in *The Journal of Parapsychology* by the anthropologist John R. Swanton (1873-1958), which calls for anthropologists to take seriously the research and findings of psychical research and parapsychology. It has been hugely influential to many, and I'm sure the reader will be similarly impressed.

The next issue of the journal (January 2013), will have the theme of 'Thinking About Experience.' See page 17 for submission details.

Jack Hunter

Clock System or Cloud System?: Applying Popper's Metaphor to the Study of Human Consciousness

Hillary S. Webb

The question of what human consciousness “is,” how it “works,” and what it “does” is currently being approached by myriad fields of study, each with their own particular goals and research techniques. But, despite the undeniably complex nature of this enigmatic phenomenon, the prevailing scientific and institutional paradigm seems to imply that only quantitative, experimentally focused approaches are a worthy means of illuminating “truth” about human consciousness.

In this paper, I begin by borrowing Popper’s metaphor of “clock systems” versus “cloud systems,” applying each to quantitative and qualitative inquiry respectively. I make the case that, as Popper urged when articulating his ideas about physical determinism, the field of consciousness research must reconsider the possibility that rejecting the “cloud,” or qualitative aspects of consciousness, will lead to a stunted, incomplete picture of the phenomenon. Taking examples from my own work as an anthropologist and from the work of my colleagues within the field, I offer examples of, and reflections on, what qualitative research has to offer all of us who wish to gain insight into human consciousness; in particular, its nature, function, and potential. In response to the one-sidedness within the field, I urge researchers of all types to consider its “double nature” as a positive quality, and offer the reminder that no matter what differences in our particular goals and research styles, our meta-mission remains the same: to illuminate the great mystery that lies in the center of our personhood.

Introduction

Not long after finishing graduate school, I attended a large conference at which researchers from varied disciplines within the experimental and social sciences had come together to share

their research on human consciousness. Having just completed my Masters degree and PhD at two very humanistic universities, I was eager to get out into the world and share the results of my research exploring the cross-cultural use of altered state experiences as an epistemological tool, one of the main interests of my field, the anthropology of consciousness. I saw this conference as my opportunity to step up and take my place as a member of a field dedicated to adding to our understanding of human consciousness—its nature, function, and potentials.

I had just arrived at the conference—had not yet even slung my name tag over my head—when I got into a conversation with a distinguished scientist who was there to present a paper on his research into remote viewing. Feeling excited that I had crossed paths with someone who likewise had an interest in non-ordinary ways of knowing, I began to describe plans to study various sound technologies and their potential for altered state experience using a qualitative approach. “Using a qualitative approach?” he said, with a biting laugh. “Gawd.” Then he rolled his eyes. What the hell? I thought.

Having just emerged from the supportive womb of institutions that not only supported but encouraged the exploration of an individual’s subjective, lived experience as a means by which one could illuminate the phenomenon of consciousness, his dismissive—no, contemptuous—reaction startled me. What I learned as time went on was that this attitude is far from unusual. The study of human consciousness is a complex one—perhaps most complex of all subjects of inquiry, for, as it has been said, the human mind is the only thing in existence trying to understand itself, and therefore investigating consciousness is a lot like trying to find your way through a hall of mirrors, or, perhaps, like a dog chasing its own tail. The question of what

consciousness “is,” how it “works,” and what it “does” is currently being approached by myriad fields of study. But, while philosophers, neuroscientists, psychologists, anthropologists, theologians, spiritual leaders, and practitioners of all kinds can be found investigating human consciousness through the specific lens of each one’s particular discipline, the prevailing paradigm seems to imply—in both subtle and overt ways—that only quantitative, experimentally focused sciences are a worthy means of illuminating truth about the phenomenon of consciousness. Fields like anthropology and certain branches of psychology that apply descriptive, first-person investigatory procedures (humanistic and transpersonal psychology among them), have been marginalized; shunted to the fringe of an already fringe science.

Almost three years after my encounter at the conference, I am still surprised at the persistence of this attitude that qualitative modes of inquiry are somehow a less valid means of researching human consciousness. It has led me to wonder: Are the two approaches to research destined to be rivals; existing forevermore in separate domains with very little communication between them? Or can they become interdependent, each one allowing the other to inform that which is their common mission? Specific to my own work: Will qualitative analysis ever be given the respect that it deserves as a means of coming to illuminate questions regarding the nature, function, and potential of human consciousness?

In this paper, I will offer a few reflections on what qualitative research has to offer all of us across the field who wish to attain some sort of insight into the workings of human consciousness—what it is, what it does, and what it may be capable of beyond our current understanding. I first borrow (and co-opt for my own purposes) scientific philosopher Karl Popper’s metaphor of the distinction between “clock systems” and “cloud systems” (here equated with quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches respectively rather than used as a way of articulating ideas about physical determinism as Popper intended) and then, from this, consider the possibility that, as a field, we may be

confusing the “clock problems” of consciousness with the “cloud problems” of consciousness. I will offer some examples from recent anthropological research that exemplifies ways in which qualitative research offers us essential insight into this enigmatic phenomenon.

Defining Our Terms

I’ve noticed that as individual researchers, we often don’t take the time to define what we mean by “consciousness” when speaking with one another about our work. I remember one wine-filled evening in grad school having a philosophical debate with a fellow student about some aspect of “consciousness.” After about 45 minutes of trying in vain to convince each other of the righteousness of our particular positions, it suddenly dawned on us that each of us was talking about two entirely different things, to the degree that we were essentially comparing apples and oranges. No wonder we were both so confused at how the other arrived at her conclusions! Each of us was using a very different set of parameters for how to approach the subject matter.

Since then I’ve taken care to—as much as possible—define what I mean when I speak or write about “consciousness.” This is not to suggest that I believe that there is, or should be, one definition for the term (just the opposite in fact—how can we possibly encompass this complex phenomenon using one definition or set of assumptions?), but as a way of being transparent about my starting point and the basis of my particular perspective. Agree or disagree, at least whomever I’m speaking with has an idea of how my own particular relationship to consciousness informs the work that I do. And vice versa.

Huxley’s (2004/1954) *Doors of Perception* has been highly influential in informing my personal and professional approach to consciousness. In particular, the following passage:

“Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe.

The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed [by funneling this information through a “reducing valve”]. What comes out the other end is a measly trickle [leading us to believe] that reduced awareness is the only awareness...Through these permanent or temporary bypasses [i.e.: spontaneous altered states, intentional spiritual exercises, hypnosis, drugs] there flows...something more than, and above all something different from, the carefully selected utilitarian material which our narrowed, individual minds regard as a complete, or at least sufficient, picture of reality” (Huxley 2004 [1954]: 22-23).

Based on that—and also based on the experiences I have had and the research that I have done in the field—my current definition of consciousness goes something like this:

Consciousness is the process by which the total sum of experience, information, knowledge, and understanding become available to us, both through states of “ordinary” awareness and “non-ordinary” awareness. As human beings we are in every moment experiencing and being transformed by the world through both ordinary and non-ordinary means, whether we are consciously aware of it or not.

As I said, I certainly don't consider this the ultimate definition. However, what this definition reveals is my relationship to the term and, in particular, my personal and professional interests when it comes to the study of consciousness. For example, rather than concerning myself with what consciousness is—that is, its ultimate nature and/or its potential for reducibility to one essential “thing”—my work focuses on how human beings experience consciousness, in particular, ways in which altered states of consciousness can be used to attain practical, outer-world-relevant knowledge. Given the particular focus of my research goals, my work fo-

cuses primarily on engaging with the subjective experience of consciousness and how these experiences transform us and our relationship to existence. Qualitative inquiry, with its emphasis on narrative, metaphors, highlighting uncommon connections, the local and nonlocal, causal and noncausal aspects of a given phenomenon, is my doorway into knowledge.

Of Clocks and Clouds

In his essay, “Of Clocks and Clouds: An Approach to the Problem of Rationality and the Freedom of Man,” scientific philosopher Karl Popper (1966) divided the world into “clock systems” and “cloud systems.”

Clock systems, he explained, are orderly, predictable, reducible, and mechanistic. They rely on the linear, causal aspects of existence in order to function properly. Clock systems keep the trains running on time. They give us confidence that on our drive to work each morning a red light will always mean, “stop” and not randomly change to signify “go.” As I write this I'm engaging with the world as a clock system, paying attention to the linear organization of my ideas so that (hopefully!) anyone reading this will be able to follow the progression of my thoughts (whether they agree or not) and I'll be able to construct some kind of common meaning. Clock systems keep us all organized and on the same page. And this is good.

In contrast, “cloud systems” are non-linear, non-orderly. They are unpredictable, naturalistic, and open to interpretation. While clock systems are neat and orderly and therefore can be predicted and “solved” through objective testing, cloud systems often involve the creation of relationships between two seemingly unlike and unrelated things. Imagine lying on your back in the grass looking up at the sky. What shapes do you see in the clouds? A duck? A seahorse? The profile of your high school chemistry teacher? Where does your mind go as a result of the shapes that you see? What memories? Emotions? Physiological sensations? Cloud systems are free flowing. They are time and space independent. They adapt to the changing environment and changing circumstances. One cannot

generalize using a cloud system approach, for it is too complex and fluid a system. And this is good, too.

According to Popper, the mistake of modern science is to pretend that everything can be addressed as a clock system; that everything can be reduced to mechanistic principles and processes that make everything neat and tidy. But as I learned that morning at the conference, the Western epistemological paradigm very much favors the “clock system” approach (i.e. the Scientific Method) as a means of coming to understand the world and, as we are discussing here, the phenomenon of human consciousness. Most scientists seem relatively comfortable holding the notion that while Newtonian physics is helpful in understanding causal, macro-elements of existence, it cannot be adequately applied to the quantum, micro-level of existence that plays by its own set of rules and can only be illuminated with its own set of research parameters. And still, the belief that a one-size-fits-all approach to the study of consciousness continues to endure.

Given the heavy focus on the “clock” elements of consciousness within this field of study, I would like to offer some examples of how approaching consciousness as a cloud system—that is, via the qualitative approach—offers us essential knowledge of its nature, function, and potential.

**What It Is, What It Does,
And What It May Be Capable Of**

As researchers (or, for that matter, as human beings), what is it that we want to know about consciousness? Essentially, what we want to know is: What consciousness is (its nature), what it does (its function), and what it “super does” (its potential beyond current consensus understanding). Experimental scientists of all kinds have come at these questions using a quantitative research approach, resulting in essential data that we can turn to when we need to know “big picture” information, such as how consciousness tends to act or react within a controlled setting, with certain parameters being applied to ensure consistency in environment and circumstance. Thanks to these important

“clock” studies, we now have much more insight into, and information about, the physiological and behavioral implications of consciousness.

But what about the cloud-like aspects of consciousness? That is, the aspects of consciousness that are unpredictable and free flowing and inter-relational? Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquiry does not seek the predictable or the generalizable, but rather is concerned with enriching our understanding of the human condition by paying respect to the unity and diversity of our inner experiences. Qualitative research locates the individual in the world, considering and reconsidering a phenomenon in terms of the significance and meaning that research participant—not to mention the researcher him or herself—brings to it. Qualitative inquiry enriches our understanding of the human condition by illuminating and paying respect to the unity and diversity of inner experience. In the case of anthropology, the goal is to explore ways in which individual belief and action intersect with culture. And for the anthropology of consciousness, the focus is on identifying the relationship between consciousness and culture—how individuals in a given environment relate to and understand consciousness, how they interact with it (for example, through altered state experiences), and how these experiences assist the individual in living their lives. The anthropological study of consciousness is almost always conducted *in situ*, within a natural setting, rather than in a laboratory or under contrived situations (though most of us would agree that all research is to an extent a contrived situation, whether in a lab or in the field).

What can we learn about human consciousness if we approach it in this way, as a cloud system existing within a natural setting, and with qualitative inquiry as the means by which this phenomenon reveals itself to us? The examples I give come from my work as former managing editor of *Anthropology of Consciousness* journal, and also from my work as an anthropologist exploring indigenous Peruvian ways of knowing.

What it is

The question of what consciousness is—that is, what “thing” it can ultimately be reduced to—is and has been an enduring debate, one that has, in general, been split into three camps, each aligned with a specific ontological viewpoint. In the middle are those who remain faithful to Descartes’ mind-body dualism; who suggest that for us to have the experience that we do (that of being both physical and mental entities), that the two equally real and irreducible substances of “mind” and “body” must interface in some way, even if we don’t yet know how. Positioned on either side of this philosophical premise are those who believe that the apparent irreconcilability of these two substances means that one must be a product of the other. Materialists argue that matter is the only true substance—that all phenomena, including all mental phenomena, can be reduced to being by-products of physico-chemical processes—while subjective idealists tend to regard mind as primary, with matter believed to be an illusion created by mind. For many researchers, this question of the ultimate nature of consciousness is a central quest.

Speaking generally, qualitative analysis tends to be much less concerned with identifying what consciousness “is” as a reducible phenomenon, and instead focuses on how consciousness presents and/or reveals itself within human experience and how the individual’s relationship to the world is formed and transformed through experiences of consciousness. The way I like to think of it is that while quantitative research tends to relate to the “ultimate nature” of consciousness as a noun (that is, as a singularity, as a “thing,” whether that be its neurochemical or energetic manifestation), qualitative inquiry responds to consciousness as a verb, as a moving, changing, action-oriented, and inter-relational principle. Qualitative inquiry concerns itself not with what consciousness ultimately can be reduced to, but with how its nature is reflected as it interacts within various circumstances.

In his article entitled “Identity Discourses on the Dancefloor,” Rill (2010) describes the experi-

ence of individuals who regularly participate in Electronic Dance Music Culture. As he described it, within the context of these rave dances:

“A vibe is established when a critical mass is reached--when there are enough people feeling and giving off ‘positive energy’ to create a collective feeling. ... [T]he egocentric self is replaced by an experiential model wherein the ‘I’ is superseded by ‘We’ and thinking is second to feeling...It is a somatic experience that silences the inner language so prevalent in our waking consciousness, allowing the dancer to live quite literally ‘in-the-moment’ ...This unifying energy binds participants into a collective experience” (Rill 2010:144).

What does this passage indicate or suggest about the potential nature, or ultimate structure, of consciousness? Based on what is reported in it, a few suppositions come to mind that are worth considering:

- Consciousness is fluid. It appears to move between being thinking-dominant and feeling-dominant states, depending on how the individual is engaging with the world and what circumstance are present, both internally and externally.
- In non-ordinary states of awareness (such as trance dance), consciousness has a tendency to flow towards a state of *communitas* or deep communion with others; to a state in which “we” replaces “I” as the locus of the individual’s identity.
- Time is experienced differently depending what state of awareness one is engaged with. Within the trance dance state, time even appears to stop entirely.

This short paragraph gives us much for consideration in regards to how consciousness naturally flows within a certain circumstance. One might compare the descriptions of individuals participating in a rave dance with how consciousness is experienced, say, within the ritual practices of Peruvian shamans who likewise re-

port that the ceremonial San Pedro experience, “opens up a connection [between the participants] that is usually unconscious. The connection is always there, but often we are not conscious of it” (Webb 2012:83).

Qualitative research—and in particular anthropological research—can also provide opportunities to move past our culturally conceived categories about the nature of human consciousness and consider the question through another ontological lens. When conducting my doctoral research into the concept of *yanantin*, or “complementary opposites,” as the basis of the indigenous Andean worldview, my research participants and I fell into a discussion in which I described to them the Western concern with the mind-body “problem.” To this, one of my participants responded, “Here, [mind and body] are two,” he said, spreading his fingers apart in a V. “And they are one,” he said, bringing his fingers together. Then he shrugged. “There is no problem!” (Webb 2012:45).

In the indigenous Andean view, all matter is in some way alive and has both a material aspect and a spiritual-energetic aspect. According to this conception of it, mind and matter flow so closely together that they cannot be separated. In fact, it might be more accurate to say that, in the end, they are seen not as “two” at all, but a singular “thing” that simply manifests in different forms. Looking at consciousness in this way, the mind-body problem is not a problem at all, simply an issue of perspective. The purpose of this example is not to make an argument that consciousness is one thing or two. Rather, it is to suggest that by exploring the lived experience of consciousness, considering how it appears and informs a particular worldview within various naturalistic settings (such as a rave dance, such as a San Pedro ceremony on a mountaintop in Peru), we have the opportunity to expand our definitions and our concepts of what consciousness is. Can qualitative data tell us whether consciousness is matter or energy, or arrive at some ultimate theory of everything? Likely not, for this is (again, generally speaking) not its intent or interest (though it is possible that hints in this direction might be revealed in this way). What

qualitative inquiry offers us in regard to human consciousness is a look at its nature as a cloud system, as a verb, as a complex, changing, engaging process that responds both predictably and unpredictably to the circumstances in which it finds itself.

What It Does

In addition to seeking insight into the ultimate nature of human consciousness, what researchers want to know about consciousness is what it “does.” That is, how it functions to support the individual’s existence (or, in some cases, how it seems to self-destructively turn against the individual’s apparent best interests). While it is possible that we may ultimately be energetic or “spiritual” beings, as biological entities our number one priority is to survive and thrive within the social and physical environment in which we exist. Considering it this way, the data that qualitative inquiry seeks includes, though is not limited to, information about how the various forms that consciousness takes helps individuals manage their day-to-day lives—physically, emotionally, socially, and so on.

In his work with individuals experiencing altered states through rave dancing, Rill noted: “Participants [within EMDC] have reported a ‘more concrete engagement with life’ ... This feeling carries back to the everyday world ... For many participants their experiences [within the rave setting] have radically altered their notions of self and personhood, permanently changing not only perceptions of the world but also how people choose to interact with it.” (Rill 2010:145-146).

Rill asked: What kind of relationship does the individual have with the world after these altered state experiences? What changes occur as a result—for example, the research participants’ relationships with other human beings and the world in which they live? In what ways were these experiences psycho-integrated or used to support the individuals’ day-to-day life? First-person narratives of such experiences offer us opportunities to see how experiences of consciousness initiate a re-relating between the individual and his or her worldview, both dur-

ing and after the altered state experience. Many qualitative methods take this a step further, noting not only how such experiences effect the research participant, but also considering how the researcher's worldview is likewise changed through the shared experience of entering into a particular worldview. In my work in Peru, I spent much time paying close attention to how my research participants relate to the world as a dance of complementarity polarities and how it influences their relationships to each other, themselves, and the world around them. But in addition to playing the role of "objective" researcher, at the insistence of my research participants, I also found it necessary to enter this worldview in a personal, experiential way in order to attain a tacit sense of the cultural phenomenon of *yanantin* or "complementary opposites" (primarily, by going into altered states using the mescaline cactus San Pedro). By engaging with this cultural phenomenon from both an emic and etic position, I came to understand to a greater degree how this cultural concept influences individuals' relationship to their world and the contents of their own conscious experience. Likewise, in his article on rave dance, Rill commented that, "Drawing upon a decade of personal involvement, I would suggest that understanding the EMDC trance experience requires immersion in the act of dancing" (Rill 2010:140). In this way, the relational qualities promoted by qualitative research encourages a sharing of experience that allows the researcher to have a deeper, more encompassing understanding of the "doing" of consciousness. And this sharing of experience reveals something about consciousness, too.

What It "Super Does"

What I mean by what consciousness "super does" is a question of its potential. That is: What is human consciousness capable of, beyond our current understanding of it, or beyond what we are able to measure? Here we have entered the realm of the study of anomalous experiences. For example:

- Non-ordinary ways of knowing (remote viewing, psychic abilities, dreams, visions)
- The persistence of consciousness beyond physical death (near death experiences, channeling, out-of-body experiences)
- Ways in which consciousness influences matter (distance healing, psychokinesis, feats of magic)

In the article "A Shaman's Cure: The Relationship between ASCs and Shamanic Healing," Sidky (2009) describes his observations watching a Nepalese *jhākri* perform a healing ritual on a patient (while both patient and healer were in non-ordinary states of consciousness) in which the former, claiming to be under the influence of supernatural beings, inserted his hands in boiling water and then pulled them out, unharmed.

"[The shaman entered] into altered states of consciousness to harness the power of the numinous beings for the task at hand. ... [During the trance] arrays of different types of supernatural beings manifest themselves in the room ... the shaman embodies and controls these numinous entities shaking and trembling violently as he does so. ... the visibly sleep-deprived patient, in a transitional state between sleep and wakefulness, begins to experience the full force of the [shaman's] powers. ... [the shaman] demonstrates the awesome supernatural powers he has harnessed by inserting his hands into a cauldron of boiling water and shows everyone that he is unscathed ..." (Sidky 2009:175-185).

In my work with the shamans of Peru, my focus was not on anomalous experiences. And yet, during our discussions, they spoke very matter-of-factly about their ability to read the future in a pile of scattered coca leaves, about an experience they had had watching another shaman dematerialize in front of their eyes, about their regular dealings with both dark and light spirits, and so on. Although, having not experienced these things firsthand, it is admittedly difficult

for me to fully integrate the reality of these reports (and I will be the first to state that this is my limitation rather than indicating a lack of truth about their experience), the great respect that I have for my research participants led me to trust and even believe the reality of their worldview and, in particular, the possibility that consciousness has a greater capacity to interact with both seen and unseen worlds than I can begin to conceive.

It is in the realm of anomalous experience that we may most be blinded by our cultural preference for identifying existence solely as a clock system. It seems to me that it is not too much of a stretch to propose (for certainly others have proposed it) that perhaps anomalous experiences cannot truly and accurately be engaged with via “clock” methods. Perhaps just as the laws of Newtonian physics cannot be applied to subatomic particles, anomalous experiences deserve and require their own set of principles and procedures. This is not to say that qualitative research is thus the ultimate answer to the study of non-ordinary experiences. Rather, I would argue that what is called for is a mix of both methods. For just as Popper argued that “All clouds are clocks—even the most cloudy of clouds” (Popper 1966:4) and “all clocks are clouds, to some considerable degree—even the most precise of clocks” (Popper 1966:6.), I believe that a only a mix of qualitative and quantitative procedures (and likely some procedures that we have not even conceived of yet) will lead us to the “event horizon” of consciousness in which clock system principles and cloud system properties come together to illuminate the totality of the human experience.

That said, what qualitative inquiry offers us in regard to anomalous experiences and the potential of human consciousness is a framework for exploring how these experiences are experienced, understood, and utilized by individuals for whom experiences such as this are part and parcel of life—and therefore not considered “anomalous” at all! This gives us a jumping off place from which to explore what consciousness might be capable of, beyond the current reigning paradigm.

Conclusion

All science, whether social science or experimental science, seeks to uncover truths about the world. Each has certain goals prompting this quest and each utilizes certain techniques as a means of moving towards the fulfillment of these goals. This is just as true for the study of consciousness. But despite the various ways of approaching this tricky subject matter, we should not forget that the meta-mission of all consciousness research—both qualitative and quantitative alike—is the illumination of one of the greatest mysteries we can conceive of; the phenomenon within which lies the very essence of our personhood.

Is consciousness a “clock” system or a “cloud” system? Personally, I think it is both, and that, as Popper warned, by relying so heavily on the “clock” aspects of the phenomenon we have lost opportunities to consider the total sum of its manifestations. In response to this one-sidedness, I urge researchers of all types to consider its “double nature,” and to optimistically view this not as a hindrance to understanding, but rather as a means of clearing up some of our confusion about why consciousness seems to act like both. The purpose of a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of consciousness is not to turn a clock system into a cloud system, or vice versa. Whatever threat each methodological stance is believed to pose the other (and I do believe that millennia-old fears may be at the core of this methodological split) is unfounded. Instead, I would like to suggest that, when we pass each other in the hallways, we wish each other “good work” and perhaps even open up to the possibility that some day, in some way, we may together find the event horizon of human consciousness in which its two manifestations blend so thoroughly as to reveal the totality of the human condition.

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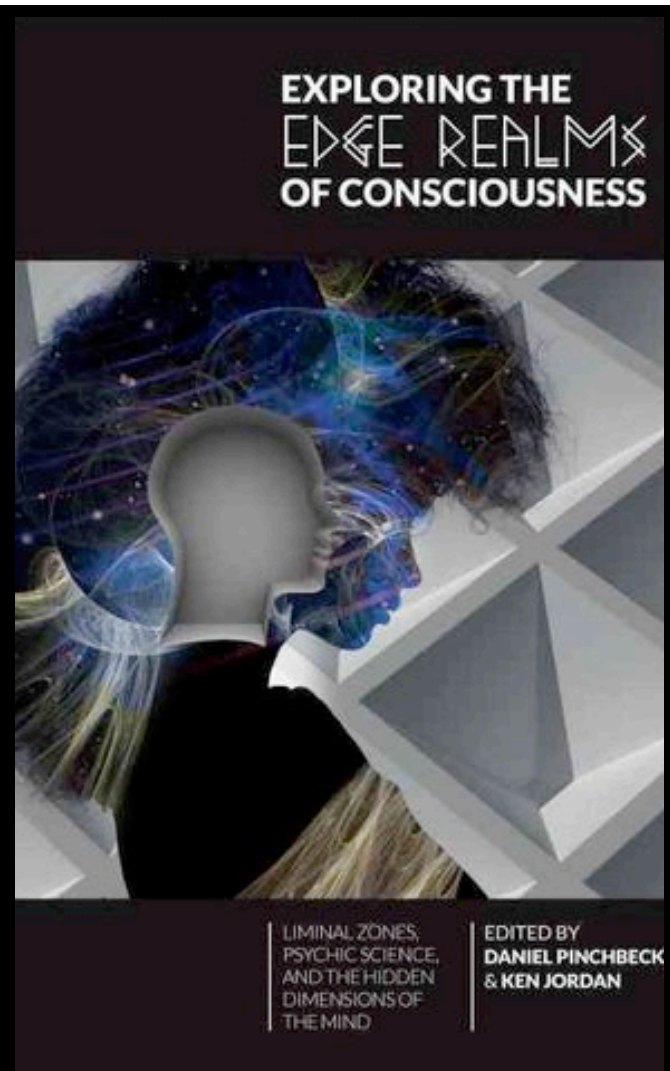
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**Commentary:
Cultural Evolution and Technological Evolution
in Consciousness Studies**

Mark A. Schroll

Hillary S. Webb's paper "Clock System or Cloud System: Applying Popper's Metaphor to the Study of Human Consciousness" (this volume) raises several important concerns. In this Commentary I offer a few brief replies to Webb, yet my cursory reply is only a beginning toward further inquiry and discussion to address the important concerns she raises. Let us begin with the concern Webb raises in recalling her encounter with the researcher who laughed at her decision to use a qualitative methodology. Those of us who choose to employ qualitative methods frequently find ourselves in the position of defending this decision. Webb sums up this defensive posture, telling us:

Fields like anthropology and certain branches of psychology that apply descriptive, first-person investigatory procedures (humanistic and transpersonal among them), have been marginalized; shunted to the fringe of an already fringe science (Webb 2012:5).

I agree, and have wrestled with this concern for 30 years, summing up my views in "Toward a New Kind of Science and Its Methods of Inquiry" (2010a) - I thank Webb for her editorial assistance on this discussion. I revisited these concerns in Charles T. Tart's article "Proceeding With Caution: What Went Wrong? The Death and Rebirth of Essential Science" (Tart 2012). (Schroll transcribed and edited this article from Tart's presentation June 16, 2004, at the 16th International Transpersonal Association conference at the Rivera Hotel, Palm Springs, California, USA, as part of the symposium organized and moderated by Schroll, "Animism, Shamanism, and Ethnobotany: Ecopsychology's Link with the Transpersonal." More recently I

summed up these concerns in "Reflecting on Paranthropology" (Schroll 2012a), and explored related concerns with John E. Mack, "Shamanism, Transpersonal Ecosophy, and John E. Mack's Investigations of Encounters with Extraterrestrial Consciousness" (Schroll & Mack 2012).

A related concern is what Webb identifies as the focus on what it is that consciousness does, or its function. This objectively oriented focus is often viewed as the hallmark of science, whose equal achievement is its partnership with technological applications that have admittedly produced a wealth of advances we all enjoy. Allen W. Batteau speaks to these concerns in *Technology and Culture* (2010), offering us a panoramic assessment of the pros and cons associated with technology's influence on culture. Additionally I have asked myself the question, where does science's predominant focus on function and/or objectivity originate? If correct, the answer I have reached is that it originates with Descartes' decision to make mathematics the basis of his new philosophy. Elaborating on this point with Katie Batten in our "Editor's Introduction: Finding and Rediscovering Gaia Consciousness: Ecofeminism as an Expression of the Transpersonal Ecosophical Perspective" (Batten & Schroll 2012), it is our conclusion that:

Quite possibly we may have found ourselves in an entirely different debate if Descartes' had said I exist, therefore I feel. Then instead of mathematics becoming the foundation of Descartes' new philosophy, with its focus on cognition linked with rationalism and materialism, the foundation of Euro-American science could have been on pure experience, with its foundation constructed upon the hu-

manities, idealism, and romanticism (Batten & Schroll 2012: 3).

Moreover this predominant focus on function and objectivity could also explain the orientation of Euro-American culture and science toward its continuing persistence in perpetuating the military industrial complex. For a thorough examination of this point see Batten and Schroll (2012). I also touch on this concern in Schroll (2010b) and Schroll (2012a). Given this glowing review, it should therefore come as no surprise to hear me say I value and support the way Webb has chosen to investigate consciousness; as she tells us:

[R]ather than concerning myself with what consciousness is—that is, its ultimate nature and/or its potential reducibility to one essential “thing”—my work focuses on how human beings experience consciousness, in particular, ways in which altered states of consciousness can be used to attain practical, outer-world-relevant knowledge (Webb, 2012, this volume, p. 6). [Further clarifying her perspective, Webb adds that her research:] focuses on engaging with the subjective experience of consciousness and how these experiences transform us and our relation to existence (Webb 2012:6).

Summary:

Humankind Is Not Ready to Possess a Technical Understanding of How Consciousness Works

To reiterate and clarify the concerns we have discussed so far, let me state clearly that the question of “how consciousness works” is something that I am torn about solving. On the one hand, to understand the way consciousness operates would be a huge leap forward. Along these lines, in an interview with Stanley Krippner, I have offered some theoretical observations to broaden our views of consciousness studies (Schroll, 2010b). And yet, I continue to approach the topic of consciousness studies with caution, because history tells us every major break-

through in knowledge is first considered as a weapon. Therefore I have continued to ask whether or not humankind is morally and ethically evolved enough, or mature enough, to possess the knowledge of how consciousness works? Considering the frequency of aggression and violence throughout the world, the answer to this question seems clear, that humankind is not ready to possess a technical understanding of how consciousness works. On the other hand, humankind is crying out for, and expressing its need of, further knowledge about personal growth, about empathy, about humanistic and transpersonal ways of experiencing our way of being; all of which are approaches to the study of consciousness that emphasizes wisdom and compassion. This is what I see as valuable in the work of Webb and others who share her personal and professional orientation toward consciousness studies.

Defining Consciousness

And Investigating Ultimate Reality

Beyond this, yet tangentially related to our discussion so far, are the concerns Webb raises regarding the questions “what is consciousness” (its nature) and “what does it super do” (“its potential beyond current consensus understanding”) (Webb 2012:7). Beginning with the question “what is consciousness,” it was in my article “Toward A Physical Theory of the Source of Religion” (Schroll 2005), that I attempted to sum up what the word consciousness means to me. I defined consciousness as:

The immediacy of the continually emerging effort to establish an awareness of the reciprocal interaction taking place between the person-the-environment-and-the fundamental unifying principle bonding this relationship together at any given moment (Schroll 2001) (Schroll 2005:57).

In referring to “the person,” I take the view that we possess a self-awareness that has free will to make decisions toward being-in-the-world. By “environment” I mean both nature and the built environment and/or the totality of our physical

planet that we call Earth. By the “fundamental unifying principle” I mean something beyond space-time that serves as a generative process of organization, and has the ability to bond this reciprocal interaction of person and environment together with this generative process at any given moment. My name for this fundamental unifying principle is “the holoflux,” a concept developed by physicist and philosopher David Bohm. The far-reaching implications of the holoflux refers to the question that Webb identifies as “what consciousness super-does.” But any further discussion of the holoflux exceeds the limits of this commentary, and whose more extensive inquiry has been taken up in my article “Clarifying the Holographic Paradigm’s Limits and Understanding Bohm’s Representation of Ultimate Reality—the Holoflux—Bohm’s Participatory Vision of Cosmos and Consciousness.” (This article is currently undergoing publication review for a project under the supervision of Charles Laughlin).

The Mind/Body Problem and

Encouragement Toward Further Inquiry

Finally to bring a sense of closure to this commentary, and the perplexing inquiry as to what consciousness is or isn’t, necessarily includes (as Webb reminds us), a discussion of the mind/body problem. Gregory Bateson in *Angels Fear: Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred* (1987), has astutely summed up this problem as:

the epistemological nightmare of the twentieth century. It should now be possible to find a more stable theoretical stance. We need such a stance to limit the excesses both of the materialists and those who flirt with the supernatural. And further, we need a revised philosophy or epistemology to reduce the intolerance that divides the two camps...Very simply, let me say that I despise and fear both of these extremes of opinion and that I believe both extremes to be epistemologically naïve, epistemologically wrong, and politically dangerous (Bateson & Bateson 1987:52-53).

Bateson’s reference to these extremes that we associate with the opposite poles of the mind/body problem have historically grouped themselves into two general schools of thought. The dominant school of thought (which we associate with Issac Newton) is that all is matter; and that what we call consciousness or God is nothing more than a by-product of our brain’s neurobiology. Contrary to this school is the view commonly associated with Bishop Berkeley, which argues that all is mind; that everything is an image in the mind of God. Nick Herbert echoed and clarified Bateson’s sentiments concerning both of these schools, by saying that:

I believe that both visions are illusions... [and instead represent aspects] of a larger truth. The world of mind needs matter as a relatively stable medium in which to express itself, and the material world needs mind to make its existence “meaningful.” As for mind-created reality, it’s obvious to me that our technological accomplishments result from the inter-action of a particular kind of mentality with matter. Our culture is not entirelyly material but a co-creation of mind and matter (Herbert 1993:186).

Moreover all of this commentary’s discussion is an attempt to lay the foundation for our further inquiry of “the holoflux,” Bohm’s radical theory of the implicate order; radical in the sense that it: 1) returns the focus of our inquiry to the very roots of the mind/body problem. 2) It provides us with an alternative worldview capable of demonstrating that psyche and earth (consciousness and matter) are a continuum, or two sides of one process, and 3) Despite this alternative worldview, Bohm’s implicate order remains pluralistic in its epistemology and ontology.

Bohm’s implicate order hypothesis therefore avoids the preference for a worldview that conforms to previous exclusive perspectives favoring either matter or mind, and in doing so avoids the well deserved criticism that Etsel Cardena ruminates on in his article “On Wolver-

ines and Epistemological Totalitarianism" (Cardena 2011). Telling us:

the rhetoric of the aggressive psi critic, the all-believing psi proponent, or the New-Ager would seem to be, pun intended, universes apart, they both reveal an epistemological totalitarianism that assumes an all-knowing apprehension about the nature of reality, intolerance for complexity and ambiguity, and an indictment of anyone not sharing that view (Cardena 2011:4).

This is a good place to bring our discussion to a close. It is my hope these comments have offered clarity and encouraged further inquiry into the mystery of consciousness. A mystery whose understanding may (if my experience can be believed as real) eventually help to explain what I have characterized to the best of my ability as "An Experience of Dematerialization on Woodrose Seeds" (Schroll 2012b).

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Paranthropology: Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal



Mark A. Schroll, Ph.D., Serves on Paranthropology's Board and is best known for his articles on shamanism, transpersonal ecosophy, and related inquiries into psychical phenomenon. Lesser known is Schroll's 30 year inquiry into the philosophical legacy of David Bohm. The late Werner Leinfellner, Ph.D., co-founder and former vice-president of the

International Wittgenstein-Symposium, summed up my investigation of Bohm by saying, "Schroll has identified the coming crisis in philosophy and I am impressed with his courage to have taken on such a huge and difficult problem. Schroll's personal insider experience and knowledge of New Age philosophy is of great advantage for him, but does not hinder him to stand up against exaggerations, such as neo-shamanism and the mystic participation cults. Schroll offers a new holistic aspect of how reason and body come together in our consciousness, a problem of interest not only for transpersonal psychology but also of general interest. His aim to make this idea of holism accessible to philosophers and scientists who wish to apply it in their own fields of research has been accomplished successfully in his dissertation."

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- * The consequences of taking experience seriously...and so on.

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**In Search of Higher Intelligence:
The Daemonic Muse(s) of Aleister Crowley,
Timothy Leary, and Robert Anton Wilson**
Matt Cardin

In my eBook *A Course in Demonic Creativity*, and at the blog Demon Muse from which it is drawn, and in the book *Daemonic Creativity: A Guide to the Inner Genius* that I am currently developing from both, I explore the experience and practice of creativity (especially in relation to writing) as a felt engagement with an autonomous entity or intelligence that is separate from the ego. I argue that deliberately personifying one's creativity in the mode of the classical muse, daemon, or genius is a particularly effective tactic not only for enhancing creativity but for discovering an organic life direction, vocation, or calling.

I also delve into the obvious and compelling question of this creative intelligence's ontological status. Is the muse, the daemon, the personal genius—that gravitational center of our creative energy and identity—truly a separate being/force/entity with an autonomous existence? Or are such words, and the experience to which they refer, simply convenient fictions that serve as metaphors for the unconscious mind? Obviously, this is a question that relates to and resonates with many diverse fields of study: religion, anthropology, esotericism, parapsychology, and even biology and neuroscience (think of the muse-like and "sensed presence" experiences reported by Michael Persinger in relation to his famous "God machine" experiments). But regardless of the angle of approach, the first thing we find when we seriously begin to consider the matter is that arriving at a viable answer will not be, and cannot be, a straightforward affair, since we are dealing with an issue whose reality is bound up with the very subjectivity of we-who-ask-the-questions. This means that all of our attempts run us into immediate difficulties, because whichever side we try to choose—the daemonic muse as somehow "real" or the dae-

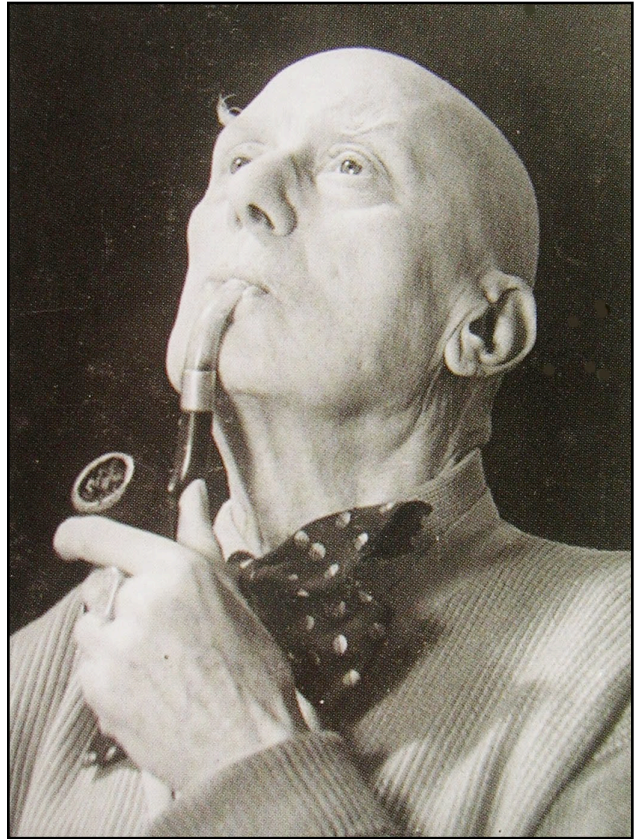
monic muse as mere metaphor—we find that our thinking, and more fundamentally the nature of our perspective and its elaboration in the cultural-philosophical worldview that underlies our thinking, proceeds from presuppositions that automatically lead us to skirt important issues, ignore certain data, beg crucial questions, and generally disregard, flatten, and bulldoze over entire realms of pertinent and potentially conflicting actualities.

Hence the value of reviewing some of the various ways in which intelligent individuals have understood the experience of guidance and communication from a muse-like source. Of all the myriad strands in the lively cultural conversation about this issue, it would be hard to identify a more pertinent—or fascinating (and entertaining)—one than the line of influence connecting twentieth-century occultist Aleister Crowley to psychedelic guru Timothy Leary to counter-culture novelist—psychologist-philosopher and "guerilla ontologist" Robert Anton Wilson. The dividing line between objective and subjective interpretations of the experience of external-seeming communication from an invisible source is highlighted not only in the individual stories of these three figures, but in the plot-line that interconnects them with each other. In particular, Wilson's final "resting point" in terms of a belief system to encompass the whole thing is helpful and instructive in any inquiry into the daemonic muse's ontological status, and can prove a helpful tonic for dogmatism, because the outlook that he ended up inhabiting was more of an *anti*-belief system that highlighted and hinged on the irreducible indeterminacy of any possible answer.

The Great Beast and His Holy Guardian Angel

Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was arguably the most influential occultist of the twentieth century, and his relevance to the muse-based, or daemon-based, approach to writing and creativity is found in his lifelong engagement with the idea of the Holy Guardian Angel, which stands as a specific iteration of the fundamental concept of the muse, daemon, or genius. By the time Crowley came along, the concept of the Holy Guardian Angel as a person's presiding spiritual guide, helper, and exemplar, the accessing of which was the chief goal of magical or esoteric work, had already been around for several centuries in Western occult and mystical circles, or even longer if you factor in its long prehistory in Neoplatonism and various sister schools of philosophical mysticism. Crowley himself borrowed the term from an English translation of a medieval occult text. So there was nothing particularly original in his use of it, or even in his fundamental philosophical framing of it. But it was he who made it central and definitive for subsequent generations when he founded the new religion of Thelema and devoted the remainder of his life to explicating and promoting its principles.

The founding event itself, which Thelemites still celebrate every year on the spring equinox, as the Feast of the Equinox of the Gods, was the writing of *Liber AL vel Legis* or *The Book of the Law*. As the story goes, in April 1904, while Crowley was on honeymoon in Cairo with his new wife Rose, the book was dictated to him over a span of three days by a voice that identified itself as Aiwass or Aiwaz, messenger of the Egyptian god Horus. The book became Thelema's central scripture, and Crowley identified Aiwass as his own Holy Guardian Angel. He also identified the event as a dividing point in history that signaled the end of the former "Aeon of Osiris," a period characterized by belief in patriarchal monotheism and all that goes with it, and the new "Aeon of Horus," whose guiding ethos would be individual liberty and the discovery of each person's "True Will" in communion with his or her own Holy Guardian Angel.



Interestingly, and importantly, Crowley's championing of Thelema and *Liber AL* didn't happen right away in the immediate wake of his Cairo experience. In fact, initially he was not at all enamored of the book, and spoke more than once of the way its ideas were distasteful and contrary to his own thoughts. Robert Anton Wilson and co-author Miriam Joe Hill elaborate on this briefly in their encyclopedia *Everything Is Under Control: Conspiracies, Cults, and Cover-ups*, and their comments again underscore the question of what Crowley's experience with Aiwass "really was":

At first, Crowley did not like the experience or the book, and managed to largely ignore them for ten years. After 1914, however, he felt increasingly under their spell, and eventually he devoted the rest of his life to the "mission" the book imposed on him. After 1919, he spoke of the Cairo experience as an encounter with a superhuman intelligence; one of his disciples, Kenneth Grant, has claimed the communicating entity emanated from the

system of the double star, Sirius, while another student, Israel Regardie, prefers to say Crowley reached the depths of the human evolutionary unconscious unknown to either Freud or Jung.¹

Thelema is erected entirely upon, and around, the idea of the Holy Guardian Angel. Its central organizing concept is the necessity for each adherent to achieve the “knowledge and conversation” of his or her own Angel, and thereby to discover the aforementioned True Will, a term that is basically coeval with the idea of a life mission or divine purpose. The most famous statement from *Liber AL*—the oft-quoted “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law”—was borrowed and modified from Rabelais, but in Thelema it assumes the radically specific and transformative meaning of *discovering one’s guiding daimon and thereby accessing, activating, and actualizing one’s cosmic/divine destiny*. The classical daimon/daemon or genius encapsulated the idea of an invisible spirit that accompanies a person through life and exerts a kind of existential gravity or magnetism that evokes experiences in accordance with the divinely ordained life plan. When Crowley spoke and wrote about the Holy Guardian Angel, and also, significantly, when similar-minded people and organizations in his time did the same—as with the influential Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, whose founder was in fact the translator of the book that provided Crowley with the term “Holy Guardian Angel”—he was pursuing the very same thing from a different angle.

His experience is also relevant because his interpretation of it, which continued to evolve throughout his lifetime, underscored the tension, or confusion, between objective and subjective views. Until the end of his life he kept issuing what seemed to be contradictory statements about the matter. Sometimes he even planted them side-by-side in the same writing, as in *The Equinox of the Gods* (1936), the book where he tells the story of how *The Book of the Law* came to be written. At one point he describes the Holy Guardian Angel as “our Secret Self—our Subconscious Ego,” clearly favoring

an interpretation of the Angel as a layer or presence within the psyche. But in the same chapter he says that even though the words of *The Book of the Law* were physically written by him as “ink on paper, in the material sense,” still they

are not My words, unless Aiwaz be taken to be no more than my subconscious self, or some part of it: in that case, my conscious self being ignorant of the Truth in the Book and hostile to most of the ethics and philosophy of the Book, Aiwaz is a severely suppressed part of me. Such a theory would further imply that I am, unknown to myself, possessed of all sorts of praeternatural knowledge and power.²

In other words, Crowley says here that the simplest, and therefore the best, explanation is to consider the Holy Guardian Angel an independent intelligence, since the subconscious explanation strains credulity even more.

Four decades after Crowley wrote these words, in June 1973, Robert Anton Wilson took “a programmed trip on something an underground Alchemist told [me] was LSD,” where part of the “program” involved listening to a taped reading of Crowley’s Invocation of the Holy Guardian Angel. As Wilson recounted in *Cosmic Trigger: The Final Secret of the Illuminati*, he achieved, among other experiences, “a rush of Jungian archetypes, strongly influenced by the imagery of Crowley’s Invocation, but nonetheless having that peculiar quality of external reality and *alien intelligence* emphasized by Jung in his discussion of the archetypes.”³ He also “laughed merrily at Crowley’s joking seriousness in telling one disciple, Frank Bennett, that the Holy Guardian Angel invoked in this ritual is merely ‘our own unconsciousness’ and meanwhile telling another disciple, Jane Wolf, that the Holy Guardian Angel is ‘a separate being of superhuman intelligence.’”⁴ Again, the paradox or contradiction is deliberate and central.

The reference to Frank Bennett, not incidentally, comes from a conversation that Bennett and Crowley both recorded separately, Crowley

in his autobiography and Bennett in his diary of the time he spent with Crowley in 1921. Bennett was a British-born Australian who became one of Crowley's chief disciples, and Crowley wrote in his *Confessions* that he once revealed something to Bennett that shocked him into an initiatory experience of his Holy Guardian Angel. Editors John Symonds and Kenneth Grant filled in the other half of this story in a footnote to their edition of the book: "We know from Frank Bennett's diary what Crowley said to him on this occasion... Crowley told him that it was all a matter of getting the subconscious mind to work; and when this subconscious mind was allowed full sway, without interference from the conscious mind, then illumination could be said to have begun; for the subconscious mind was our Holy Guardian Angel."⁵

For our present purposes, perhaps the most helpful expression of this interpretive tension comes from Israel Regardie, who served as Crowley's personal secretary from 1928 to 1932 and went on to become one of the most influential figures in modern Western occultism. In his introduction to *The Law Is for All*, a collection of Crowley's commentaries on *The Book of the Law*, Regardie wrote, "It really makes little difference in the long run whether *The Book of the Law* was dictated to him by a preterhuman intelligence named Aiwass or whether it stemmed from the creative deeps of Aleister Crowley. The book was written. And he became the mouthpiece for the Zeitgeist, accurately expressing the intrinsic nature of our time as no one else has done to date."⁶ One is free to disagree with Regardie regarding Crowley's prophetic value and insight, but his basic point—that it doesn't matter whether one opts for the supernatural or psychological explanation, because the end result is the same—is worth pondering at length and in depth by those who seek to navigate a relationship with their own deep creative selves.

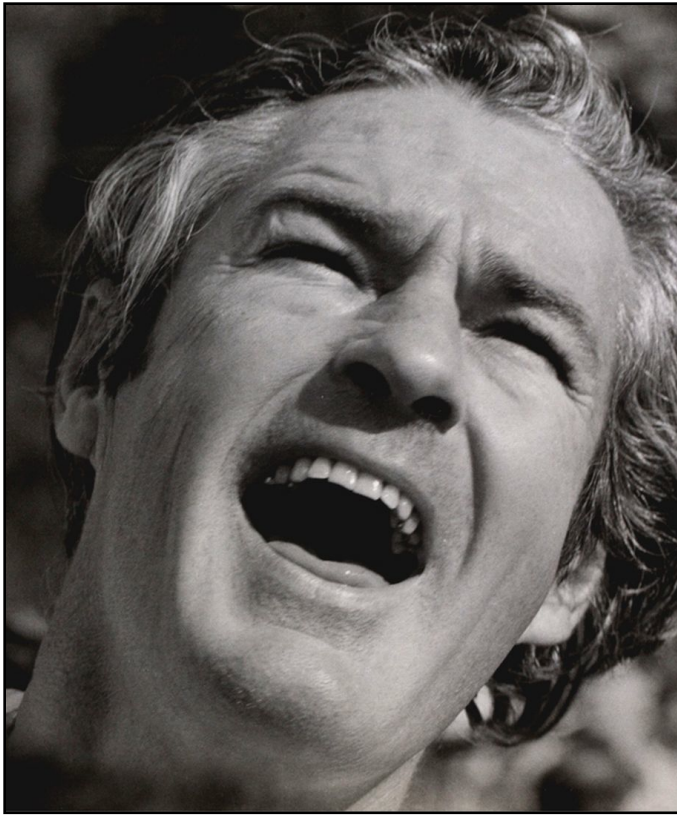
The Strange Case of Timothy Leary

The leap from Crowley to Leary and Wilson is, culturally speaking, a drastic one. It's a leap from Edwardian and post-Edwardian England to the America of Woodstock and rock and roll;

from World Wars I and II to the Vietnam era; from black-and-white movies and the age of radio to the shimmering visual-electronic culture of McLuhan's global village. But even so, the basic theme of perceived guidance and communication from an invisible, alien presence remains constant. Moreover, the fact that the early 21st century saw a surge of fresh interest in Leary's life and legacy, and also in the general history of the psychedelic movement and the possible therapeutic and spiritual uses of psychedelic drugs, only reinforces the pertinence of attempting to understand the nature of this internal guidance and its emergence as an alien-seeming force—something that is characteristic, as we may non-tangentially note, of many psychedelic experiences.

More than just well-known, the basic outline of Timothy Leary's life is legendary. His "first career," as it were, was as a mainstream psychologist and professor. In the 1950s he taught psychology at Berkeley and performed research for the Kaiser Family Foundation, and then, most famously, he taught at Harvard from 1959 to 1963. Some of this early work has had a lasting influence; while serving as head of psychological research for the Kaiser Family Foundation, Leary came up with a system of analyzing human personality along two axes, love-hate and dominance-submission, that produced eight possible personality types with two subdivisions each. It was a brilliant idea (with roots in the work of earlier psychologists) that ended up expressed in a diagram that has come to be known as the "interpersonal circle" or the "Leary circumplex." Leary's insights helped to lay the foundation for what would become the standard personality tests that are still in use today, e.g., the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (which is mostly extrapolated from Jung—who had deeply influenced Leary).

Leary's progressive fall (or ascent, depending on your perspective) from formal respectability was initiated in 1960 when, encouraged by the cultural tenor of the time and the specific incitements of friends and colleagues from both academia and the emerging counterculture, he traveled to Mexico and ingested psilocybin



mushrooms. Some years later he said, "I learned more about my brain and its possibilities, and I learned more about psychology, in the five hours after taking these mushrooms than I had in the preceding 15 years of studying, human research and psychology."⁷ When he returned to Harvard, he enlisted the aid of his colleague Richard Alpert, who would later achieve fame as writer and spiritual teacher Ram Dass, to launch a formal study of the psychological effects and possible therapeutic uses of psychedelic drugs.

The story of how the whole thing spun out of control is long and fascinating, but the short version is that after achieving some interesting and promising initial results—such as an indication that the integration of psychedelics into the counseling programs offered to criminal offenders might drastically reduce recidivism rates—Leary, who was naturally antiauthoritarian and free-wheeling, grew fed up with the constraints of conventional research, reputation, and respectability, and in 1963 ended up getting fired from Harvard along with Alpert. The university shut the research program down, and within a

few years the U.S. government had banned the use of all psychedelic drugs for any purposes, scientific or otherwise.

The provocation for the government ban was traceable at least partly to Leary himself, who upon his departure from Harvard rapidly transformed himself into the colorful prophet of psychedelic liberation that he's best remembered as today. Naturally, this incurred the wrath of civil authority, and so began a trend that was eventually epitomized by Richard Nixon's televised proclamation circa 1970 that Leary was "the most dangerous man in America."

Irrepressible to the core, Leary refused to back down, and his life path rapidly mutated into something like a thriller novel with a plot involving imprisonment, escape, flight from the U.S., entanglement with prominent anti-government groups (e.g., the Black Panthers, the Weather Underground), kidnapping, flight from country to country, and eventual return to the U.S. in 1973, at which point he was thrown back in prison, first at Folsom and then at the Vacaville California Medical Facility. At Folsom he was kept in solitary confinement, and also, for a time, in a cell next to Charles Manson.

It was in those prisons that his story dovetailed with our overarching theme of guidance by the muse/daimon/genius, for it was there that he began to experiment consciously with opening himself to thoughts and ideas that, as it seemed, "wanted" to be expressed through him—in other words, with channeling. Viewing the operation as a form of telepathy, and setting as his goal the contacting of "Higher Intelligence" (his specific term) of an expressly extra-terrestrial sort, he recruited his wife Joanna, a fellow prisoner named Wayne Benner, and Benner's girlfriend, a journalist, to participate. The resulting writings—*Starseed* (1973), *Neurologic* (1973), and *Terra II: A Way Out* (1974)—introduced his famous 8-circuit model of consciousness and advanced the idea that life originally came to earth from outer space, and that humanity is destined by DNA coding and evolutionary impulse to colonize space and return to the stars for transcendence and fulfillment via

reunion with the galactic source of our being, which is none other than the Higher Intelligence that Leary and his team were in contact with.

To back up a bit and draw a crucial connection, by this point in his life Leary had come to see himself as deeply connected to Aleister Crowley. He had long felt an interest in Crowley's life and ideas, but by the time he arrived at Vacaville in 1974 this had advanced to a point where he viewed his own life as a "continuation" (as distinct from a reincarnation, since his and Crowley's lives overlapped) of Crowley and his work. In the words of John Higgs, author of *I Have America Surrounded: The Life of Timothy Leary*, in the early 1970s Leary came to believe "that his role in life was to continue Crowley's 'Great Work,' that of bringing about a fundamental shift in human consciousness."⁸ This was the result of several mind-blowing events that seemed to indicate a profound connection to Crowley. Most dramatically, in 1971 Leary and English beatnik artist and writer Brian Barritt tripped together on LSD in the Sahara desert at Bou Saada, "City of Happiness," reputedly a site of magical influence. It was the night of Easter Saturday and Sunday, and Leary and Barrett witnessed massive celestial imagery and visionary symbolism. A year later they discovered that some of the things they had seen and experienced paralleled in eerie fashion a series of visions reported by Crowley in his *Confessions*. Unknown to them at the time of their Sahara experience, Crowley had engaged in a weeks-long magical ritual in 1909 with the poet Victor Neuberg on the very same site in the very same riverbed at Bou Saada. Barritt later wrote that he and Tim were "pretty freaked out" when they discovered this, and he speculated about a "mysterious force" in the form of an "unconscious directive" that had dictated in parallel fashion the motivations and even the life events and circumstances of Crowley-Neuberg and Leary-Barritt across a span of decades.⁹

Augmenting the Crowleyan vibe, in 1972 Leary asked a deck of Crowley-designed tarot cards, "Who am I and what is my destiny?" and then randomly cut the deck to the Ace of

Discs—the very card that Crowley had identified as his own representation. In his autobiography, *Confessions of a Hope Fiend* (a title he chose as a deliberate blending of Crowley's *Confessions* with his *Diary of a Dope Fiend*), Leary wrote, "The eerie synchronicities between our lives [i.e., his own and Barritt's] and that of Crowley, which were later to preoccupy us, were still unfolding with such precision as to make us wonder if one can escape the programmed imprinting with which we are born."¹⁰

It was in the wake of all these Crowleyan synchronicities that the incarcerated Leary began his channeling experiments. He approached them in the full sway of his sense of carrying on Crowley's planetary consciousness-altering mission, and in full view of the fact that Crowley had attempted similar contact with a higher intelligence. And although Leary made no mention of the Holy Guardian Angel, his emerging extraterrestrial hypothesis corresponded with the views of a subset of Thelemites who thought contact with one's Holy Guardian Angel was actually a form of contact with a literal extraterrestrial intelligence. (Others, by contrast, vehemently insisted and still insist today that such a view is false, ridiculous, and detrimental.)

Wilson began exchanging letters with Leary a few months after the commencement of Leary's telepathic "transmissions," and later offered a succinct description of the concrete nature of the experiments: "The Starseed Transmissions—'hallucinations' or whatever—were received in 19 bursts, seldom in recognizable English sentences, requiring considerable meditation and discussion between the four Receivers before they could be summarized."¹¹ What's of prime interest to us here is that even though the resulting writings clearly advanced and proceeded from the extraterrestrial view of higher intelligence rather than the unconscious or daemonic muse-based one as such—in *Terra II*, for example, Leary asserts the truth behind humanity's long history of belief in higher intelligences (as in religious beliefs), but modifies it in a science-fictional direction: "The goal of the evolutionary process is to produce nervous systems capable of communicating with the galac-

tic network. Contacting the Higher Intelligence.”¹²—other things said by other people about the Learyan view of communicating with perceived higher or external intelligences, and even things said by Leary himself, clearly link his experiences to a more traditionally muse-like view.

For instance, in a section of archival footage featured in the “Summer of Love” episode of PBS’s *American Experience* series, Leary describes the LSD experience by saying, “It is a sense of being in communion with powers greater than yourself, and intelligence which far outstrips the human mind, and energies which are very ancient.”¹³ There is no indication of the context or time period in which he said this, but it resonates interestingly with something he told Wilson when the latter came to visit him at the Vacaville prison:

[Leary said] Interstellar ESP may have been going on for all our history...but we just haven’t understood. Our nervous systems have translated their messages in terms we *could* understand. The “angels” who spoke to Dr. Dee, the Elizabethan scientist-magician [who had figured in both Crowley-Neuberg’s and Leary-Barritt’s visionary experiences in the Sahara], were extraterrestrials, but Dee couldn’t comprehend them in those terms and considered them “messengers from God.” The same is true of many other shamans and mystics.¹⁴

Note that despite the outrageous-sounding nature of such speculations to the modern secular-materialist ear, Leary was not insane. Or at least that was the medical-psychological opinion of the mental health professionals who evaluated him, according to Wilson:

It should be remembered, in evaluating the Starseed signals, that, a few months before this experiment, three government psychiatrists testified (at the escape trial) that Dr. Leary was perfectly sane and possessed of a high I.Q. Since so many ex-

tremists of Left and Right have impugned Leary’s sanity, it should also be entered in the record that Dr. Wesley Hiler, a staff psychologist at Vacaville who spoke to Dr. Leary every day (often to ask Tim’s advice), emphatically agrees with that verdict. “Timothy Leary is totally, radiantly sane,” he told me in a 1973 interview.¹⁵

Nor was Hiler’s judgment made in ignorance of the telepathy/channeling experiments that Leary was engaged in. In fact, Wilson says Hiler regarded Leary’s project from an informed long-historical/psychological view, and Hiler’s actual words resonate wonderfully with the vibe of ontological uncertainty that we are exploring here:

I asked Hiler what he *really* thought of Dr. Leary’s extraterrestrial contacts. Specifically, since he didn’t regard Leary as crazy or hallucinating, what was happening when Leary thought he was receiving extraterrestrial communications? “Every man and woman who reaches the higher levels of spiritual and intellectual development,” Dr. Hiler said calmly, “feels the presence of a Higher Intelligence. Our theories are all unproven. Socrates called it his *daemon*. Others call it gods or angels. Leary calls it extraterrestrial. Maybe it’s just another part of our brain, a part we usually don’t use. Who knows?”¹⁶

Bob Wilson’s Excellent Adventure

As already indicated by the above discussions, Wilson resonated with the ideas of both Leary and Crowley, and was in direct contact with the former during the Starseed period. He even helped Leary in the crystallization and promulgation of his 8-circuit model of consciousness; although the model was first laid out by Leary in *Neurologic* (1973) and *Exo-Psychology* (1977), Wilson gave it an energetic and entertaining publicity boost, and also provided a work of genuine substance, in his 1983 book *Prometheus Rising*, which featured an introduction by former Crowley secretary Israel Regardie. So it is



no surprise that in addition to being aware of and interested in Crowley's and Leary's experiences in communicating with angels and aliens, Wilson had his own encounters with "higher intelligence."

The primary account of it is found in his *Cosmic Trigger* (1977; later retitled *Cosmic Trigger I* when Wilson wrote two sequels). Richard Metzger zeroes in on the emotional heart of the matter when he writes that, notwithstanding the trippy and subversive delights of Wilson's famous *Illuminatus!* trilogy (co-written with Robert Shea), "*Cosmic Trigger* was different. This time the mask came off. In this book, Wilson came clean, in the most intellectually honest way that anyone ever has, on the subject of 'What happens when you start fooling around with occult things? What happens when you do psychedelic drugs and try to contact higher dimensional entities through ritual magick?'"¹⁷

Wilson, who had a Ph.D. in psychology, contextualized the book's content in a valuable introduction that he wrote for a new edition published in 1986. "*Cosmic Trigger*," he explained, "deals with a process of *deliberately induced brain change* through which I put myself in the years 1962-76. This process is called 'initiation' or 'vision quest' in many traditional societies and can

loosely be considered some dangerous variety of self-psychotherapy in modern terminology."¹⁸ In the course of this "initiation" he came into perceived contact with a number of external-seeming intelligences and was thrust into the same surreal world that Leary and Crowley had likewise explored.

The high point emerged from his commencing a new "course of neuropsychological experiments" in 1971, in response to the feeling that he had deciphered a hidden message in Crowley's *The Book of Lies*. "The outstanding result," he wrote, "was that I entered a belief system, from 1973 until around October 1974, in which I was receiving telepathic messages from entities residing on a planet of the double star Sirius."¹⁹ Although Wilson never describes anything like the experience of supernatural dictation that resulted in Crowley's *The Book of the Law*, or like Leary's experience of extraterrestrial telepathy that resulted in the Starseed books, the question of his supposed Sirius contact, and of the general idea of psychic contact with alien-seeming forces or entities, dominates the bulk of *Cosmic Trigger* and forms the guiding thread of Wilson's journey through "Chapel Perilous," his term, borrowed from Arthurian legend, for the frightening and transformative state of psycho-

logical uncertainty in which the walls of a person's belief system have been breached by the intrusion of events that seem equally amenable to paranormal and naturalistic, or supernatural and non-supernatural, explanations.

In describing the various synchronicities and paranormal events that began to unfold in his life, Wilson forcefully foregrounds the questions of ontology and epistemology—of what's really real and how or whether we're even capable of making that determination—and he describes various reversals and mutations in his own viewpoint. For example, he explains how it was a meeting in October 1974 with Dr. Jacques Vallee, the internationally renowned astronomer and UFOlogist, that led him away from the belief that he (Wilson) was literally receiving telepathic transmissions from Sirius. Wilson says Vallee told him this type of other-worldly communication is a centuries-old phenomenon “and will probably not turn out to be extraterrestrial,” since the extraterrestrial slant can be chalked up to the influence of modern cultural beliefs. In former eras, Vallee said, “The phenomenon took other and spookier forms.”²⁰

Wilson says Vallee's viewpoint

made perfect sense to me, since I had originally gotten in touch with “the entity” by means of Crowleyan occultism. The extraterrestrial explanation was not the *real* explanation, as I had thought; it was just the latest model for the Experience, as angels had been a model for it in the Middle Ages, or dead relatives speaking through mediums had been a model in the nineteenth century.”²¹

This framing of all belief systems in relativistic and provisional terms—an attitude that, as we might do well to notice, is implicit in the very concept of a “belief system” itself, since to recognize belief systems as such automatically subverts the unreflective and wholesale adoption of any of them—became for Wilson the touchstone of his entire outlook. He began that new preface to *Cosmic Trigger*, written ten years after the book's first publication, by proclaiming

in all capital letters, “I DO NOT BELIEVE ANYTHING.”²² In explaining this position over several pages, he quoted approvingly Alan Watts's characterization of the universe as “a giant Rorshach [sic] ink-blot” and described his own position as “neurological model agnosticism—the application of the Copenhagen Interpretation beyond physics to consciousness itself.”²³

Most significant for the question of the daemonic muse and its ontological status are his specific thoughts about the status of all invisible entities/intelligences that are encountered in psychic space:

Personally, I also suspect, or guess, or intuit, that the more unconventional of my models here—the ones involving Higher Intelligence, such as the Cabalistic Holy Guardian Angel or the extraterrestrial from Sirius—are *necessary* working tools at certain stages in the metaprogramming process [i.e., the process of accessing and altering one's fundamental psychological imprints]. That is, whether such entities exist anywhere outside our own imaginations, some areas of brain functioning cannot be accessed without using these “keys” to open the locks. I do not insist on this; it is just my own opinion.²⁴

With this, we're back once again to Crowley and his continual dance on the edge of mutually exclusive interpretations. “I don't believe anything,” Wilson insisted, and so did Crowley and Leary, at least in spirit. The question at hand is: Can we learn anything from this?

Angels, Daemons, and Haunted Artists

For our specific purpose here, what's valuable in the stories of Crowley, Leary, and Wilson is the vivid picture they show us of people struggling to interpret and live with forces in the psyche that really do present themselves as independent of the ego and possessed of their own intelligence and will. As already mentioned, the Holy Guardian Angel and its supernatural and extraterrestrial kin are explicitly connected in

historical-cultural-conceptual-psychological terms to the ancient muse, daimon, and genius, and a Wilsonian attitude of thoroughgoing “neurological model agnosticism” toward them only removes categorical interpretations of what’s happening in the perceived experience of inner communication, not—*not*—the fact of the experience itself. Regardless of what we think or how we feel about it, this experience of being in perceived contact with a “higher intelligence” really did happen to these three men. It really has happened to people throughout history. And it really can happen to you and me. It doesn’t necessarily mean audible voices and telepathic transmissions, but it definitely means a sense of something impinging on or communicating with our conscious self “from the outside,” or perhaps from the deep *inside*, which experientially amounts to the same thing. The really electrifying jolt comes when we realize, as our three present case subjects all did, that such impinging and communicating is *always* happening, regardless of whether or not we’re consciously aware of it, as a constant psychic undercurrent. If we’re skilled and sensitive enough to tune in and hear it, the rewards in terms of creative vibrancy can be exquisite.

Entirely aside from all of the far-out details of his (possibly) paranormal experiences, at least twice in his life Wilson directly equated the autonomous-feeling force in the psyche that drives artistic creativity with the ontologically indeterminate Higher Intelligence that seemingly communicated with him, Leary, and Crowley. One of these instances came in an essay he wrote about the life and work of Raymond Chandler, under the pseudonym of one of his (Wilson’s) own fictional creations, book critic Epicene Wildeblood. In describing the 15-year hiatus from fiction-writing that Chandler once experienced, Wilson said, “Chandler spent 15 years, the prime years of a man’s life, in the oil-executive game before *the Daemon or Holy Guardian Angel that haunts artists got its teeth into him again.*”²⁵

The other instance is found in a 1981 interview Wilson gave to the late, great genre magazine *Starship: The Magazine about Science Fiction*.

The interviewer asked him, “Is a book fully organized in your mind before you start writing or does it take shape as it unfolds?” Wilson responded:

Sometimes I have a clearer idea of where I’m going than other times, but it always surprises me. In the course of writing, I’m always drawing on my unconscious creativity, and I find things creeping into my writing that I wasn’t aware of at the time. That’s part of the pleasure of writing. After you’ve written something, you say to yourself, “Where in the hell did that come from?” Faulkner called it the “demon” that directs the writer. The Kabbalists call it the “holy guardian angel.” Every writer experiences this sensation. Robert E. Howard said he felt there was somebody dictating the Conan stories to him. There’s some deep level of the unconscious that knows a lot more than the conscious mind of the writer knows.²⁶

The unconscious mind? The daemon? The Holy Guardian Angel? All and none of the above? For purposes of accessing and aligning with the experience of creative inspiration, *does it really matter?*

¹ Robert Anton Wilson and Miriam Joan Hill, *Everything Is Under Control: Conspiracies, Cults, and Cover-ups* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 134.

² Tim Maroney, “Six Voices on Crowley,” in Richard Metzger, *Book of Lies: The Disinformation Guide to Magick and the Occult* (New York: The Disinformation Company Ltd., 2003), 168-9.

³ Robert Anton Wilson, *Cosmic Trigger: The Final Secret of the Illuminati* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon Publications, [1977] 1991), 83.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

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⁵ Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography* (New York, Penguin Arkana: 1989), 936, n. 4.

⁶ Quoted in Lawrence Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 133.

⁷ *Ram Dass: Fierce Grace*, directed by Mickey Lemle (Zeitgeist Films, 2001), Netflix.

⁸ John Higgs, "The High Priest and the Great Beast," *Sub Rosa* 4 (March 2006): 15, http://download.dailygrail.com/subrosa/SubRosa_Issue4-Single.pdf.

⁹ Brian Barritt, *The Road of Excess: A Psychedelic Autobiography* (1998), excerpted in *Book of Lies*, 155, 152.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹¹ *Cosmic Trigger*, 105.

¹² Timothy Leary, "Starseed: A Way Out," excerpted from *Terra II: A Way Out* (Starseed, A Partnership: 1974), reprinted in Brad Steiger and John White, eds., *Other Worlds, Other Universes* (Pomeroy, WA: Health Research Books, [1975] 1986), 15.

¹³ "Summer of Love," *American Experience*, PBS, transcript, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/love/filmmore/pt.html>.

¹⁴ *Cosmic Trigger*, 118.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁷ Richard Metzger, *Disinformation: The Interviews* (New York: The Disinformation Company Ltd., 2002), 14.

¹⁸ *Cosmic Trigger*, ii (Wilson's emphasis).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰ *Cosmic Trigger*, 9. The veracity of Wilson's recollection here is supported by the fact that Vallee himself said largely the same things in his 2010 book *Wonders in the Sky: Unexplained Aerial Objects from Antiquity to Modern Times*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, i.

²³ *Ibid.*, iv.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, v.

²⁵ Robert Anton Wilson, *The Illuminati Papers* (Berkeley: Ronin Publishing, 1980), 127, emphasis added.

²⁶ Jeffrey Elliot, "Robert Anton Wilson: Searching for Cosmic Intelligence," *Starship: The Magazine About Science Fiction*, Spring 1981, accessed May 19, 2011, <http://www.rawilsonfans.com/articles/Starship.htm>.



Matt Cardin is a writer and college teacher living in Central Texas. He has a master's degree in religion and a lifetime of involvement in the study of world religion and philosophy. Since the 1990s he has focused his research and writing on the intersection of religion and spirituality with supernatural horror. He is the author of **Divinations of the Deep** (print edition 2002;

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Magic, Science and Religion: A Conversation With Eugene Burger (Part 1)

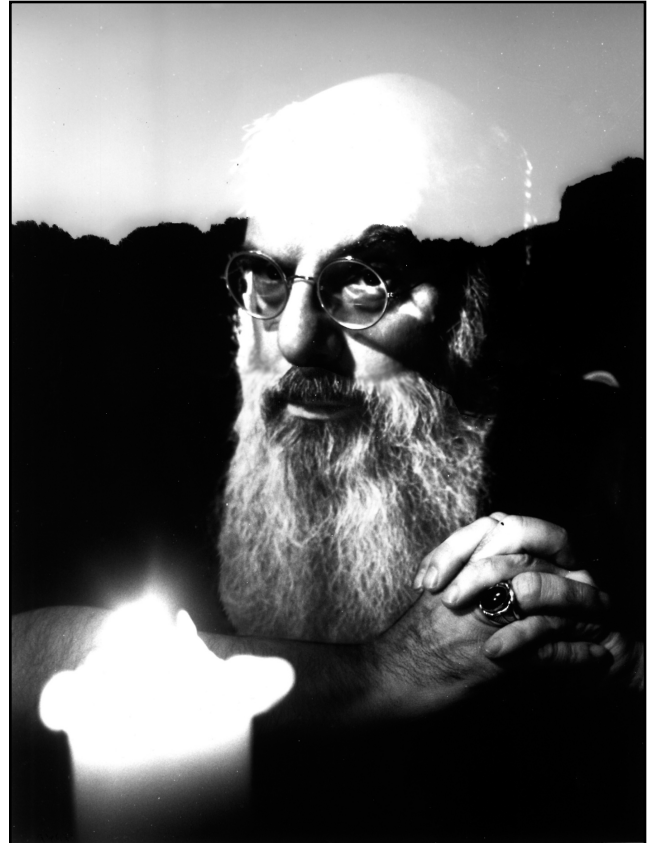
Jack Hunter

JH: In addition to performing and writing about stage magic, you have stated that the study of religion is one of your main interests, and you have taught college courses on comparative religion. What is it about magic and religion that interests you?

EB: First, I believe there was a time when magic, religion and science were not seen as separate areas, as they are today. My friend, Dr. Ricardo Rosenkranz says that magic and medicine share a common DNA. The same is true with magic and religion. There was a time when they were not seen as completely separate activities. What appeals to me about them? It is definitely the sense of Mystery that each brings to us. Magic and religion both point us to the capital "M" Mystery of life.

JH: When you use the term 'magic' are you referring specifically to stage magic, or are you referring to traditional beliefs? Do you see a connection between stage magic and traditional magical beliefs?

EB: I am referring to theatrical magic primarily rather than what I will call (for lack of a better phrase) ceremonial magic. But I believe ceremonial magic stands behind stage or theatrical magic. Put another way, stage magic points to ceremonial magic for part of its meaning. You might find it interesting that I would follow my friend Bob Neale who believes that behind both ceremonial and theatrical magic is what he calls "life magic." Bob gives two examples of life magic. First, imagine the baby begins crying at 5 am in the morning. What do you do? Well, you pick up the baby and hold it and say, "It's all right." But, honestly, it isn't all right! It is 5 in the morning and you have to go to work and the baby is crying! But you say, "It's all right," and eventually the baby quiets down. Metaphori-



cally, we might say that the magic words have worked; they have been successful. Second, Bob worked with dying patients during his last years in the academic world, teaching Psychiatry and Religion at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. With many dying patients, who might be afraid, or even barely conscious, what do we do? We take their hand and say, "It's all right." Again, this is life magic -- using the word or touch to achieve real world ends.

JH: So, would I be right in saying that your view on ceremonial magic, and presumably also religion, is that it serves an essentially psychological function in allowing people to think that "It's All Right" even when it isn't? Do you think this is a sufficient explanation, or could there be something more to it?

EB: No, I do not think that magic or religion serve an “essentially psychological function.” This may be part of what both do but it is surely not the entire story. Magic and religion also serve sociological functions (finding a group in which one feels safe and honoured, etc.) As I said, I think theatrical magic points us to the fact that we are living in the middle of an immense Mystery. I think this metaphorical or symbolic function is at the core of both magic and religion.

JH: I agree. Psychological and sociological functions are almost certainly factors, but are not complete explanations in themselves. There is something else going on, something more profound. I wonder whether we can explore this Mystery a little deeper. Could you describe how, in your opinion, theatrical magic points us towards the immense Mystery? What is it about performing illusions that reveals the Mystery?

EB: Words are difficult here, speaking about mystery. My use of the word “points,” of course, is a metaphor. I might have used other words or phrases such as “suggests” or “reminds us of.” The use of such words is to communicate the idea that the little mystery of the magic trick can have some connection in the mind with the larger, capital “M” Mystery of the Universe. Part, but not all, of this larger Mystery can be expressed with questions such as, “Why is there something and not nothing? Why is there anything at all?” And, I might add, I do not believe this happens very often for audiences or for everyone in an audience. In the same way, being deeply moved by a painting or a play, deeply moved in our very existence, probably is also rare. If we are rushing through the art gallery, for example, we probably won’t be deeply moved by too many paintings. All art seems to require an openness on our part if there is to be a deep engagement at all.

JH: I wonder now whether we can talk a little about the smaller, but no less intriguing, mys-

teries of the so-called paranormal. What is your opinion on the phenomena labeled as “psi” by parapsychologists (including, for example, telepathy, psychokinesis, and so on)? Do you think there is evidence for these phenomena?

EB: I am open to psi phenomena but I neither affirm nor deny it. I think that I am a skeptic who does not have the answers. So many so-called skeptics are, in my view, really debunkers. They have already come to a definite decision. Sometimes I think of them as being fundamentalists turned inside out.

JH: Do you think that a knowledge of stage magic can help us to understand the nature of ostensible psi phenomena?

EB: I’m not sure theatrical magic tells us much about the nature of ostensible psi phenomena. A good deal of theatrical magic, of course, seeks to create the illusion of various psi phenomena. Theatrical magic creates the illusion of telepathy or telekinesis and so I do think that a knowledge of theatrical magic is certainly of use to investigators if they are going to be successful at catching psi cheaters.

JH: I have been thinking quite a lot, in the context of my PhD research into trance mediumship practices, about the role of performance in mediumship, not in the sense of “mediumship is a performance therefore it is fraudulent,” but in a more open ended manner whereby performance is seen as a particular technique for the ‘manifestation of spirits.’ Similarly, there seems to be a performative aspect to traditional forms of shamanism, employing sleight of hand and so on, which were important factors in bringing about genuine cures for illnesses. The parapsychologist Kenneth Batchelor found, in his experiments with table-tipping, that if he introduced ‘artefacts’ (fake levitations) early on in the experiment, ‘genuine’ levitations would be more likely to occur later on. He put this down to the idea that it is the ‘instant belief’ of the experimental participants

that is necessary for the manifestation of psi, and that seeing apparently paranormal phenomena increased this instant belief, thus leading to stronger manifestations. It seems to me that there might be a deep connection between performance, belief and manifestations of psi phenomena.

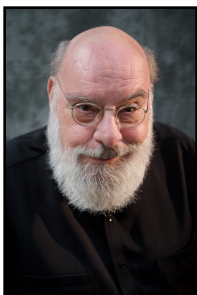
EB: And a connection with healing generally. What is the relation between one's belief state and being healed? Expectation is a powerful tool. In theatrical magic, I want to awaken your inner sense of expectation and use it to my advantage in deceiving you.

And, yes, I think it is important that we do not begin our investigations with the assumption that all psi phenomena must be fraudulent. That, as I said earlier, is fundamentalism turned inside out. It has no place in the academy and yet this view seems deeply entrenched there.

Why wouldn't experiencing the Shaking Tent, or some other shamanistic demonstration, lead one to have more trust in the shaman's pronouncements - including pronouncements about one's health and healing?

At the same time, I really believe that for many people in the group these demonstrations involving sleight-of-hand or other trickery were seen in a totally naturalistic way: they were seen as theatrical demonstrations to impress and teach the young of the group and not supernatural events at all. Many might even have reached the critical stage where they compared last year's Shaking Tent with this year's - and found this year's performance a bit lacking! We must not assume that everyone who witnessed them interpreted these demonstrations in the same way.

End of Part 1. To be continued in Vol. 4 No. 1.



Eugene Burger is an American magician. He was born in 1939 and is based in Chicago, Illinois. He is reputed for his close-up skills and his work in mentalism and bizarre magic. He is also a philosopher and a historian of religion.



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'Get thee enthured!': Magic Mushrooms, Time and the End of the World

Andy Letcher

From *The Day the Earth Stood Still* to *Planet of the Apes* and *2012*, Hollywood has long enjoyed unsettling us with end-of-the-world movies. But if a growing body of opinion is to be believed we are literally heading towards an apocalypse, a time of massive planetary upheaval and ecological calamity that will herald the collapse of civilization as we know it. Fasten your seatbelts, for, as Hollywood correctly surmised, this earth-shattering event is set to occur on December 21st 2012. But fear not. The crisis may yet yield a spiritual awakening, a revolutionary expansion of consciousness that will implement a radical shift in human understanding and auger the next stage of human evolution.

The 2012 movement is gathering considerable momentum, so much so that NASA have been moved to release a video calming public concern over some of its wilder claims. Advocates of 2012 can be found amongst the usual hippy and psychedelic subcultures, New Age spiritualities, green and anti-capitalist groups, but also beyond, with their ideas receiving some celebrity endorsement (George Lucas, Woody Harrelson, Emile Heskey, Ashton Kutcher and Sting are all rumoured to be on board).

This wave of popularity is attributable in no small part to writer and psychedelic 'guru,' Daniel Pinchbeck, author of the seminal *Breaking Open the Head* (2003), who has latterly become one of the leading advocates of 2012. In his most recent book, *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl*, Pinchbeck (2006) describes a psychedelic encounter with the eponymous deity, the plumed serpent god of Mesoamerican antiquity, warning him of the impending apocalypse. A follow up film, *2012: A Time for Change*, directed by Joao Amorim (2010), develops the theme: global capitalism is delivering us to an ecological catastrophe that only an evolutionary shift in human consciousness will avert. The judicious use of

psychedelics and a return to indigenous, shamanistic lifeways – not to mention some ingenious solutions to sustainable living – are what will hoist us across the abyss. In other words, knowledge and practices that are forbidden in the modern West will prove themselves invaluable in the end, and may even provide the key to our salvation.

While I support the view that psychedelic shamanism could have a more universal value beyond the confines of the indigenous cultures where it originates, I remain far from persuaded by 2012. In this essay I want to explain why I think 2012 is an unnecessary and damaging accretion to the psychedelic cause, one that undermines its foundational epistemological claim that the drugs and the visions add up to something more than an escapist and solipsistic joyride. If champions of psychedelic revelation abrogate reason (and there is much in 2012 to suggest that they have) then the movement ossifies into an 'ism' – 'entheogism' – with a narrow and unquestioning set of orthodox truths. It becomes a religious movement. To remain a paragnostic philosophical tool, psychedelic insight requires critical self-examination. It requires reason. As Iain McGilchrist reminds us, in matters concerning consciousness, the brain, culture and history 'it behoves us to be sceptical' (McGilchrist 2009: 7).

Furthermore, 2012 remains hidebound to old Judaeo-Christian, apocalyptic ways of thinking, botoxed and wheeled out for the twenty-first century. It rests on a very Western conception of time as an arrow, as something with aim, purpose and direction, that is taking us somewhere definite. Following French mathematician and philosopher, Henri Bergson (1859-1941), I will argue that this is a misconception, one that necessarily falls out of the inadequacies of language. The only way we can truly grasp time, which remains mysterious, is, as it were, side-

ways, through metaphor and intuition. Our inability to conceive time is neither cause nor origin of our modern predicament, but I want to suggest that a more pagan outlook might prove the antidote to worn out millenarian thinking and provide a more sustainable psychedelic framework than that which is currently in fashion.

The Origins of 2012

In *True Hallucinations* (1993) the late Terence McKenna (1946-2000) relates the story of an expedition he made in 1971, together with his brother Dennis and several friends, to the Columbian Amazon rainforest in search of paragnosis – knowledge by other means. He was not disappointed. After considerable experimentation with the local and abundant psilocybin-containing magic mushrooms, and some seriously weird encounters with UFOs and alien intelligences, he returned home to California with a theory. Bolstering his ideas with the heavyweight ‘process philosophy’ of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), and the Gnostic bioethics of Hans Jonas (1903-1993), McKenna eventually made his theory public in a book co-written with his brother, *The Invisible Landscape* (1993 [1975]), the main thrust of which goes as follows.

Over its long history the universe has become steadily more complex, undergoing many spasmodic “ingressions of novelty” (McKenna 1991: 113): the formation of stars then planets, the emergence of life, the evolution of language and consciousness. These sudden, shuddering leaps of complexity or conrescence occur with mathematical regularity, according to a predictable, fractal pattern called ‘the timewave’ (a pattern that Terence derived from the structure of the King Wen sequence of hexagrams of the ancient Chinese divination system, the I Ching). A ‘best fit’ approach enabled McKenna to map the timewave on to real historical events, yielding the result that the next large, and perhaps final, ingression of novelty would occur on December 21st 2012. Quite what that ingression would bring was unclear and could not be predicted, but McKenna tended towards the view that

mind would liberate itself from matter, the conclusion of which would be “the monadic self, exteriorized, condensed, and visible in three dimensions” (McKenna & McKenna 1993: 188). “History will end, and the transcendental object that has been drawing being into ever deeper reflections of itself since the first moments of the existence of the universe will finally be completely conrescent in the three-dimensional space-time continuum” (McKenna 1991: 113).

The timewave, in other words, was a theory that combined psychedelic revelation, divination, cosmology and metaphysics into a coherent soteriological narrative. Imbuing biography, history, phylogeny and cosmogony with inherent meaning and purpose, it came as charged as a religious prophecy.

Terence went on to become a writer, speaker and psychedelic guru, and with the flowering of rave during the late 1980s and early 90s, and the ensuing psychedelic resurgence, his ideas started to find a new, young and receptive audience. It was as a speaker that, in 1985, he met a Mexican-American writer, visionary and New Ager, José Argüelles, who was independently developing ideas about 2012 (Defesche 2008).

Argüelles was fascinated with the ancient Maya, the pre-conquest indigenous culture that flourished in parts of Mesoamerica, especially the Yucatan Peninsula, reaching its zenith during the so-called Classic Period, 250-900 C.E. (see Webster 2007). Time, or rather the measurement and correct observation of the passage of time, clearly mattered to the Maya, for they developed a complex series of calendars with concomitant ritual practices. Just as we have days, weeks, months, years, decades and so on, so the Maya had interlocking and stacking cycles of days: *kins*, *uinals*, *tuns*, *k'tuns* and *b'ak'tuns*, to name a few. One, the *b'ak'tun* cycle, a period of 144,000 days or approximately 394 years, was found by nineteenth century archaeologists to culminate on December 21st 2012. More significantly, an even longer cycle of 13 *b'ak'tuns*, which began on August 11th 3114 B.C.E. and will have lasted 1,872,000 days when it expires, also ends on December 21st 2012 (Sit-

ler 2006). It was this 'long count' that caught Argüelles' imagination.

It seems likely that the meeting between McKenna and Argüelles in 1985 proved a pivotal moment for both of them, and for the 2012 phenomenon more generally (Defesche 2008). McKenna learned from Argüelles that his time-wave theory corresponded with an ancient Maya calendar, a coincidence he could not ignore. Given that the Maya had used psilocybin mushrooms it was hard to escape the conclusion that they too had been illuminated by some eternal truth about time, which they left coded into the complexities of their calendars and the long count. Argüelles, already inclined to regard the Maya as spiritual exemplars, took McKenna's theory as 'scientific' proof that the long count contained an essential spiritual message, to which he was heir.

In 1987 Argüelles published *The Mayan Factor*, the first complete expression of his prophetic vision. 1987 would, he claimed, initiate a twenty-five year countdown to the collapse of Western civilization in 2012, a disaster that might be averted if 144,000 people meditated at dawn on August 16th and 17th of that year (following Argüelles, large numbers of people did meditate at dawn for the so-called 'Harmonic Convergence'). Since then, Argüelles claims to have come into contact with the 'Telektonon,' the 'talking stone of prophecy,' through which he channels 'transmissions' from the seventh century Mayan King, K'inich Janaab' Pakal. He has called for the West to abandon the Gregorian calendar in favour of his own version of the Maya *tzolk'in*, a 260 day lunar calendar, with dire consequences if we do not. And he takes an unorthodox view regarding the collapse of the Classic Maya civilization, that it ended when its leaders departed into space. His interest is not so much the indigenous Maya, who still inhabit Yucatan and the Guatemalan highlands, but these 'Galactic Maya' (Sitler 2006).

A more sober take on the implications of the long count was introduced by alternative archaeologist, John Major Jenkins, in his *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* published in 1998. Following McKenna, Jenkins promoted the discovery that

December 21st 2012 will see a rare astronomical alignment between the sun, a dark streak running through the Milky Way, and the centre of our galaxy. Owing to the fact that the earth wobbles about its axis like a spinning top – giving rise to the 'precession of the equinoxes' – such an alignment only occurs approximately every 26,000 years. It was this rare event, Jenkins claimed, that the Mayan calendar was designed to measure.

From these three originary sources, the 2012 movement has grown with many other writers – of which, Daniel Pinchbeck remains the most influential – throwing their ideas into the melting-pot. The process metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), New Age prophecy, the wisdom of ancient civilizations, astronomical observation, apocalypticism and psychedelic utopianism have all become jumbled up into what one scholar calls 'a self-validating set of ideas,' which, for people hungry to believe, 'establishes a reality of its own' (Sitler 2006: 34).

For example, Daniel Pinchbeck's film, *2012: Time for Change*, opens with a beautifully animated retelling of the creation story from the Popul Vuh (a collection of texts from the Post Classic Quiché kingdom of the Western Guatemalan highlands). The gods have two stabs at making humans, firstly out of clay and then out of wood, but as neither creation lives up to their makers' expectations, they are destroyed. On the third attempt the gods succeed in making humans out of corn and so receive the respect and obeisance they demand. However, humans inadvertently possess an almost godlike ability to see long distances and to know 'all that there is in the world.' Consequently the gods limit human capability by obscuring their vision with a mist.

So far, so good, but in the film this 'vision' is represented by our possessing a throbbing, lysergic 'third eye' that enables us to see the hidden, psychedelic, spiritual dimension of reality. Thus an acid-drenched Western caricature of the Hindu chakra system is laid over a Quiché creation story within a Judaeo-Christian eschatology that wonders whether we too will be destroyed

by the gods if we fail to regain our forgotten psychedelic heritage. Truly 'a self-validating set of ideas.'

Even if we politely push some of Argüelles' wilder claims to one side, objections to 2012 are plentiful. It is not at all certain what the long count meant to the Maya, nor what, if anything, they supposed would happen at its conclusion. Indeed, so little is known about the Maya it is hard to say much about their views on time, cosmology and eschatology. Whether they knew about the precession of the equinoxes or what, if anything, they thought such astronomical events meant is impossible to prove in the absence of corroborating evidence. Of the Classic Maya, one archaeologist writes: "we know just enough to find them fascinating, but there are lots of blanks we can fill in to our own satisfaction" (Webster 2007).

As for the timewave, I have criticised it at length elsewhere (Letcher 2006). Even if we allow McKenna his starting assumption, that there is an essential structure to time that was intuited by the ancient Chinese and coded into the I Ching divination system (which for many may prove a dispensation too far), there remain some damning problems with his formulation of the timewave and the way he positioned it on the timeline. The wave was analysed by mathematician Matthew Watkins who demonstrated that it is not in fact fractal and that it was constructed using some rather inexplicable mathematical legerdemain (Watkins 2010). Nor is it at all clear how McKenna arrived at December 21st 2012 as the wave's end point: he may simply have shoehorned it to fit with the Mayan calendar, subsequent to his meeting with Argüelles. Indeed, 'novelty' is so difficult a concept to define that many of the events labelled by McKenna as 'ingressions of novelty' seem arbitrary and myopically Amero-centric: the summer of love, say, or the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Important as these events undoubtedly are to us, from a perspective that takes into account the age and extent of the universe (which the timewave purports to do), they are trivial to the point of irrelevance.

Rather surprisingly, one of the staunchest critics of the timewave is McKenna's brother, Dennis, who went on to become a leading research scientist specializing in the ethnopharmacology of the Amazonian hallucinogenic brew, ayahuasca. Pointing out that the timewave is untestable, he regards it, at best, as unscientific. In one online interview he has been heard to mutter 'don't get me started on the timewave.'

But there is one further criticism of 2012 that I want to develop, namely that it represents a back-projection onto the ancient Maya of an entrenched Western mindset, a Judaeo-Christian habit of thought that sees time as purposeful but finite, and coming to a shuddering halt sometime soon.

Time's Arrow and the Pursuit of the Millennium

When speculating about the ancient Maya, advocates of 2012 typically assert that, with their many counts and calendars, the ancient Maya were 'obsessed' with time. It's an old saw that rarely goes unchallenged. The argument goes that as no one invests time and effort into something so arbitrary without good reason, the Maya must have been onto something: their calendars must have pointed towards a real event. I want to suggest that we have this the wrong way round: that the obsession with time is ours and not theirs.

The refusal of days (complete rotations of the earth), months (complete orbits of the moon about the earth) and years (complete orbits of the earth about the sun) to fit tidily together in a nested set of whole numbers means that calendars are necessarily complicated things. Ours is no exception but we are so inured to it that we no longer see it for the strange concoction it is.

We regulate our lives according to the quotidian and an arbitrary seven day cycle, in which each day (named after ancient pagan gods) is somehow felt to possess a unique character or flavour: Monday morning feels very different to Friday night. We divide the year into twelve months of approximately 30 days each (approximating the length of the lunar cycle)

and again attribute each a distinctive seasonal quality: April, the cruelest month, or flaming June.

Then, quite apart from this higgledy-piggledy system, which nearly but does not quite fit together (else we would not need leap years, hours, minutes and seconds), we impose a decimal system of year counts. Scoff as we might at the Chinese astrological system, with its years apparently ruled by a repeating succession of animals, we nevertheless attribute each year, decade, century or millennium a characteristic zeitgeist. We talk of the sixties or the eighties or the nineteenth century, as if these arbitrary time brackets have objective meaning. Rare and unusual numbers in our year count – 1900, say, or 2000 – become supercharged with meaning, presumably because the length of time between such numerically pleasing numbers far surpasses our paltry three score years and ten. Our year count imposes awe upon us by virtue of its very magnitude (indeed, once you have established a system of year counts, be it decimal, *tzolk'in* or whatever, meaningful dates simply fall out of it).

And then, running through all these complicated cycles and counts, with their corresponding qualities, is the idea of a forward movement, that time and progress are taking us somewhere. Though Anno Domini has been replaced with the more politically correct Common Era, our forwardly-orientated year count remains a Christian confection. It's one of the central planks upon which our civilization is founded.

In 1957 a British historian called Norman Cohn published a landmark study: *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Cohn 1970 [1957]). The European Middle Ages had, he observed, been pockmarked by outbreaks of millenarianism; that is, by the emergence of religious sects and cults pronouncing the end of days and the imminence of the apocalypse. The origins of this recurrent pattern, he stressed, are Judaeo-Christian. Unlike its pagan contemporaries, ancient Judaism, convinced that its people were "the Chosen People of the one God" (Cohn 1970: 19), was profoundly concerned with

its place in history and with how that history would culminate. Christianity developed the theme, most notably in the Book of Revelation where, in lurid prose that has transfixed the Western imagination ever since, it states that Christ's second coming will initiate a messianic reign of one thousand years (the original millennium) culminating in the last judgement.

In times of social unrest, of war, plague or natural disaster, millenarian sects – which in the Middle Ages included flagellants, Cathars, Free Spirits, Taborites, Anabaptists and Ranters – have pronounced the end of days to be imminent. Though differing in the details, each adheres to a common paradigm: "the world is dominated by an evil, tyrannous power of boundless destructiveness – a power moreover which is imagined not as simply human but demonic. The tyranny of that power will become more and more outrageous, the sufferings of its victims more and more intolerable – until suddenly the hour will strike when the Saints of God are able to rise up and overthrow it...This will be the culmination of history" (Cohn 1970: 21).

Following Norman Cohn, the political theorist John Gray argues that Christian eschatology did not just rock the Middle Ages: it informed the Enlightenment, the French Terror, the Russian Communist Revolution and was with us still in Bush-era American neo-conservatism, the latter with its 'axis of evil' and hubristic and pre-9/11 claim to have somehow put an end to history (Gray 2007). It remains embedded in our idea of progress, the idea that 'things can only get better.'

Perhaps this is another case of New World optimism versus Old World ennui, and to be sure not all apocalyptic religions are of Judaeo-Christian origin (Wojcik 2004), but it is hard not to read 2012 as just another expression of Christian millenarianism (McKenna, we should remember, was brought up Catholic). In Daniel Pinchbeck's retelling, the setting has changed – Christ has been replaced by Quetzalcoatl, the last judgement with ecological destruction and psychedelic redemption – but the typical form

and structure identified by Cohn remain essentially unaltered.

The demonic power for Pinchbeck is now capitalism, or the corporation, and for the first half an hour of *2012: Time for Change* we are subjected to repeated images of the effects of its tyrannical power: deforestation; profligate burning of fossil fuels; aberrant weather; homelessness; people with cancer; the city as a soulless, decadent carbuncle. We are told we are facing a 'crisis of consciousness,' a 'time of transformation,' where the 'system can't hold together' and we are 'alienated from ourselves.' Salvation will come through a 'revolution in consciousness,' achieved through lateral thinking, sustainability, yoga, and most importantly, the shamanistic use of psychedelics.

But of course 2012 has no significance for contemporary Maya (Sitler 2006). It is rather a Western, and therefore Judaeo-Christian, imposition upon ancient Maya culture (which, incidentally, some contemporary Maya, bowing to the pressure or perhaps spotting an opportunity, are beginning to accept). The 2012 movement, from McKenna to Pinchbeck, has simply lifted parts of indigenous culture willy-nilly, appropriating them for its own, time-obsessed ends.

Time flies, we say. It passes, flows, rushes or drags. We look back in anger and forward to a bright future. We lay historical events out along a timeline, imagining ourselves moving through time from left to right.

Something jars when we learn that the ancient Greeks thought the future lay behind them (as only the past could be known, and hence 'seen') – that's not right at all! But of course, the future isn't anywhere, in front or behind, left or right. All of these are metaphors, images from concrete experience applied to an abstract entity that, in truth, we cannot apprehend at all (indeed, the only way we can conceive abstraction is through metaphors drawn from concrete experience: see Deutsche 2005). We know that time exists – I have the grey hairs to prove it – but just what kind of a thing it is remains mysterious.

The French mathematician and philosopher Henri Bergson drew our attention to this prob-

lem a hundred years ago (Bergson 2005 [1913]). We cannot conceive of time, in words or in mathematics, without rendering it in terms of space, which is to say, as something which it is not. Our attempts to grasp time do violence to its very nature: 'time is essentially an undivided flow...[our] tendency to break it up into units and make machines to measure it may succeed in deceiving us that it is a sequence of static points, but such a sequence never approaches the nature of time, however close it gets' (McGilchrist 2009: 76).

For Bergson, both language and maths are the product of intellect which has evolved not, as Western Philosophy typically assumes, to help us ponder the world and our place in it but to allow us better to act upon the world. Intellect is therefore ill-equipped to conceive time except in its own limited, spatial terms of reference. It must be supplemented instead by intuition. "Intuition is...an act, or a series of acts, of direct participation in the immediacy of experience... The result will be a cognition of reality such as intellectual concepts can never yield" (Gouge 1999: 12). For, "in pure duration we get a feeling of our own evolution and the evolution of the cosmos" (Gouge 1999: 17).

Bergson employed a range of captivating metaphors – for which he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927 – to help us approach time in this sideways manner. He spoke rather of duration, and imagined duration unfolding like an extemporising dancer for whom the entire sequence is implied in every move (Bergson 2005 [1913]).

Bergson's conclusion was that both mechanistic determinism (the idea that if you could somehow rewind the universe and set it going from the same initial starting conditions, it would replay identically, just as a Youtube clip does) and its inverse, finalism (the idea that time is drawn ineluctably forwards to a specific end point, of which 2012 is one example), rest on this spatial misconstruction of time. Neither can be correct (Bergson 1912). The universe does not admit ingressions of novelty at discrete intervals: rather, novelty endlessly unfolds.

Whether Bergson successfully holed the metaphysic upon which apocalyptic thinking floats remains, like all philosophy, contested, but I find his arguments powerfully persuasive (and the intuition of duration redolent of the psychedelic experience, which is why, perhaps, Aldous Huxley was also an admirer). If 2012 is set in stone, as it were, why does it matter whether I elevate my consciousness or not? Surely the event is going to happen irrespective of my actions? (Indeed, some have taken the inevitability of 2012 as the perfect excuse not to act but to party, for there really will be no tomorrow.) But if 2012 is contingent on yours or my behaviour then it can't be inevitable. Which is it?

Of course, the great test will come in December 2012: either we will wake up on the morning of the 22nd to a world that has been radically transformed, or we won't. One way or another, we'll know. Should the great transformation occur I will be the first to own up and say I was wrong, but history shows that millenarian groups tend not to be so graceful in defeat. One interesting branch of the Study of Religion looks at how millenarian groups cope with the disappointment and cognitive dissonance of eschatological non-arrival.

One way is to admit their calculations were wrong. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, have had to readjust the date of the apocalypse no fewer than four times (Scotland 2004) and already there are reports circulating around the internet that 2012 may be awry by anything between thirty and one hundred and fifty years, a handy get out clause. In 2009, psychedelic veterans Gong released an album 2032, the date they suppose will be "the time when the existence of Planet Gong will be officially recognised by astronomers on Earth and will signal the first public arrival of...space visitors" (Gong 2009: sleeve notes) (though with tricksters like Gong it is hard to separate playful allegory from seriously held eschatology). One can't help thinking of *Beyond the Fringe's* famous 'End of the World' sketch: "Never mind, lads, same time tomorrow."

Another way is to suggest that something did actually happen, just not quite what was

expected. Reacting to Matthew Watkins' criticisms of the timewave, Terence McKenna replied by saying that even if there were no truth to it, the more people that believed, the more likely that some kind of positive planetary transition would occur (Watkins 2010). In other words, even if 2012 proves to be a mirage it will produce necessarily beneficial results, just not the ones we hoped for.

But I think Bergson's critique of finalism and our inability to grasp time call us to abandon these kinds of tortuous apologetics altogether, to rid ourselves of the entrenched Judaeo-Christian conception that the meaning of human lives is grounded in time's purposive movement, and to forgo the idea that time is a sort of cosmic escalator carrying us (or more honestly, some kind of 'chosen' or 'elect' few) inexorably onwards and upwards to a glorious end. Nor am I persuaded by the alternative view, championed by celebrity atheists like Richard Dawkins, that the universe is meaningless, or, rather, that the only meaning we can draw from time is that for each of us it will eventually run out. Between naive optimism and bleak pessimism there is, I want to suggest, a middle way.

Linear Time, Circular Time

In 2006 the storyteller Hugh Lupton and the folk musician Chris Wood were commissioned by BBC Radio 3 to produce Christmas Champions, a radio ballad (mixing music, song, storytelling and archive recording) about the traditional English folk custom of the Mummers' Play. Performed all over England during the Christmas season and involving anything from five to nine players, these plays typically enacted a fight to the death between Saint George and another knight, with the deceased being brought back to life by a Doctor. All over in about five minutes, and performed by untrained 'actors,' the plays were traditionally a means of raising money and getting free beer during the dead of winter. Ribald and entertaining, they are currently enjoying something of a revival. Folklorists have had much to say about the central motif of death and resurrection but for Wood and Lupton the plays possess a still deeper meaning.

'The Mummies' Play,' writes Wood, 'celebrates two simultaneous concepts of time – linear or 'tragic' time...and circular or 'resurrective' time. The players are bound in tragic time while the characters inhabit resurrective time and the whole is a deep and wondrous melting of the two' (Wood 2007: sleeve notes). The characters of the play – Saint George, Old Father Christmas, The Doctor and so on – are traditional and so outlive the individuals who enact them. They are, in a sense, eternal. By stepping into the characters players remember all the times they have done so before, and all the other players who did so before them. By keeping the characters alive each player receives, in turn, a brief sojourn in circular time. The result? "English Voodoo at its finest!" (ibid).

As Bergson would remind us, time is neither linear nor circular but given that we have no choice but to use spatial metaphors I think there is something profound in Wood and Lupton's formulation (assuming, of course, that we can overlook the obviously Christian reference to resurrection). Instilled as we are with Western habits of thought, we are very much bound to linear time. I can see no way of escaping it. We can't go back to some naïve primitivism, if indeed 'timelessness' ever existed, but we can escape temporarily into circular time. Ritual remains the way to do so.

Whenever we perform ritual – by which I mean any intentional, orchestrated set of actions, gestures or utterances, formal or informal, repeated at significant moments – we remember the times we did so before. Ritual derives its power from memory: tradition, infused by memory, is what propels us into circular time. Ritual elicits in us an intensity of feeling, which is to say, an intuition of duration.

One reason, I think, why 2012 is so appealing to psychedelic enthusiasts is that the psychedelic experience has so often been framed as a kind of internal apocalypse from which there is no going back. Once you've turned on and tuned in you have no choice but to drop out. Perhaps this is part of why psychedelics have been so vilified by the mainstream. But given that the relationship between 'dropping acid'

and 'dropping out' is one born of cultural expectation and not pharmacological necessity, maybe we need to rethink our metaphors and reframe the psychedelic experience, not as something that is abruptly discontinuous with our ordinary lives but as something that steers and enriches them, something that we return to for brief, episodic but illuminating and reflective excursions into circular time. That, after all, is how psychedelics are framed within indigenous cultures. I want to suggest that in Britain, where 2012 has not had quite the same impact on the psychedelic imagination as it has in America, this return to indigenous frameworks has already started to happen thanks to a little-known movement that I call *tribedelica*.

Get Thee Enhured!

Tribedelica had its roots in the hippy culture of the sixties and seventies and in the traveller scene that flourished in and around the Stonehenge Free Festival (1974-84), but it emerged as a distinctive subculture during the anti-roads protests of the 90s (see Letcher 2003, 2004, 2005, forthcoming). The then Conservative government introduced a massive road-building programme which was met by an equally large groundswell of public protest. Inspired by the US group Earth First!, protesters employed direct action to try and halt construction, using treehouses, tunnels, tripods and lock-ons, 'digger-diving' and occasionally eco-sabotage ('pixieing' or 'monkey-wrenching'). What this meant in practice was that large numbers of young people, of which I was one, spent months at a time defending a particular piece of land, building a profound connection to place and significant relationships amongst themselves. No wonder, then, we thought of ourselves as a 'tribe.'

No less opposed to capitalism and the power of the corporation than 2012, and as equally concerned about the human impact on the environment, tribedelica nevertheless rejected Christianity in favour of a festive pagan worldview. Our sense of alienation from nature would be healed by living close to the land in low-impact lifestyles, by marking seasonal

changes with celebratory pagan festivals, with pilgrimages to ancient sites like Avebury and Stonehenge, and especially through the periodic use of the indigenous psychedelic mushroom, *Psilocybe semilanceata*.

Rejecting rave as too urban, as too reliant on electricity and the trappings of industrialized modernity (those records and decks had to be manufactured somewhere), tribedelica nevertheless centralized music and dance. It produced its own music, an acoustic and participatory form of medieval-tinged, drone-based, organic folk-trance, played in extended psychedelic jams on mandolins, bouzoukis, the saz, bagpipes, dulcimers and hurdy-gurdies, and used to accompany repetitive Breton step-dances (see Letcher forthcoming). As one tribedelic band, The Space Goats, put it, the aim of such sessions was 'to get thee enhurued,' by which they meant to achieve an ecstatic tribal reconnection to each other and the land through music and dance.

Well, tribedelica had its day, and, however extraordinary it was to be a part of it, it has to be seen as an efflorescence of a particular historical moment and one not without its own problems. It was no less guilty than 2012 of romanticising the ancient past, and even though it was a countercultural and low-impact lifestyle it remained reasonably dependent on the mechanisms of modernity for its survival. However, I would argue that for a modern psychedelic movement it was unusual in its rejection of Judaeo-Christian thinking. And its legacy, the idea of consuming psychedelics in a circular framework at pivotal moments of the year, lives on.

Since English Heritage introduced its Managed Open Access policy in 1999, increasing numbers of people have celebrated the summer solstice at Stonehenge. On average something like 30,000 people show, with large numbers also traveling to Avebury, the Rollright Stones and other ancient sites around the country. While everyone has their own reasons for going, many do so because they are looking for something, a sense of connection to 'the pagan,' 'the ancients,' 'the ancestors,' or perhaps just something intangible and unnameable. In the absence

of sound systems people bring acoustic instruments and expect to jam. As well as being a tangible expression of what Terence McKenna called 'the archaic revival' (McKenna 1991) the summer solstice is the tribedelic festival gone viral.

As a 'significant date' in some newly invented, circular, psychedelic ritual calendar, the summer solstice, usually the night of the 20th June through to sunrise on the 21st, has much in its favour. Potentially it has global appeal, at least for people at latitude (in the southern hemisphere, the 21st of June is usually the winter solstice, but no less relevant). It is an event on a cosmic scale, one that encourages humility by inviting us to consider our place in the wider scheme of things, but one with local and immediate relevance, impacting on our modern lives by virtue of it being the longest day. Unlike some modern Neo-Pagan festivals it has form: archaeology tells us that people have celebrated the summer solstice for millennia. Judaeo-Christian eschatology has no claim upon it: it comes drenched in pagan connotations which, to the modern Western imagination, all point to the natural world. Unlike Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Valentine's Day it has so far eluded the grip of the capitalist marketing machine: it remains a people's festival. It doesn't have to be celebrated at Stonehenge. It can, and preferably should, be celebrated locally (indeed, the crowds and security presence at Stonehenge don't necessarily make it an ideal tripping environment). And, as all rituals should, it has a natural dramatic shape: the expectation of the all night vigil followed by the climax of the sunrise.

When we gather in small groups to hold vigils around fires we step away from modernity, expose ourselves to the elements and feel we are engaged in something primal. When we make music together, we feel a profound sense of connection to one another: as Oliver Sacks says, in 'such a situation, there seems to be an actual binding of nervous systems' (cited in McGilchrist 2009: 105). And when psilocybin is thrown into the mix, something even more extraordinary begins to happen.

One of the recurring trip reports from magic mushroom users is that the experience occasions a kind of communion with the natural world (Krippner & Luke, 2009), especially the plant kingdom (the same is true of iboga and ayahuasca). Much has been written by futurologists about the emergence and significance of the noosphere, the global network of information exchange made possible by the internet and modern communication technology. But could it be that, as some have speculated, psilocybin and other tryptamines offer access to a kind of planetary-wide network linking plant and animal kingdoms into a 'Gaian mind,' a 'psilosphere'?

Irrespective of whether this kind of speculation is helpful or not, I find the idea that mycelial networks of small groups venturing out to their local significant site, celebrating the solstice, making music, 'entering the psilosphere,' getting enhurued, connecting by stepping into circular time, an inspiring one. Were this to happen or become commonplace it would, at the very least, offer us an alternative framework to the apocalypticism within which psychedelics have traditionally been consumed and interpreted in the West, and which if not the cause is certainly part of the problems we face. Anything more would be a happy bonus.

Sceptical as I am over 2012, if even the most conservative predictions about climate change are correct then humanity is facing some very stormy waters ahead. It may very well be touch and go whether we make it across to the other side. But I strongly believe that the judicious use of psychedelics has a role to play in helping us negotiate the vicissitude of a high-carbon future. They might conceivably stimulate us to find creative solutions to apparently intractable problems. They might help us re-orientate ourselves away from our innate short-sightedness to a wider and more empathetic view of the world, and thus help us create a more sustainable lifestyle (as the better parts of *2012: Time for Change* suggest). Or they might even hurl us into a necessary paragnostical encounter with the shamanistic Other.

But whatever it is we glean from our explorations it is imperative that we do so by harnessing the billowing spinnakers of the psychedelic vision to the mast of reason. As Dennis McKenna puts it, 'reason is our friend.' If we do not – if we forget to question – then the use of psychedelics risks becoming just another 'ism,' entheogism, an orthodox set of beliefs rooted in the millenarian obsessions of a bygone age. The time for that is surely past.

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A Letter to Anthropologists

John R. Swanton

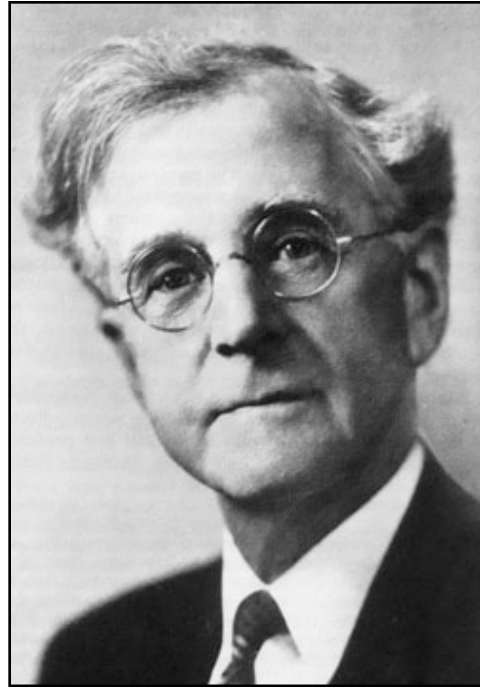


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Fellow Anthropologists, the present writer happens to be one of the oldest of our burgeoning fraternity but, as he freely confesses, far from occupying a position in its upper echelon of eminence in spite of the honors with which you have had the kindness—and possibly the indulgence—to bestow upon him. He is near enough the other end of the trail, however, for a swansong in the approved dramatic style, but believes that, so far as the strictly anthropological field is concerned, you require no professional advice from him since you have carried the standard of this new and all-important discipline far beyond his operational sphere. He would not venture to address you at all were it not that he believes that a significant revolution which concerns us all is taking place quietly but surely in a related branch of science and that it is not being met in an honest, a truly scientific, manner.

Some of you perhaps received your education in physics and chemistry before the century began, before Einstein had messed up the Newtonian universe and the resolution of the atom had destroyed forever the theoretic boundary in minimalism. You may remember the shock we all got when Roentgen obtained a photograph completely through those "hard, round, indivisible particles" which had come down from Newton and had for two hundred years bounded scientific vision in that direction.

Of course Newton's definition was only a hypothesis, and a very useful and fruitful one, but many of his successors accepted it as axiomatic truth, a dogma if you will, and experienced a shock when it faded out of existence as if it were merely a very clever fore-drop to a much more wonderful scene. But if one looks into the history of science, he will find that its greatest advances have often been made by



challenging a supposed axiom. That was what happened when Copernicus demolished the Ptolemaic universe. When that Padua professor refused to look through Galileo's telescope, he felt he was protecting the science of his time as well as its theology, not against heresy as we now imagine it, but against an impossible innovation in the established order of things. Most of us are old enough to have caught some of the sparks that flew after *The Origin of Species* was published. The resulting struggle is usually represented as "warfare of science with theology," but it would be truer to call it warfare between the older science and the newer for, while theology was arrayed principally with the older, we must not forget that it was upheld also by scientists of eminence, such as Georges Cuvier and Louis Agassiz. Sigmund Freud's name is connected with another challenge to the past.

Sometimes these primary revolutions creep upon human thought so unexpectedly that supposedly reputable scientists, the great men of their time, are taken unaware, especially since the new thought may come upon them from an

entirely unorthodox quarter and in a wholly unorthodox way. The story of hypnotism is interesting in this connection. Under, it is true, a somewhat crude form as "Mesmerism" it was condemned by a committee of distinguished men, which included Lavoisier and Benjamin Franklin, and later a leading London physician, John Elliotson, was driven out of his profession because of his support of hypnotic therapy. Medical opinion was equally hostile to James Esdaile who had used it successfully in operations in India. Later the British Association for the Advancement of Science refused to allow demonstrations of hypnotism before it by James Braid, though he ultimately won out and secured for it a scientific status.

At the present time it is believed by a number of experienced investigators that there are still other manifestations of the mind beyond those revealed in hypnotism and psychoanalysis. I refer more particularly to work now especially associated with the Parapsychology Laboratory of Duke University. When this was first made public the assumption of extrasensory perception cut squarely across my scientific frame of reference and I was not surprised at the counter-criticism it aroused and which I accepted as justified. However, much to my surprise, the work in parapsychology did not immediately sink out of sight under the wave of hostile criticism. Nevertheless, I did not pay much more attention to the subject until the year before my retirement from active work at the Bureau of American Ethnology. Up to that time I was unfamiliar with the proceedings of the British and American Societies of Psychical Research, and anything that I heard of them was by no means to their advantage. About the time of which I speak, however, I happened to run across a small volume containing diagrams which professed to be examples of the transference of thought from one person to another without direct contact between the parties concerned. A point which struck me forcibly regarding these diagrams was the *percentage* of resemblances between the designs set down by the "agent" and those supplied by the "percipient." Of course, if the great majority had been misses

the result would hardly have been convincing, and if there had been agreement in each case I would have felt sure that there was fraud or that something was wrong with the technique employed. But the fact was that along with failures and marginal cases there was a sufficient percentage of "hits" to render the claim plausible and coincidence unlikely. Shortly after this I happened to fall heir to a number of publications by members of the psychical research societies, and I spent some time studying them, my interest being a bit stimulated by an event in my own experience which had remained in a corner of my mind for half a century, from the time when I was a student at Harvard.

When I came to enlarge my reading in psychical research I found that, while much of the material was mixed up with spiritualism, and one came in contact with plenty of evidences of fraud, there was a great deal resembling that which parapsychologists are now investigating. Besides, the names connected with this evidence are not obscure or unknown to fame.

One of the weightiest supporters of belief in extrasensory perception—though the time when he made his investigations was forty years before that word came into use—was Prof. William James, founder of American psychology, and one of the most penetrating minds America has produced. Today James's report on the results of his close and detailed examination of the mental phenomena presented by Mrs. Leonora Piper seems to have been forgotten. After many years devoted to the study of her case, during part of which time Mrs. Piper's movements were watched by a detective, James made the subjoined declaration. That he never afterward modified the statements contained will be evident to anyone who reads "Final Impressions of a Psychical Researcher" in *Memories and Studies*, a volume of essays printed in 1911, a year after James's death, under the editorship of his son.

The report in part is as follows:

But it is a miserable thing for a question of truth to be confined to mere assumption and counter-assumption, with no decisive thunderbolt of fact to clear the baffling

darkness. And, sooth to say, in talking so much of the merely presumption-weakening value of our records, I have myself been wilfully taking the point of view of the so-called "rigorously scientific" disbeliever, and making an *ad hominem* plea. My own point of view is different. For me the thunderbolt *has* fallen, and the orthodox belief has not merely had its presumption weakened, but the truth itself of the belief is decisively overthrown. If I may employ the language of the professional logic-shop, a universal proposition can be made untrue by a particular instance. If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you must not seek to show that no crows are; it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white. My own white crow is Mrs. Piper. In the trances of this medium, I cannot resist the conviction that knowledge appears which she has never gained by the ordinary waking use of her eyes and ears and wits. What the source of this knowledge may be I know not, and have not the glimmer of an explanatory suggestion to make; but from admitting the fact of such knowledge I can see no escape. So when I turn to the rest of the evidence, ghosts and all, I cannot carry with me the irreversibly negative bias of the "rigorously scientific" mind, with its presumption as to what the true order of nature ought to be. I feel as if, though the evidence be flimsy in spots, it may nevertheless collectively carry weight. The rigorously scientific mind may, in truth, easily overshoot the mark. Science means, first of all, a certain dispassionate method. To suppose that it means a certain set of results that one should pin one's faith upon and hug forever is sadly to mistake its genius, and degrades the scientific body to the status of a sect.

We all, scientists and non-scientists, live on some inclined plane of credulity. The plane tips one way in one man, another way in another; and may he whose plane tips in no way be the first to cast a

stone! As a matter of fact, the trances I speak of have broken down for my own mind the limits of the admitted order of nature. Science, so far as science denies such exceptional occurrences, lies prostrate in the dust for me; and the most urgent intellectual need which I feel at present is that science be built up again in a form in which such things may have a positive place. Science, like life, feeds on its own decay. New facts burst old rules; then newly divined conceptions bind old and new together into a reconciling law.

So there it is. Was the writer of the above possessed of a crude, third-rate intelligence? It was the intelligence that founded American psychology. Was he deceived by a woman so exceedingly clever that not even detectives were able to catch up with her and, although examined by some of the most experienced investigators of England and America, was never "exposed"? Do not cite the cases of mediums like Palladino who have been detected in fraudulent practices after deceiving many highly competent investigators. Those cases almost always concerned physical mediums operating in darkness or semi-darkness, not trance mediums communicating messages in broad daylight. There was, and is, no evidence of fraud in the present instance, and to suppose that the communications of which James speaks happened to be right by coincidence is absurd. And this is merely one case out of a mass of material.

It is often demanded that advocates of allegedly "occult" phenomena present a complete, thoroughly checked case. Well, here it is and presented half a century ago. Why, then, did it not register, and has it not registered? Simply because the majority of psychologists *would not and will not believe* or accept its implications.

So that is what science, or at least psychology, has become! A set of dogmas which the "faithful" must accept or be damned. Is this science or is science what James called it, "a certain dispassionate method" as opposed to "a certain set of results that one should pin one's faith upon and hug forever"? This latter interpreta-

tion, as James warns, "degrades the scientific body to the status of a sect," a degradation which the main body of psychologists is now engaged in bringing about. What has become of that alleged willingness to accept truth from whatever quarter it comes? Are we to understand that facts must be censored by the high priests of the cult, and have a "none-genuine-without-our-signature" tag affixed?

The attitude is, however, nothing new. Having observed manifestations of the above character in connection with several other noted mediums, and been requested by associate scientists to investigate them, Sir William Crookes wrote, the italics being his:

It was taken for granted by the writers that the results of my experiments would be in accordance with their preconceptions. What they desired was not *the truth*, but an additional witness in favor of their own foregone conclusion...When I am told that what I describe cannot be explained in accordance with their preconceived ideas of the laws of nature, the objector really begs the question at issue and resorts to a mode of reasoning which brings science to a standstill.

And so, on being invited to observe the same phenomena, two of these gentlemen, Dr. Sharpey and Prof. Stokes, find it "inconvenient" to do so. Shades of Galileo!

Helmholtz is reported to have said to another physicist "that neither the evidence of all the members of the Royal Society nor the evidence of his own senses would ever make him believe in thought-transference, since thought-transference was impossible."

A scientist of Dr. Rhine's acquaintance when asked what he thought of the case for ESP replied in similar language that "if it were on any other issue, one-tenth of the evidence reported would have been enough to convince me. As it is, ten times that amount would not do it."

Jules Remains, who won distinction as poet, dramatist, essayist, and medical researcher, comments:

I shall never admit that reason should refuse to consider a fact of experience merely because it is improbable and contrary to the postulates of science to date. Taking into account the new fact, it must simply begin anew its exposition of the nature of things.

William James himself had the following experience:

An illustrious biologist told me one day that even if telepathy were proved to be true the savants ought to band together to suppress and conceal it, because such facts would upset the uniformity of nature, and all sorts of other things, without which the scientists cannot carry on their pursuits.

According to that biologist, then, science is "a certain set of facts that one should pin one's faith to" and a faith to be protected by systematic suppression like Mediaeval religion or Communist ideology. Presumably the *autos-da-fe* will follow. At present the technique employed seems to be suppression by silence.

I have already mentioned the initial struggles for recognition of some now accepted scientific facts. The trouble experienced when it is a question of new facts regarding the mind is the great difference between the physical and the psychological. Things physical remain relatively constant and can be investigated at will, but minds, as every anthropologist well knows, do not necessarily respond to the will of the experimenter. One field worker can produce results from what is sterile ground to another. One subject interviewed will talk freely; another, and perhaps the best authority in the tribe, will shut up like a clam. And so one who experiments with ESP cards, for instance, cannot obtain confirmatory evidence at will. It should be apparent by this time that extrasensory and similar abilities are uneven endowments and that the reactions of good subjects will often be smothered in a mass experiment. But one would suppose that we already have enough cases of extrasensory

ability to prove the case. How many of those who refuse to accept data of this kind because they cannot themselves produce results at will are able to answer correctly in one minute the question "What number is that which, being divided by the product of its digits, the quotient is 3; and if 18 be added, the digits will be inverted?" Or extract the sixth root of 24,137,585 in 25 seconds? Yet they know perfectly well that mathematical geniuses have done both, and, as a matter of fact, the power some lightning calculators have is beyond present explanation. And so must I deny the special abilities of a Home, a Piper, or a Linzmayer because I haven't the same or because I know of few who have?

I find no fault with those who do not take an interest in this subject, or with those who are skeptical regarding it, but with the fact that the present attitude toward it in the scientific world is *not* scientific. It is a standing refutation of the claim that science is interested in truth and only truth without regard to its source or the implications involved in the acceptance of it.

There is a suspicion—rather more than a suspicion in fact—that the present prejudice is occasioned in large measure by the association of these phenomena with supposed "spirit manifestations" and that it seems to border upon another realm of existence as to the reality of which many scientists have a pronounced distaste in spite of the fact that they will assert that they are in no manner opposed to religion. Dr. G. E. Hutchinson, Professor of Biology at Yale University, in an article called "Methodology and Value in the Natural Sciences" says regarding ESP phenomena: "The reason why most scientific workers do not accept these results is simply that they do not want to and avoid doing so by refusing to examine the full detailed reports of the experiments in question." But they should be reminded that science is concerned with the identification and study of *phenomena*, not with the pre-judgment of what can or cannot be believed.

No doubt many anthropologists will say that this question belongs in another field and that it is up to the psychologists to thrash it out. I believe, however, that because of the number of

real charlatans who profess to operate as psychologists the regular members of the discipline are sensitive as to their status. Indeed, I have received a distinct impression, which others will I am sure confirm, that those who pursue what have been called "the exact sciences" look with considerable disdain on the social sciences, though, when one considers some physical theories now in good standing, one doesn't see where they get the right to such a supercilious attitude. Therefore, perhaps a protest from some other field may not be unwelcome, and I am not merely in another field but fortunately well situated in having my professional life behind me and in being willing to stick out my neck in place of those who might fear for their reputations and their careers. Adhesion to current orthodoxy is always more profitable than dissent but the future belongs to dissenters. Prejudice and cowardice in the presence of the *status quo* are the twin enemies of progress at all times and of that "dispassionate method" in which science consists.

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An Historical Review of a Notable Physical Medium in the Tropics: Anna Prado, a mulher que falava com os mortos

Ademir Xavier



Title: Anna Prado:

A Mulher Que Falava Com os Mortos

Author: Samuel Magalhães

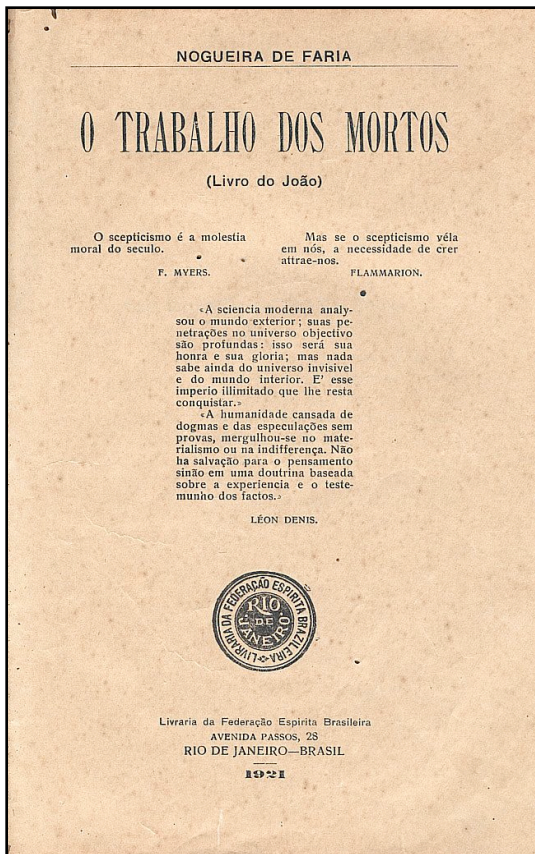
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The Amazon rainforest is a dominant ecosystem. As the largest tropical forest in the world it controls the local climate, and sets the pace for the economies of Brazil's northernmost states. The region was re-discovered and explored by the Spanish and Portuguese in the 18th century. The isle formerly known as Tupinambarana, as the area around the city now known as Paritins in the state of Pará, was named just after its discovery in 1749 by a certain Portuguese captain

called José Cordovil. The name 'Paritins' is derived from one of the native peoples inhabiting the region long before the arrival of Europeans. The Paritins were not alone in the region, other peoples, including the Tupinambás, Sapupé, Peruviana, Mundurucu and Mawe, also lived in the region. It is little known today, however, that Paritins was also the birth place of one of the Brazil's first physical mediums: Anna Rebello Prado (1883-1923).

Her story is the subject of a new book *Anna Prado: a mulher que falava com os mortos* (Anna Prado, the woman who talked to the dead) by Samuel Magalhães. Until the publication of Magalhães' book, to talk about Anna Prado was the equivalent of quoting extensively from *O trabalho dos mortos* (The work of the dead, published in 1921) by Raymundo Nogueira de Faria or, to a lesser extent, *O que eu vi* (What I saw) by Ettore Bosio, published even earlier. Both references are only available in Portuguese, the former can be easily found on the web, while Bosio's work is a very rare book today. The Italian maestro Bosio was responsible for all photographs in de Faria's book which are reproduced in Magalhães' work. Magalhães made an extensive search in the public libraries of Paritins and Belém (capital of the state of Pará) in order to find the date and birthplace of Anna Prado, a controversy among historians interested in Spiritualist mediums. He found that Paritins' history is linked to many members of the Prado family who were active Spiritualists in the region at the time, and were also involved in the public administration of the city (Anna Prado husband, Eurípedes, was the city superintendent from 1911 to 1913, a role equivalent to a mayor today). According to Magalhães, in 1907 Paritins saw the publication of the first number of the Spiritualist newspaper 'O Semeador' (The Sewer) by the Spiritist circle "Amor e Caridade."



Manaus had its own Spiritualist journal called "Mensagem" (Messenger) already in 1901.

Eurípedes Prado was very interested in the table turning phenomenon and thought the family should try an experiment. The first attempt on June 18th 1918 was, however, unsuccessful. Only on June 24th, in a family sitting, did they succeed in producing the famous 'table turning' phenomenon, obtaining the levitation of a table. Through the classical signal system of 'yes' and 'no' replies after uttered questions, they were put in contact with a deceased personality who called himself 'John' (it was then St. John the Baptist day) and discovered that the occurrences were linked specifically to Anna's presence. Later, John identified himself as Felismino Olympio de Carvalho Rebello, one of Anna Prado's uncles in life. This entity assumed the position of 'controller' in all sésances that took place in over the short period of time until her death in 1923. Most of Anna Prado's sésances were private sittings attended only by very close friends. Much of Magalhães' book follows very closely the descriptions given in de Faria's book.

There are long excerpts taken from this work that help to build the narrative in a roughly chronological order. However, some details are lacking in Magalhães's work such as, for example, a short biographic note on Ettore Bosio, the man in charge of setting up the photo equipment and developing the emulsions of all sittings.

Historical accounts of Anna Prado's sittings report that several classical physical phenomena were produced: raps, levitations, apports, direct writing, 'spirit surgeries,' full materializations and the 'dematerialization' of the medium (see last paragraph). Such accounts include Gabriel Delanne's 'La Réincarnation' - Documents pour servir à l'étude de la Réincarnation, Paris, France, 1924 - (Documents for the study of Reincarnation); an article in the Revue Spirit, May 1923, p. 230-231; and two other chronicles in a 1922 issue of the Revue Métapsychique signed by Pascal Forthuny. There is a report of 'seed germination' (Chapter 7 - Um fenômeno raro, p. 191), whereby seeds of Eucalyptus plants brought from Rio de Janeiro were found in an advanced stage of germination after a sitting on May 1922. Moreover, when the medium was in trance, she was able to describe ordinary facts at a distance, perhaps best illustrated by Anna Prado's description of a rebellion in Paritins on January 21st 1921, while she was in Belém (something known as 'far seeing,' p. 97).

By far the most extraordinary, and most highly publicised, narratives associated with Anna Prado name were the materialization accounts of Rachel Figner, given by Esther and Fred Figner, which are all fully reproduced by Magalhães (Chapter 6 - A extraordinária materialização de Raquel Figner). The name Fred Figner (1866-1947) is linked to the phonographic industry in Latin America, since he, a Jewish immigrant from Milevsko in the Czech Republic, was responsible for bringing Edison's invention to Brazil in 1900. The Figners lost their oldest daughter Rachel in 1920. In a private sésance with Mrs. Prado on May 1st 1921, Esther made the first description of a spirit form identified as her daughter, although she recognized that the materialization was not complete. Then the

phenomenon developed progressively a couple of times until the last sittings on May 4th and 6th, which were considered by Rachel's parents to be the most perfect ones. Fred Figner's testimony of the séance was published in the newspaper *O Estado do Pará* at the time, causing a real sensation in the population and bringing the strong opposition of the Catholic Church over the Prado family. According to Figner, the presence of Rachel lasted 40 minutes and was witnessed by 10 people, in addition to the members of his own family, in a partially illuminated room. To Fred Figner 'Rachel was there fully alive, ready to go to a party. Her head high with her round arms, usual smile, nice hands, and even the position of her hands testified that she was in our presence exactly as she used to be while on earth' (excerpt from p. 188). A still existing paraffin glove of Rachel's hand (Fig. 54 on p.181) was fabricated during those sittings together with several paraffin flowers. Today these objects are part of the séance relics in the possession of Mrs. Marta Prochnik, whose interview can be read at the end of the book. Rachel was Mrs. Prochnik's great aunt.

Finally, the most controversial aspects of the book are the pictures and descriptions (already published in de Faria's book and illustrating Magalhães' book cover), of Mrs. Prado's instances of 'dematerization.' If an image is just a representation of what is on the mind of the observer, the images showing parts of the transparent body of Mrs. Prado resting on a rocking chair are unlikely to be credited as genuine. It is today (and, perhaps, at Bosio's time as well) very easy to reproduce the same photo effect using mirrors and software trickery. However, both the narratives of Bosio and Magalhães insist that the effect was real and that it was obtained for the first time on September 13th 1921 (p. 201, Chapter 7). According to Bosio, the very production of it was suggested by the medium's controller, provided restricted illumination conditions were observed and the medium could reach a state of deep trance. After the controller's signal, the magnesium light was flashed several times. The success of the experiment was assured by John himself. Some images show



only parts of the medium's body in transparent form (in general the feet and arms) and one can see some details of the chair through it. Also, Bosio reported that the process was gradual so that during the first stages people could see parts of the medium's bones and flesh because the upper skin had become transparent first. Another picture shows an empty chair. The medium's body simply disappeared but a diaphanous image of her body can be seen on the left. To my knowledge there is no other account similar to this one in the psychic literature, although many reports do exist about changes in the medium's weight. Anna Prado died at home on April 23rd 1923 in a fire accident that partially burned her body. A short note about her death was published in the October 1923 issue of the *Revue Spirite*, p. 378 as described by Magalhães in his book.

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