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Paranthropology

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Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal

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**The Effect of Meditation Attainment on Psychic Awareness: Research With Yogis and Tibetan Buddhists -
Serena Roney-Dougal**

**Shamanism, Transpersonal Ecosophy, and John E. Mack's Investigations of Encounters with Extraterrestrial Consciousness -
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**Experiential Reclamation and First Person Parapsychology -
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**Souls and Spirit-Deities -
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**Plus: Book Reviews by
Margaret Gouin &
Robert M. Schoch**

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Vol. 3 No. 2 (April 2012)

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Welcome to Vol. 3 No. 2. This issue features David Luke's final Presidential address to the Parapsychological Association, in which he calls for a first-person approach to parapsychology (first published in *Journal of Parapsychology*, No. 75). Bob Trubshaw's article 'Souls and Spirit-Deities' examines the similarities and differences between various traditional concepts of spirits, gods and ghosts. In 'Soundscape and the Culture of War on an American Battlefield' John Sabol outlines his methodology for conducting ghost excavations and describes some unusual occurrences on Civil War battlefields. Serena Roney-Dougal outlines her research into the psychic development of Tibetan Buddhists and Yogi meditators (first published in *Paranormal Review*, No. 61), and Mark A. Schroll presents some of John E. Mack's final thoughts on the relationship between extraterrestrial encounters and the ecological crisis our planet is facing. Finally we have two reviews from Margaret Gouin and Robert M. Schoch. I hope you enjoy.

The next issue represents the second anniversary of the journal's existence. In order to celebrate two years of *Paranthropology* we will be releasing a special hardback book featuring a choice selection of the best articles from the past four issues. The book will be reasonably priced and available to buy from amazon.com/co.uk and lulu.com, so keep your eyes peeled for that.

The next issue will also be the first to implement a new set of volunteer editors and proofreaders, whose welcome contributions to the work of putting this journal together will assist in helping *Paranthropology* to further flourish. New additions to the editing team include John W. Morehead, editor of the great website *Theofantastique* and founding member of the Western Institute for Intercultural Studies, who will be fulfilling the role of Interviews Editor. The role of News/Events Editor will be taken by Anthony Kelly, a second year Ph.D candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Maynooth University in Ireland, and the new role of Reviews Editor will be performed by Dr. Douglas Farrer of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Guam. I am very much looking forward to working with these new editors and am sure that their efforts will serve to improve the quality and content of the journal.

Jack Hunter

Experiential Reclamation and First Person Parapsychology

David Luke

When J. B. Rhine proposed the formation of the parapsychological association (PA) in 1957, he intended that the organisation be both a professional and an international group, in order to better promote communication between the scattered academics working in the field. The following year, 1958, the first PA convention was held at Duke University in North Carolina, in the US. Despite being an international body the PA was at that time, and has always been, a predominantly American organisation, and approximately half of the current 320 members live in the United States. Naturally, then, the first six PA conventions were held in the US, until 1964 when my good friend Steve Abrams, who was doing his PhD in parapsychology at Oxford at the time, was able to organise the first overseas event from there.

From then on, the convention returned to the US for three consecutive years and was then hosted by a foreign country every fourth year, switching to once every three years in Europe from 1991, until finally in 2000 it began alternating evenly each year across the Atlantic. So far, outside of the US, the annual PA convention has been hosted by the UK, Germany, Holland, Iceland, Canada, France, Austria, and Sweden, but has never yet left the northern hemisphere.

I'm pleased to say that, with the support of my board and my good colleagues here in Brazil, I spearheaded the move to have the PA fully engage with its international objective and host the convention beyond the usual Euro-american confines. This manoeuvre somewhat disrupted the comfortable back and forth pattern, causing quite some unexpected commotion last year at the PA business meeting in Paris, regarding where the next convention location would be. Europeans tussled with North Americans for their turn next, now that the cycle had been broken. Fortunately there were neither baguettes nor bagels thrown, but I had not anticipated such a disagreement, and I diplomatically opted

to let the board decide later instead of there and then, rather than face half an angry crowd whichever way the issue was resolved. I am, nevertheless, extremely pleased that PA members get very passionate about where the next convention will be held.

Bringing the PA's annual event to Brazil, however, was for me the obvious thing to do. Having visited here in 2008 for the *4th Psi Meeting* and *3rd Journey Into Altered States*, I was immediately impressed by the great enthusiasm for parapsychology among Brazilians, and deeply enamoured with the earnest and concerted efforts to legitimise the field among researchers here, especially Wellington Zangari and Fatima Machado of the University of Sao Paulo, and Alexander Moreira-Almeida of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora. I was also hugely compelled by the excellent organisation of the joint Brazilian events by Fabio da Silva, one of Professor Zangari's parapsychology PhD students at USP.

The incorporation, quite literally at some points, of the *3rd Journey Into Altered States* into the Brazilian parapsychology meeting added a much-needed experiential dimension to all the heady intellectual presentations that are typically delivered at an academic conference. This is also the true difference between Brazil and other countries in which the PA has been hosted: that many people here do not just explore parapsychology as an academic discipline, they attempt to live it as a dimension of their personal belief system. For Brazil, as you may have noticed, has one of the most open minded, diverse and progressive approaches to different religious practices, towards paranormal phenomena, and towards the often fraught relationship between science and spirituality.

Here at the PA we are typically scientists first-and-foremost—no matter what else we are—but the advantage of studying parapsychology in a country like Brazil is that there is

no shortage of natural phenomena to study, and the amount of people both believing in and experiencing the paranormal are easily in the majority. This is truly an anomaly in a country as developed as it is. For instance, in a survey conducted by Fatima Machado (2010) here recently (as reported by Wellington Zangari this morning) an extraordinary 80–90% of Brazilians reported having had a psi experience.

Typically, we also find the same types of anomalous phenomena here that we find elsewhere in the world, such as the everyday occurrence of apparently psychic episodes, out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, et cetera, but there are also occurrences of less common phenomena such as poltergeist-like manifestations and, something especially Brazilian, we also have psychic surgery (for a review of some famous Brazilian cases of the above phenomena see Playfair, 1975). There's also the common and widespread practice of mediumship, perhaps here more than anywhere else in the developed world: such as among the two million or more practising Spiritists in Brazil, who even have mediums working alongside psychiatrists in spiritist mental health hospitals, helping to remedy otherwise conventionally untreatable cases of schizophrenia and other problematic disorders (e.g., see Luke, 2009; Silveira, 2008). Some of our delegates were earlier this week treated to a visit to a local institute to witness this extraordinary institutionalised mental health practice.

We also find that the events on offer alongside this conference occur readily here in Curitiba and all over Brazil, such as Umbanda trance incorporation rituals (Giesler, 1985) and the drinking of psychoactive jungle decoctions such as the one once called telepathine by chemists, now typically called ayahuasca, yage, or daime (Luke, 2011b). This is because these ancient techniques of utilising altered states of consciousness for healing, which is what they are intended for, never left the culture here in Brazil—despite the modernisation that has seen such practices die away in many parts of the world, particularly in North America and Europe.

In many cases such traditional healing practices were actually actively killed off, for example by the inquisition, which all but ended much of this type of approach to healing in Euro-America, and since then the hegemony of the medical establishment has continued with that process in recent centuries, but in a somewhat less brutal fashion. Nevertheless, as a concurrent outgrowth of the scientific age we had the establishment of psychical research in the UK some 130 years ago, which has continued to thrive, particularly in recent years, in the form of the academic study of parapsychology (Luke, 2011c).

One of the developments occurring in the UK, perhaps partly as a reaction to the rise of parapsychology and psychical research, is the growth of anomalistic psychology. There is the need for some explanation here when I talk about anomalistic psychology, because I am using that term in a rather restricted sense. I am sure that in the minds of many here, you see the research that you do as anomalistic psychology, in that you scientifically study psychological experiences and phenomena of an anomalous nature. I am also aware that many researchers in our field who are sympathetic, or at least open to the psi hypothesis, like to use this term, but I am using the term anomalistic psychology here to apply to the so-called skeptics who research in this field and adopt the term exclusively to that of parapsychology, because they have a prejudice against the very notion of psi.

Should *a priori* be a Priority?

In principle, this skeptical approach to the anomalous adopts the stance of researching the psychology of anomalous beliefs and experiences without assuming that anything paranormal exists, but in practice it commonly maintains—as a working hypothesis—that nothing paranormal ever occurs, at best, or, more typically, assumes *a priori* that the paranormal is bunk, *woo woo*, *flim flam* (e.g., Randi, 1994), hocus-pocus, mumbo jumbo, or, in a somewhat imperialistic fashion, just plain voodoo (e.g., Park, 2000), that is, just some kind of gullible, primitive, retarded, illogical, crazy, foreign,

and/or juvenile type of magical thinking (e.g., Alcock, 1981; Hood, 2009; Vyse, 1997; Zusne & Jones, 1989).

So while some respected researchers in our midst like to use this anomalistic psychology term, in my mind, and for the purposes of this talk, it has come to represent the prejudged and prejudiced type of psychological approach that supposes that paranormal belief is degenerate and that paranormal experiences are delusional. And it is this academic shadow of parapsychology that is seemingly also growing, in the UK at the very least.

So while anomalistic psychology has the objective of reducing the unknown to the known—as Professor Zangari (2011) reminded us yesterday—there is an inherent danger of assuming that we really do fully comprehend the universe already, which, at its core, projects a sort of ignorant arrogance, because, for me at least, the more I learn the more I realise how little I know. Now, obviously the findings of anomalistic psychology, and that of parapsychology, serve an extremely important function in helping us to understand “what looks like psi but isn’t.” I also have an enormous amount of respect for the late professor Bob Morris, and others (e.g. Pekala & Cardena, 2000), for ceaselessly determining these criteria, but Morris didn’t leave the research there (and neither would Zangari), and he would also consider “what looks like psi and, given that we’ve ruled out other factors, it probably is.”

However, for researchers to restrict an approach to a purely disconfirmatory agenda would be throwing the baby out with the bath water, or at least willfully not checking to see if the baby is in the bath first, because we just don’t like children. Essentially then, by restricting the agenda to maintaining that paranormal experiences really are just normal experiences—and not potentially phenomena currently inexplicable by scientific knowledge—the paranormal experience itself is being wholly appropriated by the so-called skeptical anomalistic psychology community. As such I am calling for the reclamation of “the experience” from anomalistic psychology, which is pushing to

make us all believe that anyone having an anomalous experience is cognitively faulty. Thus, from this perspective, all experiencers are suffering from some sort of misperception, misremembering, poor judgement, fantasy, faulty reasoning, self-delusion, deception, fraud, or coincidence. Of course, all these considerations are valid, because they do sometimes occur, but, problematically, they are all too often offered as whole and complete explanations for all phenomena by so-called skeptics. The “experience” has all but been swept up and dumped into a filing cabinet labelled as “broken brain.”

Paranoid Normality:

Why They Don’t See What is There

Take Richard Wiseman’s (2011) latest best selling book on anomalistic psychology that came out this year, *Paranormality: Why We See What Isn’t There*. It gestures towards legitimate science but without actually taking a balanced or even an empirical viewpoint on certain experiences. For instance, the neat explanation given for the great prevalence among the public for reports of precognitive dreams is that, yes, these experiences occur with some degree of frequency, but, no, they are not paranormal, they are just coincidental. In this view, dreams of future events are merely products of the law of truly large numbers, that is, that given that enough people are having dreams each night then the probability of someone dreaming a particular future event is almost certain.

Wiseman takes the example of the numerous people who reported precognitive dreams about the 1967 Aberfan disaster in Wales that killed 128 children in a school when a landslide destroyed the building. According to the rationale, the average person has 60 years of adult dreaming in their lifetime, 365 days of the year, which equates to roughly 22,000 nights of dreams. Assuming that events like the Aberfan disaster only occur once in each generation, and the average person only dreams of such a disaster once in a lifetime then the odds of such a dream are 22,000 to 1. Then, considering that there were about 45 million Britons in 1966, this equates to roughly 2,000 people dreaming the

Aberfan disaster. According to Wiseman, the law of truly large numbers accounts for Barker's (1967) seemingly impressive collection of 36 dreams of the Aberfan disaster before it happened.

There's some faulty logic at work in all of this. What is meant by generation in this context? Should we expect 2,000 people to dream the Aberfan disaster or to just dream of some disaster, as supposedly only occurs once in a lifetime, according to Wiseman? Wiseman's calculation also assumes that the coincidence of the dream and the event can occur any time throughout one's lifetime. Clearly though, the dream didn't occur at any time in the entire lifespan of 45 million Britons, it happened on one day when some of them were old and some were young, so it's unsound to use entire lifetime calculations for a cross section of the population. Dreaming of the disaster after the event doesn't really count as precognition, does it? So it rather depends on the average age of people when they have such dreams, not how long they live for (Luke, in press). I could go on.

Not only does this example demonstrate the inherently dodgy use of estimated probabilities in this sort of reasoning, but Wiseman (2011) and many other anomalous psychologists (e.g., Blackmore, 1990; Charpak & Broch, 2004; Esgate & Groome, 2001; Hines, 2003; Mueller & Roberts, 2001; Zusne & Jones, 1989) utterly fail to consider any genuine experimental research into dream ESP, and rely solely on subjective estimates of probability and subsequently dubious calculations, all of which, perhaps unsurprisingly, are completely different from one researcher to another. Consequently, 50 years or so of diligent experimental dream research using clear objective probabilities, conducted since the start of Stan Krippner's era at Maimonides, is completely ignored at the expense of some logically sketchy tales. All this despite the call from skeptic Michael Shermer (1997, p.48) that the study of paranormal beliefs needs "controlled experiments, not anecdotes." I assume Shermer is using the term anecdote in the common use of the word as a story told without any evidence to

back it up, rather than in the literal sense of the word, of an account that remains unpublished.

The major problem with Wiseman's (2011) proposal that such precognitive dreams occur but once in a lifetime is that this estimation is also plucked out of an intellectual vacuum. Reclaiming the dream experience, if you were to work with, record, and study your dreams every day as I did for just 18 months, then you might actually discover, as did I, that on average 1 dream in 10 had some compelling precognitive component. I am not the only one who reports this either, as we have comparable figures from other dream diary studies (e.g., Bender 1966; de Pablos 1998: 2002). While such self-reports are not evidential, can the law of truly large numbers actually account for these rates of occurrence? Indeed, suggesting that such frequent occurrences are expected by chance is essentially the opposite of what psychiatrist Klaus Conrad (1958) somewhat oddly called apophenia, the discovery of patterns in (apparently) random data. Perhaps we should call this opposite phenomenon of attributing chance probability to (apparently) related phenomena *randomania*, as a label for believing that everything one cannot currently explain is just due to chance and coincidence. One assumes that such a condition derives from a deep-seated rejection and fear of the paranormal—which I'll come back to—a kind of paranoid normality.

**Experiential Reclamation:
Repossessing Possession and Other Anomalies**
Essentially though, for me, Wiseman's assumed rarity among individuals (though not populations) of precognitive dreams indicates the importance of truly getting inside our subject matter. I don't have to take somebody else's word for it that 10% of their dreams are seemingly precognitive when I can experience it for myself. There are other advantages to pursuing this line of personal research too, in that the subtleties of negotiating the dream psi experience can also teach us about the first-person process involved in the experience and, perhaps, even teach us something about ourselves too (e.g., Luke, 2005). So what I am asking for is the reclamation of the

anomalous experience from anomalistic psychology. Yes, parapsychology studies anomalous experiences too—though mainly in other people—but the field seems increasingly to retreat further away from the lived experience and towards the abstract, objective experimental domain, often to the point where the personal meaningfulness of the task for the participant has been all but squeezed out. This year’s banquet speaker, Michael Winkelman, nailed this nicely earlier today (Winkelman, 2011) by indicating the importance of ecological validity in relation to Carlos Alberto Tinoco’s comments that his own ayahuasca-drinking ESP participants much preferred to enjoy their visions than engage with his psi task (Tinoco 1994: 2011). participant-experimenters would probably be advantageous in such a situation, or would at least be useful in anticipating design flaws that would likely arise with other participants.

Clearly, experimental control is essential for having some certainty that our effects are genuine, and this will usually be at the expense of ecological validity (as Winkelman pointed out), but, beyond just striving for a well-controlled naturalistic study, we can also gain a great deal from exploring the personal dimensions of our subject matter. I’m not asking that everyone in our field become platonic maniacs—as illuminated by Etzel Cardeña (2011) last night in the opening keynote address for this convention—but I am saying that we have something to gain from a Jamesian radical empiricism. William James reminds us that, “to be radical an empiricism must neither admit into its construction any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them [sic] any element that is directly experienced” (James 1912 [1996]: 42).

As we progress next year into the centenary of James’ posthumous *Radical Empiricism*, we should recall his noble first-person approach to his subject matter, unafraid as he was to experiment with “the atmosphere of heaven” and partake of nitrous oxide, and further still he was also unafraid to write about it in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* (James 1901 [1958]). As Ralph Metzner (2005: 27) says about radical em-

piricism, “it is not where or how observations are made that makes a field of study ‘scientific,’ it is what is done with the observations afterwards.”

Now, some of you here may find this radical epistemology challenging, and for others I may well be preaching to the converted, but I would like to encourage and celebrate first-person science as a means of approaching anomalous phenomena. It needn’t be everyone adopting this approach, and neither can, nor should, it be used to investigate all phenomena (e.g., near-death experience). Nor is this approach a replacement for objective methodologies, but rather an augmentation of our current epistemology.

Take the phenomena of lucid dreaming. While lucid dreams have long been reported as anomalous experiences, they were for many years considered by some researchers to be delusory, impossible, and absurd (e.g., Malcolm 1959) and they were largely thought to be “micro-awakenings” (Foulkes 1974), until the late 1970s. Lucid dreams weren’t actually widely accepted as real by the scientific community until Stephen LaBerge taught himself to lucid dream to such an extent that he learned that he could control his eye movements and demonstrate to an objective observer that he was actually consciously in control of his dreams whilst in a physiologically verified sleep state (LaBerge, Nagel, Dement, & Zarcone 1981). Perhaps once we can demonstrate psi ourselves in our personal encounters with critics, they may well also take a different view, perhaps not.

Do You Do Voodoo?

The Perks and Perils of Going Native

Another parallel example comes from the field of anthropology, which witnessed a revolution of methods in the 1970s that, in particular, had a profound effect on many anthropologists’ view of ostensibly paranormal phenomena (Luke 2010a). During the late 1960s and early 1970s a number of anthropologists, such as Harner (1968), Kensinger (1973), and, controversially, Casteneda (1968), passed over the objective threshold that had been maintaining prejudices

in their field, and, rather than merely observing, began participating in native rituals and actively journeyed into altered states of consciousness, particularly those utilising psychedelic plants. As a result they finally transcended the etic-emic divide that had separated researchers ethnocentrically from a deeper understanding of their subject matter, and the technique of participant-observation was finally fully embraced with respect to anomalous phenomena (Luke 2010a). For the first time in the history of anthropological research, researchers not only participated but actually “went native” and reported having transpersonal experiences (they had usually kept them quiet until this time), and, in the process, transformed themselves, their data, and their methodology.

After apparently witnessing a spirit leave a body during a healing ceremony with the Ndembu of Zambia in 1985, Edith Turner (1992; 1994) strongly urged for a deeper participatory approach to anthropology and the ostensibly paranormal, chastising those who merely participated in a “kindly pretense.” Turner’s call to ethnographers was also echoed across all fields of consciousness research at that time, and Harman (1993) warned that, “the scientist who would explore the topic of consciousness...must be willing to risk being transformed in the process of exploration” (1993: 193, italics in original).

Nevertheless, such advances in the understanding of the natives’ rituals and their belief in magic presented some problems within the established academic doctrine, and the ontological boundary the anthropologists crossed once they had gone native often caused their peers to immediately question the validity of their experience (Macdonald 2001). So, despite the epistemological advances forged through participant-observation, the spectre of the “removed” ethnographer still persists in haunting researchers (Turner 2006), continuing to give rise to a fear of ostracism within the anthropological community (Winkelman 1983; Young & Goulet 1994).

For instance, Richards (2003) recently testified to this fear by announcing that all the anthropologists she knew had had paranormal experiences themselves, but that their so-called

scientific training demanded that they explain away the ostensibly psi phenomena as coincidence (more randomia) or psychosomatic healing—itsself a notion held to be superstitious until recently. One theory put forward for this fearful data-burying is that the culturally acceptable arguments for paranormal phenomena given by Western scientists serve to alleviate the anxiety induced by the possibility that magic may be real (Van de Castle 1974), a notion which anthropologists, parapsychologists, and even magical practitioners themselves (Luke 2007) find equally difficult to accept. Charles Tart (1984), Harvey Irwin (1985), Stephen Braude (1993) and others have written at length about this matter in our own field and the problem inherent in both our acknowledged and unacknowledged fears of psi that may not only hold back participants but also researchers and, inevitably, the data we collect.

First Person Parapsychology:

Being Subjective Is the New Objective

Experience tells us, however, that a first-person approach can help us to deal with both the fear of psi and with the restrictions of an ethnocentric perspective. Furthermore, we have heard a good deal today about altered states of consciousness, and it is hard to deny their relevance and importance to the field of parapsychology (Luke 2011a). They are indeed, as Professor Cardeña (2011) so eloquently reminded us, a many splendored thing. But, lurking within the purely detached and objective observation of these states lies what Grof (2008) calls pragmacentrism: an inherent inability to fully understand the state itself without having experienced it oneself. And yet, despite having sounded the revolutionary call for state-specific sciences some 40 years ago, Charles Tart’s (1972, 1998, 2000) hugely important demand for studying altered states on their own terms has all but been ignored.

There are exceptions, of course, in various pockets of the study of consciousness, and following from his work investigating the cognitive psychology of so-called hallucinations through the use of ayahuasca—both by himself

and by others—Benny Shanon (2002, 2003) points out the basic limitations of not being inside one's subject matter: few people would trust a deaf person to teach us about music. The same principle goes for altered states and their phenomena, be they form constants (Luke 2010b) or psi. Indeed, in the study of altered states, some researchers (e.g., Strassman 2001) indicate that it is the researchers' duty to go first so that they can anticipate the kind of states that participants may have, leading to increased awareness and insight into difficult experiences. Charles Laughlin (1992) illuminates the issue of pragmacentrism further by delineating the differences between monophasic and polyphasic cultures, that is, respectively, the difference between cultures that primarily regard the ordinary waking consciousness as the only true and trusted state, compared to those cultures that recognise the importance, even the necessity, of other states of consciousness for their own psychological well being and for the well being of their community and habitat.

So I am asking for the reclamation of the anomalistic experience itself from the arm's length stylisation of it as a dysfunctional dimension of being human. I am not saying that the inclusion of first-person science is essential in all domains of our research, but it may certainly be advantageous in some areas. As I have pointed out, it can help us transcend the intellectual gulfs of ethnocentrism, pragmacentrism, and the fear of the implications arising if our theories are actually right. Getting inside our subject matter may also be an ethical imperative and, additionally, may have a positive transformative and cathartic effect upon us as researchers, perhaps leading to better insights and an opening up of our creative potential. For example, the sociologist and anthropologist of mediumship Charles Emmons (in press) actually went all the way and trained as a medium, pointing out that this allowed him to better appreciate the experiences of his research participants.

Furthermore, given the very special subject matter of parapsychology and the near-inescapable trickster element of experimenter psi that plagues the very interpretation of any

findings (e.g., Stanford 1981; Hansen 2001), then *N-of-oneself-experimentation* the likes of which many parapsychologists have attempted (e.g., de Pablos 1998, 2002; Radin 1990; 1990–1991; Schmidt 1991, 1997, 2000; Tart 1983; Thalbourne 2006) at least circumvents this issue somewhat and gives us some faith in the source of our results. Self-experimentation also guarantees a number of factors that may be found to be problematic with other-than-us participants, such as motivation and honesty (e.g., Luke & Zy-chowicz 2011), security, and adherence to the protocol. Further, Thouless (1960) suggested that psi self-experimentation could help with getting more reliable results. Such "participatory science," as Emmons calls it (in press), can also help us personally determine if particular anomalous experiences are genuinely paranormal. Ultimately too, a first-person approach may help us discover new ways in which we can utilise the phenomena we study, so that we are not forever burdened with an almost entirely theoretical science that, ironically, is in need of a comprehensive theory, and we may instead begin to discover new applications for the useful implementation of the phenomena we study.

Perhaps too, parapsychology, like transpersonal psychology can have the additional aim of being hermeneutic (Daniels 2005) and reach for an emphasis on understanding and interpretation, thereby living up to the psychological dimension of its name, love it or loathe it, and not just striving for physical or physiological levels of explanation. Ultimately, if there is a central theme here it is merely that we should "get inside" our subject matter. Anyway, seeing as we are running late, and I've been talking all day, the next subject matter of the evening is to enjoy ourselves and have a drink, so I hope you both get inside your subject matter and let your subject matter get inside you; the drinks are served. Thank you.

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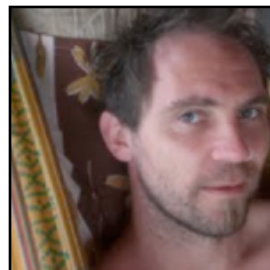
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Souls and Spirit-Deities

Bob Trubshaw



Books describing ethnographic fieldwork often seem to be written by people with no soul, and while we might refer to a group of academic ethnographers as collectively having no souls, it seems odd to refer to an individual as having 'no souls' rather than not having just the one.

The reason is easy to see. Modern Western thinking, with academic paradigms often at its core, is the secularised successor to nearly two millennia of Christian thinking. And, while many aspects of the Christian worldview have shifted and changed, the doctrine that we have one soul has stayed constant. Secularised Western thinking may simply shift to the position that we do not have a soul, rather than the much more awkward shift to thinking that we do not have more than one soul.

Furthermore, modern Western thinking clearly separates the physical realm from the metaphysical one of souls and deities. So referring to the heart as an anatomical organ is quite distinct to referring to the heart as the seat of our emotions. However much this separation seems 'common sense' to us now, only a few generations ago that the division was nothing like so well-defined. This is because 'common sense' tells us only about the usually unchallenged myths underlying our culture, and often fails to recognise that what was common sense to, say, our great-grandparents would not seem that way today.

The first thing to emphasise is that, contrary to Christian thinking, souls and spirits are not two words for more-or-less the same thing. In traditional worldviews there are likely to be several souls and any number of different types of spirits. Clive Tolley has provided a useful summary of the ethnography of these disparate worldviews (Tolley 2009: Ch.8&9). While there are distinctions between the different souls and different spirits may not always be consistent, the distinctions between souls and spirits are much clearer.

To get an idea of just how different traditional views of the soul can be, here is Tolley's outline of the beliefs of the Nanai (also known as the Hezhen, Golds or Samagir) from Siberia:

People are possessed of three souls. In heaven, *boa*, there is a soultree, *omijamuoni*, where human spirits in the form of birds flit about, and may fly into a woman on earth, impregnating her. The shamanic rite for childless women involves the shaman flying up to heaven and selecting a strong spirit, *omija*, to bring back down for the woman. The *omija* exists for the first year of an infant's life. It has the appearance of a small bird. If the infant dies, the *omija* does not go to the world of the dead, *buni*, but flies straight back to heaven, without funeral rites. The mother may pray for the *omija* to return to her; hence she may give birth to the same child several times. In the second year the *omija* is replaced by the *yergeni*, 'sparrow', which has the form of a small person but can transform itself into a sparrow and fly away. If the *yergeni* falls ill, so does its owner. At death the *yergeni* is transformed into the *fania*, which may hover around the dead for a while, or else flee away. It cannot depart from the world until an elaborate funeral wake, *kaza*, is carried out, involving the shaman acting as psychopomp to take the soul to the world of the dead. (Tolley 2009: 16970; based on Lopatin 1960: 2830)

If we want to look back even further in time than pioneering ethnographers then, because these early societies these are almost always non-literate, the oldest records are written down by people from literate cultures, who usually have a Christian, Buddhist or Muslim worldview. And, in rather too many cases, the scribes are pursuing a missionary agenda to promote

their worldview over the 'primitive' one they are describing. While I will come to Buddhist views of the soul later, in the case of Christian writers they – understandably – have trouble recognising or accurately describing cultures with multiple souls.

Yet despite such distortions of the evidence, throughout the world an overwhelming number of cultures recognise several souls. Ethnographers attempt to differentiate these with such names as 'life soul,' 'life force,' 'free soul,' 'external soul,' 'shadow soul,' 'mirror soul,' 'alter ego,' 'double' 'second body' or '*fylgia*.' And this multiplexity seems almost inherent – the clearest early example is from the first century AD when Plutarch, in *De Facie Lunae*, describes souls as 'multilayered' (Brown 1978: 68–72).

What is typically referred to as the 'life soul' is often associated with the breath, whereas the terms 'free soul' or 'shadow soul' refer to souls which can wander free from the body. Variants of these two souls are all-but universal, while a third soul – the bearer of 'psychic life functions' and often referred to by ethnographers as the 'ego-soul' also exists in many societies (Tolley 2009: Ch.8).

In myth and legend these free soul can go on journeys – perhaps with companions, perhaps turning into an animal, perhaps to a 'fairy realm' or to a 'heaven' or to a demonic 'sabbat.' These soul journeys may be to heal or to harm or for other reasons. The soul may even take part in battle with hostile spirits, or the spirits of storms. Different cultures the souls are subtly different, do things differently and for different reasons. Yet, with almost no exceptions, there is a belief in souls. And, unlike Christian cultures, it is 'souls' not 'soul.'

Where traditional legends and myths have survived only through Christian scribes, as with Scandinavia, then the original complexity of beliefs in souls is often blurred by the misunderstanding of people writing from the simpler Christian worldview of a single soul (more-or-less equating to the 'life soul' alone). Or, the souls only appear in disguised form:

Two ravens sit on Odin's shoulders and speak into his ear all the news they see or hear. Their names are Hugin and Munin. He sends them out at dawn to fly over all the world and they return at dinnertime. As a result he gets to find out about many events. (Snorri Sturluson)

Clearly ravens are Otherworldly birds and feature in both literature and visual art of the period. The names Hugin and Munin translate roughly as 'thought' and 'memory/mind.' So on the face of this these birds are distinct from souls. But the idea that Óðinn can 'project his mind', to use modern parlance, is shared with pre-Christian Scandinavian beliefs about souls – even if Snorri, writing in the thirteenth century, would have little or no awareness of this.

Such blurring of 'soul' and 'mind' in Anglo-Saxon thinking is also revealed by King Alfred's translation of Boethius. The Latin makes a clear distinction between 'soul' and 'mind' and, while Old English has both *sapol* and *mod*, Alfred uses them interchangeably so fails to retain Boethius's distinction between soul and mind. Furthermore, Alfred also uses *mod* to translate *ego* (i.e. 'I' or 'me') (Tolley 2009: 178–9).

Souls, Consciousness and 'Other-Than-Human-Persons'

Alfred is all-but anticipating someone of today who uses the words 'consciousness', 'mind', 'self-identity' and maybe even 'soul' as all-but indistinguishable terms. Indeed secular Western thought has substituted 'consciousness' for the Christian concept of 'soul.' And, just as Westerners find it hard to think of having more than one soul, we find it even harder to think of have more than one consciousness. And, outside the realms of cognitive science and neuroscience, few people are happy to believe that consciousness is just an illusion.

Here is not the place to rehearse why we think we 'have' a consciousness (for a useful summary see Danser 2005 Ch.11, which in turns draws on Searle 1997 and Blackmore 2003). Suffice to note that the same 'theory of mind' that creates our own sense of unified consciousness

also allows us to infer the emotional responses in other people (an ability impaired in people with autistic traits).

This ability also spills over into projecting anthropomorphic emotions onto pet animals, and even inanimate objects such as teddy bears and other cuddly toys. The same theory of mind is exploited in artificial intelligence – both in the underlying belief that a computer can to some extent ‘replicate’ consciousness and in the ease with which people emotionally engage with a wide range of computer-generated avatars.

While inevitably offending all believers in deities, clearly the same theory of mind creates our concepts of deities. I am not the first to note that the wide spectrum of personality types found among deities – from macho ‘smiting thine enemies’ ones (such as Yahweh or Jupiter) through to compassionate all-forgiving father figures, (such as Jesus) and the various female counterparts (from Kwan Yin to the Blessed Virgin Mary) with considerable diversity in between – seem to reflect entirely human aspirations. On the basis of all the available evidence, we create deities according to our desires. On a similar basis we create a variety of ‘invisible friends’ and ‘intimate friends’ such as imaginary childhood companions (see Hallowell 2007 for one of the most insightful studies) through to the *daimons*, *genii*, guardian angels – and Christian saints – known as long ago as late antiquity (Brown 1981: 501; 55). Self-evidently the whole spectrum of souls and spirit-deities can also be seen to manifestations of the same ‘theory of mind,’ the same responses to externalising our desires in an anthropomorphic manner.

However to deem any of these – from humble souls through to omnipresent supreme beings – as ‘nothing but’ mental projections is not my purpose. Rather, I will continue to explore these ‘manifestations’ as being of interest in their own right.

In English the word ‘person’ has a fairly narrow sense, whereas in nonwestern cultures there is often a sense that human persons are just part of a spectrum of person-like entities. Irving Hallowell invented the phrase ‘other-than-human-persons’ to describe Ojibwe beliefs (Hallowell

1960, discussed in Harvey 2005 33–40) and it is a phrase which provides very useful way to think collectively of souls, spirits and deities.

This sense of ‘otherthanhumanpersons’ is central to Graham Harvey’s reappraisal of animistic religions which sees animism as far more than an ethnocentric dismissal of ‘belief in spirits’ (Harvey 2005). While Harvey’s view provide a helpful perspective on these discussions about souls and spirit-deities I have resisted the temptation to use the word ‘animism’ in this work as anyone only familiar with its ‘old school’ usage would be confused while anyone who is familiar with Harvey’s view will readily see that my ideas fit comfortably within his broader approach.

Souls and Ghosts

Just as two or more souls are almost ubiquitous outside the West, so too is the distinction between souls and spirits. Traditional beliefs about whether or not souls can become ‘ghosts’ are very varied. However, such ghosts remain linked to the ideas about souls and, unlike Christian concepts of ghosts, are not deemed to part of the spirit realm. However, unlike Christians, traditional cultures may have difficulty distinguishing spirits from gods.

However Christianity is more complex than its creeds might suggest. On the one hand Christianity asserts that there is one God, so spirits and souls are something else. However Christianity also declares that the ‘godhead’ is a Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and a much less well-understood entity called either the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit, which – at least in more popular piety – is linked to the breath. So, Christianity too has inherited some of this pre-Christian complexity. Just as Classical Greek religious beliefs reveal traces of their origins among earlier Thracian and Iranian tribes, so too Christianity reveals a synthesis with the ideas it claims to have superseded.

Further complexity about souls is integral to one of the key beliefs of medieval Christianity – that on the Day of Judgement everyone’s bones will be reunited with their souls and they will be resurrected. Analysis of this belief usually fo-

cuses on whether not a person's soul has been deemed to be redeemed of sin and thereby eligible for this resurrection. There may also be some concerns about how few bones need to be retained to effect this resurrection – the practical outcome was that skulls and long bones made their way into charnel houses or crypts while the rest of the bones were repeatedly disturbed by later burials as the churchyards became evermore crowded. But what is ignored is that this Christian creed requires a belief that both the soul and the body in some sense 'live on' until the Day of Judgement and the final resurrection. This is much more like the 'bone soul'/'breath soul' dualism seen in nonwestern cultures.

The Spirit-Deities of the Orient

'Unpacking' the cultural biases of Christianity can be tricky – it's a bit like trying to look at the outside of a goldfish bowl while still swimming inside it. Sometimes it's much easier to understand other people's cultures than the ones we've grown up in. On the basis that readers have no recollections of living in India about 2,000 to 2,300 years ago and practising Buddhism, this era is about as 'other' to modern Western thinking as we can go and still have reasonably detailed information. A small number of texts and carvings still survive to offer some insights. They reveal that by 2,000 years ago we have gone back far enough in the history of Buddhism for bodhisattvas to still in the future. Instead various 'spirit-deities' are venerated.

These early texts and carvings formed the basis of a wonderful book by Robert DeCaroli called *Haunting the Buddha: Indian popular religions and the formulation of Buddhism* (DeCaroli 2004). At the risk of oversimplifying DeCaroli's discussions, he looked at Buddhist texts and statues from the three centuries before the Christian era. In particular, he looked at the many various Sanskrit names for ghosts and spirits – and the way they had been grouped together in all sorts of different ways by different writers. He noted that these assorted ghosts and spirits these blur into *devas* and *yaksas*. *Devas* are gods – or, more usually, demigods – and *yaksas* are local

spirits of place (what the Romans called *genii loci*). Collectively he refers to all these ghosts, spirits, demigods and spirits of place as 'spirit-deities'. Later they would blur into bodhisattvas, but only during a later period of Buddhism than that studied by DeCaroli.

DeCaroli spends considerable time establishing that these spirit-deities are part of the *laukika*. This word, meaning 'customary' or 'prevalent,' refers to the village religious practices which predate Buddhism in India – the same local practices which evolved into the Hindu practices of rural India today. By its very nature, *laukika* varies from place-to-place. But it always involves the worship of a chthonic local spirit-deity (in recent centuries most commonly the Mother Goddess known as Mata or Devi or a local byname; see Chandola 2007). Unlike Buddhism or Christianity, *laukika* has no 'creed' and does not offer enlightenment or salvation. The *laukika* practices both offer respect to the spirit-deity and, where deemed appropriate, seek to benefit from the *shakti* of the spirit-deity. I'll return to the concept of *shakti* later.

Much as DeCaroli's wonderful study deserves more attention, for present purposes I want to move swiftly on to another unique insight into popular Oriental rituals. Again this offers insights into the centuries just before the Christian era. But the country is China and the popular practice is known – at least to Westerners – as Taoism. The Belgian scholar Kristofer Schipper became, in the early 1960s, the first Westerner to be trained in the inherited family traditions of the Taoist religion. Only, no ordinary Chinese person would call themselves a Taoist – only a trained master is referred to this way (Schipper 2000: 3). And, until recently, when a word with the literal meaning of 'sectarian doctrine' was invented to translate the English word 'religion,' the Chinese did not have a word which equated to the Western notion of religion (exactly as the Indian word *laukika* refers only to customary or prevalent practice, without the dogmatic associations of the Western word 'religion').

Even more so than Indian *laukika*, Chinese customary practice has no faith or creed or

dogma. These customary practices include performing the essential rituals at the four most important annual feasts: New Year; honouring the earth god in spring and autumn; and feeding the hungry spirits (or 'orphan souls') on the fifteenth day of the seventh moon. These rituals honour Heaven, Earth and the local godsaint (Schipper 2000: 22–3). In the absence of a formally trained priest, one family (elected annually) in each village will take on the role of organising the rituals. While such rituals can become elaborate, the only essential requirement is an incense-burner (a metal or ceramic container, almost always antique) which is regarded as a representation of the sacred mountain.

While such rituals were repressed during the Maoist years, they survived in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and have regained importance in mainland China during recent decades. Sadly the many Taoist monasteries in China did not survive the Cultural Revolution and seem unlikely to reappear.

What is clear from Schipper's intimate knowledge of both contemporary Taiwanese practices and the early Taoist literature is that these locally based veneration focus on what he calls 'local god-saints' in a manner closely analogous to DeCaroli's descriptions of spirit-deities in early Buddhism and the localised Mata/Devi worship among rural Hindus today.

Just as Taoism is used by Western academics to refer to the nameless localised Chinese customary practices, so too Hinduism is a word invented in the mid-nineteenth century by Westerners to refer collectively to the religious activities of the Indus peoples; only with the rise of Indian nationalism was the word 'Hindu' used by Indians themselves to refer to their religion. In a similar way the name Shinto has been imposed on the originally unnamed spirit-worship which characterise pre-Buddhist religion in Japan.

Shinto has no gods, scriptures or a founder, so it fits in poorly with Western notions of religion. Shinto rituals honour *kami* – which denotes a combination of transcendent power, otherness and mystery – which manifests through all sorts

of forms and places, as a tree or a rock or through a powerful person.

Although such spirits are often collectively referred to as *kami*, strictly *kami* are only the most powerful of four types of spirits. There are also *tama* (ancestral ghosts); neglected ghosts (equating to the hungry ghosts and orphan souls of the Chinese worldview); and rather nasty 'witch-animals', of which the fox is the most prevalent.

Although Shinto was recognised as a distinct religion many centuries ago, it happily coexists with Buddhism and other religions – Shinto followers often also practise Buddhism simultaneously. Shinto has changed considerably – more than once – as a result of Japanese political upheavals. In the nineteenth century Shinto was adopted as a 'national religion' (in the same way the Church of England is respected in British State rituals) but historically – and in local practice – Shinto is much more a 'grass roots' tradition than anything 'top down.'

Kami, óðr and Potentia

Looking more closely at the other-than-human-persons best described as 'spirit-deities' reveals extensive cross-cultural parallels. In my online essay *Souls, Spirits and Deities* (Trubshaw 2012) I show how the same broad span of cultures also recognises a 'potency' that is materialised through these spirit-deities (and sometimes also through trees, rocks, and living humans). By looking at closely at Christian practice in Britain before about the eleventh century we seem to be seeing an unbroken continuity from earlier north European worldviews about *óðr* – the 'energy' which manifests 'in' *Óðinn* (whose name therefore should be understood as 'full of *óðr*') and presumably other gods and in sacred places – through to the doctrines associated with *potentia* which can best be thought of as the power of Christ manifesting through early saints and their relics.

As academics are beginning to discern (see Carver *et al.* 2010) we are hard pushed to recognise a clear boundary between 'pagan' and early Christian worldviews. So, even though the 'exegesis' of *potentia* reflects the Church's doctrines,

the underlying concept of an 'otherworldly' energy manifesting through powerful people, objects and places is close kin to the Scandinavian concept of *óðr* and so possibly a direct continuity of the similar (but less clearly understood) ideas associated with the Old English word *ond*. In my more extended online essay *Souls, Spirits and Deities* (Trubshaw 2012) I look in more detail at almost worldwide ethnographic accounts of energies which manifest through 'sacred' people, places and objects in the same manner as early Christian ideas of *potentia*.

To understand this Anglo-Saxon worldview we need to at least partially strip away changes in Christian belief over the last thousand years. However we must be careful not to strip away too much. Popular thinking about the Dark Ages has yet to properly recognise that early Christianity is not so much a break with paganism but rather a continuity of early outlooks and practices, albeit with the 'meaning and significance' somewhat shifted.

This article is based on the opening section of Bob Trubshaw's *Souls, Spirits and Deities*, published online at:

www.hoap.co.uk/general.htm#ssd

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Since childhood Bob has been interested in photography and all aspects of landscape, especially geology and archaeology. He graduated as an industrial designer and worked in various aspects of the plastics industry from the mid-1970s until 2001. In 1986 he returned to Leicestershire and became deeply involved in various aspects of local history and folklore. At the end of 2010 he moved to Avebury.

Soundscape and the Culture of War on an American Civil War Battlefield: An Ethnography of Communication with Past Presences

John G. Sabol



Today, there are historic battlefields where the sounds of combat are recorded and perceived as 'authentic' auditory markers from the past. Individuals have reported the sounds of gunfire, cannonade, and the voices of soldiers in battle. Are these perceptions and recordings the traces of material remains of past combat, misinterpretations of contemporary (and naturally recurring) phenomena, or configurations of imaginative minds? Is it possible to identify and isolate geographical areas that exhibit a repeating and patterned auditory character from the past? If this past auditory character exists, is it a residual element, or can it be explored as a manifestation of still 'active' past presence ('a ghost')?

Many battlefields of the American Civil War are perceived as 'hallowed ground' (McPherson 2003). At these sites, ritualized activities (such as reenactments, monument memorialization, and individual/group 'offerings' of remembrance) are practiced. Some of these 'rituals' have become part of a recurring (albeit habitual) activity ('anniversary date' celebrations) for a number of decades. The memory of the American Civil War has become a social fixture in the American psyche since the centennial years of 1961-1965 (cf. Weeks 2003). Has this ritualized activity opened-up a 'portal' to the past? Has it created a cognitive signature or 'morphogenetic field' (Sheldrake 1994) on some battlefields? Are the 'manifestations' that are reported by many individuals today a result of this new morphogenetic field? Has a 'cumulative memory' emerged from the repetition of similar acts on these battlefields? Have reenactments, ghost tours, ghost tour/investigations, and widespread 'ghost hunting' created an expanded morphic field of battlefield presence that is perceived as a haunting by phantom 'ghost soldiers'? If so, are these manifestations actual presences from the past, or are they 'cultural imagineerings' of what 'ghost

hunters' and ghost tour operators commonly (and inaccurately) perceive as Civil War 'combat'? Has a misperception of Civil War combat (sightings of men 'drilling' on a battlefield, single and sporadic gunfire, the absence of real sensory elements of battlefield death and injury, the absence of the 'smell' of death, etc.) merely created 'tulpas' or 'egregores' as thought forms, rather than 'true' presences?

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a series of 'ghost excavations' that were conducted at one American Civil War battlefield. The focus of these 'excavations' was to explore the reality of these perceptions and manifestations of past presence through controlled and directed fieldwork. The site chosen for our 'ghost excavations' was the Antietam battlefield, located in Sharpsburg, Maryland. This battlefield was the site of the single bloodiest day of combat in American history, with more than 26,000 casualties (killed, wounded, and missing). Our non-evasive 'excavation' involved a phenomenological exploration of various militarily perceived spaces on the battlefield. These spaces were analyzed through the use of contextual 'soundmarks' and the effect of replaying these soundmarks in specific battlefield areas and their relation (if any) to perceived haunting phenomenon. We used soundmarks because 'they create an extremely important continuity with the past' (Truax 1984:59). This analysis of *one* aspect of a battlefield setting is based on the fieldwork of Mark Nesbitt (2005) who states that the most common form of 'haunting' manifestation on these battlefields is an auditory one, constituting more than 60% of all reported phenomenon (2005:16). It was also based on the assumption that the 'life' of any period is always immersed in a matrix of acoustic information. Our fieldwork was conducted using 'soundmarks' as 'triggers' for immersive acts in 'acoustical communication' (Truax 1984).

This involved an 'excavation' that attempted to unearth material remains as auditory elements of past presence in specific and different physical spaces on the Antietam battlefield. Our work was meant to analyze the perception of the contemporary reality of acoustic phenomena in specific spaces of an American Civil War battlefield, and their relation in the development of a perceived 'haunted' battlefield.

In our investigation, a number of methodological avenues merge. These include:

- * The use of soundscape analysis as 'communicational,' following the work of Truax (1984);
- * The use of audio scene analysis, as developed in perception psychology (Bregman 1994), and applied in auditory archaeological fieldwork by Mills (2001) in his documentation of auditory past presence;
- * The use of an 'ethnography of communication' as developed by Dell Hymes and other social linguists in analyzing the 'culture of war' (Fussell 2008) of the American Civil War; and
- * The use of morphic resonance theory (Sheldrake 1994) to account for the presence of auditory phenomenon from the past.

Theory

The most common approach to investigating anomalous sounds heard on an American Civil War battlefield is to conduct a 'ghost hunt,' using tech devices to record and measure the contemporary ambient environment (Potts 2004). This physical, mechanistic approach is a limited view of what actually remains on these battlefields. This limitation involves 'the unquestioned association of technology with detection' (Potts 2004:222). The 'link between the alleged anomaly and the technology used to represent it...[however]...remains unexamined' (Ibid:222). Besides, many recordings of 'anomalous' sounds are taken in general surface sweeps, or are heard (not recorded). The missing link, I propose, is cultural context, or, in the context of our investi-

gation, the *sonic context*. We can come to a better understanding of what these anomalous sounds (including EVP recordings) are on Civil War battlefields, I propose, if we 'open ourselves to new ideas and *combination of ideas* (my emphasis) that might explain part or all of a ghost experience' (Auerbach 2004:238).

I propose that perceiving a battlefield as a varied soundscape setting, within the landscape of combat and non-combat zones, can produce a solid baseline in which we can analyze the most common form of anomalous manifestation on these Civil War battlefields: auditory manifestations. In our 'excavation,' we view the soundscape as 'communicational' (Truax 1984) to a specific acoustic community. The auditory communication of a soundscape is defined as 'any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the lives of the inhabitants (no matter how the commonality of such people is understood)' (Truax 1984:58). For purposes of our investigation, this 'commonality' centered on 'Inherent Military Probability' (I.M.P.) behavior of the 'culture of war' (Fussell 2008) during the American Civil War. This I.M.P. behavior refers to how a soldier would have acted to particular contextual sounds ('soundmarks'), in specific situations and particular battlefield spaces.

The amount of information in an acoustic situation, even a very simple and repetitive one (like military drills), requires screening to reduce the incoming (and sometimes incoherent) information that is heard. This screening involves a 'reference to the memory of past experience' (Truax 1984:17). Truax uses the Vancouver Soundscape Study as an example. In this study, older individuals detected information through acoustic cues of patterns of association that remained in memory. According to Truax 'recalling the context may revive a memory of the sound, and the sound, if heard again, usually brings the entire context back to life' (1984:26).

Our fieldwork was a phenomenological exploration of this acoustical 'screening' which helped to direct I.M.P. behavior in particular spaces during a battle. Within those battlefield

spaces, our fieldwork became ethnographic, an immersion into the American Civil War's 'culture of war.' Our use of soundmarks (see examples below) provided a sonic context for social interaction by screening the information that may be received by any lingering presences (as a memory of past experience). Contemporary ghost hunting, with its 'demand and command' mentality ('Show us a sign'...'Is anyone here?'...'Do something!'), are not contextual memories of past experiences in I.M.P. behavior! Is the creation of a 'sonic context,' in our use of contextual soundmarks, a 'sound' means to establish identity and create a social dialogue with the past? Is past sound (in *any* form) a recoverable category of data? The doctoral research of Mills (2001) in auditory archaeology demonstrated that sounds *are* recoverable and that they are 'critical to understanding past ways of life' (2001:5). He proposes, as a key element in auditory archaeology, that 'in their daily activities, people generate acoustic information that is integral to creating, [and] maintaining...social relations' (Ibid:5).

Following Truax (1984), and critical for acoustic communication, is the notion of context and its importance to the understanding of messages *and* the circumstances under which these messages are communicated. This communication is an exchange, a two-way relationship, of information. It is not a transfer of energy (where EMF level is indicative, in a ghost hunt, of a manifesting past presence). This exchange of information is based on field *resonance*, not field dissonance. The use of tech devices is *not* within the cultural or sonic context of the Civil War soldier. These devices were not used during the American Civil War, nor were the sounds coming from them (a series of bleeps from a K-2 meter or unnatural sounds from an ovilus). These sounds are 'noise' or what Mary Douglas calls 'dirt' or 'pollution.'

The experience and memory of battle was (continues to be?), a highly emotional (and deadly) experience, not a mechanical response to the physical nature of combat, measurable by scientific instruments. These instruments do not create resonance. We must never lose sight of

the fact that war (and battle) is about sudden violence and frequent death, especially how it was 'performed' during the American Civil War. This had a very specific and uncanny effect on these men. Battle was a soundscape of emotions, a field of auditory manifestations. It is important that we understand these men on *their* terms. Their 'culture of war' is not our culture of reality. The fieldwork to recover this soundscape is not a 'hunt,' but a mode of production (resonance in context). It is recovering what remains of that soundscape today through resonating 'soundmarks' and contextual cultural scenarios (performed within the context of an ethnography of communication). There are particular social and cultural fields of activity, and areas of specific action, that may be unearthed (or reawakened) on these battlefields, I propose, through specific soundmarks.

I propose that past memory (and presence) can be 'unearthed' through morphic resonance. The continuous repetition of drills and specific behaviors in combat, as elements of I.M.P. behavior, can create a morphic field framed by specific soundmarks. A morphic field is the 'means by which the habits' (such as I.M.P. behavior),..."are built up, [and] maintained..." (Sheldrake 1994:110). It is hypothesized that the use of soundmarks, and the enactment of contextual participatory cultural scenarios (in specific battlefield spaces), act as a form of morphic resonance and can be used to 'tune-in' to the sounds of past experiences of I.M.P. behavior of the American Civil War soldier on the Antietam battlefield. Quoting Sheldrake, this possibility would suggest 'the influence of like upon like through space and time' (Ibid:111). Morphic resonance (like the concept of acoustic communication in Truax's theory), 'does not involve a transfer of energy, but of information' (Sheldrake 1994:111). This concept of 'like upon like' (soundmarks and cultural scenarios that imitate I.M.P. behavioral patterns initiated by auditory cues), may produce a form of 'auditory communication' from various past presences on a battlefield. As Sheldrake states:

“What happened in the past can in some sense become present there again and thus.....can act as doorways to realms of experience that transcend the ordinary limitations of space and time” (1994:176).

Memory depends upon this morphic resonance, which itself is dependent upon similarity. The more similar the acoustic cues (as contextual soundmarks) to the sounds that initiated I.M.P. behaviors in the past, the more specific and effective the morphic resonance can become. Specific soundmarks, through repeated use in drill and battle, became habitual alerts to act in specific ways in particular situations. Over time, this link between soundmarks/habitual I.M.P. behaviors became embedded in personal and cultural memory patterns. It created a morphic field. These soundmarks were distributed in different topographical/militarily-defined battlefield zones that associated these soundmarks with distinct military tasks. These zones constituted ‘taskscape’ (Ingold 1993). It was in these ‘taskscape’ that our ghost excavations were centered.

If there are interactive hauntings on American Civil War battlefields, and ‘live’ apparitions from the past, they may respond to these soundmark/cultural scenario recreated events of I.M.P. behaviors. The morphic resonance produced by these sounds and acts can be situated in a resonating field through ethnographic means. This is achieved, I propose, by using an ‘ethnography of communication’ (E.O.C.). This ‘conceptualizes communication as a continuous flow of information, rather than as a segmented exchange of messages’ (Lindlof and Taylor 2002:44). In this respect, the ethnography of communication contrasts with typical EVP recordings in ghost hunting, where a non-contextual ‘demand and command’ (‘is anyone here’) elicits (if anything), a *perceived* one or two word response. An ethnography of communication in a ghost excavation uses ethnographic methods (participant-observation) to initiate auditory communication and continues the dialogue through ‘target’ performances. The participation/performance acts center on a shared code (soundmarks), a channel setting

(contextual cultural scenarios), and an event (a situational I.M.P. behavior on a battlefield) to transmit the message.

The E.O.C. approach allows us to use acoustic markers in conjunction with specific social acts that are performed in certain situations and particular spaces. I frame an excavation as an E.O.C. of various soundmarks within cultural contextual scenarios. We enact this cultural resonance as a staged performance (‘ghost script’), observed and recorded before a potential audience of interested individuals (‘ghosts’). I call this ethnographic process ‘P.O.P.’ (Participate-Observe-Perform). I propose that P.O.P. may unearth a series of auditory communications with past presences on American Civil War battlefields. I further propose that this process can become iterative. It can build a morphic field of acoustical communication which would allow investigators to record and document similar acoustical communications”in the same physical spaces at a future date. If interactive apparitions remain on American Civil War battlefields, the use of sonic and cultural contexts ‘might explain part or all of a ghost experience,’ as Auerbach suggests. The following hypothesis will be used to test this theory in the field:

If soundmarks, tied to contextual cultural scenarios recreating I.M.P. behavior of the culture of war of the American Civil War, are enacted in specific militarily recognized spaces, then the probability of auditory manifestations from the past is greater than mere chance, coincidence, or ghost hunting subjective perceptions.

The next part of this paper outlines the methodology that was used to test this hypothesis.

Methodology

In our ghost excavation, I chose those sounds that facilitated the transmission of information from one person to another (or group) in the culture of war, *and* which produced resonating elements that linked the present to the past. This link involved a playback of ‘auditory streams’ (any coherent auditory phenomena that is detectable to the human ear), that were contextual

sound examples of soundmarks that had initiated I.M.P. behavior in the past. These soundmarks included:

- * Bugle calls;
- * Drums;
- * A simulated "Rebel Yell"; and
- * Period music.

These soundmarks, together with contextual behaviors/acts (battlefield commands; roll-call), and resonating dialogue (conversations about home life; reading of letters sent home by soldiers; relatives searching for loved ones on the battlefield) form part of an auditory ethnography of communication (E.O.C.) that produced, I propose, a field of morphic resonance in particular spaces on the battlefield.

The battlefield was divided into various and distinct militarily defined spaces. These spaces are called the K.O.C.O.A. spaces of a battlefield. The K.O.C.O.A. was used by military commanders during the American Civil War, and these spaces were defined in the following way:

- * 'K' – This was the *key* area of the battlefield;
- * 'O' - These were the *observation* areas and lines of fire on the battlefield;
- * 'C' - These were the *cover* and *concealed* areas on the battlefield;
- * 'O' – These were the *obstacles* an army encountered on the battlefield; and
- * 'A' - These were the *avenues of approach* by which an army engaged the enemy.

We used a series of different cultural scenarios/soundmarks (relative to I.M.P. behavior) in each of these K.O.C.O.A. spaces. In each space, we used multiple scenarios. This permitted us to largely avoid confirmation bias. It was also predicated on the fact that people (even ghosts?), have likes and dislikes. So, even though our scenarios and soundmarks were location-specific (aligned to a particular K.O.C.O.A. space) culturally contextual (conforming to I.M.P. behavior), and resonating ('like attracting like'), we did not know (or pre-

sume to know) which scenario, soundmark, or combination would unearth an auditory communication (if any).

The excavations consisted of 10-12 fieldworkers, which included both male and female investigators. We did two excavations. To maintain context and resonance with the actual battle, the females served as observers/recorders, except in post-battle scenarios: attending to the wounded; searching for missing relatives. There were no female combatants at Burnside Bridge, that part of the Antietam battlefield where the ghost excavations were enacted (see below). The males performed the I.M.P. behaviors and the playback of the soundmarks. In keeping with the cultural resonance, we did not use flashlights. Both excavations began at 8:00 p.m. and ended at 2:00 a.m. This allowed us to work unburdened by tourists and other visitors (joggers). We used lanterns throughout the investigation. Tech devices were kept to a minimum (see below).

We used the P.O.P. process throughout the night and during both excavations. The P.O.P. process is not a linear sequence of events. It is a system of related acts (**P**articipatory acts, **O**bservations/recordings, and targeted **P**erformances) that operate at different hierarchic levels. Each action intensifies the level of communication and interaction, and continues the process of resonance. It unfolds time by enfold-ing a resonating field of activity. This field increases and strengthens the acoustic communication/social relationship. The P.O.P. process identifies what Meskell (2004) calls 'culturally stepped moments' (2004:6). These 'moments' continue, I propose, due to morphic resonance. A participatory act/soundmark initiates a contextual communicative event which, through resonance and memory recall, provides a link that may initiate an auditory response. If, and when, this occurs, it is recorded by the team (through immediate review), and the moment continues with a targeted response aimed at that particular situational auditory event. If no response is heard or recorded, the next cultural scenario is enacted, and the process continues until all scenarios for that particular auditory

situation and space are completed. The team then moves on to the next set of scenarios in another K.O.C.O.A. space.

Our audio recorders (see equipment below) have a 1, 3, and 6-second delay. We were thus able to record and verify immediately any auditory responses to any of our soundmarks/cultural scenarios. This enabled us to follow-up any manifestation by targeting a specific individual *and* I.M.P. situation. It *also* allowed “acoustic communication,” and the flow of information to be more frequent and expansive which further enhanced the resonance within the morphic field. This made the process and communication a potential self-regulating field. P.O.P. is the core technique of a ghost excavation. When auditory communication was established *in context* to a soundmark/cultural scenario, we continued the dialogue. Our purpose was to: (1) Document and record the traces and fragments of remaining *human* audio presence; (2) Establish a controlled process that could be repeated at a later date with another team; and, most importantly, (3) Answer some lingering questions that remain unresolved in the historical and archaeological record through ethnographic means.

We conducted two extensive ghost excavations at Antietam, each one approximately five hours long of continuous performance-based fieldwork. The first occurred on September 25, 2010. This date was chosen, not so much because it was near the date the battle was fought (September 17 – the anniversary date), but was in season (Fall), which itself would foster certain soundmarks that would naturally resonate with any lingering presences. The 2nd date was June 11, 2011. This time was chosen because it did not resonate with the date or season of the year the battle was fought. We wanted to compare results of the two excavations. We used the same scenarios with different investigators, and we added additional contextual scenarios with the same investigators. The only constant was the use of the same soundmarks for both excavations. We wanted to test the validity of the soundmarks as a form of morphic resonance.

One significant question was the death and burial of Colonel Holmes of the 2nd Georgia. Colonel Holmes was one of the last Confederate soldiers to die at Burnside Bridge. After being hit several times from rifle fire, he fell, died, and was then stripped of his regimental ornaments by soldiers from the 51st New York (who are identified in the historical narrative). His boots were fought over and taken from him, and he was buried somewhere along the stone wall on the Union side of Antietam Creek. His remains have never been identified, recovered, and reburied. One of the major goals of our ghost excavations was to use soundmarks and various cultural scenarios to create resonance and enhance auditory communication with Colonel Holmes, if his ‘ghostly’ presence still remains there at Burnside Bridge. We used various means to recreate his death, burial, and a post-battle search for his body. The search phase was enacted by female investigators portraying his relatives. During these scenarios, the investigators used a form of imagined narrative. This involves placing oneself in the character of that relative as she searched for his remains. The results of this scenario (and others) are outlined below (see Investigative Findings).

Equipment

We refrained from using the typical equipment of a ghost hunt. We did not deploy EMF meter scans, thermal scans, use Frank’s Box or other similar EVP devices, or other ambient measuring equipment. This was in keeping with maintaining resonance with the nature of I.M.P. behavior of the American Civil War. None of these devices were known or used during this period. We believe that the use of this equipment would identify us as outsiders, rather than the ‘band of brothers’ that was typical of Civil War regiments (soldiers were usually recruited/enlisted from one area and were well-known to one another). We did use audio recorders and video cameras for our investigation. We also used a portable DVD player to playback period music, the ‘Rebel Yell,’ the sound of drums, bugle calls, and gunfire.

We located various RT-EVP audio recorders (Model DAS-RT-EVP) with simultaneous record/playback function and real-time historical data review functions, during our enactment of the soundmarks/cultural scenarios. We used a 3 and 6 second delay function in these recordings, and immediately played-back the recording to hear any responses for immediate follow-up. We also used digital and 35-mm cameras to record the landscape setting and scenario setup. Our video cameras were both stationary and mobile. We also used a video camera to record the recorder recording the scenario and/or soundmark playback. We also created a layered recording. This involved a preliminary peripatetic walk of each K.O.C.O.A. space *before* we enacted the scenario. Subsequently, we played back this initial recording during the P.O.P. process. This enabled us to view side-by-side the before (resonating acts) and during (resonating acts) and compare the two. In this way, we could verify that any acoustic communication was the result of enacting the scenario with the soundmark, and not a recurring phenomenon of the contemporary battlefield soundscape.

We were permitted total access to the area (see below), including wading across Antietam Creek (in one scenario). The area was secure from tourist/pedestrian flow. Access to the location was blocked. A National Park Service Ranger patrolled the grounds. His location and actions were constantly monitored. The only outside ambient noise came from traffic flow along a state road that crossed near the 11th Connecticut Monument, the location of one of our scenarios. The road was located about 25 yards away through a thick wooded area. The relative isolation of the area permitted us to enact our scenarios and record the soundscape without interference and relatively free of background noise.

Investigative Setting

We chose the military engagements at Burnside Bridge, part of the battle of Antietam that occurred on September 17th, 1862. Antietam is the single bloodiest day of combat in American History with more than 26,000 casualties (killed,

wounded, and missing). The engagement at Burnside Bridge in that battle was significant. According to Tucker (2000):

A relative handful of ragged and barefoot 2nd and 20th Georgia soldiers performed one of the most important military feats of the war by holding Rohrbach's Bridge [later renamed Burnside Bridge] for most of 17 September 1862. These Georgians were truly Spartans in gray, who fought against impossible odds to achieve the Thermopylae of the Civil War (2000:154).

It took the Union forces five hours and five deadly assaults to cross that bridge. They achieved that objective largely because the Confederate force (approximately 300 men) did not receive reinforcements and ammunition to continue the fight. The battle to cross Burnside Bridge had all the essential elements of acoustic communication in specific K.O.C.O.A. spaces to test the hypothesis. The Bridge became the *Key area*. The Confederate positions in the trees along the banks of Antietam Creek became the *Observation area*. There were Confederate *Cover and concealed* areas along the ridge. A Union bottleneck *Obstacle area* was located at the bridge entrance. The Rohrbach farm road served as the Union *Avenue of approach*. Together, these spaces formed the K.O.C.O.A. area for our ghost excavation. Distinct soundmarks and contextual scenarios were used in each of these spaces, which defined a separate battlefield situation and linked the present-past fields of action. Specifically, we used: (1) Historical and contextual dialogues, together with music, in cover and concealment positions; (2) We used drums and bugles to muster the men of the 11th Connecticut. These soldiers began the 1st assault on the bridge. Later, we conducted a roll-call of the Connecticut dead near their monument, located in a cover and concealed area. (3) We also had one of the female investigators read the letter of an 11th Connecticut surgeon to his wife which described the engagement at Burnside Bridge. She read the letter at the base of the monument; (4) We played the Rebel Yell along the Confed-

erate cover and concealed positions. Subsequently, we replayed it along the Union avenue of approach on Rohrbach farm road; (5) We read actual battlefield dialogue in the key area (the bridge) and in the obstacle areas. In these areas, we also used the sounds of gunfire, drums, and bugles; and (6) We read poetry and played music in various areas before ending the excavation. We also had male investigators portray both Union and Confederate officers shouting out commands in various locations. In the cover and concealed areas, we sat and played cards, drank coffee, smoked cigars, and eat. During each of these participatory acts, we observed and recorded any auditory responses. If there was a response, we immediately followed this with a targeted performance aimed at continuing the scenario and/or soundmark. This was done in *all* cases, without regard to verifying origin or agency. This was meant to continue the flow of communication. In post-excavation analysis, we evaluated each and every communicative event with reference to the P.O.P. process.

We had thoroughly researched the engagement at Burnside Bridge. This allowed us to develop a series of contextual scenarios for each K.O.C.O.A. space. We had historical dialogues, the position of combat units, the names of individual soldiers who fought and died there, and other vital events that occurred during the five-hour assault of the bridge. During our participatory scenarios/soundmark replays, we recorded (as live acoustic communication) individual words ('John'), complete sentences ('Are you Stedman?'; 'Is that you Captain?'), opinions ('traitor'), sounds of men in battle (along the Rohrbach farm road), singing (at the 11th Connecticut Monument), the sound of a bayonet thrust (near the Union bottleneck), sounds of gunfire (throughout the excavation), and an answer from one soldier to the 11th Connecticut roll-call.

During the 11th Connecticut roll-call, I portrayed a Union officer. I read the names of those killed at Burnside Bridge (inscribed on the monument), pausing between names for the team to record any responses. To my command,

'Private Lewis Dayton,' someone answered 'Dayton Present.' We did not hear or record any other responses to the roll-call. While preparing the next scenario (the reading of a letter from a 11th Connecticut surgeon to his wife), we did record a voice saying, 'Are you Stedman?' At the time of the recording, we did not know who 'Stedman' was. Upon researching the name, we found that Stedman was a major in the 11th Connecticut. He took over command of the regiment after Colonel Kingsbury was killed during the 1st assault of the bridge. His question to us would be a logical response since we had just enacted a roll call.

The reading of a letter at the 11th Connecticut monument by one of our female investigators 'unearthed' more than a fragmented auditory communication. It recovered a past 'live' audio scene that contained many elements of an ethnography of communication. During the scenario, we first heard footsteps and the rustling of brush in the wooded area behind the monument. This was followed by some investigators reporting tactile sensations as if they were being gently touched. These investigators (all female) were positioned behind the video camera and out of frame. The video camera itself was physically moved, and the live video feed was in and out of focus several times. As the investigator continued to read the letter, we recorded a man begin to sing about home (interestingly the word 'home' was spoken seconds *before* the investigator spoke the word in the letter). His voice was followed by others, joining in at the end. This recording was homophonic, predominantly a single source but accompanied by others as the communication continued. This homophonic communication occurred several times during the excavation. It was as if these individuals were speaking to one another, as well as to us. This recording contrasts with a typical EVP, which is usually monophonic (a single source).

We had other instances of auditory communication in other K.O.C.O.A. spaces. Each communication event appears to be unique to that particular space and situation. Did this occur because our cultural scenarios and soundmarks

were different in each K.O.C.O.A. space? I don't know. In future excavations at the site, we will continue to test and monitor these auditory communication responses to see if a pattern continues to unfold in each space. The most significant auditory communication was the voiced response of Colonel Holmes to female relative pleas for his whereabouts. During the two excavations, separated by nine months (and with different team compositions and audio equipment), we recorded the *same* voice, response, and physical location where he says he is buried. The auditory communications of Colonel Holmes are so dramatic (and occurring multiple times) that they suggest we may have a confirmed example of morphic resonance. Did the female investigators resonate with the past presence of Colonel Holmes? Did we link present and past through morphic resonance? We will continue to develop more cultural scenarios/soundmarks to test this possibility in future excavations.

Summary

The multiple scenarios and soundmarks enacted for Colonel Holmes by different team members (both male and female), using different audio and video recorders, at different times of the year, did produce *similar* results. When prompted, Colonel Holmes (or someone) *answered!* This auditory communication occurred approximately 75% (11-15) of the time, far above coincidence. Did a female voice, using expressions of concern and endearment (and highly emotional) produce a morphic field in which a doorway 'to realms of experience that transcend the limitations of space and time' (Sheldrake 1994:176) occur? The answer to that question may lie in a statement made by Truax (1984): 'A particular pattern of sound always produces the same response' (1984:26).

Was that pattern a female voicing her concern for a fallen relative? Was the response, 'Here,' 'over here,' and 'I'm here' repeated numerous times an acoustic communication *and* a result of morphic resonance? Habitual responses (such as the above) can lead to certain types of behavior (acoustic communication). This link

(sound pattern-habitual response) can lead to a particular relationship between the person who is speaking and others in the same environment (physical/cultural). As Truax states, it is 'the pattern of sound [that] mediates that relationship' (1984:26). I propose that this mediation is Sheldrake's morphic resonance.

One may argue that we didn't (couldn't) recreate the auditory soundmarks of Civil War battle. This is true. But we focused on battlefield situations and outcomes where we could produce a resonating field (roll call; cover/concealed dialogue; search, etc.) Besides, 'one doesn't have to recreate the exact sound...for it to be evocative' (Truax 1984:26). The key to this evocation is memory: 'Patterns in the incoming signal may be found that match those in storage' (Truax 1984:26).

Those soldiers who fought and died at Burnside Bridge were not raw recruits. They were *veterans* of drill and battle. This made a difference: 'the sound pattern has connected with it layers of association built up over the years' (Ibid: 26). We excavated those built up layers of association at Burnside Bridge. The result is a solid baseline for further research into a possible relation between acoustic communication, morphic resonance, and active past presence on American Civil War battlefields. The excavations will continue at Antietam and other battlefields in the near future. The traces that remain are not ghost stories. They are excavation tales, a mode of production and recovery of continuing to record human presences at these sites. Our ghost excavations at Burnside Bridge explored the auditory possibilities of that bridge to the past through the excavation of potential morphic fields.

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The Effect of Meditation Attainment on Psychic Awareness: Research With Yogis and Tibetan Buddhists

Serena Roney-Dougal

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, is very interested in science and spirituality coming together, as is evidenced by the series of "Mind and Life" science meetings which link aspects of science with Tibetan Buddhist teachings. In his book "Freedom in Exile," he specifically requests that science begin to investigate the Tibetan psychic traditions, such as the oracles and the Tibetan divination techniques known as *Mo* divination. In a similar manner, since the late 1960s, a renowned yogi, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, incorporated science into his books about different aspects of yoga. In 2001, an invitation to teach Parapsychology at his Yoga University in his ashram in Bihar, North India, culminated in a research programme with the students and the swamis (Yogic nuns and monks) exploring the effect of meditation on psychic awareness (psi).

In the yoga teachings of Patanjali, it is stated that psychic abilities, called siddhis, manifest on attainment of Samadhi. Samadhi is the state of consciousness beyond mind, thoughts and mere awareness; where you become one with the whole. They say it's blissful; I'd like to get there! Patanjali devotes a whole chapter to a discussion of the siddhis. In a similar manner, Buddhist teachings say that in order to attain to enlightenment you have to first understand/experience the "clairvoyances." Psychic experiences are a taboo area amongst Western Buddhist practitioners, as quite rightly the teachings state that the aim is for enlightenment and one must not be distracted from the path by the psychic experiences. However, as both His Holiness Dalai Lama and Swami Satyananda recognise, at some stage in one's practice this level of subtle awareness starts to manifest. It is better to be aware of it and deal with the accompanying problems, such as ego and glamour, than these abilities bring in their wake, than to ignore them and fall prey to all the problems that ignorance brings! Tibetans are very comfortable with this

paradox and use psi quite extensively within their traditional culture, most monasteries having a practicing oracle and someone who does the *Mo* divination, as well as using astrology very widely in a predictive sense. Energy, psychic and spiritual healing techniques are commonly practiced, and I also came across an instance of exorcism. Most of the villages will also have lay practitioners of these arts.

Tibetans distinguish two types of "clairvoyance." They consider that the one Western parapsychologists research is a low-level ability that is unreliable and subject to fraud. Many people are considered to have this ability and Tibetans consider that it is an inherent ability resulting from past-life karma. The clairvoyance you attain as a result of meditation is considered to be a high-level ability which is absolutely reliable.

In Buddhism there are two meditation disciplines: the shamatha discipline of one-pointed concentration and the vipassana discipline of contemplative insight (mindfulness). Many traditional Mahayana and modern Tibetan Buddhist texts (e.g. Lamrimpa 1995; Conze 1990) relate meditation attainment in shamatha to development of psychic powers. Shamatha meditation techniques are very similar to some yogic meditation techniques. However, many of the monks I spoke to about this say that for reliable clairvoyance you need not only attainment in shamatha but also Special Insight in vipassana, and you need to have overcome the obstacles of the desire realm. So they reckon that reliable clairvoyance does not come easy – only the very high lamas can manifest it with 100% reliability at will!

Of key importance here is that both Yogis and Buddhists suggest that the initial essential requirement is practice in one-pointed meditation. So, in the research programme discussed below, in essence we were using awareness of psychic impressions as a measure of a shift in

consciousness; i.e. as one becomes more aware in general as a result of meditation practice, so the subtler aspects of awareness increase, such as becoming more aware of the dream state, becoming more aware of subliminal perception and by extension becoming more aware of psychic impressions. Parapsychological research over the past 100 years suggests that psychic information is present at a subliminal level all the time, but normally it is only in specific circumstances that we become aware of this information. However, going into an altered state, such as dreaming, or practicing meditation, increases the availability of this information in that we become more aware of the subtler aspects of our mind.

There are two possible interpretations of Patanjali's sutras and the Buddhist teachings. The first is that as one practices meditation so, bit-by-bit, one's psychic awareness begins to manifest as one's consciousness changes. The other is that the psychic abilities manifest only once Samadhi has been obtained, a byproduct of Samadhi so to speak. So we decided to look at these two possible interpretations of the teachings, by seeing whether or not there was difference in clairvoyance and precognition dependent on for how long meditation had been practiced.

For two years we developed the research methodology and design in the Bihar ashram, and gradually worked out the best method to test for precognition and clairvoyance in a way that was acceptable to people who are not scientifically minded. Using a laptop computer, which could be used wherever was most convenient for the participants, we asked the meditator to make an intent to become aware of a "target" picture (or sometimes we used video clips), which they would see on the computer at the end of the meditation. They were then guided to do 15 minutes meditation followed by an "awareness" period. Then they drew out and described what they had become aware of during this period. They were then shown four pictures, one of which was the "target" picture and they rated all four, dependent on how similar they thought the picture was to their awareness

experience. Then they got to see the target picture. In clairvoyance trials the computer chose the picture at the beginning of the sessions; for the precognition trials the picture was chosen only after the four pictures had been rated. The computer programme (PreCOG) was developed for this research by Jezz Fox.

This clairvoyance/precognition design has both a randomised double-blind design and in-built fraud control, so there is no need for specially designed rooms or any other laboratory facilities. Therefore it is ideal for research "in the field." It is also a suitable method to use with Tibetan people who have a tradition of precognition (oracles and *Mo* divination) being used by the lamas in their monasteries, as well as the use of clairvoyance for various purposes, such as discovering reincarnated monks (known as *tulkus*). I found it amazing that computer laptop technology enabled me to carry a scientific laboratory around with me on my back up mountains in the Himalayas to monks who were living and practicing in an environment which had not changed for hundreds of years!

We did a total of four experiments: two in the ashram, and two in various Tibetan monasteries in India. The results we got with the swamis in the ashram suggested that psychic awareness does start to manifest bit-by-bit as one practices meditation, showing a clear difference from the psi scoring of the beginners to that of the monks and nuns who had done at least 20 years of meditation, and who had dedicated their whole lives to the ashram life. This showed up most strongly in the consistency with which the monks and nuns showed evidence of psi, all of them choosing the target correctly once out of three times, where chance is once every four times. In parapsychology research this is considered to be reasonably good evidence that psi is present and is typical for altered states research, such as research into dreaming or altered states of consciousness. The students however, who had typically practiced meditation for less than two years, showed the typical pattern of some people being really very psychic sometimes with others showing little evidence of psi abilities. One factor that came out when ques-



Fig. 1: Dawn in Zhanskar, Ladakh, just prior to doing a research session. What a fantastic location!

tioning the participants about their practice, was that it was those who practiced regularly who tended to show the greatest level of psychic awareness.

It was decided to extend this research to Tibetan Buddhists, who have an extensive tradition of psi being used by advanced meditators. Because His Holiness, Dalai Lama has asked for scientists to do research into Tibet's psychic traditions I wrote to him suggesting that, as I was in India doing this research, it could be extended to Tibetan monks and nuns. His secretary wrote back saying they would welcome the research if I found a Buddhist Institute to oversee it. A fantastic piece of synchronicity led me to Geshe Jampel Dhakpa, the principal of a Tibetan college near to Dharamsala, which is where His Holiness the Dalai Lama lives, and I worked with Geshe Jampel's help for the next 3 years.

We started by working with Western students of Buddhist meditation at Tushita retreat

centre in Dharamsala, moving on to working with Buddhist monks who are beginners in meditation, at the largest Gelugpa monastic university in South India called Sera Jey, where there are 5,000 monks, through to monks who are more advanced meditators, such as those who have done a three year retreat at the Ny-yingma Namdroling monastery, also in South India, and with one old lama who had lived for 35 years in a monastery high up in a mountain valley in Ladakh. That was most certainly the high point – both literally at 4,000m and spiritually!

Eighteen monks completed the required minimum of 8 sessions. We asked people to do at least 8 sessions so that we could have a really good idea of their level of psi under test conditions. The Tibetans completely accepted this, as they have a tradition that you need to be tested 7 times to show the real extent of your ability.

We also developed a meditation questionnaire that assessed the number of years and hours the person had practiced meditation, in-

cluding several different types of meditation practise. We had to use this type of assessment because one of the Tibetan values that they adhere to strongly is that of humility. No monk would say that he was advanced meditator – they all said that they were not very good at it and were just beginners. Likewise no monk would ever say that they were psychic – such pride and grandiosity goes completely against all of their teachings. Also they make vows of secrecy when being initiated into different meditation techniques. They believe in secrecy – not telling anyone the practices they are doing, let alone how advanced they are. We in the West could maybe learn from this.

We used the same basic procedure that we had developed in the ashram, making minor changes such as using only pictures from Tibet and India as the target pictures so that they would be culturally familiar. The software guided the participant through the procedure, and as this was in English a tape was made with the instructions in Tibetan so that the participant just put on the tape and followed the instructions. There were 25 sets of 4 photographs each, all of which were pictures of Tibet or, in the second series of Tibet and India. PreCOG chose a set of photos at random, such that the person never got the same set twice, and then a picture at random from the set. That way neither I nor the participant had any idea what picture they would be getting as their “target.” We found that the number of times the person correctly chose the target was related to both how old they were and how many years they had been practising. Thus the interpretation of the teaching that one’s consciousness changes bit-by-bit as you practice seems to be the correct one. In other words, do your meditation every day consistently and sooner or later you will start to notice the changes, as is shown so beautifully in this Tibetan painting, which is at the entrance to Sera Mey temple in southern India.

There was no difference between the clairvoyance and precognition trials, which goes against the common expectation that it’s easier to be clairvoyant because at least the target is already there, so to speak. This does however



Fig 2: Depiction of a monk’s progress on the path. Bit by bit the changes happen as shown by the elephant and monkey slowly turning from black to white.

match with what is found in parapsychology, which is that there are as many reports of spontaneous precognition experiences as there are of clairvoyance.

The chart above shows the relation between the psi scoring and the number of years that the monks had been practising meditation. It can be seen that most people were relative beginners with less than 10 years of practice. Those who have more than ten years practice are scoring noticeably better than most of the others. But what is most significant are the lamas who have done 32 and 40 years of practise – they are way out in front! Also it can be seen that, with the beginners, in general there was a trend towards ‘psi-missing,’ which means that the people tended to NOT choose the target picture much

more than would be expected by chance. This is a well-known phenomenon in parapsychology called 'psi-missing.' It seems that psi-missing is related to one's attitude, to defense mechanisms, to 'blocks' of different sorts, and other psychological processes which are normally unconscious. There are many possible reasons for psi-missing. The most obvious possibility here is that it was their first exposure to science. Only in the past four years had there been any science taught to the monks at Sera Jey, and that as a voluntary class during their lunch break. This means that very few monks have any idea about science, its methodology, premises, etc., and most are very suspicious of it considering that science is responsible for the breakdown of spiritual traditions. To find any monks willing to participate was possible only because His Holiness, Dalai Lama is so keen on Buddhist teachings being related to scientific findings. The monks were therefore doing something very alien to them and, for most, primarily because His Holiness supports meditation research.

Of great interest however, is that there were three participants who scored most strongly in the psi-missing direction, one Geshe (a Geshe is a monk who has done the equivalent of a PhD in Buddhist philosophy) and two Rinpoches (a Rinpoche is a monk who is thought to have been a high lama in a previous incarnation and to have consciously chosen to reincarnate for the sake of helping all of us to enlightenment – also known as a tulku). These three participants all reported, quite independently of each other, and not knowing the other participants, that as children they had had memories of previous lives as monks in Tibet during the Chinese invasion – with the resultant imprisonment, torture and death. Two of these reports were independently confirmed and verified by relatives. No other participant made such a report. Whilst there has been considerable research with children who talk about a previous life, these have all been cases where there was no particular training in passing through the intermediate period between one life and the other with the conscious intention to reincarnate. Here we have a group who are considered to have mastered this task –

and we find with them that there is significant scoring, albeit in the psi-missing direction. Could it be that there is some sort of psi block in operation here? Owing to trauma from a memory holding over from what may have been a previous life? Far-fetched, but well worth speculating about!

Whatever might be the cause of their psi-missing, this is certainly an unexpected and interesting correlation worthy of much discussion. This psi-missing of the Rinpoches is shown very clearly in the graph below, which also shows how it is only the lamas, who were the most experienced meditators, who are showing evidence of correctly choosing the target more often than you would expect. However we ideally need to work with ten times as many participants to confirm these results. This is a good first step, but it is only a first step and more work needs to be done.

Of concern however is that this psi-missing amongst the younger people distorts the correlation. This correlation significance in meditation studies occurring partially as a result of psi-missing was also found by previous parapsychologists. In those studies meditators showed psi-missing prior to meditation with psi-hitting after meditation. They considered that these results were more due to the participants conforming to the experimenters' wishes than to the effect of meditation per se.

Conclusion

This first formal experiment of the hypothesis, that years of practice of meditation affects one's change in awareness at the clairvoyance and precognitive level, gives support to the Yogic and Buddhist teachings which state that such abilities arise as a result of meditation attainment. There are now four studies which all point to more advanced meditators scoring better than beginners, but it is not clear-cut exactly what this means because, in two of the studies, the correlation occurs primarily because of psi-missing by many of the participants.

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Shamanism, Transpersonal Ecosophy, and John E. Mack's Investigations of Encounters with Extraterrestrial Consciousness

Mark A. Schroll & John E. Mack

"'Look,' said the civil servant. 'I'm sorry. It's just that we need guys who can build, not write rhymes. We're starting a whole new civilization out there and we need mechanics and engineers. I'm sorry. 'So am I,' said Edgar. You're building a whole new civilization with technology, but there's no room for the poet. I'm sorry for your civilization.' 'Look, Mac, don't take offense. The stars belong to science, not to art.' [Edgar replied] 'The stars belonged to the poets before science cast its eye up there. When do we get them back?'" (Saye 1974: 126).

This article includes a historical overview of the fracture between religion and science that leads us into a conversation between John E. Mack and Charles T. Tart. Their exchange of ideas leads us to brief reflections on my meeting with Mack. This provides a preface to Mack's lecture on the eco-crisis, and how this relates to his investigations into shamanism and its similarities with persons who have experienced encounters with extra-terrestrial consciousness. Encounters that Mack believes are our *Passport to the Cosmos* (1999) and a means of transformation in this era of humankind's greatest challenges.

Introduction

I used to think investigating psi phenomenon from the perspective of transpersonal anthropology was as weird as it gets, but I was wrong. This article includes a transcribed commentary from a lecture John Mack gave four months prior to his untimely death at age 74, on September 27, 2004, when a drunk driver in London struck him in a crosswalk. Mack (a 1977 Pulitzer Prize winner for his biography of T. E. Law-

rence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia) was giving lectures in England on the Middle East conflict.¹ But this scholarship is not what made Mack a controversial figure. It was his final published book *Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters* (1999). This very misunderstood inquiry was not concerned with proving the existence of UFO sightings; it was instead a cross-cultural philosophical treatise on shamanism and its clash with modernity that Mack wove together with eerie accounts of people who experienced visitations from what was characterized as an intelligence seeking to impart knowledge regarding: "the fate of the Earth in the wake of human destructiveness, similar in nature to instructions in shamanic journeys about bringing the Earth into balance" (Jamieson & Mack 2003:21). Mack's investigation into these encounters lead him to suggest that we need to "invent a new psychology of our relationship to the Earth" (Mack 1995:280) that has lead to my continuing development of what I refer to as *transpersonal ecosophy* (Schroll 2009; Schroll & Hartelius 2011; Drengrson, Devall & Schroll 2011).

Brief Historical Overview of the Fracture of Religion and Science

In 1662, just 12 years after the death of Descartes, the Royal Society was formed at Oxford University, whose charter served to divide the views of religion and science. According to historians of science, this increasing separation of science and religion is often explained as a consequence of the growing influence of rationalism (Schroll & Greenwood 2011). Perhaps this was the primary influence for this increasing separation of mind and body, but is it also worth asking whether fear could have been the motivation operating in the minds of the foun-

ders of the Royal Society to further separate science and religion? We know the hysteria of hunting for witches continued until around 1790. Thus, avoiding discussion of religion during this time was most likely an act of self-preservation (Kubrin 1981). Whatever the specific reasons were, the Royal Society became more interested in hard science. I should add that as science became more concerned with material reality, confirming Newton's fears and influencing his decision to hide his alchemical investigations (Schroll 2010: 6-7).

The proceeding comments are a summary of my response to Tart's "Proceeding With Caution: What Went Wrong? The Death and Rebirth of Essential Science" (Tart 2012). This was a lecture Tart gave in the symposium "Animism, Shamanism and Ethnobotany: Ecopsychology's Link with the Transpersonal" that I organized and moderated at the 16th International Transpersonal [Association, (ITA)] Conference, Palm Springs, California on June 16, 2004. I could see Tart nodding in affirmation as I brought my summary to a close by saying that in Newton's day, belief in alchemy and hermeticism would have earned him more than ostracism or the failure to achieve tenure. Most likely it would have resulted in his getting hung or burned at the stake. "I would say that if someone was going to burn me as a witch because of my belief in psi/spirit, I, too, would be frightened enough to pretend, or actually become, a hard core materialist and/or not say anything about my other interests. Thankfully, we are living in a more tolerant time, at least to some extent." To which Tart replied, "Right, at least to some extent" (Schroll 2010: 7).

Mack too responded to Tart's lecture by saying:

I want to ask Charley a question about this discussion of science. I think what you mean by science is a way of authentic knowing, whatever that may be. But most, or many of the things that matter to us, are neither outside nor inside. Like the kind of experiences I work with (Mack

1999), they are powerfully internal but have an element from the outside, and I think this is probably true of most phenomena that matter to us. [My question then is this]: How do we use science to study something that is not simply the inner world, nor is it the outer world, but is a resonance of the whole reality system? (Schroll 2010:7-8).

Tart replied to Mack by saying:

Step One: Reactivate your curiosity. A lot of us are not curious enough about a lot of things anymore [and] this is the main reason [science chooses to ignore the kind of phenomena you study, John]. [Step] Two: We need to examine our prejudices. [You, John], are a fine example of someone that has been criticized by people that did not actually read what you did. Instead, critics say "This guy is out of the paradigm, this stuff he studies cannot be true, he must be wrong." I empathize, because I've had the same response to my studies of psi phenomena. I would welcome critics that did me the courtesy of reading what I did and then suggested some better ways to do it. So it is this throwing stuff out as outside the paradigm and not wanting to look at it at all that is the main problem...Is any of this getting at your question, John?

JEM: "For starts. I mean I was—well let's open the discussion up to the audience. I do not want to dominate the conversation" (Schroll 2010: 8).

At the time I was appreciative of Mack's brevity, as I assumed this was going to be the first of many deeper inquiries. Here I learned an important lesson. We never know how much time we have or what the future holds. Unfortunately in this case continuing this conversation with Mack is an opportunity that has been forever lost. All we have to guide our understanding of his investigations are his books, papers, and the

last few fragments of his remembrances and ruminations, to which we now turn.

Meeting John E. Mack

I remember my first meeting with John E. Mack. He came up to me after the lecture "Spiritual Emergence and Spiritual Problems" by David Lukoff and Francis Lu at the 2004 ITA meeting in Palm Springs, California, saying he enjoyed my comments and that "I'm looking for Mark A. Schroll. I want to talk with him about this panel we are doing, and want to find out a bit more about what each of us plan to talk about." My shamanic trickster personality emerged at this moment, as I replied: "I'll let you know when I find him, and point him out to you." Then I walked away. About 15 minutes later during the lunch break I ran into John again in the food line, and he said: "Hey, I think I've found Mark A. Schroll, you're him, would you like to have lunch?" My identity discovered, I agreed to have lunch, and we ended up talking nonstop for two hours. One of my questions about the UFO abduction experience was whether or not it is a real physical encounter with aliens, or if it is a powerful dream that is so vivid it seems real. This question about the reality of the UFO experience is one that Mack addressed to some extent during the symposium I organized. Mack also laid to rest the most obvious questions about his research in a paper he sent to me prior to the ITA meeting:

Largely, study of the UFO phenomenon has focused on the question of whether UFOs are real in a strictly material sense, if their existence can be proven by the methods of traditional science, and whether or not people are being taken bodily through the sky into spaceships by alien beings. These may be intriguing questions, but the most important truths for our culture may lie in the extraordinary nature and power of the encounterers' experiences, the opening that these experiences provide to other, deeper dimensions of reality, and what they may

mean for our culture and the human future. The subtle and elusive nature of the UFO phenomenon is such that its secrets may be denied to those using a purely empirical approach, who try to keep observer and observed, subject and object, totally separate (Jamieson & Mack 2003:24).

Mack's Reflections On the Eco-Crisis' Personal Impact on his Life

Schroll brought to my attention in setting up this symposium [and in a conversation we had yesterday] that about the same time I became involved in working with so-called "abductees" or "experiencers" I had written up a dream that I had in ["April 1990. I was in Japan for a United Nations conference, held in the city of Sendai, on the relationship of science and technology to industrial peace and security. On the night before returning to the United States, while sleeping in a typical old-style Japanese inn in Kyoto, I had a dream on Earth Day (April 22) that reflected my experience of coming back to a country that had been changed drastically from the place that I had once known"].

Recalling this dream, I noted how little attention we were paying to the environment or environmental questions. I dreamt ([it's] a complicated dream) but the essence of it was I felt this visceral connection with the earth through memories of polluted atmosphere of New Jersey across the river from where I grew up in New York, "desecrated by the mindless excesses of industrialization," and how much that whole memory of that connection viscerally to what was going on with the earth came back to me. In my dream, I am on a hillside just across the Hudson River, perhaps in New Jersey, which I had driven through so often with my parents in childhood on the way to the seashore. Someone is lecturing to a group of us, as if we were at the United Nations conference

for which I have come to Kyoto, that there is still much beauty in the New York City environs. Then, with others from the conference, I take a kind of quick aerial and ground tour of these hills but see no beauty, for on each field of straw-colored New Jersey swamp grass there is at least one rectangular industrial or commercial building. Furthermore, there is an unmistakable chemical stench that pervades the scene, which is only partially acknowledged by the group.

The scene shifts to a meeting around a conference table where people are sharing their experiences and what bothers them. I say that what troubles me most, beyond what we have witnessed, is when someone, or a policy, or some enterprise, contradicts, or denies, or pretends that reality is different from that which my own experience tells me it is—that is, when someone invalidates my direct experience. Then a man sitting across the table from me—a kind of combination of an energetic representative of the British scientific establishment who was at the conference and of the younger people more eager for change—reacts with positive intensity to my sentiment, and I feel very much support (Mack 1991:102).

**Shamanism and its Relationship with Mack's
Investigations of Encounters with
Extra-Terrestrial Consciousness**

In approaching this symposium this morning, I was struck again how dramatically there is a consistent pattern of the “experiencers” receiving information from “the beings” [and] about what is happening to the earth. Let me turn now to some illustrations of the work I have been doing with these “experiencers” over the past 14 to 15 years. It is a very powerful confrontation for them, and they often become active on the behalf of the planet. They describe (in the same way I just mentioned) how deeply disturbed they are in

every element of their being by what is happening to the planet. Often what we are teaching in ecology courses [is exactly what is motivating them to] become very active participants in communicating the stress they experience about the planet. “The beings,” [which is my shorthand conceptual construct] of a whole fabric of intelligence—these entities that come to communicate with *the experiencers*, are reminders of our original connection with the Earth and our responsibility to it.

There is this exquisite sense many of them get, sometimes they are brought by “the beings” to some place of extraordinary beauty which again affects them so powerfully. Mother of five children: She tells us, “when they show you these environments you can actually see the life force in flowers, in the leaves and in the water, it's like colors you've never seen before. In the rainforest where she was taken in South America—when I say “taken” I am not claiming the literalness of all of this, although it is experienced quite literally much of the time. In the rainforest you can see the life existing in the leaves in the tops of these trees. There were earth spirits dancing all over the tops of these trees. Sometimes the distress about the Earth that the Beings are trying to convey, or wherever this [information] is coming from, takes on apocalyptic proportions; and the Beings reply that it takes this to get through to the consciousness not only of the experiencers but all of us that are part of this crisis situation.

This is from Jim, a Real Estate developer who completely had his consciousness shattered and transformed by his so-called abduction encounters. One example is he was shown—on a ship—a landscape that was of old growth trees, and mountains and was clean, and the scene was emotionally breathtaking. He could feel its magistry, Jim said. Then this scene faded away with a low hum, and in a few sec-

onds the next scene appeared. This time it was a clear blue ocean, teeming with fish, and again Jim said he felt strong emotions attached to this scene. As that scene faded out the next one appeared. It was a gorgeous fresh water lake, pure and clean. The next scene was a beautiful waterfall in a gorgeous mountain setting, then images of the rainforest, and so on and on. But then it all changed. In the next scene the image that was shown to him was the image of the beautiful old growth forest [that had now become] brown, gray, and dead looking instead of healthy. The air was nasty, gray looking, instead of a clear blue sky. This made me feel very sad and depressed, I didn't like it at all what I was seeing. This scene was followed by the next—dead bloated fish floating on the [surface of the] waters. Scene after scene this bleak message continued and it saddened me to the point where I could not look at it anymore. But it seemed that I had no choice but to look. I could not turn away. The power of having to witness these scenes (he was held to it) is that the consequences of this experience radically transformed his consciousness.

Andrea, mother of two teenage girls was shown a cleansing (again it is a powerful Apocalyptic picture of the detestation that will happen to the Earth). She is awakened in the middle of the night and told by the Beings telepathically about a Hawaiian island that was going to explode setting off a chain reaction of eruptions. The Beings urged her to start telling people about this. She was shown from their ships a picture of the Earth and its magnetic poles and grid lines. There will be Earth changes, she said, and static electricity will cover the planet—clouds of it—at that point no one will be let in. She saw a ring-of-fire to the left of Japan, in this picture of the Earth. Beginning in the Northern Hemisphere the Earth's axis will shift, causing a lot of depression and

chaos unless people work to become grounded and deeply connected with the Earth. Again reaching people through this process they become these witnesses to these transformations and threats to the Earth, and then communicate this to us. This is also information that they receive about the natural order.

This is Carlos Vejes, a Mexican, and he says the Beings express very little. But he has seen consciousness at work in all the biosphere's, [with creatures] interacting doing a cooperative job to maintain the planet and also themselves. He has been shown how both complex and simple an ecosystem can be at the same time, he says. Ecosystems connecting with other ecosystems, the Earth is alive. This cooperation in nature has gone on for millions and millions of years he's been shown. Unfortunately the dominating forces on the Earth are going against the natural flow of life. Each creature that has been created in the universe, he says, has something that is worthwhile to preserve.

Finally Credo Mutwa, who is a Zulu medicine man (and I found that on all continents there are illustrations of this encounter phenomenon with the same message). He speaks of this Earth as our mother earth, a special nurturing place where new species are allowed to reach maturity and perfection; a mother world or womb world, a growing place, a garden which we are messing up. According to African culture and religion there are 24 mother worlds in the sky and our Earth is the 25th; a mother world is an especially made planet whose purpose is to give birth to life. Now these mother worlds are very very rare. You can find thousands of worlds without life and only one mother world. This uniquely created world, he says, is guarded by ancient entities such as whales and others, which we kill in our stupidity.

Of course what does it mean that Beings from some other dimension we know not where [are seeking out to reach us], and why these people? I see my job in a sense as legitimizing this phenomenon so that the voices of these witnesses can be heard. But it strikes me as incredibly important that what is going on here is apparently being noticed (those anthropomorphic words) at a cosmic level. It is not just an Earth crime, but evidently what we are doing is so [disturbing and so] interrupting the fabric of being in the galaxy or the cosmos that some effort is—something is trying to reach us. To open us (open our hearts, open our consciousness) to reconnecting and reestablishing the proper harmonic relationship that indigenous people have always known. It is acknowledging this that I see as our responsibility.

Conclusion

These descriptions of encounters with extra-terrestrial beings sounds totally fantastic, does it not? What are we to make of it? This is what Mack spent the last few years of his life trying to find out and is the burning question he had on his mind when he asked Tart about his ways of knowing as an outline of an essential science (Tart, 2012). It is, however, unfortunate our inquiry process did not go far enough that day because Mack's research continues to leave us with many unanswered questions; questions that remain at the forefront of the anthropology of consciousness and my continuing effort to develop a transpersonal ecosophy. Harvard Medical School was greatly disturbed by this research that Mack was doing, and seriously considered preventing him from proceeding. In the end Harvard Medical School concluded that he remained a scholar in good standing with the University, and allowed him to continue. During this same time when Mack:

...was being criticized in the academic community for seeking to legitimize the encounter phenomenon, he was moved when Standing Elk, a Dakota Sioux medicine man, upon learning of his work, called to tell him that he and other native leaders would “stand by” him regarding the legitimacy of what he was finding (Jamieson & Mack, 2003, p. 17).

It is therefore up to those of us with the courage and the foresight to continue to both acknowledge and lend our support to Mack's investigations of encounters with extra-terrestrial consciousness. Here again, as Mack so often sought to clarify, the meaning of his research went far beyond the actual data of these encounters. The real questions and the real concerns were to look at our own lives. To question the limits of our scientific paradigm, our governmental policies, and the practices of corporations that are putting all of our lives at risk. It's not just the Earth, but the universe that is crying out for our help.

Notes

1. T. E. Lawrence was an archaeologist in the Middle East who became a British officer due to extraordinary circumstances during World War I (Mack, 1976).

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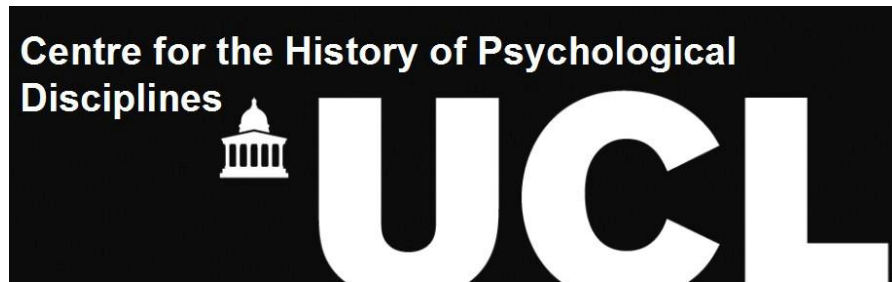
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John E. Mack, M.D. (1929-2004), was a Pulitzer Prize winning author and Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School. He was the author of eleven books, and wrote more than 150 scholarly articles.



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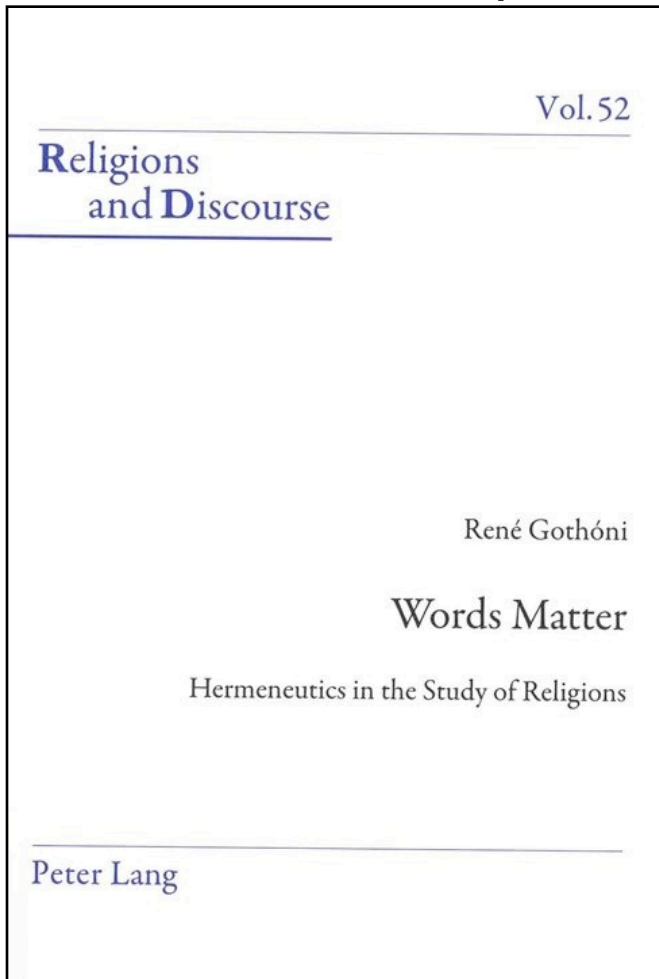
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REVIEW:

**'Words Matter: Hermeneutics in the Study of Religion' by Rene Gothóni
Margaret Gouin**



"Words Matter : hermeneutics in the study of religion"

Author: René Gothóni

Oxford/New York/Bern: Peter Lang, 2011

'Religious and Discourse' series, vol. 52

ISBN: 9783034302685 (pbk);

9783035301014 (ebk)

Price: €38.90, £35.00, US\$60.95

xiv + 220 pp; 5 figures and 2 colour illus-

This interesting exploration of hermeneutical practice in the study of religions is apparently the fruit of the author's dissatisfaction with his discussions with cognitive scientists of religion at the University of Helsinki, where he is a professor of comparative religion. It is obvious that Gothóni has some familiarity with the cognitive science of religion; and he finds the argu-

ments of its proponents to be 'utterly unconvincing' (ix) in the light of his many years of experience in the field, researching two religious traditions in two very different countries. His concern, he makes clear, is not so much with whether there can or cannot be a 'proper' scientific method for the study of religions, as with what he sees as 'the blind and infatuated fascination with the exact sciences, and the insensitivity to the limits of explanatory science and its methods, which reduces understanding to an instrumental process.' He goes on to argue that 'In today's world, we really need to expose the shortcomings of this simple methodological instrumentalism and epistemology, as well as the negligent attitude towards what is learnable from personal experience.' (6)

Gothóni takes the inspirations for his present work from the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), which go beyond the technical theory and method for interpreting texts characteristic of earlier hermeneutics. Arguing that what is unique about humans is above all *language*, Gadamer insisted that the hermeneutic experience is not just relevant to texts but to the whole of experience. 'Hermeneutical truth' is discovered by a process of speaking and listening between the parties, in which each exchange leads to new understanding which initiates the next exchange, gradually arriving at a truth which is 'revelatory of being' (184). This dialogue may take place between two persons, between reader and text, or within oneself in one's inner speaking. Indeed Gadamer concluded that 'the world itself ... is language speaking to us' (34). Since in this dialectical interaction, each party is in turn both subject and object, the distinction between 'subjective' and 'objective' is rendered pointless.

In Gadamer's hermeneutics, Gothóni finds an exciting way of opening up the meaning of the words we use. He argues that in order to interpret the words of the other—either in a text or in speech—one must make oneself totally open and present to that other, ready and willing to engage in a dialogue of discovery which will include not only discovery of the other but also of

oneself, and in particular of how one's own prejudices and cultural conditioning shape and indeed distort one's ability to perceive the other clearly and comprehend their words. He presents an illuminating example from his own experience researching pilgrimage at Mount Athos: the very word 'pilgrimage', with its unacknowledged Roman Catholic context and cultural overtones of walking (*going* on pilgrimage), he found to be an obstacle to his understanding of what was being done at Mount Athos, which in Greek is called *proskynitis*, or 'veneration', with no overtones of walking or travelling at all.

Part of his overall argument revolves around the two different types of knowledge posited by Aristotle—knowledge of *quantity* and knowledge of *quality* (i.e. 'the qualities that are desirable in life,' 10-11). These are fundamentally different, and therefore the research procedures appropriate to them are also fundamentally different, as are the approaches and skills required of the researchers in each case. The human sciences, including the study of religions, he places squarely in the domain of knowledge of quality; while he suggests the natural sciences are primarily concerned with what Aristotle designated as the knowledge of quantity. Quantity can be 'measured, taught and learned,' but quality cannot (11).

Research in the human sciences is not, nor can it be, a matter of following a set procedure in a linear fashion; the scholar must choose her method according to her understanding of the circumstances, and the method chosen may change as circumstances change. In other words, the process of research is also 'a process of discernment in which there is a dialectical relationship between the scholar, the subject matter, the material and the method' (64). This does not make it any less scientific than methods used in the natural sciences, only different. Gothóni reproaches Wiebe and other cognitive scientists of religion for using rhetorical expressions such as 'scientific understanding' for their own work (73) as if 'scientific understanding' were somehow different from ordinary understanding—one of his subheadings states trenchantly, 'There is no specific scientific understanding and there is no unmediated point outside' (72).

He reiterates several times throughout the book the important point that scholars and scientists alike are historical beings: we are tied to our time and our

personal and cultural pasts; we are 'ensnared by historically conditioned preconcepts and prejudices' (24). And, like ourselves, our concepts are also historical, and therefore both conditioned and contingent; in the course of time and the advance of knowledge, they will become outdated, and need to be reinterpreted, or even laid aside.

Gothóni suggests that the methods needed in the human sciences are those that will enable us as scholars to articulate the lived reality of religion as a human phenomenon. The methods of the cognitive science of religion, in his opinion, fail to do this: 'However much we learn about our brain, our genes and our evolutionary history, we will not thereby learn fully and satisfactorily what it means to be human' (31). 'Method' cannot be limited to mathematical (measuring) models. To this end, he concludes by setting out the process of hermeneutic reflection 'in terms of a scientific procedure with methodic characteristics' (197-201).

This is not an easy book to read, but rewards perseverance. The argument is dense at times, and the realm of philosophical hermeneutics may not be well-known to many scholars of religion. It is to Gothóni's credit that he does an excellent job of presenting Gadamer's sometimes extremely complex ideas. The views presented are cogent and well-argued; the chapters drawing on Gothóni's field work in Greece and Sri Lanka flesh out his arguments and provide grounding in the reality of research practice; and the author's passionate conviction of the importance of what he is saying is evident on every page.

This book will be of interest to anyone concerned with issues of method in the study of religions, and perhaps (it can be hoped) may stimulate the long-overdue dialogue between the cognitive scientists of religion and those who, like Gothóni, seek a less rigid and linear form of research. Perhaps one of the first subjects of hermeneutical reflection and dialogue could be what we mean by 'science.'

Margaret Gouin, PhD, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

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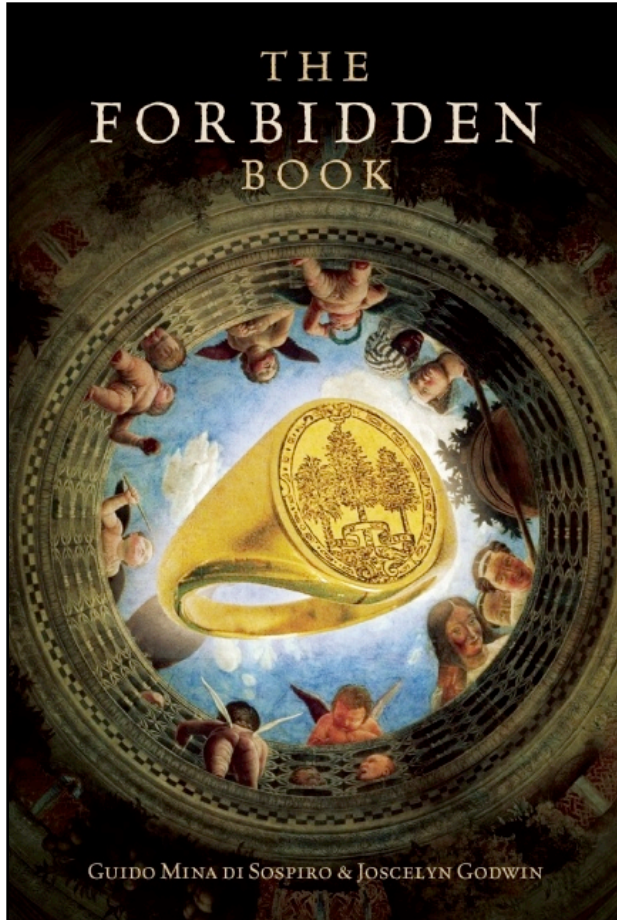
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REVIEW:

'The Forbidden Book' by Guido di Sospiro and Joscelyn Godwin

Robert M. Schoch



"The Forbidden Book"

Authors: Guido Mina di Sospiro and Joscelyn Godwin

Publisher: Disinformation Company

ISBN: 9781934708835

EAN: 9781934708835

E-book: x, 304 pages

Price, U.S.: \$16.95

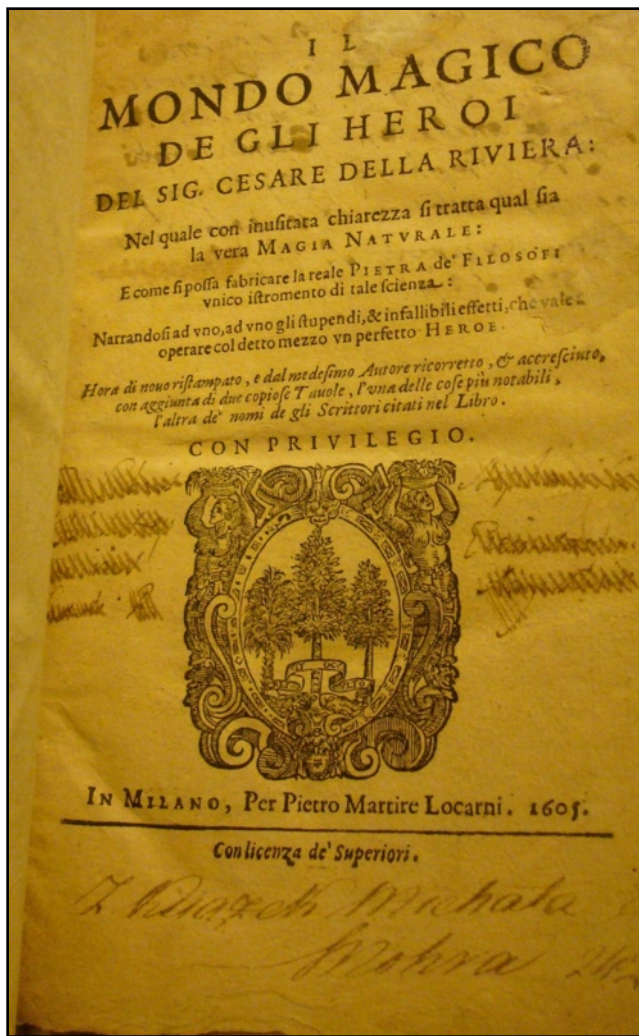
Price, Canada: \$17.95

Publication Date: 10 April 2012

From the start one should realize that *The Forbidden Book*, by Guido Mina di Sospiro and Joscelyn Godwin, is a novel, but it is also much more than a novel. As a novel, it incorporates all of the elements of a good, action-packed, adventure with a generous dose of love, intrigue, sex, and violence. Primary characters include Leonard Kavanaugh, chair of the Italian Department at Georgetown Uni-

versity (Washington, D.C.) who is in love with his former intern, some sixteen or so years his junior, the Italian Baroness Orsina Riviera della Motta. She is, in turn, in love with him despite having married the wealthy Englishman Nigel MacPherson. And there is Orsina's rather sinister uncle, patriarch of the ancient family, Baron Emanuele Riviera della Motta, who owns an ancestral villa near Verona and a palazzo on Venice's Grand Canal, as well as Orsina's younger sister, Angela Riviera della Motta. I will not give away the plot here, for those who wish to read this book simply as a novel should do so. It is a good story.

However, beyond the novelistic tale, this is a book that can (and should) be read at progressively deeper and more occult levels; it has multiple layers of meaning and contains profound insights into the ancient and enduring perennial philosophy. In many ways the central character of *The Forbidden Book* is a genuine book, first published in the early seventeenth century, *Il Mondo Magico de gli Heroi* by Cesare della Riviera (Mantua, 1603; Milan, 1605). *The Magical World of the Heroes* is a noble but obscure treatise that synthesizes the epitome of hermetic thinking in its age. The premise of the novel is that besides the published editions of *Il Mondo Magico*, there exists a private and secret, uncensored and unexpurgated, edition of the book that was successively passed down through the eldest generation of the Riviera family (with the Baroness Orsina being the most recent recipient; she calls on her former mentor, Prof. Kavanaugh, for help in understanding the difficult text). The secret edition of *Il Mondo Magico* is the "forbidden book" from which the novel derives its title. The concept of a secret edition is not unlike the understanding that Dr. John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp, 1564) had an oral, or perhaps written but severely



restricted in its circulation, explanation that is now lost (or possibly still concealed, and known only to a select few). Indeed, Cesare della Riviera included an illustration (page 24 of the 1605 edition) and discussion of Dee's hieroglyphic monad in his work, although he never mentioned Dee by name (see Peter J. Forshaw, *Ambix* [Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry], November 2005). In their novel, Guido Mina di Sospiro and Joscelyn Godwin provide a number of authentic excerpts from *Il Mondo Magico* (the book has not yet been published in English, and the translations are by the authors) which provide a ready and fascinating introduction to the alchemical-magical practices of the late Italian Renaissance, a spiritual tradition that persists surreptitiously to this day. Reading their novel made me hunger for a full-fledged English translation of Cesare della Riviera's book.

One of the core themes of *Il Mondo Magico*, made clear in the novel, is the practical application of (or minimally, appreciation of) parapsychological phenomena. This is magic (magick), true magic, real magic, in the sense discussed by David Conway (a pseudonym, by the way) in his marvelous recent book *Magic without Mirrors: The Making of a Magician* (Logios Publishing, 2011). Now such magic (that is, paranormal phenomena) can be induced through the use of various ceremonies (including, in some cases, the harnessing and redirecting of sexual energies), instruments, sigils and symbols, spells, charms, regalia, and other paraphernalia associated with more outwardly oriented means of elicitation (as magisterially discussed by Eliphas Lévi [Alphonse-Louis Constant] in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, Germer Baillière, Paris, 1856, 1861), or by more simple, unadorned, and inward means – it really depends on the personality, imagination, and volition of the individual or group involved. Both schools, both approaches, come through in *Il Mondo Magico* and are recounted in the novel; consequently *The Forbidden Book* can be seen as a primer on various forms of magical thinking.

In recent decades *Il Mondo Magico* has been reprinted a number of times, beginning in 1932 with a modernized Italian text, an introduction, and notes by the right-wing, reactionary, traditionalist, aristocratic, and heroic Italian esotericist and philosopher Baron Julius Evola (1898-1974). In the novel Baron Emanuele refers to this edition when he tells Prof. Kavenaugh that a good friend of the family brought the book back into print in the 1930s. The copy Kavenaugh purchases is described as having seven sleeping men on the cover, which can only refer to a more recent reprint of Evola's version of the book (published by Edizioni Arktos – my copy appears to lack a date, but bibliographers seem to agree on 1982 for this edition). Evola refers to *Il Mondo Magico* numerous times in his *La Tradizione Ermetica* (Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, Bari, 1931; *The Hermetic Tradition*, translated into English by E. E. Rehmus and published

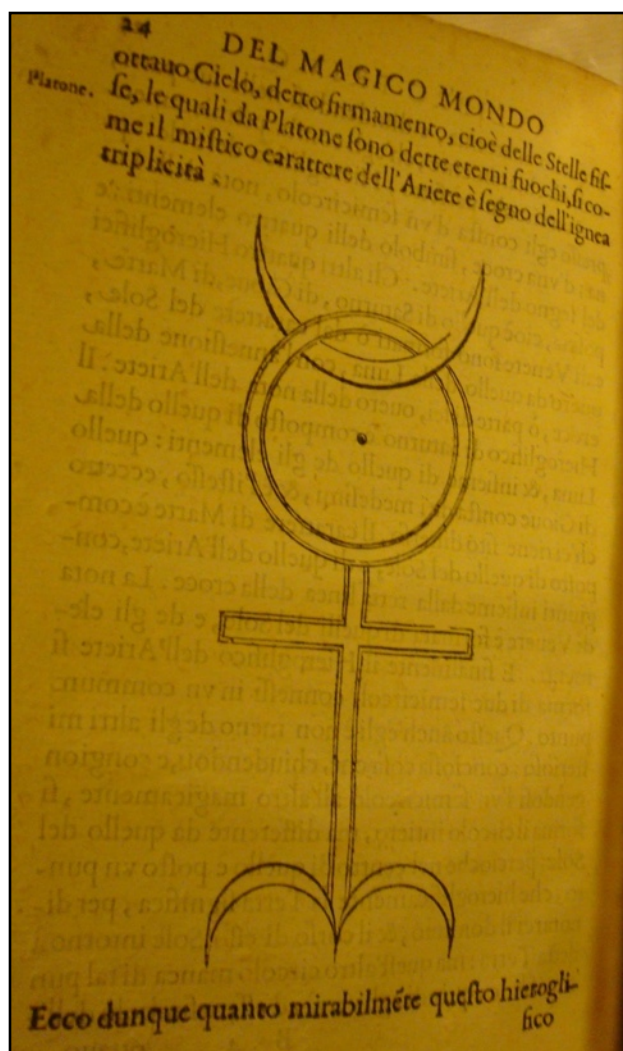
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by Inner Traditions, 1995). In his subsequent writings Evola elaborated on his elitist, anti-democratic, anti-Modernistic, and anti-materialistic ideas. As E. Christian Kopff has written, according to Evola's way of thinking, "Real men exist to attain knowledge of the transcendent and to strive and accomplish heroically" (*The Occidental Quarterly*, Summer 2002, p. 96). And, in Evola's own words (translated from the Italian), "Nothing is more evident than that modern capitalism is just as subversive as Marxism. The materialistic view of life on which both systems are based is identical" (quoted by Kopff, p. 96, from Evola's *Men Among the Ruins: Postwar Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist*, Inner Traditions, 2002, first published in Italian, *Gli Uomini e le Rovine*, Edizioni dell'Ascia, Rome, 1953). Baron Emanuele of the novel reflects many of the values espoused by the real life Evola. And Baron Emanuele put these values into action, both through his lectures and influence on his disciples and followers (his "sympathizers," as he referred to them), and via the application of alchemico-magico-sexual rituals – even if in the end the Baron's efforts were somewhat misguided, to put it mildly (but I will not ruin the story for the reader). Here we find another layer of meaning in *The Forbidden Book*.

A still deeper layer of meaning occurs at the level of allegory, and this in turn brings out another core theme of *Il Mondo Magico*. *The Forbidden Book* is among the latest in a long list of literary works in which the Hermetic tradition, the mental work, the Great Work (spiritually), the alchemical search for the Philosophers' Stone, is enciphered. A modern succinct key to such allegories is Roy Norvill's *The Language of the Gods* (Ashgrove Press, Bath, 1987). Norvill admirably introduces the subject: "The mind of Man is capable of a certain, deliberate act of will, the successful application of which results in his being elevated to a higher state of consciousness, a realm of beneficence such as he has often dreamed of but never considered a reality... attainment of this much desired goal places at

one's disposal powers [Norvill is writing of that which in other terms is referred to as paranormal or psychical powers] that, if misapplied, can adversely affect the lives of others . . . Accordingly . . . the initiates devised a form of advertising which, while open to all eyes, would be understood completely only by those in whom the sense of intuition was greater than ordinary reason" (p. 9). "Commonly, this method of encipherment is known by the term 'allegory', but in due deference to the wholly spiritual world to which it really refers, the initiates chose to call it the 'Language of the Gods'" (p. 10).

Whether consciously and intentionally, unconsciously (perhaps due to their heavy involvement in the subject), or simply coincidentally (perhaps it is synchronistic) on the



part of the authors, *The Forbidden Book* is a sublime allegory for the mental work of which Norvill writes. The classic allegorical pattern involves a hero who, among other things, may discover "a strange and ancient book" (Norvill, p. 26); undergoes arduous travels and travails in a quest for secret wisdom; is involved in magical contests, persecutions, and sacrifices; ultimately dies and is "reborn"; and finally discovers the "treasure." This allegory reflects the mental process of the adept. The hero, the adept in the making, initially is filled with doubt and skepticism relative to the spiritual, transcendent, nonmaterial world, and the mental work. A long and difficult period of concentration and meditation is required to still the mind, control the conscious thought stream, and tap into the higher consciousness (the pure consciousness, sometimes referred to as the subconscious, although there is nothing "sub" or "lower" about it). Backsliding may occur, and the would-be initiate may be subject to persecution and ridicule by those who do not understand (and most never will), and she or he may come to doubt and possibly even abandon the quest. Ultimately if the adept pushes on, new vistas and understandings, an entire new world (and the powers that go with it – paranormal wonders) is opened up. There is a death of the old and a rebirth, a resurrection in the form of a new mentality and being.

In many allegorical works of this genre, the process of the mental work is depicted in three major stages, often represented by different characters in the story, and key terms, names, phrases, and places are used to encode information about the mental work. Furthermore, these stages are classically associated with three standard colors (Norvill, pp. 31-32). Black portrays the beginning of the process for the would-be adept, the long and difficult labor to control the will and master the forces of one's own mind while cleansing one's psyche of erroneous (if commonly accepted) ideas and assumptions. White represents the second stage, the mastery by will power over thought. The final stage, the complete mastery

and control of one's own mind, and the power and gifts of the pure consciousness that are associated with this mastery, is symbolized by red. To give just a superficial indication (even a modestly complete analysis is not feasible here) of how these allegories are incorporated into *The Forbidden Book*, we can look at the descriptions and names of the primary characters.

Leonard Kavenaugh, the would-be adept and hero of the story, is described as having black hair (the first stage of the mental work) and blue eyes (potential for progress and insight). He is both physically handsome (potential to achieve the state of pure consciousness) but has an ugly past (the incessant mental thought stream that must be tamed and subdued). His name is that of a hero: Leonard, which can be interpreted as "lion-hearted" or brave, and Kavenaugh, which can be interpreted as "comely" or "handsome." The Baron has white hair; he has reached the second stage, but he uses it for evil and ugly purposes. He paints; he pursues the mental process. His unwitting accomplice is Angela, who is blonde, and has also (perhaps not entirely consciously) achieved the second stage; her female beauty is an allegory for mental reflection. And their names too are telling. Baron Emanuele ("God is with us," connoting that the Baron is attempting to harness the spiritual powers) Riviera (river bank or coast; the mental stream) della (a dual role, referring to either "noble" and/or "of the") Motta (a fortified stronghold; that is, the place where the mental work is pursued; the inner mind; the vessel, retort, or laboratory of the spiritual alchemist). Angela, the messenger of God, plays the role of go-between or intermediary, and is also a sacrificial lamb, the death of the old mentality. Orsina is beautiful (reflection; gifts of higher consciousness), with red hair and sunny green eyes. Red is the third stage of the mental work; green is often used to indicate initiation (Norvill, p. 32), and the Sun represents the pure consciousness. The name Orsina refers to a bear, perhaps an allusion to the Great Bear in the sky (Ursa Major), and I can-

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not help but also think of Osiris (perhaps just a superficial similarity of names), the Egyptian god and initiate who died and was resurrected (accomplished the Great Work). And then there is the incredibly wealthy and materialistic Nigel MacPherson. Nigel can be interpreted as referring to black, the first stage (if he should even be considered at the first stage, which is questionable) and MacPherson, which can mean son of the parson, or he who is responsible for church property (materialistic) and collects the offerings and tithes (monetary concerns as opposed to spiritual progress).

We should not forget to mention the supposed (according to the novel) Riviera heraldic shield, which appears on the title page of the 1605 edition of *Il Mondo Magico* (in fact, this colophon or printer's mark/device was used by the publisher/printer Pietro Martire Locarno on the title pages of a number of books that are not associated with Cesare della Riviera). It shows the Tree of Life, along with two other trees (possibly representing the occult and mental phenomena – this reviewer's interpretation, based on the Baron's comments in the novel), with the River of Life (according to the Baron, but not distinct in the 1605 colophon) flowing through their roots. On the actual 1605 colophon the motto "CRESCIT OCCVLTO" (it grows/increases by or from a hidden [source/knowledge]) appears on a banner across the three trees and the words "VELAS CVS" (extras/numerous [more] stand ready/guard) are written on the trunk of the middle tree (the crude interpretations of the mottos are by this reviewer).

I cannot confirm that the authors of *The Forbidden Book* consciously intended to write a Hermetic allegory (and I have only just scratched the surface in this interpretation of the book), but one thing is clear: The authors are in possession of a deep understanding of – and sympathy for – esoteric Hermeticism. In particular, Dr. Joscelyn Godwin, a professor at Colgate University, is an authority on various occult and esoteric subjects; among his many literary contributions is a foreword to the 2002

English-language edition of Evola's *Men Among the Ruins*.

The Forbidden Book has already been published in a number of languages (Spanish, Russian, Danish, Greek, Polish, Bulgarian, and Romanian), and it is a welcome addition to have it available in English. The Disinformation Company deserves hearty thanks. I encourage everyone to acquire a copy and read it closely!

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