Reflections on My Flow of ThoughtWhilst Reading this Article

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What an unusual article. Very interesting!

On the one hand, looking at it primarily as a case study, there is so much more I want to know about the subject: his background, his psychodynamics, and the ultimate outcome of the process.

On the other hand, applying standard criteria from scientific parapsychology there is way too much subjectivity in here to make any claims about paranormality and the like. I can readily project all sorts of images onto the accompanying Figure(s).

On the third hand, how ingenious to survey a thousand Eucalyptus trees to see how common a crucifix-like area is! Just the sort of thing we need instead of vaguely saying things like “rare” or “common.”

On yet another hand, what was the methodology and the bias in surveying a thousand trees? I can readily imagine biasing things one way or the other by subtle changes in the instructions …
And on yet another hand (we need one of those multi-armed Hindu goddesses to illustrate this), the “subjectivity” in finding meaning in this kind of correspondence is at the heart of most human experiences, so it needs to be honored and studied, not just dismissed as “subjective.”

Should this article drive a lot of readers “crazy,” that’s a good thing! If the reaction is just a blunt refusal to think about the material, the responder has an opportunity to observe his/her a priori prejudices. If the reaction is more like “I could evaluate that aspect of things more clearly,” great, possibilities of progress! If the reaction, like mine while reading, bounces all over the place from “pure subjective nonsense” to “maybe that’s how it actually is …” Good!

The Author

Charles Tart, one of the founders of transpersonal psychology and long standing member of the Editorial Board for the Journal, is an Emeritus Professor of Psychology at University of California (UC), Davis, has held the Bigelow Chair of Consciousness Studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and is currently on the faculty at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. In addition to his now classic books (Altered States of Consciousness, Transpersonal Psychologies, States of Consciousness) he has authored Living the Mindful Life, Waking Up, and The End of Materialism: How evidence of the paranormal brings science and life together. He works tirelessly to integrate theory and practice, has earned a Black Belt in Aikido, and practices both mindfulness meditation as well as Gurdjieffian mindfulness in everyday life.