

# *Unity of Consciousness: The Communion of All Minds*

The idea that all minds are joined is a long-standing conviction of Eastern philosophy as well as Western mysticism. The *Self* or *Atman* of Hinduism refers to a universal consciousness that underlies each individual's personal awareness. In Buddhism, dis-identification with the ego allows a merging with a primal state of being that is formless but universally present. In the West, Jesus referred to the unity of all beings in his statement "Even as you do it unto the least of them, you do it unto me." In the words of Meister Eckhart, the great Catholic mystic, "When is a man in mere understanding? When he sees one thing separated from another. When is he above mere understanding? When he sees all in all, then a man stands above mere understanding." The famous quantum physicist Erwin Schrodinger noted, "Mind—by its very nature—is a singular entity. The overall number of minds is just one."

Common to all of these perspectives is the idea that the deepest foundation of each individual mind is a universal consciousness that pervades the known cosmos and beyond. Each individual's consciousness is embedded in (or is an extension of) an Infinite Mind.

If this is actually true, then, at the deepest level, all minds are joined. On some ultimate level, our separate minds are in communion with one another and with the consciousness of the cosmos at large. This underlying, unitary consciousness is sometimes referred to as the "supraconscious

mind” Other terms for it would include “cosmic consciousness” and “universal mind.” Such a universal consciousness cannot be equated with the Godhead, which is forever ineffable and beyond description. However, we can speculate that it might be one of the loftiest points at which the Godhead enters into form. Perhaps cosmic consciousness could be the “highest level” at which form first enters into existence out of that ultimate ground that is beyond form (assuming the Cosmos is organized into a hierarchy of levels, as has been proposed by numerous philosophers).

## Evidence for Unitary Consciousness

The phenomenon of mental telepathy seems compatible with the idea that all minds are joined. The essence of telepathy is that one mind receives information from another mind that is not physically present. Common examples of telepathy might include:

- knowing what someone is going to say before they speak
- knowing who is calling when the phone rings
- feeling uneasy or distressed when a loved one is suffering, no matter how far away that person is
- having a strong mental, emotional, or physical reaction at the time of a loved one’s death, no matter how far away it occurs

Another indication of the unity of consciousness is the way people are affected by major world events. When a disaster of worldwide proportions occurs, many people feel affected, even when they are not following the

news on TV or in the newspaper and perhaps do not even know about the event. Such an event seems to color the mood of people all over the world whether they have knowledge of it or not, as happened on Sept. 11, 2001.

The existence of telepathy, as well as the universal psychic effects of global events, are supported not just by anecdotal reports but by a considerable amount of carefully done empirical research.

### *Telepathy Experiments*

Several generations of research support telepathy. Perhaps the best-known series of experiments were conducted by Joseph Banks Rhine at Duke University from the late 1920s up to 1960. Rhine had a deck of twenty-five cards displaying five distinct symbols. A “sender” would pick up one card at a time, concentrating on its symbol, and then “send” it to a remote person, or “receiver.” The receiver would then try to guess the correct sequence of symbols sent. By chance, the receiver should make 5 out of 25 matches correctly. Over a total of 4 million trials and thousands of experiments reported in over a hundred publications, receivers very frequently exceeded chance expectations. Rhine’s experiments were done carefully to avoid methodological flaws, and they provided the first significant body of evidence in favor of *psi* (a term used to refer to all types of paranormal processes). They could not distinguish, however, whether the receivers were using telepathy or clairvoyance to identify the symbols on the cards.

A more recent body of evidence comes from “ganzfeld” telepathy experiments. In this type of experiment, a subject sits in a comfortable reclining chair, listening to white noise and wearing translucent hemispheres over her eyes. A ten-minute progressive relaxation sequence is played through the headphones with the goal of reducing external stimulation to the point where the subject’s mind quiets down and is able to attend to faint impressions, some of which may be psychic in origin. In a separate room or building, a “sender” views one of four pictures, randomly selected, and attempts to “send” it to the receiver. After this is done, an independent judge asks the receiver to rank the four pictures in sequence, 1 through 4, according to how well each one matches her perceptions during the ganzfeld session. If she ranks the picture actually focused on by the sender first, then the session is scored a “hit”; otherwise it is scored a “miss.”

By chance, the experiment should result in a correct match between sender and receiver once in every four sessions, for a 25 percent hit rate. Two meta-analyses of all known ganzfeld experiments in 1985 found that 23 of 28 studies had obtained greater than chance hit rates. When the results for all 28 studies were combined, the odds against chance for the combined results were 10 billion to one. Between 1985 and 1987, ganzfeld experiments were improved methodologically to a point where most skeptics could not find fault. Studies were independently replicated in eight different settings around the world. By the end of the 1990s, the vast majority of studies reported hit rates in the range of 30 to 35 percent, well in excess of the 25 percent chance hit rate. The odds of the results occurring by chance were over a trillion to one. (Radin, 1997).

In short, the experimental evidence for telepathy/clairvoyance is robust. Anyone who makes a fair and thorough appraisal of the evidence, with full attention to experimental methodology, is compelled to conclude that information is being transferred between sender and receiver (telepathy), or between stimulus and receiver (clairvoyance), in a manner that cannot be explained by presentday science. There are no known laws of physics that can explain the acausal, “nonlocal” nature of psi processes.

### *Field-Consciousness Experiments*

While the existence of telepathy supports the existence of a unity of consciousness across distance, even more compelling is the evidence for group consciousness effects, often referred to as “field-consciousness” effects by investigators. A series of experiments, pioneered by Dr. Roger Nelson at Princeton University and replicated by Professor Dick Bierman at the University of Amsterdam, have investigated this phenomenon. Dean Radin has also done this type of experiment and reported the results in his widely respected review of the entire field of parapsychology, *The Conscious Universe*. Field-consciousness experiments suggest that groups of people, ranging from a small number in a workshop to billions watching the same television program, can have consistent effects on the physical world. The broad implication is that there is a fundamental interconnectedness among all minds and indeed between all things.

The experimental paradigm for field-consciousness experiments is, in essence, to observe the behavior of random phenomena, in particular,

random-number generators, during events where a group's attention is focused on a common object or event. Random-number generators simulate the process of tossing a coin, generating zeros and ones totally randomly at the rate of 400 tosses every six seconds. Over periods of time of an hour or longer, the expected numbers of zeros and ones very closely approximate 50-50. If random-number generators are observed during times when a large number of people are all focusing on the same thing, the expected distribution of zeros and ones typically departs from chance. For example, in a study that observed random-number generators during the 1995 Academy Awards broadcast, watched by approximately 1 billion people all over the world, the machines behaved in a significantly nonrandom fashion during the broadcast as compared with the hour preceding and the hour following the broadcast. The odds against chance for what was observed to happen exceeded 100 to 1. Similar results have been found for other events that drew the attention of billions of people around the world at the same time, such as the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games, and the hours following the 9/11 disaster in 2001.

These field-consciousness experiments imply not only that something like a group consciousness—a unity of minds—exists, but that it can exert an influence on physical events. Such impact of group consciousness on material events implies not only an interdependence of minds but a potential interdependence of all things, mental and physical. Summarizing the results of field-consciousness experiments, Dean Radin notes, "The common link between mind and matter, as observed in these experiments, is *order*. Order expressed in the mind is related to focused attention, and order in matter is related to decreases in randomness." (Radin, 1997).

He goes on to note that the experiments provide evidence for Jung's concept of synchronicity, the nonrandom occurrence of a meaningful correspondence between mental and physical events. More is said about synchronicity in the essay, "Symbolic Connections."

What are the broader implications of this group consciousness effect? On the negative side, does the anger and despair of millions of impoverished and disenfranchised people throughout the world have a disruptive effect on the collective consciousness of mankind? Alternatively, does the existence of millions of people meditating and raising their consciousness have a collective positive effect, as proponents of transcendental meditation (TM) have proposed? In the balance, is the collective consciousness of our planet skewed more in a negative or positive direction at the current time in history? The reader is encouraged to tune in to the difference between the "energy" or "feel" of things on worldwide holidays, such as Christmas or Easter, as opposed to the days following natural disasters severe enough to receive global coverage. A difference is easily noted.

## Parallel Between Paranormal Events and Nonlocality in Physics

In physics, the existence of nonlocal events is well accepted. The spin of one particle changes in a way that is identical to that of another, separate particle at *exactly the same time*, so that it is impossible that any information

could have been transmitted from one particle to the other. Such a connection is acausal and instantaneous, meaning it cannot be explained in terms of any physical causes operating in the immediate space-time vicinity—hence the term “nonlocal event.” Physicist David Bohm theorizes more generally that we cannot fully account for the universe in terms of discrete particles or fields; instead, everything must be interconnected at a deep level—what he calls the “implicate order”—underlying the visible universe of ostensibly separate things (Bohm, 1980).

Psi processes—telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition—suggest the existence of nonlocal events in the global field of consciousness. It appears information can be mediated nonlocally between two different points in the field of consciousness quite apart from the constraints of space and time. Remote viewing (clairvoyance) over vast distances overcomes limitations of space. Precognition of future events overcomes time. The mechanism of such events is unknown but transcends ordinary causality as well as the four types of forces known to physics. Instead, the connections appear to be “synchronistic” (in Jung’s sense of the word) and based on *meaning*, rather than being mechanistic. They occur along lines of *personal significance rather than causal sequence*. One mind instantaneously picks up on something important happening to a loved one at a distance (telepathy occurs more often between people who are personally connected in some way). An event foreseen in the future is of personal significance to the one who “sees” it.

Can psi processes be explained in terms of quantum physics, or any future form of physics? While Dean Radin, a scientist who conducts studies about

consciousness, would like to think so, some question remains about the very possibility of doing so. Physics, by its very nature, studies observable physical phenomena in space-time. Psi processes, on the other hand, occur in the domain of consciousness. Consciousness, by its nature, is not localizable in space; we can only experience it in the moment by *being* it. Whether physics can ever fully grasp and explain consciousness is an open question. Perhaps consciousness can only be understood on its own terms. From a scientific standpoint, we can create models of how it might work, but we cannot really investigate it scientifically because it is not localizable in space-time for us to observe. In fact, as Kant pointed out long ago, it is very difficult for us to even *conceive* of phenomena except in terms of the categories of substance, space, and time. At best, then, we have a parallel between entangled particles in quantum physics and entangled minds in telepathy. Perhaps they offer us two lenses—at the micro and macro level—through which we can begin to appreciate the ultimate unity and interconnectedness of all things.

## *Implications*

Two important implications follow from the concept of the unity of consciousness.

First, if all minds are deeply interconnected, then it might be said that each of us is a “cell” in the collective “body” of human consciousness. If this is so, then each of us can potentially make a contribution to the whole.

Whatever each of us does to heal our own awareness—to cultivate peace

within ourselves—will have some impact, however small, upon the whole of humanity. If a large enough number of individuals are able to live at relative peace with themselves, there may well be a ripple effect for the world at large. On the other hand, the larger the number of people on the planet living in stress, despair, or violence, the more chaotic or turbulent the collective consciousness of humanity may become.

Second, if an underlying unity indeed exists, then all differences among human beings due to gender, age, race, ethnic group, culture, nationality, and religion are relative. *At the deepest level we are all one and the same—* emanations of the same consciousness that pervades everything and extends beyond the physical world. In short, whatever we do, for better or worse, to another person, we do to ourselves. So the Golden Rule—the moral imperative found in all of the world’s religions (“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”)—may in fact reflect the fundamental structure of reality. Christ’s statement “Even as you do it unto the least of them, you do it unto me” explicitly conveys the fundamental unity of all consciousness. This idea of a universal and natural ethics, based directly on the underlying structure of reality, is explored further in the essay “Natural Ethics.”

## *Conclusion*

Acting with love and compassion toward our fellow human beings is not just a universal moral imperative. It follows directly from the inherent structure of reality, in which all consciousness—though seemingly separated by distinct physical bodies—is actually one unified field. Gradually

awakening or global consciousness is a step toward a wider recognition of the truth. By moving beyond self-interest to care for the environment and all humanity, each of us can begin to embody this deep connection for the entire world.

## *References*

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