

# The Collapse of the State Vector

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'We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The Sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.'

H.P.Lovecraft, 'The Call of Cthulhu'.

It has been 'traditional' for successive writers on the occult hark back wistfully, to a kind of 'Golden Age', when magick was much more powerful and its practitioners were respected. Compared to then, we are informed, modern magick is but a shadow of its former self, and impotent to affect the world at large (other than the self aggrandisement of its followers). The 'keys' then lie in the past, through Greek, Egyptian, or Qabalistic 'Mysteries', or through searching backwards to find one's previous incarnation as a priest or priestess of .....

Much of what passes for contemporary occultism is a legacy from the great occult revival of the late nineteenth century, the revolt against the rising tide of materialism, which manifested in the forms of the Spiritualist Movement and Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, which attracted many people who were by then dissatisfied with both religious fundamentalism and smug materialism. In 1888 a 'third force' appeared; the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

It appears in vogue for some writers to rail against the Golden Dawn and its legacy of a synthesis of occult concepts as 'restrictive and outmoded', in the same way that a modern science student would chafe at the narrowness (as seen with hindsight) of the Classical Sciences. However, just as the development of the Classical Sciences led to the developments of technology, and liberated the development of ideas from the constraints of religious orthodoxy, so too the Golden Dawn and some of its derivative groups provided an integration of previous occult concepts, such as Tarot, Qabalah, Dr. Dee. Alchemy and bolstered the growing conviction that there was more to human existence than the blind mechanistic universe as evinced by Materialist Science - that the realm of the 'Spiritual' or the mental, despite the rationalists attempts to banish it, was of prime importance to the life of the individual.

## THE FALL INTO FRAGMENTATION:

Descartes, in particular, is known as the father of modern science. In the seventeenth century, 'reality' was defined by the church (Galileo had been forced to recant his views). By proposing a complete distinction between mind and body (or spiritual - temporal), Descartes effectively created a niche for science, in which its investigations could be free of religious constraints. In this division the mind became the realm of the religious and the moral, while the body, like any other material object, was subject to the mechanistic motions of the universe, described by a set of laws. This primary division of mind (subjective) and matter (objective) also gave rise to a distinction between the measurable qualities of matter, such as weight, temperature, or velocity, and secondary qualities, such as sound, taste or colour which, since they belonged to the more subjective realm of mind, could not be used by the physical sciences.

The development of Newtonian Physics in the eighteenth century gave more weight to the notion that all events were governed by a series of simple determinants - laws of an absolute nature. Thus the world was totally ordered and events were predictable, given enough data. As materialism gained ground over the religious view, so the gap between mind and matter widened, until the extreme position was established that since mental/spiritual phenomena could not be measured, then they did not exist! Reductionism - the search to describe and simplify every action in the world, led to the wholesale rejection of the 'spiritual' side of experience.

Yesterday's science is today's 'reality'. Reality as experienced by the average person in modern western culture, is so according to the 'laws' of the Classical Sciences. The conceptualisation of Space, Time, Causality and Self-Image - 'the way things are' stems from the materialism of the last three centuries or so. Not only is the mind and body divided, but the individual is divided from the environment, and the mind within - the psyche - is itself fragmented. Just as the 'hard' physical sciences have built up a picture of the world about us, so the 'soft' social sciences have given us our self-image as concepts such as the 'Ego' have passed into common usage. During its formative years, the discipline of psychology attempted to follow the course of the natural sciences, attempting to be fully objective and value-free, limiting its investigation to 'behaviour' which is observable, measurable and quantifiable. In the same way that Classical Physics sought out the basic building blocks of the universe, so a reductionist psychology tried to identify the fundamental elements of Human behaviour. Behaviourism, which viewed humanity as a passive reactor to environmental stimuli (learning by stimulus-response) connections, became the dominant psychological school. The investigation of perception, which was promisingly begun by the Gestalt psychologists (who looked at wholistic perception), was reduced to the separate investigation of sensations, of which only five were said to exist. The social sciences were more of a collection of researchers pursuing their own investigations, with no unity of approach (ie. a paradigm). The search was on for 'bits' which performed one or the other function, and there did not seem to be much concern about how the bits fitted together. Moreover, since science was supposed to be value-free, it did not have to worry about ethical considerations - let others worry about the morals of discoveries such as psychosurgery, aversion therapy, or the consequences of having to live in high-rise flats.

## THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE:

Whilst psychology patterned itself along the lines of the so-called 'Natural Sciences', concepts such as the mind or soul became even more

nebulous. The relationship between mind and body or brain and mind was not open to scientific speculation and so left for mystics and philosophers to fight over. The Psychoanalytic movement of the turn of the century was severely criticised by its scientific brethren. Matters such as the soul or spirit were left to the Churches who had by then largely lost their power to define the boundaries of reality. Technology 'freed' humanity from religion, but left nothing to fill its place - the only certainties were scientific and (to reverse John Donne), 'each man was an island unto himself' at the centre of which is the ego. The general conception of the ego is of a mass identifications, idealisations and attitudes - a mask which is carefully constructed and then bolstered throughout the life of the individual. To be egocentric is to behave as if the universe runs for your convenience only, to exalt your beliefs, attitudes and desires over others, to be right when everyone else is wrong. Such a position is painfully reflected by the technocrat's relationship to the environment - nature must be subdued and exploited, and immediate gratification does not consider the long-term consequences of the abuse of the environment. Since the world is fragmented, it is hard to accept how altering one bit can possibly affect the others.

So this is where we're 'at'. The Classical Sciences have over the generations become our cultural roots for organising experience. Over the last fifty years however, the fundamental assumptions made by the Classical Scientists have been increasingly brought into question, with profound implications that are only now beginning to be realized, for our future cultural development.

The twentieth century offered the turning point for science with the developments in Physics. Experiments in the first three decades led physicists to question the nature of reality itself. The emerging Quantum Physics served to undermine the solid foundations of Newtonian reality - Space, Time, Causality, Solid Objects and Laws of Nature. Scientists began to talk about the world not in terms of objects and events separated by space and time but of patterns and processes that did not necessarily follow the principles of cause and effect. 'Laws' became only 'tendencies to occur', and the very objectivity of the scientific experiment was questioned, as the outcome of an experiment depended on what the experimenter was looking for.

However, no matter how mind-blowing these results were for the scientists involved, the governments holding the purse strings were more concerned with explosions of a more terrestrial nature, and since 1945, the word 'nuclear' has become synonymous with mega-deaths rather than multiverses.

The developments in modern physics have been to some extent, paralleled by developments in psychology. Despite the dominant reductionist ethos, there has always been an undercurrent against the purely behaviourist sciences. From the work of Carl Gustav Jung, to the post-war Humanists and Existential Phenomenologists, various schools of psychology have been founded, with the message that there is more to human experience than the reductionists allow. Like the new physicists, the human-centred psychologies do not separate the individual from the world, and the fragmentation that was characteristic of the Classical reality is being healed by individuals beginning to be re-established within the world.

The nineteen-sixties appear to be a critical point for these developments, with the phenomena of 'consciousness' brought into the limelight at last, ushered in by advances in neuroscience, Dr. Timothy Leary's LSD research and the coming of psychedelia, with its attendant interest in consciousness-expansion and spiritual development. Some commentators date the 'true' take-off of neuropsychology from 1960 onwards, as the 'split-brain/consciousness'

debate began to rage throughout psychological journals. Interest in the brain/mind problem was stirred and whatever the present validity of the split-brain theory of consciousness, it cannot be denied that the issue stimulated a great deal of work into neuropsychology. Similarly, altered states of consciousness (ASC) research took off dramatically in the sixties, and hence more credence was given to meditation, hypnosis, yogic body-control and other 'fringe' areas.

The sixties also marked a revival of interest in the occult, of both Eastern and home-grown systems and 'masters'. Occult symbols and imagery were taken up by both underground press and rock groups and the cultural motif of the 'New Age' (whether this be of Aquarius, Horus, Ma-ion or whatever) once more became popular during a time of searching for 'mysteries and secrets', as Mircea Eliade put it, out of the meaninglessness of modern life. For many, the sixties mark the true beginning of the time of 'Spiritual Rebirth' that Jung wrote of in his 'Modern Man in Search of a Soul' (1933). Jung also believed that one day physics and psychology would 'work together' and current developments seem to bear him out.

#### BEYOND DUALITY - MONAD OR VOID?

This then is the backdrop against which contemporary occultism is set. Whereas previously, Magick has been popularly conceptualised as belonging to the realm of the paranormal and somehow 'beyond' the range of normal experiences, as the quantum perspectives begin to shift the focus of experience from parts to wholes, some occult ideas should become more acceptable, at least to those of an enquiring nature. The nature of Magick is shifting from it being a case of doing certain things, to living a particular way. Being a magician becomes not merely another compartmentalised fragment, but a whole approach to one's life. For once, it looks likely that the 'New Wave' of scientists will come to support the magical perspective. Writers on the new physics such as Fritjof Capra and Gary Zukav have pointed out the similarity between the conclusions of the Quantum physicists and Eastern philosophies such as Hinduism, Zen or the Tao. Zukav goes so far as to claim that physics has become a branch of psychology - or vice versa; perhaps in the next few years a similar claim will be made that both are a branch of Magick?

'Every man and every woman is a star' AL.1.3.

The unity of 'as above, so below' is being confirmed now in current scientific research. Theories such as the 'Holomovement' of David Bohm and Karl Pribram, and James Lovelock's 'Gaia Hypothesis' mark a transition from reductionist theory to holistic science, with their underlying philosophy of General Systems Theory. In a systemic universe, the whole is always more than the sum of its parts, and all the parts interact by means of feedback loops, rather than linear chains of cause and effect. Change one part and you change the whole, if only minutely. Properties of the system as a whole cannot be found in one or more of its constituents. Systems 'evolve' (by energy fluctuations eventually reaching a critical point) into 'higher order', with greater complexity and organisation.

Systems thought enables us to return to an awareness of a Gestalt (whole) participation in the world. Some scientists now consider that the previously thought of as 'mental' phenomena such as perception and consciousness - the stuff of the ghost in the machine (body) may be 'emergent properties' of our interaction with the environment, and as such, cannot be reduced to centres in the brain. Such a perspective entails that a radical revision be made of our basic assumptions about the world and our relationship with it.

The particle-wave paradox provides a useful analogy of the development of Western thought in that the focus has been laid almost exclusively upon the particle - the individual unit, whether this be the atomic building block or the individual ego as an intentional agent. We have now begun to recognise the wave aspect - the 'dance' in which we participate. Whilst the orthodox sciences have until fairly recently, pursued the particle aspect of experience, it is magicians and their ilk who have explored the wave aspect of experience.

The power of the (magical) will to bring about change, is a central theme in Western Magick. The concept of will, especially in a magical sense, is a **difficult one to grapple with**, since it has little to do with concentration, or the 'will-power' to overcome habits or desires. Consider will in terms of two characteristic properties. Firstly, that like consciousness it is an 'emergent property' of the human race considered as a whole system, and secondly that it is vector-like in nature: '.... in terms of the world-frame, consciousness is an addition, being a vector quantity, not a scalar quantity, not a passive screen but a direction and power at any given moment. Just as matter cannot live without an associated vector, awareness cannot exist without vector.'

Barrington Bayley, The Four-Colour Problem.

Hence the magical will has both intensity and direction. It is a process of engagement towards a particular goal, which is to change between states of consciousness. It is the wave aspect of will which influences the dynamic patterns which underlie/permeate our space-time universe, which appear as synchronicity or co-incidence. Nor is the will as a wave-function limited to the forms it manifests through. Neither distance, nor temporality (space-time co-ordinates) are limiting factors to the wave-function.

Following this line of thought, identifications such as 'I' as an individual ego, which has free will and volition, begin to collapse - they are only 'true' when awareness is limited to the confines of reality as defined by Classical Science - the world of duality. By experience and insight, the magician may move from the dualistic to the monistic frame of reference. The individual ego is not so much dissolved or transcended but becomes a dynamic, rather than static structure. Dualistic opposites become complementary to each other and reality is experienced in silence (consciousness without object) without a need to follow mental maps. In effect, the magician becomes whatever current she or he is aligning to, a multi-dimensional wave-function, which manifests in space-time at a particular set of co-ordinates. Returning to the systems theory mentioned earlier, present events can be seen as energy fluctuations within the human system building up to critical mass - known to some occultists as 'Titan-Gnosis'. The possibilities for either 'escape to a higher order' (evolution) or systems-'crash' (destruction) are still neck and neck... at the moment. Magick began with shamans gaining an edge for their tribe in a hostile, harsh environment - the struggle for survival. From here, at least, the wheel seems to have come full circle.