

# How to Go Out of Your Mind and Come Back Again

Joseph Campbell, Robert Anton Wilson, and  
The Art and Science of Conscious Evolution

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“The Great Tao is most often found with parents who are willing to learn from their children”

Lao Tse

## Acknowledgments

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## Key Definitions

**Mind/Brain** The sum of natural and cultural programming in the central nervous system. In other words, the biology and language that determine how you think, feel, and perceive reality.

**Consciousness/Awareness.** There is no fixed definition of these terms, and I use them interchangeably. But mainly I will use it in this essay to differentiate from mind. Awareness is not the body, nor the mind, but that which *experiences* them. In other words, it is what brings inner and outer reality together.

**Expanded Awareness/Self-Realization/Higher Consciousness.** A general term for something that escapes definition. In a nutshell, it is the experience of being much more conscious, or aware, than in 'normal' consciousness; of being everything, the ALL, totally undifferentiated, even from this page and the electrons that constitute it - and it can therefore not be contained in a word. I will try to use the terms 'expanded awareness' or 'consciousness expansion' as much as possible, because the adjective 'higher' in higher consciousness implies a hierarchy of consciousness which I do not wish to convey. Alternate names include enlightenment, illumination, mystical experience, religious experience, epiphany, transcendence, ascension, opening the third eye, ultimate reality, tripping, self-metaprogramming, mythogenesis, and more.

**Science.** General term for rationalism, empiricism, logic, and all other left-brain tendencies. With regards to consciousness, it is the system that takes apart the mind to study it piece by piece.

**Art.** General term for creative expression in any medium and all other right-brain tendencies. With regards to consciousness, it is the aspect that brings the mind together into a new whole that has been intuitively envisioned.

**Reality Tunnel.** The mental system which on the one hand is unique to each individual, determining how he or she interacts with reality, and on the other hand connects us with those who have similar beliefs. This includes language, psychological imprints and conditioning, religious beliefs, etc. The key to this concept is that your reality tunnel is mostly unconscious until you experience it from the 'outside'. Alternate terms include personal mythology, culture, operating system, mental software, or thought parameters.

**Mainstream.** A useful but generalized term to describe common knowledge, common sense, and the institutionalized opinions of the day. In reality, the mainstream isn't quite so monocultural, but for the sake of simplicity a line is drawn to contain it.

**Counterculture.** A generalized term for the marginalized and self-marginalized subgroup in society that is different from if not opposed to the mainstream. Often characterized as the 'dissenting youth' and their intellectual and artistic forbears. Think Bohemians, Beatniks, hippies, anti-war protesters, ravers.

## Abstract

This paper studies some of the main aspects of the so-called twentieth century counterculture, as displayed in the work of two of its most influential authors – the mythologist Joseph Campbell, and the philosopher of science Robert Anton Wilson. Step by step, a comparative approach reveals their common methodology for expanding one's consciousness. This method, the art and science of conscious evolution, is a guide, a way in and out of the mystical experience. To detail the nature of the mystical experience, and the ways in which it is useful to a scientific mindset, this paper describes the physical, psychological, and linguistic techniques that are embraced by the counterculture. These techniques are claimed not only to alter consciousness, by changing one's perception of the world and of oneself, but to help determine the course of evolution on a day to day, moment to moment basis.

The argument that is presented in this paper is that counterculture perspectives are not only an eclectic mix of Eastern mystical philosophies of enlightenment, shamanism, ancient mythologies, and contemporary physical and

psychological sciences - to name a few - but a viable modern approach to knowledge, culture, and community. The paper concludes by arguing for the adoption of this approach in a mainstream academic setting.

## Foreword

According to scientific theory, your mind is the result of billions of years of evolution. Still, you will be lucky in your short life to become aware of your *own* individual contribution to this process. In the enormous expanse of time and space of the universe, let alone eternity and infinity, many of us feel we exist only in the blink of an eye. And, since you did not ask to be here, you are merely the victim of circumstance. What we call Reality – which is *out here*, even in the paper you are reading right now – is a mystery, but we have stopped wondering how it got here, and why we are living it. So the same science which taught us the wonders of evolution has stopped us from wondering any further.

This, at least, is how many children grow up today; with the general sense that life and the universe are meaningless, disconnected, and random. We live on a rock in space, without knowing where we came from or where we are going, and the things that matter most are money, fame and power. It seems a sad state of affairs for something which took billions of years to evolve. But it is, of course, not the whole story. As we grow, we may grow tired of the answers we have been given; the assumptions we have been taught to accept. We may come to understand that questioning Reality starts with questioning ourselves. And so there are people who invest great energy to discover, from the inside out, the mechanisms and mysteries of their own mind. Their quest for self-knowledge, which takes them beyond a meaningless existence, seeks truth, or meaning, within – not in the established truths of science or religion. From shamans, to prophets, to philosophers, to psychologists, these people actively seek revelations and deeper insights into their own nature, and that of the universe itself.<sup>1</sup>

According to most reports, there is no more direct way to do this than to seek and experience what is known as a mystical experience: to attain an expansion of consciousness, also known as gnosis, religious ecstasy, illumination, enlightenment, *ultimate reality*. And this ultimate reality, it is eventually realized, is You, capital Y – not you, the animal with a mind of its own, but You, the source and creator of everything.

This, at least, is the answer brought back by the authors I wish to compare here: namely, the mythologist Joseph Campbell and the philosopher of science Robert Anton Wilson. As 'spiritual guides' – one mainstream, the other countercultural – for an artistic and intellectual audience, their message was to seek out and connect to the mystery dimension of existence. To ask the deeper questions, so that living in itself becomes a wondrous act. Until then, you are under a spell cast by your mind – preprogrammed, and predetermined in your ability to think and feel – which limits you in determining for yourself what is meaningful and what is meaningless.<sup>2</sup>

In the past, this same message would have led its announcers straight to the cross, the stake, the hemlock, or the madhouse; or, if they were lucky, to the forefront of a cult. Already in Plato's time – around 400BC – there seems to have been a social mistrust against the mystical experience. In the dialog of the *Phaedrus* it is called 'Divine Madness,' and the great Plato had to explain to his fellow Greeks why it is *not* the same as being insane.<sup>3</sup> Then as now, spiritually transformed people appeared

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<sup>1</sup> Mystical realization has been known to occur spontaneously, but we will be concerned mostly with *induced* mystical experience.

<sup>2</sup> Note that this realization has to be linked to expanded, or mystical awareness. “Yes I Am God, but that "I" is not the ego,” writes Douglas Rushkoff. Similarly, Campbell writes in *The Power of Myth*, p.211, “If you're thinking “I here, in my physical presence and in my temporal character, am God,” then you are mad and have short-circuited the experience. You are God, not in your ego, but in your deepest being.”

<sup>3</sup> In fact, he considered it greater still than reason, for which Western culture ironically credits him. See *Phaedrus*

rather weird and irrational to the rest of the world.<sup>4</sup> But in the twentieth century, especially since the 1960s, altered states of consciousness have become more open, more available, and more reliable than ever before. Take the right drug, use the right brain tuning machine, or learn a yogic breathing technique, and just about anybody can have a mystical experience. Popular intellectuals and scientists such as Alan Watts, Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, Aldous Huxley, Fritjof Capra, and Carl G. Jung have transformed into gurus, and taken large audiences along with them on their trips into Eastern philosophy, Zen meditation, psychedelics, alchemy, Quantum physics, chaos math, fractal geometry, shamanism, mantras, tantras, and so on.

Most of this movement has been decidedly non-academic. Instead, it is often associated with the counterculture, or with the New Age, which would seem to put it at a lower level than that of the purely intellectual or scientific. However, its repercussions are important enough to merit academic study. And the question has to be asked: why isn't it academic? Everything from pop culture, to science, to athletics has been affected in some way; indeed, directly or indirectly, science itself is inspiring the creation of entirely new worldviews. But the bias of our intellectual institutions is geared towards pure rationality, and this tends to smother the open dialog with non-rational perspectives.<sup>5</sup> More importantly, it may even limit the ability to understand that, great though it is, there are more perspectives than the rational.

The challenge, as ever, is to describe the euphoria and the insights that come with an expanded state of awareness, and to contain them without confusing the predominantly rationalistic, scientific mindset of the modern age. It is notoriously difficult, and even impossible in an absolute sense. One has to have had the experience oneself before being able to understand what is being described. Ask yourself, for instance: if, according to the common expression, you can go “out of your mind,” where do you go? Where *can* you go? What have you ever known outside of your own individual experience? This is murky territory, where science and logic cannot retain their foothold, and so those who have experienced it are usually moved to answer in vague religious terms. For example that when you go out of your mind, you go *into* the mind of 'God', into cosmic consciousness.

But for most of us, these words are still meaningless. So how do we arrive at a common understanding, or a sensible model of consciousness with which rationalists, non-rationalists, and everyone in between can communicate on an equal level? The answer to this question, specifically, is why I have chosen to compare Joseph Campbell and Robert Anton Wilson. Their approach has deeply grounded parallels. And what we need to do, they tell us, is to actually go out and *do it*. Nothing can substitute for the experience. Their writings themselves are an afterthought to their own experience; they are clues, brought back to show how an expanded awareness can be integrated into everyday life.

## **1. Introduction**

Going out of your mind, *and* coming back again – that's not an easy thing to do. Using mystical experience as a psychological tool, but without succumbing to religious mania or other delusions, doesn't sound like an everyday occupation. But this is exactly what Joseph Campbell and Robert Anton Wilson teach; the basic way to *normalize* higher consciousness, or the expansion of awareness. Like Timothy Leary, prophet of the countercultural LSD generation wrote, they believe that consciousness

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<sup>4</sup> We are speaking in general of the Western world, as there are many cultures that react quite differently

<sup>5</sup> For example, a Dutch professor and philosopher (Bas Haring on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009) recently claimed he would give a failing mark to anyone who even mentioned non-rational perspectives in his university (Leiden University).

and intelligence can be systematically expanded.<sup>6</sup>

Say that, like millions of Westerners since the 1960s, you've had a mystical experience, a higher vision of reality, and now you want to be able to do it again – except you want to do it on your own, without a guru, or drugs, or having to isolate yourself from the world like a monk.<sup>7</sup> Realistically, living in the distractions of modern society, you cannot achieve a constant euphoria, total enlightenment, or blissful identity with the entire universe. But there are ways to come close – to shake loose of your automatic behavior, and play a freer game. For the modern counterculture, Campbell and Wilson are two of the typical sources of information on how to do this. They have written what can be called operating manuals for de-conditioning the nervous system: non-religious, science-inspired textbooks on mastering the art - and the science - of conscious evolution.

Conscious evolution opens the individual up to the bigger picture, and the bigger picture that Wilson and Campbell describe involves all space, and all time; it even involves you, right now. By showing you how you are co-creating your sense of reality, they awaken their audience to their own role in the evolution of reality itself. Myth, religion, and even science have given us stories to live by, narratives pasted onto reality to provide meaningful roles in this evolution. By describing this process of creating meaning from a secular, pluralistic, relativistic, and most importantly of all an enlightened point of view, they have created a *meta- psychology*; a model that any user can take to themselves and their own beliefs in their own way. Not unlike the Buddha - who claimed to teach not Buddhism, but the *way* to Buddhism - Campbell and Wilson teach you how to do it yourself, consciously, intelligently, and compassionately.

Campbell's and Wilson's basic method – the “how” of how to go out of your mind and come back again – is concealed within their many volumes of work. There is no prior research comparing these two scholars, and no academic work of note that studies Wilson at all. Therefore, it is my goal to extract the basic formula of conscious evolution through a careful research and comparison of their primary texts. I will also use the support of a number of similar authors from the Western counterculture, as well as any secondary research on the topic of consciousness change in the twentieth century. But the following text is mostly my own interpretation of their work – a simplification of the simplest road to conscious evolution, which is regrettably not in any way a simple thing.

In chapter one, I will set up the biographical background on Campbell and Wilson, and outline the shared messages, motivations, and methods of their work. Chapter two compares the different models of consciousness – the maps of how your mind works – that Campbell and Wilson use. Then, in Chapter three, we will look at the neurological methods they have laid out for changing consciousness, and the difficulties and pitfalls that accompany it. Next, in Chapter four, we will look at the art of playing with the mind's software after a change of awareness; the way to stay 'high' after a peak experience. Chapter five sums up the basic method of conscious evolution, and, finally, Chapter six discusses its relevance for the modern world and its people. In the end, after comparing these two comparative researchers and detailing their model of consciousness expansion, I hope to have extracted the basic elements of conscious evolution that are being spread by the counterculture as a model for further research.

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<sup>6</sup> Leary, *Flashbacks*, p.33

<sup>7</sup> As Jerry Garcia of the *Grateful Dead* says, “Nobody stopped thinking about those psychedelic experiences. Once you’ve been to some of those places, you think, ‘How can I get back there again but make it a little easier on myself?’” Quoted in *Rolling Stone*, November 30, 1989



## 1.1 Context, Research Methods, and Sources

Any study of consciousness, language, and evolution necessarily draws on history, because history reflects these issues back on us. When looked at from 'above', through a psychological or metahistorical approach, history presents itself as a living record of humanity's own neurological evolution. It is therefore a mirror unto our own minds. Such a metahistorical study helps us understand ourselves and our peers, past and present. This is also a motivation to find out, as a comparativist, in what way the specialized areas of science and other forms of knowledge connect. While the diverse realms of religion, science, psychology, mythology, and linguistics would be hard to reconcile in any understanding, this essay offers an intuitive yet structured account of just such a reconciliation.

Research on the mystical, or religious experience, begins with religious studies. A major focus of today's religious studies is on the effects of secularization and pluralism on culture and society in the last centuries. Now, from a countercultural perspective, consciousness change – usually a major change in awareness which leads to a secular, pluralist, and 'mystical' awareness – is a driving force within this trend. But consciousness change has in fact been a familiar, if not typical, phenomenon throughout history. Any religion, mythology, cult, or shamanic tradition is likely to have roots in the vision unlocked in altered states of consciousness. Western music, the arts, literature, and even modern technology have been influenced by consciousness altering techniques. Just think of The Beatles, Salvador Dali, Allen Ginsberg, or Steve Jobs. At the same time, the scientific study of altered states of consciousness spans at least a few centuries. Famous psychologists such as William James, who wrote *On the Variety of Religious Experiences* (1902), and Sigmund Freud, who experimented with cocaine, contributed to the research, as did anthropologists such as Mircea Eliade and his famous work *Shamanism*. Charles T. Tart's *Altered States of Consciousness* (1969) still provides a comprehensive overview of experiences from meditation, to dreams, to psychedelics and the earliest EEG studies on brain changing individuals.

Studies have also been made of the modern history of consciousness change. Christopher Partridge's *The Sacralization of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture* (2005), for example, traces the broader path and impact of different countercultural movements, placing the origin of the modern counterculture in the psychedelic and Orientalist studies of an intellectual elite of the 1950s – with writers such as Aldous Huxley at the source. Partridge envisions it as a top down re-introduction of the West to consciousness change, re-introducing it to its Pagan roots through Eastern spirituality and drugs. However, he believes this quickly became corrupted from its intellectual origins and grew into the New Age and its watered-down relations.<sup>8</sup>

Since there are many taboos involved with consciousness change, the topic is highly controversial. Even Partridge doesn't shirk from judging certain aspects of its history. It would be nice to be able to circumvent the controversy, and simply focus on the scientific study of consciousness change. However, one of the most important approaches - psychedelics - has been criminalized and barred from study right round the globe for the last few decades. So what is left to research today? Perhaps the most important references are the members of the counterculture – both scientists and laymen. They take information from the sciences, humanities, and personal experience to explain the history and the current state of mankind and its psyche. While they are themselves controversial, I do not consider it controversial to study them and their ideas. On the contrary, I believe it is time that they were appropriated by academics for the enrichment of scholarship and common knowledge.

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the history of the counterculture, see also Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*

The most visible members of the community of conscious 'evolutionaries', such as Robert Anton Wilson, Terence McKenna, Timothy Leary, Alan Watts, Ram Dass/Richard Alpert, and Daniel Pinchbeck, have steered well clear of the academic community. That, or they were fired from it. However, as marginalized thinkers, they can provide what the mainstream cannot; radical, 'taboo,' and enlightening knowledge. This gives them the freedom to create their own structure of knowledge, and to explore in directions that academics do not. It is this broadness of their vision that interests me. Not the controversy, nor the detailed laboratory research, but the conceptual meta-theories that are *so* different from the mainstream, and that seem to pop up time and time again from the experience of expanded awareness.

The contemporary counterculture is a broad, dynamic movement which cannot be pegged down to any single source. It is informed by, and perhaps in turn informs the popular, or mainstream culture through its creative processes. According to media theorist Douglas Rushkoff, the counterculture is in fact what feeds the consumption needs of the mainstream culture – for example, by making a marketplace for spiritual goods and services through the New Age.<sup>9</sup> The intense growth of the counterculture is worth studying, as well as its background. While it is impossible to trace exactly, there are two general factors which I believe are common to the creation of the counterculture and its mindset.

First is the globalization, or expansion of knowledge. The counterculture is a melting pot of ancient, modern, Eastern, Western, indigenous, esoteric, and scientific knowledge. The effect on worldviews that is being created by this mixture is awesome, because, whether through Western eyes or not, it brings together all the languages and interpretations of reality that the world has to offer. In other words, history is culminating in a comparative, mutually illuminating whirlpool of perspectives.

The second factor that characterizes the counterculture – which also sets it apart as a more select, radical group than the general New Age movement – is its pursuit of radical changes in consciousness or awareness. The psychedelic revolution of the sixties and seventies made a huge impact on Western culture, as has the introduction of Yogic and other Eastern techniques. But psychedelic and post-psychedelic techniques seem to alter worldviews and perspectives to a far greater degree than others - which we will also see in the differences between Campbell and Wilson. In this sense, *counterculture* seems to be a misnomer. While they have disconnected from the culture they were given, they are not simply protesters or anarchists. They are making their *own* culture.

The counterculture is a quickly accelerating movement. How to trace it? Where to pinpoint the main influences? It is not my goal to cover such a broad area of history. I have already pointed out Partridge, who accomplishes this task relatively well. Instead, I have chosen two authors, who have both had a great influence in this cultural sector, to show how the two factors of the counterculture can be extracted: changing of awareness, and knowledge expansion. I have gone in depth into their primary sources, to show what I believe is the heart of this movement. Other authors have been found to present the same core factors. Secondary sources on altered states of consciousness, semantics, physics, and mythology have also been used. But the most novel factor, other than the comparison of Campbell and Wilson itself, is the study of Wilson. There is not yet any major study of him, and it is time that his impact on the counterculture is reviewed. Of course, there is much more research to be done on this author; including his impact on the arts, on individual scientists, philosophers, media theorists, and on the counterculture itself.

Campbell has been studied before, and even has his own posthumous research and education

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<sup>9</sup> Rushkoff at *Disinfocon 2000*

institution in place. Why study him? Campbell's influence on the counterculture, the New Age, the arts, and academic studies is considerable. Furthermore, though they are strong enough on their own, Campbell's works and words are a useful counterpoint to Wilson. His writings, which are more historically based than those of Wilson, demonstrate that what is being said in the counterculture is not entirely new. It is something that has always been around in some form or another. The only thing that changes, is *how* it is being said, and comparing Campbell and Wilson helps to demonstrate this.

According to Walter T. Stace, a philosopher who greatly influenced the study of mysticism since the 1950s, there are five shared characteristics of mystical experience. They are a sense of objectivity; a feeling of blessedness; an awareness of the holy; paradoxicality; and ineffability.<sup>10</sup> This last one is especially important. Ineffable means that it is incapable of being put into words. You cannot say “mystical experience,” or any other name to describe it, and actually convey what it means. As a result, a purely philosophical or purely scientific approach to the mystical experience tends to get rather complicated, futile, and self-contradictory. On the one hand, a combination of languages and approaches, as we will see, clarifies much more than any one on its own. But on the other hand, actually *having* the experience makes for a much less convoluted discussion. But there is of course a resistance to partaking, as it might affect a researcher's objectivity. One modern approach – the postmodern, or poststructural approach – is not to try it out, but to simply stand clear of any absolute statements. Postmodernists do not try to pinpoint the final scientific definition of what the expansion of awareness *is*. Instead they maintain a total skepticism which, Samuel Brainard says, has led to a “crisis of meaning:” a philosophical nihilism, where nothing is true.<sup>11</sup>

To the authors I present here, however, there is no such crisis to speak of – or, at least, the crisis seems to have been overcome through an evolution of sorts. First off, Campbell and Wilson did not shun the experience, so they learned for themselves which words to use. And secondly, the relativity of language and truth, which is an inherent aspect of mystical experience, seems to be a basic aspect of illuminated thinking. Like a scientist, absolutes can be avoided, and hunches about reality – or hypotheses – can be experimented with according to personal taste. Therefore, the 'crisis' of truth which modern academics and mystics throughout the ages have confronted is an invitation to a game, a game where the reward is personal growth. Learn the rules of this new game, and you can evolve from belief to belief. Criticisms can be accepted and contradictory ideas can be held without being intellectually dishonest.

It should be noted that this mental fluidity is also the source of the greatest criticism that can be leveled against Campbell, Wilson, and similar thinkers. It is the criticism of their dogmatic anti-dogmatism, which seems to preclude the admission of any superior system of thought. However, it should be made clear that Campbell and Wilson themselves do not *throw out* any system of thought either; instead, the relative virtues of a science, a religion, or a psychology are all analyzed and integrated. In this manner, the context of their work, and therefore that of this essay, is both time-bound to the twentieth century and at the same time unconfined in its outlook on human psychology across the ages – in contrast to the context-bound studies that are already available on the counterculture such as Partridge and Roszak.

Most researchers of altered states of consciousness, I have found, get stuck in problems of language, problems which make it difficult to approach expanded awareness concisely and

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<sup>10</sup> Almond, p.70

<sup>11</sup> Brainard, p.2

scientifically. The linguistics of altered states, which is a quantitative approach, is a very recent science, as Spivak writes.<sup>12</sup> But even here there is a fundamental problem: the problem of taking serious what someone says that they have experienced in an altered state. And this is where Robert Anton Wilson comes in. Wilson's writings have to be taken with a grain of salt, and with a very good sense of humor. He has written long works of fiction – often billed as post-psychedelic science-fiction – as well as autobiographical, theatrical, and psychological texts, and has conducted many lectures and interviews, written and spoken. Often he describes methods, experiments, and vocabularies tied to conscious evolution and mystical experience. But Wilson does not always make clear when he is being truthful, and when he is putting you on – you don't know when to take him seriously. While this may seem like a hindrance to academic research, I think it actually increases his clarity. Wilson plays with words on purpose, because altered states of consciousness play with one's sense of reality. He is trying to emulate this in his writing – to train his readers not to take any truth for granted.<sup>13</sup> I think the point of this style will become clearer in the course of the essay.

How does Campbell fit into the research? Campbell's interest in comparing the world's mythologies is not entirely unique. And his views on the underlying unity of religions are also not uncommon. Joachim Wach, Rudolf Otto, and Friedrich Schleiermacher have expressed similar thoughts. And Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an Indian statesman and philosopher, wrote of the unity of religions in light of mystical experience in the early twentieth century. Like Campbell, his greatest influence was that of Hinduism, a religion that incorporates many different views on reality.

However, for many who study the comparativism of such scholars, their claims defy common logic. Basically, they are countered with the argument that if one religion claims God is one way, and another religion claims God is another way, then they cannot both be equally true. Even if there is an underlying unity, and they both have *some* truth to them, says Philip Sherrard, one must be more true than the other.<sup>14</sup> This argument, however, is limited to a simple either-or logic. Metaphysical 'truths' should not be expected to fit into linear models like this. However, in a *pluralistic* logic, such as quantum logic in the West, or Mahayana Buddhist logic in the East, there are many ways to look at any single belief. Something can be not just either true or false, but true, and false, and meaningless, and indeterminate.

This expanded logic mimics the state of expanded consciousness, and in a way it *is* an expansion of consciousness. For example, you do not have to believe that God either exists or does not; you can recognize that he does exist, and that he also does not exist, and that he neither exists nor doesn't exist because you can't prove it, and that it is at the same time meaningless to even talk about it. Which answer is more 'true' depends on who's asking – and if they can maintain a plural perception of the truth. Now, while in Radhakrishnan's time this was still mostly an Eastern form of thinking, informed by mystical experience, by Campbell's time it was recognized by the likes of Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg in the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum physics, and by John von Neumann and others in the form of quantum logic. These physicists and engineers got to a pluralistic, or nondual point of view without any mystical experience. Of course, this Western, science-based precedent for a so-called “mystical” point of view makes the study of countercultural and mystical 'truths' that much more interesting. And what's more, it allows us to place Campbell at a key point in history as an academic scholar who expresses such views in the West.

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<sup>12</sup> Spivak, p.86

<sup>13</sup> Brainard has successfully used a similar technique. See Brainard, p.5 on keeping alive paradox as an inherent part of the mystery of consciousness.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Almond, p.14 This problem is known as the “conflicting truths” problem.

It is not my intention to discuss the existential or objective truth of Campbell's, Wilson's, or the rest of the counterculture's claims, nor that of expanded awareness in general. I will stay clear of philosophical debates as much as possible. Nor am I interested in discussing the controversies surrounding Campbell and his alleged Eurocentrism and antisemitism.<sup>15</sup> The fact that consciousness is such a subjective phenomenon, however, increases the importance of an interdisciplinary, comparative study. Conscious evolution is not solely a subject of scientific, or of historical importance; nor should it be confined to the counterculture. Its very interdependence on culture, psyche, and existence should be explored as widely as possible. I believe that comparing these two authors, who have widely different areas of study, will help bring out the basic aspects of conscious evolution. It will serve to simplify what is in fact an extremely challenging field of study, which has until now been necessarily esoteric and geared primarily towards those who have had the experience. I believe this is of primary interest within the academic world and outside – not to take the creativity and vitality out of the counterculture, which is primarily non-academic – but to broaden the mainstream insight and education on the topic.

## **2. Campbell and Wilson**

In comparing Campbell and Wilson, I have chosen two internationally known intellectuals to represent twentieth century approaches to consciousness expansion. They are generalists, or *polymaths*, as opposed to specialists, as they each have an impressive breadth of knowledge. These two have not had any 'better' experience of ecstasy than, for instance, the joyous revelers who preach the love of Jesus in town squares, or than the suicide bombers who willfully meet their own destruction. But their command of language, science, and religion makes them that much easier to relate to - and much more useful to learn from. Unlike the ecstatic revelers, their words are more likely to grab you, and unlike the suicide bombers, your response is not likely to be one of fear and hatred.

Campbell and Wilson – whom, as far as I know, never met, in word or in person<sup>16</sup> – have both made the experience of consciousness expansion the crucial factor in their life and writings. It is a starting point to their writings, and an entry point for many of their readers. So, actually living in expanded awareness is only the first step to many of the other topics they discuss. In fact, both Campbell and Wilson go so far as to depict this achievement of an expanded awareness as *the* evolutionary goal of humanity. They take you beyond the senses and the intellect, and beyond the adjustments of therapy, self-help magazines and so on, to a radically different perception of reality. And yet few if any would peg them as dangerous or raging lunatics.

There is of course a purpose to comparing Campbell and Wilson in this essay. And it is rather straightforward: while both deal with the radical topic of conscious evolution, and therefore inform members of the counterculture, Campbell is actually more 'mainstream,' or popular culture, while Wilson is more properly 'counterculture.' One of the paths to consciousness expansion in the counterculture which Wilson explores is that of mind-altering plant substances and psychedelic chemicals. But there are many ways to expand your consciousness, and though powerful, psychedelics are not a stand-alone technology – and, not to forget, there is a strong cultural bias against them. So Campbell, who is not a psychedelicist, acts as a counterbalance to Wilson, representing the more traditionally intellectual and conservative side of consciousness expansion.

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Lefkowitz, and Gill.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson does quote Campbell at least once, in *Coincidence – A Head Test*. Also, both Campbell and Wilson spent time and gave workshops at the Esalen Institute, a “humanistic education institute” in California. It was a major center for the Human Potential Movement in the 60s and 70s, which still teaches personal transformation.

In spite of this difference, Wilson and Campbell actually have very similar approaches to conscious evolution. The vocabulary and audience of these two writers may appear different on the surface, but the message, as we will see, is the same. It is a message that comes from the impulse to explore the depth of human existence, and to question all the beliefs and the taboos of the day. In the century when mass media, mass mind control, and ideological conflict reached new heights, it is no surprise that such an impulse should have arisen. They transcend labels, and are not confined to a politics, or a science, or a religion. Instead, they stress the need for greater compassion, intelligence, and consciousness.

In any other age, Campbell's and Wilson's work might have been regarded as divine revelation or spiritual doctrine. Or charlatanism, depending on the audience. Ultimately - even though they are immersed in history and science - these writers are trying to bring you closer to your own experience of 'the transcendent'. But they make no claims to greatness, or even to knowing the truth about anything. Somehow, they make their revelations without creating a new religion or a trendy spirituality. Instead, they invite their readers to think for themselves. And now I invite my readers to find out more about them.

## ***2.1 Campbell***

Joseph Campbell (March 26, 1904 – October 31, 1987), or Joe, to his friends, was a rather famous comparative mythologist. He was born out of a well-to-do Irish-American family in Idaho, where from a young age he became fascinated with Native American mythology. However, his family was Roman Catholic, and he grew up in a traditional religious environment, after which he went to a school for science. As a grown man, he says, he could look back with appreciation on his Catholic youth; but until that time, his studies in biology had created a rift in his mind between Church doctrine and the world of science. And native mythology remained on the sidelines.



*Illustration 1: Joseph Campbell*

Specializing in literature, Campbell traveled to Europe in the 1920s to complete his degree. Here he encountered the work of psychologist Carl Jung, one of Sigmund Freud's greatest students and competitors. This exposure, and a chance meeting with the Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti, changed his life. He returned to America just as the Great Depression began, and spent the next five years in a forest cabin, unemployed, reading hundreds of books about art, anthropology, biology, history, religion, philosophy, science, and psychology.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> By authors such as William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Franz Boaz, F.H. Cushing, Leo Frobenius, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Otto Rank, as well as Friedrich Bachofen, George Dumezil, Marija Gimbutas, Jose Ortega y Gasset, James

Campbell was determined to outline and prove a theory which he had discovered while reading a book on the Buddha, a book which Krishnamurti had given to him. It was the theory that the religious symbols of East and West are in fact the *same*, but that they are interpreted differently.<sup>18</sup> Any conflicts between them are merely surface problems, and misinterpretations of the symbols as facts.<sup>19</sup> Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, and Osiris, for example, have more in common than not, as they symbolize the same psychological truths and experiences. But Campbell could go much farther than surface details, and find the common meaning hinted at in things as diverse as Kundalini Yoga, Mesopotamian ziggurats, and the Axis Mundi.

Motivating this search for parallels was the basic question of why they existed. What does it mean that humans all over the planet come up with similar myths and symbols about reality? There were several theories to choose from,<sup>20</sup> but Campbell eventually settled on that of Carl Jung. The human psyche, said Jung, is based in the organs of the body. And since the body is virtually the same everywhere, the foundational energies of the psyche, its 'archetypes', are being expressed the same way in all the world's myths. This is why the same symbols and themes occur across the globe, and across time spans that have no historical connection. According to Campbell, Jung's was a scientific restatement of what the Hindus had already realized in the ninth century BC: "That all the deities are projections of psychological powers, and they are within you, not out there."<sup>21</sup>

Having gone deep into the the psychology of religion, Campbell spent his life spreading his insights to a broad, intellectual audience. Long before the popularization of his work in the 1980s – mainly through a series of television interviews with Bill Moyers on PBS – his harmonious vision had made him a great influence in the worlds of literature, art, comparative religion, and mythology.<sup>22</sup> His works on comparative mythology and religion are widely-read and have become part of the standard texts in the field. They bring a deeply psychological approach to the understanding of human myth-making, and how it relates to social and cultural realities. Billing his work as a "science of myth," he taught that the realities we believe in are self-imposed.<sup>23</sup> Basically, Campbell says that each myth can be seen as the mass interpretation of reality that a society holds. It is a map which guides its behavior. In this sense, even science itself belongs to the mythology that shapes a society; and Campbell gives it a mixed review.

At the age of thirty, after his forest retreat, Campbell was invited to become a professor at Sarah Lawrence, an all-women's college in New York. He accepted, and remained at this post until his retirement. His enthusiastic students soon forced him to look at another dimension of mythology – namely, his own connection to it. "What does the material mean to life?" he asked, and "What does it mean to me?" Campbell found that, until you ask these questions for yourself – as Jung did – you are living what he calls an "inauthentic life." You are expressing beliefs that you don't really have, and

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Joyce, and Thomas Mann

<sup>18</sup> Campbell, *The Hero's Journey; Sukhavati*.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Campbell says in *Sukhavati*: "There is no conflict between mysticism and science. But there is a conflict between the science of 2000BC and the science of 2000AD, and that's the mess in our religions."

<sup>20</sup> Otto Rank notes three basic models of comparative mythology: those of Adolf Bastian, Adolf Bauer, and Leo Frobenius. p.4-6

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, *The Hero's Journey*

<sup>22</sup> "The Hero," writes Robert Walter, Campbell's editor and president of the Joseph Campbell Foundation, "would prove to have a major influence on generations of creative artists—from the Abstract Expressionists in the 1950s to contemporary filmmakers today—and would, in time, come to be acclaimed as a classic."

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.28 "The science of myth is concerned with self-induced belief...the make believe of children."

expressing love that you don't really feel.<sup>24</sup>

Campbell addressed these introspective questions in his famous first book, published in 1949: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Here he applied Jungian psychology to a universal perspective. Jung had said that a psychologist should know mythology to be able to understand his patients.<sup>25</sup> Campbell turned the roles around, making psychology an integral aspect of mythology. Campbell could now collect and discuss the grand narratives – or 'monomyths' – of *all* of humanity, instead of those of just the individual patient. It seems straightforward: like any schizophrenic, an entire culture can believe its own delusions. By diving into the depths of our accepted truths like this, and exposing them as purposeful fictions of the human mind, Campbell felt he was giving people the key to unlocking their own imagination. It was the key to their own artistic ability, where they didn't have to be tormented by the contradictions of their given culture. Plurality, like the deities themselves, is in your head, and Campbell wanted to convey that you can read and write your experience of the world according to multiple mythological themes – as a tragedy or comedy, as morally Christian, as scientifically rational, or detachedly Zen. In this heightened state of consciousness, which at one time he called the “realm of the muses,” the inner and outer worlds come together, and the myths you believe in can be re-imagined.<sup>26</sup>

Campbell says of Carl Jung, who was perhaps his greatest influence, that Jung had discovered that he didn't know what mythology he was living by. Jung had then made it his life task to learn which myth it was, so he could better understand himself. This is a tale of Jung's liberation; of his self-realization. If you could do that for yourself, Campbell thought, and wake up to the fictions or myths which society and history have written *for* you, you can find “the beginning point for your *own* reconstruction.” After this turning point, says Campbell, your mythology is written *by* you.<sup>27</sup> And, Campbell believed, when you do this, the world actually moves in and helps.<sup>28</sup>

In an encyclopedic series of texts, called *The Masks of God*, Campbell wanders through all the countless ways in which religious consciousness has been described in the past. His examples and deconstructions always come down to the mystical 'fact' that each myth is like a mask: each thing, every idea, every illusion, even *you yourself*, are a mask of God.<sup>29</sup> So while all you see is a mask – words, a face, a paper, etc – it actually reveals to you a different aspect of the All. This is one of the big secrets of many mystical schools, and Campbell came to it simply: by reading widely with an open and inquisitive mind.

When you have a mystical awakening, you have the eyes to see what the masks of God point to, that somethingness without form, concept, or name. Wilson says “It's like meeting your own father in a crowd: you'll have no doubt whatsoever” about *whom* is here behind the mask.<sup>30</sup> Campbell seems to have found out. And after he did, mythology and religion were no longer ways of finding meaning in the universe. Logic and rational science would dismiss them as such, as mere psychological delusions.

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<sup>24</sup> Campbell, *Sukhavati*; *The Hero's Journey*

<sup>25</sup> Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p.67

<sup>26</sup> Campbell, *Sukhavati*

<sup>27</sup> Campbell, *Sukhavati*. My italics. “Through Freud, Jung, and Adler, and particularly Jung, it was realized that the figures of dream are really figures of personal mythologization. You're creating your own imagery related to the archetypes.”

<sup>28</sup> Campbell, *The Hero's journey*; *The Power of Myth*, p.120

<sup>29</sup> Wilson expresses the same thought in *Illuminatus*, p.488: “Of course, it's true of any human being. We're all allegories on the universe, different faces it wears in trying to decide what it really is.”

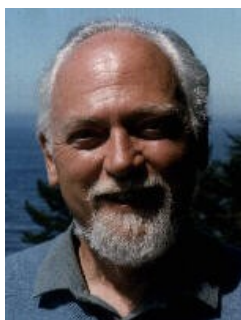
<sup>30</sup> Wilson, *Maybe Logic*



But actually, Campbell says, myth is a way of having an *experience of being alive*.<sup>31</sup> The words, the myths, the delusions, they bring you somewhere that is closed off to pure logic – they bring you to life, in all its depth. In Campbell's mind, all the world's mythologies are variations of the *one* story, of the living essence behind the mask – not to explain away the mystery of existence, but to connect us to it. The world around us *is* us, and the myth puts us back into that awareness, squarely in the moment of here and now.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.2 Wilson

Dr. Robert Anton Wilson (January 18, 1932 – January 11, 2007), known as Bob, or RAW to his fans, was a trained engineer and psychologist, and author of a massive range of fiction, non-fiction, articles, essays, poems, plays, and reference works. He was born to a working-class Irish-American family in New York, going through a Catholic childhood of a slightly stricter nature than that of Campbell. Stricken by polio before the vaccine was developed in the 1950s, Wilson was actually cured by the alternative “Sister Kenny” method – a method which the American Medical Association had publicly denounced. This experience seems to have had a great impact on his life, as he later credited it for his own constant suspicion of “all ‘Authorities’ and Authoritarians.”<sup>33</sup> It fixed his determination to follow his own way through the world of knowledge, science, beliefs, and assumptions.



*Illustration 2:*  
*Robert Anton*  
*Wilson*

After a youth spent in Catholic school, “which only managed to scare the shit” out of him, Wilson opted to go to engineering school. He had a gift for math and physics, and imprinted a lifelong tendency to think in terms of forces, actions and reactions. More importantly, his work in “corrosion engineering” turned him on to a world beyond science and Catholicism; namely, Buddhism. Just as Buddha says everything is impermanent, so in his engineering Wilson was impressed to find that you can never completely stop something from corroding. Everything corrodes; nothing is permanent. This discovery generated a fascination with parallels, or 'isomorphisms' between various forms of knowledge.

Altered states of consciousness were an early factor in Wilson's life. Of course, he regards the movies of his childhood, such as King Kong, as early spiritual experiences. He even counts spinning

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<sup>31</sup> *The Power of Myth*, p.xvi

<sup>32</sup> *The Mythic Dimension*, p.211

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, *The Life and Times*

until you're dizzy as a spiritual experience. More tellingly, however, he also smoked hemp rope for a while before the age of ten, and later “smoked grass” with jazz musicians in the forties and fifties. Furthermore, after being let down by his first Holy Communion, which the priests had said would be a deep and wonderful experience, he says he had his first “*real*” communion at the age of thirty, in 1962, through peyote. After reading a book by the psychologist Robert D. Ropp, Wilson says, which focused on the chemical nature of consciousness and on mystical experiences, he became interested in psychedelics and thought, “gee, I'd like to try that, and see if I retain my skepticism.”

With this book, Wilson's empirical, self-scientific approach to consciousness expansion began. He moved on to experiment with psychedelic mushrooms, LSD, Aleister Crowley's magic rituals, yoga, pranayama, Sufi exercises, brain tuning machines, and many more experiences to profoundly change his idea of reality. As he says in an interview, “I was an early, and enthusiastic, experimenter with LSD, peyote, magic mushrooms and any other compound that mutated consciousness. The result was that I became even more agnostic but less superior about it. What psychedelics taught me was that, just as theories and ideologies (maps and models) are human creations, not divine revelations, every perceptual grid or existential reality-tunnel is also a human creation - a work of art, consciously or unconsciously edited and organized by the individual brain.”<sup>34</sup>

The exploratory and taboo-breaking nature of Wilson's interests led him to write for what is commonly regarded as the 'counterculture.' Although a precise definition of this movement is beyond me, we might think of it as the avant garde, where those who have gone beyond the 'reality-tunnel' or 'perceptual grid' of the older generations come together. Or, as Campbell says, they are the elites - shamans, artists and others who experience their lives as being inadequate to the spiritual aspect of their being.<sup>35</sup> As a consciousness-traveling crowd, the counterculture, like the hippies before them, is a source of social criticism – a counterbalance to the dominant forces of the day – and of positive alternatives for individual and collective growth.

However, before he was embraced by the counterculture, Wilson collected insight, through friendships, personal experience, and extensive research, into many disparate areas of knowledge. Some eighty-percent of his friends, he says, are scientists, often engaged in research at the frontiers of knowledge and consciousness. Scholarship, science, literature, economics, politics, psychology; nothing was off-limits in his gathering of information. Wilson then observed the deeper connections, and the miscommunication that often separates them. And, as with Campbell, he did this by finding the root of all knowledge in psychology, and the truth-making apparatus we call the mind.

There are several writers who significantly shaped Wilson's thinking.<sup>36</sup> For instance, there is Alan Watts, the British Orientalist and intellectual guru, who describes the same view of reality as Campbell does in *The Masks of God*. Watts, who also turned Wilson on to the occultist Aleister Crowley, humorously depicts how the whole universe is a cosmic game of hide-and-seek, where we are ourselves what we are looking for: and we are our own creators. Less metaphysically, the work of the Polish mathematician and engineer Alfred G. Korzybski helped Wilson put his ideas into clear and

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<sup>34</sup> Wilson, *The Life and Times; Techniques for Consciousness Change*.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.58, 123. “Usually, something's taken, or felt lacking in the normal or permitted experiences.”

<sup>36</sup> Influences include Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Popper, Benjamin Tucker, Timothy Leary, Harry Stack Sullivan, Eric Berne, and Wilhelm Reich; Niels Bohr; Remy de Gourmont, Richard Bandler; Buckminster Fuller; Claude Shannon and Norbert Wiener; and Ezra Pound. “None of them deserve any blame for my errors or blunders,” *Email to the Universe*. Wilson's topics include history, occultism, mythology, metaphysics, mysticism, religion, government, political economy, consciousness, conspiracy theory, secret societies, sex, cybernetics, Information Theory, biophysics, ethology, Internet and the Information revolution, neurolinguistic programming, neurosciences, physics, philosophy, language, and logic.

scientific language. Korzybski, who devised an update to modern language called General Semantics, worked from the idea that our nervous system presents us with a personalized version of reality. “All perception,” says Wilson, “is co-creation,” and it makes scientific sense to speak in a way that recognizes this.<sup>37</sup>

The same issue, Wilson found, is highlighted by the famous Schroedinger's Cat paradox. This paradox of quantum physics, which is one of Wilson's favorite topics, is the problem that in any experiment, the observer and the observed *cannot* be separated. Until quantum physics, says Wilson, a scientist would say “I am going to be objective now,” not realizing that his mind was directly connected to the outcome of his experiment. What the scientist looks for, and how he looks for it, helps determine what he can find. “In a sense,” Wilson says, it means that “everyone is carrying around their own universe.”<sup>38</sup> So, whether you discover some truth through a microscope, or in a state of expanded awareness, you should remember that it is still true *only* in relation to your mind.

Now, if reality is relative to your mind and its “programs,” or myths, then it seems to follow that you can change your reality by changing your mind. You create your own “reality tunnel,” says Wilson, the filter through which you see, hear, smell, feel, think, and so on, and you can change it and expand it in numerous ways. Together with Timothy Leary, he put this principle to use in the HEAD Revolution: “Hedonic Engineering and Development.” Since changing your inner reality is basically an individualistic revolution, it starts from the hedonistic question – what do you want from life?<sup>39</sup> And how will you go about achieving it? To help people answer these questions, Wilson started a lecture tour called “How to Use your Brain for Fun and Profit.” When you find your answers, he says, it is not a religious, or even spiritual awakening; it is simply a neurological improvement, by raising your intelligence and your consciousness.<sup>40</sup>

This do-it-yourself attitude, again, comes from Wilson's distrust of authority. He tries to handle a complete agnosticism, without taking anything for granted. As he states in one interview, “My goal is to try to get people into a state of generalized agnosticism. Not agnosticism about God alone, but agnosticism about everything.” Thanks to this philosophy, he says, “I've always got something to wonder about.”<sup>41</sup> This is a kind of agnosticism – the denial of the possibility of attaining absolute or objective truth – that seems to be a common mental state for consciousness-explorers. So Wilson repeats, time and time again, that you should never totally believe anything, *especially* yourself.<sup>42</sup> Instead, he wants his readers to stay unsure of what they believe, even in his own work. To remain curious, he says, and tentative, live, inquiring, open-minded, humorous, optimistic, and skeptical, instead of dogmatic, closed, frozen, and constipated. To be “more scientific than religious, more open than dogmatic, more optimistic than pessimistic, more future oriented than past oriented, and more humorous than serious.”<sup>43</sup> This, he says, is because “The more things you totally believe in, the less thinking you're inclined to do;” and “The less thinking you do, the stupider you get.”

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in *Life and Times; Language and Reality*. See also Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, *Language and Reality*

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.88

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, *TVI interview; Interview by Jeffrey Elliot; interview by SFR 17*. Alternatively, Wilson calls it Agnostic Gnosticism in *Illuminati Papers*, p.88; or, in *Life and Times*, Transcendental Agnosticism.

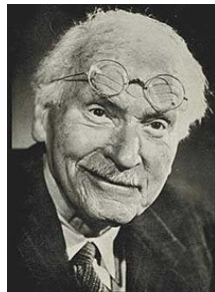
<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.24: “ROBERT ANTON WILSON is an imaginary being created by God. Since he is fairly bright, Wilson has figured this out and knows he has no real existence aside from the mind of God. Nonetheless, he still relapses into taking himself seriously on occasion.”

<sup>43</sup> Wilson, *Life and Times; Disinfocon; SFR 17 interview; Illuminati Papers*, p.114; and *Subgenius* interview .

### 2.3 Wilson and Campbell

When put side by side, the most obvious similarity between Campbell and Wilson is that they are generalists, or universalists. They lived during nearly the same span of history, with its pre-internet globalization of knowledge, as well as the tumults of the World Wars, the Great Depression, and the 1960s. Emerging as more-or-less humanistic intellectuals, they brought everything they learned and experienced together into a coherent picture, and presented it to the world as a better way of living, to spread sanity and psychological wholeness.

Being a generalist and comparing your own beliefs with those of the rest of the world, just as in the study of anthropology, opens your eyes to a multitude of contradictions. But Campbell and Wilson, in comparing the diverse symbols from the sciences, religions, philosophies, and so on, focused on the deeper, psychological dimension of the beliefs that we normally take for granted; the dimension where we *create* beliefs, and limit ourselves to one preferred version of reality. As Wilson says, this is where “The normal has been invented by a process of self-hypnosis, of creative imagination.”<sup>44</sup>



*Illustration 3: Carl Jung, who influenced both Campbell and Wilson*

All human symbols are part of a greater language – a language about reality, or at least, what we believe reality is. Although many people fight over who has the right words to describe reality, Wilson and Campbell assume that they can all be translated from a psychological perspective. This way, you can see what effect an idea or belief has on the mind that holds it; you can see, for example, what different effects physics has on the mind than Judaism, or capitalism, even though these describe the same reality.<sup>45</sup> And you can see not just the effect on the mind, but what we can learn from this about how to live. Because the myths we live by – what Wilson calls our Reality Tunnel – determines how we interact not just with ourselves, but with each other.<sup>46</sup>

The tunnel, or filter through which we perceive reality is not just in our eyes or ears, but in our personal prejudices and in the very language we speak. In fact, says Wilson, “reality tunnels are supported and created by our language use, and we have through creative genius made language

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<sup>44</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.201; *The Power of Myth*, p.9; *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*, p.231. Wilson, *Who Is the Master Who Makes the Grass Green*

<sup>45</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.56

<sup>46</sup> For Wilson on reality-tunnels see for example *Techniques for Consciousness Change*, *Cosmic Trigger*, or *Quantum Psychology*. The concept is said to summarize Jan Huizinga's sociology, phenomenology, the emic/etic distinction of ethnomethodology, William James' Pragmatism, John Dewey's Instrumentalism, Percy Bridgman's Operationalism, Niels Bohr's Copenhagen Interpretation, Alfred Korzybski's General Semantics, and Albert Ames' Transactional Psychology.

realities which we enforce upon everybody.” Each individual projects their own model outwards and considers it reality, either because they believe it is made of scientific 'facts', or the 'word of God', or because they simply have never questioned them before. This, as Wilson has so eloquently pointed out, can lead to stupidity. When reality does not behave exactly as we expect it to, we still don't change our reality tunnels. The message that he and Campbell bring however is optimistic: “Intelligence,” says Wilson, “*can* be raised, consciousness *can* be altered, nothing is static, all we have to do is learn how to change our nervous systems and we can go to wider and wider reality tunnels and bigger and bigger levels of perception and so on.”<sup>47</sup>

One shared factor in Campbell and Wilson's history may help explain their agnosticism, their individualism, and their optimism in one fell swoop. They are both ethnic Irish, former Catholics, and great enthusiasts of James Joyce, the Irish novelist and author of *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. Campbell wrote the first major study to the latter novel, called *A Skeleton Key to Finnegan's Wake* in 1944, and Wilson wrote numerous articles dissecting the same work.<sup>48</sup> Campbell and Wilson both report that Joyce gave them a clearer understanding of psychology through his poetic use of the English language, which plays with the reader's mind in fantastic ways. But most importantly, perhaps this Irish connection - also shared by Timothy Leary - is related to the conflicts which Campbell, Wilson and Joyce all had with the authoritarian and doctrinaire Catholic Church. Having made the initial, radical break with this fundamental source of Irish identity, we might speculate that their minds were freed to explore other mythologies, *and to remain* free of conforming to any other fixed belief or reality-tunnel. As Wilson quips, “thank God for the nuns telling me what books *not* to read!” Incidentally, this may also be why they mainly reached out to the youth. The pre-crystallized minds of young people are more easily made aware of their inner freedom.

There is however a major difference between Campbell and Wilson's style. It also relates to the different audiences they appealed to. Basically, Campbell, who is a generation older, has remained relatively traditionalist, intellectual, almost mainstream. He looks mostly to the East, and to the past. Wilson, on the other hand, looks to the West, to the new sciences, and to the consciousness movements. Campbell finds great, almost scientific precision in ancient psychological models, and has no need for creating his own; whereas Wilson, like Leary before him, stimulates the development of newer, more up-to-date models. If you prefer the language of Hinduism, Buddhism, or the Medieval bards over that of quantum physicists, cybernetics theorists, and semioticians, then you know whom to study.

His focus on the mystical or feminine side of knowing seems to place Campbell closer to the New Age than the counterculture. It may also explain his greater popularity compared to Wilson. His writings, like those of the New Age in general, are perhaps more accessible *because* they appeal to the so-called feminine, intuitive side. It takes a formidable mind, well-versed in reasoning and logic, to see through many of Wilson's tricks, but not to intuit the gist of Campbell's message. In fact, more generally speaking, this may be the dividing line between New Age and counterculture; their different levels of feminine energy. Still, Campbell has been of great influence on both sides of this 'divide.' And the fact that the counterculture tends more towards the rational-masculine side, makes Campbell's impact all the more important to consider.

Since their deaths, both Campbell and Wilson have maintained a following through their publishings, Internet communities, online resources such as interviews and documentaries, and research

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<sup>47</sup> Wilson, *On the acceleration to 2012*

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, *Language and Reality; Life and Times*. Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.263, *The Power of Myth*, p.143, *Creative Mythology*, p.39

and teaching institutions like the Joseph Campbell Foundation and Wilson's online Maybe Logic Academy.<sup>49</sup> Wilson's joviality and Campbell's personableness are also a factor in their continuing popularity. I believe this increases their ability to be of lasting influence on an audience, as the character of a speaker is at least as important as their words. This is an important point. They are more than storytellers: they *are* what they speak about. And since they are both generalists, they are themselves a summarizing, a convergence of the psycho-spiritual history of mankind.

Wilson and Campbell are teachers, on the one hand, of extreme individualism – how to think for yourself, and be the master of your own mind – and, on the other, of our oneness and the broader responsibilities which that entails. The messages that flow out of a religious experience have a strong tendency to support this oneness; so what Campbell and Wilson teach is not a break with tradition, but a deepening of it. The mystical core has always come up, in different words and images, but it always puts the responsibility for Creation squarely in the hands of its Creators. This awakens the need for a higher morality, to feel the bonds beyond our fragmented, unequal culture and society. To awaken bit by bit to the fact that what you do and what you feel affects everything in your universe in some way. This brings us directly to the two main messages of their work: to the story lines, if you will, of the higher levels of consciousness.

## 2.4 *The One Story*

In traditional terms, what Campbell and Wilson do is provide insights, techniques, and vocabularies to help you attain and maintain enlightenment. This process is what Campbell calls the mythical “hero's journey,” which he wrote about from his first book in 1949 up to his death in 1987: it is the journey of encountering your higher Self – your unconscious mind – and coming back to integrate the experience into 'normal' life.<sup>50</sup> Wilson, more mysteriously, uses Nietzsche's phrase to call it “Becoming What We Are.”<sup>51</sup> What does it mean, and why is it done?

In a nutshell, it is the self-transforming ecstasy of the mystic or shaman made accessible to the average city-dwelling, non-religious, technologically advanced Westerner. Instead of having to meditate alone in a dark cave for decades, or become a disciple to a guru, the challenge is to handle your identity as part-Universe part-Man at the same time in your normal life.<sup>52</sup> In this state, *everything* becomes a potentially 'spiritual' experience. Enlightenment, or ecstasy, is (amongst other things) a point of view from where all of life can be experienced as sacred, divine, or mystical, because consciousness – *all* consciousness – is experienced as one. It is crucial to understand that this is a *point of view*, and not a matter of fact. It is, as the poet William Blake and Aldous Huxley have written, the “opening of the doors of perception.”

Having opened their doors of perception during the twentieth century's revolution of multiculturalism, Campbell and Wilson both believed that we are approaching a fundamental myth for humanity. In seeing the hidden unity that underlies our differences, they prescribe what I call the One

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<sup>49</sup> For example, social networking site Facebook.com lists over 7000 Campbell fans and over 5000 Wilson fans. Video.google.com, which searches multiple online video sites, lists over 750 online videos about Wilson, and 850 for Campbell. A Google search engine query for “Joseph Campbell” gives over 800,000 hits, while “Robert Anton Wilson” registers nearly the same. Keep in mind these figures are only to give an idea of their online presence.

<sup>50</sup> See Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, *Becoming What We Are*

<sup>52</sup> Campbell, *Creative Mythology*, p.647

Story: a new and basic mythology for a single human race, of One Planet, freed of national borders, racism, and exploitation.<sup>53</sup> Until now, the predominant mentality of science and Western culture in general, says Campbell, has inherited the dualistic, disunited worldview of the Bible. It is a worldview that condemns Nature, so we cannot accept unity with it; and we cannot accept unity with other groups or individuals, because we are too focused on our differences. As Campbell notes,<sup>54</sup> most mythologies construct limited tribes like this by excluding different groups or individuals. It's the 'chosen' ones versus the others. So the new myth, what Wilson calls the “Tale of the Tribe,” must be where *the* tribe is *all* of humanity. And on the way to this ideal, myths which exclude or denigrate other people – and anything else in the universe – must be transcended.<sup>55</sup>



*Illustration 4:  
"Earthrise," one of the  
first pictures to be taken  
of our planet.*

There is a vision recalled by the Native American medicine man Black Elk which Campbell calls the “key statement to the understanding of mythological symbols,” especially in how they relate our transcendent connection. Black Elk writes: “I saw myself on the central mountain of the world, the highest place, and I had a vision because I was seeing in the sacred manner of the world.” The sacred 'central mountain' to his people was Harney Peak in South Dakota. But the physical mountain is not what he is talking about: instead, he says, he saw that “The central mountain is everywhere.” In other words, in his mystical experience, he saw that everybody is at the center of their own universe, but that all those universes add up to one. “Each of us is a manifestation of the mystery,” says Campbell; “You are the central mountain, and the central mountain is everywhere.”<sup>56</sup>

Campbell quotes the philosopher Schopenhauer who wrote in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “Our true reality is in our identity and unity with all life.”<sup>57</sup> Translated into terms of biology, all organic matter is descended from a single cell. But before such an idealistic myth (or truth) is accepted, it has to become a common experience. Western democracy and liberal education don't seem to be bringing it about; the

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<sup>53</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, pp.222, 262; *The Power of Myth*, p.22; *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, p.388; *The Hero's Journey*

<sup>54</sup> Campbell, *Thou Art That*, p.30

<sup>55</sup> Our fundamental 'oneness' is a basic realization during a mystical experience, and making you realize it is almost certainly part of the agenda of those who promote it. This of course means that Campbell and Wilson do have an ideology, one which supports higher consciousness over the lower, even though they are trying so hard to *escape* ideology in the first place; but, as author Tom Robbins states in *Maybe Logic*, a video documentary on Wilson, while the ideology of no-beliefs may still be an ideology, it's a very flexible one.

<sup>56</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth* p.89 By most accounts, this is a primary aspect of the mystical experience; the feeling, as Almond writes, of “unity, coherence, and oneness of what previously seemed merely disparate, multiple, and unconnected.” Almond, p.7

<sup>57</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.110

world has too much history for that. Little surprise then, that Campbell and Wilson speak so highly of something which actually *does* bring about this experience: namely, the expanded states of consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

There is an aspect of the mystical experience that makes it fit quite well with the modern, skeptical, individualistic age. This is the fact that it is empirical; you have to 'do it' yourself. As Campbell says, "I don't have faith, I have experience."<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the Eastern philosophies like Buddhism that are becoming more popular in the West are centered around finding the divinity in yourself, and they facilitate the search for personal experience.

Whether or not 'oneness' is something you will experience in your life *consciously*, it is always there. This seems to be a mystical truth, as well as a scientific fact in such realms of biology and quantum physics. Moreover, it is hidden and long-forgotten in the main word we use to describe our spiritual sensibilities: because the word "religion," says Campbell, actually means *re-ligio*, the "linking back" of our separate life to the one life. The word 'atonement', which has a modern religious connotation of redemption, has a similar origin; that of "at-one-ment," or becoming one with.<sup>60</sup> The same is expressed in the East, says Wilson, as the word *Yoga* means 'to yoke,' to hitch together. "And the funny thing," he says, "is that you are experiencing your yoga with the universe all the time; otherwise you wouldn't be experiencing anything!"<sup>61</sup> From the point of view of an expanded consciousness then, all of life can be experienced as a yoga, as 'religious', divine, or mystical, because it is all connected. So Campbell and Wilson's One Story is, in effect, the story of our oneness.

#### **2.4.1 And A Major Subplot: The Story of Creation**

The story is not over yet. Unlike in the Bible, where God is said to have completed his Creation in six days, the reality of every day life is that things are constantly changing. In us and around us, Creation is an ongoing process. Evolution never stopped. And, as a character in Wilson's *Illuminatus Trilogy* says, "*Humanity is not yet created.*"<sup>62</sup> We are all contributing to our own changing existence. Having experienced that You and I are one – *the One* – you suddenly see that You have been creating yourself. To Campbell, it is like waking up to being an artist living in your own masterpiece. "Life," he says, "is a poem, and you yourself are participating in a poem."<sup>63</sup> Similarly, in Wilson's novel, *The Schrodinger's Cat Trilogy*, several characters actually *wake up* to the fact that they are in a novel and that they can affect its course.<sup>64</sup> This is a leap in consciousness that in turn is meant to affect the reader. These kinds of sporadic hints – of waking up to the fact that you are in a story, poem, or play, for lack of better terms – are meant to poke *you*, the reader, into having the same, 'mystical' realization about your own life.

Normally, as Campbell frequently paraphrases Schopenhauer, when people look back at the end of their life, they see what appears to be a consistent plot. Everything that happened fits together into a story, no matter how random it seemed at the time. But who wrote it? Who wrote their lives for them, that everything happened to go the way it did? It is, says Campbell, a part of yourself of which your

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<sup>58</sup> Campbell, *Thou Art That*, p.30

<sup>59</sup> *The Power of Myth*, 208

<sup>60</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.214; *Creative Mythology*, p.27

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, *Maybe Logic*

<sup>62</sup> Wilson, *Illuminatus*, p.282

<sup>63</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.55

<sup>64</sup> In *Schrodinger's Cat*, pp.22, 23, 28, 33, 129, 132, 137, 146, 200, 210



conscious mind is unaware.<sup>65</sup> A quote from the Upanishads reveals its identity. Here, the God, in creating the universe, is said to have realized that “I, indeed, I am this creation, for I have poured it forth from myself.’ And in that way,” it continues, “he [the God] became this creation. Verily, he who knows this becomes in this creation a creator.” And “That,” says Campbell, “is the clincher there. When you know this, then you have identified with the creative principle, which is the God power in the world, which means in you. It is beautiful.”<sup>66</sup>

So, having first awoken to this story of Creation – realizing that evolution hasn't stopped – you realize that *you* are co-creating your part of the story, on every level of your being. If reality is perception, then the story of your life is the story of what you believe you see, hear, feel, and smell. There is a great liberty in this realization, because it means that truth is relative to your own nervous system: that everyone has their own individual brain, and can choose their own truth, their own story; their own reality tunnel.<sup>67</sup> And in this sense, consciously choosing your reality tunnel is the same as creating it.

Teaching this is a major motivation behind Wilson's and Campbell's work. They are trying to help their readers to become aware of their own contribution to reality. And they were not the first to bring this message, as it appears in one form or another throughout history - in Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Taoism, and Western philosophies such as Existentialism. It also seems to be a consistent message in the counterculture. “Nothing is true, everything is permitted,” Wilson quotes Hassan I Sabbah, the eleventh century leader of the Assassins cult; “Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be The Whole of the Law,” decreed the early twentieth century magician Aleister Crowley. And “Think for yourself, question authority,” Timothy Leary chanted in the 60s; test your beliefs scientifically, “Write your own Bible,” and start your own religion. In other words, use science, art, and mindfulness to re-write the story which you call reality. The Story of Creation is, first and foremost, that You are co-creating the story. And that story is a part of (and not apart from) the evolution of consciousness.

#### **2.4.2 *The Hero of the Story***

In Campbell's and Wilson's work, the religious or philosophical seeker reappears in its most modern guise: that of the artist-scientist.<sup>68</sup> The journey to be undertaken – the discovery of the deepest truths about reality – leads you, the 'hero', through the depths of your conscious and unconscious mind. Your own mind becomes your laboratory, where you can experiment on your Self.<sup>69</sup> And, after peeling off all the different levels of data, you find that your mind is just as mechanical as Pavlov found his dogs to be. While you may not drool on command, you do live by the strict dictates of your genes and your hormones, and by the cultural norms of your environment. The challenge, which only the hero takes upon him or herself, is to escape from this traditional, mechanical behavior, and to fashion a personal myth. In other words, Campbell says, the hero is the waker of his own soul, using scientific experiment to debunk his own myths. After this deconstruction, the hero must become an artist, and refashion his mind according to his expanded vision of the rules.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.229

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

<sup>67</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.225

<sup>68</sup> Campbell, *The Hero's Journey*

<sup>69</sup> By experimenting on “Self”, I mean to say the *idea* you have of yourself.

<sup>70</sup> See Wilson, *Schrodinger's Cat Trilogy*. Campbell, *The Mythical Dimension*, pp.238-9; *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, p.260

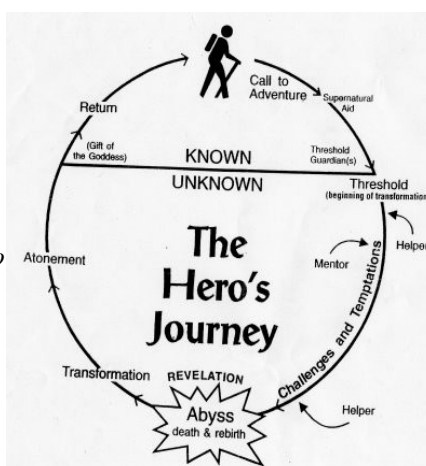


*Illustration 5: The mind is mechanical until the Hero escapes it*

However, to learn this art and science of conscious evolution, the new ideal initiate – the one trying to go out of his mind and come back again – also has to read up on every hero that has come before: the shaman, the prophet, the philosopher, and so on. But why? Why still read Plato, or the Bible, or the Sutras? Why read any modern thinker on the science of the mind, if the trip to consciousness expansion takes you there by itself?

Well, the hero needs help getting there, a way in and out of the mystical experience. Everyone can do it, says Campbell, but no-one can go it alone.<sup>71</sup> Many people get halfway and see their world fall apart around them; reality unravels into meaninglessness, and they get caught up in negativity, guilt, paranoia, destruction and isolation. But this is only halfway. To come back again, and retain your heightened awareness, you need a guide. The decisive ordeal, where you confront death, and destroy the world you have built - *with yourself in it*, Campbell says - requires guidance. You could go out of your mind, and never come back again. The mystical experience is that foreign to the mind. And yet it is also familiar; others have had the vision, and have found ways of coming back to it; and even of extending it. There is a long history of descriptions of altered states and techniques to bring them about. As with the characters in Wilson's novels, the hero needs to find people who have seen and described it, to find the words that are the best guide along his own adventure.<sup>72</sup>

The educated and the well-prepared will be better able to recognize the transformation that they are going through so as to maneuver their way 'back'. As in any situation, it helps to have a mental lexicon of different meaning systems, or myths, so you can understand it in multiple ways. This way, even the meaninglessness of a postmodern world can be filled with a personal vision of meaning. As the hero of your own story – your own mind – you can choose to shift your mental and emotional perception at any moment. Through meditation, or psychology, you may be able to recognize the workings of your own mind. A thought that is useless, ignorant, or harmful can be transformed into one that is useful, intelligent, or euphoric. This involves a high level of personal control, and so the hero learns to 'control' his own destiny.



*Illustration 6: One artists' rendition of the Hero's Journey*

<sup>71</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.148; *The Hero*

<sup>72</sup> Wilson, *The Life and Times*.

Since the self-explorer is on an inner quest, free of cultural dogmas, he is free to experiment with the usefulness of his thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Wilson jokes that these are not dogmas, but “catmas”: relative meta-beliefs.<sup>73</sup> While some might call it mental anarchy or blasphemy to play around with your convictions this way, we find at least one who disagrees: namely, Carl Jung. There is no point in discarding any belief completely, he says, because it always has some potential for what he calls “psychic use.” For example, an atheist might think 'God' does not exist, have proven it to himself in some sense, and then be blind to the benefits of belief in a God for the rest of his life. The Christian, Muslim, or Jew who does believe in God may actually be tapping into something very useful for their own psychic well-being. So not only is God real to their psyche, 'He' also has a demonstrable “psychic use.”

According to Freud and Jung, by denying a belief, thought, or emotion, you are *repressing* it, hiding it away in your subconscious. From here, it may disturb your dreams and eventually make you lose control of your mind.<sup>74</sup> So, Jung continues, until you have control over your moods and emotions, or a consciousness of all the unconscious ways in which your mind affects you, you are not your own master. You are not writing your own story, because the different 'compartments' of the self – the animal, the lover, the believer, the doubter, etc – are never confronted with one another.<sup>75</sup> Wilson and Campbell, however, represent a positive completion of the psychic process. As students of Jungian psychology, they bring the different 'compartments' of culture into full view of each other.

The ultimate deed of the hero is to come to the knowledge of unity – the One Story – and then to make it known.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, Wilson and Campbell fulfill Campbell's own concept of the hero's journey: the Separation, Initiation, and Return. The separation stage is the going out of your mind, a leaving behind of everything you thought was real. The initiation stage is into a 'higher' knowledge; one might say that initiation entails finding out for yourself what it means that nothing means anything. And the return – out of your mind and back again – is to share your expanded awareness with others. What this means, simply put, is that the hero can reinterpret the meaning of his or her oneness with reality.

If all of us are 'specialists' of some sort, as artists, *or* scientists - as this, *or* that - and ignorant of the many ways in which we relate to the rest of the world, then enlightened generalists are the elite few of the elite few. You would think that, following their own model, Wilson and Campbell themselves would be the role models, the heroes of modern society. They test the boundaries of the accepted and the known. Still, Wilson has relatively few followers, and most of them are relegated to – or self-

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<sup>73</sup> Quoted in *Maybe Logic*. See also *The Principia Discordia*

<sup>74</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, pp.193-194

<sup>75</sup> Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p.83

<sup>76</sup> See Campbell's Monomyth, especially in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, pp.30, 40; *The Power of Myth* p.123

defined as – the counterculture. Many joke religions, such as Discordianism<sup>77</sup> and the Church of the SubGenius, are associated with his legacy, but they are humorous congregations that mock themselves above all. Campbell may have a bigger audience, considering his prime-time exposure in the US, but the fact is that neither him nor Wilson has a serious 'religious' following. And this is how they themselves would have it; you are told to become your own creator, not a follower. As Wilson says, “A disciple is an asshole looking for a human being to attach itself to!”<sup>78</sup> Campbell and Wilson make no excuse for being guides at best, so that you can do it yourself: change your own brain, and go on your own hero's journey.

### **3. Understanding Consciousness: The Seven Chakras and the Eight Circuit Model**

Before we look at how Wilson and Campbell say that consciousness can be changed, we have to look at the models which describe it in the first place. Remember the question – if you go out of your mind, where do you go?

#### **3.1 Mapping the Mind**

Your mind is constantly being bombarded with billions of bits of information. Facing all of that at the same time would lead to a mental overload. However, instead of confronting each of the billions of signals our bodies receive every moment, we naturally reduce the detail of our experience.<sup>79</sup> Like wearing headphones in a bus to drown out the noise, we try to control which inputs we are aware of, leaving the rest to our subconscious. This is the same principle behind map making – to make the territory manageable by highlighting certain factors. Now, mapping consciousness is like making a map of your inner self. It is a two-dimensional representation of the inner spaces which you may have explored. For Jung, bringing together these different areas of consciousness – which are otherwise unconsciously directing each other – is crucial to our mental stability and even our physical health.<sup>80</sup> In other words, creating a map of the different levels of consciousness helps us to find what we are unaware of, where things have gone wrong, and where there is potential for healing and growth.

The lines on the map will of course differ from person to person, but there may be enough similarities to make a standard model to describe human consciousness. Bits and pieces and wholesale attempts to do so can be found throughout history; indeed, everything that myth-makers, mystics, philosophers, occultists, psychologists, psychedelics users and everyone else has done has contributed to our understanding of what the human mind thinks of itself.<sup>81</sup>

But for Campbell, the ultimate map of consciousness was already made centuries ago by Hindu priests. This system, which is now thoroughly integrated into the New Age movement, depicts chakras – literally, “wheels,” or revolving centers of energy – located in or at least associated with specific parts of your body. There are seven of them, traveling up your spine, and they represent (amongst other things) specific psychological planes of concern, consciousness and action.<sup>82</sup> There is a two-way current

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, *The Principia Discordia*, which Wilson is rumored to have co-authored.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, *Secrets of Power*.

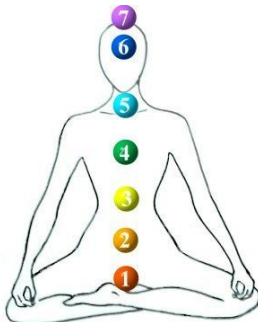
<sup>79</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*.

<sup>80</sup> Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p.52

<sup>81</sup> According to Campbell and Wilson, every myth is an outside reflection of what lives within us. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.165

<sup>82</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.206; *The Power of Myth*, p.173; *The Mythic Dimension*, p.207

between the poles, from the base to the crown, which determines the flow of consciousness between mind, body, and spirit. For instance, your base chakra could be 'blocked' if your existence was threatened by a lack of money. This in turn would affect the rest of your psychology, and the flow of energy through your other 'chakras'. Alternatively, you could be in love, and have an open heart chakra which improves (or perhaps masks the lack of) the flow through your other chakras.



*Illustration 7: The seven chakras leading up the spine*

Wilson is much more willing to devise his own system. To him, the most useful and up to date model is the Eight Circuit Model of Consciousness, developed by the psychologist Timothy Leary in the seventies, and embellished by Wilson in the eighties.<sup>83</sup> Although more scientific than the chakra system, it is also more abstract. Rather than being correlated to specific points of the body, it relates to the successive events in your life which you experience as you mature – the moments of 'imprint vulnerability,' such as birth, the beginning of adolescence, the first menstruation, and so on. There are eight circuits, 'gears,' or mini-brains in this map. The first four are experienced by all adult humans, where each person has been uniquely imprinted by genetics, psychological conditioning, and learning. But this model, said to have been combined by Leary out of several other religious and psychological models, goes beyond the commonly experienced levels of consciousness: it goes beyond the "terrestrial" levels of consciousness that mainstream science describes. Instead, it also offers a view of the evolution of consciousness through the states accessed in mystical experiences. In doing so, Leary was trying to create a systematic language where there was none; there is simply no Western language variant for describing such states of awareness. So to do this, the Eight Circuit Model brings together the vocabularies of mysticism, psychology, biochemistry, neurology, cybernetics, and other sciences. Like the chakras, it is an ascending system and it seems to imply an evolutionary trend 'upward' towards divine union.<sup>84</sup>

<p>The Chakra System<sup>85</sup></p> <p>The seven chakras represent vital centers of consciousness in the human body, and can be described</p>	<p>The Eight Circuit Model of Consciousness<sup>86</sup></p> <p>The eight circuits are metaphors for levels of psychological growth and imprinting. The higher levels also involve re-</p>
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<sup>83</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change; Cosmic Trigger*

<sup>84</sup> Other maps include the Enneagram, Astrology, in some cases, and the Kabbalistic Tree of Life

<sup>85</sup> See for example Judith, *Eastern Body Western Mind*, or *The Mythic Dimension*, pp.206-216

<sup>86</sup> See for example, *Prometheus Rising*, Wilson's in-depth description of the Eight Circuit Model, or *Info-Psychology* by Timothy Leary, or *Angel Tech* by Antero Alli. Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change; Illuminati Papers*

<p>quite simply in Western terms.</p> <p>1 The base chakra: survival instinct. Regulates the sense of stability and groundedness.</p> <p>2 The sacral chakra: sexuality and reproduction. Regulates creativity and joy.</p> <p>3 The solar plexus chakra: digestion. It regulates personal power, and fear.</p> <p>4 The heart chakra. It regulates compassion and unconditional love.</p> <p>5 The throat chakra. It regulates self-expression and communication.</p> <p>6 The third eye chakra. It regulates intuition, and inner-guidance.</p> <p>7 The crown chakra. It regulates universal consciousness. Dualism is transcended, oneness is experienced.</p>	<p>imprinting of the lower levels.</p> <p>1 Biosurvival circuit: imprint fight or flight; either fear or curiosity for new things. Roughly, the Will.</p> <p>2 Emotional-territorial circuit: dominance or submission. Creates a sense of hierarchy. Roughly, the Ego.</p> <p>3 Semantic circuit: symbol and language manipulation. Usually imprints a favorite, rigid symbol system. Roughly, the Mind, or Reason.</p> <p>4 Socio-sexual circuit: imprints tribal sense of morality, sexual roles, and guilt. Roughly, the Adult Personality.</p> <p>5 Neurosomatic circuit: imprints rapture and ecstasy.</p> <p>6 Self-Metaprogramming circuit: expansion of awareness, in that it allows the nervous system to become self aware and re-imprint itself. Transcending time.</p> <p>7 Neurogenetic circuit: evolutionary consciousness, concerned with genetic history and future evolution.</p> <p>8 Neuroatomic circuit: nonlocal quantum consciousness, beyond spacetime and dualism.</p>
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As you can see, the models do not mirror each other exactly. However, there are similarities. The first three chakras, as well as the two lower circuits, are shared with animals, and the fourth is even shared with certain primates. 'Fight or flight', for example, parallels the survival instinct, and 'dominance or submission' is parallel to personal power. It is no surprise that these lower levels correspond so closely, because they are basic areas of animal behavior. They are a part of our genetic heritage, and are structured into our body and nervous system. The implication, however, is that most people are still operating primarily on the animal circuits; but that is not entirely accurate. While the higher chakras and circuits are said to be distinctly human, our lower circuits are more complex than, for example, those of monkeys. Circuits five through eight, which correspond roughly to the seventh chakra, are accessible in all humans; but they are still in a developmental phase of evolution.

There are also telling differences between the two maps. First, all humans have the full extent of both maps present in their neurological structure. However, while the chakras are always 'on', in the Eight Circuit Model, the higher circuits have to be unlocked before they are present in the moment-to-moment fabric of our experience. Still, in both models it is important to keep in mind that all available levels are operating at the same time, all the time. Secondly, the Eight Circuit Model has a glaring omission in relation to the chakras: it has no 'heart.' The heart chakra is considered by Campbell to be the most important: it is the center, the point at which we have become specifically human. Here, the lower chakras are transcended, but not refuted; our animal nature "becomes subject and servant of the heart." For Campbell then, raising consciousness is mostly a matter of getting in touch with your heart; reaching the center of your being and the source of higher potentials such as compassion and bliss.<sup>87</sup> Of course, some animals are in their nature compassionate, caring and loving beings, so the line between humans and animals is perhaps not quite as defined as Campbell would have it.

Wilson, on the other hand, is more concerned with matters of the mind: with higher intelligence, unlocked in the higher circuits, to overcome the animalistic, emotional, and destructive patterns of the

<sup>87</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.160, 174, 176; *The Mythic Dimension*, pp.210, 185; *Creative Mythology*, p.677

lower circuits. Leary calls this I<sup>2</sup>, or Intelligence Squared: intelligence studying intelligence.<sup>88</sup> Love and compassion, while present in Wilson's work, are clearly more central to Campbell. Instead, Wilson speaks of 'emotional intelligence' as an evolutionary upgrade. Why the difference? One explanation might be that Wilson emphasizes the mind, because it can maintain a neutral distance, a scientific distance, while Campbell prefers the heart because it connects us directly. Either way, however, the goal is to relate more sanely with the rest of the world.

Interestingly, the chakra system is directly applicable to any life situation; your body and mind fluctuate all the time, and you can relocate yourself in the model accordingly. This allows you to see what your strengths and weaknesses are, and how you can deal with them. In the sense of this model, for example, Campbell is predominantly a fourth chakra person, and Wilson a sixth chakra person; that is, they are heart and mind, respectively.

Unlike the chakras, however, the eight circuits are based in modern science, which more or less assumes that youthful imprints on our psychology are irreversible. If you grew up without the comfort of a mother, had a dominant sibling, and had little or no stimulation towards learning, your first three circuits would have negative imprints for life. But Leary and Wilson made the Eight Circuit Model reflect the ability to *rewrite* the imprints of the lower levels.<sup>89</sup> This seems to be a scientific restatement of what the chakras already indicate.

Re-imprinting takes place in the sixth, or “Self-metaprogramming” circuit. Here, says Wilson, you rewrite your belief system from the inside. Metaprogramming means programming your programming – like a self-evolving computer. The four lower levels of programming, which you have to experience all day – like hunger, jealousy, guilt, or fear – can be refuted or updated by metaprogramming, where “you learn you can choose any programs you want.”<sup>90</sup> To help consciousness explorers along, a so-called “winner script” of self-empowering programs was written. It is a guideline for how to re-imprint, or self-metaprogram, your 'normal' consciousness with the insights from an expanded consciousness:

Bio-survival Script: I will live forever, or die trying.

Emotional-Territorial Script: I am free; you are free; we can have our separate trips or we can have the same trip.

Semantic Script: I am learning more about everything, including how to learn more.

Sociosexual Script: Love, and do what thou wilt.

Neurosomatic Script: How I feel depends on my neurological know-how.

Metaprogramming Script: I make my own coincidences, synchronicities, luck and Destiny.

Neurogenetic Script: Future evolution depends on my decisions now.

Neuroatomic Script: In the province of the mind, what is believed to be true is true, or becomes true within limits to be learned by experience and experiment.

These scripts are part of the story of how an enlightened, or mystically awakened person should be able to interact with their reality. They are a *map of the map* of your consciousness, and the higher you go, the more re-imprinting can be done.<sup>91</sup>

The chakras and the Eight Circuits are distinguished by their inclusion of the metaphysical, or 'supernatural'. They recognize something higher in man; higher than the sexual, the mechanical, the chemical, the linguistic, or the mental. But how does consciousness get mapped? In the up-down, left-right spatial terms which map-making demands, 'higher' or expanded consciousness is usually shown after, or above, 'normal' consciousness. Like the top of a pyramid or mountain, it allows an overview of

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<sup>88</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change; Illuminati Papers*, p.54

<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Wilson, *Language and Reality; The Eight Basic Scripts*

the land below. Campbell believes that the more deterministic mind sciences of the twentieth century, such as Skinner's Behaviorism, Freud's psychoanalysis, and Adler's Individual Psychology, lack this overview and self-reflexion of an expanded state of consciousness. Instead, they are fixated on one idea: for example, that 'everything is sexual,' or that everything is mechanical, or that everything is based on power; so they express only one chakra per psychology, and they deny the importance or even the existence of the others.<sup>92</sup> However, this is only natural. As Wilson says, “All I know is what I tune in;”<sup>93</sup> and a Freud, an Adler, or a B.F. Skinner who has not tuned in to an expanded awareness does not yet know it. Without the experience, you cannot know how to put it onto a map, or that it belongs there in the first place.

### 3.2 *Minding the Map*

In many pre-industrial societies, it is common to be initiated into adulthood through some arduous, frightening, and painful ordeal. You enter the ritual as a child, and leave transformed; so the expansion of consciousness is forced upon you for the sake of the tribe and its traditions.<sup>94</sup> Having had a personal vision, a personal connection to the unconscious, you are literally 'reborn' into a higher incarnation of yourself – a true adult. But the greater part of humanity does not go through such a transformation. Yes, we mature physically; but, as Campbell notes, physical birth and maturation *overcome* you. There is little choice in that. You have to *choose* to be birthed again spiritually, or be forced into it by your tribal elders. It is, says Campbell, a personal resurrection: the death to purely animal existence, and the birth of spiritual life.<sup>95</sup>

This of course implies that most people, having gone without an initiation experience – and never in their right minds willing to face the loss of control that comes with it – dwell in the mechanical and animal levels of consciousness, in the lower chakras and circuits.<sup>96</sup> Unwanted and unquestioned thoughts and emotions have free reign in the mind. And since such people haven't been to the 'higher' levels of consciousness, they can't rewrite the 'lower' either: they are stuck, trapped by genetic and cultural imprinting and conditioning.<sup>97</sup> The upper, or broader regions of Campbell's and Wilson's maps of consciousness remain unexplored territory.

For those who *have* explored the inner territories, expanding consciousness expands your awareness of what you are thinking, how you think, and why you are thinking it in the first place. This is also one of the main uses of having a map of consciousness: to reflect on your own involvement and intelligence at each 'level' of your consciousness. In the Hindu map, you speak in terms of how 'open' or 'closed' your chakra is. As Campbell says, this helps you discover your own way of producing *Maya* – your own illusion, or reality tunnel.<sup>98</sup> The Eight Circuit model is similarly built to clearly reveal how each level of consciousness determines your experience. Theoretically, it should be possible to do “constant conscious re-imprinting of all the other circuits,” so that the metaprogrammer chooses which

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<sup>92</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, pp.208-216

<sup>93</sup> Wilson, *Maybe Logic*

<sup>94</sup> Wilson, *Illuminatus*, p.284

<sup>95</sup> Campbell, *Sukhavati; The Power of Myth*, pp.124-125

<sup>96</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.8; *The Mythic Dimension*, p.209. Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.86

<sup>97</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.162; fear, lust, and duties are the rulers of the world, says the Buddha; they are roughly equal to the first 3 chakras. Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*. Roughly speaking, Jung calls the first three chakras: sensation, feeling, and reason; and Freud: oral, anal, and latency.

<sup>98</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.207, 216.



universe he will enter.<sup>99</sup>

Expanded awareness reveals the basic metaprogram that beliefs about reality are not really real. They are mostly in your mind, an artful creation of the imagination. With this higher program installed, you can check at any moment what is real to you – which lower programs you will abide or detach from. For simplicity's sake, we can call this concept a 'Reality check'. By minding the map – to see what level you're operating on – you see what is real to you, and what reality you are creating for others.

As Campbell, Wilson, Leary, and others have envisioned it, these maps are a clue to our future evolution.<sup>100</sup> The higher you go, the more you can dissociate from lower consciousness emotional, egotistic, and communication games, and move “more and more towards unity and harmony of what's going on.” You can put your self into perspective. The higher levels, such as the self-metaprogramming circuit and the crown chakra, open up the ability to determine your experience of your experience. After the mystical awakening, this self-evolution is the next step. It is an empirical self-science, where you are more than just the machine that has to be understood and controlled by science.<sup>101</sup>

## **4. The Science of Conscious Evolution: Losing Your Illusion**

### ***4.1 Brain Change Techniques: How to Go Out of Your Mind***

Each brain is different. As Wilson says, we have all been organized by our own unique combination of genes, early imprints and traumas, conditioning, education, and any consciousness changing experiments we have gone through.<sup>102</sup> However, in spite of these differences, everyone has the potential to go 'out of their minds.' And there are many, many ways to go about doing it. Wilson says “The possibility of changing consciousness was discovered in the Orient twenty five hundred years ago at least – probably it's older than that – but techniques were discovered to quiet the mind, pacify the mind, and remove emotional compulsions. And these were organized into the science of yoga.”<sup>103</sup> The counterculture rediscovered these techniques, and combined them into a many-sided science of consciousness change.

In this chapter, it will help to keep in mind that the term *brain change* is used as an umbrella term for any way that the state of the mind can be altered or transcended – be it through neurochemistry or mindfulness, psychology or environment.

#### ***4.1.1 Psychedelic Techniques***

Psychedelics, at least since the 1960s, have been a favored brain change technique in the Western counterculture. For Wilson, and for many others since the 60s, the efforts of Timothy Leary in studying and popularizing them have been of key importance.

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<sup>99</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*.

<sup>100</sup> Wilson, *Cosmic Trigger*: The theory of Sri Aurobindo, Gopi Krishna, and Timothy Leary, says Wilson, is that we are all evolving into the use of new neurological circuits, which will make us superhuman in comparison to our present average state. The activation of these new circuits creates a great deal of temporary weirdness until we learn to use them properly.

<sup>101</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for consciousness change*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> “As John Lilly says, yoga is the science of the East, as science is the yoga of the West Science is a yoga too, science is a way of trying to reach an objective level in which your emotional compulsions and prejudices aren't twisting all the facts to fit in with your favorite reality tunnel.” Wilson, *Acceleration to 2012*.

The most basic aspect of the psychedelic experience, says Leary, is the sudden centering of consciousness on the sense organs.<sup>104</sup> You leave the conditioned mind – your distant thought processes – and enter into harmony with the body. So, instead of being 'absent,' living inside your thoughts and forgetting about the real world around you, you connect the inside and the outside. Leary called this heightened awareness the psychosomatic, or mind-body circuit. Intuitive flashes of meaning add color to one's conscious experience of the world; and the ecstasy that this experience can bring, Leary believes, entices people to explore further and step into the expanded self-awareness of the higher circuits.

What follows is, according to pharmacologist Roland Griffiths, an experience that is virtually identical to naturally occurring mystical experiences. The research criteria for this comparison are similar to those offered as criteria for a mystical experience by Walter Stace. In this case, they include the sensation of fundamental unity, sacredness, a noetic quality (the sense that what is being experienced is more true, or more real than everyday reality), a deeply felt positive mood, transcendence of time and space, and ineffability of the experience. This, he believes, suggests that psychedelically-induced mystical experiences are “biologically normal; that is,” he says, “we're wired for these kinds of experiences.”<sup>105</sup>

Apart from being biologically normal, as Campbell points out to Bill Moyers, his interviewer in *The Power of Myth*, psychedelic drugs are a perfectly modern choice in the search for transcendence. And they have been since prehistoric times, as shamans everywhere use local plants to perturb their brain chemistry. Although Campbell himself has not partaken, he also believes that psychedelics are “the way in to an experience;” a way to initiate your own hero's journey.<sup>106</sup>

Drugs, at least of the psychedelic variety, are known to profoundly change your perception of reality. This is because consciousness - as Wilson and many neuroscientists believe - is chemical in nature. It means that by changing our bodies' chemical composition, we change the nature of our interface with reality; and so the way we interpret reality changes.

The scope of the alteration can be so drastic that few words come close to describing it. 'Spiritual' seems to be one of those few. However, there is a cultural resistance to the use of this word; and not just from rationalists or atheists, but from those mystical traditions that are themselves not psychedelic. Psychedelics are often dismissed as an induced, and therefore non-spiritual mystical experience.<sup>107</sup> “In some ways,” says Dennis McKenna, ethnopharmacologist, “I sometimes get a little impatient with people that say 'A drug experience can not possibly have any 'spiritual' validity.' Well, I'm here to tell you that *all* experience is a drug experience. We're all on drugs all the time, largely because we're *made* of drugs.” Our waking experience of reality, he continues, is a “biochemical process of neural transmitters and hormones moving around our brain. I mean - *it's drugs*.” When using psychedelics, as in the advanced mystical or yogic state, you do not enter a state of meaningless or 'spiritual' hallucination. Instead, the radical change in the quality of mind makes you realize that you already *were* hallucinating your reality. Says McKenna: “The idea that it's all illusion, it's all hallucination; *that's* what the experience is.”<sup>108</sup>

As researchers found out in the 1980s, the human brain has specific receptor sites for drugs like

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<sup>104</sup> Leary, *Politics of Ecstasy*, p.30

<sup>105</sup> Griffiths, *TEDxMidAtlantic*

<sup>106</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.61

<sup>107</sup> See, for instance, Partridge's *Resacralization*

<sup>108</sup> McKenna, Dennis, quoted in *Manifesting the Mind*

peyote, psilocybin mushrooms, LSD, and so on.<sup>109</sup> We even produce the most powerful psychedelic known to man in our very own brains; DMT, or dimethyltryptamine, which has been linked to near-death experiences and dreaming.<sup>110</sup> Of course, why we have these receptors and compounds in our brains is a matter of speculation. And *who* should use them, and *how*, has been a topic of heated debate for decades.



*Illustration 8: Banisteriopsis caenis, a vine that is one of the ingredients for the psychedelic brew Ayahuasca*

The problem, it seems, is that all drugs are not created equal. What we normally refer to as drugs – such as cocaine, heroine, amphetamines, party drugs, antidepressants, and so on – are highly addictive, and often dangerous to the users' health. Psychedelics, however, are not addictive. Research has shown that they are physically harmless, and that they have beneficial psychological effects. According to Wilson, “The psychedelic level of reality is one of the most fascinating, one of the most erotic, one of the the most mystical. And above all one of the most funny. I recommend it highly to anyone over forty.”<sup>111</sup> As one anonymous female experimenter writes of her experience, “You learn to see yourself objectively, and you see through the things that you normally delude yourself with. Some people are stuck in them their entire lives. With mushrooms you can break through that in one trip.”<sup>112</sup> In other words, you learn to watch your thoughts, and realize that you are not bound to them. You see yourself, and hear yourself better; the conditioned ways in which your mind reacts and projects onto the world.

Timothy Leary, in his Harvard University LSD experiments in the 1950s and 60s, was one of the first to research psychedelics scientifically. He quickly determined that the dosage, and what he called the “set and setting,” largely define the quality of a psychedelic experience. The “set” is roughly equal to the subject’s expectations, their emotional status games, personality profile, etc; and the “setting” is the actual events in space-time; the mood and environment where the trip is taking place. These variables were determined through extensive research on religious professionals. In these tests, dozens of professional priests and divinity students reported having profound, spiritual experiences after trying psilocybin mushrooms.<sup>113</sup>

However, the authorities at the time were not impressed, and recreational drug use was getting out of hand – something Leary himself is often accused of causing. But the research greatly impressed

<sup>109</sup> Wilson, *Paul Krassner* interview.

<sup>110</sup> See McKenna, Terence, and Rick Strassman's *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*

<sup>111</sup> Wilson, *Maybe Logic*

<sup>112</sup> "Je leert jezelf objectief bekijken, dingen waarmee je jezelf voor de gek houdt ga je doorzien. Sommige mensen zitten daar een heel leven in vast. Met paddestoeltjes kun je dat in 1 keer doorbreken. Op psilo kan ik wel lekker uit mijn bol gaan, maar niet oppervlakkig. Dan heb ik behoefte om dieper te gaan." Anonymous, quoted in Hellinga, *Psylocybe: Kaalkopje*.

<sup>113</sup> See Leary, *The Politics of Ecstasy*

Wilson. As he tells an interviewer,

“Leary's comprehension of LSD is, I think, superior to any other scientist who has written about it; he understands it and knows how to use it constructively. He recognizes, as few others do, that LSD suspends the printed neurological programs of one's life, thereby creating 'imprint vulnerability', in which a new imprint can be created. This means that if one is working with someone who understands LSD, or the person himself understands it, it is possible to create an entirely new ego for oneself. On the other hand, if one is simply experimenting casually with it, one is likely to imprint anything - including delusions.”<sup>114</sup>

What is the 'danger' here? Is it the drug, the chemical? When someone says psychedelics are dangerous, Leary retorts “Ah, consciousness is dangerous.” LSD, he says, is simply a key.<sup>115</sup>

In spite of the great promise of psychedelics, Wilson recognized their limitations – and of any other, solitary brain changing technique. As he writes, “A good LSD trip will ‘destroy’ your ego temporarily, and leave you energized, healthy and strong for 2-4 weeks.” But after a time, you will regress.<sup>116</sup> So it seems there is more to the art and science of conscious evolution than simply changing your brain chemistry through psychedelics.

#### **4.1.2 Non-Psychedelic Techniques**

Of course, psychedelics aren't the only form of drugs. And drugs are not the only substances that change your brain. *Any* chemical changes consciousness. However, says Wilson, partly because of genetic differences, no drug has the same impact on any two people. And different people are drawn to different chemicals. Most of us stick to coffee, cigarettes, alcohol, over-the-counter drugs, and the electronic stimulation of TV screens; but these do not expand consciousness. Indeed, Wilson believes they are more likely to reduce it, and lists have been made detailing the specific circuits of consciousness that each chemical activates.<sup>117</sup>

Beyond chemicals, Wilson and Campbell review a great number of other brain changing techniques. Prehistoric humans, for example, used caves for their important rituals. Campbell recounts his own visit to one, and the profound effect it had on him.<sup>118</sup> Cathedrals and temples serve the same purpose. This is a technique of using the outer environment to change your brain. Stepping into forest, out of the bustling city streets, will have a similar effect by connecting you to a more timeless dimension. The Eastern, or Yogic techniques, however, use the body itself to sculpt an inner environment. Asana, or posturing of the body, for example, is a method of bringing the body to maximum relaxation. Pranayama, or controlled Yogic breathing, is a method of bringing the emotions under control. Celibacy also changes the brain, as Wilson writes, because the pent-up sexual energy has to go somewhere – and often it explodes into higher circuits. There are also meditation techniques like Darana, where all words are driven out of the mind, and Mantra, where one single word or phrase is

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<sup>114</sup> Wilson, *Starship interview*

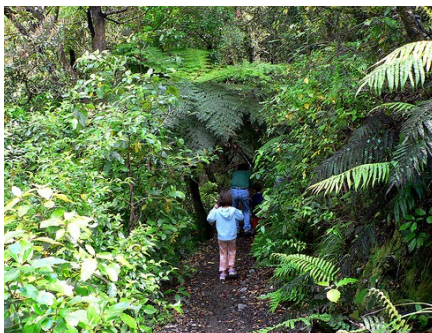
<sup>115</sup> Leary, *The LSD Crisis*; Politics of Ecstasy, p.179

<sup>116</sup> Wilson quoted in Hyatt, *Undoing Yourself*. See also Lilly, *Programming and Metaprogramming*. And Watts: “Psychedelic experience is only a glimpse of genuine mystical insight, but a glimpse which can be matured and deepened by the various ways of meditation in which drugs are no longer necessary or useful. If you get the message, hang up the phone. For psychedelic drugs are simply instruments, like microscopes, telescopes, and telephones. The biologist does not sit with eye permanently glued to the microscope, he goes away and works on what he has seen.”

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, Wilson, *Cosmic Trigger*, or *Prometheus Rising*

<sup>118</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.79

repeated, to quiet and focus the mind.<sup>119</sup> And finally, also from the East, 'mindfulness' is a rising notion in the New Age and Western psychology; it is a training of awareness, to be aware of your thoughts, your emotions, your body, and of awareness itself. Most of these techniques have been refined over hundreds if not thousands of years.



*Illustration 9: Entering a forest can change your consciousness profoundly*

Western techniques for brain change have been handed down by esoteric and occult societies, alchemists, magicians, artists, mystics, and psychologists. There is a wide range, from drugs, to near-death experiences, to sex magic, to sigil magick, to hypnosis, to prayer rituals that bring about altered states of consciousness.<sup>120</sup> But it need not be quite as dramatic as all that. Campbell, for example, advises Jung's technique of active imagination, whereby any symbol is held in the mind until it starts transforming itself. Watch what happens, and see the connections your mind makes, connections that you were never aware of before. Recording your dreams also contacts the hidden levels of your mind. Even reading and writing can have a big effect on our brains: as Wilson writes, his own novel *Illuminatus!* is, "Among other things, a precise manual of eroto-neurological techniques for consciousness expansion."<sup>121</sup>

Brain change can be a turning point in an individual's life, activating their brain patterns at new and unique levels. It opens up the greater potentials of self-awareness of the higher chakras and circuits. To the counterculture, since it is increasingly difficult to open these doors through long-term meditation in the modern world, psychedelics are an obvious alternative.<sup>122</sup> But Campbell and Wilson agree that each person has to discover for themselves the brain changing techniques that they prefer. Each one changes your reality tunnel; and it takes time to communicate the changes.<sup>123</sup>

#### **4.2 The Path to Expanded Awareness**

Because expanded awareness is itself too difficult to explain, I am going to employ a visual metaphor. It is an interpretation of the infamous "Eye of Providence;" the Eye in the Triangle, or the

<sup>119</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.209, 217

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, Alli, *The Neuropharmacy of an Eight-Circuit Brain*, for an extensive list of techniques and their correlation to the Eight Circuits

<sup>121</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.88.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204

<sup>123</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.118.

pyramid with the “all-seeing eye,” which is printed on the back of the American \$1 dollar bill.<sup>124</sup> This metaphor is not meant as an official interpretation of the symbol, but as a helpful tool to quickly explain something which is quite difficult to put into words.



*Illustration 10: The pyramid with the All-Seeing Eye*

Imagine the symbol above is actually a diagram, a depiction of the journey you take in your mind when you have a mystical experience. Now, you start at the bottom left side of the pyramid, as a regular mortal. But if you are on this quest for higher knowledge, to find 'the' truth, or reach enlightenment, you will work your way up the side of the pyramid, through trials and tribulations, to the very edge of human experience – to the last step of the pyramid. After this, there are no words, no maps, or anything else to prepare you for what is to come. At this point, all that remains is to take a giant leap into the unknown. A leap off of the pyramid, out of everything that is familiar to your mind, and into an expanded state of consciousness. You've reached pure awareness; you are the “all-seeing eye” of the universe. It is a direct connection to your higher self, with knowledge beyond good and evil, and it feels like total bliss, like ecstasy. But, as is the case with mortals, gravity still has its pull, and you come down again no matter how much you want to stay.

However, something has changed: *you* have changed, your knowledge, insight, and wisdom, everything has been put into a new perspective. And you see that the path which you took up the pyramid is only one out of many. So on the way down you take a new path, down the other side of the pyramid. And even if you come down from your visit with cosmic consciousness to return to the same world, the same people, the same words – *you* are different. You have experienced the vision for yourself. And that, in a nutshell, is what a mystical experience is.

What's useful about this metaphor is that it works to represent mystical experiences for any individual, no matter what their background. In other words, if the pyramid is everything that is familiar to you, everything that you take for granted as true, or real, it doesn't matter if you started as a skeptical rationalist, a Christian, a Kabbalist, or a Hindu. Everybody has their own pyramid, a cultural, biological and personal path of more or less fixed rules, beliefs, habits, and assumptions. But when you take the leap, you take leave of any culturally mediated ideas, and your local identity as a twenty-first century

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<sup>124</sup> The symbol is familiar to esoteric and occult circles, not to mention conspiracy theorists. This is hardly surprising, since the text in Latin reads “he approves our undertakings,” and “New Order of the Ages.” It is often associated with the Freemasons. But the Freemasons, says Campbell, are “a scholarly attempt to reconstruct an order of initiation that would result in spiritual revelation.” *The Power of Myth*, p.29

individual is peeled away. Everyone has their own pyramid; the pyramid is their own mind. But *consciousness*, the eye, connects us all; it is a point of balance between something and nothing, real and unreal, matter and spirit. It is inside you and outside you.<sup>125</sup>

So here, your mind, which you have left behind for a little while, is revealed to be an illusion. All authority, truth, or reality is a delusion, whether inside your mind or out. Everything, says Wilson, is “radically, even sickeningly, free.”<sup>126</sup> Time itself is an illusion, and everything you look upon is a mirror unto yourself. This is part of what the eye of expanded awareness reveals: it uncovers “the truth,” or at least a very different and more fundamental version of it than you knew before. It shows that the reality you took for granted is not solid, but a structure we have worked together to impose on the chaos of our minds. We built our pyramids to feel *as if* we live in an ordered universe. Wilson says that this has led to the construction of a sense of “individuality,” or the ego, and that it was “useful to get us to the point of here and now out of the chaos of history. But now,” he writes, “you have to let it go.”<sup>127</sup>

Having come down again, something special happens. You find that the journey isn't near over: it has only just begun. You want to retain as much as possible of what you have experienced – to bring this expanded awareness down to your mortal sphere. This is what the prophets, the founders of religions, cults, and philosophies have tried to do: to bring us all a step closer to 'God,' and it is what Campbell considers the final and most important part of the hero's journey. The return. To bring back that message of wonder, the vision of 'heaven'; or, in a secular sense, of the neurological rapture of activating a higher circuit of your brain. Just think of Moses climbing up Mount Sinai, talking to Jehovah, and coming down with His laws for His people; or of Buddha sitting under the Bodhi tree, attaining enlightenment, and teaching the path; or Christ, who was baptized, but then went into the desert for forty days and returned to found a new religion; or the Greeks of ancient myth, who went on dangerous quests and returned to found cities and civilizations.<sup>128</sup> How well *you* do it is in a way a measure of how well you are accepted in modern society: do you shout and laugh like a madman in the town square; or are you, like Campbell and Wilson, seen as an artist, or an intellectual? In other words, are you a novelty and a laughing stock, overwhelmed by ecstasy, or do you bring a bit of light to share with others?

#### 4.2.1 *Mere Ecstatics*

While the mystical experience reveals the illusive nature of reality, or *Maya*, as the Hindus and Buddhists call it, it is equally a trap to assume that the newly liberated state you are in is any *more* real. As Wilson says, the danger is to become so infatuated with the experience, that you want to stay high, and end up becoming a “mere ecstatic.”<sup>129</sup> In other words, you can get stuck in the experience, and forget to come back and share it. This is a major 'pitfall' of the mystical experience, as the ecstasy may

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<sup>125</sup> 1988 interview, Wilson: “The eye on top of the pyramid represents the transcendental ego as distinguished from the normal ego. It represents your awareness of your role as an evolutionary agent with all past generations holding you up to the position you're in now. The pyramid represents all past generations and the open eye represents your realization of your oneness with all past generations, especially all past generations of magicians.”

<sup>126</sup> Wilson, *Illuminatus*, p.483

<sup>127</sup> Wilson, *Disinfocon*

<sup>128</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth* pp.136, 139

<sup>129</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change; Illuminatus*, p.284: “He remembered Saint Francis of Assisi called his body 'Brother Ass,' and Timothy Leary used to say when exhausted, 'The robot needs sleep.' Those had been their mantras, their defenses against the experience of the mountaintop and the terrible arrogance it triggered.”

tempt you to become a mystic purely for the sake of mysticism.

Wilson and Timothy Leary were major advocates of sharing the experience, and the messages and insights that it brings, in a feedback system that leads to mutual enrichment and intelligence. In more traditional terms, Campbell simply calls it the completion of the hero's journey; the triumphant return of the hero to share his boons. Like Odysseus, the archetypal Western hero, who had several opportunities to remain in the highest illumination, we must choose to come back to our families and communities.<sup>130</sup>



*Illustration 11: The risk of becoming a religious nut*

For some, the danger of religious experience is that it can lead to a new religion. An initiate may communicate their vision of Ultimate Reality in fixed terms, and form new dogmas out of this experience. Or, the followers of the initiate may misinterpret their words and turn them into dogma. Either way, aside from the risk of becoming a mere ecstatic, to whom nothing matters but total bliss, there is also the risk of coming back as (what society perceives to be) a religious nut.

#### **4.2.2 Fundamentalist Materialists**

Of course the tendency to think that we have found 'the' truth is an ever-lasting temptation. Wilson calls it “model-theism”: worshiping one model above all others.<sup>131</sup> He believes that scientific materialists or atheists, who exist perhaps at the opposite side of the spectrum from the 'mere ecstatics,' have chosen to worship rationality and materialism as the one truth. Pointing out, for example, the witch hunts of CSICOP (The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal) against everything paranormal in the seventies and eighties, Wilson believes there is a risk of becoming “irrationally rational.” The boundaries of scientific method and theory become the boundaries of truth, and of the scientific mind. And indeed, it seems to have become a predominant mentality in the Western world to say that if something is not scientific, it is not true. This is excessive rationalism, and it is a rigid, potentially intolerant belief system. Wilson has characterized (or perhaps caricatured) those who think this way as “fundamentalist materialists,”<sup>132</sup> because they defend their fundamental idea of reality at the expense of all other versions.

Campbell believes the issue comes down to faith. While science itself has “come to the edge,” and is “breaking through into the mystery dimensions,” amongst scientists it is still *faith* that determines the general perspective on truth; namely, the faith that the material world is real reality. This faith, says Campbell, “belongs...to those who as yet have no idea of how mysterious, really, is the mystery of

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<sup>130</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.135, 132

<sup>131</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, Wilson, *The New Inquisition*, or *Creative Agnosticism*.



themselves.”<sup>133</sup> In other words, science might take you out of a lot of illusions, but it cannot take you out of all of them.

### 4.2.3 Science and the Counterculture

The point, it seems, is that any experience of truth that we have, even of a 'higher' truth, is just another reflection of our own self-created, or culturally created illusion. The implication is clear: when we believe that we know *the* truth, or a better truth than someone else, whether it be through science, religion, or consciousness expansion, it has a limiting effect on our intelligence. Or, as Aleister Crowley says in Wilson's novel *Masks of the Illuminati*, “To remain totally rational is to become half a human,” and “To allow the irrational to overwhelm you is to succumb to religious mania. The Great Work,” he continues, “consists of yoking the rational and irrational together in a harmony that transcends both.”<sup>134</sup> The modern world, therefore, with its many boundaries and insect-like specializations, seems to call out for people who can learn more than one perspective; those who can access expanded awareness, self-metaprogram, and be neither bewitched by reason nor blinded by religious doctrine.<sup>135</sup>

This, it seems, is one of the roles of the counterculture. Modern science has provided new technologies, languages, and insights into reality and the structure of the mind, which the countercultural 'psychonaut' - think astronaut, but of the psyche - incorporates with the discriminative eye of a 'rational mystic.' Also known as non-dualism, transrationalism, or integralism,<sup>136</sup> this perspective combines reason and intuition, mysticism and science, and all such pairs of opposites. In this way, opposites are used as complementary approaches to knowledge, and they do not necessarily exclude each other (just as in Niels Bohr's Complementarity principle of quantum physics). So when the rational model is needed, it is used; and when it becomes too constricted, it is balanced by the intuitive, or altogether transcended. In this nondualistic system of thought, everything in reality is both separate and connected – the same and not the same – and we determine for ourselves just how separate and how connected it seems to us.<sup>137</sup>

Part of what this synthesis of scientific and mystical, rational and non-rational perspectives achieves, is the mutual illumination of each side's illusions – and their truths. Combining forces tackles issues from the outside as well as the inside, from the fringe as well as the center. And all the while *consciousness* connects the knowledge that is produced just by being open to it. In this sense, the countercultural perspective on knowledge is that it is fractal in nature: that despite the appearance of discrete differences – of specializations, or branches that go off in different directions – it is actually one network of knowledge. So what at one level appears to be the core truth, as science is today, at another level turns out to be but a branch. Briefly put, reason is not the only way to reality, nor is it a way to absolute truth. In a countercultural modeling of consciousness - as in the mystical experience itself - science is not the dominant system, but a subsystem like any other language that attempts to describe reality.

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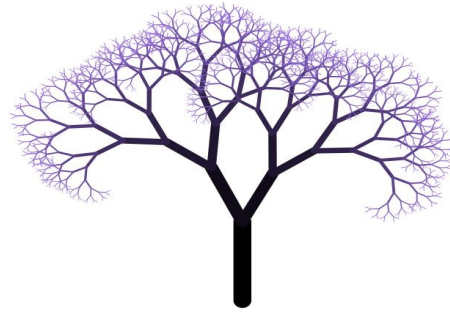
<sup>133</sup> Campbell, *Thou Art That*, p.13; *The Power of Myth*, p.132; *Creative Mythology*, p.609

<sup>134</sup> Wilson, *Masks of the Illuminati*, p.35

<sup>135</sup> Wilson, *High Times* interview; *Illuminati Papers*, p.83

<sup>136</sup> 'Transrational' is the Integral philosopher and mystic Ken Wilber's term for certain instances of what are otherwise called non- or irrational experiences of mind. The term is meant to overcome the inherent bias towards rationalism of its predecessors. Wilber, *Een beknopte geschiedenis van alles*, op.cit.

<sup>137</sup> Wilson, *Maybe Logic*. For example, says Wilson, scientifically speaking, even mysticism can be seen as a branch of neuroscience.



*Illustration 12: The countercultural perspective is that knowledge, like this Romanesco, is fractal in nature*

### 4.3 Turning Off the Autopilot

In spite of the risk of fundamentalist materialism, Campbell, like Wilson, encourages his readers to learn the science of the day. It's the current truth, and he believes it is worth knowing. But, he says, you shouldn't do so without question; always investigate what the science means to life, and what it means to you. Otherwise the knowledge will lead a life of its own, and can unintentionally become destructive. So, he says, you must “penetrate it to the mystery.”<sup>138</sup> If you do this, Campbell believes, you can see the bigger picture; how your knowledge connects to reality beyond the laboratory and the printed page.

Science itself is often an aid in coming to 'mystical' realizations about reality. In biology, for example, it can show you that our species is interrelated to all life on Earth; and in chemistry, that everything is chemically related, having grown out of the same space dust in the same universe; and in physics, that we are all related on a quantum level as parts of a shared field of energy, where every electron affects every other electron everywhere; and, in psychology and anthropology, that we shape and co-create our own inner universes. In other words, as humans, the science of the day says you are connected to everything, as witness and co-creator of the universe. Penetrating these mysteries can be a religious experience.<sup>139</sup>

But who actively does this, and penetrates the mystery? Who takes the extra step, and experiences an expansion of consciousness? Even a century after the birth of quantum physics, most of society is ignorant of the paradoxes and mysteries it reveals. In academic circles, any mention of it is often labeled as 'New Age'. So journalist Bill Moyers, in *The Power of Myth*, asks Campbell a poignant question: “Can Westerners grasp the mystical experience that leaves theology behind? If you're locked to the image of God in a culture where science determines your perceptions of reality, how can you experience this ultimate ground that the shamans talk about?” “Well,” Campbell answers, “people do.” And he gives examples: the heretics, for example, did it during the Inquisition; Jesus, who said “The Father and I are one,” did it; as did the Sufi mystic Mansur Al-Hallaj.<sup>140</sup> But Campbell's list is not a comforting list, nor is it up to date. The heretics were burned at the stake; and Jesus and the Sufi were crucified. Moyers' point is well made – that there are relatively few people who take that extra step.

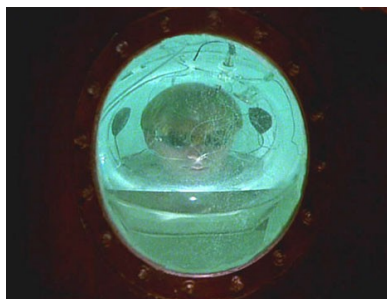
<sup>138</sup> Campbell, *Sukhavati*. Not unlike Nietzsche's science in the service of life: see *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*

<sup>139</sup> Campbell, *Creative Mythology*, p.655; *Thou Art That*, pp.105-108; *The Power of Myth*, p.xviii. Wilson, *Schrodinger's Cat*.

<sup>140</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.117

Why the violence? Leary believes it has to do with maintaining the status quo, or consensus reality. Throughout history, when a Socrates comes wandering into town, and exposes your own delusions to you, the typical response is: kill him. It's no surprise then that the counterculture is called *counterculture*, because it is perceived to do exactly that – it challenges our truths. But for most of us, the inputs we receive in life from parents, genetics, schools,<sup>141</sup> governments, churches, corporations, television, advertisements, emotions, etc, are real enough not to have to question them too deeply. These inputs create your reality for you, or at least the parameters within which you can create it for yourself. And so this overload of programming, Wilson says, puts our consciousness on autopilot.<sup>142</sup> The mind does as it is programmed to do, and that includes ignoring or silencing any challenges to the status quo.

This 'autopilot' is also known as the ego, as Freud called it. It's what we identify with as being 'me', and what we believe is really us. But it is actually just a mask, or a persona, as Jung calls it; the collage created by our imprints, learning, and conditioning of lower circuits. The ego, it seems, is like a cocoon defending against the unknown. It protects us from unexplainable mysteries that could threaten our sanity, by acting and reacting according to fixed and predictable programs. However, to many who have experienced consciousness expansion, this means that it is also a barrier to openness and growth. It contracts your consciousness into a tiny spot behind your eyes; and it contracts your identity into your body, your choice of words and beliefs, your favorite clothes and music style, your insecurities, fears, and desires. And this is where we are all at, culturally speaking, because according to modern biology and psychology, the ego is the 'normal' state of consciousness for us to be in. Ninety-nine percent of the human race, psychologists say, is in a robotic state 99.999 % of the time; and only 1% of our bodily function is consciously controlled.<sup>143</sup> Anything that threatens this limited state of consciousness is either ignored or actively repressed.



*Illustration 13: A flotation chamber, or isolation tank. Here there are no outside inputs on the mind, and consciousness is confronted with itself*

There are of however examples of 'awakened' scientists. John C. Lilly, for example, an influential consciousness researcher in the 1960s and 70s, invented his own ways of transcending the ego, or turning off the autopilot. He noted in his experiments that when consciousness is stripped of all inputs – for instance, by completely isolating yourself in a dark flotation chamber – you awaken to the existence of the autopilot. This robotic self, he writes, “becomes so obvious as to be inescapable and humbling.” Outside of the chamber, he says, in external reality, you use ingenious and subtle techniques

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<sup>141</sup> According to Wilson, “A professor is a policemen of the intellect.” In *Illuminatus*, p.86

<sup>142</sup> Wilson, *On the Acceleration to 2012*. See also Leary, *The Politics of Ecstasy*

<sup>143</sup> Wilson in Hyatt, *Undoing Yourself*. And Leary, *Politics of Ecstasy*, p.26

- well-known to psychology - to escape this realization, and imagine that you are actually in control.<sup>144</sup> But without outside inputs to keep up the magic show, there is only a sea of darkness - and the machinations of the mind are suddenly put into the spotlight. Then, when you see your own ego revealed to you, the autopilot turns off; and all that's left is 'the Creator', confronted with its own creation. This, it seems, is higher, or expanded consciousness. A mystical awakening.

#### 4.4 *The Out of Mind Experience*

Leaping off the pyramid – turning off the autopilot – brings a mixture of great shock and awe. It literally wakes you up from the slumber of your mechanical ego, by stripping everything away except pure consciousness. The *Matrix* movies are probably the most familiar modern depiction of this event, showing the character Neo awakening in shock from the virtual 'machine world' to the *real* reality. It may be necessary to go through such a shock to have the experience in the first place; because it takes a shock, as Jung says, to “wake up” and “pay attention.”<sup>145</sup> Near-death experiences, psychedelics, fasting, isolation – these are all ways of shocking your body and your mind, and therefore of “dying” to your normal sense of self.<sup>146</sup>



*Illustration 14: When Neo wakes up from the Matrix, he has been released from the machine world into 'real' reality*

Facing death is often said to be the ultimate test of character. It confronts you with your own lack of control over your existence. But the concept of death is, as Leary writes, the oldest and most powerful taboo in human history.<sup>147</sup> What has to be understood is that the mystical sensation of 'dying to yourself' and being reborn 'spiritually' (into the heart chakra, and the upper circuits) is neither a physical nor a permanent psychological death. Ego, reason, and logic do not disappear. As Campbell says, it is “Not the death of ego: it is the abandonment of ego attachment.”<sup>148</sup>

This is why I have entitled this thesis “How to Go Out of Your Mind.” It is meant as a parallel to the “out of body” experience, where you are outside of your body, hovering over it and witnessing 'yourself' below. Except in this case you detach not from your body, but from your mind, and look upon it as it operates on its own. You are having an 'out of mind experience.' This may indeed be the ultimate test of character, because it confronts you with your own lack of control over your mind. The confusion that can be experienced by an unprepared person, says Leary, is a result of having to use their brain anew. You are launched out of your conditioned patterns, and become aware of processes – in body,

<sup>144</sup> Lilly, *The Quiet Center*, op.cit.

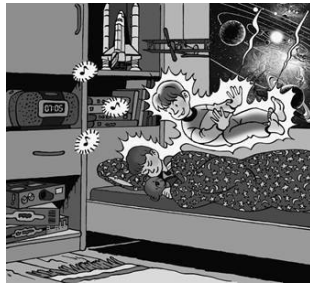
<sup>145</sup> Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p.76. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.xiii, 110. Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.89

<sup>146</sup> Richard Alpert, quoted in *The Man Who Turned on America*

<sup>147</sup> Leary, quoted in *A Game of Mind Tennis with Timothy Leary*

<sup>148</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.107, 112, 130

cell, and mind – that you were never tuned in to before – the unconscious 99%.<sup>149</sup>



*Illustrations 14a and 15b:  
The "out of mind"  
experience is like looking  
at yourself from the outside  
- as in an 'out of body'  
experience*

Several times in Wilson's *Illuminatus!*, it is said that “The fear of death is the beginning of slavery.” In other words, the fear of death is how the ego – the autopilot – maintains its hold and makes you its slave. And, by extension, it is how society at large marginalizes mystics. You don't ask the questions, because you fear the answers. Without ego – without life – where would you be? As I asked in the introduction, what have you ever known beyond your own individual experience? Reaching that threshold, where you break the bonds of your ego, can be an experience of absolute terror. It is the unknown, come upon you as if you were on your deathbed. And the question asked of you, to cross that threshold, says Campbell, is: “Can the ego put itself to death?”

If you answer yes, then the ultimate illusion is revealed. And it is at the same time a great liberation: your deepest fear was unfounded, because death itself is an illusion. “Consciousness,” says Wilson, “like matter and energy, is neither created nor destroyed.” The only real terror you have faced “is the horror of realizing that you can't believe anything you've ever been told.”<sup>150</sup> In other words, what you really faced was the fear of not knowing what is true anymore – realizing that none of the concepts, rational or otherwise, are 'true' from the perspective of eternity. Normally, you want to think that what you know is right, so losing your illusion this way may be a bitter pill to swallow. But for the successful hero, the trade-off appears to be worth it. Because passing beyond the threshold of the fear of death, the oldest taboo, you step into the ecstasy of an expanded consciousness.<sup>151</sup> In terms of the hero's journey, from separation, to initiation, to return, it is the psychological journey from birth, to 'death,' to rebirth.

Campbell often repeats a story from the Grail legends. In this story, the knights of the Round Table go off on their quest for the Holy Grail; and, as heroic knights, they decide that each will go alone, into the darkest part of the forest, where there is no path. To do otherwise, and follow someone else, would be a disgrace.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, to Campbell and Wilson, until you experience it yourself, you haven't opened and visited a pathway out of your own mind. Remember the pyramid metaphor: a new path is created after having the vision. You are the only one who can explore your inner world, and if you don't do it, nobody will. Finding his or her own way is the inevitable task of each consciousness-explorer. But it is also the most rewarding. As Wilson says, “Once you get to the level where you're outside your reality tunnel looking down at it, you can compare reality tunnels. And then you're on a

<sup>149</sup> Leary, *Politics of Ecstasy*, p.114

<sup>150</sup> Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, p.109; Wilson, *Illuminatus*, pp.260, 487, 207; *Masks of the Illuminati*, p.33

<sup>151</sup> Campbell, *The Mythical Dimension*, pp.202-4. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p.162

<sup>152</sup> Campbell, *Thou Art That*, p.30

higher level of intelligence already, because you're no longer a conditioned mechanism just following the reality tunnel that was accidentally imprinted or conditioned, and you can start choosing between reality tunnels.”<sup>153</sup>

#### 4.4.1 *Going Out is Going In*

Expanded awareness, or religious experience, is something greater than what you normally experience or feel – it is greater than you or your ego. The term expanded consciousness itself also conveys this meaning; that you are expanded into an identity with the whole universe. This is a much broader perspective on where you stand in the game of existence and evolution than as a mere ego, the victim of circumstance that exists only in the blink of an eye.

Campbell has a book appropriately entitled *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*. The title describes the fundamental, ego-shattering experience of many astronauts. Having gone beyond Earth's atmosphere they report having had a deeply religious experience.<sup>154</sup> In outer space “all barriers are shattered;” you find yourself floating in infinity, with endless space in all directions, and that Earth is just an arbitrary center to it all. The same thing happens to the inner-space explorer who sees his own mind for the first time. It is an experience of infinity and eternity, where the ego is also just an arbitrary center of the Self.

Campbell uses this parallel to show that when you visit the inner reaches of your Self, you start to see how you are connected to everything else in the universe. It is at the same time the most modern image that Campbell uses. Similarly, in *Schrodinger's Cat Trilogy*, Wilson's character Blake Williams says that “Earth is our womb. Leaving Earth is literally rebirth. There’s nothing metaphoric about it.” Just as in the mind, where there are no limits, there is no time, or spatial boundary; it is infinity, eternity. “This,” says Campbell, “is what is known as the sublime.”<sup>155</sup> Your connection to micro- and macrocosm is revealed. If you identify your Self with all of humanity, or the world, or all the universe, or even a grain of sand – as in the Hindu sacred formula, *Tat tvam asi*, Thou Art That<sup>156</sup> – you have expanded your inner being by expanding the outer. Basically, the further you go in, the farther you go out. Outer space and inner space are both mirrors that reveal you for who you are. And in the out of mind experience, you realize that inside is out, and outside is in, and your total identity is as infinite as space in all directions.

In expanded awareness, there is no 'far away' in space or time: it is all right *here* and *now*, at the Axis Mundi, the doorway where eternity and time meet.<sup>157</sup> Of course, say Campbell and Wilson, you exist there always, even when you're not aware of it; even right now; but the mystical experience charges the moment with an intensity that you cannot ignore. Normally, your inside and outside worlds are mirrors that you can stare into so deeply that you fall in and forget yourself. But if, at any moment, you can look upon the outside world, and at the same time see that it is 'inside' you, you have found your center of consciousness.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Wilson, *On the acceleration to 2012*

<sup>154</sup> Wilson, *The Eight Systems of Consciousness*

<sup>155</sup> Wilson, *Schrodinger's Cat*, p.20. Campbell, *Sukhavati*.

<sup>156</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.256 “Tat tvam asi. You yourself are that which you are seeking to know.”

<sup>157</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.196

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p.177

## **5. The Art of Conscious Evolution: Choosing Your Illusion**

I wrote above about brain change techniques, and drugs, chemicals, ego-detachment rituals and so on. That part was the 'science' of conscious evolution. But there is one class of drugs that is much more influential than all of those put together: language. Language itself can be seen as a drug that changes the way we perceive reality. It can make us high, or angry, or intelligent, or stupid.<sup>159</sup> We can be addicted to our words, our truths, and our interpretations, and hunger for those that offer something newer and better.

Terence McKenna, ethnobotanist and brother of Dennis McKenna, expresses what I mean quite well. "Culture," he says, "is your operating system." Like a Windows, Macintosh, or Linux operated computer, your brain runs on certain programs in a certain operating system. It is what you grew up with – your culture – and it is all that you know how to know. Science, for example, is one of the many programming languages that your brain can run on. If it's the only programming language you run on – if you have imprinted excessive rationalism in your third circuit – then you may fall into Wilson's category of fundamentalist materialism. But if there are more – if you speak many languages, or can use your own very flexibly, even *poetically* – then you already know the principle behind the 'art' of conscious evolution, which I am going to explain below.

### **5.1 All That is, is Metaphor**

There is an important quote cited by both Campbell and Wilson, which I believe is central to their philosophy. Understand this quote, and you understand their notion of reality tunnels, personal myths, programming, and culture in general. It was originally written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in *Faust*, part two, in 1832, and it reads as follows: "All that is, is metaphor."<sup>160</sup> What does this mean? What is metaphor, and how does it relate to expanded awareness?

Metaphors – symbols, words, figures of speech, and images – have no fixed interpretation. Instead, when used in a poem, there is an infinite number of ways to see meaning in them, or at least as many ways as there are interpreters making interpretations. Every interpretation of a metaphor is true in some sense, and says something about what the poem means to people. And the same applies to everything in reality – in other words, if we make the psychological shift to see everything as poetry, or as metaphor, we see that everyone is making their own interpretation of it. Take rain for example: while somebody might see rain and say, "It's dreary outside," a child might be happy to jump in its puddles; and a farmer could be worried about too much rain on his crops. The reality doesn't change, but the interpretation and therefore the experience does. Even within ourselves, we should be able to recognize such voices that contradict each other and feel differently about the same thing.

But our tendency is to see the world as fact, not as poetry. We are trapped, says Wilson, in our linguistic constructs – in our third circuit semantic imprints. And so it really is dreary when it rains, and nothing else. It is what it is. The strongest metaphor wins. This kind of certainty is a self-created illusion – a choice – which, as Wilson humorously writes, belongs to he who owns only one encyclopedia,<sup>161</sup> or to he who checks one dictionary, uses one scale, or reads one translation of the one

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<sup>159</sup> As Wilson writes, "You don't need to take drugs to hallucinate; improper language can fill your world with phantoms and spooks of many kinds." Quoted in *Toward Understanding E-Prime*

<sup>160</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.230. And in Wilson, *Schrodinger's Cat*, p.112; *Maybe Logic*

<sup>161</sup> Wilson, *Paul Krassner* interview

holy book. Put another way, what Campbell and Wilson are saying is that everything you say or believe or feel is not really true, nor is it a lie; it is a perception of a metaphor. Like reading poetry, or appreciating art, your reading of reality is somewhere in between, true for you perhaps, but not for all time, nor for all people.<sup>162</sup> What, Campbell asks, is the meaning of a flower, or the universe? “It’s just there,” he says. “The meaning is in the mind.” And since the meaning of the metaphor is in your mind, you can change your interpretation of it at any time. With that knowledge, you can choose to change or ‘evolve’ your state of consciousness, by simply changing the meaning you are perceiving.

Everything, Wilson says, is perception. And perception, according to him, is a *transaction* between your perceiving apparatus – your mind, brain, senses, instruments, etc – and ‘the outside.’ Wilson often quotes Dogen Zenji, a Zen master of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, who asked his students: “Who is the great master who makes the grass green?” The greenness of the grass, so the answer goes, is your interpretation of the signals that light takes from grass to your eyes. There’s no green without the grass, and there’s no green without you; it’s a transaction. This does not *mean* that the grass is green. You and the grass have made it green, together. You could decide that grass is not green; or you could be color blind, and not even know what green is. So in our minds, we do not *find* meaning, we *create* it.<sup>163</sup> Facts, even in science, do not speak for themselves: we *create* their meaning when we choose our preferred interpretation of the metaphor.

Most of the time, Wilson continues, when we make a perception, we are unaware that we made a perception. We don’t think of a rock as being ambiguous, we just think ‘rock’ – but there is a nearly instantaneous process in which your brain has made you think that and not something else.<sup>164</sup> Most people only sidestep this programming when, for example, looking at the shape of clouds, or at art, which is overtly ambiguous and inspires the imagination. Therefore we usually assume that things are what they are, and take for granted that something is normal. We don’t read reality as poetry, because it is inefficient to spend time re-interpreting everything and every thought all of the time. “A lot of people don’t realize we invented the lines on the map,” says Wilson; and we don’t ask where the lines came from, where our thoughts or feelings came from, and whether or not they can be changed or re-imprinted. We forget that it’s all man-made, invented.

Every mythology, says Campbell, is true in the metaphorical sense. The laws of science, the formal logic of mathematics, the pseudo-science of the New Age, nursery-rhymes, and any other text is in this sense a mythology, a set of metaphors. They are maps, not territory. The problem, says Campbell, is where you get stuck to the literal meaning of the metaphor. If you realize that you can draw the lines yourself, you are on guard against anyone who claims to have the one truth. And, more importantly, it puts you on guard against the voices in your own mind that claim to have the one truth. When you remember that your truths, your perceptions, and your interpretations are based on metaphors, you remember to be critical about them, and decide for yourself what is true for you. This is an aspect of self-metaprogramming, an intellectual approach to mindfulness, where you are aware of what you are aware of. And therefore you become aware of your own prejudices.

So, say Campbell and Wilson, everything is metaphor. This means that, in the grand scheme of things – especially in terms of expanded awareness – it doesn’t matter what words you use. Whether you speak words of faith, logic, or the one’s and zero’s of machine language, they are still metaphors.

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<sup>162</sup> Wilson, *Illuminatus*, p.414

<sup>163</sup> Wilson, *Cosmic Trigger*, p.vii The theory of transactional psychology, according to Wilson, says that the **meaning** of an experience depends entirely on you and the *results* depend partly on you (and partly on the doctors).

<sup>164</sup> Wilson, *Masks of the Illuminati*, p.44



Wilson says, “To me the metaphors of the experience don't matter.” Instead, what matters is *the ability to change your consciousness*.<sup>165</sup> As we will see, Campbell and Wilson are both adept at making everything from science to mysticism do just this – to make the mind leap beyond the bounds of its programming language, its metaphors, and enter the higher states of consciousness. And this, briefly put, is the 'art' of conscious evolution according to Wilson and Campbell; evolving your use of language to affect the state of consciousness of yourself and your surroundings.<sup>166</sup>

### 5.1.1 *The Word is Not the Thing*

Still, the concept of metaphor is notoriously difficult to explain. As Wilson says, somebody who intellectually acknowledges the relativity of truth – the relativity of *all* knowledge – can still turn around and act as if something called “holy” really is “holy;” or as if something immoral really “is” immoral.<sup>167</sup> They do not take the concept far enough into their own experience, because they cannot always distinguish the *word* from the *reality*.

A second quote that Wilson and Campbell share, taken from Alfred Korzybski, the semanticist, further explains the awareness of reality as metaphor. It says that “The word is not the thing.” Or, in Alan Watts' version, that “the menu is not the meal.”<sup>168</sup> Hamburger, written on paper, is not the same as a hamburger on your plate. Korzybski called this recognition the *consciousness of abstraction*. He defines it as the awareness that when we speak, write, or think, we are abstracting reality – the thing – into words, and that this means that we leave out certain characteristics.<sup>169</sup>

The difficulty of keeping the two apart is easy to understand. While the word is not the thing, in our minds, that's exactly what the word becomes. In psychology this is known as projecting. You are projecting from your unconscious mind – your operating system – onto 'reality.'

The word metaphor itself seems to indicate this same insight. *Metapherein*, in ancient Greek, means 'to carry over.' A metaphor 'carries over' qualities from a thing to a word, or from one word to another word - but not all of it. It is just an abstraction of the thing. The Yaminahua word for metaphor, *Tsai-yoshtoyoshto*, means “language twistingtwisting.”<sup>170</sup> It implies even more directly that the word approaches the thing, twists towards it, but never quite touches it. The Sanskrit word for metaphor also confirms this limitation of language; *Upaya* means “to go toward,” as in not quite reaching.

For Wilson, one of the important factors behind Korzybski's consciousness of abstraction is the fact that it accords with modern science. Modern science, in the words of several of the founders of quantum physics, is itself a language about reality. It is human minds imposing words on Nature.<sup>171</sup> So, in the twentieth century, the 'high priests' of science have taken us towards recognizing our scientific knowledge as metaphor again. This has been a great shift in the metaphysics of science, and it has not gone unnoticed in the New Age or in the counterculture.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*

<sup>166</sup> Keep in mind that language is everything that you use to communicate and express yourself with.

<sup>167</sup> Wilson, *Language and Reality*

<sup>168</sup> Campbell in *The Power of Myth*, p.56, unacknowledged quote. For Wilson, see any major work

<sup>169</sup> Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, p.416. Lee, p.63

<sup>170</sup> See Narby, *Cosmic Serpent*

<sup>171</sup> See, for example, Wilber, *Quantum Questions*. Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.260 Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.95

<sup>172</sup> Wilson has dedicated several works to popularizing its more flexible understanding of truth. See for example, *Quantum Psychology*. Or Campbell, *Creative Mythology*, p.190; *The Power of Myth*, p.54. Of course, not all scientists acknowledge this, now or in the past. So, while science is a modern phenomenon, consciousness of abstraction has come and gone for as long as humans have created knowledge. Campbell and Wilson both tell a version of human history which, in a nutshell,

Scientific metaphors have a prominent place in the counterculture. 'Self-metaprogramming,' for example, which is a consciously chosen concept from computer engineering, is a metaphor for consciousness expansion; which itself is a metaphor for mystical experience; which is a metaphor for...and so on. In other words, the most precise language we have is always being used to update our understanding of the least 'scientific' aspects of reality we know. And this trend, it seems, is somewhat inevitable, since the counterculture incorporates all languages that it deems beneficial to knowledge and understanding.

Metaphor, to sum up, is not quite true, and not quite false. It has aspects of both, but it is more than that – if you are conscious of it, it allows you to choose what you want it to mean. To choose your own projection, your illusion, your *reality tunnel*, consciously. In other words, Reality is not real until you decide that it is – within limits to be determined by experience, as the Eight Circuit script says. It's like poetry; when you make your own interpretation of a poem, nobody can deny that it is true for you. So do you realize that you are in your own poem, seeing the metaphors that you've been taught to see? And do you crystallize its meaning, or do you leave it open for a new reading? Living with this insight into your psychology, Campbell and Wilson believe, allows you to treat any word, belief, thing, or emotion as an open experience – as a new metaphor to program the mind that you want to live in.

## 5.2 *Playing With the Brain's Software*

In an exercise in meditation, you will often find that you can't quiet your mind completely; you can't always be fully mindful and aware. At some point, your thoughts will lead you, and control you, because your thoughts are pretty much always 'on'. That can be hard to compete with. It seems then that total enlightenment in our culture of distractions is unattainable. However, knowing that all that is, is metaphor, gives you the choice over your illusions, and an expanded level of control. You see that there are many realities, and not just one. This is a direct parallel to expanded awareness, where all is experienced to be equally illusive. Having learned to deconstruct your mind and launch yourself outside of it, you can now turn from the *science* to the *art* and re-imagine the mind before you return to it.

Campbell and Wilson's approach is simple: change your thought-patterns for the better. "I am a chap," says Campbell, "who likes to play with software."<sup>173</sup> Different software – your personal set of metaphors – allows you to interact with reality in different ways. That's what all the different myths, or metaphors, are for; to be able to play with the way your mind works. In *Masks of the Illuminati*, Wilson's fictional representation of James Joyce tells his friends how he plays with his sense of reality: "I am saying that I can see the world...as a spiritual adventure full of Omens and Symbols. I can also see it, if I choose, as the Jesuits taught me to see it in youth: as a vale of tears and a web of sin. Or I can see it as a Homeric epic, or a depressing naturalistic novel by Zola. I am interested," he says, "in seeing all of its facets."<sup>174</sup> Joyce's ability to switch from metaphor to metaphor, illusion to illusion, is the art of conscious evolution that Campbell and Wilson are talking about.

The point of learning such an art is to be able to detach from all perceptions – which gives you the

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goes from 1) The first humans, stone age shamans and Vedic priests, who knew that they were telling myths, or stories about reality *as if* they were true, to 2) Jews, Christians and other religious dogmatists who thought they had *the* truth, to 3) Early modern alchemists, occultists and troubadours, who knew they were engaging metaphors about reality, to 4) Classical scientists who think they engage 'the' facts, to, finally, 5) Modern physicists, who recognize that their knowledge is an approximation of reality, and not reality itself.

<sup>173</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.20; *Creative Mythology*, p.677

<sup>174</sup> Wilson, *Masks of the Illuminati*, p.73

freedom to use any alternatives where they work and drop them where they don't.<sup>175</sup> This is self-metaprogramming, where the field of potential experiences that you can draw on is wide-open; you can choose the better programs in the realm of the physical, the psychological, personal, interpersonal, social, cultural, scientific, mystical, and so on.

We've now seen a conviction in the counterculture – based on research in neuroscience, linguistics, and the metaphysics of modern science, amongst other things – that chemicals and words are key parts of the interface between reality and our minds. Of course, just as psychedelics are one of the preferred tools on the chemical level, there are also certain words or systems of words that enjoy preferential treatment within the counterculture.

One of Wilson's favorite examples is quantum logic. It is a new system of logic that grew out of the paradoxes encountered during experiments in quantum physics – paradoxes such as the finding that light travels both as waves and as particles, while only one of those should be true in classical logic. As we saw earlier, in the integral, nondualistic, or complementary approach of counterculture knowledge, there is a recognition in quantum physics that many different interpretations can apply to one single fact. As a new form of science speak then, quantum logic allows multiple versions of truth; and the more versions of the truth you have, the more complete your perspective is likely to be. So quantum theory, says Wilson, means you can do all the science without having to believe any of it.<sup>176</sup>

Apart from quantum logic, which Wilson adapted into Maybe Logic,<sup>177</sup> we have also noted the influx of Eastern forms of thinking and their mystical vocabularies. And Wilson is also a proponent of E-Prime, or English Prime, an update to language inspired by Korzybski's General Semantics. Amongst other things, E-Prime suggests a more restricted use of the word 'is', or verbs like 'to be,' and reformulating sentences without them. This way, the problem of whether an electron 'is' a particle or a wave is sidestepped by saying 'the electron appears as a wave when measured with instrument A, and it appears as a particle when measured with instrument B.' Both realities are real. So E-Prime is argued to automatically make your language fall into the kind of expression that is considered acceptable in modern science; and, says Wilson, it also helps generate the consciousness which Zen Buddhism tries to induce. However, as he himself admits, it is very difficult to incorporate E-Prime into one's writing, let alone one's speech.<sup>178</sup>

Whether something is true or not is often secondary to what you believe. As the eighth circuit script says, "In the province of the mind, that which is *believed* true *becomes* true, within limits to be established by experience." Therefore, the metaphors you use are a reflection of what you believe – in fact, says Wilson, they reflect what you *can* believe.<sup>179</sup> If you use words like factual, proven, and verifiable instead of words like revelation, faith, and love, then you are limited by that vocabulary. And if you choose to believe in a certain God or Gods, you reflect that God in your own thinking and actions. If Jesus is your role model, or Mohamed, or Buddha, or even Einstein or Newton, then you activate your own 'inner' Jesus, Mohamed, Einstein, and so on. You may actually become more like them, or at least like your idea of them. Their words become your words.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Wilson, *SFR 17* interview

<sup>176</sup> Wilson, *Schrodinger's Cat*, p.99

<sup>177</sup> Maybe Logic advocates the use of maybe over just true and false, and is therefore a nondualistic form of logic.

<sup>178</sup> Wilson, *Maybe Logic*

<sup>179</sup> Wilson, *Creative Agnosticism*

<sup>180</sup> In a sense, as Wilson quotes Leary, you are a 'reincarnation' of every person that ever made an impact on you.

### 5.2.1 Perception Control

In myths, words or symbols are engaged in such a way as to direct the mind towards operating in the higher chakras or circuits. They bring us to a level of consciousness that we may call 'spiritual'. Similarly, prayers or meditations, like mantras or magical incantations, are designed to hold our consciousness on a specific level. The symbols of myth, Campbell believed, originate in what Jung calls the "collective unconscious,"<sup>181</sup> which correlates roughly to the sixth and seventh circuits; it is the 'field' that connects all the energy states of the cosmos, and therefore connects *us*.

Knowing myths, and using them, can help you to reflect higher states of consciousness in your daily experience. This is also where we find the main difference between myth and religion, and the source of Campbell's and Wilson's dislike of monotheisms (and model-theisms). Religions do not necessarily point to spiritual experience; they have fixed interpretations of words and symbols, and are therefore tied down in the lower circuits. In fact, says Campbell, religion can be seen as misinterpreted myth.<sup>182</sup>

In other words, our brain 'software' can define the very quality of our psyche. The supreme metaphor or software we have imprinted, for example, has great repercussions. You might be a wrathful, jealous Jehovah; a caring Nature goddess; a cold, analytical Science god; or a frustrated Anarchy god. Whatever the god you adhere to, say Wilson and Campbell, *that* is part of the reality you are creating for yourself and for others.<sup>183</sup> The benefit of expanded awareness is that it puts up a mirror to that God in your mind; you see which reality it is creating, and how. After engaging a brain change technique, the mind can detach from that 'God' and experience it objectively. This allows the art stage of conscious evolution, which I will call 'perception control', to take over. At the moment of reimprinting, you can install or imprint an entirely new inner 'God'; a new metaprogram, based in the higher circuits of consciousness. Perception control is therefore a mix of the consciousness of abstraction, mindfulness, and self-programming.

These kind of software upgrades seem to come standard with a successful brain change technique. For example, mystical experience often imprints the opposite of paranoia – called *pronoia*, where you believe that the whole universe is out to help you, instead of hurt you. For a while you may actually live in a universe where it seems that everything is on your side.<sup>184</sup> To get back into such a state of mind, you can change your language use to accord with it – stop using words like 'struggle,' stop your worrying at the thought of 'money,' etc. The available metaphors, myths, and programs are literally endless. Which ones you use, and how, depends on your scope of knowledge, your ingenuity, your taste, and your ability to experiment with your own beliefs. If you learn a broad range of metaphors, you can use them fluidly depending on the situation. As Campbell writes, "Learning myth is learning technologies."<sup>185</sup> And Wilson says more generally: "Everything you learn is an update; you can incorporate it and use it."

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<sup>181</sup> The collective unconscious, as opposed to the personal unconscious, is our common storehouse of ancestral energies and archetypes, with all the knowledge and experience gathered since we were primitive bacteria till now. Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, p.55

<sup>182</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.57 Religion is misinterpreted myth, says Campbell: it focuses on the *denotation*, instead of the *connotation* of a myth. For example, a Catholics' focus may be on the historical truth of the Virgin Birth, instead of on its spiritual meaning; and he may defend it against anyone who doubts its historical occurrence.

<sup>183</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.230

<sup>184</sup> Wilson, *Starship* interview

<sup>185</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.9

The core myth, as I have shown before, is that of the hero who is aware of oneness. To do this, you need a mythology that influences consciousness to remind it of its essence; a change in software that improves the reality you can create in your mind. So that while you are living your life, like everyone else, you can realize at any moment that you are 'awake', and that you can change yourself and your experience.<sup>186</sup> If you don't take your own metaphors and thoughts too seriously, you don't take *yourself* too seriously; and then you can put aside your ego, change your programming, and 'be in the now'.

It's not that there is no such thing as truth anymore. But it has become much more fluid, as you are free to decide for yourself what is true to you. This, again, is the principle of re-imprinting in the Eight Circuit model, where you can self-induce a belief according to your perception of which belief is better. In other words, it's a conscious self-brainwashing. Are you an optimist, or a pessimist? Do foreigners frighten you, or do they invite your curiosity? As we saw before, we create stories about the reality we live in, consciously or unconsciously, and Campbell and Wilson - like Jung before them - believe we must recognize what kind of story we and our peers are living in. Combined with a map of consciousness such as the seven chakras or the Eight Circuits, you can influence your reality – or control your perception of it – at each level of consciousness. It is simply a matter of making conscious that which we are already doing subconsciously.

### ***5.2.2 Do It Yourself***

It is no easy task to differentiate Language from Reality, especially if you're still stuck in language.<sup>187</sup> There has to be a training, says Campbell, so that you can begin to hear metaphorically instead of concretely; and, says Wilson, to learn tricks for doing it while you're awake.<sup>188</sup> This is probably why changing your consciousness is key, and why Wilson and Campbell both advocate it. For those who do not know how to alter their own consciousness, there are others who will do it for you, at a price; they are the brainwashing 'cults'.

In an article comparing Scientology, Landmark, and Forum, which are self-development companies that are accused of being cults,<sup>189</sup> researcher Tim Boucher notes a principle which is similar to Campbell and Wilson's understanding of metaphor. These movements, Boucher says, all share a basic distinction between “what happened” and “the story about what happened;” the metaphor and its interpretation. As a result, they ask their followers to focus on their creation of meaning. Everything is inherently meaningless, they say, so you can drop your garbage and 'reinvent' yourself. As Boucher writes, these cults are 'technologies' for experiencing new ways of approaching life. But there is a problem. They have specific 'versions' of the story which they want people to learn, intentionally or not. And so the followers are again brainwashed into a fixed belief, and self-development becomes cult-entrapment.

This is also what differentiates Wilson and Campbell from these 'cults'. Their aim is to teach you how to do it yourself, so you can go in and out of agnosticism and belief at will. They promote a full confrontation with your *own* metaphors, at all levels, chakras, or circuits of your conscious and unconscious mind. This is what self-metaprogramming is for: to lose your illusion, and choose the one

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<sup>186</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.41

<sup>187</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.21

<sup>188</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.58 Wilson, *Language and Reality*.

<sup>189</sup> Groenveld, *Est, the Forum, Landmark Education*

that benefits your consciousness and consciousness in general. You can believe that everything is magical. Or you can believe that it is all logical. Or, like Campbell, you can believe that 'it' is all You. 'It' *is* what *you* want it to be, when you want it to be, within limits to be established by experience.

### 5.3 *How to Come Back Again*

To Leary, the eye-opening revelations of the psychedelic experience unmask the power of words over our sense of reality. While language informs and limits our normal understanding of reality, a transcendent consciousness can oversee the effects of its own linguistic programming. From a cynical perspective, anything anybody says is revealed to be words used to delude themselves – a self-induced brainwashing, whether through science, philosophy, fantasy, or otherwise. Metaprogramming, however, gives the freedom to determine which delusions to accept. As the Eight Circuit script says, “I am free, you are free; we can have our separate trips or we can trip together.” Any and all incoming words and communications can be filtered according to one's own self-imposed standards.

Leary also believes that it is man's challenge to develop new languages for new levels of consciousness.<sup>190</sup> Through the continuing attempt to communicate the ineffable, a more harmonious and less dogmatic message is communicated.<sup>191</sup> His Eight Circuit Model was an attempt at doing so with the help of science. In this way it seems that science, a language of control over physical and mental reality, brings us to new heights of personal power. But there is still the matter of making this practicable in daily life; to help the hero to 'come back again.'

Say you've had a mystical experience. Now what? The problem with common language is that it isn't enlightened the way your consciousness is. Language is focused on the ego – we say 'I am doing this,' and 'you are feeling that,' but we don't generally redefine “I” and “you” as one connected consciousness. And you cannot simply tell someone how it feels to be one connected consciousness.

When getting into the 'mystical' realms of reality, it seems that you have to be very careful with your language. And not just with the words you use, but with how you use them. None of the words used to describe the experience of consciousness expansion are good enough.<sup>192</sup> In fact, the experience shows that no words are ever good enough to describe anything precisely; they are metaphors, at best. Even the mystical experience itself is a metaphor of human existence, and should not be treated as an absolute. If you understand *this*, it seems, you can come back from a mystical experience – from being 'out of your mind' – without becoming a mystic, a religious dogmatist, or a raving lunatic. Instead, you come back, as Wilson suggests, being potentially agnostic about everything; you become a freethinker, even towards your own thoughts. As Terence McKenna says, you learn to “live without closure.”<sup>193</sup>

A traditional mystic, says Wilson, can't communicate what he or she has experienced. Often they are either 'mere ecstasies,' shouting like lunatics about things people can't understand, or they have completely forgotten what 'normal' people think like, and what they respond to. When they speak of the

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<sup>190</sup> Leary, *The Politics of Ecstasy*, p.166

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117. Leary defines the ineffable as “the direct awareness of the energy processes that science measures.” *Ibid.*, p.20. Direct awareness precludes interpretation, as one 'is' consciously that which is 'inter,' or in between, reality and self. Communication however does require interpretation, and Leary's support for LSD and personal religious experience hints at the responsibility of finding one's own 'harmonious message'. In Leary's case, that message is told mostly in scientific terms.

<sup>192</sup> This would mean that any word is as good as the other – and this may be true in a sense. But, as I show later on, this is not the case when communicating with non-experienced peers.

<sup>193</sup> McKenna, Terence, *Live at Wetlands Preserve*

nature of reality, it is at a level that the rest can't follow. However, says Wilson, the artist *can*.<sup>194</sup> Choosing your illusion – or perception control, as I have dubbed it – is 'coming back again' so that you can communicate your experience.

Two things are achieved in learning how to come back with perception control. On the one hand, you are aware of how others are programmed – what circuits or chakras they are operating on – and you can share the programming language that is meaningful to them, so that you can understand each other to a certain level. On the other hand, you are also aware that they are just words, and that their meaning is entirely open. Scientific metaphors, for example, like 'gravity' or 'objective reality', are useful and rational, but they are also mystical, uncertain, and meaningless. In other words, coming back is ambiguous: you can come back to the lower chakras and circuits to communicate on that level, with people who haven't had the experience, but you can do that while maintaining the awareness of the higher circuits. You need not wallow in the illusions of others; instead, if you choose, you can show them how to play with their sense of reality. With practice, this awareness of language as metaphor itself becomes a brain change technique; a way of coming back to expanded awareness. This way, you can come down, and come back up again at will.

### 5.3.1 *Language Barriers*

Many academic debates have focused on whether the mystical experience is mediated or unmediated – basically, on whether your cultural background determines the nature of your mystical experience or not.<sup>195</sup> Some say yes, some say no. But the point, as is often missed, is that the experience has to *be* mediated eventually. You have to learn how to use your language to describe what you've seen; so as a Christian, who is familiar with Christian metaphors, you are likely to use Christian metaphors, as a Hindu to use Hindu metaphors, as an atheist to use scientific metaphors, and as an agnostic to use whatever metaphor is at hand. Words, myths, symbols, metaphors, facts, whatever you prefer to call them, you need them to communicate your vision. For Campbell, and especially for Wilson, as long as your metaphors are still twistingtwisting, you are less likely to delude yourself in a way that harms you or others.

Campbell and Wilson themselves, like McKenna and others in the counterculture, keep twistingtwisting by employing multiple programming languages. All of these languages are used to describe roughly the same experience, the state of consciousness that you find yourself in when you step outside of your ego, just with slightly different vocabularies and connotations. Each one of them is not enough, but many of them can cover a lot of ground together. Most importantly, however, mixing all these metaphors together is part of an ambitious psychological trick: a trick to untrick yourself, and pass the language barriers of the ego. Different people respond to different cues differently. Basically, every reader is bound to have an allergic reaction to a particular word which attempts to describe consciousness expansion.

Whether Campbell or Wilson calls it God, Buddha, enlightenment, cosmic consciousness, or self-metaprogramming, there is a tendency to read these metaphors and zero in on one that you think you know is nonsense, whereby the rest becomes equally suspect. Only when dealing out a whole range of metaphors is a returning hero likely to disarm the knee jerk, dogmatic reaction of an unexperienced audience. The shifting of words seems to be aimed at reminding people, consciously or unconsciously,

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<sup>194</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.64

<sup>195</sup> See, for example, Katz, *Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism*

that the words are just metaphors. Or, alternatively, the many variations on a theme will confuse the reader to a point where they do not know what is being said anymore. And, ironically, this may actually be just as desirable – because they are finally open to a new imprint.

There are a few contradictions here that needs to be addressed. Campbell, for example, says that no metaphor is ever enough. The 'transcendent' is transcendent of the word transcendent; 'the ALL' cannot be conceived by the mind or by language. And yet he tries it, time and time again, borrowing terms and metaphors from those who have been there. He can't get around having to mediate the experience through language. And then there's Wilson, who says the metaphor itself doesn't matter: that it's the ability to change consciousness that matters. But the metaphor *does* matter: perhaps all words in the end are equally meaningless, but some – like “God” - carry enough layers of meaning to lead the user away from expanded awareness and back into the ego. As Marshall McLuhan says, the medium is the message – and each word has its particular message. “God” will cause a knee-jerk reaction with those who think they know what is being said, because they know the word God.<sup>196</sup> This is why there is a seeming contradiction between not being able to say something – because of the ineffability of expanded awareness – and still trying, trying, trying, with newer metaphors that are not yet limited by the ego.

In the end, there is no perfect word for the experience. This is what makes coming back difficult, as it is hard to communicate the experience to yourself and to your peers. The enlightened feeling may last for a while, some of the insights might stick, but eventually the perspective fades. Only if you can put your expanded consciousness into an expanded use of language – with improved and expanded vocabulary, grammar, and logic, such as those shared by Wilson and Campbell – will your language better reflect your enlightenment. As McKenna says, “Consciousness can't evolve any faster than language. So planned evolution of language is the way to speed it toward expressing the frontier of consciousness.”<sup>197</sup>

Consciousness, or awareness, depends on the inputs - like chemicals and language - that an entity experiences. According to Wilson and Campbell, remaining fluid in your language use will at the very least maintain a degree of expansion of awareness. And this will in turn reflect in your daily communication with those who are still stuck at one specific chakra, circuit, or level of awareness. In sum, you can't get around the programming - the metaphors – all of the time.<sup>198</sup> And that's why you need perception control; to consciously determine the reality that your mind is projecting.

#### **5.4 Making the Unconscious Conscious**

Mind, in the interpretation offered here, is basically your biology (neurology) and your language (linguistics), or a neuro-linguistic interface with reality. Alternatively, we could see it as the sum of the first four circuits; or, perhaps, as the meeting point of nature and culture. But can the art of conscious evolution be practiced without experiencing expanded awareness?

Near the end of his life, Campbell claimed that he had never had a mystical experience of his own. He had only had some intense moments of 'flow' as an athlete in his youth.<sup>199</sup> It is striking that a man should devote much of his career to describing and promoting something he's never had. So how

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<sup>196</sup> God, when familiar as the Old Testament God, is himself basically a characterization of ego: invisible, selfish, jealous, and wrathful, he always wants to be in control. Witness psychotics and New Agers who say, “I am God.”

<sup>197</sup> McKenna, Terence, interview for *Mavericks of the Mind*

<sup>198</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.60

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.87, 161, 220



did Campbell get to his level of knowledge, and have such a coherent understanding of expanded awareness?

By reading and comparing ancient religious texts, Campbell realized that every religious belief is symbolic, or representative, of some psychological aspect of your Self. Myths are not historical facts; they are metaphors for what is in our own minds. Like the archetypes of a Tarot deck, or the stereotypes of a TV sitcom, or the Gods of a pantheon, the symbols by which you identify yourself do not come from 'out there,' but they originate inside you. This intellectual 'insight' – literally, by looking within – gradually made conscious to Campbell the myths that he himself was living by; namely, those of science and of Catholicism. Again, *consciousness* is the crucial factor: Campbell did not just have *knowledge of*, but *awareness that* he was creating meaning through those mythological systems. Psychedelics or advanced yoga may have sped up the process for him, but Campbell was close enough to understand what it was: the process of learning the art of conscious evolution.

As we have seen, the teachings that the counterculture receive from Campbell and Wilson are strongly grounded in a changed awareness of language. Through an expanded awareness and through self-analysis – consciousness of abstraction, or awareness of metaphor - they connect the mind to its unconscious mapping of reality. Why? To see how things connect. Everything is connected, especially in our unconscious mind, says Jung. We communicate consciously with words, but the unconscious mind thinks in symbols, not words, and it makes all kinds of connections that we are not aware of. It can cause a thought, or a feeling, or a judgment without us knowing why. So, for the hero, the task at hand is to expand his or her awareness: to be aware of the metaphorical nature of reality, and see what the unconscious projects into it. In sum, to integrate the mind, and to master it, we must actively make the unconscious conscious.

## **6. How To Go Out of Your Mind and Come Back Again: The Art and Science of Conscious Evolution**

So far, we have seen how consciousness is mapped in the chakras and the Eight Circuit Model, how the 'hardware' of consciousness can be changed through psychedelics, yogas, and other mental techniques, and how language can be used to explain and facilitate these changes by improving the software of the mind. So we have progressed from losing your illusion, to being able to choose your illusion. It is now time to get to the heart of this thesis, and summarize these two basic elements of conscious evolution in one simple formula.

### **6.1 *The Basic Formula***

The art and science of conscious evolution is achieved not through traditional religious doctrines, but with the tools of modern psychology, semantics, occultism, psychedelics, neuro-linguistics, and any other hardware or software one feels like testing. It is a countercultural, individualistic combination of forbidden science and forbidden religion, and only a select few seem to be drawn to it. But to those who do engage in it - the technoshamans, agnostic mystics, and psychonauts of modern society - the Self is free to be experimented on.

I have summarized the basic formula, as condensed from the works of Campbell and Wilson, as follows: *the art and science of conscious evolution* is equal to *brain change* plus *perception control*. First you go out of your mind, and are temporarily separated from consensus reality; then you are initiated into the state of consciousness where you can control your perception. With brain change, you

experience an expanded identity, including an identity with all of reality; and with perception control you can come back again by programming your identity the way you want. It is, as the hero's journey has ever been, a “Separation, initiation, and return.”<sup>200</sup>

You can't always get around the illusions – or the realities – of the mind. This is why you need perception control; to create better models from moment to moment as your reality changes. And you can't get around brain change, because you need to know the roots of your illusions to be able to upgrade them successfully. The general goal of conscious evolution is to normalize an expanded consciousness – to naturally exist in the higher circuits of consciousness as well as the lower. This way you can live in a saner mind, where you can tune in to greater intelligence, consciousness, and compassion as you co-create reality.

Of course, eating a potato will alter your consciousness; as does changing the depth of your breathing, listening to music, or reading this essay. And learning a new language can expand the way you think. Chemicals and words are a major part of our interface with reality - our reality tunnel, as Wilson calls it. So, to some degree, while we may not think of it as a formula, or be fully aware of it, we are all familiar with the act of conscious evolution.

However, as a countercultural 'science,' it differentiates itself by its *willful*, empirical, skeptical, and radical approach. It is a controlled ecstasy, in as far as it may be controlled. And words are not enough; as Alan Watts says, “People can't be talked out of illusions.” Instead, the brain change that is required usually manifests as a massive shock; it is life-changing, a psychological death and rebirth.<sup>201</sup> Potatoes generally don't do that. And remember that, unlike most 'natives,' Westerners have no initiation ceremonies to give them such an experience. So brain change generally has to be induced; you have to go looking for it to find it.

A drastic, but well-guided change in consciousness takes your brain out of its standard programming. It temporarily turns the autopilot, or ego, off, which can be a terrifying experience. Your mind might think it's going to die, or that it's going insane; but in reality, people like Leary and Wilson say, you are beginning to think for yourself. Metaphorically speaking, after the apparent 'death' of the mind, you are reborn into pure, or expanded consciousness. This, it seems, is the main prerequisite for conscious evolution: to be a metaprogrammer, to have that outside view of your own mind, you have to disconnect from it. You have to have a clean slate, *tabula rasa*, to reprogram at will. To stay in language – to use only the second half of the formula – is to stay in the program; it is to stay programmed. Here, all you can do, relatively speaking, is reshuffle the surface a bit. And this difference is what makes the technique proposed by Campbell and Wilson unique. You have to seek the mystical connection, *become* the program, *become* your language, to tell it what to be and what to do.<sup>202</sup>

## 6.2 The Formula Repeats

Once you are consciously creating your perception of reality, you can update the language you use to do so and evolve a new way of perceiving truth. Wilson calls this *self-metaprogramming*: learning how to communicate with yourself at a higher level. You can literally program the voice of Buddha, or Jesus, or Socrates, or anyone else, right into your mind. This voice – the eye in the triangle

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<sup>200</sup> I have found the basic formula expressed in Wilson and Campbell, but also in Lilly, Hyatt, Leary, and McKenna. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) shares many principles, except it lacks mystical experience as either a method or goal.

<sup>201</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.107

<sup>202</sup> The main difference at this point between Wilson and Campbell, and perhaps others as well, is in the matter of degree of brain change that they have experienced and advocate. For Campbell it is less drastic than for Wilson.

– becomes the programmer of your programs, defining the scripts by which your 'normal' self operates. Similarly, Campbell calls it *mythogenesis*: being conscious of which 'mask of God' you are wearing, and living by those myths which make the best masks.<sup>203</sup>

Now, if you complete the formula unsuccessfully, you could become a 'mere ecstatic,' or a 'religious nut'; or you might simply forget it all and go back to your old mental habits. Even if you've self-metaprogrammed before, your mind will go back on autopilot.

However, if you complete the formula successfully, you start a discipline of self-awareness that never really stops. Reality is always evolving, and in a flexible mind there is always room to connect to new realities. So the formula repeats. From science, to art, to science, to art; from reason, to intuition, to reason, etc. You are always deconstructing and reconstructing your mind.

The final purpose seems to be a cycle, or a feedback loop. In Wilson's words, you cycle between being the magician and the robot, where the magician defines a reality-tunnel, and the robot lives in it.<sup>204</sup> This is a process of learning how to metaprogram yourself in expanded awareness, so that you can reprogram your lower circuits, so that you can get back into expanded awareness, and so on. This interplay between the higher circuits and the lower circuits – waking to and being lulled to sleep by illusion, thoughts, beliefs, and emotions – is a constant up and down, up and down of each pyramid that you create. So, as Campbell says, the archetypal trip, the “hero's journey,” is a departure and a return: to remember that this, the place where you started, is it; the here and now, and You are it; *I am it*.<sup>205</sup>

Since the mind always gets in the way of this recognition – putting labels on every experience almost before it has even been experienced – the cycle must be updated time and time again.<sup>206</sup> Somehow, says Campbell, a meaning has to be given anew every time it is used. Every time you use the word God, or Reality, you have to be conscious of what you mean: consciously ask, what is 'God', and what is 'reality'?<sup>207</sup> And what do these metaphors do to your consciousness?

Learning, in this sense, is a constant process of perfecting your metaphors. Once a metaphor, myth, or belief is accepted in your mind, it becomes part of your programming; and the stronger the belief, the more control the program has. This, says Wilson, is why he teaches how to be agnostic about everything: to be able to question belief systems (or, he says, “BS,” for short), *especially* your own. It seems to require a periodic analysis of the effect that each belief has on your experience of life, to constantly update your mind in the way you see fit. To repeat the formula, and cycle between belief and skepticism, illusion and awakening.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.208; *The Mythic Dimension*, p.184

<sup>204</sup> Wilson, *Schrodinger's Cat*, p.222

<sup>205</sup> Lilly seems to think that the best approach to keeping this loop going is to have a basic metaprogram, way at the top, which will have a trickle down effect. “Basic metaprogram: *analyze self to understand one's thinking and true motives more thoroughly*. The resolve exists to generate a net effect with this instruction uppermost in the computer hierarchy.”

<sup>206</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.147; *The Power of Myth*, p.53

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p.227

<sup>208</sup> Before Wilson, it was expressed by Aleister Crowley as the simple formula of “hunchbacks and soldiers,” or of question marks (?) and exclamation marks (!). You start as a hunchback, a question, and then you have an a-ha moment. On a true path of enlightenment, said Crowley, this process must repeat itself endlessly – ?..!..?..!?! (Quoted in *Masks of the Illuminati*, p.112-115) *Creative Mythology*, p.484: “The entire course of a lifetime is a rite of initiation, for those with the eyes to see in the sights of common day.” It is also a basic scientific attitude: to ask questions, and keep asking them.

### 6.3 Synchronicity

Again, because of the tendency of the mind to follow routines, you have to have a new trigger to put you back into an altered state. You have to enter the maze of your mind at a different point every time, because otherwise it gets too familiar, and you know your way through it already – the words won't grab you, or shock you, and make you question your assumptions, because it's the same old same old. This is the 'problem' of established religions and their fixed doctrines: they found one way up the pyramid, and they say “*this is the way.*” But, as Bill Moyers says in his interview with Campbell, Jesus and Buddha came back with the *wonder* of God, not a blueprint of God.<sup>209</sup> Every time you revisit the eye in the triangle, it is floating over a different pyramid, and your blueprint becomes false, inaccurate, empty. It puts you back into a fixed illusion. The pyramid diagram has to be extended into a repeating sine wave with successive peaks and valleys, where you keep going up and down, questioning and accepting, programming and deprogramming, believing and disbelieving. You're changing. Evolving.<sup>210</sup>

This whole process is tied quite literally to a consciousness of your participation in the continuing creation of the universe. Everything you are thinking and feeling right now helps determine where we are all going. As such, the art and science of conscious evolution is necessarily hedonistic, and yet moral; relativistic, yet ethical; and scientific, yet metaphysical. It is a way to have one foot on the pyramid and one in the eye; you are not totally out of your mind, nor totally robot. Scientifically speaking, you are simply on a psychological quest, experimenting with the usefulness of specific ideas. You attain the freedom to consciously control your own mind, and the freedom to be unconsciously controlled by it in turn.

The unconscious universe, as many writers since Jung have pointed out, 'reveals' itself to the conscious mind in day to day situations through what Jung has called *synchronicity*.<sup>211</sup> Often translated as 'meaningful coincidences,' synchronicities are situations that awaken your consciousness to a higher pattern – as if something 'out there' is playing tricks with you.<sup>212</sup> Let's say that you're in the bus, and you read the word “sabotage” in some graffiti by the road, while at the same time you're listening to the song “Sabotage” by the Beastie Boys on your headphones. Normally, logic demands that this is a *meaningless* coincidence, and you'd be deluding yourself to believe otherwise. However, says one of Wilson's characters, “The belief in coincidence is the prevalent superstition of the Age of Science.”<sup>213</sup> Objectively speaking, you cannot know what a coincidence 'means'. But we cannot speak objectively. We decide for ourselves what things mean, even when we try to stay objective by saying that they are meaningless. And the same is true here: we decide to believe in either coincidence or synchronicity.

To a person experienced with expanded states of consciousness, such unexplainable or illogical coincidences of whatever magnitude confirm that they are in tune with the universe. Or, they *reconnect* them to their identity with the universe.<sup>214</sup> Because the 'something' out there that's playing tricks on you, is somehow also you. Rare is the person who at all times remembers, 'this world is me, and I am the source of the universe now living in my own Creation,' or some such higher circuit program. But a

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<sup>209</sup> Bill Moyers quoted in *The Power of Myth*, p.141

<sup>210</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.108 Wilson, *Frogweb* interview: “When you get to at least the Sixth Circuit, as Crowley says, the Universe becomes a more or less continuous ceremony of initiation. There's synchronicity everywhere, there are miracles everywhere.”

<sup>211</sup> Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p.55

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p.306

<sup>213</sup> Wilson, *Illuminatus*, p.220

<sup>214</sup> Wilson, *Masks of the Illuminati*, p.54

synchronicity can pop up at any time, as a sort of “hello!” from the unconscious mind and bring about a change in consciousness. So synchronicity doesn’t just happen; it’s how ‘big’ You decides to manifest itself to ‘little’ you. And it makes you pay attention to what you’re paying attention to.<sup>215</sup>

In a sense, this is an awakening to the illusion of time. The word synchronicity, from synchronous, connotes the coming together of time and eternity. This is what Campbell, in mythological terms, calls the Axis Mundi, or the World Tree. In terms of the Eight Circuit model, this transcendence of time (or of the normal *sensation* of time) is typically experienced in the self-metaprogramming circuit. Hence its ‘winner script’ declares that “I” - the expanded identity of expanded awareness “I” – “I make my own coincidences, synchronicities, luck and Destiny.” So, is it a synchronicity, or is it a coincidence? Does it wake you up to the illusion of time? And what does it mean? You decide.

Wilson has often written about the so-called ‘23 enigma.’ The number 23, so it is said, is synchronistically present all over history, in movies and in books, in the news, and so on. To some, this is part of a ‘hidden conspiracy’ that’s leaving occult clues out in the open. Wilson humorously plays with this paranoia in his novels. But, he says, to those who experience the number as a synchronicity – not because the number 23 is inherently magical, or divine, but because you *recognize* that it represents something extra-ordinary to you – it wakes you up to the fact that Reality is saying ‘I am here – You are here.’ By designating 23 as a mystery symbol, it opens up your mind to the transrational mode whenever you notice it. And when you do, and you realize it’s you talking to yourself, you can expand your consciousness and make the mystical connection, Tat Tvam Asi.

Paramount to the mystical connection is the union of the conscious and unconscious mind, or, from another point of view, of the left brain and the right brain. Wilson calls this “Interacting processing”: processing the interaction between the conscious and unconscious mind. Synchronicities are one way of accomplishing this union. They seem to be a direct interaction with the unconscious, through externalized symbols like the number 23. And the interaction seems to take place in three steps: 1) Tuning in to synchronicities, 2) which remind you of your connection to - and oneness with - reality, 3) so that you evoke the participation of your will in the bigger picture of reality. In other words, when a synchronicity makes you aware of the bigger picture, you can better adapt to it. So, when applying your mental technologies – your perception control – to a synchronicity, you can consciously choose its meaning and therefore the meaning of your very moment of reality. This way, Creation – or evolution – becomes co-creation – or conscious evolution. The different methods of perception control – languages, body languages, numerology, consciousness of abstraction, magick techniques, yogas, mantras, etc – are different levels of interaction with the unconscious. But they can all be combined with synchronicities to constitute a fundamental change in awareness.

Synchronicities, in effect, are not only an indication or a reminder of expanded awareness, they can trigger it. Of course, in a sense, the entire event of existence is a synchronous event – as Wilson says, you are always experiencing your Yoga with the universe, otherwise you couldn’t experience anything – but it is the seemingly meaningful, the extraordinary events, that we notice. Becoming familiar with the synchronicity phenomenon allows you to experience anything as a wake-up call; any moment, any place, any person or object can trigger an expansion of consciousness. While there is no indication in Campbell or Wilson’s work that there is a science or an art to having synchronicities, the

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<sup>215</sup> Wilson, *Creative Agnosticism*: Wilson quotes Barbara Honegger saying that a synchronicity is a psychologically-induced space time relativity.

very act of noticing them is a key aspect of the successful brain-changer's life.<sup>216</sup>

## **7. Why You Should Go Out of Your Mind**

The question has to be asked – why expanded awareness? What good does it do, if it leads to the dissolution of reality as you know it? Or, as McKenna asks, what's wrong with the operating system we have?

Well, McKenna answers his own question. Because “It's dumb,” he says. It's retro. It's messy. It's inefficient. It runs on stereotypes. And it makes us erratic, irrational, and malfunctional. The current operating system – Culture – is flawed. We poison the atmosphere we breathe, and the water we drink, we exploit each other, etc, etc; the list of grievances is long, and there are few people in the twenty first century who haven't been confronted with something man-made that's very ugly.<sup>217</sup> This has fueled a growing drive in our own culture to change our ways. But is conscious evolution 'the' solution to these problems? And what about your own problems?

The point is that until you go out of your mind – and can look objectively at your own culture, and your own subconscious programming – you are likely to be stuck in the patterns set up by our ancestors. Slavery, conquest, eugenics, Inquisitions, crusades; we have a history of bad habits. So I have prepared in this section some of the conclusions that Campbell and Wilson give with regards to conscious evolution – their conclusions of why we should use science, art, and expanded awareness to change these habits, and the thought patterns that lead to them.

### ***7.1 Get Back into the Garden***

The final point, or purpose, of consciousness change, which is actually the starting point to the rest of Wilson's and Campbell's work, is to Realize that This is You. At any time, and any place. Here and Now is Me. The computer is me. Even the paper is me; and we are all connected. Wilson says that everyone you meet is a 'Buddha'; so try to *see* the Buddha in everyone you meet.<sup>218</sup> As I wrote before, this is a process of naturalizing expanded awareness – to be able to see what's behind the masks.

So, everything is everything, and You are it. What good is that insight? Or, as a certain New Age book title reads, *So I am God. Now What?* To Campbell and Wilson, there is no panacea, no soul-saving philosophy to answer that question. As Leary trumpeted in the sixties, you have to “Think for yourself.” But there is a significant advantage that comes from being aware of your expanded identity. As Campbell says, the “big mystical teaching” is that all the outside problems in the world actually come from within us. Our world is the result of what we have thought. Being aware of this, you can learn to maintain a greater focus on how you relate to the world, your thoughts, and your feelings; in other words, you upgrade your awareness, your attentiveness, aliveness, awake-ness, mindfulness.<sup>219</sup> It seems then that you should be able rebirth yourself on command; to rebirth your feelings, your thoughts, your beliefs, and your entire identity. Campbell says that what we are looking for is an *experience of being alive*: well, here it is. If your identity is an identity with Life and the cosmos, you probably can't

<sup>216</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.118, 182, 213; *Creative Mythology*, p.566 So far I have found no direct reference to synchronicity in Campbell's work. In literature it is a very modern concept; but since Jung coined the term, I am still surprised to find no more than a few hints of it. I speculate that this is a result of his personal lack of mystical experience.

<sup>217</sup> McKenna, Terence, *Reclaim Your Mind*

<sup>218</sup> Wilson, *Masks of the Illuminati*, p.28 Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.162

<sup>219</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.xvii

experience being any more alive than that.

There also seems to be a clear ethic involved with this. If you have determined that indeed, everything is one, then you also realize that when you hurt an 'other' – whether it be an animal, vegetable, or mineral – you are literally hurting yourself. So you have to try to see all things as equal, because they are equally you. According to Moyers, the lesson, as Jesus says, is to “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” because he *is* yourself.<sup>220</sup> This is the Golden Rule, the rule of universal love, which most religions express in one way or another; except, instead of being taught the words in Sunday School or at Catholic Mass, you are personally living them. By living them, you are aware that, while your mind is always projecting, you can choose to project towards the light. Remember the One Story and the Story of Creation - together, they are the story we create about ourselves, as co-authors of evolution. For Campbell, like the Gnostic Christians and Buddhists, you, as your own author, should realize that this is it; this is Eden: the Garden of Timeless Unity. If you don't get back into the Garden, and experience eternity – by co-creating 'Heaven on Earth' - you're not going to experience it anywhere.<sup>221</sup>

Some scholars – not to mention theologians – have questioned Campbell's reasoning.<sup>222</sup> They ask whether anything has meaning anymore if *everything* is a religious experience. But the question ignores the difficulty of maintaining expanded awareness. As Campbell says, “the Spiritual life is the bouquet, the perfume, the flowering and fulfillment of a human life, not a supernatural virtue imposed upon it.”<sup>223</sup> If you get to this stage of the spiritual life – if you get back into the Garden – then yes, it is meaningful to experience everything as equally spiritual. It is a way of *consciously* creating its meaning as 'spiritual' – to write your own story, dance or song – instead of being told what things mean by science, religion, or the bad mood you happen to be in because you're hungry after a hard day's work. Otherwise, rain will always be dreary, and failure will always hurt; and, worse yet, you might take a beautiful summer day for granted.

## 7.2 Be The Trickster

The second purported virtue of consciousness change is that it opens up new possibilities in how to live. Basically, between the opposites of the 'mere ecstatic' and the 'fundamentalist materialist,' there is a third option. In Sanskrit, it is called *Lila*: we would call it 'play'.<sup>224</sup> It represents the freedom to pass back and forth, says Campbell, in and out of the story of oneness. And that freedom to play, he writes, “that is the talent of the master.”<sup>225</sup> By being awareness, that root of reality, and controlling the way you communicate with yourself, you can go in and out of self-metaprogramming at will. In and out of enlightenment at will. You can have a foot in both worlds; the world of divine madness, and the world of earthly delusion.<sup>226</sup>

This pivot point, the doorway, the hinge, the threshold between realities is what people like Campbell and Wilson point us to. It is the side that has no sides. And it is the domain of the trickster god, the playful god in pre-Christian mythologies; not quite good, not quite evil, the trickster has the

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<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.110-111

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.230, 48, 67, 223, 120 Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.46 Campbell, *Thou Art That*, p.50

<sup>222</sup> See, for example, Lefkowitz, Segal, or Gil. There is as yet little questioning of Wilson as there are no major studies of his work.

<sup>223</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.197

<sup>224</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.35

<sup>225</sup> Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, p.229

<sup>226</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.xviii; *The Mythic Dimension*, p.195.

potential to be anything and everything at once. Like the mythological tricksters Hermes, Loki, raven, coyote, Don Juan, Odysseus, baby Krishna, Nasruddin, Kokopelli, Eshu, Tiji Uilenspiegel, and Bugs Bunny,<sup>227</sup> the trickster is not quite real, and not quite unreal; not quite true, and not quite false. He himself is agnostic, and has fun playing with the different categories of thought. The trickster is above the 'established' rules and norms, destroying the old, and creating the new. He decides for himself when myth becomes reality, and when reality becomes a myth, because he is 'outside of his mind' mediating between the two. So, in a sense, the trickster is the embodiment of metaphor. There is no 'true' interpretation of his actions, because it is all equally true and false and meaningless.<sup>228</sup>

According to Taoist teaching, as Campbell and Wilson well know, there is a seed of good in all evil deeds, and a seed of evil in every good deed. The Taoist advice is therefore to 'go with the flow,' because no matter what you do, it will always have both positive *and* negative effects.<sup>229</sup> The trickster, however, represents not just the willingness to go with the flow, but a playfulness. If you get tied down in the heavy, fixed rules of a system of morality, you won't be able to deal with the chaos of reality in a realistic way. And, as Campbell says, "The rules are now to be used at will for life."<sup>230</sup> So the trickster doesn't just react to change by following one system or another, he or she brings it about. Whether this is done in conjunction with the heart chakra, and whether the purpose is to 'get back into the garden' or not, likely depends on the individual who is personifying the trickster.

The trickster knows that meaning is all in his mind – that reality is perception – and is therefore free to play around with his own level of interaction with reality. This, it seems, is doing what we all do when we look at the world, but on a more free and artistic level. Through creativity, we take more and more responsibility for our own minds into our own hands. In this game of interaction, there is nothing to win, nor is there such a thing as losing – it's a process, *the* process of interacting processing between the conscious and the unconscious.

While being able to access the out of mind, out of reality state of consciousness that the trickster represents is a powerful goal, it is not the only goal. You don't have to be 'on the edge' with every thought. That, says Campbell, would be tedious, and potentially dangerous to your sanity if you're not up to it.<sup>231</sup> You don't always have to question whether the ground under your feet is solid, or that it is an illusory quantum state that has appeared out of the infinite. Sometimes you just settle down and take things for granted – to be the robot, the autopilot. But by watching your conscious thoughts – as in meditation, or mindfulness – from a higher, neutral perspective, you can at least lighten the load that they place on your consciousness. "The best we can do," says Campbell, is to make them "lean toward the light."<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> As mythologist Robert Graves writes (p.21-22), Greek mythology is no more mysterious in content than a modern cartoon. And so vice versa. For more on the trickster, see for instance Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, or Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World*. For the play element in human psychology and society, see Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*

<sup>228</sup> Aleister Crowley, the twentieth century occultist (1875-1947), was a trickster in a very real sense; he convinced the public that he was the most evil person alive, but at the same time taught his pupils that "Love is the law." Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.89

<sup>229</sup> See, for example, *Tao te Ching*, attributed to Lao Tzu.

<sup>230</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.154

<sup>231</sup> Campbell, *Creative Mythology*, p.82

<sup>232</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.197





*Illustration 16: In a deck of cards, the joker can take any other card's place. Similarly, the trickster can take on any role in the game of life.*

The self-metaprogrammer, the inner trickster, is a powerful psychological technology. He uses the myths and metaphors he has learned and imagined to create the reality tunnel he wants. It should be clear at this point that Wilson's and Campbell's idea of the metaprogrammer, by going 'out' of his mind, becomes the steersman of the mind; the programmer of the programmer; the leading inner voice, and the inner divinity. 'Self-metaprogramming' and 'mythogenesis' are equally clumsy names, but there you have it. Be the trickster.

### **7.2.1 Divine Madness**

It may seem as if the liberties that a consciousness-explorer can take with his own mind are closer to madness than to divine madness.

The thing is, because everything is more and more relative nowadays – including sanity – we have to determine for ourselves what is 'mad'. As Campbell points out, knowledge and action and morality are in a 'free fall', and the only rock left to stand on is in oneself. There are no longer absolute boundaries to determine what is real, what is normal, what is natural, or what is good, except what we determine for ourselves, *or let others determine for us*. "Adventure," says Campbell, "is upon us."<sup>233</sup> Hence Crowley's seemingly anarchic "Do what thou wilt shall be the law," Hassan I Sabbah's ominous "Nothing is true, everything is permitted," and the Grail legend's "Each shall enter where the forest is thickest." As Leary writes, in this day and age, it is "your responsibility to learn how to operate your own soul. That's a new concept. You can't fall back on commandments or anything like that;" instead, "it really requires that you think for yourself."<sup>234</sup>

This freedom of the mind is not a command to be a monster or an anarchist. If anything, says Campbell, it is a call to personal wisdom, and the wisdom to serve others.<sup>235</sup> It is not a call for absolute

<sup>233</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.225 "Just as in science there is no such thing today as a fixed and final, 'found truth,' so also in the moral sphere. Life, in both its knowing and its doing, has become today a 'free fall' into the next minute, into the future."

<sup>234</sup> Leary, *Still Crazy After All These Years*, interview by Bill Moseley

<sup>235</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.xv

freedom and isolation from others and their ideas, but a synergy that comes from our fundamental unity. However, if we let our minds – our thoughts and our emotions – control our reality, reality will continue to be controlled by the animal urges of the lower chakras and circuits. And the 'evil' ways of our ancestors will still be our ways.

Bill Moyers, as the voice of reason, asks Campbell: if we all do it, and leave behind the dominant ways of society, won't that lead to anarchy, and the destruction of society? And Campbell calmly answers: "There are some societies that should not exist."<sup>236</sup>

Wars, politics, racism; the education this world gave us in our youth, says Campbell, only "infected us with the madness of our elders."<sup>237</sup> But *divine* madness is a form of genius; it is a religious genius, in the words of Einstein.<sup>238</sup> And the nature of this genius, says Wilson, is "to be in better touch with the universal consciousness than the average man is."<sup>239</sup> So is the world created by the trickster, the one with "Divine Madness," going to be 'good,' or 'better' than what we have? Well, that's open to interpretation. To Wilson and Campbell, everyone should be free to construct their own reality tunnel, no matter the result to self or society.

### 7.3 *Conscious Evolution*

The third, and perhaps most important goal of conscious evolution, is conscious evolution itself. Man, says Campbell, is the animal that doesn't know what to do with itself.<sup>240</sup> We're always on the edge of now, without being able to control the future; and the illusion of time is so real, because we feel we have almost nothing to do with its passing. So what is coming next?

We have made ways to predict the future; myths and initiation rituals, for example, are guideposts, maps from the past to give a sense of what is coming in our life journey. Science, by looking to the near and distant past, also provides detailed descriptions of what to expect, and the most efficient ways to get there. But the records of history and science are the beginning, not the end. As Campbell writes, "If there is a path, it is somebody else's path, and you are not on the adventure."<sup>241</sup> Somebody else made it and traveled it before you. The paths of your being – the biological and the cultural – have been laid out by your ancestors, and if you follow them strictly, you may never discover, or *be*, yourself. You are mostly the machine, living out its programming.

Conscious evolution, on the other hand, is a matter of intention, or True Will, as Aleister Crowley called it. The goal is *to create goals*: to *consciously* evolve yourself, and choose the direction into which you are going. And the work to achieve higher intelligence, through expanded awareness or otherwise, is work towards achieving this goal.<sup>242</sup>

Evolution is what we call the bigger picture of life in our universe. The story of evolution is not just of man, but of the whole cosmos, and, say Wilson and Campbell, it is to us to make the cosmic personal.<sup>243</sup> So conscious evolution implies a sense of responsibility for the directionality of your own life, and of Life in general. Hopefully, say Campbell and Wilson, this includes an artistic sense of

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<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198

<sup>237</sup> Campbell, *Creative Mythology*, p.47 Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.112

<sup>238</sup> Quoted in Wilber, *Quantum Questions*

<sup>239</sup> Wilson, *Illuminatus*, p.400

<sup>240</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.150

<sup>241</sup> Campbell, *Sukhavati*

<sup>242</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.6

<sup>243</sup> Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, p.280

beauty, and a compassionate sense of unity, because if you've tuned in to your evolutionary role, you realize your role in creating the present, past, and future.<sup>244</sup> We choose which illusion stays and which one goes. Cherish or destroy. Everybody, says Wilson, is doing this to some degree, and we are doing it faster and faster - we can *evolve ourselves* faster and faster.<sup>245</sup>

As Wilson writes, “the future is up for grabs. It belongs to any and all who will take the risks and accept the responsibilities of consciously creating the future they want.” This is reflected in the seventh circuit script: 'future evolution depends on my decisions now.' And this, says Wilson, is not only true for the individual, but for all of us as a species:

“Let's just say that "reality", so-called, is an evolving, ever-changing, quantum-jumping energy-dance, not a rigid and block-like box confining us. Those who know how to swing with the dance are co-creators of the next hour's reality, the next day's, the next year's, the next century's...[So] The reality of any instant is the temporary resultant of the ontological guerrilla warfare between rival gangs of artists, technicians and magicians.”<sup>246</sup>

Wilson's caricature is rather Darwinian, with reality depicted as a battlefield where the fittest ideas and beliefs survive. This picture leaves out the fact that not just warfare, but *sharing* also means evolution; reaping the benefits of others' tested mutations, which it would seem is the purpose behind the availability of the works of Wilson, Campbell, and authors like them in the first place.

Of course, like warfare, evolution does depend on death to move forwards. That which transcends, also leaves certain things behind. In the path towards conscious evolution, it starts with the death to ego attachment, and the revealing of the illusions of separateness, of time, and of real reality. You die to yourself, just as you must die to your parental attachment when young, only to be reborn, evolved. As Hagbard Celine says in Wilson's *Illuminatus*, “Thou art That. If there were no death, there would be no sex. If there were no sex, there would be no death. And without sex, there would be no evolution toward intelligence, no human race. Therefore death is necessary.”<sup>247</sup> So, whereas evolution is said to take eons to create significant change in other animals, it can speed up many times in one human lifetime. ‘Rebirth’ is an evolutionary leap, and all it takes is an acceptance of sacrifice, a willingness to let aspects of your identity ‘die’.<sup>248</sup>

As Wilson writes, “If psychopharmacology is offering us the chance to program, deprogram, and reprogram ourselves at will, we are entering a new stage of evolution.” This is the stage of intelligence studying and improving intelligence. He continues, “Obviously most people are depressed, dumb, and agitated most of the time because *they lack the tools* to repair and correct damaged, defective circuits in their nervous systems. The Neurological Revolution (chemical, electrical, biofeedback and other) is giving us these tools.” And there is a hedonic principle which fuels this drive for conscious evolution: “That is, the more internal freedom you achieve, the more you want; it is more fun to be happy than sad, more enjoyable to choose your own emotions than to have them inflicted on you by mechanical glandular processes, and more pleasurable to solve your problems than to be stuck with them forever.”<sup>249</sup>

Reality, it seems, never *really* makes sense, even if the scientific or the religious mind convince us otherwise; but our attempts at *making* sense of it, by thinking creatively, clearly do evolve. If we are

<sup>244</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.79

<sup>245</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*

<sup>246</sup> Wilson, OCR interview

<sup>247</sup> Wilson, *Illuminatus*, p.156

<sup>248</sup> Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, p.17

<sup>249</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, pp.7-8

to believe Leary, it is no surprise that people need direction to deal with this self-conscious aspect of their consciousness. Conscious evolution, he writes, is itself still an evolving aspect of humanity. Wilson believes the process of it becoming normal for a majority of humans is coming to a head, and he sees signs of a planetary awakening. Where 2500 years ago there was only one Buddha, he says, nowadays you can meet five or ten Buddha's in every city you go to.<sup>250</sup> In this broader sense, conscious evolution is also the evolution of consciousness.<sup>251</sup> We used to be conscious animals, now we're self-conscious humans; and what we call 'higher' consciousness now, may in time become normal.<sup>252</sup> In a way, the chakra system and the Eight Circuit Model predict the direction in which this can happen, which is probably why they are such widely-used tools in the New Age and the counterculture.

Campbell and Wilson both believe that there is a historical process that is coming to a head right now: that humanity is about to enter an entirely new evolutionary relationship to space, time, and consciousness. Campbell believes that we are “in a free fall into the future. We don't know where we're going,” he says, because “Things are changing so fast, and always when you're going through a long tunnel, anxiety comes along.” But if you are conscious of your evolution from moment to moment, he says, “All you have to do to transform your hell into a paradise is to turn your fall into a voluntary act. It's a very interesting shift of perspective, and that's all it is...[a] joyful participation in the sorrows.” And when you make that shift, he says, “everything changes.” You are “following your bliss.”<sup>253</sup>

To come to a joyful participation in the One Story, you have to remember that you are it, without knowing where you're going or where you're from, or having to be afraid of not knowing what is true or not. Because now, says Campbell, you are centered, and have become what you are: the ears, nose, eyes, mouth, skin, mind, and consciousness of Life, of the universe gazing upon itself.<sup>254</sup>

### **7.3.1 *Becoming What We Are***

If *Becoming What We Are* – completing the hero's journey – is an invitation for the human species to head towards self-transcendence, should that concern us?<sup>255</sup> Are history and evolution really up for grabs? The irony of the situation, and of Wilson's title, is that it means that we already are what we are becoming; we already are 'Ultimate Reality,' whether we've realized it or not. We don't need a major transition to *become* it, only to become fully *aware* of it.

From the descriptions we receive in Campbell's and Wilson's writings it seems rather curious why we don't have a global culture of brain-changing, self-realized tricksters. So why don't we?

Trick question. There actually is a sizable group of consciousness-changing individuals, and they are fed by the insights of writers like Campbell and Wilson. However, there are very real limitations. First off, there are social, religious, and institutional biases against the individual mystical experience. Psychedelics are generally at the top of the black list, so education on this topic is more or less stumbled upon through personal interest. In fact, academic research on psychedelics has only recently been continued after decades of restrictions.<sup>256</sup> Secondly, for those who do encounter an

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<sup>250</sup> Wilson, *On the Acceleration to 2012; Illuminati Papers*, p.55

<sup>251</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*

<sup>252</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, pp.50, 148 Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension*, pp.199, 261

<sup>253</sup> Campbell, *Sukhavati*

<sup>254</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.32, 104

<sup>255</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.211

<sup>256</sup> See, for example, Johns Hopkins University and MAPS, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies

expansion of awareness, it seems that it is actually hard work to maintain it.<sup>257</sup> It is a moment to moment process of staying ahead of your mind. As Leary writes, “Divinity is something you have to work at, just like you work at any other profession. It's something that requires moment-to-moment readjusting.”<sup>258</sup> So, while psychedelic transformations of consciousness may give an enormous leap in perception, the real work is done every day, in the 'normal', up-and-down communication with your own mind and the world. As Wilson writes, the 'occult' traditions of the West teach that,

“Although humans are born as mechanical as the wild primates, there are techniques by which we can become *less* mechanical, and approximate in daily and yearly increments toward freedom and responsibility. The “spiritual” (neurological) techniques of Un-doing and re-robotizing oneself are, of course, of no interest in the Orient, where it is accepted that we are born robots and will die robots; and they are of even less interest in the Christian-Democratic cultures which assume that we are already free and responsible and do not have to work and work HARD to achieve even a small beginning of non-mechanical consciousness and non-robotic behavior.”<sup>259</sup>

In other words, our culture and our nature are both obstacles to be overcome in liberating the mind. But there is also a third limitation. The science of conscious evolution – and the list of brain change techniques – is not yet sophisticated enough to be fully predictable. Except for the descriptions and maps left by other consciousness explorers, in your own mind, you are on your own. And in a scientific society, until it becomes more predictable or better understood, brain change will probably not find mainstream acceptance.

#### **7.4 The Hero Returns**

Thinkers like Campbell and Wilson are part of an intellectual force behind creative, 'spiritual,' and progressive trends in culture. They synthesize old knowledge to produce creative, self-empowering, and optimistic visions for modern society. What people do with that is of course beyond their control. But *whom* is it for? It should be clear that the modern brain-changer – the countercultural trickster, a contemporary version of the hero – is a direct product of modern culture, and not some sort of accident. His tools, maps, technologies, and insights come from everywhere – from the sciences, the arts, and the spiritual philosophies of the globalized world. The return of this hero, who has successfully learned how to expand their own consciousness, is an evolution in itself. It means, for the first time in the history of social movements perhaps, the creation of more creators, instead of the creation of more followers and consumers.

With the Sixties gone, this counterculture community has found a niche on the internet. Information is being shared between people to learn how to use brain-change techniques for personal enlightenment. It seems that this culture of enlightenment is not an escape from nor an attack on religion or science. Instead, it is a highly individualistic, constructivist, self-empowering alternative to organized thought. The members of this community have woken up to the fact that they are already organized beyond any system of thought; namely, as a collective force called 'evolution' in which we all play a part.

The return of the hero should be a gift to the rest of the culture. He or she, like Campbell and Wilson, helps people get back in the Garden, because they remind us that the only thing stopping us is our own mind. All the different words and systems of knowledge that normally divide us are put on the

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<sup>257</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.129

<sup>258</sup> Leary, *Still Crazy After All These Years*, interview by Bill Moseley

<sup>259</sup> Wilson in Hyatt, *Undoing Yourself*, p.v

same level – the level of myth, metaphor, and mental programming. Here science can say the same thing as Hinduism or shamanism: that you are the co-creator, and that consciousness, or awareness, is the foundation of everything.

This way of taking knowledge out of its cultural context has made it necessary to study Campbell and Wilson with a meta-historical perspective. The trickster is a trickster in all contexts; and his bag of mental technologies, informed by eternity, seems to be applicable in all times. This realization in turn leads to a general impression, which says that the tendency of a counterculture - at any moment in history - is in fact always the same. It is always the attempt of expanded consciousness, or higher intelligence, to break through into normal consciousness – to make enlightenment a natural state of mind, of society, and of daily experience.

I have already noted that Campbell and Wilson relate to the fourth and sixth chakras, respectively. In these roles, they represent two of the main branches of the path to expanded consciousness; the paths of the heart and of the mind. These are crucial complements in guiding the hero to a mystical experience and back. But there is another level that can be added to this description: their mythical role. Campbell, or the metaphor that best describes his mythical, heroic role, represents a return of the feminine; the return of the mother Goddess of the indigenous Earth religions. His intuitive knowledge and focus on mythology is poised against the overly rational materialism and cynicism that dominates academic culture.

This encounter with Goddess, which is more or less the New Age worldview, can lead to a further transformation. This is the personification of the Trickster, who has integrated the feminine and the masculine sides of his or her psyche, and it is also Wilson's mythical role. One could say that there would be no Wilson without a Campbell; no trickster without the Goddess. Wilson addresses both the rational and the non-rational, scientific and mystical, because both have their 'psychic usefulness'. He therefore brings out the ambiguous creator, the artist who laughs at fixed realities and has his own joyful vision.

Campbell's and Wilson's own early imprints attest to this reading of their roles. Campbell's first initiation into this realm was through Native American mythology, which is steeped in nature-based symbols. And Wilson has been playing around with brain software ever since he was a child. Moreover, he filled his writings and presentations with humor, and, occasionally, a stand-up comedy routine. So, whether one thinks he is humorous or not, the fact is Wilson has fun with his beliefs. In Wilson and Campbell then, the mother goddess and the trickster – two archetypes that were pushed aside by the mythologies of Christianity and Science – reappear in the chaos of the twentieth century with one message; the message of the hero.

Although they are in a sense typical, these roles are not the only ones that lead to or inform a countercultural understanding of the complexity of reality. There seems to be a common structure to the modern art and science of conscious evolution, and I have traced its primary elements not just in Wilson and Campbell, but in other and very different authors. And I suspect that it can be found elsewhere with more research. I make this assumption because I believe there is something basic, something perennial about the concept of consciousness change. In different times, with different sciences, arts, and religions, humans have used different metaphors to describe what they were doing. But they always point to the same experience of eternity. Their words still ring true, because eternity doesn't change; that would defeat the whole concept. So there is always this basic hero's journey – the journey of remembering who you are, in all your aspects. The hope is that, as the hero evolves, so does

his or her way of communicating the increase of consciousness, intelligence, and compassion with the rest of the world.<sup>260</sup>

## **8. Conclusion**

### **8.1 *Counterculture Scholarship***

This thesis was written, specifically, to determine the core of the twentieth century counterculture – the art and science of conscious evolution. But there has also been a more general purpose to this thesis. It has been to provide an understanding of how consciousness expansion relates to knowledge in general. This way, this paper does not so much counter other philosophical views – for example, by opposing the mainstream and the counterculture, or science against mysticism – as provide a conceptual tool for understanding and *using* their different views. This is what the counterculture does; or, at least, what it claims to do. To play with knowledge and be mindful of its limits. So, does it work? Can you 'go out of your mind,' leave behind all that you know, and still come back again? I believe this should be studied empirically within the counterculture, and that this thesis – and the basic formula of brain change plus perception control – is an important contribution in making such a study possible.

The counterculture represents an alternative to having a hegemonic belief system. Universities are, generally speaking, beacons of Enlightenment rationality and advanced thinking and knowledge, and therefore they embody a hegemony of reason. But we, like the counterculture, can't pretend to be purely rational. Nor does a hegemony of rationality lead to a completeness of knowledge. Jung said you aren't your own master until you know how the unconscious mind affects your conscious mind, and there are many ways that the unconscious dominates our behavior. Third circuit rationality, for example, is undercut by first and second circuit psychological traumas and emotional baggage, as well as the guilt trips of the fourth circuit adult personality – not to mention the neuroses and psychoses of the third circuit itself. Add to that the fact that we are less than 1 percent in conscious control of our own biology, and you see that the time we spend actually being rational and objective is hair-raisingly minimal.

The rational, logical, scientific, objective, and materialist approach that the modern student is molded into is itself quite minimalizing. This approach does not open their perspective so much as close it off. For instance, by having to pretend not to have a personal perspective on their objects of study, students largely default on their own opinions. This is how a dogma is upheld. But history, philosophy, sociology, and psychology are neither objective nor rational. The 'humanities' – in Dutch, the *geesteswetenschappen*, or studies of the psyche – reflect on what it is to be human, and there is much more to this than we allow ourselves to acknowledge.

It has been shown here that one of the goals of the counterculture is to integrate the unconscious, instead of ignoring it or repressing it. Exploring the higher circuits and the higher chakras is meant to accomplish that: to actively reprogram your unconscious tendencies, and make them serve the better cause – a harmonious mind and a holistic society. Without this reprogramming, the failures of the past keep haunting us.

We may find that Campbell's model of the hero's journey is a useful myth to observe our own functioning as an academy. The postmodernist side of academic culture, for example, has

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<sup>260</sup> Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp.135-136

deprogrammed, or deconstructed the current reality and its shortcomings, but has failed to offer alternatives. Postmodernism embodies the 'separation' stage of the hero's journey in the academic culture; but in failing to complete the rest of the journey, it evokes opposition, vagueness, pessimism, and cynicism.

Completing the journey won't be easy. Postmodernism focuses heavily on the meaninglessness of each form of knowledge, and with its tendency to deconstruct any constructed perspective it leaves behind a taste of nihilism. And many academics are still dismissive even of postmodernism, perhaps not seeing that it is a direct outgrowth of the same Enlightenment-style pursuit of reason that inspires *them*. Lacking this primary recognition, it will seem even less clear that by integrating the nihilism of postmodernism, the next step along the journey presents itself; namely, the step from excessive rationalism to nondualism. As Timothy Leary, one of the early faces of the psychedelic counterculture writes, "Far from being unconventional, I see my unfolding as highly orthodox and predictable for anyone who takes truth and knowledge seriously."<sup>261</sup> When nondualism – with science and mysticism, nihilism and constructivism equally represented – becomes 'highly orthodox', it will mean a rebirth of the academic community.

This is not to say that what we are doing is wrong – of course, we are doing the best we can, but there is ample room for growth. Recognizing and being open to other perspectives could lead to cooperation, community, and positive contributions. For instance, the fact that mystics claim, as Stace notes, that the mystical experience confers an actual sense of objectivity calls for investigation. As does the countercultural experience that objectivity isn't exclusively scientific *or* mystical, but rather includes both. These 'non-scientific' sources provide a useful challenge to the quality and relevance of our own knowledge and its objectivity.

The main contribution of counterculture scholarship to the academic community is its public engagement with such 'non-scientific' areas of knowledge and experience. Partridge, in his study of the counterculture, finds that this constitutes a challenge to the disenchanted world that materialism, rationalism and science brought about. But paying attention to the mystical aspects of the world is not a challenge, or a conflict with the world of the Enlightenment and the current academic culture. It is not a *revolution*, nor a return to pre-scientific or irrational ways, but rather an *evolution* of the scientific world-view. It is an evolution towards integrating the intuitive consciousness which has not only been entering our Western psyche through the influence of Eastern metaphysics, indigenous spirituality, depth psychology, psychedelics, and the occult arts, but which has always been there, waiting to be recognized.

The counterculture represents an immense realm of information and perspectives, and we as academic researchers can't penetrate it, or get much out of it, with a purely rational or scientific inquiry. So Jung's argument of integrating the psyche seems to apply to the scholar of the counterculture as much as it does to the counterculture itself. The path which the counterculture has explored, from linear, either/or thinking, to symbolic, nondualistic thinking is crucial to the relevance of the knowledge we produce. If we think only one way, then we lose the connection to the unconscious. And worse, we lose contact with reality.

Universities are the keepers of the trust for society's knowledge. What they say is true and what is false, what is scientific and what is not contributes to the nature and quality of our consciousness. And if universities lose contact with aspects of reality, this affects the quality of our society. Of course, the move towards integrating different viewpoints is already there, through interdisciplinary studies

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<sup>261</sup> Leary, *Politics of Ecstasy*, p.207



such as the Historical and Comparative Studies of the Sciences and Humanities. But it is still largely fearful of treading beyond the boundaries of the scientific and rational perspective. This is, I believe, an unnecessary restriction of the academic perspective. The task of recognizing both the differentiation and the integration of reality – to study the differences, *and* our connection through these differences – should not be divided between the 'rational mainstream' and the 'irrational counterculture'.

Several terms come to mind for potential branches of academic study that would combine these tasks, such as Integral Science, Scientific Pluralism, or the Comparative Studies of Science and Mysticism. Such studies would mark an end to a period of diminished reality; they would, in effect, allow for a hero's journey within the academic environment.

Ideas are technologies. And, with diverse ideas coming in from around the world, students of modern globalized culture are learning this more and more. The counterculture is an important source of ways to bring these ideas together. At this point, integrating its meta-psychological, meta-historical approach is not just useful for individualistic purposes, but *necessary* for social purposes: there has to be an infrastructure to support this growing movement in our academic culture right now. And, if not to adopt it, then at the very least to make space for it in certain specialized degrees.

By considering this general side of the paper's implications, I am trying to make counterculture knowledge into a point of study for common knowledge. *Counterculture*, I believe, is a misnomer. It is not a matter of *them* versus *us*. If we see culture as a parallel of nature - that it is evolving, and growing, like a tree - then we cannot say that counterculture is really counterculture. Every tree has branches growing far away from its trunk. And so the counterculture is one of those branches, trying to find a path towards the sun. It feeds the culture, and grows out of it at the same time. This paper, in developing its arguments, has borrowed the perception that 'science' and rationality are mainstream mentalities – the trunk of the tree. But this is not necessarily true. Culture and counterculture may not be quite as separate as imagined.

This thesis was itself conceived in part to bridge the gap between academic culture and counterculture. If, as William Blake and Aldous Huxley say, there are “doors of perception” that can be opened, it implies that these doors are normally closed to us. Excessive rationalism, to Campbell and Wilson, is one of these barriers. It must be stressed again that this is not an attack on reason. If anything, the counterculture is a questioning of dogmatism – and rationalism can be as dogmatic as anything else.<sup>262</sup> The suggested transformation is not about bringing the perspectives closer together, but about loosening the hierarchy, the dominance of *either* science *or* religion, *either* academy *or* counterculture to tell the story of reality; in other words, the dominance of “either/or.” Oppositional viewpoints can be integrated agnostically and plurastically, if not in our minds, then at least in our models. Until it's recognized that both are metaphorical systems, mental projections to live life with some measure of order, the conflict will continue. Going out of your mind, or in any case the models that describe this experience, provide insight into how we as academics can structure the dialog between rational and non-rational perspectives, and move forwards constructively.

## 8.2 Final Statements

The countercultural authors Robert Anton Wilson and Joseph Campbell, by accessing the so-called mystical state of awareness, point to a level of human psychology that has not yet been integrated

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<sup>262</sup> This, in turn, seems to make the counterculture a movement of dogmatic anti-dogmatists

into a mainstream, nor yet an academic understanding of reality. While we normally think of ourselves as free-willed individuals on a planet full of more individuals, all different and often opposed to each other in rational or irrational pursuits, in the countercultural perspective, human consciousness is both individual *and* inherently unified. Whatever our beliefs, mystical, religious, or scientific, they all refer to the same thing. And what's more, there are known ways of interacting between these many perspectives. Perhaps the most important perspective that synthesizes the individual mind with the totality of reality is the awareness of our co-authorship of evolution. This awareness leads to a sense, not entirely different from postmodern theory, that we create our own illusions, and that we choose our own meaningful 'story' of existence. Except in the countercultural arena, it leads not just to a deconstruction of truth and meaning, but to a positive expansion and reconfiguration of our self-identity through the combined art and science of conscious evolution.

Meaning, says Campbell, is in the mind, and you can play with your mental software to change the meaning of your reality. While not everybody partakes of mystical type experiences, everyone engages in this basic formula of conscious evolution in some way. Campbell and Wilson's argument is simple: why not do it consciously? And the only thing that truly lifts us out of our illusions, they say, is the mystical experience. It strips us of our sense of time, our sense of disconnect, and of the rigidity of our belief systems. That which is revealed in this process is apparently unnameable, but the newly initiated self carries back with him or her the tools of mythology, art, religion, reason, empirical science, and more, to envision a new level of functioning – a functioning that approaches reality through all the seven chakras, and all the eight circuits of consciousness.

The way in and out of the mystical experience that counterculture authors like Wilson and Campbell describe is essentially non-religious, or non-dogmatic. Any beliefs you gain come forth from your own experience, making theirs an openly subjective and agnostic science. Taking such an empirical, or scientific approach into the mystical experience reveals the use of higher consciousness from a psychological perspective. However, it also reveals the limits of this same psychological perspective and its rigid reliance on logic and structure, and balances it with the perspectives of love, compassion, humor, intuition, and creativity. While these are more typically attributes of the mystic or the spiritual seeker, in the counterculture they are equally likely to illustrate the scientist.

How do you cultivate expanded awareness? And why? Learning how to go out of your mind and come back again is, first and foremost, a way of naturalizing expanded awareness. To step out of your programmed reality, and become a programmer. Whether the beliefs of Joseph Campbell and Robert Anton Wilson are illusions or not – and Wilson, especially, would be the first to admit that they are – the point is that they help you to *wake up* from your beliefs. And this is the ultimate goal. Losing and choosing your illusions, so that you can change your identity through an awareness of your thoughts, feelings, and belief systems.

Campbell and Wilson teach techniques for making enlightenment normal – they have written operating manuals to de-condition the nervous system, and *stabilize* consciousness at expanded, fluid, and self-aware levels. The basic point, the foundation of this art and science of conscious evolution, is to be at any moment in touch with your 'true' identity – to realize that you are not just a man or a woman, living on a rock in space, but that you are also that rock and that space. That you are one with the Creator, the Universe, Ultimate Reality, or whichever metaphor suits you best. It is difficult to do, and there are a number of taboos against it, but it is the current frontier of consciousness.

The caveat, of course, is that what these words mean – the ecstatic experience of consciousness

that Campbell and Wilson point to – cannot actually be described. It can be communicated in some sense, but in the end, they agree, you have to do it yourself to know what they are talking about. To have a personal awakening. Then, by mastering the art and the science of conscious evolution, you can create your own sense of reality; you can *consciously create* the level of your experience, and the meaning in your life, at any time. Everyday reality, or the illusion of everyday reality, is evermore subject to the mastery of brain change and perception control.

This formula represents the meeting of time and eternity; of science and consciousness; of history and evolution. Whether veiled or straightforward, all the words, metaphors and texts – from the West and from the East, ancient and modern – that make these poles meet are meant to poke you, the reader, into your own moment of awakening, of recognizing the symbols as *your* symbols, recognizing history as *your* history, and recognizing that the writer, *this* writer, is you. History, the nightmare from which we are trying to wake up, is our own doing. “You did it to yourself,” says Campbell. “The God is within you, and you are yourself your creator.”<sup>263</sup>

The counterculture's conclusion, it seems, is that your mind is a natural liar – it is an artist.<sup>264</sup> It fabricates reality tunnels, or myths, which it then calls reality; it thinks it's in control, at least of your inner reality. And it even thinks it *is* you, even though 'you' are barely there. Until you realize that you are more than your mind and all of its illusions, you will be stuck inside it. Ancient mystics figured this out thousands of years ago; that the problem is our mind, and that the cure is to go out of it. Their response was to either go with the flow, or to step out completely by silencing the mind and becoming a monk or a hermit. Not so in the twentieth century counterculture. Campbell and Wilson interpret the mystical realization of who you are from the point of view of modern science, art, and literature. Through science, consciousness expansion allows you to dissect, deconstruct, and understand reality from a broader perspective than normal; and through art, it allows you to put reality back together again in new and harmonious ways. Instead of letting it be, as the ancient mystics did, the evolving art and science of conscious evolution is determined to control its own illusions.

Campbell's and Wilson's primary task therefore is to guide the modern scientifically-minded individual to the mystical experience and back – to go out of your mind and come back again. They give the tools and the maps for getting there, such as the chakra system and the Eight Circuit Model of Consciousness. In a way, this makes them the messengers of death; the death of ego attachment, and rebirth into expanded awareness and identity. By providing the knowledge and techniques of the art and science of conscious evolution, they make that process easier and less frightening, and more rewarding to the individual and their community.

And yet it's nothing new. People have been going out of their minds since long before Plato did. The name and definition changes – from Divine Madness, to union with God, to mystical experience, to self-metaprogramming – and the methods change, but the experience itself is unchanging. However, with the added boost of scientific research, it seems the way to an expansion of awareness is being opened for more and more minds. There is more potential for rewriting culture from the individual level up, and for 'counterculture' to become 'mainstream' culture. Right now, Wilson says, the major struggle is between those who want to program themselves - and as far as possible teach others to self-program - and those who want to program everybody else. Because if you're not programming yourself, then you're being programmed.<sup>265</sup> Reality – history, *evolution* – is the temporary resultant of the warfare between

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<sup>263</sup> Paraphrase of James Joyce. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.161

<sup>264</sup> Wilson, *Illuminati Papers*, p.85

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86

rival gangs of artists, technicians, and shamans. We all fight for our reality tunnel – our sense of truth. And so, the counterculture implies, you *are* the victim of circumstance, until you wake up and choose to become what you are.

At the introduction I claimed that youth grow up with the idea that nothing they do matters in the bigger picture. Of course there is a great effort in education to teach children, for example, of their impact on the environment – but this doesn't stop the culture machine from turning. Consumption, pollution, and exploitation are embedded in our operating system. The assertion of Campbell's and Wilson's work, like that of many others in the consciousness movement, is that we can go farther and experience the vision and realize; *I am* the bigger picture. Everything I do matters. Everything you do affects everything. This is a great responsibility, and a great *ability*: to *choose* to see the mystery of everything, the mystery of yourself, and the oneness of the world; and you can choose to see everything as *You*.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Wilson, *Techniques for Consciousness Change*.

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