



The Center of the Cyclone: Looking into Inner Space

John C. Lilly

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In this long-out-of-print counterculture classic, Dr. John C. Lilly takes readers behind the scenes into the inner life of a scientist exploring inner space, or “far-out spaces,” as Lilly called them. The book explains how he derived his theory of the operations of the human mind and brain from his personal experiences and experiments in solitude, isolation, and confinement; LSD; and other methods of mystical experience. It also includes glimpses into Lilly's friendship with such 1960s' notables as Oscar Ichazo, Ram Dass, Timothy Leary, Albert Hofmann, Fritz Perls, and Claudio Narajo. Written for the non-specialist, *Center of the Cyclone* shows an important, modern thinker at his most personal and profound.

The Center of the Cyclone: Looking into Inner Space Details

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From Reader Review The Center of the Cyclone: Looking into Inner Space for online ebook

Erik Graff says

During the four years of seminary study, summers and Christmas breaks were the two periods when there was time for fun books outside the curriculum. They were mostly fictions, often tangentially related to academic studies, things like historical novels or sf books playing off religious themes. Occasionally, I'd pick up a non-fiction title, something lighter than the usual school fare. Lilly's *The Center of the Cyclone* was such a book.

I cannot remember anyone specifically recommending this title, but Lilly's name was definitely in the air, he being much discussed amongst friends since high school. I knew he was a psychiatrist, wrote about altered states of consciousness and had done seminal work about cetacean intelligence. I did not know about the sensory deprivation tanks until reading this "Autobiography of Inner Space."

Lilly started his career with the government, doing work with dolphins which consisted, in part, of training them for warfare. During the Vietnam conflict the U.S.A. experimented with training them to attack divers and having them carry bombs as living torpedoes. He also participated in studies which, thanks to Congressional subpoenas, we now know were related to the CIA's MK-ULTRA program and its predecessors--experiments in mind control, experiments with psychoactive chemicals and with sensory deprivation which led eventually to his famous tanks. To his credit, Lilly preferred the dolphins to his employers and dropped out of these well-funded areas of "research."

Working on his own, Lilly continued the research, minus the torture and manipulation of others, experimenting mostly on himself. *The Center of the Cyclone* is one of his earlier attempts to map out the phenomenology of his experiences, with and without LSD, under conditions of sensory deprivation.

L says

Ah, the 60's... neuroscience was in its dark ages, academics hung out naked, and researchers injected themselves with pure LSD and wrote about the symbolism of their bowel movements. For people who have done their own work with altered states, you likely won't find much new here (though it's a fun read). For those who have never tripped (or meditated, or so on), this book is probably way more interesting -- and is, in the very least, accurate and honest. Worth a read.

Sara Gray says

Trust a scientist to turn even the heights of woo-woo into a bunch of dry systematics, charts, and continua! This book is a glorious artifact of the 70s, and I had a great time reading about how Lilly peed in isolation tanks and pooped himself into existence. The sections on his work in Chile with Oscar Ichazo made my eyes glaze over with his many schemas of "Satori," but overall, this was an interesting peek into the woolier past of psychedelic science. And I'll admit--this book has some pretty solid, sensible advice on learning how to trip safely and effectively.

Nak says

One may think the parts of the book, in which John Lilly begins to speak as one to one about how one may experience one's perception of one's universe to be annoying.

But other than that, it was well written, had good examples of some real places and was a good affirmation of psychic places that I've peeked. He seemed to have a much healthier outlook and ability to navigate these places consciously, which was a great read.

Bria says

In one way, this book gives me insight into the inner thoughts of the psychedelic-era-style belief systems that allow for instantaneous communication across the universe, telepathy, previous lives, and mental transcendence to different realities. But in another way, I'm left just as baffled as before. Lilly does explain his experiences and some of the beliefs that surround them in a rather straightforward way, but I still don't feel like anything is actually explained. He leaves open a lot of room for skepticism, saying that he's a skeptic himself, and essentially remains agnostic on the existence of actual higher dimensional beings and realities or whatever it is he describes that happens to him when he mediates himself into a blissful plane of existence. All he knows is that, when he follows these procedures, this is what he experiences, and more people should do it because it's pretty great. Somehow it doesn't all fit together. And what I mean by that is, I already have a framework for understanding reality and he doesn't try to explain it using the vocabulary that I'm used to, so it just sounds like garbage to me.

David Arnold says

A fascinating look at the world of a world-class scientist who has decided to probe that most touchy of subjects, consciousness and the experience of it with the use of psychedelics, and the sensory deprivation flotation device he invented which is now offered for rent at such places as Reboot in San Francisco.

John C. Lilly was either a genius or the strangest crackpot ever invented, but either way, this book reveals a number of insights into the basic human condition, and the unconditional acceptance of it.

Kind of a difficult read in terms of vocabulary and general precise language, but worth it.

Steve says

Here is a book by my favorite mad scientist, John Lilly. He worked in isolation studies as well as human-dolphin communications. The government tried to exploit him. Both Day of the Dolphin and Altered States are based on his life and work. Come with him on this psychedelic voyage and you will encounter ECCO, the Earth Coincidence Control Office, and the CCCC, the Cosmic Coincidence Control Center. This is his most deeply personal memoir and a great read for exploring the wilder side of science and mysticism.

Marla says

I have spent a fair amount of time and money with teachers who said they understood programming, but no one has ever explained programming and the levels of enlightenment attainable with certain practices/disciplines the way John C. Lilly does in this book. He connected a lot of dots for me. Most importantly, before you spend any more money, if no one in the group of students reaches any level of enlightenment, then he/she may not be the guru you think they are. If you are a seeker like me, drop what ever you are reading, this is the book that will open your eyes to the possibilities.

Greg says

This book I really have to rate in two halves. The first half is the author's experiences with LSD. It is typical of other psychedelic literature, but better written than most (although nothing in the genre tops Huxley's *Cleaving the Doors of Perception*). The second half is the author's self explorations with various self-improvement cults and builds on *Programming the Human Biocomputer*. It is really weak. The first half, gets 4 stars the second half gets 2.

Scott says

John C. Lilly was the inventor of the sensory deprivation chamber. He and many others believe that by removing the constant sensory reminders that "you are here" via sight, sound etc. you can free the mind and achieve different states of consciousness.

This book contains interesting stories about the author's experiences with altered states of consciousness including: experiencing nitrous oxide administered by his dentist at age 7, an air bubble in his vein/artery, lung and then to his brain causing a coma, out of body experiences, experiences on LSD, near death experiences, and other altered states of mind including experiences in isolation tanks.

Sometimes the author uses terms like level 3 or level 5 and I don't know what that means. The latter part of the book uses language that might be more easily understood by people who are more familiar with the mechanisms involved when the conscious mind communicates with the unconscious mind. For example there was talk of interacting with entities and even creating them. It reminded me of other things I've read regarding the occult science of mind. For example, some skilled meditators refer to making contact with your "higher self" and accessing the "hall of records". These aren't real people or real places, rather, they are metaphors for accessing information available in different states of consciousness. I think I have to do more reading on the subject before I can fully appreciate the concepts discussed within this book.

A. D. Jameson says

This book is a real adventure. Lilly writes with a contagious passion, obsessed with understanding his own

mind and then communicating what he's learned—or thinks that he has learned. Revelatory, even if what it mostly reveals is how little we understand about ourselves—and how OK so many of us sadly might be with that.

Deepak Dev says

It is hard to contemplate or be in the states described in the book by just reading them. An apt heading "the centre of the cyclone" was all I found. Since imagination has its own limits in creating a mental reality, this a set of hallucinatory crap for someone who is not already following the path consciously or unconsciously.

Dave Summers says

Brings new meaning to the word (and concept) of "introspection". Fearless, curious, initially egoistic, eventually generous; all told with the honesty of a true explorer. Recommended.

Chris says

Dr. John C. Lilly, M.D. is one of those legendary scientist/psychologists who went exploring the mysterious inner spaces of their own freaking minds - zoning out in sensory deprivation tanks, communicating with dolphins, meditating and chanting on the side of mountain in Chile with gurus, doing aggressive and traumatic group therapy sessions in San Francisco, loading up on pure LSD and being pulled through swirling infinite inner mental vortices, reprogramming his mind, learning from mystics and gurus like Ram Dass, Alan Watts and Gurdjieff - even *giving LSD to dolphins* (which have brains larger than humans), who were "far more developed than we in strange and alien ways" and, in fact even doing LSD ('Pure Sandoz') in sensory deprivation tanks and achieving 'Darhma-Megha-Samandhi' (Gurdjieff vibration level +3), a state of "Fusion with universal mind, union with God; being one of the creators of energy from the void, in the Ma'h spiritual center of the head". Truly one of the most fearlessly exploratory scientists of the last century, going wherever the inquiry takes him. Worth quoting is his dictum

"In the province of the mind, what one believes to be true is true or becomes true, within certain limits to be found experientially and experimentally. These limits are further beliefs to be transcended. In the mind, there are no limits... In the province of connected minds, what the network believes to be true, either is true or becomes true within certain limits to be found experientially and experimentally. These limits are further beliefs to be transcended. In the network's mind there are no limits."

These types of psychologists were crushed by establishment science, their work lives on in neglected books like this.

Jason Meinig says

This book is proof positive that there are, or at least were, open-minded scientists - willing to have some pretty extreme ordeals to reach non-ordinary states of consciousness. I'm not sure all of the descriptions and experiences he described could accurately be called "science", but I do think Lilly at least thought of himself as a scientist and so this book tends to turn a fairly objective eye on very subjective realms and experiences. The book covers a wide variety of methods and journals that Lilly outlined as he went further and further "out" to get to what he calls his own 'meta-programming'. The subject is fascinating, and if you relax your normal skeptical position, the book takes you through very elaborate descriptions of the states Lilly found himself in by way of LSD, yoga, mantras, isolation tanks, etc.. Interesting read.
