

# I See Dead People<sup>1</sup>

## Modern Theories on the Provenance of Channeled Material and Implications for Scholarship and Research

Ben Rovers, 15-3-2015

### *Abstract*

*According to Klimo (1998) mediumistic channeling is more than a new word for an old phenomenon, its massive resurgence in the second half of the last century may also point to a new development in consciousness. In this essay the conceptual dimensions of channeling are discussed. There is no consensus on what constitutes this phenomenon. The conceptual discussion extends to theories on the provenance of channeling. Basically three sources for channeling are distinguished: the channeled material is self-generated by the channel, it comes from a source outside the channel or it comes from a transcendent reality to which the channel has direct access. A broad survey of theories that have been proposed in the last hundred years, shows that in particular new insights in quantum physics have moved these theories in the direction of the latter source. It is concluded that further knowledge of channeling can only be gained by using a flexible ontology and research methodologies that stretch the objective approach.*

### **Introduction**

Mediumistic channeling is a widespread phenomenon. A search on google delivers more than twelve million hits and numerous pages on individual channels and channeled information.<sup>2</sup> Although the term is quite new and broadly associated with the new age movement of the twentieth century (Hanegraaff 1996:21), the activity is not. According to psychologist Arthur Hastings:

‘[The] term channeling ...is current, but the process has been called prophecy, oracle, revelation, spiritual communication, possession, and the inspiration of the muses. The Biblical tradition in Judaism and Christianity says that the prophets received and spoke the words of God. Today, there are many individuals who speak words that are said to come from disembodied teachers on other levels of reality. The process, though not necessarily the content, appears to be the same.’ (Hastings 1991:xi)

Some authors claim that in our time channeling has become more pervasive and has reached a broader audience than ever before. Parapsychologist and expert on channeling Jon Klimo (1998:3) speaks of an ever increasing number of people who seem to be having some kind ‘of communication with beings from levels of reality beyond the physical as we know it’. American anthropologist Michael Brown (1997:6) claims that channeling has ‘moved from the gilded ashrams of the West Coast to the living rooms and offices of the American Heartland’. Nevertheless, as Hanegraaff (1996:26-7) argues, we have to be careful to make such broad statements. The historical material is largely unknown and the concepts are too broad to encompass and understand all different

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from the movie ‘The Sixth Sense’ (1999).

<sup>2</sup> The following websites present multiple sources: <http://www.spiritwritings.com/channelinglinks.html>, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_modern\\_channelled\\_texts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_modern_channelled_texts).

phenomena as one single process. He regards channeling as an example of (articulated) revelation, but warns against considering all revelations of the past as channeling.<sup>3</sup>

In this essay modern theories on the provenance of channeling will be presented. Subsequently the implications of these theories for researching the phenomenon are discussed. Before we proceed to this discussion, some important conceptual issues are considered. It will be shown that these are fundamental to discussions on theories and research in this field.

### **What is Channeling?**

Consider the following two definitions of channeling:

‘Channeling refers to a process in which a person transmits information or artistic expression that he or she receives mentally or physically and which appears to come from a personality source outside the conscious mind. The message is directed toward an audience and is purposeful’ (Hastings 1991:ii)

‘Channeling is the communication of information to or through a physically embodied human being from a source that is said to exist on some other level or dimension of reality than the physical as we know it, and that is not from the normal mind (or self) of the channel’ (Klimo 1998:2)

Close reading reveals some important differences between these two definitions: Klimo refers to the output of channeling in terms of information, Hastings also considers artistic expressions. Hastings refers to the source of channeling in terms of a personality, Klimo leaves the nature of the source open. Hastings makes a reference to the mechanism by which the source communicates with the channel (mentally or physically) and to the outcome (it is purposeful), Klimo doesn’t mention these dimensions in his definition.

What these two and most other definitions agree on is the fact that in channeling some form of communication takes place between the channel and some (perceived) source outside the channel’s normal consciousness.<sup>4</sup> However, as the above two examples show, there is also considerable discussion on the different aspects of channeling. It is anything but a straightforward concept. The way these aspects (or conceptual dimensions) are described not only determines what channeling is and what makes it different from analogous concepts such as mediumship, revelation and mystical experience (to name just a few), but it also influences discussions on theory and research. Therefore it is important to highlight the main issues here.

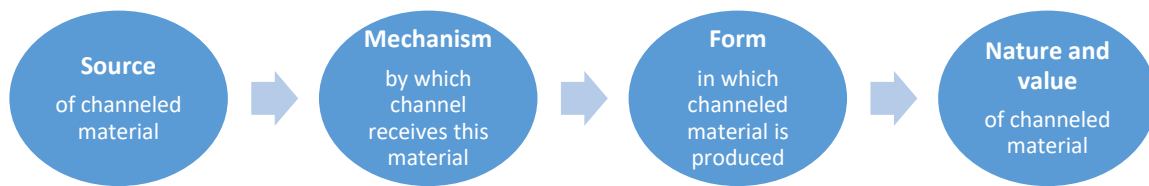
Definitions of channeling mostly refer to some or all of the following dimensions:

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<sup>3</sup> According to Hanegraaff (1996:25) channeling belongs to the general class of religious inspiration. In our time the term inspiration has become secularized and is more and more associated with the realm of artistic and literary creation. Therefore it has become a rather weak term to describe channeling phenomena. Hanegraaff prefers to speak of ‘articulated’ revelation, to exclude the broader category of (not divine) inspired activity.

<sup>4</sup> It is possible to describe channeling as an objective reality or as a perceived reality from the perspective of the channel or others. For reasons of readability this distinction will not always be explicated in the text.

### *Conceptual dimensions of channeling*



#### *Source of channeled material*

One thing that immediately strikes the observer is the enormous diversity of sources being channeled. According to Klimo (1998:193) 'the assortment of supposed sources challenges the imagination and strains credibility'. In his book we find numerous examples in which channeled information comes from such diverse sources as the channel's higher self, God(s), group entities, Jesus Christ or other ascended masters, all sorts of nonhumans such as angels, devas, elementals, planets, plants and animals, extraterrestrials (ET's) and finally the large category of discarnate human spirits (1998:ch.1&5).

The source can be seen to exist independently of the channel, as a part of the channel's own psycho-energetic system or in some other 'space' where channel and source meet. The nature of the source can be divine, human or otherwise and it can have more or less identifiable personality. Compare for example channeling a concrete deceased person to the channeling of group entity 'Lazaris', who describe themselves as follows: 'we are not a guru, and we are not a master(...) we are a spark of consciousness'(Lazaris 2015).

Authors differ in the way they demarcate the sources for channeling. Hanegraaff, for example, limits himself to sources that have divine or religious origin (1991:26-7), Hastings focuses on identifiable 'personalities' (1991:ii), Klimo doesn't limit himself to any of these and leaves open whether the source is located inside or outside the channel and what its nature is (1998:2). For Klimo the distinction between external and internal sources is not important, because he leaves open the possibility that all separate phenomena might be emanations or manifestations of a single underlying reality (1998:4-5,175). In this view channeling the archangel Michael is conceptually considered equal to drawing information from ones own inner wisdom.<sup>5</sup> Hanegraaff (1996:25) rejects this approach, because it binds together too many different phenomena, making channeling a useless 'container' concept.

#### *Mechanisms by which the channel receives material*

These mechanisms are generally related to the level of consciousness during channeling. Two or three levels of trance (or dissociation) are distinguished. In a full trance the channel has no or very little consciousness of what is going on. The channeled entity has full control over the mind and body of the channel. According to Klimo most channels in the last hundred years up to the 1970s have been full trance channels (1998:219). Jane Roberts who channeled the so called Seth material is an example of this. In an interview she explains that she gave Seth permission to use her to bring out his messages (Roberts 1974).

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<sup>5</sup> Like in many other definitions, telepathy (extrasensory perception) is excluded from Klimo's definition, because it is generally considered to come from embodied sources. Klimo however believes that channeling might involve some sort of telepathy from disembodied sources (Klimo 1998:9-10).

In a light trance the channel has at least some consciousness of what is happening, it may be slightly altered, but there is no total 'stepping aside' as in a full trance. The channel is aware of what is going on in his surroundings and can switch between this outer reality and the realities within. These inner realities often come to the channel as clairaudience or clairvoyance. Because the channel's consciousness is still active next to the consciousness of the channeled source, an obvious question becomes how the observer can know that the channel is not mistaking his own 'self-generated material for channeled material' (Klimo 1998:223).

Some form of full or light trance has long been considered a necessary mechanism of channeling, but Klimo has suggested a third mechanism in which the channel does not experience trance and is fully conscious. He calls this 'open channeling' and it means 'the ability to channel thoughts, images, feelings and information from what appears to be other than the normal self, and other than from fellow embodied minds or from physical reality'(Klimo 1998:231). In contrast to the other two mechanisms there is no identifiable source for the material received. Phenomena like inspirational writing and speaking are examples of this. Klimo admits that his notion of open channeling is closely related to such concepts as intuition, creativity, inspiration and imagination, but he treats these as categories coming from 'a larger realm than one's self or experience' (Klimo 1998:231).<sup>6</sup>

Hastings (1991:5-6) and Hanegraaff (1991:34) are not keen on extending the definition of channeling to Klimo's category of open channeling, because we don't know yet whether the same kind of process is involved as in trance channeling. For Klimo the study of consciousness, central to understanding the nature of channeling, is still in a novice phase. It is therefore premature to consider open channeling as nothing more than 'self-generated contents of consciousness' (Klimo 1998:223).

#### *Form in which channeled material is produced*

The channeled material is produced in different forms. In his definition Klimo (1998:2) speaks of 'information', thereby focusing on mental output such as speaking and (automatic) writing. Hastings (1991:ii) also mentions artistic output such as writing/playing music and painting. Physical channeling is considered a third major form. In this form the channel affects the physical world in some way, for example by moving or changing objects, by imprinting of material (clay, pictures), by healing physical bodies, et cetera.

Although authors on channeling may differ in their focus on mental, imaginal or physical forms of channeling, it is generally not considered an important aspect of the conceptual discussion.

#### *Nature and value of channeled material*

Klimo (1998:176-192) gives a factual description of the nature of channeled information. This shows a wide array of messages dealing with such issues as higher spiritual truths (perennial wisdom), personal messages and guidance for individuals, proof of the existence of discarnate spirits,

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<sup>6</sup> Specific mechanisms such as automatism (like automatic writing or painting) can be done in full and light trance states. When done in a light trance it can be considered a mixed mechanism, because the channel's consciousness and awareness are still active, but there is no control over motor activity in certain parts of the body.

descriptions of life in the nonphysical realms, descriptions of the past and the future on this planet, subject matter for artistic expression, scientific knowledge and information on health and healing.

In valuing the result of channeling, many authors relate the outcome to its source. They stress the fact that the source of the message can only be known by the message (Hanegraaff 1996:25; Klimo 1998:174-176).<sup>7</sup> Generally the importance of the high spiritual quality of the message is stressed (Hastings 1991:5; Scott Rogo in Klimo 1998:5; Earl Babbi in Klimo 1998:211; Hanegraaff 1996:24).

It is clear from Klimo's factual description that it may prove difficult to limit channeling to messages testifying of perennial wisdom; the nature of the channeled information is simply too varied. Moreover, not all messages seem to have an uplifting quality. Klimo (1998:210) discusses 'evil' sources coming through, distressing instead of uplifting those who are involved. In this light Liester (1996) discusses the differences between transcendental and pathological characteristics of hearing inner voices. Moreover it may prove difficult to come to an objective judgement. What is trivial to some may be highly revealing to others.

In short, the nature and value of channeled information are not always part of the conceptual discussion. The value of the channeled material is often described as spiritually uplifting, thereby implicitly or explicitly limiting channeling to this quality.

### **Modern theories of channeling**

Most theories on channeling refer to the source of channeling, they propose an answer to the question where the channeled material is coming from. Basically we can distinguish between three types of sources: 1) self-generated material by the channel, 2) material that is coming from outside of the channel -in which case the channel functions as a medium for the source, and 3) material that is neither self-generated nor coming from outside, but found in a transcendent reality to which the channel is connected. In the latter case the channel does not function as a medium, but is directly connected to the source. It may even be said that the channel becomes the source. Nevertheless the nature of the latter source is very different from the first one, because that source assumes channeled material is coming from a (psychically) closed system. The second and the third source assume the channel is an open system and somehow connected to a larger (transpersonal) reality (Klimo 1998:250).

#### *Channeling from self-generated material*

Early twentieth century psychological theories stress the importance of the unconscious in explaining paranormal phenomena. Sigmund Freud saw them as projections of rejected and repressed instinctual drives trying to pass the gatekeepers of consciousness (Ehrenwald 1977:529-530, Klimo 1998:244-247). In early work of Carl Gustav Jung we can also find a rejection of the idea that the paranormal is something else than a product of one's private unconsciousness. The difference with Freud's approach is that Jung did not view paranormal phenomena as pathological. It could also store positive potentials for the individual (Main 1997:3-4).

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<sup>7</sup> Klimo discusses various other authors who share this view, such as James Fadiman and Charles Tart (Klimo 1998:175-176).

Most contemporary psychologists use comparable closed models of the psyche. A popular perspective following Jung's concept is that of the divided (or fragmented) mind, in which it is assumed that consciousness does not represent a unity but a collection of subsystems under some central control.<sup>8</sup> This general idea can be found in different psychological schools. Ernest Hilgard, one of the early proponents of this idea, was interested in the hypnotic state, arguing that hypnosis proves that people are able to split up their mind, creating realities that are unknown to everyday consciousness (Hilgard 1977).

Combining Freud's pathological approach and Hilgard's idea of the fragmented mind, we arrive at the idea of channeling as a pathological condition. Klimo (1998:259-272) discusses a range of psychiatric conditions (described in the Psychiatric Manual DSM III/IV) somehow related to the channeling phenomenon, such as identity disorders, hallucinations, psychosis, schizophrenia, et cetera. Liester (1996:21-22) analyzes the similarities and differences between transcendent and pathological variants of hearing voices. They share some traits, but are very different as well. Important differences concern for example the nature of the inner voices (judgmental versus supportive) and the fact that transcendent inner voices have a value outside the ego of the channel.

There are also non-pathological variants of the idea of the fragmented mind. John Rowan's theory on subpersonalities is an example of this. He defines subpersonalities as 'semi-permanent and semi-autonomous regions of the personality capable of acting as a person' (Rowan 1999:11). They are present in all people. Only in special cases (when people are 'possessed') he considers these subpersonalities as pathological, because they involuntarily create realities not related or known to the other subpersonalities. John Beahrs' re-introduction of the idea of co-consciousness bears a strong resemblance to this hypothesis. He defines this as 'the existence within a single human organism of more than one consciously experiencing psychological entity, each with its own identity and self-hood, relatively separate and distinct from other similar entities' (Beahrs 1983:100).

A special group of psychological theories within the 'closed-system' perspective uses fraud or deception as an explanation for channeling. The focus in these theories is on unintentional forms: explaining why channels wrongly assume they are channeling. There is a range of theories to explain for this, for example because channels make thinking errors (cognitive misattribution), because they have vivid imaginations or because they have personality traits prone to believing in the paranormal (Irwin & Watt 2007:309-314).

Most psychobiological theories, on the functioning of the brain, also fit the closed-system framework. With inner voices and visions there is no activation of the outer ears or eyes, and therefore there must be some internal agent (in the brain) causing these phenomena. Klimo (1998:306-324) discusses various theories in this field, focusing on the role of parts of the brain, on information exchange between the different parts, on electromagnetic activity and on the role of melanin.

Not all theories in the fields of psychology and biology assume a closed system of reality. In every discipline we can also find examples of theories that assume or leave open the possibility of a transcendent reality, for example in hypnosis research Francuch's (1981) notion on spiritual hypnosis, in psychiatry Van Dusen (1974) distinguishing between lower and higher orders of experience and in brain research McGilchrist (2009) on the importance of the right hemisphere in knowing about transcendent reality.

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<sup>8</sup> This psychological view is referred to as polypsychism (as opposed to monopsychism, in which unity of mind is assumed).

### *Channeling from sources outside the channel*

Frederic Myers, one of the founders of the British *Society of Psychical Research*, contributed to the explanation of channeling the concept of the subliminal self, a part of consciousness that resides beneath the threshold of conscious knowing. Contrary to Freudian and early Jungian theories of the unconscious, Myers believed that the subliminal self not only contains subconscious but also supraconscious material: 'no Self of which we can here have cognisance is in reality more than a fragment of a larger Self' (Myers 1919:14-15).

American psychologist William James, founder of the *American Society of Psychical Research*, changed his ideas on consciousness during his life from a closed to an open approach of psyche and consciousness. A central concept in his theory is 'pure experience', a level of reality that precedes mind and matter (it can produce both). In pure experience there is no distinction between subject and object, between observing consciousness and experiencing consciousness. (James 1912).

In the later work of Jung the psyche (also) becomes more transpersonal. Jung has developed various concepts useful in explaining channeling phenomena. One of them is synchronicity, an acausal connecting principle, that challenges ordinary reality concepts, because events out of space and time become connected. It also highlights the fact that human consciousness is somehow involved in creating this reality: synchronicity is a meaningful event to the observer (Jung 1973). Another important concept is that of the collective unconsciousness. It contains all of experience and consists of pre-existent forms called archetypes. We may safely conclude from Jung's later works that he saw this reality as related to the 'ancient idea of an all-extensive world-soul' (Von Franz 1995:85).

In the field of consciousness research more theories have been formulated that extend this concept to the transpersonal realm. Charles Tart (1969) popularized the idea of altered states of consciousness (ASC). He saw ASC's as gateways to a higher consciousness (using mediation and other techniques). Later he described ordinary consciousness as a 'consensus trance', thus stressing the fact that this dimension of reality is not necessarily the most 'real' (Tart 1986).

To differentiate between pathological and transcendent variants of hearing inner voices, Liester (1996:5) presented a hallucination-revelation continuum with on the far left side regressive and pre-personal states (hallucinations), the ego state in the middle (perceptions) and transcendent and transpersonal states on the far right side (revelations). In this model imagination is the first step to ego transcendence, followed by intuition and revelations. Where imagination comes from the sensory organs but has no relation to what is actually present to the senses, intuition is a direct impression on the mind not originating from the sensory organs. Revelation is a completely transcendent state in which the messages are coming from outside of one's self (1996:6).

Ken Wilber's ideas on consciousness are probably the most widely known in our time. It is impossible to present a full picture of his vast work here, we will pick one cherry (and save another for the next paragraph). Wilber stresses the importance of distinguishing pre-rational reality (consciousness before an ego is formed) from trans-rational reality (in which the ego is transcended). According to Wilber many people make the mistake of mixing up these realities. He calls this the 'pre/trans fallacy' (Wilber 1996).

Psychical and parapsychological research provide us with two basic hypotheses: psi and survival after death. Psi is a container term for the basically unexplained psychical abilities of people, the two main appearances being extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK). ESP refers to mental

interactions like telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition, PK refers to interactions which affect the environment such as metal bending, poltergeist phenomena and psychic healing (Weaver 2015).

By far the most important contribution of parapsychology has been that it has produced a vast amount of evidence for the existence of psi phenomena (Radin 2007, 2014), although many mainstream psychologists stay skeptical and don't accept the proof (Irwin & Watt 2007:303-304). Psi itself doesn't explain anything, it describes a mechanism (or more than one) in need of explanation. Since J.B. Rhine the discipline of parapsychology has heavily focused on rigorous empirical testing.<sup>9</sup> Now psi has become an established fact, attention is shifting to theorizing this phenomenon (Radin 2014).

Irwin & Watt (2007:ch. 8) discuss the main theories, which try to explain ESP and PK at the same time, because these phenomena are not considered 'ontologically independent' (2007:152). Most theories focus on explaining how information is mediated between the environment and the individual. This is explained by electromagnetism, by (yet undiscovered) energy fields and by quantum effects of observation. An example of the last one is Von Lucadou's Model of Pragmatic Information (MPI). This model 'states that psi effects represent meaningful non-local correlations between a person and a target system. Such non-local correlations cannot be used for information transfer, and thus the MPI predicts difficulty in obtaining replicable evidence for psi under the methods usually used by experimental parapsychologists'(Irwin & Watt 2007:158).

The survival hypothesis, referring to the survival of spirit after bodily death, was widespread in nineteenth century psychic research. After J.B. Rhine's move to 'hard science' in the 1930's, it became less popular, because there are many conceptual and (of course) empirical problems in establishing this for a fact. Besides, the super-psi-hypothesis seems to provide better possibilities of explaining the same phenomenon (Braude 1992).<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the survival hypothesis is still alive. Research shows phenomenological differences between mediums experiencing 'somatic psi' and 'survival psi' (communicating with living persons and 'discarnate entities'). Montague Keen states that the survival hypothesis cannot be proven without making inferences, because we 'cannot send expeditions of scientists to the next world'. She infers from the data above that survival is the best explanation to account for the difference between somatic and survival psi (Keen in Rock (ed.) 2013:279).

### *Channeling as uniting with the source*

This source is based on the philosophical idea of monism (all things can be explained in terms of a single reality). This is also true for self-generated material. The important difference between the two is the nature of reality considered: transcendent versus immanent. The second source is based on the idea of dual or plural realities (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015). The differences can be quite subtle, especially between the second and the third source, but the mechanisms by which the channel receives the material are nevertheless very different (self-generating, mediating and uniting).

Some of the theories discussed in the previous paragraph fit the idea of channeling as uniting with the source, some even fit the idea of channeling from self-generated material. To give an example: established psi phenomena suggest a reality outside the channel, that is why we discussed them in the previous paragraph, but explanations of these phenomena also include hypotheses on self-

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Banks Rhine (1895-1980) founded the experimental approach to spiritualist phenomena, he called this new field parapsychology.

<sup>10</sup> Super-psi or super-ESP refers to unlimited ESP-capabilities in humans.



generated material and uniting to transcendent realities (for example Von Lucadou's MPI). The survival hypothesis is the clearest example of the idea of a dual/plural reality. However it is not necessarily in disagreement with the idea of a united reality at a higher level. A lot of nineteenth century spiritualism focused on the idea of 'personalities' surviving in another world and communicating with us in our world (Myers 1918). It seems that theoretical developments in (quantum) physics have pushed more recent channeling theories in the direction of the third source.

Twentieth century developments in mathematics and (quantum/astro) physics have produced ideas that show a remarkable resemblance to perennial philosophy. In these disciplines the idea of higher dimensionality is no longer considered a possibility but a logical necessity. In string theory, for example, the M-theory predicts eleven dimensions of spacetime (SST 2015). Compare this to the four dimensions in the physical world as we know it (three dimensions of space and one of time). An important feature of the idea of high dimensionality is that it makes the reality of lower dimensions relative. This can be illustrated by a simple example taken from the three dimensions of physical space known to us: the line (one dimension), the plane (two dimensions) and space (three dimensions). In the second dimension the line becomes an option on the plane, in the third dimension the plane becomes an option in space. Einstein showed this principle to apply to our concept of time as well (it becomes relative when we add dimensions such as gravity and speed; Einstein-online 2015). Another finding in quantum physics is quantum nonlocality (sometimes called quantum entanglement; the fact that particles separated in space still stay connected and information between them 'travels' instantaneously; Nikolic 2008:21).

These three phenomena, higher dimensionality, relativity and nonlocality, are all in line with truths found in esoteric and religious literature throughout time: the idea of different levels of reality, the idea that our 4D-reality is only one level subordinate to higher levels and that at the highest level there is an all encompassing reality called many things.

Many theories of channeling that have been put forward in the last hundred years or so, refer explicitly to the discoveries in (quantum) physics, but the idea that channeling unites the channel to transcendent realities is of all times. Jung, in his latter days, became very fascinated by the recent findings in quantum physics and considered his ideas on synchronicity and collective unconsciousness related with the ideas that originated from quantum physics and relativity theory (Main 1997:25).

We will shortly discuss a few recent theories on channeling that apply these principles of perennial philosophy and/or quantum physics.

Klimo (1998:357-361) presents a metaphor in which human beings are considered an individuation out of a oneness (of whatever nature). We are all subpersonalities within the one universal mind, but unconscious of our deeper identity. Therefore we see ourselves and the world around us not as a unity (ordinary consciousness is seen as the dissociative state). Channeling is the communication between different kinds of subpersonalities, comparable to normal interpersonal communication. A 'cognitive revolution', fuelled by the process of channeling, may take us out of the dissociated state in which we perceive ourselves as different. Channeling helps us to realize that we can connect to very different levels of reality, in the end all these realities appear to be a higher faculty of ourselves (Klimo 1998:357-361).

British biologist Rupert Sheldrake (2015) presents the concepts of morphic fields and morphic resonance.<sup>11</sup> The central idea is that memory is underlying the space-time dimension of life and this

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<sup>11</sup> Morphogenesis is the biological process that causes an organism to develop its shape.

creates habitual behaviour in nature and in people. It is a dynamic reality because systems inherit memory from previous similar systems but also (re)create it, thus renewing and changing them. Therefore Sheldrake prefers to speak of habits in nature instead of laws. Morphic fields exist outside space and time. This makes it possible for humans (and other entities) to communicate with other entities outside these dimensions. Thus the theory provides an explanation for telepathy, but it also provides an explanation for connecting to other levels of reality.

Ken Wilber borrowed from Arthur Koestler the concept of the holon and holarchy (Edwards 2015). A holon is something that is simultaneously a whole and a part: in relation to the parts of which it consists the holon can be considered a larger whole, but at the same time it is also part of a larger whole. Wilber's idea of the universe as a multitude of holons provides another angle to the idea of levels and evolution of consciousness. This concept is no longer considered in a hierarchical linear way, but viewed in terms of ascent and descent, simultaneously integrating all that came before and disintegrating the whole into parts. Translated to the phenomenon of channeling this can explain how a channel can be in two realities at the same time.

According to psi-researcher Dean Radin quantum physics, and especially the concept of nonlocality, provides an excellent starting point for new theories on psi-phenomena, but he adds: 'An adequate theory of psi, however, will almost certainly have to expand upon and synthesize aspects of certain puzzles in existing physical, psychological, and neurological theories. (...) Cross-disciplinary theories are exceptionally difficult to develop, but that's probably what psi will require.' (Radin 2007:331).

### **Conclusion: Implications for Scholarship and Research**

An major conclusion from surveying the theories on channeling can be that in the last century innovations seem to have come from outside the traditional realm of disciplines studying this phenomenon. In more than one way this can be considered an important step forward. Especially the field of parapsychology, with its traditional focus on (experimental) empirical research and closed-system explanations, seems to be 'opening up' under the influence of this influx from outside. In particular concepts and research findings coming from (quantum) physics challenge the traditional reductionist ontological assumptions of parapsychology, stimulating a more open attitude towards the possibility of transpersonal realities. As Klimo and others have noticed, ontological flexibility is a prerequisite for realizing progress in this field (Klimo 1998:282, 289).

From our discussion on the conceptual dimensions of channeling it is clear that conceptual clarification needs continued attention to be able to better see sameness and differences in phenomena. This is especially true for the mechanisms by which channels receive information (full trance, semi-trance, no trance). According to Irwin and Watt (2007:154) there are not a lot of theories focusing on this aspect. Theorizing these mechanisms may also advance our understanding of the sources involved.

Both psychical and parapsychological research lean heavily on objective research methodologies, but do they suffice? If the ontological net is widened, they become at least problematic. As Voss (2013:11-12) puts it: rational methods devoid of this 'sixth sense' may speculate about possible meanings and purposes of non-rational phenomena, but they cannot intuit these meanings in the unique contexts in which they arise.' She also quotes Proclus on the 'similitude [that] binds the knower to that which is known' (2013:7), thus stressing the perennial idea, now also known from quantum reality, that reality only exists in the eye of the beholder. A different approach to research methodology is needed when we want to learn more about phenomena we cannot perceive with the

senses. Voss (2013:18) proposes a Platonic approach in which modes of perception 'beyond the rational' can be used (2013:18). Tart (1972) points to the fact that different states of consciousness produce different realities. To be able to study these realities adequately, researchers should be in the specific state of consciousness in which these realities exist. He calls this 'state-specific science'. Within a community of researchers working from the same state of consciousness, objectivity can still be obtained. Whatever road is taken, stretching research methodology to take into account multiple ontologies, seems crucial.

Klimo (1998:282-3) presents ten specific topics to be of interest for the future study of channeling. Let us add an eleventh and a twelfth one. It would be interesting to survey the channeled sources on the topic of research methodology; what do they suggest? Another interesting area would be that of 'creating channeled sources'. Klimo (1998:255,301) shows some examples of ordinary people creating a source for channeling that consequently starts giving messages (or in one case: provides students with special painting talents). The appealing aspect of this approach compared to the study of 'regular channels' is, that it gives researchers more control in setting up their studies.

To enhance our knowledge of channeling we need above all to be open minded, and with John White we may agree that having an open mind is not the same as having a hole in the head (White in Klimo 1008:11).

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