
Open Forum on Omni-interconnectionism and Omnivention

Discussants: The Editor (Michael A. Thalbourne), Colin Mitchell, Mikele Barrett-Woodbridge, Dominic Gill, Lance Storm, Dick Richardson, Rhea A. White, Kathleen Leach-Ross, James Houran, Walter F. Daniel, and Robb Tilley.

CONVENED BY THE EDITOR

Opening remarks. On Friday 7th of January, 2005, I wrote the brief paper which appears under the heading “Omni-interconnectionism and Omnivention” (terms which will be explained in due course.) I disseminated the paper to a wide email audience, and the reaction of a number of recipients was to write a commentary, short or long, on (usually) one or two themes within the article. Many but by no means all of these commentaries were critical or in some cases corrective (I duly thank Rhea White for her excellent editing of the paper.) I attempt to deal with at least some of these commentaries immediately following each.

It should be pointed out that the relationship of this paper to parapsychology is as follows: there is discussion of causality (e.g., in paranormal events), synchronicity, and mysticism. People who report mystical experience are statistically likely to report also experiences of the paranormal.

It should also be pointed out that in addition to these points, reference is made to sexology and mystical experience, somewhat in the tradition of the work of Michael McBeath (1985) with the paranormal. (More connections are made below in the section by James Houran.) If the reader thinks that they may experience distaste or embarrassment about such topics as orgasm then I strongly advise them to refrain from reading this Open Forum.

Note finally that the “omni-interconnectionism” paper here is is the same as that sent out by email, except that it has been corrected by Rhea White, and I have added one footnote.

REFERENCE

McBeath, M. K. (1985). Psi and sexuality. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 53, 65-77.

Omni-Interconnectionism and Omnivention

The designation of what is to count as one single event is arbitrary: for each event may be a part of another, or it may itself contain other events. The borders spoken of between one event and another are purely for the sake of convenience, and have no other ontological reality. But however we designate an event, it is hypothesised that that event has influence on all other events in the universe, no matter how small or technically unmeasurable. Thus the fluttering of the butterfly in Australia has its own effect—no matter how micro—on the moons orbiting around a planet in a distant galaxy. The principle of omni-interconnectionism states that all (“omni”) events are in some causal sense “inter-connected” with each other, no matter how weak that inter-connection is. Thus we are led to conceive of a universe where each part to some degree affects every other part. That effect differs in the degree of its perceptibility to humans: most of the time the connections between events are not obvious; when they are more obvious, and one tends regularly to precede another, we say we are observing cause and effect; and when they are even more obvious, as in the convergence of two or more events in what we call synchronicity or amazing coincidence, we cannot see *any* obvious causal connection but nevertheless are inclined to want a quasi-causal principle that Jung called “acausal”. But omni-interconnectionism forbids the postulate of acausality. So, then, what is the cause in synchronicities? Let us tentatively answer this question with the statement that when the causal influence is not obvious, a cause of a Higher Order is operating to bring to our attention the interconnectedness that is otherwise not obvious. We may call this the Artifice Principle, and the more we observe its operation the more acute is our perception of the existence and operation of a Higher Order. This is why the more often we perceive paranormal events the more likely we are to be also experiencers of the mystical, which is the paranormal extended to a degree that we call Infinite.

Talk of the mystical raises the question of expansion of consciousness: from a limited viewpoint on the world we, usually suddenly, are apprised of an overwhelming panorama, something obviously greater than our selves and greater than the environment in which we usually find ourselves. This apprising we call enlightenment, and may be of several degrees and extents. I find it useful to abbreviate the word “enlightenment” to capital O, because we say “Oh! That’s how it is!”, or our mouths are agape in wonder; and because the circle is the symbol of Infinitude in Zen Buddhism.

Indulge me, reader, with a jump in theme: “o” is also the first letter of the word “orgasm”, as well as the shape of a person’s mouth in orgasmic ecstasy and what they moan. I maintain that there is no coincidence in this, since enlightenment is like a (temporary) cosmic orgasm, and orgasm involves a (temporary) awareness of oneness with the cosmos. “I’m coming!” may be said to be the process of being enlightened as to the direction to go in life, or the acme of psychophysiological arousal, for the word “come” is delightfully but not salaciously ambiguous.¹ But of course, I come, you come, everyone comes in their own way: this concept may be expressed in a new word: omni-vention, meaning “All coming together as One”, which from a certain vantage may refer to what happens to everyone in everyday life, or which at a certain other level may be the purpose of existence—mutual enlightenment as to everything in the Cosmic Process. So how may the individual ego be overcome? By continuing forays into carnal and/or cosmic consciousness. Omnivention is the goal to which the Artifex Principle is inevitably leading us by the process of omni-interconnectedness.

FINIS

COMMENTS ON PHYSICS AND OMNI-INTERCONNECTIONISM, INTER ALIA

BY COLIN MITCHELL

I’m jumping in with a few quick comments on the Editor’s paper from the point of view of physics. These are not in-depth because although I know more physics than some I still have a superficial understanding compared with those who specialise in relativity and quantum physics (I am not a professional physicist or philosopher although I have studied some of both).

First let me state my opinion that there should be much more involvement of physicists and philosophers in parapsychology—it should

¹ Note that I have heard the expression “intellectual, or mental orgasm” used in the USA by people whom bright thoughts have enlightened, bursting upon consciousness. This notion is perhaps a sort of halfway house between mystical enlightenment and sexual orgasm, and better shows the crossover of meaning. James Houran discusses this meaning in his section below.

not be just psychologists. It is my opinion also that physics and metaphysical philosophy should walk hand in hand into the sunset (or the sunrise) together.

Physics and philosophy need each other—physics needs philosophy to interpret its findings and metaphysical speculation needs physics to ground it in reality. Metaphysical speculation on its own, in my opinion, can go a certain distance but no further—to really travel it needs the information provided by physical science. It is all very well to make statements and assertions (or hypotheses) about reality—but physics can test some of these and see how well they really apply in the universe we observe.

Firstly some comments about the validity of the concept of Omni-interconnectionism as presented in the paper. According to the Special Theory of Relativity (as I understand it) not all events can affect other events in the universe.

The Editor hypothesises in his paper that

. . . it is hypothesised that that event has influence on all other events in the universe, no matter how small or technically unmeasurable. . . . The principle of omni-interconnectionism states that all (omni) events are in some causal sense ‘inter-connected’ with each other, no matter how weak that inter-connection is. Thus we are led to conceive of a universe where each part to some degree affects every other part. (p. 60)

According to the Special Theory of Relativity (STR) events can only affect each other if they are what is known as “time-like separated events”. It is based on the “fact” (according to relativity) that influences cannot travel faster than the speed of light. For one event to affect another the second event must lie in the future light cone of the first. For the other event to affect the first it must lie in the past light cone of the first. (I will leave it up to the reader to look up information about the concept of light cones.) The events must lie in what is known as the “absolute future” or the “absolute past” of each other.

What we are talking about here is not space on its own or time on its own but a combination of the two called space-time. In STR, events are separated by what is called the “Interval”, but this is not a measure of time alone but a measure of the ‘distance’ in space-time. ‘Distance’ does not refer to a space distance alone but to a combination of space and time in space-time (if you like it is a 4-dimensional “distance” where time is considered as a 4th dimension).

Now it turns out that events which lie outside each other's light cones cannot affect each other because the Interval between them is such that neither lies in the "absolute future" or the "absolute past" of the other. Instead they exist in what is called the "absolute elsewhere" and they are what is known as "space-like separated events". Such events may be observed by different observers in relative motion to have different time-orders: i.e., for one observer event A may occur before event B and for another observer event B may occur before event A.

As I understand it, according to the conventional interpretation of STR, this means that there is no absolute universal time—it differs according to different observers. The important thing as far as causality is concerned is that for events to affect each other they have to lie within each other's light cones—if they are outside each other's light cones they are in the great "absolute elsewhere" and cannot affect each other because the Interval between them is such that there is no pathway for any influence travelling at light speed or less between them—they cannot be connected to each other.

There is another complication. STR does not actually forbid faster-than-light travel. What it says is that nothing can be accelerated through the light speed barrier. It is possible that entities can travel faster than light but in that case they cannot decelerate to a speed slower than light-speed. Tachyons are hypothetical particles which travel faster than light. The catch is (as I understand it) that these two worlds (one slower-than-light speed and one faster-than-light speed) never connect and cannot affect each other. However I am shaky on this, so do your own research.

There is also a thing called quantum entanglement in which certain quantum properties remain correlated across distances which forbid the possibility of causal influences between them that are not faster than light (or so it appears). It is controversial and the implications in terms of causality are a subject of hot debate, I believe.

So the contention that all events in the universe affect all other events is at least debatable in terms of STR. However STR is not written in stone and is probably destined to be qualified or modified when a new, more fundamental theory comes along. The searched-for theory that unites the General Theory of Relativity and quantum mechanics may do that. Also whether everything in the universe is connected in some other sense rather than by events affecting each other is another question again.

Secondly, causality itself is not a firmly defined concept. At the quantum level there are multiple possible outcomes from the one event—we observe the probabilities of the different outcomes but cannot predict the actual specific outcome with certainty. Also some quantum events are said to be spontaneous and without a cause (random quantum fluctuations)

Therefore, is there room for saying that some events just “are”? The universe just “is”? Does everything have to have a “cause”? What is a “cause”?

This brings me to synchronicity. What is the “cause of a Higher Order” that the Editor talks about? Is this meant to be a causal influence of some kind operating like other causal influences in the universe? Or is it an arrangement of events in the universe that are simply created that way by a Higher Order and that is meant to be the ‘cause’? The latter could be said to be a case of the universe just ‘being’?

Personally, as you will see from my article in the December 2004 issue of the *Australian Journal of Parapsychology*, I don’t have any difficulty with the idea of the universe “just being”. I don’t see a necessity for causality to rule with an iron fist, especially when we are talking about time itself as part of the universe. In fact since causality is something which is a consequence of time itself, or at least operates within time, perhaps it has no relevance when we look at the larger picture and attempt to go beyond the boundaries of time. Causality may be something we observe which is a consequence of our viewpoint—perhaps it is not fundamental.

My other comment about synchronicity is that I thought Jung’s idea of it (but I am no expert on Jung—Lance Storm may want to comment) was that synchronicity operated in response to the activation of an archetype within the unconscious mind of the target of the synchronicity—in other words it was to do with a psychological process in the individual. Not caused by the individual but with a purpose of achieving psychological integration in the person? In other words the synchronicity had some personal relevance to the recipient in conjunction with their psychological/spiritual development.

It is like a union between the subjective inner world and the objective outer world. This would fit with what the Editor says in his paper.

But the question for me is—is the universe being arranged in this purposeful fashion just a consequence of the way things “are”—the universe just “is” arranged this way?

Because presumably events in the universe still appear to have their physical causes.

For example, if the patient dreamed of a scarab beetle and just as she mentioned this to Jung a scarab beetle flew in the window (and this was of psychological importance to them as a metaphor of their own inner process of integration) presumably the scarab beetle’s progress was all following the laws of cause and effect and there was a perfectly rational explanation of why it flew in the window at that time—it was simply the juxtaposition of these events separately caused by normal processes of

cause and effect which was unusual. Is this juxtaposition just a consequence of the way the universe “is”?

These are my comments on parts of the Editor’s paper.

I want to take issue with a statement by Dick Richardson in the last paragraph of his email: “Empirical material science. . .can only reach material energy—not conscious energy.” But since this is off-topic from the Editor’s paper I will do this separately in a later communication.

Editor’s response to Colin Mitchell: If Colin is correct, then there seems to be no place for omni-interconnectionism. However, we do not know whether he is correct. The “Higher Order” that I referred to was a neutral designation for “God”, whom I regard as operating according to “the Artifex Principle” of design and planfulness.

COMMENTS ON OMNI-INTERCONNECTIONISM

BY MIKELE BARRETT-WOODBRIDGE

The main comment that occurs to me relates to the comments made by Colin, namely, that it is important to define the type of system within which the “causal” event occurs. I would think that interconnections could only occur within a defined closed system or an infinitely open system, but not between two closed systems. One problem is: How do we know whether any given system is open or closed, given the limits of our perception? Given our current limitations of being and knowledge, we have no way of determining whether we exist in a closed system or an infinitely open system. If we exist in an infinitely open system, then omni-interconnectionism would be possible.

FURTHER COMMENTS ON OMNI-INTERCONNECTIONISM, INTER ALIA

BY COLIN MITCHELL

I wouldn’t say positively that the present state of physics suggests that omni-interconnectionism is false; that’s too strong. It depends on what sort of connectionism you are looking for perhaps. Although it may be true

that in the present universe there are regions of the universe that are disconnected from each other, when it was all together at one point or in one small region of space at the Big Bang you could presumably say it was all connected at that time. If everything was together at one time then perhaps you can say that the universe is all inter-connected by virtue of the fact that it had a common origin and reflects, in its state now, that common origin.

Cause and effect are creatures of time, so if you are looking for a connection in terms of cause and effect then perhaps you could say that the whole universe is connected through a chain of cause and effect leading back to the past (to the original cause or event) even though in the present universe there are regions which cannot now affect each other through cause and effect initiated now. Effect is always delayed through time so there is no such thing as INSTANT connectionism if you are talking about cause and effect anyway. But, in addition, it is my understanding that in today's universe the Special Theory of Relativity shows that there are regions which can now NEVER affect each other no matter how long you wait (I think this is because there is no path between them through space-time which can be traversed by anything travelling at or below the speed of light. I do not fully understand this myself. I think it might be due to the expansion of the universe—the universe is expanding because space itself is growing and for distant objects the space between them may be growing at such a rate that no signal can travel fast enough to connect them. We need a physicist / cosmologist / astronomer to enlighten us . . .HEEEELP!).

One more thing—the above is a simplified picture assuming that you can trace time back right to the initial event. In reality, quantum physicists talk about the creation of time, and I think the prevailing view is that space and time were initially linked indistinguishably—time was just a dimension of space—and then it separated out and became more and more noticeable as distinct from the other space-dimensions. And all this without there being a “higher time” or “meta-time” as suggested in the language I used in the former sentence! Very difficult to conceptualise or visualise. But I think you can probably say that some quantum events were correlated together at the time of the Big Bang. So does that mean that some quantum properties are still correlated now, even though they may be separated from each other in regions which sub-light-speed causation cannot bridge? We need a quantum physicist to help us.

So the upshot is I think that one needs to clarify in what sense the universe is hypothesised to be connected. I would say it probably IS all connected in some sense—but that this does not mean that the connection is necessarily available at any one particular point of time. Time seems to be the problem. Even though perhaps you could say that the universe is

connected by virtue of the fact that it is all one structure of space-time (which quantum physicists would disagree with because space and probably time at the quantum level have a discontinuous structure) you can say there are regions of the universe that are not now connected in terms of cause and effect initiated now. But in the past they may have been connected and in the future they may be connected. What sort of connection do you want?

Also I am not sure that the Editor's initial statement "The designation of what is to count as one single event is arbitrary. . ." is true at the quantum level. At the quantum level I think there are events which are discrete events which cannot be broken down into smaller events. That is the idea of "quantum"—instead of a continuous structure which can be subdivided indefinitely we get to a point where there is a basic unit—a "quantum" of something which is the basic unit. Things jump in energy level straight from one level to another and that event cannot be subdivided further. These are not arbitrary but definite discrete events.

Mikele's comments seem valid to me. But I am not sure how to apply them to a relativistic universe.

OMNI-INTERCONNECTIONISM: A VIEW ON CONNECTIONISM

BY DOMINIC GILL

The meaning of "omni-interconnectionism" is, simply, that "all things are interconnected." It does not necessarily state *how* "all things interconnect: although it would seem reasonable that those professing a belief in omni-interconnectionism should attempt to put forward a "general theory" of how all things interconnect, and also, at times, suggest specific dynamics as to how certain things may interconnect with other things in the context and setting of the omni-interconnectionist model.

The onus of proof implied above should apply equally to conventional sciences as it does to omni-interconnectionists. For indeed, science, when it is all boiled down, simply investigates how things relate, or how they go together, or (metaphorically speaking), it is a study into the glue that binds things together. The omni-interconnectionist model is attempting to do the same. However, it differs in two fundamental respects:

1. It assumes that all things are connected, whereas science does not.
2. It attempts to study the issue of "connectivity itself", whereas science tends to focus on the connections themselves.

Science, it seems, works on many themes—as if working on a hybrid of models—insofar as how it considers the universe to be connected, and, to what *degree* it is “interconnected”. In its particular focus, it tends to suggest that things are connected via “matter”. Physics adds to the issue of connectivity with the idea of things being connected via “energy”. It also suggests that matter/energy and space are connected via a thing called “time”. Yet regardless of the specifics of connections, science nonetheless tends to work consistently on the assumption that not all things are connected to all else.

It would seem—to me—that science has *no* absolute theory about reality, although many would perhaps disagree with this statement. Omni-interconnectionists, on the other hand, have at least a solid platform and a statement to make about connectivity: they say, “All things are interconnected.” Their challenge is to explain the “how”. In doing so the omni-interconnectionist must present such a wide-ranging theory as to leave no doubt that things, no thing?—no one unit—is separated from all else as science would have us believe. There is no doubt that this is a daunting task.

Under the umbrella of the term “omni-interconnectionism”, this Open Forum will be discussing what I see as a “general theory of reality”, perhaps an even larger theory than is arguably the largest connective theory in science, namely, Einstein’s general theory of relativity. The hypothesis of omni-interconnectionism stares straight down the barrel at the largest questions known to humanity: How am I connected to the universe? How does reality work? It is a study of the fundamentals of reality. The omni-interconnectionist hypothesis says, “All is connected, and there are no exceptions.”

Even considering the magnitude and ramifications of the statement above, the essence and meaning of “omni-interconnectionism” however are not new ones: the idea that “all things are interconnected” is quite old. For under the umbrella concept of God (and gods), humankind has been entertaining the possibility that all is interconnected since time immemorial. Omni-interconnectionism is simply an extension of this kind of thinking, if not merely with a more scientific bent.

We could say that the question “How do things connect?” is as large a philosophical question as the other classic philosophical questions, such as: Why are we here? Where are we going? And what does it all mean? Or perhaps to the more humorously inclined or disturbed philosophers amongst us we might add, “And what does it matter, anyway?!!”

Science (including many other schools of thought) generally asserts—through various logics and theories—that things are connected this way, or in that way, and perhaps, even, in this strange kind of way (often the expressions of psychics and quantum physics), but few schools of thought actually overtly and blatantly express that “all is connected”, and then attempt to pursue the “dynamics of connections” from there.

Of all the sciences, however, psychology, quantum mechanics (and especially parapsychology) tend to make inferences that “perhaps, all is connected!” Often this may be done through the very raising of the concept of “mind”, or “the universal mind”, or the spirit or soul or consciousness, or by the suggestion that there is some unifying intelligent force within the universe, or in ideas that place “the individual” as being at the centre of the universe. Whatever angle, it is an attempt to bring together in logic “all to all.”

Alfred North Whitehead (1938) writes:

Connectedness is of the essence of all things of all types. It is of the essence of types, that they can be connected. Abstraction from connectedness involves the omission of an essential factor in the fact considered. No fact is merely itself. (p. 13)

If we consider the paragraph above to be true, could it be the case that science—in its fundamental premise that not all things are connected to all other things—is actually in the business of omitting the “essential factors” in what Whitehead calls “fact consideration”?

Science’s general dismissal of the idea that all things are interconnected could be placing itself in a position of *not being able* to perceive what Whitehead calls “the essence of all things of all types”. If Whitehead is right, could science be making a crucial and fundamental mistake?—a kind and type of mistake that *is* seriously affecting all of its other reasoning? Could science, by operating using such a flawed concept as “not all things relate”, be making itself virtually unable to find the “essence of all things”, that is, its interconnectiveness? I personally tend to think so. The connective nature of just one *thing*, one *unit*, one *object*, is at the very heart of the quality or “personality” of that thing. Science, then, in my view, is ignoring the fundamental aspect of all things—their total interconnectiveness with all other things.

Some months ago I was writing to our Editor, expressing my many views on this and that. At some time in our discussions, the Editor wrote back saying that the concept I was really talking about could be termed “omni-interconnectionism”. It was from this discussion that he decided to conduct an Open Forum on the issue—I think a wise decision, because as it

turns out, the ramifications of thinking about “how the universe is interconnected” are huge.

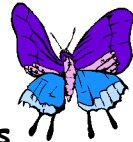
Indeed, from a parapsychological point of view, if it can be argued or even seen that **all is interconnected**, this one point alone would most certainly throw considerable light on the entire field of paranormal phenomena.

When the Editor wrote to me about this new term “omni-interconnectionism”, he was referring in part to a small poem I had sent him which, to me, sums up my thoughts on “synchronicity” but also simultaneously on the subject of omni-interconnectionism. And so I leave you with this little poem and the not-so-little question, could this possibly be true?

REFERENCE

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Synchronistic



**When the butterfly flaps its wings,
the whole universe sings.**



Or is it the other way around?

**The butterfly flaps its wings
because it hears the song of the universe.**

COMMENTS ON OMNI-INTERCONNECTIONISM, CULTURAL
RELATIVISM AND OMNIVENTION

BY LANCE STORM

Note that the concept of an interconnectedness between all things is an idea common in many philosophies and even appears in Buddhism and Christianity—I'm sure I've heard it mentioned of Roman Catholicism. The alchemical *Unus Mundus*, of which Jung writes, encapsulates those ideas also. This is where synchronicity comes in. Alchemically and psychologically, when a person is at one with themselves, they should feel at one with the world. The "World" in ancient times was what we now call the Universe. It was the canopy of the sky and stars above (Heaven), and the Earth below.

The Editor's sexual motif may be restricted socio-culturally. For example, during the sexual climax, Japanese people say "Iku!" or "I'm going!"

Also, some people don't go "Ohh!" during orgasm. They just grunt, groan and moan, or make no noise at all.

Editor's response to Lance Storm: First of all, I was not claiming originality for the *idea* of omni-interconnectionism, just inventing a term that would perhaps facilitate discussion of the notion. Koestler (1972) quotes with approval Whitehead's statements that "The modern point of view is expressed in terms of energy, activity and the vibratory differentiations of space-time. Any local agitation shakes the whole universe. The distant effects are minute, but they are there... There is no possibility of a detached, self-contained existence." (p. 110) Koestler further down on p. 110 speaks of "the inarticulate idea of the 'sympathy of all things', of their tendency towards fundamental unity. . .", and speaks of the notion occurring right back to ancient times.

It is thus relevant that if omni-interconnectionism proves *false* (as possibly suggested by the present state of physics) then the use of the concept in the "many philosophies" that Dr. Storm mentions may need to be re-visited.

On the other hand, his comments about the "I'm coming!" event are very important. It would be of anthropological interest to discover how "I am orgasming" is translated in different cultures. It is interesting that in Latin the word to reach sexual climax was not "venire" ("to come") but

“patrare” (“to accomplish [it]”: see Adams [1982, pp. 142-143.]) Regardless of that possible problem, I suppose that I am still positing some sort of link between enlightenment experiences and experiences of orgasm. The definition, “All coming together as One” was of course *not* intended to be sexual, as in some great universal (All = everyone) simultaneous orgasming (although that meaning is available to those who like plays on words), but rather “All things being seen to be related or being realised as parts of the Unity that is the Universe.”

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Koestler, A. (1972). *The roots of coincidence*. London: Picador.

COMMENTS ON MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND SEXUAL ORGASM

BY DICK RICHARDSON

PART 1

With regard to such things as instantaneous action at a distance and synchronicities then mystical experience reveals (for what it is worth to consensus society and their understanding of things) that things are not joined up in the space-time fabric, but rather below it. I have written about it in some little detail. But of course it cannot be proved to be so.

As for the analogy between the mystical reunion event and that of a sexual orgasm then I think this detracts from the profundity of mystical experience and gives no reasonable likeness of such to an interested reader. Oh, by the way, one does not learn anything in a sexual orgasm.

My intention at this point is simply for food for reflective thought by academics (of which I am not one, I hasten to add).

“I think that it is finally time that all of us who are interested in mysticism to be connected with each other” Walter F. Daniel, Jr.

I would imagine that each generation of mystics has been saying the same thing since we lived in caves: and certainly since the advent of faster communication. But each generation is only here for a short while,

and evolution does not work as fast as we do whilst here. Good intentions are indeed good intentions, but the unfolding of things moves on in its own sweet way. And I would ask as to who defines a mystic and mystical experience? And by what and who's criteria?

I have seen many definitions of mystic experience in my time, and predominantly from folk who have never had one. Thus, I simply offer this as food for thought, but there are many kinds of anomalous experience which do not fall into the category of mystical—unless of course folk wish to use that term for any kind of cognitive event which they do not understand within the existing paradigm of so said “understanding”. I have heard people call the vision of seeing a “ghost” a mystical experience. But this is as far removed from a mystical experience as is from Hitler being the epitome of good will to all humankind. But ignorance is bliss is it not?

However, and be all that as it in fact IS, then if academic psychology is going to use that term for very common psychic experiences then what term will they use for that which was once called mystical experience? I understand that some have been calling it “Transpersonal Psychology” for some years (I have met and known them too). However, it would seem to me that they are making a great error and doing Joe public no favour (and especially so when reading the experiences that go under that heading—standard, or common, psychic experiences). “Trans” can be taken to mean beyond the person, or across all human minds. It is axiomatic that not all people have mystical experience (even though about 90% of them have at least one psychic experience during their lives—and some many). However, if it is taken to mean beyond the person then I would make the suggestion that they alter it to meaning beyond the personality—for it is the person that experienced it. How could an experience be experienced beyond the person that was experiencing it—one has to keep a modicum of common sense here as well as the facts of mystical experience—even in academia. Indeed mystical experience (at its deepest level) reveals what the PERSON IS. Psychic experiences do not.

I encourage all your efforts Gentlemen and Ladies, and have been doing so for over forty years, for it is high time that psychology grew up and got real. But I would suggest you read far and wide (and preferably experience far and wide) before telling Joe public what mystical experience is all about and what it reveals, and how. There is an old and wise saying . . . “A little learning is a dangerous thing”. I would add a rider to that however. . . . No learning is a dangerous thing unless a little learning is assumed to be much learning—and assumption is NOT a good travelling companion.

Sincere best wishes to you all, and may you indeed get a message across to Joe public which will help to relieve the stranglehold by Priestcraft

upon the gullible for reasons of power politics. Empirical material science can never do this, for they can only reach material energy—not conscious energy. The mystics cannot do this—for they are sent by the devil obviously; and the gullible and insecure believe anything, for it saves them thinking. T’is a sad and backward little world Gentleman—but hope springs eternal.

PART 2

I have given thought to your request for a few paragraphs appertaining to the analogy between the Mystical Reunion Event and that of a sexual orgasm—having fortunately or otherwise known both of them.

I will fully understand if you choose not to make use of it in the academic journal however, but I have to remain true to myself and the experience and its effects. There is no way that I can sell either down the river simply to accommodate an analogy—academic or otherwise. But however, here goes . . .

I can indeed understand as to why some writers might make the analogy of a sexual orgasm with that which for millennia has been called the Mystical Reunion Event. For one could use the expression “WOW” to both of them. But there the likeness ends.

I am not familiar with all the mental, chemical and physical dynamics which manifest the feeling of satisfaction, or “bliss” as some might call it, in a sexual orgasm. But it certainly seems to be some kind of carrot and donkey scenario and the effect for the encouragement of procreation—and I have no problems or argument with that. The effect is that it makes people feel happy whilst at the same time helping to keep the species going in the physical world. But the Mystical Reunion Event is more inclined to make people weep with humility, awe and wonder. It is not about happiness or achievement. And there really is no correlation with a sexual orgasm.

It is true that many people have (and still do) write about mystical experience who openly (and rightly) admit that they have never known it personally; and they can indeed use words and analogies which other writers might come to pick upon to use at a latter date. And that is unfortunate both for the truth of the event and the exegesis of what is probably the most profound and revealing spiritual/metaphysical experience known to Man.

I have read the expressions as likened to “sex with God” or a “cosmic union with the all”. But not a one of these writers went on to describe it in detail, what it looked like, what it felt like, what it revealed, what its implications were, and what later effect it had on them—let alone

the experiential journey to it—and how they got back here again. And one can draw one's own conclusions from that. Such books are common and written for money or notoriety.

There are of course two very different kinds of mystical experience, viz., the Extroverted type and the Introverted type—think of our incarnate being as having antennae facing in two opposite directions—inward and outward. And there are different levels of each type. The Mystical Reunion Event is at the base of the Introverted type, and in which there is no memory or knowledge of an outside world—let alone sexual orgasms. And you will find nothing in socio-political Religions which meets with the truth of this event either.

Moreover, some young people might take the analogy of an orgasm to be some kind of fun and hence try to induce such event by messing with their mind in some way, drugs or sensory deprivation, etc., and this is not a good idea and very dangerous indeed. Living with that degree of mystical experience is not fun, and not something to mess with. Sometimes I have wished that I had never encountered it, for life was simple in those days. I do not really mean that in a deep sense, and I am very grateful for having known it—but its profundity is not as simple to live with in this world as some people (who maybe have something to sell or gain) might lead one to believe. This is a rare event in terms of per capita of human population—as yet anyway. And maybe, for the time being what it is at the moment, it had best stay that way. Let them enjoy their sexual orgasms a while longer, and take it one day at a time. Evolution of the human incarnate mind has not stopped yet, even though it might seem like it at times!

I truly encourage all open debate upon the human mind and its relationship to absolute objectivity, and of course the deep inner mysteries of the mind itself. But one should keep both sex and mystical experience in their own slots, just as with politics and the various religions which this world loves to believe in—just as one keeps theories separate from known facts.

COMMENTS ON MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE, SEXUAL ORGASM, AND OMNIVENTION

BY RHEA A. WHITE

The comment that comes to mind is that people have been having orgasms through countless centuries and it does not seem to have promoted

peace. In fact, wanting to share orgasms with a specific person has sometimes led to jealousy and even murder. As a species, we seem to be best at thinking of more diabolical ways to kill or maim each other! If the military in Iraq and Afghanistan achieved orgasm in torturing and fornicating with prisoners, it didn't seem to lead to peace or connectedness. I hope there is an interconnectedness engineered from on high in the events of this world today, but it seems to me more likely that the recent weather assaults in the Far East and in California are instances of Earth rebelling against the way in which humans are treating Earth, other life forms, and other humans.

However, the play on words with the two Omnis I like very much. It's Vintage Michael!

Nevertheless, you can quote me on orgasm being a potential Exceptional Human Experience (EHE). If my memory is right, the long list of experiences that are potential EEs/EHEs on the EHE network's website at www.ehe.org lists it. Jenny Wade of the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology has written a whole book about sex and spirituality/enlightenment.

COMMENTS ON ORGASM AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

BY KATHLEEN LEACH-ROSS

The way people experience the cosmic is fascinating in its diversity. If, when younger, we become comfortable with our intuition, we may avoid censoring our psychic experiences. However, society often intervenes, and it's hard not to become self-conscious when they occur. Many people refuse to acknowledge those instances of knowing, psychic awareness, warnings, soul connections and intuitive information. There is an old Wiccan saying, "One should never turn aside from the knowing, no matter whence it comes." Perhaps there will be a time when what is now considered metaphysical is accepted as a normal part of the life experience.

There's a story that fathers are pleased when a baby's first sound is "da", but what it really means (for Hindus) is "soul" and speaks of a greater knowledge not yet lost. William Blake spoke of children coming into life "trailing clouds of glory". There are so many things that we just sense, of which we have a natural awareness. Since all things are knowable, if a person is quiet, receptive and contemplative, wouldn't all knowledge come? So many current disciplines are just repackaging ancient practices. If Reiki

sounds too esoteric, rename it Healing Touch and it becomes a medical skill.

The fact that we are spiritual beings in a physical body is at the base of many ontological discussions, with the body usually being dismissed as inferior. But our body is often the tool with which we touch the spiritual. Sex and sensuality have been the focus of much discussion, most of it pejorative, and guilt is the Greek Chorus to that discussion. Orgasm is indeed grounding, and raises our Kundalini and God/Goddess energy. But more germane, it is one of the times, along with meditation and trance work, when we can lose sense of time and place. It opens the portal to higher consciousness by engaging the physical body. Similarly, during hypnotherapy, the physical body is put in a safe place, so the subconscious can travel without concern for the body's well-being. When intense orgasm occurs, the body steps aside, and one can experience being outside of physical awareness. Is it any wonder why so many religions relying on obedience and unquestioning faith, have tried so hard to eliminate mystical sexual experiences? And do we doubt that the mystical experiences within the confines of dogma do not have a sexual component?

When we can use our body as a conduit for knowledge on the physical and spiritual planes, we have a greater chance of capturing those elusive moments when we glimpse another reality. Limitations, like concepts of linear time, are human constructs. Perhaps our quest is to take that leap of faith that other realities really do exist. Perhaps Wordsworth was right when he said, “. . . That we feed this mind of ours in a wise passiveness”. But no good Romantic or Existentialist would ever deny the great gift of feeling and sensuality.

COMMENTS ON ORGASM AND MYSTICISM

BY COLIN MITCHELL

In relation to orgasm and mysticism I note that there is such a thing as tantric yoga. I know next to nothing about it but I think it involves sublimating sexual energy and using it to alter consciousness. Either the sex act is delayed or never consummated and the energy is used instead to produce a mental effect or raise consciousness. Whether the experience qualifies as mystical I don't know.

Actually, one tantric teacher I witnessed was just teaching breathing techniques, but others do use sexual energy with a partner.

SEXUALITY AND EXCEPTIONAL HUMAN EXPERIENCES

BY JAMES HOURAN

INTRODUCTION

It may seem questionable *prima facie* to suggest a link between sexuality and exceptional human experiences, but in this brief essay I want to review qualitative and quantitative evidence that leads me to believe such a relationship is downright obvious and begging for additional study.

I was first introduced to the term “intellectual orgasm” by my graduate studies mentor and supervisor, Ronald Havens, Ph.D. Havens was a disciple of the brilliant Milton H. Erickson. Erickson was one of the most creative, dynamic and effective hypnotherapists and psychotherapists of the twentieth century. He used unconventional techniques with remarkable success. He was the founder of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and was a life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. He received his M.D. from the University of Wisconsin and was founding editor of the *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*. Havens and I would spend many classroom breaks discussing Erickson’s approaches to cases. I was fascinated with Erickson because it seemed he had uncanny insight into what *a-ha* experience a particular client needed in order to progress in therapy. A-ha experiences—periods of sudden cognitive or emotional comprehension—might be deemed Exceptional Human Experiences (EHEs). I’ve never had any indisputable paranormal or mystical experiences myself, but throughout my graduate studies I regularly experienced a-ha experiences. Havens and I referred to them as intellectual orgasms—because the satisfaction derived from my sudden “knowings” in my studies was remarkable and transcended mere academic fulfilment. That metaphorical reference (so fitting to use given our admiration for Erickson!) also led me to wonder if sexuality was consistently related to EHEs.

SEXUALITY IN RELATION TO SELECTED EHEs

From a historical and literary standpoint, sexuality has been linked with anomalous experiences (for a review, see: Chambers, 1999) as well as with regular practitioners of EHEs. One of the oldest of these practitioners is the shaman. As noted by Kottack (1987), *shaman* is the general term encompassing curers (“witch doctors”), mediums, spiritualists, astrologers, palm readers, and other diviners. Unlike priests, shamans are not full-time religious officials but part-time religious figures who mediate between

ordinary people and religious entities. Although they are only part-time specialists, shamans often set themselves apart symbolically from ordinary people by assuming a different sexual role. One way of doing this is by transvestism. In more complex societies, priests, nuns, and vestal virgins do something similar by taking vows of celibacy. Male shamans may copy the dress, speech, hair arrangements, and general life-styles of women. Such shamans may also take other men as husbands and as sexual partners, and were respected for their supernatural and curative expertise. Female shamans could join a fourth gender, copying men and taking wives. Are these practices purely symbolic or is the sexuality of many shamans less rigid than the general population? I speak of rigidity here because loose mental and social “boundaries” such as discussed by Hartmann (1991) and echoed in the research on transliminality by me and Michael Thalbourne would seem to coincide with shamanism and kindred practitioners. Thalbourne (1997) did not find a significant correlation between believers in the paranormal and sexual orientation, but this research focused on a sample from the general sample of an industrialised society. It would be interesting to approach, quantitatively, the same question in a sample of shamans.

Of course, specialised practitioners are not the only ones whose EHEs have had sexual components. Musgrave and Houran (2000) have documented striking parallels between the phenomenological features of the legendary “Flight to the Witches’ Sabbat” and experiences of UFO/alien abductions. It might well be that these two disparate episodes actually refer to the same core experience. Both of these experiences, which reportedly occurred to individuals from the general population, often contained sexual experiences—albeit not always pleasant ones. To be sure, “negative expressions” of sexuality have also been noted in other types of spontaneous EHEs. Poltergeist outbreaks have long been known to be associated with the presence of a living agent—many times an individual within the stage of blossoming adolescence. On a more explicitly sexual level, Hufford (1982) discussed the phenomenon of sleep paralysis and how this anomalous experience is often interpreted by experiencers as a physical attack (sometimes including sexual activity) by a supernatural entity (cf., Evans, 2001). Curiously, belief in the paranormal is also significantly associated with the tendency to express psychological distress through one’s physiology, such as seen in hypochondriasis and somatisation (Houran, Kumar, Thalbourne, & Lavertue, 2002). In addition, Thalbourne, Houran, Alias, & Brugger (2001) found that higher levels of transliminality are associated with cross-modal perception like *physiognomic perception*, entailing the fusion of perception and feeling; *synesthesia*, entailing the fusion of sensory modalities; and *eidetic imagery*, entailing the fusion of

imagery and perception (i.e., structural eidetic imagery). Thus, it should not be surprising that some individuals have spontaneous EHEs with sexual overtones within waking experience as well. For example, a report by Sabatini, Gaud, and Guillemarre-Alzieu (1987) detailed a woman who was hospitalised after a suicide attempt prompted by an argument with her lover. In telling the attending psychiatrists her life history, the woman described her place of employment as haunted by a presence connected with an old family secret.

Aside from historical references and anecdotes, there is quantitative evidence that sexual activity is arguably an altered state of consciousness—one in fact that according to Wade (2004) transports one in twelve people into a mystical state. According to Wade, transcendent sex is to sex what near-death experiences are to dying. It takes you beyond the limitations of yourself and the everyday world into spiritual experiences so profound that you will be transformed. Sex can trigger episodes identical to the highest spiritual states of shamanism, yoga, Buddhism, and mystical Christianity, Judaism and Islam, including:

- shapeshifting
- being possessed by or channelling animals, plants and supernatural entities
- seeing visions of divine avatars
- re-living past lives
- transcending the laws of physics with paranormal powers
- awakening to the enlightenment of nirvana; seeing the face of God

These experiences are so breathtakingly powerful that they can be destabilising. For people who know how to integrate them, though, they are often the most transformative, healing events of their lives. Research has shown that like other spiritual events, transcendent sex can result in:

- becoming whole and shedding a lifetime of shame and guilt about sexuality
- healing from sexual trauma and abuse to enjoy making love
- acquiring paranormal abilities for healing or psychic gifts
- creating healthier lives, especially leaving dysfunctional relationships and careers
- becoming a spiritual seeker after a lifetime of atheism, doubt, or a religion that did not fit

CONCLUSION

This essay is far from complete, but I hope it justifies my conclusion that sexuality is an aspect of EHEs. How funny that Michael Thalbourne should invite this essay, given that my current status is to conduct research on sex, love, and attachment (see, e.g., Lange, Jerabek, & Houran, 2005)! My current research program seems to have surprised some people in the field. An amusing example recently came from the UK newsletter, *Skeptical Digest*:

Houran recently surfaced in—of all things—a press release promoting an Internet dating site True.com (formerly TrueBeginnings.com), which has taken to publicizing itself via bits of media-friendly research. In one such exercise, Dr. James Houran, director of psychological studies for True, found that many single people are depressed by St Valentine's Day—depending on whether or not they were given gifts. In another, he found that celebrity worship led to success in life as people strive to emulate the celebrities they admire. Most recently, Dr. Houran has examined the psychometric tests other dating sites claim will make sure-fire matches for their users and found them unscientific.

However, it is my hope to look into the issues raised above by studying the self-reported EHEs of online daters who have also completed psychological testing through my company. Extremely large sample sizes (> 100,000) are available to companies such as TRUE, and the psychological testing includes measures of attitudes and behaviours related to sexuality. The topic of sexuality and EHEs is a particularly appealing one, because it bridges mainstream science with parapsychology and transpersonal psychology. In this regard, future research might well afford valuable collaborations among specialists who benefit both areas. To this end, the construct of transliminality and the use of the *Revised Transliminality Scale* (Lange, Thalbourne, Houran, & Storm, 2000; Houran, Thalbourne, & Lange, 2003) could be an effective starting point for understanding the experience and manifestation of sexuality, as well as its expression through EHEs. And who knows. . .the investigators involved in this research might experience results firsthand via some important and invigorating intellectual orgasms!

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COMMENTS ON THE HYPOMANIC ORIGIN OF “OMNIVENTION”

BY THE EDITOR

I coined the term “omni-interconnectionism” sometime in November or December 2004. I have a better memory of coining “omniventon”. I was travelling on a tram from Adelaide to Glenelg to meet with Colin Mitchell and Robb Tilley on January 7th, 2005. I was definitely in an altered state of consciousness at the time: I was experiencing Kundalini (energy rushing up the spine), and I also had an apparition of a deceased female lecturer from my department, Inara Proske by name. I was aware that she was in some sense in my mind as a very vivid mental image, rather than being projected “out there” in the physical world. She was wearing her big smile, so familiar to me. Telepathically she told me that I was “on track”, of course literally as well as figuratively. She also, in my mind, placed a wreath of laurel on my head, which I could feel. At some point (I am not exactly sure precisely when) I thought up “omniventon” and the meaning “All coming together as One”. It struck me as a mind-blowing idea. Either just before or just after this event I became hypomanic (subclinical mania) and remained so for the next few days. It was manifested by (believe it or not) a sense of well-being, a feeling that one’s ideas are very important, and perhaps by over-productivity. Indeed I was working quite frantically on a paper about the use of a particular recreational drug in relation to sexual behaviour. Thinking it my scientific duty to do so, I was obsessed with getting at the truth and the minutest detail. Consequently I ended up with a paper that was probably too personal and too self-disclosing to be published. This paper came to the attention of my psychiatrist (he is on email), and we met on the Friday after the trip on the tram, i.e., a week later. He came to the conclusion that while I might have been hypomanic for a while, he could see no signs of mania now. I should mention that the day before, I had sent out an apology to all those people to whom I had sent copies of this second paper. The general reaction was not at all critical but quite accepting, and one person even mentioned that she found it honest, brave, and informative. Even so, my medication was increased, to be “on the safe side”, and I have had no more social inappropriateness. In late January my medication went back to the normal level. Again, no social inappropriateness.

The point of these autobiographical details is that some people might argue that because of its apparently pathological origin the concept of omniventon is not valid—it is merely a product of a disordered mind. Indeed, it might be argued, perhaps by Dick Richardson, that the mystical experience / orgasm connection was an example of what is called “over-inclusive” reasoning. However, Walter Daniel Jr. has some things to say about this argument in a section that follows.

If I were truly hypomanic on that fateful Friday, then so I was that afternoon and evening when I wrote the little paper on omni-interconnectionism and omnivention. Indeed I was so enthusiastic about it that the next day I sent the paper out by email to at least a dozen people. Once again it could be argued that the concepts in the paper are “merely” the productions of a feverish mind, but Walter Daniel’s arguments again stand against this view. The most that can be said for it is that the paper was in large part a concise list of *conclusions* rather than my usual reasoned text. This had the effect that assumptions went unstated. The virtue of this situation is that it left open a broad degree of opportunity for the commentators to explore the assumptions and implications of the brief paper.

I also want to mention while I have the reader’s attention that in the week before I saw my psychiatrist I had some more apparent paranormal experiences. Indeed, psychological research shows that people who report experience of hypomania or mania are more inclined to believe in the paranormal and to report paranormal experiences (Thalbourne, 2004a, 2004b; Thalbourne, Keogh & Crawley, 1999). Moreover, people who report manic experience are more likely to report mystical experience (Thalbourne, 1998; Thalbourne, Keogh & Crawley, 1999).

On Monday 10th of January, I was in our departmental office, where the Christmas decorations were being taken down, and glass-fronted prints of paintings were put back up. Suddenly there was a loud “crash”, as the Monet fell to the floor and smashed. This is relevant because at the meeting with Colin and Robb the previous Friday I had told them that one of the people in a recent interview study of mine claimed that on the same day that his mother died a painting came crashing down from the wall. Coincidence? Perhaps. Perhaps not. I claimed responsibility for the crash of the Monet, but the secretaries were, understandably, very sceptical about this claim!

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COMMENTS ON OMNI-INTERCONNECTIONISM AND OMNIVENTION

BY ROBB TILLEY

Transpersonal Psychology pioneer Stanislav Grof provides an excellent example from his own life of synchronicity in action. He describes a “Karmic Triangle” resolved during an LSD session whilst working at the Psychiatric Research Center in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1967.

Grof met a woman called Monica and immediately felt a strong attraction and a sense of instant deep connection with her. He was rapidly drawn into a relationship and did not see any problem in the fact that she was considerably younger than himself. They had a very passionate and unusually stormy relationship. Monica’s moods swung from day to day and from one hour to the next. Waves of intense passion and affection alternated with episodes of aloofness, evasiveness and withdrawal, writes Grof.

In addition, Monica’s brother Wolfgang “hated me since the very first time we had met.” Wolfgang and Monica had an unusually strong relationship, seemingly incestuous, and Wolfgang was violently opposed to Grof, who was committed to making the relationship work.

The rollercoaster ride Grof was taking with Monica was baffling to him and he sought some insight into this sexual dynamic. In an effort to reach some clarity in this relationship, just as their difficulties were reaching their peak, Grof applied for a Therapeutic LSD session. Journeying in this altered state of consciousness, he relived many past-life situations with the “Karmic Triangle” of Monica, Wolfgang and himself repeating the same destructive behaviours toward each other time and time again.

Bringing conscious intention to resolve this impasse with its very powerful emotions, Grof triggered a psychic change in Monica, Wolfgang and in himself, (a multiple synchronicity) and ended the session “in a state of indescribable bliss and ecstatic rapture. I felt that even if I would not achieve anything else during the rest of my days, my life had been productive and successful. Resolution and release from one powerful Karmic pattern seemed a sufficient accomplishment for one lifetime!”

Simultaneously, while Grof was in session, Monica experienced “probably the worst time of my entire life” and Wolfgang’s attitude to Grof suddenly changed radically. “His hatred dissolved as if by magic” and he

decided to phone Grof and seek his psychiatric help with a psychosexual problem.

This must surely be an example of omni-interconnectionism. The higher causes of teleological consciousness, its goal-oriented and end-directed outcome benefited this triangle—both the people in it, and their mutual relationships. Grof goes on to tell us that “The tension and chaos disappeared from our interactions and neither of us [Grof and Monika] felt any compulsion to continue” Grof (1998, pp. 169-177).

To me it seems that in this instance, Grof was the cause of this synchronicity. The editor writes that the statement “I’m coming” may be said to be the process of being enlightened as to the direction to go in life. This made me laugh: Are sex workers effing the ineffable? Could this be a research project—“forays into carnal/cosmic consciousness”?

The Editor has a facility for creating new parapsychological terms. Watch out for the revised third edition of Michael Thalbourne’s *Glossary*.

For further information on psychosexual/spiritual transcendence, read Emma Bragdon (1990). Chapter 8 is devoted to sexual experiences and spiritual emergency.

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ON THE NESTED STRUCTURE OF “CAUSAL EVENTS” IN STUDYING EXCEPTIONAL HUMAN EXPERIENCE (EHE)

BY WALTER FREEMAN DANIEL, JR.

Rhea White coined the term “exceptional human experience (EHE)” in the 1990s as an umbrella term under which parapsychological, mystical, and other anomalous human experience (near-death experience, out-of-the-body experience [OBE], etc.) might fit.

Students taking Advanced Statistics generally laugh when they are given the following example of the logical fallacy *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* (after this, therefore because of this): “I have a headache. I take aspirin. The headache goes away. Therefore the headache was caused by lack of aspirin.” A philosophically naive bumper sticker states, “Physics makes the world go round.” Yet the world “goes round” in and of its own accord, and

did so long before the evolution of humans and their *construction* of a branch of scientific study called “physics.” In this regard, *all* of the constructs (e.g., “space,” “time,” “events,” “causality”) and “laws” of physics cannot be proven to exist “out there” apart from a construing mind; to assert that they do is to embrace naïve classical *realism* (Barbour, 1997), and to fail to understand Einsteinian relativity and quantum theory, both of which render such naïve realism absurd (Davies & Gribbin, 1992; Tegmark & Wheeler, 2001). The existential phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1907-1961) (1962, pp. viii–ix) states:

All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world, without which the *symbols* of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by *reawakening the basic experience* of the world of which science is the *second-order expression*. (emphasis mine)

When humans first acquired consciousness, they probably noticed that there was an asymmetric directionality in the manifestation of various phenomena (e.g., human life: pregnancy to birth to youth to senescence to death; a pebble thrown into a still pond: small, concentric circles form, followed by increasingly larger concentric circles). At first, humans perceived that these phenomena had a certain “existential thickness” to them that was *a-dimensional*. In the 17th century Galileo and Isaac Newton assumed that “mass,” “space,” and “time” were fundamental ontological entities because they could be used mathematically in conducting science (Barbour, 1997). Science at this time attempted to “prove” causality among “events” by examining the temporal and spatial inter-relationships among these “events.” The following classical Newtonian philosophical presuppositions became deeply engrained in the psyche of most people,¹ and were rarely challenged, and found their way into modern physics (Relativity Theory and Quantum Theory): 1) “Space,” “time,” “events,” and “causality” exist apart from a construing mind (naïve realism). 2) These constructs are fixed and immutable. 3) These variables have no phenomenological (experiential) depth to them (Melges, 1982; Clayton,

¹ Other cultures, such as the Hopi Indians in the desert Southwest of the United States, view time cyclically.

2004), and 4) An “event” possesses at most one temporal dimension (Tegmark, 1997); if it is treated abstractly, it possesses no spatial dimensions; if it is treated less abstractly, it may possess no more than three dimensions (Tegmark, 1997).

Yet considerable problems are created by this naïve conceptualisation of an “event” in dealing with EHEs. In discussing mystical experience, Jones (1993, p. 4) states:

William James describes the process by which the concepts we invent to cut the fluid continuum of perceptions and experiences into a useful order becomes ossified and takes on a life of its own that blinds us to the fact that it is our own construction. Concepts become a barrier between us and the dynamic, continuous reality we confront in perceiving.

Our Editor states:

The designation of what is to count as one single event is arbitrary: for each event may be part of another, or it may itself contain other events. The borders spoken of between one event and another are purely for the sake of convenience, and have no ontological reality.

Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 411) is even more radical and states:

For, *looking at the things themselves* [i.e., in a Kantian sense],. . .the very notion of event has no place in the objective world. . .the “events” are shapes cut out by a finite observer from the spatio-temporal totality of the objective world. But on the other hand, if I consider the world itself, there is simply one indivisible and changeless being in it. Change presupposes a certain position which I take up and from which I see things in process before me: there are no events without someone to whom they happen and whose finite perspective is the basis of their individuality.

These quotations suggest that how we classify an “event” is arbitrary, and that there may be a certain amount of existential (a-dimensional) “thickness” that is being overlooked when we simplistically suggest that an “event” is “caused” by a particular variable.

Any discussion of EHEs in relation to “causal events” needs to address the concepts of “emergence” and the “nested” structure of “events.” Consider the following example. When I type the present sentence at my

usual 100 w.p.m. I do not notice successively striking the individual keys on the word processor. However, if I had slowed down while typing this sentence, I might have noticed (and even remembered) typing the letter “W” (now an “event”) nested in the word “While” (now an “event”), which itself is now nested (along with the other letters and words, etc.) within the composite “event” of having typed the whole sentence. The typing of this sentence will in turn become nested within a paragraph (soon to become an “event”), which will in turn be nested in this entire essay (eventually to become an “event” despite my many breaks in writing it.). This example demonstrates that, through an act of free will, I paid attention to the letter “W” (etc.), thereby giving it an ontological existence with existential thickness in an a-dimensional universe, because we cannot say with any certainty which direction in “space” or “time” this nested structure took place.

An “emergent” phenomenon (simply put) is one where “the whole is more than the sum of its component parts.” Conversely, one might have the case where “the whole is equal to the sum of its component parts,” a stance on which reductionistic science has operated for some time (Davies, 1983; Barbour, 1997; Ellis, 2005). An example of an emergent phenomenon is human consciousness, which is more than the sum collection of all of the neurochemical and neurophysiological operations of the human brain (Davies, 1983; Daniel, 1996). Several points need to be made about emergentism. *First*, what is an emergent phenomenon today may fall to a reductionistic understanding tomorrow; this is the nature of science—an infinite exploration of nature, always able to revise itself. (Theology should be able to revise itself accordingly.) *Second*, top-down causality may exist by itself, bottom-up causality may exist by itself, or both may interact concurrently, or both may act in “Strange Loops,” as in M. C. Escher’s *Waterfall* painting where, if one follows the path of the water around the loop, at each stage the water behaves perfectly normally until suddenly (with a shock), one finds oneself back at the very beginning (at the top of all of the waterfalls). The theoretical mathematical physicist Paul Davies (1983, p. 96) states:

My belief is that the explanations of “emergent” phenomena in our brains—for instance, ideas, hopes, images, analogies, and finally consciousness and free will—are based on a kind of Strange Loop, an interaction between levels in which the top level reaches back down towards the bottom level and influences it, while at the same time being determined by the bottom level. The self comes into being the moment it has the power to reflect itself.

Third, the physical biochemist/theologian Arthur Peacocke (2001) prefers to talk of whole-part causation/interactions rather than top-down causation/interactions. It would seem that the former terminology avoids the danger of us reifying causality “out there” in some abstract spatial sense, which is the natural tendency if we talk about “top-down” or “bottom-up” causality. Furthermore, Peacocke (2001) philosophically embraces *Panentheism*² rather than *theism*. If God³ exists panentheistically in the Universe(s), then God, who created everything and is *in* everything *in* the Universe(s),⁴ can exert *causal influences* (which we presently cannot understand) in any particular part of the Universe(s) or on the whole Universe(s) instantaneously. In this regard, since God (who created time itself) can travel at the speed of light, faster than the speed of light, or instantaneously; God can alter, slow down, reverse, or halt time, all of which would dramatically alter the way humans understand the interconnectedness of the Universe(s).

Let us now examine eight increasingly complex phenomena that illustrate various issues pertaining to emergent phenomena, events, explanations, and omni-interconnectionism: (1) Consider water—understanding the gaseous and non-polar properties of hydrogen gas (H₂) and oxygen gas (O₂) (and their interactions) (bottom-up causal structures) does not allow us to predict the liquid and polar “self emerging” properties of water (H₂O) (top-down causality).⁵ (2) From 39°F (4°C) to 32°F (0°C), the density of water *decreases*, enabling ice to float, and fish to survive under the ice. This irregularity can be viewed both as a God-made miracle

² Panentheism asserts that God is everywhere and is in everything (in either an *a-dimensional* or *n-dimensional* sense), yet somehow (mysteriously) transcends His or Her Creation. Peacocke (2001) suggests that this panentheistic God is like the composer of a symphony, and that we humans are co-creators with God in the creation of this ongoing symphony (an unfinished concerto?).

³ God may exist in an apophatic (*via negativa*) fashion: we may not be able to make positive predications about the nature of God. Instead, God may be a non-entitative concept which is “beyond being and non-being” (the first negation), and beyond this first negation (the second negation—cf. Kierkegaard via Kangas, 1998).

⁴ This would include parallel universes, ensemble universes, and multiverses (Tegmark, 2003; Ellis, 2005).

⁵ Navier-Stokes mathematical equations are being discovered all the time to *model* water and other fluids.

(top-down or whole-part causality) or merely a natural anomaly (a-causal). (3) In an analytical chemistry class, my professor said, “For those of you who think that there is something spiritual or mystical about a rainbow, I’ve got news for you—it’s nothing but refracted light.” However, if a mother sees a rainbow after finding her daughter buried alive under the debris of a devastating earthquake, she is correct in saying the rainbow represented a promise from God (top-down or whole-part causality), even though the physical chemist can say a rainbow is “caused” by refracted light. 4) During the First Gulf War, a United States Air Force pilot was shot down over Iraq. After parachuting safely to the ground, he hid in some bushes for several days eating leaves and insects (Air Force survival skills), while Iraqi soldiers desperately searched for him. When a TV reporter asked him how he survived (bottom-up causality),⁶ he repeatedly said, “God was responsible for that, Sir.” (theistic top-down or whole-part causality). 5) A very small percentage of patients with temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) (“complex partial epilepsy”) experience “ecstatic seizures” of oneness with God, the universe, and all life. It is clear that these patients, when brought into the EEG lab, have demonstrable epileptiform EEG temporal lobe activity (Hansen & Brodtkorb, 2003). In one such patient, the source of the epilepsy was a brain tumor (Morgan, 1990). After removal of the tumor, this patient had no more ecstatic seizures. Although the theological substrate for his experiences might have been intact, the neurology of his brain could no longer support his visions (interaction of top-down/whole-part and bottom-up causality). In one study (Hansen & Brodtkorb, 2003), patients with ecstatic seizures deliberately did not take their anticonvulsant medications so that they could continue to have these pleasurable seizures. In this case, these patients’ free-will (an emergent property of consciousness) descended vertically to disobey the physician’s lower level (mundane) pharmacological orders.

The last three examples are more difficult to dissect: 6) Our Editor suggests that the inspiration for this Open Forum occurred during a brief hypomanic episode he was experiencing and this fact might be considered as negating the validity of his omni-interconnectionism and omnivention theses. However, these theses are not necessarily monolithic entities

⁶ It should be remembered that many delusional psychopaths have done terrible things, believing that “God told them to do so.” It is therefore a judgment call as to when to believe this assertion. Furthermore, some theistic scientists/theologians prefer to say that science answers questions “why” but that religion answers questions concerning “How” (e.g., St. Clair, 1993-1994).

negated by any hypomanic episode he might have been experiencing; the *a priori intentionality* (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Daniel, 1996) that led to these theses is not reducible to hypomania. Furthermore, the expression of this intentionality into his novel ideas concerning “events” and “causality” was probably only trivially related to his hypomanic episode, and might even have been Divinely inspired (top-down or whole-part causation). 7) Some psychologists, neurologists and psychiatrists (e.g., Landsborough, 1987) assert that the conversion experience of St. Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9: 1–9, 22: 6–11, 26: 13–18; I Cor. 9:1, 15: 8; Gal. 1: 15–16) was “nothing but” a complex partial seizure (i.e., an “ecstatic” TLE seizure) with auditory and visual hallucinations that secondarily generalised into a full-blown tonic-clonic (grand mal) seizure, which in turn was followed by postictal (ictal = seizure) blindness all the way to Damascus. (It has also been suggested that the religious experience[s] of the following people were “caused” by epilepsy: Ezekiel, Mohammed, St Birgitta of Sweden, Joan of Arc, St. Teresa of Avila, Swedenborg, Joseph Smith, Kierkegaard, and Dostoyevsky.) St. Paul may very well have had an ecstatic seizure that had neurological roots in epilepsy (bottom-up causality). However, God, through Christ, may have altered the zealous goal of Paul to persecute Christians in a top-down or whole-part fashion over and above St. Paul’s hypothetical case of temporal lobe epilepsy. 8) At Duke University Medical Center, a young adolescent male patient named John (he was from a small farming town, and had probably never even heard of an OBE and astral projection was a surgical candidate for a temporal lobectomy for uncontrolled seizures. As part of the neurosurgical work-up, he had surgically implanted depth electrodes, one in each hippocampus, and one in each amygdala. When the two hippocampi and the left amygdala were electrically stimulated (this was an attempt to trigger one of his seizures), nothing happened. However, when his right amygdala was electrically stimulated, John said, “Gee, Dr. M. [the attending neurologist], I had the feeling that I was out of my body and was a different person” (cf. Vuilleumier *et al.*, 1997). (Some of us observing the procedure wanted it repeated and the voltage increased, but Dr. M. would not do this for ethical reasons.) (The surgical decision was made to remove John’s right temporal lobe, including his right amygdala.)

How could John have had this OBE or astral projection (both of which constitute an “event”) in so short a period of electrical stimulation (0.25 seconds) followed by 1-2 seconds of epileptiform EEG after-discharge? Was his OBE/ astral projection “nothing but” impaired neurophysiological functioning (bottom-up causality), or was there some aspect of existence (downward causality) “nested” (perhaps in a “Strange Loop”) within John’s brain? Obviously, we will never be able to test

hypotheses concerning what happened to John. Nevertheless, this discussion of the nested structure of “causal events” may suggest phenomenological ways to investigate EHEs in the future. In agreement with Philip Clayton (2004; personal communication, April, 2005), it does seem that our metaphysics must be broad enough to allow us to study EHEs with altered temporal, spatial, and other dimensions. Let me conclude by agreeing with Colin Mitchell that, given the interesting problems put before us by Relativity and Quantum Theory, philosophers, physicists, cosmologists, psychologists, and theologians should join forces in examining parapsychological and other EHEs.

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SUMMARY DISCUSSION

BY THE EDITOR

The original, very brief, paper raised issues concerning approximately 13 distinct themes. In this summary discussion I will deal with each theme, but relatively independently.

How did the concept of omni-interconnectedness fare with the commentators? From the point of view of present-day physics there may be problems with aspects of this concept (Colin Mitchell), though the position could change given future developments (Mikele Barrett-Woodbridge). The concept also seems to be assumed in many religions and philosophies (Lance Storm), so if it is refuted then various assumptions will need to be revisited. My statements in this opening section may rightly be said to reflect a psychologist's unfamiliarity with physics—an unfamiliarity which I am trying to rectify by reading Steven Hawking and others.

Colin Mitchell and Lance Storm both took up the theme of synchronicity. Colin also had a question about the "Higher Order" that I mentioned, meaning the divine level—the origin of the Artifex Principle.

On North Terrace in Adelaide one finds inscribed on the front of the Masonic Lodge the statement “Aedificatum et dicatum magno Artifici mundi” (“Built and dedicated to the great Artificer of the universe”). I conceive the universe as being a work of art, and that all events are planned in advance by the Artificer. Coincidences come about because, in the plan, two causal sequences leading up to the two events were designed to occur in conjunction with each other. I believe that amazing coincidences are “messages” to human beings that the universe is *not* a random place but is rather built to a design. It does not matter whether the coincidence has deep psychological significance; the fact of the matter is the *occurrence* of the coincidence itself. When we produce or listen to those particular “coincidences” which we call “music”, especially our favourite music, I believe that the Artificer Principle is delighting us with repeated and subtly altered acoustic patterns.

I have formerly believed that Jung’s theory of synchronicity is incorrect, though I am being persuaded by Lance Storm—an expert concerning Jung—that perhaps the theory is right after all. Personally, even now, I try not to use the word “synchronicity” in favour of “[amazing] coincidence”, and I note that common parlance now uses the word not as Jung meant it but simply as “amazing coincidence”. People even speak of “synchrons”.

I was surprised that no-one suggested that if omni-interconnectionism is correct then it lends possible support to astrology.

I then go on to talk about mystical experience. It is not clear from the comments made that I have accurately (though briefly) described mystical experience. Dick Richardson made some comments and distinctions, and is not too happy with the way mystical experience is dealt with in the literature. I find myself in agreement with a number of his comments. “Mystical” is one of the most abused words in the English language.

I then make what some people would regard as a breath-taking leap, from mystical experience to sexual orgasm. With regard to orgasm, there are really *two* questions going on. The first question is: Is sexual orgasm in any significant sense akin to an experience of enlightenment? And the second question is: Can sexual orgasm be responsible in any degree for spiritual development? I think these two issues must be treated separately.

It seems to be conceded that there are at least one or two basic similarities between enlightenment and orgasm. (This becomes even more plausible if one accepts James Houran’s account of “intellectual orgasms”.) The commentators differ in regard to the number of characteristics that there are in common (Dick Richardson claiming that there are few and not

enough to justify the analogy; indeed he points out differences, such as the absence of knowledge-acquisition in orgasm, though I would say that the experience of orgasm can be an eye-opener), while Rhea White counts orgasmic experience as one of her “exceptional human experiences”, which lead, amongst other things, to spiritual growth. There seems to be agreement with her from Kathleen Leach-Ross, James Houran, and Robb Tilley.

The use of the verb “to come”, meaning “reach sexual climax” is queried by Lance Storm and even by myself: other languages may have quite different expressions for what we call “coming”, and the words that are used to describe oneself at the point of climax. The word “omniventation” (All [things] coming together as One) thus should not be allowed to be interpreted in a sexual sense despite the play on words in the definition, but only in a mystical sense. Statements in the original paper could be changed so as to avoid more clearly this unwanted implication.

Indeed, it is not entirely clear whether the coining of the word “omniventation” was the *result* of hypomania or its *cause*. In other words, did hypomania occur and lead to “over-inclusive” reckoning (for the concepts enlightenment vis-à-vis orgasm)? Or did the inspiration that led to omniventation as a concept “blow my mind” into hypomania? Be that as it may, both Walter Daniel and I have argued that such an origin should not stop us from evaluating it for its validity. After all, hypomania is associated with “sharpened and unusually creative thinking” (APA, 1980, p. 220).

I would like to thank all the contributors to this Open Forum, for taking the time to offer comments on my brief paper and thereby help us all assess the reasonableness of the ideas put forward.

I have not included street or email addresses for the contributors. Should a reader wish to be in contact with any of them, please contact me, the Editor: my contact details can be found in the Guidelines for Contributors.

Finally, if any reader would like an Open Forum on a topic relevant to the *Journal* please feel free to contact me with your ideas.

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