

Contact With Transcendent Mind

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Perhaps one of the most potent rebellions of this time is the refusal to walk in the mainstream western herd, conforming to expectations and values that have ultimately ravaged the Earth. Opting out at its core means realignment with an inner knowing about what is ours to do, from the inside out. Each one of us must choose the path that is ours. The sum total of this is legions of people taking action in their unique ways, and supporting one another.

Dahr Jamail & Barbara Cecil, *Rethinking Activism*, Truthout

My perspective on this momentous research project is threefold: as philosopher, artist, and experienter. I think the title is apt, almost understated: *A Greater Reality*. The prospect of advance is enticing and involves the paranormal, which is where the ‘greater’ comes in. The paranormal is going to require a new paradigm of consciousness, a new general model that links various non-ordinary states and actions of consciousness together. The research is oriented toward understanding the nature of the extraordinary contact experiences, and the modalities of mind that facilitate them, which in fact are multiple. These are not ordinary scientific challenges, as they seem to involve not just scientific but metaphysical challenges. In other words, they break new ontological ground, which to some will appear incredible, especially if it seems at odds with deeply held beliefs and assumptions, religious and/or scientific.

With the title and subtitle in mind, let me sketch how I think it is possible to build a new paradigm of consciousness. Consciousness to a physicalist is an embarrassment, a bad relative one can’t be get rid of. In the new paradigm, consciousness will not be an unintelligible nuisance; it will occupy a primary place, as will the concept of mind.

A new paradigm of consciousness can in part be built, as I will try to show, from four groups of phenomena and their modalities of contact: evidence for survival after death; evidence for the transformative mystical experience; evidence for psi powers, i.e., telepathy, psychokinesis, clairvoyance, precognition, retrocognition; and evidence for ‘contact’ experiences, which exist in many forms, now and throughout history.

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To build this new paradigm, we need a new model of the relationship between mind and body. In contrast to the materialist view, according to which our minds are at best a transient by-product of brain mechanisms, the present view has a long and rich history, which, following William James, is the transmission theory of mind. On this view, the brain does not create but it does permit, filter, and transmit consciousness. Consciousness, on this view, pre-exists and might therefore post-exist a particular living body. For us in this book interested in the various modalities of contact consciousness, the transmission theory of mind and brain may be of use. It is a theory that explains how altered states may generate contact experiences. For the history and contemporary neuroscience behind the transmission theory of mind, see chapters 3 and 4 of *Beyond Physicalism* (2015).

By way of understanding my emphasis on the empirical, let me explain how my own experiences set me on this curious inquiry. As a university philosophy and humanities teacher for thirty years, I took an interest in the philosophy of mind. I found myself at odds even in graduate school at Columbia University when I mentioned to a fellow student that I once had an “ESP experience.” He looked at me shocked and promptly replied: “But that’s impossible, it would imply dualism.” I immediately recognized this as what R. D. Laing would have called “the destruction of experience.”

I’ve had experiences that I don’t understand; how, that is, they were possible in the first place. I could describe a variety of them I have written about but cannot explain. They have sent me on a search for answers to questions about the nature of my own mind. What did it imply that I had these experiences? What powers in the universe were out there that made such things possible? Here’s an example, a memorably strange incident of contact with something that emerged inexplicably from nowhere. My experience was triggered by being immersed in listening to music.² It was *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, a challenging jazz composition by the great John Coltrane. I was standing by the window in my sixth-floor apartment at 14 Bedford Street, in Greenwich Village, NYC. An hour before midnight, I was listening and gazing into the clear night sky when suddenly a cluster of lights appeared out of nowhere and began to dance wildly in the air before me—and my companion who quickly came to the window. The lights were performing impossible movements before us, in tune, it seemed, with the edgy music of Coltrane. Then the display ceased, and the lights shot a few blocks North to the dome of Our Lady of Pompeii (a Catholic church) where they stopped and beamed, on and off, clearly (to our minds) signaling us. Then the light cluster took off again and zigzagged North, and in a fraction of a second, vanished over the Empire State Building. Jane my friend saw exactly what I saw and we immediately met a third witness (neighbor Louie) who was on the roof and also observed the same inexplicable light show. I should

² Grosso, M. (1997) *Soulmaking: Uncommon Paths to Self-Understanding*. Anomalist Books.

add that I had recently introduced the music of John Coltrane to Louie who was a neophyte drummer.

What we saw was something real and external, but to this day I don't know what it was or where it came from or what kind of reality we had encountered. It was intelligent and seemed to know what we were listening to—underscored when it flew to the dome of Our Lady of Pompeii.

What did we see that night? Could it have been a flying saucer? The idea that some aircraft should travel light years across galaxies to interact with me, Jane, and Louie, while listening to John Coltrane for a few seconds—is, in my opinion, not credible.

I've gradually come to suspect that *we* somehow unwittingly evoked this strange display, unconsciously, of course. Whatever it was, I'm inclined to believe it came from another dimension of reality, perhaps from the unknown depths (or heights) of our own minds. And it felt more spiritual than extraterrestrial.

As a result of this experience and others, I've come to reject the standard materialist worldview that undergirds the reigning culture of capitalism, consumerism, and militarism. It's hard to ignore certain facts, especially when they have mortal consequences. The ethos of materialist culture is no friend to living things or to the health of our planet. The reason for this can be stated quite simply; profit for this culture is the one and true god.

What is needed is a change of worldview, a transformation of lived values, a collective alteration of consciousness. Being equipped for this venture of renewal requires that we understand the full extent of our human capacities. The more informed about our potential, the greater the likelihood that we learn to make use of them. By looking at case histories we can determine in detail the extended potential of our mental life. That will be the main aim of this chapter: to outline types of empirical data and their associated or implied expanded mental powers.

For our needs, mainstream reductive materialism is useless. By reductive I mean the disposition to dismiss as illusory any concept or experience, mystical or paranormal, that cannot be explained by familiar physical principles. Automatically, it excludes many of the most interesting kinds of experiences that people have and might report. Reductive materialism should be rejected for two reasons: first, because it is false; for it fails to account for a formidable array of human experiences or, in fact, *any* conscious experience.³ Second, it should be rejected because, boomerang-like, *it is killing us*. The reductive worldview is killing us in various ways: psychologically, environmentally, politically, economically, and spiritually.⁴

A full explanation of the phenomena cited in this essay awaits future developments. The facts, however, allow us to advance from views of mind as a causally impotent and much illuded byproduct of the brain to a more credible hypothesis of *transcendent* mind: that is, first of all, a mind not reducible to, or explainable by, any particular group of brain mechanisms. (There are, of course, correlations between mental and brain events.) The new view implies a dramatic shift from the everyday concept of a personal mind to the concept of an extended, more powerfully creative, transpersonal mind.

There is another part to the story. The considerable bulk of facts amassed from experience, viewed synoptically, point (as we may see it) to a higher stage of human psychophysical evolution. Much of the extraordinary data collected and analyzed in *Beyond UFOs* (2018) is grist for this evolutionary idea, to take one example, Chapter 8 by Mary Rodwell, *The New Human: Awakening to Our Cosmic Heritage*.⁵ The futuristic emphasis adds to the attraction of this venture, especially the challenge of reports of real, sometimes ongoing, ‘contact’ with nonhuman, otherworldly, superhuman beings.

Need For A New Vision

According to Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” People on Earth today need to come together with a new shared vision. A vision powerful enough to help us stave off the convergence of unprecedented approaching dangers.

³ See Kelly, E. lead editor, *Irreducible Mind* (2007) and *Beyond Physicalism* (2015); also Raymond Tallis (2011) *Aping Mankind* and Steve Taylor’s (2018) *Spiritual Science*, Thomas Nagel’s *Mind and Cosmos* (2012).

⁴ As far back as Pitirim Sorokin (1941) *The Crisis of Our Age.*; see also Grosso, M. *The Final Choice: Death or Transcendence?* (2017) www.whitecrowbooks.com

⁵ Hernandez, R., R. Schild & J. Klimo, eds. (2018). *Beyond UFOs: The Science of Consciousness and Contact with Non-Human Intelligence*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing (Amazon Press)

In *The Millennium Myth* (1995), I described the recurrent failed predictions of endtime, doomsday, and apocalypse. Throughout history hucksters and prophets of different stripes have been announcing doomsday; the end was forever nigh. So, I quit listing all failed predictions. I never dreamed that in 2019 *scientists* would be predicting that in a dozen years manmade climate catastrophe could take down world civilization.⁶

Certain facts and certain trends show we're on a collision course with major threats to the delicately calibrated fabric of life on earth. The key word is *unsustainable*. That means, short of drastic change, the worst that science is predicting may now only be a matter of time. It seems we are trapped in a trio of unsustainable global trends steadily gaining momentum, worse, acting in deadly synergy. Besides encroaching climate catastrophe, there's another danger, a loosening of restrictions on what kinds of atomic weapons should be permissible; in effect, a new global arms race.⁷ No surprise that the Bulletin of Concerned Scientists has moved the Doomsday Clock to two minutes before midnight.

The third member of this lethal trio is perhaps the worst, and the root of the two other trends—the ever-growing gap between elite enclaves of the super-rich and the rest of life and nature on planet Earth. It is a notorious fact that the world's wealth is owned by a tiny minority, for the most part, persons not known for their civic probity or love of the natural world. This, some might say, is a symptom, deadly enough, of a spiritual disease called greed, a byproduct of narcissistic materialism. I don't of course mean to imply that all supposedly spiritual people are ungreedy or that all professed materialists are greedy and heartless.

However, depressing the sight of so much greed, we might recall the Dickens tale, *A Christmas Carol*, about a tight-fisted, money-grubbing, anti-social dolt named Ebenezer Scrooge—thanks to a little ghostly contact—transformed into a loveable, compassionate member of society. In a piece of good news, the classic Dickens fiction has counterparts in true stories of transcendent contact. Data suggest that our personal mental life is part of a much greater, more profound mental life. Throughout history people have been aware of, and sought to interact with, denizens of this greater life; and have variously named, channeled, and interpreted them.⁸

⁶ See Kirkpatrick Sale. *The Illusion of Saving the World*, September 26, 2019: *Counterpunch*.

⁷ See Helen Caldicott (2017) *Sleepwalking To Armageddon: The Threat of Nuclear Annihilation*

⁸ See Jon Klimo's pioneering study, *Channeling: Investigations on Receiving Information from Paranormal Sources*.

History - Our Primary Source

The transcendent contact experience (CE) is no stranger to history. Interaction with higher beings and agents is found in the religions of the world. All the great names in the history of religions, saints and saviors, and famous founders, like Moses, Jesus, Buddha, St. Teresa, St. Catherine, and Hildegard of Bingen, all recipients of transcendent contact. The mode of interaction between the finite and the assumed infinite takes on different shapes and forms. Rites evolved, prayers were devised, sacrifices made, and ascetic practices discovered. In effect, experiments were devised aiming to curry favor, good fortune, and wisdom from the greater mind, the greater power, however conceived by the community or as may be the case, the loner and the outsider. The reported modes of transcendent experience vary, but the orientation is always toward greater consciousness, deeper meaning, and above all, in some sense, more integrated personal power.

Where did the assumption of transcendent forces and agents come from? Are they more than hopeful projections of angst-ridden psyches? Unconscious fabrications stimulated by coincidences that occur all the time? Such may account for some of the claims but not the entire mass. Traditional belief systems presuppose the existence of a powerful creative spirit, a source of possible benefits, favors, and guidance.

The Australian aboriginal called it *The Dreaming*, an idea of mind as a diffused, all-encompassing presence wed to the native landscape.⁹ Names for the higher spiritual energy are found in different belief systems, ranging from the Holy Spirit of the Early Christians to the orgone energy of Wilhelm Reich. Beyond physicalism, the collective experience of humankind attests to the reality of spiritual energy and invisible intelligences. Entire cultures and epochs of history have created distinct systems, their own versions, of transcendent reality, the result of pioneers and original explorers of the “subliminal self,” to use the expression of Frederic Myers—a term for the cosmic reservoir of mind that undergirds our personal mental life.

Acquaintance with history and anthropology shows that the notion of greater mind was an assumption, an intuition, and a part of popular understanding, at least until the rise of 17th-century mechanistic physics. The then new scientific understanding of the laws of motion, and thus of astronomy, physics, and chemistry created a kind of intellectual enthusiasm, in which people believed that all things and facets of life could be understood, controlled, and improved, or if need be, destroyed, in accord with materialist principles. There are, however, other philosophies, and today there is a new physics.

⁹ Elkin, A.P. *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*, St. Martin's Press: New York, 1977.

Some of the phenomena that challenge the reductive view have in major ways impacted on history. Saint Paul on the road to Damascus is a perfect example of a ‘contact’ experience. Paul was mandated by the high priests to track down the followers of the Nazarene, and the story is told in *Acts of the Apostles*. Approaching the city “suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him” (Acts, 9:3). He fell to the ground and heard a voice. “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

In the first letter to the Corinthians (15:8), Paul tells the story of his contact experience of fourteen years ago when he was caught up—“whether still in the body or out of the body, God knows—whether in the third heaven . . . into paradise, and who heard things which must not and cannot be put into human language,” 2 Corinthians (12:2-4). Notably, the light, the out-of-body state, and the ineffability of the experience are similar to a near-death experience.¹⁰ Of course, not every ‘contact’ experience changes history. But there are contact experiences that have a small effect on the public at large but may enlighten and transform an individual’s life.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Our main focus is empirical—an array of extraordinary phenomena normally excluded from “normal” science that challenge the inadequacy of materialism. The inadequacy may be shown by philosophical arguments. Think of them as the stagecraft and the lighting; the actors perform the stories and make visible the play of transcendence. For starters, in spite of all the brilliant advances in modern neurophysiology, our own immediate consciousness is a mystery to science. No one has been able to come up with a satisfactory explanation of how what we call consciousness can be explained by, or conceptually reduced to, the chemical and physical processes that go on in our brains. There is some kind of dance of correlation between mental and brain events, but nothing at all that remotely suggests identity or even reliable regularity.¹¹

As I said above, it makes more sense to think of the brain as an organ that transmits rather than produces consciousness.¹² A distinction of fundamental importance, it respects the reality and functions of the brain but holds to the irreducible reality of our mental life. This is crucial to any attempt to restore the validity of the inner perspective, the sentient part of our being, the conscience and the consciousness.

¹⁰ See chapter 5, St Paul’s Conversion and the Near-Death Experience, a chapter in *Frontiers of the Soul* (1992), Grosso, M., Quest Books.

¹¹ For a thorough-going scientific and exhaustive review of challenges to physicalism, see Kelley, E., Kelly, E., Crabtree, A., Gaud, A., Grosso, M. and Greyson, B. (2007). *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

¹² In *Beyond Physicalism*, see chapter 3 by me, The “Transmission” Model of Mind and Body: A Brief History and chapter 4 by Edward F. Kelly and David E. Presti. A Psychobiological Perspective on “Transmission” Models.

Some are confident that a physical explanation of consciousness will eventually be forthcoming. So far there are few, if any, indications of how this is even conceivable. In contrast, there's a growing school of scientists and scholars that argue that consciousness is an irreducible fact of nature, whose depth and breadth are unknown, probably unknowable, as Heraclitus implied when he said, no matter how far you travel, you will never reach the boundaries of mind and psyche. Unbound by space and time, consciousness could not have been formed from brain matter. This permits us to infer the possibility of consciousness after death; for if you cannot reduce consciousness to brain processes, you are free to assume that it exists prior to, and independently of, any brain processes. Given *that*, our personal consciousness then seems likely to exist *after* brain demise. In the divorce between mind and body, mind seems to have the upper hand.

This is similar to one of Plato's arguments in the *Phaedo*.¹³ The soul, says Socrates, is a simple substance; unlike physical objects with parts that can decompose, the soul is irreducibly itself, a timeless monad of being. The body decomposes, not the soul; this is an ancient argument, implicit in the Indian tradition of the Upanishads. In the Katha Upanishad, Nachiketa interviews the King of Death and begins like this: "I beseech you, O King, teach me whatsoever you know to be beyond right and wrong, beyond cause and effect, beyond past, present, and future." This surely counts as an example of a type of consciousness that sounds very much like the pure consciousness that mystics, yogis, and near-death experiencers describe.

If consciousness is not derivable from physical reality, the outer limits of our consciousness become unclear and the idea of definite boundaries becomes more elusive. In light of these reflections, and strengthened by psi phenomena, it appears reasonable to say that a timeless, nonlocal mind may be the deep root of our limited everyday mental experience. Plato, Plotinus, and the authors of the Upanishads had similar intuitions of the one transcendent mind. Mystics, poets, saints, artists, and just about anybody might think they experience it, under one description or another, relying on different words or symbols, culture-slanted but still, hopefully, pointing to the all-embracing one, the all-harmonizing source of the experience.

A bit difficult to imagine happening, but any really widespread experience of cosmic oneness would likely advance the well-being of our species. If a critical number of humankind were touched and shaped by the transformative power of this insight, it might well ignite a new phase of our species' history. It would begin, I would stipulate when the intuition of the one mind becomes the new common sense.

¹³ See Plato's *Phaedo*.

Irwin Schroedinger, one of the founders of quantum mechanics and a student of the Upanishads, argued that numerically there can only be one mind. Mind cannot be divided into parts, and the difference between your mind and my mind is the difference between the filtering effects of our brains and culture. Larry Dossey, who coined the phrase ‘nonlocal mind’, provides a rich tapestry of examples that illustrate the human reality behind this unifying experience in his book, *One Mind*.¹⁴

So, for philosophical starters we have mind that is irreducibly itself, not a mysterious secretion of the brain; nonlocal, not absolutely constrained by time and space; immortal, in light of survival evidence; and numerically one, all-permeating, and all-encompassing by its intrinsic nature.

As an exercise, a meditation, it appears that by reflecting on the nature of my own conscious life, I can see my way to a powerful self-understanding that made the idea of immortality self-evident to myself. Reflecting on the nature of consciousness lays the groundwork for an expansion of the concept of mind. But now on to review the empirical phenomena that flesh out our claims against premature mainline assumptions as to what is possible in nature and beyond.

The Phenomena

Certain phenomena are plainly incompatible with reductive physicalism and point to the notion of an extraphysical agency let us call transcendent mind: 1) case histories that seem best explained by the afterlife hypothesis; 2) mystical phenomena; 3) psi phenomena (ESP and especially PK), experimental and spontaneous; and 4) The category that covers the varieties of contact experiences (CEs). We have at hand then an entire gamut of human experiences that seem to break the mold of what is normal and familiar in physical nature. It is time to confront all the metaphysical outliers and engage them with thought and courage.

Postmortem Consciousness

In the effort to transcend reductive materialism, nothing packs a bigger wallop than the case for life after death. It radically opens our worldview, allowing for currently unthinkable possibilities, some perhaps frightening, others, I believe, adventurous and humanly appealing. This data dramatically enlarges the scope of possible human experience.

¹⁴ Schroedinger, I. *What is Mind?*

Related to the survival question is extrasensory perception (ESP). If ESP is real, it is a step toward proving survival. PK and ESP prove that mental acts and perceptions can function beyond the limits of our known physical senses and motor capacities. ESP is a step toward disengaging the reality of mind from its setting in the physical world. But ESP, while in one sense advancing the cause of survival by extending the power of mind, can also be used to *explain away* the seeming evidence for an afterlife. On either interpretation, the psi factor in nature expands the concept of mind beyond the limits of what is physically possible. Hence the guilt-assuming epithet *anomalous*, aka “outlaw”.

Notice how telepathy helps us reinterpret the meaning of distance. Suppose our bodies are located 5 miles apart from each other. It makes no sense to say that our *thoughts* are five miles apart because our thoughts are not in physical space. Our thoughts ‘meet’ and connect not by clock time or in measurable space but by meaning, emotion, or memory—all things mental.

If our thoughts are not in physical space, then physical distance cannot separate our minds, although the psychological effects of distance may. What separates us is attention, awareness, and the ceaseless clutter of competing thoughts. Telepathy between the living indicates transcendence of the body but not quite survival of death; the persons involved in telepathy are, after all, still firmly planted in their living bodies.

But there is a question worth asking. Why do we possess psychic powers? How and why did we acquire these abilities in the first place? One problem is that extrasensory perception doesn’t work through known bodily organs, as sight has eyes, sound ears, smells a nose, and so forth. A second difficulty is that our psychic abilities are mainly dormant, and as far as reliability and daily use or application, they are most of the time practically useless—barring the rare exception or in some cases of great saints, yogis, and assorted sorcerers.

If our psychic abilities are little or no help in surviving on earth, perhaps their purpose lies in our postmortem existence. If we survive death, it must be in an extrasensory world, perhaps like a dream world, as the philosopher H.H. Price once suggested. Our psychic capacities, after we shed our bodies, will spontaneously come to the fore; as a chrysalis turns into a butterfly, our psychic organs will open us to the postmortem environment. So, a possible answer to the question, why psi? Psi is an inherent aspect, potential, we might say of consciousness itself; when consciousness separates from the body at death, our normally latent psi capacities will emerge and enable us to interact in the new postmortem psychospiritual environment. This idea gains some strength when we note that being near death, either by accident or as a result of ascetic practice, is associated with increased paranormal manifestations.

Evidence for personal survival shows up in various situations: near-death experiences, reincarnation memories and bodily marks, different forms of mediumship, hauntings, veridical apparitions, and so on.¹⁵ There is no question about the reality of experiences that seem to some critically-minded investigators best explained by the afterlife hypothesis.¹⁶

The alternative to accepting the reality of survival is the assumption that the human subconscious compulsively draws on its paranormal talents to take every opportunity to deceive us into believing there really is an afterlife when in fact there isn't. And yet, even if this were true (it is conceivable), it would still be a severe challenge to materialism. One has to assume that the subliminal mind has an obsessive need that never diminishes, a will to deceive us into believing in the reality of postmortem existence. But why? Is it meant to ease our passage through nature into extinction? One cannot help feeling thankful to evolution for being so kind, so thoughtful as to connive to trick us into feeling the pleasant delusion of immortality, even if it turns out to be a scam—which we'll never know anyway if it is.

Mystical Experience

Thales noun tou kosmou ton theon. To de pan empsychon. “Thales said that the mind of the world is God, and that the sum of things is besouled” (Aetius 1, 7, 11). Thales must have had unusual experiences that made him say such an unusual thing. Or else he just had an unusually fertile imagination.

Looking at the rich phenomenology of human experience, certain categories stand out as especially interesting. Mystical experience is a subject of great scholarly interest. It's not easy to pin down the criteria of mystical experience but to say it occurs at the outer limits of transcendence, revealing the ultimate source of life's meaning and well-being, a state ineffable, memorable, and transformative.

One could say it is the ultimate contact experience. It appears to involve contact with some infinite source of intelligence and vital energy. The essence of the experience is not rational, sensory, or visionary. Ineffable, it cannot be described or reduced to anything other than itself, an experience of all-pervading oneness, joy, and super-personal love.

¹⁵ There is a vast literature on this subject, which we cannot discuss in any detail here apart from some references. But see Rivas, T., Dirvin, A., Smit. H. *The Self Does Not Die: Verified Paranormal Phenomena from Near-Death Experiences*. 2016. IANDS; Grosso, M. *Experiencing the Next World Now*. Pocket Books, 2004; Bruce Greyson: *After: A Skeptical Scientist's Journey to Understand Life After Death*.

¹⁶ Braude, S, (2003) *Immortal Remains: The Evidence for Life After Death*. Lanham, MD: Rowman&Littlefield.

“If you want to experience the One, says Plotinus, “Strip yourself of everything. . . For it is not possible to see it, or to be in harmony with it, while one is occupied with anything else.”¹⁷ To radically unoccupy yourself and be silent about it touches the core mystical idea. Not any easy project to pursue to the end. As far as a model of human potential, nothing could be more important than mystical transformation, known for its all-embracing spirit of communion and liberality of thought, qualities needed in our fractured, fractious world.

As for the moral progress of the species, a heavy draft of the mystical seems essential; survival together on Earth surely demands from us a lively awareness of our common humanity. But that is not enough; we need to extend that awareness to the whole living planet we’re part of. For a contemporary study that places mysticism in the context of the human need to evolve in a fractured world, Paul Marshall’s *Shape of the Soul* is essential reading.¹⁸

Some things are so basic we forget what they are. Unspoken assumptions, for example, that other people are like us—by virtue of our common humanity. But how strong is that basic human bond in our culture today? I see everywhere on the planet today discord and discontent, incivility, insurrection, revolution, sectarianism, oppression, and monstrous inequities of wealth, power, and privilege.

G. Vico wrote of the critical need for the *sensus communis*, the essential core of society, without which human societies cannot function.¹⁹ “Love thy neighbor as thyself” is the religious injunction to remember our common humanity, the oneness of spirit particularized in the other. The unifying power of the mystical experience is the great friend to all life and to the natural world. The mystical impulse latent in human consciousness aligns itself with Eros, not Thanatos, love of life and peace, not greed for profit and power.

¹⁷ Stace, W. (1960) *The Teachings of the Mystics*. New York: Mentor Books, p. 116.

¹⁸ Marshall, P. (2018) *The Shape of the Soul*. Lanham, MD: Rowman&Littlefield

¹⁹ Vico, G. *The New Science*

A society in which the mystical sense was awakened would differ from a society dominated by the ethos of materialism: the three-headed beast of capitalism, consumerism, and militarism; a world where the appetite for wealth and power is all-consuming.²⁰ It ought to be obvious to any sane person that such values are fatal to the cause of life on Earth. The disease may be cured by a new healed and healing consciousness. The great mystics and visionaries of the world tradition agree: the way out is within us—infinately far and infinitely close. To master that single truth is perhaps the virtue we most need to cultivate. At the moment, the way life on earth has historically evolved is perhaps minimally conducive to acquiring that virtue. On the other hand, necessity has been known to be the mother of invention.

Psychokinetic (PK) Phenomena

The next component of our evolutionary template is PK or paranormal action. Common sense allows that our thoughts, feelings, and desires can affect our own bodies; but not that they can directly affect *other* bodies—or our own bodies in obviously extraordinary ways. But on this, the facts belie common sense and the assumptions of mainstream science.

Data from diverse sources enable us to imagine dramatically extended possibilities of psychophysical life. The array of examples allows us to speculate on the extraordinary creative potential of humans.²¹ As for our evolutionary potential, consider a statement from an ancient religious text, Genesis, 26: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” Belief in this implied godlike creative potential of humans sparked the Italian Renaissance, as Charles Trinkhous’s two-volume study attempts to show in detail.²² A culminating text on this was Pico della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* of 1486, which provides a philosophical rationale for the deification of humanity.

²⁰ We have only to point out the latest government budget proposal that increases military spending but slashes everything else, health, human rights, infrastructure, education, and so on. The worship of military power is a perfect illustration of the death-instinct taking over values and possessing consciousness. See Caldicott, H. (2017) *Sleepwalking To Armageddon: The Threat of Nuclear Annihilation*. The New Press.

²¹ See especially Part IV, Parapsychology and Physical Systems. In *Handbook of Parapsychology* (1977) Ed. Benjamin Wolman

²² Rowland, I.D (2008) *Giordano Bruno*

The Creator placed humans at the center of the cosmos, but without a fixed essence, so we are free to contemplate the cosmos and choose to identify with the highest or lowest forces and elements of the world. We can model ourselves after the divine or the bestial. Human consciousness, inherently open, makes this possible. As Trinkhous puts it: “This subjectivity comprised human freedom to potential, consider a statement from an ancient religious text, Genesis, 26: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” Belief in this implied godlike creative potential of humans sparked the Italian Renaissance, as Charles Trinkhous’s two-volume study attempts to show in detail.²³ A culminating text on this was Pico della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* of 1486, which provides a philosophical rationale for the deification of humanity.

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Moving now from mythology to empiricism, I think we’re on the threshold of a new awareness of evolutionary potential. The need is to break out of the straight-jacket of a contracted worldview, according to which all reality is physically determined, and the world of mind and consciousness are minimized in causal importance. Prevailing views throw a blanket of passivity on our consciousness that must be abolished.

²³ Rowland, I.D (2008) *Giordano Bruno*

²⁴ Ibid, p. 506.

To exorcise this spell of passivity, I want to focus on psychokinesis (PK), which emphasizes the active pole of conscious life. As I define this, PK describes what happens when mind acts directly on physical systems, inside and outside one's body. An example of the latter: J. B. Rhine's famous dice-throwing experiments involved intentionality, and statistically proved the reality of direct mental influence on physical objects in motion. Later, physicist Helmut Schmidt performed PK experiments in which subjects succeeded in affecting events at the quantum level of physical reality. Intentionality as it operates directly in healing has been carefully documented and explored by physician Larry Dossey.²⁵

Note already the versatile character of PK. It can impose order on a random process (dice rolling); influence events on the quantum level; have healing effects on living systems. As we'll see, the roster of PK phenomena will lengthen. Here I want to focus on Schmidt's idea of PK as a goal-oriented process.²⁶ This makes it akin to the "real magic" that Dean Radin has written so engagingly about.²⁷ One doesn't try to manipulate conditions to bring on the desired effect; one attends to the goal, the end-state. Regarding this process of directing one's attention toward the goal, parapsychology and mysticism agree. Trying too hard, grinding your teeth, so to speak—in short, the wrong kind of anxious, pleading effort might get in the way rather than lubricate the process. The challenge seems to consist of being able to imagine and even feel what the desired end state will be like. The image itself of the end-state triggers the manifestation of the actual end-state.

This indeed sounds like "real magic." "Let there be light," says God. "And there was light." Nice display of PK from the Book of Genesis. Ancient philosophers, Aristotle, for example, accepted the idea of goal-oriented causality. Modern mechanistic science leaves little room for the idea of a final mentalistic causation. PK is the remnant of a supposedly outmoded type of causality, an effective, once highly appreciated, a power that connects the human mind with an order of supermind—atman, oversoul, mind at large. And so forth.

²⁵ Dossey, L. (2012). *One Mind: How Our Individual Mind Is Part of a Greater Consciousness and Why It Matters*. Hay House, Inc

²⁶ Schmidt, H. (1974) Psychokinesis. In E.D. Mitchell. *Psychic Exploration: A Challenge for Science*. New York: Putnum.

²⁷ Radin, D. (2018). *Real Magic*. Harmony: New York.

For the most part, it operates covertly, ignored by mainstream science. Yet one form of PK is commonplace in everyday experience; in typing these words, I'm using my PK—my mind, after all, makes my hand move, mediated by neurons. This is an example of commonplace endosomatic PK. Nobody really understands how an intangible, weightless, invisible thought can cause a nerve or muscle to react or how a mental agent can influence the fall of dice at a distance or events at the quantum level. The essential gap between mind and body is the same when I decide to point my right index finger at the moon as when I score positive in a PK test on something physically outside my body. If I get into a complicated yoga asana and hold it for a long period of time, the cause can be traced back to a series of mental images and volitions, which are completely mental. None of that is seen by the external observer; still, a complex, sustained mental operation had to occur that made the posture physically visible in the first place.

There is a body of experimental evidence for different forms of PK, showing different aspects of the agency involved. Some are normal, like operating a computer keyboard or blushing; some abnormal like hysterical blindness and paralysis; and some are supernormal like levitation and instantaneous healings. Viewing PK phenomena as a whole—especially the spontaneous cases—a surprising picture of what some humans can do emerges. The full story is best understood in light of the recorded phenomena of mystics, yogis, saints, sufis, shamans, mediums, magicians, and very often of ordinary people in ordinary life.²⁸

Poltergeists are phenomena related to the emotional disturbances of children but may have afterlife connections, the children's emotional problems providing the means for discarnate agents to enact their mischief.²⁹ The physical phenomena of mediumship are also well documented. The astronomer Camille Flammarion wrote an account of psychokinetic phenomena, including Count Gasparin's early investigations of table-tilting.³⁰ The right group dynamic seems to facilitate the expression of these normally quiescent powers. When Jesus said after healing somebody, "Your faith has made you whole," he was alluding to the need for the right group dynamic. Healing is about connection. The Greek word for faith is *pistis* or trust. This facilitates the healing. Trust is more than abstract belief; it means feeling, hope, and expectation. It's not an attitude you can force or fake. But then, you may have the right attitude, but circumstances around you may not resonate.

²⁸ Lang, A. (1972) *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts*. A New Castle Book.

²⁹ William Roll (1972) *The Poltergeist*. New York: New American Library.

³⁰ Flammarion, C. (1907). *Mysterious Psychic Forces*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.

For example, Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918)³¹ was perhaps the most widely investigated physical medium; but she had a highly idiosyncratic personality. There was no question about the reality of her phenomena and the due diligence of her investigators.³² But she had the volatile temperament of an opera star, and her performances were ontological, not aesthetic. Except for Myers and Feilding, her English investigators, haughty and hypercritical, drove her to crude attempts at trickery. Otherwise, with her hands and feet controlled, she produced unexplained sounds, caused curtains to billow out, levitated objects, materialized hands that tapped investigators on the head, and so on.

Franek Kluski was a writer, in business, and otherwise normal family man with a talent for causing animals and known deceased people to materialize during a séance.³³ D.D. Home was perhaps the most famous Victorian medium and was closely studied by the great physicist Sir William Crookes.³⁴ More recently, sociologist James McClenon published a 50-year group study (1961-2015) by the Society for Research on Rapport and Psychokinesis (SORRAT) describing a range of unexplained physical phenomena.³⁵

Among PK data are the physical phenomena of mysticism. Extraordinary phenomena are found in all religious traditions, but the legalistic tradition of the Roman Church requires collecting sworn eyewitness testimony to back up miracle claims. The Church, especially since the Counter-Reformation and the rise of modern scientific awareness, is not in the business of promoting false miracles.³⁶ A few examples will have to do with psi powers acting on physical and biological systems.

³¹ See <https://www.survivalafterdeath.info/mediums/palladino.htm>

³² One of the best reports: Feilding, E. (1963) *Sittings with Eusapia Palladino and Other Studies*. New York: UniversityBooks; Bottazzi, F. (2011) Princeton, NJ:ICRL Press. Carrington, H. (1909). *Eusapia Palladino and Her Phenomena*.London: T. Werner Laurie.

³³ Weaver, Z. (2015) *Other Realities? The Enigma of Franek Kluski's Mediumship*. UK: White Crow Books.

³⁴ Crookes, W. (1874) *Research in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. London: Burns.

³⁵ McClenon, J. (2018) *The Entity Letters*. Charlottesville: Anomalist Books.

³⁶ Haynes, R. (1970) *Philosopher King: The Humanist Pope: Benedict 14*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Physical effects—Consider some purely physical effects, for example, levitation. Here the super-naturally subverted physical thing was gravity, the most fundamental space-shaping agency in the universe. The best source for a critical treatment of the phenomenon of ecstatic levitation among Catholic saints is Herbert Thurston's *Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*.³⁷ According to Thurston, about two hundred cases of reported levitation among Catholic saints exist with credible eyewitness testimony. *Masters of Meditation and Miracles* covers Buddhist saints in India and Tibet and their miracle lore.³⁸ Mullin's study of *Tibetan Flying Mystics* provides a dazzling artistic rendering of levitational playfulness. What is less abundant are convincing eyewitness accounts of the aerial capers represented in the artworks.

Fortunately, there is ample testimony of highly expressive levitations of the 17th-century mystic, Joseph of Copertino.³⁹ Levitation is a physical manifestation of an ecstatic, possessed, or inspired state of consciousness—a state in which the normal conscious personality seems invariably displaced. Ecstatic displacement seems to permit the influx of *whatever it is* that causes the suspension of gravity. Nothing is more fundamentally physical than gravity.⁴⁰ That a particular state of consciousness, however rare and exotic, should somehow be instrumental in suspending gravity is pretty astonishing. How does a state of mind lead to bending physical space into what looks like dream space, which appears to happen during levitation? How can a state of consciousness affect what is at the bottom of the physical glue of the universe--gravity?

Other types of basic physical changes have been reported. Bilocation is perhaps more bizarre at first glance than levitation. In bilocation, the same embodied person becomes tangibly present in two different places at the same time, suggesting that our bodies, as well as our minds, are *nonlocal*. Joseph's mother was dying, knowing that her son was in Rome, hundreds of miles away; but independent witnesses saw him in Copertino at his mother's deathbed, and we have his mother's testimony that he appeared to her.⁴¹

I am trying to draw a big picture and imagine what it would feel like if these phenomena came to life in the course of our daily experience. Levitation may manifest in different ways to suggest a new lightness of being. Our flying dreams

³⁷ Thurston, H. (1952) *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*. London: Burns Oates.

³⁸ Tulku Thondup (1999) Shambhala.

³⁹ Grosso, M. (2016) *The Man Who Could Fly*. Rowman & Littlefield; Grosso, M. *Wings of Ecstasy*.

⁴⁰ For the central role of gravity in nature and biology, see Martin Rees' *Before the Beginning* (1997).

⁴¹ In this case, others than Joseph's mother saw him in Copertino when in fact everybody knew he was in Rome.

seem to give us a vivid sense of levitation. I know from experience that when I'm in high spirits I feel lighter than usual as I walk and move about in the world. "Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road," writes Whitman, "henceforth I ask not good fortune, I myself am good fortune." Walt Whitman was the great American poet of cosmic consciousness.

Now to something completely different, a venture into a metaphysical cartoon. Bodily elongation is a strange phenomenon; it was reported of the Victorian medium, Daniel D. Home. Measured before and after during an experiment, Home suddenly (and temporarily) grew five inches!⁴² An amusing epiphany of the shape-shifting talents we may all possess. There are accounts of Tibetan yogis turning into balls of flesh and their dead bodies shrinking and then slowly disappearing.⁴³ These weird manifestations suggest an elasticity and malleability of physical reality that is more dreamlike than when we're awake and facing ordinary reality.

Among the strangest physical phenomena are accounts of materialization and the complementary dematerialization. The materialization of food and drink is a miracle cited in the New Testament. The first miracle of Jesus at a wedding in Cana was to turn water into wine (John, ch.2)—thanks to the recommendation of a woman, his mother. Similar practical wonders in the lives of the saints are reported. There is modern data about different forms of materialization among mediums. With Eusapia Palladino, the most widely investigated physical medium, loud raps, and hands that touched witnesses would materialize while the Polish medium, Franek Kluski, seemed able to materialize people and other animals, long enough to be photographed.⁴⁴

We are looking at examples of mind directly acting upon and even seeming to create physical reality *ex nihilo*. We have the careful research of psychoanalyst Jule Eisenbud with Ted Serios, a man who could project mental images onto Polaroid film.⁴⁵ Another well-known case involves a related talent, Eva C. (aka Martha Beraud) able to materialize a very curious substance called 'ectoplasm', extruded from some part of her body, which then temporarily morphed into visible faces and figures that were repeatedly photographed.⁴⁶ We must mention widespread reports of the materialization of blood and tears on artworks of religious figures, especially paintings of Jesus and especially statues

⁴² Crookes, W. (1922) *Researches into the Phenomena of Modern Spiritualism*.

⁴³ Tiso, F. (2016) *Rainbow Body and Resurrection*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books

⁴⁴ Kluski, *Incredible Tales*

⁴⁵ Eisenbud, J (1967) *The World of Ted Serios: "Thoughtographic" Studies of an Extraordinary Mind*. New York: William Morrow.

⁴⁶ See Schrenck Notzing, (1920) *Phenomena of Materialization* London: Kegan-Paul.

of the Madonna.⁴⁷

Dematerialization is reported in various contexts, but one case that went global will serve as an all-purpose illustration. On September 21, 1995, I myself observed milk dematerialize on CNN. Early that day people all around the world that offered milk to statues of Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity, and ‘Remover of Obstacles’, watched the milk dematerialize. On that day I watched a British reporter hold a small cup of milk to a statue of Ganesha. Plainly, I observed the milk gradually disappear, indeed, *dematerialize*. Milk never left the cup; it just contracted into nothing. The reporter was visibly shocked. My jaw dropped too as I watched the impossible happen before my eyes.

Soon after I received a written eyewitness report from an Indian student of mine; twice he went online to make milk offerings to a Ganesha statue, and twice he was amazed to witness the prodigy of the milk sucked up into nothing.⁴⁸ So here we have a strange form of contact with a power acting for one day all over the world that through a statue of the Indian god Ganesha the Remover of Obstacles made a physical substance (milk) apparently disappear into nothingness.

Materialization and its negative, dematerialization, are so strange that we associate them with miracles and divine power. For one day, Ganesha ‘drank’ milk offerings in Jersey City, U.S.A., London, India, etc. The fact that it manifested abruptly all over the world for about 24 hours on that one day and then abruptly ceased is completely baffling. What turned it on and what turned it off?

This paradigm-busting phenomenon has made no impression on the world outside of India, where it has been called the miracle of the millennium. It was a series of events that cry out for explanation, and certainly, at the very least, for some thoughtful recognition. The attempt to explain the phenomenon away as an effect of the capillary action of milk that makes it defy gravity is nonsense. Why did this supposed action occur one day only, starting and stopping abruptly? This particular miracle has occurred at least twice in India in the new millennium. Whatever the explanation, whatever the cause of the phenomenon, given that it occurred anywhere in the world where a statue of Ganesha was available, it seemed to emanate from something we should rightly call *omnipresent*. The phenomenon caused a milk shortage in parts of India. With things appearing out of and disappearing into *nothing*, our confidence about the nature of reality could be reduced.

⁴⁷ Refs. Blood and tears materialized

⁴⁸ See *Experiencing the Next World Now* (2004)

To inject a note from my experienter self, I have sporadically been metaphysically jolted by PK and precognitive episodes, and for good measure been treated to three visitations from apparently quite dead souls, presumably from the land of the dead. Why? I can see no reason but to rough up my conceptual apparatus and throw my picture of reality into a kind of animated disarray. One effect is to have permanently agitated my metaphysical imagination. In short, I have a malleable sense of reality, useful if you study the reality-bending phenomena of this book's subject matter.

Broadly, what we're looking at are experiences of contact with forces and intelligence that transcend the prevailing scientific worldview. Each *contact*

reveals another layer of meaning for a theory of self, new domains of competence, effects that are ongoing, and life-reshaping-- a pattern of phenomena that point to higher forms of embodied life.

We've seen evidence for the surprising elasticity of the body, D.D. Home's elongation. The stigmata, a feature of mystics like Padre Pio, add to the picture. Stigmata are somehow a mentally connected tissue transformation linked to psychically identifying with the archetypal crucified Christ. More elasticity of biological substance, Padre Pio's wounds lasted fifty years, never suppurated or got infected, fading away toward the end of his life. All the wounds shrank and vanished, and, incredibly, left no visible scars.⁴⁹ Whatever the inner dynamics for Padre Pio, the fifty years of his stigmata demonstrate the extraordinary expressiveness of the body, *the malleability of the body in service to a belief, to an image.*

One wonders what would happen if a new breed of super-modern saints decided not to dwell on the crucified body of Christ, and magically replicate his wounds, but instead dwelled on his glorified, post-resurrection body. As a model for the countless sick, wasted, and toxified bodies, our new saints could be an inspiration for super-health instead of icons of self-torture and masochistic penitence.

The odor of sanctity is another mystical phenomenon, extremely well documented. Biographer Bernini devotes Chapter 23 of *Wings of Ecstasy* to vivid testimonials of the paranormal olfactory effects that emanated from Joseph of Copertino, the irrepressible levitator. Joseph's olfactions were rich in symbolic, aesthetic, and therapeutic overtones and effects. The interesting idea is that a state of pure consciousness can materialize into a fragrant atmosphere. The odor of sanctity is said to express the purity of transcendent consciousness; it was explicitly related to his triumph over his sexual desires. According to Bernini's account (all based on sworn testimony), Saint Joseph was plagued by unwanted sexual fantasies and desires. What made it harder

⁴⁹ For medical studies, See Padre Pio of Pietrelcina: Acts of the First Congress of Studies on Padre Pio's Spirituality (1972). Flumeri, G, 71013 San Giovanni Rotondo, Foggia, Italy

for the besieged friar were the women who crowded him, eager if possible to make physical contact. Some apparently propositioned and some just wanted to watch him give out with his otherworldly scream and take to the air. The temptations were exceedingly powerful. We are told by Bernini that his levitations were correlative to the conquest of his temptations. The more heroic his resistance to the sexual fantasies, the more invigorated his flights into the air. Bernini clearly connected the sublimation of Joseph's sexual desires to the propulsive power of his levitations.

Those who experienced the friar's ineffable fragrance claimed it was otherworldly and uplifting. That too must count as one of the fruits of supernatural sublimation. It is interesting to imagine a future state of human evolution where we communicate with each other by the subtle odors we emanate and modulate. I can also imagine the sport of the future or the dance of the future, conducted in the freedom of being up, unleashed from gravity, and cavorting about in the air.

Three further sets of phenomena—inedia, healing, and incorruption—speak to our possible future biology.⁵⁰ As for their broad meaning, they all point to lighter, purer, more mobile forms of embodied life. We could think of them as steps converging toward the creation of so-called subtle bodies, suitable for some yet-to-be-entered epoch of history or some new environment.

Inedia refers to prolonged periods of not eating, drinking, or eliminating. The cases of the Hindu goddess-worshipping yogi, Jani, and of the Catholic mystic, Therese Neumann—both reputedly inediatic for decades—were tested and observed for two weeks running and proven for that time that they ingested nothing, eliminated nothing, but remained physically normal and functional.⁵¹

Being able to live without food, drink, or elimination suggests the possibility of a new mode of being on earth. Life on our planet, as we know it, is based on living organisms killing and eating others. What would happen if our species just stepped out of that framework? Inedia is a signal that an advanced lifeform may be sustainable without having to rely on common forms of nutrition. This, I imagine, might release enormous drafts of creative energy into the biocultural sphere, all the energy and attention devoted to producing, ingesting, and eliminating food and drink. We may have to say farewell to some very fond pleasures as we ascend the ladder of evolution toward becoming stripling gods and goddesses.

⁵⁰ See Michael Murphy's classic study of the *Future of the Body*

⁵¹ Jani and Therese Neumann

Two types of physical phenomena point to the transcendence of bodily death, albeit in a roundabout way, stories of instantaneous healings and accounts of ‘bodily incorruption.’ There are credible reports of such healings from various sources.⁵² It’s the suddenness of certain well-documented cases, as in the instant materialization of Pierre de Rudder’s leg bone, and total restoration of his health after eight years of suffering from an infection. All he had done was stop by a statue of the Madonna at Oostacker, nearby Lourdes. He prayed for relief from unremitting pain so he could work and care for his wife and children. He made contact with a power that healed him instantaneously. Read the account of what happened; Pierre de Rudder’s fresh, newly white materialized leg bone was photographed after his death. The miraculous healing caused a sensation in its day.⁵³ Other, similarly supernormal healings suggest an order of power capable of reversing the finality of death.

Bodily incorruption is different, though still an uncanny phenomenon. H.T. Rowe, L.A. Mortuary Director, wrote of the dead body of P. Yogananda: “The absence of any visual signs of decay in the dead body of Paramahansa Yogananda offers the most extraordinary case in our experience... No physical disintegration was visible in his body even twenty days after his death... This state of perfect preservation of a body is, so far as we know from mortuary annals, unparalleled.”⁵⁴

For an account of the phenomenon of bodily incorruption among Christian saints, see the well-documented books of Joan Carroll Cruz.⁵⁵ With regard to incorruption, something seems at work that retards the normal process of bodily decay; so that the bodies of saints like Bernadette Soubirous remain fresh, undiscolored, without rigor mortis, sometimes fragrant, for unnatural periods of time. Like the extraordinary healings, bodily incorruption symbolizes and seems to demonstrate a transcendent life force, a sign of life somehow resisting the onset of the normally inevitable ravages of putrefaction. It looks like a case of retroactive, expressive psychokinesis. The psychokinetic action is expressing the idea of resistance to the physical changes entailed by becoming a corpse.

⁵² Dossey on healing

⁵³ Bertrin, G. (1908; 2018) *Lourdes: A History of Its Apparitions and Cures*. www.facsimilepublisher.com. See Suzanne Kaufman (2005) *Consuming Visions: Mass Culture and the Lourdes Shrine*. Cornell University Press. This book details the fanatic resistance of some parties to admitting that there are things material science cannot explain.

⁵⁴ Yogananda, P. (1975) *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

⁵⁵ Cruz, J.C. (1983) *The Incorruptibles*.

So let us imagine an evolved scion of ourselves when we combine the various “psi” manifestations that occur in human experience. The idea of a new spiritual body is major in our hypothetical template. This future human would be recognizable but radically different from creatures like us of today. The differences would be in kind: philosophical, cognitive, physical, social, and biological—the story of which we defer to the future. Now let’s focus on supernormal *contact*.

There is a sense in which all psi-mediated forms of experience are experiences of extraordinary contact. For example, in telepathy we contact each other mentally; in clairvoyance, we contact scenes, places, and events; in pre- and retro-cognition, we contact future and past times; in psychokinesis, our minds make contact (touch with) other bodies in various efficacious ways. In sum, all paranormal experiences are a type of extraordinary *contact*. The extraordinary feature of the ‘contact’ is its extra- or super-physicality.

Contact Experiences

On now to the all-intriguing category of *contact* experience recounted in the thousands of contact experiencers in the Dr. Edgar Mitchel FREE UFO Contact Experiencer Research Study.⁵⁶ The notion of *contact* suggests presence, connection, and possibly pressure—a metaphor fraught with meaning. It is perhaps dramatic and moves us on to the stage of a possible new and greater conception of reality, a taste, a touch of the Infinite. More than a metaphor, I think there is something, for example, that had to inspire Giordano Bruno to hold his vision of truth more powerful than the life of his body.

The Latin etymology of the word contact is *contingere*, to touch each other. The OED has a lengthy discussion of the different senses of the word *contact*—ranging from electrical to mystical. The type of contact experience that interests us here is close encounters with beings that seem extra-human, superhuman, or outright nonhuman. Something almost impossible to classify invades our conventional space. They seem high-powered parapsychical assaults on common sense and mainstream science. To complicate matters, the government has shown bad faith on the issues, but Leslie Kean’s *UFOS: GENERALS, PILOTS, AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS GO ON THE RECORD* (2011) should dispel any lingering doubts about the reality of unidentified aerial phenomena.

⁵⁶ Hernandez, R., R. Schild & J. Klimo, eds. (2018). *Beyond UFOs: The Science of Consciousness and Contact with Non-Human Intelligence*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing (Amazon Press).

We have reviewed types of data that enlarge our concept of possible mental life. With more dramatic contact experiences, we observe more signs of transcendent agency. Contact experiences (CEs) can be life-changing but also unsettling because they pose questions about identity, other worlds, and exotic forms of life and consciousness. The FREE research reported in *Beyond UFOs* focuses on such experiences and interprets them as generally more positive and upbeat than typical alien ‘abduction’ stories. The more expansive approach of John Mack and Edgar Mitchell, pioneers in inner and outer space research, informs the background of this huge research project. It covers the global variety of contact experiences in the second decade of our century; it covers parapsychology and ufology-UAPs, noting the empirical overlap in both fields (e.g., both groups include claims and reports of levitation, telepathy, healings, visions of extra-humans, i.e., aliens, angels, etc.) *Beyond UFOs* affords an enlarged database that points to something undoubtedly greater. We could look at it as foreshadowing the next stage of human evolution.⁵⁷

Two important books by Hilary Evans review “Encounters with Non-Human Beings.”⁵⁸ Evans covers encounters with divinities, gods, angels, demons, Marian visions, hauntings, extraterrestrials, and entities of all sorts, and analyzes possible explanations. *Beyond UFOs* covers a similarly wide and more up-to-date spectrum of experiences, as recent as 2018. We are presented with an array of features that cannot be easily explained in any plainly uncontroversial way. Mysticism, life after death, and the agency of mind over matter become conceivable once we posit the fundamental existence, nonlocality, and causal potency of a transpersonal mind.

The fourth group of phenomena centers around contact experiences (CEs) where now the contact is with ostensibly otherworldly beings: deities, demons, angels, saints, ghosts, fairies,⁵⁹ the nonhumans, and superhumans of ufology, and so forth. Some of the FREE research-based reports of CEs are ambiguous and sometimes suggest religious *and* outer space provenance. This is one reason why it serves the interest to combine the study of parapsychology and UAPs.

⁵⁷ See in *Beyond UFOs*, chapter 8 by Mary Rodwell, ‘The New Human.’ See also my forthcoming *Smile of the Universe: Miracles in an Age of Disbelief*. Anomalist Books

⁵⁸ Evans, H. (1987) *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians: A Comparative Study of the Encounter Experience*. The Aquarian Press.

⁵⁹ See Evans-Wentz, Y.W. (1911/1977), *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*. Humanities Press.

There is a basic problem with the fourth group of case histories. No consensus exists about what the Contactees are in contact with. Reports describe encounters with a plurality of unexplained beings whose identity, origin, and reality status remain essentially unknown. There are those who think nothing is going on but misperception, unchecked imagination, possibly hoaxing, and so forth. Like innumerable other witnesses, I believe there is much that needs explaining. There is a mainstream assumption that UFOs (unidentified flying objects) are craft from outer space. Many stories exist of apparent alien “craft” easily out-performing our most advanced flying machines. Eyewitness testimony of military and air industry personnel have testified to that repeatedly.⁶⁰

There is another view that UFOs are at least in part a psychic phenomenon, engineered by an advanced technology, and more likely originate from a normally hidden dimension of reality, psychical or hyper-spatial.⁶¹ It’s hard not to notice the mindlike properties of UAP phenomena. Related occupants may appear transparent or suddenly vanish like ghosts. The craft often appear and disappear like phantasms in dream space. The aliens repeatedly are said to communicate with Contactees by telepathy and to teleport and levitate them around.

The contact experience is mindlike in its whimsical variability. Researcher Manfred Cassirer wrote: “To convey an even approximately adequate idea of the multiplicity of the UFO syndrome and its shifting pattern over the years would be a truly gargantuan task.”⁶² The bewildering multiplicity of forms suggests a psychic origin, like the various ways an archetype is expressed in dreams and art. Patrick Huyghe’s illustrated *Field Guide to Extraterrestrials* provides a detailed overview of reported alien life forms—based on actual accounts and sightings.⁶³ To mention the most popular: ‘human’, short gray, giant, reptilian, insectoid, avian, metallic, Nordic, apparitional, ghostlike—and so on.

⁶⁰ Kean, L. (2010) *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, And Government Officials Go On The Record*. New York: Harmony Books. Essential reading on the reality of the phenomenon.

⁶¹ For such possibilities, see Bernard Carr in hyperspace, Ch. X in *Beyond Physicalism*.

⁶² Manfred Cassirer, *Dimensions of Enchantment* (1994, Breese Books, London), p.11.

⁶³ Patrick Huyghe, *The Field Guide to Extraterrestrials*. 1996, Avon, New York. See also pp. 181-219 in *Beyond UFOs* for detailed descriptions of the alien lifeforms.

Veteran UFO researcher Jacques Vallee has stated that UFOs more likely originate from another dimension of reality. But, says Vallee, whatever exactly they are, they come with advanced technology that enables them to manipulate space and time. Psychological research supports the idea of mind as not intrinsically bound by time and space, inferred from cases of telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis. We may not possess alien technology, but we can believe such technology is possible.

The contact phenomena take us into spaces more dreamlike than ordinary reality-based. For example, Contactees report being taken inside a craft the size of a bus maybe; once inside they see a vast complex structure, perhaps like an office building buzzing with activity—totally unlike the initial entry scene. Of course, we have no idea how this technology (if that's the right word) works; but in light of all the reported experiences of high strangeness, something that subverts our everyday perceptions of what is possible must be acknowledged.

A motif prominent in some otherworldly encounters is that we are loved by the higher beings. Descriptions of the sensation of transcendent love felt in their presence sound like accounts of mystical love, reported in more familiar religious environments. Moreover, they—the ultra-humans—seem to love us so much they want to blend genetically with us. This is supposed to be taken literally, and there are supposed to be hybrids of native human and alien stock walking among us. Or is this all some kind of pious fantasy of deluded Contactees? Or does it represent something real that wants to help us stave off the onset of eco-Armageddon? Something similar seems afoot in the religious movement of Marian visions—otherworldly visitors warn of coming global catastrophe. Is it part of the advanced technology of these alleged visitors to manipulate our religious beliefs and symbols in order to alter our behavior?

Jacques Vallee writes that the events in Fatima in 1917 had many characteristics of a UFO phenomenon; for example, the so-called miracle of the spinning sun that seemed to plunge from the sky before 70,000 witnesses seemed like a brilliant UFO that moved with a characteristic zigzag motion. Strange sounds were heard and strange healings produced, as often reported in UFO sightings (see Chapter 6 in *Beyond UFOs* by Joseph Burkes, MD and Preston Dennett for many interesting examples).

The Marian visions in Medjugorje and in Zeitun, Egypt, were large-scale manifestations, occurring repeatedly and for long periods of time. In Medjugorje, since 1981, a small group of young people began to see and interact with their visions of the Virgin Mary. Scientists came on the scene, studied, tested them, and found by all tests that they were absolutely normal kids. Also, the visionaries were totally synchronized in how they perceived the figure of Mary—as if they were in fact riveted upon a single object—but an object invisible to everybody else.⁶⁴

As for stories of strange happenings, I met a Catholic priest on a plane once who had been to Medjugorje; he was skeptical about the stories he heard there until he discovered his rosary beads changed their color. This annoyed him into deeper interest and perplexities. An artist acquaintance told me she went with a friend to Medjugorje, mainly to keep her company, not as a believer. When she and the group went to the place where the Lady was supposed to have appeared, the artist told me she saw a light structure that resembled a UFO. Only later it came out that others also saw something unexpected, similar to what the artist saw, but preferred not to say anything. It certainly is highly strange that people should report seeing a UAP where others had seen specific appearances of the Virgin Mary.

In most of the famous Marian apparitions, it's usually just a few kids that 'see' the Blessed Virgin. But from 1968 to 1971 in Zeitun, Egypt, thousands if not millions saw a mysterious Lady of Light, silent and gesturing, almost night after night, around the dome of the Coptic Church in Zeitun, a suburb of Cairo. The "Lady of Light", as she was called, was photographed, and reportedly was linked to documented healings. I was able to interview five people from the Coptic Church in Jersey City, NJ, who were present in Egypt at the scene of Mary's appearances. They all described their experience with breathless excitement. However, one woman said that she was there but saw nothing. There were others like her, I was told. So, what kind of an entity can be seen by most, can be photographed, but that cannot be seen by some people?⁶⁵

The Zeitun phenomena were essentially a light show. It was the figure of a robed woman who hovered and moved about in the air and made gestures to the crowds. They called her the Lady of Light. Now and then some birds of light would 'fly' by without moving wings. The Virgin was all light and sometimes only a fragment of her appeared.

⁶⁴ For excellent analysis of the scientific research on the visionaries, see Klimek, D. (2018) *Medjugorje and the Supernatural: Science, Mysticism, and Extraordinary Religious Experience*. Oxford University Press.

⁶⁵ Zaki, P. (2002) *Before Our Eyes: The Virgin Mary, Zeitun, Egypt*. Goleta, CA: Queensnip. See for careful scientific analysis, Kamell, G. Jackson, J. Jackson, R. (1996) *A Lady of Light Appears in Egypt*. St. Marks Press.

An alien technology that could manipulate space, time, and light could have produced the Zeitun phenomena. The Zeitun story could be seen as orchestrated by some distinctly otherworldly, ultra-dimensional technology with benign intentions. One effect of the Zeitun appearances was to bring millions of Muslims and Coptic Christians together in peace and spiritual harmony. Muslims venerate the Blessed Virgin. But the benign effects did not last; recently Islamic fanatics are back to killing Coptic Christians.

Human beings throughout history and in all cultures have encountered beings transcendent in one or another way. The world's belief systems, folklore, and mythologies are the sediments of these encounters, records of what was seen, felt, and learned. I believe enough data has been collected that justifies the working hypothesis that our species has been in dialogue with the transcendent mind, a dialogue that is evolving at all times and in ways as diverse as the times, places, and languages of the world. There is one mind and one light of consciousness, refracted in time and numberless perspectives through numberless sentient beings.

Concluding Speculations

Grant that anomalous psychophysical phenomena as described exist, what are we to make of them? One possibility is that the phenomena presage the possible evolution of future humanity. Henri Bergson's philosophy of creative evolution is summed up in the last sentence of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* with an astonishing statement about "the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods."⁶⁶ In reviewing the spectrum of extraordinary human experiences, listing their types and functions, a picture does emerge of a more evolved human species, a possible human that Bergson might well term 'godlike.'

In forming a picture of the next human, two factors come into play. First are all the paranormal extensions and powers of consciousness, from levitation to inedia, from materialization to dematerialization, including precognition and retrocognition, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis. We form this idea of evolution in terms of specific extra-physical types of phenomena. We also used philosophical arguments for the irreducibility, nonlocality, and numerical oneness of mind. These ideas conjoined constitute the concept of mind I'm trying to clarify in light of the empirical phenomena.

⁶⁶ Henri Bergson (1935) *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

It doesn't seem that mind is an epiphenomenon of the brain; mind is irreducibly what it is through itself. It is no useless afterglow of the brain; it uses and can through patient effort rewire the brain. As for consciousness, it will never be manufactured in a chemistry lab or wired into a computer. The denizens of our mental life don't occupy physical space. Dig down anywhere into the micro crevices of your brain; you'll never find or detect your thoughts, feelings, memories, fantasies, dreams, or desires there.

We reviewed four types of narrative that pose big problems for physicalism, but provide empirical support for a new metaphysics of mind. Following the trail, step by step, we find reasons to show how the concept of mind gains in causal power. Each group is about a major theme, and each theme is part of a more comprehensive model we can use to imagine the new human. I would want to add that the superhero mythologies of popular culture have been paving the way to acceptance of the empirical pointers to real superhumanity.⁶⁷ In the template of the new human, the four types of narrative are prominent.

The first is large and varied and centers around the theme of an afterlife. The essence of this material proposes that the interior reality of a human being—as largely believed since time immemorial—continues to exist after bodily death. Moreover, the evidence we have suggests an expansion, not a loss, of consciousness in the postmortem state. The continuity of consciousness mortem would count as the cornerstone of a transcendent theory of mind.⁶⁸ The second body of data is about the mystical sense, another major building block in our model of transcendent mind. There are different forms of mystical experience, introverted and extraverted, and different degrees of intensity. Perhaps the most important feature is the experience of the all-pervasive oneness of being.

The awakening and the active education of this latent spirit of unity may be key to the enterprise of 21st-century spiritual evolution. Of all our slumbering mental faculties, this sense—this living, vibrant awareness—of the unity of life may be the most consequential for the future. The spirit of unity in question applies to oneself; to other people and other living creatures; to the world at large; and to the transcendent beings we call God, Goddess, Tao, nirvana, Great Spirit, the Dreaming, etc., --the ultimate principle, however, named or unnamed.

⁶⁷ See Jeffrey Kripal (2011) *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal*. Chicago University Press

⁶⁸ Greyson, B: *After: A Skeptical Scientist's Journey to Understand Life After Death*.

Suppose we expand our mental and physical powers without any of the mystical virtues of unity, peace, and love; it would make things worse, having extravagant powers without spiritual insight, or any sense of common humanity. In my opinion, the felt spirit of the oneness of being is the cornerstone of the new human. There is evidence suggesting that such experiences are part of our human potential as much as our psychic potential.

As for the third component, all those telekinetic phenomena, dramatic and perhaps unsettling: reports of levitation, bilocation, shrinkage, elongation, stigmata, inedia, materialization (various), dematerialization, instantaneous healing, paranormal olfaction, weather control, and so on and so forth.⁶⁹

Beings that possessed such powers along with an evolved mystical sense would appear superhuman and divine by comparison with human beings in 2019. The fourth category of contact experiences speaks perhaps most directly to the changes in the new worldview that may be shaping up. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 in *Beyond UFOs*, by Rebecca Wright, Michael Melton, and Michael Carter, respectively, all examine the after-effects, the psychological and spiritual changes described by people in the FREE surveys. The changes and values emphasized matched for the most part the model of the more evolved human, imbued with the sense of oneness linked to mystical states. Does it really require an extraterrestrial invasion to wake humanity up to the most vital truths?

Reports of UFO sightings broke into public consciousness around the time the first atomic weaponry appeared.⁷⁰ This does not appear to be merely a coincidence. In the most recent Contactee reports, we are warned of the convergence of cataclysmic forces descending upon us such as climate disaster and global anomie. Such ‘Contactees’ seems to represent a latter-day prophetic function that often finds expression during crises or cultural near-death.⁷¹ I myself (with two others as I said) seem to have been contacted by an unknown intelligence at a significant time in our lives. The experience remains a major question mark—where did those lights come from and what were they trying to tell us?

⁶⁹ For weather control and contact experiences and much more. See Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove’s *PK Man*, a critical study of Ted Owens, a 20th-century self-proclaimed UFO “prophet,” apparently with incredible psychokinetic talents.

⁷⁰ Hastings, R. (2008.) *UFOS and Nukes: Extraordinary Encounters at Nuclear Weapons Sites*. Authorhouse

⁷¹ See my *The Millennium Myth* (1995) Quest Books, for striking examples of this.

We have questions, anomalies, and mysteries. We have data and a working model of a superpersonal concept of mind. The model is explicit about the fundamental reality status, the irreducibility, and the causal efficacy of mind and consciousness. We have gathered some theoretically provocative information about human capacities. We also know that these capacities won't be bullied into performing tricks for us, but need to be carefully engaged with all sides of ourselves, all the faculties of our being, and even then, there's no guarantee of results.

Perhaps the most interesting challenge this research poses for us is personal and experimental. This might be the challenge of making oneself a more attuned instrument for engaging with the greater mind and consciousness. Thus, we might explore old and new ways to test our theory of transcendent mind and explore in more practical, personal, and transformative terms. How specifically do the curious powers discussed in this chapter touch our lives?

Consciousness activists in history have discovered ways of freeing the default awareness from its normal bondage to sensory-intellectual life. There are methods for opening the mental space that allows transpersonal breakthroughs to occur more readily. Traditional methods like the many yogas, like prayer, fasting, meditation, drumming, music, and so on, all are methods of purifying, directing, and sometimes, vacating consciousness of specific content. The great lesson seems to be one of right orientation, so, for example, Augustine said, "If you seek the truth, go within."

The thread that attaches us to everyday reality is much thinner than we normally suppose. It can be snapped suddenly, or slowly, and by different causes or methods. As an experiencer, my model for researching the contact phenomenon is to investigate more deeply my own experiences, or rather the entire pattern of extraordinary of experiences I have had since my early years. In addition, as I mentioned up front, my approach to exploring the mysteries of contact is through art, and this in two ways. The first involves the study of the history of art, and how it has been a vehicle for remembering and for prompting the occurrence of contact experiences, works of art, or music that induce ecstatic and paranormal experiences. The second involves making art myself, which depends on a certain inner creative discipline, an attitude of consciousness conducive to making art.

Introspection—an inward reflexive orientation—seems the place to begin, the pure datum of immediate experience, our own moment-to-moment perception of the world. One of the strange properties of consciousness is the ability to observe and reflect upon itself. There is the place we can learn to contain, direct, inhibit, activate, deflate, and energize the various modalities of contact with the transcendent vehicle of ourselves, whatever form it may take in whatever context of our existence.

In reviewing the spectrum of extraordinary experiences, it's tempting to ask: Are we seeing pictures at an exhibition of future humanity? Given the current global crisis, we should be curious about anything that promises to enlarge our worldview and our sense of what it is to be human. The first two groups of phenomena we looked at are perhaps the most dramatic and potentially transformative—an intellectual path to an afterlife of consciousness and armed with a map and guide to the mystical dimension of that consciousness. Such a doubly magnified sense of reality is bound to heighten our perceptions and energize our actions and creative tasks.

Getting proactive about transcendence goes back to ancient history. Since the *soma* of the Rig-Veda, people have used psychedelics to explore alternative psychic realities.⁷² Substances like DMT, LSD, etc., can catapult us out of our mundane subjectivity into new far-flung worlds. For a recent account, Michael Pollan's *How To Change Your Mind* will turn us on to the possibilities of psychedelic transcendence.

Perhaps the most dramatic consciousness-changer is a close encounter with death; in the time it takes for the brain to be deprived of oxygen, one may find oneself in other worlds, out of body, and into the ineffable light of transcendent mind.⁷³ In the near-death experience, attention is suddenly torn from everyday life, in ten or more percent of cases flooding the experiencer with extraordinary forms of consciousness. Yogis, mystics, and shamans devise ways of diverting consciousness from fixation on mundane existence in order to pry open psychic space. Contact is one of the eternal possibilities. It's uncanny to think how close we all lie to being precipitated into alternate realities.

⁷² See Wasson, G. *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*

⁷³ Pim Van Lommel (2010) *Consciousness Beyond Life: The Science of the Near-Death Experience*. HarperCollins.

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