

# NONLOCALITY AND EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES: A STUDY OF GENIUS, RELIGIOUS EPIPHANY, AND THE PSYCHIC

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Two hundred years of reductive materialism has failed to explain the extraordinary experiences we know as moments of genius, religious epiphany, and psychic insight. This paper proposes that these three experiences are in essence the same experience, differentiated only by intention and context. It reaches this conclusion based on well-conducted experimental research across the continuum of science—work that proposes a new interdependent model of consciousness that takes into consideration a nonlocal linkage or entanglement, as an aspect of consciousness not limited by space and time. The paper surveys some of the most important relevant research from quantum biology, physics, psychology, medicine, anthropology, and parapsychology. It proposes that more attention should be paid

to the autobiographies, correspondence, and journals of men and women to whom history unequivocally accords the designation of genius, saint, or psychic, offering examples from these sources. And it presents comparisons between ethnohistorical material and spiritual traditions, suggesting they arrive at a similar worldview. Finally, it proposes that meditation research, some examples of which are cited, be seen in the context of psychophysical self-regulation, and that it offers one powerful avenue for producing these exceptional experiences.

**Key words:** Nonlocality, consciousness, meditation, psychophysical self-regulation, quantum biology

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## INTRODUCTION

For almost 200 years, the most intellectually rigorous approach we have had for examining the world—science—has had a strong bias toward reductive materialism. From this perspective, spiritual ecstasy is delusional, creative processes are the result of genetics and reinforcements, and parapsychological functioning is impossible. Yet from time immemorial, these experiences have been reported across geography and culture, and continue to be so today. After a century or more of trying to explain them by using the reductive analytical model, the result is acknowledged to be inadequate. There is an aspect of consciousness that has not been accounted for by the materialist worldview. Materialism asks us to believe these quite common experiences cannot be what they so obviously are: an aspect of consciousness not limited by space/time—the nonlocal aspect of consciousness.

In contrast to this materialist perspective, an interdependent model is emerging that sacrifices nothing in scientific rigor while incorporating the nonlocal and providing a framework for experimentation and hypothesis testing. This research appears in hundreds of studies, from many disciplines, addressing the nonlocal. The peer-reviewed journals that are science's benchmark carry papers on quantum entanglement amongst insects, ani-

mals, and birds,<sup>1</sup> distant mental influence,<sup>2,3</sup> interactions between species,<sup>4</sup> the efficacy of prayer,<sup>5</sup> and transactions that do not involve standard sense perception.<sup>6</sup> What is notable is that these papers often make few references to research outside of the authors' own discipline community. I mention this for two reasons: first, it means there is enough research in single disciplines for references to exist, and second, to emphasize the point that these are independently arising lines of inquiry merging into an as yet unacknowledged consensual perspective. This work collectively suggests that religious epiphany, creative breakthroughs, and parapsychological phenomena are, in fact, different manifestations of the same process—allowing the nonlocal aspect of consciousness to emerge into conscious awareness. Sometimes these experiences are spiritual (humanity's ancient spiritual practices such as meditation attest to this); sometimes they are the insight of creative genius, sometimes merely descriptions of teacups hidden in closets. But regardless of what they are, for the individuals who have them, they are always notable for a sense of connectedness and timeless wholeness.

Functionally and metaphorically in this emerging paradigm, we—all life—can be likened to workstations in a network. Our interactions with this network take place at many planes, from the physical to the nonlocal and, just as in any network from electronic to biological, individuals both inform and influence, even as they are informed and influenced through interaction with this network lying in a domain of nonlocal consciousness.

As Albert Einstein put it:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to

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our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.<sup>7</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Studying how these processes work is important, because this holds the key to developing a discipline for accessing nonlocal consciousness that is based on scientifically sound data. Taken one by one, these studies are often impressive; in aggregate, they present a compelling argument that materialism is no longer a fully adequate explanation of how our world works.

### The Physicalist/Materialist Model

Following are some of the hallmarks of materialism:

1. The mind is solely the result of physiological processes.
2. Each person's consciousness is a discrete entity.
3. No communication is possible except through the defined physiological senses.
4. Consciousness dwells entirely within the time/space continuum.

### The Interdependent Interconnected Consciousness Model

In place of the physicalist/materialist model, an interdependent perspective is emerging that challenges these assumptions. Some of its principal hallmarks:

1. Only certain aspects of the mind are the result of physiological processes.
2. Consciousness is causal, and physical reality is its manifestation.
3. All consciousnesses, regardless of their physical manifestations, are linked (entangled).
4. Some aspects of consciousness are not limited by the space/time continuum.

### Artificial Intelligence

What the world looks like from a strictly materialist view can be discerned in the field of artificial intelligence. Creating a "thinking machine" has been one of science's most alluring quests. Artificial intelligence enables computers to win at chess, as well as model systems as complex as the climate. But even ardent advocates realize something is missing: the creative originality that breaks molds and charts new paths remains a human hallmark. Professor James A. Hendler, a program manager at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, as well as head of the Autonomous Mobile Robotics Laboratory and the Advanced Information Technology Laboratory at the University of Maryland, confessed the expert opinion of his field when he admitted that the self-awareness of consciousness is not on the perceptible horizon. "If you think of awareness as just a point where suddenly things are conscious—I don't see that happening."<sup>8</sup>

The great fear that machines would replace us, or that we would all be turned into interchangeable uniform cogs serving

vast combines, as Fritz Lang and Karl Marx envisioned, appears to have been a dark fantasy. Along with Communism and Freudianism, the mechanistic standardized future predicted has proven to be one of the great failed myths of the 20th century. A fourth myth, the strictly reductionistic materialistic worldview, seems headed toward becoming one of the early and great failures of the 21st century.

### Hyman and Utts

So that we do not waste time arguing about the quality of the evidence for this—putting aside the peer review of the journals themselves—let me cite one case, and let it stand as representative. In 1995, the United States Congress commissioned the American Institutes for Research (AIR), a Washington, DC based not-for-profit think tank with a long history of work in human performance and close government ties, to assess the reality of "remote viewing" in research the US government had previously funded. Remote viewing is a protocol for obtaining objectively verifiable information that can only be obtained through opening to nonlocal awareness, the aspect of consciousness outside of space/time.

To make the assessment, AIR selected nationally recognized statistics professor Jessica Utts of the University of California, Davis, and well-known skeptic Professor Ray Hyman, a psychologist on the faculty of the University of Oregon and a fellow of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (now the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry). Both had previously written on nonlocal perception and were notably sophisticated in the issues involved. Utts had already addressed the question Congress was asking in a 1991 paper published in the journal *Statistical Science*.<sup>9</sup>

Hyman and Utts were each asked by AIR to produce an independent report by a fixed date. Utts complied and submitted her report by the deadline. Hyman did not. As a result he was able to see her report before writing his own, and the approach he chose to take, when he did write, was largely a commentary on her analysis. To compensate for this inequity, AIR allowed Utts to write a response that was incorporated into the final document submitted to the Congress. It is in this unplanned form of exchange that the essence of the two positions is revealed.

Utts' initial statement is remarkable for its clarity. She says:

Using the standards applied to any other area of science, it is concluded that psychic functioning has been well established. The statistical results of the studies examined are far beyond what is expected by chance. Arguments that these results could be due to methodological flaws in the experiments are soundly refuted. Effects of similar magnitude have been replicated at a number of laboratories across the world. Such consistency cannot be readily explained by claims of flaws or fraud.

The magnitude of psychic functioning exhibited appears to be in the range between what social scientists call a small and medium effect. That means that it is reliable enough to be replicated in properly conducted experiments, with sufficient trials to achieve the long-run statistical results needed for replicability.<sup>10</sup>

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