

2013 Frank C. Tribbe Memorial Essay Contest

-First Place-

The Elusive Quantum of Consciousness

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I am thy life free-ranging, external to thyself.

– **Garuda**, the Hindu bird-god

The Age of Consciousness

Just as progress brought us from an age of superstition and dogma to an age of science and reason, the next phase promises to be one of insight – the quickening of human understanding. Ever since Arthur Koestler's 1967 book, *The Ghost in the Machine*,¹ a new approach to consciousness has been set in motion, challenging us to find what lies beyond the five senses.

There is something, a something which does not require a brain...

which knows many things that the five senses cannot supply ...

– **T.C. Lethbridge**²

Gerald Heard's *Pain, Sex, and Time* traced mankind's development from an unconscious physical being to a technologically gifted but unreflective being, and finally to the man of tomorrow, a realized being who exercises his fullest psychic potential. Today, on the cusp of that final paradigm shift, the mandarins of science still hold the reins on this "technically gifted" Age of Information (and Disinformation) which is nonetheless sweeping full bore into the coming Age of Consciousness.

Great Mind

Once you get into mind, you can't stay in the physical realm, because mind is not brain.

– **Fred Alan Wolf**³

To Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of Evolution, human thought was one thing that could not have been the result of Natural Selection; it was the exception to the rule: some higher power had to be behind it. This was, to Wallace, an Unknown Reality, and, as he put it, "my special heresy." Since consciousness was to him "completely beyond all possibility of explanation by matter," there must be "an unseen universe – a world of spirit, to which the world of matter is altogether subordinate."⁴

Wallace, deeply involved in the spiritualist movement by the 1860s, made bold to invoke "Great Mind" over all, something beyond measurement, "disconnected from a physical brain." Thus was he up against the scientific establishment, which allows no separate ground of consciousness, even though no one, including evolutionists, has yet to figure out why consciousness, if it is a *by-product* of natural selection, "seems to spring into existence full blown."⁵ How is it that man's rise was so explosively short and all other animals' ascent so ploddingly slow and gradual? Wallace was convinced that the rapid development of the human brain *demand*s a force of transcendent power at work.

Today's Darwinian materialists call this Wallace's "vague and goofy" ideas⁶; perhaps he "had simply gone mad."⁷ Dr. Steven Pinker, a card-carrying skeptic (see CSI, below), has argued that the soul is really "the information-processing activity of the brain."⁸ The prominent evolutionist/paleontologist, Stephen Jay Gould, (who also figured in the imperious skeptics movement, as we will soon see), sniffed at "the fallacy of Wallace's argument... [which is] deeply wrong."⁹

To others, though, this was not *Wallace's* fallacy, but the *materialist* fallacy: "The existence," says a team of Hungarian ethologists, "of nerve cells in itself is not an explanation for consciousness. Consciousness is a characteristic of the soul."¹⁰ And that's the problem: it is independent of matter, perfectly invisible. No wonder academics wash their hands of consciousness, pegging it an "impenetrable mystery" (best left to "goofy" metaphysicians).

Yet Kurt Godel, rationalist, mathematical genius, and friend of Einstein thought psychic factors might be as important as elementary physics. Brains, he reasoned, were a machine, but minds were not; neither did "the brain come in the Darwinian manner."¹¹ The mind, Godel thought, being non-material, was not measurable by any orthodox parameter.

Science can tell us a zillion things about the brain – but nothing much about consciousness. And when the materialist makes a go of it, the result is a meaningless tangle of jargon: "Perhaps the extraordinary phenomenon of modern consciousness is... a chance combination of exaptations [pre-adaptations] that were locked into place as an unexpected functioning whole by a final keystone acquisition that appeared... independently of any functional role. What that acquisition was ... will have to await a more profound knowledge of the human brain..."¹² – *Obscurum per obscuris!* (explaining the unclear by means of the more unclear).

The Vehicle

In his *Notebooks*, Charles Darwin called consciousness "a secretion of brain." Thought, then, was the flux of cerebrum, as bile is of the liver, and consciousness a mere epiphenomenon produced by biochemical interactions. Unlike Wallace, Darwin dismissed any ethereal component behind Mind and the origin of intelligence. Yet, world traditions have it quite otherwise. In the Mayan *Popul Vuh*, for example, it is said that early humans were indeed *etheric* beings, their sight encompassing the whole of the earth. To Wallace, this ether consisted of "minute vibrations of an almost infinitely attenuated form of matter... [a] recondite force... [with] a power of motion as rapid as that of light or the electric current." In fact, "the whole material universe exists for the purpose of developing spiritual beings."¹³

The current romance of brain research – almost a national obsession - has distracted us. The fact that the brain does thus-and-so while we are dreaming or daydreaming or concentrating or playing piano or eating ice-cream does not mean the brain is *causing* anything at all; it only means the brain is *accommodating* whatever Mind has taken on. Brain, in other words, is merely the *instrument* of mind, the servant of mind, which is *the Master*, though perfectly intangible. Mind, which is Consciousness *per se*, simply co-opts the brain; gray matter is the humble vehicle.

To imagine that consciousness is ruled by the laws of physics and chemistry, is as preposterous as the suggestion that a nation could be ruled by the laws of grammar.

– Sir Arthur Eddington¹⁴

While brain is certainly the apparatus, the housing, the machine – it is not brain that moves us to think. Man is something more than an anatomical, zoological phenomenon. A meta-explanation is in order.

Outings of Psyche

"The mind is still there after the brain is dead. And that is what these near-death experiences indicate."¹⁵ NDEs and OBEs are by now so well known and documented that only prejudice can deny man's latent powers of transcendence. To test the separation of consciousness from the gross body, we have the great alphabet soup of phenomena to choose from: ESP, OBE, NDE, ASC, PK, ADC (after death communication), XPE (extra planetary experience), etc. Poetically called "flight of the soul," this outing of psyche has, in the past 35 years, been studied most intensively in the form of NDEs.

This past year, when a Harvard brain surgeon, Dr. Eben Alexander, fell into a coma for seven days, "my entire cerebral cortex shut down.... I not only remained fully conscious but ... traveled to another level or dimension... a realm beyond the physical... [It] is not quite true that the brain produces consciousness, [although] most scientists accept this as dogma..."¹⁶

Others who have undergone this extraordinary experience speak of being in a dark tunnel, usually graced with effulgent light at its end. The tunnel adventure, however, is not limited to the NDE; it is also described in reports of autism, astral projection, hypnosis, and even psychopathy. The hypersensitivity and photophobia of some dyslexics also signal emergence from this tunnel-of-psi, a bit like the blinking response of moviegoers blinded by harsh neon lights upon leaving the theater's womblike darkness.

The dyslexic, we might note, also betrays the altered state in his difficulty with time and space concepts, so typical of ASCs (altered states of consciousness), including trance, meditation, hypnosis, dream and even spirit possession: "In such possessions, it was as if the dimension of time were somehow erased as past and future were melded into the present... In Tart's *Altered States of Consciousness*, a comparison is made of various altered states... All share the common denominator of an absence or alteration of time experience."¹⁷

Significantly, dislocation of time and space (non-locality) manifests in both ASCs and dyslexia as part of the curious automatism known as reverse writing. The dyslexic's confusion between right and left, though it baffles the experts, is a direct result of the soul's excursion. When the dyslexic writes backwards, we can compare this to the feat of automatic writing. Kate Fox and her sister Maggie, J.B. Conklin, Mrs. Piper, and many other famous mediums have produced (in trance or semi-trance) messages from Elsewhere – *written backwards*; "it must be read with the aid of a looking-glass," explained a descendant of the Foxes. This is because the controlling power acts from a position *opposite* the medium. In Mrs. Piper's case, the writing paper was held to her forehead. Also known as mirror-writing, such automatic scripts are sometimes applied underneath – hence backwards; to picture this, think only of a clockwise motion, and realize that, if viewed from below, it is counterclockwise!

Reversed imagery has also occurred in cases of psychopathy: Dr. Ronald Markham described his troubled patient Eric, who believed his thoughts were controlled. Eric also felt himself separate from his body. He would wake up in the middle of the night and find his hands were on backwards. Nor is reversed imagery unknown in other

dissociated states such as multiple personality disorder (aka DID); Kit Castle, for example, with seven "alter" personalities (picked up in the Tunnel, as she herself describes this dark and timeless place), could draw well, but completely upside down. She had no difficulty reading her husband's newspaper upside down at the breakfast table.

Finally, in the tragic case of Anneliese Michel, the German girl destroyed by demonic possession in the 1970s, the malignant intruders were so overwhelming, "she didn't know back from front."¹⁸

Remember Robert Monroe's intrepid self-experiments with OBE (which he called the Second State)? His method of leaving the physical was to rotate 180 degrees; "the Second Body," he said, "is a direct reversal of the physical."¹⁹

Spooks Earn Their Name

The very same result was obtained in secret American Intelligence efforts called "remote viewing." Here, "psi spies" sometimes reported information from an *upside down position*. Operators explained: "When a 180-degree voltage polarity shift from head to toe occurred, this almost always indicated that the viewer was in the desired altered state."²⁰

Remote Viewing, a controlled version of OBE, entails projecting ones awareness through time and space to secure foreign intelligence. Under such "ESPionage" programs (Operation Bluebird, Stargate, Grill Flame, etc.), trained American operatives, from 1972 to 1995, successfully discerned, among other things: details of the Red Chinese nuclear bomb (at Lop Nor); the whereabouts of a kidnapped American officer (Italy); covert military activity in Russia including a new type of submarine and the location of a downed Soviet bomber in Africa. During the Iran hostage crisis, viewers (also called Watchers) were able to identify the whereabouts of the hostages. The CIA has even tried to contact the spirits of its dead agents to find out what secrets they may have learned or divulged under duress.

Thanks to the invisibility factor, Psi – though academically and officially non-existent – is nonetheless the ultimate secret weapon, investigated *sub rosa* by governments throughout the world. I would especially recommend David Morehouse's very candid (almost subversive) *Psychic Warrior*²¹. Unexpectedly, David, on a few occasions, was thrown among "the dark ones," infected with destructive forces "from another dimension." Yet his psychiatrist would brook no such entities; she diagnosed the problem as merely something "deep in your limbic system." A brain thing. The Almighty Brain! Even psychiatry will not abide the disembodied state. Nevertheless, David's handlers did peg his dissociated states as "in the ether."

In England as well, where the Ministry of Defense has recently declassified its own previously top secret experiments in ESP, researchers are verifying the dormant human powers suggested by remote viewing. Cambridge's Dr. Brian Josephson (see Josephson Effect, below), physics Nobel Prize winner, endorsed the experiments' design and "considers the evidence for remote viewing to be pretty clear-cut."²²

An American cousin, our own beloved Mark Twain (who delved deeply into the paranormal), toyed with a related idea – a "phrenophone" to connect minds; he envisioned the day when one could say – "Connect me with the brain of the chief of police at Peking!"²³

Re-inventing the Wheel

Frankly, our problem is not proving the non-locality of consciousness, for it has been demonstrated a thousand – a million – times. The incessant demand for proof frustrated the great English medium Ena Twigg: "But why should we have to prove the same thing over and over again? It is like asking us to reinvent the wheel in each generation. There is so much more to know that we should get on with the still-unexplored."²⁴

The problem, really, is the strong, overwhelming, voice of materialism, of scientism, grown a bit more belligerent and defensive in this Age of Information as it founders on the brink of the new Age of Consciousness – which began of course with the Fox Sisters in 1848: Shortly after those paradigm-rocking Hydesville/Rochester, New York, events (which inaugurated the Great Age of Spiritualism), three professors from the Buffalo School of Medicine subjected the Fox girls to a series of tests and came to the remarkably inane conclusion that the girls were producing "raps" by snapping their knee joints. The pseudo-scientific, obfusatory, explanation soon appeared in the *Cincinnati Inquirer*, attributing the knocking sounds to:

"the physiological defect of the membranous system caused by the vocation of the electricity from the extremity, [whereby] the tympanum would also dissolve into the spiritual sanctum, and the olfactory ossificator would ferment... The abdominal indicator causes the cartilaginous compressor to coagulate into the diaphragm, and depresses the duodenum into the fandango. ..."

Flandango, indeed! Detractors, then and now, would grasp at any explanation (no matter how obtuse or far-fetched) to avoid the possibility of disembodied intelligence. The mumbo jumbo of the Buffalo professors did little more than soothe the skeptic, while everyone else remained bewildered by the astounding manifestations centered on the Fox family – hammer-blow knocks, sounds coming from the walls, objects floating about the room, heavy-tables moving on their own, etc.

Remarkably, those Buffalo skeptics are still alive and kicking – in the shape of the CSICOP (Committee for Skeptical Inquiry of Claims of the Paranormal). Based in Buffalo, their organ is Prometheus Books, their journal *The Skeptical Inquirer*, and their *raison d'etre*, after more than 150 years, unchanged, "investigating" the paranormal – with nothing less than missionary zeal. (A co-founder, the sociologist Marcello Truzzi, resigned in disgust when he saw the organization becoming an "inquisitorial body.") Dressed in the researcher's garb of objectivity, these arch-rationalists take no greater pleasure than savaging the Unseen power.

They have counted among their illustrious members Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, Francis Crick, Richard Dawkins, Stephen Jay Gould, E.O. Wilson, and B.F. Skinner. Called CSICOP ("psi cops") until a few years ago, the organization, now called CSI, is rumored to be CIA controlled. How so? – perhaps the public display of ridicule is a cunning ploy to keep their secret weapon secret! In fact, America's military application of remote viewing was *officially* (supposedly?) discontinued in the mid-1990s – the Pentagon allegedly "embarrassed" by the Skeptics' derisive remarks in the media. And "that was the end of it. But was it?"²⁵ – asks one Skeptics skeptic.

The Quantum Leap

"Consciousness itself is a quantum phenomenon," declared Dr. Eben Alexander. Ironically, it is science itself – particularly theoretical physics – that is rediscovering consciousness and proving the psi cops wrong. In recent years, physics, forced to

abandon the mechanistic model, has had to acknowledge the *nonlocal* and ephemeral qualities of subatomic particles. Analyzing the implications of quantum physics (especially the "observer" or "shyness" effect on subatomic particles), Nobel laureate in physics Eugene Wigner concluded that man must have a nonmaterial mind that can influence matter. Other thinkers have recognized the behavior of quanta in consciousness itself, as the "Higgs particle" comes closer to realization, validating the existence of a force that is both invisible and intelligent.

Shamanism, says anthropologist Omar Rosales, "is the world of quantum physics... When a Buddhist master says the thoughts of all sentient beings are connected ... aren't we describing string theory?"²⁶ – in which every fundamental particle and force is composed of tiny vibrating strings of energy believed to be the building blocks of life. Some science writers consider this tantamount to a Theory of Everything.²⁷ And yes, the ectoplasm of materialization has been described as "string-like" threads of plasma; while the plasma of ball-lightning – also *string-like* – behaves like microwaves, penetrating closed containers. Scientifically called a "soliton" (packet of energy), it materializes in closed rooms and metal aircraft.²⁸ As ephemeral and transitory as the apports of the psi world (sometimes vanishing at a mere gaze* – exactly like the sub-particles of physics), ball lightning is notorious for its brief duration and its hovering, "inquisitive," manner – which seems to exhibit kinship with PK, UFO lights, and other inexplicables known for their "intelligent" maneuvers – and their evanescence. (*This "shyness effect" (Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, to the physicist), is also a factor in poltergeistery, levitation, and other unexplained phenomena, including the British fairies called Pillywiggins, who vanish the moment they are glimpsed.)

All these disparate phenomena are telling us that the non-material world lies outside the normal measure of our physical senses, just as the elusive "dark energy" of the quantum hunters "pops in and out of existence."²⁹ And isn't this, after all, the same as the ether waves which Prof. William Crookes, more than a century ago, suggested have powers and attributes abundantly equal to any demand – even to the transmission of thought? But so small is their amplitude and so great their vibrational frequency, that gross matter easily penetrates it - like "touching a phantom" and finding one's hand go right through it – as if there were nothing. Science came very close to "psi-ence" with the discovery of the (Brian) Josephson Effect, i.e., the flow of current "through insulating barriers... the same way ghosts pass through walls..."³⁰

Alas, all this has been known for decades; more than 30 years ago, with the discovery of the "ghostly particles" called neutrinos (produced in cyclotron accelerators), nonmaterial intelligence became a scientific possibility, for here were virtual particles with no known physical properties but behaving "very much like a ghost."³¹

So here is quantum physics discovering the essence of things, not really in matter, but in vibrational frequencies, waves: the solid atom disappearing into waves of energy approaching pure thought. Two of the 19th century's great scientists, James Clerk Maxwell and Sir Oliver Lodge, also championed the classical ether, against an increasingly contentious and powerful foe. Sir Oliver would explain telepathy by invoking the all-pervading yet imponderable ether which "fills all space." But by the turn of the 20th century, the notion of ether was smartly booted out of the science stronghold, whose new brainchild was none other than quantum physics – which would now presumably satisfy the conditions of sub-atomic behavior.

Which brings us right back to Crookes' and Wallace's ether – those infinitely attenuated "minute vibrations." By the same token, the "ethereal body of a man," declared the Swiss sage Paracelsus five hundred years ago, "may know what another man thinks at a distance of 100 miles or more." Neither was Paracelsus the first to espouse the hidden dimension or to call it ether. Aristotle, 18 centuries earlier, had introduced a fifth element, ether, which he reckoned the quintessence of all things.

Now, and in the years to come, we will see ether make its final comeback – under a new name: dark matter (a colossal misnomer, for it is neither dark nor matter). Max Planck himself, the founder of quantum theory, said all matter originates from, and consists of, a force, and we must assume a conscious intelligent spirit behind this force. "I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness."³² Even sneaking up on it doesn't work. Our best bet would be to remember Einstein's wise words, to the effect that no problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it.

Endnotes:

¹ Chicago: Henry Regnery Co.

² Lethbridge, *ESP*, 83.

³ Quoted by Cynthia Logan in "Dr. Quantum's Big Ideas," 273.

⁴ quoted in Lovtrup, *Darwinism*, 226.

⁵ Fix, *Bone Pedlars*, xvi.

⁶ Wills, *Darwinian Tourist*, 297.

⁷ Shapiro, *Origins*, 247, repeating comments made.

⁸ Quoted by Dr. Eben Alexander in "The Science of Heaven," 24.

⁹ Gould, *Panda's Thumb*, 54-7.

¹⁰ Balazs Hornyanszky & Istvan Tasi, *Nature's IQ*, 135.

¹¹ Quoted in Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 444.

¹² Tattersall & Schwartz, *Extinct Humans*, 245.

¹³ Shermer, *Darwin's Shadow*, 197-9.

¹⁴ *Science and the Unseen World*, NY: Macmillan, 1937, 53-4.

¹⁵ Petre, "Soul Searching."

¹⁶ Alexander, "The Science of Heaven," 25-6.

¹⁷ Pressel, "Negative Spirit Possession," 333.

¹⁸ Goodman, *Exorcism*, 104.

¹⁹ Monroe, *Journeys Out of the Body*, 91-3.

²⁰ Marrs, *Psi Spies*, 102-3.

²¹ Morehouse, *Psychic Warrior*, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

²² "Remote Viewing Gets a New Look," *Atlantis Rising*, 10.

²³ Ebon, *Beyond Space and Time*, 197.

²⁴ Twigg, *The Woman Who Stunned the World*, 116.

²⁵ "Remote Viewing," op. cit.

²⁶ Rosales, "The Resurgence of Elemental Shamanism in the 21st Century," 12.

²⁷ Battersby, "Oh, for a theory of everything," 8.

²⁸ Corliss, *Handbook of Unusual Natural Phenomena*, 58.

²⁹ Battersby, "Oh", 6.

³⁰ Lewis, "Debunking the Debunkers," 16.

³¹ Hunt & McMahon, *The New Spirituality*, 148-9.

³² Quoted in Joseph H. Fussell, "Review and Comment." Review of Max Planck, *Where is Science Going?* *The Theosophical Path* 43, no. 2, 1933, 198-213.

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