

# The Noetic Post

## A Bulletin from the Institute of Noetic Sciences

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**“There are no  
unscientific topics,  
only unscientific  
methods...”**

### Alternative Medicine Research Questioned

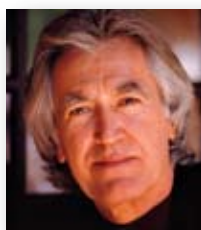
A RECENT STORY BY ASSOCIATED PRESS MEDICAL WRITER MARILYNN Marchione took aim at what she and others claim are “disappointing” results from the government’s ten-year investment of \$2.5 billion into research on the efficacy of herbal and alternative health remedies. The story was given front-page coverage in ABC News.com’s Money section. Marchione concludes that there have been no definitive, breakthrough findings from this effort. She was especially troubled by her discovery that “the government also is funding studies of purported energy fields, distance healing, and other approaches that have little if any biological plausibility or scientific evidence.” Scientists and physicians on both sides of the issue were interviewed for the article, as well as Josephine Briggs, new director of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), which provided most of the funding for the research.

Responding to the article, IONS Director of Research Cassandra Vieten points out “There are no ‘unscientific’ topics, only unscientific methods. I agree that much research funding has been spent both within and outside of complementary/alternative medicine on studies with marginal significance. But testing hypotheses for which there is little current evidence is exactly what scientific exploration is all about. When germ theory was originally proposed, it was considered irrational. The existence of prions—the agents that are now known to cause ‘mad-cow disease’—were once thought to be physiologically impossible. Such examples abound.”

IONS asked four physicians and researchers in the field of integrative medicine to briefly respond to the Associated Press article.

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**Larry Dossey, MD**  
Executive Editor  
*Explore: The Journal of  
Science and Healing*

“Marchione’s article ‘\$2.5B Spent, No Alternative Med Cures’ claims that studies in distant healing and prayer are ‘irrational and foolish’ (Dr. Barrie Cassileth) and that ‘distant healing and other approaches... have little if any biological plausibility or scientific evidence’ (Marchione). These

assertions are factually wrong. As a single example among many, a comprehensive 2003 survey of 122 laboratory studies and 80 randomized controlled trials in this area found a large number to be positive, meriting a laudable ‘B’ grade according to accepted CONSORT qualitative criteria (summarized in the book *Healing, Intention and Energy Medicine* by Wayne Jonas and Cindy Crawford). Several areas in science are ripe with hypotheses, ➔

advanced by eminent scientists of Nobel caliber, that claim to explain how these remote actions may occur. Plausibility is largely in the eye of the beholder and is hugely subjective, even within science. Irony of ironies: It may turn out that the institution least equipped to evaluate distant healing phenomena is NCCAM, where there seems to be an institutional blindness to evidence favoring these events.”



**Charles Elder, MD, MPH, FACP**

Physician Lead–Integrative  
Medicine for Kaiser Permanente  
Northwest  
Affiliate Investigator with the  
Center for Health Research

“In reporting that ‘the acupressure weight-loss technique won a \$2 million grant even though a small trial of it on 60 people found no statistically significant benefit,’ the article confuses the scientific process and misleads the public. In 2007, my colleagues and I published preliminary data

in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*\* suggesting that, among several interventions assessed, Tapas Acupressure Technique (TAT) warranted further study as a potential tool for weight-loss maintenance. As is typical of early-phase clinical trials, this pilot project was neither powered nor intended to determine statistical significance or efficacy. Rather, we used these preliminary data to justify and design the larger efficacy trial. I agree that one must ‘expect scientific thinking’ from both CAM investigators and the NIH. We must likewise demand fair-minded and accurate reporting of scientific topics from the press.”

\* C.Elder, C. Ritenbaugh, S. Mist, et al., “Randomized Trial of Two Mind-Body Interventions for Weight-Loss Maintenance,” *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 13, (2007), pp. 67–78.



**Len Saputo, MD**

Founder, Health Medicine Clinic in  
Walnut Creek, CA  
Author, *A Return To Healing:  
Radical Health Care Reform and the  
Future of Medicine*

“The obvious lack of balance in Marchione’s story is deeply disappointing. She suffers from two tragically mistaken assumptions: (1) mainstream medicine is built on solid science, and (2) clinical practices not yet ‘scientifically’ studied must be categorically discarded. She seems to be unaware

that peer-reviewed literature supporting much of modern medicine is based on poor or even junk science. (See, for example, the writings of the previous chief editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Marcia Angell, MD.) As well, many useful clinical practices are not yet validated by science because the tools needed to evaluate their validity are not yet available. More important, the ignorance and provincialism—like that on display here—ensures that funding for alternative-medicine research will remain woefully inadequate. Finally, despite billions spent on mainstream medical research, the remedies provided (i.e., drugs and surgery) in many approved treatments are not only incorrect but dangerous, leading to tens of thousands of documented iatrogenic deaths annually.”

“When suffering people do not find relief through conventional medical channels, they search for it wherever it is promised. My experience is that many people seeking alternative healthcare approaches are struggling with unresolved emotional needs, which have been poorly addressed by both the conventional and alternative medical communities. Rather than continuing to spend billions of dollars on studies that look at herbal

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**David Simon, MD**  
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 Love, Free to Heal*

nostrums or energetic adjustments, we should refocus the efforts of NCCAM on the emotional-physical connection, seeking more effective ways to help people heal their bodies by healing their emotions. Recent reports demonstrating the relationship between adverse childhood

experiences and adult health issues,\* for example, can serve as a template for well-designed studies that can authentically promote health and reduce healthcare costs. Such an approach will help fulfill the unrealized promise of alternative and complementary therapies.”

\* S.R. Dube, Fairweather, et al., “Cumulative Childhood Stress and Autoimmune Diseases in Adults,” *Psychosomatic Medicine* 71, (2009), pp. 243–250.

K. R. Douglas, G. Chan G, et al., “Adverse Childhood Events as Risk Factors for Substance Dependence: Partial Mediation by Mood and Anxiety Disorders,” *Addictive Behaviors* (August 8, 2009).

V. J. Felitti, “Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adult Health,” *Journal of the Academy of American Pediatrics* 9, no. 3 (2009), pp. 131–132.

## NEW HEALTH STUDIES

### Antidepressant Use Keeps Rising

Use of antidepressant drugs in the United States doubled between 1996 and 2005, according to surveys carried out by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. In 1996, about 6 percent of Americans—13 million people—were prescribed an antidepressant, a figure that rose to more than 10 percent (or 27 million people) by 2005. “Significant increases in antidepressant use were evident across all sociodemographic groups examined, except African Americans,” according to study authors Mark Olfson, professor of Clinical Psychology at Columbia University Medical Center, and Steven Marcus, research associate professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania. “Not only are more U.S. residents being treated with antidepressants, but also those who are being treated are receiving more

antidepressant prescriptions.” According to the healthcare research firm Intercontinental Marketing Services, more than 164 million prescriptions were written in 2008 for antidepressants in the nation, representing nearly \$10 billion in sales. **Source: Archives of General Psychiatry 66 (2009), pp. 848–856**

### The Dangers of Aspirin

On the heels of a long-standing assumption, driven by traditional allopathic studies, that a daily dose of aspirin minimizes the risk of heart attacks and stroke, comes the following: Professor of Epidemiology Gerry Fowkes and colleagues from the Wolfson Unit for Prevention of Peripheral Vascular Diseases in Edinburgh recently completed a study that found that taking a daily dose of aspirin to control asymptomatic atherosclerosis “may do more harm than

good.” The Aspirin for Asymptomatic Atherosclerosis (AAA) study, the first placebo-controlled randomized trial designed to determine the effect of aspirin in asymptomatic atherosclerosis, found no difference in stroke prevention between the aspirin and placebo group—although higher incidents of bleeding were found in the aspirin group.

**Source: European Society of Cardiology Press Release (August 30, 2009)**

### Yoga Is Good for You

According to a new study funded by the National Institutes of Health, yoga helped people with chronic lower back pain improve their mood and ability to function and eased their pain more than conventional treatment alone. The study was reported, ironically enough, by ABCNews.com Health (see “Alternative Medicine Research Questioned” on p. 1). According to *Spine*, study participants who took yoga for two months experienced a 29 percent reduction in functional disability and a 42 percent reduction in pain. Yoga was also associated with a nearly 50 percent decrease in symptoms of depression over conventional therapy alone.

**Source: Spine 34 (19), pp. 2066–2076**



### Are You Reading iShift?

Every month we feature current trends in noetic research, news highlights from around the world, new films and books, the month’s upcoming teleseminars, and lots of cool links.



**Among those skills considered by many to be most essential for success in the twenty-first century are greater cognitive flexibility, comfort with unfamiliarity, appreciation for diverse perspectives, agility in the face of rapidly changing circumstances, an ability to hold multiple points of view simultaneously, and a capacity for discernment that relies equally on intellect and intuition.**

## Cultivating Worldview Wisdom

BY LIZ MILLER

AS GLOBALIZATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND URBANIZATION change the face of our world at a pace previously unimaginable, and as we gain new appreciation of the truth of our interdependence, we are confronted with challenges of unprecedented scale and complexity. Hard questions have emerged: What will help people thrive in a multicultural society with numerous, sometimes dramatically opposed, traditions, values, and goals? How can we work together to create well-being, loving relationships, personal fulfillment, and global sustainability?

Recognizing that addressing such questions places new demands on our psychological resources and requires core competencies not previously fostered, a growing number of educators are participating in the rise of what is being called the “Skills” movement. It is increasingly clear that to separate training of the intellect from cultivating emotional and social intelligence is no longer productive, and to understand ourselves as learners is as important as the information we acquire. Among those skills considered by many to be most essential for success in the twenty-first century are greater cognitive flexibility, comfort with unfamiliarity, appreciation for diverse perspectives, agility in the face of rapidly changing circumstances, an ability to hold multiple points of view simultaneously, and a capacity for discernment that relies equally on intellect and intuition.

These skills don’t spring as much from *what* we know as *how* we come to know what we know—an integral part of forming a conscious worldview. In order to catalyze the changes we seek, first we must learn to examine the content and origins of our worldviews—the composite of our beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions—for these are the filters that color our understanding of the world and our place in it. Learning how to expand our worldview in ways that allow us to become more balanced, compassionate, celebratory of difference, and accommodating of new information is one of the most fundamental tasks before us. Cultivating an awareness—a worldview literacy—that what we think and believe informs and structures our experiences and relationships will lay the necessary foundation for identifying and acquiring critical twenty-first-century skills.

To address this need, the Institute of Noetic Sciences has begun the Worldview Literacy Project, a large-scale initiative that includes the development of educational programs



*Closing ceremony with Worldview Literacy youth at the IONS 2009 Conference in Tucson*

and materials for K–12 students, teachers and administrators, parents, IONS community groups, and the public. Recognizing that youth are the seed-bearers of our collective future, we are first developing our K–12 programming, which we call Seeds of Change.

To encourage schools to use the curriculum, we are designing the program to be compliant with California standards. Each of the fifteen 50-minute lessons will include pair dialogue, small group processes, and class discussions on questions related to worldview. Each will use a variety of experiential exercises to help students relate concepts to personal experience, try on new perspectives, and experiment with multiple ways of knowing. Students will learn that applying observation and discernment to both the outer/material and the inner/subjective worlds leads to a more complete, inclusive, and whole worldview.

Our Worldview Literacy curriculum is collaborative, project-based, and interdisciplinary—drawing on everything from poetry to new science. Various forms of technology are being incorporated to inspire students’ imaginations and encourage media literacy skills. A multimedia project emphasizing issues of worldview, for example, will encourage students to practice moving from insight to action and to know themselves as contributing citizens. Projects will be presented to both local communities and global audiences via the Worldview Literacy website. We imagine the site as a hub of new conversation and a model global classroom.

We are currently piloting early versions of the curriculum with high school students around the San Francisco Bay Area. Teachers from diverse educational settings, including public schools, online schools, and Waldorf schools, are expressing interest in making Seeds of Change available to their students. We are also collaborating with educators and institutions in several countries, including Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and England. Informed by our decades of research, we believe that the Worldview Literacy Project represents another important step in serving individual and collective transformation. ○

*Liz Miller is program coordinator for the Worldview Literacy Project.*

## IONS INSTITUTE OF NOETIC SCIENCES

### New Logo / New Website

IONS will unveil its new website in early 2010, which will include a content section called “The Noetic Post”—the name of the new semi-annual bulletin you have in your hands. We have also redesigned our logo after a long relationship with Leonardo da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man.” We like its clean look and the sense of forward movement—transformation—as your eye moves from left to right, and the treatment of the “O” evokes the life-changing experience of IONS founder and Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell during his return trip from the moon.

### New Teleseminar Series!

#### “The Science behind *The Lost Symbol*”

This new series launched live on October 7 from Washington, DC, the location of Dan Brown’s thriller. Additional segments will feature prerecorded interviews with leading noetic scientists from our rich library of interviews, teleseminar programs, and presentations at the 2009 IONS Conference. Open to all Shift in Action members.

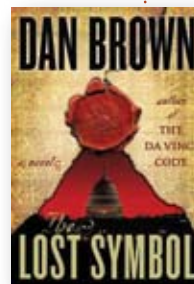
For more information, go to [www.shiftinaction.com/lost\\_symbol\\_science](http://www.shiftinaction.com/lost_symbol_science).



*High school student talking about stereotypes*

### Key Questions from WVL Curriculum:

- How do you know what you know?
- How comfortable are you with what is different, new, or unexpected?
- What helps people open to new possibilities?
- What does it feel like to be stereotyped?
- How do you know the difference between an observation and a judgment?
- Why are there so many different worldviews?
- How can we learn to respect differing views while still holding our own?





**Do we tear consciousness apart, relegate it to a mere by-product of the brain, abandon it as pure mystery, or do we attempt to pull at the strands and embrace all of its evolutionary and developmental complexity?**

## BOOK SPOTLIGHT

### **Consciousness Explained Better: Toward an Integral Understanding of the Multifaceted Nature of Consciousness**

by Allan Combs (Paragon House, 2009)

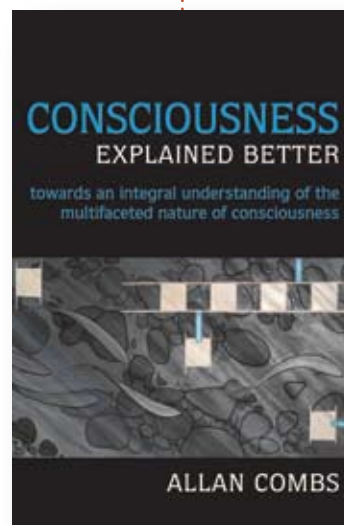
Reviewed by C. E. McAuley

In *Consciousness Explained Better*, writer-philosopher Allan Combs guides both the expert and uninitiated through an historical journey of our understanding and study of consciousness, from prehistoric times forward, while providing an integral framework for exploring consciousness that represents a potential turning point in the long evolution of the subject. Playing off his tongue-in-cheek title (a nod to Daniel Dennet's 1992 materialist classic, *Consciousness Explained*), Combs posits an emerging direction in the field that integrates consciousness into a transcendental evolutionary model where consciousness unfolds in stages. Not surprisingly, he draws in part on the work of integral theorist Ken Wilber and the Wilber-Combs Lattice—a chart of developmental consciousness from the archaic level to the nondual. Combs believes that the study of consciousness is at a crossroads and that an integral perspective offers the greatest benefit to furthering our understanding of this *mysterium tremendum*.

*Consciousness Explained Better* effortlessly takes readers through Australian philosopher David Chalmers's so-called "hard problem" of the nature of consciousness, which essentially asks how subjective experiences can emerge from the

objective workings of a physical brain. Using the "great thoughts" as signposts to help make its case, the book also explores how our perceptions of consciousness have evolved over time, while comparing and weaving the perspectives of major figures in the libraries of philosophy and psychology.

Quite appropriately, Combs relies heavily on the theories of legendary developmental psychologist Jean Piaget and pioneering consciousness theorist Jean Gebser. He embraces the evolutionary notion of developmental diversity, which he believes will lead to the psychic integration of human consciousness—both individually and collectively—into a state of nonduality. For Combs, this idea of the developmental lays the



foundation for the integral. As he writes, "Now we come to another important point: *no step can be omitted or passed over*. In other words, you cannot build a house starting with the second or third floor while the space below remains empty air. Likewise, no one can leapfrog to advanced levels of growth without first mastering the earlier elementary levels. We have here a central principle of mental development and, indeed, of psychological development in general."

In discussing various states and structures of consciousness, Combs agrees with Piaget, saying "what he discovered was that our sensory experiences, as well as our inner thoughts, feelings and memories, are refracted through habitual structures of interpretation to such an extent that we literally live in different experiential worlds as we pass through infancy,

childhood, adolescence and so on.” Using first Piaget as a foundation and then Gebser’s broader structures of the archaic, magical, mythic, and integral periods in the evolution of consciousness, Combs builds effectively toward his conclusion: that studies of human development lead to the conclusion that human consciousness advances inexorably toward higher levels of integration.

In addition to the ideas of Piaget and Gebser, Combs draws on the work of the spiritual teacher Sri Aurobindo and an array of significant others, as he sketches what he calls the “21st-Century Perennialist”—an individual who recognizes cultural differences in the study of consciousness, while also understanding the inherent universality of certain aspects of the human experience.

*Consciousness Explained Better* is not simply one man’s attempt at putting forth a new theory of consciousness. It is a synthesis of Combs’s decades of study and experience condensed into a single volume, and his recognition that the study of consciousness has reached an evolutionary moment of choice. Do we tear consciousness apart, relegate it to a mere by-product of the brain, abandon it as pure mystery, or do we attempt to pull at the strands and embrace all of its evolutionary and developmental complexity? Combs concludes that the moment for integration has arrived. 🍎

*C. E. McAuley is a lecturer in the department of Communication Studies at Sonoma State University and a doctoral candidate in Transformative Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies.*

## A WORLD TRANSFORMING

### A Psychedelic Resurgence

On September 26, 2008, the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved research using LSD-assisted psychotherapy for end-of-life anxiety in terminally ill patients. With FDA approval, data from clinical trials currently taking place in Switzerland is now accepted and used in the United States. The first legal dose of LSD in nearly four decades was administered by Swiss doctor Peter Glasser last May in a study funded by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Research. MAPS is pioneering a whole new branch of psychotherapy which uses psychedelics to treat mental ailments such as anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

“This is the first study with human subjects using LSD in more than 35 years,” says Randolph Hencken, Director of Communications for MAPS. “The most remarkable thing about this trial is that we’ve been able to overcome the stigma associated with LSD and get back to research...”

So far, the results of the studies in Switzerland and at Harvard [on cluster headaches, funded by ClusterBusters] have been positive, and the number of studies on psychedelic substances is multiplying. Two Vancouver psychologists, backed by MAPS, received an exemption from Canadian narcotics laws to administer MDMA to PTSD patients. Research on the effects of LSD on the brain is also underway at the University of California, Berkeley, and the California Pacific Medical Center.

— from *“The Psychotherapy Movement: Acid’s Long Trip Back to Clinical Research”*

by Carolyn Gregoire

[www.mcgilltribune.com](http://www.mcgilltribune.com)

(September 29, 2009)

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**It is clear that the cautious language of science is now inadequate to inspire concerted change, even among scientists. We need a fundamentally different approach.**

## **Climate Change Confronts Belief Systems**

Despite all the information, opinion polls over the years have shown that 40 percent of people in Great Britain and over 50 percent in the United States resolutely refuse to accept that our emissions are changing the climate. I do not accept that this continuing rejection of the science is a reflection of media distortion or scientific illiteracy. Rather, I see it as proof of our society's failure to construct a shared belief in climate change. I use the word "belief" in full knowledge that climate scientists dislike it. Vicky Pope, head of the Met Office Hadley Centre for Climate Change in Exeter, UK, wrote in *The Guardian* earlier this year, "We are increasingly asked whether we 'believe in climate change.' Quite simply, it is not a matter of belief. Our concerns about climate change arise from

the scientific evidence."

I could not disagree more. People's attitudes toward climate change, even Pope's, are belief systems constructed through social interactions within peer groups. People then select the storylines that accord best with their personal worldview. In Pope's case and in my own, this is a worldview that respects scientists and empirical evidence. It is clear that the cautious language of science is now inadequate to inspire concerted change, even among scientists. We need a fundamentally different approach. ●

— from *"Why People Don't Act on Climate Change"*  
by George Marshall  
[www.newscientist.com](http://www.newscientist.com)  
(July 23, 2009)