

The Transcending Nature of Consciousness

A Synthesis

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Abstract

There is a growing number of accumulated facts that suggest that there is an aspect of consciousness/mind that can extend and/or, in some cases, exist independently from a physical organism. The evidence does not easily fit into the current materialistic paradigm of modern science. For this reason *it* is regarded with considerable suspicion. In spite of this, the body of evidence that sustains this hypothesis has been growing in relative silence during the past two Centuries. Cartesian dualism has, on one hand, allowed science to develop independently from Church doctrine. But, on the other hand, dualism has indirectly forced science to develop a purely mechanic and materialistic world view. Today, any experience that contradicts this dogmatic world view is met with fierce skepticism. In spite of that, there is little reason to believe that this *new* body of evidence will not be incorporated into mainstream science, at some point in the future. Currently there are a number of scientific societies attempting to reconcile materialism with metaphysical experiences. To name but a few of these institutes there is the *Scientific and Medical Network* in England, *The Institute for Noetic Sciences* in the United States, the *Society for Scientific Exploration*, the *International Society for the Study of Subtle Energy*, *Energy Medicine* and many others. In addition there is much published work that deals with some of these metaphysical (beyond physical) phenomenon. Among these, Dr. Michael Newton's case studies of *Life Between Lives* and Dr. Ian Stevenson's two-thousand-five-hundred case studies of the *reincarnation style* cumulating in twelve published books including *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. Today theoretical Physics has reached a point that truly blurs the lines between reality and fantasy. The advent of String Theory, Multi Verse theory and Quantum Mechanics has literally revolutionized our understanding and view of the world. As science gains further insight into the inner workings of the cosmos, biology and chemistry they increasingly encounter systems of irreducible complexity. The persistent discovery of *order* from the smallest biological divisions to the grander arches of outer space in our Universe has lead many scientist to seriously entertain the idea of a metaphysical reality and even potential an intelligent design, of some sort, over chaotic chance evolution.

Introduction

In this paper I will develop a working theory for *The Transcending Nature of Consciousness*, its implications and mechanics.

1. To begin, I will take you on a tour of antiquity; we will explore the mystical teachings of the ancients through the Platonists, Pythagoreans, Ancient Mystery Schools, Gnostics and build our way to modernity through the Rosicrucians. On the other side of the world we will take a look at Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism and the ever present theory of Reincarnation. Once the two world views have been satisfactory presented we will then take a brief look at Kabbalah , and certain Sufi traditions in order to unite the two world views through their common similarities and beliefs; hence searching for a synchronistic world view as opposed to a culturally subjective one.

2. From here I will present a critique of the phenomenon known as *lucid dreaming*. From there I will present a second critique for the increasingly popular phenomenon known as *Astral Projection*, and attempt to use the tools of reason to differentiate between the Dreamworld and Reality.

3. Last but not least a look at String Theory is required in order to present a scientific and workable mainstream framework for these experiences. Indeed for the first time ever modern Science meets Mysticism; the two might in the end speak of the one and same thing, differing only in their approach.

Ancient Accounts of the Reincarnation Type

It is said that the Greek legacy to philosophy is *philosophy*. Philosophy, as we understand it today, is now understood to have been present in many ancient cultures. In the West, however, few names have casted their shadow onto this field to the extent that Socrates, the famous barefooted teacher of Plato, has. Socrates has influenced philosophy to the extent that all philosophy before him is today known as *preSocratic philosophy i.e., the philosophy that was done before Socrates*. Socrates needs little introduction. He is known as an eccentric; a rebel of sorts. He was put on trial on charges of atheism and corrupting the youth. This much is well established. However, Socrates was anything but an atheist. He believed in a divine Creator and actively advocated the reality of the soul. Socratic metaphysics (elements of which are found throughout Plato's work) is a blend of many different ancient beliefs.

I would like to draw attention to the Republic, one of Plato's most popular works. The Republic focuses around two main points, Socrates and Justice. Socrates is the central figure of the work and the topic discussed, justice. Today the work is most popular in Political Science departments. But I argue that it should equally be so, if not more, in Metaphysics and Philosophy. For in this work many subtle hints are made about the immortal nature of consciousness. The most direct hint at this is made at the very end of the Republic in *The Myth of Er*:

[The story is an account of] a brave Pamphylian man called Er, the son of Armenias who once died in a war. When the rest of the dead were picked up ten days later, they were already putrefying, but when he was picked up, his corpse was still quite fresh...on the twelfth day, when he was already laid on the funeral pyre, he revived and, having done so, told what he had seen in the world beyond [The Republic, 1937, p., 285].

This account bares great similarity to a clinical phenomenon that is today known as a *Near-Death Experience*. This is one of the earliest accounts that we have regarding an NDE; one of mechanistic Science's many bastard children. Near-Death Experiences typically involve a clinical death *i.e: the end of all corporal activity, including brain activity*. The person that has died is then transported, as if pulled by an upward gravity force, from their material body. The

deceased then see their deceased body, their family, doctors, friends and geographical surroundings from an elevated vantage point, no pun intended. In some reports, the deceased achieve communication with other world beings that were not previously seen *i.e.*, *beings that do not belong to the here-now conscious state*. Resuscitation eventually takes place—sometimes as late as a week. Interestingly, when brought back, the deceased retains full memory of the experience; often being able to speak about things that s/he couldn't have known. Among these things are events that have occurred after their deaths, specific discussion and/or visual information, or even discussions that have occurred at great geographical distances from the physical location of their deceased body. In other words, in the cases of near-death experiences, it appears that the deceased can somehow transcend the physical body, at the moment of death, and exist independently, as pure consciousness, all the while maintaining at least two sensory abilities (seeing and hearing).

Currently there is no satisfactory scientific explanation for this phenomenon. No such explanation can be provided since current science is locked in a mechanistic and materialistic worldview. For this reason anything that transcends the physical body cannot be explained or taken seriously by current science. Materialistic science by definition strictly deals with the material aspect of reality. For this reason any explanation that is satisfactory to science, for any phenomenon, must have a physical root. Otherwise it would be as if a poet would try to use his ink to recreate a cherished moment. The recreation will always remain but a partiality of his true intention, unable to ever truly manifest.

Let us now return to the story of Er. Socrates tells us that after Er's soul had left him:

[I]t travelled together with many others until they came to a marvelous place where there were openings in the earth, and opposite and above them two others in the heavens, and between them judges sat [Republic, 1937, p., 285-286].

This part of the account also bears a striking similarity to modern accounts; often judges, or some form of judgement is described by Near-Death Experiencers. This is also a common religious theme in many world religions *i.e.*: Judgement. The main idea being that no action goes unrewarded. Interestingly, Near-Death Experiencers often report similar events, independent of

their world view. This is the very definition of objectivity *i.e.* *multiple independent reports of the same phenomenon.*

From this point onward, Socrates gives a detailed account of Er's journey. At this point the reader discovers that Er was sent to the other world as an observer and that he had to report back to earth on everything that he saw. In short, Er described the following:

(1) A form of Judgement of the deceased. (2) A punishment or reward based on 1. (3) The fulfillment of one's punishment 1 & 2. (4) The persistent attempt to enter heaven by the punished. (5) A period of time spent in either punishment or heaven. (6) The possibility of redemption, even for the cursed. (7) A cyclical nature of incarnation. (8) The choosing of a new life based on the drawing of lots. (9) The choosing of a guarding angel (Daimon). (10) The last night in the other world. (11) The river of forgetfulness. (12) And finally rebirth.

Based on the information that we have to deal with, it could be safely assumed that the Myth of Er, if not entirely at least partially, is a very detailed account of a Near-Death Experience. Similar accounts can be found in many different traditions. *The Myth of Er* is neither unique nor special; but seems to portray a commonality that is found throughout history in human experience.

To support this claim let us look at some popular ancient beliefs regarding reincarnation. The idea of reincarnation was central to Egyptian theology. The Pythagoreans also believed that human beings are trapped in a *wheel of birth*, a concept that is strikingly similar to *Dharma* in Buddhism and Hinduism. They believed that through the right practice of daily activity one can free her/himself from the cycle of reincarnation. These right actions often involved a series of purification rituals. The Pythagoreans offered three levels of existence, the highest being the life of a philosopher, the contemplative thinker [Burnet J. 1930, p., 187]. Each level of existence was seen as a phase in one's spiritual development.

The Gnostic also believed in the reincarnation of the soul. They depicted Creation as a hierarchy of existences each governed by its own spiritual world. Many of the previously unknown Gnostic works *The Gospel of Mary*, *The Gospel of Judas*, *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Truth* and *The Gospel of Philip* reveal a very different side of Jesus and his message. For example, in the *Gospel of Thomas* we see Jesus teaching reincarnation: *Watch and pray that*

you may not be born in the flesh, but that you may leave the bondage of this life [Book of Thomas the Contender 9:5]. Still further,

When you see your likeness, you are happy. But when you see your images that came into being before and that neither die nor become visible, how much you will bear! [Gospel of Thomas, saying 84].

In another recently discovered Gospel, the *Secret Book of John*, a river of forgetfulness is mentioned. The *river* is very similar to the one presented in *The Myth of Er*. The idea that the physical body is a prison for the soul bears striking similarity to many Pythagorean, Buddhist and Hindu beliefs. In the *Secret Book of John*, Jesus is asked how to redeem oneself from ignorance:

This soul needs to follow another soul in whom the Spirit of life dwells, because she is saved through the Spirit. The she will never be thrust into flesh again [Secret Book of John 14:20].

The idea idea that ignorance is *evil* and that one needs to redeem oneself from it is also found in Buddhism as well as Hinduism. The ceasing of earthly incarnation is likewise praised in both of these Eastern traditions.

Similarly the concept of Karma can be found in even older Western texts. For example, in the Wisdom of Solomon, we find the following verse: *I was given a sound body to live in because I was already good* [Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20]. Clearly implying life before birth. When the ancient teachings are closely examined a prevailing world view starts to emerge.

Unfortunately all accounts of Gnosticism seem to have mysteriously vanished from the pages of history from the 4th Century C.E. onward. The only accounts that we possessed prior to the discovery of the Gnostic texts are found in the early Church Fathers' literature, which was typically critical of Gnostic practices and beliefs.

After Christianity was standardized in 322 C.E, many competing beliefs were classified as heretical. Recent discoveries *e.g.*, *the lost Gnostic texts*, give us a glimpse into the multi-belief world that the early Christians lived in.

While the Catholic Church seems to have monopolized spiritual belief throughout much of the past 1600 years, a closer examination of history reveals that many contrary world-views still struggled and survived. For example, during the Middle-Ages a new form of Judaic mysticism, known as Kabbalah, had developed. This was but one of many underground schools that continued to advocate for the reality of reincarnation.

Medieval Kabbalah and Reincarnation

Kabbalah is an esoteric school of mysticism that developed during the Medieval ages. Kabbalah can also be seen as the metaphysical philosophy of Judaism, meant to explain the relation between the Creator and emanation (creation). Kabbalah *i.e.*, *to receive*, was traditionally kept behind closed doors. Only a select few had access to its teachings, and only after they had reached the age of maturity, forty years of age. In other words, Kabbalah was scarcely known to the Medieval world. Traditionally, Kabbalists believed that Moses received two different commands on Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments and *Hitbonenut* (the hidden teachings). *Hitbonenut* is believed to have been passed down orally only to a select group of few. Kabbalah is thus seen to be the philosophical embodiment of this second (hidden) teaching. Recently, however, places such as the *Kabbalah Center* in Los Angeles California, have openly endorsed and popularized the doctrine to a wider public. A decision that is still seen as controversial by orthodox Jewish communities.

According to the Zohar (Kabbalah's foundation text) the Torah has multiple levels of interpretation *Peshat* (literal), *Remez* (allegorical), *Derash* (imaginative and comparative) and *Sod* (the inner, esoteric and/or metaphysical). Different Kabbalist groups focus on different aspects of divination.

One of the most controversial teachings of Kabbalah is that of reincarnation. This teaching seems to go directly against the Torah and many basic Judaic principles. However, the Kabbalists insist that any deeper reading of the Torah will reveal the teaching of reincarnation. Interestingly, Kabbalists go as far as claiming that the soul does not depend upon a human body to live and can, and often does, incarnate into an animal, a plant or even an inanimate object. The

concept of inanimate incarnation has been long ridiculed by the West when first encountered in no other religion than Buddhism.

Because Kabbalah was developed in Europe, we can conclude that the teachings of reincarnation never truly left Europe; they were rather simply suppressed, hidden and/or neglected.

Contemporary Experiences of Reincarnation

In retrospect, it becomes clear that the ideas of reincarnation never truly left the West, but have always circulated in underground restricted circles away from the eyes of the church. Because the average Westerner was never fully exposed to these theories, and because the church achieved a monopoly on beliefs and ideas, it is understandable to see why so few historical accounts of sudden memory recall *i.e., children, or adults, remembering their past lives*, have been documented in that hemisphere of the planet. However, in today's world countless stories of children experiencing memory recall are being documented in Europe, Canada, Australia, the U.S, South America and even among Inuit and Siberian communities. These children typically begin remembering (or sharing) their memories at about the age of two (this is the age at which children typically begin to speak). Albeit, since children cannot speak earlier than this, it is possible that these children actively remember their past lives even before the age of two; but are unable to communicate their experiences. When these children begin recounting their past lives (how they died, lived, their antecedent family and events that could only have been known to the past persona) they are still often met with disbelief and suspicion in the West. In the Eastern traditions, on the other hand, where reincarnation is a dominant theology, these are considered to be truly special and/or gifted children. For example, the Dalai Lama had memory recall experiences when he was young and was able to name officials from distant villages, which he had never met in his current incarnation. This fact was used to reinforce his status, and not to diminish his credibility as a spiritual leader.

The West has been traditionally under the Judeo-Christian sphere of influence, and/or, more recently, under the intellectual grip of secular science. This heritage allows little room for reincarnation. Hence a child born in the West is often at odds with his/her parents' beliefs.

There are countless accounts of reincarnation in India; and an increasing number of reported accounts in the West. I believe that this is primarily due to the renewed interest in spirituality under the banner of the New Age Movement, an ever increasing skepticism against classical Church doctrine; as well as growing suspicion against the materialistic doctrine of science. The New Age phenomenon has also opened the door to alternative spiritual practices, that are no longer directly linked in the Judeo-Christian legacy. This development in spirituality has once again allowed for reincarnation and other, previously *heretical* or *unscientific* (cannot weigh, measure, or quantify) beliefs to take root in the West. The increasing number of documented cases of reincarnation in the West do not necessarily represent an increase in gifted children. Rather they represent a paradigm shift in Western mentality as a whole. It appears that previous non-reported experiences are now being increasingly advertised and discussed.

Science “The Skeptics”, and Ian Stevenson

Unfortunately, the Judeo-Christian tradition has been, and is being, replaced primarily by secularism—a belief system grounded in materialism. The scientific community has often expressed its doubts about reincarnation. These cases are very difficult to test; anything that cannot be adequately recorded by 21st Century machinery “probably does not exist”, (or so the rumor has it) and/or is challenged by skepticism *i.e.* *skepticism as a particular world view*. Science as a whole has adopted a Darwinian materialistic approach to consciousness. Hence the reason why a transcending view of consciousness would go directly against the current scientific world view, countless academics and their careers, as well as the vested interests in the current economic paradigm, be it Capitalistic or Communist. For this reason reincarnation is still an endangered worldview in the West.

Despite this unfortunate materialistic, and limited worldview, many acclaimed scientists have attempted to bring about a paradigm shift to their byzantinian restrictive field of study. In the field of reincarnation no other name stands out as much as that of Ian Stevenson, a Canadian biochemist and professor of psychiatry. Dr. Stevenson was the head of the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia School of Medicine; where he studied the paranormal. Dr. Stevenson believed that the concept of reincarnation might help explain certain aspects of human

behavior and development, otherwise known as *the problem of character*. His most famous, and controversial work, *Twenty Cases suggestive of Reincarnation* (1974) has generated much criticism, but also many positive reviews. To conduct his research, Dr. Stevenson traveled through Africa, Alaska, Europe, India North America, and South America. He reported that the children he studied in those places typically began remembering their past lives between the age of two and four. Accounts which bear striking similarities.

Some of the best evidence that he had collected was a mixture of both physical and testimonial evidence. In more than forty cases he gathered physical evidence (birth marks, or birth defects) which perfectly correlated with deformations and/or death, and non-death, injuries, with the child's respective past life [Ian Stevenson, 1992, p., 2]. Further, he determined that many character traits, as well as emotional predisposition strongly correlated with those of the deceased [Jim Tucker, 2002, p., 705-710]. His final conclusion was that the roughly three thousand or more cases that he studied were all *cases suggestive of reincarnation*, or *cases of the reincarnation type* [Shrodder Tom, 2007, p., 3]; and that some aspect of personality might be able to travel, through mechanisms still unknown, beyond physical death and return into a newly born, either at inception, birth or a later point in life. Dr. Stevenson took great care not to make any religious or metaphysical claims for obvious reasons.

Great Minds and Their Acute Interest In Parapsychology

A throughout examination of some of history's most important thinkers reveals an acute interest in paranormal, metaphysical and/or parapsychological matters.

Many of Antiquity's great minds were often associated with the renowned mystery schools. The Pythagoreans, as we have already seen, were one of the first groups to establish an esoteric school of thought. They were rumored to have derived some of their teachings directly from Egyptian schools of thought. Many Ancient Greek philosophers were known to be members of the Pythagorean school.

Later on in history the Rosicrucian Order was closely followed by Paracelsus, Bacon, Fludd, Descartes, Pascal, Spinoza, Newton and Leibniz. Many of these figures also wrote

extensively on supernatural topics. For example, it is a well known fact that Newton spent more time researching alchemy, and writing or discussing spirituality, than he did Mathematics.

Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-founder of Darwinian evolution, spent the great deal of his life researching spirituality; later concluding that he could no longer remain a skeptic due to all the evidence that he had amassed regarding the existence of a higher consciousness.

Closer to our age, many of the pioneers of science were heavily involved with *esoteric* or *paranormal* practices. For example, Marie Curie and her husband, after having concluded their work on radiation and sharing the Noble Prize, continued their work in Paris researching parapsychology. Pierre Curie later reported:

We had at the Psychology Society a few séances with the medium Eusapia Palladino. It was very interesting, and truly those phenomena that we have witnessed seemed to us to not be some magical tricks—a table lifted four feet above the floor, movements of objects, feelings of hands that pinched you or caressed you, apparitions of light. All this in a room arranged by us, with a small number of spectators all well known and without the presence of a possible accomplice. The only possible cheating would be an extraordinary ability of the medium as a magician. But how to explain the different phenomena when we are holding her hands and legs, and the lighting of the room is sufficient to see everything going on? [Michael A. Cremo, 1996].

In a later letter Mr. Curie wrote:

We had a few new séances with Eusapia... Those phenomena exist for real, and I can't doubt it any more. It is unbelievable but it is thus, and it is impossible to negate it after the séances that we had in conditions of perfect monitoring. [Cremona, 1996].

Charles Richet, also a Nobel Prize winner, also participated with the Curies in their paranormal investigations. Here is one of his accounts:

It took place at the Psychological Institute at Paris. There were present only Mme. Curie, Mme. X., a Polish friend of hers, and P. Courtier, the secretary of the Institute. Mme Curie was on Eusapia's left, myself on her right, Mme. X, a little farther off, taking notes, and M. Courtier still farther, at the end of the table. Courtier had arranged a double curtain behind Eusapia; the light was weak but sufficient. On the table Mme. Curie's hand holding Eusapia's could be distinctly seen, likewise mine also holding the right hand... We saw the curtain swell out as if pushed by some large object... I asked to touch it... I felt the resistance and seized a real hand which I took in mine. Even through the curtain I could feel the fingers... I held it firmly and counted twenty-nine seconds, during all which time I had leisure to observe both of Eusapia's hands. [*Ibid*, 1996].

These are but a few selected fragments about the conclusions reached by these well known researchers. Only those who purposely choose to ignore the overwhelming research that has been conducted on this topic, as well as their conclusions, can remain ignorant about the multi-layered nature of reality.

Kary Mullis attributes the discovery of the double helix DNA to LSD. In a later interview he publicly stated that without LSD he would have probably not made this stepping stone contribution to biology.

Still further, Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), the famous French astronomer and writer, who also founded the French Astronomical Society, performed extensive research into clairvoyance and apparitions. He later concluded that:

All these observations prove that a human being does not consist only of a body that is visible, tangible...it consists, likewise, of a psychic element that is imponderable, gifted with special, intrinsic faculties, capable of functioning apart from the physical organism and of manifesting itself at a distance with the aid of forces as to the nature of which we are still ignorant [*Ibid*, 1996].

An example of this ignorance is the discovery of radio waves. Prior to this discovery scientists believed that no a-material substance can exist. Instant communication across large distances was impossible, according to the best science of the day. Prior to the 1800's the best scientific figures argued that meteorites do not exist. Airplanes were a concept that contradicted the established laws of physics, since no heavier than air object can fly! The list of scientific arrogant statements about the nature of reality are endless. It would truly be foolish from a philosophical point of view to take science as the ultimate reality defining mechanism.

The list of renowned scientists, physicists, and nobel prize winners who performed research in paranormal elements of reality and reached conclusions contrary to popular skeptical belief are very much overwhelming. The testimony of these men and women about the *supernatural* and *paranormal*—who were well trained and recognized for their astonishing abilities both as critical thinkers and their immense contribution to their respective field of study—cannot be neglected or brushed aside.

The overall picture of a grander *reality* is just starting to develop as we gradually begin to step out of the dark days of dogmatic, skeptical materialism; the school of science that we have

unwillingly submersed ourselves in, in our search for truth. For it does in fact appears that there is an entire element of human existence that is both a-material and transcendent. The human consciousness seems to possess subtle mental energies that are capable to both bypass the known laws of physics and transcend the body in a multitude of cases including clinical death. Or as Kant sublimely stated: we are creators of our reality by bringing into existence the a priori categories with which we define the phenomenal world.

Differentiating Dreams From Reality

Hitherto we have seen the different tradition that carried forth an esoteric knowledge, passed down through the ages through various Mystery Schools. The teachings of which seem to have originated in Ancient Egypt in most cases. Further, we have seen a persistent world belief in the immateriality of consciousness and reincarnation. We have also seen how many of these teachings were lost, suppressed or simply neglected throughout Western history. Moreover, we have seen that some of the most well known scientific figures of history were deeply involved with paranormal experiments. Based on the information amassed thus far and a variety of other experiments—that have been conducted and briefly touched upon in this paper—I can conclude that there is an aspect of consciousness that transcends physicality by unknown mechanism and continues to exist, at least temporarily, in an unknown reality, or frequency. It is this element that I call the *Transcending Nature of Consciousness*.

Next, we must philosophically analyze the mechanism of consciousness. To do this I will evaluate and present four common experiences, *Dreams*, *Lucid Dreams*, *Shared Dreams*, *Astral Projection* and *Sleep Paralysis*.

Dreams

Dreams are an integral part of human existence. Everyone dreams, yet no one knows exactly what dreams are. The ancient Mesopotamians believed that a part of the soul traveled and visited other places while asleep. Ancient Egyptians took dreams seriously enough to write them down on papyrus in an age in which paper was not an easily accessible commodity. In Egypt,

people who had vivid, prophetic or lucid dreams were considered especially gifted [Lincoln JS, 1935, p., 32]. And in Judaism dreams are seen as an active experience of the world.

The Upanishads text, written roughly between 900 and 500 B.C.E reveals two levels of dreams. First, dreams are a reflection of one's desires (similar to a Freudian understanding); the text thence reveals a belief in a second dream state during which the soul leaves the body, while asleep, and is then guided until it awakes. The Greeks believed that certain dreams are prophetic in nature, and that sleeping near temples and shrines might increase these type of dreams. Aristotle believed that dreams can be used to analyze illness and predict diseases. The Medieval Kabbalists believed that dreams are 1/12 of prophecy. Later in history a more material interpretation was adopted. For example, in the 17th Century, it was believed that dreams were caused by indigestion. This idea was promoted by figures such as Michel De La Montaigne.

But, none of these interpretations have been as widely accepted by the scientific community as the Freudian interpretation. Sigmund Freud popularized the idea that there is a deeper meaning to dreams. Due to his work in psychoanalysis, dream were now, and are still, seen as a gateway to the inner mind. But even Freud's interpretation of dreams is lacking, and incomplete; for it does not account for a multitude of experiences e.g: *Out of Body Experiences initiated by the dream state*. Interestingly, despite the things the beliefs that are attributed to Freud, in a letter addressed to Herewood Carrington, Freud wrote: *If I had to start my life over again I would rather be a parapsychologist than a psychoanalyst* [Hans Holzer, 1997, p.24].

There are many experiences that one has in dreams that are not accounted for in traditional Freudian psychology. For example, there is a well documented phenomenon known as *shared dreaming*; where two people dream together. There are also prophetic dreams that reportedly actualize. These kinds of dreams are vaguely accounted for in traditional psychology. And of course there are *lucid dreams* which allow the dreamer to fully take control of his/her dream. Lucid dreaming was believed to be a hoax during Freud's time. Today *lucid dreaming* is a scientific fact.

Pascal wrote in his *Péensees* that it is impossible to distinguish between a dream and reality. He was in good company; De La Montaigne previously made the same argument. This

has been observed by countless others to this day. In Eastern tradition we find the famous dream of Zhuangzi that expresses the illusion/reality schism of dream reality:

Once Zhuangzi dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuangzi. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuangzi. But he didn't know if he was Zhuangzi who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi. Between Zhuangzi and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things [Saint-Denys, 1982, p., 231].

Many mathematicians were reportedly able to resolve complex mathematical problems while asleep. Personally, I can attest that I have resolved many philosophical, and metaphysical problems while dreaming. Although it is not a simple feat to achieve, and is not necessarily determined by exterior factors as much as interior ones (more on this in a future essay). Dreams are virtually indistinguishable from reality. Active lucid dreamers will attest to this. Realizing that one is dreaming does not diminish the reality of the dream. As a matter of fact it makes the dream even more real and vibrant. Unfortunately, most people only realize that they were dreaming only once awake; and hence only have a partial recall of the events and not firsthand experience. Memories are also partially recalled, their reality is, however, not questioned.

Strangely, once awake, in many cases, the dream hastily becomes “unusable”. Albeit, the memories made in dreams are no different than the memories that one makes while awake. When one contemplates one’s past memories both *real* memories as well as *dream* memories present themselves in the same foggy unclear manner. The vagueness of dreams do not confirm their ireality; for the same vagueness of recollection likewise applies to reality. For example, try to remember a cherished childhood memory. And now, try to remember a cherished dream memory. You will remember both in the same exact manner. The substance of the memory will not be sufficient to differentiate dream from reality. Hence, one of the primary conclusion of this paper is that consciousness will manifest itself and equally record any reality that is presented to it. For this reason it is impossible to differentiate between *reality* and *ireality*. This observation is an uneasy one; for it challenges everything that we claim to know about reality. This vagueness and inability to differentiate dream from reality has lead many philosophers to conclude that what we think to be the *real world* could be nothing more than a dream in itself, in an unknown metrical

hierarchy of existence. This deduction brings to mind the popularized saying *life is but a dream*. Indeed, many ancient traditions say precisely this; insisting that life is an illusion created for consciousness to grow and learn.

Lucid Dreaming

Lucid dreaming is the ability to become consciously aware of one's dream [Frederik van Eeden, 1913]. The phenomenon has been recorded as far back as the 8th Century in early Buddhism and Bonpo traditions where *Dream Yoga* was practiced by monastic communities in Tibet [Tse-fu Kuan, 2008, p., 36]. In the Western tradition the earliest account of a *Lucid Dream* is given by the great St. Augustine in 415 A.D. [Letter from St. Augustine 159, 415]. In spite of these accounts, and many others, lucid dreaming has been denied for centuries in the West. It used to be believed that it was impossible to become aware of dreams. Recent experiments, however, were able to demonstrate that indeed a dreamer can *wake up* within his/her dream and even communicate with the outside world while asleep. Lucid Dreams were first recognized as a scientific fact by Celia Green *in 1968*. That is but a few breaths away in our immediate past.

These type of dreams are according to active Lucid Dreamers an amazing experience. One of the most striking aspect about lucid dreaming is the vividness of the dream. These dreams often appear more vivid and real than *reality* itself. Colors are often reported to be brighter, experiences more personal and the state of one's awareness greatly expanded. These claims are of course entirely subjective and impossible to verify at this point in time. Yet, all lucid dreamers will attest to them. (If our legal system permits us to condemn a man based on subjective testimony, then there is no reason why we cannot use subjective testimony to analyze the structure of lucid dreams and alter-realities.) However, skeptics will not be satisfied with testimonies. Fortunately there is a better way to convey this experience to skeptics. Everyone can achieve a *lucid dream*. It is simply a matter of practice and right mindset. There are many different techniques to do this, and many of them require very little time to perfect. For this reason anyone who is interested in experiencing this state of consciousness can just achieve it themselves. For there is no simpler way to experience the rich dynamics of an alter state of consciousness then by inducing a Lucid Dream state.

Lucid dreams often have multiple layers or levels of existence *i.e., it is possible to have a dream within a dream ad infinitum*. It is possible to experience a *false awakening*. False awakenings occur when the lucid dreamer thinks he has awoken from his dream, sees his bedroom and surroundings and begins his/her day, without realizing that s/he is still dreaming. This phenomenon of multiple levels of dreams is barely acknowledge. And for this reason I will not spent much time on it at this point, but will most certainly do so in a following edition of this essay. Albeit, it is important to *stress* that experienced lucid dreamers often report multiple levels of dreams.

Lucid Dreaming is an important component for Consciousness Studies. In these dreams one is often able to fully control their environment. Certain restrictions do apply, however. Regardless of those restrictions, one can choose to do, and do, almost anything they like; they can fly, reach the cosmos, visit people, have discussions or *visit other dreamers* (more on this below). Unfortunately, few of these things can be objectively proven at this point in time given our technological restrictions. This does not mean that these phenomenon should not be studied and explored philosophically; preparing the groundwork for future studies into the phenomenon of which I hope to be able to play a part in.

Shared Dreaming

Lucid dreamers have often described shared dream experiences with their companions, close relatives, or friends. However, this phenomenon is far less acknowledged and documented than that of *lucid dreams*.

Couple dreaming, shared dreaming, or dream telepathy, seriously challenges the idea that dreams are entirely subjective experiences. If indeed two people can have the same exact dream, than by definition dreaming, at least partially, becomes an objective experience; hence an extension of consciousness beyond the physical body. While many of these accounts can be hoaxed, it is important to stress the long tradition of shared dreaming found across cultures. We must also bear in mind that If only *a single one* of these reports proves to be a real experience then we are obliged to draw out an entirely new paradigm regarding the true nature of consciousness.

Shared dreaming requires an environment *i.e.*, *the dreamscape*, and a medium to join consciousness. This means that some aspect of the dream must exist either independently of the mind's activities, or that one's mind is telepathically able to create the same dream in his/her partner's mind. Further, couple dreaming implies that either two distinct consciousness are able to travel to an external dreamscape and thus have the same dream, or that after having telepathically synchronized the dream the synchronizer can also transport his/her consciousness in the other person's dream or vice versa. These are the only logical explanations for *shared dreaming*. The only alternative explanation would be coincidence; and hence would require that the two people would have coincidentally dreamed the same identical dreamscape, as well as each other, and have coincidentally made the same memories with each other. This is highly improbable; especially when one takes into account the number of reported shared dreams that have been documented and reported despite the vagueness of the experience. I want to point out here to my reader that the number of cases reported typically represent but a fraction of the cases that do occur in any phenomenon of study. Also, bear in mind that many phenomenon might have never been reported, or are buried in some archive by the pages of time. This only to emphasize the constant humbleness that we as researchers must exercise in our disciplines.

Mass dreaming has also been reported. In these cases more than two people have the same exact dream [Ullman, 2011, p., 239]. This implies that multiple consciousnesses can somehow, through unknown mechanics, transport themselves in an alternative reality or wherever the common dream is being created.

Astral Projection

The next phenomenon that has also been recorded since time immemorial is *Astral Projection* or commonly known as an *Out of Body Experience* (OBE). Astral Projection is the belief that one's spiritual body (Astral Body) can leave the physical body and travel; free to roam wherever it wishes in the geography of *reality*. This experience typically begins with a floating sensation, followed by the observation of one's own body (autoscopy) [Science Daily, 2007]. Many traditional school of thought, including *Hermetics*, *Neoplatonists*, *Theosophists* and

Rosicrucians, believed that the astral body is an intermediate body between the physical body and the soul. And that between the soul and the physical body is the intermediate world composed of spheres (planets and stars) [Proclus, 1963, p., 287-289], [Pagel, 1976, p., 324].

Going back to Ancient Egypt, accounts of Astral Projection are found deep within Egyptian theology. For example, the Egyptians believed that the soul can travel outside the body in *Ka* (subtle body). This believe is similar to that of the Theosophical understanding of the Astral Body. Moreover, the famous vision of Saint Paul, in which he encounters the Christian God, has been interpreted as an OBE: *I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not, God knows) such a one caught up to the third heaven...[2 Corinthians 12:2].*

In Islam, the *Isra* and *Mi'raj* describe Muhammad's journey to the seven heavens. The journeyer is also believed to be astral as *the apostle's body remained where it was*. In Taoism, one of Chinas most influential religions, it is believed that through certain alchemist breathing practices one can create an energy body in which one can then circulate [Chi, 2007, p., 56]. The famous Taoist story of Han Xiangzhi not only describes an astral projection, but also the ability of those in physical form to perceive it:

Xiangzi ... with a drum as his pillow fell fast asleep, snoring and motionless. His primordial spirit, however, went straight into the banquet room and said, "My lords, here I am again." ... When Tuizhi walked ... with the officials to take a look, there really was a Daoist sleeping on the ground and snoring like thunder. Yet inside, in the side room, there was another Daoist beating a fisher drum and singing Daoist songs. The officials all said, "Although there are two different people, their faces and clothes are exactly alike. Clearly he is a divine immortal who can divide his body and appear in several places at once. ..." ... At that moment, the Daoist in the side room came walking out, and the Daoist sleeping on the ground woke up. The two merged into one.

In Indian tradition it is believed, to this day, that miracles can be performed while in Astral Form. Just as with the story of Xiangzhi, the Astral Body is seen as capable of manifesting itself in reality. Meher Baba, the great Indian spiritual teacher, describes the abilities and use of the Astral Body in the following way:

In the advancing stages leading to the beginning of the path, the aspirant becomes spiritually prepared for being entrusted with free use of the forces of the inner world of the astral bodies. He may then undertake astral journeys in his astral body, leaving the physical

body in sleep or wakefulness. The astral journeys that are taken unconsciously are much less important than those undertaken with full consciousness and as a result of deliberate volition. This implies conscious use of the astral body. Conscious separation of the astral body from the outer vehicle of the gross body has its own value in making the soul feel its distinction from the gross body and in arriving at fuller control of the gross body. One can, at will, put on and take off the external gross body as if it were a cloak, and use the astral body for experiencing the inner world of the astral and for undertaking journeys through it, if and when necessary....The ability to undertake astral journeys therefore involves considerable expansion of one's scope for experience. It brings opportunities for promoting one's own spiritual advancement, which begins with the involution of consciousness [Meher. Baba, 1967, p., 290-292].

Astral projection can be found in all cultures. In Japan, for example, the Astral Body is known as an Ikiyro. Similar to Indian, and Taoist believes, the Ikiyro is believed to be able to influence physicality [Patrick Drazen, 2011, p., 7].

Astral projection bears many similarities to *Near-Death Experiences*. Certain people that have experienced a NDE do not necessarily travel to a different *reality*; some of them continue to exist in a phantom state in this geographic *reality*. There are many reports from people who have experienced NDEs and/or OBEs and who have reported things that they could not have been aware of given the location of their deceased/physical body.

Recently, with the acceptance of Lucid Dreams in the fields of popular psychology, Astral Projection has become an increasingly researched area. Just as with *lucid dreams*, Astral Projecting can also be easily achieved. It can be attempted out of curiosity, or be the result of some sort of spiritual practice. In Astral Form, meetings with different entities, spirits-beings or deceased souls can reportedly take place. The Astral World is a replica of the *real* world; but also extends to other undocumented worlds called the *Astral Planes* or higher levels of existence [Melton. J, 1998, p., 112, 116, 127-28]. From all of the phenomena so far discussed this is perhaps the most controversial, as it presents the philosophical possibility of a *living* traveling *phantom*. This has tremendous implications on our day to day activities. For example, think of the implications presented if either *divine* or *local* information can be gathered through OBEs. The concept of privacy, fraud, information piracy and personal information, among many others, would have to be entirely redefined.

Sleep Paralysis

The last aspect of sleep that we will analyze is *Sleep Paralysis*. This is a very well documented and scientifically confirmed phenomenon. Sleep Paralysis has been documented across the world. Reports range from China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Pakistan, Nepal, Turkey, African countries, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Malta, Greece and the Americas. Sleep Paralysis, in short, refers to a physical condition in which the dreamer wakes up to a paralyzed body. The victims of sleep paralysis often report waking up in their room paralyzed to their bed, unable to move. The reports are always consistent. Unfortunately, many Sleep Paralysis experiences are reportedly frightful. Many of the people that report these phenomenons report seeing, or feeling entities in their room. Some go as far as claiming to have been *attacked*, strangled and bruised by these shadow entities. Many researchers have attributed the common Alien Abduction phenomenon to Sleep Paralysis as they both bear striking similarities.

This leads to a very powerful question: is it possible that the level of five-sense existence is but a fraction of *reality*? And that all of these different paranormal, supernatural or transcendent experiences are but extensions, or glimpses of other frequencies that exist simultaneously with our own? Perhaps the brain is but a receiver of consciousness that can be altered and tuned in to various other levels of existences through various practices and methods, as hitherto discussed? To answer this final question we must turn to physics.

String Theory

Twenty years ago anyone that even contemplated the existence of other dimensions in our universe would have found him/her-self ostracized from the scientific establishment. Today, it is one of the most researched topic. It is called String Theory. In short, String Theory advocates that the universe is made out of eleven dimensions. These dimensions all exist in the same physical space. For example, according to the co-founder of String Theory, Dr. Michio Kaku, the fourth and fifth dimension are closer to you then your shirt is. These extra dimensions are everywhere. From the perspective of modern theoretical physics *reality* can be but one frequency of existence derived from a multiplicity of available frequencies. In this model our minds can be nothing

more than signal receivers attuned to this reality. At any given moment we are bombarded by eleven dimensions of frequencies; however, we are only tuned into one of these, *reality*.

If String Theory prevails as a unification theory *i.e., the merging theory of both Quantum Mechanics and Relative physics*, then we would have a working theory to explain all supernatural and seemingly paranormal experiences hitherto discussed. If the humane brain is a receiver of consciousness then, through String-Theory, we can contemplate the possibilities of temporarily drifting this frequency into another dimension; hence tapping in and using seemingly paranormal abilities. Through String Theory many paranormal activities can be logically explained. In addition to a logical explanation to many extra-sensory abilities, the theory also provides a working model for a Transcending Consciousness. Unfortunately the theory does not answer the ultimate question of all: *What Is Consciousness?* But it does certainly provide an explanation for reincarnation, Astral Projection, heavenly visitations and Near Death Experiences. In a way, String Theory can be seen as a unifying theory in its entirety; blending mysticism and spiritual realities with science.

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