



Kor's Kosmos

EXPLORING THE BORDERLANDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Is "Free Will" a Myth?

NO ISSUE has occupied the attention of philosophers and scientists more over the ages than whether or not Man has free will. For all the effort that has been expended, however, there has been little illumination. While the consensus of "experts" seems to be that free will is nothing but a convenient myth, the evidence and arguments usually advanced to support the claim leave much to be desired.

Inquirers who espouse the view that Man is not truly free usually charge their opponents with being simplistic. The issue, they claim, is much more complicated than free-will advocates imagine, and should be decided on the basis of logic and evidence, not emotion. Unfortunately, many inquirers who take this basically correct position create much of the complication through their own obfuscation.

There is a third school of thought that maintains that the issue of free will is not important. According to this view, people ought to just go about their business and not worry about whether or not they are free. After all, they say, what counts is what people do, not what they think or believe.

What this view ignores is that people act ON THE BASIS of what they think and believe. Human motivation and action that are predicated on the premise that the will is free will be drastically different than if they are based on determinism. And this difference will manifest itself in a corresponding discrepancy in the extent of individual creativity, as well as in the nature and progress of human society.

Much of the confusion about the issue of free will stems from a misunderstanding of the concept of "freedom", on which a resolution of the issue depends. The problem is that most inquirers are not rigorous enough in defining the concept; thus, they

arrive at a view of free will that is inappropriate, inconsistent, or both.

The most prevalent concept -- held by many philosophers and laymen alike -- defines freedom as: TO BE WITHOUT LIMITATION OR RESTRICTION. To understand why this concept is erroneous and even dangerous, consider its logical implications and consequences.

Existentially, for example, Man is "limited" by the nature of reality. Not only must he function in accordance with human capabilities, but he must deal with the other entities in the universe on the basis of what their respective natures permit. Although reality allows for an incredibly wide range of possibilities, Man cannot literally be or do whatever he imagines or wishes. Thus, according to the without-limitation concept of freedom, Man is not a free being. To be free, he must transcend humanity -- which means he must escape reality!

Few people would explicitly endorse or consciously try to realize the consequences of such a concept of freedom. But, then, few people would be able to explicitly identify and analyze those consequences in the first place. What usually happens is that a person subliminally "absorbs" his most fundamental beliefs about Man and the universe in a piecemeal fashion. The logic of those beliefs then works itself out incognito in the person's interests and actions. So if you want examples of people who are alienated from humanity and are seeking a way out of reality, I ask you to consider: The fundamentalist Christian who anxiously awaits the cataclysmic end of the world; the Yogi who systematically shuts down his bodily processes to facilitate his merger with the one, indescribable nothingness; and the "psychic" who trains himself to receive "impressions" of events

that haven't happened yet.

Man cannot escape his nature or the facts of reality. A concept of freedom that holds such escape as an ideal to be strived for is both ludicrous and dangerous.

When applied to the social realm, the without-limitation concept of freedom fares no better than before. Whereas it appears to allow for the widest possible range of social action, it actually embodies a contradiction. To wit: If a person acts literally without restriction in a social situation, he will inevitably forcibly prevent others from acting in the same way -- and will eventually incur the forcible restrictions of others. Thus, the "freer" he acts, the less free he becomes. The result will not be freedom for all or even freedom for some; it will be conflict for all -- which is precisely what attempts to practice this idea of social freedom have created with increasing intensity over the past twenty years.

This consequence of inevitable conflict is a major reason why social controllers almost always espouse the without-limitation concept of freedom. For if freedom, in the strict sense of the term, literally cannot be achieved socially -- and if attempts to achieve it inevitably produce conflict -- then the managers of society are justified in continually intervening in people's lives in an effort to find the proper "balance" between freedom and order. Naturally, such efforts require further acts of force which create new conflicts, but these are considered to be necessary evils for the greater good of "society" (whoever THAT is).

A logically consistent concept of social freedom would restrict actions to those which are mutually compatible -- which

means that no actions would be permissible that FORCIBLY prevented the actions of others. If this logically-consistent concept seems to leave little room for government, so much the worse for government!

People who see the futility of trying to practice the without-limitation concept of freedom existentially or socially often try to apply it to their personal lives. But that won't work either. Consider: The pursuit of particular interests or relationships necessarily limits the time and energy that can be spent on other matters. The more attention a person confers on preferred matters, the further he restricts his overall scope of action. But -- according to the without-limitation concept of freedom -- the more he restricts his scope of action, the less free he is. Thus, the way for a person to increase his personal freedom is to avoid deep interests, challenging work, and close relationships.

If you don't believe anyone could fall for such a principle of action, I ask you to think about: The man who chronically avoids making important decisions about his career so as to keep his "options open" -- or the woman who refuses to make or keep personal commitments in an effort to keep her life "free" and "spontaneous". Such people do not realize that a life that is FREE of major efforts and commitments is, at the same time, LIMITED to superficial work and relationships. A person's aim should not be to continually maximize his options, but to select and apply himself to the most valuable options.

Perhaps the most devastating effects of the without-limitation concept of freedom occur when the concept is applied to the realm of the mind. In popular parlance, to be psychologically free is to be mentally flexible -- which means to be willing to adapt one's thinking to the intellectual fashions of the day -- which means to have no fixed standards or methods for evaluating the ideas and practices that are adapted to. Not only does such a mental modus operandi preclude a person from conducting true inquiry; it also makes him susceptible to the thought control of society's illuminati.

The quasi-hippie who defends every way-out belief or practice with "don't knock

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it if you haven't tried it" -- and the theoretical physicist who maintains that logic must not be allowed to stand in the way of efforts to explain quantum reality -- are just two examples of the consequences of the without-limitation concept of psychological freedom. Of course, the quasi-hippie does not explain the BASIS for his conclusion that trying something is a prerequisite for judging it; nor does the physicist tell us how he KNOWS that logic can be dispensed with. To provide either of these explanations would be an admission that every assertion implies comprehension; and that every comprehension is ultimately based on fixed standards of evaluation. But such an admission would not be fashionable.

The without-limitation concept of freedom sees the ideal person as being essentially independent of constraints and influences. According to this view, free will is the capacity for autonomy. Framed in this manner, free will is easy to refute. All someone has to do is to show how particular events and situations constrain and influence human thought and action to prove that the capacity for autonomy has no basis in reality.

But, as has been shown, the without-limitation concept of freedom does not make sense, no matter where or how it is applied. Thus, the capacity-for-autonomy view of free will falls with it. To understand what free will really involves, a rational view of freedom is required.

The reason why the without-limitation concept of freedom fails is that it confuses ends with means. To wit: Freedom is not what a person HAS; it is what he DOES. Freedom is not a goal to be achieved; it is the quality of action required to set and meet all goals. Freedom is not in existing in a without-limitation situation; it is in CHOOSING among limitations.

To be free existentially is to recognize that volition is Man's primary function, and to LIVE accordingly. To be free socially is to recognize that coercion restricts volition, and ACT accordingly. To be free personally is to recognize that choices have consequences, and to COMMIT YOURSELF accordingly. To be free psychologically is to recognize that effective choices are based

on a clear, direct contact with reality, and to THINK accordingly.

If freedom is expressed in the act of choosing, free will is the CAPACITY FOR MAKING CHOICES. Thus, what is at stake in the free-will controversy is whether or not Man can really function volitionally. In other words: Are Man's choices determined BY him or FOR him?

For true inquirers, the issue is especially crucial. Consider: If free will is a myth, Man cannot really choose his thoughts and judgments; which means that he cannot adjust his thinking according to the merits of the matter under consideration. But without the capability for mental adjustment, there is no MEANS for distinguishing fact from fantasy. If there are no facts, there is no knowledge. And without knowledge, inquiry is an exercise in futility.

The issue of free will cuts at the heart of Man's understanding of himself, his life, and his place in the cosmic scheme of things. Truth or illusion: THAT is the question.

Although most people believe that they possess the power of free will, most authorities in the relevant fields are convinced that free will is a myth. The theological position is an interesting case in point. Theologians or preachers will rarely state flatly that they do not believe in free will and, in fact, they often are convinced that their beliefs require free will. They point out that the bible represents god as creating Man with the power (free will) to choose between good and evil. (Presumably this will can be used to choose among other possibilities as well.) Unfortunately, they also maintain that god is omniscient -- to the point that he knew the outcome of his creation before he created it -- which requires that he know each person's choices before the person is born. But since there is no BASIS FOR GAINING such KNOWLEDGE, the NECESSITY for making particular choices must be BUILT-INTO the constitutions of the people making them. Thus, the theological view necessarily implies that Man's choices are determined FOR him, not BY him -- which means that his will is not free.

Some apologists try to escape the con-

tradition in the theological position by resorting to faith. We must trust scripture in such matters, they argue, because the mind of Man cannot comprehend the ways of god. Question: Why should the minds of theologians or preachers be trusted to define the limits of Man's mind? Needless to say, faith does not resolve the contradiction in the theological position.

The scientific position is much more formidable. Although no claim is made that the scientific case against free will can be proved, most philosophers and scientists agree that the scientific worldview leaves no room for genuine volition. They argue that Man is a physical being who cannot escape the determinism implicit in his physical constituents; that he is basically an incredibly complex robot whose thoughts and actions are nothing but built-in responses, however subtle, to environmental forces; and that intimations of free will are only programmed illusions by which the human organism seeks to perpetuate itself.

Many advocates of free will try to refute this view by resorting to "spiritism". Man is more than a physical being, they contend. He has a "soul" that is the real source of free will. Putting aside the fact that no such separate spirit has ever been detected, such arguments never come to grips with the main issue. To wit: Either spirits exist or they do not. If they exist, they must be made of something (else they would be nothing) -- and that something must have specific properties that characterize its interactions with other existents. Thus, even spirits -- however rarified -- would still be physical in the strict sense of the term and would still be subject to physical laws. So even the demonstratable existence of spirits would not, by itself, prove that Man has free will.

A more modern version of spiritism holds that Man's body is fully determined by physical forces, but his mind is not. In this view, thoughts, dreams, etc., constitute an etheric domain of existence that is not subject to the usual constraints. The source of this view is the apparent freedom with which ideas can be created and manipulated. But the view neglects the fact

that the mind is not an independent existent. It functions only as one aspect of a total, integrated, physical entity. If that entity is fully determined, there is no basis for ascribing free will to one part of it.

A third approach to refuting determinism via spiritism shifts the emphasis from human thought to human motivation. According to this argument, Man acts on the basis of intangible values such as love, honesty, and propriety. This must surely mean, the argument continues, that matter is at the beck and call of something that is immaterial.

I am amazed at how many otherwise discriminating people fall for this argument. Values are not independent existents. They are concepts that refer to concrete actions that are deemed beneficial to those who take them. For example, "love" refers to a mental and/or physical attachment between people -- an attachment that is epitomized by a mutual concern, protectiveness, and affection. But love is engaged in by two concrete human beings, not two intangible "motivators" that dwell incognito within those beings. That Man is capable of abstraction should not be taken as evidence that his physical being is a product of, and depends on, abstractions. Ideas and concepts proceed from Man; Man does not proceed from ideas and concepts.

A different approach to refuting determinism confuses free will with unpredictability. According to this argument, if Man's choices were predetermined by physical forces, his thought and action would be predictable. Since such predictability is an impossibility, Man's choices are not physically predetermined -- which means that he is mentally free.

This somewhat-disguised version of spiritism has been undermined by some physicists and computer scientists who claim that such predictability is possible in principle. Given complete descriptions of the atomic configurations that represent specific brain states, they claim, the laws of physics would make possible the prediction of subsequent brain states. And since thought is tied to the state of the brain at any given time, such a prediction would be tantamount to predicting

the thinking being done. Even though such complete knowledge is nowhere near being possible, advocates of this view claim that their prediction theory, if valid, would sound the death knell for free will.

The theory may be valid, but it hardly disproves free will. Even if brain states could be described completely and states of mind predicted accordingly, the predictions could only anticipate WHAT choices would be made, not prove HOW they were made -- which is the real issue. To illustrate: If a being from another world was intellectually powerful enough to know the exact contents and processes of thought that "existed" just prior to a person's decision, he could predict the outcome. But the information on which his prediction would be based would already incorporate the person's mental modus operandi. Thus, the alien predictor would be anticipating the results of free-will thinking (assuming that the person was functioning freely), not proving that free will is impossible.

Predictability is a phony issue. For human thought to be unpredictable in principle, it would have to be random -- which means that it would have to be UNintentional -- which is the antithesis of free will.

Attempts to escape scientific determinism by resorting to spiritism will not work. If Man has free will, that capacity must be inherent in his nature AS A PHYSICAL BEING. Thus, there is no alternative but to meet the scientist on his own ground. To wit: Does what is known about physical reality make free will an impossibility? Let's look at the evidence.

PSYCHOLOGY: The most direct and strongest evidence for free will comes from introspection. All normal, healthy people are conscious of searching for and finding memories, focusing attention on specific ideas and issues, deciding among options, and directing their thought and action toward predetermined goals. Each of these functions appears to involve the INITIATION of some action, which is the essence of volition.

But according to psychologists, this power of volition is an illusion. Consciousness, they say, is a passive, not an active process. As important as it seems to be, it is really nothing but a tiny

bubble of identity riding on a fathomless "sea" of unconscious "forces". While Man deludes himself that his conscious will is in control of human thought and action, that will is really controlled by the unconscious in a way that escapes direct detection.

This view is typical of the "truths" of psychology: They are always in conflict with, and sometimes in direct opposition to, the most obvious experiences. They are also almost always false, and the "truth" about free will is no exception. Consider: If the forces that rule Man's thought and action are really UNconscious, how do psychologists know that they exist in the first place? "Aha", they reply, "that's where we've got you. We know about the forces of the unconscious because we can bring them to consciousness during therapy sessions and, thereby, help the 'patient' to avoid being dominated by them." But such a response defeats the case it is designed to prove. For if the forces of the unconscious can be brought to consciousness and dealt with, then those forces are demonstrably not NECESSARY DETERMINATES of human thought and action!

Again, the concept of free will does not require that there be no limiting influences on Man's thought and action; only that whatever influences there are do not necessarily dictate what he thinks and does in a specific situation. To illustrate: If a person has a psychological "complex" due to a "traumatic" experience in childhood, that complex might distort how he thinks and condition how he behaves. But he is not necessarily a prisoner to the complex. Not only does the person have the power of choice outside of the constraints of the complex, but he can choose to pursue, identify, and understand his problem so as to remove the constraints. Thus, the person has the capacity for genuine volition, whether or not he exercises it fully.

There are other, more complicated versions of psychological determinism. For example, radical behaviorism pictures human "thought" and action as mere conditioned responses to environmental stimuli. Logical behaviorism sees all men-

tal states as predetermined programs that control thought and action. But these and similar versions of determinism merely draw on and combine more fundamental arguments from sociology, genetics, and physics. If these other arguments are not valid in themselves, no combination of them can be valid.

SOCIOLOGY: Like the psychological argument, the sociological argument against free will employs the erroneous without-limitation concept of freedom. Man cannot really think and act freely, sociologists say, because individuals are constantly being influenced, impeded, and conditioned by others. A person who chooses to be a lawyer, for example, really had no free choice in the matter. He was conditioned by society to pursue a career, encouraged by his lawyer-father to take up law, and hooked by the monetary and social values that were inculcated in him by his family and society.

No one can deny that people can be influenced or even conditioned to a point of view. But this truth misses the point at issue. To wit: Does a person's family, friends, and/or society literally **FORCE** him to adopt certain values and pursue certain ends? Was our hypothetical student literally without the power to reject a career, decide on some other profession, or think his way to other, alternate values? Of course not. His values and actions merely reflected the fact that he either chose the values and the course involved, or he failed to initiate a process of genuine choice in the first place -- in which case he would have absorbed and accepted the choices of others. But even this latter possibility does not prove that he did not have the capacity to choose; only that he did not use the capacity he had.

The sociologist will counter this argument by claiming that even when people appear to be genuinely choosing their own courses, they are really only responding to less-obvious social conditioners. The student who rejects his lawyer-father's advice and takes up medicine or joins a rock band, for example, is probably being prompted by a professor of medicine, friends, or even the views presented in the books he reads and the films he sees. The person

is no less a "puppet" because he is being "pulled" by different "strings".

Forgetting for the moment that this counter argument, once again, mistakes the influencing of choice for the determination of choice, the question must be asked: Who conditions the conditioners? If the student's choice to pursue law is literally dictated by his father's "encouragement", how was the father's encouragement determined? By HIS father? By society? Then who or what dictated that the father's father or society would dictate that the father would dictate the choice of law for the son?! Not only does social determinism result in an infinite regress of determinations; it fosters the absurdity that one person can dictate the course of **ANOTHER** person (through conditioning), but cannot dictate **HIS OWN** course (through free will).

Furthermore, if people's thoughts and actions merely reflect the thoughts and actions of others, whence creativity? How can new ideas and inventions arise from recycled conceptions? And how did the recycled conceptions arise in the first place? Without the power to choose genuinely-new courses of thought and action, there could be no originality. Human progress, in whatever form, is the objectification of free will.

GENETICS: The discovery of a genetic code and the realization that it is literally a program for general and specific human characteristics have convinced many professionals and laymen that Man is a fully-determined being. While genes were thought to be responsible only for coloring, body build, and something called "intelligence", there was not much of a problem. But now there is serious consideration being given to the possibility that Man's basic behavior patterns are "wired-in". Thus, what used to be thought to be determined **BY** Man may, in fact, be determined **FOR** him by his genes.

There are many issues to sort out here. First, there is no doubt that the human specie is determined by the genetic code for humanity. But this is just another way of saying that Man is a being of a specific sort. Atoms, rocks, trees -- everything has a characteristic way of

BEING that is determined by its properties. Atoms possess spin; rocks possess hardness; trees possess the capacity for transforming light into chemical compounds. The question is: Does Man possess free will? In other words, the fact that Man's basic nature is fixed does not preclude free will from being the essential characteristic of that nature.

Even if human behavior patterns are eventually found to be genetically limited, this would not contradict the requirements of free will. The question is not "Does Man have an unlimited behavior potential?"; but rather, "Does he have the power to determine what behavior, among the various patterns that are possible, is most appropriate in a given situation?" The fact that Man must act AS MAN does not mean he cannot act freely.

The activity that escapes genetic determinism is precisely the activity that makes free will possible: Thought! There is no such thing as a gene for Platonism or socialism. Two people with identical genetic endowments (i.e., identical twins) can have entirely different points of view or philosophies; and, conversely, people with basically the same points of view or philosophies can have radically different genetic endowments. Thought is the most subtle and decisive characteristic of -- but is not strictly determined by -- Man's genetic constitution.

PHYSICS: Thus far, the case against free will has been more than weak; it has actually been favorable to the view it was designed to refute. In examining the determinist argument provided by physics, however, we get to the heart of the matter. For physics is both the most fundamental and strongest ground for denying free will. If this ground is found wanting, the entire determinist viewpoint falls.

The reason why the physics argument against free will is considered to be so strong is that it is based on one of the primary truths of science: The law of causation. According to this law, happenings do not occur autonomously or spontaneously (i.e., magically); they are produced by specific causes. Thus, every event, situation, or condition is a part of a chain of causation in which what

comes after in the chain is produced by, and dependent on, what comes before. The determinist argues that since no event can escape causation, no event can escape the forces that bring it into being -- which means that thought and action cannot be free in the strict sense of the term. Choices appear to be free, he maintains, because their actual causes are too many and too subtle to sort out. But that choices are truly caused must be true, else strict causation does not hold -- in which case the foundation of modern science is in jeopardy.

Although this is the form that the determinist's argument usually takes, it misstates the primary issue involved. Free will does not contradict causation. The issue is not whether choices are caused or uncaused; but whether choices are caused BY MAN (free will) or by forces beyond Man's control (determinism). What the determinist is claiming is that Man's choices (thoughts, values, judgments, etc.) are determined for him by a complicated network of genetic-environmental causes in a way that creates the illusion of volition. This determinism goes beyond psycho-social influences; it is supposedly built into the cause-and-effect relationships imbedded in the structure of matter.

The determinist's argument appears to be rigorous, but it is based upon a false conception of causation. To understand the misconception, consider the example of how the Aurora Borealis is produced. When you look at the multi-colored, dancing lights in the sky, the display appears to be autonomous and spontaneous. But a closer look reveals unseen entities and subtle forces that combine to create the luminous effect. To wit: Charged particles emitted from the sun become trapped in the earth's geomagnetic field. As the particles move along the north-south magnetic field lines, they penetrate deeper and deeper into the earth's atmosphere. Eventually, the particles encounter air densities at the north or south poles that are sufficient to create a visible interaction. Each particle crashes into air molecules, giving up a certain portion of its energy in the process. The combined effect of countless charged particles

transferring their energy to the air is what produces the luminous display. The intensity and color of the display is determined by the energies of the particles and the structures of the molecules they encounter.

The point is that only **PHYSICAL ENTITIES** can be agents of causation, and they can do their work only by way of a **DIRECT** interaction. But there is nothing even remotely similar to this situation in examples of human action. To illustrate, imagine an everyday situation in which a man is driving to work in the morning. As he proceeds, the sky clouds over and a hard rain begins to fall. The man -- remembering that he had left a piece of partially-assembled electronic equipment outside -- turns his car around, and speeds home as rapidly as possible to save the equipment. Question: What **CAUSED** the man to turn his car around and go home?

The determinist would probably say that the rain caused the man to change his course. But causation can only work through direct, physical interaction. Thus, rain can cause "wetness", "oxidation", "erosion", etc., but it cannot, by itself, cause a man to change his course.

What the determinist insists on ignoring in such cases is that Man acts on the basis of **COMPREHENSION**. To wit: The man remembered that he had left the equipment outside, knew that a heavy rain would make it worthless, and concluded that the equipment was valuable enough to try to save. The memory, knowledge, values, and judgment that made his action possible were occasioned by the rain, but they were not caused by the rain.

The determinist would undoubtedly change his mind at this point, declaring that "the situation", not the rain, caused the man's action. But only physical entities can be the agents of causation, and "the situation" is not a physical entity. To the contrary, "it" is an abstraction that refers to countless physical entities, none of which has a determinate effect on the man's action. Only by comprehending the situation in the light of his values and purposes is the man able to decide what to do.

Faced with the collapse of the deter-

minist argument, many advocates of determinism take the last, most precarious step: The man's action is still causally predetermined, they declare, because the comprehension on which it is predicated is predetermined. The human brain is nothing but an electro-chemical computer programmed with data called "memories", "values", and "purposes". The comprehension and subsequent action, they conclude, are nothing but predetermined "outputs" triggered by situational stimuli.

This final, desperate argument contains several flaws. But the most significant one is the basic picture it presents of comprehension. To wit: For comprehension to be predetermined, physical stimuli from every significant element of a situation would have to be selected, integrated, and processed **AUTOMATICALLY** (i.e., **unintentionally**)! But this is manifestly not what happens. Put a person with an IQ of 180 in a given situation and he will not automatically produce comprehension. He must **CHOOSE** to activate his consciousness in a way (i.e., thinking) that will make comprehension possible.

Of course, the determinist will reply that the choice to think or not is also predetermined -- by the values and goals that society has programmed into us. But in resorting to this position, the determinist leaves the strict causal-determinism he thought physics provided for him, and enters the realm of social influences. As has already been shown, such influences leave ample explanatory "room" for free will.

The evidence against free will actually supports free will. And logic confirms that result. Consider: If Man's will is not free, his every thought and conclusion is determined for him, not by him -- which means (as was shown before) that knowledge, in the strict sense of the term, is impossible. But if knowledge is impossible, how does the determinist **KNOW** that Man's will is not free? **HIS** thoughts and conclusions are also predetermined -- which means that he, too, is unable to decide the issue otherwise; unable to freely conclude on the basis of facts and logic. And this inability means that **HIS** conclusion that free will is impossible is

merely his particular programmed response to physio-social determinates. By his own thesis, then, the determinist cannot know that his thesis is correct!

This is more than a trite exercise in logic. To the contrary, it reveals that determinism is not a scientific point of view at all. To claim the credibility of science, a theory must be testable. But there is no way to test determinism. To conduct such a test, facts would have to be identified and analyzed, and alternate explanations would have to be evaluated. But every step in this process requires thought (discrimination, conceptualization, and judgment) which, to be effective, **MUST BE FREE!** Thus, any attempt to deny or test free will requires the reality of free will -- which means that determinism is an act of faith, not a truth or theory.

Unlike any other known form of existence, Man acts purposefully, no matter how limited or grand the purpose may be. But purpose is predicated on values and goals which, in turn, are determined by thought. And thought requires a will that is free to initiate and direct it.

The fact that thought is the "realm" in which choices are made should not be construed as indicating a mind-body or spirit-matter dichotomy. To the contrary, thought is an attribute OF Man, not a mysterious process taking place IN Man. Although references have been made to thought AND action for purposes of distinction, this practice should not obscure the truth that thought, itself, is a subtle form of action.

Although every normal and healthy person possesses free will, every such person is not functionally free. The capacity to initiate and direct thought is given, but the desire to use and develop that capacity is not. Only by continually focusing on, thinking through, and consciously deciding the issues of your life will you be able to determine the values and goals that will govern your existence. To the extent you default on the effort required, to that degree will you have to live off of the thinking of others -- thereby simulating the physio-social robot that determinists claimed you were in the first place.

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The Men Who Made the Saucers

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WHAT MAKES the saucer saga so interesting and significant is that it is a genuine psycho-social movement that has been born and fully developed in our own time. As a result, it can be participated in and studied "up close", thereby illuminating the structure and dynamics of similar movements in the past and, perhaps, the future.

Regardless of what stimuli triggered the early saucer reports, the "phenomena" and mystery that eventually took form were the products of thought. To wit: The initial "sightings" generated an intense expectation; the expectation, together with the delay in its realization, fostered

avid speculation; and the speculation resulted in a closed system of belief that served to explain the "phenomena" and rationalize its elusiveness. The beliefs eventually fed back on the "phenomena", fashioning it in such a way as to perpetuate the mystery and advance the movement that the mystery was fostering.

The basic concepts that make up the saucer belief system were created by three men: Ray Palmer, Donald Keyhoe, and George Adamski. Each of these men introduced a major, mutually-supporting line of thought about flying saucers, around which countless researchers and enthusiasts clustered. Eliminate the efforts of these three men from the saucer saga, and the mystery that their ideas generated vanishes.

Ray Palmer was a publisher of books and magazines that dealt in science fiction

and the occult. As the first editor of the first national magazine devoted to strange and mystical happenings (FATE, which was born in 1948), he was the first to promote the early saucer reports. His FLYING SAUCERS magazine, published from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, was by far the best source of IDEAS about flying saucers and related subjects of its time. Many of today's well-known saucer "experts" have only recently embraced points of view that were pioneered in Palmer's magazines 15 to 20 years ago.

When the first strange saucer happenings were publicized, Palmer -- steeped in what can only be called "critical mysticism" -- interpreted the phenomena as evidence of unseen forces. Through his many publications, he channeled information about and expounded upon all aspects of the subject. He was the first to popularize the experiences of Richard Shaver, Kenneth Arnold, and others -- always intimating that there was more to the saucer happenings than met the casual eye.

Behind the barrage of saucer publicity Palmer generated was a sharp, inquiring mind. However, the effect of his method was the advancement of the saucer cause at almost any cost. He publicized everything having to do with the subject, without clearly distinguishing between what he knew or thought to be fact from what he knew or thought to be farce. Palmer died in 1977.

Donald Keyhoe is a retired marine major and pilot. When Ken Arnold and others reported strange objects in the sky in 1947, Keyhoe "recognized" them as advanced aircraft. So while Palmer was inoculating science fiction fans and mystics with ideas about Deros and hidden worlds, Keyhoe was explaining to the straight man on the street that the earth was being visited by highly-intelligent beings from another planet. Keyhoe's efforts spawned a generation of "scientific" saucer "investigators". Whereas Palmer came across to many as a wide-eyed visionary, Keyhoe projected the image of a sober, hard-headed fact-finder.

Keyhoe's early writings (especially The Flying Saucers Are Real, Fawcett, 1950) set the stage for a momentous turning point. As the saucer fervor reached a cre-

scendo, a Keyhoe-type space ship "landed" in the California desert. An earth man had been "contacted". His name was George Adamski. Adamski's claim that "brothers" from other planets were here to save men from nuclear holocaust triggered two decades of face-to-face, telepathic, and electronic "contact" with space intelligences.

Adamski posed quite a dilemma for early researchers. They had been conditioned to believe in physical craft from another world, and they fully expected that one of the ships would eventually land and, perhaps, even make contact. But, when it finally occurred, it came in an obscure place and involved an obscure man -- a man who ran a small shop on Mount Palomar, California, and dabbled in astronomy and various occult mysteries.

The Adamski affair split the ranks of saucer researchers into two factions: Those who believed or seriously considered Adamski's claims, and those who rejected the claims outright, believing that bona fide space men would be intelligent enough to go through the "proper" channels and provide the "proper" proofs. Adamski died in 1965.

Whatever their differences in perspective, Ray Palmer, Donald Keyhoe, and George Adamski accepted the same basic system of saucer belief. Of the three, however, Keyhoe played the most decisive role in getting that system established in the minds of researchers and the public at large.

There were four major reasons for his success. First, Keyhoe was the first to popularize flying saucers in the mass media. Second, being a retired major in the Marine Corps, his pronouncements had the air of "official authority". Third, he took a no-nonsense, middle-of-the-road approach to the subject. While endorsing the reality of the saucers, he lambasted the "kooks". This posture enabled thousands of self-respecting people to take part or believe in an off-beat subject without thinking that they were "nuts". Fourth, Keyhoe's saucer explanation -- that flying saucers were intelligently-controlled machines from another world -- was very much in tune with the popular expectation of the time that men would soon journey to the moon and planets.

The effect of Keyhoe's success has been considerable. He was the principal trigger and educator of the first generation of saucer researchers. The premises of his perspective of the saucer situation became part and parcel of most subsequent saucer inquiry.

PREMISE 1 -- The saucers are flying machines. Terms such as "craft", "vehicle", "airship", "device", etc., are used throughout Keyhoe's works to convey the conception that the saucers are mechanical conveyances.

The argument used to support the "flying machine" premise is that observers have reported flying machines. Such reports, however, are not conclusive. Machines are physical. No matter how advanced, machines malfunction: Materials break down, controls go awry, and operators make errors. The result of a malfunctioning flying machine is a forced landing or a wreckage. Yet, there has not been a single substantiated forced landing or wreckage in over 30 years of "sightings" and contacts".

Consider the odds against such a situation: How many missions of American aircraft, for example, would have to be conducted over and on a land of primitive people before one of them failed, resulting in the crash or capture of the craft? Fifty? One hundred? One thousand? Now consider the tremendous additional complexity of such craft navigating through space to the earth, maneuvering close to the ground, and even landing now and then. How many years could such an intense, complicated activity go on without a demonstratable accident? Five years? Ten? Would you believe 30 or even thousands of years (depending on the particular belief)?

Some researchers will argue that there HAVE been crashes of flying saucers, but that government authorities have always managed to spirit-away the remains and discredit the resulting rumors. But this argument misses the main point. To wit: No government monitoring program could keep track of all the saucer flights or landings in all the various parts of the country or world that are implied by the thousands of saucer reports per year. Thus, there is no way that such a program could prevent the truth from becoming known through any number of avenues -- such as a landing or

crash in or near a large metropolitan area. How could the "lid" be put on the forced landing of a saucer in the suburbs of Chicago? Yet, after several decades of saucers swarming all over AND ON the earth, no such event has occurred.

PREMISE 2 -- The saucers are reconnaissance vehicles launched from another world. There are two fundamental problems with this premise. The first problem concerns the magnitude and proximity of a reconnaissance force that would be required to support the frequency and duration of reported saucer visitations. Literally thousands of sightings have been reported per year for many years. To sustain such a persistent, intensive reconnaissance, saucers in great numbers based on or close to the earth would be required. Yet, no activity indicative of such a base has been demonstrated -- either on the earth or in space. Consider the facilities, personnel, and supplies needed at a single airport to launch a few hundred airline flights per day. Now imagine the effort that would be required to maintain such a schedule on the scale of interplanetary space. If such an effort was in process on or near the earth, manned and electronic probes would have detected it long ago.

The second problem has to do with the purpose of such a reconnaissance. Keyhoe has painted a very straight-forward picture (quotes are from his book, Aliens From Space, Doubleday, 1973):

* "(UFOs are) obviously observing every aspect of our civilization for some highly important purpose" (p.9).

* "...The UFO beings must have amassed a tremendous amount of information about humans during their long surveillance" (p. 246).

* "Phase Seven, when and if it comes, would probably be the final operation -- contact, landings, and attempts to carry out the purpose behind the long observation of our world" (p. 72).

Long observation indeed! Researchers maintain that the saucers have been around for at least 30 and, perhaps, thousands of years. What conceivable reconnaissance from another planet would require so much time to accomplish? How many rock, water, air, and specie samples would be needed

before the nature of the terrestrial environment would be known to the aliens? How much human history would the aliens have to observe and how many psychological profiles would they have to make to carry out their purpose?

In 1950, when Keyhoe wrote The Flying Saucers Are Real, everything seemed so simple. The saucers were thought to be a recent phenomenon. They were doing all the things that one would expect an advance interplanetary guard to do. In just a short time, researchers thought, the saucers would land, make contact, and reveal their purpose.

The showdown never came. The evidence and logic of the situation are such that it is easier to believe that the saucers are not interplanetary reconnaissance vehicles than it is to believe that the reconnaissance is taking so long to complete.

The reconnaissance concept is central to Keyhoe's understanding of the saucer mystery, and explains why Keyhoe has a blind spot where the more exotic saucer cases are concerned. Consider his position: He believes that the saucers are advanced craft from another planet on an expedition to survey the earth. He fully expects that the space visitors will eventually contact earthlings. Yet, he steadfastly rejects all reports indicating that such landings and contacts have already taken place. Why? His reply is that all claims of contact can be attributed to hoaxes and hysteria; that there is no proof that aliens have made contact with earthlings.

Keyhoe is correct that there is no proof of contacts. But there is no proof that the saucers are reconnaissance craft from another planet, either. Why does he believe in space ships and not believe in space contacts? Why does he ignore the lack of decisive evidence in the first case, and use that lack as an excuse not to believe in the second case?

The Betty and Barney Hill episode provides an excellent case in point. The Hill's saucer-abduction story sounds authentic to Keyhoe. He believes that its essentials have not been shaken and is impressed that experts with the proper

credentials take the episode seriously. Still, Keyhoe cannot bring himself to accept the more bizarre aspects of the story. Consequently, he accepts that the Hills had a close-encounter experience, but rejects the portion of the story telling of the Hills boarding the craft and being examined. Keyhoe's unjustified severing of this saucer tale into acceptable and unacceptable parts poses a problem which he expresses this way:

"What caused the subconscious minds of these two people to create these pictures (of boarding the craft and being examined) from their imaginations has never been fully explained" (p. 245).

If the same degree of confirmation that the Hills' case exhibits was present in the case of a pilot chasing a UFO, Keyhoe would have no reservations about accepting the case as true. What accounts for Keyhoe's "split personality" vis-a-vis the saucer evidence?

Keyhoe's reconnaissance concept provides the answer. In the typical conception of a reconnaissance mission, the authorities of the surveying force supervise the expedition and, eventually, make contact with the authorities of the culture being surveyed. Thus, Keyhoe's concept of a contact is the take-me-to-your-leader stereotype, which means that Keyhoe expects the aliens to go through the proper channels! None of the contactees (or abductees) qualify as "proper" authorities, therefore -- according to what appears to be Keyhoe's logic -- they must be lying or mistaken.

Another purpose is served by arbitrarily rejecting the more incredible saucer reports. Belief in sightings of presumed space ships in the absence of proof is easier than belief in contacts with space men in the absence of proof. Thus, Keyhoe opts to keep the saucers at long range where the absence of decisive evidence is more intellectually tolerable.

PREMISE 3 -- The government is concealing the extraterrestrial nature of the saucers. Supposedly, the government has covered up the truth about flying saucers so as to avoid public panic. Originally, Keyhoe agreed with such a coverup. Consider this quote from The Flying Saucers Are Real (p. 14):

"I believe (the air force denials are) part of an elaborate program to prepare the American people for a dramatic disclosure... Only by seeing all parts of this intricate picture can you begin to glimpse the reasons for this stubbornly hidden secret. The official explanation may be imminent. When it is finally revealed, I believe the elaborate preparation -- even the wide deceit involved -- will be fully justified in the minds of the American people."

Keyhoe was wrong. There was no official explanation. He explains the lack of an explanation in terms of a struggle going on in official circles: The "good guys" want the truth revealed, the "bad guys" don't. Thus far, the bad-guys' fear of public panic has won the day. To wit (from Aliens From Space): "... high officials, caught in a serious dilemma, are convinced it is best to delay admitting that UFOs are real" (p. 3).

There are several reasons why the Keyhoe cover-up thesis is untenable. One reason is that Americans are no longer naive about outer space. They have been bombarded by constant accomplishments, theories, and claims over the years. The revelation that extraterrestrials have been surveying the earth would hardly set off a panic. "UFO" is a household term. Polls have shown that a majority of Americans believe that flying saucers are real and that there is life on other planets. For government officials to think that an announcement about extraterrestrial visitation would create mass hysteria is ludicrous. And for Keyhoe and other researchers to believe that government officials would hold such a view is equally ridiculous.

Another reason why the government cover-up idea doesn't hold logical water is that, by Keyhoe's own admission, efforts to conceal the truth have been inept in the extreme. In page after page of his various books and articles, Keyhoe tells us how the censors issued ridiculous explanations and denials, and otherwise bungled the saucer investigation. Time and time again, we are told, the entire web of deceit was on the verge of collapse.

But the coverup never collapses. The saucer secret is never revealed. Why?

The answer is staring Keyhoe in the face, but he refuses to see it: The coverup appears to be impenetrable because there is no secret to reveal.

These three premises -- that the saucers are flying machines, are coming from another planet on a reconnaissance mission, and are the object of a government coverup -- still shape the thought and activity of most saucer enthusiasts. Even those who reject the interplanetary answer and opt for the extra-dimensional thesis, whether they know it or not, are still thinking within Keyhoe's framework. These people continue to conceive the saucers to be flying machines, although their machines navigate "densities" as well as space. They still imagine the saucers are here on a mission -- even though it may be to control rather than to survey the earth, and their point of origin is thought to be another "plane" instead of another planet. And they still believe that the truth about the saucers is being suppressed, although the agents of that suppression sometimes turn out to be international bankers or the aliens, themselves, rather than air force or CIA personnel.

That this saucer belief system has survived for so long with so little logical and evidential support is a testimony to the tenacity of human credulity. That this system was established principally by the efforts of just three men is a testimony to their audacity and creativity. That this system has dominated the thinking of three generations of enthusiasts, and captured the imagination of the public as well, is a testimony to the seductive power of eschatological conceptions -- and to their potential usefulness for remote social control.

Though certainly not consciously coordinated, the efforts of Keyhoe, Palmer, and Adamski dovetailed beautifully. Keyhoe's constant references to government contacts and classified reports gave the saucers an official sanction and an air of seriousness that made even the most disbelieving person take notice. Palmer tied the coming of the saucers to occult forces, setting the stage for an extension of the saucer quest into the realms of religion and mysticism. Adamski concretized the saucer belief by drama-

tizing what others were only thinking and writing about. If Donald Keyhoe was the most authoritative spokesman for the saucer movement and Ray Palmer was its most imaginative publicist, George Adamski was its most proficient actor. The question is: Were any or all of these men prompted or guided toward ends that went beyond their own purposes?

Anyone who has known these men can testify to their sincerity. So I am not suggesting that they consciously participated in a pro-saucer conspiracy. The issue is whether or not their efforts were triggered remotely and/or encouraged covertly.

Ray Palmer was the least subject to covert manipulation. He was a fiercely independent thinker and fought government intervention with a passion. But he was indiscriminate in what he published. In his zeal to give everybody and every point of view a fair hearing, he could have become a channel for reports and views that performed a function beyond his ken. Also, Palmer was suspicious almost to the point of paranoia. Every detrimental event in his life was looked upon as evidence that sinister forces were trying to thwart his efforts to get the "truth" out about the powers behind the saucers. This mind-set could easily have been manipulated. Mysterious incidents -- anonymous threats, secret informants, etc. -- would send Palmer to his typewriter with a vengeance. The resultant articles would add "substance" to the claims that there was a saucer secret that "someone" was trying to cover up at all costs. Were some of these incidents staged for Palmer's benefit?

Donald Keyhoe was the most subject to remote thought control. His respect for authority and his knowledge of how military channels operated convinced him that he was performing a desirable function by publicizing supposed confidential saucer reports and views. Early in the saga, he thought of himself as a "point man" who was helping government authorities to break a profound truth to the public. He had no way of knowing who ultimately may have been responsible for using him to "inform" the public about flying saucers -- and why.

His national organization (NICAP),

organized in the mid-1950s, galvanized saucer enthusiasts into action at a time when the movement was in its infancy. Its principal objectives were to "educate" the public about flying saucers and force a revelation of the saucer secret through congressional investigations. Yet, many officers of the organization were retired military and intelligence officials who were deeply imbedded in the very establishment Keyhoe was supposed to be opposing!

George Adamski may have been just an isolated zealot who got so "turned on" by the saucer situation that he felt compelled to act it out, knowingly or otherwise. There is some evidence that he used the saucer belief system to further his own purposes. Many of his own views about life on other planets and how Man should live on earth, for example, were later espoused by Orthon, his Venusian "contact".

Yet, even Adamski's situation is not cut-and-dried. Before his "contact", Adamski was known from published articles as an amateur astronomer who photographed flying saucers. Later, he counseled people about how to contact the "space brothers", and personally coordinated the efforts of several eventual contactees. In his heyday, he was surrounded by people wherever he went. Some of these people were almost his constant companions -- and at least one of them had ties to a U.S. intelligence agency.

Adamski's contact could have been staged outright; or Adamski might have been stepped through a series of experiences that convinced him that he was in contact with space people; or he might have been convinced by someone that a contact-hoax would serve some overriding "national interest". Of course, the psycho-social "mood" of the country has changed greatly since the days of George Adamski; and the nature, purpose, and modus operandi of the aliens has changed accordingly.

The men who made the saucers were interesting and important characters in their own right. But were they also pawns in a game that was beyond their sight?

PETER KOR

COUNTERPOINT

Objectivity: Necessity or Impossibility?

The concept of objectivity has been one of the cornerstones of inquiry. It dictates that a person must approach his quest dispassionately if he wants to identify and comprehend reality. Despite its apparent certainty, this view has come under vigorous attack in recent years. Today, many "sophisticated" thinkers believe that objectivity is merely a piece of modern mythology rather than a necessity for successful inquiry.

The new view is expressed in many ways. Some reporters and investigators, for example, claim that objectivity is impossible. The claim is based on the assumption that every point of view is necessarily biased and, therefore, unreliable. Thus, a person should not even try to determine the "objective facts", they contend, but should concentrate on advocating preferred ideas and beliefs.

This view may be intellectually fashionable these days, but it is still false. The root error involved is that the view depends on the very concept of objectivity it supposedly refutes. Consider: The contention that every point of view is necessarily biased and unreliable is, itself, a point of view -- which means that it, too, must be unreliable! What advocates of this argument are really claiming is that THEY can be objective to the point of determining that objectivity is impossible -- which is nonsense.

If objectivity is impossible, ALL views are unreliable. If even one view is reliable, objectivity is possible.

Some avant-garde scientists arrive at the same conclusion about objectivity by a different route. An observer (i.e., the subject) is not truly separate from what he observes (i.e., the object), they argue. Rather, the two exist in an almost mystical communion in which the act of observation changes what is observed -- which means that subjective creativity replaces objective discovery as the modus operandi for determining reality.

The contradiction in this view is more subtle than before, but still devastating. To wit: If subject and object are not separate, there is no sure reference for

thought. Without such a reference, knowledge is impossible -- including the "knowledge" that object and subject are not separate!

Of those thinkers and researchers who still believe that objectivity is possible and desirable, many do not understand what objectivity entails. One misconception is that objectivity requires neutrality. In this view, an inquirer is being objective if he refuses to choose between opposing views or positions. A related misconception is that objectivity involves equality of treatment. Here, the inquirer strives to give all views and positions an equal hearing in terms of time, space, and/or concern.

Actually, objectivity is not geared to neutrality or equality, but to the facts of reality. It is based on the self-evident, irrefutable truth that subject (the person conducting the inquiry) and object (the matter being inquired into) ARE separate and distinct. Thus, when seeking to understand a particular matter, an inquirer's thinking and judging should be guided solely by the characteristics of the matter. This does not mean that the inquirer must rid himself of all beliefs and preferences; only that his beliefs and preferences must be kept separate from, and subservient to, the matter under consideration.

So if the facts and logic of a particular matter support one view over all others, an inquirer is NOT being objective by feigning neutrality or treating all views equally. Objectivity demands that the best view be identified and supported.

Not all attacks on objectivity are based on ignorance. Some pseudo-inquirers have a vested ideological interest in confusing their audience. By undermining the basis for testing particular views, the pseudo-inquirer has an easier time getting HIS OWN views heard and accepted. Other, less sinister pseudo-inquirers reject objectivity so as to give "free reign" to their creativity. They do not realize that an inquiry without objectivity does not enhance creativity; it merely detaches the inquiry from reality.

MONITOR

"Scientific" Saucer Explanation Strains the Imagination

Some scientists are just as embarrassing in their zeal to explain flying saucers as most ufologists are in promoting them. And embarrassment is precisely what any thinking person would have felt when watching ABC's presentation of a new saucer theory on the February 12th edition of 20/20.

The theory is the result of a joint effort between French and Canadian scientists. A French seismologist noted a correlation between reports of unidentified luminous objects and seismic activity. Many of the reports seemed to cluster around fault lines; some sightings were reported before or soon after earth tremors or quakes.

These findings seemed to support the work of a Canadian theoretical physicist whose experiments show that the stresses accompanying large-scale geological movements can create luminous displays. The moving balls and beams of light that result are apparently emitted from outcroppings of quartz that are found in many seismically-active regions, and might be misinterpreted as flying saucers.

Such luminous displays could account for some reports involving transient lights in the night sky. But how about the more dramatic reports of saucer-shaped discs that perform unusual maneuvers? Undismayed, the physicist explained that a given luminous display might persist for several seconds and, if it was globular in shape and rotating, could look like a hovering or maneuvering disc. That a seismically-generated luminous display

could become autonomous and persist long enough to account for the details given in the "best" saucer-sighting reports is not very likely. But no one could have justifiably complained if the physicist would have restricted his explanation to these kinds of cases. Unfortunately, he refused to quit while he was ahead, but tried to convince listeners that his theory could account for the Travis Walton close-encounter claim.

At dusk one day in Nov. 1975, Travis Walton and several other woodcutters claimed that they saw a saucer-shaped object, 20-25 feet wide and 8 feet thick, hovering 15 feet above the ground near their Arizona work site. A beam of light shot out from the object and struck Walton. The others fled, but Walton was paralyzed. Missing for several days, Walton returned to claim that he had been taken aboard the saucer and examined by alien beings.

According to the physicist, the craft could have been an unusually-stable luminous display that zapped Walton with an electrical discharge, triggering hallucinations about alien beings! And all this supposedly took place within 25 yards of several witnesses, without their realizing what was really happening. That's a remarkable luminous display, wouldn't you say? If a hoax was not the most likely solution in this case, the physicist's seismic theory would begin to make the alien-visitation explanation look good.

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