Image:

*Hand Stencil in Cave of El Castillo, Cantabria, Spain*

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Editor’s note

Three Years Of A Conscious Dream

With this issue, we conclude three great years of our beloved journal. This project started in the fall of 2012 when I was a child psychiatry resident at the University of Chicago. At that time, the Resident’s Journal of the American Journal of Psychiatry had sent an e-mail to all former authors asking for volunteers to be a guest editor for an issue surrounding a suggested theme. My proposal for an issue on the history of psychiatry was accepted and I was asked to get potential writers to collect papers on the theme. After I started to recruit possible authors, I received an e-mail from the resident in charge that the journal was no longer supporting a history issue. I wondered what could have been the reason. Perhaps it was not appealing to them or perhaps American Psychiatry has felt conflicted about on the history of psychiatry, in part related to the distorted image that some anti-psychiatry circles have created around it.

After that experience I realized that there was a missing gap in literature about humanities, history and psychiatry, which lead to the conceptualization of a Journal of Humanistic Psychiatry. The idea was to revisit the history of our field in a positive and constructive way. At first I did not know how to start a journal, but one of my supervisors at The University of Chicago, Dr. Khalid Afzal, recommended to search online for “how to start a journal” and read about the requirements to get an ISSN. After that I wrote to the people who were planning to participate in the guest editor issue on history of psychiatry to ask for articles and make a PDF of what would be the first issue. Stephanie Pope, Philippe Tapon, Alan Arauz, Alejandro Santos, John P. Shand and my brother Carlos went ahead and helped me make a potential first issue a real thing. In order to get an ISSN, we also needed an Editorial Board, so I wrote to scholars I admired and a few friends. Luckily, my professors at The University of Chicago Karam Radwan and Emil Coccaro and my friends Juan Jaramillo, Susan Hatters and Joaquin Nieto were very supportive and joined the project. I was very happy when an internationally-acclaimed scholar that I admired very much, William Breitbart, accepted to become part of the project too. Coincidentally or not, Dr. Breitbart would become my supervisor two years later during my fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital. Once I had the first PDF, an Editorial Board and an URL at the webpage of the Department of Psychiatry at The University of Chicago, I submitted the proposal to the Library of Congress. The PDF issue of the Journal was uploaded on the web and when we were preparing the second issue I received an e-mail back from the Library of Congress with an ISSN. We were official. At that time our Editorial Board had grown substantially with Simon Wein, Steve Smith, John Sargent, Giuseppe Bersani and Edward Shorter among others.
After the first issue, we decided to pick a specific theme for each issue to make it more interesting for the readers. The idea was to make it reader-friendly and reach a wider audience. My identical twin brother Carlos has been a key element to make this journal possible. I would not have been able to conceptualize a journal combining humanities and psychiatry without his help and shared wisdom. He has always been the second person on board in this project. Howard Gottesman, my supervisor during my inpatient psychiatry rotation when I was a resident in Cleveland, indirectly has been key in the development of the journal. Dr. Gottesman is a philosopher, a surgeon, a psychiatrist and a humanist who generally flees from being praised, awarded or recognized. He keeps up with the spirit of ancient stoic philosophers. As one of his students, I introjected his philosophies and approach to psychiatry which have been reflected in several of our issues.

Over three years, we have had twelve issues on different interesting themes such as death and dying, sex, love, trance, psychoses, music and dance, aggression, food, the future and shame and guilt. This latest issue centers on the theme of dreams and consciousness. With the help of my good friend and our new design editor Gonzalo Ovejero, who hails from Barcelona, we will have a new webpage with a number of features. This should increase the quality and accessibility of the different articles of this publication. Nevertheless, we will keep the same spirit of the Journal of Humanistic Psychiatry that has been present since its foundation. Our articles will be free, independent and available online for all readers. We will continue to support students and those in training. We will keep looking for creative, innovative, trend-seeking, alternative, and intellectually-stimulating papers from writers from our field and other disciplines. Finally, I want to thank our writers who contribute freely with great articles and make this “conscious dream” possible.

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Most of the hand stencils found in El Castillo Cave in Cantabria, Spain date back more than 35 thousands years old. In fact, using Uranium-Thorium (U-Series) dating, a method that allows one to measure the age of calcium carbonate materials, García Díez and colleagues were recently able to determine that one of these hands was created at least 40,800 years old (García Diéz et al., 2015). To date, this is the oldest human painting ever done. This hand was made before the famous paintings of Chauvet Cave in South France. It was done at a time that the Iberian Peninsula was thought to be populated by Neanderthals. The hypothesis that El Castillo Cave hand stencil was made by our fellow species, however, has yet to be confirmed with findings of objects or remains in the area.

From a psychiatric perspective, the hand stencils of El Castillo Cave are of tremendous value since they represent the first evidence of theory of mind, that is to say, the ability to attribute mental states such as emotions, beliefs or intents onto oneself and others. In fact, this may be the earliest evidence of theory of mind in the history of the entire animal kingdom. In the realms of psychiatry, it is thought that individuals affected by autism and schizophrenia lack theory of mind, something that creates major barriers in their communication and ability to develop intimacy, bonding, and close relationships. Areas in the brain that have been related to the ability to have theory of mind are the medial prefrontal cortex, the precuneus, the temporoparietal junction, the superior temporal gyrus, and the amygdala. Studies done with Positron Emision Tomography (PET) Scans and Functional Magnetic Resonance (fMRI) show that patients affected with autism or schizophrenia have decreased activity in these anatomical areas.
Consciousness is defined as the mind’s awareness of itself with respect to the rest of the world. In philosophy, it is believed that consciousness can depend on our theory of mind. According to the higher-order-thought (HOT) theory of consciousness, there is no possible conscious mental state if one is not aware of that mental state. Therefore, a mental state can be considered “conscious” only if the person is aware of himself or herself being in that mental state. In that case, if we cannot report mental states that are not conscious, then the ability to be conscious of any mental state will depend on having theory of mind. (Lau & Rosenthal, 2011)

In the fields of neuroscience and psychoanalysis, many mental states that play a role in our emotions and our mind are thought to be unconscious, something that has put into question the existence of human free will. We intuitively believe that subcortical structures such as the basal ganglia and the cerebellum play a major role in our unconscious mental processes. In that case, through free association of thought and interpretation of random statements, a person can become consciously aware of their unconscious mental processes and therefore “consciously” change their behavior as resulting from this “new awareness” of one’s own priori unconscious mental states.

The hand stencil of El Castillo Cave in Spain may well represent the first historical evidence of human consciousness and theory of mind. The level of cognitive sophistication needed for painting the shape of one’s own hand would require theory of mind and a mental awareness of one’s own existence and identity.

References


Përhumbje (Perdition)

Carolina Teworte, M.A., Art History, University of Jena, Germany

“We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.”
William Shakespeare, The Tempest, Act 4, scene 1

“Përhumbje” (“Perdition”) draws the observer to a colorful and abstract world of free forms, figures and allusions. What do you see when you look at this painting? People, trees, chairs or houses maybe, but in the end we cannot really fix our perception and it keeps wandering. One way of interpretation is that we see a man sitting in front of a painting. He seems to be immersed in the perception of this image – or is he the painter of it, shaping the final details? Is what you see the same as others would see? Isn’t what you discover among these forms your personal and very subjective dream and aren’t you and not the forms the material your imagination are woven out of?

Shakespeare, in The Tempest, places in Prospero’s mouth a popular topos in arts and literature through all ages, the one of the relation of reality, consciousness and dream. Prospero speaks in this passage about a short play performed on stage that represents an artificial world that fleets in parallel with the real world outside.

So why is this joyful painting with its bright and seductive colors titled “Perdition”? Arts is a mirror in which the material sphere and the viewers perception collide, merge and generate dreams and desires. Unfortunately, there appears to be is a serious problem with all kind of paradises or idylls: they fall when we want to take possession of them. They inspire us the greatest joy, but in the end prepare us to the worst perdition. Arts is an illusion by definition, melting sooner or later into hot air and leaving the viewer alone, thrown back on himself.

However, even if we know that we are going to awake, isn’t it worth it? Prospero preaches in The Tempest that “our little life is rounded with a sleep”, meaning that dreams complement the “true” reality and extend our horizon. In other words, be strong enough to keep dreaming and accept the invitation to “Perdition”!
He smiles at the mirror and shows liar secrets from the depths, toward the surface just as illusory.
It’s there where they kissed: the light and darkness, the silence with the hum of consciousness, the dreams and the reality.
It’s there where it stops: the pathological exhale while burning the theatrical truth that fade in distance.
He fades ...
Lost somewhere beyond the transparent dream.
He plays ...
With himself.
With the world...
A farewell game...
Yes, he dreamed a dream, a dream full of colors. A Dream! Is not our life a dream?
Dream or reality, beyond the mirror there is another light, two, three, infinity...
Silence...
He stays there, in front of the transparent mirror, touching homogeneous spaces without deviation, without variety of matter, revealing the uniform time with a theatrical smile, stylized in “vaudeville”.
What could it be?! The novel of life, with many acts, while stopping in an empty section that will fill souls with just a few shades of transparency tending to invisible?! That dream, that dream — the revelation of a different life, renewed, colored and full of power!
Again emptiness in the wind...
He leaves. No embrace or even a touch...

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Përhumbe (Perdition),
Oil on Canvas
Dimensions: 20 x 25 cm
Erina Alushi, 2015
Since Charles Darwin wrote his “On the Origin of Species” (1859), it has been generally accepted by the scientific community that current humans descended from apes after a long period of evolution and adaptation to new habitats in which only the strongest and the most intelligent were able to survive and transfer their genes to the next generation. Darwin challenged the biblical conception that humans originated from Adam and Eve, created by God in his own image. Large religious communities refuse to accept Darwinism and remain obstinate believing in the Hebrew explanation of the world. These include Jews, Christians and Muslims. Nonetheless, empiricist research and positivist epistemology have offered further proof that Darwin was right, even if we are still far from discovering the whole change of evolution from primitive apes to current homo sapiens.

The latest anthropological research agrees that modern men originated in Africa approximately 200,000 years ago. Analysis of human DNA shows that all current individuals come directly from a small population of about 10,000 specimens from Africa some 100,000 years ago. About 60,000 years ago some communities of Homo sapiens left Africa and invaded Asia. From eastern Asia they occupied Australia some 50,000 years ago. Despite its vicinity, Homo sapiens arrived in Europe after they had inhabited Australia some 40,000 years ago. The
islands of current day Japan were populated by the new humans some 20,000 years ago; and finally America about 15,000 years ago. By this time, modern humans had invaded almost the entire world. In doing so, they encountered other human species: homo soloensis and homo floresiensis in Asia and homo neanderthalensis in Europe. They co-existed and maybe even interbred with some of them, but after an indeterminate period of time, all species of hominids were extinct upon the arrival of modern human beings. It is possible that Homo sapiens were better adapted to the world and managed to survive unlike their close relatives.

Compared to the history of the Earth -4,550 million years- the existence of Homo sapiens is extremely short. Awareness of the ephemerality of our presence in this world makes us inextricably conclude that we will not be eternal. Homo sapiens could disappear by the stroke of a meteorite, by a nuclear war, by a climate change or by any other circumstance that changes the fragility of our current equilibrium. In any case, the Earth will disappear with the explosion of the sun, and by that time if any sort of descendant of modern humans were to exist, they’d better be out of our solar system. Survival out of this world is almost unlikely in our current form; thus, evolution will once again need to play a decisive role in the creation of a new type of intelligent life.

The deciphering of the human genome has led the French writer Michel Houellebecq to speculate about the next generation of humans in two of his most celebrated novels. “The Elementary Particles”, published in 1998, tells the story of two half-brothers, Bruno and Michel, abandoned by their mother at an early age, since she preferred a life of libertinism. Michel chooses an almost monastic life devoted to scientific research due to his inability towards love and sexuality; whereas his brother Bruno is an ardent consumer of pornography and sex. Both options fatally drive these brothers to depression and dissatisfaction, a feeling that Houellebecq seems to attribute to a decadent Western civilization focused on individuality and extreme egoism. Houellebecq conjectures that the triumph of Islam in Europe could be a temporary relief of the inevitable self-destruction, a feature that he also includes in “The Possibility of an Island” (2006) and his most recent novel Submission (2014). However, in Houellebecq’s thesis, Islam is also doomed to fail; therefore, a more reliable solution has to be created for the continuation of human beings. The answer is found in the arduous research of Michel, who hints the next step of human evolution is through the study and manipulation of DNA, as an escape of the inevitable suffering of his generation. Once the
The human genome has been deciphered, evolution–in Darwin’s terms–is no longer necessary. Houellebecq is aware that the next step of evolution is in our own hands. The French writer sets Michel in Galway (Ireland) after two important human losses. Nine years of research lead Michel to write a long text published in the scientific journal Nature to solve the problems of humankind with the creation of a new species through genetic manipulation. Michel believes that human suffering is linked to the need of sexuality to guarantee procreation and therefore the perpetuation of our species. Conversely, new humans need to lack a specific sex and can prolong the species through long-lasting cloning of a homogeneous genetic charge. If all humans shared the same genes, individuality could be eliminated in favor of fraternal collectivity and ultimate happiness. Houellebecq acknowledges that this new human presents two problems to late 20th century western society: pleasure in reproduction—the motus of animal existence in Houellebecq’s thought—and the abolition of individuality. Houellebecq proposes that pleasure could be continued and even increased in the next species of humans, since genetic manipulation permits the extension of the genital corpuscles all over the body instead of just the penis and the clitoris. Pleasure would not only be maintained, but magnified and available at any time without the necessity of cooperation with the now nonexistent opposite sex. Despite genetic homogeneity, individuality would not totally be ruled out in this new species, it is assured by the diverse interaction of each specimen with a specific environment. Houellebecq uses the example of identical twin brothers that share the same genes but are different individuals due to their placement in an unavoidable different context. Genetic affinity in identical twin brothers results in most cases in a true fraternal love that, in Houellebecq’s proposal, could be shared by the entire population of new humans.

Houellebecq’s vision of future humans is not as optimistic in his 2006 book “The Possibility of an Island”. The novel alternates the narrative of Daniel 1 in present day with that of his future clone Daniel 24 until his death and resurrection in Daniel 25. Daniel 1 is a successful humorist obsessed with the inevitable decrepitude of the body. He believes that happiness mainly lies in a satisfying sexual relationship with a young woman. Sexual pleasure and love are intermixed in Daniel’s narrative, and sometimes it seems that he considers that the true sense of life lies in the possibility of sexual pleasure, a privilege of young beautiful people. Oldness is to Daniel a sort of death in life. He clearly states at the beginning of the novel: “people say that life starts at the age of 50, but the problem is that it finishes at the age of 40”. Daniel moves to Almería (Spain) with his second wife, but a few years later they get divorced as they get older and sex becomes scarcer and less satisfying due to the maturity of his wife’s body. In most of the book Daniel is over 40, but eventually he experiences a last opportunity of happiness in having sex with a 22-year-old actress from Madrid. Daniel is aware that this new relationship is based in the fact that he is rich and she is young and fears that it cannot last very
long, which in Daniel’s view of life is a fatal event, since he does not find enough pleasure in having sex with young prostitutes.

At one point Daniel receives a dinner invitation from his neighbors in Almería. There he meets their son and his partner, who tell him that they belong to the sect of the elohimites, name derived from Hebrew name for God “Elohim”. According to this sect, Elohim was plural and referred to the creators of humankind. These were not divine, but scientifically much more advanced and had already overcome oldness and death. Guided by a prophet, the goal of the elohimites was precisely to stop the decrepitude of the body with a voluntary suicide, and eternal life through perpetual cloning (understood as reincarnation) of every individual that adhered to the sect. Houellebecq graphically compares the strategies of the elohimites with ancient monotheistic religions; in fact, the promise of eternal life was the basis of the expansion of Christianity and Islam. However, the elohimites prove to be much more successful, since they deny afterlife by defending that paradise is on Earth and found through a life of sexual pleasure. There are two basic rites for the elohimites: the extraction and preservation of the new adepts’ DNA for future reincarnation and suicide once that the body could no longer satisfy sexual pleasure (in women generally in the mid fifties, whereas men generally killed themselves when they could not have erections in their early sixties).

Reincarnated humans were genetically improved to avoid the decadence of the body. Ingestion and excretion were avoided by harnessing an emulation of vegetable photosynthesis. The new humans could survive with solar energy, water and pills of minerals; excretion was limited to perspiration. This condition makes them more adapted to survive during the terrestrial catastrophes that in Houellebecq’s book were to happen in the near future. Global warming and the melting of arctic ice provoked the first radical reduction of human population followed by an overall desiccation. Daniel 24 and Daniel 25 live approximately 2,000 years after Daniel 1 in a world controlled by new humans in which ancient humans survive despite adverse climatological circumstances. Houellebecq’s presentation of ancient humans in the future world is heavily pessimistic. Free of civilization, ancient humans are described as sub-humans dragged by a savage predatory instinct with no hint of community care or charity among them. New humans enjoy a higher status because they seem to have inherited rationality from their former
ancestors, without the excess of emotion. Nevertheless, they acknowledge an unbearable tediousness of a gradual absence of feelings in subsequent cloning. It is not clear if the progressive lack of feelings in successive clones is due to scientific failure or deliberately intentional. New humans have been genetically changed so that they do not need physical contact with other members of their species. Daniel 25 states that his dog Fox is exactly the same Fox owned by Daniel 1, but conversely Daniel 24 and Daniel 25 differ widely from their original prototype. Daniel 24 declares that laugh, empathy, loyalty, compassion and altruism belong to a compendium of concepts that new humans are completely unable to experience. Nonetheless, Daniel 24 declares he can feel some sort of feeling towards his friend Marie 22, even if his sensations are completely alien to what former humans described as desire. His feelings are canalized through the care of his dog Fox. Daniel 25 suffers an increase of emotions that drive him to abandon his tedious life in search of new vital experiences. The reader finishes believing that there is hope for new humans, although Houellebecq admonishes that a third catastrophe will soon occur and new humans lack any intention to guarantee the persistence of humankind.

Houellebecq’s speculations about future humans gather current scientific knowledge. His proposals are sometimes radical, controversial and certainly would not find consensus in modern readers. They are nevertheless thought provoking and undoubtedly incorporate a certain degree of possibility, which at times causes fear and rejection. It is undeniable that genetic manipulation will play a decisive role in the future, let’s hope it will be for good so that we are able to avoid the lack of individuality and the ability to experience feelings.

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Losing My Mind

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Recently, I read an amazing story in the New York Times that was both tragically sad and at the same time infinitely thought provoking. It was the story of Kim Suozzi, a 23-year-old neuroscience student from Missouri. Kim was at the spring of her life when she was diagnosed with a deadly form of brain cancer. Realizing that her upcoming death was inevitable she decided to have her brain cryopreserved so that one day, when technology enables, her mind could be uploaded into a computer and revived. The idea of preserving and subsequently resurrecting a person’s mind is fascinating by itself. But, perhaps what lies underneath all that is the fear of losing our consciousness as beings, which can be stronger than the fear of losing our physical existence.

The notion of existing beyond our physical form and outside of a living organism is certainly not new. It dates back to ancient times when human souls were believed to exist in an extra corporal form after the individual had died. Many cultures have adopted different folklores on the after life and created myths on spirits, ghosts and other metaphysical forms. Religions believed that the destiny of people’s soul is a reflection of their deeds during their lifetime as determined by a divine supervision. But all these myths have one element in common: the difficulty in accepting the concept that a human’s mind full of thoughts, emotions, ideas, wills and more can suddenly stop existing, sort of like erasing the “hard drive” on a computer. And what seemed as science fiction not so long ago is starting to become real as the field of neuroscience is developing. So perhaps some day in the not so far future, people’s minds could be uploaded into a computer after or right before they die and continue to exist in the cyber space. This also provides an interesting insight into the relation between body and soul and the field of psychosomatic medicine. Could these “artificial minds” acquire new feelings and sensations without being affiliated with an actual body? Will they be able to develop new thoughts and ideas without spatial stimulations? Or maybe they would need artificial “virtual” stimulations, like in the Matrix trilogy? And what about freedom and autonomy? Is it better to exist forever inside a microprocessor than not existing at all? Many questions but very few answers if any.

For Kim Suozzi all this did not matter. She truly believed that someday when technology advances, her young and beautiful mind could be restored and she will exist again. Her boyfriend Josh, who was very skeptic at the beginning and became more supportive with her plan as she was dying, had his own perspective. Will they ever meet again and in what
form? Will she recognize him and what type of interaction could they have? I guess the idea of embracing death with hope and anticipation had been shown to help coping with it long before computers were even envisioned. Nevertheless, technology will continue to advance and even when it comes to the most complex “computer” on this planet, the human brain, the sky is no longer the limit. And maybe just to fulfill the wish of a dying young woman.

I posted a painting by one of my favorite artists, who had the unique ability of looking at things in a different way. The human mind remains an endless enigma…for now.

**Image:** The Endless Enigma by Salvador Dali, Museo Naciona Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain

**Reference:**

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On Being A Hipster, Consciously Or Not

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In the streets of Wicker Park, Ukrainian Village and Logan Square in Chicago, the hipster subculture has become a real trend. Hipsters are usually from the upper middle class, grew up in the suburbs and moved to the gentrifying neighborhoods in urban areas. They enjoy alternative or indie music, vintage clothes, hair-cuts, videogames, beards or moustaches, organic food and progressive ideas.

The word “hipster” had its origins in the 1940s to refer to the lifestyle of jazz musicians. After the beatniks in the ‘50s, the hippies adopted and modified the word “hipster” to refer to their innovative and revolutionary ideas about peace and free love during the late ‘60s and ‘70s. People born in the late ‘70s or early ‘80s grew up listening to the rock, punk and metal of the ‘80s and, during the ‘90s, enjoyed the grunge subculture that spread worldwide from Seattle. After 2000, the new hipster subculture (a more appropriate term would be “neo-hipster”) developed. Some of the most representative bands of this subculture hail from the Midwest. A few examples include The White Stripes, the Black Keys, Wilco, The Neutral Milk Hotel, Artic Monkeys, Cake or Phoenix. In general, these bands are strongly influenced by blues, rock, psychedelia and the ‘90s underground being Sonic Youth a major reference.
The term “hipster” is sometimes used pejoratively by non-hipsters to criticize their lifestyle as contradictory or fake. The hipster lifestyle is not affordable for many people since trendy clothing stores, organic markets and fashionable hairdressers are expensive.

Hipsters are usually laid-back and communicate with a flat affect. The word “cool” is a common descriptor. Hipsters like to collect music and, since they grew up in the iPod and CD era, they have been partially responsible for the return of vinyl records, which allows a “physical” private music collection.

Another interesting aspect of hipsters is their unawareness of their status as hipster. Unlike many other groups or societies, hipsters resist their own label. As a result, hipsters may not be consciously aware of their own manifest phenotype. In that sense, some of us could be hipsters and without being aware of it.
The Meaning Of Dreams

Fernando Espi Forcen, M.D., Ph.D., Department of Psychiatry, Rush University, Chicago, IL

Sleep is a physiological state characterized by an apparent altered or loss of consciousness with inhibition of sensorium and motor activity. All animals on the planet have some kind of sleep behavior. For instance, jellyfish’s sleep patterns - one of the earliest and most basic biological structures in the animal kingdom - were described in an Australian study with Chironex fleckeri. The study showed that while during daytime, this jellyfish moved horizontally, at nighttime its tentacles were relaxed and the jellyfish was motionless. (Seymour et al., 2004)

While most scientists agree that animals have a physiological need for sleep, still there are multiple concomitant theories to explain such need. For instance, it has been proposed that sleep is needed for learning and formation of memories, as well as creativity and overall physical health. In humans, it is well known that sleep deprivation can alter the circadian rhythm and cause cognitive changes and delirium. A study done in 1989 showed that rats under total sleep deprivation increased their energy expenditure and eventually died within 11-32 days. (Everson et al., 1989)

In mammals, sleep has usually been divided between Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep and Nonrapid Eye Movement (NREM) sleep. Dreams can take place in both stages.

In psychodynamic therapy, dreams are the subject of analysis and interpretation. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, published Die Traumdeutung (The Interpretation of Dreams) in 1900 in Austria. According to Freud, the preconscious was more relaxed during sleep and dream states, which allowed for unacceptable thoughts of the unconscious to become conscious. Freud defined dreams as “The Royal Road to the Unconscious.” In this case, dreams are the result of “wish
fulfillment” of the unconscious desires that are repressed by the superego. During psychoanalytic sessions, the patient and the analyst could discuss the symbolic meaning of the images they consciously remembered during the day. In an abridged version of the book “On Dreams” (1901), Freud discusses that – unfortunately for us – dreams are often presented in a “transformed” rather than clear and straightforward fashion. Freud then points out to the reader that the wishes in our dreams are further pressed so that we are not aware or others cannot know. As a result, for Freud, the manifest dream had been distorted requiring the therapist to use free association to interpret and understand the real dream. He termed this the latent content of the dream. (Freud, 1952)

Freud used this method of dream interpretation with Sergei Pankejeff, a patient whom he called “The Wolfman”. During one of the sessions, Pankejeff revealed a recurrent childhood nightmare in which he dreamt of a pack of white wolves outside his window; he would wake up in a terror from fear of being beaten by the wolves. Through analytic interpretation, Freud concluded that this dream was probably related to having seen his parents having sex doggy style at an early age. This interpretation relieved Pankejeff’s neurotic symptoms (Freud, Wolfman)

Today in modern psychodynamic psychotherapy, dreams are considered important in order to understand and interpret the patient’s unconscious thoughts. However, in contrast to Sigmund Freud’s methodology, most modern analysts agree that the manifest dream should be considered the main source of information rather than accessing a latent content through free association (Gabbard, 2011). On a personal note, I remember dreaming as a kid about discovering that my whole family had turned into vampires and wanting me to become one of them. I remember the
anxiety of waking up feeling that the dream was still very vivid and my conflicted feels while
dreaming and once awake as to whether I should join them as a vampire or leave them and
continue living as a human being. Perhaps this manifest dream was the result of my fears of
being estranged by the rest of my family, or the conflict between the impulses of my id (to join
them and become a vampire) and my superego drives (to leave them and bear the pain of doing
the right thing).

For most of us, dreams have a meaning that concerns our own subjective psychological
lives. Very often we dream about either our desires or our fears. Sometimes our dreams have a
straightforward interpretation, other times the manifest content of our dreams can be more
symbolic or difficult to understand. In these cases, the assistance of the therapist can certainly
be helpful. Psychiatrists must listen and pay attention to their patients’ dreams, which can be in
a very useful tool for the understanding of our patients’ desires, problems and struggles.

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Between Space And Consciousness-
The Final Frontier

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Epigrams:

'Space, the final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.'

Star Trek, Samuel Peeples

'You don’t see what you are looking at - you look at what you are seeing.'

JR Searle (1)

'One does one's thinking before one knows what one is to think about.'

Julian Jaynes (2)

The problem in understanding consciousness

How does a subjective experience emerge from a physical process? This is a core question in studying consciousness. Restated: How does the visual data of red-wavelength photons produce the experience of a vivid red? Or, we can tweak the question: How does inanimate physical become animate life – that is: How does photosynthesis transform photons into fruit?

What is consciousness and where are its boundaries?

Most authors consider that the brain is the mind (consciousness). 'The mind is what the brain does. Dualism is out'. (3) That is, once the brain stops, the mind ceases.
Dualism is a competing philosophy which claims that the mind (consciousness) and the brain are separate entities. Some philosophies postulate the existence of a 'soul' which exists independently of the brain, and animates it to produce consciousness.

Nevertheless consciousness is physical. Thus hypoglycemia, hypotension, sleep, and anesthetic agents can cause a reversible loss of consciousness. Nobody knows how this happens.

Mashour, an anesthetist, proposed that anesthetics may functionally uncouple communication between various critical modules of the brain resulting in unconsciousness (4).

William James observed: 'Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness' (5).

Exploring these alternate states of consciousness may help us to uncover and answer fundamental questions of life. Hence: '2001: A Space Odyssey' (6), psychedelic drugs, music, spirituality and religious meditation.

'2001: A Space Odyssey', a film review

The movie, directed by Stanley Kubrick and co-written with Arthur C. Clarke, was released in 1968 and has been consistently listed in the top 20 all-time-great movies. The film is formally divided into sections.

Part 1: 'The Dawn of Man'

The opening scene is set in primordial Africa. One night the Sentinel – a black tetrahedron – appears in the midst of a family of chimpanzees and emits a piercing sound. Overnight the chimpanzees gained a survival advantage and learnt how to make tools and conquer rivals.

Part 2 (untitled)

A sudden jump in time, to a space station in orbit around Earth. Kubrick enchants us with cinematographic tricks showing weightlessness and iconic references to Pan Am airlines, the Bell telephone company and the Cold War. Johann Strauss II's waltz, The Blue Danube, accompanies the space-station docking and Lunar landing sequences. It is unforgettable.
cinematography as Mankind discovers a 40 million year old Sentinel on the Moon. The Sentinel screeched and directed a message to Jupiter.

Part 3: 'Jupiter mission 18 months later'

The spaceship is run by a HAL 9000 computer who can do anything a 'conscious entity can ever hope to do'. Later HAL has a 'breakdown' (Artificial Consciousness?) and nearly destroys the mission.

Part 4: 'Intermission' is a 3 minute black screen with music.

Part 5 (untitled)

In order to survive, David Bowman (the sole remaining astronaut) decorticates HAL and discovers the true purpose of the mission – to explore Jupiter.

Part 6: 'Jupiter and beyond the infinite'

A black sentinel is floating in orbit around Jupiter. Bowman enters a wormhole filled with 1960s LSD-fueled consciousness-expanding images and psychedelic music. Finally in a surrealistic scene set in a French 19th century salon Bowman watches himself age until he is re-born as star-child orbiting Earth.

'2001' is loosely based on Clarke's 1948 short story, The Sentinel (7). Kubrick suggested they first write a novel on which to base the film. In fact a novel and screenplay were written simultaneously, with feedback in both directions. Kubrick was parsimonious in describing the storyline. It was left to Clarke's novel of the same name '2001' – and its sequels: 2010, 2061, and 3001 – to explain the film. The novels identify the Sentinel as a tool created by an alien race in its final stage of evolution of consciousness. These aliens travelled the cosmos assisting lesser species take evolutionary steps – sometimes successfully, sometimes not.

Stanley Kubrick (1928 – 1999) and Arthur C Clarke (1917-2008)
**Review of Consciousness**

I am no authority on consciousness. On the other hand I am as much an expert as anyone else alive. The laboratory for consciousness lies exclusively within me and me alone.

Here are some counterintuitive characteristics of consciousness:

1. One does one’s thinking before one knows what one is to think about. Try it. When we speak, the words appear unannounced and pre-formed. 'The actual process of thinking, usually thought to be the core of consciousness, is not conscious at all, and that only its preparations, its materials and its end results are consciously perceived' (2).

2. Psychoanalysis has produced much evidence to show that 'our conscious ideas, feelings and beliefs originate in the unconscious; the functions of the conscious mind are confined to criticisms, selection and control (8).'

3. A series of experiments has shown that the onset of cerebral activity (EEG, fMRI) precedes by at least several hundred milliseconds the moment when the individual becomes conscious of the intention to act. That is, the brain's initiation of a spontaneous, voluntary act seems to begin unconsciously, before there is any subjective awareness that a 'decision' to act has already been taken (9).

4. A conscious state cannot be subdivided into component parts – it is unity. In truth we are unable to consciously do more than one thing at a time (unless the other thing is automatic and therefore un-conscious). In order to achieve this unique conscious state, one scene out of billions of possibilities must be selected in a fraction of a second. That is: 'the brain must deal with plethora and diversity without losing unity or coherence' (10).

Rubin's Vase (Edgar Rubin, Danish, 1886-1951)

Flicking between the vase and the faces takes at least 100-150 milliseconds which is the minimum duration of a single conscious state. We cannot focus on nor be aware of both the vase and the faces at the same time. Unity rules. (10).
5. A special case of William James's 'alternate state of consciousness' is of course intense pleasure. Who can forget Jane Fonda in the 1968 science-fiction fantasy 'Barbarella'? Barbarella, stranded in space is rescued by Mark Hand. Barbarella offers to reward Mark and he suggests sex. She says that people on Earth no longer have physical relations but consume 'exaltation transference pills' and press their palms together when their 'psycho-cardiograms are in perfect harmony'. An altered state of consciousness fit for the swinging '60s ensues (11).

**Theories of Consciousness**

1. David Chalmers (b. 1966) a leading mathematician-philosopher noted that despite an explosion in numbers of consciousness studies in the past 25 years, we still cannot connect structure to function and so we need radical theories (12). In trying to unveil a theory of consciousness from which to make testable hypotheses he suggests two such ideas:
   a. Consciousness is a fundamental building block of the universe – like gravity, space, time, mass, and charge.
   b. Consciousness is pan-psychic. It is universal and made of elementary particles which are primitive precursors of consciousness. Thus consciousness becomes a continuum between mind and nature (12).

2. Julian Jaynes (1920 –1997) a psychologist from Harvard and Princeton Universities hypothesized that before 1000 BCE ancient humans were not fully conscious as we are today, but rather functioned by means of automatic, non-conscious habits. They had no introspection and no sense of an inner 'self' to reflect upon. In other words, they had no subjective consciousness in order to 'view themselves'. [Jaynes' definition of consciousness is called 'meta-awareness' i.e. awareness of awareness, thoughts about thinking.]

   “De Humani Corporis Fabrica” (“On the Workings of the Human Body”) was published in...
1543 by Andreas Vesalius from the University of Padua.

To explain this, Jaynes hypothesized that the left and right brains were not integrated - 'unicameral' - as they are today. Rather, the ancient brain was 'bicameral' with the two sides of the brains working independently of each other. The two halves were not integrated. The left brain - the logic and language center - generated ideas and commands, which the right brain then heard and obeyed. These commands were subjectively perceived by the right brain as coming from 'outside'.

Jaynes brings evidence from several sources. One is the 'voices' heard by schizophrenic patients, which is a throwback to the bicameral mind. Another is the 'gods' of ancient civilizations with whom the prophets seemed to speak directly and intimately. The era of the prophets in the Old Testament started with Abraham (about 1800 BCE) who, Jaynes claims, experienced visual and auditory hallucinations of the 'gods'. This phase of bicamerality continued until around 400 BCE when prophecy stopped, and unicamerality, the new phase of consciousness, became ascendant (2).

Where did the 'gods' go? Jaynes proposed that a series of unprecedented events and stressors forced the two halves of the brain to functionally integrate. This was a cultural and linguistic evolution, not biological i.e. software, not hardware. The stressors might have included natural disasters (The Flood), population growth, development of writing, or when the accumulation of cultural knowledge reached a critical mass.
Jaynes however does not postulate a mechanism to account for this software 'upload' and so it remains highly speculative. (Curiously the Sentinel from '2001' could explain such a sudden change.)

'Radical' thoughts

I was captivated by Jaynes' idea of consciousness evolving over eons. I see history (or time) as a spiral unfolding the future - and not a closed circle forever repeating itself.

Take art for example.

These cave paintings were made 10,000 years ago in Argentina in Cueva de las Manos ('Cave of the Hands'). Other caves from the same era revealed realistic paintings of animals – bison, deer, hyenas. We assume these artists were by and large of the same genetic stock as us. So - why didn’t they do representations of the human face and form as they did of animals? They saw other humans, or themselves reflected in water. What was it about their self-awareness, their consciousness that they only (apparently) did silhouettes of their left hands?

Thousands of years later however we paint and draw the human form, albeit limited to two-dimensions. Here is a manuscript illustration from medieval (12th century) France. This artist had the same neural networks as our cave-man predecessors.
Freud's grandson, the late Lucien Freud, was a 20th century artist. His paintings are replete and enriched with self-awareness, emotion and perspective.

What changed in us from the time of hand-painters to modern art, if the neural hardware was the same? Does Jaynes' hypothesis of the origins of consciousness provide an explanation, namely that the software – culture, memory and language - evolved, which in turn changed consciousness?

The Bible also documents changes in consciousness – some sudden (as in Adam and Eve) and some in hindsight (the demise of biblical prophets around 400 BCE). These events reflect dramatic changes in consciousness. Leaving us again with the notion, that consciousness is not something fixed and forever.

Let us take Adam and Eve in Genesis (3: 6-7):

'And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food… she took the fruit, and ate it, and also gave it to her husband; and he ate it. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin-cloths.'

The description of a sudden change of self-awareness is clear.

**An imaginative corollary**

Let us accept for argument's sake that consciousness evolves in a 'software' sense as Jaynes proposed. Is society today acting as a catalyst to change our consciousness?

I propose two directions in which consciousness may evolve. I am aided in my ruminations by science fiction, which dabbles in the black arts, so to speak, in anticipating the future.
Group consciousness

Only through the crudest of symbols – alphabet, speech, drawings, hand-signs - can I communicate to another consciousness (equally isolated within its bony fortress).

Is mental telepathy a thing of fiction, like wireless communication once was? There is no hard evidence of mental telepathy. Yet.

John Wyndham wrote a riveting science-fiction novel 'The Chrysalids'. In a post-nuclear holocaust world, people with mutations developed mental telepathy which enabled group communication and attendant change of consciousness (13).

Group consciousness was also a feature of Isaac Asimov's 'Foundation' series. A planet called Gaia, inhabited by mentalics (mental telepathists), had evolved such that every organism and inanimate object on the planet shared a common mind (14). Recall Chalmers 'radical' ideas (12).

The World Wide Web via Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, tinglingly reminds me of the beginnings of group consciousness.

Fore-seeing

Would an expanded consciousness enable us to see into the future? Not time-travel, not being in the future like G-d – but be able to fore-see the future with increased clarity and precision.

For example, on the eve of WW II Chamberlain had one vision of the future whereas Churchill another. Churchill fore-saw the future more accurately. What gave him greater insight and awareness? Could an altered consciousness – which is dependent upon information and memory - improve predicting the future?

Philip K. Dick a superlative science fiction writer wrote 'Minority Report' (15) upon which Steven Spielberg's 2002 movie was based. In the story, mutant 'pre-cogs' with hyper-evolved 'esp-lobes' could see the future. It is not explained how, but I suggest their particular defect altered their consciousness albeit in a specific dimension which allowed awareness of the future.

Take a human. A new-born has no sense of consciousness. Take that same person aged 13, 20 and then 70. Consciousness develops or evolves. Is it just the brain and its interconnections improving? Or is it also accrual and integration of information and memory that expands self-awareness and consciousness?
Accumulated cultural information has enabled us to predict eclipses, the weather, health outcomes, a missile in flight and migrating birds.

Conclusion

The development of art; the story of Adam and Eve; the demise of prophetic literature and Julian Jaynes' theory of the bicameral mind have curious parallels to '2001: A Space Odyssey' in which the Sentinel jump-started human development, in large part by altering consciousness.

Imagine if truth were stranger than fiction.

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   march 2014


Cinema and Psychiatry

Exploring The Possibility Of A Conscious Artificial Intelligence In Ex Machina

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After writing the novel The Beach, based on his experiences as a backpacker, Michael Garland met Danny Boyle who made a major film with the same name. Following, Garland wrote the screenplays for two of Boyle’s movies: 28 Days Later and Sunshine. Garland’s directorial debut took place this year with Ex Machina, in my humble opinion, the film of the year. When I saw the film last year in a Wall Street cinema after the NAMI Walk at the Brooklyn Bridge, I immediately sent an e-mail to my friends and colleagues to recommend the film strongly.

In Ex Machina, Nathan is the CEO of a famous search engine, Bluebook, and has created Ava, a humanoid robot with a synthetic brain and a complex programmed personality resulting from the personal information from billions of Bluebook users. Nathan hires Caleb, one of the programmers in the company, to test the humanoid robot and determine if Ava has true consciousness. After several interviews, Caleb grows close to Ava and struggles to make a determination as he starts having feelings for her. Ava asks Caleb for help as she fears Nathan will reprogram her and in a way ends with her life.

The film addresses a very important question: Is it possible to create artificially a being with consciousness? The film leaves the question open. What does it mean to have consciousness? Ava seems able to make decisions but to an extent her behaviors are programmed informatically. Perhaps she is programmed to use all her data to survive, even if that implies seducing the man that could help her escape. Nevertheless, the biological brain of
humans is set up in a similar way. We are genetically programmed to respond a certain way to
different stimuli. The expression, activation or inactivation of our genes is modulated by the
environment and our experiences. In that sense, we could say that if Ava does not have
consciousness, humans may not have it either. The film also addresses the question of emotions
and feelings. According to Nathan, if Ava shows that she is able to have fair feelings, she would
have consciousness and would be therefore undistinguishable from another human. Ava seems
to shows affection for Caleb but the film does not conclude congruently. If feelings are needed
to have consciousness, Ava, as opposed to Caleb, may not have consciousness.

If we were able to conclude that Ava has consciousness, the physicalist model of the
mind would be tested too. Within the last few decades, psychiatry has embraced a physicalist
model in which the mind’s substrate is the brain and the mind is not possible without a
brain. According to this model, every mental process or state would be somehow reflected physically in our
brain. However, if reprogrammed, Ava would hypothetically lose her mind.
Even if her physical elements are kept intact, after reprogramming, she would not be Ava
anymore, or at least she would not be the Ava we knew. In that case, if we could affirm that
Ava indeed has consciousness, the dualistic Cartesian model of the mind (mind and body as
different entities) would become philosophically possible.

_Ex Machina_ also evokes thoughts on free will. Ava takes any step needed to survive and
seems to disobey Nathan--her creator and the person who programmed her--to maximize her
survival chance. However, she could be conditioned by Caleb’s suggestions; therefore, we
cannot say with certainty that Ava had free will, something that we cannot assure with humans
either. Or can we?

Source of movie images: IMDb
Music and Psychiatry

Charles Bradley: The “American Dream” That Came True

Pablo García Seiquer, Filologist and Teacher, Chicago, IL

On December 6, 2013 I was one of the lucky people who got tickets to see Charles Bradley and His Extraordinaires at Metro in Chicago. The show was, originally scheduled on May 9th but, due to a death in the family of one of the components of the band, we had to wait almost seven long months to enjoy the performance of such peculiar artist. I wasn’t surprised at all when I learned that the show had been sold out with months in advance. I had the privilege to witness his debut in Chicago, a year earlier, at the same venue. My conclusion was simple: He is a unique artist.

If you wonder why this singer is so especial you only have to check his biography and how he, finally, became famous. Charles Bradley recorded his first album when he was 62 years old! After listening to any of his beautiful songs full of Soul, you can’t help thinking “what has this man been doing all this time?” and “Why did he take so long?” Well, Charles Bradley has had a hard life, full of difficulties related to poverty and violence. He worked all over the U.S. doing many different and varied jobs. He even worked as a James Brown impersonator until, finally, he decided to initiate his musical career as an original artist. His story is such a clear example of the “American Dream” that director Poull Brien decided to film a documentary about his life titled Charles Bradley: Soul of America.

When we listen to Charles Bradley, we can’t help comparing him with James Brown. No doubt that Charles Bradley, born in Florida, has many gestures and moves that clearly
remind us of the late legend of Soul and Funk and, in some of his songs, you can even “taste” a bit of Ottis Redding (like in the intense and intimate Why Is It So Hard). The fact is, that even those who would consider him just a mere imitator would enjoy a live show of this great artist just for pleasure and to experience how it could feel to be in a Soul concert in the 60s or 70s.

His performances are charged with good vibrations and he maintains a constant dialogue with the audience, trying to persuade us, with his music and his words, that together, we can make a better world (This World (Is Going Up In Flames)). Music is his medium of transmitting such message but his songs talk about many more ideas and feelings that Americans identify with.

His showman side, clearly influenced by his performances as a James Brown imitator, increased the speed at which this man in his sixties has turned into a living legend of Soul music in the times of electronic music and dubstep. His changes of attire, his dancing moves on stage, and his conversations with the audience create a very especial and unique experience. After the show, you will probably leave the venue with a broad smile on your face.

All these are my thoughts and opinions of a fan of him, as a person, and his music but, there is no doubt about one thing: Charles Bradley gives everything on stage. His dream, (the “American Dream”, as some may still feel and desire), came true late but, now he got it, he will fight to death to keep it. The best thing is that we can all enjoy it with him. If you see the opportunity of going to one of his shows take it and don’t let it go. It will be unforgettable.

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Links:
- Interview with director Poull Brien: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkkI1hCoVAA
- Charles Bradley: Soul Of America (Trailer): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvnqcwZF270
- Why is It So Hard(Live on KEXP): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBdTVmSVq14
- This World (Is Going Up in Flames): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moiUyFQQE-0
- No Time for Dreaming (Live on KEXP): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aA0fTbY3e4
Book Reviews

Book X Of Plato’s Republic:
On The Arts And The Immortality Of The Soul

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The original Greek name of Plato’s Republic was Politeia referring to the government of regime of the Greek Polis (City-State). The word Republic comes from Latin translation of the title Res - Publica that refers to the same thing (Public affair of commonwealth). Plato’s famous book lights the origin of Western thinking in regards to politics, philosophy and spirituality. The book is written in a form of dialogue between Socrates and different characters who discuss the idea of the justice, the just city, and the just man.

The Book is divided into ten chapters or dialogues. In Book X, Socrates discusses with Glaucon (allegedly Plato’s own brother) the place of music, poetry and art in society. Socrates argues against the conception that artists have creativity. For that, Socrates gives the example of an artist who paints a bed, which is not a real bed. In fact Socrates says, the artist is making a copy of bed that some craftsman may have made but the physical bed is not real either. Only the form of bed is real. For Socrates, artists create an illusory experience, something that in his opinion deprives the man from reason. Therefore, he argued that the arts have no place in the ideal state. These ideas deeply impacted Byzantine art, which allowed only copies of the allegedly “original and authentic” image of Christ Pantocrator and Virgin Mary or Hodegetria.

The second section of the book concerns the immortality of the soul. Socrates states that men who had a just life will receive their rewards after the mortal life is over. Glaucon is
initially surprised that Socrates holds onto the immortality of the soul but Socrates elaborates further on his arguments:

“There are all sorts of illnesses that can and do attack the body and bring about its demise. Every material thing we understand falls prey to its own unique "evil": wood rots; iron falls prey to rust; the body dies of the illnesses that attack it; and so on. But what is the "evil" peculiar to the soul? Of course, as we have seen, the soul's peculiar evil is injustice. But the souls of unjust men are not destroyed by injustice, and neither are the souls of just men. If a thing can be destroyed by its own particular evil (and only that), and if the soul cannot be destroyed by its own particular evil (injustice), then the soul must be immortal.”

In the third section of the book Socrates argues that after death, the souls of just men will be rewarded while the souls of unjust men will be punished. Socrates illustrates his theory through the myth of Er who, after death was able to come back and share his journey of the afterlife. According to Er’s story, the souls go to a place between heaven and earth where they are judged. Whereas the just souls go to heaven to meet with the Fates, the unjust souls are punished to wander a thousand years beneath the earth. In fact the most unjust souls such as tyrants and murders can remain beneath ground for eternity. Once in heaven, the just souls tell the Fates what kind of life they want to have in their new upcoming mortal life. Some choose wisely others not. For instance Er says, Agamenon chose to be an eagle, Ajax a lion and Odysseus chose to be a common citizen. After choosing their new life, the Fates make them drink from the river of forgetfulness so that they cannot share their experience with the living mortals on earth. Er was not allowed to drink so that he can share his story. After that, Er woke up in his funeral and shared his story. Plato’s Book X of the Republic was the basis of Saint Augustine of Hippo and has determined Western philosophical thinking about religion, spirituality and life after death.
Free Text

The Journal Of Humanistic Psychiatry Travels The World!

This picture taken by Erina Alushi is an example of the popularity that our journal is gaining across continents. Our list includes scholars from a number of countries in the Americas, Europe and several other places.

Here, the Spring Issue 2015 is displayed on a table for readers at the bar “Unlimited Soul Café” in Tirana, Albania.
Future Issues

- Winter Issue 2016: Friendship
- Spring Issue 2016: Sports, Physical Activity

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