

ONLY ONE MIND: AN ARTIST'S EXPLORATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Barry Cottrell, MA (Oxon), CFA[#]

The aim of this article is to critique the contemporary scientific reduction of mind to brain and to explore the imaginal realm of consciousness. Through the author's own practice as an engraver, and through the researches and discoveries of free-thinking scientists, philosophers and artists,

this realm of the "One Mind" is revealed to be timeless and universal.

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I believe that the purpose of the universe is consciousness: to produce multiple foci and expressions for all creatures, who are in effect one creature, One Consciousness—a Monad, experiencing itself as self and itself as other—simultaneously, alternately, inextricably.

—Richard Grossinger¹

encapsulating image."⁴ It is an experience that dissolves, in the act, the philosophical dilemma of mind and matter.

INTRODUCTION

Engraving—the process of sculpting copper plate, of driving a line through its surface with a steel burin—has always been for me an act that induces a sense of expanded awareness. It is a "technique of transcendence" during which "an inward relocation of the real" takes place "at the expense of... everyday consciousness."² It is a kind of "ecstasy" in the original sense of the word, "*ekstasis*," the movement out of oneself into a larger self, into "Big Mind." The experience of "*ekstasis*" is both *in* time (as if inside the physical movement of the burin through the copper plate) and also, paradoxically and simultaneously, a timeless activity, as if watching the act with a mind out of time.

Access is obtained to the limpid and pervasive realm of metaphor and imagination—which becomes potent as a living and lived reality or *presence*, ontologically dominant, a zone of tension and energy beyond words and symbols. Consciousness expands outwards, relaxing into a larger field of awareness co-existent with the physical, and which is energetically enhanced, so real as to be populated—"*trouvier than life*."³ Through the imagination, in its deepest and most dynamic sense, a vital metaphorical force bridges eternity with time, a fact of which William Blake was constantly aware. For him, Imagination *was* Eternity. Metaphor becomes a living force; it is "our means of effecting instantaneous fusion of two separated realms of experience into one illuminating, iconic,

MIND THE GAP

Since Descartes' separation of the mental and material worlds, philosophers have struggled to close the gap and reconcile the two domains. With the rise and dominance of neuroscience in contemporary culture, the trend has been to conflate mind and brain, seeing consciousness as a kind of residue, or froth, effervescing from the brain's neuronal activity: "When mind seems visible within the brain, the space between person and organs flattens out—mind is what the brain does."⁵ For some commentators, like sociologist Nikolas Rose, "we are inhabiting an emergent form of life,"⁵ and "... are increasingly coming to relate to ourselves as 'somatic' individuals, that is to say, as beings whose individuality is, in part at least, grounded within our fleshly, corporeal existence."⁵

Rose⁵ elaborates a vision of the present and emerging future dominated by "the new psychiatric and pharmaceutical technologies for the government of soul." Iconic images of the simulated brain from increasingly sophisticated neuroimaging technologies have become compelling ambassadors for the brain's incorporation of mind. Informing us about our so-called identity, these images, claiming to explain the mind, convince us that the mind is the brain. We are "neurological selves" and these new selves are being progressively layered onto our former selves, whose psychic depth is being "flattened out."

The new style of thought in biological psychiatry not only establishes what counts as an explanation, *it establishes what there is to explain*. The deep psychological space that opened in the twentieth century has flattened out. In this new account of personhood, psychiatry no longer distinguishes between organic and functional disorders. It no longer concerns itself with the mind or psyche. *Mind is simply what the brain does.*⁵ (Emphasis added)

In this 'brave new world' where "... the new truths of ourselves arise, not from philosophy, it seems, but from

Oxford University, UK

[#] Correspondence to: The Clock House, Widford, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4DU, UK.

e-mail: barry@barrycottrell.com; mail@barrycottrell.com

research...,"⁵ personhood is mapped directly onto the body and especially the brain, so that dysfunction, mental disorder, or any kind of mental pathology "is simply the behavioral consequence of an identifiable, and potentially correctable, error or anomaly in some of those elements now identified as aspects of that organic brain."⁵ Psychopathology becomes an anomaly classified as a chemical disorder of the brain to be corrected by therapeutic intervention from pharmacology. It is this doctrine of molecular monotheism that now directs the psychiatric gaze to the virtual exclusion of all other approaches.

Rose sees this change in therapeutic outlook as "a shift in human ontology—in the kinds of persons we take ourselves to be. It entails a new way of seeing, judging, and acting upon human normality and abnormality. It enables us to be governed in new ways. And it enables us to govern ourselves differently."⁵ Rose does not see this biological reductionism as a cause for concern or criticism; rather he views "our bodies becoming ourselves" as the grounds for a certain optimism: it is giving rise to a "somatic ethics," in which individuals are becoming more responsible for themselves and able to manage their own affairs.

On the one hand, our vitality has been opened up as never before for economic exploitation and the extraction of biovalue, in a new bioeconomics that alters our very conception of ourselves in the same moment that it enables us to intervene upon ourselves in new ways. On the other hand, our somatic, corporeal neurochemical individuality has become opened up to choice, prudence, and responsibility, to experimentation, to contestation, and so to a politics of life itself.⁵

While this grounding of personhood in the physicality of corporeal existence is seen by many to be a positive development, the "flattening out" of the psyche and the biological reduction of personhood to molecules is more menacing, with implications for collective soul-loss and profit-driven corporate manipulation on an even more profound and global scale than at present, as the "new style of thought" spreads throughout contemporary culture. Oxford University's *Institute for the Future of the Mind*, for example, makes a clear and unequivocal statement about how the "mind" is formed by brain activity.

The brain is the most dynamic, individual, and vulnerable part of the human body. Although we are born with almost all of the brain cells we will ever have, it is the growth of connections between neurons that accounts for the physical growth of the brain after birth.

Importantly, these connections are highly determined by individual experience and change throughout life. This "plasticity" enables us to move from a view of the world through primary sensation to building our own interpretations in the light of previous experiences. *It is this continuous personalisation of the brain, through individual experience and the development of belief systems, that forms the "mind."*⁶ (Emphasis added)

Similarly, a walk through the Who am I? gallery of the Science Museum in the UK's London borough of Kensington reveals the same "new style of thought" about human identity.

Funded by the Wellcome Trust, the gallery is full of pithy blandishments coaxing parents and children, and innocent others, gazing at prominent slogans and amusing interactive showcases, into believing their minds and identities arise from no more than the mechanical firing of their brain cells. Take, for example, Showcase 14: "Who do you think you are?"

The human brain is a thinking machine with 100 billion nerve cells and 100 trillion connections. This mysterious device creates memories, sparks moments of genius and makes sense of what you see, touch and hear.

And Showcase 11: What do you think you are?"

Three pounds of wrinkly, grey flesh... *Scientists now know* that our thoughts, feelings, memories and reason all emerge from the brain. People used to believe that their heart was the seat of their identity. Do you feel your brain is what makes you you? (Emphasis added)

The emergent utopia inhabited by our brain-based, neurochemical selves may even promise eternal life through genetic manipulation.

Advances in genetics and medical technologies are already saving, improving and lengthening lives. But where might this research eventually lead? Some creatures, such as jellyfish, appear never to age. By studying their genetic make-up, scientists might reveal how we could have not only healthy but potentially never-ending lives.⁷

Thousands of visitors to London's Science Museum read this material, day in, day out, month after month. Yet this myopic molecular fantasy—especially the absurdity of extrapolating from seemingly ageless jellyfish to everlasting life in an unaging human body—goes unquestioned. Taken to an extreme, the vision becomes dangerous: scientists today believe they have the means to engage in "neurotechnological mind-reading." The human psyche becomes irrelevant when technologies like functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) are used "to enter and read the contents of the human mind via its cerebral activities."

The possibilities of neurotechnological mind-reading that we have today allow access to mental states without 1st person overt external behavior or speech.

With the advancement of decoders of cerebral activity (and also of other non-cerebral markers of inner thought) it is very likely that in the near future we will see a rapid progression in the capacity to observe—without mediation of language—contents of the others' mind... we might be able to efficiently use a subject's cerebral cortex for rapid object recognition, even when the subject is not aware of having seen the recognized object. This may be extended as a great promise to the domain of dreams, to observe in real time the content of a visual narrative during sleep.⁸

The ethical menace of this brave new world is plain to see. While the privacy and integrity of selfhood are clearly under threat from the application of so-called neurotechnological "mind-reading," the promotion of this neurotechnology as a means of mapping "identity" inevitably leads scientists into the moral maze of genetic modification and the molecular

manipulation of what they believe to be a person's essential (even if neurological) self. The pharmaceutical industry also has much to gain by eliminating the psyche—along with the psychotherapist—in order to treat mental problems directly as disorders of brain chemistry through the sale and use of their drugs.

“YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A PACK OF NEURONS”

This brain idolatry and the brain's appropriation of personhood has been vigorously criticized by Oxford philosopher, Peter Hacker, as a symptom of widespread conceptual confusion amongst the neuroscientific community at large, with leading researchers committing major category errors and, basically, talking nonsense.

On the current neuroscientist's view, it is the brain that thinks and reasons and calculates and believes and fears and hopes. In fact, it is human beings who do all these things, not their brains and not their minds. I don't think it makes any sense at all to talk about the brain engaging in psychological or mental operations.⁹

For Hacker, mind is a capacity not an entity, and it is a mistake to be “reifying the mind.” He follows Aristotle in seeing “the mind... as an array of powers or potentialities.” To do so would prevent us getting “enmeshed in insoluble problems of interaction. For it patently makes no sense to ask how one's abilities to do the various things one can do interact with one's brain.”¹⁰

This view is endorsed by the distinguished British biologist, Denis Noble, who sees “the self” as an integrative construct or process rather than a neurological object. He, too, believes that “the self” belongs to a different category or semantic domain than the scientific study of the brain:

At the level of neurons and parts of the brain, what we normally mean by self, that is you and me, is more like a process than an object.

But when we start talking about the location of the self, we are talking about a person. Such talk belongs to a context in which it makes sense to refer to persons. It leads to semantic confusions to recast these as questions about locations in the brain.¹¹

Both Noble and Hacker point out that neuroscientists can only discover *correlations* between neural states and consciousness, and it is a mistake to ascribe causation of our states of mind to the brain. The brain makes conscious thought possible, but it does not *in itself* think or feel anymore than it can go for a walk. As Bennett and Hacker¹² point out, “We are human beings, and we do not live in our skulls but in our dwellings.”

One of the most extreme formulations of reductionist materialism was expounded by Sir Francis Crick, Nobel prize-winner for his co-discovery of the structure of DNA. In his book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search For The Soul*, Crick outlined his view with this famous statement:

‘You,’ your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As

Lewis Carroll's Alice might have phrased it: ‘You're nothing but a pack of neurons.’ This hypothesis is so alien to the ideas of most people today that it can truly be called astonishing.¹³

In a certain sense, the title of Crick's book is misleading: his radical reductionism was not a “hypothesis” at all, for it could be neither verified nor falsified; rather, it was a point of view, an ontological assumption that had become dogma. Nor is it “astonishing” in terms of novelty, for as Peter Hacker and his co-author, physiologist Max Bennett, point out in their magisterial critique, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*, “it was already propounded in Epicurean atomist form in the first century BC by Lucretius in his great poem *De Rerum Natura*. In somewhat different forms, it was defended by Gassendi and Hobbes in the seventeenth century, and by La Mettrie, Diderot and d'Holbach in the eighteenth.”¹⁴

Crick presumably felt that it was “astonishing” because it does not “come easily to believe that I am the detailed behaviour of a set of nerve cells.” But Bennett and Hacker are not astonished, and they simply draw attention to the basic assumptions of his position.

This conception appears to be a form of *ontological reductionism*, inasmuch as it holds that one kind of entity is, despite appearances to the contrary, actually no more than a structure of other kinds of entity. Side by side with the ontological reductionism, Crick also defends a form of *explanatory reductionism*: “The scientific belief is that our minds—the behaviour of our brains—can be explained by the interactions of nerve cells (and other cells) and the molecules associated with them.”¹⁴

Bennett and Hacker illustrate how pervasive this view—that our actions and experience are the products of our brains—has become amongst the purveyors and consumers of both “hard” and popular science; and they expose the articles of faith held by most scientists as being unscientific. “Such assertions as these—namely, that human beings are machines, or that behaviour of a human being is no more than the behaviour of their nerve cells, or that decisions are taken in and (apparently) by the brain—are *not science but metaphysics*.”¹⁴ (Emphasis added)

In neuroscience, there is an unquestioned assumption that the results of research into the activities of the brain can be translated into the language of human experience and behavior and can *explain* that behavior. A new kind of animism prevails in which the brain “knows” or “wants” or “decides” or “thinks.” For Bennett and Hacker,¹⁴ this is nonsense and they go to great lengths to show how the brain cannot be the subject of psychological attributes: “It is not the brain that is conscious or unconscious, but the person whose brain it is.” They give a detailed example of how illogical this confused thinking about the brain and identity can be: “If I were, *per impossible*, an embodied brain, then I would have a body—just as the Cartesian embodied mind has a body. But I would not have a brain, since brains do not have brains.”¹⁵

Bennett and Hacker's exposure of the unscientific basis to the supposedly “hard scientific” outlook in much of contemporary neuroscience, along with its animistic ascription of human qualities and faculties to the brain and its parts, is

withering. A long line of distinguished neuroscientists and some philosophers are exposed for their failure to both abandon the structural dualism inherited from Descartes, updated as “crypto-Cartesian” “brain/body dualism,” and also to establish, as a precondition for scientific investigation, “the question of sense.” Without general agreement amongst scientists “on what *counts* as a manifestation of consciousness,” they will hardly be in a position to identify what they are investigating or to be able to communicate their results.

Similarly, in their discussion of vision, Bennett and Hacker agree that the discoveries of neuroscience have helped us to understand the neural substrate and processes that are the necessary precondition for the experience of seeing. Yet again, they emphasize that it is not the brain that has the experience but the *person* (or “animal” in their terminology).

The truly impressive discoveries in visual theory explain the neural processes requisite for an *animal* to see, not for a brain to see. And the explanations do not bridge or purport to bridge any gulf between brain processes and consciousness, for the existence of a *gulf* is an illusion.¹⁵

BEYOND THE BRAIN

While Bennet and Hacker see the gap between brain and consciousness as an illusion for linguistic and semantic reasons, and the neuroscientists see it as non-existent because they have conflated the two realms and squeezed out psyche or soul, Nobel prize-winning neurobiologist, George Wald, expresses humility in the face of the mystery of consciousness.

I have spent most of my scientific life studying the mechanism of vision...

One can put together everything we have learned, and add to it everything that workers in this area hope to learn; and none of it comes anywhere near, or even aims in the direction of *what it means to see*.

That is the problem of consciousness...

Seeing—the event in consciousness—seems to lie in another universe, unapproachable by science.¹⁶

This sense of mystery is echoed more explicitly in American anthropologist Richard Grossinger’s speculation about “the template” for the miracle of biological growth:

Our basis is completely mysterious—don’t try to tell me that the impetus holding fetal phases together, gluing tissues into functional sheets, transmuting meridians into metabolic series and fractal organ fields, sage to each lineage and life form, is mere DNA flow, valence, and shear force twirling randomly under gravity and heat. There is a template, somewhere, beyond thermodynamics, an esoteric intelligence is mirroring, lasering two and three dimensions back and forth through one another until crystals cake into banks of nerves.

Doth a ghost dwell inside the living machine? Absolutely.¹⁷

George Wald is emphatic that the “somewhere” of this template, the source of “the event in consciousness” cannot be approached by science:

... science has no way to approach consciousness. It lies in another sphere from what we call physical reality,

congruent in part with it, yet distinct from it, and projecting far beyond; beyond physics into metaphysics, intuition, emotions, imagination, dreams, perhaps much more.

Science tells us nothing about consciousness, nor does it promise ever to do so.

Metaphysics is the sky over the sea of physics, not only what we know in physics, but what we are likely ever to find out as physics.¹⁸

Wald’s “event in consciousness”—in his example, “seeing”—*does* lie in another universe, or “in another sphere” to the physical, or rather, perhaps more precisely, it lies in another dimension or *realm*, the transcendent or imaginal realm, “congruent in part with material reality,” through which that unique function of the human animal—“the production and condensation of ideas”—is expressed. For philosopher and psychonaut, Terence McKenna, “the very fact that a primate has left the ordinary pattern of primate activity and gone into the business of running stock markets and molecular biology labs and art museums indicates to me the nearby presence in another dimension of a kind of *hyper organizing force*, or what I call the transcendental object”¹⁹ (emphasis added). He observes, “There is below the ordinary surface of space and time, ruled by relativistic physics,... this strange domain of instantaneous connectivity of all matter, of all phenomena.”²⁰ This domain is also Grossinger’s “Big Mind” where there is a fusing of mind and matter:

The original healing modality is Big Mind—a configuration-space of phase transitions expressing the core gene–cell–cosmos function and generating a biosphere of coevolving hypercubes cascading epigenetically.

Mere thought can be the most powerful medicine of all, for mindedness and cellularity are different octaves of the same original state, vibrations of the same wave form.

Big Mind is always present as an activating force in organismic state change... Big Mind is as much a fact of nature as water or *roches moutonnées*, those immense glacial boulders on the tundra of little mind.²¹

Big Mind as a fact of nature is very much akin to the lyrical phenomenology of philosopher and ecologist David Abram, who seeks to expand and re-unite human consciousness with the wider, deeper consciousness of the Earth. He asks:

What if mind is not ours, but is Earth’s? What if mind, rightly understood, is not a special property of humankind, but rather a property of the Earth itself—a power in which we are carnally immersed?²²

In placing human consciousness within Earth’s consciousness, as a manifestation of Earth’s consciousness, Abram²² is seeking to heal “the painful split” caused by the neglect of “our carnal entanglement with this immense Presence.”

... or shall we finally heal that age-old wound by acknowledging Earth’s implicit involvement in all our experience—as the solid ground that supports all our certainties, and the distant horizon that provokes all our dreams?²²

For Abram, mind is clearly not exclusively human, a private possession residing inside one's head, and he draws attention to the difference between "alphabetic" civilizations in which the net of literacy has trapped and confined the collective mind, cutting it off from Earth's embrace, and oral cultures:

While there may indeed be an interior quality to the mind, for a deeply oral culture this interiority derives not from a belief that the mind is located within us, but from a felt sense that we are located *within it*, carnally immersed in an awareness that is not ours, but is rather the Earth's.²²

This humility in the face of the vastness of creation, with its endless fertility, and an awareness of the mystery of existence, is an essential first step toward restoring a balanced relationship with the Earth. That realm—the human and "more-than-human" imaginal realm—is *real* and interpenetrates all aspects of life, giving it life and meaning; and while it may not be approachable by science, it has been approached since the dawn of time by human beings in the guise of artist, seer, and especially the shaman, who has undertaken the magical flight into other potent worlds on behalf of their tribe.

The pre-eminently shamanic technique is the passage from one cosmic region to another—from earth to sky or from earth to the underworld. The shaman knows the mystery of the break-through in plane.²³

The word *shaman* comes from the Tungus tribe of Siberia and means "one who sees in the dark" or "one who knows." Shamanic peoples have always known that there are other worlds, or dimensions of life, which permeate or interpenetrate our own ordinary everyday reality. To the average person, these worlds are invisible or "dark," populated by spiritual forces and beings that cannot be perceived by our normal senses. The shaman, however, is someone who has opened the inner eye, who can "see."

The shamanic cosmos is both intimate and immanent in that it embraces and interpenetrates the physical space we live in. But it is also transcendent—hidden and remote—for it is only accessible to those gifted with special vision or the ability to journey into it. This paradox represents not so much a misalignment between these worlds as in our consciousness of them, so that for visionaries like William Blake experience of this dimension of existence, which he called Imagination, was immediate, all-encompassing and direct.

Philosopher and theologian, Henry Corbin, describes this realm of Imagination as the *mundus imaginalis*, the "imaginal world," contrasting it with the "imaginary" to make it absolutely clear that he is not referring to "just the imagination" as we understand it: "Let me again emphasize that what is involved is not imagination as we understand it in our present-day language, but a *vision*, which is *Imaginatio vera*."²⁴ This means *True Imagination*. Like the shaman, the Persian mystics discussed by Corbin²⁴ enter *real* worlds that are eclipsed in waking life: "It must be stressed that the world into which these Oriental theosophers probed is perfectly real. Its reality is more irrefutable and more coherent than

that of the empirical world, where *reality* is perceived by the senses."

This reality knows no limits, it is infinite and eternal, beyond time and space. As McKenna points out, "What is perceived in the imagination is that which is not local. And can never be." He continues, "... in one sense asking the question 'What is the imagination?' is a different way of asking the same question 'What is the origin of consciousness?'"²⁵

George Wald's answer to this question highlights the mystery of consciousness. Yet he too gave the question further careful and deep thought, overcoming his "scientific sensibilities" to take the "next step" and realize the primacy of consciousness—that "the stuff of this universe is ultimately mind stuff."

... a universe that in any way can breed minds and so begin to know itself, one must concede to be at its core, from its inception, in some sense if only potentially, a *knowing* universe.

That thought has led me to take the next step. It came to me quite lately, as a new and extraordinary idea, both tempting and repellent, since it shocked my scientific sensibilities. Then I realized with some embarrassment that many others had been there before—not only mystics, over past millennia, but also a few most thoughtful physicists quite recently.

It is the view that, just the contrary of consciousness first appearing as a late outgrowth of the evolution of life on this and other planets, that this universe breeds life and consciousness because consciousness is its source, because the stuff of this universe is ultimately mind-stuff.²⁶

Wald discovered that he was not alone amongst great thinkers and scientists in his shocking realization about the primacy of consciousness and the nature of the universe. His was just one, admittedly important, voice proclaiming a timeless, eternal dimension to the mind. It is as if the trend toward the reduction of mind to molecules, and the dissolution of the soul, has been an aberration in human thought and culture, spawned by the hubris of philosophers and scientists trapped in the rigid paralysis of extreme rationalism.

ONLY ONE MIND

Lest the idea of a unitary, group, or universal mind be dismissed as new-age woo-woo, we should note that some of the most distinguished scientists of the 20th century have endorsed this perspective. Nobel physicist Erwin Schrödinger also believed that minds are united and one... "In truth there is only one mind."^{27,28}

The primacy and universality of consciousness as the ultimate ground of reality has been a basic tenet of all religions throughout history; yet most scientists today, not just neuroscientists, would claim that the brain itself actually produces consciousness, which is a purely "local" human phenomenon—consciousness cannot exist beyond the brain. As we have seen, confining and reducing mind and consciousness to the firing of brain cells is conceptually incoherent, but

it also *does not fit the facts*. The “non-locality” of mind has been advocated for over a century now by a number of pioneering thinkers and leading scientists; and there is now a vast body of empirical research showing how mind can act way beyond the bounds of the brain.

One example of non-local mind in action is precognition. In his landmark book, *The Power of Premonition: How Knowing the Future Can Shape Our Lives* (2009), American physician, writer and key advocate of the role of consciousness and spirituality in healing, Larry Dossey, builds on the evidence presented in his earlier books like *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine* (1993) and *Healing Beyond the Body* (2001) to present a mass of experimental research data demonstrating the non-locality of mind.

Hundreds of studies on “precognitive remote viewing,” performed at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Lab and elsewhere, indicate that individuals can presage detailed events up to a week before they occur. Psi researchers Charles Honorton and Diane Ferrari, for example, examined 309 precognition experiments carried out by 62 investigators, involving 50,000 participants in more than 2 million trials. The odds that these results were not due to chance were greater than 10^{12} to 1. That’s like flipping seventy coins and having all of them come down heads!²⁹

Premonitions are real and not uncommon: they can happen in dreams and also when awake, through a hunch, an intuition, or gut feeling. Premonitions can have survival value, such as sensing danger around a corner on the road and slowing the car down in time to avoid an accident or canceling a plane on the day it crashes. Premonitions also suggest that we actually inhabit McKenna’s “strange domain of instantaneous connectivity of all matter, of all phenomena.” As Dossey points out: “Premonitions suggest that we are linked with every other consciousness that has existed, does exist, or will exist, that we are part of something larger than the individual self.”²⁹

Other scientists to endorse this understanding about universal mind include physicist David Bohm who said: “Each person enfolds something of the spirit of the other in his consciousness. Deep down, the consciousness of mankind is one. This is a virtual certainty... and if we don’t see this it’s because we are blinding ourselves to it.”³⁰ Dossey lists several more free-thinking scientists including the following:

Anthropologist and psychologist Gregory Bateson: “The individual mind is immanent but not only in the body. It is immanent also in the pathways and messages outside the body; and there is a larger Mind of which the individual mind is only a sub-system...”³¹ Physicist Henry Margenau: “There is a physical reality that is in essence the same for all... {This} oneness of the all implies the universality of mind...”³² “If my conclusions are correct, each individual is part of God or part of the Universal Mind.”³²

As Dossey points out, these eminent scientists “did not arrive at their conclusions in fever dreams, but by a careful analysis of evidence and experience. Yet there is a near-total blackout within current science toward these views and the

abundant evidence supporting them.”³³ The reductionist dogma is deeply ingrained and science relies very much on consensus, a shared understanding about reality. Also, jobs are at stake if fundamental assumptions are questioned and alternatives raised.

In 1989, Dossey introduced the term “nonlocal mind” in his book *Recovering the Soul* because of the abundant evidence supporting this view of consciousness, and since then the evidence has continued to accumulate. He is also passionate about why nonlocal mind matters.

The street meaning of nonlocal is, literally, not local. If something is nonlocal, it is not localized or confined to a specific place in space and time, as mentioned. Nonlocal, therefore, is another word for *infinite*. The implications for consciousness are profound, for if something is nonlocal or infinite in space, it is omnipresent, and if nonlocal or infinite in time, it is eternal or immortal.³⁴

While some may object that nonlocality is strictly a term applied by physicists to a class of events relating to the speed of light, Dossey points out that physicists do not own nonlocality, nor do they have a monopoly on nonlocal events and the language used to describe them. From time immemorial, long before the invention of quantum mechanics in the 20th century, people have routinely experienced nonlocal manifestations of consciousness and “we are not obliged to cede nonlocality to scientists who have chosen to nuance the term differently.”³⁴

In striking contrast with materialism’s local view of consciousness, the idea of nonlocal mind affirms ancient concepts such as *soul*, *spirit*, and *Buddha nature* that designate an ongoing something that survives the death of the physical body. In short, nonlocal mind not only makes room for immortality, it mandates it. Why? Temporal nonlocality does not mean “for quite a while” or “a long time,” but *infinitude* in time: eternity or immortality.³⁴

Dossey illustrates the prejudice amongst some scientists against even the possibility that a nonlocal, immortal quality of consciousness might be proved to exist.

Around 1900, a leading American biologist insisted to Harvard psychologist William James, “Even if such a thing [immortality] were true, scientists ought to band together to keep it suppressed and concealed. It would undo the uniformity of Nature and all sorts of other things without which scientists cannot carry on their pursuits.”

The result of this paranoid point of view, in the opinion of many, has been disastrous. As author George Orwell put it, “The major problem of our time is the decay of belief in personal immortality.” This is not admitted within science. Even addressing the topic of immortality in many scientific circles is considered a sign of intellectual weakness or of “going mystic.”³⁴

However, it is vital that this prejudice is overcome. For Dossey warns, “Make no mistake: the fear of death is humanity’s Great Disease, the terror that has caused more suffering throughout history than all the physical diseases combined. Nonlocal mind is a Great Cure for this affliction,

because it assures us that the most essential aspect of who we are cannot die, even though the physical body perishes.”³⁴

As we shall see, this realm of nonlocal mind being revealed by progressive science has long been known and revealed as Imagination by visionaries and mystics, and it also embraces the state of being into which we move beyond death.

IMAGINATION AND METAPHOR

Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away.

—Philip K. Dick.³⁵

George Wald³⁶ was bold enough to assert: “I do not need spiritual enlightenment to know that... I am one with the universe. That is just good physics.” Yet he candidly “confessed” that despite a lifetime working on the mechanism of vision, he and all others working in this field are nowhere near understanding “what it means to see” since “seeing—the event in consciousness—seems to lie in another universe.”

Perhaps this is because science has to deal only with a universe that can be measured; that “event in consciousness” is immaterial and cannot be measured. What enables us to “see” exists within a qualitatively different dimension of immaterial mind or spirit—it is *another order of existence*. This is the realm of William Blake’s Imagination: for Blake, Imagination was central—it was divine: “Imagination is nothing less than God as he operates in the human soul. It follows that any act of creation performed by the imagination is divine and that in the imagination man’s spiritual nature is fully and finally realized.”³⁷

For Henri Corbin, this other order of existence is *mundus imaginalis*: like Blake’s Imagination it is a timeless realm of existence that impinges upon the reality of physical life but which is both primary and primal, both an interior and anterior realm from which passing time and incarnation originate. Neither of these realms are imaginary in the sense of being “just in the imagination,” as when we are talking about something that is “not real.”

British philosopher, Owen Barfield, as a “prophet of the New Consciousness,” gives us a clear indication of some of the qualities of this realm:

... there is a dimension of mind, a reaction to experience that we can only describe in terms of conscious mind, but that is sharply cut off from our self-consciousness and yet is not entirely irrelevant to it. It is a realm that is governed by quite different laws from those which we recognize and obey in our conscious waking lives. There is a threshold between the two worlds, but we cross it in sleep, and in our remembered dreams we even bring back, though usually in an unintelligible form, something of the goings on upon that further side of it. That the being called man spends about one-third of his time asleep is a fact that for centuries had been simply ignored by Western philosophy and psychology, though the business of that philosophy and especially of that psychology had been to determine the nature of man.³⁸

This “dimension of mind” may also be understood as the source of the most profound, mystical revelations and even as giving access to the ineffable “luminosity,” the ground of all existence. The German-born American political philosopher, Eric Voegelin saw consciousness as a “luminous” center, not an “intentional” one, as argued by phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Philosopher Barry Cooper outlines Voegelin’s thought on luminosity: “Human beings... participate in reality and are aware of their participation, though imperfectly. As humans undertake to clarify their participation they are also aware of what Voegelin... called ‘luminosity’... In its simplest sense, to say that consciousness is ‘illuminated’ means it is ‘experienceable from within’ and the process of self-reflection by which consciousness becomes aware of itself as experienced from within or as ‘luminous’ is not ‘a flight of imagination... The effort of self-reflection is real.’”³⁹

It is this luminous, immaterial, spiritual dimension that gives rise to the material world; it is the source of meaning, a dimension infused with metaphor, but not metaphor as a linguistic device. Rather it is metaphor almost like a living force or energy that can determine both the qualities and structures of civilizations and also the experiences of individuals.

Metaphor is a way of knowing—one of the oldest, most deeply embedded, even indispensable ways of knowing in the history of human consciousness. It is, at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown. It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us.⁴⁰

Metaphor is an immaterial force originating from the imaginal realm, rising up and out, almost like a solar wind from the radiant Imagination. It does not just belong to poetry or religion or art: “... metaphor also belongs to philosophy and even science... The difference between scientist and artist has little to do with the ways of creative imagination; everything to do with the manner of demonstration and verification of what has been seen or imagined.”⁴⁰

It is within this realm of metaphor and imagination that ideas are formed that enable us to “see.” As psychologist James Hillman points out, “Ideas give us eyes, let us see.” Ideas, from the metaphorical, luminous realm, literally enlighten us and change what we see in physical reality.

Our word *idea* comes from the Greek *eidos*, which meant originally in early Greek thought, and as Plato used it, both *that which one sees*—an appearance or shape in a concrete sense—and *that by means of which one sees*. We see them, and by means of them. Ideas are both the shape of events, their constellation in this or that archetypal pattern, and the modes that make possible our ability to see through events into their pattern...⁴¹

For Hillman there is no raw perception—without ideas we cannot “see” even what we sense with the eyes in our heads. Particular ideas shape our perceptions. “Once we considered the world flat and now we consider it round; once we observed the sun rotate around the earth, and now we observe

the earth turn around the sun; our eyes and their perceptions did not change with the Renaissance.” What have changed is our ideas not our perception, and as our ideas change so does what we “see.” And as an idea is “the eye of the soul” (Plato), so ideas change as changes take place in the soul.

Therefore *the soul reveals itself in its ideas*, which are not “just ideas” or “just up in the head,” and may not be “pooh-poohed” away, since they are the very modes through which we are envisioning and enacting our lives. We embody them as we speak and move. We are always in the embrace of an idea...⁴¹ (Emphasis added)

Hillman is indirectly saying that George Wald’s mystery of seeing is inapproachable by science since *it is a function of the soul*—“the soul reveals itself in its ideas.” The soul clearly exists on the other side of the threshold, in the realm of Imagination and within the luminosity of Big Mind. Like “seeing,” the soul is also inapproachable by science, yet it is “congruent” with our everyday reality, literally in-forming and infusing it constantly with life and meaning. Paradoxically, it is *closer* than can be known by science.

Hillman⁴¹ writes of “the soul’s desire for light, like the moth for the flame.” As we have seen, there is an inner luminosity that radiates from every human being, which is close to both William Blake’s and Corbin’s Imagination. Both are originative forces or internal powers arising from the ground of existence and timelessness of eternity; and as Grossinger reminds us: *Light is more than light. It is revelation.*⁴²

Blake even considers, at times, Imagination to contain all of existence: “For All Things Exist in the Human Imagination.”⁴³ As a timeless sphere, he also considers Imagination to be the place where we go after death: “This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity it is the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body.”⁴³ Corbin⁴⁴ shares the same view: “The first postulate is that this Imagination must be a purely spiritual faculty, independent of the physical organism and therefore able to continue to exist after the latter has disappeared.”

Both of these visionaries are describing Dossey’s nonlocal dimension, the timeless realm and the “Cure” for humanity’s “Great Disease,” the fear of death. If the purpose of the universe is consciousness, then that purpose prevails, regardless of a few hundred years during which the human mind has shut out that knowledge.

Wald has written, “It is clear to many thoughtful persons by now that our society has taken a wrong turn... If we are to survive there must be fundamental changes in direction, not only organizational, but in our ways of thinking. We have to think different thoughts and to want different things.”⁴⁵ The different thoughts we have to think are those which restore our sanity about who we are and our relationship with the cosmos. For example, Abram⁴⁶ remarks, “... clearly there’s something about the psyche that exceeds us and overflows all our knowings, confounding every notion of mind as a self-contained space within our head.”

Once we accept that mind exceeds the brain, that we are embedded within Earth’s Mind, and ultimately within the “One Mind,”⁴⁷ there may dawn a certain sense that “... it is not so much a matter of what we think, but *what thinks us*”⁴⁸

Through a visionary participatory knowing, through understanding that the *soul* is what makes us human; that mind is universal and extensive—both in and out of time, we may come to understand what a Bushman hunter once told Laurens van der Post,⁴⁹ that “... there is a dream dreaming us.”

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