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REALITY SHIFTS

What happens to those who slip between the cracks of time and space?

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Perception determines "truth." We invent our own reality through our own perceptions and others', and by accepting what appears to be real as real.

History is filled with stories of people who, in "slipping between the cracks" of their own consciousness (thus altering how they perceived the world around them) uncovered different ways to experience reality. What they accomplished in doing this made an impact on society. You and I, all of us, have profited again and again because this happened.

Chester F. Carlson, for example, inventor of the Xerox duplication process and founder of the Xerox Corporation, was a devotee of a certain trance medium who channeled spirit beings. While attending a series of sessions with the woman, he eventually "received" the photocopy process from the spirit beings she contacted. After experimenting with the technique and making a few adjustments, the Xerox process was born, along with a multi-billion-dollar company.

George Washington Carver took the peanut, until then used as hog food, and the exotic and neglected sweet potato, and turned them into hundreds of products, including cosmetics, grease, printer's ink, coffee, and peanut butter. Carver said he got his answers by walking in the woods at four in the morning. "Nature is the greatest teacher and I learn from her best when others are asleep," he said. "In the still hours before sunrise, God tells me of the plans I am to fulfill."

How did George Washington Carver communicate with God during the wee hours of morning? He said it himself - through the assistance of angels and fairies. And he isn't the only one to make such a claim. Peter and Eileen Caddy

and their colleague Dorothy Maclean give the same credits in describing the work they accomplished.

This troupe, along with Caddy's three sons, took up residence near an inlet to the North Sea at Findhorn, Scotland, for the purpose of setting up a co-creative link between themselves and nature intelligences - that is to say, angels (what they later called "devas") and fairies ("nature spirits"). They became willing workers with nature's own in an attempt to co-create a garden the likes of which would defy every known rule of convention and climate. That was 1962. Today, the Findhorn Gardens regularly draw people from across the globe to tour the premises and take classes at Cluny Hill College, classes on how to communicate with angelic forces and helper spirits while at the same time enhancing one's own sense of spirituality.

The people I have mentioned came to perceive reality from a vantage point other than the norm; then they used what they gained from that experience to benefit others.

Different ways of experiencing reality happen when individuals expand their consciousness. Whether accidental or on purpose, that shift in perception also alters the meaning and the importance of time and space.

NATIVE RUNNERS EXPAND REALITY

Documented cases of native runners, especially those in North and South America, illustrate this. In Peter Nabokov's book *Indian Running*, an anthropologist by the name of George Laird described what happened to one runner who lived in the southwestern part of the United States:

"One morning he left his friends at Cotton Wood Island in Nevada and said he was going to the mouth of the Gila River in southern Arizona. He didn't want anyone else along, but when he was out of sight, the others began tracking him. Beyond the nearby dunes his stride changed. The tracks looked as if he had just been staggering along, taking giant steps, his feet touching the ground at long irregular intervals, leaving prints that became further and further apart and lighter and lighter in the sand. When they got to Fort Yuma they learned that he had arrived at sunrise of the same day he had left them," thus arriving before he departed. The runner's altered perception enabled him to accomplish this feat; he did not allow himself to be bound by normal perceptions of time and space.

Let's not forget the Australian aborigines. Theirs is the oldest continually existing culture on Earth (around for at least 50,000 years), and they maintain an understanding of time and space - of reality - that deserves our attention.

What they call "dreaming" has little to do with sleep or dreams which occur during sleep. Dreaming for them is actually more akin to a type of "flow" where one becomes whatever is focused on and suddenly knows whatever needs to be known at the moment. Aborigines sometimes use drugs to achieve this state but, more often than not, drumming,

chanting, rhythmic movements, and certain other sounds and rituals suffice. In this state of consciousness participants seem to "merge with" or "enter into" soil, rocks, animals, sky, or whatever else they focus on - including the "Inbetween" (what appears to exist between time and space, as if through a crack in creation).

These people believe reality consists of two space/time continua, not one - that which can be experienced during wake time and that during dream time, with dream time slightly ahead of its counterpart, yet capable of merging into all time, of what Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Gary Snyder calls "everywhen."

To Australian aborigines, wake time is where learning is acted out and utilized, but dream time is where learning is first acquired. For them, dream time is the place where all possibilities and all memory reside. Stories are told of aborigines who physically appear and disappear as they slip back and forth from one continuum to the other, from the here and now to the alternate universes they believe exist and the everywhen they know awaits them.

Wise ones, be they monks or shamans or healers or mystics, are like this. They know life extends beyond the boundaries of perception. Yet perception itself can be flawed.

Yes, it is a fact that individuals and societies have always organized the cosmos to fit their own preferred beliefs. This is what defines the relationship between heresy (independent thinking) and orthodoxy (mutually accepted bias). But it is also a fact that the bizarre can intrude upon one's life so dramatically that one is forced to shift one's awareness of real versus unreal.

FICTION CAN FORETELL REALITY

Reality shifts (sometimes called coincidences) take on many guises. Fiction, for example, sometimes foretells reality. Were the authors of prophetic works inspired by altered perceptions of reality?

*The popular movie China Syndrome, starring Jane Fonda, depicted a nuclear facility meltdown. Three weeks after the movie opened, the same kind of disaster actually happened at Three Mile Island near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

*The 1961 novel Strangers in a Strange Land, written by Robert A. Heinlein, told the story of a global chief executive who made decisions based on his wife's advice, advice she obtained from regular consultations with a San Francisco astrologer. In 1988, media headlines carried the story that Nancy Reagan frequently consulted a San Francisco astrologer, and that the advice she passed along to her husband Ronald Reagan, then President of the United States, was based on those consultations.

*The novel Futility, an 1898 creation of Morgan Robertson, detailed the sinking of an unsinkable ship, the largest vessel afloat. This imaginary ship, named Titan, collided

with an iceberg during April, resulting in a high loss of life because the ship carried too few lifeboats. Fourteen years later, with uncanny similarities, the real ship Titanic re-created what happened in the novel: The two ships had almost identical names; both ships were designated unsinkable; both were touted as the largest ships at sea; both collided with icebergs in April; both resulted in many deaths due to a shortage of lifeboats. Plus, both had strikingly similar floor plans and technical descriptions.

*Radio broadcaster Paul Harvey'y aired a grim tale of three shipwrecked sailors and one cabin boy, adrift and facing starvation, who drew lots to see who would forfeit his life so the others could survive. The contest was rigged to make certain the cabin boy, Richard Parker, would lose.

Evidence used at the subsequent court trial that convicted all three of murder and cannibalism included a story written by Edgar Allen Poe. Titled The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, Poe's tale described three shipwrecked sailors who rigged a drawing of lots, then killed and ate their cabin boy companion, Richard Parker. Poe's story, which so accurately described the drama, every detail as it actually happened - including the victim's correct name - was written and published 46 years before the event happened, even before the participants were born.

The astonishing ability of fiction to accurately foreshadow what physically occurs happens more often than you might think. It's almost as if on some level, knowingly or unknowingly, consistently or occasionally, individuals can tap into or stumble across other dimensions of reality, as well as knowledge of a predestined or potential future.

Remarkable reality shifts also occur that cannot be correlated with any sort of imaginings:

*Brad Steiger, in his book The Reality Game and How to Win It, tells about Charles W. Ingersoll of Cloquet, Minnesota, who appeared in a travelogue made and copyrighted by Castle Films in 1948. Ingersoll could be seen leaning over the rim of the Grand Canyon taking pictures with his 35mm camera. Yet Ingersoll did not go to the Grand Canyon in 1948. He had planned to do so, but his plans changed and his first trip there was made in 1955, when he took with him a newly purchased camera manufactured the same year of his trip.

A week after his return, he chanced upon the old travelogue in a store and bought it, discovering to his utter amazement that the film clearly showed him there in 1948 - holding a camera that did not exist until 1955. An investigation verified the incident and the dates, but no explanation was ever offered as to how Ingersoll could have appeared in a film showing him at a site seven years before he got there.

*On October 21, 1987, Claude and Ellen Thorlin were sitting at breakfast. Ellen heard a disembodied voice ask her to tune in Channel 4 on their television set. Even though that channel did not receive broadcast transmissions in their

area, Ellen turned the set on. There she saw the face of their dear friend and colleague, Friedrich Jergenson, a well-known Swedish documentary filmmaker and the father of EVP (electronic voice communication with spirits). Ellen was shocked; Claude snapped a photo that recorded the image and the time - 1:22 p.m. That time was 22 minutes into Jergenson's funeral service that was occurring 420 miles away, a funeral service the Thorlins had been unable to attend.

*When T.L. of Fort Worth, Texas, was 21 years old, he borrowed his parents' car for a drive from Darby, Montana, to Missoula, to visit friends. Staying later than expected, he found himself speeding back to Darby between one and two in the morning. At a place where the road wound around hills paralleling the river channel, the car headlights suddenly picked up a herd of 20 to 30 horses sauntering across the highway. With no time to hit his brakes and no place to pull off the road, TL hoped to avoid a collision by driving between the animals. Two large horses stopped directly in front of his path. The inevitable seemed his fate until, in the flash of an instant, TL found himself well beyond the herd, driving as if nothing unusual had happened. To this day he cannot explain how he missed hitting the horses. "It was as if I and my car were 'transported' to the other side of the herd," he said.

Each of these "coincidences" involved people as real as you and me, on days that began as ordinary days.

CHANGING OUR AWARENESS

Are these events merely coincidences? Too much evidence from too many sources contradicts this idea. Something else is going on here.

The events described in this article underscored moments when subjective reality overlaid objective reality to determine experience. And when that happened, the future easily surfaced. This peculiarity occurred automatically, without provocation, and regardless of logic. What we call time -past, present, future - ceased to be sequential for these people and took on the aspect of simultaneity.

All of the cases - whether involving aboriginal or present-day societies, fictional or non-fictional themes - centered on men and women who encountered alternate versions of time and space. What occurred changed their perception of the world. It also changed their awareness of "future."

P.M.H. Atwater adapted this excerpt from her book, *Future Memory: How Those Who See the Future Shed New Light on the Working of the Human Mind* (Birch Lane Press, New York, 1996) especially for FATE. Due out in paperback Fall 1999 through Hampton Roads Publishing.

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