

The Meaning of Being Illuminati

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By

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With a Preface by Giuliano Di Bernardo

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*“Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo
iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna”
Virgil, Eclogues, IV:5*

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FOREWORD

“The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.”

Winston Churchill, Speech at Harvard University,

6 September 1943

This book is intended to fill a signal absence in the literature on the “Illuminati,” namely, the light-seekers/light-bearers, in general, and the illuminist movements that have emerged in the history of esotericism, in particular. Scanning the titles published on the subject of “illumination” over the past several decades, and those scheduled as forthcoming titles, one is startled by how significantly under-researched this issue is, and by the lack of a unified, systematic study of the issue of illumination in its entirety. Moreover, what a tangle one finds when reading over the available literature (including internet publications) on illuminist movements, especially the eighteenth-century Illuminati of Bavaria, and, generally, on esotericism and its relationship with metaphysics! By contrast, the purpose of this book is to refocus the discussion on illumination and the various Illuminati and to restore an important context for understanding the terms. That context, taken for granted for a long time, must be reconsidered from a new perspective. The argument of this book is that “illumination” and the “Illuminati” as descriptors become intellectually incoherent and even objects of arbitrary speculation if we do not recognize and acknowledge their spiritual history and context in its entirety.

It goes without saying that—oddly enough—there are few terms more anathematized than “Illuminati.” It is not uncommon to find the word used for denigration, as when members of the political, economic, and cultural elites are condemned because they are (assumed to be) “Illuminati,” or when—especially after the publication of best-selling novels and conspiracy-theory books about the historical Illuminati of Bavaria—several scholars make the word synonymous with woolly-mindedness, and several pseudo-esotericists use the word in order to speculate on people’s ignorance, imagination, and curiosity by creating pseudo-Illuminati organizations and undercurrent associations.¹ Moreover, in several contemporary and older

¹ Gill, “What is the Illuminati?”

religious publications, not only does one find relatively few scholarly rigorous publications on the topic, but one also realizes that often the notion of a “light-bearer” is associated with evil archetypes (often given the names of “Lucifer” and “Satan”), and one might wonder why that is.

A. From Information to Illumination

Information consists of the facts (the raw data) and their communication as well as the potential interpretation that can be given to these facts. By the term “interpretation,” we mean the assignment of meaning to data. Therefore, information can be defined as data (cognitive stimuli), as content (sensuous and conceptual/abstract objects of conscious processing), and as a message (an event of communication/exchange of data), to which a meaning can be assigned and from which knowledge can be acquired. At the most basic level, information refers to the difference or the distinction between two states, and this difference or distinction underpins the acquisition of knowledge by the conscious being that receives the corresponding information. Consequently, the acquisition of knowledge represents a difference or a distinction, too, for which reason the cyberneticist Gregory Bateson has argued that “information is a difference which makes a difference.”² However, the aforementioned “difference” does not necessarily lead to knowledge, but it has the *potential* to do so, and, therefore, it would be more accurate to argue that information is a difference which is capable of making a difference. Furthermore, it is not difference *qua* difference that can make a difference (namely, lead to knowledge), but it is a *meaningful* difference, namely, an adequately interpreted difference, that can make a difference. As a result, information is a meaningful (or adequately interpreted) difference that can make a difference.

But what exactly does being meaningful mean? A being or a thing is defined to be meaningful if it is related to something that transcends the given being or thing. Hence, a conscious being concerned with the issue of meaning naturally seeks the ultimate source of meaning, the primary meaning, or the meaning of meaning. In fact, this is the deity. If one assumes that the ultimate source of meaning is something other than God, then one is ultimately obliged to argue that imagination is the ultimate source of meaning. But, in contrast to God, imagination cannot *really* create species *ex nihilo*, and, far from being self-sufficient, imagination must ultimately have recourse to reason in order to organize itself and to

² Bateson, *Ecology of Mind*, pp. 315–17.

be able to communicate with other imaginations. The knowledge of and the participation in the ultimate source of meaning is the essence of “illumination.”

The current drift of contemporary scholarship—especially under the influence of an epistemologically and ontologically arrogant strand of thought that is known as “scientism”—is well away from an unfashionable subject like illumination, which essentially overlaps with metaphysics and mysticism. Hence, one finds considerable emphasis on the study of the inanimate nature and the “material culture,” and realizes that many contemporary scholars cannot easily appreciate questions of meaning, purpose, philosophical cosmology, or metaphysics. Instead, many choose to stay safely ensconced in a superficial positivism, which allows them to evade the entire field of traditional metaphysics and to constrain human thought to conventional truths, thus clearly separating “truth” from “reality.” Others proceed even further by proclaiming the dawn of a so-called “post-truth” era. Behind such perspectives is typically a self-complacent nihilism, specifically, a modern variant of nihilism that—in contrast to Nietzsche’s tragic nihilism—celebrates and preaches a way of life without any concern about life’s ultimate meaning and purpose. In fact, it is worth pointing out that the word nihilism comes from the Latin terms “ne” (= “not”) and “hilum” (= “a hilum”), namely, it signifies “uprooted,” or spiritually hovering and disconnected people.

However, a few decades ago, that was not the case: then, mysticism was understood as the culmination and apex of religious experience. For instance, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the American psychologist William James, the English Anglo-Catholic writer and pacifist Evelyn Underhill, the French intellectual René Guénon, the Italian intellectual Baron Julius Evola, the American Christian anarchists Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker Movement in the 1930s, and the French philosopher Simone Weil saw the mystical path of illumination as the immediate spiritual intuition of truth believed to transcend reason and to unite its partakers into a spiritual community wherein both the individuality and the sociality of the human soul are underpinned by the soul’s link with God. In addition, it is important to mention that the renowned French mathematician René Thom (1923–2002), who is the acknowledged father of “Catastrophe Theory”³ and won

³ Catastrophe Theory (CT) is a mathematical theory whose fundamental theme is the classification of critical points of smooth functions. In other words, the goal of CT is to classify systems according to their behavior under perturbation. Thus, CT is a method whereby mathematicians describe and classify systems and events where significant qualitative changes of behavior in the system are caused by

the Fields Medal in 1958, has recognized and acknowledged the importance of metaphysics for the natural sciences by arguing as follows:

Modern science has made the mistake of foregoing all ontology by reducing the criteria of truth to pragmatic success. True, pragmatic success is a source of pregnancy and so of signification. But this is an immediate, purely local meaning. Pragmatism, in a way, is hardly more than the conceptualized form of a certain return to animal nature. Positivism batted on the fear of ontological involvement. But as soon as we recognize the existence of others and accept a dialogue with them, we are in fact ontologically involved. Why, then, should we not accept the entities suggested to us by language? Even though we would have to keep a check on abusive hypostasis, this seems the only way to bring a certain intelligibility to our environment. Only some realist metaphysics can give back meaning to this world of ours.⁴

The quest for illumination, like it or not, has a long history, and it is inextricably linked to the very existence of the human being. In general, the term “existence” signifies the continuity of a being. Consciousness, as consciousness of existence, aims at the preservation of the existence of a given being under the best possible terms. Thus, a conscious being aims at preserving its existence and at improving its existential conditions. Therefore, the intentionality of consciousness operates as an impulse to participate in the world (since consciousness absorbs and assimilates the world) and as pure self-knowledge. These functions take place at four different levels, namely: instinct, experience (based on sense perception), intellect (based on logic, or rule-based reasoning), and spirituality (based on illuminated, meta-logical intuition).

At the level of instinct, conscious activity is minimal, and existence reduces to the two basic instincts, namely, those of survival and reproduction. Instinct is a highly formalized behavioral code that reflects the logic of organic nature. At the level of experience, the intentionality of consciousness is expressed through the functioning of the senses. In fact, a sense is a psychological capacity that provides organisms with data for perception. The senses are oriented towards the external world, with which they connect existence. Experience is about the person finding oneself in some situation, and being aware of it. At the level of intellect, reason plays an active role. Thus, a conscious being perceives and thinks in nonlinear

perturbations, which are represented by control parameters on which the corresponding function depends. For more details, see: Laos, *Topics in Mathematical Analysis and Differential Geometry*.

⁴ René Thom, *Semio Physics*, pp. 218–20.

ways, and it influences perception. At the level of intellect, “illumination” refers to a state in which humans maintain a high level of vigilance (in the sense that their functions of perception and thought are highly alert, and they can direct their attention to what they deliberately choose) and a low level of tension (in the sense that they can maintain a high level of inner peace and self-control). Moreover, at the level of intellect, consciousness processes sensuous data in a scientific way, and, therefore, it explains them and organizes them into systems.

For instance, one of the senses is “touch,” or “somatosensation,” which is a perception that results from activation of neural receptors in the skin, the tongue, the throat, and the mucosa. But what does it really mean that we can touch something? Every time we touch something, we exchange force-carrying particles with it. This is the essence of touching. Specifically, let us consider two electrons. In essence, an electron is a circular standing wave. Electrons, being zero-dimensional, lack spatial extension (that is, they have practically zero volume), and, therefore, they interact with each other by exchanging photons. As two electrons move towards each other, a photon is passed from one to another, and it changes the momentum of both of them, thus pushing them off. Therefore, in contrast to the folk understanding of “touch,” when we say that electrons “touch” each other, we mean that they interact with each other by exchanging a photon. The photon is a quantum of light and the force carrier of the electromagnetic force (the electromagnetic force is the result of the fact that particles with an electric charge exchange photons with each other). Even though photons propagate magnetic fields, they cannot be seen, because they are “virtual particles,” namely, particles that cannot be directly detected and may not obey all of the laws that physicists force all real physical particles to adhere to (for instance, virtual particles do not necessarily need to obey the Einstein energy–momentum relation). In fact, it is not just electrostatic repulsion that prevents atoms from getting close, but it is primarily the Pauli exclusion principle that forces the electrons and the quarks that make up the atom to arrange in shells instead of sitting on top of each other. In other words, since our atoms’ electrons repel objects when they are approximately 10^{-8} m (one eight-billionth of a meter) away from us, we technically never touch anything, but we can feel the force of the resistance. The previous example clarifies the difference between explaining “touch” at the level of experience (namely, empirically) and explaining “touch” at the level of intellect (namely, scientifically).

Moreover, those who have achieved high levels of intellectual development through meditation and consciousness-expanding practices exhibit a remarkable difference in their gamma brainwaves, which are the

fastest of brain waves (high frequency) and relate to simultaneous processing of information from various sources. Daniel Goleman, a research psychologist, lecturer, and science journalist who has reported on the brain and behavioral sciences for *The New York Times* for many years, has argued that, most people get gamma brainwaves for a very short period of time when they solve a problem that they have been grappling with, even if it is something that has vexed them for months, but, in the brain of very intellectually developed persons, who have rich experience in meditation, gamma is a lasting state that they experience constantly.⁵ In this case, the term “meditation” is used independently of any particular religious belief system, and it refers to a practice where one uses a technique—such as mindfulness, or focusing one’s mind on a particular object, thought, or activity—in order to train attention and awareness and achieve an intellectually clear and emotionally calm state.

At the level of spirituality, the intentionality of human consciousness is expressed through contemplative or ecstatic illumination, which transcends the levels of instinct, sensory experience, and intellect. In particular, at the level of spirituality, which Plato calls “noesis” (intelligence),⁶ not only has a conscious being achieved to distinguish appearance from reality, to impose the government of reason on one’s emotions, and to develop a scientific consciousness, but one has also cleansed and cured one’s soul, thus being psychologically “open” to a mystical, intuitive communication with the “absolute,” or the good-in-itself. It is worth pointing out that, in the second and the third sections of his essay “Life, Art, and Mysticism,”⁷ the renowned Dutch mathematician and philosopher L. E. J. Brouwer (1881–1966) has recognized and acknowledged the importance of intuitive knowledge, in general, by distinguishing immanent truths, which are suggested by perception, from the transcendent truth, which is primarily approached by discriminating oneself from the sensuous world and breaking the cycle of fear and desire caused by our relationship with the sensuous world. Therefore, mysticism should not be confused with superstition or ignorance; ignorance is mental darkness, and superstition is an attitude that consists of irrational fears and timidity with regard to faith (hence, superstitious individuals try to hide their insecurity and flaws behind formalism and ritualism).

In addition, at the level of spirituality, without succumbing to superstitions or illusions, one is deeply aware of the difference between the “sacred” and the “profane”: the “sacred” is the realm of communion

⁵ Goleman and Davidson, *Altered Traits*.

⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 514a–521b.

⁷ Brouwer, “Life, Art, and Mysticism,” pp. 389–429.

with the “absolute,” the good-in-itself, that is, the ultimate meaning and purpose of existence, whereas the “profane” is the realm of self-centeredness and materialism. The distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane” is intimately related to philosophy, theology, and several esoteric societies (such as those of the Rosicrucians, the Freemasons, the historical Illuminati, etc.). The issues to which I hitherto referred in this Foreword have determined both my scholarly endeavors and the initiatives that I have undertaken in the field of esoteric societies.

Regarding my scholarly consciousness, I would like to mention that it has been primarily formed by my studies and research in mathematics and philosophy. In particular, at the Department of Mathematics of the University of La Verne (California), from which I graduated in 1996, I conducted research in mathematical logic (specifically, in the algebra of k -valued logic and descriptive set theory) and in the foundations of mathematical analysis. During my studies and research at the University of La Verne, the renowned mathematician Professor Themistocles M. Rassias (Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society – London) supervised my mathematical research and thesis, which was published as the Volume 24 of the World Scientific Publishing Company’s Series in Pure Mathematics (1998). My research work in logic and mathematics helped me to appreciate the deep relationship between mathematical and philosophical method. In 1623, the renowned Italian astronomer, physicist, and engineer Galileo Galilei wrote in his essay *Il Saggiatore* (*The Assayer*, as translated by Thomas Salusbury):

Philosophy is written in this grand book—I mean the Universe—which stands continually open to our gaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and interpret the characters in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one is wandering around in a dark labyrinth.⁸

Thus, according to Galileo, it is philosophy that is written in the language of mathematics. In the same spirit, Isaac Newton published his theories of calculus⁹ and celestial mechanics in a book entitled *Mathematical*

⁸ Quoted in: Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, p. 75.

⁹ Calculus consists of two fields, namely, differential calculus and integral calculus. Differential calculus is concerned with curves and slopes; the “slope” of a curve is defined as “rise over run” and is referred to as the “derivative” of a function. Integral calculus is concerned with areas and volumes; areas and volumes

Principles of Natural Philosophy (first published in 1687), thus implying that physics, as “natural philosophy,” is part of a broader philosophical project. My philosophical research, which has earned me a Doctoral Degree in Christian Philosophy from the Academia Teológica de San Andrés de México (which is part of the Ukrainian Christian Orthodox Church of Mexico under Metropolitan Daniel de Jesús Ruiz Flores), includes a combination of ontology and theology, and it underpins my philosophical approach to religion. Thus, I have never looked for a formalistic religion to put all my spiritual awareness into, but I understand religion as a personal, mystical bond with *the* Person (with capital P) who underpins my own personhood and is the transcendent end of my personhood. Having said that, I wish to add that, far from despising doctrinal theology, I aim at restoring doctrinal theology to its original authoritative position as the custodian of the following two existential underpinnings of humanity: firstly, the understanding of God as the embodiment of love (according to Hosea 3:1–5, 1 John 4:16, and 1 Corinthians 13:4–7), and, secondly, the sensitivity to and the pursuit of the real truth, namely, an ontologically grounded truth that is accessible to the human being and endows the human individual with universality.

On the other hand, literarily poor thrillers and debased conspiracy-theory and mystery books profane humanity’s great spiritual traditions and disorientate people. For instance, both the huge commercial success of Dan Brown’s novel *The Da Vinci Code* (published in 2003 by Doubleday in the U.S.A. and by Transworld and Bantam Books in the U.K.) and the large number of the people who took it literally—not as fiction, but as if it were a real revelation—are noteworthy phenomena. In fact, from the perspective of a serious esotericist and a scholarly rigorous student of cultural anthropology and spirituality, the hordes of those tourists who visit the Louvre Museum, the Saint-Sulpice Church in the Saint-Germain-des-Près district, in Paris, the Château de la Vilelette outside Paris, and the Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland looking for secret vaults and occult symbols resemble the ragged knights of the round table in the brilliant 1975 British comedy film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, which was written and performed by the Monty Python comedy group, parodying degenerated chivalric and/or occult systems. If I were to wish anything for their “pilgrimage tourism,” I would wish them not to encounter any carnivore rabbits or any terrifying “knights who say ‘Ni,’” and, since they look for the “holy feminine” praised in Dan Brown’s outrageous narrative, to

are referred to as integrals of functions. See, for instance: Kramer, *The Nature and Growth of Modern Mathematics*.

finally find themselves in the dominion of the naughty chatelaine Zoot and her scandalously innocent ladies-in-waiting, and to indulge themselves with the pleasures that poor Sir Galahad did not manage to experience because he was overly preoccupied with the sword of Camelot.

B. Cosmic Complexity and the Exceptionality of the Human Being

Both natural sciences and philosophy indicate that humanity is a wonderful exception, a really exceptional being, in the cosmos. If we summarize the history of physics over the last three thousand years, we shall realize that the laws of nature can be distilled into four fundamental forces: gravity (namely, a natural phenomenon by which all things with mass or energy are brought towards each other; it helps us to calculate the motions of celestial bodies), electromagnetism (namely, a type of physical interaction that occurs between electrically charged particles; it has given us the wonders of the electric age), weak nuclear force (namely, the mechanism of interaction between subatomic particles that is responsible for the radioactive decay of the subatomic particles, and, thus, it plays an essential role in nuclear fission, which is a form of nuclear transmutation), and strong nuclear force (namely, the mechanism that binds the component particles of an atom's nucleus). Hence, the following question emerges: is there a fifth force? Modern physics has managed to scientifically confirm the theories that explain the aforementioned four forces, but it has not discovered a fifth physical force. However, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, physicists discovered a new energy source larger than our galaxy itself: "dark energy." In particular, physicists have realized that, in our universe, about seventy-three percent of the total energy is in the form of dark energy, known as the "energy of nothing," which blows the galaxies further and further apart from each other. Dark energy is the energy of the "Big Bang" itself, and, in fact, it was dark energy that made the universe (being originally a very hot, small, and dense mix of the four fundamental forces) "bang," according to the Big Bang theory.

Intimately related to the notion of "dark energy" is the notion of "dark matter." Dark matter is a peculiar form of material that neither emits, reflects, nor absorbs electromagnetic radiation (light and all the different variations of light, like, for instance, radio waves and gamma rays). Thus, in this case, "dark" means "invisible." For instance, if there is a cloud of dark matter between a source of light and an eyeball (observer), the light that is emitted from the source just goes straight through the cloud of dark

matter without bouncing off or interacting in any way with the dark matter, and, thus, it is seen by the eyeball (observer) that is on the other side of the dark matter. By contrast, normal matter (of which the common substances studied in physics, chemistry, and biology are made) appears “dark” to our eyes, but this is due to the fact that it absorbs or reflects light, namely, it interacts with light (and, hence, it is visible). The reason why, in the twentieth century, physicists started believing that dark matter exists is that, whenever they look in the universe, there is evidence of something that they cannot directly see but that has gravitational effects on things that physicists can actually see. In fact, dark matter explains gravitational lensing (namely, the fact that gravity from matter between us and galaxies bends light) and galaxy cluster collisions.

About twenty-three percent of the universe is “dark matter,” namely, a peculiar invisible form of matter (thought to be non-baryonic in nature, being composed of some mysterious subatomic particles). Stars, made out of hydrogen and helium, make up about four percent of the universe. We, the higher elements of the universe, namely, humans, made out of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, nitrogen, calcium, phosphorus, etc., make up only about zero point zero three (0.03) percent of the universe. In other words, even from the perspective of physics, humanity is the exception in a universe that is mainly made out of dark energy and dark matter.

Our awareness of the exceptionality of the human nature becomes even stronger if we bear in mind the issues of consciousness and spirituality. Consciousness is not just a single concept but a set of concepts, since it is a state in which a being can understand, process, and modify one’s internal and external environment. Thus, consciousness is manifested by the creation of multiple feedback loops whereby a conscious being can create models of oneself in the historical and the physical space-times with regard to other beings in order to pursue certain goals. Animals can understand their position in space, and many of them can also understand their relationships with other beings, but only humans can understand the future and restructure their spatio-temporal existential conditions according to their intentionality, thus creating history.

According to the “consciousness model” of magic, thoughts can be objectivated and become reality. In simpler terms, both the outer life and the inner life of the human being is a reflection of one’s intentional thoughts, and, thus, a “magician” is a person who actively does things instead of just thinking or talking about them. Not only has quantum physics proved that, at the quantum level, matter reacts to the “observer,” namely, to one’s thoughts, but also everyone can easily confirm that one’s immediate environment (for instance, one’s home, the activities that one

performs, one's profession, etc.) is an expression of the fundamental significations and the major driving forces of one's inner life. Hence, from an elevated perspective, "magic" means wisdom put into action with faith and focused thought in order to produce history according to one's will.¹⁰ This notion of magic is explicitly referred to in the Bible, specifically, in Matthew 2:1–12, where we read that three Magi visited and worshiped Jesus Christ, the Messiah, after his birth, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

In principle, magic is the traditional science of the secrets of nature and of the human being. It is the old name of the subject-matter of the ancient occult initiates and intellectuals of India, Chaldea, Persia, Egypt, and Homeric Greece. The French occultist and alchemist François Jollivet-Castelot (1874–1937) has explained the meaning of magic as follows:

Magic is by no means, as most outsiders imagine, the negation of Science. Quite on the contrary Magic is *Science*, but Science with syntheses, almost integral Science, its horizons being the Absolute, the Infinite in Unity . . . In truth *Magic is the knowledge of the action and the combination of the forces of the Universe . . . the study of their conduct, their involution, their evolution.*¹¹

Hence, the quaternary of ancient magic: "Know, dare, will, keep silent."¹² From the aforementioned "magical" perspective, the Egyptian Sphinx (a mythical animal with a human head, a woman's breast, the loins of a bull, the claws of a lion, and the wings of an eagle) can be interpreted as follows: its human head symbolizes intelligence and knowledge; its claws symbolize daring and action; its loins symbolize will-power, perseverance, and labor; its folded wings symbolize silence.¹³

One of the most creative and thought-provoking scientific disciplines that helps one to understand the dynamics and the peculiarities of human life is quantum biology,¹⁴ which encompasses physics, chemistry, and biology. In fact, quantum mechanics is the most important and most powerful theory in the history of modern science, because quantum mechanics describes the building blocks of physical-biological reality, and it provides us with the rules that inform us about the way in which the

¹⁰ See also: Moro and Myers, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion*; Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism*.

¹¹ Quoted in *The Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences*, p. 305.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹⁴ See, for instance: McFadden and Al-Khalili, *Life On the Edge*.

subatomic world behaves (namely, about the ways in which atoms fit together to make molecules, the ways in which particles come together to make atoms, as well as the properties and the behavior of all these particles). Without quantum mechanics, most of modern technology that we rely on and take for granted today would be impossible because the whole realm of modern electronics (for instance, laptops, CD players, mobile telephones, etc.) ultimately relies on chips (integrated electronic circuits), which, in turn, rely on semiconductors, and we would not understand how semiconductors operate without an understanding of the rules of quantum mechanics.

When scientists investigate physical-biological structures at the nanoscale (namely, the scale of nanometers; one nanometer being one billionth of a meter), they actually work at the edge of quantum mechanics (namely, on the boundary of the world in which the quantum rules start to take effect). Beyond that, scientists can investigate even smaller particles. In the second half of the twentieth century, it was understood that all matter is ultimately made of four building blocks: up and down quarks (which make up the protons and the neutrons, namely, the components of atomic nuclei), electrons (balancing the atomic nuclei), and neutrinos (a neutrino is an elementary particle that interacts only via the weak subatomic force and gravity).

Quantum physics provides us with the rules that inform us about the ways in which atoms fit together to make molecules, and, therefore, organic chemistry necessarily relies on the rules of quantum mechanics. If organic chemistry is scaled-up in terms of complexity, then it will ultimately lead us to the realm of biochemistry and molecular biology, namely, the study of life itself.¹⁵ All living systems are ultimately made of atoms, and, therefore, ultimately, at some very deep level, the rules of quantum mechanics must come into play.

One of the most intellectually challenging and thought-provoking phenomena of quantum physics is quantum tunneling, which has absolutely no analogy in classical physics. From the perspective of classical mechanics, if the energy of a barrier is greater than the energy of the incoming particles, then there is no possibility that any of the particles will reach the other side of the barrier, but, from the perspective of quantum mechanics, the rules of the world are different, and, thus, we have quantum tunneling.

To understand quantum tunneling, one must firstly understand that particles do not have a defined position until they are observed. In fact, in

¹⁵ See: Abbott, Davies, and Pati, eds, *Quantum Aspects of Life*.

quantum mechanics, particles do not have classical properties like “position” or “momentum,” but they are described by a “wave function,” which is a complex-valued probability amplitude, usually denoted by the Greek letter psi, ψ . According to the Born rule, the probability of a particle being observed at a particular location is given by the square of the amplitude of the wave function at that location—symbolically:

$$\text{Probability}(x) = |\text{amplitude}(x)|^2$$

Let us suppose that a particle bounces off a barrier because the energy of the barrier is greater than the energy of the particle. This situation is represented by the wave function reflecting at the boundary. Inside the barrier, the wave function behaves as follows: as the distance into the barrier increases, the amplitude of the wave function decreases exponentially, but the wave function does not actually reach an amplitude of zero. Now, let us consider a different scenario where the barrier is shorter in length. As in the previous case, the amplitude of the wave function will decay inside the barrier. But, because the wave function does not reach an amplitude of zero, the wave function can exit the barrier on the other side. Once the wave function exits the barrier, its amplitude does not decay any more. Therefore, a portion of the wave function passes through each of the two sides of the boundary, and a portion of the wave function reflects at each of the two sides of the boundary. Consequently, there is a nonzero probability that the particle will pass through the barrier to the other side, and there is a nonzero probability that the particle will bounce off the barrier. Furthermore, let us consider a third scenario where the barrier’s length is even shorter. In this case, the wave function does not have as much distance to decay inside the barrier, and, therefore, we have a larger amplitude for the portion of the wave function that exits the barrier. In other words, with this smaller barrier, the particle has a greater probability of passing through and a lower probability of bouncing off the barrier, which is represented by a smaller amplitude for the reflected wave. In general, irrespective of the barrier’s size, and even if the probability of each individual particle passing through a barrier is inversely proportional to the barrier’s size, if there is a very large number of particles (“large” in relation to the barrier’s size), then there is a significant probability that at least some of these particles will pass through the barrier.

In the 1930s and the early 1940s, quantum physicists and mathematicians, such as Werner Heisenberg and Ernst Pascual Jordan, highlighted the importance of quantum mechanics in understanding and explaining biology and, especially, the dynamics and the complexity of the phenomenon of life. However, it is worth pointing out that, unfortunately, for a long period of time after the end of World War II, quantum biology became

disreputable, and the progress of this scientific discipline was slow because the acknowledged father of quantum mechanics, namely, Ernst Pascual Jordan was a Nazi ideologue.

Of all known complex systems that exist in the physical universe, the human brain is the most complex one. If we were to construct a computer that would model the human brain, then that computer would be of the size of a city block, it would have to be cooled down by a river, and it would need a nuclear power plant to energize it (whereas the human brain operates with just about 20 Watts). We can use dynamical systems in order to create a model of the operation of the brain and, in this way, to explain the relationship between the brain and consciousness.

In mathematics, by the term “dynamical system,” we refer to any system whose state evolves with time over a “phase space” according to a fixed rule. The “phase space” of a dynamical system is the set of all possible states of the system. Thus, each point in the phase space corresponds to a different state of the system. A state to which a system finally settles is said to be an “attractor.” In other words, an attractor is a set of numerical values (system states) towards which a system tends to evolve for a wide variety of its starting conditions (initial data) after transient processes. A “strange attractor” represents a trajectory upon which a system runs from situation to situation without ever settling down. A strange attractor, then, is an orbital attractor determined by a function that has mathematical discontinuities. Thus, an attractor is said to be “strange” if it has a fractal structure, namely, a structure that is characterized with self-similarity.¹⁶ In other words, a strange attractor is a dynamic kind of equilibrium, whereas an attractor is a static state of equilibrium.

A system in which the change of the output is not proportional to the change of the input, and, therefore, it cannot be arranged in a straight line, is called “nonlinear.” Nonlinear systems may exhibit chaotic behavior. The best heuristic definition of chaos is that chaos means sensitive dependence on initial conditions. Scientists cannot forecast the precise state of a chaotic system, but chaotic systems trace repetitive patterns that often provide useful information. Hence, often scientists use the term “deterministic chaos.” According to Michael J. Radzicki, deterministic chaos is characterized by self-sustained oscillations whose period and amplitude are non-repetitive and unpredictable, but they are generated by a non-random system.¹⁷ For instance, we do not know exactly where or when tornadoes and hurricanes will strike, but we do know what

¹⁶ See: Peitgen, Jürgens, and Saupe, *Chaos and Fractals*.

¹⁷ Radzicki, “Institutional Dynamics, Deterministic Chaos, and Self-Organizing Systems.”

conditions lead to their occurrence, when and where they are most frequent, and their likely paths. To give a second example, we know that the economy cycles through recessions and booms, but we cannot predict very well the depth or the duration of a particular recession.¹⁸

Neurons (nerve cells) fire a signal when they are activated by incoming signals from other neurons. Each neuron can be considered to represent one variable, and, therefore, in the phase space that models the brain, each neuron is given one dimension. Hence, there are as many dimensions as are the neurons of the human brain (namely, there are a few billion dimensions).¹⁹ Consequently, to the extent that consciousness is related to the activity of these neurons, consciousness can be represented as a point moving within the aforementioned phase space. Regarding the behavior of this point (namely, consciousness), we can draw the following conclusions: (i) Its path is chaotic, in the sense that, even though the overall system is subject to particular laws, the behavior of the point is unpredictable (as a result, we can never totally predict human behavior). (ii) Even though the movement of the point is chaotic, it is not random, because it follows a strange attractor. In this case, the strange attractor is the phenomenon of “personality.” (iii) This model is not algorithmic, in the sense that it is neither predictable nor sequential.

However, the human brain, wondrous though it is, is subject to physical laws and constraints. For this reason, as it has been argued by the renowned British psychiatrist and mind-control expert William Sargant, “simple mechanistic principles,” to a large extent, “underlie many old and new methods of altering the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of men.”²⁰ According to Sargant, “when it is necessary to break up already fixed patterns of thought and behavior,” it may not suffice to use only intellectual arguments, but “emotions may have to be aroused to act as the initial disruptive element, and to create, if possible, special states of brain activity conducive to reversals of old patterns or the more ready implantation of new ones.”²¹ Nevertheless, in his book *Battle for the Mind*, originally published in 1957, William Sargant distinguished his biology-oriented, specifically, brain-oriented, research work and mind-control practices from the entire realm of the human being’s spirituality. In particular, Sargant has argued as follows:

¹⁸ See: Butler, “A Methodological Approach to Chaos.”

¹⁹ See, for instance: Luo, *Neurobiology*; Presti, *Neuroscience*.

²⁰ Sargant, “The Mechanism of ‘Conversion,’” p. 316.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

My concern here is *not* with the immortal soul, which is the province of the theologian, nor even with the mind in the broadest sense of the word which is the province of the philosopher, but with the brain and nervous system, which man shares with the dog and other animals . . . This study discusses mechanistic methods influencing the brain which are open to many agencies, some obviously good and some obviously very evil indeed . . . This book will discuss . . . how new ideas may be implanted and firmly fixed in the minds of those unwilling at first to receive them.²²

The more one's mental life is constrained in the realm of biologically determined operations and the more outer-directed and stable these biologically determined operations are, the more one resembles Pavlov's dog, and, therefore, the more easily one becomes brain-washed. The Russian physiologist Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849–1936), known primarily for his work in classical conditioning, studied salivation in dogs in response to being fed, inserting a small test tube into the cheek of each dog to measure saliva when the dogs were fed. Indeed, he discovered that any object or event that dogs learned to associate with food would trigger the same response. William Sargant expanded Pavlov's model to account for experiences that make people change their world-view suddenly, see themselves as part of a new group, or become vulnerable to ideas very different from their usual assumptions.

However, there is another complex world, which is immensely more complex than the quantum world, and this is the realm of spirituality, in which any kind of physical-biological necessity collapses. Spirituality transcends physicality itself. Even though consciousness is inextricably linked to the brain, and even though, according to John Searle and the foregoing model of brain and consciousness, consciousness can be considered as a higher state of the brain,²³ "spirituality" signifies aspects of being that completely transcend biology, and it is an exclusive attribute of humanity (being intimately related to the aforementioned strange attractor that is called personality). One can understand the life of the human spirit by contemplating intentionality as a suprabiological attribute of human consciousness and by delving into the traditional belief that the concentration of the mind to a particular object/person can attract certain occult properties, according to the principle that "like attracts like," which, in one way or another, underpins the following spiritual quests: (i) the Neoplatonists' quest for one's unification with the "cosmic soul"; (ii) the Taoists' and the Chinese alchemists' teachings according to which there is

²² Sargant, *Battle for the Mind*, pp. xviii, xxiii.

²³ Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science*.

a universal energy, called “Chi,” which can be applied and directed by man; and (iii) the Byzantine hesychasts’ teachings according to which man can and, in fact, should participate in God’s uncreated energy. Inducing “trance” can produce results that have ontological significance, for which reason the aforementioned traditions emphasize the systematic repetition of a statement of intent by reciting a chant, a mantra, or a short standardized prayer. The most exalted aspect of these “energy models” of esotericism consists in the invocation of the divine, which presupposes a religious belief system.

Walach et al., in their thorough scientific research paper “Spirituality,” have argued that, apart from “transcendence,” which is a “common denominator of different concepts and definitions of spirituality,” spirituality can be interpreted as “alignment of the individual with the whole,” and “the Whole would be a transcendent reality as well.”²⁴ Moreover, Walach et al. have clarified the meaning of spirituality as follows:

Spirituality is the experiential realization of a transcendent reality. This is variably called meaning or purpose, sometimes it is called a relationship with a transcendent goal or reality reaching beyond the ego . . . spirituality has at least two core aspects: It refers to a relationship with a reality that reaches beyond the ego. The second aspect is about its experiential manifestation, i.e. a holistic type of knowing that includes cognition, affect, and motivation.²⁵

C. In the Realm of Esoteric Societies

Regarding my initiatives and labors in the controversial and chequered field of esoteric societies, I have to say that, in 1997, in London, I was initiated into Freemasonry in the “Honor Per Onus” Lodge No. 6586 of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), having been “proposed” by the late W. Bro. Theodore Frangos, who was a Grand Officer of the United Grand Lodge of England, a prominent member of the Cypriot-British community of London, and an Archon (honoree) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (my “second” being the late W. Bro. Constantine Drakos, PM, PZ, PMWS, Knight Kadosh). Within six months after my initiation, I was raised to the sublime Degree of a Master Mason. During 1997–99, at Lodge meetings (which were taking place at the Freemasons’ Hall, the headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England, which has been at 60 Great Queen St, London, since 1775), I had

²⁴ Walach, Kohls, von Stillfried, Hinterberger, and Schmidt, “Spirituality,” p. 279.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

several opportunities of meeting interesting and well-intended people and of reading many authoritative Masonic books and historical documents at the Grand Library, where I had the opportunity to personally interact with two brilliant senior members of the UGLE's staff, namely, V.W. Bro. John Hamill (who was then the Grand Librarian of the UGLE) and W. Bro. Julian Perry (who was then the media relations coordinator of the UGLE).

The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) is an internationally respected institution, to which I personally owe a debt of gratitude, but the fact that the UGLE strictly prohibits political and religious discussion in its Lodges and the fact that it cultivates a rather ritualistic and bureaucratic attitude towards Freemasonry have made me realize that the UGLE's conception of "regular Freemasonry" is too restrictive, and that the UGLE deprives the average Lodge of the right to discuss the most significant issues of humanity, namely, ontology, religion, politics, and economics. As a matter of fact, I have come to realize that the distinction between "regular" and "irregular" Freemasonries is nominalistic, and, ultimately, it depends on Freemasonic power structures. In the context of the UGLE, an elementary perception of tradition, which consists in formalism and familiarity, overrules truth, whereas my approach to Freemasonic institutions can be summarized by the following statement that was written by Bruce Lee as the Dedication on the inside cover of his book *Tao of Jeet Kune Do*: "Research your own experience; absorb what is useful, reject what is useless, and add what is essentially your own."²⁶

In the nineteenth century, Freemasonry was systematically used by the British establishment as a connective force of the British Empire and as an intelligence and cultural-diplomacy apparatus.²⁷ In particular, the UGLE and those Masonic organizations which comply with the UGLE's "landmarks" for the organization and the governance of Symbolic Masonry usually call themselves "regular," and they characterize every other model of Symbolic Masonry as an "irregular" one. For instance, from the perspective of those "regular" Masons, a Masonic organization that accepts women and allows religious and political discussions inside its Lodges is "irregular." However, the main driver of the UGLE's strict policy of Masonic "puritanism" and formalism is an attempt to instrumentalize Freemasonry in order to serve particular political goals of particular groups of the British establishment. Similarly, particular groups of the U.S. establishment have used U.S. Masonic institutions (mainly the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite and the General Grand Chapter

²⁶ Lee, *Striking Thoughts*, p. 176.

²⁷ Deschamps, "From Britain to India."

of Royal Arch Masons of the United States of America) as an American intelligence and cultural-diplomacy apparatus, and particular groups of the French establishment have used the Grand Orient of France as a French intelligence and cultural-diplomacy apparatus. The aforementioned attempts to instrumentalize Freemasonry for the sake of political goals are profane, not because politics itself is profane, but because the subordination of spirituality to politics is profane. On the other hand, when and to the extent that political action is guided by spirituality, namely, by supra-/meta-political principles and pursuits, it becomes really good and sacred.

In the 2000s, I was deeply disillusioned with the decision of the UGLE to use the Freemasons' Hall (which is the headquarters of the UGLE and the principal meeting place for Masonic Lodges in London) for product launches, fashion shows, conferences, drink receptions, and dinner dances; for instance, in 2005, it hosted events for London Fashion Week and the Lancôme Design Awards, and, in 2006, it hosted the Julien MacDonald Fashion Show and the Alternative Hair Show! What a disgrace to the Freemasonic initiatory tradition! However, a true initiate is oriented and focused towards the spiritual Sun, and not towards exoteric institutions, especially if the latter are dilapidated and/or filthy. As Diogenes the Cynic pointedly observed when one reproached him for going into unclean places, "the Sun too penetrates into privies, but is not polluted by them."²⁸

In 1999, I left London and settled in Athens, Greece, where I continued my Masonic journey, initially in the "Greek-Speaking Hotel" Lodge No. 67 under the auspices of the National Grand Lodge of Greece and, subsequently, in the "Etairia ton Filikon" Lodge No. 116 under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Greece, in both of which I socialized with engaging persons, and I participated in several Masonic Orders beyond the Craft (such as the Royal Arch, Mark Masonry, the Royal and Select Masters, the Scottish Rite, etc.). In the 2000s, I realized that most so-called "regular" Greek Lodges (namely, those Lodges that operate under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Greece or under the auspices of the National Grand Lodge of Greece) were neither more spiritually significant nor more interesting than the UGLE, and that they were mostly controlled by a superstructure that consisted of wicked local cliques, stunningly underqualified and debased "Worshipful Masters" (Lodge governors) as well as superstitious and idiotic occultists. The state of affairs that I confronted in Greek Freemasonry during the 2000s and the 2010s did not take me by surprise because I am well aware of the following two facts: (i)

²⁸ Quoted in: Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Book 6, Diogenes 6.

the domestic power structure of the modern Greek society, especially from the 1970s onwards, consists of a corrupt oligarchy whose major components are mafiotic partisan cliques that control the country's entire political system, and superstitious and authoritarian ecclesiastical cliques that control the Greek Orthodox Church; (ii) the major, mainstream Greek Masonic organizations are not only spiritually insignificant but also organically integrated into and subservient to the corrupt social establishment.

In the 2010s, the spiritual insignificance and the moral corruption in the Grand Lodge of Greece as well as the conflicts among its own mutually competing factions became so explosive that various factions of the Grand Lodge of Greece, under the guidance of power-hungry and money-hungry lawyers, started massively suing and vilifying each other, so that, ultimately, in 2017, the Athens Court of First Instance (with its decision No. 132/2017), namely, a “profane” institution, appointed and imposed a temporary administration to administer the affairs of the Grand Lodge of Greece, which supposedly belongs to the realm of the “sacred.” Moreover, in 2009, the Athens Court of First Instance (with its decision No. 4875/2009)—deciding an appeal lodged by Masons of the Grand Lodge of Greece against the newly-elected Supreme Council of their Scottish Rite Body—annulled the election of Chrestos Maneas (a highly controversial former Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Greece) as the Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the Body of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite that is affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Greece. The very fact that Masons of the Grand Lodge of Greece resort to the profane court system in order to administer Masonic affairs is a disgrace to Freemasonry.

Regarding the National Grand Lodge of Greece (henceforth, NGLG), I should mention that it was founded in 1986 by Lodges that split from the Grand Lodge of Greece under very controversial circumstances related to domestic and international power games for the control of Greek Freemasonry under the pretence of representing and safeguarding “regular Freemasonry.” In the late 1970s, William Evmenis Kaloudis, who was then the Grand High Priest of the Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Germany and the Commander of the Heidelberg Commandery No. 2 operating under the auspices of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America, the Greek-American U.S. Army Colonel (ret.) Pantaleon Fragedakis, who was a senior Freemason living in Germany, and a group of Master Masons of the Grand Lodge of Greece under the leadership of Efsthathios Liakopoulos, who was a distinguished Athens-based lawyer, created and established a new Royal Arch Grand Chapter and a new Masonic Templar Order within the context of the