

# RICHARD MAURICE BUCKE AND THE MODERN STUDY OF COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

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**ABSTRACT:** The existence of god has nothing to do with religions. This statement is perhaps one of the principal conclusions of this chapter, anticipated here, to the perspective brought by Richard Bucke in his study of the evolution of the human mind and the phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness. Historically, the human experience with cosmoconsciousness has become a vehicle for messages and content for the founding of various religions. This chapter was written on the primary basis, among others, of the book *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*. In the book, Bucke relates his personal cosmic consciousness experience and his life trajectory, the analyzes made by him, the hypotheses and methodological effort, all of which diverge from any religious approach. Along with the account of personal experience, the high point of the book is the comparative analysis between the historical personalities supposedly candidates for recording the category of the same phenomenon. The purpose of this chapter is to present new possibilities, some developed by Bucke and others from current research, for the study of the phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness for the evolution of human consciousness. These possibilities are treated in a sensible, profound, self-experimental, rational and methodological way, differing from primitive, mystical or contemplative approaches. The signs brought by Bucke regarding the possibility of exceptional experience, the evolution of human consciousness and the understanding of the Cosmos in their maximal conceptions are innovative, striking, and challenging for science and philosophy.

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**Keywords:** Cosmoconsciousness, expansion of consciousness, illumination, parapsychic phenomenon, parapercept, percept, paraphenomenology, paraphenomenon, self-consciousness, self-research

## Introduction

Cosmic consciousness (cosmoconsciousness) and the *expansion of consciousness* are phenomena recorded under different names at various points in the history of humanity. These manifestations have always been associated with more evolved human qualities. Moral nature and perceptual abilities seem to be two fields of human attributes with a central role in the development of these phenomena.

The applications of human maturity derived from such experiments have been subjects of the highest interest in mystical and religious studies throughout history. It is not difficult to observe the connection between historical personalities who have reported exceptional experiences and the creation of a new religion or mystical ideology.

However, in recent centuries, some researchers and philosophers have brought new reflections on studying these phenomena, and gradually it was possible to construct a new vision, with universal perspective to investigate the vast possibilities in the evolution of the human being and the understanding of the Cosmos.

First of all, the phenomenon of cosmic consciousness brings transcendent and permanent consequences to the person who experiences it. These signs may be among the most valuable to indicate possible directions to humanity.

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness, or cosmic consciousness reported since antiquity and examines the contributions of Richard Bucke who inaugurates the systematic study on cosmoconsciousness by the legitimacy of personal experience and allows creating a bridge to move from mysticism towards science.

The force of the authentic phenomenon that occurred with an intellectualized man of elevated moral nature and sensitivity is the first object of the present study. It seems that there is a possibility to demonstrate that, in this case, the phenomenon did not occur randomly and we may try to understand the construction of the life trajectory that made this manifestation possible.

In addition to taking a step in understanding the phenomenon, the purpose of this study is also to discuss some foundations, procedures, and methods for advancing research and personal development towards the *expansion of consciousness*. This author approaches this possibility through the proposition of the Paraphenomenological Methodology (Schlosser, 2009). However, the focus will only address the fundamental

dynamics between mental images of perception and imagination. The operation of these mental images allows proposing a hypothesis about the category of intellect appropriate for the development of the phenomena of *expansion of consciousness* and cosmoconsciousness.

This chapter will also present a range of modern perspectives in an attempt to investigate and understand the expansions of consciousness. The cosmoconsciousness exceptional experience category invites us to enter new horizons in the research of consciousness and in the studies of parapsychic phenomena.

The entire discussion will be around the legacy of Richard Bucke and a few other personalities who have followed these studies. Let's see what it's all about!

## **I – Who is Richard Maurice Bucke and What Is His Contribution?**

Few people in the history of humanity have built a bridge with such robust and detailed components between exceptional personal experience and the wide-ranging research of the same phenomenon resulting in a magnificent book. Richard Bucke starts from the expanded examination of transcendent personal experience with the cosmic consciousness, carefully analyzes diverse personalities supposedly subject to the same category of experience throughout history and proposes a new vision for human possibilities.

Bucke makes a point of presenting himself as an ordinary man. In fact, he had a dramatic life if analyzed by an outside observer. But it was this man who had transcendent experiences, of the same category as Gautama Buddha, Jesus the Christ, Plotinus, Mohammed, and many others.

In addition to the value of the quality of the experiences sought by Bucke, he wrote a book with methodological status to study the phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness entitled *Cosmic Consciousness: a Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*, published in 1901, the year before his death. Even today, this book can perhaps be considered the main reference in the study of the phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness.

In the first part of the book, Bucke details the most important experience of his life, narrating the illumination occurred in 1872, in London in the early spring, at the beginning of his thirty-sixth year. Perhaps this experience was facilitated by the natural and spontaneous exercise of consciousness expansion resulting from his involvement in reading poetic texts with two friends earlier that evening.

Here is Bucke's account of cosmic consciousness, referring to himself in the third person:

*“He and two friends had spent the evening reading Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and especially Whitman. They parted at midnight, and he had a long drive in a hansom (it was in an English city). His mind, deeply under the influence of the ideas, images and emotions called up by the reading and talk of the evening, was calm and peaceful. He was in a state of quiet, almost passive enjoyment. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around as it were by a flame-colored cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration in the great city; the next he knew that the light was within himself. Directly afterwards came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning-flash of the Brahmic Splendor which has ever since lightened his life; upon his heart fell one drop of Brahmic Bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an after taste of heaven. Among other things he did not come to believe, he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love and that the happiness of every one is in the long run absolutely certain. He claims that he learned more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and that he learned much that no study could ever have taught (Bucke, 1905, p. 7-8).”*

This exceptional experience of Bucke inaugurates the movement of a type of self-research to understand what was going on in his life, trying to situate this understanding in the context of other occurrences in humanity throughout history.

In a sense, the investigation of the phenomenon was guided by a scientific purpose, going far beyond a stagnant attitude towards the possibility of remaining in mystical contemplation or assuming a mission in ideological or religious leadership.

The new possibility was about accepting the challenge of treating personal experience with rationality, based on the evidence of the experienced facts and the evidence and casuistic found in several other historical accounts. Bucke was a man with a scientifically-minded look at human nature and his history in the practice of medicine, especially in psychiatry, enabled him to speculate and seek structuring foundations in the study of mind and consciousness. Scientific influence also helped him to widen the boundaries in the study of human morality and spirituality.

But perhaps these processes of self-research and self-knowledge were already being prepared by paths difficult to interpret since Bucke's birth, without his knowing it himself.

Bucke's singular consciousness and his personality made up a unique mosaic that makes us think if it provided some condition conducive to the manifestation of cosmic consciousness and the productions that he achieved in life.

Perhaps the most well-organized historical documents and data about Bucke can be found in the archives of Western University (Western Libraries), Ontario, Canada, in the city of London, where he grew up and died. Here is a summary of the main aspects of this fascinating life trajectory.

Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1902) was born in Methwold, Norfolk, England, the son of Rev. Horatio Walpole Bucke (1802-1856), a parish curate, and his wife Clarissa Andrews Bucke (1797-1845). The parents and their seven children emigrated to Canada when he was a year old, settling near London, Ontario. Little Bucke never went to school, and his literacy, education, and teaching in Latin were the responsibility of his father who owned a vast library that had influenced his son very early on. He was an autodidact in the broadest sense of the term.

Despite his father's religious orientation, he never, even as a child, accepted the doctrines of the Christian church and Bucke (2017, p. 6) tells how early he thought Jesus was just a great, good man. On the other hand, even from a very young age, he has always had a deep interest in the affairs of the human soul, spirituality, and themes of this kind.

Bucke's consciousness already showed signs of expansion shortly after he became literate. The reading of poems stimulated him throughout his life. He says that before the age of ten, he sometimes experienced "a sort of ecstasy of curiosity and hope". Intermediate and gradual expansions of consciousness can manifest in many ways. Expanded self-perception of high feelings in children may be a relevant sign. This kind of phenomenon accompanied Bucke at various times until the climax in 1872 described in the above account.

The death of the mother at age eight and a feeling of dissatisfaction due to the circumstances of the teenage life made Bucke leave home at the age of sixteen in search of new possibilities. In this movement, he even uses the words "to live or die as might happen". For five years he wandered long stretches of the United States, sought work literally from north to south and from east to west, acting on farms, railroads, steamboats and in the placer diggings of Western Nevada. He suffered starvation, freezing, and once fought for his life half a day with Shoshone Indians on the banks of the Humboldt River in Utah.

This pilgrimage made some writers of biographical notes give him the label of an adventurer, but above all other important features and traits of personality such as willpower, modesty to take on any work, love of freedom and the ability to take the initiative and take life in his hand. We cannot forget that a sensitive person manifested these traits from infancy and interested in the depth of human consciousness.

A severe accident seems to have been a turning point for Bucke to start recycling in his life months later. The brief description of the episode recorded in the official biographical sketch found at Western University is transcribed below.

*"In 1856 Bucke traveled to the Sierra Nevada where he joined forces with the prospectors Allen and Hosea Grosh. Hosea died within the year of blood poisoning, and in 1857 Bucke and Allen Grosh were lost in a snowstorm. They went 5 days and 4 nights without food or fire until they arrived at a small mining camp. Grosh died of exhaustion and exposure, while Bucke recovered, despite losing one foot and part of the other to severe frostbite (Western Archives, 2017, p.4)."*

Bucke lost his father at age 19, in 1856, in the midst of his absence. The set of experiences of suffering could shake up most people, but found in that young man an already expanded consciousness, above average, and

the young man's response was to make recycling decisions. It seems that he decided to return to a life centered on the study of human morality and the care of people.

By speculation, one might venture to say that the snow survival effort, coupled with the sensitivity developed in childhood and other positive traits of his personality, helped him to resume humanitarian and spiritual tendencies. The present hypothesis in this chapter sheds light on the possibility that these earlier circumstances constituted the main propitiating basis for the course that led Bucke to meet the experience of cosmoconsciousness in 1872. We can also speculate whether there were moments of spiritual elevation and significant expansions of consciousness regarding existential values accompanying the survival effort in the snow.

Bucke returned to Canada in 1858. Beginning adulthood, he inherited the small property of his deceased mother and this money allowed to him to spend some years studying. Bucke entered McGill University's medical school in Montreal, where he graduated with honors in 1862, at age 25, with the thesis entitled *The Correlation of Vital and Physical Forces*. In the years 1862-63, he completed his post-graduate studies in London (University College) and Paris (*Collèges des Médecins*) where he specialized in psychiatry.

He returned to Canada in 1864 and married Jessie Maria Gurd in 1865. He settled down to practice medicine in Sarnia, Ontario, for the next ten years. Bucke and his wife had eight children.

Bucke was appointed Medical Superintendent at the *Provincial Asylum for the Insane*, the new mental hospital in Hamilton in 1876. He was transferred to the *Asylum for the Insane* of the Ontario Hospital in London where he remained in the position of superintendent for twenty-five years until his death in 1902. He was very successful in the profession he chose. He pioneered several practices, published several articles, and presented many lectures in associations of medicine and psychology.

Bucke was a co-founder of the University of Western Ontario School of Medicine. He was appointed Professor of Nervous and Mental Illness in 1882 and was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Bucke gave the opening lecture of the year at McGill University upon request of the faculty of medicine in 1891. He became chairman of the Psychological Section of the British Medical Association in 1897 and was also elected president of the American Medical-Psychological Association in 1898.

The professional trajectory already demonstrated that his personality had a great capacity to offer contributions and it was based on Bucke's deepened humanitarian sense. His development in medicine advanced in parallel with the development of research on personal experience with the phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness that occurred in 1872 and continued to materialize the book that he was writing step by step.

The encounter with Walt Whitman's thought, and then with him personally, was decisive for the enrichment of Bucke's consciousness, probably also to precipitate personal experience with the phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness and indeed to define methodological options in the book *Cosmic Consciousness*.

Bucke read Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in 1867 and met Whitman for the first in Camden, New Jersey in 1877. It seems that there was a potentiating effect of Whitman's expansions of consciousness, conveyed by poetry, acting on the psychic phenomena manifested by Bucke and on his own written material. Bucke was very sensitive to the contents and meanings of those readings. The succession between reading and the experience of cosmoconsciousness that occurred in 1872 draws attention to this hypothesis.

Again, Bucke's scientific and analytical sense prevailed, translating this friendship into the biography with the title *Whitman* published in 1883 and becoming his literary executor to take care of his posthumous publications. Before that, Bucke had already advanced in depth on other aspects of human consciousness in the book *Man's Moral Nature*, published in 1879.

Here is the dedication to Whitman in *Man's Moral Nature*:

*I dedicate this book to the man who inspired it – to the man who of all men past and present that I have known has the most exalted moral nature – to Walt Whitman (Bucke, 1879, p. v).*

Like Whitman, Bucke saw the sense of life directly linked to the value of consciousness, and this applied to the people around him. Great friendships and ease relationship with other great personalities represented milestones in his life. There was dialogue with different thinkers of his time and Bucke also became a reference to several others who succeeded him.

Pyotr Demianovich Ouspensky (1878-1947), the spokesman for George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866-1949), devoted himself to this study in the book *Tertium Organum* (1911), in chapter XXI, entitled *Cosmic Consciousness of Dr. Bucke*. Currently, this chapter is published separately in book form (Ouspensky, 2005).

Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), a prominent English writer and pacifist of the first half of the twentieth century, develops the concept of mysticism. She considers the consistent influence of Bucke's new proposition of cosmic consciousness in her classic book published in 1911, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (Underhill, 1911, p. 193, 255).

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), a famous English writer and also a philosopher, in his classic work *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946, p. 81), considers the consistent Bucke's reference to conceptualize and categorize the higher stages of spiritual knowledge.

William James (1842-1910), an American philosopher, pioneer of American Psychology and psychic researcher, in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (James, 1902, pp. 398-399) transcribes and examines the characteristics of the phenomenon of cosmic consciousness described by Bucke.

In addition to those cited above, Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), Edgar Mitchell (1930-2016), and several other influential personalities referred to Bucke's contribution.

Despite being recognized as important references for mystical and academic knowledge, none of these personalities gave a sign of having taken a more detailed examination and profiteering of the methodology and fundamentals proposed by Bucke.

Bucke carefully describes the hypothesis for the possible physiology of mental images of different categories (*percepts*, *recepts*, and *concepts*) to ground the general functioning of the development of human cognition and the consequent characterizations of simple consciousness, self-consciousness and even the manifestation of cosmoconsciousness. In the same context, he well places the problem of the phenomenon of intuition, but still leaves several gaps with research problems.

Another relevant aspect that occupies most of the structure of the book is the comparative analysis of forty-nine people who may have had the same or similar experience as the author. Among these, Bucke classifies fourteen personalities who have experienced cosmoconsciousness with a higher degree of certainty. Another thirty-five candidates underwent the same type of analysis with a lower level of certainty, or at intermediate stages in the development of the phenomenon.

Bucke's analysis is exquisite and allows for a brilliant approach to see the manifestation of the phenomenon as it is. The result of applying this method constitutes a relevant contribution to phenomenology. Somehow, those people were evaluated by the traits of personality and by the characteristics of the manifestation of the phenomenon, according to rudiments of what can now be called conscientimetry (Vieira, 1996).

Bucke creates a new cosmovision on the breadth of the experience of cosmoconsciousness and human development hypotheses. In his book, he utilized resources from the field of logic and the scientific perspective in his time. *That is not a movement toward mysticism, but rather the reverse.*

His challenge was to speculate in the field of a science of consciousness that did not yet exist. Even today, this task is still arduous. Bucke anticipated several analyzes beyond his time, advancing on (1) theories of the mental images, (2) cognitive hypotheses on the perception of colors, (3) the evolution of the language and its relations with consciousness, (4) hypothesis to investigate the evolution of levels of consciousness, (5) theory about the emergence and classification of categories of levels of consciousness, and especially (6) the very notions of consciousness, self-consciousness and *expansion of consciousness*, among other exercises of scientific logic. Bucke gathered the most advanced information available in the nineteenth century. He did the best he could and what was within his reach.

According to this analysis, it would not be correct to consider him a mystical man.

The phenomenon is not mystical or scientific in and of itself. The definition of these categories will come from the attitude of the experimenter/observer.

The people who conclude by qualifying Bucke in the category of mysticism did not probably lean on the analysis of his work. If the reader does not make a detailed reading of the book *Cosmic Consciousness* and only

be impressed by the original account and by the ideas it deems incomprehensible, it will also tend to a mystical pre-consideration. Bucke's hypotheses are not easy to understand. Not reading them or not understanding them can result in mediocre opinion formation.

Attenuation of this situation is merely the fact that at that time and even today there is the apriorism of classifying any mention of psychic and exceptional phenomena in the category of mysticism. Again, the phenomenon is not mystical in and of itself. Mysticism, too, is not the simple absence of a scientific attitude, for in mediocrity it may be a term employed by purely unthinking prejudice. Authentic mystical experience is phenomenologically rich but lacks research methodology and refutation.

Bucke's life example, combining depth of sentiments and methodological systematization, demonstrates that the scientific attitude does not necessarily exclude deep involvement with the phenomenon, which the person of a mystical approach could claim exclusivity. On the other hand, the scientific and methodological attitude tends to deconstruct the conservative perspective of the notions acquired in experience. Science, by its very nature, can be destructive of old and stagnant concepts in consciousness itself.

## II – Cosmoconsciousness: Terminology and Phenomenology

In this part of the text, we would like to ask the reader's permission to start from the base launched by Bucke and then present this author's current hypotheses in the study of cosmoconsciousness.

Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), philosopher, English socialist poet, and friend of Bucke, used the term 'cosmic consciousness' for the first time (Rechnitzer, 1994). Carpenter studied religion in the East and made the derivation of the Eastern term 'universal consciousness'. Bucke borrowed the term from his friend and consolidated its use.

Currently, the terms "cosmic consciousness" and "cosmoconsciousness" are synonymous.

The term 'expansion of consciousness' may also be synonymous with 'cosmic consciousness' when referring to maximal expansion. However, the term 'expansion of consciousness' is best used to refer to the expansive intermediate phenomena, or the gradual *expansion of consciousness* that precedes, or characterizes, the developmental process of the parapsychic person before reaching cosmoconsciousness.

According to Vieira (2002, p. 133), "*cosmoconsciousness is the inner condition or perception of consciousness of the Cosmos, life and the order of the Universe; the indescribable intellectual, ethical exultation, when the consciousness feels the living presence of the Universe and becomes one with it, in a single, indivisible unity*".

In his book *Projectiology* (2002), Waldo Vieira defines cosmoconsciousness using several elements taken from Bucke's account cited at the beginning of this chapter. William James also points out the same features that have become a reference in characterizing the occurrence of the maximal manifestation of this phenomenon in the book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902, p. 398).

The consistency of the account, the categories of characteristics observed by Bucke, and the extensive research on the manifestation of cosmoconsciousness in other personalities have left strong references in their time and to the leading researchers to date.

The hypothesis about the mental images functioning (*percepts, receipts, and concepts*) is one of Bucke's most interesting contributions and maybe the least valued up to now.

Mental images are component elements of the mental body of consciousness (*mentalsoma*), functioning as vehicles that operate essential processes and are carriers of evolving and determining content for the *expansion of consciousness*, such as meanings, sentiments, moral traits, and the cognition in general.

The subject below will address phenomenological aspects of cosmoconsciousness and, following Bucke's inspirations, will discuss fundamentals of mental imagery using current hypotheses.

*If the cosmoconsciousness phenomenon manifests the perception of the reality of the Cosmos, what is included in it?*

1. The perceiver, who perceives. It is an integral consciousness that has multiple attributes, that interacts through energies, which is holosomatic, multidimensional and multiexistential. The perception of the broad reality includes the perception of oneself and the world around.

2. The Cosmos that is perceived. In the present ignorance, superficial speculation about the content of the Cosmos may include the existence of countless consciousnesses at various evolutionary levels (from proto-consciousnesses to the prime consciousness, the equivalent of what can be called god), the existential times of these consciousnesses (present, past and future), the different existential dimensions (materials, energies, multiple universes), and other unknown elements.

Here are some synonyms of cosmoconsciousness, not necessarily exact: a touch of the infinite; absolute moment; absolute *Tao* (Taoism); ascendant self-transcendence; climax experience; conscial big-bang; cosmic awareness; cosmic consciousness; cosmic identification; cosmic mind; expanded consciousness; experience of atemporality; extratemporal moment; *fana* or annihilation (Sufism); global conscial hyperacuity; *kensho*; mentalsomatic projection (projectiology); *nirvana* or extinction (Buddhism); oceanic sentiment; *samadhi* or conjunction (Yoga); *samadhi* consciousness; *satori* or illumination (Zen-Buddhism); spiritual union; supercosmic consciousness; superlucid consciousness; supermind; supramental consciousness; total interfusion; transconsciousness; *unio mystica* (Eastern 'mysticism'); universal mind; *wu* (Chinese).

The phenomenon of the *expansion of consciousness* seems to be the primary *effect* that characterizes the intermediate phenomena before the major phenomenon of cosmoconsciousness. In theory, cosmoconsciousness corresponds to the *maximal expansion of consciousness effect*.

The *expansions of consciousness* can be classified into at least three categories depending on the multiple degrees of magnitude and complexity between the stage of self-consciousness and cosmoconsciousness:

1. **Partial.** The *partial expansion of consciousness* can be characterized starting from the minimal amplification of one or more conscial attributes, in varying degrees, temporarily or permanently. After that, the amplifying effect of the cosmic paraperception proper to the initial stages of cosmoconsciousness may or not occur. This category represents a common manifestation between people when one exerts one or more attributes in a way above the normal, but still, it is possible to occur significant deviations in relation to the reality and to moral values.

2. **Integral.** The *integral expansion of consciousness* can be characterized starting from the minimal expansion of a set of conscial attributes, in varying degrees, temporarily or permanently, generating an integrated or significant effect of amplification of the cosmic paraperception proper to the intermediate stages before cosmoconsciousness. This expansive integral effect can be perceived at lower levels to higher levels of manifestation. This category represents a rare manifestation that requires higher levels of conscial energy, elevation of moral quality, and cosmobiological sense of reality.

3. **Maximal.** The *maximal expansion of consciousness* can be characterized by the maximal magnification of a set of conscial attributes, temporarily or permanently, generating a significant effect of amplifying the cosmic paraperception, constituting the attainment of the cosmoconsciousness phenomenon. This category represents a very rare manifestation, which demands the highest levels of conscial energy and the maximum convergence between the perception of reality and the intellect, resulting in the sense of oneness with the Cosmos.

In the present hypothesis, the *expansion of consciousness*, in itself, is not a phenomenon of the *conscial attribute* category. The *expansion of consciousness* seems to be an 'effect' resulting from the exercise of conscial attributes, especially of perception and a kind of intellect apparently fully adjusted to the perception of reality.

The category of *conscial attribute* refers to essential functions or characteristics directly related to elements of concrete existence in the physiology of consciousness. For example, perception (related to the existence of *percepts and parapercepts*), memory (related to the existence of *engrams*), imagination (related to the existence of *imagos*), and so on.

The notion of *effect* on the paraphysiology of consciousness refers to the indirect consequence of the exercise of one or more conscial attributes. For example, lucidity, *expansion of consciousness*, sleep, among others.

The qualitative factor of the *consciousness expansion effect* seems to be produced by the qualitative correspondence between (1) the contents perceived by the consciousness and (2) the contents produced by the consciousness.

For example, in the hypothesis raised here, when my thoughts and sentiments about myself correspond to the reality of what I am, at this moment the *consciousness expansion effect* would advance one or more units. Likewise, when my base of intellectual thought, sentiments, and energies approaches the reality around me very closely, the tendency is to take a perceptive and synergistic potentiation characterizing the *consciousness expansion effect*.

Thought evolves in consciousness as a result of the capacity for symbolization, and precisely because of this it differs from the manifestation of sentiments and energies that do not require symbolic or representative functioning to manifest themselves.

The most significant challenge in developing the *expansions of consciousness* seems to be the re-education of thought or intellect. In the present human condition, this problem is reflected in the manifestations of ethics, morality, the ego's phenomenological coherence about itself and related to the surrounding reality, that is, the internal coherence of consciousness between the very elements of thoughts, sentiments, and energies.

The human capacity to symbolize through images can create mental representations closer or more distant from reality. In this case, '*imago*' is the term attributed by this author to refer to the mental image represented or produced by consciousness (Schlosser, 2011). The distance from reality is the challenge to be overcome by the intellect.

The path of intellect approximation toward reality seems to be one of the keys to developing the *expansion of consciousness*. Whitman's poetry seems to be an example of the expression of this approximation of reality. Of course, there are many other ways of approaching reality. Somehow, the poetic side has aided Bucke's expansions of consciousness since childhood.

In the culture of mysticism and religious rites, contemplation and the pursuit of integration with experience are examples of ways of approaching reality and can provoke the effects of the *expansion of consciousness*.

However, the same results can be achieved without the ideological burden of these traditions. Using a technical basis and with universalistic ethical intentions (cosmoethics), anyone can, in theory, reach cosmoconsciousness without the need to submit to old ideologies.

It is worth emphasizing here two distinct categories of intellect in the present analysis: (1) the *convergent intellect* in relation to reality and (2) the *divergent (deviant) intellect* from reality.

The basis for the imageticological hypothesis of the *expansion of consciousness* lies in the functioning of two basic categories of mental images (Schlosser, 2011) differentiated into *percepts* (formed by perceptual capture) and *imagos* (formed by the imagistic production of consciousness itself). The *parapercepts* are the mental images relative to the content of the perception of *parapsychic phenomena* and are also included in the category of the *percepts*. When the content of the *imagos* tends to increase correspondence with the content of the *percepts* and *parapercepts*, it would be possible to provide the *consciousness expansion effect* to the perception of reality.

Most probably, at this same point also arises the tendency to the sense of unification of the consciousness to the Cosmos as a result of the convergence and the integration between *percepts* and *imagos*.

This attempt to formulate a hypothesis on the basis of the paraphysiology of mental images is paralleled in Bucke's assumptions when he studies the relations between *percepts* and *recepts*. That is, research is taking place at the level of mental images.

It seems plausible to try to ground the *expansion of consciousness* through the study of mental images, for they can provide explanations for various phenomenological effects and bear meanings, including the moral and ethical content so valued in Bucke's research.

The studies on mental images conducted by Piaget (1896-1980), Vygotsky (1896-1934), Saussure (1857-1913) and others are posterior to Bucke's hypotheses, which gain in originality and merit since he had no such references.



### III - Perspectives for the Study and Development of Expansions of Consciousness and Cosmoconsciousness

In this part of the text, we are simply going to look for a way of not neglecting to say the main analysis on the subject within the natural limitations to the dimension of the chapter.

The proposal will highlight the main contributions of Bucke (1 to 5) in the form of perspectives brought or inspired by him and also include others (6 to 9) according to the view of this author.

#### 1. Perspective of the Systematization of Studies and Research

Bucke brings the perspective to create a research attitude in the face of exceptional experience and the parapsychic phenomenon. This perspective is materialized in the script of his book and follows the opposite direction of other historical possibilities like occultism, esoterism and even religious interpretation. In summary, the main issue seems to be the overcoming of the mystical tendency in the approach of the research of the consciousness.

It may be possible classifying Bucke's study into a phenomenological branch, notably by his attempt to discuss the universalization of the phenomenon's existence and its meanings by gaining independence from the personalities examined as subjects of experience.

He also systematizes the study of cosmoconsciousness and proposes the ordering of the value of experience and its record. He proposes an evolutionary taxonomy (simple consciousness, self-consciousness, and cosmoconsciousness) and discusses a hypothesis based on the existence and functioning of the mental image as a taxon. The categories of taxa identified are the *percepts* and the *recepts*. In addition to the theoretical effort and the exposition of personal casuistry, Bucke presents data and proposes a systematic analysis of the manifestation of cosmoconsciousness in forty-nine personalities throughout history.

#### 2. Perspective of Moral and Ethical Development Toward Cosmoconsciousness

The results of Bucke's research point to the tendency of the more advanced human manifestation, as in the case of cosmic consciousness, to result from the evolution of people's ethical and moral qualities.

The personalities studied by Bucke in his book are examples of this possibility. The hypothesis of the cumulative evolution of *percepts* and *recepts* loaded with an enormous diversity of moral content information captured from people and collectivities could create a potential condition for the *expansion of consciousness* of a more advanced personality.

In other words, realizing and becoming more sensitive to the moral qualities of the personal micro-universe and the universe of surrounding consciousnesses can mean synonymous with the potential for *consciousness expansion*. The application of the hypothesis, developed above, of the *convergent intellect* on moral perception deserves, in this case, investigation and practice.

#### 3. Perspective of the Approximation Toward Conscious Reality and the Cosmos

In Bucke's perspective, the *integral expansions of consciousness* (intermediary stages) and cosmoconsciousness lead one to realize, in his personal micro-universe, possibilities and magnifications that would be infeasible outside these phenomena. The expanded contents are feelings, cognitions, and perceptions of the most valuable essences for the evolving consciousness.

Contrary to what one might think, the *expansions of consciousness* are not ephemeral experiences, but rather they are learning that tends to become permanent in a high percentage and, in general, modify the life of the experimenter definitively.

The core of the expansion is internal and consistent; otherwise, it would not occur. The permanence of the expansion and the magnification of the perceptions lead the person to become more effective in the fraternal and social manifestations.

This effect is opposed to the notion of isolation or alienating contemplation. The authentic *expansion of consciousness* occurs by more consistent traits, and the parapsychic person no longer needs to isolate himself excessively to develop the expansions. It is worth remembering that Bucke was an active physician.

The possibilities for the *expansion of consciousness* are in the consciousness itself waiting for maturation for the fullest manifestation, and this includes the approximation toward the reality of oneself and the world around.

The cosmoconsciousness experience allows perceiving and thinking that the existence of the most evolved consciousnesses occurs regardless the human ideologies.

The perception of the Cosmos as a "living presence," described by Bucke in his account, may be related to the effect of perceiving a universe of consciousnesses around, from protoconsciousnesses, unicellular beings to the most evolved extraphysical consciousnesses, all these permanently involving us in their energy fields.

#### 4. Perspective on the Stabilization of More Evolved Levels of the Human Being

The manifestation of a *parapsychic phenomenon* or *paraphenomena* in the human consciousness can occur (1) in a more or less habitual way, in varied frequencies and compatible with the level of attributes and constitutive traits of the personality under study, or (2) quite rarely, characterizing *parapsychic extrapolation* of the person's average abilities.

The cosmoconsciousness paraphenomena analyzed by Bucke in the forty-nine personalities throughout history can be considered experiences of parapsychic extrapolation in the life of the majority of these people. That is, they are unique experiences of expanding consciousness far above the habitual perceptual capacity of those subjects.

On the other hand, Bucke leads us to speculate about the possibility of the human being to evolve into a more permanent consciencial state where the perception of the Cosmos would be amplified, stabilized and lasting.

In contrast, the occurrence of the cosmoconsciousness paraphenomena in humanity has occurred in peaks of experience, at times of shorter duration. Many of these people have already demonstrated a certain level of *expansion of consciousness*, stabilized, and above average for humanity. This condition is already quite favorable, yet it still seems to be only an intermediate stage before reaching full cosmoconsciousness.

It remains for us imagining what life would be like at this most evolved and stabilized level.

#### 5. Perspectives of Ideological Differentiation

Bucke's movement develops the clear intention of studying cosmic consciousness under the hypothesis that it is a universal phenomenon. He created a phenomenological research style and managed to avoid contamination by religious and mystical ideologies in his procedures, analyzes, and interpretations.

There is a small passage in the 1872 report which is quite significant and striking in the analysis of the experience of cosmic consciousness which reflects the strength of the new independent approach that was being initiated at that time. The following is the small repeated passage from the account already transcribed at the beginning of this chapter:

*"... Among other things he did not come to believe, he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, ..."*

Bucke excludes the need for belief, given the clear evidence of the phenomenon treated by the category of fact. From a methodological point of view, this attitude does not guarantee the elimination of scientific failure. But from the ideological point of view, Bucke's decision to opt for the strength of the investigation of experience excludes the possibility of accepting a religious or mystical approach.

Somehow, there seems to be a parallel with Descartes' daring when he announces his philosophical-scientific conclusion independent of the church's authorization: "*Cogito ergo sum.*"

The importance of this attitude also lies in the fact that the phenomenon of cosmic consciousness lies at the foundation of some religions and, with Bucke, begins to be studied under a new phenomenological approach and with a scientific perspective.

## 6. Perspective of Lucid Investigations Outside the Human Body (OBEs)

All the research brought by Bucke refers to the occurrence of cosmic consciousness among human beings in their earthly lives, in the so-called intraphysical dimension. Despite this and using honesty in the face of phenomenological information, there is an account (Vieira, 1995, pp. 215-222) of the occurrence of the same phenomenon during out-of-body experiences (OBE), and also the insertion of a chapter on cosmoconsciousness in the field of study of Projectiology (Vieira, 2002, pp. 133-139).

The main thesis of these studies argues that the nature and origin of virtually all parapsychic phenomena are extraphysical and cosmic consciousness is no different. In other words, when a person can technically verify, with full lucidity, during the out-of-body experience, the self-induced phenomena of the *expansion of consciousness* and cosmoconsciousness, it is possible to find higher potentials and optimizations if compared to the same phenomena occurring in the intraphysical human condition.

It is necessary to achieve significant elevation in the levels and quality of the consciential energy if an experimenter intends to accomplish the *expansion of consciousness* during an out-of-body experience. The foundations and techniques of consciential energy mobilization are included in the same studies.

Repeated lucid experiences, outside the body, carry some risk of the person developing some alienation from human life. The *expansions of consciousness* and the cosmoconsciousness do not bring this risk because precisely the amplification of the discernment and the cosmovision takes place. The result, in general, is the development of the attitude and the fraternal, active, altruistic sense of practical renewal of life and projects to help people and collectivities.

Following the perspective brought by Bucke, we now have the possibility of advancing the investigation of extraphysical cosmoconsciousness and bring those studies to the public soon. At the moment, this author is working on this project.

## 7. Perspective of the Application of Gradual Expansions of Consciousness in Daily Life

The study of the cosmoconsciousness development brings the perspective of understanding, categorizing and seeking the daily exercise of the intermediate *expansions of consciousness*. The initial effects can be obtained by merely re-educating attitudes and sentiments through the improvement of personal morality and its empathic application in social life. The more advanced effects may also include the permanent manifestation of sets of parapsychic phenomena accessible in daily practices.

The essential task is the study of the functioning (paraphysiology) of attributes and personality traits capable of generating the *expansion of consciousness effect*. Among several possible aspects in the study of this functioning, (1) the moral nature and (2) the perceptions have particular relevance.

The elevated human moral nature reflects the refined ability to adjust one's conduct to the perception of reality of oneself and other consciousnesses. The permanent ability to re-educate personal moral traits and improve perceptions are indispensable exercises. The authenticity and coherence between thoughts and sentiments, and also between perceptions and imagination are examples of elemental functioning to be perfected in the personality.

Perceptions can evolve from physical sensations to paraperceptions through parapsychic phenomena. For example, this author has researched and practiced the following progression (Schlosser, 2017): (1) cosmovision in everyday life, (2) practice of a paraperceptual modality, (3) practice of a set of paraperceptual modalities, (5) out-of-body experiences with self-lucidity above that of the ordinary waking state, (6) technical mastery of the expansion of initial self-lucidity, (7) self-awareness about the functioning of paraphenomena, and (8) training to expand consciousness during out-of-body experience.

## 8. Perspective of Differentiation of Phenomenological Categories

The task of differentiating the *expansion of consciousness* and cosmoconsciousness from other parapsychic phenomena is challenging.

There is no doubt that cosmoconsciousness is a rare phenomenon. *Expansions of consciousness* are far more common phenomena. Nonetheless, it is possible that people who are inexperienced or with an exhibitionist intention may attribute to themselves the mistaken manifestation of great *expansions of consciousness* when, in fact, the effect is due to another, less significant phenomenon.

New altered states of consciousness can cause sensations in the inexperienced person and generate an attribution misconception, like the four categories listed below:

1. **ASC.** Altered states of consciousness, generally different from the *expansion of consciousness*, such as daydreams, hypnagogy, hypnopomp, self-hypnosis, hallucination, euphoria, among others.
2. **Discoincidence.** Various effects and sensations obtained in the experiments with the natural or forced paraphysiological discoincidence between the vehicles of manifestation of consciousness (soma, energosoma, psychosoma, mentalsoma), to a greater or lesser degree, specific to each parapsychic phenomenon, before, during or after the out-of-body experience (OBE), according to the projectiological theory (Vieira, 2002, pp. 237-343). The phenomenon of the *discoincidence* of consciousness bodies commonly occurs in rituals and practices of diverse cultures and can generate shocking sensations in the practitioner, for example, in yoga exercises. In this case, the sensation of *discoincidence* can create effects similar to the *expansions of consciousness*, but of short duration, representing only a temporary increase of a certain mode of lucidity.
3. **Psychotropics.** Varied effects of natural or artificial psychoactive drugs such as *ayahuasca*, *LSD*, and others.
4. **Neurochemicals.** Serotonin neurochemical effects or other neurotransmitters in the human body.

The issues mentioned above do not exclude the possibility of simultaneous occurrence of *consciousness expansion effects*, but they do not characterize this effect in itself.

The *expansion of consciousness* tends to generate permanent consequences, learning, and advancement, unity to unity, corresponding to the internal and gradual growth in the evolution of consciousness.

## 9. Perspective for the Current Possibilities in the Research of Expansions of Consciousness and Cosmoconsciousness

Here are at least eight different types of research possible to be developed today:

1. **Self-development:** the attempt to voluntarily develop the *expansion of consciousness*.
2. **Self-observation:** the descriptive self-observation of the spontaneous self-paraphenomena of *consciousness expansion*.
3. **Self-research:** the investigation of oneself to apply self-knowledge to evolve toward the *expansions of consciousness*.
4. **Self-projectiology:** self-research for attempting to develop *consciousness expansion* during out-of-body projections (OBEs).
5. **Bibliography:** research in the specific literature on the phenomena of *consciousness expansion* and cosmic consciousness.
6. **Casuistry:** analysis of reports of experiences of *consciousness expansion*.
7. **Hetero-observation:** direct hetero-observation of close personalities manifesting the paraphenomenon of *expanded consciousness*.
8. **Paraphysiology:** a study of the paraphysiology of cosmoconsciousness.

### Last Words

The nine items in the section above are summaries of the essential message of this chapter. Writing a conclusion would result in repeating them.

From the point of view of immediate and meaningful utility, the subject of the possibility of gradual *expansions of consciousness* in everyday life may be highly recommended for the reader to initiate studies and practices to advance in personal research and development endeavors.

There are innumerable proverbs that recommend patience or the understanding of time to move in the direction of wisdom.

The same seems to occur in the understanding and study of the *expansions of consciousness*. However, the earlier it is possible to reach maturity to move in that direction, the human being is likely to move in a safe direction in its evolution.

The research and development of the *expansions of consciousness* still constitute a very new and challenging field for all of us. With great happiness, we can count on the legacy of Richard Maurice Bucke to inspire us and integrate the living perceptions of the Cosmos.

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