

## Report - The Extended Mind: Self and Non-Locality

### Drynachan Symposium, 2000

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The theme of this year's symposium was designed to build on last year's meeting on Participatory Reality. It was once again generously hosted by Countess ANGELIKA CAWDOR at Drynachan Lodge on the banks of the River Findhorn amid glorious autumn colours. All the contributions explored implications of the view that consciousness is fundamental rather than incidental to the Universe and that it extends in some way beyond the confines of the brain and body. The first two contributions, from EMILIOS BOURATINOS and ROY WILLIS, gave us historical and anthropological perspectives that took us out of our present frameworks in space and time.

Emilios, in *Culture, Consciousness and Non-Locality*, questioned the premise that non-local aspects of reality can be apprehended irrespective of the way in which we objectify the world. He alluded to a conversation with Ilya Prigogine in which the latter said that one cannot approach non-linear reality through a linear mindset. By the same token, Emilios argued, one cannot approach non-local mental operations through a localising mindset: 'you describe to the extent that you experience. You don't experience to the extent that you describe'. In this sense, non-locality of mind may be an objective state or aspect of consciousness that becomes accessible only to the extent that consciousness does not lock into what it perceives. Here language also plays a role. Emilios pointed out that the language and thought processes of science are grounded in the local so that science locks on to perceptual localisation. This kind of language and thinking is necessarily inadequate to the task of evoking the subtle.

Emilios thought it significant that non-locality was part of a family of words that begin with a negation such as *asaletheia*, *ahimsa*, *advaita*, *wu-wei*. The common denominator of such expressions is that they suggest the absence of something, which requires the active participation of the unique reader or listener in order to become present. In meditation, for instance, one shuts off the senses and can become sensitive to other orders or levels of being. Thinking historically about this, Emilios observed that hunter-gatherers are more 'non-local' or at any rate less localised than agricultural societies. The hunter still has a more developed capacity for telepathy and intuition, as Laurens van der Post found with the bushmen of the Kalahari. The labyrinth becomes a symbol of imprisonment in the localised mind with its increasing abstraction and complexification. The world is no longer dynamic but related to concepts of mind: we move from intuition to abstraction. Non-local consciousness is therefore less a feature of the brain than a state of mind - it depends on how the brain is used. This is why meditation aims at loosening the hold of the localised self.

MAX VELMANS pointed out in response that there were certain conditions attached to representations of any kind. The knower has to be differentiated from the known. Culture shapes our thinking through language as an attention-directing device. In response, Emilios said that Greek was an experience-based language while Latin was concept-based. The problem is that, from Cicero onwards, Greek has been understood in a Latinised conceptual fashion. Roy Willis took this theme of experience up in his talk on *Selfhood and Expanded*

*Consciousness: A View from Anthropology*. He related that the emergence of 'consciousness' from taboo into a legitimate topic of social-scientific enquiry has thrown anthropology into an exciting state of ferment that would make some of its founders turn in their graves. The authority of a supposedly 'objective' ethnography has been profoundly questioned. The generation of Sir Edwards Evans-Pritchard thought of the cultures they studied as 'the other', which was to be understood in terms of a Western mindset that was never itself called into question. This enabled such scholars to dismiss apparent instances of non-local consciousness as delusions, errors or hallucinations to be corrected; whatever is not perceptible to the senses does not exist, they maintained. The new anthropologist does not privilege his or her own understanding of reality to nearly the same extent, taking a much more participatory approach.

Roy's own research has concentrated on the Lungu people who live near Lake Tangyanika. Their sense of self is embedded in the community but they recognise a larger unbounded self that emerges in altered states of consciousness during rituals. Roy himself had some interesting experiences and perceptions during these rituals and eventually came clean about his own healing abilities. This changed his relationship with the people, who wondered if he could 'deal with' African spirits or just European ones! Initiation in this context signifies a dissolution of the normal boundaries of reality, an expanded self and a sense of kinship with other people. He felt that this was better defined as an alternate (to the waking) state of consciousness rather than an altered state. BOB MORRIS recognised some parallels in professional attitudes between anthropology and parapsychology. The richness of experience in the field tends to disappear in the final report. HERTHA LARIVE commented that authority in our society tends to derive from knowledge rather than understanding through experience.

In elaborating on the shared sense of self Roy said that he understood space as joining rather than separating us. Rituals bring a communal sense of self where one is paradoxically more aware of oneself and which is reinforced in interesting ways - for instance in not being allowed to pour one's own alcohol; someone else has to do it! Angelika Cawdor, who grew up in Africa, recognises much of what Roy was relating, commenting that the left brain shuts off from experience and develops an ego rather than sense of self. The real learning process is inside ourselves. IAN MARSHALL observed that many of his colleagues would regard ASCs as psychotic, a deficiency in their sense of reality when it is perhaps us who are lacking something. BRUCE CURTIS remarked that the nature of unity is love but love requires another.

DANAH ZOHAR and Ian Marshall then explored some aspects of quantum non-locality and its implications for psychology. Danah explained some of her recent work on spiritual intelligence (SQ), which she regarded as innate and expressed in our quest for meaning, value, purpose and wholeness - the depth dimension which is part of the world. She discussed the binding problem and the 40 hz theory, which she interpreted as an excitation in the Quantum Vacuum. Evolution proceeds from the first fluctuation and extends consciousness through space-time. She put much emphasis on spontaneity - and creativity - observing that questions extend, while answers limit and that the words question and passion have same root in Greek.

Ian Marshall then took up these threads by postulating the self as a condensation of consciousness within a physics of continuity. He thought that non-locality was required even for integration in the brain and suggested the coherent 40-hz oscillations within the

mammalian brain may have an analogue in the coherently oscillating Higgs Field that permeates all space. If the coherent quantum field also had consciousness, then individual minds would be its sub-personalities. Bruce commented on parallels with Henry Margenau's permeable membrane of consciousness (see *The Miracle of Existence*). Max observed that the 40-hz frequency disappears with general anaesthetics (this raises interesting research questions about NDEs) and in non-REM states.

The next two sessions overlapped: the sense of self in mystical experience and models of the self. Hertha Larive opened as someone whose direct cognition has led to her models of the self. In mystical experience the self disappears from the foreground and one is sustained by love and has a knowledge of immortality. The state is beyond fear, one of beatitude and unitive being. One becomes aware of the presence of Divine in everything. Love is a creative and unifying principle and wisdom the goal. Bruce Curtis called for a restoration of greater self-knowledge. What one sees is a reflection of oneself. For him, science and mysticism are both grounded in experience but have different epistemological pathways through the senses and the supersensible. The body is itself a finely tuned instrument. Science separates subject and object but we need to participate in order to gain knowledge. This knowledge is symbolised by light, a lighting up of originary awareness. Bruce put forward his idea that the mind was within a field of light in a system of nested harmonics. The question for each of us is the extent of our opening and connection.

RAVI RAVINDRA asked how the self is related to the Self? People say what they see, but, he asked, is there a seeing without the seer? The seer is ego identification. In India individuality is ultimately a mark of ignorance or avidya. The emphasis rather is on the oneness of all that is - there is only God. In Christianity the sense of uniqueness remains as a keystone in the prophets. Ravi pointed out that one can speak of extension in space and in time. Not only is the everlasting is not eternal, but everlasting life is actually a threat! Transformation is received rather than controlled, and surrender is key. In terms of practice the aspirant seeks silence of the mind, seeing without the seer. This inner knowledge is not the habitual orientation of science, which seeks to know (an indeed control) the other. DAVID FONTANA once again brought up the question of authority in relation to knowledge, once the province of the Church but now of science. For Max, as indeed for many of us, the main move was to add legitimate modes of knowing - both-and rather than either-or.

In speaking of her own experiences, Hertha Larive began by describing the relationship between light and information. Consciousness is a basic principle - synonymous with energy and both fields of information. The universe is multi-dimensional with many levels of consciousness. For her chakras are at the interface. And represent the evolution of consciousness. We have within us the equipment for higher functioning - as a bridge (pontifex), container or transformer. This is the role of direct cognition. David Fontana continued by bringing in the question of the self surviving bodily death and the self as experience. The main question he raised was: does the transcendent self contain an enduring essence which might be termed a soul and which retains a measure of individuation when this destiny is fulfilled? Or does it realise itself as beyond individuation and in fact as the Unity from which it arises and which underlies all creation? For him, the personal self is embedded in a wider matrix that is mapped by transpersonal psychology. Eckhart refers to the Ground of Being or Godhead, of which God is the first emanation. He argued that we need both immanence and transcendence, ground and individuality,

knowledge and experience. We do not always remember who we are as expressions of the absolute but meditation practice can help.

Max Velmans also used the image of a bridge that starts from Western science and winds up in a different place! He explained the dualistic background to consciousness studies and the reaction to it. His own model, written up in his recent book *Understanding Consciousness*, is a reflexive one where both inner and outer, connection and disconnection are respected. Both matter and consciousness presuppose a ground and differentiation from it: 'if we define ourselves by the physical boundaries that appear in everyday experience we think of ourselves as separate, embodied and unique. If we attend to the way our bodies and conscious minds are embedded in a supporting non-experienced ground, it is easy to think of ourselves as conscious points of focus within a wider, non-experienced ground'. In the discussion it was pointed out that differentiation is in fact not separation, but could be understood as non-duality. This in turn implies a union of opposites and self-contradictions. It is significant in this respect that early places of worship were at crossroads and summits.

Bob Morris considered the implications of parapsychology for the nature of the self by explaining what he regarded as five false dichotomies: detection of meaning (real psi) vs. imposition of meaning (pseudo-psi) models; psi source (PK) vs. psi-receiver (ESP) models; psi-liberal (it is widespread) and psi-conservative (it is rare); biophysical vs. metaphysical models; and real time vs. transtemporal models. Some of the evidence from parapsychology has implications for some fragmented models of the self that develop within psychopathology. Equally, positive interpretations may suggest greater degrees of integration. Bob gave examples shedding light on all these dichotomies and the different ways in which experiments might be set up and interpreted. One interesting area concerned conscious vs. physiological responses and measurement, as in Dean Radin's work on pre-sponse where a physiological signal just precedes the conscious awareness. On the third dichotomy, Bob felt that the evidence favoured the psi-liberal - that psi is indeed widespread. In other experiments involving OBEs, it turned out that physical detectors did not work but humans were sensitive to these subtle effects.

Ian Marshall added his own coda by asking what brain systems were associated with psi functioning. He did not think that the neo-cortex was central, especially given Rupert Sheldrake's work on animal telepathy. Indeed, given that rational functioning is diminished in psychotic episodes, dreams and trance, one would predict a decline effect with the cortex taking over - this is arguably the case in very long series of PK trials that begin with significant effects that fall off over time. We know that the thalamus is the main sensory system at the limbic level, so it becomes an intriguing hypothesis (as in Patanjali's discussion of Siddhis) that ESP becomes more likely as spiritual development reintegrates limbic system functions. Hertha commented from her perspective that ESP can occur from the solar plexus centre then heart (love) then brow then crown. She likened its functioning to a light in the head involving both a beam and a screen, remarking that it is easier to pick things up from mentally focused people. David Fontana observed that mediums were often not aware if they were right or not. Confidence was not a reliable indicator of correctness!

My own presentation combined Rupert Sheldrake's work on 'the extended mind' with evidence for 'feeling/sensing at a distance' or telesomatic phenomena. Rupert gives examples of empathic connections between animals and their owners, which closely resemble accounts of people feeling at a distance a sensation being experienced by an emotionally close person. Emotional closeness or love seems to be the key here and this

might form the basis of a hypothesis to be tested (indeed the work of Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum and replications by Peter Fenwick lend it some support). Rupert accounts for this with his theory of morphic fields, explaining that a bond, once formed, can be stretched so that events occurring in one are registered in the consciousness of the other. The question is whether this is explanatory or descriptive. This kind of registering within the field of consciousness can be seen in the lives of sages as they are connected to their disciples, like Peter Deunov in Bulgaria. I believe that most of us only register impressions at an unconscious level but this becomes conscious in highly developed individuals. This suggests consciousness as a fundamental field or ground in which we all 'live and move and have our being'. It begins to sound rather like God!

ALAN WATKINS began from Gregory Bateson's phrase, 'the pattern that connects', remarking that medical science has become dissociated with specialists who do not see this pattern. However, a process of integration has been going on at the same time with psychoneuroimmunology (spell check still doesn't like this one!) and neurocardiology among other areas. We now know that the hormonal, immune and nervous systems cannot be separated, nor can the autonomic and nervous systems. If the immune system is referred to as a '6th sense', then perhaps the gut is a 7th sense and the heart as 8th sense. Drew Amor has shown that the extent of the heart's input into brain -it has electric output 50-60 times that of the brain. It also has an EM field effect 1-5,000 times that of the brain. Alan explained that the Heartmath Institute has been studying the communication between systems and seeing if they can change quality of information flow - there is more going up than down. If the signal is chaotic then cortex shuts down - we can all remember times when we could not think of clever response. Indeed interviewers like Jeremy Paxman thrive on this!

It is as if we are running on 200,000 year old software and have not been able to obtain an upgrade! Alan explained that their work indicated that a positive wave opens up brain and that the coherent quality of signal crucial. At this point he introduced the work of Paul Pearsall and others on memories seemingly encoded in hearts that have been transplanted (I reviewed Pearsall's book in April last year) where it seems that information is both localised and distributed. We do not currently have a map of how this might work but the evidence points in the direction of a new theory as in the work of Linda Russek and Gary Schwartz with their Living Energy Universe (see review in last issue). Alan and his colleagues have developed a feedback programme on computer, driven by a connection to the fingertip, which can show the degree of coherence in the heart rate variability (HRV). HRV is essential, since without it we are dead. Most people have relatively chaotic patterns here, which are in turn sent through to the cortex. Alan has now taken his work out to businesses and reckons to be able to teach the basics of 'cardiac coherence' in a day session with plenty of follow-up practice. Loving-kindness meditation has been shown to increase coherence, and in this sense the Indian tradition of Darshan could be interpreted as an imparting of coherence. A few of us tried this out, and I can report that we were not in the desired state of coherence! Although it has to be said that the coherence of the group itself was remarkable at the end of our three days and a number of possible new initiatives emerged from the meeting.

The central theme emerging from the meeting was the relationship between ground and manifestation, the One and the many, the Whole and the part, the Implicate and Explicate Orders, to borrow David Bohm's phrase. We explored the physics of this and ways in which it relates to the interconnectedness of consciousness suggested by parapsychology and

transpersonal psychology (and experience). We are heading towards a much larger synthesis of understanding than yet advanced either by physics or consciousness studies, but it is a pluralistic endeavour in which we each seek to grasp or see the patterns that connect and communicate this to others. The spirit of dialogue is not one of uniformity but rather unity in diversity undergirded by a natural sympathy of the kind that we experienced at Drynachan, not least because of the ethos generated by our hostess Angelika Cawdor. I would like to record our gratitude to her and to the Epiphany Philosophers for making the meeting possible.