

LOSS OF SOUL

by

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Several years ago my wife and I took a trip to the Native American region of the United States in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Arizona. The highlight of our trip was a visit to Chaco Canyon; a remote limited access archeological site that rivals Machu Picchu and similar more famous sites in its richness of history and ancient architecture. Before visiting Chaco we made a stop at the popular Mesa Verde region, which is known for its Anasazi Cliff Dwellers. I have always been interested in the study of ancient cultures and found the trip to these sites to be intellectually as well as emotionally stimulating. Being a rather spiritual person I was most interested in the more metaphysical aspects of these cultures and wanted very much to hear about their religious practices and more spiritual endeavors. What I experienced from the official word, as it was conveyed by the trained rangers and tour guides, and what I experienced in my gut, intuition, as well as rational observation was quite different.

On visiting the Mesa Verde sites I kept scratching my head after hearing the official talk on various aspects of life in the cliffs. Much of it didn't make rational sense. Where were all of these people buried? It was explained that few remains have been found during excavations of the sites themselves. Why were the grain storage bins so small for such a large community? Why were there so many Kivas, all deliberately built to exacting religious specifications? We were told that these were more commonly used as living quarters. The same baffling explanations for the amazing excavations at Aztec and Chaco Canyon came from the rangers at these sites as well, and still an insistence

that the sites were built primarily as living communities where religious purpose was only a small part of the culture's activities.

I was reminded of the extant temple sites in Egypt, where one explanation for their continued existence after thousands of years was that they were built to last because they were temples. The everyday housing the community lived in had long ago been consumed by the ravages of the harsh desert as the care and attention required in the construction of a permanent structure was not a consideration. I am no archeologist, and my puzzlement would be akin to the puzzlement a dog might experience looking at a skyscraper with no knowledge beyond ignorant speculation. But I was intrigued, and decided to do more research regarding my questions. I was not disappointed.

My first bit of insight came from the popular American nature writer Craig Childs (2007) who implies in his book *House of Rain: Tracking a Vanishing Civilization Across the American Southwest* that my suspicions might be correct. Although Childs never specifically says that he believes the scientific record is incorrect, he does imply, throughout the book, that it may indeed be incomplete with regard to the early American Southwest cultures. It makes sense, considering the dogma of scientism and the systematic abandonment of anything subjective and material since Newton's time four hundred years ago, that all scientific inquiry focus nearly entirely on an objective reality and explanation for any mystery that may be found. As a person that does not worship materialism, and sees beyond Newtonian physics (as many real scientists are beginning to see beyond as well) I am numbed by the idea that our entire reality, as we see it in this modern time, has been possibly manipulated in order to fit into the materialists paradigm. Even in a practical sense, with no real compelling reason to do so other than it simply

seeming more practical, the explanations for many historic uncertainties fall within a more modern, materialists', definition of reality and reason. Even if the materialists are right (which they are not) it is a relatively new phenomenon in the world, and there is much more reason, say, for the Egyptians to have built the pyramids for purely spiritual and magical reasons than to have built it as a burial tomb for a king. Of the two choices, a burial chamber is quite a bit more practical and pragmatic, therefore that reason becomes the official record.

Robert Bauval (1999), an alternative historian, commented in *Secret Chamber: The Quest for the Hall of Records* how Egyptology, and most of the scientific disciplines, have lost the soul of the object of their research. He contends that to the Egyptians, science was sacred, which included the measurable as well as the immeasurable.

To be sure, the ancient architect-priests used a geometrical canon to design their monuments, but this canon was an intrinsic part of the sacred science of initiation. Geometry was sacred. Art was sacred. Architecture was sacred. Hieroglyphs were sacred. Astronomy was sacred. They were all part and parcel of a sacred science taught to high initiates in the temple. The mind of man, which they deemed the most sacred thing of all creation, was to be made adept to this science or knowledge in order to find God. (p. 54)

What else in our culture has lost its soul due to scientism and materialism? Probably nearly everything is touched by this omission. Even religion and spirituality to a degree has lost its soul in the shadow of pragmatic materialism—practicing a religion or spiritual discipline has for the most part become seen as quaint and acceptable only because it is often excused as a fantasy or distraction rather than as a true belief system a person can count on in their everyday life.

Carl Jung (1961) seems to have suggested that it is a materialist's goal to reduce everything that we perceive in this world to a namable and identifiable element. I would go further to posit that the primary tenet of our current scientific worldview is to call only those experiences that we can define in this limited manner *real*. The experiences that remain un-named, unmeasured, and unpredictable fall into a category that contemporary philosophers have called *promissory materialism* (Tart, 2009)—phenomena that will eventually be reduced down to their identifiable, and thus definable, parts within the current scientific definition of reality. This leaves a world and universe entirely defined by the Newtonian classical physics of cause and effect. B. Alan Wallace (2000) stated in his seminal work *The Taboo of Subjectivity*:

Twentieth-century scientific materialism abandoned belief in any form of theism by adopting the principle of physicalism, which states that in reality only physical objects and processes exist. In other words, only configurations of space and of mass/energy and its functions, properties, and emergent epiphenomena are real. A closely related principle maintains that everything that exists is quantifiable, including the individual elements of physical reality, as well as the laws that govern their interactions. (p. 26)

Where does this limited view of reality leave the discoveries of quantum physics and noetic science?—apparently nowhere at all. All experience then that falls outside of the materialist view of the universe becomes a fantasy at best, and at worst, it is ignored.

Going back to the alternative history point of view, not only are we not getting the correct information (for instance, simply because it is considered impossible by the materialists the Egyptians could not have built the pyramids using antigravity techniques, or mind over matter metaphysics) we also are missing a whole perspective of seeing reality—of seeing the material world not only through scientific, materialist, eyes, but seeing the world as a sacred place, integrating science with spirituality—a sacred science.

One might ask, “so what?” It is rather easy to use the idea of promissory materialism to put anything unexplainable on the back burner until material science catches up and provides explanations. Still, we do assume that Newton rules the universe and nothing will come up that will defy these basic laws of physics, such as the speed of light, and cause and affect. Although quantum physics does seem to be having its way with some of these laws. According to most conventional physicists though, quantum laws don’t work the same way in the macro world therefore we need not be bothered by them (Bohm, 1981; Goswami, 1997; Talbot, 1991). Still, all things considered, the nagging question still comes up, “why do we need soul in our science?” In my opinion, there is a simple answer to that question, without soul, we perish.

I cannot really give any empirical evidence to support this claim but it seems clear we now largely live in a culture that has been dominated by the dogma of scientism—or a soulless science—and we are not much better off for it. Depression is on the rise (Murray & Fortinberry, 2005), a general malaise seems to permeate the culture, and people seem to be more and more desperate to find meaning in their lives and to grasp for a feeling of fulfillment and happiness living it. Human beings do seek answers to questions brought up by their experience. The need to know is a very powerful force in our psyches, but so is the desire not to know, to simply *be*, to allow a feeling of mystery and magical cloudiness to drift over our awareness from time to time. Every child knows what it is like to ponder about Santa Claus, whether or not fairies really do exist, and other wonders of childhood. Adults have a fascination with fantasy, science fiction, and make-believe as well as with ideals, values, love, and the pursuit of goodness and beauty. This subjective essence of life we may call soul, God, the numinous, or even the spark of life, is largely

unknown and unknowable; it certainly is ineffable. Pursuing its meaning and what it is actually made up of, knowing one will never really find it, is what gives it its beauty and allure—as well as well as conjuring up a sense of eternal peace.

In a truly mechanized universe one never quite feels a master of his or her fate. It all depends on where, and at what speed, the billiard ball hit the last ball. Control is always local, with no feeling of any real power to change through thought or intention alone. With soul back in our material world there is power and meaning in thought, love, awareness, imagination and intention. Bernard Grad of McGill University conducted some experiments in the mid 1960's designed to demonstrate the power of healing. Although Grad was the not the first or last to compile such data his results were rather remarkable. Taking a number of laboratory mice he deliberately wounded each mouse by cutting out a small piece of skin. Through a process careful to avoid typical pitfalls he divided the mice into three groups, a control group, a group that received deliberate and conscious healing energy from a known human healer, and a group that simply received a treatment similar to the healing treatment but with no intention to heal and not from a known healer (such as holding the mouse in the hands in the same manner for the same amount of time.) The differences in the rate of healing were quite extraordinary, with no materialist explanation (Tart, 2009, pp. 170-175).

I do not propose that we make greater efforts to prove the scientific viability of these mindful, intentional, and soul functioning phenomena. Although there have been great strides made in the specific scientific experiments revolving around certain types of psi such as ESP, psycho kinesis and other similar phenomenon (Radin, 1997), I do not personally believe the answer lies in simply defining these events in the

same manner that we define most everything else in material existence. Taking true advantage of what these things can teach us or how they can help us see the world, the universe, life and even material manifestation, in a more expanded and more truthful manner will not come about through an objective, realist, methodology. So then it becomes a matter of heart, and not entirely intellect, and matters of the heart have not typically been viewed by science as empirically evidential. Going again back to the ancient Egyptians, one aspect of their culture that is so fascinating was their ability to manipulate the material world so effectively and scientifically coming from a purely spiritual paradigm. Again, conventional Egyptologists, whose method of research and scholarly inquiry is deeply seated in a 19th Century Euro-centric scientific paradigm, give scant attention and credence to the Egyptian's sacred science, sacred architecture, and sacred medicine, astronomy, and just about anything else they dabbled in (Bauval, 1999; West, 1993).

It seems then that the issue becomes an act of balancing. What has priority in our lives, what leads and what follows? What is taken seriously, and what is relegated to mere fantasy, dreams, and if not a positive experience, nightmares and pathology. As children we are encouraged to fantasize, to bring elves and fairies to life, to have imaginary friends and make-believe worlds. But when a certain age is reached, and these non-physical fascinations are continued, the young adult is considered mentally ill and needs treatment to bring them into the real world of quantifiable materialism. It is a shaky proposition to suggest that we all take fairies, ghosts, and even subjective feelings such as love, faith, and anything we would describe as numinous as seriously as we do cancer cells in our bodies, gold in the bank, and food on the table, but I believe that some effort

must be made to find a place for these realities *as* realities and not merely epiphenomena of the chemistry in our brains.

There is a demand, in our current Western paradigm, that individual experience is suspect until it becomes a group observation. Wallace (2000) commented on this as well:

The principle of objectivism demands that science deals with empirical facts testable by empirical methods and verifiable by third-person means. This principle has proven to be very useful in revealing a wide range of facts that are equally accessible to all competent observers. Such facts must be public rather than private; that is to say, they must be accessible to more than one observer. However there are many other empirical facts—most obviously, our own subjective mental events—that are accessible only by first-person means and of which the only competent observer is oneself. (p. 22)

There is indeed a thin veil between the subjective imagination and what is considered objectively real. I believe that our current culture and scientific paradigm demands that there be a distinction between these two realms of experience. Newtonian science, for the past four hundred years, has provided a convenient measuring stick for this determination (Newton, 1962). Now it seems that our comfortable and delineated way of looking at the universe is falling apart. We are becoming more aware and conscious of the events that occur within our sphere of experience that fall outside the boundaries of causal science. Maybe we are slowly going back to a sacred way of looking at reality, much in the same way the ancient Egyptians did. It seems in some ways to be a subtle shift, but the results of that shift I believe could be monumental in scope.

I have throughout this paper treated soul as being synonymous with any sort of subjective thought, including imagination, fantasy, even the supernatural phenomenon we occasionally encounter. My basis for doing this again comes from the sacred and spiritual paradigm in which many ancient cultures were ensconced—most notably the ancient

Egyptians. It seems that these cultures did not see a distinction between magic, religion, spirituality, supreme being, supernatural, or anything sacred or soulful. Of course this is opinion, but one that is shared by many philosophers and alternative Egyptologists (and many conventional Egyptologists would have difficulty arguing a contrary perspective) (Bauval, 1999, 2008; Bauval & Gilbert, 1994; Hancock & Bauval, 1996; West, 1993).

I think too it is important to make a distinction between the religion and spirituality expressed by these ancient cultures such as the Egyptians and the Native American Anasazi (Coffer, 1982) and the period of early European Catholicism which was born out of a mystical Christianity but after becoming the state religion of Rome lost much of its own soul (Chadwick, 1967, 1991). The early pagan religions were not even considered religions by those that practiced them (Bauval, 1999) but were an essential way of life and the way these cultures interfaced with the natural world. Today, as we in the Western world turn away from organized religion and turn more toward a deeper spirituality free from dogma, patriarchal hierarchies, and other seemingly man-made attributes of organized religion we find a perspective that is closer to, in my opinion, what the ancient Egyptians were practicing. Although we, as a mass culture, are far from reaching a global re-introduction of the sacred in our material paradigm, if we do move toward this deeper insight it seems to be closer to these more ancient perspectives than those of our Euro-Christian-Judaic paradigms.

After doing a bit of research into the Chaco Canyon archaeological site and the handful of other sites my wife and I visited that summer it seems there is a possibility my suspicions are correct regarding the way these ancient cultures viewed the world around them—as entirely sacred (Childs, 2002, 2007; Coffer, 1982; Noble, 2004). No one really

knows what these sites were used for, some say as communities where all communal life took place including living and dying. Others say they were indeed exclusively ceremonial and reserved for spiritual ritual (Coffer, 1982). The same can be said for the temples of ancient Egypt, although this is more widely accepted as fact (Shafer & Arnold, 1997). What intrigues me about this is the manner in which historians leave out the subjective and the importance of the subjective to the peoples being studied. Religion, spirituality, and particularly magic and anything of the paranormal, are dismissed as being delusions, misunderstandings, and primitive ignorance and are given only cursory attention or ignored entirely. What we are taught or have read has been washed with an antiseptic that ignores the reality of essential elements of these cultures, thus we miss the essence of their being. This example from archeology is merely a sample of a very widespread practice in our current culture: the systematic removal of any element of any subject that is not accepted within the materialist paradigm. This can be found in today's medical arts, all sciences, and certainly history. Unfortunately soul has been allowed only in the arts, in music, painting, sculpture, fictional literature and theater. Even here it is largely treated as a distraction and entertainment rather than as an essential part of our being.

To bring soul back into our lives and into the so-called hard sciences is to bring back symbol and subjective insight and allow them to have equal place with words and objective reasoning. John Anthony West (1993), again commenting on Egyptian symbols, said:

[The symbol in ancient Egypt] is a scrupulously chosen pictorial device designed to evoke an idea or concept in its entirety. It is a means of bypassing the intellect and talking straight to the intelligence of the heart, the understanding. The heart synthesizes, the mind analyzes. A true symbol is neither primitive nor

subconscious. It is a deliberate means of evoking understanding, as opposed to conveying information. Words convey information; symbols evoke understanding. (p. 129)

Understanding, and not just assimilating information, is a goal that few modern men and women seem to reach. Depression in our culture may be a result of confusion, frustration, and a feeling of being directionless. A sacred life is one of understanding, not in an intellectual sense, but in a heartfelt sense—a peace in knowing that not all can be known; yet it is always fruitful to seek answers. Understanding our purpose, our meaning, and the knowing, in our hearts, that there is indeed meaning in the universe and in our lives—even though we may not be able to prove what that meaning is, we simply know it is there—this to me is what the sacred life is. A life and a universe filled with soul. The ancient Egyptians, and possibly even the Anasazi, seemed to understand this. Maybe there is much more we can learn from them if we open up our hearts to their sacred way of being.

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