



# The MIND HEALTH REPORT

Secrets to Unlocking Your Mind for Work, Love and Life

Special Report

## Decoding the Phenomenon of Light

There are indications that we are at the dawn of a revolution in the science of the mind. At the focal point of this revolution is a deepening of our understanding of the phenomenon of light, both in the pursuit of truth and attainment of health.

The sun played a central role in the ancient cultures of India, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, among others. In the Vedic texts of Hindu religious literature, the sun god Surya (meaning “the Supreme Light”) heals, illuminates the intellect, and cultivates wisdom.

In ancient Greece, the sun god Apollo is at once the god of health and reason. Another Greek solar divinity, Helios (from whom the word “heliotherapy” is derived), is often depicted traversing the sky in a chariot driven by solar steeds — a prefiguration of the solar paneled automobiles that are emerging today.

### The Conflict Between Light and Darkness in Mental Health

From the beginning, there has been a conflict between light and darkness. Indeed, it was at the shrine of Apollo on the island of Delos that a precursor to the contemporary ecological crisis was played out — the demise of Thrax, the god in Greek mythology whose lack of respect for the Earth led him on an usurpation spree. When Thrax assailed the sacred shrine of Apollo, he was afflicted with disease and vanquished.

The Pueblo Indian tribes of North America expressed their devotion to solar guidance in dance. And though the U.S. government banned it in 1904, the sun dance has been subtly reanimated in Independence Day celebrations.

“For the rest of my life I will reflect on what light is!”

—Albert Einstein c. 1917

In the realm of mental health, the conflict between light and darkness manifests itself unconsciously, first and foremost in oral and written expression. This is particularly true in the use of light as a metaphor, which from time immemorial has been associated with self-knowledge in relation to the

spiritual Source that constitutes the self.

Hence, for example, St. Augustine writes in his *Confessions*: “For even what I know about myself I only know because your light shines upon me; and what I do not know about myself I shall continue not to know until I see you face to face and my dusk is noonday.”

What of the converse? What is signified by individuals who have shown an aversion to light, either in their personal existence or literary expression?

My own research, published in my book, *Existence, Thought, Style: Perspectives of a Primary Relation*, indicates that dissociation with light signals symptoms of psychological malaise. Hence, for example, the 19th century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who suffered severe depression throughout his life, writes in Zarathustra’s “Night



Song”: *Night has come: alas that I must become light? And thirst/ for the nocturnal? And loneliness?*

At pivotal passages in Nietzsche’s writings, light takes on threatening connotations, as in “Dionysus-Dithyrambs,” where it appears as glances of the evening sun . . . running maliciously.

In “Judgments of the Weary,” the sun appears as an intruding power from which the rest of nature requires protection: *They hate the sun, find steep the grade/And love trees only for their shade.*

He who burrows toward the darker regions is left to his own resources for illumination. Or he himself becomes light. Hence Nietzsche’s

indictment of religious faith and dismissal of spiritual experience. But deflected from its Spiritual source, this light reflects nothing but itself and is ultimately self-consuming. Nietzsche’s poem “Ecco homo” may be seen to presage his own mental collapse in the lines, *Ever hungry like the flame/I consume myself and glow/Light grows all I conceive/ Ashes everything I leave.*

Moreover, the German term for mental derangement *Umnachtung* (literally, “enveloped by night”) captures the dire effect on the psyche as it disassociates from the Spiritual light that constitutes it.

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**CEO** Christopher Ruddy **Health Publisher** Travis Davis **Contributing Editor** Vera Tweed **Production/Art Director** Elizabeth Dole

To contact **The Mind Health Report** send e-mail to: [mindreport@newsmax.com](mailto:mindreport@newsmax.com). Subscription/Customer Service contact 1-800-485-4350 or [mindhealth@newsmax.com](mailto:mindhealth@newsmax.com). Send e-mail address changes to [mindhealth@newsmax.com](mailto:mindhealth@newsmax.com).

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## New Research Confirms the Wisdom Of the Ancients

We are seeing an emerging epidemic of depression of varying severity in our society. In response, there has been an excessive recourse to pharmaceuticals that address only the symptoms, numbing depression sufferers into limbo and camouflaging the underlying causes.

The psychological effect of the receding light of a divine presence as well as the path of healing was understood by C.G. Jung, a pioneer and one of the leading minds in psychoanalysis. Jung wrote: “Among all my patients in the second half of life — that is to say, over thirty-five — there has not been one whose problem was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost what the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has really been healed who did not regain his religious outlook.”

In the psychological dimension, recent research in the fields of physics, biochemistry, and neurology confirm the wisdom of the ancients on light and open up new vistas of major implication. Already 500 years ago, Leonardo da Vinci entered an observation in his notebooks that meditating under predominately blue light enhanced his concentration tenfold.

Only recently have neurologists discovered a primordial photoreceptor that is particularly sensitive and positively responsive to blue light. In 2007, researchers found that by using MRI brain imaging techniques with exposures of short-wavelength blue light while participants were engaged in a memory task, specific animated areas of the cerebrum could be identified.

Significantly, these were the brain stem and thalamus, the very regions that regulate memory, alertness, and mental focus.

It may well be that by providing light environments tailored to the thalamus, each of these human capacities will be greatly enhanced.

Because the thalamus also relays sensory information to the cerebral cortex — and indeed coordinates consciousness itself — developing and expanding its potential through such an environment could conceivably one day approximate the vision of the 19th century poet William Blake, who speculated that “If the doors of

perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.”

## Social Effects of Blue Light

On one level, formative inroads with blue light therapy have been made in treating a form of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which comes upon some individuals in the sun-deprived days of winter. This condition is improved by correcting the over-secretion of the mood regulating hormone melatonin that is produced in the photosensitive pineal gland, the “third eye” located significantly between the two bodies of the thalamus. Alleviation is experienced almost immediately, though the treatment is most enduring when continued over a period of five weeks in unison with psychotherapy.

The immediate efficacy of blue light can, in fact, be restorative to the point of bringing one from the brink of immolation or impairment of oneself or others. There is evidence that since the installation of blue light emitting diodes over the end of train platforms at Gumyoji Station in Yokohama, Japan, and more recently in Tokyo (2009), suicide attempts have nearly been eliminated.

Although there has been no official scientific identification of the mechanism whereby this is achieved, it is my view that blue light elevates the level of serotonin, the neurotransmitter that governs impulsively destructive behavior. Serotonin is substantially lower in suicide victims and those



### G. Heath King

G. Heath King, Ph.D, is a psychoanalyst and former professor of interdisciplinary studies at Yale University. He is author of *Existence, Thought, Style: Perspectives of a Primary Relation, Portrayed Through the Work of Søren Kierkegaard*. He explored the philosophical foundations of psychology at the University of Freiburg, Germany, where he completed his doctorate.

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who have a propensity toward suicide, as shown by PET-scan images. This is all the more plausible as serotonin is most prevalent in the brain stem and thalamus, the very regions most responsive to blue light in neurological experiments.

This interrelationship may also explain the reduction of crime when street lamps emitting blue light were introduced in areas of Glasgow, Scotland, and Nara, Japan. (See photograph, page 2.)

A forensic study in Finland found that violent criminal offenders and impulsive pyromaniacs have, like those with suicidal ideation, lower serotonin levels than control groups. It may well be that the emission of blue light momentarily modulates the serotonin level in individuals with a propensity to suicide and impulsive criminal offense alike.

Given the fact that there are more people incarcerated in U.S. prisons than any other country, and that one suicide occurs in the nation on average every 17 minutes, it is my view that the successful blue light measures in Scotland and the Japan should be introduced in the U.S. as an adjunct to an enhanced national therapeutic protocol.

## Blue Light Furthers the Journey of Self-Knowledge

Of equally far-reaching potential is the fact that other key regions of the brain also responded to blue light. These included the hippocampus, where new memories and concepts are formed; and the amygdala, which registers wariness and fear when posed with real or imagined threats.

These areas of the limbic system — the most ancient part of brain physiology — are of particular significance when considering two subsequent UCLA studies. The first, conducted in 2009, showed that meditation actually appears to slow the natural age-related atrophy (shrinking) of the brain.

The second study, completed in 2011, used innovative technology known as diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) to discover that those who meditate have stronger structural connectivity between regions of the brain. These stronger connections also undergo less atrophy with age.

This durability is particularly pronounced in the uncinate fasciculus, the white matter that connects the hippocampus and amygdala with the frontal cortex.

This is the part of the brain that controls higher

level thinking, problem-solving, and planning.

Further recent research found that the amygdala is hyperventilating when perceiving imagined threats. It is entirely conceivable that blue light-imbued cognitive therapy and the creation of meditative meta-environments of the future may bring individuals further on the journey of self-knowledge wherein the Spirit dwells, allowing them to transcend fear-induced prejudice — whether in the form of ideology, dogma, or otherwise — and experience truly innovative conceptualization.

When this happens, the “doors of perception” are cleansed, and a higher consciousness can evolve. This higher contemplative state is captured in Rembrandt’s painting *The Philosopher in Meditation*, wherein the philosopher is enveloped in an intense light from above as he is immersed in thought in his otherwise dark chamber. (See picture, page 5.)

## Photons Key to Shroud of Turin Mystery

Just as breakthroughs in neurology are affording an insight on the interrelation of key regions of the brain and the potential of light in developing their untapped capacities, so too is new research in the field of quantum physics leading to a deeper understanding of the connectivity between the psychological and spiritual dimensions.

We may find a clue to this interrelation in research conducted by physicist Arthur Lind and historian Mark Antonacci on the image on the Shroud of Turin.

In the most sophisticated and detailed study on this phenomenon to date, the authors demonstrated in a paper entitled “Particle Radiation from the Body” that the 29 unique or atypical characteristics of the shroud found by radiocarbon, medical forensic, anatomical, archeological, and historical analysis over several decades could only have been caused by radiation emanating from the body itself.

A previous hypothesis that the image had been painted on the shroud during the medieval period had already been disproven, as no pigment was detected by infrared thermography. Nor could a series of over two dozen solvents efface or fade the image.

Had the light creating the image come from outside, the weave of the shroud on the inside exhibiting the frontal and dorsal images would



have been visible, which it was not. Instead, a three-dimensional image is yielded when anatomy of the man is traced from those darker areas closest to the cloth to lighter sections farther away. Were the image imposed from the outside it would have instead appeared like a photographic image, rather than three-dimensional.

The only explanation, as the researchers rightly conclude, is that the source of light issued from within the body itself, emanating at that instant when the “body became insubstantial or dematerialized instantly leaving behind some energy in the form of the basic particles of matter, such as protons, neutrons, and electromagnetic waves, such as gamma rays.”

While the authors of the study are on the right track in postulating gamma rays as the source of the image, they omit a particular radiation that, in my view, is more likely to have issued forth from the body: light particles known as photons. Since Einstein’s paper on photoelectric effect and its mathematical quantification by Max Plank, it has been known that blue light photons emit

more energy than others owing to their shorter wavelength and higher frequency.

Gamma ray (in contrast to alpha and beta) photons have neither electrical charge nor mass, and can penetrate stone and indeed the magnetosphere of Earth and distant planets. Similarly, they are known to arrive at Earth from vast, unmeasured distances of the universe. There has been no experimental observation of “photon decay,” despite several attempts.

It will be recalled, moreover, that it was predominately blue light that Leonardo da Vinci observed to most enhance concentration, and that in neurological experiments it was short wavelength bursts of blue light that most affected those areas of the brain that regulate memory, alertness, and mental focus, and coordinate the prism of consciousness itself. In the instant of transmission or “resurrection,” the finite light of human consciousness reunites with the spiritual Source of infinite light that constitutes it.

The present state of quantum physics makes this transmission comprehensible in the language



of science. For it has recently been verified that two photons, once in contact, will continue to interact when separated, conceivably no matter how far apart they are dispersed in time-space. This, in turn, is in accord with the “non-locality” of quantum effect and consciousness, as demonstrated by John Stewart Bell (Bell’s Theorem). These findings are consistent with the earlier work of Jung and Nobel laureate in physics Wolfgang Pauli on the “synchronicity” of seemingly disparate events as part of a conscious universal mind. We may glimpse here the deeper meaning of the passage in the Psalms which reads, “For with thee is the foundation of life; in thy light do we see light” — and the more enigmatic utterance repeated in the gospel of John, “I declare to you that you are gods” (chapter 10, verse 34).

### Near-Death Experiences Illuminate The Spirit

We may also now be in a position to better comprehend that point of intersection where consciousness coalesces into its transcendent Source. The intense light encountered in accounts of near-death experiences (NDE) enabled by cardiac resuscitation (there are now over 8 million on record) correlate with artists’ representations of this realm through the centuries. Hieronymus Bosch’s *Ascent in the Empyrean* (left) and Gustave Doré’s depiction of Dante entering Paradiso are among the most vivid of these.

The precipitous blue light-imbued tunnel journey reported in NDE, and similarly described in these art works corresponds to the wormholes and singularities delineated by astrophysicists as connecting other dimensions beyond time. Significantly, the radiation emitted from black holes, known as “Hawking radiation,” in which wormholes are posited to form, is comprised primarily of photons. In this process, light becomes more energized as it undergoes what has been identified as an “infinite blueshift.”

Revealingly, a 2007 photo from NASA’s Chandra X-ray Observatory shows blue light emanating from a black hole. (See photo, page 7.)

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Those who have experienced the NDE journey relate having been in a realm where “time stops,” where the past, present, and future can be glimpsed simultaneously in what astrophysicist Metod Saniga, who has studied the NDE phenomenon, terms “the Pure Present.”

This intense light is also consistent with what astrophysicists envision as prevailing at the very inception of the universe in the form of the Big Bang, and the effulgence projected to be present at its extinction.

The long-term psychological effects on individuals who have encountered the light of near-death experiences have been profoundly healing and en-light-ening. A deeper self-knowledge is attained, with a simultaneous shift toward a more altruistic and empathetic way of relating to others and nature. This is accompanied by a sharpened intuition and mental focus, expansion of cognitive openness, and more rapid assimilation of knowledge. A greater self-esteem is observed, and a heightened sense of meaning and purpose in life is experienced with an enhanced acceptance of death.

Atheists report emerging from the NDE with a newfound acceptance of a deity. The most articulate of these is Howard Storm, who in his book *My Descent into Death: A Second Chance at Life* spoke of



encountering “spiritual beings of light,” whom he understood as assisting him to return to “the One,” beyond name and denomination. The essence of the impact of Storm’s experience with this luminance is the inclusivity of all peoples and the transcendence of divisiveness among religions.

### The Power of Reflection

The results of the above-cited neurological responses to light on the brain may be seen as intimate analogues or precursors to the higher encounter with this Transcendent light. Indeed, the areas of the brain most responsive to light — the brain stem, thalamus, hippocampus, and amygdala — are the very regions that regulate memory, acuity, mental focus, novel conceptualization, openness to new experiences, and prevail over the fear of phantom threats. They are, moreover, the coordinates of the prism of consciousness itself.

The altered state of consciousness of those who have had a near-death experience also presents an intimate correlate to individuals who have had a sudden vision leading to a spiritual transformation. This is captured most profoundly in paintings by Michelangelo, Giordano, and Caravaggio depicting an intense raking light from above striking St. Paul from his horse, leading to his cessation of persecuting Christians and a transformative mission in life. (See picture, above.)

The relation between the psychological, physical, and spiritual realms are like the pearls of the Net of Indra in Hindu and Buddhist mythology, where each pearl reflects the other reciprocally, shedding light on the whole. As Goethe, one of Germany’s foremost poets and thinkers, wrote about the commonplace mindset to split the light: “How often do they strive to divide that which, despite everything, would always remain single and whole.” □