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Alternative Realities

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By Michael Freedman

Many of the philosophical and religious conflicts which riot through the pages of Menzed and other Mensa journals might achieve more if people were alert to the concept of 'Alternate Realities' There are a number of philosophers who have expounded this idea, but I am familiar with it through Lawrence LeShan's book (Alternate Realities, Lawrence LeShan, Evans, NY; Sheldon, London, 1976).

LeShan suggests that there are a number of alternate realities, each existing as a result of different 'basic limiting principles.' He does not suggest how many alternate realities there might be for human beings. He discusses four in his book, and rejects the suggestion by J.C. Pearce (The Crack in the Cosmic Egg) that there are an infinite number of such realities. I myself do not care any more than LeShan apparently, for the names he has chosen for some of his alternative reality world-views. But here they are, with alternate suggestions from me:

[A.] The Sensory Mode of Being, that reality which is determined by what is perceived through our senses, and deduced by rational thought or experiment.

[B.] The Clairvoyant Mode of Being (LeShan); I call this the Unitive Mode of Being. This mode of being is adapted to the direct experience of the oneness of all being and processes, to the essential unity of the cosmos rather than - as in the sensory mode its separation into parts, into objects, events and individual experiences. This is the mode of being used by three kinds of people: Theoretical physicists working with relativity theory; Mystics attempting to account for their experience of the essential unity of the cosmos; Clairvoyants attempting to obtain paranormal information.

[C.] The Transpsychic Mode of Being (LeShan); I call this the Religious Mode of Being. LeShan feels that this mode of being is less well known than the others, because it has so often been confused with other modes of being. In this mode, objects, events and the self, are not perceived as separate from each other, as in the sensory mode, nor as identical-with each other as in the Unitive Mode, but as flowing from a larger One and with no clear boundary from That (presumably = The One God). Wave and ocean has often been used as a metaphor for this reality.

[D.] The Mythic Mode of Being (LeShan and myself are at one on this name) The mythic mode of being is is the mode used in play, art, dreams (LeShan) and in High Magic (myself). It is particularly useful in creativity; it is reflected in myths, legends and dreaming. When confused with other modes of being, it leads to pseudo-sciences and bizarre cults.

LeShan makes the important point that each mode of reality contains as one of its primary axioms, that "It is the only way to regard reality. All other ways are illusory and unreal.

A good example of restriction to one mode is a letter to the Listener recently from Dr David Marks of Otago University, in which he attacks the idea of ESP.

When Dr David Marks pontificates on the impossibility of ESP, he reveals that he is operating fairly and squarely from the middle of the sensory mode of being and, he rejects entirely the possible reality of any other mode of being. Thus the thesis of the book he has written attacking the Remote Perception experiments conducted by Puthoff and Targ can be summarised:

"The results achieved by Puthoff and Targ cannot have been achieved through ESP, therefore if they could have been achieved by any other means, no matter how unlikely, they must have been."

The concept of alternate realities is not particularly new in the history of human thinking. In the medieval period, it was recognised and formalised in Catholic theology as The Theory of the Double Truth: "A thing can be true in philosophy or according to reason; and yet its opposite can be true in theology and according to faith." It is fascinating and a major point of LeShan's book to see how differently two different cultures use this theory. In the medieval period, all who used it agreed that, when the two truths were in conflict, the truth as revealed in Scripture was the correct one, since it could not be in error; while the truth revealed through the senses came from the fallible sense of fallible man.

In the modern period, Werner Heisenberg, physicist, has said: ". two kinds of revelation of God. The one was written in the Bible and the other was to be found in the book of nature. The Holy Scripture has been written by man and is therefore subject to error, while nature is the immediate expression of God's intentions."(In 'Science, Faith and Man; ed. W.W. Wagar, NY: Harper & Row, 1968)

Nuclear physicists are aware more than most of the alternate modes of being. Arthur Eddington has quoted Sir William Bragg on the two points of view of the Theory of Relativity: 'We use the classic theory on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; and the (contradictory) Quantum theory on Tuesdays, Thursday and Saturdays.'

Andrew Ross is suffering from the contradictory pulls of two equally valid systems of reality - the one of which is based on sensory perception and finds the theory of evolution a valid and useful explanation of things as they are perceived by the senses; the other of which includes as one of its basic premises that God has revealed all knowledge through a set of Scriptures written from 2 to 3 or 4 thousand years ago. Andrew Ross will have to decide for himself, the extent to which the exponents of each mode of being are 'pure' i.e., pontificating on matters relevant to that mode of being only; and the extent to which he himself will choose to live in only one mode of

being, or find himself free to shift from one mode to another according to the needs of the moment. Reality- shifts can be very exhilarating.

From my own point of view, years ago, I included, among a set of riddles (Riddles are used quite a lot in *Mythic Mode*) the statement: "The work of a magician is to change his mind." (The statement is old-fashioned; it does include the possibility of female magicians).

To be aware of what Mode of Being, which Alternate Reality, you are in at any time, and to become familiar with its basic limiting principles; to be able to shift from one mode is easy, we are all doing it much of the time; but to know when you have shifted and to be able then to work efficiently with a new set of world rules, that is the goal and achievement of what some people call full awareness.