



# AASC NEWSLETTER

*Association for the Anthropological Study of Consciousness*

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## From the Editor . . .

In this, my first issue as editor of the *Newsletter*, I want to begin by paying tribute to Geri-Ann Galanti who, as she noted in her last issue, has edited and published this newsletter for seven years. It is doubtful that the AASC and the ATA could have sustained the commitment to developing an anthropology of consciousness without her tireless efforts at providing a medium for the exchange of research and ideas. As the new editor, I intend to continue the high quality of the newsletter, but in order to succeed I will need the continued support and contributions of you, the subscribers.

In the succeeding issues, I hope to gradually increase the size of the newsletter and eventually create a topical focus for each issue. This issue, for example, focuses upon consciousness from two points of view, multiple personality and myth. In subsequent issues, I would like to focus on a broad range of topics such as healing, shamanism, ASC's, mediumship, witchcraft, etc. Again such a topical focus will depend upon the submissions. Finally, I want the newsletter to be a nexus for the interchange of ideas, research in progress, resources, and interdisciplinary research.

JEFFERY L. MacDONALD

## AASC News

### 1986 AASC Meetings

A last minute reminder: The 1986 AASC annual meeting will be held April 4-6 at the Vallambrosa Center, California Institute for Integral Studies, Menlo Park, California. Conference announcements and pre-registration forms have been sent out to all AASC members and interested parties. Please see the tentative schedule, this issue. For further

information, contact:

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### AASC Annual Dues

1986 annual AASC membership fees are also now due. Please see the rates on the last page.

### AAA Affiliation

Following heated discussion, the AASC Board of Directors, at its semi-annual meeting at the American Anthropological Association conference, opted to take immediate steps towards AAA affiliation, even though we are few in number and the *NEWSLETTER* (under its present name) is only a year old. AASC members are urged to join AAA and attend all its Annual Meetings. It was understood that AASC presidents will continue to organize AASC productions for the AAA meetings (or to make certain someone else organizes them). We will continue to have our own Annual Meetings at Menlo Park.

Nancy O. Lurie, President of AAA for the past year discussed AASC-AAA affiliation with Joe Long, at some length. She urged us to become affiliates now even at our present size of but 100 members. AAA could print our newsletter and journal at cost, mail them to members and mailing lists at 4th class, bulk rate. They would take care of all duties of the treasury. People would join us by writing to AAA. All AAA members would get bills in which they could designate that they wanted the AASC membership too. In addition to AAA's management, all of our members would receive the *ANTHROPOLOGY NEWSLETTER* monthly.

Well, where's the catch? AAA membership costs. **AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST** is no longer sent to all members, but is a separate subscription, so dues are not the old \$40, but merely \$25. So, non-anthropologists might get AASC dues reduced from \$15 to \$10, but their total AAA/AASC dues would be \$35. So freelancers, psychologists, and parapsychologists would get a tremendous monetary jolt, and future interdisciplinary types would surely be discouraged. We might pick up 100-500 new members, of course, but whatever our final fate, our composition would certainly be radically changed, perhaps either by The Big League, or by anthropologists with a temporary curiosity.

Incidentally, as I understand it, AASC would, after reaching a membership of 250 or undergoing a review by AAA after three years, either reject us, keep us as affiliates, or make us another Section (like the Psychological Anthropology Society and Medical Anthropology Society) of the AAA, by virtue of which we would have a dedicated amount of space in the **ANTHROPOLOGY NEWSLETTER**. Then (if not before), we could drop our own newsletter and convert it into the **AASC QUARTERLY**.

JOSEPH K. LONG

## News

### Professional Training in Shamanic Counseling

Michael Harner, Ph.D. and professor of anthropology, and Sandra Harner, M.A. of the **CENTER FOR SHAMANIC STUDIES** are offering professional training courses in Harner Method Shamanic Counseling in the United States and Europe. The shamanic counseling system is copyrighted and is based upon classic shamanism with innovations created by Michael Harner. "The concepts used in Harner Shamanic Counseling include: nonordinary reality; the shamanic journey (undertaken by the client); shamanic divination (undertaken by the client); discovery of one's own personal spiritual power; discovery of trust in one's self and one's own spiritual experiences; and discovery of one's ability to obtain extraordinary and very practical spiritual wisdom and answers to important personal questions. . . In essence, the client becomes a practitioner of divinatory shamanism, with the help and guidance (in ordinary reality) of the shamanic counselor." Dr. Harner stresses that shamanic counseling is a spiritual method and not a psychological one. Its goal is life-enlightenment, not the treatment of psycho-pathology. For more information see the Winter/Spring 1986 issue of the **CENTER FOR SHAMANIC STUDIES NEWSLETTER** or contact:

Center for Shamanic Studies  
Box 673, Belden Station  
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## Research Reports

### MEDIUMSHIP AND MULTIPLE PERSONALITY: PHILOSOPHY AND THE TRICKSTER

Anyone reading Oliver Sacks' (1973) study of post-encephalitic Parkinsonism, arising out of the 'great sleeping sickness epidemic' (encephalitis lethargica) of the first quarter of this century could not help but be impressed by his sensitivity and humanity. Equally impressive, though, is the picture of human consciousness, and especially embodied consciousness, which arises out of the moving and exquisitely detailed studies of 'awakenings', resulting from the application of L-DOPA, then thought to be a wonder drug. While the drug created as many problems as it solved, and equally many misconceptions perpetrated by the press, its action gave a unique insight into the interior of a major affliction. Some patients awoke after decades of impenetrable behavior and a communication gap as wide as that between Lazarus and the rich man, as viewed from the outside. What arose out of the clinical histories of these unfortunates was a living laboratory in which the unity and division of consciousness is played out in stark detail as the victims were released from their dark, Gnostic castles.

A central feature of the Parkinsonism experience is the transformation of the matrix of embodiment: the body suddenly ceases to be the seat of ordinary agency, becoming instead a veil and barrier between intention and action, between knowing and communicating. Patients did not 'have' the body in the same way that we do in routine, taken-for-granted actions. At times, it seemed as if the body 'had' the patient, as we can see from this excerpt from Sacks' case studies:

Her excitement seemed to come in waves, each wave rising higher and higher towards some limitless climax, and with these waves a mixture of anguish and terror and shame overwhelmed her, to which she gave voice in palilalic screamings: 'Oh, oh, oh, oh! . . . please don't . . . I'm not myself, not myself . . . It's not me, not me, not me at all' (Sacks 1973: 50).

In moments of lucidity and almost 'normal' motor control, Frances D., as the patient was known, confided to her diary that her experience was like that of possession. She felt that the strange mass of impulses erupting from her body had a life of its own . . . an autonomy of agency and purpose which rivalled and oppressed her own being. An immediate impression deriving from a careful reading of the case studies is the correlation with observations made in classical psychoanalytic case materials, especially those dealing with complexes. Jung (1969: para 21) says of the complex:

It appears as an autonomous formation intruding

upon consciousness. Of consciousness one might say that is our own psychic existence, but the (complex) has its own psychic existence, independent of ourselves. This statement seems to formulate the observable facts completely. If we submit such a case to an association experiment, we soon discover that man is not master in his own house. His reactions will be delayed, altered, suppressed by autonomous intruders.

This metaphorical structure of Jung's statement is revealing. He uses two antithetical forms of reference: on the one hand, the complex is accentuated as an it, as a part of the en soi, and on the other hand as an entity or entities, a part of the pour soi. It is precisely this ambiguous structure that the 'awakening' Parkinsonism patient experiences in a much more immediate way than those individuals described by Jung. Moreover, their telling observations are wrought, often, out of decades of interiority during which self-observation is relentlessly intense. Frances D. and others like her are tortured by the multiplicities of the self . . . by what Polanyi (1969) calls the 'physiognomies' of consciousness and action. In short, that which is tacit, underlying action and beneath immediate inspection, is thrown into the perceptual and intentional foreground . . . a kind of gestalt reversal which has little to do with notions of the unconscious. The benighted world of Parkinsonism and the equally horrendous realizations of awakenings both show the delicate ways in which the integrity of the self is maintained. The particular, focused and limited neurophysiological pathology underlying Parkinsonism must surely raise questions about the structure of consciousness and, in particular, how we are or are not in possession of our bodies, thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Indeed, I feel very strongly the Sacks' study is as important as Merleau-Ponty's classic re-analysis of Kurt Goldstein's patient, Schneider (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

The ambiguity of the self is deeply rooted in human experience. It underlies recurring mythical and symbolic sturcutes such as those which occur in Homeric versions of Proteus, the shape-shifter, and related myths and narratives concerned with the Trickster (Tolstoy 1985). A central theme in Trickster narratives is the scattering of the self . . . the body, the senses, the will, and so on . . . which demands re-integration. Without a doubt, an essence within this theme is a projection of the multiplicity of the self, of the body as self and not-self, of having the body and the self, yet being 'possessed' by passions and complexes. Indeed, just as the ancient Greeks were concerned with the autonomy and integrity of the self, so many modern psychotherapies are explicitly involved in the recognition, reclamation, and transformation of parts of the self which are biographical residues which often have an awesome dominion.

The fate of ambiguity depends so much upon social and cultural factors. For one such as Freud in the post-Enlightenment fascination with instrumental reason, the multiplicity of the self is a serious impediment to mental health; while in the very same era, we find the very same cultural materials turned upside down in order to exalt the creative and revelatory powers of the 'hidden selves' . . . in the form of Spiritualism and other esoteric movements. I do not wish to enter the controversy here about the existential status of 'spirits' which abounded in nineteenth century Spiritualism and its descendants; rather, I should refer the reader to Alan Gauld's Mediumship and Survival (1982) for an evaluation of the evidence in respect of this issue. Let me pass on, leaving an hypothesis: Where there is insubstantial evidence for post-mortem communication (i.e., 'spirit' communication through the body of a medium as the seat of the new and alien agent), then it is still a reasonable hypothesis that the 'alter-ego' mode of consciousness may be a vehicle for the production of psi events in the same way that less persona articulated states of consciousness may act as such vehicles.

Of immensely greater importance in developing our knowledge of the mechanics of consciousness is not the fact of ambiguity but its use! In other words, ambiguity as a focal concern may be one of the oldest and most fundamental bases of consciousness change. It is a core element in technologies of alteration of state. From circumstances of pathological salience of ambiguity or its resolution into more clear-cut and oppositional moments, we can gain insights into the dynamics of auto- and ritual induction of persona changes. For example, spirit mediums in Western societies rarely learn and enact state change rituals which involve frenetic activity: expenditure of kinetic energy is kept to a minimum and emotional tone rarely leaves the domain of mild but sedentary excitement. Nevertheless, state change is possible, the technique can be learned in the same way that hypnotic procedures can be learned, through effectively inverting the structural properties of routine perception and action. By way of illustration, it is quite common for spirit mediums to focus, meditatively, upon the ambiguity of the being/having dimension of self experience. By placing the body into a disposition where there will be, initially, an atypical pattern of muscle tension and body-orientation achieved in marginal perceptual circumstances (e.g., darkness, silence, inward attention, and suspension of critical faculties) and in a self-conscious way, the resulting proprioceptive and fantasy-reverie data is correlated and consolidated with the performative and interpretive protocols which are agency-oriented. With respect to this latter, Sacks' patients sometimes had their actions interpreted as possession and, indeed, they occasionally also saw their own actions that way. Over time, the emerging pattern of meanings attached to

actions and feelings, for example, are easily appropriated by a powerfully imposed context. For one, the result is an experience which could only be called demonic . . . chaotic, beyond control, having the sense of alienness, and pathological in an institutional and life-sapping sense . . . while for the other, status is elevated, though not necessarily finally clarified, and the essence of the experience could be described as benign surrender and control.

My comments so far are only propaedeutic with respect to the complexity of the topics at hand. There is a range of related (family related in Wittgenstein's usage) states which bear some close scrutiny. For example, the courting and engagement of an alter-ego is enhanced in situations where there is an established and socially learned set of personae which are play-learned in early childhood, as in West African possession cults and their derivatives in the Caribbean and South America. This learning continues through adolescence or until there is a spontaneous possession, imminent possession sign, or a ritual, initiatory induction. Primarily, much of this learning is body-learning . . . i.e., the construction of a bodily style in a variety of modes (posture, movement in dance, walking, communicating, and a set of correlated interpersonal strategies which for the most part remains tacit. It is in parallel with rather than unconscious with respect to routine action. But, as in the case of Frances D., a series of powerful feelings and impulses irrupting into focal awareness, force the need for meaning generation out of the temporal sequence of events. Then the multiplicity of the self has a further dimension . . . the transpositional which is memory-based but in relation to a process of interpretation which is at once proactive as well as retroactive and contemporaneously situational.

Therefore, phenomenal structure of the self has at least three major moments or dimensions . . . the horizontal (as Hilgard's (1977) meaning applied to parallelisms in consciousness), the depth (as in the psychoanalytic meaning of the unconscious), and the transpositional (temporal/interpretive). In each dimension, significant discontinuity with other dimensions may occur. These discontinuities may occur in a variety of forms . . . as in fugue, psychomotor epilepsy, hypnotic states (especially those of greater 'depth' or dissociation), possession states, or in conditions induced through some neurophysiological dysfunction (other than those mentioned above) such as in Parkinsonism or traumatic injury (the case of Schneider was such: praktagnosia arising out of war injuries).

When we think back over the examples of self-structure given, there is clearly something additional, indeed crucial, in the differentiation of states. Specifically, it is precisely to the extent that there is self-consciousness and reflexive conduct that agency

can be attributed to action. And, of course, the locus of such attribution is important . . . viz., whether it is self- or other-attribution. There is no place where this is more significant than in law. Recently, Beahrs (1982) has commented that the whole orientation toward psychotherapy and individual responsibility in criminal justice may have to be changed if the already substantial evidence for genuine multiple personality holds up. While it seems amply clear that the diagnosis of multiple personality has finally escaped the wilderness of 'hysteria' and is consistently differentiated from iatrogenic and psychotic disorders, there is still some confusion about its phenomenology . . . a confusion which reveals a lack of appreciation of the dimensions of self-construction. In law, there is no doubt that the fourth dimension is crucial in judgments of culpability. However, there is little likelihood of the main issues being adequately clarified unless the following, common, kinds of misconceptions are dealt with: Concerning Kenneth Bianchi, 'The Hillside Strangler', Beahrs (1982: 203) notes on the matter of criminal responsibility . . .

. . . there is no question of Kenneth Bianchi's guilt. The evidence shows that, without any reasonable doubt, he or at least his body caused the sexual violation and death of many female victims.

The fascinating thing about this statement is that Beahrs, while accrediting the diagnosis of multiple personality, denies it in the same breath by giving the body the status of agency, opposing the socially identifiable self (which depends substantially upon bodily recognition anyhow), 'he' (= Kenneth Bianchi), to 'his' body. Curiouser and curiouser! Beahrs tries to avoid the dilemmas by determining that a decisive criterion here is whether the offenses were caused by a conscious choice of the 'the entire organism'. However, this does not wash either! One cannot, at one moment, support the notion of multiple agency in the same body and, at the same time, demand that actions be decided upon a idea as vague as 'the entire organism'. It is as if Beahrs does not really want to believe that multiple personality exists: one body discontinuously related in being/having terms to two or more agents/personae.

Let us return to some of the earlier points. The discontinuities which may occur in all four dimensions of self-construction, need to be qualified in terms of the quality of agency as well. For example, in out-of-body-experiences (OOBE's) there is sometimes the sense that the body's waking, focal awareness state is suspended (as in trauma or sleep, for example) but that certain modes of agency are not impaired; indeed some may be enhanced, where there is an experience of 'travelling clairvoyance' or of psychokinesis (PK) (intervention in events at a distance and in a manner beyond sensory range). Here, the body is not over and against the will of the dominant or focal persona, as in the Parkinsonism case

or 'uninvited' possessions, but is released from servitude to the will and releases an experience of transcendental qualities. This kind of agency plainly depends upon a bodily state to some significant degree, but, using Merleau-Ponty's metaphors, agency correlated with the body does not haunt space as a manifold of possible actions in the same way as routinely embodied action does. There is a lacuna in the organic integration of action which, nevertheless, is a part of the total array of human possibilities in consciousness and action. Hence, some writers refer to the class of phenomena to which this kind of experience belongs as 'parallelisms'. Extending the content of the class, we find that Hilgard's (1977) 'hidden observer' belongs in a related but distinctive way. The hidden observer is interesting precisely because it seems capable of a constant monitoring function in parallel with the hypnotic state, and emanating from the same bodily locus, while seeming to act in an 'egoless' fashion. That is to say, the hidden observer does not seem to exhibit the qualities of reflexive awareness and a differentiable persona. Moreover, there is some reason to believe that, at least in some individuals, the hidden observer function may be constant throughout the diurnal cycle, sleeping or waking states.

There are a number of other ways in which the multiplicity of the self, of consciousness itself can be explored. However, with the limitation of space at hand, it is possible only to make some prefatory remarks. Throughout the diverse threads of this kind of research and theorizing there are some recurrent themes. In the first place, studies such as that done by Sacks on what seems to many to be an obscure affliction have languished precisely because the experiences of the victims seems so alien, quite apart from their inhabiting a medical 'backwater', and supportive of a view of consciousness which runs counter to some cherished assumptions. The Western intellectual tradition still holds dear the notion of the integrity of the self and the indissoluble link between the body and the self in a rather simplistic and deterministic way. There is very little room for a view of the self and the organization of the total psyche which is multi-stranded and which allows for the kinds of lacunae which have been briefly alluded to here. There is an implicit preference for the self to be unitary and firmly seated in the one body. Herein lies a major issue: There is a case for the body also to be considered multiple. So, while the body may indubitably belong to the en soi and the pour soi coextensively, it belongs to both severally! The foundations of this view are established in Merleau-Ponty's (1962) philosophy of ambiguity and in Marcel's (1952) work on the body. So, the matrix of the possibilities of the self, taking the modality of embodiment in its more complex form into account, is made considerably more complex and richer in terms of making sense of what appear to be anomalies. The second major point here, then, is that such a view of

multiplicity will be disturbing to the 'mainstream' in psychology, psychiatry, and some philosophy, but it is a view which already has a long history in cultural traditions both as thought and technique. Concerning the latter, it is within the orbit of ritual and auto-induction of altered states that ambiguity and multiplicity are often understood and utilized at the basis of specific procedures. I am not arguing for 'primitive science' here; rather, I wish to point out that culturally transmitted techniques are a form of knowing and which, as in this culture, do not depend upon reflection or analysis for their effectiveness or validity. Much of what takes place as effective thought or practice, then, is pre-theoretical!

It is worth pointing out again that there is a long history of symbolic forms and myth which deal with the multiplicity of the self and the body. One can dismiss these constructions as fantasy-wish-fulfillment of unsophisticated societies, much as the intellectualists did in anthropology; but it certainly faithful to human experience writ large to look at such beings as the Trickster as constant reminders of our tenuous hold upon unity of self and body. I should hasten to add, though, that the image of the Trickster is not necessarily negative; rather, it is a mirror held up to us collectively in order to remind us of both our foibles and our hidden strengths. There is no example better illustrative of this latter than in the encounter between Menelaus and Proteus, the Trickster of the ancient Greek world. Proteus is fearful to encounter in the many facets of his body and mind, but the encounter is always rewarding for the resolute seeker who stands to discover more of his own actuality (what is routinely hidden from awareness through culturally learned inhibitions and conscious repression . . . that which is painful) and possibility than the surface of the encounter would seem to suggest.

In a very brief way, I have tried to outline some of the major topics which are currently of interest to me as an anthropologist, psychotherapist and parapsychologist. My rather extended involvement in ASC research has led me increasingly to focus upon the phenomenal moments of self-construction . . . primarily, the horizontal, depth, transpositional (encompassing cultural, learned codes of self-reference, judgment, etc.), and agency. And these cutting across the classical components of ambiguity, the en soi and the pour soi and being and having. In short, my interest is in the roots of unity and multiplicity within human consciousness . . . the foundations of mediumship and multiple personality.

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(Editor's note: Dr. Locke has co-authored two works on ASC's of importance to the anthropology of consciousness. See: Locke, Ralph G. and Edward F. Kelly, "A Preliminary Model for the Cross-Cultural Analysis of Altered States of Consciousness," *Ethos*, 13(1), 1985, pp. 3-55, and Kelly, E.F. and R.G. Locke, *Altered States of Consciousness and Psi: An Historical Survey and Research Prospectus*, New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1982.)

## Abstracts

### Parapsychological Anthropology: I. Multi-Method Approaches to the Study of Psi in the Field Setting

The scope and nature of research in a new interdisciplinary science, parapsychological anthropology, is introduced. The historically "one-sided" methodological models for researching psi and psi-relevant activities in the field setting in non-Western cultures, the predominantly ethnographic or predominantly experimental (ESP/PK testing) models, are reviewed. The paper aims at advancing the present methodological models employed in parapsychological anthropology by proposing a multi-method approach in which improved and more psi-directed and culturally relevant versions of the standard ethnographic and intrusive experimental methods are utilized in a mutually complementary fashion. In addition, a new integrative method, "psi-in-process," is introduced. The psi-in-process approach studies ostensible paranormal functioning in a natural cultural or

subcultural context with the rigor of experimental control and statistical evaluation, yet without (or minimally) altering or disturbing the context. It is concluded that the psi-in-process method supplemented by ethnographic data on a particular psi-related activity, its actors, and its relationship to the greater cultural milieu affords a more holistic portrayal of psi and the psychocultural conditions under which it occurs. This paper (Part I) constitutes the foundational material for a second (Part II), where research with the Afro-Brazilian shamanic cult of Umbanda will be reported. Part II will serve both to illustrate in detail an application of the psi-in-process approach proposed here and to substantiate some of the principal multi-methodological considerations delineated.

### Parapsychological Anthropology: II. A Multi-Method Study of Psi and Psi-Related Processes in the Umbanda Ritual Trance Consultation

This research integrates ethnographic and intrusive and unobtrusive ("psi-in-process") experimental methods to investigate psi in the Afro-Brazilian Umbanda Cult. The cult's psi-related beliefs, the psychodynamics of its divination practice ("consultation"), and several key socioeconomic characteristics of cultists and their clientele are described.

The author proposes that, rather than using psi to find a client's lost object in the ritual consultation, the Umbanda shamans facilitate psychodynamics that, in accordance with Batecheldor's principles of psi-conducive contexts, stimulate the client's ESP to find the lost object. Ten noncult Brazilian subjects serving as clients ("clients") produced free-response protocols concerning the location of a "lost" (hidden) object under two conditions: with consultation and without. A "clientness" score was determined for each client by quantifying interview responses on the basis of criteria derived from the ethnographic data. The score represented the degree to which the client's beliefs and experience in the consultation trial were similar to those of typical Umbanda clientele. Five Umbanda shamans were also tested on a remote-viewing task.

### PATRIC V. GIESLER

(Editor's note: The above abstracts are printed by the author's request from the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. 78, No. 4, (October 1984), p. 289., and Vol. 79, No. 2, (April 1985), p. 113, respectively. The author notes that the report of his AAA paper in the last issue of the *Newsletter* partially misrepresented his views. The editor, who co-authored the report, hopes that the above abstracts will clarify Geisler's research with the Umbanda cult and Batcheldorian psychodynamics.)

# Research Reports

## MYTH AND CONSCIOUSNESS

In 1949, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers (building on the work of the nineteenth century classicist Ernst von Lausaulx) bifurcated human history into a mythic period, ending in the middle of the first millennium B.C., and a scientific period, beginning immediately after the other ended. In Greece, whose pre-Christian intellectual history we probably know better than that of any other ancient nation, the mythic outlook is represented by Homer and Hesiod, while the scientific outlook is represented by Thales and Anaximander.

The first scientific critique of mythic thought of which we have any knowledge is that of Theagenes of Rhegium in the Greek-speaking Italy of the late sixth century B.C. Theagenes, like most other philosophic Greeks, found Homeric and Hesiodic narrative both baffling and repugnant--baffling because they contained such fantastic events and repugnant because they portrayed deities who frequently violated the very rules of morality that they seemingly imposed on human beings. Theagenes anticipated Max Müller of the nineteenth century England by maintaining that myths are explicable as allegories, in which the gods of the Olympian pantheon represent mindless forces of nature, many of which are at least intermittently destructive.

Xenophanes of fifth century Ionia (in what is now Turkey) agreed with Theagenes that the Homeric gods are not to be taken at face value. Instead, he interpreted them as degenerate personal manifestations of a single impersonal and eternal deity. In viewing monotheism as prior to polytheism, he anticipated the nineteenth century Scottish folklorist Andrew Lang. Finally, Euhemerus of fourth century Sicily agreed with both his predecessors about the illusory nature of mythic beings but preferred to regard them as glorified versions of human rulers and conquerors. To the extent that he focused on the human rather than the divine aspect of the myths and their power to validate unwritten social and political claims, he anticipated the twentieth century Anglo-Polish ethnologist Bronislaw Malinowski.

What is significant about these divergent interpretations, both classical and modern, is that all of the interpreters clearly felt alienated from myth and manifested a need to translate it into language which made 'scientific' sense. One of the reasons why the exegetes could not take myth on faith was that myths depict a cosmos fundamentally different from that of the past 2,500 years. While the world since the time of the Persian Empire has been one of relative uniformity and predictability, both physically and psychologically speaking, the world portrayed in myth is one of relative discontinuity and unpredictability. To the extent that mythic disorder can be formulated, the formulation describes a triune sequence of (1) paradise, (2) catastrophe (usually divisible into a series of individual catastrophes, each attributed to a

distinct force of being), and (3) partial recovery.

The period in which most of the myths were produced--Jaspers' mythic period--was probably the second of the three stages just outlined: that is, the age of catastrophe. During the periods of primal tranquility, myth-making would have been a work of supererogation; while during the period of recovery--Jaspers' scientific period--most creative intellects no longer operated in the mythic mode. Jaspers' mythic period probably corresponds to the mythopoeic age postulated by Max Müller in the nineteenth century and reasserted by Ernst Cassirer in the twentieth. The motive of mythopoeia, or myth-making, is likely to have been a need to "make sense of the senseless"--that is, to explain the terrifying disruption of what had been a peaceful and harmonious existence. Sir James Frazer, to be sure, characterized myths as explanatory but implied that the explanations contained in them were disinterested, if naïve, intellectual efforts to establish causality as a principle. What he missed was the element of emotional urgency in them, the desperate need to account for the unaccountable. When myths address the question "Why must we die?" they do so not in the spirit of an ontologist asking "Why does matter exist?" but rather in that of an accident victim asking "Why me?"

Moreover, the earliest myths about which we have adequate knowledge--those of the Mesopotamians and Egyptians--implicitly pose a second and no less pressing question: namely, "What must we do to prevent further misfortunes at the hands of inscrutable powers?" And the answer to this question was, apparently: perform demanding rites, ranging from the erection of immense sacred structures to the sacrifice of thousands of our fellows.

Julian Jaynes was, I think, right to hypothesize that people in the mythic period were not conscious in the sense in which people in the scientific period are conscious. But I believe that he was mistaken in equating the absences of our kind of consciousness with unconsciousness. On the basis of the evidence that he himself presents, it seems more reasonable to equate the consciousness of late mythic times, when people acted in response to divine voices, with the hypnotic state that we know as trance.

As we have seen, however, myths themselves clearly distinguish the late mythic period, when myths were presumably created (that is the mythopoeic age), and an earlier mythic period to which the sacred narratives hark back nostalgically. This earlier period, best known as the Golden Age, is widely described as one in which all people were one person (in Vedic tradition, *purush*, "man") or, at most, two persons (in Biblical tradition, Adam and Eve). What these traditions seem to me quite clearly to imply is collective consciousness, in which the "skin-encapsulated egos"

that we know today simply did not exist.

In this view, individual minds, almost wholly sealed off from one another, would have come into being as a result of the fragmentation of shared awareness by a monumentally traumatic disruption of the primal order. (The nature of the disruption, though itself a fascinating question, is beyond the scope of this paper.) If the priority of collective consciousness is conceded, the rule of intellectual parsimony will then compel us to regard sporadic occurrences of telepathy, clairvoyance, and paramnesia, or déjà vu, as residual rather than as innovative phenomena.

Once this concession is made, it further follows that it is not paragnosia, or "impossible knowledge," which constitutes an altered state of human consciousness but our individualized waking consciousness that does so. In other words, it is what we call normal consciousness that has been altered and what we call exceptional consciousness that remains unaltered or, at most, minimally altered.

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(Editor's note: Dr. Wescott gave this paper at the AASC symposium at the December 1985 AAA meetings.)

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