

# **CONSCIOUSNESS**

**MARK OLIVER SMITH**

Dear Milton

Please find enclosed my attempt to grapple with the subject of 'Consciousness'. My attempt is not very original. It brings together several aspects of the subject from some very interesting thinkers. In a very real sense I have undertaken this exercise in order to educate myself!

I would like to thank you for your assistance in purchasing a number of 'difficult-to-obtain' books for me. I will return these to you shortly. I found the works of Gary Lachman particularly helpful.

The topic of 'Consciousness' brings together a number of strands which have been with me for a long time. These include philosophy, psychology and cultural anthropology. These disciplines are not the sole pre-occupation of orthodox scholarship. I have not only enjoyed wandering 'off the beaten track' from time to time. I have often been rewarded for doing so! Nevertheless I still regard my notes as a 'work in progress'.

I hope you will be tempted to continue the journey I have just begun.

Much love  
Dad

July 2010

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(Based on: *Psychiatry at a Glance* by Cornelius Katona and Mary Robertson; 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Blackwell Science Ltd; Oxford; 2000)

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## INTRODUCTION

Three sets of circumstances have conspired to keep the subject of 'Consciousness' alive in my thinking. The first of these concerns my years as a Lecturer in Curriculum Theory and Practice and later as a Curriculum Officer. The second of these relates to my extensive travels in South East Asia. The third concerns my years of reading the lectures of Rudolf Steiner.

### **Lecturing Experience**

In 1969 I began lecturing at the old Wagga Wagga Teachers' College in Education. One of my courses was a teaching methodology course which was unique to the College. It was a course distilled from the content of each curriculum subject. It was meant to obviate the repetition of methodological subject matter that occurs in such courses as English Method, Maths Method, History Method, Science Method, P.E. Method and so on. It was a course which should never have been given to a novice lecturer - especially someone who had not participated in its formulation. I was to learn much from this course delivery.

The 'first-order strategies' derived from the several teaching subjects of the curriculum were: Narration, Demonstration, Discussion, Observation, Experimentation, Creation and Research Skills. In the preparation of the lecture material for each of these strategies of teaching I had the opportunity to reflect on matters concerned with learning and epistemology. I began to differentiate the contours of **sensory inputs, perceptual organisation and concept formation**. When it came to the scientific aspects of observation and experimentation I began to distinguish between quality and quantity, data and inference, logical thinking and descriptive thinking. Thus one cannot see 'light' but one can observe its effects. One cannot see 'gravity' but one can infer its existence and hypothesise about its possible effects. In mathematics one could learn about seriation and grouping in different bases. One could utilise concepts such as 0, infinity and the square root of minus one without claiming they belonged to the 'real' world. My years as an Educational Clinician had alerted me to developmental disorders and the more striking medical conditions associated with brain injury, glandular and endocrine imbalances. Clinical disorders due to childhood trauma which manifested in acting-out behaviour, compulsions, phobias and anxieties demonstrated that much that was occurring in children was not conscious.

### **South-East Asian Travels**

My travels in South-East Asia provided an opportunity for me to gain a wider appreciation of cultural difference as distinct from individual variation within the one culture. I began to question the western axioms and the co-ordinates and structures of meaning, of linear time, three-dimensional space, causality and the nature of motion and matter.

After visiting Bali on several occasions I gained the realisation that matter and spirit were 'two sides of the same coin'. An excessive reductionism leads to a materialistic atomism on the one hand or a nebulous spiritualism on the other. Bali taught me that in this polaric tension it is man who holds the balance. Man lives at the fulcrum of this noetic force-field. This is not a dualism. It is a quantum metaphysics in which man unites the two aspects of reality. Just as the circle is the resolution of both

tangential and centric forces so, too, man is the resolution of the materialistic and spiritual aspects of reality.

Another intriguing aspect of Asian thinking concerns 'auspiciousness' or 'significance'. It manifests itself in the concept of 'luck' or 'co-incidence'. It embraces 'divination' and the 'doctrine of correspondences' or 'correlative thinking'. The western doctrine of causality is difficult to reconcile with synchronous phenomena and acausality. I found it useful to characterise Western thought as **Euclidean** and Balinese thought as **Riemannian**. Balinese thought is a creative blend of Hinduism and Animism. It also incorporates some aspects of Chinese religions. There is an entirely different geometry hidden in these religions!

After touring S.E. Asia many times I began to understand what Fritjof Capra was getting at in his *Tao of Physics*. I began to think **polarically**. Beginning with the principle of Ying and Yang, I started to divide the world into polar equivalents such as male/female, spirit/matter, matter/motion, substance/form, point/plane, form/process, statics/dynamics, causality/teleology, analysis/synthesis, quality/quantity, inscribed/circumscribed, inner/outer, evolution/devolution, space/counterspace, gravitation/levitation, pressure/suction, condensation/rarefaction, anode/cathode, systole/dystole, light/darkness, nerve/blood, skull/limb system and so on. Each 'pole' had a positive and negative valency while man stood at the fulcrum. In order to obtain a balanced view all that man was required to do was to shift the fulcrum. This involved shifting one's attitude and thinking and appeasing different sets of deities.

My travels in S.E. Asia, especially in Bali, have given me some **new noetical tools**. They have also reinforced what I have known for some time viz. that knowledge is culture-bound. Whereas the western world was intent on reducing everything to quantity the eastern world allowed for the retention of qualitative aspects of life. The western mode of thinking describes reality in terms of matter i.e. so many molecules of x combined with so many molecules of y. Man is understood in terms of physics and chemistry. The eastern mode is polar. It allows for spirit as well as matter.

The west can only scoff at such concepts as auspiciousness, synchronicity and destiny. The east, however, can make daily use of them.

### **Rudolf Steiner**

My reading of the works of Rudolf Steiner put me in touch with the thinking of a man who was familiar with the orthodoxy of western thought but chose to transcend it. He believed that Goethe was more scientific than Newton. He could see that time could be understood in other than a linear dimension and that there was a space and a counterspace. Space could be understood centrally and peripherally. Similarly, causality and teleology, if properly applied, were both valid as a means of explanation. Steiner was as much at home in the supersensible world as he was in the sensible. His theories of consciousness have echoes in the writings of Jean Gebser, Mavromatis and Thompson but his scholarship has been ignored by orthodoxy.

In the chapters which follow I am painfully aware of gaps and omissions. I would have liked to explore more fully the chemistry of the brain and outlined advances in pharmacology. These aspects will have to await a more convenient time.

The chapters which follow explore aspects of 'consciousness' from several points of view. I found the most intriguing insight to emerge from my reading stemmed from the proposals put forward by the physicist David Bohm. His ideas about the implicate and the explicate orders tie in wonderfully with the Goethean approach to epistemology. They also make sense of what Steiner was saying about the evolution of consciousness: Man as a microcosm of the macrocosm may have his individual consciousness represented as a hologram of the great cosmic consciousness!

**M.S.**

## **Chapter 1 THINKING ABOUT THINKING**

'Thinking is an organ for observing something higher than is afforded by the senses. A side of reality is accessible to it of which a mere sense-being could never become aware. THOUGHT EXISTS NOT MERELY TO REPEAT THE SENSIBLE BUT TO PENETRATE INTO WHAT IS CONCEALED FROM THE SENSES. The sense-percept gives us only one side of reality, the other side is the apprehending of the world through thinking. The thought-characterisations are such that like an equation they may be satisfied in a variety of different ways.'

Richard Seddon's *Philosophy as an Approach to the Spirit*, p. 29.

# Chapter 1

## THINKING ABOUT THINKING

### Part 1

#### Metaphysical Foundations

When one examines the structure of thought or the nature of thinking one is approaching the limits of knowledge. The answers given to such an examination will characterise a whole culture and determine the direction of most of the pursuits in the fields of religion, science and technology and the arts and so on. One cannot examine 'thinking' by placing it in a test tube or by weighing it on a beam balance or by placing it in a synchrotron to see how it behaves. Thinking can only be examined by thinking! The field of Philosophy has 'cornered the market' on most matters related to 'thinking' although it has given some ground to Psychology and Theology. The philosophic category of metaphysics is the generic term usually reserved for inquiries into the most fundamental categories of thought. Metaphysics has a number of sub-categories which specialise in certain aspects. These include Noetics, Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology, Semiotics, Aesthetics and a more generalised Cosmology.

#### Noetics

Webster's 3<sup>rd</sup> International Dictionary (1971) defines Noetics:

'Noetics: the logical doctrine of AXIOMS or the LAWS of THOUGHT'.

A subset of Noetics is LOGIC.

#### Ontology

Webster's Dictionary provides two distinct definitions for the meaning of Ontology:

1. a) 'A science or study of BEING specifically: a branch of metaphysics relating to the nature of relations of BEING.  
b) A particular system according to which problems of the nature of BEING are investigated. FIRST PHILOSOPHY.
2. A theory concerning the kinds of entities and specifically the kind of abstract entities that are to be admitted to a language system.'

Ontology deals with such topics as the nature of being, substance, freedom, possibility, necessity and the nature of time, space and causality.

#### Epistemology

Webster defines Epistemology:

‘The study of the method and grounds of KNOWLEDGE especially with regard to its limits and validity; broadly the theory of knowledge.’

Epistemology deals with such topics as the nature of thinking, the nature of sensation, the nature of perception, the nature of fact, belief, reason, intuition and imagination.

## **Axiology**

The word ‘axiology’ derives from two Greek roots ‘axios’ (or worth, worthy) plus ‘logy’ (study of). Webster elaborates:

‘The THEORY OR STUDY OF VALUES, primarily of intrinsic values (as those in aesthetics, and religion) but also of instrumental values (as those in economics) particularly with reference to the manner in which they can be known or experienced, their nature and kinds, and their ontological status’.

Some of the sub-sets of Axiology include Moral Philosophy, Ethics, The meaning of Good/Goodness, Right/Rightness, Value, Justice and Truth.

## **Semiotics**

Webster’s Dictionary defines Semiotics as:

‘The general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deal especially their function in both artificially constructed and natural languages and comprises the three branches of SYNTACTICS, SEMANTICS and PRAGMATICS’.

Semiotics owes much to The Hon. Victoria Lady Welby-Gregory who published *What is Meaning* in 1903, and *Significs and Language* (1911). ‘Significs’ was the name she coined for her THEORY of MEANING or THE NATURE OF SENSE. She divided ‘sense’ into three categories: ‘sense’, ‘meaning’, and ‘significance’ **which corresponded to three levels of consciousness**. She referred to these three levels in astronomical terms as ‘planetary’, ‘solar’ and ‘cosmic’ respectively. Lady Welby-Gregory corresponded with C.K. Ogden and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce is known for his philosophy of Pragmatism which was a theory of meaning and truth which differed from William James’ theory. According to Peter King, Peirce ‘made substantial contributions to quantification theory, propositional calculus, Boolean algebra and three-valued logic. He is particularly well known for his application of the principles of Boolean algebra to the calculus of relations’ (*One Hundred Philosophers*, Peter J. King; ABC Books; Sydney; 2001, pps 128-129).

## **Aesthetics**

Webster provides two definitions of Aesthetics:

1. The branch of philosophy dealing with BEAUTY and the BEAUTIFUL with judgements of TASTE concerning them.
2. The philosophy or science of ART.

Aesthetics is not always associated with Metaphysics but the work of a person like Samuel Alexander in *Beauty and Other Forms of Value* managed to relate it to a number of metaphysical issues. He sought to find a relationship between the nature of BEAUTY, TRUTH and GOODNESS.

## **Cosmology**

Webster manages to provide three definitions of cosmology:

1. A branch of systematic philosophy that deals with the character of the UNIVERSE as a COSMOS by combining speculative metaphysics and scientific knowledge that deals with the processes of nature and the relation of its parts – compare ONTOLOGY.
2. A particular theory or body of doctrine relating to the natural order.
3. Astronomy dealing with the origin, structure and space-time relationships of the universe.

Cosmologists attempt to relate man to the cosmos in a meaningful way. These cosmologies are usually encoded in the great religions and their temple artefacts. Thus there is a Babylonian cosmology, an Indian, a Chinese, an Incan, a Mayan, a Christian, an Islamic, a Hottentot, an ancient Egyptian, a Polynesian, a Siberian and an Australian Aboriginal cosmology. The westernised world has a cosmology which is based on rationalism, empiricism and materialism. Its expression owes much to Copernicus, Newton, Darwin and Einstein. Cosmologists which challenge these pillars of thought are ostracised. Thus thinkers such as Jacob Boehme, Immanuel Swedenborg, Georges Gurdjieff, Rudolf Steiner are given 'the silent treatment' by 'orthodox' thinkers.

## **Part 2 Social Foundations of Thinking**

While 'thinking' is generally understood as a property of an individual it can also be understood as a property of a group such as a family, a moiety, a clan, a caste or a nation-state. Again the doctrines associated with religions, political beliefs and races can influence the thinking of groups and individuals. This means that thinking has an individual or psychological aspect, a group or sociological aspect and a cultural-anthropological aspect.

## **Psychology**

At one time the Greeks had an agreed view on the nature of man. Man was a triune being with a body, soul and spirit (soma, psyche and pneuma). This view was initially adopted by the Christian Church and reinforced by its appropriation of the symbolism of the Pythagorean vesica pisces\*. In 869 AD the Church adopted a

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\* See Appendix B.



revised view which now made the belief in a human spirit a heresy. Man now comprised body and soul. In due course this was restated as body and mind. Man now lost his 'psyche' as well as his 'pneuma'! Today, there is a very real danger man will also lose his 'soma'! Man's 'body' is now described in terms of a bio-physical and bio-chemical mechanisms! While Psychologists are still concerned with personality, sensation, perception, learning, memory, language, motivation, intelligence and psychopathologies they do so from the point of view of an 'outsider' or 'on-looker' who is not implicated in the web of human conduct. There is no ghost in the machine of modern man!

## **Sociology**

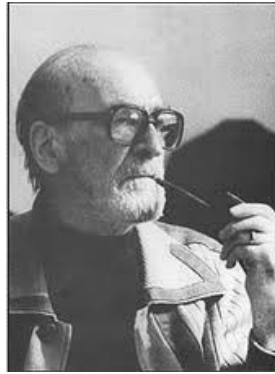
Man is always an individual but he is also a member of many groups. He has parents, siblings, relatives, a clan, a class membership, a caste membership, a national affiliation and a world membership. His membership in these groups not only involves him in relationships with other group members it also impinges on his consciousness. It shapes his attitudes and values and pre-disposes him to certain beliefs. It effects his thinking and his behaviour.

Aspects of group behaviour include the influence of rumour, sloganeering, party behaviour, religious revival, prejudice formation, crowd riots and genocidal outbreaks such as occurred in Rwanda and Sarajevo. The advertising world is familiar with the secrets of shaping group thinking and manipulating individuals' thinking processes. Propaganda and sub-liminal advertising also has insidious effects on shaping the consciousness of individuals.

## **Anthropology**

The most recent social science to emerge has been Anthropology. Man is still garnering the insights from Cultural Anthropology. My visits to South East Asia brought home to me the different mind-sets or types of consciousness that exists in each of the countries and between these countries and the western way of thinking. After my many visits to Bali I came to the view that in many respects the Balinese mentality was polar to the western style of thinking. This was noticeable in their attitudes to the fundamental dimensions of time, space and causality. Balinese were more interested in qualitative valuations than quantitative ones. Spiritual matters were attended to with as much diligence as temporal matters and the arts were given more deference than the sciences. Reality was divided into Sekala (sensible) and Niskala (supersensible) and Naga Basuki and Naga Anantboga were alive and well in the Bali I visited.

The writings of the noted Anthropologist Mircea Eliade have alerted the world to the non-western thought world of the Shaman and those who are subject to trance or spirit possession. The different attitudes of those who do not espouse western approaches to medicine, religion, science or government have been formed by different forms of consciousness. Certainly my travels in Sumatra, Malaysia and Indo-China gave me ample evidence that an individual's consciousness is very much



*Mircea Eliade*

influenced by cultural determinants. While western psychiatry would have designated many of the mind states of shamans as aberrant it was surprising to see that in many societies these states were institutionalised!

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## Chapter 2

# THE ACTIVITY OF THINKING

'Kant (and Schopenhaur and Hartmann after him) had argued that **behind** the sensory world lay (metaphorically) an inaccessible real world, of which our senses produce **impressions** ... which are merely subjective, with no relation to reality.

Steiner argues that this is untrue ... There is no world beyond the sensory one, BUT WITHIN IT LIES THE COMPLETE REALITY WHICH IS MADE ACCESSIBLE THROUGH OUR OWN SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY that is, the act of knowing. AS THINKING BEINGS WE ARE ALREADY INHABITANTS OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.

*Rudolf Steiner – An Introduction To His Life and Work*  
By Gary Lachman (p. 96).

## Chapter 2 THE ACTIVITY OF THINKING

### Part 1 Concept and Percept

#### Concept and Percept in Thinking

'When we are contemplating **thinking** itself, two things coincide which must always appear apart, namely **concept** and **percept**.'

'In thinking we realise that in the percept we have only one element given by the senses. By linking **percepts** together in the **activity of thinking** we arrive at the **concept**.'

'We receive from the external world only the empty forms, i.e. we receive only **images** or **sensory percepts**. Sensory perception is absolutely passive.'

*Philosophy as an Approach to the Spirit* by Richard Seddon, p. 28



*Richard Seddon*

#### The Double Function of Thinking

The function of the **intellect** is to form **concepts** with sharply defined contours. It is **to define**.

The function of **reason** is to **form relationships** with concepts to produce **ideas**.

Seddon, p. 28

## **Beyond Sensing**

Thought exists not merely to repeat the sensible, but to penetrate into what is concealed from the senses.

When we exercise the impulse to gain meaning from the sensory inputs we are exercising perceptual judgement and changing sense-percepts into concepts. The(se) concept(s) are already in our possession.

Thinking is the process of uniting our storehouse of concepts with new percepts.

Seddon, p. 29

## **Reality and the Mind Reflection**

The study of all sciences has as its goal the discovery of the hidden thought content within its nature. Man has only to align his own thinking with that hidden content. Thinking does not add to reality but is of the same reality. When the right concept is found we say 'Aha! I see'.

Seddon, p. 30-31

## **The Act of Knowing**

The percept is thus not something finished and self-contained, but only one side of the total reality. The other side is the concept. The act of knowing is the synthesis of percept and concept.

Seddon, p. 38

## **Intuition**

Only percept and concept together constitute the whole act of knowing. The form in which this first takes place we call intuition. Intuition is for thinking what observation is for perceiving.

*The Philosophy of Freedom* by Rudolf Steiner, p. xviii

## **The Universal World Process**

The forces at work inside my body are the same as those which exist outside. I am the things (though not of course insofar as I am a percept of myself as subject). The percept of the tree (out there) and my I (ego) belong to the same whole, the world process producing equally the one out there and the other in here.

The full reality of a thing is given in the moment of observation through fitting together concept and percept.

Seddon, p. 39

## Harmonising the Individual's Thought With The Thought Content of the World

There is only one single thought-content of the world and 'thinking' is the organ which perceives it. This 'thinking' resides in two worlds - 'out there' and 'in here'. Thought is the essential nature of the world. The task of man is to harmonise his own thinking with the thought-content of the world.

Seddon, p. 39

## Part 2 A New Noetics

### Part/Whole Relationships

At a lecture on natural science Schiller and Goethe met for the first time. Schiller commented on the lecture saying:

Schiller: 'that such a piecemeal way of handling nature could not bring the Layman any real satisfaction'

Goethe replied:

'there must certainly be another way altogether, which did not treat of nature as divided and in pieces striving out of the whole into the parts'

(Quoted in *Man or Matter* by Ernst Lehrs, p. 99).

Later Schiller wrote a letter describing Goethe's approach:

'you take all nature as ONE in order to obtain light on each separate part, and you seek the explanation of the individual in the ALL of its phenomena'.

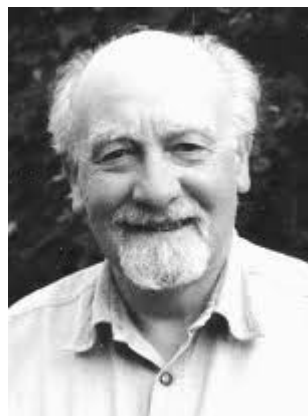
(see Rudolf Steiner Pt. 1, *Goethe's Secret Revelation* (22 Oct, 1908), Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co., published in 1932).



*Goethe and Schiller*

In his *Wholeness of Nature*, Henri Bortoft gives two examples of 'wholeness'. These relate to the **camera obscura** and the **hologram**.

- In the **Camera Obscura** (or Pin-hole Camera) the world of external objects enters the pinhole as a whole and is not the sum of single rays. The light realm has the shape of a double cone with its apex in the opening of the camera. 'In every section of the cone the image is presenting its totality – even in the very apex of the cone!' (see Ernst Lehrs, p. 355).
- In the **Hologram** (see below) the situation is similar. 'The entire picture is wholly present in each part of the plate, so that it would not be true to say that the whole is made up of parts'. (see Bortoft, p. 5).



*Henri Bortoft*

## **Analysis**

Analysis appears as Atomism in philosophy. In its common form 'Atomism' is a theory of meaning that was once advocated by Bertrand Russell in his *Philosophy of*

*Logical Atomism* (1918). The theory held the view that language can be analysed into fundamental atoms of meaning. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico – Philosophicus* attempted to extend Russell's ideas but in due course they both abandoned the theory. In its scientific manifestation 'Atomism' is the view that the physical world is made of tiny indivisible particles. Euclidean geometry is a point-wise or atomic system of description and analysis of space whereas Lobachesky's geometry is a plane-wise description.



*Bertrand Russell*



*Ludwig Wittgenstein*



*Nikolai Lobachesky*

## Synthesis

Synthesis appears as **holism** in philosophical discourse. The term 'holistic' is derived from the Greek 'holos' (whole). It is an understanding of reality in terms of integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to smaller units. In Psychological theory holism appears in the gestalt psychology of Max Wertheimer, Koffka, Köhner and more latterly in Werner and Bruner. The noted Field Theorist, Kurt Lewin, utilised the distinction between '**figure**' and '**ground**' and argued that they were BOTH important. His 'Life-Space' included everything which is known and unknown at the conscious level. Holism is more popularly known in such medical systems as Chinese Acupuncture, Reflexology and Iridology. It is mistakenly believed to be a product of intuitive and mystical forms of consciousness and is usually contrasted with the rational consciousness of western science.



*Max Wertheimer*



*Kurt Koffka*



## Holography

According to Brian Greene a hologram is:

‘a two-dimensional piece of etched plastic, which, when illuminated with appropriate laser light, projects a three-dimensional image. In the early 1990s, the Dutch Nobel laureate Gerabl’t Hooft and Leonard Susskind, the same physicist who co-invented string theory, suggested THE UNIVERSE MIGHT ACT IN A MANNER ANALOGOUS TO A HOLOGRAM’ (caps mine).

See *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, p. 482.



*Brian Greene*

Henry Bortoft refers to a remarkable property of the hologram plate:

‘If the hologram plate is broken into fragments and one fragment is illuminated, it is found that the same three-dimensional optical reconstruction of the original object is produced. There is nothing missing; the only difference is that the reconstruction is less well defined. With orthodox photography the image fragments with the plate.’

and

‘what can be seen in the hologram is the way in which the whole is present in the parts.’

See *The Wholeness of Nature*, p. 5

## Microcosm and Macrocosm

One of Rudolf Steiner’s central organising principles was his espousal of the doctrine of ‘macrocosm’ and ‘microcosm’. The universe is, according to this doctrine, the large cosmos and man is the small cosmos. Man is constituted according to the same principles and laws as the universe. This doctrine can be found in the Kabbalah and other ancient sources. Gurdjieff and Ouspensky wrote of seven, not two, cosmoses. Steiner elaborated on many correspondences between astronomy and embryology and utilised a Goethean form of metamorphic thinking to describe

these relationships. A number of these relationships were explained in *Macrocosm and Microcosm* – A series of Eleven lectures given in Vienna 21-31 March 1910.



Rudolf Steiner

### Goethe's Objective Thinking

In his *Goethe's Way of Science* Henri Bortoft contrasts Kant's approach to nature with Goethe's approach. In Goethe's **objective thinking** 'the organising idea of cognition comes from the phenomena itself, instead of from the self-assertive thinking of the investigating scientists' (a la Kant). It is not imposed on nature but received from nature. It does not appear to the senses, but is discovered within the sensory. Goethe called this 'objective thinking' or a 'higher nature within nature' (see p. 240). One does not discover the organising principle as an outsider. The organising principle itself acts in thinking. 'When this happens, what appears is a manifestation of the phenomenon itself, not a representation'. (p. 241).

### Steiner's Artistic Perception

Rudolf Steiner's *Goethe's Conception of the World* was written in 1897 when he was thirty-six. He had already come to understand Goethe's style of thinking when he laboured on the four volumes of the Kuerschner edition of Goethe's natural science. He had already written *Theory of Knowledge Based on Goethe's World Conception* in 1886. Between these works Steiner published *Truth and Knowledge* which was an enlarged version of his doctoral dissertation. This dissertation was *The Philosophy of Freedom: The Basis for a Modern World Conception*.

Steiner gave a series of twelve lectures at Dornach (19 October – 11 November 1923) which were translated by H. Collison and published under the title *Man As Symphony of the Creative Word*. In this oral presentation Steiner bemoaned the understanding of nature by abstract thinking. He said that:

'We must be able to contemplate such things as the reality of the correspondence between man the microcosm, and the cosmos the macrocosm. Man must not be considered only logically but according to a reason only acquired when intellectual perception has passed over into artistic perception.'

Lecture 1  
p. 23 and Title Page

## Part 3

### Steiner Versus von Hartmann\*

#### Eduard von Hartmann's *The Ultimate Problems of Epistemology and Metaphysics*

Rudolf Steiner discussed Eduard von Hartmann's contention that there are only three possible relationships between 'real' things and 'consciousness':

- 'real' things exist outside an individual's consciousness (**naïve realism**);
- the 'real' content of consciousness is its own contents (**transcendental idealism**);
- a thing-in-itself outside each phenomena exists but consciousness can have no dealings with it (**transcendental realism**).



*Eduard von Hartmann*

#### Realists and Idealists

Hartmann poses three litmus tests to force his opponents into one of the three categories (above). The second of these tests is:

- When three people are sitting at a table, how many distinct tables are there?

Those who answer 'one' are **naïve realists**. Those who answer 'three' are **transcendental idealists**. Whoever answers 'four' is a **transcendental realist**.

#### Steiner's Reply to Hartmann

Steiner explains his answer to this poser of Hartmann in this way:

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\* For an introduction to Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom* see Appendix A which is an excerpt from Gary Lachman's book.

'When three people are sitting at a table there is only one table present. Although there may be three perceptual images these images are not reality at all. As soon as they pass on to the table **as grasped by thinking**, the one reality reveals itself to them; then with their three contents of consciousness, they are united in this reality.'

*The Philosophy of Freedom*  
see pps. 228-229

Steiner rejects Hartmann's characterisation of his position as 'epistemological monism'

'if an epithet is wanted then a **monism of thought** (will do)'.

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### Chapter 3

## SCIENTIFIC AND SPECULATIVE INVESTIGATIONS OF EPISTEMOLOGY

'Steiner's fundamental idea is that, when we open our eyes, what we take to be a simple, immediate perception of the external world, is already infused with the content of our inner, spiritual world, our consciousness..... Far from being a passive recipient of impressions from an inaccessible outside world, consciousness is a kind of hand, reaching out and giving shape and form to what would remain empty chaos.

*Rudolf Steiner – An Introduction to His Life and Work*  
by Gary Lachman (p. 94)

# Chapter 3

## SCIENTIFIC AND SPECULATIVE INVESTIGATIONS OF EPISTEMOLOGY

### Part 1

#### Piaget and the Scientific Investigation of Thinking

##### Biographical Details

Jean Piaget (9 August 1896 – 16 September 1980) was Professor of Experimental Psychology and Genetic Epistemology at the University of Geneva. His most famous work *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* was published in French in 1936, and in English in 1952. 'Genetic Epistemology' comprised four Woodbridge Lectures delivered in October 1968 at Columbia University. His citation for his Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award by the American Psychological Association includes 'he has approached heretofore exclusive philosophical questions in a resolutely empirical fashion and created a science of epistemology'.



*Jean Piaget*

##### Primary General Principles

Piaget identified three stages of cognitive development (see below). Underlying these three stages were the workings of a second-order set of three primary principles. These were Organisation, Equilibration and Adaptation.

- **Organisation** refers to the process of developing **schemata**. This process involves the integration of simple systems into more complex and inclusive large ones.
- **Equilibration** is a motivational aspect of the integration process and the individual comes to an understanding of his environment.
- **Adaptation** (Assimilation and Accommodation) involves the mental processes of incorporation or rejection of new experiences.

Piaget does not describe mental development as a continuous and smooth process. Each of the three stages is subject to the operation of these three hidden, second-order principles.

### **Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development**

Piaget distinguishes three stages of cognitive development. They occur in an invariant sequence at roughly the same ages in all children. The stages are said to be hierarchical with each successive stage incorporating the mental organisation of the preceding stage.

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
1. Sensori-motor 0 – 2 yrs	Reflexes (e.g. suckling), the beginnings of elementary schemata and primitive identification
2. Concrete Operations 2+ - 7+	Elementary play, ‘centring’ with single focussing. Principle of ‘conservation’ emerges about 7 yrs (quantity, weight, volume, number etc), seriality
3. Formal Operations 7+ - 15+	Entrance into abstract thought, hypothesising, forming and testing hypothesis, logical thought

### **Genetic Epistemology**

For many Philosophers, epistemology is the analysis of knowledge for its own sake and without regard for its development. Piaget’s work seeks to take epistemology out of the philosophical domain and place it in the domain of science. In his Woodbridge Lectures, Piaget refers to a conversation he had with Einstein in 1928. ‘Einstein suggested to me that it would be of interest to study the origins in children of notions of **time** and in particular of notions of **simultaneity**’. Piaget was perhaps the earliest psychologist to scientifically investigate the structure of knowledge in children. He attempted to eliminate private speculation about epistemology.

## **Part 2**

### **Steiner’s Artistic/Scientific Investigation Of Human Development**

#### **Biographical Detail**

Rudolf Steiner was born in 1861, the son of an Austrian stationmaster. He paid his way through school and university by tutoring in subjects he often had to master before he could teach. He completed his first degree at the Technical University of Vienna in mathematics, chemistry, and natural history. He obtained his Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Rostock for his contribution to a theory of knowledge. This thesis provided a refutation to Kant’s arguments concerning the limitations of knowledge. Steiner’s reputation as a scholar of Goethe drew an invitation for him to become a co-editor of an encyclopaedia edition of Goethe’s works. Steiner undertook the section on Goethe’s scientific studies on which he laboured until his 35<sup>th</sup> year. Simultaneously he had been pursuing activities as an

editor of a literary journal and as an investigator into European mysticism and free masonry.



*Rudolf Steiner*

### **Thinking As An Activity Beyond The Senses**

'Thinking is an organ for observing something higher than is afforded by the senses. A side of reality is accessible to it of which a mere sense-being could never become aware. THOUGHT EXISTS NOT MERELY TO REPEAT THE SENSIBLE BUT TO PENETRATE INTO WHAT IS CONCEALED FROM THE SENSES. The sense-percept gives us only one side of reality, the other side is the apprehending of the world through thinking. The thought-characterisations are such that like an equation they may be satisfied in a variety of different ways.'

*Richard Seddon's Philosophy as an Approach to the Spirit, p. 29*



*Richard Seddon*

### **From Intellectual Perception to Artistic Perception**

Steiner presents a huge challenge to the open inquirer whose intellect has been shaped by British Empiricism and Western science. His style of thinking almost requires a relaying of the foundations of the thinking processes of modern Western man. His thought blends the best of logic with a type of paralogic that includes an aesthetic sense:



‘Man must not only be studied merely according to logic, but according to a reason only acquired when intellectual perception has passed over into artistic perception.’

*Man as Symphony of the Creative Word.*

## Part 3 STEINER’S VIEWS ON THE NATURE OF MAN

### Man as Body, Soul and Spirit

Steiner regarded Man as tri-partite, i.e. a being of body, soul and spirit. These three elements, although present in the newborn child, progressively unfold in the course of a person’s first 21 years. In a sense, a human being is born not once but four times! At about 21 years of age the fourth ‘birth’ occurs!

### Body Development

Phase 1	Body development	
<i>Birth</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Task</i>
1 Physical body 	0-7 years (cutting of second teeth)	To lay the foundations of the physical body through the sculpturing of the formative etheric forces
2 Etheric body 	7-14 years (to puberty)	The metamorphosis of the formative etheric forces into the inner soul activity of the astral body
3 Astral body ↓	14-21 years (to adulthood)	The birth of the I or Ego. The emergence of the individuality and self-direction of the person
Controlling ego		

### Ego

Once the ego has emerged phase 2 of the overall developmental cycle can take place. As the ego develops the individual shapes his own biography.

### Soul Development

Phase 2	Soul development	
The sentient soul	(21-28 years)	The astral body is now worked on by the ego from within
The intellectual soul (or mind soul)	(28-35 years)	The outer sheath of the etheric body is now worked on from within by the ego
The consciousness soul (or spiritual soul)	(35-42 years)	The outer sheath of the physical body is now worked on from within by the ego

The development of the three souls corresponds to the development of the three bodies of the first 21 years, but the process is in reverse order. It culminates in the birth of the spirit.

### Spirit Development

Phase 3	Spirit development	
Spirit self	(42-49 years)	Transmuted Astral Body or Manas
Life spirit	(49-56 years)	Transmuted Etheric Body or Budhi
Spirit body	(56-63 years)	Transmuted Physical Body or Atma

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#### Chapter 3

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## Chapter 4 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

'We take people to be much more alike than they really are. In reality, however, there exist between them great differences in the forms and methods of their perception. Some perceive chiefly through their mind, others through their feeling, and others through sensation. It is very difficult, almost impossible for men of different categories and of different modes of perception to understand one another, because they call one and the same thing by different names, and they call different things by the same name.'

Words of Georges Gurdjieff (as reported by P.D. Ouspensky in *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 107.

# Chapter 4

## TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

### Part 1

#### William James Versus J.B. Watson

##### Consciousness and Nature

Stones, plants and most animals are thought to possess no consciousness. Consciousness is thought to be a characteristic possessed by man but not the rest of the natural world.

##### Consciousness and Instinct

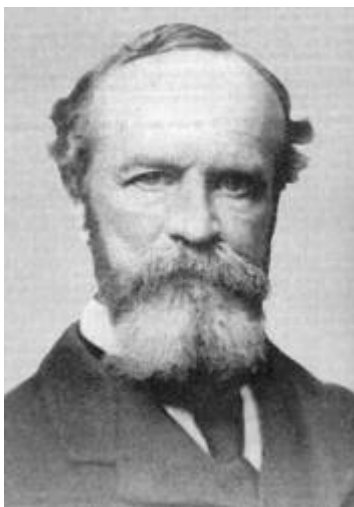
It is usual to distinguish between the consciousness of a human being and the instinct of an animal. Consciousness in man is understood as a quality which has developed and evolved in man but not in animals. Animal behaviour is thought to be developing from an instinctual or automatic base to a form of behaviour based on learning. Human behaviour is both instinctual and conscious.

##### William James versus J.B. Watson

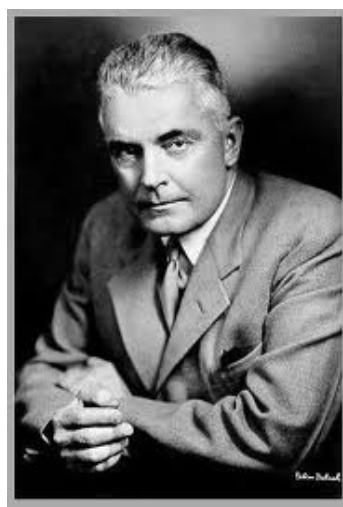
The two psychologists, William James and J.B. Watson held diametrically opposed views about consciousness. James followed the tradition of Wundt and Titchener and defined psychology as 'the description and explanation of states of consciousness'. Watson proclaimed: 'There are no centrally initiated processes. In itself, the brain can conjure up nothing. It is utterly dependent on stimulation from the periphery'. Watson in *Behaviourism* stated:

'Behaviourism claims that consciousness is neither a definite nor a usable concept. The behaviourist ..... holds further, that belief in the existence of consciousness goes back to the ancient days of superstition and magic'.

p. 2



William James



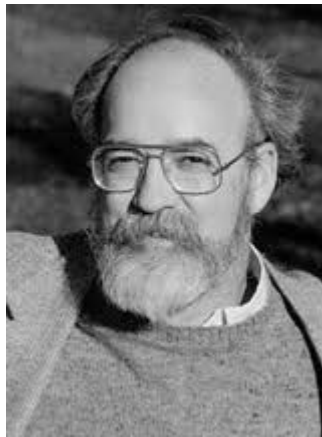
J.B. Watson

## Daniel Dennett's *Consciousness Explained* (1992)

'The behaviourist J.B. Watson argued that he never saw any evidence for consciousness and hence concluded that it therefore did not exist - at least not in any scientific sense.

Daniel Dennett, in *Consciousness Explained* (1992) devoted five hundred dense pages to the odd proposition that consciousness does not really exist. What does exist for Dennett are robot zombies who only think they are conscious.'

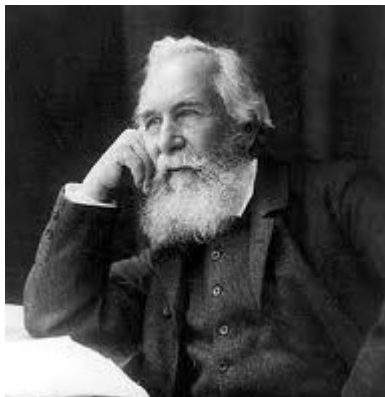
Paraphrased from Gary Lachman's Introductory Chapter, of *A Secret History of Consciousness*, p. xxiii



*Daniel Dennett*

## The Microcosm and the Macrocosm

Haeckel's biogenetic law stated that 'Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny in a shortened form'. This 'law' postulated that the embryonic development of an individual animal ('ontogeny') followed the evolutionary development of its species ('phylogeny'). Karl König claimed that this law could be extended. He expressed it in these words: 'Microcosmogony is a reflection of macrocosmogony'.



*Ernst Haeckel*



*Karl König*

## Microcosmogony as a Reflection of Macrocosmogony

In the daily life of a human being there is a period of night and a period of day. This may be expressed as a period of sleeping and a period of waking.

In the life of the Earth there is a similar alternation. There is a night life and there is a day life. At night the light of the sun disappears and in the day the light of the sun returns. Thus the rhythm of the planet is reflected in the rhythm of man.

## Sleeping, Waking and the Threshold

Sleeping and waking represent polar aspects of consciousness. Some theorists have differentiated a sleeping consciousness from a waking consciousness and identified the boundary between the two as the **threshold**. Steiner, however, saw the situation in more fluidic terms.

The threshold was permeable and a sleeping consciousness could merge with a waking consciousness and vice-versa. P.D. Ouspensky stated his views a little differently:

‘We have dreams continuously, both in sleep and in a waking state. When we awake sleep does not disappear but to the state of sleep, there is added the waking state.’

*In Search of P.D. Ouspensky*  
by Gary Lachman, p. 31



*P.D. Ouspensky*



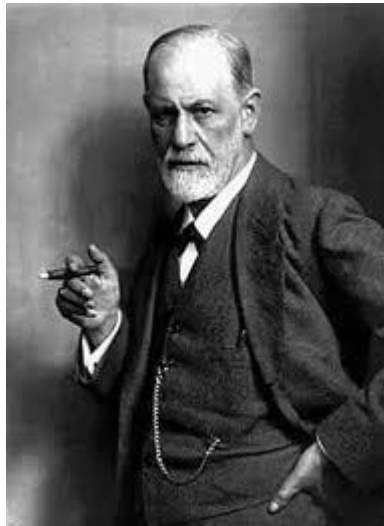
*Gary Lachman*

## Part 2 Freud and Depth Psychology

Freud strongly disagreed with the doctrine of Behaviourism which tried to develop a psychology which disregarded the fundamental phenomena of human awareness. According to Ford and Urban:

'He (Freud) characterised the qualities of human awareness and unawareness as 'the single ray of light' penetrating 'the obscurity of depth psychology.'

*Systems of Psychotherapy*  
Ford and Urban, p. 125



*Sigmund Freud*

### **Freud and States of Consciousness**

Freud distinguished several states of consciousness in his psychoanalytical theory: the conscious, the pre-conscious, the sub-conscious and the unconscious.

- **The Conscious State** is a condition of awareness and attending which is not automatic or instinctual. Freud emphasised the transitory nature of conscious-ness. This gave rise to the expression: 'a stream of consciousness'. Memory recall and the fulfilling of intentions form part of the conscious state.
- **The Pre-Conscious State** is that shadowy land where our memories lay hidden just beneath the surface of consciousness.
- **The Sub-Conscious State** is akin to a subliminal state. It is a knowing state without any dependency on conscious learning.
- **The Unconscious State** is a storehouse or memory-bank of experiences which have been repressed and forgotten and which can only surface by psychotherapy.

## Part 3

### Carl Gustav Jung and the Collective Unconscious

Jung not only saw the polarity of consciousness he went a step further. His theoretical framework proposed a polarity of the Unconscious. This polarity identified two states of unconsciousness: personal and collective.

- **The Personal Unconscious** is akin to Freud's unconscious. It is the storehouse of everything that has happened to the individual.
  
- **The Collective Unconscious**, according to Jung, is the storehouse of everything that has happened to the race into which the individual has been born. This hidden treasure trove consists of an individual's cultural inheritance which is encoded in man's psychic inheritance. It is imprinted in man's psyche through primordial images, patterns and templates which express themselves in myths. He calls these **archetypal images**. Thus the individual has a pre-disposition to organise his thinking about the world with such archetypal images as The Wise Old Man, the Magna Mater (or great mother), the Hero/Saviour, the Miraculous Child and so on. Man's thinking does not create the archetypes, they are innate predispositions or pre-existing forms of apprehension. They emerge in dreams and myths and may be symbolically represented in images such as **Ygdrasil** the world tree, **Uroboros** the tail-biting serpent, **Holy Water** as the symbol of life-renewal. Perhaps the greatest symbol of wholeness is the **Mandala**.



*Carl Gustav Jung*

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## **Chapter 5**

### **THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS (1)**

#### **1. RUDOLF STEINER    2. JEAN GEBSER**

'Steiner accepted Darwin's idea of evolution (but not in the same form expressed by Darwin) realising that, like everything else in the world, consciousness, too, has evolved.'

*A Secret History of Consciousness*  
Gary Lachman, p. 75

'Gebser saw the present historical period as a time which was at the crossroads. It was a pivotal period of history in which the old order of thinking was breaking down and leading to a collapse. It was witnessing the bankruptcy of scientific materialism and the dawning of a new consciousness.'

Ibid, Ch. 25, p. 217-267

# Chapter 5

## THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS (1)

### Introduction

#### Individual and Cultural Evolution

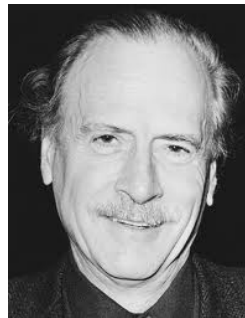
It is readily accepted that the consciousness of a new-born baby is different from an adult. The individual not only grows but also develops. In these changes one can observe a growing awareness of oneself and an acquisition of language, syntax and logic. The ideal pattern of development incorporates an ordering of reality by belief systems and rational thought. Cultures, too, also evolve. As man has changed his life styles from food-gatherer to hunter-and-fisher to food-producer to machine-maker so too has his consciousness changed. Several theorists have sought to provide an outline of the evolution of consciousness. They include Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925); Jean Gebser (1905-1973), Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) and William Thompson (born 1938).



*Rudolf Steiner*



*Jean Gebser*



*Marshall McLuhan*



*William Thompson*

### Part 1

#### Rudolf Steiner's Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness

##### Biographical Details

Rudolf Steiner was born on the 27 February 1861, in Kraljevec, on the border of Austria and Croatia. His parents were Austrian and his father was a Station master who worked just over the border in the Slavic region. He was thus an 'outsider' like his father. As a child he had a very marked individuality. At the age of seven the family moved to Neudorf. At this time he immersed himself in a book on geometry. He attended the Realschule in Wiener Neustadt with a view to becoming a civil engineer. He outstripped his class teachers and gave himself instruction in calculus, trigonometry and probability. At fifteen years he taught himself Greek and Latin. At eighteen he independently read Kant and Fichte before enrolling in a Viennese Technical College. This also entitled him to attend lectures at the University. He enrolled in mathematics, physics and geology. However it was a visiting Professor of Literature, Karl Julius Schroer, that fired his imagination and introduced him to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. This event was decisive in his life. It took him on a

path that lead to scientific Goetheanism and the building of an Arts Centre known as the Goetheanum.

### **A One-Man University**

Steiner wrote knowledgeably and voluminously on practically every subject known to man. Steiner wrote more than 20 books and numerous shorter articles. He gave nearly 6000 lectures in such diverse fields as architecture and astronomy, agriculture and apiary, mathematics and history, speech and drama, eurhythmy and dance, medicine and pharmacology, pedagogy and curative education, music and art, philosophy and theology, economics and social organisation. It was said of Steiner that he was a one-man university.

He died on 30 March 1925 having left a legacy of thought that is still reverberating throughout the world. Among his many interests it is his pre-occupation with the important topic of ‘consciousness’ that leaves his reader with the greatest challenge.

### **Consciousness Evolved as Earth Evolved**

He delineated 7 stages of consciousness through which the human being was destined to evolve. He related these 7 stages to the successive stages of earth evolution. A different type of consciousness characterised the development of man as man evolved at the same time as the earth evolved. Steiner labelled the seven stages of earth’s evolution: Old Saturn, Old Sun, Old Moon, Earth phase (now), Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan (three future phases).

<b>STAGES</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS</b>
Old Saturn	Universal Trance Consciousness
Old Sun	Dreamless Sleep
Old Moon	Pictorial Consciousness
Earth	Waking Consciousness of the Present Day
Jupiter	Astral Consciousness Further Extended
Venus	Etheric Consciousness Further Extended
Vulcan	Universal Consciousness

### **Summary of Steiner’s Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness**

<b>Type of Consciousness</b>	<b>Evolutionary Stage</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1. COMA (Trance Consciousness)	Old ‘Saturn’ (Warmth Condition/ Imponderability)	Earth becomes a mirror of the etheric which caricaturised SWEDENBORG
2. DEEP SLEEP (Dreamless Sleep)	Old ‘Sun’ (Light/ Darkness)	JACOB BOEHME TYPE (Powerful Second Sight) Reflected by darkness
3. LIGHT SLEEP (Sleep with dreams and motor activity)	Old ‘Moon’ (Gravity/ Levity)	SOMNAMBULISM or Sleepwalking Type

(Hypnagogic) 4. WAKING THRESHOLD (Hypnopompic)	'Earth' (Present Stage of average western man)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Premonitions</li> <li>• Second Sight</li> <li>• Visions</li> </ul>
5. IMAGINATION (A recapitulation of stage 4 and 3)	'Jupiter'	Earth + Old Moon
6. INSPIRATION (A recapitulation of Stages 4, 3 and 2)	'Venus'	Earth + Old Moon + Old Sun
7. INTUITION (A recapitulation of Stages 4, 3, 2 and 1)	'Vulcan'	Earth + Old Moon + Old Sun + Old Saturn

### Three Unusual Laggard Types of Consciousness

In his series of lectures *The Evolution of Consciousness* (1923), Steiner described three usual types of consciousness found in some people while the majority of the population possessed an ordinary waking consciousness.

- (i) **The Somnambulistic Type of Consciousness** manifests in certain people who function in the real world in a trance-like fashion. They have little control of their actions. They are people who are zombie-like and obediently follow impulses which emanate from moon forces.
- (ii) **The Jacob-Boehme Type of Consciousness** manifests in certain people who possess second sight. For such people it is the darkness which rays back the spiritual world. Steiner says that the pictorial content of their visions is due to the subtle influence of the sun forces. Paracelus also had a Jacob-Boehme type consciousness.
- (iii) **The Swedenborg Type of Consciousness** occurs in persons whose form of clairvoyance enables them to converse with spiritual beings and past historical personages. Steiner claimed that such a form of consciousness was due to the hidden effects of warmth and cold. These emanated from the subtle influence of the Saturn forces.

### Eduard von Hartmann: Steiner's Reaction to Hartmann's Pessimism

The publication of Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* in 1869 provoked responses from later scholars such as Fechner, Wundt, Titchner, Freud and Jung. Steiner, too, was thoroughly familiar with von Hartmann's seminal work. Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom* is indeed, a reply to the pessimism implicit in Hartmann's philosophy.

#### **Eduard von Hartmann**

Hartmann's central thesis was similar to Schopenhauer's. Hartmann believed that the 'life-force' was an unconscious will.

'In animals, the will appears as instinct, yet in human beings, the will seems to have made a blunder. In producing consciousness, it allowed human beings to develop reason, and through reason, human beings have come to recognise the pointlessness of the will's striving.'

In Hartmann's view consciousness separates us from our instinctual life while failing to provide a reason for living. Man's consciousness is, in effect, a retrograde event in evolutionary terms.

### ***Steiner's Reaction to Hartmann's Pessimism***

Steiner was infuriated by Hartmann's pessimistic world view. Hartmann's understanding of consciousness left man as a victim of futility. On the other hand, Steiner understood consciousness as an active force in the world not an atavistic leftover. Steiner corresponded with Hartmann and eventually met with him. However, Steiner could not convince Hartmann that the world beyond our perceptions was accessible through thinking. Despite their diametrically opposing views, Steiner decided to dedicate his doctoral thesis to Hartmann. When Steiner's major work *The Philosophy of Freedom* was published, he sent one of the first copies to Hartmann. Hartmann read it and annotated it and returned it to Steiner. He indicated no change of view. For Steiner, there is no world hiding behind the sense-bound world. Within the sense-bound world and within man there is a connecting bond. The idea is embedded in the outer world and this is directly accessible to man's thinking processes.

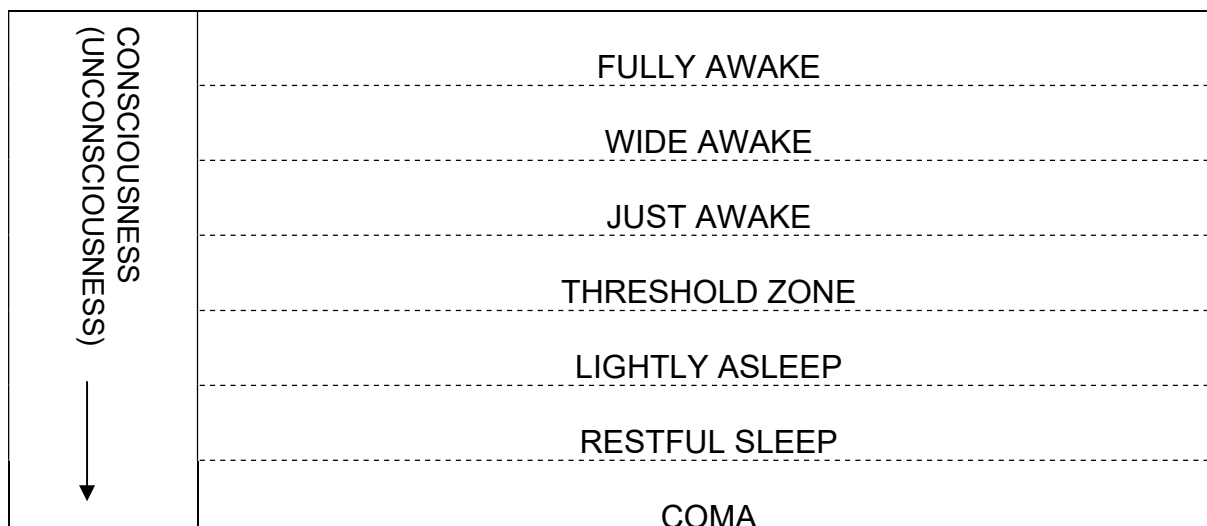
'it is through our recognition of thinking as a free, spiritual act – as Steiner calls it, a supersensible one – that we come to an experience of ourselves as free spiritual beings and of our own inner world as portals into the world of spirit itself.'

### **Rudolf Steiner and Paranormal Phenomena**

Rudolf Steiner knew a great deal about dreams, trance states, visions, reverie, second sight and other paranormal phenomena. Indeed, Steiner's *Anthroposophy* is an attempt to understand the invisible and to reveal the hidden laws of the occult. It is in this sense that Steiner's efforts were directed to make the unconscious conscious!

### **The Interplay of the Unconscious and the Conscious**

Steiner often referred to the two Guardian beings that the initiate encounters at the Threshold between Wakefulness and Sleep, between Consciousness and Unconsciousness. If we distinguish 3 levels of wakefulness and 3 levels of sleep we can imagine that it is possible to cross the threshold with one level of un/consciousness into another level of un/consciousness.



- (i) Premonitions occur when a person brings a 'lightly asleep' consciousness over the 'threshold' into the 'just awake' zone.
- (ii) Visions occur when a person takes a 'just awake' consciousness over the threshold into the 'lightly asleep' zone.

## Part 2

### Jean Gebser (1905-1973) and his Aperspectival Consciousness

#### Biographical Detail

Gebser was born in Posen, Prussia. His father was a lawyer and 35 years old at his birth. His mother was only 23 years old. As a teenager he had to leave school at the death of his father. After two years in a bank he began publishing a literary journal with a friend. He attended some classes at the Berlin University but a confrontation with Hitler's brown-shirts convinced him to turn his back on his teutonic heritage. He changed his name from the German 'Hans' to the French 'Jean'. He travelled to Florence, Paris, southern France and decided to settle in Spain. He mastered the Spanish language well enough to translate the poetry of his friend Federico Garcia Lorca into German. His early obsession with the poetry of Rilke led to another translation but this time it was from German to Spanish – *Rilke und Spanien* (1940). In this work he first mentions his notion of an emerging **aperspectival consciousness**.

**'The Ever-Present Origin'** (Pt. 1 (1949), Pt. 2 (1953))

In Spain he experienced 'a lightning-like inspiration', a kind of insight. This experience provided the content of his ideas about the emergence of a new form of human consciousness which later appeared as the content of his magnum opus *The Ever-Present Origin*.

Part 1: *The Foundations of the Aperspectival World* (1949).

Part 2: *Manifestations of the Aperspectival World: An Attempt at the Concretion of the Spiritual*.

## Interlude in Paris (1936-1939)

While in Spain the Civil War began and like Koestler he was lucky to escape with his life. His close friend Lorca was brutally murdered. He escaped to Paris and before long he was at home in the circle of creative persons that included Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon, André Malraux and Picasso. While in Paris he became acquainted with the intellectual melange of the Surrealists, Sartre, Camus and the enigmatic Russian, G.I. Gurdjieff and his brilliant pupil Rene Daumal. An old German compatriot, Walter Benjamin, decided to escape with him from Paris to Switzerland in August 1939. Gebser made it but Benjamin was arrested.

## Finding Inner Space in Switzerland

In 1941 Gebser examined the change in the forms of grammatical structure in *Der Grammatische Spiegel* (1944) – **The Grammatical Mirror**. He claimed he could detect a new kind of thought in Western consciousness. An outcome of this investigation was his adoption and coinage of **gnomic neologisms**. Gebser also saw evidence of a new form of consciousness in the emergence of **new scientific ideas** launched by Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg and Freud. He also included the ideas generated by Carl Jung in depth psychology and J.B. Rhine in his parapsychological investigations. Gebser also claimed that the new **aperspectival consciousness** with its focus on **simultaneity** and **non-linearity** was evident in modern **literature**. It was present in the novels of Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, James Joyce, Herman Broch, William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf.

## World-wide Travelling

Gebser's last years in Switzerland were filled with lectures, conferences and symposiums throughout the world and especially India, the Far East, North and South America.

In *Asia Smiles Differently* (Asien lachelt anders) (1968), he warned about the silliness of replacing Western thought with Asian thought (a la The Beatles). He was a familiar face at the celebrated Eranos Conferences and rubbed shoulders with such scholars as Jung, Erich Neumann, Mircea Eliade, Heinrich Zimmer, and others.

## Satori

In 1961 while visiting Sarnath in India, the legendary site of Gautama's first sermon Gebser had another 'lightning-like inspiration' – a **satori** experience. He hid this experience from everyone until 1971 but it was transformal for his understanding of the emerging new consciousness.

## The World Crisis

Gebser saw the present historical period as a time which was at the crossroads. It was a pivotal period of history in which the old order of thinking was breaking down and leading to a collapse. It was witnessing the bankruptcy of scientific materialism and the dawning of a new consciousness.

## Part 3 Towards a New Consciousness

Gebser's monumental work *The Ever-Present Origin* traces the transformation of consciousness throughout different civilisations. Rather than see it as different stages of development of a single element it is more appropriate to describe it as a metamorphosis of consciousness through five stages. Like a hologram each stage is part of the 'whole'.

### Five Stages of Metamorphosis in the Evolution of Consciousness

#### The Presence of Origins Gebser's Structure of Consciousness

Stage	Characteristics of Consciousness	
<b>1. Archaic</b> 'Timeless' or Ever in the present	Zero-dimensionality Undifferentiated Bonding with Nature No Consciousness	Dreamless Sleep Consciousness Telepathic Bonding Instinctual
<b>2. Magical</b> Poeticising of World	Collective Consciousness Consciousness of the Volk Control by Group	Trance-like Consciousness Somnambulistic Sleepwalking Consciousness
<b>3. Mythical</b> Cyclical Time 3000 BC	Separation and Polarity Knowing by Images and Reflections	Inner and Outer Separation Impulsive Feeling Consciousness Vitalisation
<b>4. Mental-Rational</b> Linear Time 1225 BC	Materialism Scientism Individualism Atomism	Spirituality Lost Absence of Transcendence Egocentred World 'Future Shock' Anxiety
<b>5. Integral</b> New Time Consciousness of Immediacy	Recapitulation of previous stages 1, 2, 3, 4 Return to Origins 'Aperspectival' Consciousness	'Diaphenicity' Perception of Spiritual Transcendence of Egoity Verition

### Gebser's Dimensions of Time and Space

Stage	Time	Space
1. Archaic	No Time	Aspatiality
2. Magical	No Time	Aspatiality
3. Mythical	Cyclical	Unperspectival
4. Mental	Linear	Perspectival
5. Integral	Immediacy	Aperspectival



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## Chapter 6

### EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS (2)

1. JULIAN JAYNES
2. JACQUES MARIE LACAN
3. WILLIAM THOMPSON

'The heroes of the Iliad, as well as the people living at the time its events took place, could not "look inside" themselves as we do.... Instead when they needed to know what to do they listened to "voices" they heard in their heads, voices they believed came from the gods. Jaynes tells us they really came from the right brain.'

*The Secret History of Consciousness*  
by Michael Lachman; p. 142.

"Jacques Maria Lacan founded the Ecole Francaise de Psychanalyse, later called Ecole Freudienne de Paris after being struck off the Société Francaise de Psychanalyse (SFP) in 1963. A hermetic and obscure stylist, a mesmerising lecturer, an uncompromising and intransigent thinker"<sup>(1)</sup> added "structural linguistics to Freudianism and developed new ideas on the infant 'mirror phase', the construction of identity and the dynamics of the psyche."<sup>(2)</sup> "Lacan began his original

work in the late thirties under the influence of Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerean existentialism ... Lacan inspired a French school of analysis which claims to be anti-institutional, anti-psychiatric and profoundly critical of the 'adjustment' of the individual and of those Marcuse called the neo-Freudian revisionists."<sup>(3)</sup>

Quotes from:           1. Wilden's Essay Ch. 1  
                                  2. Leader's Introduction  
                                  3. Wilden ibid pps. 2-3  
(See Bibliography)

'In the hands of a few giants – new mergers, such as those of CNN and Time Warner or Disney and the American Broadcasting Company, created new global streams of **techno-swill** in which the believing subject was fed **like cattle in feedlots**.' 'Vast **electronic latifundia** took control of sports, entertainment, politics, journalism and education; in fact, all forms of culture simply became variants of the entertainment industry'.

*Coming into Being*  
by William Irwin Thompson, p. 5

## Chapter 6 THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS (2)

### Part 1 Julian Jaynes and the Bicameral Mind

#### Biographical Detail

In 1976 the Princeton Psychologist Julian Jaynes published his thought-provoking *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*.



*Julian Jaynes*

#### Jaynes' Theory of Consciousness

Gary Lachman summarises Jayne's theory:

'Jaynes claimed that around 1250 BC human consciousness was 'bi-cameral' or two chambered. Furthermore, the right and the left hemisphere functioned as two separate minds. Neurosurgeons know that by severing the knot of fibres connecting the two hemispheres, the corpus callosum, they can sometimes mitigate the effects of epilepsy. A person with a severed corpus callosum who bumps into something with the left side – connected to the right brain – does not know it. This is because our 'I', the verbal linguistic ego, is housed in the left brain. And so 'it', connected to the right side of the body, did not bump into it. Jaynes argued that until 1250 BC ALL human beings were like people with severed corpus callosums.'

See *A Secret History of Consciousness*, p. 146

#### Voices From the Right Hemisphere

Prior to 1250 BC human beings had no self-consciousness. Human beings heard voices when they needed to know. Jaynes tells us that these voices were auditory hallucinations and they came from the right brain. Jaynes did not dwell on the content of the hallucination. As a reductionist with a scientific mind he did not speculate on the accuracy of the hallucinations. For him the 'gods' were the 'voices' from the right brain. The voices were similar in nature to the haranguing voices heard by some schizophrenics who are usually repeating the messages of an overbearing parent.

## Part 2

### Jacques Marie Lacan (1901-1981)

(Most of the following is based on Leader and Groves)

#### Biographical Detail

Jacques Lacan was born into a 'comfortable' French family and as a boy was an outstanding student in the prestigious Catholic Collège Stanislaus of Paris. In 1920 he took up the study of medicine and after serving his internship at St-Anne hospital and the *Infermerie Speciale des Aliénés de la Prefecture de Police* he developed a particular interest in the study of paranoia. In this period he 'rubbed shoulders' with leading Parisian intellectuals, writers and artists of the left bank. His conversations included exchanges with such personages as Andre Gide, Paul Claudel, James Joyce, Pablo Picasso and the surrealist Salvador Dali.



*Jacques Marie Lacan*

#### Psychiatry

In 1932 Lacan completed his doctoral thesis on Paranoia, '*Paranoid Psychosis and its relation to the Personality*'. In this thesis he undertook a detailed analysis of a woman named Aimee who attempted to stab a prominent actress. Lacan argued that in striking the actress Aimee was, in fact, striking herself. Lacan argued that the woman Aimee struck had the freedom and social prestige that Aimee desired. Aimee's action was a form of SELF-PUNISHMENT PARANOIA. The IDEAL IMAGE was both the object of her hate and her aspiration.

#### Elements of Lacan's Psychoanalytic Theory

Lacan's analysis of Aimee's behaviour introduced some of the key elements of his psychoanalytic theory:

- narcissism
- the image and
- the ideal.

Lacan proposed that the identity of a human being could include elements well OUTSIDE the biological boundaries of the body. AIMEE'S IDENTITY WAS LITERALLY OUTSIDE HERSELF!

### **Lacan's Own Analysis by Lowenstein**

Lacan undertook his own analysis by the neo-Freudian Rudolf Lowenstein from 1932 to 1938.

### **Marriage**

In 1934 Lacan married Marie-Louise Blondin. They had three children. He later formed a relationship with Sylvia Bataille who gave birth to their daughter in 1941.

### **Studies in Philosophy**

As a teenager Lacan developed a passion for philosophy. He began with Spinoza's Ethics and after he began his psychiatric studies he read the work of Karl Jaspers, G.W.F. Hegel and Martin Heidegger.

Perhaps the most important influences on Lacan were the French structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and the linguist Roman Jakobson. He also became acquainted with the works of several French thinkers: George Bataille, Raymond Aron, Pierre Klossowski and Raymond Queaneau. Lacan's work, taken as a whole, reflects his concerns with linguistics (Roman Jakobson), Ego Psychology and The Logic of Psychosis. In his later years his interest in applied mathematics led him into the study and application of Topology and the symbology of knots.

### **The Three Registers of Human Reality**

#### **I**

In 1953 Lacan's ontology differentiated the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. Reality would be best defined as an amalgam of the symbolic and the imaginary i.e. of two elements. The REAL would represent precisely what is excluded from our reality. It is simply that which is excluded from the symbolic. The REAL 'is that which resists symbolisation absolutely'.

#### **II**

After his excursion into topology and knots Lacan changed his views about the relationship of the three elements: the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary. HE NOW HYPOTHESISED A SORT OF EQUIVALENCE BETWEEN THE THREE ORDERS. Thus a successful psychotic system may be considered as a knot, or indeed, as a proper name, which ties together the three orders. Thus the well known presence of machines, computers and products of science in certain psychotic systems may be explained in a new way. Objects may be used or invented to bind together elements of the body-image (the imaginary), linguistic or computer circuitry (the symbolic), and extreme excitation or pain (the real).

## The Sinthome

Lacan coined a new word to describe the knotting process in which an individual binds the three orders of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. His word 'sinthome' is a word play in French which includes references to 'symptom', 'saint' and St. Thomas. Lacan investigated James Joyce in 1975-6. Joyce, he argued, would be an example of such a structure. His writing bound together the registers and he became the sinthome himself in the promotion of his own name.

### Part 3 William Irwin Thompson

**Biographical Detail** (<http://www.steinerbooks.org/author.html?au=746>)



*William Irwin Thompson*

William Irwin Thompson, Ph.D., was born in Chicago in 1938 and grew up in Los Angeles. A poet and cultural philosopher, received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to study at Cornell in 1962 and a Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowship to do his doctoral research in Dublin in 1964. He received his doctorate from Cornell in 1966 and published his first book, *The Imagination of an Insurrection: Dublin, Easter 1916* in 1967. Thompson has taught at Cornell, MIT, and York University in Toronto. His interdisciplinary interests are indicated in that he studied anthropology, philosophy, and literature at Pomona, and literature and cultural history at Cornell. He has served as visiting professor of religion at Syracuse University (1973), visiting professor of Celtic Studies at St. Michael's College, the University of Toronto (1984), visiting professor of political science at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (1985), Rockefeller Scholar at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco (1992-1995), and Lindisfarne Scholar-in-Residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York in the autumn of each year from 1992 to 1996. In 1995, he designed an Evolution of Consciousness Curriculum for the Ross School in East Hampton, New York, and still serves as a Founding Mentor. His best known works include *At the Edge of History: Speculations on the Transformation of Culture* (1971); *The Time Falling Bodies Take To Light: Mythology, Sexuality, and the Origins of Culture* (1981); and *Coming Into Being: Artifacts and Texts in the Evolution of Consciousness* (1996). He was a founder and president of the Lindisfarne Association, a group of creative individuals in the arts, sciences, and contemplative practices devoted to the study and realization of a new planetary culture, and the

seed for Lindisfarne Books. Dr. Thompson has been a professor at MIT and York University in Toronto, and held visiting positions at Syracuse University, University of Hawaii, St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, and California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). In 1997, Thompson retired from the presidency of the Lindisfarne Association. At the request of the Fellows, in 2007, he organizes the annual Lindisfarne Fellows conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Thompson now devotes himself to writing essays and poetry, and giving talks and poetry readings.

### The Ideas of William Irwin Thompson on Consciousness

William Irwin Thompson is a cultural theorist whose entertaining commentary on present day culture can be found in his book *Artifacts and Texts in the Evolution of Consciousness*. He displays an easy familiarity with Marshall McLuhan's and Jean Gebser's theories. Using McLuhan's five stages in the evolution of humanity he developed an extended set of characteristics which typified each stage:

Medium of Communication	Period	Political-Social Organisation	Characteristic Form of Association
Oral	<10,000 BCE	Culture(Band)	Dominance
Script	10,000 – 3500 BCE	Society (Tribe)	Authority
Alphabetic	3,500 BCE – 1500 CE	Civilisation (City State)	Justice
Print	1500 – 1945 CE	Industrialisation (Nation State)	Representation
Electronic	1945 >	Globalisation	Participation

Stage	Characteristic Form of Association
Band	Dominance may be patriarchal or matriarchal through oral instruction
Tribe	High Priests and/or Kings rule with appeal to canonical texts
City-State	Literacy becomes democratised through pamphlets and discourse
Nation-State	Authority of Scientist as Avatar and High Priest
Noetic Polity	New forms of electronic communication give rise to mediocracy where all forms of culture become variants of the entertainment industry

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## Chapter 7 HYPNAGOGIA AND DÉJÀ VU

### 1. ANDREAS MAVROMATIS    2. PETER D. OUSPENSKY

In the fascinating chapter “The Old Versus the New Brain”, Mavromatis argues that hypnagogia is linked to the subcortical structures of the brain, which are known collectively as the “old brain”. During stages of hypnagogia, he claims, the usually dominant neocortex – the evolutionary recent and specifically “human” part of the brain – is inhibited, and much older structures, such as the reticular brainstem core, Hippocampus, medulla oblongata, and thalamus, “take over”. Cortical brain activity is associated with clear, logical thought and with the perception of a well-defined “external” world. When such activity is inhibited – during sleep, for instance, or in states of deep relaxation – the older brain structures dominate. These structures are more attuned to inner experience and to a “prelogical” form of thought that uses imagery, symbols and analogy rather than language and clearly defined concepts.

Based on *A Secret History of Consciousness* by Gary Lachman; Lindisfarne Books; 2003; Chapter 12: ‘Hypnagogia’.

‘In 1909 Ouspensky produced a book, *The Fourth Dimension*, later incorporated as one of the chapters in *A New Model of the Universe*. Ouspensky took from Hinton the idea that to perceive higher space, our consciousness itself must be altered. Ouspensky asserted that the fourth dimension is not some mathematical hypothesis nor a dubious realm of the spirit. It already exists in our own consciousness’.

*In Search of P.D. Ouspensky*  
By Gary Lachman, Ch. 2, p. 43



'We have dreams continuously, both in sleep and in a waking state. When we awake sleep does not disappear but to the state of sleep there is added the waking state'.

Ibid, p. 31

*Tertium Organum* – P.D. Ouspensky p. 270

'We note that three co-ordinates are not sufficient for the description of the universe, for such a universe would contain no motion. The fourth co-ordinate takes time into account. Four-dimensional space-time allows for motion. Motion has itself three clearly expressed dimensions: duration, velocity and direction. The three dimensions of time can be regarded as the continuation of the dimensions of space.'

*A New Model of the Universe*

P.D. Ouspensky, p. 424

# Chapter 7 HYPNAGOGIA AND DÉJÀ VU

## Part 1 Andreas Mavromatis and Hypnagogia

### Biographical Detail

Andrea Mavromatis of Brunel University published the first full-scale account of the strange stage of Hypnagogia. This is a unique state of consciousness, in between sleeping and waking. In certain people this state dips into both the unconscious and the conscious **simultaneously** and produces a kind of 'duo-consciousness'.

### Hypnagogia and Hypnopompia

Each of us experiences at least two changes of consciousness per day.

- **Onset of Sleep**  
Hypnagogic hallucinations – visual, auditory, even olfactory occur at the onset of sleep.
- **Waking-up**  
When these hallucinations occur on waking they are known as hypnopompic. Mavromatis also relates these states to such paranormal experiences as precognition, synchronicities and clairvoyance.

'One of Mavromatis's descriptions of the hypnagogic state is that it can be characterised as either being awake while dreaming or dreaming while awake' (p. 89).

### The Three Brains and Three Consciousnesses

Mavromatis suggest that each of our three 'brains' has a consciousness and a 'logic' of its own.

### The Three Brains

1. Reptilian (Central Core, including thalamus with pineal gland)
2. Limbic System (Paleo-mammalian)
3. Cerebral Hemisphere.

## The Emergence of a Fourth Consciousness

1. **Instinctual Consciousness** resides in the Reptilian brain and utilises the reticular brainstem core, hippocampus, medulla oblongata, thalamus and pineal glands. It is pre-logical and uses imagery, symbolism and analogies.
2. **Free-floating Pictorial Consciousness** where sensation is not sharply focussed or defined. Form and process are not distinct from each other. This type of consciousness is **synesthetic** and at its advanced stage resounding tones permeates the world of colour.
3. **Cerebral Consciousness** is the waking consciousness of the **rational-logical world** where self-consciousness replaces primordial instinct. It is the most recently evolved stage.
4. **Hypnagogia**. The hypnagogic state is, according to Mavromatis, an emerging fourth state of consciousness where the old-brain consciousness is united with cerebral consciousness in a kind of **duo-consciousness**. One remains awake while sleeping and sleeps while awake!

## Part 2

### Peter Demianovich Ouspensky and Déjà Vu

#### Biographical Detail

Peter Demianovich Ouspensky was born in Moscow on March 5, 1878. He died on October 2, 1947 in the London area, aged 69 years. Although he wrote on higher mathematics he was never a professional mathematician. In fact he never completed his university education. He did, however, absorb his father's interest in the mysterious fourth dimension. He wrote a romantic novel *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* in 1905. This novel has certain autobiographical elements. At that time he was working as a freelance journalist for several Moscow papers. He also began to study dreams. His essay, *On the Study of Dreams and on Hypnotism* displayed an originality of thought and revealed Ouspensky as a forerunner of research into **lucid dreams**. He attempted to experiment with his own dreaming consciousness and for a year he examined the effects of nitrous oxide and hashish on himself.



P.D. Ouspensky

In 1912 Ouspensky published the work for which he gained public attention *Tertium Organum*. This work in its English translation is subtitled *The Third Organ of Thought* which is intended to move beyond the *Organon* of Aristotle and the *Novum Organum* of Bacon.

### **Meeting the Master Magician Gurdjieff**

In 1915, aged 27 years, he met George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff. At that time Ouspensky was a journalist in Moscow. He had already travelled through Egypt, Ceylon and India in search of an esoteric 'school'. He thought that he had located this 'school' in the person and teachings of Gurdjieff. Ouspensky sat at the foot of his master magician, on and off, for seven years after which he developed his own school and taught his own pupils.



*George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff*

### **Obsession with Déjà Vu**

Ouspensky was well read in the popular scientific works of E.A. Abbott and C.W. Hinton. Both these authors had written novels about an imaginary place called **Flatland**. This place was inhabited by two-dimensional beings who regarded any incursion of three-dimensional beings as miraculous. Ouspensky developed these ideas even further and posited 'time' as a fourth dimension. With a heightened consciousness, man occasionally caught glimpses of this dimension and thus entered into experiences of déjà vu.



*E.A. Abbott*

## From the Fourth Dimension to the Seven Dimensional Framework of the Universe

The following summary can be further explored in Ouspensky's writings. His first book *The Fourth Dimension* (1909) offered a contribution to mathematical theory. In 1912 he wrote *Tertium Organum* and this work was followed by *A New Model of the Universe*, in 1914. His later works *The Fourth Way* and *In Search of the Miraculous* were not published until after his death in 1947.

### The Seven Dimensional Framework of the Universe

The following excerpts are taken from Ouspensky's book *In Search of the Miraculous*:

“As I have said, seven dimensions, from zero-dimension to the sixth dimension, constitute the full period of dimensions.” (p. 211). “Only a six-dimensional body can be completely real. A five-dimensional body is only an incomplete view of a six-dimensional body ... And of course, a plane is an incomplete view of a three dimensional body in the same way as a line is an incomplete view of a plane and a point is an incomplete view of a line.” (p. 211).

### Possibility and Actualisation

Ouspensky explained that at every moment of time only a finite number of **possibilities** exist. At the next moment only one (or some) of these possibilities will be **actualised**. ‘The consecutiveness of these moments of actualisation (of one possibility) constitutes the **line of time**.’ ‘Each moment of time has an infinite existence in eternity.’ ‘The possibilities which have been actualised continue to be actualised in eternity’. Ouspensky then goes on to claim: ‘But ALL the possibilities that have been created or originated in the world must be actualised.’ (p. 211). ‘The sixth dimension is the line of the actualisation of all possibilities. The fifth dimension is the line of the eternal existence of repetition of the actualised possibilities. The fourth dimension is the sequence of the moments of the actualisation.’ (p. 211).

### The Three ‘Dimensions’ of Time

In Yvonne Rousseau's *The Secret of Hanging Rock* (Angus and Robertson, 1981) there is a reference to Ouspensky's *A New Model of the Universe* and a claim that time has three ‘dimensions’ but we normally perceive the first.

Time 1: Duration or ordinary time

Time 2: The Perpetual Now

Time 3: The Aggregate of all possibilities.

Ouspensky claimed that ‘if we attempt to unite the three ‘coordinates of time’ into one whole we obtain a spiral’. **Synchronicity arises from the inter-play of these three dimensions.**

## **Ouspensky's Idea of the Dream Impersonator**

The 'dream impersonator' is an aspect of a person's self which is a dream artist. This psychic fragment is a consummate creative playwright, scene painter and actor-impersonator that the owner of this psychic fragment could never be in real life. The owner possesses this impersonator, 'normally' in his dream life. However this creative individual can, on occasions, obtrude into a person's waking life, in such experiences as hearing voices of the dead in a séance.

## **Ouspensky as Artist and Mathematician**

Ouspensky was not artistic himself but he held the view that:

'Art in its highest manifestations is a path to cosmic consciousness.'

*In Search of P.D. Ouspensky*  
by Gary Lachman, p.

Although most of Ouspensky's readers regarded him as a mathematical theorist there were others who saw in him a means of challenging the suffocating effects of scientism. Such people included the Symbolists, the Cubo-futurists, the Dadaists and Surrealists. For a while Ouspensky was one of the most popular gurus of esoteric thought and yet this was never his intention.

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## **Chapter 8**

### **BIOMEDICAL AND HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO CONSCIOUSNESS**

**1. J. ALLAN HOBSON    2. DAVID BOHM**

'My first meetings with Stan Grof and R.D. Laing provided me with the outline of a basic framework for studying the paradigm shift in psychology. My starting point had been the idea that 'classical' psychology, like classical physics, was shaped by the Newtonian model of reality.'

*Uncommon Wisdom  
Conversations with remarkable  
People, Fritjof Capra, p. 121*

'Grof's extensive observations of psychedelic experiences convinced him that LSD is a non-specific catalyst or amplifier of mental processes, which brings to the surface various elements from the depth of the unconscious.'

*The Turning Point  
Fritjof Capra, p. 411*

# Chapter 8

## BIOMEDICAL AND HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO CONSCIOUSNESS

### Part 1

#### J. Allan Hobson and the Chemistry of Consciousness

##### Biographical Detail

J. Allan Hobson is professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, director of the Laboratory of Neurophysiology at the Massachusetts Mental Health Centre.



*J. Allan Hobson*

##### Main Thesis (Based on *The Chemistry of Consciousness* by J. Allan Hobson)

He argues that the **self** or **I** of a person is not a constant condition or fixed entity. It is a dynamic neurophysiological continuum regulated by the two chemical systems that preside over our waking and dreaming states. Hobson argues that the brain and the mind are one. The thoughts, feelings, dreams and memories that constitute consciousness are in fact an amalgam of **electrical impulses** and **chemical interactions**.

The chemical system that mediates our waking state is called the **aminergic** system. The molecules that do the work are amines. The chemical system that mediates dreaming is called the **cholinergic** system. Its molecule is acetylcholine. The two chemical systems are in dynamic equilibrium.

Hobson advances the proposition that his unified brain-mind theory makes sense of the **continuum** of fantasy, hypnosis and meditation. He claims his theory allows us to understand altered states such as delirium, dementia, depression and coma in an integrated way.

##### Dreaming

Dreaming is not like delirium. It **is** delirium. It is a healthy psychoses.



## Mental Illness

All mental illnesses result from a failure of a major faculty of the brain-mind. Illness occurs when:

- orientation gives way to disorientation
- memory gives way to confabulation
- perception gives way to hallucination
- emotion gives way to instinct
- energy gives way to despair
- attention gives way to distraction.

## Immanuel Swedenborg

Visions, hallucinations, dreams are all actively employed by seekers of spiritual truth. The eighteenth century sage and scientist, Immanuel Swedenborg 'used a particularly interesting technique for inducing the visions that informed his religious doctrines: **sleep deprivation**. Swedenborg found that by keeping himself awake all night and then letting himself sleep fitfully by day his dreams were more intense.'

## Consciousness

Consciousness is the brain-mind awareness of some of its own information.

## Somnambulism

When a person sleepwalks, the context of his upper brain remains asleep while the lower brain is awake.

## Hypnotic Trance

'In the second half of the last century, the neurology clinics of Paris and Vienna, as well as those of Madrid and Milan, were crowded with women who complained of amnesias, anaesthesias, automatism and dreamy states of consciousness. The most famous centre for the study of what was called **Grand Hysteria** was the clinic of **Jean-Martin Charcot** at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. The most dramatic event in Charcot's clinical repertoire was the induction of **hypnotic trance**'. (*The Chemistry of Consciousness*, p. 253).



*Jean-Martin Charcot*

'The father of hypnosis was Austrian physician **Franz Anton Mesmer** who described shifts of consciousness as reflections of animal magnetism'. (Ibid, p. 253).

## **Latah**

### **Anaesthetic Effect**

Latah is like dental trance and seems to have an **anaesthetic effect**. 'When subjects have put themselves in a suitable trance state, their noses, ears, and cheeks are pierced with sharp skewers, which may then remain in place for a lifetime, as totemic inspiration to others in search of more intimate contact with the spirit world'. (Ibid, p. 247).

### **Ritual Preparation**

Ritual preparation, including intense dancing and sleep deprivation, begins many days before public exhibition.

### **Malaysian Trance (or Startle Trance)**

'Some Malaysians are particularly susceptible to trance. If they are startled or tickled, they undergo a dramatic state change that is as rapid and distinctive as the cataleptic attacks of **narcolepsy** (transient attacks of deep sleep). But instead of their bodies falling limp and their minds falling into the dream state, as they would in REM sleep, they become **hypnotically dissociated**. It's as if someone flipped a switch and they suddenly lost contact with reality. They may utter unseemly streams of invective or become submissively obedient to commands. The **latah trance** is a **hypersuggestible state** that is itself suggested. **But unlike hypnosis, it is triggered by a startle response.**'

### **Automatisms**

The stream of foul-mouthed invective uttered by the Malay strongly parallels that which occurs in **Gilles de la Tourette's syndrome**, in which compulsive swearing is often accompanied by involuntary arm flailing. These automatisms have a kinship with the dissociations of sleep: sleepwalking, sleepwalking and the REM sleep behaviour disorder are all characterised by automatic motor acts. All are unwilling and all are non-conscious. (Ibid, p. 249).

### **Cultural Disorders (Asia and North Africa)**

#### **Latah**

'Latah occurs in Asia and North Africa, is a response to intense stress characterised by altered consciousness, hypersuggestibility and mimicry (including echolalia and echopraxia). (Katona, p. 77)

#### **Amok**

Amok is an altered state of consciousness and involves uncontrollable maniacal behaviour.

### **Brain Fog**

Brain fog is characterised by concentration difficulties, vague somatic complaints and depressed mood.

### **Western Cultural Disorders**

Some Western syndromes of a cultural nature which are making their appearance include: multiple personality disorders, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and chronic fatigue.

## **Part 2 Towards Holistic Medicine**

### **Techniques of Altering Consciousness**

The techniques of altering consciousness have ranged from pre-frontal lobotomy, electro-shock therapy, drug therapies, electrode implantation, aerobic exercise and meditation. More insidious forms of torture such as sleep deprivation and the injection of pentathol are among the weapons of torturers. The wide-scale production and use of opium and its derivatives continues to play a part in consciousness alteration in a great number of societies.

### **Experimentation With Drugs**

William James briefly tried Peyote but did not study it systematically. More determined efforts with experimentation and recording have been undertaken by such persons as P.D. Ouspensky (nitrous oxide), Aldous Huxley (mescaline) and Stanislav Grof (LSD).

### **Social Drugs**

There can be little doubt that the use of social drugs on a regular basis alters consciousness. Betel chewing, Kava drinking, smoke inhalation, alcohol consumption and the use of amphetamines and anti-depressant prescription drugs (and many others) contribute to consciousness alteration. Various hemp derivatives have been used in India and the Middle East to produce visions.

### **Prescription Drugs**

In the western world there is widespread use of barbiturates, tranquilizers, anti-depressants and analgesics. The popularity of Prozac and other psychiatric 'wonder drugs' has produced a 'Prozac backlash' (Joseph Glenmullen). Aerobic exercises are said to release endorphins, the precursor to tryptophan and serotonin. Serotonin deficiency is believed to be a bio-chemical cause of depression. The details of drug use on consciousness requires further study but there can be little doubt that it does effect consciousness.

## The Bio-Medical Model

In Chapter Five of *The Turning Point* Fritjof Capra discusses the nature of the current modern scientific model of medicine. He uses the term 'bio-medical' to distinguish it from conceptual models of medieval Europe or medical systems such as the Chinese system. He argues that modern western medicine has been influenced by the mechanistic physics of Newton and the Cartesian view of regarding living organisms as mechanisms. In the bio-medical model human beings are studied from the point of view of cellular and molecular biology. Disease is a malfunction of biological mechanisms. Capra's central argument against the bio-medical model is that it cannot accommodate itself to the processes of healing. He asserts that healing cannot be understood in reductionist terms. Healing is a process involving the whole organism.



*Fritjof Capra*

## Holistic Medicine

In a remarkable way the Physicist, David Bohm, pre-figured the rise of holistic medicine. In 1951 he wrote:

'Quantum concepts imply that the world acts more like a single indivisible unit in which the intrinsic nature of each part depends upon its relation to the sum'.

Quoted from *Cosmic Consciousness Revisited*  
By Robert M. May, p. 137



*David Bohm*

In his *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), Bohm challenges the old 'Mechanistic Order' or **explicate order**.

'We propose that a new notion of order is involved called the **implicate order** where everything is enfolded into everything.'

Ibid, p. 139

Bohm's distinction between the implicate and explicate orders has an application for the understanding of brain (explicate) and consciousness (implicate). Many scientists regard consciousness as identical to the brain's operations. Others, like Eccles and Penfield, proposed a psychophysical dualism of brain and mind.

### **The Body-Mind Relationship (Bohm)**

'This connection of the mind and body has commonly been called psychosomatic (from the Greek 'psyche', meaning 'mind' and 'soma' meaning 'body'). This word is generally used, however, in such a way as to imply that mind and body are separately existent but connected by some sort of interaction. Such a meaning is not compatible with the implicate order. In the implicate order we have to say that mind enfolds matter in general and therefore body in particular. Similarly, the body enfolds not only the mind but also in some sense the entire material universe.'

Cited by Robert May from David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Routledge and Kegan Paul; London; 1953 p. 175.

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## Chapter 9

# CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

'Since the Eastern philosophical and religious traditions have tended to see mind and body as a unity, it is not surprising that a number of techniques to approach consciousness from the physical level have been developed in the East.'

*The Turning Point*  
By Fritjof Capra, p. 380

'The shaman's essential role in the defense of the psychic integrity of the community depends above all on this: men are sure **that one of them** is able to help them in the critical circumstances produced by the inhabitants of the invisible world. As a result of his ability to travel in the supernatural worlds and see the superhuman beings (gods, demons, spirits of the dead, etc.) that the shaman has been able to contribute decisively to the knowledge of death'.

'The lands that the shaman sees and the personages that he meets during his ecstatic journeys in the beyond are minutely described by the shaman himself, during or after his trance.'

Mircea Eliade  
*Shamanism – Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, p. 509

# Chapter 9

## CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

### Part 1

#### A Western Taxonomy of Psychopathology

##### Introduction

The behaviour of an individual is the result of both **conscious** and **unconscious** determinants. While mental disorders are sometimes known to an individual they are usually not known. Behaviours of the mentally ill are usually involuntary and beyond rational control. They need treatment by a qualified psychotherapist and/or psychiatrist.

An **individual's behaviour** is not only determined by conscious and unconscious forces generated by the individual's own life experience. It is also determined by **social forces** generated by others such as advertisers, spin doctors and peer pressure. To these social determinants of behaviour one must add the hidden but real **cultural forces** generated by custom, ritual and religio/politico affiliations.

##### Classification of Mental Disorders

At any one time there are different systems of classification of psychiatric disorders. These vary according to culture and country of origin. An even greater variation occurs over time. Thus a diagnosis by a Roman psychiatrist during the reign of Julius Caesar would bear little resemblance to that undertaken by a Harley Street psychiatrist in the twenty-first century.

##### The 'Betweens' and the 'Withins'

The different classificatory systems **between** cultures vary on matters of aetiology and behaviour. They are as different as demon possession is to a germ theory of disease. There are cultures where the understanding of mental maladies is based on the power of spells and magical amulets. Other cultures have based diagnosis and remediation on the evidence of divination or the consulting of oracles. In any given society it is possible to see a wide range of practices **within**. Practices such as exorcism, herbalism, aromatherapy and a wide range of allopathic medical practices may exist side-by-side with state-approved psychiatric services.

##### Contemporary Psychiatry

Contemporary Western Psychiatry has found general agreement on most aspects of psychiatric nomenclature and the descriptors of the Psychoses, the Neuroses and the Disorders of Personality.

##### Psychoses

Psychotic disorders may be identified by dividing them into two principal groups: affective reactions and thinking disorders.

- **Affective Reactions:** These include the group of schizophrenias which involve a splitting of psychic functions. This results in the formation of bizarre associations and the loss of coherence due to the fragmentation of thought structures. It may include the intrusion of unrelated thoughts. There is little or no relationship between the subject being discussed and the emotional response normally expected. This 'loss of affect' is a common symptom in the various types of schizophrenia. These range from simple schizophrenia, hebephrenic schizophrenia, paranoid schizophrenia and other forms such as catatonic schizophrenia.
- **Thinking Disorders:** Appear in all of the schizophrenias but are probably more noticeable in paranoid reactions. These reactions include excessive suspiciousness, blaming others (projection), delusion formation, persecution complexes and flights of grandeur. Paranoid schizophrenics may hear voices talk about them and finally to them. Hallucinations, confusions, manic or melancholic fluctuations are or may be secondary features.

## Neuroses

The neuroses are a group of mental disorders which are usually described in terms of five types of reaction: (1) anxiety reaction; (2) phobic reaction; (3) dissociative reaction and conversion reaction; (4) obsessive-compulsive reaction; and (5) depressive reaction. The defence mechanisms serve as a basis for symptom formation.

- **Anxiety Reaction** manifests its effects in such symptoms as trembling, irritability, oversensitivity to noise, criticism or abuse, faintness and tiredness.
- **Phobic Reaction** may occur in many psychoneuroses and may be manifest as a fear of heights, open spaces, spiders or anything which tends to threaten the sense of self-control.
- **Dissociative Reactions and Conversion Reactions.** These reactions are commonly known as hysterical disorders and are more frequently found in women. They may lead to motor or sensory impairments or partial paralysis. Basic distrust of self and others and feelings of inadequacy often underlie hysteria.
- **Obsessive Compulsive Reactions** are thoughts and compulsions which cannot be put out of consciousness. They may lead to elaborate rituals of hand washing, object touching and prolonged dressing. Milder forms of this disorder may manifest in excessive conscientiousness, frugality, overconcern about table manners, and minor details of little consequence.
- **Depressive Reactions** also occur in all forms of psychoneuroses. They include such disorders as fatigue, insomnia, anorexia, loss of sexual drive. It differs from the manic-depressive psychosis by the depth of guilt and the absence of delusions.



## **Personality Disorders**

When an individual's behaviour is wildly exaggerated and inappropriate to the situation it may be indicative of a personality disorder. Conduct which is typically explosive, hysterical, impulsive, litigious, sexual, quarrelsome or anxious may also indicate a personality disorder. Attempts have been made to classify these types of behaviour into patterns of Instability, Indecisiveness, Compulsivity, Inadequacy, Mood Swings and Suspiciousness. The sociopathic personality exhibits behaviours which conflict with rules, regulations, laws and customs. Such behaviours are found in arsonists, kleptomaniacs, gamblers, sadists, graffitists, perverts, exhibitionists, voyeurs, paedophiles, alcoholics and drug dependents.

## **Other Psychiatric Disorders**

There are many other psychiatric disorders not mentioned above. Katona and Robertson in their book provide a simplified checklist to assist in the diagnosis of disorders of a psychogenic origin.

### **Katona's Mental State Checklist Used by Psychiatrists**

Appearance and Behaviour

Speech (including form of thought e.g. blanks)

Mood/Affect

Disorders of Thought

Recurrent thoughts/intrusive

Phobias/compulsion

Intense preoccupation e.g. guilt

Delusions

Abnormalities of Perception

Distortions (cord as a snake)

Illusions

Hallucinations (visual/auditory)

Cognition

Level of consciousness

Memory (long term – short term recall)

Orientation in time/space

Attention/concentration

General knowledge/intelligence

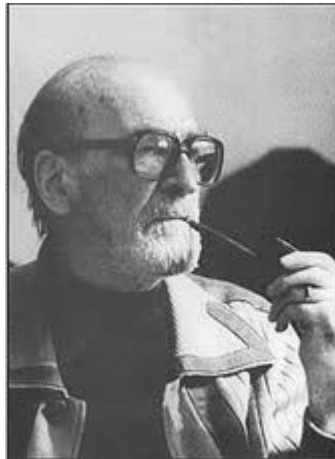
## **Part 2**

### **Mircea Eliade and Ecstatic Forms of Consciousness**

#### **Biographical Detail about Mircea Eliade**

'Mircea Eliade, Romanian by birth, was a one-time lecturer in the Ecole des Hautes-Etudes de la Sorbonne.' Subsequently 'he became chairman of the department of history of religions at the University of Chicago.' 'He is both an anthropologist and a psychologist and is one of the best modern expositors of the psychology of religion,

mythology and magic.' 'As a religious thinker he combines a knowledge of the highest religious cultures of the West and of the East with a deeply sympathetic understanding of the religious beliefs and aspirations of religious people. He is a man of European learning who has studied Indian philosophy and Yoga under Indian teachers; for many years past he has worked and taught in France and the United States.'



*Mircea Eliade*

(Quotations from cover jacket of *Images and Symbols* and *The Myth of the Eternal Return*).

### **Written Works**

Eliade was a scholarly researcher of great erudition and productivity. Most of his works were written in French and the English translations appear in slightly adjusted titling. Some of these are:

- *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton/Bollingen, N.Y. London, 1958.
- *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Rosemary Sheed, London - New York, 1958.
- *The Sacred and the Profane*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959.
- *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Princeton/Bollingen, 1960.
- *Images and Symbols*, Gallimard, 1961.
- *Myth and Reality*, Allen and Unwin, 1964.
- *Shamanism - Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Arkana, 1964 - 1989.

### **Cultural Aspects of Consciousness (Trance, Possession and Shamanism)**

In books about 'consciousness' there is little likelihood that there will be any treatment of 'trance', 'possession' and 'shamanism', yet these states are manifestly aspects of the subject. The reasons for these omissions are varied and may relate to the author's lack of knowledge. They may also relate to taxonomic specialisations. 'Trance', 'possessions' and 'shamanism' are considered by many to be subjects belonging to the domain of cultural anthropology or abnormal psychology. Behaviourists would be likely to relegate such subjects to the 'rat-baggery' of the occult.

Such a dismissal tells us much about the dismitter but nothing about the nature of such subject matter. Its widespread appearance among archaic and pre-rational cultures does give pause for thought. It requires treatment from a multi-perspective approach. This would include contributions from cultural ethnology, psychiatry and theology.

### **Part 3**

## **Altered States of Consciousness (A.S.C.)**

### **Definition of Trance**

'Trance is an altered state of consciousness characterised by changes in cognition, perceptions and/or physiologically based sensibilities' (Suryani and Jensen, *Trance and Possession in Bali*). Trance in Bali is usually self-induced while hypnosis is usually induced by another person.

### **Ceremonial Dance Trance (Bali)**

Trance often occurs in association with music, chanting or singing and in Bali it plays an important role in ceremonial performances in **Kecak** dances, fire dances (Sang Hyang **Jaran**) and little girl trance dance (Sang Hyang **Dedari**).

### **Institutionalised Trance Mediums (Bali)**

In addition to ceremonial trance dancing Bali has specialised healers (Balian) who employ the techniques of trance-mediums.

They may be Balian **Taksu** who are consulted to reveal the secrets of a child's previous incarnation. They may be Balian **Kebal** who specialise in the use of magic paraphernalia such as amulets for healing purposes. They may be Balian **Apun** who combine massage and chant mantras to manipulate mystical forces. They may be Balian **Usada** whose healing powers are based on lontar readings (sacred texts on palm leaves).

### **Abnormal Trance States in Bali**

The performance by balian (trance mediums) and some ceremonial trance dancers falls within normal and acceptable Balinese behaviour. However, there are a number of trance conditions which the Balinese, themselves, recognise as abnormal:

#### **(i) Bebainan**

Suryani (1984) investigated a mental disorder which simultaneously occurred in a group of 27 persons living in the royal compound of the Klungkung puri (palace). The Balinese attributed the disorder to sorcery. The victims were mainly women and they fell into a trance state which lasted from 15-60 minutes. 'The most common symptoms were sudden feelings of confusion, crying, screaming and shouting, followed by an inability to control one's actions'. Some spoke giving voice to the **bebai** (meaning evil spirit in old

Balinese) while others ran **amok** (sudden episode of uncontrolled violence and amnesia). The Balinese believe this form of illness is caused by the possession of the soul by a malignant spirit aroused by a sorcerer who captures the power of a *bebai*. Traditional healers are sought to effect a cure. The disorder is neither a psychosis but a form of dissociation and impaired consciousness.

(ii) **Kasurupan**

Suryani and Jensen reported another outbreak of a dissociative disorder in 1991. Again it was another form of trance contagion but this time its victims were 45 elementary school children in a school population of 215 pupils. 'The spells consisted of three phases: prodromal symptoms, trance, and recovery' (Jensen and Suryani).

1. **The Prodromal Phase** was characterised by weakness, emptiness in the head, piloerection on the neck, closing of the eyes and difficulty opening them and fear of impending events (2-10 minutes).
2. **The Trance Phase** was characterised by hallucinations and dissociative phenomena. This phase included loss of hearing and the ability to 'hear voices'. Others saw a big horrible woman like a giant *Rangda* (45%). Some saw a fair-skinned woman who lured them into a forest.
3. **The Recovery Phase** was characterised by confusion and weakness of neck and body muscles (70%).

The condition was regarded by the Balinese as a form of possession which carried no form of stigmatisation.

## Part 4 Spirit Possession

### Mediumistic Possession of the Spirit of the Dead

Possession may be spontaneously or deliberately induced. It is a frequent phenomena among the Batak of Northern Sumatra. Mircea Eliade, in *Shamanism – Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, reports:

'Anyone can become the receptacle of a **begu**, that is, of the spirit of the dead person; it speaks through the **medium's** mouth and discloses secrets.

**Possession** often takes shamanic forms: the medium picks up burning coals and puts them in his mouth, dances and leaps to the point of paroxysm. But, unlike the shaman, the Batak medium cannot control his *begu* and is at its mercy or at that of any other dead person who wishes to possess him.'

See pps. 346-347.

## Oesterreich's Review of the History of Possession

Oesterreich (1974), a German philosopher, reviewed the history of possession from the second century to the nineteenth century in Greece, Mesopotamia, Western civilisation, and 'primitive' cultures throughout the world. This was *Possession and Exorcism*, N.Y., Causeway Books, 1974. He distinguished **somnambulist** possession with its loss of consciousness from **lucid** possession which is not amnesic. He emphasised the critical role of belief in **spirits** and **demons**. He argued that although some of the possession was repulsive it was tolerated because it gave primitive tribal groups (and others) access to revelatory guidance for future behaviour.

## Guardian Spirit Complex (Benedict)

The noted anthropologist Ruth Benedict studied the Pacific North-West Coast area of the **Salish** culture on Vancouver Island. She observed the **comatose** state of new dancers possessed by their **guardian spirits** power and the **automatic singing** and **barking** of the possessed dancers. It was a practice in some tribes for an adolescent to obtain a lifelong supernatural guide from whom he could obtain a **name** as well as power from a **visionary experience**. Benedict also observed an intimate relationship between shamanism and the guardian spirit doctrine.

Jilck studied the **kwakuitl** tribe and observed a dramatic performance of spirit possession during a secret society **initiation** (1982).

## Culture and Mental Disorders (Linton)

In 1956 Robert Linton, an anthropologist at Yale University reviewed various forms of possession which he referred to as **hysterias**. He included the classic culture-bound syndromes of amok, latah, Arctic hysteria, soul loss and the 'hysteria of Shamanism'. Linton described **mediumistic hysterias** as falling somewhere between regular possession by spirits and the mystic experience.

## Types of Possession (Cardena and Frigerio)

Cardena (1989) a psychologist, and Frigerio (1989), an anthropologist, proposed an analysis of possession into three recognisable types:

- (i) **Transitional Possession** with alternation in the depth of possession rather than a fixed state.
- (ii) **Alternate Identity Possession** with co-occurrence of the regular identity with the alternate possessor.
- (iii) **Transcendent Possession** in which the individual is totally immersed and absorbed by the invading identity.

## Part 5 Shamanism

### Central Asian Shamanism

Ethnologists have often used the terms 'shaman', 'medicine man', 'sorcerer' and 'magician' interchangeably. According to Mircea Eliade, in its strictest sense, Shamanism is pre-eminently a religious phenomena of **Siberia and Central Asia**. Throughout this immense area the magico-religious life of society centres on the shaman. As the dominating social figure **he is the great master of ecstasy**. The shaman specialises in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld. Unlike the possessed person the shaman controls his **spirits**. He is able to communicate with the dead, with demons and nature spirits. His ecstatic capacities include magical flight, descents to the underworld and mastery over fire. The shaman is the great **specialist in the human soul**. Whenever the soul is disturbed by sickness, misfortune, calamity or death the shaman may be consulted. His **ecstatic trance** and his contact with agents of the invisible world enable him to effect a cure. Eliade observes that shamanism coexists with other forms of magic and religion in North America, Indonesia, Oceania and elsewhere.

### Becoming A Shaman

The chief methods of recruiting shamans in Central and Northeast Asia are by (1) hereditary transmission; (2) spontaneous call; (3) clan determination. Initiation is both ecstatic and didactic. Future shamans exhibit exceptional traits from adolescence. They exhibit nervousness and may even be subject to epileptic seizures. Dreams and visions, sleepwalking and solitariness are identifying traits for prospective shamans.

### The Psychopathology of Shamanism

The attainment of a cataleptic trance is a sure indicator of the power of a shaman. This stage is not always displayed by epileptoids or hysteroids and may be induced by the ingestion of narcotics. Eliade cites Loeb's study of the Niue shaman which describes him as an epileptic and a product of a family with a history of nervous instability. The bomor of Kelantan are described as neuropaths.

### The Batak of Sumatra

The 'Datu' or medicine man was second in status to the village Chief or 'Raja'. The Datu had responsibilities associated with fixing auspicious dates for festivals, rites, family celebrations, healing (white magic), cosmic imbalance, rain making and rain cessation. They shared some powers with the 'Sibaso' who is always a woman. She shared the responsibilities associated with contacting spirits of the dead (the 'begu'). The sibaso séance takes place at night. The woman shaman drums and dances around the fire to invoke the spirits. Each spirit has its particular melody and even its special colour. The sibaso speaks to the spirits in a special secret language (p. 100).

The 'datu' fills the role of the priest-magicians while the 'sibaso' represents only the ecstatic.

(see *Art and Culture BATAK*, by Dr Jamaluddin, S. Hasibuan; J. Mahoni 10, Medan, Indonesia; 1986).

*Shamanism – Archaic techniques of ecstasy* by Mircea Eliade; Arkana Penguin Books; 1989.

### **The Pawang (Magician) and the Belian (Shaman)**

The Malays of Perak and Kelantan distinguish between the **Pawang** and the **Belian**. Whereas the ordinary magician must rely on recitation of spells and performance of rituals with special materials, the shaman enacts spirit-raising séances (bĕrhantu or bĕrjin) to banish epidemic and individual sicknesses.

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## **Chapter 10 CONSCIOUSNESS AND NON-LITERATE SOCIETIES**

Today the word 'myth' is used as a synonym for 'fable', 'fiction' or 'illusion'. On the other hand, ethnologists and theologians have always understood it as a 'true story', 'a primordial revelation', or 'an exemplary model'. It is in this latter sense that it is being used.

Freely paraphrased from Chapter 1  
of *Myth and Reality* by Mircea Eliade.



# Chapter 10

## CONSCIOUSNESS AND NON-LITERATE SOCIETIES

### Part 1

#### The Nature of Myths

##### Mythos and Historia

Western civilisation, as it exists today, has succeeded in the process of the desacralisation of the religious world of ancient time. This process has been assisted by the triumph of the book over the oral tradition. Once there was a living experience of entering into the deeds of the gods and heroes. Today such an enlivening experience can only be achieved second-hand through the written word or its latest screen adaptation. This marks the triumph of Historia over Mythos.

##### Myths as Cultural Constructs

Myths cannot be manufactured by the creative thinking of an individual. Myths are not stories made-up for entertainment nor are they tall stories invented for the inspiration of children. They are complex, CULTURAL CONSTRUCTS.

Myths are not to be confused with 'make-believe' or fairy tales. They may spring from history but, if they do, they inevitably become transformed into legends. A great number of myths are stories associated with the gods and their battles with the demiurges or with rivalries between each other. Most cultures have their own myth of creation and their own sacred history which relates the feats of heroes and the deeds of the ancestors. These mythologies are sometimes thought to apply only to primitive cultures but that is a mistaken view. Creation myths appear in all cultures though, to be sure, they may be more transparent in primordial or ancient societies. Myths may owe their origins to the spoken word but they also appear in literate societies in the guise of metaphor. The classicist E.R. Dodds proposed the following definition of myth:

*'As the dream is to the individual so the myth is to the culture.'*

For followers of Carl Jung they arise not from an individual unconscious but from a 'COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS'.

##### Myths Provide Exemplary Models

The great cultural anthropologist, Mircea Eliade, explains:

*'Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled times of the 'beginnings' ... Myth is always an account of a 'creation' ... by supernatural beings ... and it becomes the exemplary model for all significant human activities, such as diet or marriage, work or education, art or wisdom.'*

(see 'Myth and Reality', Chapter 1. The Structure of Myths).

## The Cultivation of Memory Skills in Non-Literate Societies

In non-literate societies memory skills assume a central place and great emphasis is given to the cultivation of auditory and visual memory skills. Mystery centres trained bards in song and ballad and saga. 'Temple' attendants prepared candidates for initiation by listening to recitations of extensive genealogies. In addition these sacred schools provided education in vision and dream interpretation, divination, astrology, healing, sooth saying and declamation. In these societies status was accorded to the oracle, the bard, the actor, the magician, the healer, the balladist, the storyteller and the rhetorician. Because poetry was recited and not read it contained auditory memory aids such as rhythm, rhyme and musicality. In print culture these qualities have almost disappeared.

## Part 2 Data Gathering in Oral Societies

### Matters of Definition

There are slight differences in the meanings of the terms pre-literate, non-literate and illiterate.

- (a) **Preliterate:** this term is usually applied to children who have not yet learned to read in a society in which the expectation is that they will read and write once taught.
- (b) **Non-literate:** this term applies to all members of a society where there is no expectation or knowledge of reading. The aboriginal people of Australia before the advent of non-aboriginal settlement had no orthography or written language.
- (c) **Illiterate:** this term is usually applied to those members of a reading society who have been taught reading/ writing but for one reason or another have been unable to obtain the skills of reading/ writing. In some countries such as Australia it is possible to find persons of each type existing side-by-side.

### Oracy and Literacy

Most existing cultures were once pre-literate. The evolution of these cultures from oracy to literacy has been studied by ethnologists. Many of these cultures have also retained the skills of oracy alongside the skills of literacy. A smaller number of cultures have never evolved a literary system.

### Investigating Consciousness in a Non-Literate Society

The investigation of consciousness in a non-literate society by a literate investigator is fraught with great difficulty. The task is ultimately dependent on deduction and speculation. Anthropologists and ethno-linguists may study aboriginal cultures to ascertain clues of existing mindsets among living people. Psychologists may

investigate the psycholinguistic development of children, bi-cultural types and isolated adults for additional clues. Whatever the methodology the findings will, to some extent, be contaminated by the mindset of the investigator. Only after data gathering in certain areas is completed and analysed can inferences about consciousness be hypothesised.

### **Data-Gathering in Non-Literate Societies**

The anthropologist of today has benefitted by the specialisms of the ethno-linguists, the ethno-musicologists, the ethno-historians, the ethno-geographers and so on. Advances in technology have improved recording skills and increased the capacity for cross-cultural comparisons.

The following areas of study can yield data for deduction and hypothesis formation:

### **Areas of Study in Non-Literate Societies**

#### **Language/ Music**

Song, Lullaby, Chant, Greetings, Musical Instrumentation, Sign Language, Lament, Onomatopoeia.

#### **Dance/ Drama/ Games**

Choreography, Costume, Adornment, Games.

#### **Dress**

Clothing, Accessories, Headwear, Tailoring.

#### **Crafts/ Art/ Manufacture**

Painting, Weaving, Manufacture, Beading, Implements, Tools, Utensils, Sculpture, Modelling, Knotting, Braiding, Weapons.

#### **Occupation and Economy**

Skills, Hunting, Gathering, Fishing, Planting, Cooking, Trading, Food Preparation.

#### **Law and Social Organization**

Codes of Behaviour, Taboos, Punishments, Clan Organization, Authority, Courts, Role Specialisations, Moiety and Codes of Conduct, Marriage, Government, Laws of Precedence, Dispute Resolution, Trial by Ordeal.

#### **Rituals, Customs and Ceremonies**

Birth, Marriage, Death, Burial, Symbols, Memorials, Initiation Ceremonies, Rites of Passage, Seasonal Celebrations and Inter-clan Gatherings, Iconography, Sacred Objects.

## **Story Telling**

Fairy-tales, Legends, Myths and Sagas, Place Myths and Travelling Myths.

## **Medicine and Religion**

Shaman, Priest, Sacred Sites, Pharmacology, Sacred Objects, Taboos, Song Lines, War Declaration.

## **Shelter/ Housing**

Materials, Water supply, Storage.

## **Data Analysis**

Data Analysis is the first step in theory formation. This needs to be followed by the perception of relationships and the education of meanings and significances. It is usual to make judgements and comparisons between the investigators frames of references and those of the society being investigated. These comparisons are usually about such axiomatic coordinates of time, space, causality, being, value and so on. It also involves an examination of symbols.

## **Data Synthesis**

Synthesis involves theory formation by the deduction of relationships. This is done by positing controlling or central key ideas about which minor observances are given meaning and significance. After this procedure an attempt can be made to formulate a world-view and a cosmology.

## **Transitional People**

The availability of transitional types of resource people is a boon to anthropologists. These people belong to two or more cultures. They help to translate the meanings and understandings of one culture to the other.

# **Part 3 Australian Aborigines**

## **'Aboriginal Men of High Degree' – A.P. Elkin**

This book was sub-titled 'Initiation and Sorcery in the World's Oldest Tradition'. It was first published in 1945 and a later edition appeared in 1976. Jeremy Beckett's foreword to the 1976 Edition claimed then

*'it remains the only substantial work on what might be called the Aboriginal occult.'*

p. (xvii)

## **The Aboriginal Occult**

Elkin's book begins with Aboriginal rites of initiation and proceeds to describe the role and functions of medicine men. He outlines such beliefs and practices as symbolic surgery, bone-pointing and sorcery, thought transference and mind-reading, fire-walking and the use of the magic cord, telepathy and trans-location. These beliefs and practices can be understood in terms of Gebser's Stage 2 in the Evolution of Consciousness (see p. 67) – The Magical Poetising of the World. In order to place these practices in a more understandable context it is probably worth the effort to sketch a brief outline of Aboriginal cosmology and mythology.

## **Aboriginal Cosmology**

There is no complete uniformity in the beliefs of the numerous aboriginal tribal groups of Australia but there is sometimes a great deal of overlap. Generally, aborigines believe the world began as a large flat disc floating in space. The world has two levels: the earth and the sky. The earth was once a featureless plain until it became inhabited by giant, semi-human creatures who arose out of the earth where they had been slumbering. The sky was inhabited by the sun woman, the moon man and the numerous star people. The sky also was inhabited by the powerful thunder, lightning and storm gods. Among some aboriginal groups the sky is also the abode of the dead. In other groups the dead find their rest on an island or in a jungle.

## **The Aboriginal Dreamtime**

The giant, semi-human creatures resembled the animals and plants and yet acted like human beings. This was the period of the dreamtime. Active during this "period" were such beings as *Purukapali*, the great creator; *Wuriupranali*, the sun-woman; *Japara*, the moon-man; the seven emu sisters; *Kulpunya* the dingo; the Ice Maidens of the pleiades; *Wanambi* the sacred serpent and so on. The beings were the creators who wandered the earth and the sky and camped, fought battles, made love and performed ceremonies. Then mysteriously this dreamtime came to an end. The semi-human giants retreated into a mountain or rocky outcrop, a waterhole, or some natural feature. These heroic beings bequeathed the animals, birds, fish, lizards, and edible foods. They also left behind the first spears, woomeras and boomerangs, coolamons, didgeridoos, grinding stones and churingas. In addition to these artifacts they also left the sacred law which governed such relationships as marriage, justice and the ceremonial rituals including the secrets of initiation. This knowledge, and its laws, are regarded by aborigines as immutable and absolutely binding.

It is a mistake however, to understand this Dreamtime only as the past. It is also "the Eternal Now" and the future.

## **Aboriginal Mythology**

Aboriginal mythology incorporates dreamtime creation stories, totemic ancestry, location myths, travelling myths, birth explanations, kinship relations, ceremonial rituals including body painting and scarring, dance, music, rock painting, story-telling and song lines. These song lines trace the route of the ancestral spirits across the

landscape. They reflect the aboriginal belief that the world was sung into existence by the spirits.

Aboriginal medicine, magic and the disposal of the dead are also elements of their mythology. While the details of these aspects vary from place to place, those which apply to Uluru, and the surrounding area, typify the nature of aboriginal mythology as it is found elsewhere.

### **Sacred Sites**

Natural features are sacred because they were once the camping places of particular ancestors who transformed themselves into recognisable features of the landscape. This can be illustrated by the 'record' of Uluru.

### **Uluru As A Sacred Site**

In order to understand Uluru's 'record' of its mythological and historical part, it was necessary for the young aboriginal male to be initiated into its secrets by the *Tupidji* elders. The aborigines had an oral history and this was transmitted through the rites of initiation by annual rites of renewal and numerous other ceremonies. Incorporated in aboriginal rituals were stories of the dreamtime. These stories were portrayed in dance and accompanying music as well as by story-telling around an open fire. The natural features of the rock commemorated events of the past and particular sites commemorated particular events. Thus the rock itself was like a sacred film documentary and the aboriginal elders were like theatre projectionists who enabled the young initiate to experience a pictorial consciousness of the deeds of their totemic ancestors.

In addition, many of the cave-like formations had paintings on their walls and ceilings. The meaning and significance of these cave paintings supplemented the secrets embodied in the natural features of the rock.

### **The Elder As A Library Resource**

In non-literate societies such as exists among many tribal aborigines of Australia the elders of the tribe function as custodians of the tribal history, mythology and the sacred law. In other cultural settings this knowledge is externalised.

The visitor to *Borobudur*, *Prambanam* and *Angkor Wat* cannot help being amazed at the number of bas reliefs about the walls. These reliefs are carved in stone panels affixed to the gallery walls of these monumental temples. They are, in effect, a whole library of both the mythological deeds of the gods and ancestral heroes of the culture and also an engraved record of actual historical events. They have been arranged in a particular sequence and in the very act of viewing them, the pilgrim accumulated merit. However, at Uluru, this iconographic record is present only in the rock's natural features and its weathering. Naturally, the secrets of the rock are only known by those who have been initiated by tribal elders. The death of a tribal elder is, under these circumstances, tantamount to the loss of a library resource.

## **Medicine Men or Shamans**

Mircea Eliade and Adolphus Elkin have examined the qualities and roles of aboriginal medicine men. Eliade states that 'what differentiates a shaman from any other individual in the clan is not his possessing a power or a guardian spirit, but his ecstatic experience.' (p. 107 'Shamanism'). Elkin summarises the personal characteristics of the Australian Aboriginal medicine men by these words:

*'A number of writers refer to the native doctor as an "imposter", "the greatest scamp of the tribe", or as a rule the most cunning man in the tribe and a great humbug" ...' (p. 7).*

Elkin is more cautious in his own assessment:

*'These opinions, however are based on superficial observation ... he is not a mere charlatan ... nor is he just play acting for effect ...'*

## **Medicine Men and Consciousness**

Professor Elkin concludes his assessment of the personal qualities of Medicine Men with these words:

*'it is possible that these men are really clever, endowed with knowledge above the average ... an outstanding person, a clear thinker, a man of decision, one who believed that he possessed psychic power, the power to will others to have faith in themselves'*  
(Ibid, p. 10)

## **Part 4 Mythopoesis and Bardic Society**

### **Druid – Bard – Evangelist in Celtic Society**

In Scotland and Ireland before the imposition of the influence of the Greek rational/empirical world-view there existed an oral culture. In this culture the 'story-teller' played a dominant and pervasive role. This culture was mythopoetic and reality was constructed from the mythology of poetry and story. The arts of this culture made their early appearance in the Druid Priests. The evolution of the skills of these priests were later manifested in the lays of the minstrelsy and the bardic tradition. With the arrival of Christianity these oral skills manifested themselves in the rhetoric of the evangelist.

### **'Soil and Soul' by Alistair McIntosh**

Alistair McIntosh characterises the mythopoetic culture in this way:

*'From the earliest recorded times up unto the advent of Jame's early modern era, the Highlands and the Celtic world in general were stepped in a mythopoetic culture. People's very sense of who they were, what their human worth was and what values they espoused was transmitted through legendary genealogy, myth, poetry, the pibroch (piobaireachd) of classical bagpipe-playing and harp-accompanied song. In this sense their mindsets were very different from those schooled in Greek rationalism.'*

(p. 66)

## **Order of Bards**

The highest order were the learned **Filidh**, trained in accredited bardic schools of literary quality. They were sacred poets who were teachers and advisers to kings and legal witnesses to contracts. Peter O'Connor outlines their training:

*'Their training consisted of committing everything to **memory** and lasted between seven and twenty years. Among the tales or verses learnt by heart were ones that concerned the supernatural world, and it would seem that these tales, passed on through the oral tradition, kept the myths of ancient Ireland alive.'*

('Beyond the Mist' p. 13)

The Lower Orders were the **clair sheanchain** ranked all the way down to **itinerant storytellers** and **buskers**.

## **The Panegyric Code** (see John MacInnes)

The bards were 'to a large extent the political brains behind the Highland chiefs' military strength.

The Celtic bards with their **words** held the society together with as much effectiveness as those who wielded their **swords**. Their use of **panegyric**, i.e. eulogistic praise poetry upheld social order or, when necessary, they used **satire** to curse the enemy and effectively destroy his health.

The Panegyric Code was a psychological power which interlocked people, place and divinity. It underpinned the vernacular economics of **mutuality** and **reciprocity** and was the lifeblood of the Highland Welfare State.

## **Poetry and Prophecy** **Na Daoine** (The Men)

In ancient times the care of the soul of the people was the provenance of the Druids. The Bards were a Christianised, medieval successor to the Druids. The evangelical preacher succeeded the Bard after the 1843 church Disruption. Their connection was in their sensitivity to poetics ... The highest and most important function of poetry was prophecy. Both required a heightened spiritual awareness.

(see McIntosh, p. 67)



## The Mythological Cycles

Peter O'Connor tells us that:

*'Story-telling and tales were classified by the Irish titles, for example destructions (Togla), wooing (Tochmarca), battles (Catha), voyages (Imm nama), deaths (Aitte), feasts (Fessa), adventures (Echtraí) etc. Modern scholars have organized them according to their period of development:*

1. *The Mythological Cycle (c. 1500 BC)*
2. *The Ulster Cycle (c. first century AD)*
3. *The Fenian Cycle (c. third century AD)*
4. *The Historical Cycle, or Cycle of Kings (c. third to eight centuries AD)'*

Irish mythology portrays a tension between masculine forces, personified in the hero figure, and the universal feminine, symbolised by the land and nature.

## Celtic Mythology and Consciousness

The cycles may be understood as paralleling the consciousness of an individual. The earliest cycle picture the vast unknown and non-human elements of the collective unconscious symbolised by the world of the gods. Then there is a development into the heroic age where the individual ego challenges the real world. This is the period of the Ulster Cycle. The Fenian Cycle parallels the mid-life struggle of the individual. The Historical Cycle symbolises the attainment of the psychic land in which the marriage of the sovereign queen occurs. The cycles are a picture of an heroic journey of the human soul. It proceeds not in a linear trajectory but as a recurring spiral.

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## Chapter 11

### THE EMERGENCE OF AN ELECTRONIC CONSCIOUSNESS

'McLuhan's quips and aphorisms were not simply wisecracks about the media, they were expressions of a theory of the evolution of consciousness. At each stage in the cultural evolution of humanity, a new medium of communication comes forth, and that medium then effects a shift to a new form of polity.'

Excerpt from *Coming Into Being*, by  
William Irwin Thompson, p. 3

Marshall McLuhan proclaimed the dictum that 'every media extension of man is an **amputation**'. Thus the new technological advances in television and cyberspace were amputations of man's central nervous system. However, the pervasiveness of information technology has the effect, paradoxically, of making man 'dumber and dumber'. **Information Overload** could now be added to Toffler's *Future Shock*.

'An especially problematic consequence of these advances has been the widespread emergence of a form of consciousness that is predominantly concerned with entertainment and consumption, and is at once passive and ceaselessly restless – hyperstimulated, fragmented, decontextualised and ahistorical' – with the manifestation of **attention deficit disorders**.'

Excerpt from *Cosmos and Psyche*  
by Richard Tarnas, p. 444

'Today computers hold out the promise of instant translation of any code or language into any other code or language. In short, it promises a Pentecostal condition of universal understanding and unity. The next logical step would seem to be, not to translate but to bypass languages in favour of a general cosmic consciousness – a speechlessness that could confer a collective harmony and peace'.

Excerpt from *Understanding Media*  
by Marshall McLuhan, p. 80

# Chapter 11

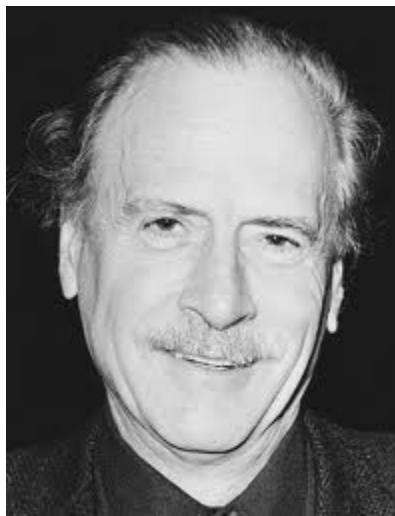
## THE EMERGENCE OF AN ELECTRONIC CONSCIOUSNESS

### Part 1

#### Marshall McLuhan (1911 - 1980)

##### Biographical Detail

Marshall McLuhan was born on July 21, 1911 and died on December 31, 1980 aged 69 years. He was once regarded by his sympathisers as a 'Media Guru' and 'Prophet of the Electronic Age'. His opponents dismissed him as an eccentric charlatan.



Marshall McLuhan

He was born in Alberta, Canada and studied at Manitoba University and took his Ph.D at Cambridge. He taught at universities in Canada and the USA.

Among his best known works are *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), a brilliant analysis of advertising and propaganda methods, and the *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) which documents the historical implications of changes caused by the shift from script to print to electronic technology. With the publication of *Understanding Media* in 1964 he gained international fame and became a cult figure. In his *The Medium is the Message* (1967) he began to use arresting photographs and artwork which experimented with type, laying it upside down, on the slant, or in mirror image, switching its size from page to page. He followed this work with a number of articles for *Look*, *The Medium is the Message*.

##### The Mechanical Bride (1951)

This book is a work which displays McLuhan's distaste for the culture of American capitalistic society. In it he was very critical of advertising and its dumbing effects. He observed that the new technological age had emasculated family life and destroyed individual thought with pre-packaged lifestyles. He caricatured the American male as a 'Dagwood' person who was being mass-produced and fed on

Dale Carnegie self-improvement platitudes. Although this book had little success it provided McLuhan with an opportunity to float his wide-ranging generalisations without having to defend them too openly. In effect, it provided him with a 'trial-run' of his ideas which were later more finely honed and better targeted.

### **'Educational Effects of the Mass Media of Communication', paper delivered at Columbia University, November 1955**

McLuhan's main thesis in this lecture was his observation that changes in the media of communication are inevitably followed by enormous social changes. Thus the print culture changed with the advent of the telegraph, newspapers, radio, television and new ventures into the electronic media.

***The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man.*** Toronto: Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1962.

This book explained why the Western world had become devoted to a visual orientation to reality. Man's normal **tribal state** had been disrupted in the West by the invention of the **phonetic alphabet**. The invention of print led to the visualisation of knowledge and the subsequent development of rationalism, mechanistic science and industry, capitalism, nationalism and so on. The **printing press** de-emphasised rhetoric and grammar and brought logic and dialectics into prominence. (see Philip Marchand's *Marshall McLuhan*, p. 155).

The movement from an **oral culture** through a **script culture** to an **alphabetic culture** ushered in a new **print culture**. The print culture has now moved into the **electronic culture**.

### **Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, N.Y., McGraw-Hill, 1964**

In this book McLuhan advanced his central thesis that every human artefact was an **outering** or extension of some human sense or extension of man. Sometimes these extensions (e.g. the car) reduced their users to the status of **servo-mechanisms**. The **outering** of man's senses is always accompanied by a **numbing process** and done to safeguard man's nervous system. The Greek myth of Narcissus illustrates the process of **numbing**. Narcissus fell in love with his own image. The young man's image is a **self-amputation** and it produces a generalised numbness. Self-amputation forbids self-recognition. Narcissus had no **feed-back loop** on himself.

The present age of electronic media is likewise an age of the unconscious in which our nervous system itself is becoming **outered**. Now electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed is bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion causing us to be now involved in everyone's life. At the same time as man's nervous system is **outered** his awareness is **numbed**. Paradoxically, as information is more available the human being is 'numbed' by **information overload**'.

### **The Medium is the Message (1964)**

This book was first published by Bantam Books in 1967. It was a 'cubist' production designed by Quentin Fiore. It could be read in an hour and contained photographs

with accompanying excerpts from McLuhan's writings. It eventually sold over a million copies. It was a form of **non-book** designed to popularise McLuhan's thoughts about communication. Its typographic novelty was used to illustrate a dislocation in thought. McLuhan's central argument was simply that the **content** of the message contained in the media was no longer as powerful as the **form** in which the content was communicated. The content conveyed a message but the form in which it was conveyed converted the message into a message. He also explained that **hot** media did not invite participation of the user, **cool** media did.

**'The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph'**. Speech is the content of the novel; the novel is the content of the film. Also, the content of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium. Each form of media 'marries' into other forms to produce hybrid offspring such as collage, ipods and laptops.

### **McLuhan and Gebser**

Gebser's narrative is one of structural transformations of consciousness, a *Bewustewerdungs prozess*. These turnings and transformations (in German, *Wandlung*) are fivefold, and interestingly, Gebser's mode is isomorphic to McLuhan's.

<b>McLuhan</b>	<b>Gebser</b>
1. Oral	1. Archaic
2. Script	2. Magical
3. Alphabetic	3. Mythical
4. Print	4. Mental
5. Electronic	5. Integral

*Coming into Being*, by William Irwin Thompson, p. 14.

### **War and Peace in the Global Village, N.Y., Bantam, 1968**

In this book, McLuhan approached contemporary themes of violence and identity. He asserted that 'when our identity is in danger, we feel certain that we have a mandate for war'. The new electronic technology was rapidly changing cherished images of selfhood. Eccentric fashions and novel challenges to tradition were automatic cultural reflexes to changes in the media. However, **'the present cannot be revealed to people until it has become yesterday.'** He called this the **'rearview mirror phenomenon'**.

### **End Thoughts**

In a sense McLuhan packaged himself as a new medium. His dress sense and ventures into typographical novelties reflected a disturbance in himself and modern western man. This disturbance, he preached, was the outcome of the effects of changing media forms. Whereas print is linear and bound to logic by the imperatives of syntax, the electronic order moves to simultaneity of expression and immediacy. Print material is static and requires the reader, not the book, to move forward linearly with sustained attention. On the other hand in the electronic order information is

networked and public, taking place within a circuit of larger connectedness. In the electronic age logic is replaced by images and **jump-cut increments**. Basic movement is laterally associative rather than vertically cumulative. The age of Print fixes the word permanently whereas the Electronic Age reduces the word to a signal; knowledge becomes a form of advertising.

The changes in media forms are accompanied by changes in man's consciousness.

## **Part 2**

### **The Gutenberg Elegies by Sven Birkerts**

#### **Introducing Sven Birkerts**

Sven Birkerts is a renowned critic and essayist who has received citations for 'Excellence in Reviewing'. In the 'Gutenberg Elegies' he alerts the reader to the differences between the printed pages of a book and the circuit driven information technologies of the screen. Birkerts argues that book and screen represent fundamentally opposed forces.



*Sven Birkerts*

#### **The Order of Print**

Media theorists from Marshall McLuhan to Walter Ong to Neil Postman have each discoursed on the differences between print orientation and electronic orientation. Briefly, the order of print is linear and bound by the logic of syntax. While the printed material is static it requires the reader to move forward through time. It requires an imaginative engagement between author and reader. It requires the reader to be active.

#### **The Electronic Order**

The electronic order of say, television, requires the viewer to be passive. The imaginative task is not required of the viewer. Images and simultaneity take precedence over logic and concept. Linear sequentiality is sacrificed. 'The pace is rapid, driven by jump-cut increments, and the basic movement is laterally associative rather than vertically accumulative.' (Birkerts, p. 122).

## The Ulteriority of Reading and its Effects on Consciousness

In his chapter on *Into the Electronic Millenium*, Birkerts 'laments the loss of **deep time** and speaks of Bergson's **duration**, the meditative, expansive, imaginative time that accompanies true reading' (comment by Gary Lachman in *A Secret History of Consciousness*, p. 270). This 'ulteriority' of reading a book generates a form of consciousness not generated by a screen. Reading a book 'slows' time down. It allows the reader to be imaginatively elsewhere. According to Lachman 'the human time experience may be undergoing a fundamental mutation'. The electronic media with its simultaneity encourages the user to have an ever-changing awareness of the present. It 'works against historical perception which (in print) depend on the inimical notions of logic and sequential succession.' (p. 123).

## Loss of Pictorial Consciousness

In a similar observation to Berkerts the Anthroposophist, Hermann Popplebaum, bemoans the loss of an inner pictorial consciousness with the advent of the motion picture. Indeed he goes further. He sees in the two-dimensional screen, and the chopped-up dissection of events into single pictures moved at high-speed through a camera, the introduction of **illusions** into human life. He also claims that slow-motion photography also contributes to an illusory view of reality.

## Three Prophecies

Birkerts concludes his chapter *Into The Electronic Future* with three predictions:

- **Language Erosion**  
Birkerts believes that the complexity and distinctiveness of spoken and written expression which characterise print literacy will give way to a more telegraphic sort of '**plainspeak**'. He observes that already 'simple linguistic pre-fab is now the norm. Nuances, like ambiguity, paradox, irony, subtlety and wit are fast disappearing.' (p. 128).
- **Flattening of Historical Perspective**  
As circuitry replaces the printed page we will move into a '**perpetual present**'. Instant access to information storage will play havoc with our historical memory. Advertising already urges us to 'act quickly', 'do it now'. The more we grow rooted in the consciousness of 'now' the more it will seem utterly extraordinary that things could be otherwise.
- **The Waning of the Private Self**  
Birkerts believes that we are already in the first stage of **social collectivisation**. In time this will vanquish the importance of individualism. One day we will transact our public and private lives within networks so dense that the individual will be left with no private space.



## Towards Cosmic Consciousness

When the stage is reached that each individual has instantaneous access to everyone else then the '**cosmic consciousness**' of R.M. Bucke may have found a bizarre fulfilment!

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## APPENDIX A

This extract has been taken from Gary Lachman's *Rudolf Steiner - An Introduction to His Life and Work*, published by Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin Group; 2007, pp. 91-97. It is Lachman's commentary and understanding of Steiner's *The Philosophy of Freedom*. This summary provides a refutation of materialism from a Goethean point of view.

'It is Steiner's central belief that it *is* possible to approach the spirit world scientifically, that means in clear consciousness and with a discriminating mind, in *this* life. For years he had tried to communicate this insight to his friends, sadly unsuccessfully. It was this obsession that led his friends to consider him either a bit eccentric, or, ironically, a kind of abstract hyperrationalist, who had to approach everything through ideas.

When we realize how intently Steiner focused on this insight, and for how long, it's surprising that he didn't suffer some kind of breakdown - and in fact, later, it seems that Steiner did go through what the historian of psychology Henri Ellenberger calls a "creative illness." Steiner admits that during his Weimar years, whenever he withdrew from social life - which, during the Goethe festivals, could be demanding, especially for Steiner, who was a part of both the official and the unofficial cultural worlds - he felt the only world he really knew was the spiritual one. The other world, that of "things seen," still remained unreal for him. The outer world, he wrote, "appeared to me somewhat shadow-like or picture-like," while the inner world for him always had a "concrete reality." It must have been a trying time for Steiner. He talks of visiting friends and, as usual, entering into their world and their way of seeing life. But no one ever entered his world. He was at home in the world of others, but no one was ever at home in *his* world. "My innermost being had always to remain within itself," he writes. And perhaps most telling: "My inner world was really separated from the outer world as if by a thin wall." Again, this is a feeling shared by many creative individuals, yet it is also a characteristic of Anthony Storr's schizotypal personality.

It's clear that the need to bring his thoughts together and to finally make the reality of this inner world absolutely unequivocal, had something more than intellectual ambition behind it. Although written with all the apparatus of philosophy and logic, and couched in a dry, academic style, *The Philosophy of Freedom* is more than a book of ideas. It's Steiner's assertion of his own reality. It's also a work of genius, and one suspects that Steiner's later occult reputation has prevented the book from receiving the kind of attention it deserves.

Although practically all commentators on Steiner's work agree that *The Philosophy of Freedom* (or, as it has also been translated, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*) contains within it all of the essentials of anthroposophy, the book itself makes no mention of a spiritual world, in the sense of an actual other world accessible to human consciousness, nor does any other standard anthroposophical theme, like karma, the afterlife, or reincarnation make an appearance. It's rigorously and exhilaratingly a book about thinking. Steiner

believed that he had succeeded in carrying Nietzsche's own thought to a higher level, and said so in a letter to Rosa Mayreder. Steiner may have thought twice about linking the fate of his book to Nietzsche; although at the time of writing, the mad philosopher was the focus of almost worldwide attention, during his career, he was even more obscure and lonely than Steiner. Steiner's book was marginally better received than Nietzsche's, although not by much, and the fact that his publisher issued a first edition of only 1,000 copies argues that he didn't expect it to sell (in fact another edition wasn't published until 1918). It's curious that the book Steiner expected the most from, and into which he poured years of thought and reflection, is one that many people who develop an interest in anthroposophy have the most difficulty with - at least according to an informal survey carried out by the present writer. Steiner's later books dealing with outright anthroposophical ideas, like *Theosophy, Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, and *An Outline of Occult Science*, although filled with rather provocative material about astral bodies, chakras, and planetary evolution, seem to provoke less resistance than this admirably clear, albeit abstract, account of the nature of human thought. Steiner himself insists there's no essential difference between his occult teachings and this early essay in epistemology, and he accounts for the fact that he kept his spiritual insights to himself until he was forty by referring to an "occult law" that allowed him to speak openly about them only then. (In the Barr Document, Steiner states that his occult master required "everything in the clothing of Idealist philosophy.") Many followers of Steiner agree, and insist that his early philosophical activity was in preparation for the spiritual teaching to come. Yet to an unbiased reader, it's clear that there's nothing occult about the early writings, and anyone who follows Steiner from *Theory of Knowledge in Light of Goethe's Worldview* (1886) to *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Fighter Against His Time* (1895), will see in him a passionate Idealist, trying to throw a monkey wrench into the machinery of materialism. In *The Philosophy of Freedom*, he succeeds.

Steiner's fundamental idea is that, when we open our eyes, what we take to be a simple, immediate perception of the external world, is already infused with the content of our inner, spiritual world, our consciousness. So when materialists insist that our consciousness is a product of the material world (as many of them still do today), this is really a case of putting the cart before the horse: the material world they refer to is already shot through with their own consciousness. Steiner speaks of "percepts" and "concepts" and the reader lacking a philosophical background can get sidetracked by his vocabulary, but his basic insight is easily enough grasped. Once we see that the materialist, in speaking of matter - or whatever form of it he or she says is at bottom the source of consciousness - is really speaking about his or her *ideas* about matter, we are halfway to intuiting what Steiner is on to. Steiner said as much in his early work on Goethe, when he wrote that "When one who has a rich mental life sees a thousand things which are nothing to the mentally poor, this shows as clearly as sunlight that the content of reality is only the reflection of the content of our minds."

Anyone trying to come to terms with the current fascination with explaining consciousness should repeat this last sentence as a kind of mantra. It's a

version of the basic Idealist position and has been voiced by people like William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Emanuel Swedenborg, Edmund Husserl, and dozens of others in different ways. The dominant view of consciousness, going back at least to Descartes and carried on by philosophers like John Locke, is that consciousness is essentially passive. Locke argued that there was nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses and that at birth our interior world is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, waiting to be written upon by the outside world, a proposition that any parent will find preposterous. (Cognitive scientists may pooh-pooh the idea, but most parents recognize that their children arrive with the kernel of personality already present.) What Steiner and his fellow Idealists are saying is that you would not even have an outside world unless you first had something inside. This is a variation of Goethe's notion of objective imagination, the idea that truth is not something out there, waiting to make a mark on our virgin minds: it's a product of the harmonious meeting *between* out there and in here. Far from a passive recipient of impressions from an inaccessible outside world, consciousness is a kind of hand, reaching out and giving shape and form to what would remain mere empty chaos. We find it difficult to grasp what a world perceived *without* thought would be like, because since around our second year, we have only seen a world already informed by consciousness. It takes the equivalent of an epistemological crowbar to wrench our contribution to our perceptions apart from their recipients. When we look at a garden and see a tree, we see a *tree*, and not the alleged molecules and atoms it is made of, nor the blotches of light and colour that make up its surface. One of the most difficult of philosophical methodologies, phenomenology, is precisely the discipline of separating what we *know* from what we *see*; it requires us to describe *not* what something is - for example, a book - but how it *appears*, a rectangular surface of a certain colour, and so on.

Along with undermining the materialists, Steiner also wants to refute his old nemesis Kant, by showing that there are no limits to knowledge, in the sense that there is a realm or area of life or the world which is off limits to cognition. Kant (and Schopenhauer and Hartmann after him) had argued that *behind* the sensory world lay (metaphorically) an inaccessible real world, of which our senses produce impressions which we translate into mental pictures, which are merely subjective, with no relation to reality. Our consciousness of the world is, in this view, like a video monitor relaying the images sent to it by a camera; for Kant and his followers, all we can ever *know* is what we see on the monitor; we can *never see for ourselves* what the camera is showing us. Steiner argues that this is untrue and that we are already directly aware of what the camera is showing us. There is no world behind the sensory one, but within it, as Goethe had argued, lies the *complete* reality, which is made accessible (or rather manifest) through our own spiritual activity, that is, the act of knowing. As thinking beings we are already inhabitants of the spiritual world - the world, in metaphysical terms, of the *noumena*, or causes, of which the sensory world, or world of phenomena, constitutes the effects. And it is through our recognition of thinking as a free, spiritual act - as Steiner calls it, a *supersensible* one - that we can come to an experience of ourselves as free

spiritual beings and of our own inner world as portals into the world of spirit itself.

The problem, Steiner recognized, is that we are unaware of ourselves as free, spiritual beings. We are also unaware of the immense creative power of our own consciousness, and so our “normal” perception of the world is far removed from the kind of world we would see if into our daily encounters with it we put the kind of energy and attention Goethe did when he went in search of his *Urpflanze*. Most of the time, we stare blankly at the world, accepting the poker face it returns, unconsciously confirming the misconception that our consciousness is passive and undermining any possibility of motivating ourselves into pouring more energy into our awareness. Steiner’s extraordinary insights into the spirit world, and the vividness with which he experienced his own inner world, combined with Goethe’s idea on imagination and produced in him the conviction that our everyday consciousness is a kind of lie. Or, if not a lie, than a dangerous half-truth, as in it we perceive only half of reality, yet accept it as the complete picture. This incomplete picture gives rise to a host of debilitating consequences. The philosophy of materialism is one; our picture of ourselves as passive, near automatons is another. Our abuse of nature and the environment, which we falsely perceive to be dead and merely material for use, is another. Our general belief that at death the personality disappears is yet another. In fact, Steiner hit on the paramount intuition that our unconscious beliefs about ourselves and the world dictate the kind of world we live in and the kind of people we are. If anyone reading this book - or any book by or on Steiner - were to *really* grasp the importance of Steiner’s insight, grasp it, that is, deep down in his most fundamental convictions, his or her world would be transformed. And that is precisely what Steiner had in mind in writing it.

After finally producing *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner could rightly feel that he had answered the materialists and Kantians and that he had provided a firm foundation for the work that lay ahead. It mattered little that the book received minimal attention; after all, most books on philosophy do. What was important was that he had managed to turn his nagging intuitions into expressible ideas, and when the mind achieves this kind of clarity, half the battle is won. Now Steiner felt it was time to get the message across, and he set out to find ways to do this.’

### **Vesica Pisces (Ichthys, Jesus Fish, Mandorla)**



This symbol, called the **vesica pisces** (piscis) or “**Jesus fish**” has an unusual history. Used almost exclusively today to denote membership in the Christian religion, the symbol once held a very different meaning (even to the early Christians who adopted it). The words usually found inscribed within, ΙΧΘΥΣ (Ichthus), is Greek, meaning *fish*. The emblem became significant to Christians after St. Augustine, who extracted the word from the **acrostic prophecy** of the Erythraean Sibyl, and applied the Kabbalistic technique of **notarikon** to the word to reveal “Jesus Christ, God’s son, savior”. The custom of early Christians to communicate by drawing a portion in the dust was carried over from the practice of the ancient Pythagoreans, who discovered the shape’s unique properties and made it an important part of their teachings.

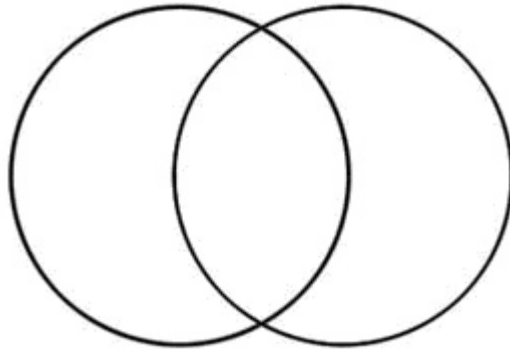


In Pagan times, this glyph was associated with the Goddess Venus, and represented female genitalia. Early depictions of Christ depict him as an infant within the vesica (usually called a mandorla, meaning ‘almond shaped’), which represents the womb of Mary (and often, the coming together of heaven and earth in the body of Jesus - part man, part god). As such, it is also a doorway or portal between worlds, and symbolises the intersection between the heaven and the material plane. The shape of arches in gothic architecture is based on the vesica.



The shape of the vesica pisces is derived from the intersection of two circles, the Pythagorean “measure of the fish” that was a mystical symbol of the intersection of the world of the divine with the world of matter and the beginning of creation. To the Pythagoreans, the whole of creation was based on number, and by studying the properties of number, they believed one could achieve spiritual liberation. The vesica pisces was the symbol of the first manifestation, the dyad (reflection) that gives birth to the entire manifest universe. Within the vesica can be found the triangle, the tetrad, the square, the pentacle, and many more polygons, making the vesica a true symbolic womb.

Curiously the New Testament story of the loaves and fishes secretly reveals the geometric formula for the fish shaped device, as does the story of the miraculous catch: “*Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an **hundred and fifty and three**: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken*” (John 21:11). This is little remarked upon by Bible scholars and usually ignored by Christian bible interpreters. It is a veiled reference to the ratio of the width to the length of the vesica pisces which is 153:265 or  $\sqrt{3}$  or 1.7320508 ...





Hidden vesica pisces in an Albrecht Durer engraving

According to St. Augustine: “the verses are twenty-seven, which is the cube of three. For three times three are nine, and nine itself, if tripled, so as to rise from the superficial square to the cube, comes to twenty-seven. But if you join the initial letters of the five Greek words which mean, ‘Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour’, they will make the word, that is, fish, in which word Christ is mystically understood, because he was able to live, that is, to exist, without sin in the abyss of this mortality as in the depth of waters.”

**Related Symbols:**

