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## ***Forward Perspectives***

**Reflections on Brain, Mind & Healing Conference**

By [Jonathan Peck](#), IAF President

A wonderfully bright collection of scientists, doctors and social thinkers met for a two-day conference on Brain, Mind & Healing at the Samuelli Institute in January. This conference offered a powerful learning experience, at least for those of us willing to unlearn long held assumptions. Both theory and empirical evidence presented at the conference challenge long-held assumptions about science. Those who accept the challenge will find their minds opening to new ideas. Throughout the conference I had to constantly relate new ideas to what I thought I already knew. *I realized that much of my knowledge may be based on flawed assumptions.* In this article I will briefly describe a scientific theory that offers a different explanation of the mind and the universe. *I will also describe my thoughts and the changes in my own mind* prompted by the discussions, and these I will identify by using italics.

Most people in modern Western societies assume that the world works through material causation, and through reasoned analysis we can determine what causal mechanisms operate and thereby create satisfactory explanations. If we don't think about anomalies, ignore the strange findings from quantum physics, dismiss Carl Jung along with recent studies of the unconscious and pay no attention to evidence emerging from the neurosciences, we can stay comfortably in the mainstream of 20th century thought. Yet the limitations of this comfortable thought were made clear in a statement Professor Harold Walach made. "We only perceive what we have a model for. The brain reconstructs what we have a model for. The current model from Descartes looks at the body as machine and the mind as rational. Both are

wrong.” The conference proceeded to review evidence that shows the limits of the current model to explain scientific findings.

Some challenging alternatives to conventional assumptions include:

- The brain and mind are distinct, though they have correspondence
- Healing occurs spiritually as well as physically, and though we tend to see the mind and body as separate, that tendency leads us astray
- Healers use the mind as well as their cultural understanding of bodies to provide the miracle of cure in ways that scientists know are mysterious.

*The wisest approach to these mysteries may also be the humblest. Thus the opening position is that we must recognize that we know only a little, and much of what we know is wrong.*

Professor Harald Walach reinforced this point while discussing a theory of consciousness: all theories begin with presuppositions. These presuppositions emerge from culture and are often unconscious. *Recent research reinforces Jung’s contention that we have much to learn individually and collectively by making the unconscious conscious.* Professor Walach offers a wonderful example by proposing an alternative to the widely held assumption in our culture that consciousness comes from the brain. That is an illusion, if you accept the theory Professor Walach presents.

*Feel like the rug got pulled out from under your feet? Carl Jung broke with Sigmund Freud by theorizing that the collective unconscious also exists beyond the individual unconscious. What’s wonderful about our unconscious is that it periodically confronts us with the disturbing realization that our assumptions may be wrong. Assumptions about our self as well as the universe need to be examined, which is what physicist David Bohm advocated in his essay “On Dialogue”. Recent research into the unconscious indicates that even our assumed sense of self may be false. (See Jonathan Haidt’s book The Happiness Hypothesis.) Learning in its most profound sense comes when we accept that what we thought we knew was, at best, a limited truth which can be transcended by greater truths.*

Dr. Walach made the point that we need to criticize our mental models in order to overcome our limited view of truth. Further, he noted that the conscious “I” often creates rational constructs to affirm a duality, separating the subjective and objective to reinforce the brain-body model suggested by Descartes. That model mistakes our physical “machinery” as a separate self subject to the laws of mechanics consistent with Newtonian physics. We can acknowledge the utility of this for scientists who assume the objective view of the body. This view has helped explain much of the material world and led to many useful therapies. However, it has also trapped many scientists in the reductionist fantasy that our physical selves are fully understandable through a mechanistic physics—a physics that we now know is only a partial view of reality. That view ultimately expects to explain the mind as simply an output of the brain. This perspective is not wholly untrue; it is only a limited truth that fails to explain much about the mind that can help in healing. This view is completely blind to the spiritual dimension of healing.

*The book The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down tells the heartbreaking story of a Hmong family whose epileptic daughter was caught in cultural misunderstandings between doctors from a biomedical culture and the Hmong. A highly educated man from the Hmong culture noted the main difference is that his culture is not Cartesian.*

The theory of consciousness Professor Wallach offers has the fundamental unity, or “stuff” of

the universe as the basis for both mind and matter. We can use our brains to access this more fundamental universe which is unbounded by time and space. This theory can be used to view the collective consciousness and collective unconscious as well as our individual mental experiences. If we train our minds, through meditation for example, we can transcend the limits of time and space in ways that have been demonstrated by replicated experiments. In order to know about the fundamental stuff from which both mind and matter form, we need to use a complementary approach that takes both the physical (*i.e., objective*) view which has long been the preference in science and a mental (*i.e., subjective*) perspective. In physics the recognition that the experimenter is part of the experiment came in the early 20th century, but in biology this might be viewed as either an inconvenient truth or a scientific heresy. Yet this theory invites both an expansion of scientific exploration into healing as a mind-body relationship as well as phenomenon such as the placebo effect and the effectiveness of spiritual therapies, as well, perhaps, of psychotherapies.

*The “complementarity model” Professor Wallach described invites the combination of psychology and physics, much as Nobel Laureate Wolfgang Pauli and Carl Jung had in their writings on quantum and synchronicity.*

Wallach supplies “the gist for non-local, non-causal, generalized entanglement correlations.” He argues. “Physical correlations through synchronicity are more basic than causality, though causality can arise out of these correlations.” This model invites an understanding of experiments that present anomalous data, which were described in the Samuelli Institute conference. Further, Professor Wallach offers a definition and explanation for spirituality as “the individual perceiving the whole.”

*In 2005 IAF forecast that we would have a [“unifying theory of biology” between 2021 and 2029](#) (p.19). More recently in an article [“The Future of Bringing Drugs from Bench to Bedside”](#) I wrote: “Currently, no true theoretical biology adequately supports computation of the vast data accruing from molecular, cellular, whole animal, and ecological studies. Thus, a new theory in biology needs to encompass health and disease to have data well understood and create new knowledge that organizes biological information”.*

Professor Walach may have such a theory. So I recommend his article [“The complementarity model of brain-body relationship”](#). In considering what this new understanding of the complementarity model might mean, it is appropriate to end with a quote Wayne Jonas, M.D., President and CEO of the Samuelli Institute, gave in [The 2029 Project](#).

*“There is a convergence between different technologies and disciplines, but at the heart of it is a merging of our perceptions of health and disease. This fundamentally is the recognition that we are both simultaneously healthy and diseased at all times. The decision becomes how tolerant are you of disease and how desirous are you for health. How much are you willing to pay to shift your place on the continuum? And that ultimately becomes the question of health and healing capacity, not simply choosing a drug to treat a disease (p.40).*

## **News & Events**

### **IAF Releases Report from Total Fitness for the 21st Century Conference**

IAF has released the findings from the conference it facilitated to define “Total Fitness” for the U.S. military. Facing an array of new programs to address the fitness of the force, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ADM Mike Mullen asked the Uniformed Services University (USU) Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP) to define “Total Fitness” and to identify metrics that can be used to measure it. The conference, which IAF organized in cooperation with the Samueli Institute, brought together military and civilian experts to address the Chairman’s questions. This topic is particularly important given the military’s current challenges of combat injuries, post-traumatic stress, and suicide, but it also speaks to the military’s awareness that it is the warrior – and not equipment – that is its greatest asset.

Participants worked in teams to explore eight domains of Total Fitness, which included physical fitness, psychological fitness, behavioral fitness, medical fitness, environmental fitness, nutritional fitness, spiritual fitness, and social fitness. In addition to defining Total Fitness and each of its domains, participants evoked four main themes:

1. The health of military members’ families plays an integral role in the force’s ability to accomplish its mission and must be incorporated into any definition of Total Fitness.  
The metrics of Total Fitness should measure positive as well as negative outcomes.
2. Just as health is much more than absence of disease, Total Fitness extends beyond the mere absence of physical, mental, or spiritual injury to include factors such as physical well-being, diet, spirituality, friendships, and acclimation to environment.
3. Total Fitness of the country’s warriors is inextricably linked to the Total Fitness of the society from which they are drawn and to which they will return.  
While the path begins with defining Total Fitness and identifying its metrics, military
4. leaders must commit to staying on this path in order to reach the improvements needed throughout the military and the country.

The conference culminated in an address by ADM Mullen on the importance of leadership and on the short- and long-term impacts of the two current wars on families. With an emphasis on the value and understanding of mental health, he spoke of his time spent with families and spouses of military personnel. He understands that when the mental health of children and spouses in military families is declining, it also affects the military itself. ADM Mullen looks to a future in 4-6 years when the two wars are no longer the main focus of the military. Then, a new definition of success will emerge when Total Fitness includes the readiness of those who were in the military to move back into society as wonderful citizens.

To view the agenda, fitness domain presentations, and speaker presentations, visit [here](#). The full report is available [here](#). For more information on this and related projects, contact Eric Meade at [emeade@altfutures.com](mailto:emeade@altfutures.com).

## **Jonathan Peck Engages Prescription Access Forum**

WASHINGTON – In February Jonathan Peck provided a keynote conversation at this year’s AstraZeneca Prescription Access Forum for leaders of healthcare clinics and organizations helping the poor and uninsured. The conversation was about change and uncertainty in healthcare. Peck inspired listeners to recognize that uncertainty creates opportunity and change can bring the healthcare they want. Participants interact daily with people in difficult health situations. In the face of uncertain legislative reforms, Peck invited these leaders to explore the uncertainty and find opportunity. Participants created a range of forecasts for: an

expectable future, a future they most fear, and a future that would be surprisingly successful. These forecasts included great strides in treating disease with better personal care and healthy lifestyles. However, they also fear a stressed system worse than we have now and vulnerable to events such as a terrorist attacks on vaccine facilities. Peck then discussed change with a forecast that society is now moving through a major value shift. He proposed an understanding of healthcare as a complex system that is evolving with the value shift. This approach to change integrates both subjective and objective aspects, leading to a more comprehensive understanding. By including both perspectives, companies and organizations can identify emerging challenges and opportunities that might otherwise be missed.

Readers interested in these topics and methodologies are welcome to contact Jonathan Peck at [jpeck@altfutures.com](mailto:jpeck@altfutures.com).

## **Jonathan Peck: The Future of Bringing Drugs from Bench to Bedside**

Jonathan Peck forecasts the future of drug discovery, development, and regulation in the February issue of Monitor, the magazine of the Association of Clinical Research Professionals. The article is available [here](#).

## **Narco State Article Revisited**

We received some pushback on last month's dystopic piece "California Becomes a Narco State." We were offering this as a provocative scenario rather than IAF's forecast for California, and should have made that clear. Among the comments we received, one noted the scenario could apply to any border state, and would include compromised American national security to a point of national collapse, which would take decades rather than years. Good points. A more sudden collapse based on historical examples is suggested by historian Niall Ferguson in an article in the March/April 2010 issue of Foreign Affairs. ("[Complexity and Collapse: Empires on the Edge of Chaos](#)") Also, Manuel Castells' 1996 book *The Power of Identity* describes the rise of networks and the decline of power for nation states, with Mexico as a case study. He writes "the drug traffickers-PRI connection played a major role in the assassinations, intimidations, and cover-ups that...opened the way for the demise of the PRI state" (p.284).

## **Upcoming Events**

*Psychology and Technology for Police Futures* workshop, IAF President, Jonathan Peck, Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) at Command College for the Center for Leadership Development on March 11, 2010 in Folsom, California

*Cyberdemocracy, Equity and Sustainable Development*, IAF Founder and Chairman Clem Bezold, International Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning Symposium (IRAHSS) 2010, on March 16, 2010 in Singapore.

[Wiser Futures Workshop](#), WorldFuture 2010: Sustainable Futures, Strategies, and Technologies, IAF Futurists Clem Bezold and Eric Meade, July 8th, 2010 in Boston, MA.

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The Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) is a nonprofit futurist research and educational

organization focused on helping organizations create the futures they prefer. For more information, write to [futurist@altfutures.com](mailto:futurist@altfutures.com) or call us at (703) 684-5880.

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