

Research Essay

The Theory of Six Main Levels of Consciousness: A Study of the Third Level

Tina Lindhard*

International University of Professional Studies (IUPS), Hawaii, USA

ABSTRACT

Based on the Arka's theory of the six main levels of consciousness, this study predicted that people would show a trend towards a more Feeling-Mind heart-based consciousness after being trained to go below their thinking mind. In order to test this, a scale was constructed under the name of the Feeling Consciousness Scale (FCS). The scale items were based on Arka's work and information derived from interviews with people who had practiced the Intuitive Meditation (IM) method for more than 7 months. Using a repeated measures design, the FCS was filled in by 8 male and 23 female participants comprising of five different groups, before and after attending five Intuitive Meditation training sessions spread over 6 weeks (a total of 13.5 hours). A significant difference at the .001 level was found between both scores. Due to the small sample size and that the scale is a project in development, these results are tentative. This research supports the third level of Arka's theory and suggests that we have a level of consciousness associated with the heart which is characterized by certain traits such as intuition, unity, peace, positivity, awareness of emotions, and connection to one's inner Self, sometimes expressed as soul, inner being, or atman. The drawings by one participant after each intuitive meditation session indicate that the inner journey of Self-discovery is a process. In suggesting other levels of consciousness including a feeling based experiencing consciousness associated with the heart, Arka's theory might also offer a solution to what Chalmers calls the hard problem of consciousness. The other levels of Arka's theory still need to be researched.

Keywords: Levels of consciousness, feeling-mind, heart-based consciousness, Intuitive Meditation, Feeling Consciousness Scale, Self.

1. Introduction

In India, consciousness has been studied for thousands of years using the phenomenological or "inside out" perspective. This has given rise to the insight that consciousness is "the essence of Atman, a primal, immanent self that is ultimately identified with Brahman—a pure, transcendental, subject-object-less consciousness that underlies and provides the ground of being of both Man and Nature" (Sen as cited in Velmans, 2009, p. 1). Compared to this in the West the

*Correspondence Tina Lindhard, Ph.D., e-mail: consol.tina@gmail.com Address: 6 Pico de la Pala, 28792 Miraflores de la Sierra, Madrid. Spain. Telephone: 34 91 8444695, Mobile: 34 659067797

scientific research into the nature of consciousness is still in its infancy, with little agreement as yet on what is meant by consciousness. As most neuroscientists and philosophers assume that consciousness is connected with the brain, their research is mainly involved around establishing how the brain functions. Crick and Koch (1990), for example, talk about oscillations in the cerebral cortex whereas Dennett (1991), a philosopher has developed a theory involving how numerous brain processes combine to produce a coherent response to a perceived event. Even scientists who have combined quantum mechanics and neuroscience such as Hameroff and Penrose (2014) and Fisher (2015) center their theories on the brain and how it functions. Hameroff and Penrose (2014) claim that their theory, known as the "orchestrated objective reduction" ('Orch OR') theory, accommodates the view that consciousness has been ever present and is derived from quantum vibrations in microtubules, protein polymers inside brain neurons. On the other hand, Fisher's (2015) theory suggests that nuclear spins of phosphorus atoms serve as rudimentary qubits in the brain - which enable the brain to act like a quantum computer. Earlier, Hu and Wu (2004) proposed "spin-mediated consciousness theory" on the possible roles of neural membrane nuclear spin ensembles and paramagnetic oxygen.

According to Chalmers (1995) these theories address the easy task of consciousness in that "they all concern the objective mechanisms of the cognitive system (and) consequently, we have every reason to expect that continued work in cognitive psychology and neuroscience will answer them" (p.81). On the other hand, the hard part involves "how physical processes in the brain give rise to subjective experience ... the way things feel for the subject" (Chalmers, 1995, p. 81). For him, one of the questions consists of "how could it (consciousness) possibly arise from neural processes in the brain?" (p.80).

In this article, I suggest that maybe the hard problem arises because Chalmers is looking for feeling-based experiencing consciousness in the wrong place. Instead of looking for feeling based consciousness in neural processes of the brain, here I suggest that by considering the theory of the six main levels of consciousness of the philosopher Srinivas Arka (2013), the hard problem of consciousness proposed by Chalmers, may be solved. This theory not only proposes that we have a thinking based consciousness connected with the brain, but that we have other levels of consciousness including a feeling based experiencing consciousness associated with the heart.

I also hold that any investigation into other levels of consciousness needs to involve a different method to that usually employed by neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists. In studies to do with human consciousness, it is argued here that discovery progresses through phenomenological experiencing. This, then, is presented in a way that no one else has thought, thereby throwing new light onto some aspects of human nature. This is consistent with a statement by La Tour and La Tour (2011) who claimed:

"Personal experience is of vital importance as it allows us to certify the complexity of our nature

and surpass the knowledge that is available in physical reality. Without transcendent experiences, or those that surpass the physical senses and dimension, research will continue to promote misinterpretation, informational gaps, and remain trapped in theoretical conjecture (armchair research) failing to serve its central purpose as a practical instrument for self-orientation and guidance in the evolutionary process". (p. 66).

Arka's theory arises out of his personal inner experience and that of his pupils while using a method of meditation known as Intuitive Meditation (IM) or *Arka Dhyana*. It involves a journey of Self-discovery from the mind, to the heart to pure consciousness (Arka, 2006; 2013). Although each person's unique inner experiences is acknowledged, Arka's gifted power of analysis has enabled him to recognize that during the inner journey the practitioner who uses the IM method passes through various levels of consciousness which are qualitatively different from each other.

In this article, I outline the approach I used and the main results obtained in a study I undertook to find out if participants would show a trend toward a more feeling-based consciousness after learning the IM method as suggested by Arka's theory. Although much research has been done involving a meditation technique known as mindfulness (Lau et al., 2006, p. 1447), this study is novel in that not much is known scientifically about heart-based meditation methods including the Intuitive Meditation (IM) method. In the discussion, evidence from other heart-based meditation methods connecting the heart with a feeling-based consciousness is presented, as is information from heart transplant patients. Research concerning heart functioning is also discussed.

To help the reader understand more about what is involved in "inner exploration", different aspects of these concepts are outlined as background material. Arka's theory of the Six Main Levels of Consciousness is also introduced.

1.1. Background

Before there were teachers or books, people wondered about their nature and the nature of nature. In ancient cultures like that of India, people who asked these questions sat down and waited for answers to arise on the inside. When their quest was sincere and they were patient, they slowly received intuitive answers to their deep questions. Arka (2013) refers to their source as the Self or Higher Nature, but each person can use whatever term he or she is most comfortable. These investigators later became known as yogis, philosophers, seers, and *rishis* (Lindhard, 2016).

Scientific inquiry is not so different in that scientists also want to know about the nature of life or the nature of Nature. Nevertheless, the way they go about it is traditionally very different.

Western scientists usually seek to understand the nature of Nature by studying the outside world using the scientific method.

1.1.1. Methods of exploring the Self and Prayer of the Heart

Predating modern psychology, methods were developed to help people explore their inner world so as to discover their true nature. These methods were known as meditation and the practitioner can go above the mind or below the mind. However methods that go below the mind are slightly easier (Arka, 2013). Meditation methods involve "the experimental phenomenological introspection into the living topological construct of the Self" (Louchakova, 2007, p. 82) or "serious self-pondering into the depth of the soul about . . . [our] existence (Arka, 2013, p. 29). Meditation methods were not only used in the East, but a heart-based method known as Prayer of the Heart was used extensively in cultures around the Mediterranean during different periods in history. It is part of the tradition known as *Hesychasm*, from the Greek meaning inner stillness. This method finds resonance with the ancient Egyptians who held the idea of God-man and it was also used by the Desert Fathers in the Christian tradition and later adopted by the Orthodox Church. Variations of it can be found in ancient Judaism, the Sufi tradition, Caucasus, Persia, Pakistan, and also India (Louchakova, 2004). This indicates that the heart has held a prime position in the journey of Self-discovery in many cultures throughout history.

1.1.2. Rational for using the IM method and a brief description of it

As Prayer of the Heart is a method which is considered to be complicated (Louchakova, 2007), the modern day heart-based method known as Intuitive Meditation was used in this study to test the third level of Arka's theory. The IM method itself is simple and being a body-based method, it is natural and can be practiced by all traditions. It is based on three pillars: touch sound and breath. Instead of using words with which the practitioner might or might not resonate and therefore lead to distractions of the mind, a vibratory sound is intoned at various energetic centers in the body. In addition, instead of seeking to quiet the mind, practitioners train their mind to where they want it to go through the use of their hands. As they move through the practice, they shift their hand position and their attention to different energy sites in the body while at the same time synchronizing the movement with their breath and intoning the humming sound (Arka, 2013). It also involves a gesture to invite the mind, usually associated with the brain, to come down to the level of the heart in the middle of the upper chest.

1.1.3. Who undertakes the inner journey?

Arka (2009; 2013) identifies the part of the individual who undertakes the inner journey as the "I awareness," "I ego conscious awareness," or "I ego awareness", which is the pivot of the memories which form into a personality. "We recognize this as a consistent personality from the

day we become aware of our presence. With the development of 'I ego awareness' a time arises when we want to touch the origin of consciousness expressing itself through the human body" (S. Arka, personal communication, August 10, 2016).

In the quest for Self-realisation, Arka (2013) talks about the need to experience the reverse process of journeying from the surface-rational–mind to the emotional-heart to the Pure State of consciousness. "Under normal circumstances, our "I Awareness" is occupied with activities in the outside world. However, in meditation, we withdraw our attention from the outside world and start shining our 'I Awareness' of light on our inner world" (Arka, personal correspondence, Oct. 2017).

1.1.4. Intention and Meditation

The results of different meditation methods also depend on the intention that one sets. The intention of the IM method is the realization or knowledge of the Self, a process that is said to lead to enlightenment (Arka, 2013). During the journey to Self-realization using the IM method, Arka (2013) claims the practitioner will pass through six main levels of consciousness.

1.1.5. Arka's Theory of the Six Main Levels of Consciousness

Arka's theory is intimately related to his definition of consciousness, which he defines in the following way:

"Consciousness manifests itself through physical matter. Similar to bacteria that are able to survive with a complete lack of oxygen and in high temperatures, consciousness lacks boundaries, can take any form or shape and can emerge under challenging life conditions. In spirituality, consciousness is mainly a non-physical yet powerful entity that is the pivotal point of all life and activates the senses in every living being. It is highly responsive and expressive and activates many levels, especially in humans". (Arka, 2013, p. 37)

This is similar to that of Sen outlined earlier but is a more specific. According to Arka (2013) the levels activated in humans are:

1) M (Mind) – Consciousness, 2) SM (Subliminal-Mind) – Consciousness, 3) F (Feeling-Mind) – Consciousness, 4) H (Emotional-Heart) – Consciousness, 5) HS (Heart-Soul) – Consciousness and 6) PS (Pure-Self) – Consciousness.

The first level is Mind or thinking mind consciousness. It "manifests on the surface of the cerebral region and becomes sharpened by the cultivation of learning, it evolves into a faculty called intellect" (p.37). Below this level, is what Arka refers to as subliminal or subconscious

mind, which he claims governs many of our daily activities. Its potential and capacities "may seem incredible to the surface mind" (p. 37). The third level is the feeling mind, and as it generally prevails in the heart area, Arka (2013) suggests it can "thus be called the Heart of Heart-Consciousness. It includes an emotional faculty called intuition. Almost all mothers have this faculty naturally available and readily accessible to help them understand the intense needs of their children and people they care about" (p.37). In next level, Emotional-Heart Consciousness, "the presence of the surface mind is reduced but the presence of subliminal mind is enhanced. It is formed by impressions gathered through all you have learned and experienced along with the memory of your personality" (pp.37-38). The fifth level, Heart-Soul Consciousness "is between the deeper heart and the ultimate essential being (Soul). Here you experience inner-space and the mystical Universe, where the laws of physics start reversing and lead you to experience many alternative realities and possibilities that give access to your own soul. Here you become more connected with Nature and the forces of the Universe." (p. 38). The sixth level is Pure-Self Consciousness and it is "core consciousness. This is the very essence of your whole presence and of everything that you feel, think and do. It is addressed as Soul or Self" (p. 38). Although these are the main levels, Arka (2013) also recognizes "there are many other levels (between these) that may be impossible to explain as our language is limited" (p.38).

2. Testing of Arka's Theory

Arka's theory opens science to a new way of understanding consciousness for in clearly outlining the main levels, it helps us know more about what is involved in the process of Self-discovery. If we also take each level to be qualitatively different from the other levels, research into this theory may also not only provide a basis for testing the theory using the scientific method, but also provide a way of finding out if practitioners using other heart-based methods give rise to similar levels of consciousness. In the research reported here, it is the third level of consciousness that was investigated.

2.1. Research approach

Investigation into Arka's theory could proceed in various ways. However, the third level of his theory lends itself to comparing measurements of the "experiencing consciousness" of subjects prior to receiving training in the IM method and then again after learning the method. As measures have been designed and developed to investigate other methods of meditation, like mindfulness (Lau et al., 2006, p. 1447), I was inspired to use a similar approach. These measures involve self-reporting through rating subjective experiences after training in the mindfulness meditation technique. Likert type measures were used in these scales, such as the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale (Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, & Greeson, 2007), the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2001), the Kentucky Inventory of

Mindfulness Skills (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004), the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003), the Mindfulness Questionnaire (Chadwick, Hember, Mead, Lilley, & Dagnan, 2005) and the Applied Mindfulness Process Scale (Michael, Black, & Garland, 2016). I also decided to use a Likert type measure in this study.

However, as I was unable to find any scale that measures feeling-consciousness, I decided to develop a scale to be applied twice, prior to learning the method and again 6 weeks later. The scale was named the *Feeling-Consciousness Scale* (FCS).

Questionnaires or scales have their pros and their cons. They are relatively quick to complete, economical, and usually easy to analyze (Rattrey & Jones, 2007, p. 235). But closed questions or statements may restrict the depth of the participant's response, resulting in the quality of the data collected being incomplete or diminished (Bowling, 1997; Rattrey & Jones, 2007). Another problem is that questionnaires or scales assume that the researcher and the respondents share underlying assumptions about language and interpret statement wording in a similar manner (Rattrey & Jones, 2007, p. 235).

I therefore chose to use both closed and open response formats, since "all methods of data collection have limitations, (and) the use of multiple methods can neutralize or cancel out some of the disadvantages of certain methods" (Creswell, Plano, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003, p. 164). I also chose a multiple method approach, in the belief that this was the most appropriate way of learning about feeling-consciousness and what is involved in this stage of Arka's theory.

The construction of the scale involved a series of steps, for the scale items were not only deduced from theory (Arka, 2003; 2006; 2009; 2013) but also derived from interviewing eight people who had practiced the IM method for between 7 months and 2 years. I asked them to tell me about the quality of their consciousness related to the practice of IM. I chose to do this, as my interest was not only in testing a theory, but to find out if certain subjective experiences are common to practitioners when they start meditating on their deeper Self using the IM method. Based on intuition and on Arka's work, I felt that "feeling-consciousness" is a single construct involving multiple facets.

Later, the same eight people ordered and arranged the statements regarding their experiences in different groups based on common elements. In the draft of the scale used in the pilot study, I had to reduce the number of scale items as when testing the reliability of a scale the rule of thumb is about five respondents per item (Byman & Cramer as cited in Rattrey & Jones, 2007).

I am also aware that everybody has a rich inner world with his or her own unique individual experiences. In applying the scale the second time I therefore also included some open-ended questions in order to learn more about the experiencing consciousness of the participants after

learning IM and to see if there were some emerging elements or factors that may have been overlooked while constructing the scale. The choice of a mixed method design was therefore not to validate or corroborate the findings of both methods, but as a way of combining the results leading to greater elaboration and expansion of information (Brannen, 2005). In addition, keeping open about the results of the two methods allows for discovery where they might complement or enhance one another or where they might even contradict one another (Brannen, 2005, p. 12). This aspect of the study has been reported elsewhere (Lindhard, 2017).

This study also included a boon as one of the participants did some sketches regarding her inner experiences after each IM session. They provided qualitative data on the internal process from another perspective. I include them in the results as a visual representation is often worth more than a thousand words and is an approach that could be considered when doing future research into meditation methods. The sketches also give a visual representation of IM as a process or journey, rather than something fixed and static. Furthermore, including the micro level in this way gives "voice" to the individual as well as the larger macro patterns that I hoped would be revealed through the quantitative research (Brannen, 2005, p. 8).

As so little is known about how our inner world is affected when we meditate on the Self via the heart, multiple methods were also seen as a practical solution, for that approach opens the door to different views and to different forms of data collection and analysis (Creswell, Plano, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). I felt that using multiple methods of data collection might not only help in learning more about the phenomenon I wanted to measure, but also assist future researches to construct a more sensitive instrument.

The study took place in phases. During Phase 1, a pilot test to refine the wording and format of the scale was undertaken. In Phase 2, I administered the scale and conducted the initial procedures to validate the scale and assess its reliability. I see the construction of the scale as the start of a research program where future researchers can refine it further.

2.1.1. Research Hypotheses: Null Form

The hypothesis predicted that the experiencing consciousness of people will not show a trend toward a more feeling-based consciousness after learning the IM method and practicing it a minimum of five times over a 6-week period as measured by the same scale.

2.1.2. Test procedures adopted.

A repeated measures t-test (paired sample test) was performed on the results to see if there was a quantitative difference between the pre- and post-test scores.

2.1.3. Validity and reliability

The specific validation processes used were: face validity, reliability as internal consistency using test-retest reliability, and Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient.

In science validity refers to the degree to which a measure measures the construct it represents. In spirituality the term validity is used differently. In spirituality a teacher of the inner world is not interested in verifying a theory, but training his or her pupils in a certain way, which will put them in touch with their own inner world and guidance so they may reach higher conscious states and obtain enlightenment. Their success in reaching higher states is considered proof of the validity of the method. Of course, this requires great dedication and perseverance by the student as well (Arka, 2013).

2.1.4. Assessment of Responses to Open-Ended Questions

I assessed the answers to the open-ended questions to learn more about the inner experiences of others and also to see if there were items that could inform future scale development through inclusion of new items (Rattray & Jones, 2007, p. 237). I also assessed them to see if we could learn more about the process involved when learning IM (Lindhard, 2017).

2.2. Description of Participants

The participants for this study were self-selected in the sense they were people who voluntarily signed up to learn the IM method and participate in the study. As long-term changes in inner consciousness normally require that people actually practice the method on a regular basis, I decided to use only people interested in learning it. All participants paid a nominal sum for attending the workshops. People who were not earning were given a discount. They came from all walks of life, were of both genders and a variety of ages. The age ranged from 27 to 72 years, with an average age of 48 years.

Thirty-seven participants started the course, of which 31 completed it. Six could not complete the course for a variety of personal reasons. This is a limitation of the study. Twenty-three were females and 8 were males. Twenty-five were Spanish, three Argentinian, and one from Colombia, Brazil, and Italy respectively. At the time of the study, they all were living in Madrid, where I conducted this research. All subjects also signed a form consenting to their participation in the study (Lindhard, 2016; 2017).

2.3. Instrumentation

The FCS was administered to 31 participants. As the same IM workshop was offered on different

days, times, and places the participants joined whatever workshop was most convenient to them. All workshops were conducted in spacious halls, which permitted the participants to lie down during the relaxation phase of the meditation. In the end there were five groups consisting of between three and nine subjects. All the participants filled in the FCS prior to beginning the workshop. The same scale, but reordered was again applied 6 weeks later at the end of the last class after practicing IM. The first time the scale was applied it also included demographic questions regarding age, gender, and experience with other meditation methods. The scale also included several open questions the second time it was applied. The assertions were the same as in the first scale, although the order of presentation was changed. A Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7 was used, with 1 representing never or almost never and 7 representing very often or always. All 31 participants filled in the scale items the second time it was applied (Lindhard, 2016; 2017).

2.3.1. Description of Final Scale

The final scale consisted of 20 items. I dropped two during the analysis phase because both of these were worded negatively and when the participants were filling them out, many asked which way they should go. This indicated an ambiguity in their wording, so I decided to not include them.

As this study is a start in a field in which scientific psychological evaluation is new, future work in evaluating this treatment approach will need to refine the measurement instrument and try to develop a shorter version so that the field can add constructs to the evaluation instrument (A. Kendall, personal communication, January 31, 2016).

2.4.1. Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

The whole field of cognitive interviewing in question development has grown from the awareness that it is difficult to develop questions that reflect the construct under consideration without mixing in other constructs that confuse the respondents and the analysis. The eliciting of information is not as simple as it may appear. This explains why psychology uses standardized tests as part of evaluations (A. Kendal, personal communication, January 31, 2016).

A repeated measures t-test (paired samples test) with a significance level is 5% was performed to see if there was a significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores.

Face validity. Face validity was not directly addressed in this research, as the field is so new there is no panel of experts to consult. However, the way I derived the scale items from actual experiences of other practitioners of IM may be seen as giving certain validity to the choice of scale items.

Internal consistency of scale items. Cronbach's alpha uses inter-item correlations to determine whether constituent items are measuring the same construct (Bowling, 1997). If the items show good internal consistency this statistic should exceed 0.70 for a developing scale or 0.80 for a more established scale (Rattrey & Jones, 2007, p. 237). In the present study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was .908.

Summary item statistics. The mean correlation between pairs of items was .35. The lowest correlation was .20. The highest was .74. The negative correlations indicate that with a more sensitive (larger) set of respondents there may be more than one underlying dimension (construct).

3. Results

This section is divided into three: quantitative results obtained from the scale; quantitative results obtained from the open questions (Lindhard, 2017) and the qualitative results consisting of the sketches presented by one of the participants.

3.1 Quantitative results based on the FCS

The experiencing consciousness of people showed a significant difference in a trend toward a more feeling-based consciousness after learning the IM method and practicing it a minimum of five times over a 6-week period as measured by the same scale.

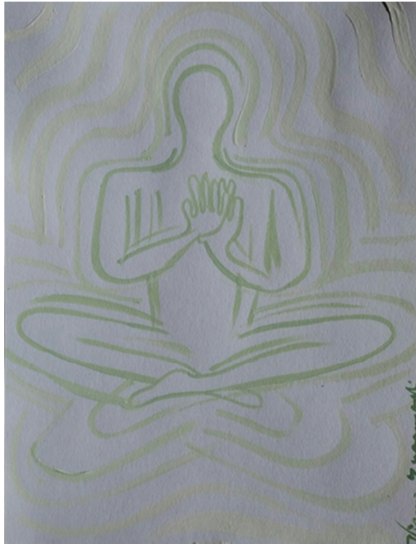
Using a paired sample t-test, a significant difference at the .001 level was found between pre and post scores as measure by the Feeling Consciousness scale.

($M= 4.3$, $SD= .99$) and the post-test score ($M= 5.3$, $SD= .72$); $t = 5.4$ (30), $p < .001$. The mean post-test score was .9 scale points higher than the mean pre-test scale score. The 95 % confidence interval is from .6 scale points to 1.3 scale points with a statistically significance at the .001 level) (Lindhard, 2016).

3.2. Qualitative Results

Here I present the seven sketches one participant made which shows her personal journey as a process as the training went on.

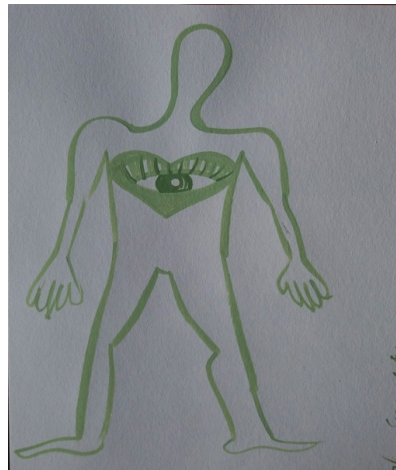
Figure 1: Seven Sketches as a Testimonial of One Participant's Inner Journey



A)



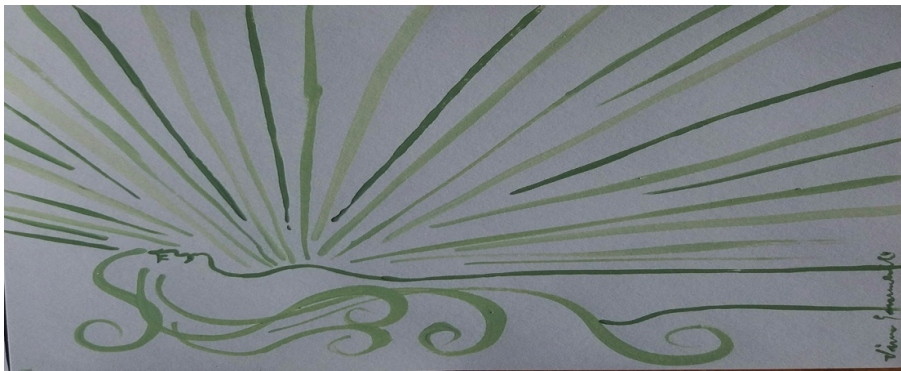
B)



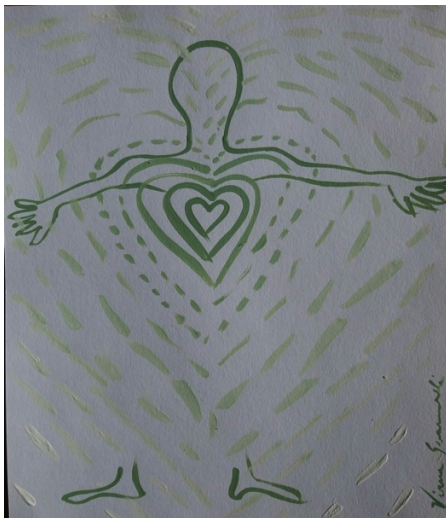
C)



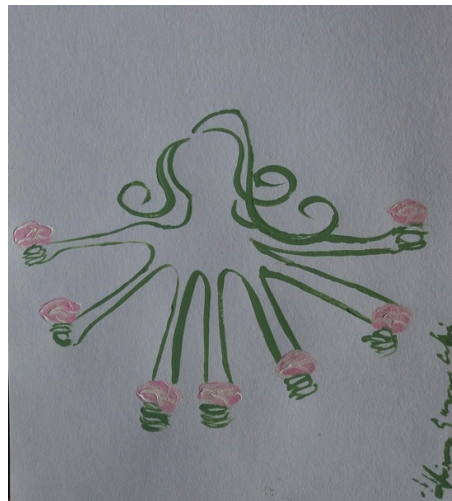
D)



E)



F)



G)

4. Discussion

The multi-methods case study showed that the IM method produced a significant shift toward a more feeling-based consciousness as measured by the FCS. This scale includes items such as intuition, unity, peace, positivity, awareness of emotions, and connection to one's inner Self, sometimes expressed as soul, inner being, or atman. Preliminary psychometric procedures in validating the scale were also performed. The qualitative results were shown to support the quantitative scale items (Lindhard, 2016, 2017)

This study also indicates there is a different type or quality of consciousness that is available to us that is characterized by certain traits. This is consistent with the 3rd level of consciousness talked about by Arka in his theory. These results do not prove Arka's theory, as the scale used is still being developed and as yet little is known about the factor "feeling" which it is said to be measuring. The results are also tentative, as the sample size was small and the developed scale needs to be refined further. There are also no results from other studies into the IM method with which these can be compared. In addition this study is concerned with the initial levels of Arka's theory, not the theory as a whole.

Nevertheless, the significant difference found indicates that the IM method does bring about a change in the experiencing consciousness of the people who practice it. The answers to the open questions confirmed many of the scale items, such as intuition, feeling of peace, being centered, awareness of oneself, being present in one's body, thoughts are calmer, and feeling of energy (Lindhard, 2016; 2017). The answers to the open questions also make one aware that some concepts like calm, tranquil, thoughts are calmer, are inner experiences of a slightly different order, as sometimes the same respondent mentioned all three variations. This also demonstrates one of the problems of reducing inner experiences to a limited number of scale items.

These results indicate that training in IM can increase one's ability to access one's inner feeling layers of consciousness. However, as words and numbers are only symbols for reality and the fact that the scale was only filled in twice, the results do not reveal this training as a process. For this researcher the capacity of the practitioner to connect with the deeper layers is also dependent on the desire of the participant to connect with his or her self, soul, or inner being. In a previous workshop one person who really had a desire to connect, had a deep emotional experience in the initial stages when introduced to the gesture from mind to heart, and for him this helped established a connection with his inner being on a very deep level. Arka (2013) also recommends that one meditate when one feels the urge. It is not purely a physical discipline where inner spiritual experiences depend only on the number of times one practices the method.

Also connecting to the deeper layer is a process. The sketches produced by one of the participants, gives a visual testimony to the process that went on in her over the 6-week period,

but in a non-quantifiable way. She described each sketch in her own words, which I include here. In sketch A, she had "an expansion of consciousness from the heart beyond her material body." This was during the first meditation session. In the second session (sketch B), her hands opened her sight "to see the whole cosmos," to see the "stars and beyond." At the same time, she lost her "experience of body weight." Sketch C does not correspond to a session of meditation, but represents a state of consciousness, which had become permanent. She described it as if "my vision now comes from the heart." The next two sketches D and E come from the third meditation session and came "out of" the music that was played during yoga *nidra*, the stage of lying down and relaxing.

From her breasts she saw "branches coming out and also other branches reaching down" to her. "Everything formed one network." At the same time, it was as though my heart "was opening and emitting rays of incorporeal light expanding in all direction." In the fourth session, there was now "permanent love through the heart, very simple, only love." And in the last session, there were just arms sharing her gifts. She is offering, "pink flowers to all." Her energy "was transformed," it was "transparent." She also shared with this researcher that "this meditation is different from others, as it permits one to live from this state permanently. It is not divorced from daily living" (Lindhard, 2016). Training in the IM method in essence is an introduction to the practice of phenomenology where contemplation of one's true nature also rests on self-pondering about one's inner states and experiences. Filling in the scale for this study had an unexpected spinoff, as it required that the participants assess their inner conscious states right from the start of the course. As normally inner states and experiences seem to be rather like dreams, writing them down helped the students to become consciously aware of them. When inner experiences are acknowledged, it also seems to open the person to further experiences.

Although this study measured the frequency of certain experiences occurring more often, the IM is not an immediate quick fix for changing one's inner conscious state permanently. The IM method seems to put the practitioner in touch with the vibrating life force in their hearts, which leads to ever-new experiences and insights (Arka, 2009). Living from a state of Feeling Heart consciousness requires going with the flow and also tuning to the Self via the heart for guidance. This is an art that is an ongoing practice over the years. It does not happen in six weeks. It is also not about eradicating the use of the thinking mind, but rather it is about accessing different planes at the will of the practitioner. Arka (2003) identifies three planes, living in the mind, living in the heart, and living in the core being (p. 61). This study directed our attention to understanding more about living in the heart. Basically, this involves "living with depth, with feelings, with emotions, and with creativity. (Here) the heart is using the mind as an instrument to express its guidance - in emotional form, like poetry. The mind is used automatically but consciousness manifests itself mainly at the level of the heart" (Arka, 2003, p. 61).

Both the scale items and the answers to the open questions, suggest there are intrinsic benefits for

the practitioner even after practicing the IM method for only six weeks. This study needs to be repeated and further research also needs to be done concerning the other levels of consciousness Arka mentions in this theory so as to understand more about the quality of the various levels of consciousness, especially those that are linked to the heart. As the heart system begins to develop in the embryo prior to the CNS including brain (van der Wal, 2003/2014), it seems likely that this system might be involved as a guiding system prior to the development of the brain and the thinking mind (Lindhard, 2016).

4.1. Comparison of IM with other heart-based methods of Meditation

Prayer of the heart is a meditation method, which, like the IM method, helps the practitioner connect with his or her deeper Self via the heart center. Although it originally involved the "repetition of Divine Names . . . with the somatic sense of self in the chest", in the "contemporary 'accelerated' form the beginning attention is fixed in the chest to access the Gnostic 'mind of the heart' . . . Whence, the phenomenological analysis of the Prayer of the Heart uncovers the inner structure of consciousness within this 'mind of the Heart' as opposed to 'mind of the head'" (Louchakova, 2005, p. 295). Here we see a distinction between the thinking mind and the mind of the heart. Furthermore, she points out how "data from the focus groups show that intentional consciousness associated with the head usually consists of self-reflective, analytic/synthetic, logic based constructs as opposed to the lived experience in the chest" (Louchakova, 2005, p. 295). In this, Prayer of the Heart seems to be consistent with the initial levels outlined by Arka (2013) in his theory. Research has shown that Prayer of the Heart also increases intuition and is said to open practitioners to their emotional layer and feeling level of experience where silence leading to insights starts prevailing (Louchakova 2005; 2007).

It has been shown that techniques that involve thinking positively and creating positive scenes (HeartMath Institute, 2016a, The Quick Coherence Technique) have a positive effect on the heart-brain relationship (McCraty & Zayas, 2014). However, this is not the same as 'living in the heart' and rewinding one's history, which is seen as leading to discovery of one's true Self or soul. Nevertheless, HeartMath has investigated the role of physiological coherence and intuition and found the heart is involved in the processing and decoding of intuitive information (McCraty, Atkinson, & Bradley, 2004).

4.2. Heart-transplant patients and the Feeling Heart

Our study has shown how practicing a heart-based meditation method seems to lead to an increase in intuitive knowledge, which might be related to the feeling heart. However this raises the question how do we know that intuition is connected to the heart and not some other organ in

the body? Some of the unusual findings concerning heart-transplant patients seem to give certain clues concerning this question. These findings reveal that at least some people are able to access information about their donors. Pearsall (1998) has informally observed that patients who receive other organ transplants, such as kidney and liver, also manifest changes in sense of smell, food preferences, and emotional factors. Nevertheless, he claims these changes are usually transitory and can be associated with medications and other factors of transplantation. However, in the case of heart transplants, the changes seem to be more robust and seem to be more strongly associated with the donor's history. "If this is verified by future research, the implications for basic physiology as well as clinical medicine could be substantial" (Pearsall, Schwartz, & Russek, 2005, Discussion section, par. 6).

This leads us to two more questions, for which science still needs to find answers. One question is concerned with how and where memory is stored and the other question concerns how the person is able to retrieve information. Various factors seem to be involved in the retrieval of data, including feelings, dreams, and experiences. Interestingly, all but two of the cases who Pearsall reported as being able to access information, were women (Joshi, 2011). The method they used to access this information seems to be linked to sensitivity (Pearsall, Swartz, & Russek, 2005, para. 2).

This is related to our study where the qualitative answers of female participants indicated an increase in sensitivity (Lindhard, 2016; 2017). The word used in Spanish is *sensibilidad* and this brings up a problem not only of translation but also of meaning. The Spanish dictionary points to five different possible translations of the word *sensibilidad* with one of them being: "information that comes through the five senses" (Diccionario Manual de la Lengua Española Vox, 2007, Sensibilidad). However, I feel that there is another perception at work here that does not necessarily coincide with the five senses. Zukov (1989) claims *multisensorial perception* is heart-based and does not come through the five physical senses. He also describes it as an understanding that comes through the heart rather than the intellect. For Zukov, intuition and multisensory perception are the same, with the latter being a more accurate term, as many people use intuition as having hunches. For him "multisensory perception is the voice of the nonphysical world;" it is "an awareness from the soul level" (Zukov, n.d. What is a multisensory human section, para. 2). For Arka, the heart is the mother of all the senses, and it is only later that the (thinking) mind forms. Feeling is "like 'mother sense', the mother of mother sense . . . without its involvement . . . [we] cannot grasp anything" (Arka, unpublished talk, July, 2015).

4.3. The Brain on the Heart or Heart Brain

It has been found that the heart has been found to have an intrinsic nervous system of its own, containing around 40,000 neurons called sensory neurites. This extensive and complex neural network has been characterized as a *brain on the heart* or *heart-brain* (Armour, 1991; 2007; 2008). This allows the heart to act independently of the brain, sending and receiving meaningful

messages of its own through the autonomic nervous system.

4.4. Heart Fields

The heart has also been found to send more signals to the brain than vice versa (McCraty, 2009). HeartMath have done extensive research into the different ways the heart communicates with the brain. According to them, there are four communication pathways: neurological, chemical, biophysical, and energetic (HeartMath Institute, 2016b, Heart Brain Communication section, para. 1).

Rigorous experimental studies have shown that the heart and the brain receive and process information about an event before the event actually happens (McCraty, Atkinson & Bradley, 2004a; 2004b). In addition the heart appears to receive "intuitive" information a few seconds before the brain. The authors suggest that the heart's energy field is "directly coupled to an ambient energy field not limited by time and space which in turn is coupled to a subtle energy field of information surrounding the body, which in turn is entangled and interacts with the multiplicity of energy fields in which the body is embedded, presumably including fields present in the quantum vacuum" (Oschman & Oschman, 2015, p. 2).

4.5. The *Feeling Mind or Heart-mind*

This brings us back to the Feeling Mind-Consciousness postulated by Arka in his theory and which is associated with the heart. Both Armour (2007; 2008) and Arka (2013) agree that intuition begins to function at the level of the heart. This seems to be supported by our case study and other heart-based methods of meditation and investigations concerning heart-transplant patients. When asked where the soul is in the body, Arka answered with a question "soul, electrically, tell me where there is no soul...soul is not the word, it is the meaning that is important—self spirit, atman, how can you separate yourself from soul?" (Unfolding the Petals of the Heart, 2016). This suggests that the heart-mind is an expression of the soul, as is the thinking mind, both being different levels of Consciousness as proposed by Arka in his theory.

The heart-mind probably receives and processes information, but what exactly is involved, how it functions and in what way it is related to the heart, is still a mystery. But then how the thinking-mind functions and its relationship to the functioning of the brain, is also still a mystery. At this level of analysis science still has a lot to discover.

5. Conclusion

Arka's theory suggests there is a clear metaphysical road map for anybody undertaking the

journey in Self-discovery using the IM method and offers a way through the "hard problem of consciousness" mentioned by Chalmers (1995). By recognizing different levels of experiencing consciousness, it includes levels of consciousness to do with the brain and with the heart, with the rational thinking mind being associated with the brain and feeling-mind being related to the heart. At the same time, it acknowledges the unique inner experiences of each person. However, it also opens the possibility that each level might have certain distinguishing characteristics.

This study demonstrated that meditating on the Self via the heart using the IM method gave rise to a level of consciousness characterized by specific traits such as the feeling of unity, peace, positivity and connection to one's soul or self. The results also indicate that using the IM method one can go below *thinking mind consciousness* and experience another level of consciousness, which is related to the "heart." It seems as though the human being is equipped with different semi-autonomous systems of a metaphysical nature for operating in the world: One is the *thinking mind* and the other is the *feeling-mind* associated with the heart. This investigation also reveals that IM is a safe, easy, and drug-free method for anyone who wishes to explore their inner world where the heart is the "gateway" to deeper levels (I. Martinkat, personal communication, July 6, 2016). It also reveals that contacting with the heart level of consciousness, even superficially, might bring certain benefits to the practitioner.

This study also provides a new way of researching consciousness where a theory arising out of phenomenological experience, can be tested using the scientific method. These results can then be compared with answers from open questions. Unfortunately these methods do not show the inner journey as a continuing process, but this can be partially overcome if the practitioner maintains a diary where words and artistic expression are included.

It seems that the level of consciousness explored in our study might not to be new, but is similar to a level of consciousness experienced by the very young and the very old (Arka, 2013). In this sense, reconnecting with heart consciousness might be recovering a level of consciousness experienced by children prior to them being trained to develop their rational thinking minds. If this is so, then this raises many issues regarding education. As feeling based consciousness seems to be involved with intuition and inner guidance, maybe educational methods need to find a way to help children maintain this connection with their hearts as well as help them develop a rational thinking mind. This might help to create a society that is more sensitive to their inner nature and to outer nature.

There is still much to explore, but what is becoming clear is that the heart is much more than a piston pump (Burlison and Schwartz, 2005, p. 1109) and learning to connect with it again could be vital for our wellbeing. This overview also suggests that Arka's theory of the six levels of consciousness might be one of the keys in helping us understand consciousness and its different levels. As very little is known about the deeper levels of consciousness associated with the heart

mentioned in his theory, additional research needs to be undertaken using more seasoned meditators of this method. In this way we would not only learn more about the changes in the inner experiencing consciousness that takes place as one goes through the levels, but also we could understand more about the underlying common elements involved in the different levels.

These deeper levels could be explored through phenomenology, heuristic techniques, or using a method similar to what was chosen in this study. These studies could be supported using technologies like the MCG, ECG, EMG, EEG, and the SQUID. This would give us information about these states from the perspective of outside in. In addition, combining some of these techniques with GVD imaging (Gas Discharge Visualization Camera), or the PIP (Polycontrast Interference Photography) could also be undertaken so we may understand more about changes in the relationship between electric fields, the aura, the meridian, the chakra system, and brain waves of seasoned meditators when they are absorbed in meditating on the deeper Self via the heart.

Acknowledgements: This article is based on a section of my Ph.D. thesis in the field of Consciousness Studies at the University of Professional Studies, Hawaii. The qualitative results have already been published in which certain terms were also clarified (Lindhard, 2017). My gratitude goes to Srinivas Arka who introduced me to the Intuitive Meditation method, which is enabling me to experience and understand life in so many new ways and also for his inspiration and encouragement to think, feel and see things in their true perspective, through science, logic and intuitive experience. My gratitude also goes to the participants who participated in this study and the participant who allowed me to reproduce the drawings of her inner journey in this article.

References

- Arka, S. (2003). *Becoming inspired*. London: Coppersun Books.
- Arka, S. (2006). *Adventures of Self discovery: The journey from mind to heart to consciousness*. Surrey, UK: Antony Rowe.
- Arka, S. (2009). *Arka Dhyana. An adventure of Self-discovery through the practice of intuitive meditation*. Middlesex, UK: Coppersun Books.
- Arka, S. (2013). *Arka Dhyana Intuitive Meditation. An enlightening journey into your inner realms initiated by your breath, sound and touch*. Middlesex, UK: Coppersun Books..
- Armour, J. A. (1991). Anatomy and function of the intrathoracic neurons regulating the mammalian heart. In I. H. Zucker & J. P. Gilmore (Eds.), *Reflex control of the circulation*. Boca Raton: CRC Press. p. 1–37.
- Armour, J. A. (2007). The little brain on the heart. *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine*, 74, 48–51.
- Armour, J. A. (2008). Potential clinical relevance of the ‘little brain’ on the mammalian heart. *Experimental Physiology*, 93(2), 165–176.
- Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., and Allen, K. B. (2004). Assessment of mindfulness by self-report: The Kentucky inventory of mindfulness skills. *Assessment*, 11(3), 191–206.
- Bowling, A (1997). *Research methods in health*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- Brannen, J. (2005). Mixed method research: A discussion paper. *CiteSeerX*. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.468.360>
- Brown, K. W. and Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in

- psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 822–848.
- Buchheld, N., Grossman, P., and Walach, H. (2001). Measuring mindfulness in insight meditation (Vipassana) and meditation-based psychotherapy: The development of the Freiberg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI). *Journal for Meditation and Meditation Research*, 1, 11–34.
- Burleson, K. O., and Swartz, G. E. (2005). Cardiac torsion and electromagnetic fields: The cardiac bioinformation hypothesis. *Medical Hypothesis*, 64(6), 1109–1116.
- Chadwick, P., Hember, M., Mead, S., Lilley, B., and Dagnan, D. (2005). Responding mindfully to unpleasant thoughts and images: Reliability and validity of the Mindfulness Questionnaire. Unpublished manuscript, University of Southampton Royal South Hants Hospital, UK.
- Chalmers, D. J. (1995). The Puzzle of Consciousness Experience. *Scientific American*, 273, 80–86.
- Creswell, J. W., Plano, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., and Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced mixed method research designs. In V. L. P. Clark & J. W. Creswell (Ed.), *The mixed method reader* (p. 159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crick, F. and Koch, C. (1990). Towards a neurobiological theory of consciousness. In *The Neurosciences*, Vol.2, 263–275. Retrieved from <https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/access/SCBCFD.pdf>
- Dennet, C.D. (1991). *Consciousness Explained*. Boston: BackBay Books.
- Diccionario Manual de la Lengua Española Vox. (2007). Sensibilidad. Retrieved from <http://es.thefreedictionary.com/sensibilidad>
- Feldman, G. C., Hayes, A. M., Kumar, S. M., Kamholz, B. W., Greeson, J. M., and Laurenceau, J. (2007). Assessing mindfulness in the context of emotion regulation: The Revised Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale (CAMS-R). *J Psychopathol Behav Assess*, 29:177–190
- Fisher, M. P. A. (2015). Quantum Cognition: The possibility of processing with nuclear spins in the brain. *Annals of Physics* 362, 593-602. Retrieved from <https://arxiv.org/abs/1508.05929>
- Hameroff, S. and Penrose, R. (2014). Consciousness in the universe: A review of the ‘Orch OR’ theory. *Physics of Life Reviews*. 11(1): 39–78.
- HeartMath Institute. (2016a). The Quick Coherence Technique. Retrieved from <https://www.heartmath.org/resources/heartmath-tools/quick-coherence-technique-for-adults/>.
- HeartMath Institute. (2016b). Heart-brain communication. Retrieved from <https://www.heartmath.org/research/science-of-the-heart/heart-brain-communication/>
- Hu, H. And Wu, M. (2004), Spin-mediated Consciousness Theory: Possible roles of neural membrane nuclear spin ensembles and paramagnetic oxygen. *Medical Hypotheses*, 63(4): pp. 633-646.
- Joshi, S. (2011). Memory transference in organ transplant recipients. *Namah*, 19(1). Retrieved from <http://www.namahjournal.com/doc/Actual/Memory-transference-in-organ-transplant-recipients-vol-19-iss-1.html>
- La Tour, S., and La Tour, K. (2011). Original mind and cosmic consciousness in the co-creative process. *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, 6(1), 57–74.
- Lau, M. A., Bishop, S. R., Segal, Z. V., Buis, T., Anderson, N. D., Carlson, L., . . . Carmody, J. (2006). The Toronto Mindfulness Scale: Development and validation. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(12), 1445–1467.
- Lindhard, T. (2016). Unlocking the secrets of the heart through meditating on the self. Ph.D diss., Dept. of Consciousness Studies, University of Professional Studies. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.16952.96008
- Lindhard, T. (2017). Experiencing peace through heart-based meditation on the Self. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 10(1): 27–40. doi:10.2174/1874350101710010027
- Louchakova, O. (2004). Essence of the Prayer of the Heart. In L. Lozowich, *Gasping for air in a vacuum* (pp. 35–50). Prescott, AZ: Holm Press.
- Louchakova, O. (2005). Ontopoieses and union in the Prayer of the Heart: Contributions to psychotherapy and learning. In A.-T. Tymeinjecha (Ed.), *Analecta Husserliana: Logos of phenomenology and phenomenology of the logos. Book four* (Vol. 91, pp. 289–311). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

- Louchakova, O. (2007). Spiritual heart and direct knowing in the Prayer of the Heart. *Existential Analysis*, 18(1), 81–102.
- McCraty, R., Atkinson, M., Dana Tomasino, B.A., and Bradley, R.T. (2009). The coherent heart-brain interactions, psycho physiological coherence, and the emergence of system-wide order. *Integral Review*. 5(2), 11–114.
- McCraty, R., Atkinson, M. and Bradley, R. T. (2004a). Electrophysiological evidence of intuition. Part 1. The surprising role of the heart. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 10: 133–143.
- McCraty, R., Atkinson, M. and Bradley, R. T. (2004b). Electrophysiological evidence of intuition. Part 2. A system wide process? *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 10: 325–336.
- McCraty, R., and Zayas, M. A. (2014). Cardiac coherence, self-regulation, autonomic stability, and psychosocial well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1090. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01090. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4179616/>
- Michael, J. L., Black, D. S., & Garland, E. L. (2016). The Applied Mindfulness Process Scale (AMPS): A process measure for evaluating mindfulness-based interventions. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 93, 6–15.
- Oschman, J. L. and Oschman, N. H. (2015). The heart as a bi-directional scalar field antenna. *Journal of Vortex Science and Technology*, 2, 121. doi: 10.4172/2090-8369.1000121.
- Pearsall, P. (1998). *The heart's code*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Pearsall, P., Schwartz, G. E., & Russek, L. G. (2005). Organ transplants and cellular memories. *Nexus Magazine*, 12(3). Retrieved from <http://www.paulpearsall.com/info/press/3.html>
- Rattrey, J., and Jones, M. C. (2007). Essential elements of questionnaire design. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 16, 234–243.
- Unfolding the Petals of the Heart. (2016). DVD. London: Coppersun Books
- van der Wal, J. C. (2003/2014). Dynamic Morphology and Embryology, In: Bie, Guus van der and Huber, Machteld (eds.), *Foundations of Anthroposophical Medicine*, Edinburgh: Floris Books. ISBN 0-86315-417-4: 87–161 Revised version Jan. 2014.
- Velmans, M. (2009). How to define consciousness-and how not to define consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 16(5), 139–156.
- Zukov, G. (1989). *The seat of the soul*. (25 Anniversary Ed.) New York: Simon & Schuster Paperback.
- Zukov, G. (n.d.). Explore multisensory perception and spiritual partnership. Retrieved from <http://seatofthesoul.com/interviews/multisensory-perception-spiritual-partnership-with-gary/>