

Bruce W. Powe

# Opening Time

## on the Energy Threshold

with the contributes of  
Cristina Miranda de Almeida  
Matteo Ciascellardi

## Humanity by Design | Open Studies

Laboratorio di Antropologia Sociologia e Design della Comunicazione

*Collana diretta da Matteo Ciastellardi e Derrick de Kerckhove*

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## *Note*

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Section 1

IDEAS

OPENING TIME

ON THE ENERGY THRESHOLD



# 1.

## OPENING TIME: ON THE ENERGY THRESHOLD

### Introduction

*Bruce W. Powe*

#### 1. BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2013, B. W. Powe, Cristina Miranda de Almeida, and Matteo Ciastellardi, met to resume their creative presentations together at IN3, work which had begun during Powe's Visiting Residency at UOC in 2012.

We had worked together on a series of public presentations on the McLuhan School of Communications, on the Poetics of the Global Village, on cosmic consciousness, on new kinds of perception and awareness through digital enhancements, on creativity and inspiration as necessary instruments in the development of thought in the 21st century, on the literary background of Marshall McLuhan, on identity in the global village, among other subjects. These presentations were given at UOC, the University of Basque Country in Bilbao, the Universtat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, and then in 2013 at York University in Toronto, Canada.

During these 2013 dialogues, together we then conceived of a new collaborative interactive digital project, which was to be called *Opening Time: On the Energy Threshold*.

We imagined this project to be the extension and expansion of a necessary conjunction of ideas, images, designs, and the creation of delivery systems (electronic agencies).

But what was the beginning? *Opening Time* was an idea that originated in lectures, and presentations, given by me in Europe

(primarily Barcelona and Naples), during the 2011 anniversary celebrations of the birth of Marshall McLuhan.

In these presentations I began to ask the questions, what does it mean to stand in the open of your time and place? What does it mean to receive the new information of the big data sphere? Are we at a crux of a new kind of communications' civilization? Are we in an evolutionary fast-forward? What would it mean to be open to this vast change in global consciousness? Is there something in the air which is moving us at once forward into hyperchange, and which is compelling many to react against the openings?

I'd been engaging these ideas for many years. They had come through in fiction, in poems, in essays, in non-fiction books, in lectures, in classes I gave in the English Department at York University. But the ideas had taken on a strong urgency because of my presentations in Europe. And I was informed by the desire to break through literary text into electronic fields of communication, to at once explore and reflect these turbulent process of openings and closings.

Enter Cristina and Matteo, and their vivid and vital endeavours and research. They became indispensable guides to more contexts and conditions. They offered new ideas and images and backgrounds and prophetic intuitions. Our creative energy together was tangible.

We found that we shared a vision which allowed us to move forward to imagine and prepare a project that would be at once a process and a manifestation of the Opening Time premises.

We wondered, what would it look like, if we created an electronic text that was at once literary, artistic, hypertextual, scholarly, and interactive? What if we could embody in an undertaking a presentation that would combine our ideas with a delivery agency that would in itself reflect the opening time premises? Could we combine Jenny Holzer (for example) with Teilhard de Chardin and do so in an e-space that would invite users to participate over a period of months, even years? Could we tell a story about our opening time and at the same time offer a scholarly context to these musings and impressions?

In the presentations we gave at IN3 in 2012 and 2013, we explored the ideas of an opening time in consciousness and sensitivity (fulfilling the prophetic awareness of Teilhard de Chardin and Marshall McLuhan).

We had a vision of our time being gripped by radical swift

changes in technology; these changes were also accompanied by changes in sensibility and (dramatically) in the nature of consciousness itself. In many discussions, we explored the possibilities of empathy, and disconnection, heartening and dislocation, of global pilgrimage and lost wandering.

In the summer of 2013, we invited Michael Century, the composer and music scholar (and artistic entrepreneur), to join us. We asked him to contribute music and sound textures to our rapidly expanding concept of the project. He did so, and now we are four.

In the winter of 2014, I met with Cristina and Matteo at IN3 to further engage our project, and set out its next phases.

The four of us have conducted conversations, and welcomed each other's inspirations and insights, online, over many months. The ideas and images, proposals and premises, sounds and suggestions, evocations and invocations, have been passing back and forth from Toronto, Barcelona, Milan, Bilbao, Cordoba, Upper New York State, and other sites, in true global village forum.

Where is the *Opening Time* project now, at the time of this essay? Here. The project has reached a crossroads where we are moving into another phase. This phase presents the four levels of our attention:

1. the philosophical focus on the *Opening Time* premises
  2. the creative expansion and alchemical combination of images, ideas, and sounds; the imaginative juxtaposition of original pictures and lines with electronic 3D enhancements
  3. the imperative exploration and configuration of the delivery system
  4. the essential development of the teaching aspect of the process (the invitation to the user to participate and expand the project).
- In the summer of 2014 we moved forward following the maxim of "Making, not Matching ...", the principle of Media Poetics, which inspires us.

This booklet, with its online enhancements, represents part of what we have made so far.

## 2. PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISE

### *Opening Time: On the Energy Threshold*

*refers* to the kindling of new forms of awareness in the digital age;

*refers* to the epoch (ours) of big data, technological innovation, global communications, crossborder transfers of images and sounds, a crucial period of apogees and abysses, when time and space seem to be converging into a mythic now;

*calls* on the idea that we at a turning point in consciousness itself, similar to and greater than that which came in the Renaissance of the 15th century, yet outdistancing that turbulent period in history through the unprecedented speed of change, the demand for new ideas, the frictions and sudden tensions, the worldwide reach, the clouds of information, the challenges to identity, the calls for innovation and for all-out resistance to change;

*describes and invokes* how the global village became the global theatre which metamorphosed seamlessly, rapidly, into the vibrating cells of the communications membrane which has now transformed into a kind of global supra consciousness running in hyperdrive;

*acknowledges and evokes* the apogee-apex, abyss-narrowing, that marks our time and place, the extraordinary degrees of awareness and perception, and the harrowing levels of alienation and reaction;

*addresses and possibly awakens* the possibility of new forms of consciousness and expression: we're attempting to identify a time when identity itself is changing, when people feel at once inspired and threatened, tending towards greater openness and more intense pressures to limit and narrow their perspectives;

*initiates a project* which is process that requires new agencies of articulation and image making, soundscape and poetic thinking, in a merger of ideas, art, music, scholarship, and technology, the ancient wisdom and the new.

Our project, therefore, is at once aesthetic, poetic, cultural, observational, technological, electronic, a teaching instrument and call to users to immerse themselves and engage and even alter the process.

This is a project that encodes changes of direction in its very processes.

*Hypothesis non Pingo ...* “I have no hypothesis,” said Isaac Newton. This means that we seek the openings that need new understanding.

## OPENING TIME DEFINITIONS

### **The Compass of 4's:**

ALCHEMIC. All forms and inventions (technologies) transform us. We make technologies, and then they re-shape cognition and perception.

GNOSTIC. Through you everything comes. The personal is everything. Gnosis: Knowing: means following your path, telling your own story, and letting the story be told through you.

HERMETIC. Everything is inter-related: everything influences everything else. “As above, so below”.

KABBALISTIC. The codes, or books, of Nature and super-Nature (electronica) can be read or comprehended. We can restore the broken languages of the cosmos to intelligibility.

**Allatonceness:** Everything happening here, there and everywhere at once. Electricity creates borderless state.

**Apogee/Abyss:** Teilhard's words for spiritual peaks and valleys. He thought 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> centuries would be period of extreme evolutionary change in consciousness, resulting in ecstasy and destructiveness. Apogee (height, light) and abyss (void, darkness) are simultaneous, not sequential. Analogy: McLuhan's figure/ground in shifting conditions of mutual influence. Age of supreme inventiveness and growing empathetic conditions of communications also an age of out-of-control technology and narcissism and spasms of mass violence (terrorism and rampaging gangs) ... New identities on line and fear of loss of identity (independence movements in Catalunya, Basque Country, Quebec) ...

**Breath (scent):** what's in the air, opening to the currents that carry the winds of change ... sensitivity to air, atmospheres, currents and voices.

Cosmic consciousness is in infancy stage, so its shape and configurations are still embryonic, enigmatic. We are still decoding its potencies ... its forms ...

**Cosmic Consciousness:** Phrase evokes highest state of evolutionary awareness (at the “Omega Point”). Four stages of awareness, according to R. M. Bucke: biological (body), self-consciousness (identity: “I”), global consciousness (“we”), cosmic consciousness (body, “I”, “we”, plus universal soul or spirit). Noosphere conditions are involuntary and voluntary apogees and abysses of cosmic conditions.

**Duende (Spanish term):** Garcia Lorca’s word for rising to the moment through music, the beat.

**Ear:** receptivity, clairaudience ... opening to what we can hear ... the soundscape ... vibrations, pulses ... acoustic intimations.

**E-Cosmos, E-Metaphysics:** Contemplation of new conditions of expanded awareness due to digital communications.

**Electronica:** Saga word for global theatre of wired-in relations, digital media as at once poem, story, business transactions, day to day reality of communiques, political networking, instantaneous news, technological innovations: refers to epic scale and speed of the transformation underway in e-cosmos ...

**En-theos (Greek term):** origin of the word “enthusiasm”, to be filled with energy, delight.

**Evolutionary Hyperdrive:** Our time; phrase for describing how quickly our conditions are changing. But result is at once full of promise and empathy (deeper connectivity to global actions) and catastrophic and confusing (instantaneous communications bring more stress, more information, more availability to negative influences). Key is seeing how fast we are altering (mind and biology at once: life expectancies, for example, have doubled in a mere one hundred years).

**Eye:** vision, clairvoyance ... opening to what we can see ... prophetic



words and spaces ... cityscapes and environments outside the usual frames of reference. Intensity comes inside the frame.

**Gaia Principle (advanced by Lynn Margulis and James Lovelock):**

Concept of earth as living organism, biosphere is a pulse of life and embryonic awareness at cellular level. Cells and bacteria carry seeds of consciousness, creating conditions for higher consciousness in humans. Life as perpetual communion of biology and mind. Electronica alters this ratio by adding another layer of awareness and creation through digital extension. Gaia now at once body and matter and cell and spirit and idea and whirling information and imagination ... Tangible and intangible energies in speeding interaction ...

**G-book:** for a generative, generational process that we are still trying to understand in the stream of making this project ...

**Global Village/Global Theatre:** Global Village (1962) described world of radio and TV. Global Theatre (1970) prophetically evoked coming of PC connection and social networking. McLuhan did not use Global Village phrase after 1972. The world as performance art, flash happenings, intimate awareness of body and emotions, empathetic crowd, natural telepathy through use of digital communications.

**Ibrain:** term coined by Gigi Vorgan to reflect change in brain patterns since advent of digital media. Invokes "netgen": generation raised on digital communications. Evidence now dramatic that the brain itself is altered by electronic media ... Generational gap is now neurological ... Brain patterns shift when using non-electronic medium (a printed book) ... and when using blackberry or iphone ... What took thousands of years to develop, our frontal lobe, has been changed in two decades.

**In-spirit-us (Latin):** Inspiration, another kind of opening, a heightening of awareness leads to an awareness of possibility ... the wind moves us where it wills ...

**Marshall McLuhan: 1911-1980.** Perceiver of Global networks and effects of source electricity; Canadian, based in Toronto ... Origin-

nator of Global Village/Global Theatre and the essential aphorisms: “The medium is the message” and “Making, not matching”.

**Message:** more than message ... how media shapes us after we shape it ... first we make technologies, then they remake our identities and sensibilities ...

**Motion, metamorphosis:** the principles of Opening Time ... we begin perpetually in media res ... If you look into the oceanic, you will find your resemblance: mutability.

**Noosphere:** term developed by Vladimir Vernadsky. Applied by Teilhard. “nous”, Greek for “mind” or “spirit”—animating principle of energized idea, soul-full thought. “Sphere” is the globe and circle of energy. Electronic world as pulse of human energy ... Transforming the biosphere with another layer of human extension ... Teilhard de Chardin’s word to describe the global membrane of communications ... Teilhard thought that the world was evolving towards higher states of awareness, where thought itself was being externalized through communication technologies ... through this externalization there would come a warming of minds and hearts, a greater opportunity for empathy and sympathy to spread ... the Noosphere is no longer a theory, it is the reality of instant cross-border messaging ...

**Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: 1881-1955.** French-born Jesuit, paleontologist, philosopher, cosmologist ... Evolutionary theorist. Idea of “noosphere” as expanding envelope of thought and soul and imagination and yearning and anxiety added to biosphere; thought is rapidly expanding to make planetary consciousness.

**Richard Maurice Bucke: 1837-1902.** Canadian psychiatrist; based in Brantford, Ontario (Home of Alexander Graham Bell). Coiner of phrase **Cosmic Consciousness**. Influenced by his friend, the American transcendentalist poet, Walt Whitman ...

**Samizdat:** Underground culture of information passing from person to person, either by hand-written pages or through digital communications. Images, sounds, words conveyed outside of channels of Big Media. Phenomenon of e-publishing ... This is how

the Occupy Wall Street movement flourished and flourishes ... The word “Samizdat” comes from underground protest movements in the Soviet Union: polemics and manifestos, poems and novels often circulated by hand outside of “normal channels”.

**Tongue (taste):** speech, language, the taste of words, the taste of speaking, the sensual poetics of speech ... opening to what is being said, what can be said ... in the cabala traditions you must open your mouth to speak or sing, through this opening comes inspiration ...

**Touch:** brings connection; knowledge of the hand is grasping, holding, feeling, clutching ... the antennae of the nerves picking up immediacy of sensations ... the electronic sphere presses and caresses our skin with vibrations. We feel our way forward, opening to the touch of the world.

**Uncentred space:** requires our own centres to make sense of what we do ... and now through this portal, our project, you have one ... here.

**Viriditas (Latin word for “greening”):** Hildegard von Bingen’s word that means encouraging, nurturing, sustaining, fostering ... all ecologies affect us, for good or ill ... Media Ecology is an attempt to comprehend the effects of the electronic sphere on sensibility ... “Greening” also means opening ... to all that is moving within you and without you ... the five senses form the microcosm/macrocosm body that is the heart of our project.

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## 2.

# OPENING THE TIME FOR IMAGES: SENSORIAL RE-UNIFICATION

*Cristina Miranda de Almeida*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A year ago B. W. Powe, Matteo Ciastellardi, and Michael Century started the project *Opening Time*: on the energy threshold to develop transdisciplinary co-creation. Transdisciplinarity and co-creation in general and in particular in art are 2 of the areas in which I have great research interest. This interest started in my PhD thesis (UPV/EHU, 2005) titled *The Tree of Art. Trans-sensorial and intersubjective matrix to a non-visual art and for the silence of the artistic self* in which a model to analyse and explore creative and co-creative processes from the point of view of artists was offered.

With the transformation of the global village (McLuhan) into the global theatre (Powe) we are experiencing a change as radical as that in the Renaissance but that carries a different sign in regarding how we relate to the world, construct reality and generate knowledge. This change is clearly visible in open online processes of co-creation in open culture, as a set of practices that enable knowledge to be spread freely by means of sharing and collaborating, beyond restrictions of intellectual property and developing, altering or enriching previous works by different authors.

One of the objectives of the project is to turn the very process into a laboratory for the observation of transdisciplinarity in digital culture. Here we must consider that differences between interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity.

According to Repko (2012: 20) “multidisciplinary studies a topic from the perspective of several disciplines at one time but makes no attempt to integrate their insights [...]”. Interdisciplinarity

studies a complex problem [...] by drawing on disciplinary insights (and sometimes stakeholder views) and integrating them [...]. Trans-disciplinarity concerns that which is at once between the disciplines, across different disciplines, and beyond all disciplines [...] and seeking to integrate disciplinary and stakeholder views [...]”.

The latest advancement in transdisciplinary collaboration aims to find a framework to foster dialogue and projects between science, engineering, art and design and a similar aim guides this project. The intention of this project is a centre from which each one of the participants is trying to respond. It relates to the technological impact on human perception, cognition and definition. This impact goes beyond the sphere of art disciplines and spills towards the fields of science and engineering. Technology is being embedded on our flesh. However, at this phase the general framework in the Opening Time project is limited to explore co-creation between 3 art fields such as text, image and sound, humanities and data design.

The representation of this process through images is a challenge and an opportunity to explore communication bridges, to contribute to the identification of obstacles, challenges and opportunities for transdisciplinary collaborations between art, design, engineering, humanities and society.

Each one of the artists and designers deals with one aspect of creation. In the first phase of the project this creation is related to the fields of text, image and sound and the design of a platform to foster real time interactivity with the public and artists.

Each artist's artwork emerges in the confluence of his/her own creative process and other artists' processes shaping hybrid collaboration across disciplines that is guided by the project's aims.

Transdisciplinarity in art is not something new. If we assume the hypothesis that art is always an inter-subjective and multidimensional process and that artists are influenced by the media and social environments in which they are immersed we can analyse new forms of trans-disciplinary collaboration not only in relation to the moment in which they occur but also diachronically. In this sense, our collaboration in Opening Time is just a horizontal layer that crosses a vertical one in which each one of the artists and designers is operating.

The horizontal layer is the one that opens the experience of cross-fertilization of ideas between the participants that are currently acting in the specific project. The vertical layer is the one that links each one of the artists and designers to their own references, and de-



velops a kind of displaced form of co-creation. This is the case of B. W. Powe and his connection to William Blake and Pierre Teilhard du Chardin, to M. Century and his musical references and to C. Miranda de Almeida and her debt to science, Flemish artists as Van Eyck and the art of description.

## 2. ANTECEDENTS, OBJECTIVE AND METHOD REGARDING IMAGES

Collaboration between artists of different fields is not something new. Examples are many of how images were created from inspiration found in literary texts, science inspired illustrations or music translated images into sound. One example is William Blake's illustration for the book *The Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri, or John Cage's *Variations VII*, in which energy phenomena already present in the environment was revealed and amplified by radio and telephone. Hildegard von Bingen focused on the relationship between her words and music. For her, music used to be a tool to access deeper contents present in her visions. *Ave generosa* was a translation of these visions into image and sound.

Society is being intensively interfaced by different layers of a reality in constant flow: the physical, digital and social layers of reality are merging and forming a new kind of hybrid environment that poses cognitive challenges and claim for a new extension of consciousness that is able to deal with new forms of perception and new explorations of meaning. However, the Cartesian split that started in Greece, accelerated in Renaissance and intensified with literacy is still present inside this reality in constant flow. For example, disciplines are daughters of this Cartesian split and their borders reflect the Cartesianism that turned into the dominating fragmented cognitive and perceptive regimen in which Western culture is immersed. The emergence of this fragmented type of cognition and perception brought with it the loss of the way oral societies used to experience the world. For these societies the world used to be a lively, animated, multisensorial and active space or sphere, in which objects, people and world were all connected (spheres of animation – Sloterdijk 2011).

One of the main objectives of the image treatment in the project *Opening Time* is to explore how a person, her/his body and sensorial

systems, can be the reference point for this new phase in the extension of identity, time, space and matter that is taking place in a way that enables society of knowledge to re-connect to their environments and overcome the sensorial fragmentation that started in Greece.

In this sense inspirations to Opening Time's images came from the recognition of a pattern that crosses the artworks by Blake (*Glad day*), Hildegard von Bingen (*Ave Generosa*) and Leonardo da Vinci (*Vitruvian man*). In these 3 art pieces the authors depicted a human being with open arms inside a circle. When we observe these images we can see a pattern that emerges. These images relate to the human being as the unified centre of cognition, perception and consciousness and as an interface to the complex dimensions of reality; they suggest that a human being is a kind of microcosm that is part of a macro field from which cannot be separated: the physical, the emotional, the social, the cultural and the spiritual ones. The body is the integrative element for all sensorial experiences and for the connection with the experiences of others. A body which sensibility needs to be retrieved, expanded and reconnected to other bodies to form a collective body, a connective house-body that lodges and makes self-knowledge and self-expression and collective knowledge and expression possible.

The loss of this sense of connection between things transformed the sphere into an empty hard shell that configured the Cartesian split: between the world and us emerged a bare interval in which we, as 'subjects', are separated from 'objects' (subject-object dichotomy). Although reactions to this situation are emerging in different fields of thought, especially in science (quantum physics) and facilitated by information and communication technologies, Western cultures are still inside the subject is separate from the 'object' or reality by the sphere understood as wall.

However some residues of the sphere -understood as a lively interval and not as a hard shell-, have survived and are still present nowadays, in particular in art. The retrieval of these 'spheres of animation' (Sloterdijk) and multisensoriality can place the human being again in the centre of a lively sphere in a sense similar to what Pascal defined as an infinite sphere of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere.

Art is always a multidimensional, trans-sensorial process in which many layers of reality are involved (Miranda de Almeida, 2006). This can be seen for example in Lygia Clark's works on the re-

trieval of a unified sensorial dimension to the body. Focusing on what she framed as “nostalgia of the body” she developed performances to enable people to feel connected to themselves, others and the environment. She talked of a “home-body”, a “collective body”, understood as a common body that re-unites all fragmented parts that results from the dominance of the analytical mode of dealing with reality. She conceived the possibility of a “network of entangled bodies”, a network that enabled the exchange of psychic contents. In parallel to Rebecca Horn, Lygia Clark developed prosthesis to make visible our own sensorial processes, to make them the core of our attention and to re-educate perception. Although Clark’s work is previous to Horn’s work, both of them used to explore these perceptual challenges in performances.

The images that are being developed to the project translate the project’s objective of retrieving complexity of human cognition, perception and consciousness as the central point around which universes are built that reflects Blake’s poem:

*“To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour”.*

(Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*, 1863)

Art and digital technologies are open doors to retrieve complexity in cognition and to access forgotten layers in the perception of reality. This role is increased when they merge to challenge the dominant sensorial regime to break the linearity of the Cartesian definition of reality. In particular it happens when other senses are given more presence and displace dominant ones, for example when touch displaces vision of its centrality.

Opening Time’s keywords are trans-disciplinarity, collective intelligence, literature, art, design, music, communication, humanities, science, electricity, digital, body, consciousness, hypertext, interactivity, augmented reality and global theatre. The project searches adding fluidity to communication, rupture to the linearity of text, exploring hypertextual modes of collaboration, developing the concept of Global Theatre (Powe) in contrast to that of globalization, helping understanding cosmic consciousness (de Chardin) that starts in our electronic skin to achieve new forms of consciousness and interactiv-

ity. The images are being developed to translate these key words and ideas into shape.

### 3. METHOD

In order to do that different images are being prepared to each one of the senses starting with vision, taste, smell, hearing and touch. More senses are still to be represented. In each one of the images the connection to the environment is depicted; the fluidity of the flow between the human body, eco-systems and media ecologies is depicted; energy fields trespass the body and establish direct connections between the nature of physical matter and the constitution of the universe: we are made of the same stuff of stars.

In addition to these aspects, images also suggest resonances to the exploration of the hidden connections of senses and media ecologies: a body that is in continuity with the physical and the media environment, an electronic skin that is the skin of our current culture (de Kerckhove) but that is merging with the biological one. Negative and positive sides of the same coin appear in the process of verticalization of meaning; images trigger a critical visual poetic of media. This verticalization is carried out from images that serve as doors to the electronic margin of the project by means of augmented reality systems (rfid, qr codes, augmented reality applications).

In this sense critical lectures connect for example the sense of smell to memory, inscription and tracking processes in digital culture; vision is seen as the root of digital control and surveillance; touch as the possibility to communicate real time by different technologies that shrank the planet into a grain of sand; taste as the internalization of digital processes of literacy, the digestion of huge quantity of data present in Big data pools. In parallel the eye is seen as the door to deeper awareness and intuition, ears relate to deep listening and connecting, taste is a form of touch and consuming the very interface and media ecology, touch is a tool to expand our reach into the world.

Different authors have focused on how to link sensorial perception and Cognition among which Damasio (1994, 2001), Freud (2002, 2002, 2003), Maturana and Varela (2003), Deleuze y Guattari (2000), Luria (1974, 1976, 1982), Sacks (1987, 1999), Merleau-Ponty (2000), Erhenzweig (1953, 1973), Jung (1959, 1984), Sheldrake

(1989, 2003). Morin (1983a, 1983b) explores perception taking into consideration its mutidimensionality together with Ascott (1990, 1995, 1996, 2003). Bateson (1993a, 1993b), Wiener (1998) from the approach of cybernetics.

Susan Buck-Morss (1993: 55-98) used the word anaesthesia that means sensibility privation. She considers consciousness as a kind of buffer, a kind of body shell that protects us and prevents an excessive amount of external stimulus to penetrate our mind and memory and cause anaesthesia. She defines a synesthetic system as that one in which external sensorial perceptions blends to internal images in memory. Consciousness for this author would be therefore a kind of buffer system that blocks the synesthetic system, isolates the consciousness of the present from the consciousness of the past and disconnects experience from memory. The result is the impoverishment of consciousness and its transformation in mere '*erlebnis*' (Ortega y Gasset, 1989) in German, or '*vivencia*', in Spanish or Portuguese. In English the concept of '*erlebnis*' can be translated as 'knowledge through living'. Synaesthesia comes from *syn* (together in Greek) and *aisthēsis* (sensation in Greek). It is a neurological condition that occurs in some people that have sensory and cognitive neurological connections between senses that usually are disconnected. Stimulation of one sensory channel triggers stimulation of other channels and, for example, the person sees colours when hears music or hears sounds when tastes food, to mention just a few examples. Synaesthesia can be a good metaphor to explore the experience of *allatonceness* (all-at-once-ness) that constitutes the nature of the experience that society of knowledge is passing through, after the impact of Internet on life: real-time-ness, always-on-ness, mobile connectivity-ness, augmented realities and so forth.

'*Vivencia*' or '*erlebnis*' is understood as a kind of experience that we feel or pass but that generates no meta-analysis, no meta-vision on the experience itself, in contrast with the term 'experience' that is understood as a full experience in which learning, and meta-analysis, are produced. In order to a full experience to occur, perception must be connected to past memory.

According to Infante del Rosal "the main modern theories of knowledge up to Kant understood that the last unity of fact in consciousness is sensation. The problem of intersubjectivity is a cognitive problem reduced to the impossibility to trespass these sensations between people. From this framework moderns gave to sympathy the

value of affective complement, of a furnace in charge of compensating for the cold knowledge that appears in individual consciousness that cannot touch another individual consciousness. When Dilthey proposed '*vivencia*' as a unity of sense, he situated subjectivity in the level of life, which is a more transparent dimension compared to knowledge of a subject. Life implies the opening, the fusion, and the diffusion, implies the external dimension of knowledge. It is true that, as Gadamer said, "the lived ('das Erlebte') is always the lived by oneself" (Gadamer, 1997: 97), but '*vivencia*' is better communicated and sharable, and in *empathy* we do not access the act of knowledge exercised by another person but her/his '*vivencia*', his/her knowing or feeling only as a '*vivencia*'. This '*vivencia*', we can say is actualised as such, is liveable, something that gets blurred in the case of knowing, something that is downloadable more quickly in what is known. Only at this level it is possible this displacement that is proper to intersubjectivity" (Infante del Rosal, 2012). Reflections on intersubjectivity should be taken to help us understand and explore how intersubjectivity in the creative processes between different disciplines can happen.

In concrete reflections on intersubjectivity oblige the very participants in Opening Time project to pass from the level of '*vivencia*' to the level of experience about their very process and how it relates to the process of other project members. For example one of the initial 'problems' in intersubjective communication that emerged during this process was the difference in the approach regarding images. The data designer proposal was to use pre-existing images bought in an image data bank, while artists preferred to make new images themselves. These different frameworks regarding images show that there are different paradigms in operation. The group overcome these differences adjusting to the approach of not needing to use image data banks and deciding that images would be developed to the project from scratch. A different approach was taken regarding sound in which pre-existing music was used to complete the project.

To Buck-Morss synaesthesia has always been an essential element in aesthetic cognition that political systems used to provoke insensibility, in order to repress memory, converting the cognitive system of synaesthesia into an anaesthetic one, that is to say its opposite pole.

One of the techniques of anaesthesia is the sensorial oversaturation that triggers sensorial numbness and over stimulation that blocks

full experience. Nowadays we are immersed in an oversaturated and over-stimulated media environment that places us in a risky position of loosing part of the experience while at the same time of accessing new ones. This on-going project is an open door to explore the multiple layers of the question of how art through a blend of text, image, sound and digital architectures that foster collaboration in open culture and that crosses borders can contribute to the retrieval of the animation in the spheres of our cognition and perception.

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### 3.

## AUGMENTED REALITY FOR COLLABORATIVE MEDIA

*Matteo Ciastellardi*

#### 1. BLENDED REALITY

Web content belongs to different and multiple spheres of production, use, and distribution. There is content that operates one-way, thus with no possibility of feedback to the original producer (except through tools that allow for subsequent feedback, such as web forms or response channels). There is content that is pre-designed to encourage active participation. (That is, it develops thanks to the bottom-up enrichment by the users themselves.) Finally, there is content that moves the reading action of medial text to a dimension of blended reality. In the latter case, as for blended reality, this does not mean one of the many patents developed by digital communication brands, but the phenomenon, that, since the 1990s (on a mass consumer level) has started to propose that media experience systems go beyond the digital synthesis of reality on the screen.

The blended reality model, has evolved on the basis of at least three different remedies to the problem of lack of relationship between the perceived reality of users and the interface of digital contents.

A first step has been taken through solutions that are closer to virtual reality, allowing the user a feeling of freedom and movement within the exploration of extended worlds and environments that recall that of the real world (open exploration, interaction with objects, virtual dual representation in a simulated environment, and so on) and, subsequently, the ability to interact with other users in virtual scenarios. Examples include the first video games with exploration

interfaces, virtual communities like Second Life, up to online gaming platforms.

A second strategy, less successful, was to bring a very realistic representation of the world to users' screens, offering forms of minimum and sequential interaction, or a guided script of visual storytelling, such as multimedia products in graphic exploration or transposition of cinematographic films whose storystream could only be guaranteed by the correct sequence of user actions (for instance, arcade games like *Mad Dog McCree*, 1990).

A third mode, a current one and nowadays regarded as the basis for the concept of blended reality, was born when the narrative focus moved from computer screens to smartphone screens, allowing users to exploit the camera as a filter able to find media texts scattered in the surrounding environment. The first step to 'augment' reality was the introduction of environmental coordinates to geolocate, via the phone camera, information related to what the smartphone was framing. Some other uses were related to tools such as QR codes (bi-dimensional dot-matrix codes): with specific apps they can be recognised in terms of digital content (a QR code represents just a text string) so they can "augment" the item where they are located, opening a weblink, or showing a text, an address, a number, or other related details. Apps and social network sites fully transformed handheld and wearable devices into interfaces to query and explore the real world through the lens of the camera and the screen of the smartphone. Information about travel, tips about accommodation, songs embedded into a paper page, or a 360-degree view explored via a Facebook picture are only a few examples of a new blended form used to recognise and relate to reality. The use and adoption of ever-more-sophisticated technologies inside a smartphone (such as compass, gyroscope, GPS) supported by a web connection and with the possibility of easily creating content to enrich the experience of environment, objects, texts, and so on, enable an improved mediated reality experience. The use of a digital layer to explore, expand or interact with the elements behind the phone camera, 'augmented' by specific apps, also meets the active roles that the public is demanding.

In this sense, we have to consider at least two different types of users. We can define the first type as 'audience' (Livingstone, 2005; Jenkins, 2013), in search for engagement in terms of exploration, interaction with content and keen for the new possibilities of real-

world recognition. We can call the second type ‘public’, made of prosumer (consumer and producer at the same time, Toffler, 1980: 265), eager to collectively participate in the experience of a blended reality, responding to the possibilities offered in terms of mutual creation of content.

The phenomenon of blended reality is the direct consequence of an endless process of technology enhancement and the rise of a participatory culture. It is easy to find products of blended reality for private consumption, in which every user is limited to exploring and interacting with the digital layer only in a way that is defined by a stakeholder for commercial purposes (very common in marketing strategies). However, the idea of participation is more engaging when participation is not limited to the use and consumption of an experience, but when it is expanded into the constant definition of the experience itself. There is a wide range of definitions of participation, determined not only according to categories of users, habits of consumption and interaction, but also by the possibilities offered by different technologies and supports: open source models, moderation, restriction policies, geographical area of participation, amongst others (Jenkins, 2006 and 2013). It is possible to move from total engagement and content production to lurking and peripheral participation (Jenkins, 2013: 156-163). Every user can be absolutely silent and unrecognisable in the lifestream of a media experience, just as the same user can serve as a content producer, moderator, troll, gatekeeper, and countless other roles and this influences the consumption of other users.

## 2. THE (UN)COMFORTABLE PROSTHESIS OF INFORMATION

The role of users as individual actors is every day more relevant in terms of personal engagement and participation: most of the experiences, tools, platforms and products for augmented reality are designed for a solipsistic use. The user in this process of interaction represents him/herself through exploring a new layer of information while maintaining control of his/her own environment. The experience is similar to the user of a pair of glasses: it is only from an entirely individual point of view that someone can benefit (in terms of information and consumption). And the metaphor of glasses is really pertinent due to the fact that one of the most important experiments

for augmented reality, promoted and supported by Google, was based on a pair of glasses able to enrich different experiences of everyday life (Google Glass). Google's project, and its suspension for various reasons (Di Zubin and Blythe, 2016: 115) underlines how subjective exploration through a digital layer is, and how difficult it can be to accept an external prosthesis of information.

The use of an external device to embed, internalise and 'browse' reality represents a cultural development that distances us from traditional ways of internalising knowledge. Memory and brain structure were originally devoted to the preservation of information, from tiny details to big stories, memes to visual memories.

In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan introduced the concept of prosthesis in media theory, to explain media's function as "any extension of ourselves" (McLuhan, 1964: 7). As physical extensions of a person, the different supports extend the capacities of the biological self: hands, feet, skin, nervous system, sight, and other faculties can find their extension outside the body by adopting different media.

This concept of augmented body converges with the idea of augmented reality. On one hand, a tool like a smartphone (augmented body) is driving senses and the nervous system to go beyond the perception of the real environment, connecting the proprioception of the self towards new patterns of reality: from here-and-now to a constant connection with distant information, people and environments (more freedom, less experience of novelty). On the other hand, a digital layer of information (augmented reality) is defining the edge of intersubjective and situated dimension of the self with a common ground of experiences, information, and knowledge framed in a mobile screen: a second skin of the world defined by other people to enrich the experience of reality itself (less freedom, more experience of novelty).

The convergence of these two aspects, and the necessarily multi-tasking activities related to the fruition and use of specific media, defines a different range of consciousness and ever-new possibilities in terms of knowledge, interconnection and exchange.

Prosthetic extension through media also creates changed processes for some functions of the body. For example the externalisation of memory (adopting wearable devices and the Internet to store and retrieve any kind of information) and the different ways of 'reading' (different interfaces and media texts) are, at the same time, useful

options and biological changes for some brain functions (Wolf, 2007); the multitasking attitude can lead to lower grey-matter density (Loh and Kanai, 2014).

If media extend, they also amputate. Although electronic technology expand the central nervous system, there is also a possible drift into amputation or auto-amputation. From a biological perspective, the human organism seeks to maintain a state of equilibrium. Any disturbance, turbulence, contamination or external stress pushes the human system to react and rebalance its original state, sometimes with the auto-amputation of the disturbing element.

With the arrival of electronic technology, man has extended, or set outside himself, a live model of the central nervous system. In this sense, it is a development that suggests a desperate suicidal auto-amputation, as if the central nervous system can no longer depend on the physical organs to be protective buffers against the slings and arrows of outrageous mechanism.

(McLuhan, 1964: 43)

Media as prosthesis can become uncomfortable when the information overload unbalances the self. In this sense, augmented reality takes advantage of the proliferation of grassroots content, but it also suffers from the non-linear and fuzzy problem of content surplus, which destabilises the biological assets of the self.

New generations, especially millennials onwards, suffer this process in terms of the reading brain (Wolf, 2007), but rebalance learning strategies to face new and fluid models of content consumption, naturally strengthening emerging competencies and skills. Moreover, the trans-media approach of recent generations, moving through different supports and channels, browsing information in several ways, and the multi-screen attitude, using several devices simultaneously, enhance people polarisation around the tools and the mixed processes of reading and decoding information. This is another step into antropeiosis, as the self-building process of social man, defined by communication (Morcellini, 2013: 146).

According to these socio-cultural and biological premises, the definition of specific content and products for blended/augmented reality must take into account different variables of use, moving from possible ways of consumption and end-user participation, to the skill abilities of the potential users and their cognitive gaps in trans-media competencies.

### 3. THE RISE OF COLLABORATIVE MEDIA FOR AUGMENTED REALITY

When we speak about blended reality, we move into a specific field of interaction and exploration. Human factors, socio-cultural context and the different supports for interaction are the three key elements that define the framework of blended reality. But we must also consider the definition of the content of blended reality itself: the layer of distributed and interconnected information that enriches what smartphones frame.

Today, when we consider media content, we are facing the rise of many collaborative media: “a form of mediated communication whereby people collaborate on messages, content, meaning” (Löwgren and Reimer, 2013: 4). Collaborative media means to face a culture of participation and mutual interchange between audiences, content and the supports on which content is distributed and remediated. According to Löwgren and Reimer, we can speak about collaborative media instead of digital or analogue media because there is no longer a clear distinction between the two. “Today all major media run on digital infrastructures and, consequently, the concept has lost its meaning as a marker of contemporary media and contemporary media practice”. (Löwgren and Reimer, 2013: 14).

In the specific case of augmented reality, as already noted, it is very simple to find content defined top-down from big stakeholders, but it is not so common to have a complete frame of grassroots production by the means of collaborative media. The software and the culture of collaboration and sharing are broadly diffused, but it is important to classify the production of content into three flexible categories:

1. microproductions (participatory media texts related to microblogging and social network sites);
2. extended contents (participatory media texts related to websites, full thematic platforms and co-operative networks);
3. full publishing (participatory media texts related to autonomous independent systems like apps and ipermedia productions).

Augmented reality commonly needs specific tools and platforms such as in the full publishing category to offer participatory media texts to explore. If companies and professionals can invest in these kinds of products, usually it is not possible to offer a broadly distributed, accessible and simple framework for content creation (Mano-

vich, 2013). Some accessible platforms to create AR content exist as well as some open source systems, but they require money or advanced coding ability in order to obtain initial results.

Only a few models of augmented reality platforms offer, for specific purposes, or with limited resources/time, a free framework to develop content to digitally enrich the real environment. These apps most often function through pattern recognition of visual objects (text, images) in order to overlap the original item with a digital layer created by the user.

Collaborative media are slowly moving in this direction in order to offer complete solutions to customise the real world with augmented content.

In the present volume, the example of augmented reality expanded towards a perspective of collaborative media starts from an original masterpiece created by B. W. Powe: *Opening Time*.

The original artwork is a text (Powe's creation) mixed with images (by Cristina Miranda de Almeida) produced for an editorial outcome (printing press). Adopting a system of augmented reality (in this case Zappar - <https://www.zappar.com/>) the product comes to life if framed by the Zappar app in a smartphone, and it offers specific interactions with a digital variant of the text/images. The digital version of the original introduces music (composed by Michael Century), web connections, videos, a wiki version of the text (completely re-writable by users) and many other elements that can be explored, modified and expanded.

The purpose, as shown in Figure 1, is to move from an original idea, preserving the authorship of the product, and then to cross-fertilise in order to create a web version of the original. The web version is a connective product that can be completely reorganised, played, and restyled, giving the opportunity to maintain a record of all the design steps taken. The digital variant, examined and re-edited over time, can be explored at different stages to view an interesting map of the contributions, the tendencies and the ideas emerging from the original artefact and recombined in the electronic version. The possibility to trace all the data and all the actions led by users in the digital layer offers the opportunity to study the creative processes of interaction and consumption, in order to have new material (apart from contents) that can be very useful in identifying emergent topics, as well as the constraints of the digital variant.



Figure 1. The four passages from the original artefact to the data analysis of contents and processes.

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## Section 2

# AUGMENTED TEXT



## Opening Time

*A flashforward*

*This is a feedflood given in discontinuous hyperspeed*

*It is a flash happening talk primed by compressed time*

*Thoughts in a spasm*

*I have aver time to speak. What I have should be enough. Ten minutes is the amount of time it takes to make love and to conceive.*

*I'm address what it means to be at the crux of opening and closing - the moment when abyss and apogee are simultaneously present.*

*And I'll be proposing **Neuro-Romanticism**, the next phase after the exhaustions of **Hypermodernism**.*

***While the global mind (the noosphere) expands, so must the heart -***

***The key is poetics - verum factum. Remaking, not matching. We become what we make. And we must make more heart.***

Here's my plan. (There is an order here.)

What is opening time? I'm positing that we are at the beginning of a great cycle, a second Renaissance of technology and mind, spirit and creative energy. It's the time when the noosphere consciousness described by Teilhard de Chardin is coming into being. James Joyce spoke of "closing time" in *Finnegans Wake*. Leonard Cohen wrote a song with that title. Norman O. Brown wrote a poetic philosophical work called *Closing Time* in (1973), in which he combined Joyce and Giambattista Vico. My work is a response to theirs; but I'm contemplating openings, not closings.

I'm asking what does it mean to stand in the open? What does it do to us to be at (in?) the opening of a great new cycle?

1. What are the openings?

I have no closing remarks, only openings.

This is the announcement of a great age - perhaps the greatest of all ages - in which the noosphere heart of spiritual connectivity melds with electronica. We are entering a new domain of hyper-evolution in which the mind itself is being altered.

2. On Energy Thresholds.

We have crossed over into spheres of being where electricity is the flux of our environment. The iBrain is a sign of evolutionary consciousness. Digital awareness and sensibility are signs of new forms of receptivity.

Electricity is source, is élan vital, is eros, is pulse, is gravitational force, is forging, is melding, is what makes and remakes.

3. The Medium is the Massage.

I'm following clues left by Marshall McLuhan. Massage means that the senses are caressed, prickled, enticed, seduced, softened, extended, reshaped, realigned. We are being lured, pulled, lulled, irradiated, invited and moved into extended selves, shaman media shape shifting.

## Discontinuity yields to Poetics

### *Interval of Aphorisms:*

**ADD is a necessary neurological-biological adaptation to an all-atonce media environment.**

ADD is an aspect of comprehensive sensoria! Apocalypticism struggling to emerge in a shocking milieu of input and output.

**Media extension means entanglement, greater networks of complexity - cosmic consciousness reverberating into a heartbeat.**

**Medium is the message implies the shaping of our selves into media shamans-shapeshifters on the web, on our screens.**

Accelerated discontinuities are an expression of media poetics.

Here's more of my plan.

I'll end with a beginning: electric *ourboros*.  
The ancient and the new are melding in radical configurations.

What are the implications for the openings?

... **Intense Subjectivity:** *Gnosis*, through you, through me, through you over there and here and through you everywhere, in you and you, come everything. You are the centre of global consciousness.

... **Hermetic Wisdom:** the mutuality and interdependence of all things; *as above so below*: electric cosmos emphasizes connectivity and ripple effects. Everything is related to everything else.

... **Cabala:** all is text in the global theatre; all can be decoded if the letters are restored, if the *adamic language of nature and supernature* (the electronica) can be read. We are in the frontier of new learning, and must re-learn the alphabet of stars and circuitry, wifi and trees.

... **Alchemy:** *everything transforms us*, the forms of life are constantly influencing us; we are making new inventions, and extending ourselves into the cosmos. We mainline electricity and alter the shape of our selves and our societies. Electricity is source, and any plug in leads to transformation of the user.

This is the fourfold cosmic vision of our hydroglyphica: transformations; knowledge; restored texts of meaning; all things interfuse in conditions of mutuality ...

These are the reveries of the global city-



No answers, only quests

This is the writing on the firewall -

Now that we have crossed the energy Rubicon, there is no going back

There is no closure in hypertext

**Our tongues are on fire, and our skin is prickling: our media is a leaping flame.**

## Interval of Maxims

We have already travelled farther than Ulysses.

We have already waited longer than Penelope at her loom.

## What is Opening Time?

Quotations to guide us

"Open a door no man can shut and You open it up so wide".  
Bob Dylan, "What Can I Do for you?"

"I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it".  
Revelation, 3:8

In every culture, creation itself is an opening.

"So far as the evidence reaches back, all beginning is synonymous with opening. In Egyptian, to found is to open. In Maori and Manganai, to begin, or *tupu*, is to open as the bud or flower. So the place of opening is *Teph*, the *Tuba* in kaffir; and the earliest ascertainable human thought was related to *opening*. Night opened the starry heaven. The black cloud opened with its quivering Assegai of lightning. Darkness opened into day. The mother opened to give birth. The child opened into the woman or man at puberty. The male opened the female. The eye opened for seeing; the ear for hearing. The nostrils opened with the breath of life. The mouth opened to utter forth; hence the mouth and mother are one by name. In the act of opening things become dual ..."

Gerald Massey, *The Natural Genesis*

The beginning time is an open mouth - to speak or sing; an open eye, an open mind, an open hand, an open heart. A person opens him or her self and steps forward towards you to love. You open the door to welcome a guest. When making love all senses come open.

In the Cabala it's said that when you open a book, you open yourself. A book, or any medium, is a voice or an energy waiting, asleep until you awaken it.

"The Hebrew *Pathah*, a word that means 'opening' [of the mouth] but also 'door' ..."

Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*

Norman O. Brown's last expression of poetic wisdom, *Closing Time* (1973), presented us with the idea that we are bruised by the sense of an ending. We are livid, because we feel that something vast is coming to an end; something vast has been triggered and initiated: we are on the cusps of beginnings.

*Closing Time* is a work of *pensiero poetante* (thinking in poetry).

Brown says

"I sometimes think I see that civilizations originate in the disclosure of some mystery, some secret; and expand with the progressive publication of their secret; and end in exhaustion when there is no longer any secret, when the mystery has been divulged, that is to say profaned ... And so there comes a time - I believe we are in such a time - when civilization has to be renewed by the discovery of new mysteries, by the undemocratic power which makes poets the unacknowledged legislators of mankind, the power which makes all things new".

What is the mystery now?

It is the open secret - the mystery hiding in plain sight-of the electrification and alteration, the extension and inspiration of global consciousness.

My premise: the Mysteries have never left us. Theme: we are being pressed unlike any other time, into the open - by our e-cosmos, and the mainlined source.

What is within - our soul hunger - is mirrored without - by the furnace of energy we've released, what I call electronica, the epic shaping of electronic communion.

In the global electrotheatre and amplified Mysterium, the e-media envelope, we feel an openness - a ripping apart, a tearing of our senses and sensibilities; we feel this in the imperatives everywhere present: to know ourselves, to be transparent, to be intimate, to be sexual, to be quick-smart, to be in tune with our bodies, to be free from tyrannies, to be available (24/7), to be on top of the job, to be alive to change, to be sympathetic, to be tough, to be hopeful, to be soft and to be hard, to be desperate for touch and love, to be googled and kudoed, to be You on Youtube ...

It is the global I opening.

Teilhard de Chardin thought the increase in electrical energy would bring warmth: a new expression of mysticism, and a greater receptivity to it. (*The Phenomenon of Man*)

By mysticism he did not mean withdrawal from the world into a cave of contemplative detachment. He meant implicate disordering of the senses, rewiring of the self to be even more profoundly involved in the evolutionary physical and spiritual processes at work in apogee times.

Let us call our opening time (EPM: evolutions per minute) the instant when we can hear and sense the noosphere heart.

Premise: the cosmos is a vast interconnecting communications process.

The cosmos is reverberating, vibrating, pulsating, calling, thundering, resonating, booming, echoing.

The Big Bang is a thunder that is echoing even today.  
Ali is a vibration of mutual call and response.

Electronica is the extension of creation. Electronic extension is the *magnum miraculum* of human experience.

## Announcements of a Great Age Neuro-Romanticism

In 1486 Pico della Mirandola in Rome announced the beginning of an inspired age. This was his pronouncement in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*.

In this central Renaissance work Mirandola spoke of his intimations of a new human being - a different self emerging. His vision was of reborn mind - modern kind. This was his tract of promise. We were about to enter an age of unprecedented creativity - power and influence of the mind to forge intimate connections between cosmos and humanity. Our destiny was to be magi.

On one side of his vision: Montaigne's sublime essays of the self - the self as supreme subject (this subjectivity culminating centuries later in Walt Whitman's 1855 *Leaves of Grass*).

On the other side of the vision: Shakespeare's Hamlet - corrosive self-consciousness, achingly acute awareness, driven beyond irony into fury and obsession, lonely dark mutterings - the radical skepticism that haunts us to this day.

## Visionary comprehension and alienation, born at once ...

But now we have moved beyond the self that Mirandola invoked, across the energy rubicon into new identities in the noosphere heart-beat ...

The screens yield to shamanistic shape shifting.

On the air, on livecams, on facebook, in iscreens and iphones, on line and in electronic space/time, you may shapeshift your self into whatever shape you wish.

Mirandola posited the new humanism.

In Opening Time we posit the multiform self, protean and discontinuous, in a crowning of electronic eros.

The extreme subjective that is nevertheless implicate in global waves.

Jeremy Rifkin calls this extension of being "The Empathic Civilization".

Empathy is extreme involvement.



Empathic implies telepathic connectivity - we pick up traces of one another.

We are observing ourselves observing.

Never has the desire been greater to see and know ourselves.

Images and films of our selves proliferate.

The average lifespan has extended from 45 (in 1900) to 80 (in 2011). It is likely that fifty years from now our lifespan will have extended again. Evolution is present, right before our eyes.

On Facebook everyone is a memoirist.

## Noosphere Heartbeat

The heart is glowing in the warmth of the noosphere.

Bigger hearts are necessary now that the darkness wants to close the evolutionary jumpstart down.

*How can we identify the darkness?*

*See it in addictions to power; deadened nerves; incipient extremism; jaded senses; cynicism; apathy; joylessness; loneliness so deep it cripples feeling; fundamentalist literalism that wishes to see the world stand still in moralistically correct-lines ...*

*Closings are contractions.*

*Fear clenches. Terror seizes. When we are closing down we can't breathe.*

*You can experience darkness through the forces of manipulation and control ...*

*Heartlessness is a sign of an addiction to power ...*

The heart-opening parallels (complements) the digital brain - iBrain developments of the past decade. These are effects documented in MRI scans that show the brain is decisively altered by the use of electronic devices.

Different parts of the brain are activated by ipods and kindle, hi-def screens and cellphones.

When you read a book, and you're gazing at a printed page, the left brain jumps into life.

When you switch on a led screen, and scan the pixels, your right brain jumps into life.

All of those thoughts compose one of the meanings, perhaps the essential one, of Marshall McLuhan's aphorism, "The Medium is the Message".

## Interval of Aphorisms

Technology is extension: this means entanglement, webbing, complexity, and growth.

To see technology as imposition is to admit alienation.

Technological extension means we expand our capacities - deeper involvement in the world and in ourselves.

Technological imposition means we accept tyrannies of sell-jobs - that somehow technology is something done to us.

The heart was always everywhere - in the first creation that is the natural world and in our evolved cultural and social worlds.

Dante's *Vita Nuova* shows us the heart of the world beating in trembling hands: heart is expression, heart is love. Hildegard von Bingen was the first to compose plainchants, the mouth opening for the spirit to sing out; she also painted images of the spheres of the soul in heart colours. She dressed the nuns of her abbey in red, to signify passion.

The technological-digital big leap is the moment when mind and life-spans are expanding quickly. The jumpstart is so fast and thorough that we are breathless, experiencing vertigo.

The noosphere heart reveals itself in our responses to tsunamis and public celebrations - acute responses to death and transfiguration.

Electronic consciousness is now universal experience and consciousness

We are witnessing the birth of the HyperModem Self.

The second creation; big bang of electrical conjunction and biology: the global wired city.

I'll update and revise Nietzsche

*What are we doing when we unleash our thoughts and energies away from Nature and the earth? Where are our energies moving? Away from all earths? Are we not rising continually - is there truly an up and down or an up and across? Are we hurtling in all directions? Are we not rushing through to an infinite everything?*

*Can you feel the held breath of the waiting cosmos as we emerge? Is the planet becoming hotter with data downloads? Isn't e-light like daylight or starlight continually opening around us?*

What do we hear everyday and night?  
“ ... the moving heart of an immeasurable pervasive subtlety ...”  
(Teilhard de Chardin)

## Crossing the Energy Threshold

The new fires bring new engines of re-creation.

We have moved from biological awareness (animal) to self-consciousness (the Montaigne-Hamlet I) to global consciousness (we) to electrified mind and soul, where animal-I-we-cosmos-spirit are melding and turning together. From biosphere to electrosphere ... in evolutionary overdrive ...

The brain took thousands of years to evolve; we've altered it in two decades, or less.

Share -pass forward-

Here are some experiences and manifestations of cosmic consciousness ...



*To be read quickly ...*

(All this makes sense, even if I'm not ...)

Call Display  
Wikileak  
Napster  
Facebook  
Outflow  
Labtop  
Desktop  
Kindle  
Kobo  
Ipod  
Ipad  
PDA's  
Blackberry  
Skype  
Thinki  
Hardlines  
Cellular modems  
SAT phones  
Textmessaging  
Superphones  
Ibook  
Hotspots (pause: what is a hotspot ... ?)  
Redaction grids

GPS  
Epaper  
Ebook  
Usershortforms  
Emoticons  
FWDtag  
Dub  
Reframe  
Flag Play Store Clip

Menusites  
Lipsynch  
Multiplayers  
Digitai prod

YouChurch Youtube  
YouShare  
YouPorn

Ipadding  
Ipodding  
So the medium is the mastication  
The medium is the mess age  
The medium is the messiness  
The medium is the mastodon  
The medium is the masturbation  
The medium is the missive

The medium is the match

The medium is the mass stage  
The medium is the mastery  
The medium is the mass sage  
The medium is the mass

(With apologies to Doug Coupland and Carolyn Myss)

## The Medium is the Massage

McLuhan taught us

All texts (natural, alphabetic, mechanical, electronic) are openings to the operations and processes of the planetary theatre (the global amphitheatre).

Open any text and you open yourself.

The forms are TVs and trees (among myriads). Like letters or words, they have a spirit moving between them.

The new texts of electronic are frontiers.

And we drive our ploughs of awareness through the vibrating fields, the wilderness of our unending pilgrimages ...

*A fool sees not the same TV that a wise man sees.*

*The productions and inventions of our time are in love with electricity.*

*E-media should be called the infinity machines - endless replication and miniaturization.*

*Where electronica is not, mankind becomes barren.*

*It's always good to have the avant-garde behind you.*

"The Medium is the Massage". I take McLuhan's witty variant reading of his most famous aphorism- "the medium is the message" - to be one of his central insights. It implies that we are being touched and molded. It suggests our bodies are playing field, our nerve-ends-the feelers and lattices of experience.

**Premise:**

The global city is a global image theatre - a domain of vision and hallucination, Maya and Lila amplified and extended. Electricity has deepened and accelerated this process into a world-wise Now, where direct experience matters more than history.

Global village shifted to global theatre. When we make this shift, we recognize the play of forms. And we find that all images and experiences are texts to be read. The soul of the world plays on the stage of the electronic amphitheatre.

The electronic cosmos is a mecca of commerce and cultural exchange, meetings place of many often ruthlessly competing interests. The e-cosmos is our crossroads heightening and externalizing our inward dramas.

***Proposition:***

Through a book or a written text (like this one) we may reach beyond words into the fluid hypertexts that inform our new hieroglyphs.

“At electric speeds the hieroglyphs of the page of Nature become readily intelligible and the Book of the World becomes a kind of Orphic hymn of revelation”.

Marshall McLuhan (in 1970)

***Imperative:***

That we become re-visionaries and yogis - capable of yoking together mind, body, spirit - capable of re-visioning contexts - through an enhanced ability to read signs and symbols (pattern recognition), in environmental clues. So we may become pliant enough for the pressings, and stretch ourselves enough to receive.

***Interpretation:***

Everything far is becoming near. Everything near is becoming even nearer.

Our children are experiencing a generation lab. They are expert astronauts navigating informational environments.

***NETgen***

***Digital natives***

They have extended themselves without knowing how far they've gone.

("Digital" now means a development of neural circuitry that is customized for rapid incisive spurts of direction and concentrated data)

Openings are the on button ...

and with openings we see outflows ...

The sexual underground of YouPorn and fucksites - the not-so-hidden network of available sex and exhibitionism.

It is the body as theatre.

Electric eros as source of a second cuming.

Skin and nerve-ends constantly caressed, our eyes and ears tantalized.

We have yet to understand what it means to have sex unlimited.



And the proliferation of dating sites - where people seek connection:  
1 in 4 relationships start this way.

And the proliferation of instant sex sites - fuck buddies for a day or  
night.

Romance search-engines ... Deer Parks open to all ...

The openings in cinema: *Avatar*, *Inception*, the *Harry Potter* movies, the three *Transformer* movies, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* ... Consciousness altering movies - that require new technologies to render their representations - which show the transfigurations of consciousness ... Reality is permeable. Being itself can be changed. Magical possibilities and beings exist. The world is charged with spirits. The machines are sentient. Animals carry portions of the spark of awareness. Dreams carry seeds of identity. There are worlds within worlds.

Worlds vibrate with other forms of consciousness. Thought alters matter. Consciousness is extension, and can live outside of the body, in other forms (animals, surrogates).

Notice that all these films are war movies. This shows the deep conflicts we feel about these recognitions.

Movies like literature both make and imitate realities. Hollywood is rarely on the cutting edge of sensory change. It usually reacts, responds. These films show an awareness that we are already over the wild edge of change; we are in vistas and abysses, where mind is shifting, being reordered ...

Recognition that reality (matter) is metamorphic, permeable; many worlds coincide ...

*Avatar* and *Inception* are signs of how far advanced the Opening Time is ...

Observe the emphasis in current movies on archetypes of warriors and magi, of female wicca and the superhuman (Spiderman, Captain America, Iron Man, Batman) ... Movies that show extended powers, expanded consciousness ... the presence of Buddhas, spirits, catholic exorcists, first nations' shamans, Tibetan Zen priests, wise teachers from occult traditions, magicians who war with evil impulses ...

The reverse of unlimited massaging and release is the fatigue visited upon the body. Tingling vibration flips into exhaustion. Jetlag, text-messaging deprivation, TV withdrawal, depression, loneliness ...

*Avatar* elicited such strong feelings of empathy for the paradisaical vision of the Navi that many viewers suffered sensory deprivation afterwards. Websites sprang up for people experiencing withdrawal symptoms from immersion in the colour and vibrancy of the living planet James Cameron envisioned.

No one can keep up to jetting paces, changing places, without the help of steroids, caffeine, attention pills, vitamin injections, uppers and downers, constant exercise, adrenaline rushes of extreme behaviour.

Closings are the off button ...

... and when things become too much we want to shut the door ...

The Bible starts with light. "In the beginning ..."

Then it immediately gets down to the lurid business of error, fall, seduction, betrayal, murder, exile, outer darkness, the grievous wounds we carry. The Bible commences in Genesis, an opening, and culminates in Apocalypse, where the seals and doors are once more opened (though the book itself will be closed), all wounds healed.

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) shows Armageddon and cannibalism to be normal conditions. The open road – long an image of liberty and exploration, joy, adventuring: from images of the promised land through Whitman to D. H. Lawrence and Jack Kerouac and Pablo Neruda - is turned by McCarthy into damnation alley. Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* (1979) turns redemptive river symbolism into murky currents carrying an assassin towards knowledge that seems to say only killing is for certain.

In *Grammars of Creation* (2001) George Steiner writes of how we are haunted by twilight, the nadir of creation - when the gulfs have indeed narrowed into bottomless abysses. He describes garbage glut and gang savageries on the streets of nowhere cities.

The opening time can look like a dark confusion of realms so devastating that you could find yourself perpetually falling (Paul Virilio).

"No direction home / how does it feel/to be on your own ..." So Bob Dylan sings in the anthemic "Like a Rolling Stone".

The obsession with closing time can be found in the restrictive often punitive perspectives of religious fundamentalists who wish to shut down the unbridled eruptions of the openings. Note too in academia their version of closings - the obsession with endings - in the proliferation of books called *The End of ... The Last ... The Final Chapter ... The Last Word ... The Final Say ...* in books that are summaries, farewells, not beginnings ...

The orthodoxies of theory in academia are signs of inability to cope with the frontiers of new consciousness.

**The Opening Time is one of extreme vulnerability.**

Everyday we have joys, terrors, masks, appearances, sextexting, puns, probes, prayers, fantasies, desperations, walls of information, the drama of "Array! Surrections!", people on Facebook seemingly facing themselves ...

*Look at our fast we are expanding*

We are here, there, everywhere, allatonce, in the spasms of satellites-and skype, and the tides of the current, now voyagers, aeronauts in the old frames of passion, birth, rebirth and death with all we know of terror and suffering.

And look at how we are horrifying despots and tyrannies everywhere ...

## **Open Heart, Open Hand**

Each time you begin you are at the source.  
And this is the time when we feel unsheltered.

Opening time means an open embrace  
An open hand  
An open mind  
An open text  
An open eye  
An open ear  
Open senses

The open hand is the symbol of the ancient wisdom in the Mysteries tradition.

Mysticism is extended perception reaching into fringes of reality, into the surround, feeling the intensities of universal animation.

Our evolutionary overdrive is the second creation, the big bang of technology (matter) and mind (spirit).

Each time you begin - open a book, walk through a door, open your arms to embrace another, start up a screen, switch on, plug in - you are at the source.

And each time you recognize this process underway,  
and live in the opening, you arrive at a crux (a crossroads).

***Mind Experiment:***

Place a priestess from the Delphic Oracles in the position of an e-screen. Surely that antique spirit would succumb to enthusiastic exclamation, "How the light beams and caresses ... Here is a place of power".

She would not have meant the screen itself is sacred. She wouldn't have said this machine is a god. A statue, an icon, a flame, a painting, a bust, a fresco, a letter, a hieroglyph: none of these, like any book (or Book), were or are in themselves sacred. They are symbols or media-meeting points for the movements of energy, body, mind, soul, spirit.

The origin of the word, “enthusiasm”, is in the Greek, “en-the-ism” - meaning to be enlivened or entered by Gods or God. *Theos* means an event - a happening where you are “in the spirit”. Enthusiasm is not located in anything specific. It can come upon you anywhere, in any site, anytime.

(Pause)

I'll return to the fours of the hydroglyphica. These are the marks of the Opening Time:

### ***Subjectivity***

Through you (and me) everything comes. The purely personal is the gateway of the senses for the universal. “User is content” (McLuhan): this is the gnosis of the personal legend, the story each of us must tell.

Facebook has replaced iconic figures like Bob Dylan and The Beatles and Janis Joplin and Joan Baez with social networking. Instead of world figures, like Dylan, who speak for a generation, we have digital networks that are a generation speaking.

### ***Interdependence***

The interfusion of realms: all things interconnect and influence the other. Through electronica we are everywhere at once. The hermetic wisdom informs us that the cosmos and the human are deeply intertwined; all is related at a vibrational level. Chaos dynamic revived this understanding. A butterfly flaps her wings in Shanghai and there is a rain-shower in Saskatoon.

### ***Extension***

All forms and inventions influence us and move us into new mental and sensory responses. We invent new machines, and they in turn mold us. This is the principle of alchemy. What we make remakes us. The more we make, the more entangled the webbing of connection.

Ibooks and downloaded texts have already replaced libraries and bookstores. Bookstores are now clearing houses for remaindered stock.



Secondhand bookstores traffic in an old technology-clothbound or paperback books for collectors and solitaries who prefer the silence and privacy of reading.

### ***Cosmic Amphitheatre***

All is text. And the texts can be read if we can find the keys and codes.

In the cabalic esoteric traditions, we are each part of the fallen who wander in the desert during our exile from paradise. There will be many stories and interpretations by those who wander. But the text is in pieces - a heap of broken images. Each interpretation has its validity according to the searing (seering) energy of the perceiver in the wilderness. The mission of exodus is to restore the broken text to its original splendor. The cracked world must be mended so we can read the great language that is creating us. The letters of the soul can be restored to sense.

This is where hermetic wisdom, alchemy, and gnosis join: in the crux where are turned towards decoding the texts of the world, and letting the song of the world speak.

When we are in a desert we need to be able to read the wind and the sand, the sky and the clouds, to learn how to survive. So it is with the electronic cosmos, our frontier.

In these restorations, we'll find that enthusiasm is beauty.

(My time is running out. Is yours?)

I'm a child of the late 20th century and the early 21st.

I'm a child of electromagnetism, of channel surfing, multi-networks, borderless nations and interracial societies. My eye was shaped by books and solitude too. I live on the cusp. That is the edge between screen and book. I see no conflict between the printed page and digital screen. Both means of communion are true. There are times when I prefer the solitude of writing and reading. There are times when I crave noosphere events and connectivity, from the G20 to news of tsunamis and Lady GaGa live.

I have no closing remarks, only openings.

One principle of the ancient wisdom is finding resurrection now: that of “the one and the many”. This is a variation of “as above so below”. Micro, macro: it means we experience things in our way, but must recognize how people everywhere experience the same processes.

In the second creation electronica we’re riding neural pathways of fire, speaking in tongues (multi-tasking), in longings and languages not wholly known to ourselves.

We are seeking something within and around us, and ahead of us.

Crossing the energy Rubicon means there’s no going back to a time without electrification.

The wild of the source draws us

**ON**





B.W. Powe - Opening Time on the Energy Threshold - Milano, LED, 2016  
<http://www.ledonline.it/lab-design/807-6-opening-time.html>









Power and the Elements of the Universe  
The Elements of the Universe



















