

# **Cosmos & Consciousness IX**

## **The Continuity of Consciousness: Cosmic, Human, Animal and Plant**

Saturday, September 17, 2011  
10 am—5 pm  
at  
The Rangeley Inn, Rangeley, Maine



### **Premium Weekend Package**

September 16-18, 2011

[Click Here for Details](#)

### **Featured Speakers**

Jonathan Balcombe, PhD

Author of *Second Nature*; *Pleasurable Kingdom*; and *The Exultant Ark*

Rudy Schild, PhD

Harvard-Smithsonian Astrophysicist, Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Cosmology*

Hillary Webb, PhD

Managing Editor, *Anthropology of Consciousness*

Author *Traveling Between the Worlds* and *Exploring Shamanism*

Hosts

Trish Corbett and Michael Mannion

Co-Founders, The Mindshift Institute

General Admission: \$75  
***Income-Sensitive Admission Available - Call 917-817-4465 for details***  
***Student Admission Free***

## **The Continuity of Consciousness**

*"...the enormous problem of consciousness has been haunting philosophers for thousands of years and natural scientists for hundreds of years, without anybody so far finding a solution. I personally regard it as the most difficult and most decisive problem facing all of natural science."*

--Wilhelm Reich, August 1943

Despite the great advances in mechanistic science, and the enormous efforts of those investigating consciousness, we still lack an understanding of its nature. Although we do not understand what consciousness is, research into this mysterious phenomenon has expanded greatly in recent years.

Neuroscientists studying consciousness focus on the brain. They are trying to figure out how brain structure and processes create what we call consciousness. Over 60 years ago, Reich wrote about "how brain mythology dominated science for decades." And this mythology is still dominating scientific inquiry today.

Proponents of the neuroscientific study of consciousness consider their work to be in its infancy. However, Alva Noe, a professor of philosophy at UC Berkeley and author of *Out of Our Heads*, rejects the claim that this field is in its infancy. In his view, that is a false analogy because it implies that science will progress through adolescence, adulthood and maturity with deepening comprehension of the nature of consciousness. Noe writes, "A better image might be that of inexperienced hikers out on the trails without any clear idea where they are: they are lost and don't even know it."

It has become increasingly obvious that consciousness is not confined to the brain of the human animal. And it is being recognized more widely that consciousness is a phenomenon that exists throughout Nature. We find evidence of it in all living things. In fact, at every level of existence that is explored, from the microscopic to the cosmic, scientists are now finding evidence of "Mind" or consciousness.

In her book, *What Is Life?*, evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis has written, "At even the most primordial level, living seems to entail sensation, choosing, mind." According to Dr. Edgar Mitchell, the most fundamental aspect of consciousness can be observed in the quantum process of nonlocality, in which two entangled subatomic particles "know" what happens to each other instantaneously and without regard to distance. There is a *continuity of consciousness* in Nature. But what is its basis?

To find an answer to that question requires that we step outside the framework of our present-day worldview. David J. Chalmers, a highly regarded philosopher of consciousness, wrote in *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, “Temperamentally, I am inclined toward materialist reductive explanation [of consciousness]...I hoped for a materialist theory; when I gave up on this hope, it was quite reluctantly...Materialism is a beautiful and compelling view of the world, but to account for consciousness, we have to go beyond the resources it provides....And the expansion in the worldview has had a positive effect, at least for me...”

An example of a science with an expanded worldview is Orgonomy, the science of the Life Energy. Perhaps an approach to a greater understanding of consciousness is to be found in the investigation of primordial cosmic Life Energy in *Cosmic Superimposition* by Wilhelm Reich. In this book, Reich writes about the contact between the bioenergy of the living organism and the Life Energy itself, which is at the root of understanding ourselves, self-perception and self-awareness, consciousness, and Life. These concepts are outside the mechanistic materialist-metaphysical worldview of today. But things are changing, however slowly, and such new concepts are receiving serious attention.

An expansion of worldviews is definitely in store for all who participate in this year’s ***Cosmos and Consciousness*** conference. We will travel far, over new territory, as we encounter expanded views of consciousness in the cosmos, ourselves, in animals and plants. We will also examine the phenomenon of an aware and self-aware Life Energy that is at the basis of the many expressions of consciousness in Nature.

### Our Exciting Speakers

#### Animal Consciousness and Emotions

Jonathan Balcombe, PhD



**Dr. Balcombe** was born in England and raised in New Zealand and Canada. He studied biology at Canada’s York University and Carleton University before earning a PhD in ethology (animal behavior) from the University of Tennessee. He has written over 40 scientific papers and book chapters, and many lay articles on animal behavior and animal protection. Dr. Balcombe is the Animal Studies Department Chair for Humane Society University.

A popular speaker, Dr. Balcombe has given invited presentations on six continents. He is the author of *Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals; Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals and the Nature of Feeling Good*; and *The Exultant Ark: A Pictorial Tour of Animal Pleasure*. His blog, “The Inner Lives of Animals,” has appeared online at Psychology Today, One Green Planet, Best Thinking, Secretary of Innovation and on his own website. He now works as a consultant near Washington, DC. In his spare time he enjoys nature-watching, biking, piano, vegan

cooking and trying to understand his two cats.

For centuries, we believed that humans were the only ones that mattered; the only ones with emotions and consciousness. The idea that animals had thoughts and feelings was either dismissed or considered heresy. Today, that's all changing. New scientific studies of animal behavior reveal perceptions, intelligences, awareness, social skills and virtues that would have been deemed fantasy a generation ago.

Careful scientific studies now show that animals are aware of themselves and others, are capable of complex cognitive tasks, and can experience long-term emotional states. Perhaps most important, there is now evidence that animals are as sensitive to pain and as vulnerable to suffering as humans. The paradox is that, as our understanding of animal sentience grows, our treatment of them falls further behind and becomes more inhumane.

Dr. Balcombe will present information that informs, enlightens, and empowers us. His captivating examples show that animals are acutely sentient—aware, perceptive, intelligent, pleasure-seeking, communicative, sociable, and virtuous. In addition to sharing the latest knowledge about animal consciousness and emotions, he will show us how to take personal responsibility for developing more compassionate relationships to animals and to help bring about positive change through informed daily lifestyle choices.

#### Quantum Processes, Nature's Mind and the Human Mind

Rudy Schild, PhD



**Dr. Schild**, an astrophysicist and cosmologist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, is highly regarded professionally for his work on gravitational lensing, baryonic dark matter and the study of quasars and black holes. He is the author of over 200 articles published in peer-reviewed professional publications. In addition, he is the Editor-in-Chief of the highly successful—and fascinating—online publication, the *Journal of Cosmology*, which now has over 50,000 unique visitors each month. Dr. Schild has been part of the “Mindshift Team” since 1999 and has spoken at many of our annual conferences.

Dr. Schild will share with us his new insights into quantum physics processes that are observable in the cosmos and that also appear to play a key role in consciousness. He has connected his recent astronomical observations with important new ideas in science and consciousness studies, especially investigations into the zero-point energy field and the work of Dr. Edgar Mitchell on quantum holography. When these new bodies of knowledge are integrated, our view of the nature of the Universe and our place in it is altered dramatically.

We now know that the energy emitted by all objects in our universe, living and nonliving, contains *information about the life history of those objects* in what are called “quantum holograms.”

Dr. Schild's recent astrophysical observations of black holes, or what he now calls MECOs (Magnetic Eternally Collapsing Objects) indicate that this information is stored up at the relativistic surfaces of the MECO objects in structures that act like "memory membranes" of what Edgar Mitchell refers to as "Nature's Mind."

And this goes much further. It appears that this information—about all that was, is, or shall be—is theoretically retrievable using quantum nonlocality. It seems as if contemporary science is discovering functions in the energy field of space that are similar to what the ancients called the *Akashic Record*. Dr. Schild will lead us in an engaging exploration of the quantum physics processes that are at play in both "Nature's Mind" and the human mind.

### Exploring the Enigma Of Human Consciousness

Hillary Webb, PhD



**Dr. Hillary Webb** was Research Director at The Monroe Institute, a nonprofit research and education institute dedicated to the exploration of human consciousness. Dr. Webb earned a PhD in psychology from Saybrook University in 2009 and a Master's Degree in the philosophy of mind from Goddard College in 2006. She is currently managing editor of the journal *Anthropology of Consciousness* and the author of *Traveling Between the Worlds; Exploring Shamanism*; and also the upcoming autoethnography, *Yanantin and Masintin in the Andean World: Complementary Dualism in Modern Peru* (University of New Mexico Press, 2012).

In her talk, Dr. Webb will explore a variety of questions regarding researchers, explorers, practitioners, and educators who are creating new ways of coming to a better understanding of the enigma of human consciousness:

- In what ways are researchers around the world attempting to shed light on this topic?
- Is it even possible to understand human consciousness or is this field of study like trying to understand the dark by turning on a light?
- Is it possible to bring together the many disparate, but ultimately *complementary*, techniques that exist to work toward a deeper understanding of human consciousness?
- Can the much-needed collaboration between the quantitative (objective) and qualitative (subjective) approaches to comprehending consciousness be successfully achieved?

Dr. Webb will raise these and other profound questions that will certainly lead to further discussion and exploration among us all.

## Consciousness in Plants and Throughout Nature

Trish Corbett and Michael Mannion



**Trish Corbett** will share with us what she has learned about the intelligence of the heart and its crucial role in the direct perception of Nature. In antiquity, many cultures located consciousness in the heart. Because of this they had the capacity to connect their own consciousness with other living organisms, including plants. In our culture, we do not understand that the heart is an organ of perception and communication. However, this lost knowledge is being re-discovered today through exciting work by many different people.

In the 18th Century, the great poet Goethe spent much of his life studying plants. He saw that Nature in general and plants in particular were striving and changing for the internal satisfaction of wholeness. He was among the first to see that plants made “choices.” In the 19th century, scientists discovered that plants had the capacity to perform many complex actions, such as transmuting one element into another (e.g. calcium into potassium).

In the 20th Century, Cleve Backster, then America’s foremost lie detector examiner, found that plants are sentient. He proved that they display emotion; can read the mind of a human who is planning to hurt them; differentiate between real and pretended intent; and react strongly to the death of other living beings in their environment. More recent studies of plants have demonstrated they are capable of very sophisticated feats. For example, in less than 20 minutes from the time a caterpillar begins feeding on its leaves, a plant will pluck carbon from the air and create defensive compounds from scratch. These volatile chemicals also serve as cries for help. They attract both large predatory insects like dragonflies, and small parasitic insects that infect the caterpillar and destroy it from within.

Dorothy McClean, a founder of Findhorn, teaches people how to make a conscious connection with the consciousness of plants. From a broader perspective, this work is about healing the alienation from Nature produced by our technological culture. It can help contribute to new attitudes and perspectives that move us toward the creation of a new worldview.



**Michael Mannion** will explore the phenomenon of a physical Life Energy that appears at times to be aware and self-aware. He will discuss the connection between this Life Energy and the manifestations of consciousness being investigated in the cosmic, human, animal and plant realms. Is the Life Energy a force in Nature that is the underlying unity that connects all the variations of consciousness we have been exploring? His presentation will lead into an interactive workshop that we believe will be stimulating for us all.

### ***Premium Weekend Package***

COSMOS AND CONSCIOUSNESS IX:  
The Continuity of Consciousness  
An Exciting Weekend in Rangeley, Maine  
September 16-18, 2011

The Mindshift Institute is presenting an exciting day-long conference with a deeper weekend experience from **September 16-18, 2011**. The first eight **Cosmos and Consciousness** conferences have demonstrated that participating in this weekend is indeed a special opportunity. In addition, Rangeley provides a wonderful setting for expansive thinking and exploration.

While the one-day conference on Saturday, September 17 is open to the public, we want to invite you to join us for an extraordinary weekend with the Mindshift speakers: **Jonathan Balcombe PhD; Rudy Schild, PhD;** and **Hillary Webb, PhD**. You will have a rare opportunity to spend one-on-one time with these creative individuals who are making important contributions to the new worldview now emerging.

Because we want to ensure that each participant has time to connect with the presenters, there are only *a limited number of places available* for the Premium Weekend Package. All activities will take place at The Rangeley Inn and include:

A special evening Friday with the speakers and fellow guests; including dessert, coffee, tea, soft drinks and wine

Admission to the Saturday conference itself

An excellent dinner on Saturday night with much stimulating conversation

Sunday breakfast together and a thought-provoking morning session with the presenters and the weekend guests

**The cost for this unique weekend is \$325.** This does not include lodging. We recommend that the weekend participants stay together at The Rangeley Inn. After you sign up with us for the weekend, you will need to call **The Rangeley Inn at 1-800-MOMENTS** to reserve your room. The reservations for the weekend will be filled on a *first-come, first served* basis. Because many participants join us year after year, some reservations have already been made. We encourage you to call us soon or email us at [Info@mindshiftinstitute.org](mailto:Info@mindshiftinstitute.org). We look

forward to seeing you for a special weekend!

Trish Corbett and Michael Mannion  
The Mindshift Institute

**To Register at the Door:** Check or cash only; no credit cards accepted at the door.

**To register by Mail:** Make your check payable to The Mindshift Institute.

**Income-Sensitive Admission:** Call for details.