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From Transcendence to ‘Altercendence’?

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and science.

— Albert Einstein, “What I Believe,” 1930.

When I was ten, I saw a movie about a boy, his horse, and a fox. The boy lived with his grandfather on a small farm in France. He had tamed a white stallion. One day the fox began raiding the grandfather’s chicken coop. Most of the story was about how the fox evaded being caught by the boy until near the end of the movie. During a wild horse chase the boy dove off his horse and grabbed the fox by the neck, ready to strangle him. At that moment the boy and the fox looked into each other’s eyes, for what seemed to me an eternity. Something happened that changed the boy’s mind and he released the fox. This moment also changed me. From then on, up until today (to the exasperation of friends and family), I catch and release cockroaches, flies, bees, and even mosquitoes, rather than kill them. Maybe the boy’s and the fox’s consciousnesses and later my own, got entangled for a transcendent moment, a kind of mingling of the selves, an expansion beyond the *a priori* single state of our individual selves. This may sound like castle-in-the-sky or just weird as an idea, but it is actually thinkable according to contemporary concepts being applied to our understanding of the mind.

There seems to be a renewed interest in the last couple decades in studying and writing about consciousness. This may be due in part to advances in the cognitive sciences and

technologies like positron emission tomography (PET) and nuclear magnetic resonance imaging (NMRI) that now allow for non-intrusive imaging of the brain, not only in form but also in function. We are nearing the time when the activity of individual neurons will be easily observed, thus allowing us to identify the form of thoughts in the brain even if the mystery of self-reflectivity and autonomy evades us. David Chalmers, famously, called these qualitative subjective phenomenal experiences (e.g., ‘qualia’ such as the taste of wine, or the redness of an evening sky’), the ‘hard problem’ to explain in contrast to the ‘easy problem’ of how the brain functions (Rose 22). However, other scientific developments—in particular in quantum physics (e.g., attractors), in the social sciences (e.g., memes) and in computer sciences (e.g., human-computer interaction)—are also creating an environment in which scientists, philosophers, and artists can find common ground on which to dialogue (Rose, Nunn). Nicholas Tresilian describes this as the migration towards a greater measure of consilience between the natural and the social sciences and towards trans-disciplinary approaches (Tresilian).

Despite this renewed interest, consciousness and the mind retain, at this moment, the odd quality that St. Augustine alluded to with time when he said, “What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.” As you read these words you are sharing my consciousness and, as I ask you to self-reflect on your mental state, you most probably have become aware of an immaterial presence somewhere in the area of your head. It has no precise boundary or locale, yet it originates from somewhere near the centre of your head. At least you are quite sure (I hope) that it does not reside elsewhere—in your hands, or in the chair you are sitting on, or the paper you are reading. Most humans in western culture would agree with this description. For us, consciousness can

refer to awareness of the world, 'self awareness,' subjective experience, being awake, knowing, understanding, being attentive, or the possession of free will. The mind tends to include memory, the unconscious, the imagination (Rose 4) and the transcendent experience.

Transcendence. Considering our nascent understanding of consciousness, wanting to discuss a phenomenon that rises above, or goes beyond, normal limits of consciousness, makes me nervous. For Robert Pepperell, consciousness "may well be the most difficult question humans have tried to resolve about their own condition." (Pepperell 132). For Chalmers, "...There is nothing that is harder to explain." (Chalmers 201). For the purpose of this discussion I will retain a Hegelian rather than Kantian view of the transcendent experience. For Emmanuel Kant, the "transcendent" is that which lies beyond what our faculty of knowledge can legitimately know. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's critique was that to know a boundary is also to be aware of what it bounds and, as such, what lies beyond it. The experience I refer to remains within our knowledge and memory as a time-limited period during which we perceive an expansion of our consciousness. I believe this is an experience most of us have had at some time in nature, a museum, a place of worship or meditation, or even under the influence of psychedelic drugs; and, it is of specific relevance to the arts, as art works often elicit this in their viewers (Herbert). Furthermore, eliciting this state has been an identified goal for many artists in the past, possibly even in cave art. Joseph Nechevatal describes the Apse cave at Lascaux (16,000 B.P.) as an immersive space with no single point of reference. This homospatial quality is suggestive of the non-spatial character of consciousness itself. He speculates that The Apse created such a surrounding process that the evaluation of self was revised from bound to boundless. It is likely that rituals involving hyperventilation, rhythmic movements, or psychoactive plants, also facilitated this altered

state but we cannot be sure (Nechvatal). More recently, it was a goal in religious art and then for visionary artists. For the German Romantic landscape painter, Casper David Friedrich (1774–1840), the visualisation and portrayal of landscape was not just to explore the blissful enjoyment of a beautiful view, as in the classic conception, but rather to examine an instant of sublimity, a reunion with the spiritual self through the contemplation of nature. Among the Suprematists painters, Wassily Kadinsky (1866–1944) saw the purpose of art to move individuals to a higher level of spirituality. Colour was a means of psychic expression and a colour such as yellow radiated spiritual warmth. He was Paul Klee's (1879–1940) friend and both taught art the Bauhaus School of Art and Architecture. For Klee, it was the artist's mission to penetrate the secret primal ground of creation and to make artwork that evoked those mysteries on a different level of human consciousness (Knott). Recently parallels have been drawn between Mark Rothko (1903–1970) and Friedrich and Kadinsky with respect to the expression of religious transcendence. The "enveloping magic" Duncan Phillips appropriately uses to describe the experience of viewing a Mark Rothko painting suggests a preternatural quality inherent in Rothko's work. Indeed, Rothko himself often alluded to a life force embedded in his canvasses that extended beyond material boundaries (Kelsey). Wessel Stocker notes that, since the Romantic period artists stopped using Christian iconography, they have had to find new personal ways to express this experience (Stoker). Char Davies (1954–) and Bill Viola (1951–) are living artists, whose works are discussed later, exemplify this search.

We are even reaching a point in our knowledge that we may be soon be making art that is conscious as Robert Pepperell has suggested (Pepperell). It may therefore be useful to explore this aspect of consciousness from biological, psychological, cultural, and spiritual

viewpoints and to discuss the works of contemporary artists recognized to elicit this reaction, and then to consider the future.

Our brain is made up of two hemispheres. The two communicate via the corpus callosum. The left hemisphere thinks linearly and logically. It takes in all the information about the present and organizes it into the context of the past and the future. It thinks in language. It is Cartesian in its logic. It says, "I think therefore I am." It allows for individualization and separation from the environment. The right hemisphere is all about the present. It thinks through our senses and learns from our movements. It is holistic and collective. It connects with the environment. Jill Bolte Taylor is a neuro-anatomist in the Harvard Department of Psychiatry. She had a stroke on the left side of her brain from which she recovered. This is how she describes the event:

... on the morning of December 10, 1996, I woke up to discover that I had a brain disorder of my own. A blood vessel exploded in the left half of my brain. And in the course of four hours I watched my brain completely deteriorate in its ability to process all information... I got up and I jumped onto my cardio glider, which is a full-body exercise machine. And I'm jamming away on this thing, and I'm realizing that my hands looked like primitive claws grasping onto the bar. I thought 'that's very peculiar' and I looked down at my body and I thought, 'whoa, I'm a weird-looking thing.' And it was as though my consciousness had shifted away from my normal perception of reality, where I'm the person on the machine having the experience, to some esoteric space where I'm witnessing myself having this experience...

And I lost my balance and I'm propped up against the wall. And I look down at my arm and I realize that I can no longer define the boundaries of my body. I can't define where I begin and where I end. Because the atoms and the molecules of my arm blended with the atoms and molecules of the wall. And all I could detect was this energy. Energy. And I'm asking myself, 'What is wrong with me, what is going on?' And in that moment, my brain chatter, my left hemisphere brain chatter went totally silent. Just like someone took a remote control and pushed the mute button and -- total silence.

And at first I was shocked to find myself inside of a silent mind. But then I was immediately captivated by the magnificence of energy around me. And because I could no longer identify the boundaries of my body, I felt enormous and expansive. I felt at one with all the energy that was, and it was beautiful there.... And I felt lighter in my body. And imagine all of the relationships in the external world and the many stressors related to any of those, they were gone. I felt a sense of peacefulness. ... I could not identify the position of my body in space, I felt enormous and expansive, like a genie just liberated from her bottle. And my spirit soared free like a great whale gliding through the sea of silent euphoria. (Taylor)

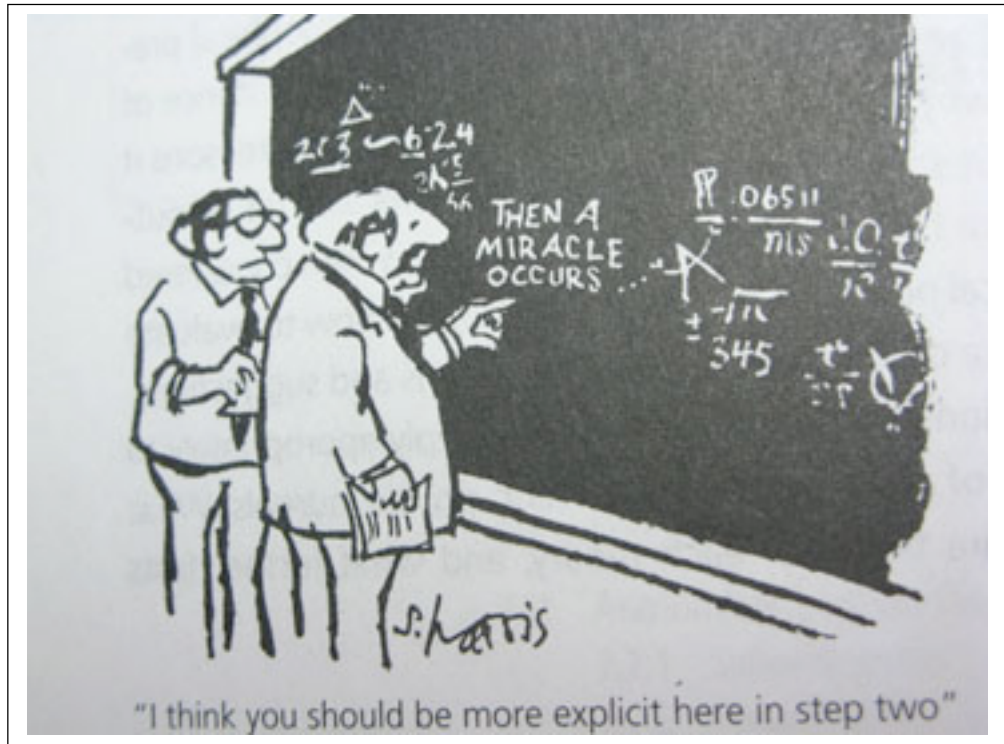
Most of the characteristics of Jill Bolte Taylor's experience fit with what many people describe in transcendent states. Rob Barnard describes a person's art experience similarly.

They:

... may be in a museum looking at painting, sculpture, pottery, or photographs, when suddenly an object seizes them and creates a kind of mental confusion...It unexpectedly causes them to transcend their prejudices and taste and somehow makes the world a larger and more beautiful place to inhabit, a place where all things seem possible. Their fears and worries vanish and they leave feeling like they are walking on air...This experience is fleeting and it is the desire to re-experience it that causes people..." to continuously search for it or to try to recreate it. (Barnard)

One could then conclude that our right hemisphere is the place for transcendence. It is, however, more likely that it is only a major contributor but not the only one. In his review of current research, Rose concludes that theories that assign special brain locations to consciousness are not satisfactory because the brain is dynamic, and the theories do not address the local circuitry and its local dynamics (Rose 237). Just like roots do not explain a tree or bricks a house, the gestalt of consciousness is greater than its parts in yet a magical way (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The present state of consciousness research? (Rose 198)



Mysterious perhaps, but not necessarily magical, if one considers the ideas of attractors and particle entanglement from quantum physics. First, one has to let go of the idea of an electron as a particle, a very, very small object. In fact, the very best description is that “it does not have what one might call ‘real’ existence at all; it is a matrix of potentialities that manifest actuality only in the context of particular observations or experiments” (Nunn 22). Hans-Peter Durr, of the Max-Planck-Institute Fur Physik in Munich, argues that matter is not composed of matter and reality is merely potentiality (Ascott). In this light, the flow of consciousness, “the most ‘real’ yet elusive thing in the world to us may be an expression of attractor dynamics” (Nunn 21). Attractors are best described as properties of complex chaotic

systems that are like probabilistic landscapes. They are not any more real than an electron; they are like laws that can change as a system evolves. A simple attractor could be a memory held in a neuronal net. It is the electrochemical interaction of these that is associated with conscious perception and behaviour. Thoughts develop and flow along these landscapes. The more often they occur, the deeper the groove they create in the landscape and the harder it is for them to change. Therefore, another important function for the system is to be able to destabilize. If it could not, it would get stuck in an obsessive-compulsive state. This is important for the transcendent experience and to be able to think ‘outside the box.’

Physics, which used to exclude the mind from conceptions of the world, may now be the ‘outside the box’ science that brings the mind back in. In 1989, Sir Roger Penrose proposed that, “consciousness is a function of quantum collapse in the brain” (Nunn 177). The entanglement phenomenon, which has been proved at the micro level (electron), is simply weird and mysterious but it opens the door to the possibility that phenomena like telepathy, telekinesis, and transcendent experiences may be explainable. Quantum entanglement is a possible property of a system of two or more objects in which the quantum states of the constituting objects became linked together after colliding so that one object can no longer be adequately described without full mention of its counterpart. Thus, the objects may change simultaneously even when large distances spatially separate the individual objects. One might then speculate that, in certain situations such as meditation, rituals, drug-induced states, or in the presence of art or nature, our minds may be more available to experience entanglement related phenomena ‘outside’ our regular consciousness—something similar to what Jason Heroux describes in his poem, “Today I'm More Alive Than Usual:”

Today I'm more alive than usual.
 I am still Jason Heroux but I'm also
 the little doorstep everyone walks over,
 and the forgotten ladder left leaning
 against a wall on Sunday, and a cigarette butt
 on the cold sidewalk waiting to be swept up,
 because today I'm less dead than I usually am.
 Everyone remembers the crime of when
 I walked through an old cobweb.
 And the little stone I kicked, once.
 So you must be Jason Heroux, they say.
 Yes, I'm Jason Heroux, but I'm also
 the snowflake falling through the air,
 and the next one, and the one after that,
 but not the fourth one, or the fifth,
 no, just the first three, and then that's it. (Heroux)

Transcendence remains primarily a personal experience, an active constructive process involving the subject. Our mind has to be receptive to it. Alternatively, it is likely that our senses act as filters such that we do not become overwhelmed from all the information available at once. The poet William Blake wrote in 1793, “if the doors to perception were cleansed, then everything would appear to man as it is infinite” (Viola 60). Thus, we continuously make individual choices on what we value and when. Those choices are guided by our culture but also by our temperaments. The Temperament and Character Inventory is a personality questionnaire that has self-transcendence as one of the character traits it measures in individuals. It has been used in much research, from looking at what is associated with wellbeing to psychopathological conditions. The relevance to our concerns is that people vary in this trait. Some of us—through a combination of genetic, neurochemical, learnt, and cultural factors—have different self-transcendent capacities (Cloninger). Furthermore, if we agree with Sergio Roclaw Basbaum that consciousness may be culturally shaped (Basbaum), it is likely that this capacity has fluctuated during our evolution with periods of greater openness to transcendence followed by periods less open or closed to it.

This idea fits well with hypothesis of memetic swarming proposed by Nicholas Tresilian—that is, the synchronization of memes in alternating open and closed states as “an expression of the sensitivity of our consciousness to the changing dynamics of our own relationship with the planetary biosphere through ecological evolution” (Tresilian 115). Richard Dawkins' coined the word meme in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins used the term to refer to any unit of cultural transmission that an observer might consider a replicator. They are complex ideas that replicate using people's minds. They are embodied in our minds and in all artefacts we encounter. For example, an arch might be in one's imagination, in an architecture book or in a church one is visiting. The criterion for memeship, according to Dawkins, is that it should occupy part of our mental space (Nunn 89). The meme is to culture and human behaviour what the gene is to the brain. Memes replicate and mutate through exposure to humans and lead to the evolution of culture in a way similar to the natural selection of genes in biological evolution. There are, however, important criticisms about this idea because it has been difficult for people to agree on the size and location of memes. Nunn offers a solution in suggesting that “memes express themselves in our brains as attractors in neural network dynamics” (Nunn 91). According to him, examples of memes in action could be: near-death phenomena, mesmerism, drug-induced hallucinogenic experiences, alien abductions, and dissociative disorders (Nunn). Although memes operate within all states of consciousness, these are also examples of transcendent experiences. According to Tresilian's hypothesis we are in a memetic phase that would make us more open to event-based art and, thus, I would propose, transcendent experiences. This tendency would have started in the 19th century with the progressive invasion of Time as a fourth dimension in Western art. This led the deconstruction of the art-object in Conceptual

art, Installation art (Tresilian 118), and Performance art. In some ways, we are continuing to return to an open meme phase, to that reflected in Cave art 30,000 years before the present (B.P.). Joseph Nechevatal alludes to this when he describes the immersive state of consciousness he experienced in the Apse part of the caves at Lascaux (Nechvatal). The Apse is covered completely in repeated layers by engravings. If we are indeed moving away from the ‘closed’ meme period of Classical Western art—which heavily valued the art-object in 3D space, aesthetics and reason—to an ‘open’ meme period richer in event-based art, ritual, 4D space- time and participation, it is probable that art that gives rise to transcendent experiences will gain in prominence. Concurrently, the experience of beauty and its awe-inducing sister, the sublime, may also regain value. Two recent expositions may be reflecting this interest. The Romantic artist heralding the shift to a more open meme pursued these experiences. The English Romantic poet, William Wordsworth in 1804, evokes this out-of-body transcendence:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze...
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And ten my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils. (Wordsworth)

Wordsworth’s poem is about the sense of losing and finding oneself and about the joy of re-inhabiting that transcendent moment. Having viewers experience that joy and pleasure looking at art works, while having a highly personal and profound encounter, was the goal for Lynn Herbert in curating the *THE INWARD EYE: Transcendence in Contemporary Art* exhibition at the Houston Contemporary Art Museum in 2002. She wanted to rekindle what

poet Robert Frost called the pleasure of ulteriority, a feeling of being swept away spiritually. To do so, she selected works not by traditional reasoned methods but intuitively by her reaction to them. She describes that reaction as having her breath being taken away, bringing her hand to her heart, and summoning an ‘aaahhh’ from deep within (Herbert 13). Peter Schjeldahl describes his experience of beauty in a similar manner: a combination of stimulation and relaxation, a willing loss of mental control, an unexpected and sometimes intense sense of the sacred that stops him in his tracks (Schjeldahl). Both he and Herbert allude to the fact that these states can now be captured in images of brain activity. Schjeldahl is also annoyed by a culture in which the value of beauty has become controversial. He asks: “can there be any problem with ‘intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind?’” (Schjeldahl 90). Some of the resistances to beauty are similar to those about transcendence. Both are fleeting, time- and place-bound, highly personal experiences that fail to redeem a world with a dark side. Rather, it is that awe-inspiring, sometimes frightening and painful side that is addressed in the sublime.

This similar but not identical aspect of beauty was the target in the Art Gallery of Hamilton exposition curated by Shirley Madill in 2006 and called *Sublime Embrace: Experiencing Consciousness in Contemporary Art*. Madill wanted to explore the strategies artists employ to translate consciousness into contemporary art expression. The sublime possesses this quality of transcendent greatness and she felt that there had been a revival of interest in it in the last few decades (Madill 10). For Emmanuel Kant, the sublime is experienced when we become aware of our smallness and our inability to comprehend the infinite, the universe. In contrast, Edmund Burke associated the sublime more with the emotion of astonishment created by the ideas of pain, danger, and powers we cannot control.

In either case the sublime holds a “mystical ability to raise the veil of one’s waking consciousness and momentarily arrest the faculty of cognition” (Madill 11). Thus, transcendent reactions can be associated with pleasure but also with awe-inspired tension or pain. It is the belief in this ability of art to alter consciousness that unites artists interested in transcendence. They create works whose beauty can seduce but also overwhelm. In the following, I have selected a few of artists (some exhibited in these shows) that demonstrate this interest.

It is rare in a gallery to see viewers weep; yet there is someone in tears at most of Bill Viola’s exhibitions. Viola’s work addresses both beauty and the sublime. Viola’s art is an art for ‘everyman’... an art of affect...an art of duration and absorption...an art that refuses the spectator control over image...an art, then, that refuses transcendence to the spectator, but which attracts us by its own inquiry into transcendence” (Townsend 10). Cynthia Freeland writes that while seeing *The Passions* exhibition at the Getty Museum, she was shaken deracinated and began to weep uncontrollably. It is no surprise that the title of her chapter is: “Piercing to Our Inaccessible, Inmost Parts: The Sublime Work of Bill Viola” (Freeland). She refers particularly to the work called “Observance,” a piece in his series *The Passions*. In it, Viola deals with the emotion of grief. A solemn line of mourners passes very slowly in front of us in a tall, narrow display like an altarpiece. They look like ordinary folk. They could be us witnessing a tragic event or mourning a loss. The images and the method of presentation are beautiful. This work fits best with Burke’s analysis of the sublime as the apperception of something terrible and frightening that also touches our instinct of sympathy with others. It is thus that we find both pleasure and pain in sublime moments.

Other artists turn to nature to elicit these moments. Their works fit more with Kant's sublime that is concerned with power, overwhelming natural forces beyond the rational and the finite. Through her photographs of icebergs, Lynn Davis captures the majesty and awesome power of nature. Their beautiful and enigmatic shapes seduce while simultaneously we sense their murderous potential. Janet Cardiff is best known for her audio walks and installations. *Night Canoeing* is a video and audio installation that is eerie and mysterious. We are in a canoe travelling down a river at night. All we hear is the sound of the paddles and all we see is the shore lit up by a single flashlight. Our imagination is stimulated. Shirley Madill describes the immersive experience in the darkened room as hypnotic, yet uneasy, setting free the unconscious (Madill 58). It is also through nature and sensual immersion that Char Davies pursues giving the observer a new means of perceiving. In her works, "Osmose" and "Ephemere," individuals are immersed in virtual space. They access this space through a stereoscopic viewing helmet and navigate in it using their breathing, monitored by an interface vest. "Osmose" consists of realms of forests, ponds, and subterranean earth around a central clearing. "Ephemere" also includes the interior body as a realm. As with Bill Viola's works, immersants have wept. They have also described an expansion of their consciousness into space (Davies 70). These are complex, multi-sensorial works dependent on emerging technologies. Davies is aware of the bias of these technologies to reinforce traditional western ways of seeing the world. Yet where Viola uses the painterly and hyper-real LCD screens to force the mix between life and art, Davies brings a blurry organicity into her virtual space to explore a new sensibility. Wassily Kandinsky understood the challenge:

The work of art comprises of two elements: The inner and the outer. The inner element, taken in isolation, is the emotion in the soul of the artist that causes a corresponding vibration (in material terms, like the note of one musical instrument that causes the corresponding note on another instrument to vibrate in

sympathy) in the soul of another person, the receiver.... The vibration in the soul of the artist must therefore find a material form, a means of expression, which is capable of being picked up by the receiver. This material form is thus the second element, i.e., the external element of the work of art. (Kadinsky)

It is this potential of this second element in the emerging technologies that excites new media artists to make works that explore consciousness directly. Using the 2006 installation work by Adam Brown and Andrew Fagg called “Bion” as an example, Katherine Hanker argues that “artworks based on intelligent technology do open possibilities for humans to develop higher complexities of knowledge” (Hanker 255). Working at the Isis Conceptual Laboratory at the University of Oklahoma, Brown and Fagg combine their engineering and art knowledge to bridge the boundaries that separate art and science. They draw on the work of the controversial scientist and psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957) in several of their projects. Reich believed he had discovered the existence and function of orgone energy (the quintessential elixir and life-force) and defined bions—the bearer of a quantum of orgone energy—as transitional forms between non-living and living matter. The installation is composed of hundreds of mass-produced, three-dimensional (4x3x2½ inches) glowing and chirping sculptural forms hanging from the ceiling at different levels. Each is fitted with an audio speaker, blue lights (LEDs), and multiple sensors that allow each to communicate with others and also react to viewers entering the space. Hanker suggests that by entering the form, the user can create higher order experiences at meta-levels, potentially opening up towards an integration of a spiritual level. This synthesis in intelligent art installations of science and the artists’ imaginations broadens our view of consciousness. It externalizes it, stretching it into a new, larger non-physical landscape.

It is to further our understanding of consciousness that Robert Pepperell proposes a project to construct a “conscious art.” Drawing on the inconceivability problem, reflexive and

looping models of self-consciousness, Zen, and his personal practice of meditation and previous use of LSD, he uses the technique of video feedback to sketch out a self-conscious work of art. It would be a system that combines three sources of data: (1) light, sound and pressure from outside the system; (2) information about the internal state of the system; and (3) ‘memories,’ images and sounds that can be activated by associations. These three sources would be synthesized into an overall system, which would be observed by another set of sensors. This information would be fed back and re-observed. This would set an infinite regression situation, like that in video feedback, that would be non-linear and unpredictable because conditions would always vary in the exhibition space. If successful, the system might have a rudimentary functional awareness (Pepperell).

To conclude, if consciousness and transcendence are non-physical phenomena constantly in flux, flowing around energy landscapes sculpted by our senses and culture, the introduction and experimentation with new technologies by artists such as Eduardo Kac, Sterlac, Steve Mann, David Rokeby and projects like *The Tissue Culture and Art Project* (Catts & Zurr), and *Einstein Brain* (Dunning & Woodrow), may be of critical importance in destabilizing our traditionally western scientific experience of consciousness (Basbaum). By challenging our ways of perceiving, they force us to resituate our consciousness. These works may feel awkward or odd to us at first, somewhat like a child’s first steps; hence they need to be received with encouragement and nurturing. Eventually, Roy Ascott predicts the emergence of a syncretic alliance between arts and sciences leading to the transformation of the self and the connectivity of minds. This will “enable the navigation of altered states of consciousness, and a pathway to a spiritual domain” (Ascott 71). Could we be rejoining the goal and vision of the Suprematist artist, Wassily Kandinsky, to develop a physiological change from former

ways of seeing and evolve a new consciousness (Gamwell)?

Many of these artworks might well be called Altermodern art. Altermodern is the new era that Nicolas Bourriaud proposes we are entering, leaving behind the Postmodern. This new era will be typified by time-specific rather than site-specific work, by translation and transcoding of information, and wandering in geography and history. Our awareness will be global (Bourriaud). Maybe the experience future works will elicit will no longer be one that moves us beyond or transcends our limits, but one that will change the nature of our consciousness—what I would call an ‘altercendent’ experience. As stated above, striving to make art that elicits an ephemeral transcendent experience that expands one’s *a priori* consciousness, has been the goal of many artists since the beginning of art. Perhaps, with this renewed symbiotic relationship between the sciences and art, the convergence of digital media and the emergence of global communication networks, we are at the verge of art that will create a change, an alteration in our consciousness. What this change will be is yet a mystery.

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