

Foundation for a New Consciousness
chapter 1: A Dare

Even though we may not always agree with the ballad singers, the times are a-changin'. This essay describes my understanding of the drastic changes that have occurred in the 20th century. Is the here-and-now completely cut off from the past, or can we believe that "whatever inheritance left to us, to own it we must earn it dear"? (Quotation is from Johann Goethe's *Faust*.)

Today, many people are looking forward to a new age while others are waiting for the end to the present one. I address those who await change. We must begin building a foundation for a new consciousness. The time is ripe, so we should grab our cubic centimeter of chance and use it.

For a long time now the dichotomy between the arts and sciences has been bemoaned. Many artists and scientists have believed that they could never be joined again, yet the advent of a new consciousness heralds hope for a renewed and bountiful marriage.

If we examine the underlying structure of the arts and sciences, both ancient and modern, we can discover their connection. The eyes of Western scientists are opening to the meditative tradition because they now have devices to measure the inner state. It is this tradition of meditation (or for some--magic) which, I believe, is the glue that binds the arts and sciences together. Since the arts incorporate a traditional cosmology, they can shed light upon contemporary science, which often assumes that it is radically different from ancient science. There are meditative traditions that use the arts both to illustrate cosmic principles and to further the growth of the soul. Two traditional Western sciences, alchemy and astrology, have used the arts for this purpose. In ancient times the link between art and religion was usually present. Perhaps this is true even today. Perhaps the arts are opening our awareness to another reality.

The new consciousness is a variation on an ancient theme which can be called the consciousness of paradox. The child, springing from a state of unity, soon learns that there's mommy and there's daddy. This basic duality is found in all human societies and may reflect our divided brain with its right and left hemispheres. And so, in most societies is found a tradition that shows how to regain the lost unity, but on a higher level. Consciousness of paradox is one step toward that next dimension.

We can understand the connection between opposites by using a holistic way of thinking that blends the rational and non-rational, reason and intuition. On the surface paradox poses an either-or situation that is unsolvable. We are aware of the conflicting dichotomy and often choose one side or the other. By understanding how opposites are linked together, we can move to a higher level of awareness where paradoxes are not stone walls but rather are elegant forms of expression. Consciousness of paradox increases the power of the human mind. It can be used to make changes in our cultural programming and to find and develop hidden mental powers. It has always been a part of meditative tradition, and it is inherent in the foundation of knowledge.

The argument of this essay assumes the universal existence of the pattern which connects; it does not try to prove this truth. If I have forged any definite position, it is that of a traditionalist. This differs from such labels as conservative or progressive. It may even be slightly radical. The word "tradition" means the act of passing on or carrying on. What we have is the idea of process, of selecting from the past those things which we can use for our present purposes. The image of a river comes to mind. Sitting on the river bank, we watch as various objects float by. If any attracts our interest, we reach out and take it. The other objects continue their journey until someone further down stream retrieves them.

Yet traps lie in wait for the unwary, even for the traditionalist. Often we pass on many things unknowingly without careful inspection, and popular fashions can carry us in directions that we are unaware of. Perhaps, we like an idea which was selected from the past, and we feel honored to

preserve it, but the changing environment will make refinements necessary. "Fine-tuning" is a popular phrase today, yet the basic concept has been heard since ancient times. Both continuity and change occur at all levels on planet earth. If we decide to continue or change some idea, technique or purpose, can we be certain that the decision is a wise one? Know thy self, a legendary inscription indeed, for without self-knowledge we cannot find the truth that will free us! Looking deep into the mirror of our mind, we can discover the fabric of reality and the web of destiny. Do we dare grasp the deadly terrors and the living waters that will transform our life? Here is the challenge.

The key I have selected from tradition is alchemy, a science now hidden by fable and legend. Alchemy has a Gothic aura; the alchemist, working secretly in the laboratory, changes lead into gold and discovers the elixir of life. The alchemical process centers on the reciprocity between the inner and outer environments. The alchemist through laboratory operations simultaneously reshapes the mindscape. The laboratory operations correspond to analogous mental activities. When the alchemist manipulates the outer environment, the mind goes through intended changes.

By placing the body in a meditative posture or by using it to build a piece of furniture, one can make changes in the mind, especially in the unconscious processes. The body is the interface, the skin, between the inner and outer environments; it is both passive and active; it receives and gives. Alchemically, the body is a hermetic vessel in which the philosopher's stone is made; the retort in the laboratory is an analogue. The chemical process taking place in the retort corresponds to an activity occurring simultaneously in the mind. What is done in one environment is reflected in the other. Thus, selection and performance are important ingredients in the magnum opus. Here is the basis for the theory of signs.

All living organisms try to change their environment so that it will become more conducive for their survival. A plant, by secretion through its roots or by decomposition of its dropped foliage, changes the chemistry of the soil. Other organisms in the same ecological niche will also be making their changes. Yet the inanimate part of nature, climate for example, adds its counterpoint. Out of the polyphony of many musical voices arises a new environment with a different ecological structure. Here is a principle of natural process: the swamp gradually becomes the desert which later turns back into swamp.

The basic tenet of alchemy is that "nature conquers nature." Humans can only help nature achieve its destined purpose. The seed of perfection, inherent in any physical thing, can be cultivated so that it will blossom forth. And so the alchemist cultivates the seed latent in the mind.

The alchemical process is similar to the cabalistic tradition, a heritage that has its roots in the distant past. Alchemists have examined cabalistic writings for clues to make the philosopher's stone. As one develops a sense of tradition, the different cultural motifs become discernible. When the mind perceives the structure holding together the teeming cauldron of life, the veil of human customs drops away. This can be a shocking experience, for it is iconoclastic. Whenever our ordinary view of the world is shattered, we feel lost and naked. Yet the chrysalis must crack open if we are to fulfill ourselves--and live!

Let us step forward, reader, and dare! Working together we can build a foundation for a new consciousness.

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Other books by John Caris

Spenser Blake's Secret 2016

Spenser Blake has a secret about an important early Christian theme: the friendship of Jesus and Lazarus. Listening to his inner voice, he decides to hire Shasta Garland, author of the popular Peaches Peoples detective novels, to write a story conveying his controversial interpretation of the idea.

Dancing Magicians 2013

Magic and psychic feats abound while psi field intersects with cyberspace. Magician Ralph Garland, participating in psychic experiments at Institute of Consciousness-Imagination-Nous, alters the fabric of reality. His worldview shattered, he journeys through the secret mansion to regain his vital self. Shasta Garland, poet and novelist, embarks on a quest with a new mystery story featuring detectives from Peoples Investigations, who are caught in a web of role-playing wizards inhabiting the astral zone. The Garlands become entangled with others who are on their own path of self-discovery and renewal.

Hermes Beckons 2006

Alchemy and magic dominate. Magician Ralph Garland embarks on a quest to discover the secrets hidden in Hermes' craft. His research branches into diverse religious traditions, including the Neolithic goddess religion. He journeys beyond the veil and initiates a response from the spirit realm. Many strange experiences occur as he progresses in his alchemical studies, and when his conventional worldview disintegrates, he finally emerges through the portal of mysteries. In fear of losing his mind he opens his heart to his friend and love Shasta Garland, who is writing a new novel in her on-going detective series, one that will apply the theme of magic. She supports him in the healing process, and her nurturing strengthens his resolve to attain his mystical aspirations by producing a magical presentation of alchemy: The Alchemical Light Show. Together the couple evolve toward a spiritual healing and bonding.

Reality Inspector 1982

An early, perhaps the first, computer-hacking novel.

A world championship chess match is the backdrop for this intriguing mystery story. The main computer of the Federal Reserve is being tampered with by a sinister power, and the results could wreak havoc with the fiscal policy, causing the U.S. economy to fragment into pieces. Actual chess games are used, and they act as launching pads for journeys into strange and challenging worlds.