

**Dr. Ingela Visuri: Spirituality & "The case of High functioning Autism" -
"unexplainable sensory experiences & invisible touch w/ creativity &
imagination + Distress, factor & "gradual enlightenment**



autistic 640px-Autism-stacking-cans_2nd_edit – Wikimedia

1. **"To me it seems the most important and exceedingly difficult task of our time is to work on the construction of a new idea of reality"¹. - Wolfgang Pauli**
2. **It would seem our reality is not working very well**
3. **"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them!"² - Albert Einstein**
4. **The way you look at things is the most powerful force in shaping your life!³ - Irish poet theologian John O'Donohue**

Spiritual Actualities (People) vs an Artificial Abstraction

"Proper knowledge maps actualities of the real world!" – K Gergen

Justice Rehnquist: "It is not true if the major premise is not true!"

When it comes to spiritual and religious beliefs, the only actualities are “people” – not artificial abstractions like the “supernatural” which is defined as outside the scope of science and so an empty and meaningless abstraction. My 2018 critique of materialist methods which is endorsed by Dr Harold Koenig, Dr Paul Wong, Dr Stephen Farra, and Stefan Schindler focused on the Materialist fallacy that “Spirituality is intangible and beyond the senses – and so unreal. If that is the case, then “death” is a figment of your imagination! The materialist argument is a fallacy! Gergen’s principle applies to human-social consciousness as well. People, groups, and society are the actualities that need be considered, not abstractions like Allport’s 1927 false premise, “There is no psychology of groups.” - Or the “materialist model” of consciousness as being solely and entirely a “byproduct of the neurology and biochemistry of the brain.” (Baruss and Mossbridge)

- Alfred Rupert Sheldrake, author, and biochemist at Cambridge University concludes: “The atheist ideology found a powerful ally in materialist science, which by the end of the nineteenth century, portrayed a purposeless, unconscious, mechanical universe where humans, like all life, had evolved without purpose or guidance.” (p.155)
- Rene Guenon & the materialist problem: “Rationalism in all its forms is essentially defined by a belief in the supremacy of reason, proclaimed as a veritable 'dogma', and implying the denial of everything that is of a supra-individual order, notably of pure intellectual intuition, and this carries with it logically the exclusion of all true metaphysical knowledge....[and] the rejection of all spiritual authority, rationalism and individualism are thus so closely linked together that they are usually confused,” (p.90)
- Guenon’s assessment is correct. Kenneth Gergen, David Hay and Virgilio Enriquez agree that Rational Individualism (a political ideal) has morphed (from the Age of Reason to the Materialist Age) into a form of extreme individualism. Wikipedia has only three references to social consciousness – the most salient being Karl Marx. In western academia, the Rational Individualism norm holds sway. As a point of information, the English language has no words for the Filipino words, Bayanihan (helping others in a community context), Kapwa (shared identity), or loob (relational will – equality)

Visuri, Ingela (2019). Sensory supernatural experiences in autism. Religion, Brain & Behavior, 10(2): 151-165⁴.

- It has become extremely questionable whether, in the flux of life, it is a genuinely worthwhile intellectual problem to seek to discover fixed and immutable ideas or

absolutes. It is a more worthy intellectual task perhaps to learn to think dynamically and relationally rather than statically. – Karl Mannheim

- “Embracing divergent perspectives at the same time is a key to understanding reality” - Walczak

When it comes to spirituality, spirituality comes in all sorts of types and varieties - from Einstein's yugen - to the spirituality of dancing, singing, love of nature, including the spirituality of grieving, autistics and children (relatively common), as well as enlightenment & spiritual quest. On top of that there is the spirituality of compassion. In America there are 77.4 million care-giving volunteers. Of course, there is the Synthesis-Consensus of Jung-Frankl-James which states that "spirit" [spiritual-processes] create meaning.

For perspective: Spirituality is a New Emerging Field of Science: “Psychological research on spirituality and religion has grown exponentially in recent years⁵ (Paloutzian & Park, 2013). In the diversity of new research, “spirituality” has proven to be a complex and dynamic term that is challenging to define.”– Tomlinson et al Furthermore, William R. Miller and Carl E. Thoresen titled their article in Pubmed “Spirituality, religion and health: an emerging field of research.”⁶ DR H Koenig also highlights spirituality as an “emerging field”

I. "The Case of High functioning Autism"

Ingela Visuri, a PhD, in her well researched dissertation paper focused on the spiritual experiences of high functioning autistics stated that Autistics demonstrate a tendency to have "unusual, sensory experiences [and] are prevalent among autistic individuals" She goes on to say that "A majority of the participants report unexplainable, sensory experiences that seem to occur without any input of stimuli: touch by invisible hands, visions of things that other cannot see, whispers when no one else is to at home, and sensations of invisible bodies being present. "Several participants describe times of grief when they have felt that a significant, invisible other has been present to comfort them."⁷ (Varieties of Supernatural Experience: The case of High functioning Autism)

Again, the most salient feature of autistic spirituality is the distinct character of the experiences - "unexplainable sensory experiences" - invisible touch, invisible presence (i.e., bodies), and even imaginary friends. My reasoning would be that since this peculiar type of spirituality appears peculiar to autistics it would seem to follow that the peculiar way their brain process information and their deficit in Theory of Mind processing {ability to make inferences and judge others' intentions) would be an influence or cause of this peculiar type of spiritual experiences. I have done some research into neuroscience and it is complex. But I believe the argument presented below is a reasonable proposition.

A. "Supernatural ideas gradually are shaped from reflections of unusual events, emotional prompts and existential issues"

Another positive aspect of Ingela Visuri's research is that rather than dealing with autistics only as an abstraction, Visuri also dug into the real-life circumstances. Besides uncovering the “distress” factor, she

also uncovered the fact that the beliefs in the “divine” or “supernatural” in autistics took place over a “gradual” time period and weren’t like lightning bolts out of the blue. That is also true in my own life-experiences as well as others I have spoken with.

Dr. Ingela Visuri, in her dissertation, *Varieties of Supernatural Experience: The case of High functioning Autism*, observes that “On the contrary, the participants in this study describe how supernatural ideas gradually are shaped from reflections of unusual events, emotional prompts and existential issues, and cultural frameworks escort them towards various conclusions on supernatural agency.” Visuri’s observation matches perfectly Flynn’s experience when he said, “I found it difficult to handle my main experience and struggled for a long time, but finally once I got a 'structure' worked out I keep my balance pretty well.”⁸ That also matches perfectly my own experience as well.

Attitude and Interpretation

The famous psychologist, Muzafer Sherif (1906-1988), “promotes the idea of attitude and attitude change due to its importance in a quickly changing world. He emphasizes that real world contexts are important, even if regarded as “messy” compared to controlled lab experiments.”⁹ (wiki) Way too many researchers it seems in spiritual-psychic experiences ignore circumstances and situational context. For example, an Icelandic study showed numerous results of psychic experiences related to ghosts and the deceased, yet failed to mention if grieving was involved. Ingela Visuri does dig into the reality of people which puts perspective on “people” and their real-life circumstances. In that context, I would like to add a brief sum of Flynn’s story

Dr. Visuri, who has a balanced point of view, refers to transcendental experiences and beliefs as “enchanted,” – which is a hell of a lot more objective than hallucinations” and “delusions.” Einstein had some enchanted views as well - just from a different perspective. Einstein beheld the universe with an enchanted view of awe and wonder: “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery---even if mixed with fear---that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, our perceptions of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our minds---it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity;”¹⁰ That “begs” the question of whether being “enchanted” a positive characteristic after all?

B. Enchanted Worldview, and Creativity

Bettino, who worked with autistics explained autistic creativity, “For instance, in 2019 for about a year I was working with a community of autistic children and young adults in a coffee shop. I watched a young man who did not speak to me at first, who is autistic, come out of his shell by using his creativeness to paint and build models of cars, to even getting jobs to paint portraits of animals for a veterinarian. I can’t help but ask whether – in some circumstances - the “enchanted” and creative ideas – that Visuri refers to - which are creative aren’t life-giving to some people, as it were. I believe this is a pivotal point not only for autistics but for others as well.

Brief Highlights of High-Functioning Autistics by B.G. & the Story of a Parent

My kids don't stop creating things, you wouldn't know they are autistic, they are just very focused into what they are doing but they need to be creating and doing something all day long, they are homeschooled, always, since before covid.

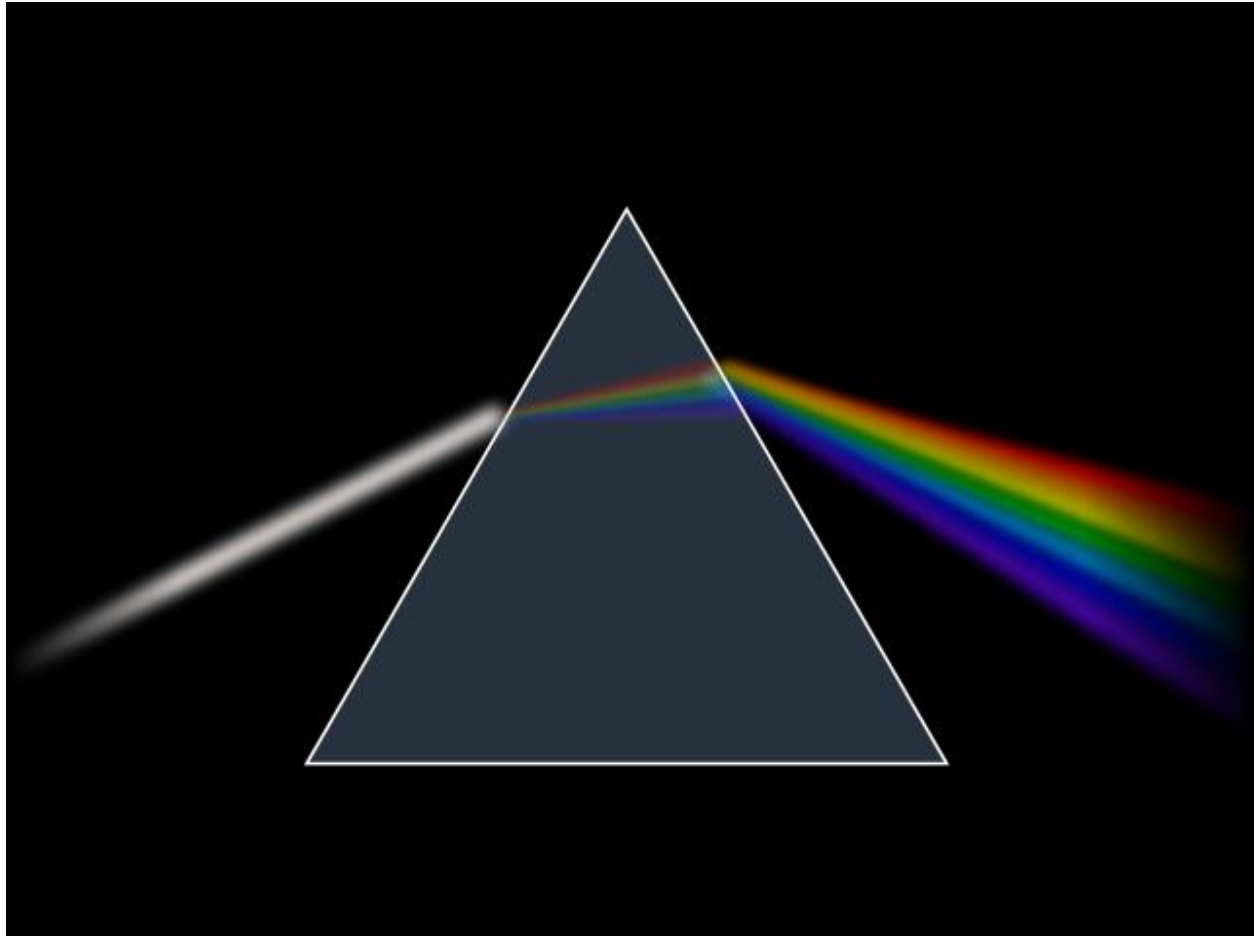
We are considered high functioning, people think we can out-grow being autistic or have a break through, I think it may be true for some, but for most of us, we find ways to cope, learn behaviors and stay away from stressful situations so it appears like it just goes away (like when being creative) but it's really a different way of thinking, this is why I believe that the growth in the autistic population as of lately may have something to do with Edgar Cayce's new 5th root race being born.

Most of us have special hobbies that we obsess about, can you guess what mine is?? 😊 Its the Edgar Cayce Readings.

Through the Eyes of an Autistic Child

Stories have value in and of themselves. A man related this story to me: "My son has always been close to the spiritual domain. He was supposed to be a twin but the twin died early on while still in the womb. When he was born, he didn't come crying - as is normal with some babies - he came out cooing. By the time he was two he was just barely starting to talk. The doctors told he may never develop normally. From the time he was two to about the age of six, he communicated with someone named Joseph. They would play together, sometimes quarrel; my wife asked him one day who Joseph was and he said that Joseph was his brother, One night he was up sitting in the living room and my wife heard a scream. She went in there was my son just shaking. She asked what was wrong and he said he saw a ghost. She asked him what did he look like? He pointed to the picture of my wife's dad who was killed in a truck accident when she was 5. He said it looked like him. By the time he was about 12 my wife asked him if he ever saw Joseph anymore, and he said that Joseph went away. As he got older and he learned how to pray and the meaning of prayer, he would pray for hours a night. One night I stayed up to listen and it sounded like he was talking to his best friend. To him God was his best friend. As I've aged and put aside my foibles of youth and I have learned a lot from my son. I now have relationship with God. I don't have long conversations with him like my son but feel a presence in my life I hadn't felt for a long time. Yes, you have my permission to write your essay. My one question is how do you quantify and qualify those kinds of spiritual experiences?

From the time he was two to about the age of six, he communicated with someone named Joseph.



II. Prism Paradigm: The Energy-Filter Metaphor:

The Genetics of Spirituality: Tim Spector states, "They [the researchers] estimated the heritability of spirituality to be around 40 to 50 percent, which is quite high considering how tricky it is to measure.... These studies demonstrate our variable but innate inherited sense of spirituality, which affects how we perceive the world, ourselves and the universe."

Prism Paradigm: Energy, Symbols, and Archetypes: Energy, as "light," in this paradigm - originates from unconscious symbolism which is processed and filtered by a [consciousness] prism producing different colors [worldviews]. William James stated that "This absolute determinability of our mind by abstractions [symbols] is one of the cardinal facts in our human constitution. Polarizing and magnetizing us as they do, we turn towards them and from them, we seek them, hold them, hate them, bless them, just as if they were so many concrete beings. p. 47 William James emphasizes the emotional powers that [they] "determine our vital attitude as decisively as the vital attitude of lovers is determined by the habitual sense, by which each is haunted, of the other being in the world." p.48 Donald Kalsched observes that "Archetypal energy is rooted deep in the unconscious and it is 'archaic', primitive, and also 'typical'... "because they exist in raw, unmediated form they tend to be over-powering." Nancy Furlotti similarly states, " Affect emerges from archetypes, which are the a priori ordering principles of nature, the world, and the psyche. When an archetype is activated, energy is put in motion that does not adhere to the laws of causality, or time and space."

Prism Paradigm Spirituality is about people (including physiology) NOT the Supernatural

Materialist Maxim that “All spirituality” is “intangible” vs. “physiological factors” of spirituality

William James - Filters, Selective Attention, and Physiological Filters: Ortega Gasset observed – “I am I plus my circumstances” - which in some cases are not just cultural or political circumstances but can include “physiological” circumstances. Prisms are filters and “selective attention” not only focuses attention but filters out data. As William James observed, in order to focus attention that requires excluding and filtering out information .

1. Physiological Filters - Autistics: In Ingela Visuri's study of autistic spiritual experiences what is striking is the very distinct character of the autistics' experiences. In Ingela Visuri's words, autistic experiences tend to be characteristically "unexplainable sensory experiences" - invisible touch, invisible presence (i.e., bodies), and even imaginary friends. Now, it would stand to reason that since this unique type of spirituality appears to be peculiar to autistics would to be generated or stimulated the “unique” physiology of autistics brains” who are well known to have a weakness in Theory of Mind processing {ability to make inferences and judge others' intentions}.
2. Physiological Filter – Circumstance of Distress/Stress: “Distress” and Tapping into Unconscious Spiritual Processes: Ingela Visuri states that "Distress triggers" Spiritual Seeking and Spiritual-Psychic Experiences: Ingela Visuri, as a result of her intensive study of spirituality in high functioning autistics stated that "The results also indicate that distress triggers the participants to seek out supernatural ascriptions and invisible relations." In reviewing types of spirituality "distress" appears to be a cause in many different scenarios of spirituality such as the processes of grieving, recovering addicts, depression, as well as many others very likely. Tapping into unconscious spiritual processes which most likely are deeply embedded in the human unconscious, makes a lot of sense. Jean MacPhail, author and scholar, observes that “stress” in her experience has been a major factor in her experiences.
3. Circumstances grieving (stress) – grieving as a Physiological Filter with Spiritual Experiences in Grieving as Adaptive Mechanisms
 - Easterling (et al): “Conversely, experience has shown pastoral caregivers that individuals do seem to cope better if they can "actualize" their spiritual experiences in times of crisis .
 - Julie Parker: study finds that “continuing bonds with the deceased can be adaptive, and spiritual and/or religious belief systems are associated with adaptive outcomes of grief.”
 - Gabriella Kilianova highlights the views of a Catholic priest in Slovakia. The priest “assumed that such dreams help people deal with the loss of their loved ones.” That does appear to be part of pastoral folklore as it were. But also because of the priest’s reflections and comments about the afterlife and connections with souls departed .
 - Adams and Hyde: “Qualitative studies have shown that some children reflect on their dreams and find meaning in them, with some of these dreams making a spiritual impact!”

- Donna Thomas: “Whether ‘positive’ or ‘negative’, anomalous experiences can catalyze self-healing for children and young people. Through children achieving greater self-awareness and a sense of intra-connectedness between self, others and the world.”

4. Physiological Filter - NF personalities: J. E. Kennedy observes that: “Research studies have found that belief in paranormal phenomena is associated with the N and F personality factors (Gow, et. al., 2001; Lester, Thinschmidt, & Trautman, 1987; Murphy & Lester, 1976). In a study of a technique attempting to induce a sense of contact with someone who had died, 96% of the participants with NF personality types reported after-death contact experiences, whereas 100% of the participants with ST (sensing, thinking) personality types did not have these experiences (Arcangel, 1997). In a survey of parapsychological researchers, Smith (2003) found that the F factor was associated with experimenters who were rated as psi-conductive.”

5. Physiological Filter – Gender: Kennedy observes: Women tend to be more spiritual and religious than men. This pattern has been found consistently across cultures, across religions, and throughout history (Stark 2002). Women also tend to believe in psychic phenomena more than men (reviewed in Irwin 1993, also see Orenstein 2002). In the Canadian survey, 72 percent of the extreme skeptics were males and 64 percent of the extreme believers were females. The tendency for men to be more skeptical may reflect a genetic tendency to be more inclined toward rational, practical thinking and competition whereas women tend to be more interested in people, relationships, and connections.”

I believe Iain McGillChrist’s observation about modern ways of thinking is relevant here: “An increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, decontextualised world, marked by unwarranted optimism mixed with paranoia and a feeling of emptiness, has come about, reflecting, I believe, the unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere.”

6. Physiological Filters Conservative Political Beliefs: Nurit Novis-Deutsch et al observe: “Previous studies have shown that religious people tend to be politically conservative, and to support existing social arrangements. The evidence linking religiosity and conservative social attitudes extends across social policy attitudes (issues such as same-sex marriage or abortion) and political attitudes (voting patterns). Typically, the power of religions draws on traditions, authority figures and in-groups, which makes its connection to conservative attitudes clear.”

They go on to say, “Our quantitative findings are generally consistent with the research literature. We found via path analyses that religion affects ideology both directly and indirectly. There is a direct relationship between religiosity and positions on issues such as homosexuality and same-sex marriage. In addition, there is also an indirect relationship in which religiosity is related to values, which in turn are related to ideology.”

Commentary: Kennedy observes, “Paranormal beliefs and experiences are associated with certain personality factors, including absorption, fantasy proneness, and the Myers-Briggs intuition and feeling personality dimensions. Skepticism appears to be associated with materialistic, rational, pragmatic personality types. Attitude toward psi may also be influenced by motivations to have control and efficacy, to have a sense of meaning and purpose in life, to be connected with others, to have transcendent experiences, to have self-worth, to feel superior to others, and to be healed.”

Spirituality is a natural human predisposition! It is more primal than institutional religion and concerns a person's sense of connectedness with self, others, and world!" Spirituality is more primal, Anton Killin: "The oldest known musical instruments [date] from 40,000 years ago (40 Kya)"

Music: A Quintessential Illustration of Spirituality & Evolutionary Adaptive Trait: "Music is a core human experience... often functional because it is something that can promote human well-being by facilitating human contact, human meaning, and human imagination of possibilities, tying it to our social instincts. Music is a fundamental part of our evolution – and functional because it facilitates "human contact" and out "social self"

<https://independentscholar.academia.edu/CharlesPeckJr>

III. Historical Creativity-Spirituality Connection

As the philosopher Susanne Langer observes, "Every culture develops some kind of art as surely as it develops language. Some primitive cultures have no real mythology or religion, but all have some art - dance, song, design (sometimes only on tools or on the human body). Dance, above all, seems to be the oldest elaborated art."¹¹ In early human culture spiritual beliefs permeated all aspects of society and social-spiritual-religious aspects were integrated. Even a brief overview of myths show a pattern of "Myths as Symbolic maps of social-moral order". That, of course is tremendously productive and creative.

Historically there is clear evidence that support a direct connection between creativity and spirituality. First off, in the Bible - or Torah - there are plentiful sources of creativity in the form of poetry. The Torah preserves several lengthy poems, including the Testament of Jacob (Gen. 49:2–27), the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:1–18), the Song of Moses (Deut. 32), and Moses' Blessing (Deut. 33). We also find a number of shorter poetic compositions or fragments, such as the Song of Lamech (Gen. 4:23–24), Miriam's Song at the Sea (Ex. 15:21), the Song of the Ark (Num. 10:35–36); the Song at the Well (Num. 21:17–18), the Victory Song over Moab (Num. 21:27–30), and the Oracles of Balaam (Num. 23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–9, 15–24). In some instances, often in the course of a dialogue, a few poetic verses interrupt the surrounding prose narrative, as when the man names the woman (Gen. 2:23), God speaks to Cain (Gen. 4:6–7), or Rebekah's family bids her farewell (Gen. 24:60).

Creative poetry - historically - has been an abundant source of creativity of spiritual people of all religions.:

Abraham Heschel (1907 – 1972), observes that "The prophet is a poet. His experience is one known to poets. What poets know as poetic inspiration, the prophets call divine revelation Psychologically considered, prophetic inspiration is not materially different from furor poeticus [the divine frenzy or poetic madness] of the master-poet or artist. The inspiration of the artist is what is meant by the hand of the Lord which rests upon the prophet."¹² (p.468-469)

- St. Teresa of Avila,
- Hildegard of Bingen,
- Angelus of Silesius,
- Mother Teresa,
- Thomas Merton,

- Therese of Lisieux,
- Hadewijch of Antwerp,
- Mother Julian of Norwich,
- St. John the Cross,
- Therese of Lisieux,
- St. Catherine of Siena,
- Meister Eckhart,
- Mechthild of Magdeburg
- Pope John Paul II.
- Buddha - or Bodhidharma - was a poet as well as many Zen Masters such as
- Dogen, Ryoken,
- Huang Po,
- Thich Nhat Hanh.
- Rumi is probably the best-known Sufi poet but the Poet-Seer website lists 13 other Sufi poet-seers including
- Ibn Arabi,
- Al Hallaj.
- Confucius,
- Lao Tzu,
- Chuang Tzu,
- Wu Men,
- Wang Wei
- Hindu spiritual leaders who expressed their creativity in poetry were:
- Kalidasa,
- Kamalakanta,
- Kanakadasa,
- Mahadevi,
- Ramprasad,
- Sri Chaitanya
- Swami Satchidananda!

In art, poetry, and creative writing one can often find very profound and prophetic insights

"This besotted humdrum age of spiritual blindness!"

In the epic novel, *Steppenwolf*, written by Hermann Hesse and first published in 1927, it would appear that some of the writing in the novel could, in truth, be considered properly prophetic - especially in regard to some of the psychological and spiritual aspects of our contemporary society and culture. *Steppenwolf*, the character and the central individual in the novel, decries the empty essence and of his society, when he proclaims, "Ah, but it is hard to find this track of the divine in the midst of this life that we lead, in this besotted humdrum age of spiritual blindness, its politics, its men! And in fact, if the world is right, if this music of cafes, these mass enjoyments and these Americanised men who are pleased with so little are right, then I am wrong. I am crazy. I am in truth the *Steppenwolf* that I often

call myself; that beast astray who finds neither home nor joy nor nourishment in a world that is strange and incomprehensible to him."¹³ (p. 48-49)

IV. Sociological Evidence of Unconscious Spiritual Symbolism

A. Sociological Evidence of Unconscious Spiritual Symbolism – Star Wars & Harry Potter Fandom: Rhiannon Grant in *The Sacred in Fantastic Fandom*, Grant observes in 2001, the British government ran a regular census, but they included a new question about religion. In response, almost 0.8 percent of the total population said they were a “Jedi” or Jedi knight!” Those results were repeated in Australia and New Zealand.” The contemporary-modern popularity of Star Wars and Harry Potter provides massive evidence for the existence of unconscious spiritual symbolism¹⁴.

B. Energized unconscious symbolism: In light of the "sociological reality" of Star Wars and Harry Potter Fandoms, spiritual symbols might best be understood in terms of Nancy Furlotti's argument which states, "Affect emerges from archetypes, which are the a priori ordering principles of nature, the world, and the psyche. When an archetype is activated, energy is put in motion that does not adhere to the laws of causality, or time and space."¹⁵ (*Tracing a Red Thread: Synchronicity and Jung's Red Book*:(2010), *Psychological Perspectives*, 53:4, 455-478) Beliefs and ideas are very real and incredibly powerful. From that perspective, the idea of "spirit" as energy and force is very real, especially in light of a social-collective consciousness.

C. Selective Attention as an Evolutionary Adaptive Trait

Bernhard Hommel et al observe: “How is this related to attention? A few sentences after that famous phrase we quoted above, James wrote that attention “implies a withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others.” And while these simple circuits for governing interactive behavior may seem far removed from the higher cognition of humans, they are indeed the precursors [approach circuit of the rostral tectum] to the mechanisms that control what has been called “selective attention.”¹⁶

It is argued that selectivity in processing has emerged through evolution as a design feature of a complex multi-channel sensorimotor system, which generates selective phenomena of “attention” as one of many by-products.

D. The power and influence of attentional processes. John Bargh, a researcher and psychologist of the unconscious, observes, “When I was about twelve years old, we had a big family reunion and I decided to bring a tape recorder so we’d have a recording of our grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins for posterity. I come from a large extended family so it was a really noisy room. During the gathering, our grandma sat on the couch and told some great stories in the middle of all other conversations. We listened and enjoyed all of them, and a few days after the reunion, we went back to listen to it again. What a disappointment! Just noise, noise, noise, a million people talking at once and no way to pick out her voice from the other people talking, even though we heard her so clearly at the time. We quickly figured out that we hadn’t noticed the background noise because we had been so captivated by our grandmother’s stories. We’d filtered out what everyone else was saying.”¹⁷

E. Complex interconnectivity of the human brain

Moral Neuroscience: Funk and Gazzaniga observe that “Morality is a set of complex emotional and cognitive processes that is reflected across many brain domains. Some of them are recurrently found to be indispensable in order to emit a moral judgment, but none of them is uniquely related to morality.....Some of the emotions processed are more central to morality than others, but all emotions contribute to moral judgment given specific contextual situations..... The neural circuits of brain regions implicated in morality overlap with those that regulate other behavioral processes....”¹⁸

Musical neuroscience also indicates intricately interconnected processes: Music cuts across diverse cognitive capabilities and resources, including numeracy, language, and space perception. In the same way, music intersects with cultural boundaries, facilitating our “social self” by linking our shared experiences and intentions.”

V. Background: Unconscious: Automated Social Perception, Mental Categories, Symbolism

A, Lion’s Share Intimately Connected to the environment

Modern unconscious research demonstrates that the “Unconscious” processes 11 million bits of data per second vs 40 bits of data per second processed by cognitive processes “Our conscious processing capacity isn’t insignificant, but clearly, it’s just a retention pond compared to the ocean of the unconscious.”

B. The Lion’s Share: Three major forms of automatic self-regulation:

John Bargh observes the three major forms: “an automatic effect of perception on action, automatic goal pursuit, and a continual automatic evaluation of one’s experience. From the accumulating evidence, the authors conclude that these various nonconscious mental systems perform the lion’s share of the self-regulatory burden, beneficially keeping the individual grounded in his or her current environment.”¹⁹

C. social perception involves largely automated unconscious processes

John Bargh observes, “The idea that social perception is a largely automated psychological phenomenon is now widely accepted.” Social Perception is the core of social Consciousness “Our identities are multifaceted – mother, musician, teacher, yoga enthusiast, NASCAR fan. In each of these [identities] there is stored implicit and ingrained knowledge about appropriate values and behaviors, likes and dislikes, ways of being.”²⁰

Commentary: Even in basic exchanges between two people involve a lot of information such as tone of voice, body language, hand gestures, and facial features which studies show convey a lot of information. Then there is social context and circumstances. Plus, there are theory of mind processes which process information about the intentions of another person.

D. Mental categories and social perception: “Mental categories are absolutely essential for simplifying and understanding the information-rich environment, the express link between

perception [of the environment] and action probably exists for a good adaptive reason, such as creation of appropriate behavioral preparations in the absence of conscious guidance and monitoring. Within a social group, one is more likely to get along harmoniously with other group members if one behaves the same way than when one is "out of sync" and behaves differently." (Before you know it). Bargh's research emphasizes stereotypes and norms that create these "mental categories"²¹

E. Symbols, Flags, and Kant's Symbolic Knowledge: Kant, Nietzsche, Ortega Gasset, Heschel, Heidegger and western philosophers agree that symbols are vital for both understanding and knowledge. However, the consensus is that philosophers agree that symbolism lies outside the realm of cognitive processes - rational analysis. Symbolism and quantification are mutually exclusive principles.

Immanuel Kant, an Enlightenment German philosopher (1724–1804), created the "Symbolic Knowledge"²² theory. Abraham Heschel stated, "Kant has demonstrated that it is utterly impossible to attain knowledge of the world as it is because knowledge is always in the form of categories and these, in the last analysis, are only representational constructions for the purpose of apperceiving what is given." John Glenn stresses "basic concepts (the categories and the ideas of reason) which the human mind employs can only come to be conceived because they are capable of being first presented in concrete symbolic form!"²³

Abraham Heschel highlights the fact that the most obvious, prevalent, and best illustrations of "symbols" are "flags." Of course, Christians recognize Jesus Christ on the cross as a "symbol" – a symbol with diverse meanings for different people. Kant emphasizes that God can only be understood symbolically – which is in line with St Gregory of Nyssa who states: "The unbounded, incomprehensible divinity remains beyond all comprehension."²⁴

Question: Mere Exposure Effect & "unexplainable sensory experiences"

The idea is rather simple relative to autistic spirituality. Every scientist I know of agrees that human beings are first and last social animals – which means that people are primarily – one way or another – about relationships and connecting. The idea is that for people to be that focused about relationships it would stand to reason that there must be built in physiological rewards one way or the other for connecting socially. In light of the fact that an aspect of autism is often a deficit in social connecting – it would stand to reason that the physiological reward for connecting would also be absent.

What makes autistic experiences set apart from others is that the experiences represent a distinct category - perhaps best illustrated by invisible touch or presence – or "unexplainable sensory experiences". What makes that exceptional is that it would seem an excellent question that: In light of the well-known plasticity of the human brain, it would seem likely that the mind may somehow try to compensate for the deficit in ToM which produces the well-known autistic tendency of having a deficit in being able to connect.

Since the Need to belong is a very powerful drive which "drives" the need to connect, it would stand to reason that physiological reward of some sort accompanies the act of "connecting" - and the brain is trying to compensate for the absence or loss of physiological reward stimulus.

Introduction to Mere Exposure

Everyone has experienced the mere exposure effect at one time or another. For instance, many people upon hearing a new song don't particularly take a liking to it but the radio plays it several more times, you begin to find that you actually enjoy the song and you might even start unconsciously tapping your foot to the beat. That would be an illustration of the mere exposure effect. That is, the more a person is exposed to something, the more you like it. The principle is that people have a predisposition to like things more when they're familiar to them.

Priming and subliminal exposure have actually proved to be more effective and work better than conscious exposure. It may seem contrary to commonsense in a way, but it is fact that even if you have no awareness that you've seen something a bunch of times before, you still end up liking it more. That may be because the critical analysis capabilities of the conscious mind damp down or filter emotional likings. Another interesting fact is that numerous studies showed that results are better, when there is a delay between seeing the word or picture and when subjects are asked to rate them. What is strange is that one might figure children would be more easily affected since their conscious control is less, but the mere exposure effect doesn't work as strongly with children. It seems children actually prefer new things.

Winkielman and Cacioppo focus on the ease of processing as a trigger for Mere Exposure reactions, but avoid expounding on the actual trigger of the smile. If one focuses on the fact that the information was indeed processed and highlight the "processing" then one question would be: What happens from the brain's perspective? When presented with a neutral picture, it would seem self-evident that the brain would need to make a determination of what the picture is.

So, was it the actual "recognition" – rather than the ease of processing that triggered the positive affect? Topolinski, et al, clearly indicate that it is the coherence of the word triads that triggers the positive affect. That would be an important question. If recognition or coherence trigger the positive affect then the brain is rewarded for successfully processing information. If that is so then the drive to understand would then essentially be an independent drive with its own built-in motivation. In any case the positive affect system is clearly indicated to be intricately interwoven in the processing of information.

The basic assumption behind my question would be that the brain would likely have built in inherent biophysiological processes to facilitate, encourage basic meaning making and meaning seeking processes. Damasio has convincingly demonstrated that nonconscious processes are important in judgment, decision-making, and determining meaning. So, it would stand to reason that the nonconscious processes engaged in Mere Exposure Effect would be oriented and geared toward meaning seeking, and may be integral to decision-making and judgment.

Relative to the autistic tendency for invisible touch then the argument that the brain may be compensating for "recognition" physiological signals does put some substance to the question.

Here is a link to my essay on Mere Exposure which over the course of time has had over 1,000 views and no criticisms

Mere Exposure Effect: Ease of Processing vs Recognition of Image [creates positive affect] As Albert Einstein emphatically stated: "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning."²⁵

VI. "It is only a narrow passage of truth that passes between the Scylla of a blue fog of mysticism and the Charybdis of a sterile rationalism. - Wolfgang Pauli

The Nobel prize-winning physicist Wolfgang Pauli perhaps explained some inherent dangers when he gets into spirituality or mysticism when he said: "It is only a narrow passage of truth (no matter whether scientific or other truth) that passes between the Scylla of a blue fog of mysticism and the Charybdis of a sterile rationalism. This will always be full of pitfalls and one can fall down on both sides."²⁶ Fortunately for me I like the color "blue" because "blue fog" of some sort or another is inevitable when you get into spirituality or mysticism. In Greek mythology several versions depict Scylla as a beautiful naiad who was turned her into a terrible monster by different means in different versions of Scylla myths. In my personal view, that seems all too fitting, in that it seems all too easy for transcendental spirituality turn into a nightmare. I can honestly say, especially at the start I have had my share of really bad days.

Various Scientific Views of Imagination and Creativity

"Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine, and at last, you create what you will."²⁷ —George Bernard Shaw

"You're only given a little spark of madness. You mustn't lose it." —Robin Williams

"Do not quench your inspiration and your imagination; do not become the slave of your model."²⁸ —Vincent Van Gogh

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."²⁹ —Albert Einstein

Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere. Albert Einstein

Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it we go nowhere. Carl Sagan

The world of reality has its limits; the world of imagination is boundless. Jean-Jacques Rousseau

"To bring anything into your life, imagine that it's already there."³⁰ —Richard Bach

I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free. Michelangelo

Everything you can imagine is real. Pablo Picasso

"The man who has no imagination has no wings."³¹ —Muhammad Ali

"What is now proved was once only imagined."³² —William Blake

"Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning."³³ —Gloria Steinem

What we imagine is order is merely the prevailing form of chaos. Kerry Thornley [How true – just take a look at contemporary psychology theory]

To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk. Thomas A. Edison

Imagination rules the world. Napoleon Bonaparte [Only too true in too many ways]

Link to Visuri's essay:

https://www.academia.edu/39140443/Visuri_I_2019_Varieties_of_Supernatural_Experience_The_Case_of_High_Functioning_Autism_introductory_chapter

Addendum I: New Approach-Categorization of Spiritual Actualities/Types

- Iain McGilchrist, Muzafer Sherif, Kant state real world context is vital- People are the only source for true real-world context for spiritual-religious beliefs.
- K Gergen: "Proper knowledge maps or mirrors the actualities of the real world!!"³⁴ - "To understand something, whether we are aware of it or not, depends on choosing a model!"³⁵ Iain McGilchrist
- Aristotle- Scientific Method
 - Gather Facts
 - Categorize Data
 - Analyze Information
 - Draw Conclusions

New Categorization: pragmatic creative spirit

"Spirituality is a natural human predisposition! It is more primal than institutional religion and concerns a person's sense of connectedness with self, others, and world!" K. Bishop, B Hyde - A Killin: "The oldest known musical instruments [date] from 40,000 years ago...."³⁶

1. Musical Spiritual - Social Self: "Music is a fundamental part of our evolution – and functional because it facilitates "human contact" and out "social self!"³⁷ - J Schulkin, G Raglan ; 'musicality' is a property of communities rather than of individuals"³⁸ I Cross

2. Spirituality & Compassion: Saslow "Spirituality was especially associated with having a spiritual identity, having had transcendent experiences, and tending to pray..... spiritual participants... tend to feel compassion link between spirituality and higher compassion..." & Sprecher + Fehr: correlation between spirituality and compassion³⁹ & V Frankl's principle: "human beings have a spiritual core with an innate need for meaning...."⁴⁰

3. Spiritual Healing in Grieving: Easterling: "... individuals do seem to cope better if they can "actualize" their spiritual experiences in times of crisis & J Parker⁴¹

4. Relational spirituality - spiritual self: "Hay and Nye: spirituality involves a deep-down awareness of one's relationship with one's self, and with everything that is other than one's self."⁴²

a. Filipino Kapwa-loob & pro-social norms: “Kapwa is a recognition of a shared identity, an inner self, shared with others – belongingness-social consciousness: J D Espiritu, M Zosa, R Ileto, J Reyes, Mercado, Jose De Mesa...⁴³

b. Dream Weaving: T'boli-Bla'an T'nalak Dreams as a source of divine inspiration – T'boli Be Lang Dulay, created over 100 different T'nalak designs.⁴⁴

c. "Human relationships with the natural world" as arctic hunter gatherer spiritual beliefs in animal spirits (Erica Hill) – relational-social consciousness⁴⁵

5. Children's Spirituality “anomalous experiences can catalyze self- healing for children and young people.” Donna Thomas +D. Scott⁴⁶

6. Artistic Spirituality: 20 percent of Americans turn to “media, arts and culture” as their primary means of spiritual experience and expression....⁴⁷

7. Poetry & Prophecy: "The prophet is a poet. What poets know as poetic inspiration; the prophets call divine revelation" - Heschel⁴⁸

8. Dr. Ingela Visuri: Spirituality and "The Case of High functioning Autism" - "unexplainable sensory experiences"⁴⁹

Dr S Neal (JHU) said She [psychiatry] had no training in people who have spiritual experiences.' From Park & Paloutzian chapter "Mystical, Spiritual, and Religious Experiences"- synopsis as short list of APA “anomalous experiences, hallucinations, near death, past life, mystical, and paranormal experiences!" (w/ nothing on “people” who have experiences. J E Kennedy: “Very little research has been aimed at investigating the overall effects” on people Dr Visuri: “There is a difference between analyzing experiences and researching people.”

Einstein observed, “Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of nature and you will find that, behind all the discernible laws and connections, there remains something subtle, intangible and inexplicable. Veneration of this force beyond anything that we can comprehend is my religion. To that extent I am, in fact, religious.”⁵⁰ (p. 384-5 E)

In William James' classic 1902 work, *The Variety of Religious Experience*, William James states that spiritual and religious experiences create a “sense of reality!” It is a self-evident fact and truth. When you look at the experiences that William James cites, then it is easy to see that spiritual experiences do indeed shape and influence spiritual and religious beliefs – a fact the modern materialist philosophy with its quantification bias has side-stepped and marginalized.⁵¹ Carl Jung similarly said "Spirt gives meaning to [his] life!"⁵²

The synthesis consensus of Viktor Frankl, Carl Jung, and William James simply put is that "spirit, spiritual processes, and religious beliefs create meaning, a sense of reality - and ultimately Reality, and Truth. In the anthology, *Meaning in Positive and Existential Psychology* (2014), Paul Wong, observes: “Frankl considers meaning seeking as stemming from one's spiritual nature.”⁵³

Three characteristics

1. "spirit, spiritual processes, and religious beliefs create meaning, a sense of reality - and ultimately Reality, and Truth.
2. Tolerance: That different experiences create different worldviews and understandings
3. Spiritual symbolism generates emotional energy

Genetics, the Unconscious, and Motivation as an Evolutionary Adaptive Trait

Another pivotal aspect of spirituality necessary for understanding spiritual experiences and beliefs would be inherited spiritual symbols and symbolism in the unconscious. It appears well accepted in modern psychology that as Bargh observed, the unconscious is the workhorse of the human mind. It really shouldn't be any surprise at all that after tens of thousands of years of spiritual and religious beliefs that spirituality and religiosity are genetic. Research into Genetically Inherited Traits of Religiosity. For instance, Tim Spector, in the article, What Twins Reveal About The Science Of Faith (Popular Science, August 8, 2013) states, "They [the researchers] estimated the heritability of spirituality to be around 40 to 50 percent, which is quite high considering how tricky it is to measure. Other U.S. studies using even more detailed questions in larger numbers have found similar or even stronger genetic influences. These studies demonstrate our variable but innate inherited sense of spirituality, which affects how we perceive the world, ourselves and the universe⁵⁴.

Also, again, "Twin studies show there is a significant genetic component to spirituality while religion and church going are more cultural. It is likely that the genes for spirituality were selected because the social cohesiveness that spiritually fosters has a strong survival value. The neurobiology of spirituality suggests that our rational brain occasionally needs to step back and give the spiritual brain some space to have beliefs and feelings that do not always make rational sense. Genetic research has demonstrated some traits of religiosity are inherited⁵⁵d. (NeuroQuantology | December 2010 | Vol 8 | Issue 4 | Page 478-494 Comings DE., Neurobiology of human spirituality)

Prevalence of Spiritual and Spiritual-Psychic Experiences

As background for this essay, a pivotal piece of information would be that minimally in America there 110 million Americans who have spiritual-psychic experience of one sort or another. Crystal L. Park and Raymond F. Paloutzian, editors of the comprehensive anthology, Handbook Of The Psychology Of Religion And Spirituality, observe that "Numerous survey studies in both the United States and Europe have demonstrated the normalcy of reports of religious experiences, including mystical experience (see Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003, pp. 307-312). Depending on the specific wording of the questions asked, anywhere from a third to a half of the populations affirm such experiences. Furthermore, the report of such experiences is correlated with gender (stronger for females), education (more common with higher education), social class, (more common in higher social classes), While this correlational data does not

provide evidence of what causes such reports, it does establish the normalcy of such reports and indicates social scientists have until recently ignored a common phenomenon!"⁵⁶ (p. 67 The Guilford Press, New York, 2005) Furthermore, study after study shows that people who have spiritual experiences are literally afraid to talk about them. Again, it should not be surprising – at all – in light of the fact that people have had spiritual-psychic experiences for thousands and thousands of years, that people, today, have them.

A New Psychology of Spirituality

I would like to begin with Children's Grief Dreams and the Theory of Spiritual Intelligence: Kate Adams Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln & Brendan Hyde Australian Catholic University – because they do an incredible

SPIRITUALITY, SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE, AND DREAMS

Spirituality is a natural human predisposition (e.g., Hay & Nye, 2006; O'Murchu, 1997, 2000). It is more primal than institutional religion (James, 1901/ 1977; Maslow, 1970; Tacey, 2000) and concerns a person's sense of connectedness with self, others, and the world (or cosmos). For some people, connectedness with a Transcendent dimension is a part of spirituality (Bosacki, 2001; Elton-Chalcraft, 2002; Fisher, 1999; Hyde, 2004; Tacey, 2003). Hay and Nye (2006) argue that spirituality involves a deep-down awareness of one's relationship with one's self, and with everything that is other than one's self.

It is possible to conceive of spirituality as a type of intelligence (Emmons, 1999, 2000; Hyde, 2003, 2004; Kwilecki, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). One hallmark feature of intelligence concerns the ability to solve problems (Ruzgis & Grigorenko, 1994; Walters & Gardner, 1986). Zohar and Marshall (2000) define spiritual intelligence as the mental aptitude used by human beings to address and find solutions to problems of meaning and value in life. In drawing on discourse arising from theories of motivation and personality, Emmons (1999) further suggests that people are able to use spiritual resources to solve problems: The adaptive processing of spiritual information is a part of intelligence, and individual differences in the skills with which such processing occurs constitute core features of personality. Spirituality can serve as a source of information to individuals, and, as a function of interests and aptitudes, individuals become more or less skilled at processing this information ⁵⁷(p. 163).

Link to my academai profile: <https://independentscholar.academia.edu/CharlesPeckJr>

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