

# **THE OMNIVERSE CENTER FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

a presentation to

**TRANSFORMATION: '94**

**A VISION OF PLANET EARTH FOR THE 21st CENTURY**

a conference sponsored by

the International Institute of Integral Human Sciences

and the Spiritual Science Fellowship

Montreal, Canada

May 23-27, 1994

by

Oliver W. Markley, PhD

Professor, Human Sciences and Studies of the Future

University of Houston-Clear Lake, Houston, TX 77058 USA

© 1994 by O. W. Markley

# THE OMNIVERSE CENTER FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

## Abstract

This paper is an expanded version of a presentation featuring a visionary resource which described itself to the author as "*The Omniverse Center for Cultural Development--an intellectual oasis for evolutionary operatives.*" Also described are how other professionals have visited and used the "Omniverse Center" as well, finding insights which directly answered what they went there to inquire about.

Questions are raised about the appropriateness of publicly disclosing this type of phenomenon as a credible method of professional inquiry. It is suggested that because of increasingly severe crises facing humankind, it is imperative that new approaches, tools and techniques involving higher consciousness be shared and applied.

## The Context of the "Omniverse" Experience

Twenty-five years ago I was a fresh postdoc hired by Willis Harman to lead methodology development at the new futures research think tank he was forming at the Stanford Research Institute (now SRI International). Soon thereafter, I got my first taste of professional paradigm change.

As if it wasn't hard enough to figure out how to do holistic research on the future of society, our first major results indicated that of some fifty of the most highly plausible alternative future histories for society, only a small handful were by any stretch of the imagination desirable, and most of them involved deep seated transformation regarding underlying attitudes, images and policies in response to emerging problems involving over-population, resource depletion, pollution, dangerous weapons build ups, etc. Problems that Harman collectively dubbed, "The World Macropblem."

With my methodological responsibilities in mind, I in turn, reasoned that research methods based on rational/analytic modes of thinking are, in principle, not suitable for creative exploration of transformational alternative futures because such thinking modes are more

## Side Bar: A "Remote Viewing" of Apollo 13, Facilitated by Group Self-Hypnosis

In this brief aside note, it is my purpose to describe the remote viewing of what appeared to be extraterrestrial entities. This event occurred in the early 1970s when I was actively searching for the best ways to tap intuition and use it as a visionary research method for the futures research I was doing at the Stanford Research Institute.

One of the methods I explored was self-hypnosis, which I learned at the Peninsula Hypnosis Institute of Palo Alto, California. One of the instructors there was informally experimenting with the use of group self-hypnosis as a method for achieving extrasensory perception—typically doing such things as remote viewing and at-a-distance diagnosis and healing. Thinking that this might be a robust way to learn what I was seeking to do, I became a regular participant in the group.

The group met one evening per week. At each meeting we would first choose the type of phenomenon we wished to explore. Then we followed a protocol that involved, first the relaxation of our physical bodies, then of our minds and emotions, and then of our attachment conventional assumptions about reality. And then to the extent we were able, we would join our individual awareness in what is sometimes nowadays given the technical name of "non-local consciousness." Together, we would then explore whatever distant target we had chosen to investigate.

On one particular evening, NASA's Apollo 13 manned space flight to the moon was underway, so we decided to see what we could observe by remotely viewing the craft and the crew in space. Upon achieving "non-local consciousness" together, we "flew" as a group to where the Apollo 13 spacecraft was hurtling through space.

We immediately noticed two non-physical, but decidedly sentient beings flying in a close formation with the Apollo spacecraft. To us, they looked like shiny, translucent spheres of consciousness. We tried to make contact with them, but they ignored us. Or so it seemed. Because when we considered the possibility that our attempts to communicate with them were not perceived by them, we immediately intuited that they could, in fact perceive the presence of our collective awareness of them, but chose to make no response that we could discern. (Much later I learned of the so-called "[Foo Fighters](#)" of World War II fame, which these seemed to be.

We then turned our attention to the Apollo spacecraft itself, and "went inside." Immediately we became aware of great emotional distress felt by the astronauts. As we tried to become aware of the reason for this, we got the distinct impression that something spherical was leaking and that this was creating a dangerous situation for the astronauts. After looking around a bit more, we returned our focus to Earth and moved on to other targets we had selected for the evening's work.

The next morning's news was filled with the emergency caused by leakage of the Apollo 13 oxygen tanks. Although, like others, we were filled by feelings of concern for their well-being, we were also elated that we had such a dramatic validation of our "remote viewing."

Although I do not expect this anecdote to have any standing in the annals of either ESP research or the "alien contact" literature, it did serve for me as the first objective evidence I had that my experience of extra-terrestrial beings might be valid in the *explicate domain* of physical reality. I report it here only to illustrate this fact, for in retrospect, it seems significant that the *Omniverse Center* experience described herein occurred fairly soon thereafter.

or less simply mechanistic extrapolations of what has gone on before.

My knowledge of cognitive psychology pointed toward *intuition* as the appropriate mental mode to use; and so, I gave myself the task of searching out as many different ways to access one's intuitive faculty as are available.

By the time I experienced the episode to be described below, I had already tentatively selected *guided cognitive imagery* as the most appropriate technology for helping people tap their intuitive sources of knowledge. I was aware that I had not yet checked out the method of "trance mediumship" (more frequently called "channeling" these days), and felt some reluctance to do this because of the rather unacceptable image that mediumship often has for people with a scientific orientation. But since open-mindedness to alternatives is a central characteristic of good futures research, I felt I owed it to myself to at least see what this modality might open up.

As things turned out, however, the following experience--and other things it led to--answered all the questions I felt I needed to pursue at that time regarding mediumship or channeling.

### **The content and process of the "Omniverse" experience**

One afternoon in 1993, I was riding my bicycle at the close of work from SRI in Menlo Park to my residence in Palo Alto - a distance of some 2.8 miles, through mostly residential streets. Just as I left the SRI property line, I heard a voice saying,

"Hello, I'm Henri. I'd like to show you something. Would you be willing to come with me?"

My first reaction was to look around to see the source of the voice. Finding none, I realized that it came from inside my own being, as in "hearing voices."

My second reaction was one of interest in the fact that because I am not conversant in French, I had no way of knowing how the name Henri was pronounced, and wouldn't have understood its sound if I hadn't simultaneously been given to understand its correct spelling by means of some type of non-verbal intuition that was immediately obvious.

This being the case, I at once concluded that this must be some type of experience involving "higher consciousness," and that although there was no one I could "see" who had spoken to me, it probably wouldn't be a bad idea to play along with the situation, and see what happened. (After all, because of contextual factors described above, I had been planning to soon

begin an investigation of trance mediumship, and this experience seemed to be somehow related to this intention.)

So I thought, "Sure, I'd be glad to go with you."

For the next several moments we seemed to be underway to some unknown destination that I was silently given to understand was "beyond space and time." Meanwhile, I reassured myself that I was functioning normally, with clear awareness of what was going on outside. I could, in other words, continue riding my bicycle safely, even though some new type of mental experience was going on inside.

The next thing I was aware of was that we had somehow stopped our journey to where/whenever our destination was. Where were we? I didn't know. Nor did Henri give me any clue. In the unmoving silence, I somehow intuited that the next step was up to me.

This being a totally novel experience, I asked myself, "What knowledge or prior experience do I have that would apply here?"

Two phrases from the occult literature immediately popped into my mind: "Guardian of the Threshold," and "Initiation."

With this to guide me, I composed the following thought, which I then silently "transmitted" to who or whatever was in control of the experience I was in the midst of:

"I don't know where I am or why I am here, but I didn't ask to come--I was invited. However, this I can say: Although I don't know what this is all about, I will either take responsibility for using whatever I find here, or I will not use it at all."

At once, it was as though an invisible shield was removed, and I found myself mentally gazing on a city of incredible beauty, floating in mid-space immediately in front of me. And at the same time, I was given to understand that the city I was seeing was but a three-dimensional spatial metaphor that was necessary if I was to perceive what was here in ways that would be meaningful to someone like me.

As we entered the city, I noticed a building on the right side of the street which we entered. On the right side of its foyer, was an opening that looked like the hat check window of the Hollywood Palladium I had known as a youth in Southern California. (And again, I experienced a silent chuckle at the use of metaphors which were easy for me to understand.) In this window was a swarm of lights which looked very much like tiny clear white Christmas tree

lights. But each light was obviously a sentient being, and the whole swarm was also sentient in its own right. The swarm thought to me, "Welcome."

I thought back to the swarm, "Thank you. Where am I? What is this place?... (and in a type of question that although I asked it nonverbally, they understood perfectly)..." "Does it have a name?"

They thought back, "You (or, your species) would call it, *The Omniverse Center for Cultural Development*. It is an intellectual oasis for evolutionary operatives, such as yourself."

(To clarify their answer for readers, I should add that the word *Omniverse* in this context clearly meant, "all creational epochs, past and future." Although a paradoxical concept, it made complete sense as they thought it to me. And the word *oasis*, in this context, had similarly multiple meanings.)

I was at once overjoyed that something like this would even be possible; and that if possible, that an experience of it would be afforded me, without even having had the wit to ask for such a thing.

I thought back to them, "What is your function?"

They answered, "We provide a guidance and translation service so that visitors such as yourself can get what you need here."

I thought back, "What benefit do you get from this arrangement?"

They replied, "We get all [the information/knowledge/ intelligence/wisdom] that passes through us for our own use."

By this time it was evident to me that I was addressing an entire species of telepathically sentient beings whose niche in the ecology of consciousness of the "Omniverse Center" was to help visitors get whatever they need.<sup>1</sup>

My next response was predictable: "What is here to see?"

Rather than see a menu or map, I was at once treated to a rapid series of lucid impressions that closely resembled what computer operators call a "core dump." Although much too fast to permit me to dwell on any one impression, I nevertheless had a good sense of the whole, which was beyond anything I would have thought possible.

---

<sup>1</sup> Readers familiar with the visionary 1937 novel, *Starmaker*, by Olaf Stapledon, will recognize the transpersonal phenomena which he called "*mindedness*" through which all individuals in a given species, planet, etc. simultaneously experience themselves as individuals but also as a group consciousness.

I next asked, "What should I look at first?" But they refused to advise me, indicating that I had to make up my own mind what I wanted to see or experience.

At this point, I drew back inside myself and reflected on the fact that historically on Earth, when a relatively more "advanced" culture came into contact with a more "primitive" one, things usually didn't go too well for the primitives. So I ventured to ask, "What is the ratio of war and peace in the Omniverse?"

I was guided down a hall to the left, into a door on the right, and stopped in front of a device that had a television like view screen. (For readers who are familiar with the comic strip "Alley Oop," the device looked for all the world like Oscar Womug's time machine.)

Soon the view screen warmed up, and displayed a cluster of lights that were connected by a network of lighted threads. Some of the lights were white; the others were red. The ratio was about 2/3 white to 1/3 red. The meaning was obvious.

I then asked, "But what is the trend?"

After a few moments, a deep voice came down from above, saying something like, "We judge that your [intellect; degree of mental development; etc.] is not sufficiently developed to understand a meaningful answer to your question. Nevertheless, if you insist, we will find a way to answer it as best we can."

Naturally, I deferred.

After looking at a few other things, I realized that I was by now within several blocks from my residence, and since I didn't want to greet my wife and children with this sort of experience going on, I began my exit from the Omniverse Center.

Henri was waiting for me as I left. He asked, "Do you have any questions?"

I replied that I had only one: "Can I come back."

He said, "You can come back any time you need to."

---

That evening, after my wife and family had retired, I sat in the reclining chair I kept in my home office, let myself become relaxed, and then checked to see if it was possible to return to the *Omniverse Center*--intending to ask about a technical problem I thought might be a suitable way to explore the use of this new tool.

Upon opening myself to this possibility, it was immediately present in my consciousness once again. I inquired about the question I had brought with me, got a satisfactory answer, and let my consciousness of the Center go. I then noted the answer in my journal, and went to bed.

The next day at work I mentally returned to the *Omniverse Center* and got an answer to yet another question; but when I tried to return later that week, it was not available to me. Instead, I found myself recalling what Henri had said upon leaving the first time...that I could return whenever I needed to. Concluding from this that this exciting resource was not to be used frivolously, I mentally filed the idea that the Omniverse Center would probably remain as a resource to be used whenever truly needed, but that what would qualify as valid "need" in this regard was probably knowable only by intuition, and not by superficial rationality or opinion on my part.

### **Taking Others to the *Omniverse Center***

During this general time period, I engaged a small group of my SRI futures research colleagues to help me pilot-test a variety of guided visualization procedures through which to use intuition as a means to explore the future. Our method of operation was simple. Each Friday, in the early afternoon, we would gather at the Atherton residence of Arnold Mitchell, the founder of the SRI VALS (Values and Life Styles) Program. While having light refreshments, we would talk about our ongoing research projects with an eye toward selection of interesting research questions that might be illuminated by the visionary/intuitive procedures I was developing. After selecting several interesting targets for investigation, I would fashion specific methods to use in our afternoon's work and we would begin. (By way of illustration, in one session we decided to explore possible smog levels in the future. After first using a type of relaxation and mental focusing useful for putting us in the right state of consciousness for this type of visionary/intuitive exploration, we each imagined crawling into the same ten foot diameter eyeball--what nowadays would be called a "virtual space-time ship." Once inside, we would collectively fly to various space/time locations, such as over the Los Angeles basin at an altitude of 2,000 feet in the year 2020 . We would then compare notes on what we saw. The results would then be used in the "regular" futures research we did back at the office the following week.)

On one particular Friday afternoon, two researchers in our group reported difficulty in writing a scenario involving "The Man on a White Horse" (a social science phrase which refers



to the phenomenon of a charismatic leader who revolutionizes a society, often by finding a scapegoat to blame for current societal problems). They simply couldn't get the scenario to "work," and therefore asked if there was some visionary/intuitive method that might resolve their problem.

As is my custom when getting such requests, I "went inside" to see what my intuition might suggest by way of an exercise. (From almost the beginning in this type of work, I have found that guided visualization works best when the guide is guided by his intuition, rather than following some prescribed script or program of instructions.)

My intuition immediately suggested "the Omniverse Center" as an avenue in which their questions could be appropriately answered. This greatly surprised me, for I had never considered the possibility of taking others to a "place" in consciousness lying outside of normal time and space, and I wasn't even sure how I could do it.

My reluctance quickly gave way to interest when my intuition also suggested playing the "Night Music" from Bartok's *Music for Strings, Celeste and Percussion* as background for the exploration, for this particular section of music has often been instrumental in helping me facilitate entry into interesting states of consciousness. So I cued it up, and told the participants that if they were willing, I would lead them on a new type of visionary exploration--one that might even seem like being outside of time and space; but not to worry, I had been there before and would guide them into the experience.

I then used a conventional relaxation induction, and suggested that we would get to our target by "flying in formation" like air force pilots do, with me in the lead; that I would take them to an interesting place; and that once there, they should do anything they felt appropriate in order to gain access and get meaningful answers to our questions. (One additional person volunteered to inquire about the Man on a White Horse/charisma issue; and the others simply went along for the ride, with instructions to bring back anything they found interesting.)

Our attempt to "fly in formation" worked flawlessly, and once I was there, I "took muster," checking to make sure that the others were as well. I then said that I would give them ten minutes to explore whatever they found there; while I "stood guard" so to speak at the entrance; and that I would then bring them back to "the room" (our phrase for the normal state of consciousness from which we departed on our visionary expeditions.)

The results were striking. Each of the "fellow travelers" had experiences that, while interesting, were nothing to write home about. The three who went to inquire about charisma, on

the other hand, came back so deeply moved that we had to take a 15 minute break in order for them to integrate their experience and stabilize their emotions. It turns out that each of the three came back from the *Omniverse Center* with what can only be called a "religious conversion experience" in which they experienced the reality of charismatic insight in their own lives, and came to see how charisma is an essential ingredient in all valid leadership. The problem, as they now saw it, with the "Man on a White Horse" phenomenon in society, is that when a leader in society is inspired with some exciting charismatic idea but does not continue to receive valid charisma (energized intuition?) as he or she continues to lead, or if they experience the phenomenon of charismatic inspiration and think it is "illumination" but don't clean up their egocentric act on Earth, then trouble comes. And the two who had been trying to write the "Man on a White Horse" scenario now saw that when, back at the office, they needed to radically re-conceptualize the scenario into a story in which charisma is used constructively, rather than destructively in society.

Readers who are interested in the result can most easily find it by reading *Seven Tomorrows: Toward a Voluntary History* by Hawkins, Ogilvy and Schwartz (New York, Bantam Books, 1982--now out of press, but can easily be obtained via the interlibrary loan system that most public libraries participate in). It features a constructively transformational scenario in which a quiet but inspirational leader emerges at a time when the society is about to be torn up due to a variety of emerging problems; a leader who provides a distinctively different type of leadership than most of us have grown accustomed to in this day of "spin control" and "media hype."

## **Related Experiences**

Two other anecdotes which may shed additional light on this whole line of investigation (what I have come to call "visionary futures research") are as follows:

1. One of the other SRI participants in the group visit to the *Omniverse Center* was a young woman who was my research assistant. She reported having a lucid dream the night after the visit described above, in which she was once again at the *Omniverse Center*. But this time a personal guide was there, leading her into a room with lots of filing cabinets stacked everywhere. One of them had a drawer standing open; she was obviously expected to go check it out. When she did so, she found an open file folder inside, with the label: HOLISTIC VISION, in which was a pair of glasses. When she put them on and looked

around, everything she saw suddenly shifted into sharp contrasts between figure and ground--but figure/ground relationships that were frequently more conceptual than physical in nature, and with a pervasive sense of intuitive integration that cut through all these contrasts. It was aptly named: a pair of glasses for seeing with holistic vision. She later reported being able to use these "glasses" in many different personal and professional situations, and has come to rely on them when needing to see things in perspective.

2. One of the other participants in the group was a somewhat hard-bitten SRI transportation engineer who was on loan to our small futures research think tank in order to help lead the large scenario project on the future of transportation in America which we were currently doing under contract to the U.S. Department of Transportation. He sat in on our Friday afternoon "visionary research" sessions with an open-minded, but skeptical outlook, never having much "visionary stuff" happen for himself personally.

When the project was finished, and the transportation scenario team was getting ready to travel to Washington for the briefing of final results to the client, we decided that it would make a good Friday afternoon research project to personally "live through" each of the scenarios that the team had created, so as to get a better sense of what the scenarios might signify for the client. After doing this exercise, we talked about what happened.

The transportation engineer/project leader said,

"Well, this is the first time that I can say that something really important happened for me in these exercises. I don't feel like I learned anything really new; but now, for the first time, I feel really confident about briefing these scenarios to a possibly hostile client audience. They have become something I can talk about from the heart of my own felt experience, rather than as something that I would have to talk about from only my intellect."

Then, because we had finished early, with more than a half an hour to go before we usually ended our Friday afternoon sessions, we decided that it might be a good idea for us to do an exercise in which we all moved forward in time about a week, and watched the forthcoming briefing take place, so as to alert ourselves to anything that might be important to know. As with the *Omniverse Center* visit described above, the specific personnel scheduled to do the briefing had a specific charge--to see themselves doing whatever they were supposed to do at the briefing; the rest of us simply went along for the ride, as it were. When we were in the middle of the visionary briefing run-through, the transportation engineer/project leader suddenly sat upright from where he had been lying on the floor, and

said loudly, "We can't do the briefing this way; it simply won't work!" When he explained what it was that he had seen, all agreed that the client would be confused by the plan for the briefing that all were working from. The team immediately redesigned that part of the briefing; then went back into the visionary state of consciousness re-visioned the briefing; and came up with a feeling of quiet joy at having a design they felt confident in. At the next Friday meeting after the team had gone to Washington and returned, all agreed that the briefing went well--just as it was "re-visioned" as doing; and that it would have been a disaster to have run the briefing as initially envisioned.

### **Global Consciousness: The Challenge of the 21st Century**

The "Omniverse Center" story is but one of a number of anecdotes that could be told of how our group at SRI, like others elsewhere, have come to use unconventional ways to access higher consciousness for professional as well as personal purposes.

Needless to say, however, we didn't describe these explorations in the "methods" sections of the research reports we wrote for our government and foundation clients during those early years of our work! And I dare say we still don't.

Is it time to begin owning up to the use of noetic technologies we find useful in our work--especially if we believe that these technologies could significantly help in the much needed transition to a sustainable, humane society? Dare we not do so at this time in history?

The most concise way I know of stating what is at stake is the following statement, synthesized from the writings of such authors as Olaf Stapledon and Gregory Bateson:

*When one species attains a position of dominance over all the other species in the ecology of its planet, if that dominant species is egocentrically greedy, and if it has a powerful set of technologies through which to amplify the expression of that greed, then unless that dominant species can find a way to limit or to transform its egocentric greediness into something more wholesome, it will foul its planetary nest as surely as the night follows the day--perhaps even to its own extinction.*

This dilemma, standing as it does at the core of what Willis Harman has called "The World Macroproblem," is perhaps the central challenge of the 21st Century. Although opinions differ on how best to respond to it, I am personally committed to the premise that the most

appropriate way to resolve this dilemma is through the type of Global Mind Change that would yield a true sense of *Global Consciousness*.<sup>2</sup>

Toward that end, I have in the past two decades experimented with various guided imagery and visionary futures research techniques through which to lead interested people in this direction. And since my primary vehicle for doing this has been the teaching of open-enrollment graduate courses offered at a public university located in the conservative heartland of America, I have also gained a keen appreciation for the obstacles which sometimes stand in the way and how they can often be circumvented.

What I have not done much about is to focus on the problem of coming "out of the closet" with this type of methodology, and am now exploring how to do so appropriately, even though some of my professional colleagues warn that to do so is a rapid way to ruin one's professional credibility in respectable circles. This conference offers turns out to offer a most appropriate setting in which to do so, and for this I am most grateful.<sup>3</sup>

## Conclusion

Today I have shared something that would have been unthinkable for me to put forward in public when it first happened. Many professionals have similar stories that I hope will increasingly be shared as well. And all of us who identify with the noetic school of thought can do more by way of describing the noetic approaches we use in methodologically credible ways.

By way of closing, may I recall two ancient Chinese curses that seem uniquely appropriate for our times?

The first is:

May you live in interesting times!

---

<sup>2</sup> By *Global Consciousness* is meant both improved awareness of our planetary ecology as a whole system of physical and non-physical interactions; and the expansion of consciousness beyond ego-centric identity to include a transpersonal and/or transcendent sense of self as well--hopefully resulting in the types of motivations and insights that would lead to sustainable life support systems for "*SpaceShip Earth*."

<sup>3</sup> At the speech, I was asked whether I considered the Omniverse Center to be "real" or more like a "dream." My answer: "For now, suffice it to say that I have come to consider the Omniverse Center--whatever its true nature may be--as but one of many possible "process metaphors" for that infinite wisdom which, the Perennial Philosophy reminds us, is in all of us. Indeed, it may be our most true nature. If so, then perhaps the task is to bring forward those uniquely 'noetic' approaches that can efficiently and effectively wake us up to this fact.

The second is a bit more droll. It is:

May you get what you pray for.

Thank you for your kind attention. I wish you a better future than you have thus far had the awareness to imagine.

---